Historicizing Mobility: Coyoterismo in the Indigenous Ecuadorian Migration Industry

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smuggling, we articulate a counternarrative to that of criminalization prevalent in transnational debates on national security, border controls, and irregularized migration.

In the sections that follow, we provide an overview of the critique of migration studies vis-à-vis indigenous mobility, followed by a summary of the Ecuadorian migration context. We then provide a history of mobility practices predating the current indigenous migration patterns, primarily through the testimonies of indigenous and mestizo[2] people from the Ecuadorian Southern Highlands. Further, we outline contemporary and current trends in smuggling practices. We close with a series of conclusions and policy recommendations.

Indigenous Mobilities

Mobility within the context of globalization creates a "new order of instability in the production of modern subjects" (Torres and Carrasco 2008, 13). Indigenous Cañaris from Ecuador's Southern Highlands, often wearing the wide-brimmed white hats associated with agrarian life, are now commonly seen in the driver's seats of new pick-up trucks transporting goods and people through town. New consumption practices and entrepreneurial activities, such as investments in small businesses and vehicles, challenge long-standing forms of economic and social inequalities sustained by middle-class and professional mestizos. Another entrepreneurial activity is migration.

Migration is not new among indigenous communities. Cañaris have been on the move for generations. Regional trade precedes the arrival of the Spaniards (Murra, Wachtel, and Revel 1986). Cañari history has also included short-term migration to urban areas and the coast, as well as between haciendas in the highlands (Baraona 1965; Clark and Becker 2007). For most of the twentieth century, these patterns of circulation were interspersed with periods of stasis, as legislation often bound rural people to labor relationships with landed oligarchs (known in Spanish as latifundistas).

Migratory practices in Ecuador have been described as constituting a regional migration industry (Kyle and Goldstein 2011; Ruíz and Álvarez Velasco 2016).Yet scholars have paid less attention to the importance of indigeneity as a form of social capital that indigenous people have mobilized within their social networks and intermediary organizations in the context of irregularized migration (Stone-Cadena 2016). Migration industry scholars have analyzed the institutions involved in migration control, such as legalization (Hernández-León 2013), detention (Hernández-León 2013; Nyberg Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen 2013), and deportation (Berg and Tamagno 2013), alongside the vast social and economic networks of migration facilitators and mobility management. Indeed, historical and regional social networks, economic practices, and informal networks within the region are extremely important in the growth of international migration from the region. Yet our goal here is to demonstrate how identity, as discussed by indigenous migrants and migration merchants, shapes opportunities and strategies in the practice of coyoterismo.

A growing body of literature on indigenous migration looks at different aspects of the migration experience: from its significance in the destination countries (Andolina, Laurie, and R

the Petroleum Exporting Countries [OPEC] 2015). Earnings from oil are followed by remittances from immigrants abroad, estimated at US$2.3 billion in 2015 (Banco Central del Ecuador 2015).

International migration from Ecuador is not new, but the dynamics have changed significantly since its early inception in the late 1960s. Prior to the 1960s, overseas migration was minimal. Scholars identify the demise of the regionally based Panama hat export industry in the mid-1960s in the highland southern provinces of Azuay and Cañar as leading to the pioneering migratory movements to the United States (Kyle 2000; Gallegos and Ramírez 2005). These flows predominantly involved young male merchants who migrated to the United States by relying on the connections they had made through their participation in the hat trade. Most of them migrated without authorization and found employment in restaurants as busboys or dishwashers, while a smaller number worked in factories or construction sites in cities such as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, and Minneapolis (Jokisch 2014). By the 1970s, the provinces of Azuay and Cañar, and Ecuador's third-largest city, Cuenca, constituted the core migrant-sending zone in Ecuador. The main sending communities relied on subsistence agriculture and maintained the tradition of women weaving Panama hats for export to New York, and male seasonal migration to the coast.

The global petroleum crisis during the 1980s prompted another spike of Ecuadorian migration as rural laborers struggling to subsist in a weakened economy traveled to the United States. Yet a more dramatic crisis occurred in late Cuenca, constitutedpan<ActualText<FEFF0ermanyBDC (R)TjEMC (amírez 2005).)Tj/Span<

than 7,500 Ecuadorians have been deported from the United States between January 2012 and June 2016 (Directorate of Attention and Protection of Ecuadoreans Abroad [DAPE] 2016). Furthermore, while the last decade has seen some improvements in Ecuador's economy and living conditions, most advances are concentrated in urban areas (INEC 2013). Poverty remains high in regions with high concentrations of rural and indigenous populations (Chiriboga 2013). National unemployment is also high, and approximately half of the economically active population works in the informal economy (INEC 2013). Furthermore, the open-border migration policies put into place by former president Correa allowed migrants from countries from regions as distant as West Africa and as close as the Caribbean to enter Ecuador without a visa. This led Ecuador to become an important springboard from which transcontinental migrants could embark on the journeys that would eventually take them north. In the aftermath of several events involving confrontations between migrants in transit and the state forces,[4] the Ecuadorian parliament signed the Law of Human Mobility on January 2017, which sought to regulate the entry of foreigners into the country. The law implements, among practices such as visa restrictions, the detention and removal through deportation of those who fail to enter the country legally (Ruíz and Álvarez Velasco 2016).

The leading destination among migrants leaving Ecuador is the United States. The route, which includes crossing at least seven national borders, is traversed by land or a combination of air and land routes. Most travel from Ecuador to Honduras; from there, they travel by land to the Mexico-U.S. corridor. Another route from Ecuador is to Colombia or Peru to Panama, from which migrants travel into Mexico and on to the United States. Historically, the majority of these migratory flows have involved migration facilitators in the formal and informal markets, ranging from travel agencies to coyotes (Kyle and Siracusa 2005). While Ecuadorian investigative journalism has remained the primary source of information on the facilitation of irregularized migration from or through the country, there is a vacuum of empirically informed scholarly work on the operation of smuggling groups, as knowledge of their contexts and processes remains scant.

Historicizing Coyoterismo

To explore the dynamics of irregularized migration and coyoterismo in Ecuador, we turned to ethnography as our main data collection strategy. Following Marcus's example of multisited ethnography and "following" people, things, metaphors, stories, relational conflicts (Marcus 1995), our field methods focused on the spatial contexts of social relations to understand the dynamics of coyoterismo.

There are several considerations for "following" migrants "en route" or "capturing" the clandestine dynamics of circumventing border control. The waiting times and pauses during migration allowed us to capture the complexity of movement (Urry 2007; Auyero 2012). Apart from finding key ethnographic sites, we

identified places and moments of pause along the migration process to build trust, develop deep conversations, and carry out in situ observations. The first stage of this study took place between June 2007 and August 2009, and was carried out in the cantón (province) of Tambo and the nearby province of Cañar. A total of twenty-seven structured interviews with indigenous families who had at

However, not just anyone could become a coyote. In the early period of migration, only a few mestizo families occupied the lucrative positions of informal moneylenders and coyotes, relying on their connections in the United States

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refers the migrant to a reputable chulquero, usually local lawyers or business owners. By doing so, the social network of irregularized migration facilitation is extended to include the mainstream economy through document forgers, travel agents, airline staff, consular officials, and law enforcement to name a few.

In this social network, chulqueros are most often seen as a burden for migrants, and not necessarily as a trustworthy figure. To lend families or individuals money for migration journeys, chulqueros demand that they sign apocryphal contracts or surrender property titles. These documents, while in many cases illegal, constitute effective intimidation tools. In fact, references to chulquero's frauds and abuse of power were more common than those pertaining to coyotes in our sample. As Andrés, a 29-year-old migrant deported from the United States stated:

> The problem is not the coyotes. With certain exceptions, they usually keep their word and they guide people to reach the U.S. Otherwise, coyoterismo would have ended. Do you think we will still be trusting an activity that is destined to fail? Of course not. As migrants, we are not dumb. Accidents do happen on the route, but people arrive. Coyotes give us three attempts. Chulqueros are the problem: they abuse us and steal our properties, while threatening us.

However, while en route, coyotes in our study did engage in abusive behavior, which often went unpunished. This happens not only because migrants fear reprisal, but because of other social mechanisms put into place to reduce the likelihood of conflict through mediation. As one government prosecutor stated:

> People rarely report coyotes. When they do, usually the chulquero or someone else who works with the coyote negotiates with migrants' families and charges are not filed. It is very difficult for us to seek justice in this matter because people protect coyotes and cases come to a standstill. Scams linked to chulqueros are much more likely to be reported, though chulqueros also negotiate [solutions] in the shadow.

Coyotes may also not be criticized because of their historical role in the local economy. As an official at the Cañar's State Attorney General stated:

> It is very difficult to catch a coyote. Before him there is a lot of other people who won't dare to report him because the business would end. He hides behind them. The chulqueros or enganchadores (brokers) are caught before a coyote. But once caught, new people are immediately recruited. It has been and still is a super business.

Across communities in the Southern Highlands, the existence of coyoterismo ensures the emergence of often lucrative business opportunities, with legal and illegal business transactions becoming blurred, creating an income source that few want to jeopardize.

Contemporary Trends in Ecuadorian Coyoterismo

The testimonies of indigenous Ecuadorians are effective in identifying new transitions in and elements of the irregularized migration facilitation experience.

Despite the absence of official data on the number of people who rely on coyotes to embark on their routes or of empirical work on the dynamics of smuggling facilitation, our research identified a series of trends in the testimonies of migrants and their families.

Perhaps the most important of them is that despite the historical processes of migration and immigration enforcement in that country, the community-based, trust-dependent form of facilitation exists to this day. The irregularized migration facilitation processes that are primarily based on trust among coyotes, chulqueros, migrants, and their families are still commonplace in Ecuador, alongside other more recent forms of facilitation.

For example, in our research we identified a "relay-race" modality of coyoterismo, which has emerged to circumvent at least in part the border controls along the route. It relies on the contacts that coyotes have built over decades of journeys with their counterparts across the continent. While this form of coyoterismo only involves local, regional operations, it requires skill and knowledge in building relationship with coyotes from other countries who by virtue of possessing the same social capital, can "push" migrants forward. Hernan, a taxi driver describes how this works:

> Starting in the late 1980s, Ecuadorian coyotes developed direct links with Mexican coyotes. A coyote from Gualaceo would guide a group of migrants all the way into Mexico, or even further north. Now it is different. With so many controls, [coyotes] work as in a relay race: one coyote takes the people from here to Colombia, then another [takes them into another country] and it goes on [until their destination].

Hernan's testimony illustrates how coyoterismo has transformed because of the externalization of the U.S.-Mexico border—the implementation of stronger migration controls beyond the U.S.-Mexico border into the south has led others to adopt the tactics of Ecuadorian coyotes. The tightening of visa requirements, not only in the United States but also in Mexico, Guatemala, and Costa Rica, has also complicated transits that in the past could be easily carried out. Mexico has also implemented, in collaboration with and in response to demands from the United States, stricter migration controls in the last two years. Mexico has detained more migrants than the United States in the context of the program "Frontera Sur" or "Southern Border" (Badillo 2017).

As a result, since the end of the 1990s Ecuadorian coyotes have increasingly become part of a broader system of coyotes that operates along the continent. Unlike the 1970s or 1980s when coyotes were capable of transporting their clients from their place of origin to their destination, some Ecuadorian facilitators have opted to execute only a single segment of the journey, for instance from Ecuador to Bolivia or from Ecuador to Colombia (in some isolated cases, they do cover the entire segment, Ecuador-Mexico), in conjunction with other coyotes in the region.

Our field work has not produced evidence of any involvement of transnational organized crime. However, we did find strong connections between Ecuadorian and foreign coyotes along the migration route. Most of the communication

> has caused more disappearances because [deportees] think they can guide but they cannot.

Deported migrants often do not know the route nor do they have experience negotiating or dealing with more seasoned coyotes. This lack of experience and connections can lead to violent confrontations with more established smugglers. Still, though, there is no shortage of deported migrants who begin a new journey north on their own. Wi-Fi hotspots and GPS-enabled phones give these less-experienced migrants the confidence to begin their journeys once again. And because of cell phones, migrants can remain in constant contact with friends and family members, tapping into the collective knowledge created, shared, and updated by migrants in transit. Facebook, Skype, G

Notes

1. The term irregularized migration instead of irregular migration is used in this article to bring attention to the social, political, and juridical processes that consign some migrants to an "illegal" or "irregular" status. The more commonly used term "irregular" migration suggests the existence of an antagonist and supports a binary discriminatory regime between "desired" and "nondesired" migrants, where regular—and all possible synonyms, such as documented, authorized, legal—is directly linked to the former and irregular to the latter. In an attempt to surpass the binary trap, critical migration scholars argue for denaturalizing the term and focusing on the processes that produce it, appealing for an understanding of the social and political processes that render some people "illegal" or "irregular" (De Genova 2002; Bauder 2014; Dauvergne 2008).

2. The Ecuadorian population is ethnically diverse and can be roughly categorized into four ethnoracial groups: white (of Spanish/European descent), mestizo (of Spanish/European and indigenous descent), Afro-Ecuadorian (of African and European or indigenous descent), and indigenous.

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