Metodologías participativas en la construcción de políticas públicas migratorias en la frontera colombiana[*]

Participatory Methodologies in the Construction of Public Migration Policies on the Colombian Border

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Resumen

En este artículo se aborda una experiencia de construcción de conocimiento conjunto entre la academia y el Estado en torno a la política pública migratoria en Colombia requerida para dar respuesta a la inmigración venezolana. Presenta el procedimiento metodológico del Primer Encuentro Nacional de Departamentos de Fronteras (ENALDEF), elaborado por la Red de Investigación en Asuntos de Frontera (RIAF). Los métodos utilizados en ENALDEF fueron la cartografía social, la aplicación de una matriz FODA, los grupos focales y el mapeo de políticas y programas, que se configuraron como escenarios participativos y flexibles. La frontera es concebida como un lugar en donde la participación ciudadana contribuye a la generación de una visión binacional y un imaginario cargado de elementos únicos que requieren de la atención diferencial del Estado y de la academia, dada su histórica tendencia a la precarización.

Palabras clave: migración, fronteras, políticas públicas.

Abstract

This article addresses an experience in the construction of knowledge shared by the academic sector and the State regarding Colombia's migration policy in response to Venezuelan immigration. It presents the methodological process used by the First National Meeting of Border Departments (ENALDEF) and prepared by the Research Network on Border Affairs (RIAF). The methods used in ENALDEF were social mapping, the application of a SWOT matrix, focus groups and the mapping of policies and programs, which were configured as participatory and flexible scenarios. The border is conceived as a place where citizen participation contributes to creating a binational vision and an imaginary loaded with unique elements that require special attention from the State and academia, given its historical tendency to precariousness.

Keywords: migration, borders, public policies.

Introduction

In 2009, Colombia did not have a migration policy that comprehensively addressed foreigners in the country, since programs and plans were developed for Colombian returnees, leaving a constitutional void for immigrants. Based on the different theoretical approaches to public policy, Vargas (2009) stated that the national migration policy had not been included in the political agenda, which produced a legal vacuum in this regard, in addition to a very low degree of effectiveness. That year, the Colombian government issued CONPES 3603 or Comprehensive Migratory Policy based on the

defense, protection and guarantee of the rights of all persons involved in the migratory processes and the creation of scenarios that benefit the decision to migrate under conditions of freedom in which citizens build their own destiny with the support and protection of the State. (Chancellery of Colombia, 2009).

In 2013, the Red Migrante ("Migrant Network") was created, a policy that sought to provide guarantees and services for immigrants in Colombia with background in the Plan Nacional de Desarrollo ("National Development Plan") 2010-2014 «Prosperity for all». (Departamento Nacional de Planeación [DNP], 2011) and the Plan Estratégico Institucional "Fronteras en línea 2012-2014" (Institutional Strategic Plan "Aligned Borders 2012-2014") (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012).

However, these top-down policies were unable to address the immigration that Colombia faced during 2015 with the massive arrival of Venezuelan citizens to the country. The study of immigration based on the census of 200 years of republican history determined that, up to that year, it was of low intensity (Mejía, 2020). Migration Colombia figures indicate that in 2019 there were around 1,408,055 Venezuelans living in the country, of which 742,390 were regular and 665,665 remained in irregular conditions.

Therefore, by applying a participatory methodology, the contribution to the construction of a public migration policy (PMP) with the Primer Encuentro Nacional de Departamentos de Fronteras (ENALDEF, 2018) ("First National Meeting of Border Departments") in 2018 set an academic, political, economic and social precedent for border areas, which would be included in the National Development Plan, effective 2018-2022 (Congress of Colombia, 2018).

This article describes the participatory methodologies used from a multidisciplinary perspective in the process of gathering information from eight out of the 13 border departments in Colombia, whose representatives attended the ENALDEF. In addition, the possibilities of State-academia-citizenship cooperation in knowledge management are made visible for the resolution of problems specific to each territory. This meeting was highlighted as being a process capable of generating analysis and dialogue between people who work (public officers) and inhabit the country's borders, academia, and the State.

The methodology uses interactive, descriptive, and observational instruments through which participatory democracy was put into practice, according to Gúzman (2012), as "the democratic model with which all citizens try to justify their place in the system as political subjects, thus eliminating the exclusion from the political sphere of people who do not have any representation" (p. 32).

The experience makes it clear that knowledge is not segmented in the academic community or the State, but that, nowadays, information is linked to the reality of the territory associated with the complex exercise of interpreting meaning from the new realities, which implies the understanding of history, stories and dynamics based on the recognition of each other.

Public migration policies — citizen participation and governance

Studies on citizen participation in the construction of public policies have been approached from the political sciences as a contribution of public administration. However, in recent years, other disciplines have included them in their research repertoire as possible scenarios for action. Moreover, public policy studies in Latin America have tended to import approaches without taking into account their implications and needs for adaptation to the context, a situation that is "particularly pernicious for the case of a problem-focused area of studies that emphasizes the explanatory role of context" (Valenti and Flores, 2009, p. 180).

Umbarila (2015), from a social work perspective, reflects on co-management practices that enrich democratic action with collectives that rethink and question traditional decision-making processes. To achieve this, she proposes to open up to methodological pluralism, following Funtowicz and Ravetz (1993).

Likewise, Canelo (2016) analyzes the public policies that affect migration without being focused on the subject, with an approach based on anthropology from the margins, understood as the possibility of studying practices of control and discipline imposed by the State in the social and spatial margins, where it is assumed that it would not reach or where the exception to the rule appears. Das and Poole (2008) inquire from an ethnography point of view as to "who are the social actors that participate in the construction of certain topics as 'issues' or 'social problems', how they characterize them, what responses they construct as adequate to them, and who they hold responsible for their implementation" (p. 128).

Their work shows the logic that can obviate and/or contradict the proposals in the migratory normativity and that become evident when reviewing them from the social and symbolic margins of the State. For example, the public policies implemented for a decade by the government of the city of Buenos Aires in the Indo-American Park of Villa Soldati "deeply and distinctively affected the migrant population, despite not being focused on their entry or stay in Argentina" (Canelo, 2016, p. 148).

In her approach, she resorts to Oszlak and O'Donnell's (1995) definition of public policy, which alludes to "the set of actions and omissions that manifest a certain modality of intervention by the State in relation to an issue that arouses the attention, interest or mobilization of other actors in civil society" (Oszlak and O'Donnell, 1995) (pp. 112-113).

Moreover, Vegas (2017) assures that citizen participation in the construction of public policies allows not only to identify the "needs they suffer, but also to identify situations that compromise the welfare of the citizen by making unconsulted decisions, and even worse by failing to sponsor spaces for understanding and dialogue." (p. 8). In this sense, the policy oriented to the most vulnerable sectors is important, since

> Participation is, first and foremost, a set of instruments and procedures that democratic institutions make available to the most disadvantaged social groups to facilitate their participation in political life and to stimulate their collective development (Urdaneta, 2012, p. 123).

In this regard, Velásquez and González (2003) state that the analysis of the agents of citizen participation in Colombia can be made from two points of view: on the one hand, there is the participatory offer that sustains its institutionality in the definition of the rules of the game and the profile of those who can interact in this space; and on the other hand, there is the demand for participation made by those who effectively intervene in the participatory space.

Participation requires that citizens know how to express their needs in order to establish priorities in planning, that they demand total transparency and that they need to be trained for the complex participatory work, in which citizens directly or through their associative expressions influence certain governmental processes that determine public policies (Espinosa, 2009). That is, through citizen participation, individuals, communities and organized social sectors have the opportunity to intervene in different ways in the resolution of certain issues of collective interest.

This is where governance comes into play. Prats (2003) acknowledges that the concept has been approached by different schools and at different moments, proposing a double perspective of its study according to whether political institutions are understood as endogenous or exogenous variables. The author highlights the fact that the concept continues to evolve.

> From a governance perspective, the basic question to be answered is what are the institutional determinants of a government's capacity to formulate and implement policies? In this way, the alignment between the rules of the game (institutions), the interaction of strategic actors (governance) and the capacity of the system to reinforce itself; that is, to translate citizen demands or preferences into effective policies (Prats, 2003, p. 260).

Thus, governance is understood as the capacity of all social actors to generate a common good through actions. Girao (2012) states that the responsibility for maintaining adequate conditions of governance does not lie unilaterally with the government or society, "but rather government and opposition, and citizen parties and organizations must jointly commit to maintaining an acceptable level of governance" (Girao, 2012) (p. 6).

Arbós and Giner (1993) assert that governance is the quality of a political community whereby "its institutions of government act effectively within their space in a manner considered legitimate by the citizenry, thus allowing the free exercise of the political will of the executive power through the civic obedience of the people" (p. 13).

For Boeninger (1993), the exercise of governance cannot only be attributed to the political actors electorally recognized by the citizenry as the appropriate ones to govern their society, but also includes the citizenry as a fundamental part of it.

For this to happen, it is necessary to:

> 1. Strengthen citizen organization and participation, to facilitate the existence of a societal coalition and a political coalition of government; 2. Strengthen the capacity for the legitimate exercise of authority; 3. Strengthen the capacity to prevent and resolve conflicts and to prevent and resolve problems that affect people's rights. (Heredia, 2002, p. 9).

In the particular case of ENALDEF, this inclusion of actors that favors dialogue and cooperation between academia and the State for the formulation of public policies may lead to the reinforcement of technocracy if participatory processes are disregarded, in which the voice of citizens, especially those involved in and/or benefiting from public programs is not heard. According to Parker (2014), it is "required that academics sharpen a sensitivity that is not always present in the world of academia and laboratory research" (p. 192). In alignment with Hysing (2013), it is essential to listen to citizens and their demands, "criticisms, needs and dreams, and to open deliberative spaces about green reforms, always generating democratic instances of dialogue and common learning" (Parker, 2014, p. 192).

The border: subjectivities and limits

Colombia shares land borders with Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and Venezuela, the latter (2,219 kilometers) being the longest that the country has with any other nation in the subcontinent and the most dynamic in economic terms. Until the year 2000, more than 80% of the trade volume between the two countries moved through the land routes of Táchira (Venezuela), which borders Norte de Santander (Colombia), constituting a fundamental space for the transit of goods flowing between Venezuela and the other members of the Andean Community (Valero, 2000). In subnational terms, the borders between states and

departments in Colombia and Venezuela are shown in Table No. 1.

Table No. 1: States and Departments bordering Colombia and Venezuela

Colombia/ Department	Venezuela/ State
Guajira	Zulia
Norte de Santander	Táchira
Arauca	Apure
Vichada and Guainía	Amazonas

Source: own elaboration.

This article reports on a bid by the Departmental Government of Norte de Santander and the regional academia to gather input for the construction of the national PMP to be included in Colombia's National Development Plan 2018-2022 (Congress of Colombia, 2018), and in response to the immigration of Venezuelans following the border closure between Colombia and Venezuela. Therefore, although methodologically the border departments (Nariño, Putumayo, Chocó and Amazonas) with other nations (Panama, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil) were included, the approach focuses on the Colombian-Venezuelan border.

The World Bank (2018) indicates that in Colombia border areas have historically lagged behind the rest of the country.

> These districts show significant gaps in terms of their level of economic development and access to basic services, and most of them have a lower population density than other regions of the country. In addition, they are areas where poverty has declined more slowly. Despite recent government efforts to strengthen institutions and increase investments in border areas, the arrival of migrants has forced local authorities to respond to the needs of new families, in addition to the already existing pressures to reduce gaps in the provision and quality of services (p. 17).

For example, as of May 2020, the employment rate in Cúcuta (Norte de Santander) reached 38.8%, in contrast to 43.4% at the national level. Regarding the type of employment, 61.2% of the employed earned their income as self-employed, followed by 28.6% as employees (Departamento Nacional de Estadística [DANE], 2020).

According to the National Planning Department (2014), the unemployment rate in border departments is five percentage points above the national average; in addition, the employment informality rate is 80%, that is, 20% higher than the country's average. DANE

cited in Pérez (April 27, 2018) mentions that border municipalities have an average Unsatisfied Basic Needs Index (NBI) of 52.81%, while border departments register a rate of of 47.75%, which puts them in inequality compared to the national average of 27.78%. This indicator reaches values above 80% in border departments such as Guajira, Guainía, Vaupés and Vichada.

For its part, in the report *Sin dios ni ley (Without God or Law)* (Fundación Paz y Reconciliación [Pares], February 10, 2020), the conflict over routes for transporting supplies for processing coca paste and cocaine hydrochloride, and of course, the passing through the state of Zulia (Venezuela) to leave the country has been worsening in the border departments of Guajira, Norte de Santander and Arauca since 2017.

Despite these precarious economic and social conditions, regional research (Norte de Santander) has constructed a definition of the border that goes beyond the perspectives of linearity and zonality, proposing it as a space of shared action where the following unfolds:

> a web of economic, social and cultural relationships, a space whose delimitation, where there is a dynamic relationship, can only be established in an approximate and transitory way, being precisely its essence, the daily character of this relationship, the heterogeneity of situations that develop in it, its momentary equilibrium, and, consequently, its permanent evolution in space and time (Parra et al., 2016, p. 62).

Thus understood, the border was defined as "a scenario for the exchange of subjectivities, with identities that move and where the singularity of cultural hybridizations constitutes a unique, cosmopolitan and diverse space" (Espinel, 2017, p. 1). From this conceptual approach that breaks with the conceptions that divide the territory from the geopolitical, academia approached the study and interpretation of the border as a scenario for research and intervention, where it was necessary to count on the different actors of the territory managing knowledge in a participatory manner.

In other borders, such as the case of Mexico and the United States, social imaginaries register them as sites permitted to violate consolidated norms; such imaginaries have been widely represented in Mexican literature; for example, in the film *Espaldas mojadas* by Galindo (1955); and in literary works such as *Los motivos de Caín* by Revueltas (1957), *Murieron a mitad* by Spota (1977) and "Paso del Norte" (*El llano en llamas*) by Rulfo (1953).

Thus, there are multiple factors at the borders that feed a scenario of instability with a precarious population. There are "policies that limit their freedom, interactions with threatening figures, fear, insecurity and violence, and poor migrants" (Valenzuela, 2012, p. 111). These processes of exclusion, abandonment and social prostration produce wasted lives, as Bauman calls them (2005); "these are rather collateral victims of economic progress, unforeseen and unintended" (p. 57). It is possible to argue that the border would be constituted as a territory that can generate social dehumanization and, consequently, the creation of an imaginary in which factors that go against the established parameters of a social system take precedence.[1]

> In border cities, subaltern groups include large populations of poor migrants, as well as maquiladora workers immersed in the dynamics imposed by the internationalization of labor and productive forces, overexploitation, attacks on collective and benefit contracts, and violations of health and social security norms. (Valenzuela, 2012, p. 14)

And although borders are intense and diverse scenarios that include a variety of people, activities and routines that are trying to distance themselves from the poor dimension they have been given, they are still seen as spaces of vice, perdition and prostitution.

It is not for free, then, that the theory of *thinking from the border* has emerged as a response to the violence (borders) of imperial/territorial epistemology (knowledge) and the rhetoric of modernity (and globalization) of salvation that continues to be implemented today, because it assumes the inferiority of the *other* or their evil intentions and, therefore, continues to justify oppression, exploitation and the destruction of difference (Mignolo and Tlostanova, 2012).

Thinking from the border is the epistemology of exteriority; that is, of the outside created from within and as such is always a decolonial project. Borders are not only associated with the geographical, but also relate other elements of the human being and of knowledge, of language, of the religious, economic, political, as pointed out by Mignolo and Tlostanova (2012).

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[1] Prohibition in the United States strengthened smuggling and crime scenarios. In this sense, the borders became spaces of entertainment, alcohol consumption, prostitution, shows to evade the law and morality of the prohibitionist law.

The border embodies the ambivalence of the borderline, both a line that delimits and separates territories (two enclosed spaces, the national and the foreign), and the place of transit between them. The border is a *bar* that divides (splits) and unites the two elements located on either side; it is a *hinge* equally apt for closing and opening. It is a *daimonic* or *hermeneutic* space through which "messages or requests circulate, in both directions, between the two opposing fences; without their separation being annulled." (Sucasas, 2003, p. 207).

In this way, the border is confronted with multiple meanings, an ambiguity between stigmatization from the problem and oblivion, as well as the meeting of the two, where the national sense and visions of "us" and "them" are blurred.

Method

The process of a participatory methodology

The Primer Encuentro Nacional de Departamentos de Frontera ("First National Meeting of Border Departments") (ENALDEF, for its acronym in Spanish) was a process led by the Secretaria de Fronteras y Cooperación Internacional de la Gobernación de Norte de Santander (Secretary of Borders and International Cooperation of the Government of Norte de Santander), Universidad de Pamplona, Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander and Universidad de Santander (UDES) working together through the Red de Investigación en Asuntos de Frontera (Border Issues Research Network) (RIAF, for its acronym in Spanish)–[2] and consolidated in the dynamics of the border and the current needs of the territory, associated with the Departmental Development Plan "A productive North for all" 2016-2019 (Gobernación de Norte de Santander, 2016).

Its aim was to gather qualitative information from the border with collaborative and collective foundations in order to respond to the changing reality of the region, investigating deeply into the context to generate interventions in priority fields, where these approaches "involve understanding reality as a whole, to account for processes, structures, cultural manifestations, which define the dynamics and social organization; to clarify the conceptions, understandings and support related to problems, subjects, contexts, intentions and interactions (…)" (Cifuentes, 2005, p. 10). In this way, the current situation of the border departments and their dimensions were made known, in order to expand knowledge about these areas and provide concrete answers to the problems of this reality, as seen from the perspective of the inhabitants and their leaders.

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[2] Created by ordinance 016 (2018) by Asamblea Departamental de Norte de Santander, Colombia to create spaces for training, promotion, design of research projects and the application of their results; as well as the formulation and execution of plans, programs and projects leading to effective attention to the socioeconomic and environmental challenges of border dynamics in the Department.

The general objective of ENALDEF was to create a space for the interaction of different actors in the border environment that would allow the formulation, construction and development of a public border policy. The specific objectives were as follows: (i) identify needs and solutions in areas such as economy and public policy, social inclusion, development and social change, and cultural identity and social phenomena; (ii) analyze the interrelationships and consolidate a policy of direct work on issues of regional, national and international interest that in turn are inserted with the general policies and orientations of the State; (iii) establish proposals based on the development of the issues discussed in the border scenarios for the creation of technical inputs for the public migration policy in the Plan de Desarrollo Nacional (National Development Plan) 2018-2022.

Population and sample

Out of Colombia's 13 border departments, eight attended: Amazonas, Putumayo, Boyacá, Norte de Santander, Arauca, Cesar, Vichada and Vaupés. This figure shows a representativeness of more than 60% of the object of study, adding the strategic location of these selected departments, which mostly cover the countries that share a border, such as Venezuela, Brazil, Peru and Ecuador. Delegates from territorial entities converged in Norte de Santander to participate in ENALDEF, which took place between November 8 and 9, 2018. Each border department was represented by its governor or its delegate from the Border Office or the Planning or Government Secretariat, who are familiar with the regulations in border scenarios and work on the development plans of the linked regions. These actors wove a discourse of occurrence based on their experiences with the territory.

In addition to the eight departmental representatives, other participants included university professors and students from different academic programs and educational institutions, representatives of the Executive Branch, civil society organizations, international cooperation agencies and members of the business and public sector of Norte de Santander.

Procedures for data collection

(i) Stage I. Participatory diagnosis: through this method, needs and solutions to problems were identified from the economic, public policy, social inclusion, development, social change and cultural identity and social phenomena perspectives. Questions were asked and answered at workshops to learn from the voice of the actors, the processes that the community is going through, the interests that mobilize them, the communicative codes and their spaces of appropriation.

In addition, each departmental delegate presented data related to the governor's name, the development plan and brief geographic, economic and demographic characteristics. In order to have accurate information, a matrix was established and sent in advance to these institutional actors.

(ii) Stage II. Mapping of existing programs and policies: national and international experiences in PMP were identified in order to analyze interrelationships and consolidate lines of regional, national and international interest. To complement this mapping, a documentary review was carried out in which a content analysis was applied through established conceptual categories such as: border migration, public migration policy, migration and the border.

It was considered pertinent to review the realities of the border departments in order to establish, for example, what are the dynamics of limits beyond the borders where the imaginary ones reduce them to geographic lines, but which in detail bring to the surface social interactions common to residents on both sides of the border.

For its methodological development, the central guiding question was taken as a starting point: how is the border perceived from the cultural, gender, economic, social and environmental point of view? From an initial discussion, participants identified icons, symbols, signs, images, key places, monuments, geographical landmarks, addresses and names, to group them into each of the variables of analysis: culture, gender, economy, social and environmental, which were represented with a convention that could be a color or a written sign.

A participatory diagnosis was then carried out by means of social mapping to identify the economic, geographic, social and cultural aspects of the border departments; with this methodology, common points of the regions studied were identified, thus achieving the discriminated systematization of factors with the lines of greatest occurrence and relevance of the regions.

Social cartography is a tool associated with participatory work dynamics. Through dialogue, realities are captured on maps that make it possible to visualize the social dynamics of citizens in certain territories. It is usually used for research processes of the participant action type, in which interaction with the population is required, with the purpose of clearly explaining the scope, available resources, dynamics and variables through graphs.

> The central purpose of this methodology is to create a dynamic process of reflection and social production of knowledge with the population; it is a pedagogical action that records the relational networks that constitute the territory, thus building a holistic image of reality (Quiñonez, 2011, p. 160).

For Quiñonez (2011), from the social cartography perspective, it is possible to recognize the stages of the past, present, and future, which have been the changes marking the evolutionary trajectory of the inhabitants in a territory from its streets, spaces, parks, neighborhoods, boundaries, iconic elements, colors, shapes and differences, allowing for a more in-depth diagnosis to take place.

This pedagogical tool allows the collective to approach the understanding of territoriality as a factor that transcends the land area of a region and becomes a collective construction of powers that give meaning to the dynamics of behavior and cultural, social, economic and political identity of a group of people who appropriate a space to carry out their life project.

(iii) Stage III. Definition of strategic axes: through focus groups, ideas were selected to consolidate the vision of the border scenario for the creation of the policy from its social actors. Under this participative dynamic, a SWOT (Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, Threats) matrix was implemented, based on the descriptive scenarios linked to the realities of the population, in order to recognize them from the Development Plan of Amazonas, Putumayo, Boyacá, Norte de Santander, Arauca, Cesar, Vichada and Vaupés.

The exercise allowed participants to recognize, from their current regional public policy, which internal and external factors should be strengthened and minimized, in order to propose territorial strategies to support the consolidation of the border policy in the face of increased migration and return migration.

Methodologically, the SWOT was completed collectively and by each of the components, so that all participants could observe the repetitive or absent ideas at the end of each review and socialization process. As a closing dynamic for the construction of the SWOT, a series of strategies were produced among all the participants from the departments, which were left for discussion with the national delegates to serve as input for the PMP.

Findings and discussion

Approaches to the border and migratory context by regional academia

As previously mentioned, although ENALDEF brought together actors from eight of Colombia's 13 border departments, university professors and students and representatives of the Executive Branch, international cooperation agencies and the business sector, and its objectives were aimed at gathering input for the construction of the national PMP, the discussions focused on the immigration of Venezuelans into the country.

It is important to clarify that the emigration of Colombians abroad has been generated mainly by political violence. Since 1948, the country has witnessed the departure of its nationals to other regions of the continent and the world, but especially to Venezuela, because it had the economic bonanza of oil and special characteristics to find refuge from difficult situations in the economic, social and political fields (Rincón, Acosta, Añez and Rincón, 2016). A report by the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (National Center of Historical Memory) (CNMH, for its acronym in Spanish) states that between 1980 and August 2013, Norte de Santander forced out 154,773 people to Venezuela as a result of the armed conflict, second only to the department of Cesar, also bordering Venezuela (CNMH, 2014).

However, in 2015 there was a breaking point with the vehicular closure of the Colombian-Venezuelan border by the Government of Nicolás Maduro and the expulsion of 1,100 Colombians from Venezuelan territory; accused of smuggling, their houses were demolished and they had to cross the Táchira River (which divides both countries at the northeastern border) with household goods and even, with people in a situation of disability, which forced the mobilization of the Colombian authorities in an unprecedented operation at the border, enabling shelters and relocating this floating population to their hometowns throughout the country. The closure highlighted the lack of products in Venezuela, a situation caused by the large-scale hoarding of food and medicines in the hands of smuggling mafias and the scarce activity of the industry in that country, in addition to the economic blockade exercised by the United States.

Venezuelan migration was intensified between 2017 and 2018, when thousands of walkers (Grupo Interagencial sobre Flujos Migratorios Mixtos (Interagency Group on Mixed Migratory Flows) [GIFMM, for its acronym in Spanish], 2018) began their journeys to the interior of Colombia, seeking capital cities such as Bogota, Cali, Medellin and Bucaramanga, or to destinations such as Peru, Ecuador, Chile and Argentina.

Pineda and Ávila (2019) explain that 40 percent of the people from Venezuela who reside in Colombia have dual nationality, and 30 percent are Colombian nationals. In this order, the authors indicate, only 30% have exclusively Venezuelan nationality, which evidences "the historical ties of migration between the two peoples. In a way, the new generations of Colombians whose parents, decades ago, were looking for a better future in Venezuela, are returning to their country of origin" (p. 90).

Faced with this situation, the National and Regional Governments initiated diagnoses to create public policies aimed at development, priority and specialized attention in health, temporary housing and education as axes of assistance. In Cúcuta, the First Meeting of Border Municipalities of Norte de Santander was held in 2016, with the purpose of identifying the problems related to migration in ten municipalities with border crossings in the department, with the participation of local officials and researchers from nine of the 17 public and private universities in the region, to discuss the results of studies on border and migration.

Subsequently, in July 2018, the meeting "Challenges of Public Migration Policy in Colombia: a perspective from knowledge management" was held in Bogotá, organized by the National Government, the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID, for its acronym in English), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

This background of academia-State dialogue opened the possibility of ENALDEF as a space for dialogue and questioning of different sectors of society interested in the construction of a PPM linked to the territory and its actors. However, this Meeting meant the use of methodologies brought from the administration and social sciences to broaden the possibilities of dialogue and thus promote spaces for governance with citizen participation, where governance is, in addition, democratic. According to Prats (2003), the fact that governance is democratic helps to identify the most urgent citizen demands and to establish the political incentives that lead to the construction of public policies to solve such needs.

The priority areas identified in ENALDEF were productive activities, the empowerment of dual citizenship and the encounter and construction of meanings on migration that contribute to the idea of generating a border of integration between the two countries.

Scope of the participatory methodology of ENALDEF

Although universities have their own research agendas as a strategy to intervene in the social and public world, with ENALDEF it became clear that when academia and government work together they can begin to build a public policy according to the dynamics of the border, taking into account that, in general, universities contribute indirectly to public policies, but policy makers, government officials, experts, technicians and consultants, who were trained in academic circles, tend to acquire autonomy and form groups with social interactions that are mostly closed and self-referential, in which only privileged sectors of academia have a place (Parker, 2014).

For its inhabitants, the border is a scenario of exchange between the collaborative work that the State and academia do and should continue to do with the citizenry that survives the crises caused by the absence of public policies designed by the two territories. However, the imaginary related to the border as a space where regulation and order on the part of the military and administrative authorities is present all the time, in reality it is possible, from a social cartography, to represent a territory where informality and economic and social exchange is less rigorous than in the center of the country, the rules are more flexible and cultural, musical and gastronomic traits are shared, which give meaning to the place.

In line with Valenti and Flores (2009), it can be reiterated that one of the pending tasks of border academia is the construction of a framework that allows an adequate analysis for the identification of regional problems, based on a methodological correlate that leads to the evaluation of solution alternatives. In the case of ENALDEF, the application of the SWOT matrix accounts for these two scenarios: the definition of strengths and opportunities versus weaknesses and threats related to migration.

In turn, the focus groups as a methodological strategy made it possible to open reflective dialogues on the situation of the border departments, with explicit accounts from each of the actors present in the territories and the confrontation with the experiences, perceptions and feelings of the nationals. Discourse loaded with initiative was found to generate a present border, a place for the construction of new meanings that continue to deepen the historical ties between the two countries and from there build democracy, equity and unity, taking into consideration the voices that merge to imagine a better future.

With the tools used in ENALDEF, as Valenti and Flores (2009) point out, there is a multidisciplinary convergence and the recognition that there are different methodologies to address the phenomena that require the definition of public policies.

Conclusions

This article has shown how the Colombian-Venezuelan border is a space of significant changes produced by the crisis in Venezuela, which has generated a migratory flow of great intensity, changing the direction of binational relations that were marked by economic and cultural exchanges in both directions, Cúcuta being one of the cities with the greatest dynamism in this process. At this level, the border is evidenced as a space with a great plasticity, which is impacted by the crisis. At the same time, it seeks to resignify the imaginaries that see the border as a place of conflict or abandonment, in order to build a different perspective of the border, where the elements of the citizen who lives in the context are made visible, which has been achieved through the search for participation and interaction between the public sector and academia, as two actors who live and build their own meanings beyond the border, finding binational interests and aiming at integration between the two countries. The path of citizen participation was taken as a mechanism to build a joint voice, in search of a democratic institutionality that generates governance and empowerment.

The methodological exercise carried out in ENALDEF was aimed at setting a precedent in this interaction through participatory methodologies in the border zone, with the aim of contributing to the Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (National Development Plan) 2018-2022 (Congress of Colombia, 2018). This methodological exercise was carried out through the participation of representatives of eight border departments in participatory diagnostic work, the mapping of programs and policies and the definition of strategic axes. Among the results of this research, it is highlighted that the border has multiple meanings, whether as a regulated and ordered space, as a place of informality, or as a place for cultural encounters. So, the idea of a border conceived as a dynamic place is contradictory.

For its part, academia fulfills a dual role: that of knowledge manager and methodological advisor to insert social science methodologies in the construction of public policies. Likewise, as a citizenry, it is committed to democratic governance by engaging in participatory exercises, along with the willingness to prevent and resolve conflicts and problems that affect people's rights.

Scenarios such as ENALDEF offer the opportunity to establish collaborative work between academia and the State in order to manage projects, initiatives and experiences for the region, based on and taking advantage of the results of joint research with a view to strengthening the social fabric. This is how the universities of the territory, faced with the possibility of working in a network, invigorate their research spaces based on the ecosystems of innovation and constant reflection that arise from the borders.

This is an example of how methodological triangulation and the inclusion of a greater number of stakeholders in decision making increase the levels of democracy and representativeness around dialogue and the search for consensus that promotes understanding among the various stakeholders, which increases the degree of legitimacy of political actions for the borders.

We can affirm that the co-production of knowledge is related to the understanding of context, where the border ceases to be a periphery or a problematic territory and is valued as a fundamental part of the integral framework that makes up the country, becoming a key area, a hinge of international and regional integration; therefore, a space of priority attention that governments cannot ignore.

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