GeoAtos
Revista Geografia em Atos

unesp

PROCESSES OF RETERRITORIALIZATION OF VENEZUELAN IMMIGRANTS IN SALVADOR IN THE 21ST CENTURY

PROCESSOS DE RETETERRITORIALIZAÇÃO DE IMIGRANTES VENEZUELANOS EM SALVADOR NO SÉCULO XXI

PROCESOS DE RETERRITORIALIZACÍON DE LOS INMIMIGRANTES VENEZOELANOS EN SALVADOR EN EL SIGLO XXI

Emanuel Gonzaga dos SANTOS [1]
e-mail: emanuelgonzaga@rocketmail.com

Agripino Souza COELHO NETO[2]
e-mail: agscneto@uneb.br

How to reference this paper:

SANTOS, E. G.; COELHO NETO, A. S. Processes of reterritorialization of Venezuelan immigrants in Salvador in the 21st century. **Revista Geografia em Atos**, Presidente Prudente, v. 09, n. 00, e025012. e-ISSN: 1984-1647. DOI: 10.35416/2025.10888

| **Submitted**: 16/03/2025
| **Revisions required**: 23/06/2025
| **Approved**: 30/07/2025
| **Published**: 10/10/2025

Editors: Ph.D. Nécio Turra Neto
Prof. Mrs. Karina Malachias Domingos dos Santos

[1] State University of Bahia (UNEB), Salvador – Bahia (BA) – Brazil. Bachelor's and a Licentiate Degree in Geography from the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA). Master's Degree in Territorial Studies from the State University of Bahia (UNEB), Department of Human and Earth Sciences (DCET I).

[2] State University of Bahia (UNEB), Salvador – Bahia (BA) – Brazil. Ph.D. in Geography from the Fluminense Federal University (UFF). Master's and a Licentiate Degree in Geography from the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) and a Bachelor's Degree in Economics from FACCEBA (Bahia). Full Professor at the State University of Bahia (UNEB, Campus I).

ABSTRACT: This article aims to analyze the processes of Venezuelan immigrants' reterritorialization in Salvador, having Raffestin's T-D-R system (territorialization-deterritorialization and reterritorialization) as a theoretical framework, based on the classic conception that understands the territory as the nation-state's borders interior. The aforementioned conceptual triad is articulated with the Bourdesian and Sayadian sociology of migrations, since the immigrant is simultaneously a territorial and a sociopolitical category. In this research, we found that the diversity of experiences lived in the capital of Bahia is marked by factors such as social and cultural capital, period of entry, and financial conditions, being of paramount importance in the configuration of their territorial experiences in the soteropolitan context.

KEYWORDS: Territory. Migrations. Venezuelans.

***RESUMO**: O presente artigo objetiva analisar os processos de reterritorialização de imigrantes venezuelanos em Salvador, tendo como base teórica o sistema T-D-R (territorialização-desterritorialização-reterritorialização) de Raffestin, considerando a concepção clássica que vê o território como o espaço demarcado pelas fronteiras do Estado-nação. A tríade conceitual mencionada está articulada com a sociologia bourdesiana e sayadiana das migrações, pois o imigrante é, simultaneamente, uma categoria territorial e sociopolítica. Constatamos que a diversidade das experiências vividas na capital baiana é marcada por fatores como capital social e cultural, período de entrada e condições financeiras, sendo de suma importância para a configuração de suas experiências territoriais no contexto soteropolitano.*

***PALAVRAS-CHAVE**: Território. Migração. Venezuelanos.*

***RESUMEN**: Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar los procesos de reterritorialización de los inmigrantes venezolanos en Salvador, teniendo como base teórica el sistema T-D-R de Raffestin (territorialización-desterritorialización y reterritorialización), basado en la concepción clásica que concibe el territorio como el interior de las fronteras del Estado-nación. La mencionada tríada conceptual se articula con la sociología bourdesiana y sayadiana de las migraciones ya que el inmigrante es a la vez una categoría territorial y sociopolítica. En esta investigación encontramos que la diversidad de experiencias vividas en la capital de Bahía está marcada por factores como el capital social y cultural, el período de entrada y las condiciones financieras, siendo de suma importancia en la configuración de sus experiencias territoriales en el contexto soteropolitano.*

***PALABRAS CLAVE**: Territorio. Migracíon. Venezoelanos.*

Introduction

Migrations constitute a socio-spatial phenomenon of significant interest to geographical science. Migration, that is, the spatial movement of populations, lies at the core of the occupation of the ecumene and has been a recurrent phenomenon throughout human history, as recognized by the French geographer Max Sorre in *Les migrations des peuples*, originally published in 1955. The ecumene, in turn, "encompasses two associated elements: the idea of a terrestrial space with its boundaries and the idea of human occupation, the latter implying settlement and stability" (Sorre, 1984, p. 126, our translation).

According to *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (Gregory *et al*., 2009), migration inevitably involves a change of residence and indicates a classification of migrations based on criteria such as geographic scale, temporality, motivational factors, and legal status.

The residential relocation of an individual, family, or group from one place to another (see also migrations) differs from tourism or other short-term visits, which do not involve a change of residence. Traditionally, migration is classified according to four broad criteria: intranational versus international; temporary versus permanent; forced versus voluntary; and legal versus illegal (Gregory *et al*., 2009, p. 462).

The present study emphasizes international migrations, given that the flow of Venezuelans to Salvador is directly related to the crossing of interstate borders. Accordingly, the territorial dimension of migration will be operationalized according to the classical conception of Political Geography, which understands territory as the portion of space where the State exercises its power and sovereignty.

The analysis of the spatial movement of populations can be operationalized through the conceptual triad of territorialization–deterritorialization–reterritorialization. Territorialization is conceived as the process of forming a territoriality, arising from the relations established through experiences within territories, which, according to Hasbaert (2011), is characterized by multidimensionality, involving relations of political, symbolic, and economic dominance and/or appropriation. Deterritorialization is understood as the destabilization of these territorial experiences, which may result from migratory processes that prompt departure from the country of origin. Reterritorialization, in turn, refers to the reconfiguration of territorialities, considering experiences and bonds of belonging to a new territory. It is important to note that these processes occur simultaneously due to the constant transformations of territory, which imply the spatialization of power. Experiences within territories shape what Soja (1971) calls territorialities, that is, processes mediated by power

relations, in which conflicts and contradictions prevail, taking into account political, economic, and cultural dimensions. It should also be emphasized that reterritorialization processes resulting from international migrations are not timeless and require an effort of historical contextualization.

In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, migratory flows of Venezuelans to neighboring countries intensified. During this period, Brazil experienced the arrival of a significant population influx from Venezuela, a movement involving processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. In this context, the objective of this article is to analyze the reterritorialization processes of Venezuelan immigrants in the municipality of Salvador.

To achieve this goal, the text was fundamentally structured around two main components. The first aimed to provide a brief historical, political, and social contextualization of Venezuela from the mid-twentieth century, outlining general frameworks that help understand Venezuelan emigration. This component was operationalized through academic literature, the review of articles from various national (Venezuelan) and international newspapers, and the use of governmental data, such as those provided by the Central Bank of Venezuela.

The second component, focused on analyzing the reterritorialization of Venezuelan immigrants in Salvador, was developed through interviews with ten Venezuelans who settled in Salvador during the twenty-first century, sharing their migratory trajectories. Additionally, the National Migratory Registration System of the Federal Police of Brazil was used to obtain immigration data for the capital of Bahia.

Historical, political, and social context of Venezuelan Emigration

Venezuela's recent history is deeply marked by the geopolitical context during and after the Cold War, due to its geostrategic position in northern South America and its natural resources, particularly oil, which attracted both American and Soviet interests. Our historical contextualization begins in 1959, with the end of the military dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez (1952–1958), marking the beginning of what scholars consider a period of re-democratization (Aguirre, 2020; Oliveira, 2013; Rodrigues, 2012; Ricupero, 2013).

The first president of this period was Rómulo Betancourt (affiliated with Acción Democrática, a center-left party), whose administration lasted from 1959 to 1964. Despite

apparent economic success during this historical period, the government faced attempts to destabilize the presidency by groups aligned with both the socialist bloc and the United States. The main coup attempts during this time were the Barcelonazo in 1961 (led by right-wing officers loyal to Marcos Pérez Jiménez, the last president of the country's military dictatorship, whose regime was supported by the United States), the Carupanazo, also in 1961, and the Porteñazo in 1962 (the latter two executed by the far left). Despite these attempts, the country managed to make important autonomous decisions, such as joining the group of founding countries of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (Francisco, 2007).

Attempts to overthrow the government persisted during the administration of his successor, Raul Leoni (also affiliated with Acción Democrática), whose term lasted from 1964 to 1969. These attempts were aligned with the Soviet bloc, through actions originating from the Cuban government. The most significant coup attempt during his administration occurred in 1967, when a plan by Venezuelan and Cuban guerrillas in the city of Machurucuto to depose Leoni was uncovered and suppressed by the National Guard. During this government, relations with OPEC member countries were further strengthened, and the domestic oil industry also experienced consolidation (Sanchéz, 1996).

The conflicts reached a form of resolution during the administration of Rafael Caldera (affiliated with the Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente—COPEI, a center-right party), who served from 1969 to 1974. A truce was achieved with the Communist Party of Venezuela, providing amnesty to guerrillas who had fought on behalf of this political group. This administration was also marked by higher fiscal participation from oil revenues and the nationalization of natural gas. In this context of relative political stability, Carlos Pérez, his successor (president from 1974 to 1979), transformed strategic natural resources, such as iron and oil, into state monopolies (Urbaneja, 2007).

This scenario of political and economic stability was interrupted when President Luis Campins (COPEI, head of the executive from 1979 to 1984) undertook a series of international loans, compelling Venezuela to accept the rules of international financial institutions in its domestic policy. This contributed to the devaluation of the Bolívar (then the national currency) and led to a severe economic crisis (Briceño-León, 2006).

The crisis persisted during the administration of Jaime Lusinchi (Acción Democrática, 1984–1989) and worsened during Carlos Pérez's second term (Acción Democrática, 1989–1993), when the International Monetary Fund pressured the country to implement stricter

austerity policies. This resulted in a sharp increase in prices, widespread protests that were harshly repressed, and renewed attempts to seize the executive power, primarily by leftist movements such as the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement, with then Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez as one of its main leaders (Santanna, 2023).

The Pérez era officially ended in 1993, when he was removed from the presidency due to corruption allegations and replaced by Ramón Velásquez (Acción Democrática, 1993–1994). The following year, Rafael Caldera assumed his second term (Convergencia, a right-wing party, 1994–1999), but was unable to control the crisis, which continued to worsen. In the face of deteriorating living conditions and growing distrust of traditional political forces, Chávez gained popularity and assumed the presidency of Venezuela through legal means in 1999, breaking with a political model that had endured for four decades and governing the country for 14 years across three consecutive terms. However, despite this political paradigm shift, the Chávez administration reinforced Venezuela's increasing dependence on the oil sector (Urbaneja, 2007).

During his first term (1999–2001), notable developments included the implementation of the Bolivarian Missions, a set of social assistance programs in which the Armed Forces played a key operational role (Urbaneja, 2007), as well as a constitutional reform (Aló, Presidente […], 2008). On the geopolitical front, Venezuela faced an economic crisis, strengthening its relations with other OPEC countries and China, to the detriment of the United States (Chávez, 1999).

The main focus of the opposition's criticism against Chávez's first government consisted of accusations of authoritarianism, particularly stemming from the dismissal of more than 1,000 judges, a decision originating from a constituent assembly dominated by the pro-government legislature (Aznárez, 1999). This action provoked public demonstrations, whose participants reported having been repressed (Álvarez, 2008).

Protests continued during Chávez's second term, which began in 2001, with one of the main moments of tension occurring in 2002 during confrontations between government supporters and opponents near the presidential residence (El Universal, 2006). This culminated in Chávez calling on the Armed Forces to intervene in the conflict (Frías, 2002). In this context, the opposition orchestrated a coup d'état, dissolving the Legislature, the Public Ministry, and the Supreme Court; however, through the use of force, government supporters removed the anti-Chávez actors from power, and Chávez returned to the presidency, attributing the events to the United States (Campbell, 2002).

Beyond these tensions, Chávez's second term was also characterized by currency controls (Hernandez, 2003) and the implementation of the Robinson, Ribas, Sucre, Vuelvan, and Barrio Adentro missions. Another significant initiative during this term was the redistribution of land ownership (Correo Del Orenoco, 2005).

Chávez's third term began in 2007 and was marked by the nationalization of the telecommunications, electricity, cement, metallurgical, and gold sectors, as well as the expropriation of a number of foreign companies (El estado […], 2008; Legiscomex, 2010; Venezuela […], 2008) Major points of tension with the opposition were related to increasing the number of re-elections in both the Legislative and Executive branches (Jardim, 2009) and the cessation of public broadcasts by RCTV, which frequently criticized his government (Chávez […], 2007).

Despite these challenges with the opposition, Chávez was re-elected in 2012 but passed away the following year. The government was temporarily assumed by Nicolás Maduro, who, through electoral processes, officially took office later that same year. Despite the president's death, Maduro positioned himself as Chávez's political and ideological successor.

Venezuela's economic dependence on oil, which began with the Punto Fijo Pact and continued under Chávez, persisted during Nicolás Maduro's administration. However, this period was marked by a series of internal and external problems related to fossil fuels. The primary domestic challenge is that oil, which historically accounts for more than nine-tenths of Venezuela's economy (Banco Central da Venezuela, 2019a), suffered a depreciation of over 60%, according to OPEC (2022).

It is important to note that although the drop in oil prices during the 2010s negatively affected all OPEC members, OPEC data (2022) indicate that Venezuela was the country whose exports were most severely impacted, suggesting that internal production issues also contributed to the crisis.

The country's recession also led, according to the Central Bank of Venezuela (2019b), to a significant decline in imports and a decrease in domestic productivity (Banco Central da Venezuela, 2019c), resulting in widespread shortages of goods. Another major economic challenge faced by the Bolivarian nation was the extremely high inflation rate from 2013 onwards, which exceeded 130,000% in 2018 (Banco Central da Venezuela, 2022).

The 2010s were also marked by the sanctions imposed on the country. In the case of the US embargoes, under the pretext of combating human rights violations, since 2017 the

United States has restricted transactions with sectors of the Venezuelan economy, eventually prohibiting any kind of transaction within US territory involving Venezuela—a country with a predominantly state-controlled economy—and the use of the *petro*, a Venezuelan cryptocurrency created to facilitate domestic transactions in the face of the devaluation of its local currency.

It is worth noting that accusations of human rights violations are not exclusive to the United States, internal opposition, or the international right wing; they have also been raised by the Socialist International (2014), particularly regarding the government's leniency toward acts of political violence against opposition leaders and sympathizers. Moreover, authors such as Feitosa (2015) and Jácome (2018) draw attention to the process of militarization in the country, characterized by the significant presence of military personnel occupying positions in public administration. The United Nations website (2019) also reports the existence of journalists unlawfully imprisoned, while others live in exile abroad.

The impoverishment of the local population, resulting from a multisectoral crisis, prompted the government to implement a food redistribution program known as CLAP (*Local Committees for Supply and Production*), which, according to Aponte (2020), reached 95% of Venezuelan households at least once, with 11% of them considering it their main source of food supply.

These committees, however, were insufficient to prevent the worsening of the country's economic crisis, which led to the escalation of political tensions between the Executive and Legislative branches. The National Assembly, then dominated by opposition forces, under the pretext of redemocratizing and economically restoring the nation, appointed Juan Guaidó, the head of the Assembly, as the country's executive leader. The justification was that Nicolás Maduro had abused his power by interfering in electoral processes to his own advantage, and that the National Electoral Council, at Maduro's request, had altered the rules for the upcoming legislative elections shortly after results indicated that the opposition had secured a majority of seats (Corrales, 2020).

This event also affected the country's foreign relations, as Latin America was, at the time, undergoing what Demier (2016) termed a "conservative wave," characterized by a large number of right-wing presidents across the continent. This same right-wing movement encouraged the Lima Group—a bloc opposing the Maduro government—to recognize Guaidó as the legitimate executive leader of the Caribbean nation, thereby generating major

challenges in Venezuela's foreign policy, even though the Chavista successor remained the *de facto* president of the country (Barros; Gonçalvez, 2019).

According to Armanian (2019), Guaidó was a US-manufactured opposition leader, created to destabilize Nicolás Maduro's government and enable the Anglo-Saxon nation to reassert its influence over the Hispanic-American country. From this perspective, the US pro-democracy discourse functioned merely as a façade to advance its own geopolitical interests. Yustiz (2019), however, interprets Guaidó as an individual trained over the long term by the United States to incite a coup d'état without resorting to armed conflict.

Nevertheless, two events favored President Maduro. The first was the 2020 parliamentary election, in which the government regained a majority in the National Assembly, easing tensions between the Executive and Legislative branches. The second was the reconfiguration of political dynamics across the American continent, marked by a decline in the number of presidents opposing Maduro's administration in Latin America.

Paths and detours in the reterritorialization of Venezuelan immigrants in Salvador

Social, political, and economic problems have triggered a Venezuelan exodus, resulting in the emigration of more than seven million people, primarily to other Latin American countries (Plataforma […], 2022). Among these, the National Migration Registration System (Sismigra, 2022) recorded 766 Venezuelans registered in Salvador as of October 2022.

In the present study, interviews were conducted with ten Venezuelans who currently reside or have resided in Salvador—seven men and three women—who arrived in the Bahian capital between 2017 and 2021. These participants were, therefore, able to describe their processes of deterritorialization from Venezuela to Salvador. The interviewees were adults aged between 23 and 40 years, including seven temporary immigrants, two with permanent visas, and one with refugee status. In their home country, they worked in various professions: one engineer, two lawyers, one teacher, an IT technician, two small business owners, and four students. Upon arriving in Salvador, due to multiple factors, they began to engage in occupations that did not necessarily correspond to their academic or professional training. Their current or recent occupations in Salvador include one engineer, one teacher, one barber, one graphic designer, one painter, two call center attendants, one travel agent, and two university students.

There was consensus among the interviewees that economic issues were the main driving forces behind migration. Underemployment and the decline in purchasing power, resulting from inflationary pressures, were decisive factors leading them to leave their home country. This is illustrated in the testimony of Nicanor Domínguez (a teacher born in Coro, fictitious name), who stated:

> The problem with food, with money… The economy changed a lot… A reality you couldn't understand… You earned a salary, and that salary was only enough to buy one week's worth of food. It was very difficult, right? You tried to buy other things with what was left, tried to feed yourself for the rest of the month because it was an economy with very high inflation, so you felt very affected.

Another commonly cited reason for emigration was the collapse of public services, including the deterioration of the healthcare system, public security, and electricity, the decay of universities, and the instability of internet service. An example of the degradation of the service sector, compounded by consumers' reduced purchasing power, is expressed in the words of Anita González (an engineer born in Maracaibo, fictitious name):

> Transportation, gasoline, tools, food, medicine… my goodness! There was no medicine at the time—now they say there is, but in dollars, and no one has dollars. It's still madness.

The migrant's territorial rupture is also linked to the weakening of family and friendship bonds—abrupt changes that, by their very nature, are conflictual and emotionally draining, potentially leading to psychological distress. The slow process of re-rooting enables a renewed sense of belonging, which Marandola Jr. and Gallo (2010) refer to as the "migrant's territory"—a concept that does not exist in isolation but is constructed through the new social ties established beyond one's place of origin.

Marandola Jr. and Gallo (2010) offer a series of reflections on this condition, emphasizing the need to view migrants as human beings rather than mere data points within state bureaucracy or international organizations. For these authors, "being a migrant" involves both territorial and existential dimensions. They argue that territoriality constitutes a fundamental aspect of being, and that the ability to maintain control—however symbolic—over one's territory enables the continuation of existence. The uprooting caused by migration can, therefore, generate existential crises as individuals confront new and often dissonant realities in a foreign nation.

These new bonds are not formed solely with "strangers," but also through the social networks that emerge once an individual begins to inhabit a new territory. The relationships between the foreigners and the locals, along with the continued connection to previous social ties, create what can be understood as a social network. From a territorial perspective, this phenomenon is defined as a "network-territory" (Haesbaert, 2000), which may help mitigate the traumatic effects of the ruptures brought about by migration. Nevertheless, it is important to note that those considered "natives" and those regarded as "outsiders" do not experience or make use of the territory in the same way.

Understanding territory as a space defined by established borders raises questions of exclusivity in appropriation and use, distinguishing between "us" (the included, those who belong to the territory) and "others" (those who do not belong to it). Within this perspective, the territorial State can be accurately characterized as a bounded domain of appropriation, use, management, and control over portions of space—constituting a political and State apparatus whose access requires authorization from an instituted authority, centralized in the figure of the State itself (Coelho Neto, 2013, p. 25).

From this standpoint, territory is delimited by borders and is neither used nor appropriated equally by all. Those who do not belong to a given territory may be excluded from its use or appropriation, as not everyone is permitted to cross national boundaries—access being subject to the prevailing political interests and legal frameworks.

Overall, despite the multiple challenges faced by immigrants, Salvador has proven to be a city of new beginnings for the research participants. However, this process does not unfold uniformly among individuals, as each migrant possesses distinct resources for subsistence. This dynamic is directly linked to Bourdieu's (2012) concept of *field*, understood as a space of struggles, agents, and representations—in other words, a domain inherently tied to territory.

In migrating to Salvador, Venezuelans also had to adapt to a new behavioral pattern, referred to as *habitus* (Bourdieu, 2015). From a territorial perspective, *habitus* represents territoriality itself, encompassing behavioral and emotional patterns associated with a given space (Soja, 1971). When an individual migrates, this *habitus* transforms into what Oliveira and Kulaitis (2017) term the *migrant habitus*, thereby constituting a process of de-reterritorialization.

Bourdieu (2000) offers a series of theoretical contributions to the study of international migration, including the concept of *habitus* (also referred to as social practices), which

encompasses the behavioral patterns of a particular group that are followed by its members, often unconsciously. While the way these social practices manifest varies from person to person, it is evident that migrants—especially recent ones—tend to display a set of *habitus* distinct from those of the local population. However, such patterns can be modified in response to new social demands to which individuals are exposed.

Processes of reterritorialization are directly linked to those of deterritorialization. Individuals who were able to better plan their departure also possessed a greater degree of *mobility capital*—that is, the resources and strategies necessary to sustain themselves abroad (Oliveira; Kulaitis, 2017). These migrants managed to save more money, had stronger social networks, were familiar with the main characteristics of Salvador, arrived at a time when crossing international borders was easier (prior to the closure and/or overcrowding of service posts), and had better employment prospects upon arrival.

Mobility capital refers to the set of conditions that enable certain individuals to access and remain abroad with a relative degree of quality of life. It is closely tied to local migration policies as well as to the migrants' cultural capital. Some countries implement policies that facilitate the entry of immigrants interested in specific sectors of the labor market, while others ease bureaucratic requirements for those seeking to enroll in higher education institutions.

As noted by Sayad (1998), migrants face numerous challenges upon arriving in a foreign country. Brazil has historically been characterized as a nation of *reception* rather than *integration*, since even *Operação Acolhida*—a federal program created to assist Venezuelans—focused primarily on bureaucratic regularization and, in some cases, provided shelter in refugee camps and transportation out of Roraima (although none of our interviewees benefited from the latter service). As Sayad (1998) also emphasizes, immigrants arriving in conditions of vulnerability require not only legal regularization but also access to employment and housing. Despite these difficulties, some of the most vulnerable immigrants reported finding it easier to access public services—particularly healthcare—in Brazil compared to Venezuela or other South American countries where they had previously lived before arriving in Bahia. This is exemplified by the testimony of Raul Riviera (a barber born in Guajara, pseudonym), who recounted undergoing surgery for a hernia caused by a traumatic injury during an attempted robbery in his home country. Despite delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the procedure was successfully completed:

> When I traveled here to Brazil, before the pandemic, I started feeling pain here. Then they told me I needed another surgery because I had a hernia here, and that kind of surgery is very difficult to get in Venezuela, you know? But during the pandemic, I couldn't do it because all surgeries were suspended. So, I only managed to do it later, you know, and it's been two months since my operation.

Some immigrants reported a deterioration in their mental health due to the processes of deterritorialization they faced in Venezuela and/or other Latin American countries. However, upon settling in Salvador, they stated that their psychological well-being improved, particularly once they achieved relatively stable housing and income.

Although they considered that their socioeconomic conditions in the Bahian capital were better, some reported difficulties such as discrimination in the labor market due to xenophobia or linguistic prejudice. Many mentioned that some employers assume Venezuelans do not speak Portuguese. Even those who had already demonstrated proficiency in the language reported being marginalized because of their accent. This issue of xenophobia and linguistic prejudice in the labor market can be exemplified in the statement of Josias Jordán (a fictitious name, an engineer from Maracaibo), who revealed:

> If you don't have a recommendation from someone here, nobody knows you, right? You might be good, but still, you have to build that network—it's complicated. Because if you take your résumé, they'll say, 'Oh, this guy doesn't speak Portuguese,' and then it gets difficult, you know?

Oliveira and Kulaitis (2015) emphasize that not even a high level of mobility capital or prior knowledge of the local culture guarantees employability. Entering the labor market is not merely a matter of academic qualifications or acting according to local social conventions; it also involves identity markers that may either facilitate or hinder an individual's integration into a professional occupation—such as ethnic, cultural, and even nationality-related factors—since being a foreigner can subject immigrants to prejudice.

Another challenge regarding access to the labor market in Salvador concerns the need for personal recommendations within companies to secure a job, which poses an obstacle for those lacking a network of contacts—what Bourdieu (2000) termed *social capital*—with influential individuals in the private sector. Most immigrants who arrived in Salvador without a guaranteed job had to create small businesses as a means of generating income to support themselves and, in some cases, their families who remained in Venezuela or elsewhere in the diaspora. The services provided through these Venezuelan microenterprises were primarily

manual, particularly in residential maintenance and computer-related activities, including graphic design and programming.

Table 1 presents an overview of the occupations held by Venezuelans in the city of Salvador, Bahia. Although the data reveal a diversity of activities and job types, there is a strong presence of students (29%) and a significant proportion of workers in occupations that do not require higher education—such as vendors, domestic workers, construction workers, mechanics, cooks, and butlers—which together account for over 30%.

Among those formally employed by companies, the profile varies depending on the educational level required for each position. Jobs demanding primary, secondary, or technical education tend to involve manual labor, mainly in construction, kitchens, and beauty salons. Among positions requiring higher education, engineering and technology stand out, often overlapping in their areas of expertise.

There is a notable difference in labor market integration by sector. Manual labor and technology-related services exhibited faster employment rates, while engineering fields with a strong technological component showed the highest employability. Other sectors—particularly law—faced greater difficulties in professional placement, either due to bureaucratic constraints or the scarcity of available positions in Salvador and its surrounding areas.

Table 1 – Occupations held by Venezuelans in Salvador between January 2018 and August 2022

OCCUPATION	NUMBERS	
	ABSOLUTES	RELATED
Students	119	29%
Vendors, shopkeepers, and related workers	44	11%
Unemployed	43	11%
Domestic workers	37	9%
Minors	25	6%
Construction workers without higher education	22	5%
Mechanics, metalworkers, and related trades	22	5%
Cooks, butlers, housekeepers, and related workers	17	4%
Artists, musicians, and related professionals	16	4%
Construction professionals with higher education	15	4%
Teachers and related professionals	15	4%
Decorators, seamstresses, tailors, and related trades	12	3%
Beauty professionals without higher education	12	3%
Administrators, executive staff, and related professionals	12	3%
Total	**409**	**100%**

Source: National Migratory Registration System – SISMIGRA, 2022. Prepared by the authors.

It was also observed that some Venezuelans in Salvador received assistance from fellow compatriots, particularly regarding bureaucratic and academic matters. Similarly, one interviewee reported providing such guidance to his fellow citizens. As stated by Daniel Santander (a teacher born in Mérida, fictitious name), his relationship with the Venezuelan community involves offering support and sharing information, including guidance related to educational opportunities. Most of the Venezuelans he and his wife know in the city seek this type of assistance, especially concerning bureaucratic procedures.

Those who arrive in Brazil without the support of friends, relatives, or acquaintances do not find state assistance capable of ensuring the socioeconomic conditions necessary for

their permanence in the country. This lack of support renders individuals with low mobility capital particularly vulnerable. In employment matters, for instance, although foreign workers may obtain a work permit, there is no guarantee that it will be formally registered for those who arrived in more precarious circumstances.

On the other hand, as emphasized by Sayad (1998), migrants should not be reduced to mere labor in the workforce, since other critical factors—such as access to housing—must also be considered. Those who arrived in Salvador without third-party assistance had to rent accommodations, often without a stable source of income to sustain their tenancy, exposing them to the risk of eviction.

The concept of *hexis*, understood by Bourdieu (2015) as one's very presence, tends to be positively reflected among the research participants in Salvador, particularly in their interactions with Brazilians. In general, most reported friendly and welcoming experiences with local residents, except within the labor market.

Despite the differences between Salvador and their cities of origin—or other cities where they had previously lived—immigrants experience the city with the same challenges faced by Brazilian citizens, compounded by the need to adapt to a new urban dynamic. As foreigners, they undergo a process of reterritorialization.

Future plans are directly linked to the expectation of whether or not they will remain in Brazil. Those who intend to stay in Portuguese America have already formed new family units, with some having or planning to have children. Another factor influencing the decision to remain in Bahia is job stability: individuals who have achieved relatively secure employment tend to plan to stay in their host country. Some even wish to bring family members—both those still in Venezuela and those dispersed throughout the diaspora—to settle in Salvador as their new home.

There are also those who remain uncertain about whether to stay in Brazil or return to Venezuela, as this decision is closely tied to the political and economic conditions of their home country—that is, the concrete feasibility of reestablishing themselves there. This ambivalence regarding the desire to return, even without a clear expectation of when such a return might occur, is identified by Sayad (1998) as the migrant's primary existential dilemma.

Final considerations

The recent history of Venezuela has been marked by a state-controlled economy centered on the oil market and, politically, by numerous coup attempts since the country's redemocratization in 1958. With the collapse of oil prices in the 2010s, the Bolivarian nation entered a severe economic crisis, resulting in instability both in its domestic and foreign affairs. This scenario deteriorated the living conditions of a significant portion of the Venezuelan population, prompting the emigration of millions of citizens to other countries.

The situation faced by Venezuela triggered a broad process of deterritorialization, leading the immigrants who participated in this study to experience a migratory movement. It is worth noting that their arrival in Salvador did not occur uniformly, as there was heterogeneity in their respective mobility capitals.

Their arrival was shaped by diverse social networks, which, in turn, translated into distinct forms of social capital. Those with stronger social capital were able to organize a networked territory, transforming this potential into a more stable mobility capital. The networks that facilitated their arrival in Salvador were mainly composed of friends and religious organizations.

Upon settling in Salvador, the immigrants underwent a new territorial experience known as reterritorialization. These reterritorializations were marked by varying degrees of mobility capital: those who had prior job referrals were able to enter the formal labor market more quickly, whereas others with less influential networks had to spend more time in precarious or informal employment. A shared sentiment among the participants during this reterritorialization process was *saudade*[3]—a deep longing for their homeland, particularly for friends and family.

This longing, combined with employment conditions and the formation of new family units, gave rise to three main categories of plans regarding whether to remain in Brazil: (i) those who wish to return as soon as possible, once they believe their home country can offer acceptable living conditions—mostly single individuals with less stable employment situations in Brazil; (ii) those who keep the option of returning open, but not as a priority—generally immigrants in stable unions who express some dissatisfaction with their income in Portuguese America; and (iii) those who have decided to remain in the country—predominantly married individuals with more consolidated professional careers.

[3] A melancholic feeling caused by separation from a person, thing, or place, or by the absence of pleasurable experiences already enjoyed.

However, these plans may change according to the evolving political and social contexts of both Brazil and Venezuela, as well as the individual life circumstances of each subject. It is also important to emphasize that immigration is a dynamic process, requiring constant reassessment of its configurations.

Studies on Venezuelan immigration in Salvador do not conclude with the findings of this research, as migration is an ongoing and complex phenomenon, deeply influenced by political, social, historical, economic, and geographic contexts at both national and international scales.

REFERENCES

AGUIRRE, D. A. F. **Análise histórica de democracia venezuelana**: de Punto Fijo ao bolivarianismo. 2020. 163 f. Thesis (Doctorate in History) - Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Goiás, Goiânia, 2020.

ALÓ, PRESIDENTE: 300 y contando. **YVKE Mundial**, 24 May 2008. Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20080807052030/http://www.radiomundial.com.ve/yvke/noticia.php?6067. Accessed in: 5 Aug. 2022.

ÁLVAREZ, A. E. Venezuela: ¿la revolución pierde su encanto? **Revista de Ciencia Política**, Santiago, v. 28, n. 1, p. 405-432, 2008. DOI: 10.4067/S0718-090X2008000100020. Available at: https://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0718-090X2008000100020. Accessed in: 15 Jul. 2025.

APONTE, C. **Los Comités Locales de Abastecimiento y Producción CLAP y la Gran Corrupción del siglo XXI**: los nuevos programas prioritarios del sector social en Venezuela, 2016-2019. Observatorio de programas sociales. Transparencia Venezuela, Caracas, 2020.

ARMANIAN, N. Las nueve raziones de EEUU declarar la guerra a Venezuela. **Opinión**, 4 fev. 2019. Available at: https://blogs.publico.es/puntoyseguido/5517/las-nueve-razones-de-eeuu-en-declarar-la-guerra-a-venezuela/. Accessed in: 5 Aug. 2022.

AZNÁREZ, J. J. La presidenta del Supremo venezolano dimite y da por enterrado el Estado de derecho. **El País**, 24 aug. 1999. Available at: https://elpais.com/diario/1999/08/25/internacional/935532004_850215.html. Accessed in: 05 Aug. 2022.

BANCO CENTRAL DA VENEZUELA. **Exportaciones de bienes y servicios según sectores (millones de U$$)**. Serie anual 1997-2018. 2019a. Available at: https://www.bcv.org.ve/estadisticas/comercio-exterior. Accessed in: 10 Jan. 2023.

BANCO CENTRAL DA VENEZUELA. **Importaciones de bienes y servicios según sectores (millones de U$$)**. Serie anual 1997-2018. 2019b. Available at: https://www.bcv.org.ve/estadisticas/comercio-exterior. Accessed in: 10 Jan. 2023.

BANCO CENTRAL DA VENEZUELA. **Indice Nacional de Precios al Consumidor**. Serie desde diciembre de 2007 (Base diciembre 2007 = 100). 2022. Available at: https://www.bcv.org.ve/estadisticas/consumidor. Accessed in: 01 Dec. 2022.

BANCO CENTRAL DA VENEZUELA. **Índices integrados de volumen y valor de las ventas comerciales**. 2019c. Available at: http://www.bcv.org.ve/estadisticas/comercio. Accessed in: 25 Sep. 2022.

BARROS, P. S.; GONÇALVES, J. S. B. Fragmentação da governança regional: o Grupo de Lima e a política externa brasileira (2017-2019). **Mundo e Desenvolvimento**, Rio Claro, p. 6-39, 2019. Available at: https://ieei.unesp.br/index.php/IEEI_MundoeDesenvolvimento/article/view/50. Accessed in: 15 Jul. 2025.

BOURDIEU, P. **Esquisse d"une theorie de la pratique**. Paris: Du Seuil, 2000.

BOURDIEU, P. **O poder simbólico**. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2012.

BOURDIEU, P. **Sociologie Général**: les concepts élémentaites de la sociologie. 1. ed. Paris: Seul, 2015.

BRICEÑO-LEÓN, R. A violência na Venezuela: renda petroleira e crise política. **Ciência & Saúde Coletiva**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 11, n. 1, p. 1223-1253, 2006. DOI: 10.1590/S1413-81232006000500012. Available at: https://www.scielo.br/j/csc/a/VGv4VyB5WFcXYXKn3FX8wtw/?format=html&lang=pt. Accessed in: 15 Jul. 2025.

CAMPBELL. D. American Navy 'helped Venezuela coup'. **The Guardian,** 29 apr. 2002 2022. Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,706802,00.html: Accessed in: 05 Aug. 2022.

CHÁVEZ critica EEUU y pide apoyo a China. **El País**, 12 oct. 1999a. Available at: https://elpais.com/diario/1999/10/13/internacional/939765609_850215.html. Accessed in: 05 Aug. 2022.

CHAVEZ to shut down opposition TV. **BBC News**, 29 dec. 2006. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6215815.stm. Accessed in: 05 Aug. 2022.

COELHO NETO, A. S. Componentes definidores do conceito de território: a multiescalaridade, a multidimensionalidade e a relação espaço-poder. **GEOgraphia**, Niterói (UFF), v. 15, p. 23-52, 2013. DOI: 10.22409/GEOgraphia2013.v15i29.a13652. Available at: https://periodicos.uff.br/geographia/article/view/13652. Accessed in: 15 Jul. 2025.

CORRALES, J. Democratic backsliding through electoral irregularities: The case of Venezuela. **European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies**, Amsterdam, v. 109, n. 1, p. 41-65, 2020. DOI: 10.32992/erlacs.10598

DEMIER, F. **A onda conservadora**. Rio de Janeiro: Mauad, 2016.

EL ESTADO venezolano tomará el control de la mayor mina de oro del país. **El País**, 5 nov. 2008. Available at: https://elpais.com/internacional/2008/11/06/actualidad/1225926004_850215.html. Acesso em 14 Jul. 2023.

EL UNIVERSAL. 2006. Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20060217112323/http://buscador.eluniversal.com/2002/12/01/apo_art_01106EE.shtml. Accessed in: 05 Aug. 2022.

FEITOSA, N. A. Militarismo na Venezuela. **Revista Brasileira de Inteligência**, Brasília, n. 10, p. 83-92, 2015. DOI: 10.58960/rbi.2015.10.129. Available at: https://rbi.abin.gov.br/RBI/article/view/129. Acesso em 14 Jul. 2023.

FRANCISCO, C. A. **Democracia, comunismo e reformas na Venezuela de Rómulo Betancourt (1940-1964)**. 2007. 143 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em História) – Faculdade de História, Direito e Serviço Social, Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho, Franca, 2007.

FRÍAS, H. C. Fragmento de conversación durante su cautiverio. **Analotica**, 14 abr. 2002. Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20081225021143/http://www.analitica.com/bitblio/hchavez/cautiverio.asp. Accessed in: 05 Aug. 2022.

GREGORY, D. *et al*. **The Dictionary of Human Geography**. 5. ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2009.

HAESBAERT, R. Desterritorialização: entre as redes e os aglomerados de exclusão. *In*: CASTRO, I. E. *et al*. **Geografia**: conceitos e temas. 2. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2000.

HASBAERT, Rogério. **O mito da desterritorialização**: do "fim dos territórios" à multiterritorialidade. 6. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2011.

HERNANDEZ, C. Chávez suspende el mercado de divisas para frenar la fuga de capitales de Venezuela. **El País**, 2003. Available at: https://elpais.com/diario/2003/01/23/internacional/1043276408_850215.html. Accessed in: 5 Aug. 2022.

JÁCOME, F. Los militares en la política y la economía de Venezuela. **Revista Nueva Sociedad**, Buenos Aires, n. 274, 2018, p. 121. Available at: https://nuso.org/articulo/los-militares-en-la-politica-y-la-economia-de-venezuela/. Accessed in: 5 Aug. 2022.

JARDIM, C. Disputa política na imprensa incentiva polarização na Venezuela. **BBC Brasil**, 30 jan. 2009. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/reporterbbc/story/2009/01/090129_venezuela_polarizacao. Accessed in: 15 Jul. 2025.

JONES, B. **Hugo Chávez**: da origem simples ao ideário da revolução permanente. Tradução de Rodrigo Castro. São Paulo: Novo Conceito Editora, 2008.

LEGISCOMEX. **Gobierno de Chávez oficializa adquisición forzosa de cinco empresas lácteas**. 2010. Available at: https://www.legiscomex.com/Documentos/NOV-11-10-7NOT. Accessed in: 13 May 2023.

MADURO, N. **Carta a la humanidad**. Nova York: Assembleia das Nações Unidas, 2022.

MARANDOLA JUNIOR, E.; GALLO, P. M. D. Ser migrante: implicações territoriais e existências da migração. **Revista Brasileira de Estudos Populacionais**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 27, n. 2, p. 407-424, 2010. DOI: 10.1590/S0102-30982010000200010. Available at: https://www.scielo.br/j/rbepop/a/rzmFzZWXRMzVHZhFGWSR6wn/abstract/?lang=pt. Accessed in: 5 Aug. 2022.

OLIVEIRA, M.; KULAITIS, F. Habitus imigrante e capital da mobilidade: a teoria de Pierre Bourdieu aplicada aos estudos migratórios. **Mediações**, Londrina, v. 22, n. 7, p. 15-47, 2017. DOI: 10.5433/2176-6665.2017v22n1p15. Available at: https://ojs.uel.br/revistas/uel/index.php/mediacoes/article/view/29616. Accessed in: 15 Jan. 2025.

OLIVEIRA, R. P. Venezuela e os antecedentes de uma Política Externa ativa: petróleo e democracia como elementos da Política Externa do regime de Punto Fijo. **Revista Internacional de Unificação**, Foz do Iguaçu, v. 1, n. 2, p. 132-140, 2013. Available at: https://revistas.unila.edu.br/IMEA-UNILA/article/view/192. Accessed in: 15 Jan. 2025.

ORGANIZAÇÃO DOS PAÍSES EXPORTADORES DE PETRÓLEO (OPEP). Annual Statistical Bulletin 2025. **OPEC Annual Statistical Bulletin**, 2022. Available at: https://asb.opec.org/ASB_Charts.html?chapter=227. Acesso em 31 Jan. 2023.

PLATAFORMA de coordenação intergerencial para refugiados e migrantes para a Venezuela. 2022. Available at: https://www.r4v.info/es/refugiadosymigrantes. Accessed in: 3 Feb. 2023.

RICUPERO, R. Chávez (1954-2013) no seu contexto. **Passagens**, Fortaleza, v. 21, n. 4, 2013. Available at: https://ieei.unesp.br/portal/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Politica-Externa-21-04-Rubens-Ricupero.pdf. Accessed in: 13 May 2023.

RODRIGUES, N. I. **Entre a distribuição de recursos e a articulação política:** um estudo acerca da dualidade funcional dos conselhos comunais no período de 2007 a 2012. 2012. 85 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Ciências Sociais) – Universidade Estadual Paulista "Júlio Mesquita Filho", Araraquara, 2012.

SANCHÉZ, I. D. J. **Los Golpes de Castro hasta Caldera**. Caracas: Centralca, 1996.

SANTANNA, M. J. Processo democrático na Venezuela e as tentativas de violação da sua soberania. **Revista Humanidades em Diálogo**, v. 12, n. 1, p. 114-126, 2023. DOI: 10.11606/issn.1982-7547.hd.2022.192111. Available at: https://revistas.usp.br/humanidades/article/view/192111. Accessed in: 15 Jan. 2025.

SAYAD, A. **A imigração ou os Paradoxos da Alteridade**. São Paulo: EDUSP, 1998.

SISTEMA DE REGISTRO NACIONAL MIGRATÓRIO (SISMIGRA). Departamento da Polícia Federal. **Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública/OBMigra**, 2022. Available at: https://portaldeimigracao.mj.gov.br/pt/dados/microdados/1733-obmigra/dados/microdados/401205-sismigra. Acesso em 31 Jan. 2023.

SOJA, E. W. **The political Organization of Space**. Washington: AAG Comission on College Geography, 1971.

SORRE, M. Migrações e mobilidade do ecúmeno. *In*: MEGALLE, J. (org.). **Max Sorre**. São Paulo: Ática, 1984. p. 124-139.

UN HUMAN RIGHTS report on Venezuela urges immediate measures to halt and remedy grave rights violations. **United Nations**, 4 jul. 2019. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/07/un-human-rights-report-venezuela-urges-immediate-measures-halt-and-remedy. Accessed in: 15 Jul. 2025.

URBANEJA, D. B. **La política venezolana desde 1958 hasta nuestros días**. Caracas: Fundación Centro Gumilla; Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, 2007.

VENEZUELA acuerda compra de cementeras francesa y suiza, pero no de la mexicana. **Opiníon**, 18 ago. 2008. Available at:

https://www.opinion.com.bo/articulo/economi%C2%ADa/venezuela-acuerda-compra cementeras-francesa-suiza-mexicana/20080818202857289153.html. Accessed in: 13 May 2023.

VENEZUELA: for to end violence. **Socialist International**, 17 feb. 2014. Available at: https://www.socialistinternational.org/news/press-releases/venezuela-for-an-end-to-the violence-899/. Accessed in: 20 Apr. 2023.

YUSTIZ, O. R.; RANGEL, O. Guaidó fue entrenado por EEUU en técnicas para desestabilizar gobiernos. **El Ciudadano**, 2019. Available at: https://www.elciudadano.com/politica/guaido-fue-entrenado-por-eeuu-en-tecnicas-para-desestabilizar-gobiernos/02/06/. Accessed in: 20 Apr. 2023.

CRediT Author Statement

- **Acknowledgements**: I thank God, my mother, my grandfather, and all those who contributed to my education—from primary school to postgraduate studies—from cleaning staff to my professors, with special acknowledgment to Agripino Souza Coelho Neto, my master's advisor. I also extend my gratitude to FAPESB for funding this research.
- **Funding**: Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado da Bahia (FAPESB).
- **Conflicts of interest**: None.
- **Ethical approval**: Research approved by the Ethics Committee of the Universidade do Estado da Bahia.
- **Data and material availability**: This work is derived from the master's dissertation entitled "*Processos de Des-reterritorialização de Imigrantes Venezuelanos em Salvador*," authored by Emanuel Gonzaga dos Santos, available on the *Plataforma Saber Aberto*. Available at: https://saberaberto.uneb.br/items/0253e6d0-7262-4fbd-8bab-93f63929e084.
- **Authors' contributions**: Emanuel Gonzaga dos Santos: Interviews and writing of the text. Agripino Souza Coelho Neto: Guidance, review and co-writing of the text.

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação
Proofreading, formatting, standardization and translation