

Three Generations of Kichwa-Otavalo Transnationalism

Tres generaciones del transnacionalismo kichwa-otavalo

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the changes in migration strategies of Ecuadorian Kichwa-Otavalo indigenous merchants and musicians by following the accounts of three men of different ages. We address the ways strategies have transformed in three generations and the various types of relationships migrants establish in migration networks. In a scenario of both change and continuity in these strategies, which have seen Kichwa migration reach almost every continent in the world, we address the ways migration networks are connected in a transnational social field, which is dynamic and ever-changing.

Keywords: 1. migration networks, 2. indigenous migration, 3. Kichwa-Otavalo, 4. Colombia, 5. Ecuador.

RESUMEN

Este artículo muestra cambios en las estrategias migratorias de indígenas migrantes kichwa-otavalo ecuatorianos, siguiendo las trayectorias de tres comerciantes y músicos de diferentes edades. Discutimos las diferentes maneras en que las estrategias han cambiado en tres generaciones y las relaciones que establecen los migrantes con las redes que usan para viajar. En un panorama donde hay cambios y continuidades que han llevado a miembros de esta población a casi todos los continentes del mundo, exploramos cómo sus redes comerciales se enlazan en un campo social transnacional que es dinámico y cambiante.

Palabras clave: 1. redes migratorias, 2. migración indígena, 3. kichwa-otavalo, 4. Colombia, 5. Ecuador.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last hundred years, the indigenous population known as the Kichwa-Otavalo has undergone a growing process of mobility and urbanization that began in the interior of the province of Imbabura,³ in the northern Ecuadorian highlands (Maldonado, 2004), and that since the second decade of the twentieth century took indigenous artisans and traders to neighboring countries such as Peru and Colombia (Salomon, 1973), and eventually to almost all continents (Meisch, 2002).

Colombia is one of the first destinations in this mobilization process and Bogotá, among other Colombian cities, has had a constant population since the 1940s, to the point that it was officially recognized as an indigenous council, or “Cabildo” of the capital in 2005. (Ordóñez, Colmenares, Ginsel and Bernal, 2014; Bocarejo, 2012; Chaves and Zambrano, 2006). Nowadays, this council has a little more than 2,000 people registered and estimates that there are more or less 1,500 more people who have not registered. The population of Kichwa who enter and leave Colombia on a seasonal basis has not been calculated and the council estimates that there may be between 6,000 and 7,000 more indigenous migrants.

The literature on Kichwa⁴ migration, which recognizes the Otavalo region as a focus from and to where people, objects, money and representations flow, suggests that the global expansion of migratory networks has transformed both the place of origin and the socioeconomic and cultural relations of those who migrate and those who stay in Ecuador (Meisch, 2002; Kyle, 2003; Huarcaya, 2010; Colloredo-Mansfeld, 1999). Other authors have explored migrants’ relations to receiving communities, where they establish particular relationships with the State, as well as how gender and ethnic identity are reconfigured within the community (Caicedo, 2010; Ruiz Balzola, 2008; Torres, 2005; Silva Guendulain, 2012; Ordóñez Charpentier, 2014).

In this article we show how social and economic relations are embedded in established transnational migration networks, through strategies that often arise spontaneously and that diversify the Kichwa's ability to move and trade over time. We use the migratory trajectories of three Kichwa-Otavalo individuals from different generations

³The Kichwa-Otavalo are located in the municipalities of Otavalo, Cotacachi and Antonio Ante, a mountain region which is crossed by the Pan-American Highway. The city of Otavalo, the artisan center of the region, is approximately two hours by bus from Quito and four hours from Tulcan, on the border with Colombia. The population of the province was estimated at nearly 400,000 inhabitants in 2010, of which 25.8 percent are considered indigenous (INEC 2010). The Kichwa-Otavalo are known for their handcrafted textiles, which along with their business skills, has allowed them to enter different transnational flows of commerce. This sets them apart from other Ecuadorian and southern cone indigenous groups (Meisch, 2002).

⁴The term Kichwa is used hereinafter to refer to this population following the uses of the community in Colombia from which the research comes. The word “kichwa” alludes to who belongs to the indigenous group and at the same time is translated as “the language of the people”.

to illustrate these processes. The journeys made by these men share an origin in the province of Imbabura, and include passing through Colombia, something that influenced how they arrived at other destinations. Two cases are directly related to the community in Bogotá, which has emerged as a major migratory destination in the last 80 years (Ordóñez et al., 2014). The Colombian capital is a point of departure and arrival, both for Kichwa inhabitants of the city and for those who come temporarily; a space where migration strategies are implemented which can take migrants to destinations all over the world.

Our contribution is to show the scenarios that arise from the crossing of old migration strategies with the current context and that intervene in Kichwa migration. The trajectories we show belong to migrants of three different generations who left Andean towns in the area surrounding Otavalo (Quinchiqui and Cotacachi, both less than 30 minutes by car north of this city). The migrants in these trajectories passed through Colombia on their first trips. In the case of the oldest journey, the trips are limited to this country, something characteristic of his generation. The two most recent ones include trips to Europe. This represents the evolution of Kichwa commercial networks that began with migration to countries close to Ecuador, such as Colombia and Peru, and expanded to other more distant countries in the second half of the twentieth century (Meisch, 2002; Kyle, 2003).

While some authors have proposed typologies of Kichwa migration that divide the flows of different generations by “stages” —in which people traveled in particular sequences related to previous migrations (Ordóñez Charpentier, 2008)— we prefer to avoid typologies since they do not reflect the connection, the direct relationship and the permanence of different migratory strategies that are maintained or continue to be presented regardless of the generations.

For example, although the expansion into Europe began in the 1970s and 1980s, migration to Colombia continued, all three cases began as sporadic migrations and their subsequent permanent or transitory nature changes throughout the lives of the migrants themselves. What is clear is that trips to Europe subsequently arise from migration experiences to Colombia, and that in individual narratives the strategies used in this country are references for understanding subsequent strategies.

It is important to note that at the historic moment of expansion into Europe and other regions, the permanently established population in Bogota also participated, as kinship and commerce continued, as they are today, to be inherent in the organization of transnational travel. We do not assume that these are the only forms of migration, but we recount the dynamic panorama of migration strategies of people from the same region and similar social conditions, which allow us to account for the continuities, changes, tensions and meeting points between them.

TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS AND FIELDS

Transnational migration, as a concept, appeared at the end of the last century as a response to classic notions of migration as a one-way movement in which the migrant loses contact with his or her place of origin and must face the country of arrival alone (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc, 1995). This concept provided migration studies with analytical structures that allowed them to understand the ways in which migrants incorporated and settled in new destinations, while at the same time they maintained relations with their country of origin.

As a result, analyses emerge of how flows of people, capital, goods and ideas inscribe migrants, their families, partners and friends in complex networks of relationships that extend beyond the national borders of the countries of origin and arrival (Levitt, 2001; Fog Olwig, 2007). While the initial theoretical approach pointed to the diminishing importance of the state, studies today see it as a vital actor in the global processes that articulate these relationships (Kearney 1995; Ong, 1999; Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004; Suárez Navaz, 2008).

Studies of migratory networks make evident the economic relations and rationalities of populations which migrate and settle permanently and temporarily (Portes and Böröcz, 1989; Portes and Walton, 1981). They have also contributed to the study of how migration affects related persons, whose exposure, or lack thereof, to new environments has effects on how they understand themselves and how they fit into specific contexts (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). In this way, the analysis of networks over time makes it possible to unravel the particularities of population flows, making explicit the social, economic and political relations of people (associated through kinship, work, ethnicity, etc.) that, in the case of transnational migrants, are articulated through members in different places and countries (Fog Olwig, 2007). Not all members of a network migrate or migrate simultaneously, and there are often members who relate in different ways to the flows, either in economic terms or on more ephemeral issues, such as their identity.

Some critics of network analysis question the emphasis on the fluidity and porous nature of borders or on the notion of mobility as something emancipatory, freeing social actors from the structural constraints of the country (Kearney, 1995; Ordóñez, 2015). Attention has also been drawn to the important and often decisive role played by other agents, both in the receiving countries and in the countries of origin. Among these agents are the recruitment agents of formal and informal migrant workers, as well as other intermediaries that affect not only mobility and the types of mobility that can be generated (regular, irregular, permanence times and others) but also the volume of migrant populations (Krissman; 2005).

Other criticisms suggest that the apparent autonomy with which these agents move and insert themselves into new environments is a fiction that hides how differential power relations are restructured at the community and family level (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994).

Many of these perspectives have sought to unravel the effects of migration on gender relations. In the case of Kichwa-Otavalo migration, Ruiz Balzola (2008) shows how notions of independence and autonomy among Kichwa women in Spain are accompanied by forms of domination reproduced daily in the labor, sentimental, and sexual spheres. Thus, networks are not inherently emancipatory, but can reproduce, maintain and redefine hierarchical structures of inequality (Glick Schiller, 2015, p. 2277).

Suárez Navaz (2008: 927-31) understands migratory networks as social relations between people whose projection in the political and cultural geography of action of its members constitute transnational social fields in which governments, other institutions and agents play an important role. These different agents and collaborators can be found at different scales and in different points of the network, not only in national, regional and community institutions (Levitt, 2015, p. 2287). They also act as intermediaries with the local contacts that are established in migration (Krissman, 2005).

Thus, by understanding the participation of the different agents that have effects on the political economy of transnational fields (which are not necessarily visible or explicit when mapping networks), it is possible to see the apparently random intersections between migrants who do not belong to the same networks, and allows queries about the form that migration takes in a heterogeneous population that is not necessarily coherently articulated in time and space (Faist, 2015).

Colombia offers an example of transnational migration networks that has not been sufficiently studied. With the political juncture following the 1991 constitution, the stage was set for the political recognition as a Colombian indigenous group of part of the Kichwa-Otavalo population present in the country. This recognition was condensed into the creation of an urban indigenous council in the capital (Chaves and Zambrano, 2006; Caicedo, 2010; Bocarejo, 2012). Colombian multiculturalism came to play a differentiating role between Kichwa born in Colombia or with several years of residence (who can legally be “recognized” as members of a Colombian ethnic group) and foreign Kichwa (who do not meet the same conditions), creating political differences between them (Ordóñez et al., 2014).

Although only a part of the Kichwa population residing in Colombia is included in these recognition processes, those involved in the networks continue to interact with each other through family and commercial relations that are independent of the Colombian State. However, in the studies of this population there is a tendency towards methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002), in which the group’s ties with Ecuador are mentioned tangentially (although not with Kichwa migrants in other countries), but national borders are assumed as the discrete limit of analysis and the problems of the population are seen as something particular to a Colombian indigenous group.

Although recognition policies in Colombia “locally” impact the political and social organization of the Kichwa, the borders of the nation-state cannot be naturalized because its territorial limits and policies do not define the unity of analysis nor do they encompass

the totality of relations that affect the community (Suárez Navas, 2008, p. 927). The cases discussed in this article support this reality by showing the overlapping migratory journeys of individuals of different generations present in Colombia, which although located, even in short seasons, in the nation (as a political-territorial unit), are linked to social processes that escape this framework. It is also notorious that they escape in different directions in the transnational social field, overcoming the binational structures that continue to be reproduced in many studies (Levitt, 2015).

THREE CASES OF KICHWA-OTAVALO MIGRATION

We will address three migration accounts of Kichwa merchants and musicians who traveled the world in different periods over the last 70 years. They are not related to each other by kinship or friendship, but the networks they have passed through are intercrossed at particular points. We thus provide ethnographic summaries of these journeys, which are rich in detail and illustrate the particularities of their transnational movements and how they are articulated in time.

Don Sixto

Don Sixto was born to a poor family in Quinchuquí, Ecuador, around 1930, and learned weaving from his father as a child. Between the ages of 12 and 16 (his memory fails) he traveled to Bogotá with two friends; they passed through Tulcán (a border city in the north of Ecuador that connects with Colombia), as well as through the cities of Ipiales, Pasto, Popayán and Armenia, in Colombia. In a journey of eight days they brought only a little toasted corn and washed their clothes in streams; they even had to beg for money during the trip.

Sixto settled in downtown Bogotá and was an assistant for one of the first Kichwa weavers in the city. Then he started taking hats and cloth to Ecuador and returning to Bogotá with Ecuadorian clothes and textiles that he sold in the capital. They were difficult journeys, as they had to go around La Laguna Yahuarcocha to avoid the confiscation of merchandise, passing to the city of Ibarra (Ecuador), two and a half hours by car, twenty-four hours on foot (107 kilometers) from the border with Colombia and then to Otavaló. During his first trip, his father bought a house in the city of Atuntaqui with the help of money that Sixto brought him on his travels, which meant that Don Sixto's father went from rural life to urban life.

At the age of 15 Sixto married the sister of one of the first Kichwa entrepreneurs in Bogotá. He supplied several merchants, mainly Kichwa who arrived in that city and also shipped to other cities. In addition, his brother-in-law enjoyed a reputation as a wealthy Kichwa who brought people to work in Bogotá. Sixto began to travel throughout

Colombia, selling both the clothes his employer gave him and those brought to him by a cousin from Ecuador.

As an independent merchant, he traveled to Medellín, Barranquilla, Cartagena and Santa Marta. Barranquilla was his favorite city, and he spent long periods there (he claims to have lived there for four years) selling textiles and clothes on the street with a stand/suitcase on his shoulder. His white pants, long hair, hat, poncho and sandals helped him in the trade, because everyone recognized him as indigenous person and as an Ecuadorian, but he also suffered discrimination. Sixto laughs as he remembers when he was approximately 25 years old and he cut his hair and dressed as a “mestizo” to go to the movies (he had not been admitted because he was “an indian”). But then he lost almost all his customers because they preferred to buy from the “Ecuadorian” (Sixto, personal statement, September 28, 2012). When he returned by plane from his travels, he arrived at the Techo airport in Bogotá, closed in 1959. He sent money back to his father with returning countrymen to help him pay off a debt that eventually left him homeless in Ecuador. At that time, Sixto did not have his documents as a regular migrant, so he had to bribe the police to avoid problems.

Sixto had 6 children, four born in Colombia (three men, one woman) and two who were born in Ecuador, when he returned temporarily for three years. Along the way, the older children (all teenagers) stayed in a workshop of their first employer, in the border city of Ipiales. When they returned to Colombia, they settled in Zipaquirá (a tourist city to the north of Bogotá) where some countrymen had mentioned to him that “sales are good” there and helped him settle down. His wife sold handicrafts and he wandered around selling clothes to foreign tourists. He says, repeating the English he learned: “Do you speak English? That was mentioned a lot around there. How much? How much?” then one would say: ‘Two hundred, two hundred, three hundred, four hundred’, like that, and then I would lower it.” (Sixto, personal statement, October 15, 2014). After this, Don Sixto and his family returned to Bogotá a year later, settling in the south of the city, where they have lived for four decades.

Sixto and his family used to sell their products at fairs in nearby cities and in downtown Bogotá. The merchandise was brought from Ecuador by his children or by countrymen. For 17 years his family has been making clothes in Bogotá, something they find more profitable today than selling Ecuadorian handicrafts.⁵ As well as in other families, the distribution of work is tied to gender, where women make garments and men trade, although on dates close to the delivery of orders all support in manufacturing. Ten years ago, Don Sixto began to explore commercial possibilities in the eastern plains of Colombia. Now in his eighties, he is still talking about going out to trade as an “adventurer.”

⁵This was after the dollarization of Ecuador in 2000.

Don Eduardo

Don Eduardo was born in the 1950s in a rural community near Cotacachi, no more than a 20-minute walk from the center of town. He has known eleven countries in his life - four in Latin America. He lived eight years in Colombia and has traveled twice for extended periods to Germany and Spain. He has eight children, four of them living in Europe (two of them born in Colombia) and four in Ecuador. Of the latter, two have already begun to travel seasonally to Colombia, where we met, and more recently to Italy, Spain, and Russia.

Eduardo learned to use looms with his father and later with a relative in Quito. It was hard work, from four in the morning until late at night. Knowledge of weaving brought him to Colombia in the 1970s, hired by an acquaintance of the family to work in Cúcuta, Norte de Santander, a city on the border with Venezuela. Eduardo left his wife in Otavalo and traveled without documents. His contract consisted of room and board and his employer said he would only pay him in Ecuador, in front of his father, so that he would not waste the money. Eventually he got tired of being “exploited” and went to work with another Kichwa, who sent him to bring weavers from Ecuador and allowed him to travel with his wife, who helped prepare food for the Ecuadorian team that ran the factory. Eduardo worked for two years without receiving any money, they only gave him a TV set and his living expenses. Finally, he set up his own weaving factory with little capital, thanks to the contacts he had made and his work with the looms. He had been in charge of getting embroiderers who made dresses and shirts, he knew suppliers of textiles and threads, and he had Venezuelan customers who bought most of the product. Then Eduardo brought his 13-year-old brother-in-law and other family members (one now lives in Mexico) and they started making some money from their work on the weaving machines and marketing their products. His main partners were Venezuelans and during bad seasons he sold throughout the cities of the Colombian Caribbean, from Cartagena and Santa Marta to Sincelejo. Eduardo returned to Ecuador for “merchandise” up to twice a year, buying dresses in Cuenca and other merchandise in Otavalo. He had a passport issued at the Ecuadorian consulate in Colombia, but without any visa or work permit. In the eight years he lived in Cúcuta he had two children,⁶ then he went bankrupt and returned to Ecuador.

Back in Cotacachi, Eduardo and his wife worked recruiting day laborers from all over the province of Imbabura for an agricultural and fruit company on the Ecuadorian coast. This was achieved by taking advantage of the festivities of the San Juanes⁷ to look for people, so Eduardo became known in the region. After five years he left the company and

⁶It is difficult to determine how Colombian immigration laws affected these first generations because of the ambiguous legal contexts in which they seemed to unfold and because many do not keep their documents from times past.

⁷The festivities of San Juan and San Pedro recently renamed "Inti Raymi," at the end of June. They constitute one of the central markers in the annual cycle of Imbabura.

with his children began to travel to tourist sites in Ecuador to sell handicrafts. Eduardo's innovative designs came from an American Indian art book he bought in Cúcuta, Colombia, where he copied patterns of bracelets and necklaces. Since then Eduardo has dedicated himself to handicrafts, including taking a technical “business” course in Otavalo, from which he retains a diploma and a small monograph he wrote in order to graduate.

A decade later, again in the San Juanes, Eduardo met a German who spoke to him about Europe. Although he knew artisans and musicians who had traveled to Europe, none of his family had done so and he also did not know how to organize musical groups, which was apparently the most profitable option for those trips. His eldest son went to Germany and learned enough from other indigenous musicians about the sale of merchandise, the organization of musical troupes on the street, and how to handle the police. He considered that this was enough to take his father, some cousins and other acquaintances with him. Eduardo arrived in Germany in 1994 and with the help of his German friend bought a van in Holland to transport the whole group. Eduardo, who had road experience and an international license, was chosen as the driver.

The five men slept in the van, looking for places to carry out their musical presentations in and to sell the handicrafts they had taken from Otavalo. Occasionally they were stopped by the police (because of the Dutch license plates of the van), who confused them with Peruvians or Bolivians. Eduardo suddenly goes from feeling excited to being sad as he recalls the first winter, when he could not work and only learned to avoid neo-Nazis who had attacked some fellow Otavalans. In the spring they continued looking for work and helped in the construction of the house of the German friend.

One morning in Berlin they parked the van and went to have breakfast while one from the group was changing the oil on the van in the parking lot of a multi-story building. Eduardo returned and found several policemen looking for the driver. He was arrested and only received help from a translator the next day. The only thing he understood from the interrogation was that they were accused of “terrorism” because they parked above a police station they were suspected of trying to cause an explosion. Once the interpreter realized that he did not intend to blow up the building, he told them that it was better for them to leave the country. Without money to return home, Eduardo went to Holland hoping to find help from countrymen. He was afraid to return to Germany, because he was told that he would be given 12 years in prison if he returned. Without finding help, he ended up on the streets, where he decided to sell the little merchandise he had left while trying to be deported:

I went out to sell what I had, a little bit of handicrafts, and then in half an hour I had finished, I had like 450 Florins. At that time the currency was Florins. So, I had money to eat and all, but I needed about 200 or 300 Florins to buy a ticket. But I had necklaces and the next day I decided to go out to sell some again so that the police could deport me. And none of that happened, I was in the same place so the police could catch me and deport

me. But nothing...and the police came, but they bought some stuff, he says laughing, and they told me: 'you are Mexican'. No,' I told them, 'I'm from Ecuador. Where is Ecuador? It doesn't exist on the map. Then I told them: 'It's at the end of the world, maybe' [laughs] (Eduardo, personal statement, June 30, 2014).

It was on the streets that Eduardo met a Hungarian who gave him lodging and food in exchange for helping him pick up abandoned bicycles at dawn, which the Hungarian restored and sent to India. Now more stable, he contacted a fellow Otavalan who was in Germany and who needed a driver for the van that would transport his musical group: "Don Eduardo, I need a driver because I don't have a license. Come to Germany, once you're screwed, you're screwed. And you'll have to get screwed if you want to succeed, come with me, and if not, just leave" (Eduardo, personal statement, June 30, 2014).

His second visit was short because his German friend decided Eduardo was depressed and helped him get a ticket back to Ecuador. His son, on the other hand, eventually arrived in Spain, and helped three siblings to join him, which required Eduardo to return to Colombia for his children's birth certificates (to apply for residency). The four currently work in different cities in Spain and Italy as employees, making music and selling handicrafts on weekends. In summer they make longer trips. In these jobs, they also sell crafts that Eduardo manufactures in Ecuador and sends them through acquaintances who travel between the two countries. When Ecuadorian crafts are scarce, they also get merchandise in Madrid.

In 2013 Eduardo returned to Europe with a special permit and some merchandise to assist his son, who was hospitalized. This time he only brought bracelets that he made inspired by his book of Native American designs, designs that he does not exhibit in Otavalo to avoid being copied. For eight months he took care of his son and sold the merchandise. He showed us his new designs with silver beads he got from Indian merchants in Madrid. He talks about returning a third time to see if his son is doing better.

Eduardo has seen a change in Ecuador, from a time when indigenous people stepped off the sidewalk to give way to mestizos, for example, to an Imbabura of urban indigenous people with status and affluence (Lalander, 2010; Huarcaya, 2010). In sixty years, he went from working on traditional looms to be a musician and, eventually, to being recognized as a craftsman. His travels through Colombia and the designs inspired by the book he had bought in Cúcuta led him to be one of the first artisans to make American Indian costumes for Kichwa musicians in Europe. Eduardo showed us videos of the San Juanes from half a decade ago:

"Do you see that headdress? And the outfit, I made it for my son in Italy," – he tells us as we watch the traditional taking over of Cotacachi Square; a mass of people dancing and drinking in circles around the central park–. "We used to dress up as the Lone Ranger or the Phantom, but now everyone

dresses like that; I was one of the first to make those outfits (Eduardo, personal statement, July 3, 2014).

Their children's generation began to use these costumes in presentations in Europe as a complement to help them raise more money.⁸ Made mainly in Cotacachi and Peguche, these outfits cost between 500 and 1,800 dollars, depending on the design; nowadays, they are essential for young people who venture to make itinerant music.

David

David was born in Cotacachi, in the community of La Calera (a 30-minute walk from downtown Cotacachi) in the early 1990s. David is a pioneer in his family in leaving the country to work as a street musician. He made his first trip to Bogota at the age of 19, accompanied by Oscar and Roby, the youngest son of Don Eduardo. He crossed the border with the Tarjeta Andina⁹ with the intention of surpassing the three months of allowed stay. They arrived in Bogotá with nowhere to stay and little money. They started going to a park where the police didn't make much trouble for them and where other Kichwa musicians occasionally played. They stayed in a motel where they slept lying by the door for fear of being attacked at night. During an encounter with the police, who took them off the street to control the "invasion" of public space, the agents found that their permits had expired, and they were taken to an immigration office where they were issued a deportation order. They understood this simply as a deadline to leave the country, so they continued to work in the downtown area, where we met them.

Their luck changed when a woman from Bogota offered them lodging in her house. They lived there for two years without being charged. The woman heard from the Kichwa Major Indigenous Council of Bogota. And so, this woman invited the group of Kichwa guests to go to the Council. The group participated in cultural events but also had some conflicts with other Kichwa musicians, because in addition to combining Andean music with "new age" music and wearing Native American costumes that are not common among the Kichwa in Colombia, they sold their records below the agreed street price. In addition, David fell in love with a young Kichwa girl from an important family from the council, whose members, long-time transnational travelers, are university educated. He feels he was

⁸Another reason is that the police bother the musicians less because they see these presentations as an expression of indigenous culture.

⁹The Tarjeta Andina (literally "Andean Card") is a migratory document which authorizes the transit between countries of the citizens of the member countries of the Andean Community of Nations (Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia). It is valid for three months and can be renewed only once (Ordóñez et al., 2014, p. 46).

treated like a Kichwa of another “class”: less educated, with little affluence and no ties to the community in Colombia.

The group returned without money to Ecuador in 2012 for the San Juanes. Two months later David, back in Bogotá with his girlfriend, tried unsuccessfully to finish high school. Because he had a deportation order, he entered without going through immigration services and had to bribe three policemen on the way. Before returning to Ecuador, David met a Kichwa who had been in Moscow and had contacts in Otavalo. He was looking for musicians to teach them how to play to go to Russia. The people David met were Kichwa merchants who knew Bogotá and the Colombian Caribbean but knew nothing about musical presentations.

His new partners were older than David and were merchants established in Imbabura who had their own families. They mortgaged some goods and got more than \$30,000 USD for the trip. Once in Ecuador, David dedicated himself to buying the instruments and merchandise and ordering the Native American outfit that he would wear while the group, through contacts in Russia, processed labor invitations so that they could obtain visas of a longer duration than those for tourism. Although the attempt to get work visas failed, the group decided to try to enter as tourists. David offered to go first, under the agreement to notify his associates if they let him go through immigration with all the merchandise.

David arrived in Russia with four suitcases full of handcrafts (bracelets, dream catchers, small musical instruments) and his outfit (but no clothes other than the ones he was wearing). He spent 600 dollars (on the failed permit) and 3 thousand more that the partners lent him for the ticket. He calculates that there were 14 thousand dollars in merchandise that they bought before the trip, 8 suitcases, 200 kilos. Adding the group tickets (approximately 15 thousand dollars) and some other expenses, he rounded the investment to 45 thousand dollars in total.

At the airport he was asked in Russian about the contents of the suitcase, to which he replied in Spanish “son recuerdos de mi hogar” (they are souvenirs from home) (David, personal statement, February 20, 2014). His “contact” picked him up at the airport at four o'clock in the morning in a car that was bought in Ukraine for his group by a Russian “friend” for \$4,000 USD. The contact in Russia lived in a small apartment with 15 more Kichwas sleeping on the floor. For five days David waited for his associates, while the other Kichwas taught him the business in Moscow and explained to him how to bribe the police to sell their records. In the five days he worked with them, he realized that it wasn't easy to sell merchandise on the street, but that the only thing that worked was to play and sell records. At the end of the day the profits were distributed, and depending on what they got, they had payments between 200 and 300 dollars.

When his group arrived, everything was ready. The fellow countryman he met in Bogota had got them the car, the equipment and a relative of another member of the group had bought the reproduction rights to four musical works of two Kichwa bands living in

Europe (approximately \$3,600 USD in total). With the rights in hand, they went to a studio and had hundreds of records made at one dollar each.

The first day they sold almost 200 records at 300 rubles each (9 dollars¹⁰) and merchandise (bracelets that in Ecuador are worth 30 cents, sold between 3 and 4 dollars and others, up to 12 dollars). David, happy with the result, suggested finishing the day's work early, but his associates refused. Then the police arrived and confiscated everything, leaving only the sound system. And so, began a rough period of almost three months, where they only collected enough for food, lodging, and the car. For David the problem was the lack of experience and “aguante” (ability to resist long hours of work in difficult conditions) of his colleagues, something he had learned in Bogota. Worried and disappointed, they heard that the tourist city of Sochi was better. They ended up working in this city where the director of a tourist park invited them to play and they managed to recover the investment in a month and a half. David also earned \$6,000 that he used to buy a cell phone to call family and friends in Ecuador.

In Sochi they met an 18-year-old Russian woman who served as an interpreter and as an intermediary in front of the police. She was paid between \$60 and \$120 a day. David learned Russian history from her, and they looked for nearby towns to go to. She also helped by sending remittances to Ecuador in amounts greater than those allowed for foreign “tourists.” As the expiration of the permit as tourists approached, they crossed into Abkhazia, a small country not fully recognized, which has a border with Georgia. They had to pay 3,000 rubles of bribe money (approximately 47 dollars) to enter, walk around and then return to Russia where they were detained for having “irregular documentation.” Some money and the language barrier solved everything, although David heard that two of his companions were questioned again upon returning to Ecuador by plane.

With the investment recovered and a surplus to show, David left the group, giving up the initial agreement to sell the car and sound equipment at the end of his trip to recover his share of the investment. He returned to Moscow alone, taking only his outfit and met a cousin who had lived in Italy since 2007 and who had Italian¹¹ nationality and could travel more freely. Since he had his own car, his cousin proposed that they work alone there in Russia, meeting with other Kichwa at night to eat and talk. They were groups that did not have any mobility: “I met groups that did not even have enough to eat, they slept in parks, under bridges” (David, personal statement, February 20, 2014). When there was leftover food, they left it on the table, knowing that there were colleagues sitting around waiting to take them.

The competition between groups for the most “touristic” spaces was high, and to have a car was a great advantage, they could spend some nights in the car to be in these places at

¹⁰All conversions were made by David during the interview.

¹¹It is difficult to determine the migratory status of relatives in other countries because the terms nationality and residence are often used in an interchangeable way.

dawn and get the best spots before everyone else. The musical presentations consisted in forming a line while they played some instrument in front of a microphone on the track of the CDs. They wore colorful costumes with tasseled bracelets, large feather headdresses and sometimes makeup, reminiscent of the American Sioux.

Before returning to Ecuador, his cousin suggested to go to Italy. The problem was the visa. Although it didn't happen, the strategy they had planned was that the cousin would return to Italy by car and David would wait in Turkey for a passport from a relative similar to him to cross the border, a strategy used by some compatriots in the past. They said it was easy, since the control over documentation was not so rigid and for the Italian policemen all the indigenous people were the same. However, after five months of travel, David returned to Ecuador. He was planning his third trip to Russia in 2017.

THREE GENERATIONS OF MIGRANTS

The abovementioned trajectories present the changes in migration strategies of the last seventy years, as well as the continuities of some practices. The first thing that stands out is the importance of the looms for the first two generations, a vital activity in Otavalo since the colonial period (Salomon, 1973). Sixto and Eduardo arrived and settled in Colombia thanks to their knowledge of the use of the loom, which together with the family contacts they had in Colombia made them valuable workers. Their migratory strategy is historically consistent with the process of indigenous urbanization of Imbabura and the consolidation of indigenous businessmen who went out to look for economic opportunities and partners abroad. This is the characteristic of the oldest families in Bogota, which currently are part of the backbone of the city council and with whom the descendants of Don Sixto are politically, economically and socially related.

A study of the conformation and recognition of the indigenous council would show a continuity between these first entrepreneurs with looms and the current political power of the families that compose it, which provides a particular outline to the social field that emerges in the 1930s, and reconfigures the social stratification in Otavalo (Collaredo-Mansfeld, 1999). The social field also has effects in Colombia as well. In the 1970s, the relationship between textile work and the Kichwa population underwent important transformations thanks to the appearance of street music groups.

Knowing about weaving helped Sixto and Eduardo become independent, it is the basis of the "affluence" of their families. In the shift from looms to music, we see the continuity of practices that illustrate Kichwa social stratification and its relationship to networks. With several generations apart, David and Sixto ventured without "partners" or money to seek fortune in Bogota. Sixto's experience working with looms is then similar to what David did with his musical knowledge and experience playing with street groups. The access to more affluent and established partners is crucial since these connections are

financed within the network but carried out by people in marginal or less affluent positions.

In all three cases, the commercial networks to which these migrants belong are only part of the relationships that determine their lives in transit, since they do not offer homogeneous access to the possibilities of migrating and working. There is a certain degree of spontaneity in the social relations that some autonomous movements generated, where the individual “entrepreneurial” action connects the “adventures” of these people to flows that tie them to the networks that are formed randomly. Although they seem to be “adventures,” the trips end up connected to more structured networks where other people and other products flow.

Eduardo's migration to Europe in the 1990s seems to be determined on two occasions by strangers, a German and a Hungarian, who “give him a hand,” intervening in his misfortune and helping him. In David's case something similar happens with the lady from Bogota who gives them lodging and connects them with the community there and also in the way his interpreter ends up determining his access to Russia. In both cases, these backgrounds, which seem to be coincidences and which spontaneously arise, connect them to the transnational social field of Kichwa migration; that is, they make possible their inscription in the logics of countries where their migration status is ambiguous, in such a way that they can move and act effectively in their territory.

Krissman (2005) has drawn attention to the absence of theoretical models that realize the importance of contacts and intermediaries such as those mentioned above in network analysis. While in the journeys we have described other agents appear (indigenous Kichwa) that finance trips or make transnational recruitment of workers, there are intermediaries that become more important as the migratory movements of the main characters of these journeys move geographically away from the areas of influence of these other Kichwa agents. The informality of the relationship established with some of these contacts (people they met in the streets) can become a much more structured relationship, such as that of Rosa, David's interpreter or Eduardo's German friend. In both cases these contacts were linked in networks and many other musicians have travelled and obtained cars and other services through them. It is also notorious that intermediaries are present in the trajectory of the 1990s and in David's travels from 2010 onwards.

There are also similarities in the political contexts of migration that attract these spontaneous movements. The “adventures” of trips to Colombia, Germany and Russia occur at different times, to very different countries, but all at their time occur in countries where it is easy to enter and live in the interstices of legality and in each case there is an economic and social context that “receives” indigenous migrants with good economic results, despite the suffering they describe.

It is also notorious that both Colombia and Europe have changed for some of these migrants, especially in the legal context as well as in their structures of inclusion (such as the Kichwa Indigenous Council of Bogota), making it more difficult to stay irregularly and

work or generating processes of inclusion and political recognition that redefine some of the positions within the network. The social field, in this case, has effects on social stratification and determines the political organization in the nodes and the way in which flows occur. This social field also somewhat determines who invests and who takes risks, who is the employer and who is the employee. In both cases the previous generations that took advantage of the initial laxity have established and regularized members that allow and reproduce the flows of the network. In this way, David discovers the great usefulness of his Italian cousin and Eduardo ends up with “associates” (his sons) in Italy and Spain. This also works in terms of the particular nodes of the network.

In Colombia, the Kichwa have maintained trade relations with Ecuador, but they have also made these relations independent by establishing other relations with factories and handcraft production at a local level. Similarly, Eduardo recognizes Madrid, Spain, as a place of “production” where Kichwa migrants in Spain can be supplied, even if in transit to other countries. Something parallel happens for David, who must acquire the copyrights of music from groups which were more established formerly in Europe (in countries such as Spain, Italy or Germany). In this sense we see networks in transnational social fields, where established members consolidate receiving nodes which attract new migrants and concentrate the wealth, information and knowledge that allow more spontaneous movements. There is also an imbalance between the ability to read the political-administrative situation of the environment (to know how and when to bribe the authorities, to understand and take advantage of the lax attitude towards deportations) and a large number of migratory flows that set the stage for new incursions into transnational social fields.

Expansion into different countries of the European Union brings with it some of these new strategies. Both Eduardo and David depended on cars bought by European “contacts,” which not only implied a greater investment of money, but also relations of friendship and commerce with local people. Situations that for them become part of their everyday life, such as the need to acquire a car or make round trips to neighboring countries (as is the case with trips to Georgia), generate specific documentary practices, for example, as happens with the process of international driving licenses in order to be able to use the cars without problems, or the knowledge that they must have about the limits of the permit times offered by the visas they acquire and the consequences of overcoming those times.

These strategies are also typical of music, which has replaced the textile trade in the last two trajectories. For Eduardo it's not only for economy, but for practicality: “In a suitcase I can put a couple of textiles, it will be a hundred dollars, but in the same space I can fit hundreds of dollars in bracelets and small things” (Eduardo, personal statement, July 3, 2014). Another strategy Kichwas have used in the United States, where they have had their products confiscated at customs, is to buy bracelets and clothing made in India and put Made in Ecuador labels on them. Carrying large products is becoming less profitable and new, less cumbersome, strategies are being sought. At the end of the day, it is not the same

to get copyrights or audio equipment to play on the street as it is to be involved in a constant transaction of bulks of merchandise between several countries.

Just as in the forms of commerce used by the Kichwas exposed here, there are also similarities in the temporalities and spaces in which one goes from being part of spontaneous networks to a more structured panorama of migration in a transnational social field. The clearest example is the San Juanes.¹² These festivals are presented as an ideal scenario for the formation of new ties, for the exploration of new merchandise or new “stories” which open the doors to different destinations or networks; new forms of incursion into the transnational social field for the three generations. A similar argument has already been made about other festivals, such as the *Pawkar Raymi*, which is held in February. During this festivity, transnational migrants return from different parts of the world to rebuild, but also to make evident certain social gaps that are created within the community, where there is a clear but reciprocal tension between exogenous and globalized work (whose emblem would be the transnational Kichwa migrant) and an artisanal production and endogenous social difference represented by the workers who produce handicrafts and still work the fields in Imbabura (Wibbelsman, 2009; Ordóñez Charpentier, 2008).

It is worth emphasizing how the network is projected in the transnational social field. Through the trajectories that we have described, we can observe the importance acquired by certain characters that have managed to enroll in several ways in the local dynamics of the European countries where they live, where there are even several of these characters with nationality of those countries, as occurs in Spain, Germany and Italy.

Migration laws, copyright laws, mobility, politics and work begin to play a role in how these relationships are structured, even when they originate in other places (such as Bogotá) that, in turn, are permeated by state logics, other laws and other social referents. For example, “being” indigenous is very different for the Ecuadorian State than for the Colombian State, and both are radically different in the eyes of a European or from the Spanish, Italian or Russian State, but the network crosses these geographical and political spaces and is integrated in them “locating itself” in parts but maintaining, reproducing and, in some cases, spontaneously generating the flows that we have described.

In David's experience we also see how the politically and economically established nodes are structured in the social field. In Bogotá he learns the life of a street musician, but he also integrates with the Kichwa community recognized in the city and suffers a localized social stratification that reflects his marginal position in the networks that cross it. His girlfriend emerges as a class impossibility that he seeks to overcome first through education and then with the status and influx that his experience in Russia brings. In his

¹²The San Juanes are a two-week period that includes the ecumenical feasts of San Juan and San Pedro. They are celebrated between late June and early July of each year, commemorating the harvest and thanking the sun. It is considered the most important feast of the Kichwa-Otavaló and has been renamed in some contexts as *Inti Raymi*.

short two decades of life, the experience of this Kichwa is marked by the effects of migration since its inception and the waves it has generated in Colombia, Ecuador and the European countries he has visited. But it also inhabits a world of representations where Kichwa musicians are appropriating the North American indigenous aesthetic to maximize the eccentricity and indigenous autochthony and to generate greater income in the presentations. This aesthetic is simultaneously penetrating the daily life of the Kichwa in Ecuador and Colombia and begins to emerge as a truly “autochthonous” expression of the Kichwa-Otavalo culture.

It is also clear that ethnicity plays important but different roles in the way the social field expands. All three generations depend on their ethnicity to project a particular identity that facilitates trade. Let's consider Sixto, a low-income man who left Imbabura in the 1930s. He is indigenous, something that for him determines who he marries, the associations he establishes and the daily practices that define his family and work life. However, it is difficult to know whether being indigenous for him is the same politically informed identity his children and grandchildren may have, and definitely has little to do with the more recent configurations that have led to the renaming of the festivities of San Juan and San Pedro as Inti Raymi, a term that puzzles people his age in Imbabura.¹³ Being indigenous for Sixto does not mean making the same investments of money, social capital and time that the next generations make to “manage” practices and representations of what different audiences consider “indigenous.” In his situation, Sixto's inclusion in the transnational social field has more to do with his commercial activities, his relationships within the networks, his migration and the doors he opened, for his sons and daughters, to the possibility of new and more varied spontaneous Kichwa transnational migration networks that eventually become part of the transnational social field.

In Eduardo's case, the first part of his trajectory is close to that of Sixto. These two characters follow the migratory flows of an ethnic group expanding through Latin America through the textile trade. It is only after the two long seasons abroad, eight years in Colombia and two in Europe, that the designs he was using for the bracelets were expanded to full outfits. Believing that he is one of the first to make these costumes points to the moment they start to be used, towards the end of the 90's as an accessory to musical presentations that incorporate more *New Age* sounds.¹⁴

We also see the circular relationship with this aesthetic, which originally appears to maximize the “indigenous” effect marketable in Europe but at the same time enters the local sphere as a valid and highly desirable representation. In the strategic process of marketing their “otherness,” many musicians and craftsmen incorporate those elements

¹³ Many older indigenous people explain change as something to attract tourists, while younger people take it as an ancestral tradition.

¹⁴ Both Eduardo and David recognize the huge influence of Peruvian and American groups that began experimenting with these new sounds and the combinations of American-indigenous costumes.

that in the beginning seem to be “essentialized” from another culture. These elements enter the imaginaries of those involved thanks to the networks, but they do so in a distinctive way through the migratory nodes that are formed in the transnational social field. This leads to differentiated processes of identification and construction of identity in dynamics that exceed any “locality” but that are also “located” in a differentiated way between the nodes. Indeed, the Plaza de los Ponchos in Otavalo is full of these images that are not only for tourists and are found in the homes and clothing of many people, mostly indigenous but also among young mestizos.

CONCLUSIONS

Looking at Kichwa migration processes as a transnational network has a double meaning. On the one hand, it allows us to approach the ways in which the community is interconnected globally through networks. The constant flow of things, people and so forth allows different strategies with which the Kichwa face different realities to meet on the same stage. This is how they face the challenges of everyday life in different places of the world, at the same time that new destinations are disputed, new strategies emerge and even new ways of understanding themselves as indigenous people and as migrants are discovered.

In Bogotá, the logics of political representation present a specific scenario in which the recognized population is building its image and legitimacy, limiting the field of action, or at least the challenge of being seen as indigenous before the State. At the same time, in the city there are Kichwa people being deported or under ambiguous legal conditions where their status as an indigenous person is overshadowed by their status as migrants, and it is thanks to the possible support they have in the networks that their stay in the city or flow to other parts of the world depends on (the city council can be part of this, but not always).

In scenarios other than Colombia, such as Spain, Italy or Russia, where there is not necessarily a political demarcation between “indigenous/migrant,” other ways of representing indigenous identity arise, which are not politically limited, just as their field of action as migrants is limited. In their work as indigenous musicians in Russia, there is an identity dispute, in which their musical presentation makes clear their identity as indigenous people in front of the audience that observes them, highlighting that identity over that of the migrant, which becomes more evident only in relation to the State or the Russian police.

These identity articulations as indigenous people and migrants, which simultaneously happen in Russia, Spain, and Bogota are hard to grasp and compare: the staging that allows the network to be sustained in Russia is inconsistent with the way in which the Kichwa identity has been constructed in Bogota, at least in political terms: the Kichwa in Bogota

would not dress in Sioux-inspired costumes, as David does in Russia. Likewise, it is not yet possible to think that the network is sufficiently constituted in Russia to give some kind of support to the Kichwa as a migrant as would perhaps happen in Bogota. The flows through networks allow new and old strategies to overlap, as well as access to diverse economic resources which facilitate movement. Observing these trajectories, one can also see how strategies emerge, especially those related to the construction of identity or ethnic recognition by state figures, which have a “validity” or a local sense, but which are not compatible in the network as a whole. This makes these new identities that arise simultaneously in different locations immeasurable for the same individuals. The logics of that immeasurability are also inscribed in the transnational social field, especially in the way in which certain processes of identity construction take place as indigenous people or as migrants. It is precisely there where daily, spontaneous responses begin to emerge, as well as better structured and planned ones, with which one seeks to weigh, in some way, the challenges that arise from migrating through networks. It also opens the doors to reflection on whether it is possible to speak of the appearance of a cosmopolitan Kichwa identity as a result of these contrasting transnational flows that enter into dialogue, and sometimes in dispute with each other....

Translator: Yahaira Nava Morán

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