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Precarious Labor and the Social Construction of "Illegality": Ecuadorian Indigenous Families in New York City

Precariedad laboral y construcción social de la "ilegalidad": familias indígenas ecuatorianas en Nueva York

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the migration of Ecuadorian indigenous families to New York City in the context of the 2008 Financial Crisis and the tightening of immigration policies in the United States. Migration trajectories show increasingly risky travel conditions, and significant changes in labor market integration as well as settlement. The article shows that job insecurity and the social condition of illegality are mutually connected in the different stages of the migration trajectory and constitute a different experience from that of Ecuadorians who emigrated in previous decades.

Keywords: 1. indigenous migration, 2. illegality, 3. labor markets, 4. Ecuador, 5. New York.

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza la migración de familias indígenas ecuatorianas a la ciudad de Nueva York en el contexto de la crisis financiera de 2008 y el endurecimiento de las políticas migratorias en Estados Unidos. Las trayectorias migratorias muestran que junto a las condiciones cada vez más riesgosas del viaje, se han producido importantes cambios en la inserción laboral de estos migrantes y en sus formas de asentamiento. El artículo muestra que la precariedad laboral y la condición social de ilegalidad se articulan mutuamente en las distintas etapas de la trayectoria migratoria y construyen una experiencia distinta de aquellos ecuatorianos que emigraron en décadas anteriores.

Palabras clave: 1. migración indígena, 2. ilegalidad, 3. mercados laborales, 4. Ecuador, 5. Nueva York.

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INTRODUCTION

On August 25, 2010, Mexico's *El Universal* newspaper published the news of the discovery of a mass grave with 78 bodies—58 men and 14 women—in a ranch in the town of San Fernando, in the state of Tamaulipas, northwest of Mexico (El Universal, 2010). Presumably, these were the bodies of migrants heading for the U.S.-Mexico border, who were victims of a gang linked to drug trafficking. The only survivor was a young indigenous man from a rural Andean community in the province of Cañar in southern Ecuador, who alerted Mexican officials about this event.

Four years later, on March 11, 2014, a 12-year-old Ecuadorian indigenous girl from the same province died in a shelter in Ciudad Juárez, a border city 1400 kilometers from San Fernando. The news from the newspaper *El Comercio* in the city of Quito indicates that the girl was attempting to cross the Mexico-United States border for a second time to reunite with her parents in New York City, to which they had emigrated ten years ago (Castillo, 2014).

These two events circulated globally, prompting reactions from governments, civil society organizations and other institutional actors, who unanimously condemned human trafficking as a devastating global reality and drew attention to the increasingly close relationship between these events and transnational organized crime. The issue was primarily framed by governments and the media as a national security problem that threatened to become a regional problem.

In contrast, at the local level in the rural communities where these two migrants came from, these events are not *extra-ordinary*, but are part of the everyday narratives of their inhabitants. Among the inhabitants of Canton Cañar, belonging to the province of the same name, the death or disappearance of a migrant family member is an experience shared by several and, in many cases, the bodies are never recovered. Therefore, the case of Tamaulipas not only showed the violence of organized crime, but also made visible a migration flow that had remained relatively unknown until then: that of young members of Ecuadorian indigenous communities who undertake "*el camino*" (the road) to New York and the East Coast of the United States, where their families and neighbors have settled for at least twenty years.

According to the 2010 Population Census, Canton Cañar has 59,323 inhabitants, of which 45,916 come from rural areas; 46% of the rural population self-identifies as indigenous (INEC, 2011). Cañar is the third canton with the greatest international emigration at the national level and the only canton where emigration has not decreased in the last ten years (Herrera, Escobar & Moncayo, 2012). In addition, the data express two new trends: a progressive feminization and also an increase in the outflow of minors (ODNA, 2008).

According to his account, the young indigenous man who was ambushed was traveling to reunite with his parents, who had emigrated to New York four years earlier. He had left behind his wife, who was 17 years old and pregnant with his first child, and with whom he had been in a relationship since he was 15 years old (*Diario digital INFOBAE*, 2010). Likewise, the dead girl in the border city was traveling with another girl her own age, who was also pursuing family reunification because it was impossible for her father or mother to take her to the U.S. through regular channels since they lacked legal residency documents.

This article analyzes the migration of Ecuadorian indigenous families from the province of Cañar to New York City in the context of the intensification of violence at the Mexican border. For this study, we chose to situate transit violence within the framework of other structural violence that affects the lives of these families. The migration trajectories show that together with the increasingly risky conditions of the trip, these migrants have also experienced important changes in conditions of labor market insertion and settlement. This has led to a greater precariousness of social reproduction, making social mobility more difficult and increasingly exposing migrants to deportation.

In fact, the migration and life projects of these families are very different from those experienced by other Ecuadorian migrants in New York City twenty or thirty years ago (Priblisky, 2007), and radically different to what Ecuadorian families experienced in Spain (Pedone, 2006; Herrera, 2008). In the first place, departure, settlement and labor insertion take place in increasingly risky and precarious environments, in which social and family support networks have been weakened. Secondly, the economic crises of 2001 and 2008, along with transformations in the labor market and urban regeneration processes in New York City, have led to the dispersion of these migrants among various settlement locations, increasingly far away from the traditional spaces of occupation and socialization of the Ecuadorian community in Queens, which in turn affects their working conditions and social reproduction. Thirdly, these migrants' experiences of settlement and labor insertion in the city extend the clandestine conditions with which they began their journey. Finally, indigenous families reproduce intense ties with their families and communities, despite the fact that many of these community members have not returned to their communities of origin in ten or fifteen years. It is a forced transnationalism that is much more precarious, different from the connections made by Ecuadorian migrants in New York who have been in the city for more than thirty years. While the latter have achieved a certain social mobility, many have built for themselves a kind of transnational living, one that includes temporary returns, ethnic enterprises, economic connections and even political networks (Caro-López, 2012).

The study is based on multisite fieldwork carried out first in the communities of Canton Cañar, in the parishes of Zhud and General Morales, between 2010 and 2013, and subsequently in several indigenous settlement sites in and around New York: Brooklyn's

Bushwick neighborhood, Ridgewood and Jamaica in Queens, the Castle Hills area of the Bronx, Ossining in the state of New York and Milford, Massachusetts.[2] The work in the United States was carried out in two stages: a first stage in 2012, in which relatives of people from the parishes of Zhud and General Morales in Cañar were interviewed, with whom I had previously worked on a project on the impacts of migration on local development.

The article also features interviews held in the Bronx in 2016 with other family members from the same parishes. A total of 15 family units from the rural parishes mentioned above could be reconstructed. Several family members were interviewed both in Ecuador and in the United States. While the sample was not intended to select undocumented persons, the vast majority of those interviewed remained undocumented at the time of the interview, even those who had lived in the U.S. for ten or more years. A few young people who in 2016 had been able to benefit from DACA constituted an exception.

Most families had children who had been born in the United States and as well as children who had been born in Ecuador before they migrated. These are families that the literature now calls mixed-status families (Debry, 2015), meaning that they are made up of some members who have U.S. citizenship and others who do not. Nearly all of those interviewed had arrived in the first decade after 2000, although some of the relatives who served as support networks at the time of their arrival had migrated several years earlier. Ten interviews were also conducted with mestizo migrants from the province of Cañar, but these migrants were of urban rather than rural origin, and had arrived in the United States before 2000. These interviews were conducted in the traditional settlements of the Ecuadorian community in New York—Ridgewood, Corona Queens and Bushwick—through contacts with migrant associations and consular authorities.[3] The purpose of these interviews was to understand the migration trajectory of families from the southern region of Ecuador who preceded the arrival indigenous migrants from Cañar, and to have comparative elements that would make it possible to identify the differences between the two groups of migrants.

The article is divided into six sections. The first part presents the conceptual framework

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[2]The fieldwork in New York City was carried out thanks to two grants from FLACSO Ecuador's Academic Development Fund, in 2012 and 2016, which allowed me to make short visits of two and three weeks, and a Fulbright Exchange Scholarship in 2013 that allowed me to stay for three months. The fieldwork in Ecuador was carried out within the framework of the project on the impacts of migration on local development (PIC-FLACSO, 2009-2014), thanks to funding from the Belgian Interuniversity Cooperation.

[3]Ecuadorian employers, leaders of the Ecuadorian community, officials of the Consulate of Ecuador and officials of the extinct SENAMI (National Secretariat for Migrants), among others.

from which the convergence between precarious labor and the social construction of illegality is analyzed, which serves as the basis for interpreting the experience of Ecuadorian indigenous migration to New York. The second section examines some of the characteristics of the communities of origin in order to contextualize the existence of a culture of migration produced by structural forms of exclusion. The following section analyzes the exit process. Then I focus on settlement in destination sites. Finally, strategies for labor insertion are presented, emphasizing the differences between men and women. The paper concludes with some reflections on the existing differences between these post-2001 migrants and Ecuadorians who migrated earlier.

PRECARIOUS LABOR AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF ILLEGALITY

In line with the literature on the social construction of illegality that has developed in recent years in the field of migration studies, (Donato & Armenta, 2011; Boehm, 2012; Debry, 2015; Golash-Bouza & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013; Ábrego & Menjívar, 2012; Oliviero, 2013; Brotherton & Barrios, 2008; Shrover, Van Der Leun, Lucassen & Quispel, 2008), this article conceives illegality as a social and contingent condition that responds to specific historical realities and political contexts. We maintain that this social condition of "illegality" comes into existence at the beginning of the migration project in the locality of origin, and is reinforced in the day-to-day life of migrants, where they are forced into labor market conditions that push them towards constant mobility and dispersion regarding where they settle. The text examines how the place of departure and the journey itself contribute to the social construction of illegality and how these experiences, as a result of the restrictions imposed by migration policy, converge with a very precarious labor market insertion.

The analysis draws on two fields that have been especially influential in understanding this new moment of undocumented migration in the United States. On the one hand, the transformations towards a post-productive economy in the global city (Sassen, 2000; Waldinger, 1996; Chin, 2005; Cordero-Guzmán, Smith & Grosfoguel, 2001) have considerably modified the relationship of migrants with the labor market. Several authors have shown that economic globalization is based on processes of feminization and racialization of labor markets that have meant more flexible and precarious working conditions (Flores-Gonzáles, Guevarra, Toro-Morn & Chang, 2013). In the case of New York City, this reconfiguration of the labor market meant, for example, a drastic reduction, beginning in the 1980s, in the number of garment workshops, which mainly employed immigrant women of many nationalities, including Ecuadorian women. But in addition, the labor market was transformed by the economic crises of 2001 and 2008. The first, as a result of the attack on the Twin Towers, meant the relocation of several companies and financial businesses out of the city, affecting the service economy and the migrant workforce massively employed in this sector. Conversely, the global crisis of 2008

impacted sectors such as construction, which were especially important for male indigenous migrants from Ecuador.

Without the steady employment of garment workshops, or the so-called *factorías*, women moved into street-vending and hourly-paid domestic work; these activities, as several authors have pointed out, give women a certain flexibility to combine their productive and reproductive work, although they do not offer any security in terms of income and other benefits (Muñoz, 2013). The crisis in the building industry led men to look for work outside New York City. These changes in the labor market for men and women pushed many Ecuadorian families out of the city towards other locations and led them to seek employment in other niches. For example, to New Jersey and Massachusetts, as well as upstate New York.

On a different note, we take up the growing literature examining the impact of a hardened immigration policy on the daily lives of migrants (Donato & Armenta, 2011; Debry, 2015; Boehm, 2012). These authors have stressed the importance of going beyond legal status and understanding that being undocumented or "unauthorized" is primarily a social condition, which is also contingent in terms of time and space (Donato & Armenta, 2011). These works coincide in pointing out that the condition of "illegality" in the 1980s, and even until 1990, did not really represent a threat or constriction in the life of undocumented migrant families.

In contrast, in the last fifteen years, restrictions on movement and the exponential growth of deportations and returns at the border have made the condition of "illegality" a ghost that conditions, in differentiated ways, the daily lives of men, women and children (Debry, 2015). But, in addition to the anguish it creates, the works of Boehm (2012) and Debry (2015) show that legal status becomes a factor of social stratification as powerful as class or race. For example, in some states, whether or not children in the same family have residence documents can lead to differences in their access to education and even health services.

All of this is to say, "illegality" impacts the opportunities a person finds in their life project. Moreover, De Genova (2002) defines the concept of "deportability" as a political concept that exercises disciplinary power over the lives of migrants. For this author, the deportation regime is not only a governmental mechanism to expel citizens considered "undesirable," but fundamentally a regime of discipline and social control that makes the undocumented migrant deportable through certain laws, regulations and various procedures. Therefore, deportability is a social condition produced by the government.

According to De Genova and Peutz (2010), this space of forced invisibility and subjugation materializes in the life of the undocumented in many ways. To begin with, several activities considered common and ordinary such as working, driving a car or traveling freely become crimes. Second, restrictions on physical mobility may induce a

greater inclination to accept situations of labor exploitation. Third, it can lead migrants to what De Génova calls "a forced orientation towards the present," i.e. the migration project seems to move in circular time, in an act in permanent reconstruction, making it impossible to have a sense of projection towards the future (De Génova, 2002).

The migration and labor trajectories of Cañar indigenous migrants living in and around New York show that both precariousness, a product of the reconfiguration of global labor markets, and deportability are the framework in which they develop their life strategies.

INDIGENOUS AND MIGRANT CAÑAR

However, precariousness and deportability cannot be understood solely through structural conditions in destination cities. It is also necessary to take a close look at how the places where migration originates shape the migration experience and the inequalities experienced by these families. In fact, these migrants come from poor rural areas, where family land ownership has undergone *minifundización*,[4] and whose usufruct no longer covers for a long time their needs of social reproduction. These are areas that for several generations have combined internal migration with agricultural activities (Vaillant, 2013; Rebaï, 2008; Jokisch, 2002).

They are also social segments with long histories of domination by and resistance to racist practices by the state and local mestizo groups, and with important memories of land struggles (Vaillant, 2013; Eguiguren, 2015). Migration then constitutes not only the search for a better economic future for their families, but an experience where these axes of domination (class, ethnicity and gender) are lived differently.

Emigration from Canton Cañar has stayed at a steady pace over the past fifteen years, in contrast to the rest of Ecuador, where emigration has decreased (Herrera et al., 2012). Migration, which began fifty years ago, continues to grow and extend its reach throughout the region. The structural crisis of rural communities due to *minifundización*, the problem of access to water, unemployment and the expansion of migration networks have spread the idea of migration as an ever-closer possibility for the inhabitants of Canton Cañar. In the last fifteen years, indigenous communities have actively entered these migration processes. Thus, in the 2001 and 2010 censuses, the mostly indigenous rural parishes of Zhud and General Morales of the Cañar Canton had the highest migration figures.

In addition, the traditional pattern of male rural migration is giving way to an increasingly feminized migration. A silent and persistent flow of indigenous women goes out to *hacer el camino*, to go on the road to the U.S. As in Boehm's study (2012) on transnational families between Mexico and Albuquerque, in Cañar infidelity is not as feared as the possibility that spouses might stop sending remittances to support their

[4]TN: *Minifundización*: Division of the available land into smaller plots.

families' day-to-day subsistence as well as the purchase of assets that may ensure their future well-being. For this reason, many women decide to reunite with their partners, arguing that they wish to avoid conjugal abandonment. The degree of endogamy among couples in both Cañar and New York is very high, but migration and labor strategies are also shaped by persisting bonds of kinship and ethnicity. For example, several young interviewees reported that they did not personally know the relatives who facilitated their arrival in the United States, and whom they met when they arrived; despite this, the degree of trust established by kinship was enough for them to undertake the journey and migrate.

The proportion of migrants who leave behind children under the age of 18 is higher in indigenous households (67%), especially when it is women who leave (69%). While 26% of children in Cañar have one or both parents abroad, the percentage rises to 36% for indigenous households (ODNA, 2008). Interviews with young Indigenous migrants in New York showed that several of them had lived apart from their mother and father as children, usually in the care of their grandparents; they were able to share daily life with their parents and get to know each other again once they arrived in New York.

These are also families that maintain intense connections at a distance. Thus, according to the PIC-FLACSO survey (2012), 80% of the families in these two parishes maintain relationships with their relatives in the United States, either because they communicate regularly (at least once a month), because they receive gifts—especially clothing—(at least twice a year), or because they receive remittances (monthly and every three months for the most part, from children and spouses).

In other words, similar to many localities and regions of Mexico or Central America, in the indigenous parishes of the province of Cañar, international migration is part of the social reproduction strategies of several generations. However, unlike the case in Mexico, this migration has not diminished in recent years; on the contrary, it has remained steady in spite of the growing risks experienced by migrants in the crossing of borders and the changes in the labor markets in which they insert themselves.

"HACER EL CAMINO"[5]

In fact, almost all of the migrants interviewed, earlier and more recent, indigenous and mestizo, crossed the U.S.-Mexico border illegally with the help of "pasadores," "coyoteros" and moneylenders, participating in an illegal industry of undocumented migration that has existed in this Cañar-New York circuit for many years. The process of reaching and crossing the border has been analyzed by authors such as Jason de León (2013), who examines the actions of the border patrol in the Arizona desert and tells the

[5]TN: Metaphor of the process migrants go through when crossing the border into the United States.

story of the disappearance of an Ecuadorian woman in the desert, and also by Voigt (2013), who focuses on the violence faced by Central Americans crossing Mexico on their way to the United States.

As with these works, accounts from migrants from Cañar show that, unlike years prior, going on *el camino* to the U.S. has acquired the connotation of possibly being a journey without return. Each person who leaves their community knows that their arrival as well as their return are no longer certain. Those who have left also leave behind certain footprints, their empty houses, their vacant lots, the mothers and fathers who are absent, and also the stories of the disappeared (De León, 2013). In other words, the hardening of migration policies in the United States has had an impact on the very geography of the places from which migrants depart and the lives of their inhabitants.

People who undertake this journey are not simply crossing borders in search of work in the North. The act of *hacer el camino* also creates a sense of empathy and identity, as if from that point on one also crossed a subjective border and first became an "illegal" migrant.

> I went by boat to Guatemala, then by bus and then walking, walking to the border, then to Los Angeles... walking and then by bus to Brooklyn... The hardest thing for me was to go ashore, when they got us on the boats, after eight days in the water, getting off the boat... fifteen hours on a motorboat... that was the ugliest thing for me, the saltwater tearing at one's face, it breaks one's skin, it seems as if the boat is going to turn over, and if you fall there... that's it for you…, the water hits you, from how it hits you it later feels as if you've been dragged around... then you walk, you walk hidden by the hills, afraid of the swamps... (Rosa, returned, Cañar, August 2012).

The uncertainty and restlessness experienced by men and women during the journey places them in a situation of extreme vulnerability, where they put their lives and their belongings in the hands of strangers, since in many cases personal belongings indicating they are travelers are taken away from them. While they deny their status as migrant travelers, they cross the threshold of what is allowed and become "illegal" before arriving in U.S. territory.

These accounts show that migrant journeys have become more complex; the journeys are longer, taking more complicated routes that include sea and air travel. Our Andean travelers are increasingly accompanied by men and women from all over the world. The interviewees remembered travelers from India, China, Peru, Colombia, in addition to Central America. On several occasions they were returned to the Mexican side of the border and crossed again up to three times.

Their strategy to deal with being returned at the border and the toughening of travel conditions has been to blend in with other migrants, mainly with those from Central

America and Mexico. This is the advice given by the *coyoteros* themselves or by those who have been returned and are on their second and third attempts.

The above has unexpected consequences, since sometimes people are not found precisely because they have hidden their nationality (Álvarez, 2016). This differs from the stories of migrants who arrived around 1980 and even in 1990, who, although they also crossed illegally through Mexico, were able to do as much in less time, at a lower cost and without the same level of distress. For example, Oswaldo, who now owns an Ecuadorian food restaurant in Brooklyn, left Cañar and had arrived in New York within a week. He flew to Mexico City and crossed the border in three days. Oswaldo also benefited from IRCA, the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, which legalized undocumented migrants who had arrived in the United States before 1982. It also differs from the way Ecuadorians emigrated to Spain in the late 1990s; they generally entered Spain on a tourist visa and stayed to work. This group of migrants benefited from a regularization program undertaken by the Spanish government in 2005; moreover, today many have obtained Spanish citizenship.[6]

In sum, "illegality" as an identity, stigma or social marker is established during the journey. But migrant stories also point to the overcoming of adverse situations, even after experiencing arrests and returns. In other words, the moment they are constituted as "illegal," migrants also learn to navigate this condition, even if in a precarious and risky way. The moment illegality is established, it is also transgressed.

SETTLEMENT: FROM ETHNIC ENCLAVE TO DISPERSION

But the journey also has longer-lasting sequels. This practice of blending in among others becomes a way of being in the world, a way of existing as migrants that endures after the trip. With time, it produces a kind of invisibility, a failure to make oneself felt in order to slip away from risks and danger. To the violence of the crossing is now added the condition of deportability in daily life; indigenous migrants seek to go unnoticed and seem to be invisible in the same environment where they live. Thus, the priest of one of the churches most frequented by Ecuadorian migrants in Brooklyn, including Quichua-speaking indigenous people from the communities of Cañar, did not know that Quichua-speaking people attended his church: women who in their free time continue to spin or sew their skirts for parties, young people with music groups and traditional dancers from Cañar.

Their presence is felt only when conflicts arise with local or federal authorities. One such conflict, for example, took place in September 2011 in the community of Milford, Massachusetts, following a young man of Italian origin being run over by an indigenous

[6]It is estimated that by 2014 approximately 230,000 Ecuadorians had acquired Spanish citizenship (Iglesias Martínez, 2015).

migrant. The local community organized a series of protests and called for the expulsion of the migrants from the area, accusing them of violence and excessive alcohol consumption.[7] As a result of this incident, many migrants have stopped driving or drive late at night to avoid control by state agents, as there have been several cases of people arrested for expired licenses or lack of papers that have led to deportations. This is the case of Juan, who, after being stopped by the police while driving with his expired license, taught his wife to drive, who is less visible to the police because she is a woman. This confirms what other studies have mentioned about the male and racialized construction of "illegals" (Golash-Bouza & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013).

Changes in forms of settlement have also contributed to this invisibility. Although Queens concentrates 63% of the Ecuadorian population in New York (125,891 people in 2008), the Bronx, where the majority of the indigenous population lives, went from 12,277 to 29,314 Ecuadorians between 1990 and 2008 (Caro-López, 2011, p. 8). In addition, the indigenous families who were interviewed tell a story of constant changes in residence. Although most of them arrive in Brooklyn or Newark in the state of New Jersey, they soon settle in other places like the Bronx or in satellite towns in New York, like Spring Valley or Ossining. A factor that has considerably influenced this dispersion is the increase in rents due to gentrification (or urban regeneration), which has turned areas like Bushwick or Ridgewood, traditionally Latino and with a large Ecuadorian population, into neighborhoods for generally white young students or middle-class professionals.

Thus, although some indigenous families still live in this area, which contains both the main Catholic church they attend and an evangelical church led by a Quichua pastor from Cañar, many families have left the neighborhood and now reside in Jamaica, Queens, along with Indian and Pakistani communities, in the Chinatown sector of Queens. This dispersion distances them from family networks, with women being the most affected, lacking networks of care assistance and also day-to-day contact with a strong community. Many of the women I interviewed, mother and their adult daughters, would only visit each other every two or three months, something unthinkable in their communities of origin. Furthermore, both the displacement of certain work centers out of Manhattan after September 11, 2001 and the search for new work niches have also pushed these families away from the traditional enclaves of the Ecuadorian community in New York.

INSERTION INTO THE LABOR MARKET

Men: Wandering the Suburbs in Search Of Roofs and Gardens

One of the most recurring topics in my conversations about migration and labor trajectories

[7]This was widely covered in the local press in the state of Massachusetts. See Martinez (2011) and Vásquez Toness (2011), among others.

with earlier migrants who arrived prior to 2001 was the sense that things used to be better. For example, Juan, a mestizo from the city of Biblián in the province of Cañar, arrived in New York in 1984. Juan came from a family of farm workers and began working at the age of twelve as an assistant to his uncle, a transportation worker. He soon migrated to Guayaquil to work temporarily in the shrimp industry, until a cousin convinced him to travel to New York in 1984, where several of his relatives already lived. When Juan arrived, he began to work washing dishes in the same restaurant as his cousin. Since then, he has remained in the food service sector and little by little, as years went by, he managed to save enough money to invest in his own business. At the time of the study, he owned an Ecuadorian food restaurant in Brooklyn. Although this is a particularly successful trajectory (that of becoming a business owner), it presents two elements that are generalizable for the set of trajectories prior to 1990: on the one hand, insertion into a relatively stable labor market segment, restaurants, where workers can move upward, from dishwasher to cook, and on the other hand, the possibility of obtaining legal residence papers, which means, if not definitive settlement, at least family reunification.

In contrast, migrants who arrived after 2001 had less stable work histories and had been unable to obtain papers. Instead, their trajectories showed a complex interweaving of coming and going between temporariness, precariousness and unemployment. Living "one day at a time" becomes the rule.

Indeed, the indigenous men of Cañar who arrived after 2001 shared (and today share) work niches with newly arrived migrants from Honduras and Guatemala. Men occupied a specific niche in construction: roofing and gardening in middle-class suburban houses, generally but not exclusively white-owned. These are mainly seasonal jobs that take place in the summer. The men organized into crews of four or five people under the command of a master construction worker who acted as an intermediary to obtain contracts from the owners of the houses. The system was very similar to day labor in the Spanish or Mexican farms studied by Lara Flores (2006) or Pedreño (2007). Family and territorial networks were fully operative in the organization of these jobs.

Most of the interviewees worked with or for relatives or with or for people from their community. They were in construction crews operating in the tri-state area, which includes New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Their operating radius was quite wide and was widening more and more due to the scarcity of contracts. While a few years prior to the investigation they could work in a single sector, later they had to travel to several areas to find work. They understood moving constantly as necessary for survival, not only to find work but also to avoid being detected in one place because of their undocumented status.

The precariousness of their work was characterized by two factors in particular. On the one hand, their services were expendable: "if the winter is not strong, there is no work in the summer" (i.e. the roofs are not damaged and therefore there is no need to repair them).

On the other hand, there was seasonality and lack of regularity. As one interviewee reported, "there are whole weeks when there is no work." The winter seasons were especially difficult, so they worked up to 15 hours a day in the summer to be able to have savings for the winter "lean season," as happens with agricultural cycles in farms. The possibility of not having enough work was a permanent source of distress, especially among newcomers. Despite the harsh working conditions in the summer due to the high temperatures, interviewees complained that employers sometimes suspended work, leaving them with no income:

> […] you feel desperate, this very week I only worked one day, I can't stand it outside without work. Besides, you don't work because of the rain, you don't work because of the heat, you don't work because of the cold..., the supervisors won't let us work, so you feel desperate and you don't know how you're going to pay rent or food, back there [in Ecuador] if you don't work one day, it's not a problem... you spend two, three, four days without working and it's not a problem, you still have your house, you have food... whatever... but not here, here if you don't work one day, you don't pay rent... that's why I feel desperate, that's why I don't get used to it... I didn't work in construction there, that's why I have this feeling again... here you feel desperate if you don't work one day (Humberto, Ossining, NY, November 2012).

At a different time, Humberto recounted his different jobs in laundries, restaurants and gardens. The journey that Humberto described to us after a six-month stay was not so different from the one that his brother-in-law David described after living seven years in the United States.

On one occasion, David picked me up from the train station in a four-wheel-drive Ford. The car made me think of a successful migration, at least economically speaking. However, David began by pointing out the shortage of work because of the crisis, but also because of competition from the arrival of Central Americans to the roof repair sector: "that's why they pay 60 and 70 (dollars) a day and people accept and only when they're there they realize it's not appropriate." This confirmed that workers were hired on day labor contracts. He had worked under this modality all the time: mowing lawns, fixing roofs, as a painter, in wiring, building walls, fixing gardens. He described to me in countless detail practically the same jobs as Humberto. These narratives of precariousness were repeated in several of the households I interviewed; the earliest arrivals were general contractors, who passed on the crisis and the work shortage to the day laborers, lowering their wages and working hours.

An additional factor that hindered the movement of migrants working in roofing was the post-9/11 change in New York State that disallowed driver's licenses for people who had not regularized their residence in the country. This meant that many of these contractors had their movement limited, because despite the years they had lived there and the money they had saved, they had no papers. The work then depended not only on the demand for

labor from middle-class suburban households, but also on the legal framework they operated under, which limited their movement: the government, deportability and the market together produce these migrants' precarious labor insertion.

Finally, although all of these jobs were described as opportunities structured by networks of kinship and territorial belonging, this did not necessarily mean they were horizontal or based on solidarity. For example, in some cases there was a connection between the networks that arranged the migrants' journey and the networks through which they got their first job. This indicates that there could be a link between the job that migrants' are hired for and the debt they took on for the trip—a situation that connects their precariousness with possible human trafficking networks.

In sum, the precariousness that characterized men's insertion into the labor market had to do with their working conditions, i.e. instability, temporality, uncertainty and difficulty of the work itself. Their income might be high in certain periods, when they are able to obtain good contracts, and non-existent at other times. The pressure to pay the debts acquired for the trip, the need to send remittances to their relatives, and the expectations from relatives who had stayed in Ecuador regarding building a family home in their communities, all of these pressures meant male migrants preferred to stay in the United States rather than return to the poverty of their communities, because such a return would demonstrate their failure.

Job Insertion: Women Looking for Houses to Clean

While the men went around the suburbs in vans looking for roofs to repair, women went out in different vans looking for houses to clean. Like construction, these jobs were and are organized by fellow members of their communities of origin or, at least, by fellow nationals. María Antonieta had lived in Ossining for six years and since the beginning she had worked with a mestizo lady from Girón, Azuay Province, Ecuador, cleaning houses. The latter was the one who found the houses and drove four women in her car through various New York City counties. They were generally able to clean three or four houses a day, working from seven in the morning to eight in the evening and, like the men, they received a daily wage, which was much lower than in construction—in cleaning it ranged between 60 and 70 dollars a day while men in construction received around 200. María Antonieta, a native of Zhud, a rural indigenous parish in Canton Cañar, was comfortable with this type of work. She liked moving around everywhere, and preferred this job than being in a restaurant or a laundry service. They took her to "Connecticut, the Bronx, Jersey City, Queens, and different houses… with owners who are black, Chinese, American..."

The same type of organization—that of small crews of women going from house to house—is repeated in the exercise of other trades. In the case of manicurists or people working in beauty salons work is organized across ethnic lines. The migrant women were

hired by the owners of these businesses, generally Korean men, who would pick them up in the morning and return them to their homes at night, after strenuous workdays.

An article in the New York Times reported on the exponential growth of these salons in New York City, which have tripled in number since 2000, and which maintain the lowest fees nationwide for manicure services based on the exploitation of the work of immigrant women. The article collects the accounts of Chinese, Korean, Tibetan and Ecuadorian immigrant women, who report being paid below the hourly minimum wage and many other forms of discrimination (Maslin Nir, 2015). In the field work carried out in 2012 and 2016, the first job of several indigenous teenagers was precisely in these nail salons, generally outside Manhattan, in areas of Connecticut and the Bronx, where they lived with indigenous migrants from Guatemala and Mexico.

From Factorías to Street Vending

In contrast to the men, who were practically unfailingly engaged in some form of construction work, indigenous women worked in several different trades. Besides house-cleaning and nail salons, some women worked in the few garment sweatshops that still exist in the city. Although the city's productive reconversion towards a service economy virtually eliminated textile manufacturing in Manhattan in the nineties (Waldinger, 1996), many indigenous women got their first job in the so-called *factorías*, with Dominican, Korean and Italian owners, even at the end of the nineties and the year 2000. Some of these workshops were even owned by Ecuadorians. While these workshops were mainly located in Brooklyn and New Jersey in the 1990s and 2000s, in 2016 there were still a few in Midtown Manhattan that recruited day laborers. One morning in March 2016, on 38th Street and Eighth Avenue, one could see about 30 women waiting to be recruited, most of them indigenous and mestizo Ecuadorian women. Among them, one found different ways of working: per piece, per day, per hour.

When Inés first arrived in New York two days after the attack on the Twin Towers, her sister-in-law took her to a workshop owned by a woman from Guayaquil: "that woman took advantage of Ecuadorian women, especially of indigenous women, the women of Zhud, they were all there... she would pay us 80 [dollars] per week and would deduct the cost of transportation." At first, Inés would cut threads all day, then she learned to use the sewing machines and got paid a little more, 200 dollars a week. Inés worked in several workshops both in Brooklyn and Midtown Manhattan, with owners from different nationalities and varying payment methods: per hour, per piece, per day. This was how Inés was able to send money to support her four children and then managed to bring three of them to live with her, incurring debts of $12,000 for each child. These were the sort of companies studied in the 1990s by Margaret Chin (2005), who found large quantities of Ecuadorian labor in these workshops.

With the passing of the years and the uncertain job prospects vis-à-vis garment workshops, which had become scarce, the women of Zhud entered the business of street vending: "nobody bothers you there, it's quieter, I can stay waiting for people to pick up their child from school and then I leave..." It is seasonal work, just like the men's. The women would buy boxes of mangoes, slice them and sell them in small bags on the streets of Brooklyn. Their buyers were Mexican and African American passers-by from the streets of Downtown Brooklyn, "the black ones buy them with lemon, the Mexican ones with chili..."

Although Inés considered this work to be more pleasant because they could handle themselves autonomously, with their own schedules, and were not accountable to any external party, she also recounted several encounters with the city police, including two times when she was apprehended because she was selling on a street for which she did not have a permit. The first time she got very scared and spent the night in jail; the second time she was not as scared, and she later saw it as part of the job. The main problem for her was the cost of bail each time this happened. Arrests and all, Inés had an ambivalent perception of the police: "they are not all bad, they buy the mangoes themselves, it is forbidden to sell in... Street, but on the other hand that's where they buy the most... so they tell us in Spanish themselves... 'ok, go lady, go... I haven't seen anything... go to another street'... they help us."

This type of experience is similar to Muñoz's studies (2013) which show that street vending can be an alternative for women who are better able to organize their workdays and the care their children. Likewise, this perception of street vending as dignified work on the part of women, and the pragmatic way in which transgressing rules is perceived and negotiated, are also worked on by Estrada and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2011), who analyze street vending by Latina teenagers in Los Angeles.

In short, the labor market for Ecuadorian migrants from Cañar was characterized by precariousness, temporariness, and later by permanent movement. Men and women travelled around the city, either in crews of day laborers providing urban services in the vans of their intermediaries, or in the streets, with street vending. These were, in most cases, casual, expendable, invisible jobs.

These three characteristics are what made their existence possible; otherwise, greater visibility in times of crisis, without papers, would have gone against their survival. Blending in the streets of the city, some of their trades involved inter-ethnic relations, either because their contractors and their "bosses," as the women call them, were earlier migrants of other nationalities, or because they were mestizo Ecuadorians. In the latter case, several examples of labor exploitation were found, along with the reproduction of relations of domination present in migrants' communities of origin. This is a pattern that should be explored further: forms of inequality that correspond to racist constructions that

are clearly combined with class divisions in the community of origin, while in migrant environments (where class markers tend to be diluted) these markers of ethnic inequalities, which structure the relations between nationals of the same country, seem to persist.

On the other hand, as regards labor relations with other groups of migrants, these ethnic markers became invisible, and relations were governed by class divisions or by axes of inequality based on the vulnerability caused by the lack of documents. Finally, an important characteristic, especially in street vending, is that it took place in consumer markets that catered to immigrants themselves.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the migration, labor and settlement trajectories of these post-2001 migrants is so very different from the experiences of Ecuadorians who arrived in New York[8] in the 1990s, and from those of Ecuadorians who left for Europe,[9] and moreover, this cannot be explained only by their status as recent arrivals. Indeed, we have shown that the trajectories of mestizo Ecuadorians, of urban and rural origin, who arrived in previous decades, although not linear and ascending, does share much of a history of progressive socioeconomic integration, although culturally they remain excluded and their sense of belonging is much more complex than what an assimilationist line proposes.

In fact, this first exploration of the lives of indigenous migrant families shows a different trajectory, condition and scenario for the future, in which exclusion processes do not tend to disappear, but instead persist and even become more accentuated. Several factors are interlinked to create this situation. First, there is the economic crisis of 2008, which caused the economy to stall, affecting the spending capacity of middle-class families, a group to which these migrant families are economically linked through the delivery of quite discrete and precarious services, such as the maintenance and cleaning of their homes in the summer. In other words, theirs are extremely narrow and inflexible job niches.

Second, migrants' lack of papers has perpetuated their irregular situation and structurally excludes them, with no possibility of labor, economic and, even less, social mobility. This crisis of legality has direct and indirect effects. On the one hand, there are the threats and apprehensions for deportation, which, in practical terms, mean large amounts of money paid to cover the necessary bail to release the person. On the other

[8]See Priblisky (2007), who examines the gender relations and settlement processes of these migrants in the 1990s in New York.

[9]On Ecuadorian migration to Spain and Italy see the works of Pedone (2006) Herrera (2008), Lagomarsino,(2007). Regarding the return processes due to the global crisis of 2008, see Herrera (2012), Moser (2013) Herrera & Pérez Martínez (2015) and Boccagni (2011).

hand, the lack of papers considerably limits people's movement due to the fear of being apprehended, all of this in circumstances where, as we have seen, their job opportunities depend on their ability to move from one county to another.

Indirectly, the impossibility of having a stable job places the migrant's migration project in a kind of circular time in which each day goes by and everything begins again: they face the same risks, the same scarcity, the same difficulties, without the possibility of finding a fixed position in space. On the contrary, they have to change their homes all the time in search of a better price, and their jobs are constantly changing; therefore, any medium-term risk management strategy becomes impossible.

Third, this double environment of crisis causes the social reproduction of these families to be confined in the nearest networks, which little by little are being exhausted. What initially may be seen as the hoarding of opportunities through family networks, over time may also become an inability to move to other spaces and other jobs due to legal limitations.

In sum, due to the economic crisis of 2008 and as a consequence of the hardening of migration policies, these families are increasingly intertwining their social reproduction practices and their migration project in precarious conditions, which seem to reproduce and deepen, rather than change.

Translator: Yahaira Nava Morán

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