Transnational Indigenous Migration: Racialized Geographies and Power in Southern Highland Ecuador

Victoria Stone-Cadena

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TRANSNATIONAL INDIGENOUS MIGRATION:
RACIALIZED GEOGRAPHIES AND POWER IN SOUTHERN HIGHLAND ECUADOR

by

VICTORIA STONE-CADENA

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2016
Transnational Indigenous Migration:
Racialized Geographies and Power in Southern Highland Ecuador

by

Victoria Stone-Cadena

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

Transnational Indigenous Migration: Racialized Geographies and Power in Southern Highland Ecuador

by

Victoria Stone-Cadena

Advisor: Marc Edelman

This study examines the shifting landscape of social and economic inequalities in the remittance-dominated region of southern highland Ecuador, focusing on the transformations brought about by increased international migration since the early 2000s. The broader question is whether or not transnational migration has facilitated political and social upward mobility among indigenous communities. More specifically I ask: in what ways does indigenous identity figure in contemporary international migration practices, how does transnational indigenous migration complicate bounded notions of rural indigenous life, and how might the strategies employed by indigenous migrants transform social and economic inequalities in two small towns in the Cañar province? In order to answer these questions, I engage a theoretical framework which draws from transnationalism and mobility studies and migration industry literature in order to more accurately depict the multiple and intersecting dimensions of contemporary indigenous migration.

I argue that indigenous migration challenges formerly rigid social inequalities and blurs geographic markers of class, ethnicity, and privilege in a region with a deep history of exploitation by mestizo landowners and business owners. My research found that migration has
created more stratification – not alleviated poverty for all involved. Rather, access to remittances and migration social networks has created inroads for indigenous entrepreneurs in business ventures. My research shows that despite many critiques of the long-term potential of non-governmental organizations’ development projects, NGOs have historically functioned as important avenues for change in these communities, served as intermediaries between state institutions and community-led projects, and also provided critical alternative possibilities for indigenous youth. These organizations clearly provided vital livelihood alternatives to international migration, largely stimulated by a period of neoliberal policy reforms which drastically affected the economy. They were also resources that supplemented underfunded education programs that launched many indigenous leaders on their career paths. Local leaders saw their community involvement as a critical counter-point, an important and vital alternative, to international migration. Lastly, I found that the agrarian reforms of the 1960s and 1970s provided the land needed for collateral for indigenous and rural migrants to cover costs within the informal economic lending structure of clandestine migration.
AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I’d like to thank the families and friends who opened their homes and shared their stories about the impact that migration has had on their lives and their communities. This dissertation bears witness to the hardships and sacrifices that they have made in the hopes of a better future.

This project would not have been possible without the support of my family and friends. From listening to the many different ideas I had for a research project to the challenges of finalizing this manuscript, I deeply appreciate your support and encouragement throughout this entire process. I thank my parents and grandparents for instilling in me a deep respect for learning, for encouraging my curiosity, as well sharing lessons of perseverance and maintaining a sense of humor at all times. I thank my grandmother, Victoria Malave, for planting the seed, for calling me doctor as a little girl, and my grandparents, Williard and Louise Stone, for always emphasizing the importance of education. And of course, I thank my husband and partner, Robert Cadena, who witnessed my frazzled days as a new graduate student to the frazzled days of finishing this dissertation, thank you for always believing in the importance of this project and supporting my efforts throughout. To our little guys, Lucas and Mason, thank you for being the bright light at the end of long days of writing.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Prof. Marc Edelman for the continuous support of my PhD study and related research, for his patience, motivation, and immense knowledge. His guidance helped me throughout the research and writing of this thesis. Along with my advisor, I would like to sincerely thank the rest of my thesis committee: Prof. Ana Ramos-Zayas, Prof. Donald Robotham, and Prof. John Collins, for their insightful comments and encouragement, but also for the challenging questions which helped me analyze
the material and place it within a broader context of human mobility. I greatly appreciate the time and energy of Prof. Marc Becker for his insightful and detailed comments on the final draft of this manuscript. I’d also like to thank Prof. Julie Skurski, Adrienne Lotson, Vivian Berghahn, Tina Lee, Erin Martineau, and Julie Birch, as well as may others, for their feedback over multiple drafts of this dissertation, as well as their encouragement after each milestone.

This research project benefited from the financial support from the Fulbright IIE, the Graduate Center MAGNET dissertation grant, as well as reconnaissance research grants from the Department of Anthropology and the CLACLS. Through my institutional affiliation with the Facultad Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO- Sede Ecuador), I benefited from the insights and networks of esteemed migration scholars Dr. Gioconda Herrera and Dr. Alicia Torres. Thank you to Miguel Caguana, Judy Blankenship, Dr. Jason Pribilsky, Dr. Brad Jokisch, and Francisco Guamán, former President of the UCIOT, for welcoming me as a colleague while I conducted my research in Ecuador.

When I first began my graduate career, I received a fellowship from the Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies (CLACLS) at the Graduate Center. I consider CLACLS my academic home in many respects. The Center has provided an intellectual space that connected me with outstanding and hard-working graduate students who have inspired me to complete this project. I’d like to thank Dr. Laird Bergad and Dr. Teresita Levy for cultivating such an important center that has supported so many students throughout the years. To my CLACLS familia, thank you, mil gracias, for all our chats over coffee and chocolate (and sometimes wine). Teresita Levy, Debora Upegui, Justine Calcagno, Laura Limonic, Mila Burns, Lawrence Cappello, Karen Okigbo, and Carolina Barrera-Tobón, I can only hope to find such an incredible group of supportive colleagues in my next adventure.
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Introduction

In the early morning hours, a passenger bus makes its way out of a small dusty town square. It meanders past partially constructed houses, whose large, empty windows look out over the quiet streets. The bus heads south along the Pan-American Highway, passing sparsely populated villages on its way towards Cuenca, the third-largest city of Ecuador (fourth if counting the Ecuadorian population in NYC) and historically the seat of a major Incan stronghold in the southern highlands. Beyond the outskirts of the colonial city, the bus ascends the western rim of the Andean cordillera and passes though Cajas National Park, whose peaks reach 4420 meters (14,500 feet) above sea level. At this elevation, the clouds hang suspended as a semi-permanent mist. Slowly, the bus winds through hillsides of sparse vegetation and rocky outcroppings. The headlights pierce the fog, cold air seeps in through the windows, and the passengers rest their heads, waiting to arrive at their destination.

The bus then begins to descend, at first passing eucalyptus trees, clusters of pines and later palm trees and tropical plants. A few houses line the roadway, some sit empty, and others restful, at this early hour. As the bus approaches sea level, the temperature and humidity rise. Over the next few hours, the bus crosses the coastal lowlands, through fields of banana trees, sugar cane, and grazing cattle. As dawn approaches, it skirts Guayaquil, the largest city in Ecuador, and continues towards the coast. The bus passes through small, sleepy towns, though the plazas will soon bustle with activity: vegetable vendors displaying their produce under tents of blue tarp; bicycle carts loaded with sugar cane, oranges, and fruit presses; and pick-up trucks

1 It was earlier held by the Cañari, an indigenous group that was well established in the southern highlands prior to the arrival of the Incan Empire.
loaded with freshly caught fish. Billboards line the roadway, advising on the dangers of clandestine migration. As the sun rises, the bus reaches its destination, and the passengers quietly disembark. Following the driver’s directions, they make their way through shrubbery and across the beach to await the dinghies that will carry them out to small fishing boats. And so begins their three-month journey to the United States.

Between 2000 and 2010, most U.S.-bound Ecuadorian migrants followed a route that began with a seven- to eight-day journey by sea and later — for two to three months — over land by car, train, makeshift cargo holds (in tankers and other courier trucks), bus, motorcycle, and foot. Since 2010, many migrants are able to fly to Central America, primarily to Honduras, and begin the journey over land. Alternatively they will cross the border into Colombia, and continue the journey by land. It is a route marked with danger, precariousness, and fear. Terrible stories abound, as friends and neighbors return from unsuccessful attempts and share their experiences. Routes and borders are increasingly policed by national migration control agencies, as well as drug cartels, and people undertake greater risks in search of alternative passage. These migrants begin under the weight of an unimaginable debt—US$12,000 to $15,000—for the cost of the journey, which includes the smugglers’ fees and most of the costs to be incurred along the way.

Many of those who board the bus in the southern highlands have never traveled to the coast or even seen the Pacific Ocean. “It’s like being a fish out of water,” said one indigenous migrant, an apt simile for the change in oxygen levels between the Andean mountains and the coast, as if there were too much oxygen for his body to process, long having acclimated to the altitude of his hometown in the highlands. Upon arriving in Honduras, Guatemala or Mexico,

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2 Using a selection of testimonials, Chapter Three describes the migration journey in more depth.
3 All translations found herein are by the author, with the exception of the testimonials of Mercedes. Her testimonial
traveling is interspersed with prolonged periods of waiting, as smugglers await updates on opportunities for passage or the arrival of payments. Once migrants finally cross over into the United States, they continue on to their final destinations of New York, Minneapolis, Oregon, or California, depending on where they may have contacts. The journey is an immense undertaking, but it is only the beginning of a life-changing experience for the migrant, and for the family and acquaintances left behind.

On August 13, 2005, a fishing ship sank off the coast of Colombia with one hundred ten passengers, all of them Ecuadorian migrants and their guides. Ninety-five lost their lives. The accident gripped the national imagination and the debate raged on about whether migration was worth the risk. Here was the plight, the danger, and the risks of the migration exodus that had gripped the country following the 2000 economic crisis. On a national level, Ecuadorians were leaving from all regions of the country, from remote villages to the major cities, Guayaquil and Quito, and included men and women from all social, ethnic, economic, and educational backgrounds. The government responded to the accident by seeking out the coyotes (Spanish for human smuggler) to prosecute them but could not alleviate the pain or financial loss that the family members had incurred. Many of these passengers had taken loans to cover the cost of the journey and the families retained this debt despite the failure of their journey. Most of the migrants were from southern Ecuador, from the Azuay and Cañar provinces, a region with a long history of migration to the United States, likely having traveled a similar bus ride as described earlier.

By 2007, many migrant families had joined an association called the Asociación de Migrantes 13 de Agosto. By late 2007, the Association was actively working with the Cuenca-
based Casa de Migrantes, established by the new Ministry of Migration by the newly appointed President Rafael Correa. The Casa worked to organize activities and programs to help migrants and migrant families in the region. In order to help these families cope with their loss and find ways to pay off the migration debt, the Casa had organized a series of bread-making workshops in the hopes of generating a means to find work or open businesses in the many small towns from which the families had traveled. They held the workshops every Saturday at a small factory just outside of Cuenca. The families would meet at the Casa, early in the morning, and ride together in small vans to the location. In addition to the bread-making courses, the all-day workshops included activities that helped both the children and adults identify emotional responses and constructive reactions to difficult scenarios. The families were divided into groups of three and were asked to workshop the proposed resolutions on a poster board. The groups convened after a period of time to discuss the merit of the various solutions. This comprised part of the psychological therapy to help families work through the shock of their loss.

I mention this project because it shows how the government was slowly coming to grips with the extent of the migration crisis. Here we can see the presence of the state, the migrants and their families, the smugglers and the dangers of the clandestine migration route, the question of development and business, and the level of public distress over migration.

Overview

This study examines the shifting landscape of social and economic inequalities in the remittance-dominated region of southern highland Ecuador, focusing on the transformations brought about by increased international migration since the early 2000s. The broader question is whether or not transnational migration has facilitated political and social upward mobility among indigenous communities. More specifically I ask: in what ways does indigenous identity figure in
contemporary international migration practices, how does transnational indigenous migration complicate bounded notions of rural indigenous life, and how might the strategies employed by indigenous migrants transform social and economic inequalities in two small towns in the Cañar province? In order to answer these questions, I engage a theoretical framework which draws from transnationalism and mobility studies and migration industry literature in order to more accurately depict the multiple and intersecting dimensions of contemporary indigenous migration.

I argue that indigenous migration challenges formerly rigid social inequalities and blurs geographic markers of class, ethnicity, and privilege in a region with a deep history of exploitation by mestizo landowners and business owners. My research found that migration has created more stratification – not alleviated poverty for all involved. Rather, access to remittances and migration social networks has created inroads for indigenous entrepreneurs in business ventures. My research shows that despite many critiques of the long-term potential of non-governmental organizations’ development projects, NGOs have historically functioned as important avenues for change in these communities, served as intermediaries between state institutions and community-led projects, and also provided critical alternative possibilities for indigenous youth. These organizations clearly provided vital livelihood alternatives to international migration, largely stimulated by a period of neoliberal policy reforms which drastically affected the economy. They were also resources that supplemented underfunded education programs that launched many indigenous leaders on their career paths. Local leaders saw their community involvement as a critical counter-point, an important and vital alternative, to international migration. Lastly, I found that the agrarian reforms of the 1960s and 1970s
provided the land needed for collateral for indigenous and rural migrants to cover costs within the informal economic lending structure of clandestine migration.

While people in Tambo, a small canton in the highland province of Cañar, have long depended on diversified subsistence strategies, including short-term migration to urban areas and the coast, contemporary migration practices produce distinct social transformations, such as new consumption and business practices. Indigenous migrant entrepreneurs, through informal and formal economic strategies, undermine regional, ideological, and structural forms of discrimination between white mestizos and indigenous people. While these transformations may seem promising for those on the margins, social stratification has increased between non-migrants and interrupted migrant households, on the one hand, and migrant entrepreneurs, on the other. Though social mobility is often defined in terms of economic and political gains, it is more than appropriating modern trappings, cars, houses, land, clothing, language, it is the ability to merge and blend these with a newly emerging sense of identity. De la Cadena (2010) points to the “image, rhetoric, institutions, and practices of the ‘lettered city’ (initially discussed by Rama (1960)...a term that described the power of literacy…and the central role of cities in deploying and reproducing it” (de la Cadena 2010, 346), as historically rooted in national imaginaries as the transformative power to a fully realized modern citizen. Among many indigenous communities, rather, the power of contemporary global circulations of indigeneity lies in the ability to “bring together apparently disparate frameworks as a way of reimagining categories of belong…and by extension, the meanings of modernity itself” (Goodale 2006, 634).

Transnational migration is not the only driving force of these changes. Broader economic and political changes, largely stimulated by a period of neoliberal policy reforms throughout the
1990s, have helped shape transformations in these communities. In the following chapters, I attempt to draw out some of these connections between the agrarian reforms of the 1960s and 1970s, the early inception of migration from the region, and the indigenous social movements of the 1990s, into a broader narrative of indigenous social mobility within Ecuador. These transformations are taking place across many Latin American countries. However it is important to note the particular trajectories and histories, as well as recognize the heterogeneous set of goals and strategies among indigenous leadership and organizations (Becker 2012; Goodale 2006; Cadena and Starn 2010; Sawyer 2004).

Negative national discourse around migration largely targets migrants who have left rural areas, or poor urban areas, citing the overwhelming burden on state institutions that their abandonment has caused. Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) point to these national mythscapes in their analysis of the constraints on mobility and stasis and the ideological function of mythscapes in the national imaginary. Indigenous migrants suffer from an inverted national mythscape in which their indigenous identity becomes rooted in a nostalgic, fixed space against which modern aspirations (such as those sought by migrant households) are viewed as inauthentic. This discursive critique of indigenous migrants, however, arises from the challenge that migration presents to economic and social hierarchies.

In the face of historical patterns of exclusion, indigenous leaders and entrepreneurs employ a range of migration-related strategies to improve their lives. I use the term, racialized geographies (Lefebvre 1974), to describe the spaces, or social fields, which migrants, and those

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5 Return migration as well as increased migration from other regions led to remittances sent out of Ecuador, 278 million in 2015, primarily from Pichincha, Guayas, and Azuay provinces, up from 89 million in 2009.
they leave behind, navigate intersecting power disparities. Ramos-Zayas and De Genova utilize racialized geographies to describe how social and racial formation processes were rooted in the space and place-making practices of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in historically Puerto Rican neighborhoods of Chicago (De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003). Setha Low “links anthropological analyses of the body in space (embodied space), the global/local power relations embedded in space (transnational/translocal space), the role of language and discourse in the transformation of space into place (meaning), and the material and metaphorical importance of architecture and urban design (the built environment).” (Low 2009) My research engages with the translocal dimension of space and place studies and analyzes multiple terrains, local, regional, and transnational. Three dimensions of these contested terrains are the focus here: territory as one of the primary sites of discursive and ideological struggles in the formation and state recognition of indigenous identity, the marking of mestizo-dominated spaces with visible signs of indigenous migrants’ success in the form of new houses and storefronts, and the emergence of indigenous coyotes and prestamistas in the migration industry, previously dominated by more affluent mestizos.⁶

Over the course of two years, I conducted ethnographic research in the southern highlands within the canton of Tambo and the nearby province of Cañar, and with Cañari migrants in Spring Valley, New York. I conducted structured interviews and engaged in participant observation in Tunis and Pamba, two smaller towns in the canton of Tambo. I followed family connections and interviewed migrants in Spring Valley, a small town in Rockland County, New York. I interviewed indigenous representatives in four cantons and

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⁶ “Coyote” is a Spanish term for those, usually mestizo, who smuggle people across national borders, relying on a series of contacts along the route. It refers to both the people who make the arrangements and the people who accompany migrants at different stages of the journey. “Prestamista” is the Spanish term for informal moneylenders, also usually mestizo; more recently indigenous moneylenders have begun to participate in the migration industry. In Kichwa, regardless of ethnic origin, they are called “chulqueros.”
attended numerous community and municipal meetings. I held an institutional affiliation with FLACSO (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales - Ecuador) and met with Ecuadorian scholars, organizations and municipal leaders whose work on migration informed my research. At the time, research on indigenous migration was underrepresented in the national literature. While scholars had focused on rural and urban migration, the role that identity played in the strategies of migrants was insufficiently analyzed (Herrera, Carrillo, and Torres 2006). This became an important aspect of my research as I analyzed the ways in which migration impacted the local communities. Concerns about the negative repercussions of migration were couched in peoples’ conceptualizations of family, tradition, and community obligation, all of which were tied to indigenous rural life. People witnessed the decline in traditional practices, festivals, activities, and other community activities, but indigenous leadership and organizations were at the forefront of mitigating these changes. In this way indigeneity was present in most, if not all, discussions about what was changing.

**Regional Background**

Ecuador is a small country but extremely diverse. It is the fourth-smallest country in Latin America and has four distinct geographical regions: the Pacific coastal lowlands, the highlands (Andean cordillera), the Amazonian jungle, and the Galápagos Islands. It is also one of the most bio-diverse countries in the world and encompasses numerous distinct ecological environments. Each region has played a role in the political and economic development of the nation. At the turn of the century, the coastal region exported cacao and later bananas and shrimp and, to this day, accounts for most agricultural exports. The highland provinces are home to the nation’s political infrastructure and flourished during periods of high exports of artisanal goods,
in particular, Panama hats. As colonists pushed deeper into the Amazonian region, rubber and later petroleum became the leading exports. Lastly, the unusual ecology of the Galápagos, the inspiration for Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, became the site of a burgeoning tourist industry, although tempered by environmental preservation efforts. Crude oil exports comprise close to 50 percent of the nation’s export earnings, estimated at US$11.4 billion in 2014 (“OPEC Annual Statistical Bulletin 2015” 2015). Earnings from oil are followed by remittances from immigrants abroad, estimated at US$2.3 billion in 2015 (Banco Central del Ecuador 2015). While international migration first notably increased in the 1960s, a financial crisis in 2000 stimulated a dramatic rise; by 2013, between two and three million Ecuadorians out of 15,754,000 were living abroad (INEC 2013).

In January 2000, President Jamil Mahuad eliminated the Ecuadorian *sucre* as the national currency and dollarized the economy despite opposition from the leadership of the Central Bank and from political parties, trade unions, and indigenous leaders. This occurred shortly after a severe devaluation of the *sucre*, which had lost over 67 percent of its value in late 1999. It also followed a series of financial upheavals after the fall of petroleum prices in 1998, when revenue from crude oil exports plummeted from the previous year’s US$625.5 million to US$249.5 million (Giugale, Fretes-Cibils, and Lopez Calix 2003, 116). The economic crisis, the devaluation of the sucre, and dollarization severely impacted the population, as people lost savings, investments, and businesses, the cost of living continued to increase and unemployment soared. In response, many Ecuadorians opted to search for better opportunities abroad. Ecuadorian migration to Spain, Italy, and, to a lesser extent, Germany and Russia, increased dramatically in this period, surpassing migration to the United States. In Spain, the Ecuadorian

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7 While intensive oil extraction began in the early 1970s, crude oil had been discovered as early as the late 1800s, and Shell Oil began extraction in the first half of the twentieth century (see Sawyer 2004).
population soared from 4,000 in 1998 to 490,000 in 2005, a staggering 12,150 percent increase (FLACSO - Ecuador; UNFPA--Ecuador 2006). According to the U.S. Census, the Ecuadorian population grew from 392,045 in 2000 to 609,762 in 2009, a 55.5 percent increase, since then the population has grown to just 670,233 in 2014.

The Ecuadorian population is ethnically diverse and can be roughly categorized into four ethno-racial groups: white (of Spanish/European descent), mestizo (of Spanish/European and indigenous descent), Afro-Ecuadorian (of African and European or indigenous descent), and indigenous. While indigenous identity has a broad range of definitions across nations and internationally, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE, Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador)\(^8\) has had an important role in its conceptualization in Ecuador. Currently CONAIE recognizes eight nationalities (including the Zapara, Kichwa,\(^9\) Chachi, Epera, Tsa’chila, Siona, Cofán, and Awa nationalities and three comunas, the Huancavilca, the Quisapinchas, and the Otavalos) (Cholango 2010).\(^10\) In response to long-standing demands by organized indigenous confederations at both the regional and national levels, Ecuador defined itself as a pluri-national state; this act was ratified in a new 2008 constitution that recognized the rights of indigenous national groups.\(^11\) The newly crafted 2008 Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador also guaranteed the rights of nature, as a political entity, and reads, “Nature or Pachamama, where life becomes real and reproduces itself, has the right to

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\(^8\)“The indigenous movement of Ecuador has a pyramidal structure, with autonomy for each level and for the organizations that form it. At the lowest level, there is a dense fabric of local organizations – called ‘first-tier’ or ‘basic’ – which includes the whole territory (communities, co-operatives and associations)” (Breton 2008, 584). UPCCC is a second-tier indigenous organization, part of the ECUARANI, and third tier of the Sierra, united under CONAIE.

\(^9\) Kichwa is the most recent spelling for Quichua. It is closely related to Quechua that is spoken in both Peru and Bolivia.

\(^10\) Chapter Five includes a deeper analysis of indigeneity and the transformations of indigenous ethnic identity.

\(^11\) For more on the implications of the Ecuadorian constitutional recognition of plurinational status, see Andolina, Laurie, and Radcliffe (2009) and Clark and Becker (2007).
be integrally respected in its existence, and the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structures, functions, and evolutionary process” (de la Cadena 2010, 335).

Southern Ecuador has a long history of regional migration, beginning in the early 1940s, and migration to the United States, beginning in the mid-1960s. The 2000 economic crisis further stimulated migration and the impact was profound. In large part, migrants from the Azuayo region (which includes Cañar and Azuay provinces) continued to follow social networks established in the United States, while many in the urban provinces of Guayas and Pichincha traveled to Spain and Italy. After 2000, the cost of migration via coyotes tripled, from US$3,000–4,000 in the late 1990s to US$12,000-15,000 in 2008, typically with a monthly interest between 2 and 3 percent. It often takes migrants up to three years to pay off the debt. For context, a generous monthly salary for households in the region is approximately US$300, and, in many cases, the monthly income in rural households is well below US$150. Remittances have led to substantial increases in the cost of living both in the region and nationally, which in turn has increased the gap between those households with migrants abroad and those without.

The Province of Cañar

The small city of Cañar sits nestled in a valley of the Andes mountain chain in southern Ecuador. Buses stop at the corner of the Pan-American Highway and Avenida Guayaquil, the main thoroughfare. People selling pinchos (grilled meat on skewers), humitas (steamed corn cakes in banana leaves), and assorted fried goods jump on and off the passing vehicles; others hurry across the pitted highway. Prior to the 1990s, the intersection served as a clear demarcation between the mestizo and indigenous parts of town, a fault line found in many small towns that straddle the highway.
International migration and access to remittances have blurred the social and geographic markers of class, ethnicity, and privilege in these rural highland communities. Arjun Appadurai recognized mobility within the context of globalization as creating a “new order of instability in the production of modern subjects” (Torres and Carrasco 2008). Indigenous Cañaris, often wearing the wide brimmed white hats associated with agrarian life, are now commonly seen in the driver’s seats of new pick-up trucks transporting goods and people through town. New consumption practices and entrepreneurial activities, such as investments in small businesses and vehicles, challenge long-standing forms of economic and social inequalities upheld by middle-class and professionalized mestizos. By the mid-2000s, indigenous coyotes and prestamistas had a significant role in the lucrative informal economy of the migration industry, which mestizo elites have long dominated. These changes suggest an important shift in the socio-economic and ethnic stratification between mestizo elites and indigenous and rural workers. Within the indigenous communities, social stratification has increased between households with migrant members abroad and those without. The inflation in costs of goods and services due to the influx of remittances, among other factors, has also generated greater divisions. However, even migrant households are not guaranteed an improved financial status given the unstable flow of remittances, high level of debt, and heightened tensions among family members left behind (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002; Pribilsky 2007).

Just south of the city of Cañar, capital of the province and canton of Cañar, is the town of Tambo, the seat of a much smaller canton and the location of Ingapirca, the most famous Incan ruins in Ecuador. Like many in the surrounding canton, the small rural communities of Pamba and Tunis have large numbers of migrants in the United States and Spain. Both communities are

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12 Prior to the cantonization of Tambo, Pamba was part of Sisid (one of the oldest seats of the Incan ayllu, Sigsig). Pamba is geographically separated from Sisid by a river that passes between them.
largely indigenous, identified as Cañari, and have many members who take part in political events organized through the Provincial Union of Cooperatives and Indigenous Communities of Cañar (UPCCC, Union Provincial de Comunas y Cooperativas Cañaris), a regional pan-indigenous organization, and the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), the national-level pan-indigenous organization. Ecuador’s indigenous political party, Pachakutik, which was established by CONAIE in 1996, is reputed to have included high-level members from this area in its early days, a claim touted by people in their homes, the fields, and the local markets. Even though indigenous social movements gained traction in the 1990s, increasing numbers of indigenous migrants continue to travel to the United States and Spain.

Figure 1. Map of Ecuador, Cañar Province highlighted

13 Pachakutik is the political arm of CONAIE; founded in 1996, it has garnered between 6.5 to 19 percent of the vote in national elections, a significant percentage within a multiparty system. This has also translated into representation in the legislative assemblies (Lucero and Garcia 2011, 244).
Research Description

Transnationalism Studies

In the late 1990s, sociologists and political scientists predominately framed international migration from a political economic perspective focused on “push” or “pull” factors and cost/benefit analyses. Traditional social scientific studies of international migration traced the onset of global migration to current practices brought about by globalization processes and labor flows (Orozco 2005; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Qin-Hilliard 2001; Brettell 2003; Massey and Pren 2012; Durand, Parrado, and Massey 1996). Anthropological research on migration has increasingly drawn attention to the social experiences of specific groups of people, often through translocal ethnographic research (Levitt 2001; Pribilsky 2007). Later studies focused on sociopolitical aspects, including transnational or diasporic networks, stratification, race, ethnicity, and citizenship, as well as processes of migrant incorporation, integration, and assimilation.

In an attempt to shift the focus from state-centric paradigms, scholars in the 1990s proposed a theoretical framework which emphasized the transnational connections between migrants and their communities of origin (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1993). By tracing the practices by which migrant and migrant households maintained ties and continued social networks, this new lens captured the agency and meaning making which transcended national boundaries and institutional constraints. In the Americas, much research has focused on Mexico, the Caribbean, and the Central American countries, all of which have high rates of immigration to the United States and high rates of remittances. The emerging literature on indigenous migration largely focuses on Guatemala and Mexico, countries with large indigenous populations (Andolina, Laurie, and Radcliffe 2009; Cadena and Starn 2010; Fox and Rivera-
Based on informal survey conducted by Mexican civic associations in New York such as Mano a Mano as well as the Mexican Consulate, they found that the growing Mexican population is predominately from Puebla, have indigenous origins, and constitute a growing proportion of Mexican immigrant population. While there is a growing body of scholarship focused on transnational migration from Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, the topic of indigenous migration remains under-analyzed. Recent exceptions include the anthology on Ecuadorian indigenous migration by Torres and Carrasco (2008) and Ulla Berg’s ethnography on Peruvian migration (2015). My work advances their analysis through tracing ways in which ethnic identity surfaces in the mobility strategies of Cañari migrants and utilizing the lens of mobility studies and migration industry to draw out distinctions from earlier migration periods.

I draw upon the concept of transnational social fields in order to analyze racialization processes as experienced by indigenous migrants en route, in migrant destinations, and in the rural towns and villages they have left behind. With their emphasis on the interconnectedness of peoples’ lives in a globalized world, studies of transnationalism do not adequately problematize the concurrent immobility or stasis that people experience, of those that are left behind or those that choose to stay behind. The experience of a Mexican migrant in the United States differs from that of an Ecuadorian migrant, as a return visit to Ecuador can cost US$15,000 for an undocumented migrant to re-enter the United States, as well as at least four months away from their lives in the United States, in contrast to a return to Mexico, which might cost US$5000 and just a few weeks’ time. As scholars of Mexican migration point out, there is also a deeply embedded social network of Mexican migration between northern Mexico and California that differs substantially from other Latin American migrant experiences in the U.S. (Castañeda,
Manz, and Davenport 2002; Stephen 2007; Kandal and Massey 2002). While the circulation of information, goods, and money occurs with similar constraints for both migrants — not being able to return home—looms larger for the undocumented Ecuadorian migrant. Scholars of mobility studies (Salazar 2010; Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013; Nowicka 2007; King and Skeldon 2010) have demonstrated how the migrant’s personal experience is complicated by the specific constraints on his or her mobility; they point to the intersection of social, temporal, and geographic limitations that affect participation in different kinds of migration. Ecuadorian migrants who travel to the United States thus differ from those who travel to Spain, the second-largest migrant destination between 2001 and 2008 (further explored in Chapter Two).

Studies of transnationalism also tend to conceptualize transnational communities as somehow bounded; many focus on collaborations and actions toward common interests between groups across national boundaries, such as hometown and civic associations (Smith 2005; Miles 2004; Conway and Cohen 1998; Fox and Bada 2009; Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004). Groups sharing the same national origin, however, are often heterogeneous, differentiated by gendered, racial, ethnic, and generational divisions and disparities. While more recent literature on transnationalism problematizes the diverse experiences of national-origin groups, the analytic frame is less adept at teasing out the intersecting, hierarchical, social fields that immigrants inhabit, precisely because the emphasis is placed on transnational connections. Transnationalism studies also pay insufficient attention to the extensive social networks that shape the migration journey itself. Even though border studies offer important insight into these journeys and border cultures, it is more difficult to find ethnographies that successfully weave these together (Sánchez 2014; Spener 2009a; Andreas 2009). My research found that these networks were key elements in determining how people migrated and through which channels, and in turn created
social divisions within villages based on who had the social and financial capital to be a “migrant merchant” (Kyle 2003).\textsuperscript{14} The mobility studies frame is better able to capture these intersections within the experiences of migrant life.

\textit{Migration Industry and Regimes of Mobility}

There are two emerging literatures on contemporary international migration that move beyond previous approaches to understand human mobility in a globalized world. While not mutually exclusive, both migration industry scholars and mobility studies scholars highlight dimensions of migration that have been under-analyzed in previous scholarship (Nyberg Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen 2013; Hernández-León 2013; Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013; Berg 2013; Salazar 2010; Kyle and Goldstein 2011). Migration industry scholars analyze the vast social and economic networks of migration facilitators and mobility management, and the institutions involved in migration control, such as legalization, detention, and deportation. Mobility studies scholars, on the other hand, emphasize mobility as a broader set of practices within and prior to international migration. These scholars examine all forms of migration: tourism, business, education, and labor, as well as immobility, in order to capture the intersection of mobility practices, dispossession, and power disparities. Both approaches concede that components of a migration industry have existed in earlier historical periods but contend that contemporary migration has given rise to a flourishing economy of actors and institutions. In my analysis of indigenous migration, I favor a hybrid approach of the two literatures. As we understand the formal and informal institutions and actors in migration facilitation and detention,

\textsuperscript{14} David Kyle (2003) analyzes the diversification of migrant entrepreneurial activities in his ethnography on Otavaleño migrants, from northern Ecuador, and rural migrants in southern Azuayo region.
the international attention to high-risk routes, it is important to understand mobility as a practice that predates current institutions and borders.

**Mobility Studies**

I draw upon mobility studies to look beyond geographic movement at how migration is intricately connected to social mobility, especially in the imaginaries of the migrants themselves. Mobility studies emerged within the past ten years in response to the limitations researchers found in transnationalism studies, including the latter’s focus on international migrants as opposed to other travelers, such as tourists, exchange students, retirees, short-term laborers, and professionals who travel for work. Mobility researchers are primarily concerned with analyzing who moves, how they move internally, regionally, and internationally, and the networks that are established across and within these spaces (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013; Berg 2015; Urry 2007; Canzler, Kaufmann, and Kesselring 2008). The *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* published a special issue in 2013 entitled “Regimes of Mobility: Imaginaries and Relationalities of Power,” which proposes a framework for the analysis of contemporary migration that focuses on “regimes of mobility” (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013, 3). In the same way that early mobility studies sought to move beyond transnationalism, the regimes of mobility framework encompasses all forms of mobility and immobility/stasis, while also attending to intersecting networks of inequality on multiple scales, including local, national, and global disparities. In this framework, migration and stasis are seen as interconnected aspects of the human condition. In analyzing the impact of international migration on indigenous families and communities, this framing is particularly useful to include those who have migrated and those that have not.

Under the 1994 Agrarian Development Law, communal lands held by indigenous groups,
dating back to the 1937 Ley de Comunas y Comunidades del Ecuador law could become available for sale if two-thirds of residents decided to sell. The 1964 and 1972 Agrarian Reforms recodified the 1937 Comunas law and also expropriated large land holdings and redistributed small plots to rural households, many of which were former laborers on the haciendas and plantations. In the late 1990s, many families used these plots as collateral for loans to cover the cost of the migration journey. In this way, agrarian reforms, as well as later neoliberal policy reforms which privatized communal lands, are directly connected to rural and indigenous laborers ability to mortgage their lands and migrate in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The mobility studies approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the vast networks established through migration, as well as how migration control policies ripple through these networks and create power disparities. Perhaps unintentionally, the literature on transnationalism, focusing on discrete groups within and across nation-state borders, does not connect these groups to the intermediary networks that link them. A regime of mobility encompasses how migration control policies, as they are implemented along the migration corridor, impact and shape how people arrive, the risks they take, and their hopes and strategies along the way, as well as where they choose to migrate. We can then compare how regimes of mobility may shift over time and point to the changes which constrain migration of a previous group from the same region, in most cases having been less dangerous than contemporary migration routes. People who don’t have enough money simply cannot migrate, as it requires some access to either credit or loans. Others don’t migrate because they choose to stay involved in the community, as is the case with the indigenous leaders that I worked with (see in Chapter Three).
Indigeneity

One of the main concerns of this research is explaining the role that indigenous identity plays in the migration experience, in decision-making and social networking, in discourses about migration, and in how people perceive and experience the social and cultural impact within indigenous communities. In order to do this, I historicize indigenous ethnic identity within Ecuador and complicate some of the notions commonly associated with indigeneity. As defined by state agencies, scholars, and indigenous activists, indigeneity is often conceptualized in terms of community, identity, and territory, with territory understood as a way to assert claims regarding sovereignty and land rights. Territory claims also imply self-governing polities whereas CONAIE argue for plurinational rights. Given the heterogeneity of indigenous organizations’ usage and definition of land rights in Ecuador, depending on the region, this is clearly a complex category.

While we can recognize Glick Schiller and Salazar’s (2013, 85) critique of the imagined “territorial fixity of cultures,” indigenous leaders do engage in acts of community making as part of their efforts to win indigenous rights and to improve rural people’s overall living conditions, including in education systems, agricultural self-reliance, and the official recognition of rights—intercultural, linguistic, and territorial. In these acts of community making, so adeptly described by Weismantel (2006) as “imagined ayllus,” leaders may evoke places as if they were fixed, using them for self-definition. Indeed, Luis Macas, a widely renowned indigenous leader in Ecuador, describes llacta ayllus as inherently important to contemporary indigenous communities. Ayllus, he writes, are the “organizational nucleus of indigenous society…the fundamental basis on which culture, society, politics, history, and ideology are concentrated and processed…The llacta-ayllus is also the historical institution that became the basis of indigenous
resistance and a vital component of our identity, as many outside social and political commentators have noted” (Luis Macas (2000), as cited in (Weismantel 2006). At the time of my research, the weakening of community ties, decline in traditional practices, and loss of language and identity were foremost concerns of indigenous leaders in Cañar.

The typical journey from Cañar, as described in the opening of this chapter, involved local bus companies and drivers who were contracted to take migrants under the cover of night. One of the bus cooperatives involved in this first stint was owned and operated by indigenous Cañari men. They would then meet up with transporters on the coast, who would then bring the migrants to smugglers on the shores of Guatemala and Mexico. Locally based smugglers would then try to guide migrants to and across the US border. This vast network of facilitators has become ever more elaborate and expansive since migration to the United States increased in the 1960s. These shifts in strategies of mobility, the means and networks of transportation over the past thirty years are illustrative of the changing regional, national and international policies on labor movements, conflict, and economic crises.

Following the upsurge in migration in 2000, Ecuadorian indigenous coyotes now have a significant role in the lucrative informal migration economy, long dominated by mestizo elites. This development has helped shift the landscapes of socioeconomic and ethnic stratification between mestizo elites and indigenous and rural workers. While people have collaborated on certain projects, the mestizo middle-class merchants and business owners continue to cultivate political and economic privilege through extensive exclusionary practices.

Recent literature on indigenous migration

Since 2000, scholars have noted a general increase in indigenous migration from Central
America and Mexico to the United States. While these may not indicate new migration streams, many migrants are departing from indigenous regions in larger numbers because of political strife, increased gang violence, economic hardship, and family reunification plans. The diversification of migrant populations in the United States, not only in ethnic and linguistic backgrounds but also in terms of new destinations, have prompted scholars, as well as migrant advocates and lawyers, to examine how race, language, and identity influence and shape migrant journeys and experiences (Menjívar 2006; Gentry 2015; Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004; Stephen 2007; Berg 2015; Brigden, n.d.; Castañeda, Manz, and Davenport 2002; Sánchez 2013; Ng’weno 2012). Researchers have employed different theoretical and analytic tools to tease out the dynamic and intersecting dimensions of indigenous mobility. What follows is a brief but by no means exhaustive overview of some of that literature. I highlight these in particular because my research findings align with some of their findings. I recognize these parallels as substantiating my own findings and subsequent argument about the inherent tensions around emergent forms of indigenous migration.

Lynn Stephen (2007) follows indigenous migrants from the state of Oaxaca as they transverse multiple borders as they migrate to the west coast of the United States. She proposes that rather than transnational migration, these migrants negotiate transborder lives, “the borders they cross are ethnic, class, cultural, colonial, and state borders within Mexico as well as at the U.S.-Mexico border and in different regions of the United States” (2007, 6). Like others, she notes that the racial and ethnic hierarchies within Mexico and the United States play out in different ways. In many of these communities, they also share a long history of regional migration that she argues characterizes their social world. She states that, “their community of origin, San Agustín Atenango, does not exist in one geographic place but is now spread out
throughout multiple sites in the United States and Mexico. Their hometown is both a real and symbolic site that draws people back repeatedly in many senses, but which is also represented by multilayered forms of social and political organization” (Stephen 2007, 9). The experience of regional labor migration as constituting household strategies over generations parallels that of Cañari migrant communities. However in San Agustin, while many couples migrated regionally with their children for seasonal work, it was predominately men who engaged in regional migration in Ecuador.

In “Indigeneity across borders: Hemispheric migrations and cosmopolitan encounter,” Robin María Delugan points to the contemporary rise in indigenous migration to the United States and argues that it signals “a new horizon for the study of indigeneity- complexly understood as subjectivities, knowledge, and practices of the earliest human inhabitants of a particular place and including legal and racial identities that refer to these people” (2010, 83). In her work, she studies Guatemalan Mayan migration to San Francisco. In her analysis, Delugan uses cosmopolitanism to decenter classical notions of “worldliness” and understand indigeneity as including geographical and political imaginaries that at once local, regional, national and increasingly global in scale. As she states, “indigenous and diaspora, like indigeneity and cosmopolitanism, seem like an unlikely pairing of words, especially when indigenous is perceived as synonymous with Native locality and diaspora with dispersed rootlessness. The national, regional, and global migrations of indigenous people make diaspora – a longing for real or imagined homelands – a characteristic of contemporary indigeneity” (2010, 85). Delugan’s usage of indigenous cosmopolitanism draws from previous works, most notably, Marc Goodale (2006) who proposed that Bolivia social movements were characterized by different forms of indigenous cosmopolitanisms. Beyond juxtapositions of indigeneity and modernity, he refers to
indigenous cosmopolitanism as the “ability to bring together apparently disparate frameworks as a way of reimagining categories of belonging in Bolivia and, by extension, the meanings of modernity itself” (Goodale 2006, 634). He points to two emergent forms, one based in the urban El Alto region, typified by the “Wayna Rap” movement, and a second, more modest, cosmopolitanism typified by the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) in La Paz. He argues that “cosmopolitanism reflects the projection or envisioning of a different cosmos within which one’s identity itself is redefined and given new meaning” (Goodale 2006, 641). My work examines how identity, as a form of social capital, gets mobilized in particular contexts but also how it can become an asset and a risk in the journey – as well as within the imaginaries of the migrant community.

Perhaps bridging the gap between Stephen’s work on transborder lives and the repositioning of modernity aspirations, Ulla Berg (Berg 2015; Berg 2013; Berg 2008) takes into consideration various dimensions of Peruvian migration, tracing migration practices of both elite, middle-class mestizos and those of rural and indigenous Peruvians. Broadly she examines racialization practices in both Peru and in the US, as navigated and contested by rural and indigenous migrants. She conducted her research in the central Peruvian highlands, Paterson, New Jersey, Miami, Florida, and Washington DC/Maryland, among Peruvian migrant families and communities through engaging what she terms ambulant ethnography. She states, migration is “more than just an economic project. It is a cultural and class aspiration, and a demand for citizenship status and belonging which is at the very center of the always unfinished process of social becoming” (Berg 2015, 5). In some regards her work parallels my own, in questioning modernity aspirations, how they are defined, how mobility is both enabled and constrained in a highly stratified way, and what migration practices have enabled and transformed in home
societies. Where Berg finds that Peruvian elites constructed a narrative of modernity through their ability to travel internationally, as an inherent rite, transnational migration among more rural and indigenous Peruvians was relatively uncommon until the late 1980s. My work is distinct in that I focus on the ways in which indigeneity facilitated and emerged within migrant strategies, and through tracing the mobilization of identity in practice throughout the journey itself. Her work highlights the intermediaries, institutions, and document fixers that legitimated certain kinds of travel where my work focuses on the migration facilitators who worked within clandestine networks.

Another aspect of migration strategies which emerged in my research was how migrants perform another national-origin identity, a ‘passing’ strategy to remain undetected by border control officials, in the clandestine migration route (Castañeda, Manz, and Davenport 2002; Brigden, n.d.) . Based on research conducted between 1998-1999, Castañeda, Manz, and Davenport (2002) conducted a study which examined a process of ethnic adaptation that they termed “mexicanization.” In the article, they trace the migration and daily strategies of indigenous Guatemalans, and argued that the process of mexicanization, the strategic adoption of clothing, speech, even body gestures, helped Guatemalans both avoid detection while crossing the border into the United States, and also maintain a low profile while working and living in largely Mexican communities. The originality of their work lays in the fact that they recognized these strategies as not reflecting deeper internalizations of identity that stripped migrants of other indigenous, regional, and even national identifications but rather were strategic performances, the stakes of which people were highly aware. Also, the testimonials that they collected also pointed to the importance of clothing as tied to identity, and how this was gendered. Women spoke about the traje, which they missed and longed for, hoping to be able to wear them, “at least
in the house,” in the private spaces of their migrant lives. Their descriptions of the powerful moment when they changed their clothes in order to embark on the journey resonate with those of Mercedes, an indigenous Cañari woman, whose story is shared herein. Another key element which they used to describe the intersecting experience of vulnerability were the indigenous migrants collective experiences of having lived at refugee camps in Mexico for a number of years prior to migrating to the United States. The experience of racialization and marginalization was physically marked in the spaces they grew up in, which still resonated as the transitioned to living in the U.S. with a large Mexican migrant population who were privy to deeply embedded social migrant network tying them to their homeland. The Guatemalan migrants in this case were twice removed, having spent years in Mexico, away from their villages, prior to arriving to San Francisco. Most of the people they interviewed spoke about acting Mexican in a context that showed their awareness of the benefits of assuming an identity in particular spaces, in which they wanted to downplay their visibility by blending in. This passing strategy emerged as migrants shared how coyotes instructed them in how to pass as Mexican, which contexts, and what vocabulary to use. Because of the wide variety of indigenous languages among indigenous Guatemalans, they also learn to Spanish to communicate with each other. Also, similar to migration patterns out of the rural villages of Cañar, many of the younger generation had not traveled to the cities first, much less spent time in Mexico learning the language. This other generation of migrants likely experienced the need to assume/employ Mexicanisms in distinct ways than those migrants who had lived in Mexico, although the article does not tease out these distinctions fully in terms of how deeply internalized multiple identities and performance of

15 There are close to twenty-three distinct dialects of Maya in Guatemala (Castañeda, Manz, and Davenport 2002).
identity shaped migrant self-perceptions.\footnote{For a very interesting study on the role of language and ethnic discrimination in detentions centers in the United States, see Gentry (2015).}

Since 2002, border crossing and migration strategies have changed, as well as the profiles of coyotes – the networks that they are involved in and the circulation of knowledge which has transformed from knowing which way to go to knowing who to pay. While my research showed that Ecuadorian migrants were able to pass as from a local indigenous group and move with relative ease in Guatemala, this may have also increased their visibility in Mexico given the long-standing relationship and marked visibility of Guatemalans in Mexico, despite almost two decades of communities growing around refugee camps in Mexico, of a population which the authors estimate to be close to 100,000 (Castañeda, Manz, and Davenport 2002).

With a nod to material culture analysis and the ways that migrants perform alternative identities in the journey, I include a brief overview of De León’s work. De León (2012) conducted his study on the material objects/tools that migrants who were about to cross the Sonora desert would collect in preparation of their trek. He notes that the discarded material objects are more than just the refuse left behind, but testified to the real experience in material and symbolic ways. Travelers would often wear black clothing, despite soaring temperatures and use knock-off sneakers instead of hiking boots as they were both cheaper and also in the hopes that ‘tenis’ would help them blend in once having crossed. The burden of carrying water, a calculation that shows that nearly no one is capable of carrying the required amount for a safe crossing (rationing of water for the number of days it normally takes to cross). He also notes that the marketing wares, of unscrupulous entrepreneurs fed into migrant folk myths of what were the best strategies and products to make their trip successful. He departs from a material culture analysis but what I find most interesting is the connection to the circulation of knowledge, either
in concrete or folkways, in shaping the journey. Who gets what information, how relevant is time, how long is that information useful, all of these elements are shifting. While he does not use clothing as passing for a different ethnic group, it does get used to pass detection (or so it is rumored), in the form of black shirts, thought to be both more discrete and harder to detect at night.

**Finding My Place in the Field**

During the first stage of my research, I met with Ecuadorian scholars of migration and attended panels and conferences on migration and development in Quito, Guayaquil, and Cuenca. While I had contacted people in Cuenca and Cañar through colleagues in New York, I spent the first month in Quito, where I also attended meetings as part of a Fulbright grant. Through my grant from the Fulbright Commission, I had met Edwin Piedra, a consultant for the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), who worked on behalf of indigenous groups to facilitate their work with international agencies. I was fortunate enough to connect with Edwin through contacts with the IABD, whom I initially met during a workshop at the Fulbright Commission. Edwin introduced me to José, someone whom he knew to be politically and socially active in Cañar. This meeting was particularly memorable because it exemplified a dynamic I would encounter many times. Throughout my fieldwork, my single status and my gender became subjects to circumvent, explain, reposition, and defend. In the brief moments before we were formally introduced, José displayed hyper-masculine behavior (by adjusting ‘himself’ repeatedly) as we waited for Edwin to return to the office. Then, when Edwin introduced me, there was a clear subtext: he established clear professional boundaries, toning down any romantic notions about me, an apparently single, albeit well connected, young woman from the United States. He did this by highlighting my academic credentials and professional
contacts (IADB), in a way that indicated that these social contacts were incredibly valuable to them both and not to be put at risk.

After a month of research and meetings in Quito, I took an early morning bus to Cañar, where I would be living the rest of the year. I spent the next eight hours debating whether I should meet with José in the community as planned, or try to avoid him. I was anxious about how a second meeting might unfold, given his lewd overtures, but I also didn’t want to burn any bridges. After hours of weighing the decision, I continued on to Cuenca instead of getting off the bus in Cañar, calling him later that afternoon to cancel our meeting. I felt I made the best decision possible until I could get a better sense of the social networks where I planned to spend the next year. On my second trip to Cañar, I arranged to stay in one of the only hostels in town, owned and operated by a mestizo family, located near the town plaza. Over the next week, I walked through town, met with officials, gathered schedules of upcoming events, and sat in the plaza, cafes, and internet cafes, becoming more familiar with the daily routines of the town. After having settled into this routine, I reached out to José, who was overseeing the construction of a housing development, Residencia IntiRaymi, in the San Rafael section of town. He invited me to meet his family and have dinner. His house was down the road from his housing development project. I met his wife, their two daughters and young son, and his aunt who helped them around the house. He was currently rebuilding his home, adding an extension of two rooms and a bathroom, all of which were in various stages of construction. The rainy season had halted construction. On that first visit, we talked about the community and where I was from, sharing stories over a meal of potatoes and fried pork. Late that night, I briskly walked along the quiet road back up (literally uphill) to my temporary hostel in the center of town.
At first, I alternated between staying at two hostels, all the while meeting with people, attending meetings, visiting with José’s family, and getting to know other researchers from the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), the University of Cuenca, and the cultural tourism program in Pamba. It took a few weeks before people could “place” me—before they could locate me in a role or network appropriate to the local social order. Clearly, I was too old to be a proper university student. As a single Puerto Rican (a necessary disclosure given my fluency in Spanish) woman conducting research on remittances and migration, two highly personal aspects of their everyday lives, I was suspect on many levels. Puerto Rican women from New York have a particular reputation in this area, as attested by both family members and the estranged life partners of young men who have headed north. I had to tread lightly: as both US citizens and Spanish speakers, Puerto Rican women are apparently highly desirable marriage partners for the young undocumented men who have left behind young wives and children. Apparently a number of the young migrant men from the region had never reunited with their partners in Ecuador, after starting relationships with Puerto Rican women in New York. And despite my early precautions about being associated with José, I was still suspected to be his girlfriend, a rumor brought about by the few driving tours we had taken around the community in his brand new pick-up truck, which was apparently funded by his informal career as an indigenous coyote.

I finally found my place when I was introduced to an elderly mestiza woman, María, who rented rooms in the community. She lived in an old two-story home with her adopted daughter, who had been left at the woman’s doorstep fifteen years earlier by her indigenous Cañari parent(s). María had never married; she took care of her ailing parents and their home until they died and the property was left to her. She was well respected in the indigenous community and
apparently my association with her cemented a position for me in people’s minds. I was also unmarried and by living in her home, my status was not extraordinary but rather somewhat familiar and viewed as something innocuous. With this association, I began to shake the previous specters of the coyote’s girlfriend, the lascivious Puerto Rican, the potential husband stealer, and the overzealous migra agent.

I share these initial stages of my research because they demonstrate the uneasy terrain between researchers and the people who collaborate with us. The role that I was able to inhabit was very important in establishing the trust that made people comfortable enough to share the intimate details of their own households. The negative perception of Puerto Rican women was entirely unexpected but speaks to diverse experiences of different Latin American origin groups and how these intersect in migrant destination as well as the transmission of this knowledge to communities of origin. Literature on the Latino experience in the United States clearly demonstrates a racialized hierarchy among different groups that are part of the history of migration (De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003; Pallares 2005; Smith 2005; Radcliffe 1999). I later deduced that José never dispelled anyone of the false presumption of our relationship because a gringa girlfriend may have added to his reputation as a successful coyote and businessman.

**Beginning the Research**

In the fall of 2007, a new initiative sponsored by the Spanish government had just begun to work in collaboration with the municipality of Cañar to create development programs in the region. This “co-development” project included the participation of Cañari migrants in Murcia, Spain, and local representatives within Cañar. The five-year program, first proposed in 2006, provided seed money and structure for a development program for indigenous youths, with the
goal of creating a viable alternative to migration both for them and for returning migrants.\textsuperscript{17} While the project included the canton of Cañar, Tambo, with arguably an equal proportion of migrants, was not included. As part of obtaining approval to conduct my research, I met with the president of the Unión de Organizaciones del Cantón del Tambo (UCOIT, Union of Organizations of the Canton of Tambo)\textsuperscript{18} to present my research project. In that meeting, I suggested that the absence of Tambo was significant and merited more recognition, given the importance of migration in their communities. This clearly resonated among the men at the meeting, as I later learned they were disgruntled at not having been included in the first place. The president then discussed the idea with the twenty-two community presidents at the next monthly meeting, and they agreed that I could conduct my interviews in two communities. I was asked to present my research project at both community meetings so that the members could decide whether or not to allow me to speak with family members and also decide who would be part of the project.

I first attended a community meeting in Tunis, where I was met by Rafael Palchizaca, the community president, on my walk down to the meeting house. I rode on the back of the community pick-up truck, as we traveled down a bumpy dirt road into the valley below the Pan-American Highway. The meeting had been going on for a few hours, and the lunch that the president was bringing, which had been prepared by the UCOIT, provided a welcome respite. After the food was distributed, I waited outside the meeting house to be invited in by the community president. When I entered, there were a few people standing and speaking about the

\textsuperscript{17} While this project will be explored more in depth in Chapter Three, the presence of this organization dictated the location where I conducted my work.

\textsuperscript{18} Previously called the Unión Cantonal de Organizaciones Indígenas del Tambo (Cantonal Union of Indigenous Organizations of Tambo). In the late 1990s, leaders of the organization changed the name in order to be more inclusive of rural members of non-indigenous descent. UCOIT is comprised of a total of twenty-two communities in the canton of Tambo. In addition to the presidents of the twenty-two communities, there is an executive committee of seven directors that meets twice a month. In 2008 they were busy building a new office just off the main town square.
recent *minga*—a collaborative, reciprocal work project between households—that involved cleaning up the local irrigation canal, which had been clogged with dirt and debris over the rainy season. I sat with the heads of the various sectors (seven in total). Rafael introduced me, and I stood to explain a bit about myself and the research that I wanted to conduct in the community. I said that I wanted to speak with families with members who had migrated to Spain or to the United States and to families without any migrants. There were a number of comments made in Kichwa, which I gathered were suspicious from the tone in which they were said, along with the use of the Spanish word *migra* (immigration police). Sitting in that small building, I was struck by the extent of the feeling of vulnerability among the families and individuals gathered there. Who would be exposed? What would be at stake? It felt as if the veritable “long arm of law” in the form of the *migra* was in the room with us.19

The president then argued that I was no different than one of their own students who attended the University of Cuenca and conducted research for their degree, which allayed at least some people’s concerns. A few of the men came up to the table where the delegation sat and left their hats in a pile there; I imagined this was a way to indicate that they had issues to be addressed later. Within the next ten minutes, the majority of the responses turned from incredulity to acceptance as they started to discuss which families would fit the criteria of the research. Then, I was asked to step outside while the community made its final decisions. I waited with Francisco, the president of UCOIT, who seemed nervous since I was his “ward” and the meeting had been a little tense. After another half hour, I was invited back in; they had decided that I would work with nine different households (two of which were not present).20 I

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19 I conducted all of my interviews and informal meetings in Spanish, which I speak fluently. While I had taken classes in Kichwa, I was not proficient enough to give more than an initial introduction of myself.

20 At this stage of the research, I was following the lead of the indigenous leaders, respecting the guidelines laid by
was then dismissed as the community had other issues to discuss. As I trudged up the hill back to the Pan-American, it started to drizzle, and I was happy to be heading home before night fell.

Figure 2. Hand drawn map of Pamba

My meeting in Pamba, north of the main town of Tambo, went very differently. Luis Guamán, president of Pamba, was very busy and less interested in my project than Rafael had been. The community was preparing a cultural tourism project and renovating the community meeting house, both of which were being funded by a non-governmental agency in Sweden. I first met with Luis at the local bus stop in front of the meetinghouse. He was en route to another meeting in Tambo but invited me to the next community meeting which happened to be that week. The majority of the community meeting was focused on the launch of the cultural tourism project and I was introduced, gave my presentation, and my proposal was accepted in short order. At this point, I was co-teaching a cultural documentation workshop for anthropology majors at the local bilingual high school with Judy Blankenship, a noted photographer from the

them to preserve and protect community members’ interests. While the nine families did not represent a significant proportion of the community, they were chosen to represent each of the sectors as well as include families who had not migrated. I felt that respecting the collective decision making process of the community was an ethical decision and also ensured a level of trust that further solidified and validated my presence in the communities.
United States, who was well regarded in the community.\footnote{As part of this project, students developed community maps, using a map key for geographic, archeological and symbolic spaces (an example of which included the well informed female store owner who knew all the community gossip). At the end of the course, we compiled the photography, essays, and maps and created a small archive at the school library. The project was included in the end of year ceremony for the high school.} I mentioned this in my presentation, which most likely reduced levels of suspicion among community members. It should be noted that attendance was much smaller than that of the meeting in Tunis. Many of the households were simply not present as migration was more prevalent here than in Tunis. During this meeting, community members decided that I would meet with five families, including a migrant who had recently returned due to a family member’s illness.

**Organization of this work**

Broadly, my research analyzes the impact of transnational migration and remittances on rural, largely indigenous households and communities in southern highland Ecuador. I question in what ways this is distinct from earlier migration waves. I organize the study in five chapters, which include a historical overview of regional mobility, followed by a chapter on contemporary migration patterns. I then analyze indigenous identity in the context of the migration journey. The last two chapters explore the impact of social and monetary remittances and indigenous mobility strategies.

Chapter One, “Regional and International Migration Practices from 1890 to 1990s,” explores the history of regional and international mobility at a national and regional level tracing the movement of laborers from the 1940s, to the beginning of significant international migration in the 1960s. The chapter situates these movements within broader economic, legislative, national, and international contexts through three pivotal periods of Ecuadorian history.

Chapter Two, “Contemporary migration between Ecuador, the United States, and Spain” traces contemporary migration patterns following the 2000 economic crisis in Ecuador. The
Chapter compares migration patterns to Spain and the United States and each country’s policies on immigrant incorporation since 2000. I provide an overview of transnational political participation and outreach that has been undertaken by the Ecuadorian government in each country and explore the important role of institutional intermediaries.

Chapter Three, “Mobilities Strategies in the Migration Journey” examines the role of indigeneity within the migration industry and the transformations that have taken place over the past decade. This chapter includes a more in-depth analysis of the clandestine migration journey and testimonials of those who have migrated and those that decided to stay despite having access to important migrant networks.

Chapter Four, “The Social and Cultural Impact of Remittances,” examines the role of remittances on consumption, agrarian practices, and small-scale development projects. The chapter analyzes which local-level forms of political, economic, and ideological power disparities are challenged by transnational migration. It reviews the history of the informal economy of migration in the region, and presents an overview of the local and national discourse on migration.

Chapter Five, “Indigenous Mobilities” situates my research within the growing body of scholarship on indigenous migration from Latin America (Striffler 2004; Kyle 2003; Weismantel 2006; Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003; Torres and Carrasco 2008; Cadena and Starn 2010; Fox and Bada 2009) . I analyze perceptions of indigenous coyotes and entrepreneurs to suggest the possible spaces in which migration opens up social mobility in the rural communities.

The Conclusion reviews the theoretical implications of this research project, drawing on mobility studies and the migration industry concept. I revisit the overriding questions of the dissertation and the research findings as well as future directions for related research.
Chapter 1: Regional and International Migration Practices from 1890 to 1990s

Figure 3. Parents of Miguel Diego in front of their home. (Photo courtesy of Robert Cadena)²²

Andrés, a sixty-eight year old Cañari man from Pamba, and I spoke at length about his experience with labor migration in Ecuador. We were first introduced at a community meeting

²² Miguel Diego, a local leader and former provincial director of the Ministry of Culture in Azuay, was in the first stages of launching a magazine that would serve as historical memoirs of the region. They wanted to document the stories of the elder Cañaris who could still remember working on the haciendas during the huasipungo period. Miguel’s father and mother were both willing to participate. My partner, who is a professional photographer, offered to take the portraits for the magazine. We arranged to meet at Miguel’s parents’ house, which sat along the Pan-American Highway, the following week.
where I had presented my research project and agreed to meet later that week at his daughter’s newly constructed migrant house in the center of town. He and his second wife sat in the front room one sunny morning as their young grandchildren ran about the house and yard. Andrés was a local indigenous leader and had worked on the coast since he was sixteen, in different regions and jobs. He worked in the fields for short times, every three to six months, and would return to the highlands to work on the land in Pamba. When he was twenty-six (circa 1966), he finally found a stable job in a stove factory. The first stove factory opened in Ecuador in 1964 under the name Ecuatoriana de Artefactos (ECASA), a company still in operation and run under the Grupo ElJuri (Ycaza 1991). He worked there until he was twenty-nine years old. The company imported and exported products and materials to and from the United States. After a few years working at the company, he was involved in forming the Comité de Empresa, a syndicate that included 1200 workers. In the late 1960s, the workers held a strike which last two months and fifteen days to fight the exploitative practices of the company. “We just wanted stability at work, fair pay, and a schedule,” Andrés remarked. The police came and the authorities ruled in favor of the workers and the company ended up paying for their time on strike. After, the company took inventory every three months and offered professionalization workshops on topics that included economics, social relations, mathematics, and human relations. While he did not share the details of the legislation that upheld the rights of the workers on strike, Ecuador did pass a law in 1970, which guaranteed many of the rights that Andrés described, Law # 70-05, Reforms to the Labor Code 1970 (“NATLEX: Base de Datos Sobre Legislación Nacional Del Trabajo, La Seguridad Social Y Los Derechos Humanos,” n.d.). He later worked for the Cooperativa de Vivienda in Guayaquil. Of his past labor, he stated, “no he ganado el dinero tan facilmente,” clearly an understatement.
I share Andrés’s story because his work history, migrating seasonally between the coast and highlands, typified the experience of many men of his generation in the region. While he touched upon what clearly was a significant strike against one of the most powerful family run companies in the country, ElJuri, Andrés’ family still contended with the impact of international migration. He and his wife were raising their young grandchildren and supervising the construction of his migrant daughter’s house. His son, who lived in Guayaquil with his wife and two young children, had migrated to the United States in 2002 and then been deported shortly after.

**Introduction**

Regional differences within Ecuador run deep in the national imagination. Since the birth of Ecuador as a nation-state, the highland and coastal regions have followed distinct political, intellectual, and economic trajectories, largely influenced by the main urban centers: Guayaquil, a major port, and Quito, the capital in the northern highlands. Throughout Ecuador’s history, people have engaged in regional and international migration; the rate of migration has increased, however, as roadways, modes of transportation, labor markets, and legislation have facilitated people’s movement, and as economic and social conditions have influenced them to seek opportunities elsewhere.

This chapter is primarily about mobility as practice. By that I mean, in Ecuador indigenous groups have always been on the move, at different economic and political periods. While this chapter will focus on the twentieth century, I include a brief history of mobility prior to the arrival of the Spanish colonizers. Guided by a regime of mobility framework, I trace historical periods of regional migration alongside the economic, legislative, and social changes that influenced or impeded their mobility. At the national level, Ecuadorian regional and
international migration can be classified into four historical periods: regional labor migration related to coastal cacao and banana trade, from the late 1890s through the early-1950s; the demise of huasipungo and the Panama hat trade, and subsequent agrarian reforms; from the late 1950s through the 1980s; and the period of indigenous uprisings, neoliberalism, international migration (from the 1980s through the mid-1990s). In conclusion, this chapter draws connections between these earlier periods of labor migration and the contemporary period of international migration that is characterized by similar economic and social stimulus but which, as I will argue throughout, opens up possibilities for new articulations of indigenous identity and modern aspirations.

Cacao and Regional Labor Migration (Late 1890s–Early 1950s)

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Ecuador was the world’s largest cacao exporter. Vast expanses of cacao trees thrived in the hot, humid coastal lowlands. Predominantly domestic producers cultivated cacao production on haciendas in the coastal south. The city of Guayaquil, situated on the Guayas River that carried steam and cargo ships to sea, grew with the wealth generated by the lucrative export. As the infrastructure of roads and railways developed, the movement of people in search of employment and trade opportunities increased (Clark 1998). There were two decisive periods of intraregional migration: the cacao boom of the late 1890s to mid-1920s and the banana boom of the 1940s to early 1960s. This intraregional migration of laborers between the coast and the highlands preceded any significant international migration.

The construction of transportation infrastructure connecting Guayaquil and Quito at the turn of the twentieth century transformed labor and trade relations between the coast and the highlands. The railway opened up increased trade between the two regions and greater access to consumer goods. Under the liberal administrations of Eloy Alfaro (1895–1901 and 1906–1911),
the cacao export trade on the Pacific Coast, referred to in the region as the “Gold Coast,” flourished, marking a period of wealth and prosperity (Roberts 1980). Faced with increased demand for cacao, agricultural exporting elites sought to stimulate labor migration to the coast through legislation that loosened landless peasants’ labor obligations to hacienda owners in the highlands. Debates regarding the freedom of movement of labor, while initiated by the labor needs of coastal elites, also laid the foundation for workers to dispute abuses by landowners (Clark 2009).

Following the “Liberal Revolution” in 1895 under Eloy Alfaro, the Ecuadorian state challenged the Catholic Church’s hold over many juridical, legislative, and social spaces throughout the highlands (Lyons 2006; Ayala Mora 1983). The church lost some of its authoritative presence and landholdings in the rural highlands, which were quickly seized by landowning elites. However, the state lacked the institutional and financial capacity to reach and to administer rural communities and had to delegate local governance to the Church and to landowners (Martínez Novo 2006). Until the 1970s, there was a governance vacuum in many rural areas, which the Agrarian Reforms inadvertently exacerbated by eliminating the administrative functions of landholding elites within the surrounding communities (Zamosc 1994; Clark 1998). Disputes between indigenous and rural laborers and these de-facto state administrators often played out at the local level, where political and ideological tensions were negotiated and discussed. The state’s dependence on these de-facto proxies in rural areas helped create the conditions that would later allow non-governmental organizations to function as intermediaries between the state and rural populations. These become important connections as organized social protests gained momentum in the 1990s. Moreover these organizations also
provided important alternatives as touched upon in the testimonials of indigenous leaders who opted not to migrate (see Chapters Three and Four).

During the period of affluence in the early half of the century, many coastal landowners and businessmen traveled to Europe with their families and established residences in Paris, the Riviera, and various cities in Spain. Based on funeral records documenting elite Ecuadorian family names, there was a significant Ecuadorian population in Paris. While the head of household would often remain in Ecuador to manage affairs, there were many haciendas managed by administrators who would deposit landowners’ profits in Parisian banks (Roberts 1980). Many children of wealthy families attended university in Paris. Landholders and business elites from Peru also resided in Spain and London, which helped facilitate business relations between wealthy families in the region (Quiróz 1988).

World War I, the rise of competitive cacao production in Brazil, and the widespread decimation of cacao trees by witches’ broom disease led to the demise of the Ecuadorian “Gold Coast” and the fall of the Alfaro administration, which had largely been supported by Guayaquileño elites. The military-led Julian Revolution of 1925 began a period of political turmoil under the control of military dictatorships that lasted until the 1940s (Roberts 1980).

Bananas and the export boom of the 1940s

By the late 1940s, another crop created a second economic boom: Ecuador became one of the largest exporters of bananas in the world. Former cacao plantations on the coast were converted to banana cultivation, with many under the control of US-based companies. The increased labor demands generated a large migration from the highlands to the coast. Many of the banana companies, often foreign owned, paid more than the prevailing wage and, in the case
of United Fruit Company, provided housing, health clinics, schools, and even supported social clubs, which later facilitated the networking necessary for labor unions to take hold among the secluded enclave of workers (Striffler 2002).

Laborers from the southern highlands migrated to the coast for seasonal work with the banana companies for periods of three to four months and then returned to their families in the highland, as Andrés’ story highlights. In 1953, a major road was completed connecting Guayaquil to Cuenca, the largest city in the southern highlands, making seasonal migration significantly easier. Recruiters (enganchadores) from the plantations would travel to the highland villages, enticing laborers to work on the plantations. In addition to internal migration between the highlands and the coast, laborers from other coastal provinces sought work with the foreign banana companies. Then, during the latter half of the 1950s, the coastal region underwent a transformation as foreign companies began to withdraw and banana plantations no longer generated the same level of prosperity. While international migration by workers and landless peasants was fairly rare during this period, those who did migrate would follow the export trade routes, with many traveling on Grace Line passenger/cargo ships that passed through the Panama Canal destined for New York.

**Huasipungo, Agrarian Reforms, and Regional Mobility (Late 1950-1980s)**

And then as if someone had opened the floodgate of the physical needs of that sullen, dark mass, all suddenly found their tongues to tell of the hunger of their babies, the sickness of their old people, the increasing boldness of the Indian girls, the tragedy of the devastated huasipungos, of the endurable misery of past years, and of the unendurable misery of the present one. It quickly became a threatening clamor, chaotic and rebellious. (Icaza 2009 [1934], 171)
The *huasipungo* system, which emerged over a complicated three hundred year history of land and labor, was an exploitative set of labor relations between rural peasants and hacienda owners in which peasants were obligated, through state-sanctioned, violent forms of control, to work and live on specific haciendas. During Spanish colonial rule, the Spanish crown granted colonists the right to demand labor and tribute from indigenous and rural inhabitants. Following independence from Spain, both legislation and brute force continued to push indigenous people in the rural highlands into service on haciendas (Ayala Mora 1983). While the encomienda system collapsed, many Spanish descendent landowners still held large tracks of land. Landowners would allow peasants to grow subsistence crops on the hacienda land, in a system much like debt-peonage. Hacienda owners would also provide small services and food, which were added to the *huasipungo*’s debt. The brutality of the system led to uprisings on many haciendas. Peasants were obligated by law to fulfill these roles and had few avenues for redress to protect their well-being. Just as the *huasipungo* system tied laborers to haciendas, legislation in the 1940s pushed through by Guayaquileño elites facilitated worker migration during periods of high demand on the coast (Clark 1998). It is important to note that not all rural communities in the highlands were subjugated under the *huasipungo* system.

*Ley de comunas and hacienda life*

Early legislation sought to bring many of these communities under state jurisdiction elaborated the Ley de Organización y Régimen de Comunas 1937 (often referred to as the Law of the Communes), that recognized the rights of indigenous groups to hold communal property (*comunas*) and brought rural groups under administrative law. The law did not provide for landless *huasipungueros* to form *comunas* but rather sought to bring rural communities, who
were not tied to haciendas and the huasipungo system, under legislation of the state. However, after the huasipungo system was abolished in the 1960s and small parcels of land were redistributed to indigenous people, “there was a virtual explosion in the number of comunas … as former huasipunguero communities adopted this form of social organization” (Becker 1999, 535). The state responded with more focused legislation on indigenous community organization and property rights. However, members of these comunas on haciendas became veritable communities (Waters 2007).

In his captivating work on hacienda life, Barry Lyons conducted a multi-year ethnographic study collecting accounts of hacienda life in the region of Chimborazo, in the northern Andean region (2006). He collected widespread accounts to show how hacienda life was a complex network of relationships, negotiations, social contracts, interspersed with harsh and retaliatory treatment by latifundistas (landowners). There are many parallels between Chimborazo and the two communities where I conducted my research. Both Tunis and Pamba were connected to separate haciendas prior to the agrarian reforms of the 1960s and 1970s. These haciendas were run by landowners after having acquired the land from the Church. However, both communities shared collective ownership of the lands surrounding Laguna Culebrillas and invested much of their community work projects (mingas) in repairing the irrigation canals which drew from the lake. Lyons also showed that people moved between haciendas in search of better conditions. Brownrigg (1974), in her dissertation on Cuenca elites, analyzed the history and administration of a hacienda property in nearby Cañar and noted these same movements among the workers.

At first, our parents lived on the haciendas, here in Tunis. All of Tunis was a hacienda owned by the Arias family, after the monks. My parents worked there. Later, they divided the land in 1964. They offered the plots to the people who had worked on the hacienda at a low price, (but) back then there was no money. The
people sold their animals at a really cheap price and collected the money. They
had to sell so many animals. They bought the land and thought to divide it later.
Those lands aren’t divided yet. It’s a parcel of 8 hectares, it belongs to everyone.
In my family, we are nine brothers; we still haven’t divided it yet. Our mother is
the dueña of the land. It’s dedicated to agriculture and animals. (Interview with
Rafael Palchizaca, indigenous leader in Tunis)

Throughout Latin America in the 1960s, governments enacted agrarian reforms. There
are different perspectives on the political agendas, but scholars contend that they responded to a
variety of factors: increasing demands by small landowners, and in some cases large landholders,
to modernize production; shifting roles of state agencies; and, most importantly, the perceived
need to stem potential uprisings among landless laborers (Waters 2007; Dorner 1992a;
Thiesenhusen 1995). Land reform legislation was passed in nineteen Latin American and
Caribbean countries after the Charter of Punta del Este established the Alliance for Progress –
backed by the administration of John F. Kennedy (Dorner 1992a). As Thiesenhusen so succinctly
puts it, the reforms were at once the product of a ‘compassionate’ US agenda and an effort to
“head off the possible occurrence of more “Cubas” in the hemisphere” (Thiesenhusen 1995, 87).

In Ecuador, the 1960s and 1970s were marked by a rapid succession of political and
economic changes. In both 1964 and 1973 the military-led regime enacted agrarian reforms that
ended huasipungaje, thereby releasing indigenous peasants from their legal ties to hacienda
landowners. The 1964 reforms largely aimed at dismantling pre-capitalist land relations in the
highlands and allocated small plots of land (average of 3.5 hectares) to peasants who had worked
on haciendas. The 1973 reform instituted a number of credit associations in order to increase
agricultural production but this mostly benefited medium and large land holders (Dorner 1992b,
35) Social critics Jorge Icaza and Pío Jaramillo Alvarado, both eminent indigenists, made
important contributions to a larger discourse on structural inequalities, which diverse actors later
engaged. The reforms allocated parcels of land to rural workers and recognized the communal lands legalized in the 1937 Ley de Comunas. In order to systematize and regularize these allocations and enforcement of the law, the government established the Instituto National de Desarrollo Agrario (INDA, National Institute of Agrarian Development) (Viteri Díaz 2007). The Church also played a role as liberation theology compelled Catholic priests and theologians to take action against structural conditions of poverty. In 1965, the priests Father Ángel María Iglesias, Father Ángel Castillo and Father Víctor Vázquez began to work with the indigenous communities and help them organize the agricultural cooperatives on the Huantag hacienda (closer to Zhud) (Quinde and Solano, n.d.). The hacienda of Tunis, which was the first to be parceled out, and the administration and distribution of the land was largely given to mestizos in the town of Cañar; the huasipungueros received the least desirable land, in the region of Buerán, on the very edge of the hacienda land. (From Historia contada por un líder Cañari [Quinde and Solano, n.d.]).

Despite the expectation that agrarian reforms would more evenly distribute landownership, the small parcels granted to peasants were often located in the least fertile regions and were too small to meet subsistence needs. Many peasants were forced to combine subsistence farming with migration to urban areas and the coast to find supplemental employment, participating in the market economy as semi-proletarians (Brysk 2000; Zamosc 1994). The incorporation of indigenous and rural laborers into the market generated greater dependency on the state’s economic stability.23 24

23 As will be explored in later chapters, the small plots held by indigenous families would come to serve a purpose other than meager subsistence — as collateral for loans from prestamistas (chulqueros), or informal moneylenders, they finance the migration journey. Legal papers specify the land as the guarantee for these “business” loans and, if the borrower defaults, the mortgaged land is quickly seized. Many informal moneylenders are descendants of erstwhile landowning mestizo families, whose properties were taken during the agrarian reforms. In an ironic turn,
Panama hat trade and international migration

During these reforms, Ecuador as a whole experienced relative prosperity, but in the highland region, the agrarian reforms compounded the loss of the artisanal “Panama” hat market that collapsed during the previous decade. The southern provinces of Azuay and Cañar, commonly referred to as “El Austro,” were once the center of a prosperous, international hat trade. “Panama hat” is a misnomer, as the woven straw hats were the product of Ecuadorian material and labor. The region’s long history of artisanal production and its participation in global markets defined and distinguished it from other Andean communities. The industry was a vital part of the economy in the coastal and highland regions in the south from the mid-nineteenth century until the 1950s, when the industry collapsed as a result of changing fashions and the decision of New York merchants, who were the largest distributors of the hats in the United States and Europe, to import lower cost hats from other countries. After the demise of the hat industry, many members of the province’s artisan households migrated to the coast and to the urban centers in search of work. Agro-artisan households and middle-class merchants had forged social and economic ties that may have become important networks during later periods of international migration by those in the rural households. For some entrepreneurial mestizo households, these mercantile relationships provided networks that linked mestizo migrant households, these mercantile relationships provided networks that linked mestizo migrant

defaulted prestamista loans result in the redistribution of land once again. While the loss of family plots is not pervasive, it has impacted a significant number of households, and the number of defaulted loans since the 2008 economic crisis and the subsequent decline in remittances is not yet known.

24 Beginning in the 1960s, Latin Americanist scholars took up the “agrarian question,” a Marxist-centered analysis of rural livelihoods and class differentiation among the peasantry in relation to capitalism and agriculture. For further reading see, Bebbington 1997; Murra, Wachtel, and Revel 1986; Salomon 1982; Roseberry 1993; Akram, Haroon, and Kay 2010a; Akram, Haroon, and Kay 2010b; Kay 2015.

25 Tom Miller (1986) has documented how the Panama hat got its name from its trade route, as ships carrying the hats to merchants in the United States and Europe would pass through the Panama Canal. Canal workers adopted the hats, seeing their practicality, and as more and more passengers came through the canal and saw the hats in use, the hats were assumed to originate from that region.
brokers and rural migrants and that facilitated of clandestine migration.

The first wave of international migration was comprised primarily of young men from white and mestizo merchant families who followed the hat trade trail to New York and Chicago, a route formed through social connections of these merchant families with businesses abroad. While the census can only provide an estimate of the actual migrant population, data show that the number of Ecuadorians residing in the United States grew from 1,726 in 1950 to 10,271 in 1960 (see Figure 1 in Appendix). The United States was not the only destination. In the mid- to late-1950s, Ecuadorians migrated to Toronto, Canada, enticed by Italian construction contractors that were seeking cheap labor (Phillips 1999). In the early 1970s, middle-class property holders, medical professionals, and engineers traveled to Venezuela because of the country’s oil boom. Despite initial plans to return to Ecuador, many families who emigrated left permanently.

In the early 1970s, Ecuador prospered from high prices for oil in the international market and national industrialization projects, however the steep fall of the oil market in the early 1980s decimated the economy and contributed to a large migration of semi-proletarianized workers to the United States (Zamosc 1994).

Migration from the coast

The late 1960s and early 1970s also witnessed increased migration to the United States from the coastal provinces of Guayas, Manabí, and El Oro, with approximately 35,252 Ecuadorians in the United States by 1970. At least two factors propelled this migration: the decline of the banana industry and the Vietnam War. Former banana plantation workers began to migrate as production declined, with many boarding banana cargo ships to the United States. From 1966–1968, the US Consulate in Guayaquil granted numerous visas to young, male, educated Ecuadorians as well. These young men from the coast obtained visas with relative ease.
as the United States sought to fill jobs left vacant by the draft for the Vietnam War. New arrivals, mostly young men, found jobs in factories and other industrial work, primarily in Chicago, New York, and California. Once the war ended in 1975, many Ecuadorians settled in the United States, bringing family members and friends over on tourist visas. Entrepreneurial Otavaleños, from northern highland Ecuador, also began marketing artisanal goods in the United States in the late 1960s (Rudolf Colloredo-Mansfield 1999). This entrepreneurial migration marked the first significant indigenous international mobility that Kyle (2003) termed merchant migrants to juxtapose their migration from migrants from the southern highlands in his late 1990s regionally comparative study, Transnational Peasants.

Indigenous Uprisings, Neoliberalism, and Migration to the United States (1980s–Mid-1990s)

Go and tell them that we suffer here as well, that we are not just making money, that here we are worked to the bone in the -- factories [where they exploit us miserably since we do not have papers]. Describe to those in our communities, the fear with which we live. Tell them that this is not the paradise that some believe and other idiots lie that it is. Go with the truth in your hands and teach those fools that still believe that here they can pick the money off the trees on Fifth Avenue. (Galo Galarza, Letters to Ecuador 1990 [Astudillo Romero and Cordero 1990, 25])

In addition to the increased mobility of rural workers at the end of the huasipungo period, class dynamics shifted during the early 1970s. As Zamosc (1994) argues, the displacement of the hegemonic regional class of landowners exacerbated the regional political power vacuum. The loss of the traditional landholding elites’ power upset local class relations at the same time that rural peasants were being incorporated into the wage labor market and the Ecuadorian economy increasingly susceptible to international economic restructuring. This power vacuum opened a space for new social organizations that claimed to represent local and regional interests. Smaller

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26 Some accounts assert that there was a tacit agreement that men would enlist in the armed forces if their visa applications were approved (Astudillo Romero and Cordero 1990).
cabildos (community councils) and federations emerged. The regional organization ECUARURANI,\textsuperscript{27} in particular, rose up in response to Andean peasants’ changing demands and interests.

Economic strife and political instability during the late 1970s and early 1980s prompted increased international migration from El Austro region, largely comprised of young indigenous men who were later joined by their wives, siblings, and neighbors. While a long history of mobility existed in the region, this was the first significant wave of international migration among rural workers from this region.

By the early 1980s, international migration had increased significantly and it continued to grow over the next decade. Economists and international lending agencies, such as the World Bank, attached conditions to loans stipulating that Latin American countries must adopt neoliberal policy reforms and privatize state and public sector institutions and natural resources, as well as reduce spending on services. Contrary to the benefits anticipated from such reforms, these policies intensified existing economic disparities and strife in many communities.

Between 1980 and 1990, the Ecuadorian population in the United States nearly doubled from 110,044 to 196,874, an increase of 78.9 percent. Young single males from rural areas in the southern highland provinces of Azuay and Cañar began to migrate in greater numbers to the United States enticed by the promising stories circulating in nearby Azuay and Cuenca which migrants attempted to dispel, as in the above quote. In addition to economic factors, stronger social networks among migrants from these communities helped facilitate increased migration as found among many other immigrant groups.

During this decade, immigration was marked by a change in the journey itself, which increasingly became clandestine. It could be characterized by a shift in the regimes of mobility in

\textsuperscript{27} Confederación Kichwa del Ecuador.
which changing legislation caused important shifts in mobility strategies of increasingly impoverished people throughout Latin America. Between 1965 and 1976, United States legislation placed quotas on the number of migrants from Latin American nations (120,000 from the Western Hemisphere), and shifted to address labor needs and family reunification. It also ended the Bracero program, which had recruited laborers primarily from Mexico to work in agriculture, often under deplorable conditions. Legal migration from Latin America did increase, but unauthorized migration far outpaced it (Massey and Pren 2012). The increase in migration may not be solely attributed to policy changes (as migration stems from a variety of factors), but the new policies certainly stimulated new strategies for clandestine migration. In the 1960s and early 1970s it had been possible to fly directly to Miami, Los Angeles, or even New York, but increased vigilance on the borders in the late 1970s and 1980s made the journey much more arduous, costly, and dangerous. For those with resources, it was possible to purchase Mexican identification in Quito and fly to Tijuana and from there cross the border into the United States.\(^{28}\) Otherwise, hopeful migrants could journey either by land or by sea to Central America, travel through Mexico, and then attempt to cross the border. Accounts of such journeys tell of a three-month ordeal if by sea and land, but migrants could cross the borders of the countries along the way and face far less scrutiny and vigilance; the journey took closer to two to three weeks if only over land.

Between 1970 and 1980, Ecuadorian migrants settled largely in New York, New Jersey, and California (see Figure 2 in Appendix). The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 provided the opportunity for those already in the United States to gain amnesty (principally between 1989 and 1991). Migrants began to form social and civic groups that organized

\(^{28}\) It is unclear how invested Mexican immigration officials were in detaining Ecuadorians en route to the United States during this period, which could explain how Ecuadorians were able to “pass” despite their accent and lack of knowledge of Mexican history.
community activities, fostered support networks, and helped maintain social and cultural connections with Ecuador. More informally, soccer leagues and “Ecua-volley” teams were formed for summer activities. These civic associations organized themselves according to the towns or communities that migrants had left, and the social divisions that had been present in Ecuador based on race, class, and ethnicity reemerged. Ecuadorians were outnumbered by other Latino groups, in particular Mexicans, Dominicans, and Puerto Ricans (Pallares 2005), and these civic associations also allowed Ecuadorians to distinguish themselves from other migrant groups. Beyond serving as gathering places around which to celebrate national (and regional) identities, these associations helped play a role in the expansion of dual citizenship and absentee voting rights in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

\textit{Indigenous Mobilizations}

At school I was taught the history of the Incas, the Puruháes, the Cara; everything was in the past. I asked myself: And, what am I? I am indigenous, I have not died, how is it that they affirm that all has ended? This was a shock to me. (Interview with Nina Pacari, quoted in de la Torre 2008)\textsuperscript{29}

Following a decade of intense economic instability throughout Latin America, indebted governments began to implement neoliberal policies and structural adjustment reforms under the “Washington Consensus” doctrine, a term coined by John Williamson. By specifying lending conditions for developing nations, international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, set up programs that sought to “reduce the state role in the economy, and called for reductions in state expenditures on social services such as education and

\textsuperscript{29} Nina Pacari is an indigenous lawyer from northern highland Ecuador who has been a national activist for indigenous and afro-Ecuadorian rights since the 1990s.
health care, introduction of user fees for such services, trade liberalization, currency devaluation, selling off of state-owned enterprises, and financial and labor market deregulation” (Edelman and Haugerud 2005, 7).³⁰

As governments pushed through these requirements in the early 1990s, non-governmental organizations increasingly implemented development projects targeting historically marginalized groups. Scholars and activists involved in these projects also drew upon the indigenista critiques of structural inequality from the early half the century. These projects incorporated identity and the organization of indigenous populations as potential avenues for empowerment alongside the growing activism among indigenous and other groups. Throughout the 1990s, indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian, and rural laborers began organizing and demanding recognition of their rights as citizens in the face of increasingly difficult economic and social conditions. They held national protests that paralyzed transportation in the highlands and coastal trade routes for periods of up to four weeks, forcing the government to negotiate with the newly formed national-level pan-indigenous organization, CONAIE (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador).³¹

Zamosc (1994, 48) writes, “Rather than insisting on traditional themes like the struggle for land and economic improvements, CONAIE concentrated on an ethnic agenda ranging from the vindication of cultural rights to more ambitious programmatic demands such as the redefinition of Ecuador as a plurinational country.” This organized, pan-indigenous emphasis on ethnic identity largely diverged from the earlier class-based peasant agenda focused on restructuring agrarian relations. While Becker (1999) showed that indigenous activism during the early 1920s in Cayambe included ethnic identity as part of the agenda, CONAIE brought these

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³⁰ For further reading on neoliberal reforms, see Sawyer (2004), Kay (2008), Harvey (2005), and Ong (2006).
³¹ National protests by indigenous and other marginalized groups occurred not only in Ecuador but also in many countries of the Global South where severe recessions, unsustainable international debts, and neoliberal policies exacerbated polarities between industrialized and developing nations and concentrated income and wealth in the upper classes.
demands to a national platform and included the rights of multiple indigenous and Afro-
Ecuadorian groups. Such identity-based politics gained traction during the 1992 quincentennial
“celebration” of the arrival in the Americas of Christopher Columbus. Widespread protests
throughout Latin America and the Caribbean rejected the claim that Columbus “discovered” the
Americas, highlighted the brutality of the colonial and nation-building projects, and called
attention to their injurious institutional and ideological legacy. Representatives from numerous
indigenous groups mobilized and lobbied for recognition of cultural, political, and linguistic
rights, and demanded that the state institutionalize bilingual Spanish/Kichwa schools and
recognize them as dual citizens of Ecuador and their specific indigenous groups.

In June 1994, indigenous and rural groups organized nationwide protests against the
Agrarian Development Act, a “neoliberal law designed to liberalize the land market” (Bretón
2008, 585), which promoted private property rights and breaking up communal land holdings.
The law “halted further redistribution [of land] and downgraded the land titling bureaucracy,”
which in effect liberalized rural property rights in indigenous communities, despite widespread
indigenous protests, and led to families being granted “unviable subsistence smallholdings”
(Brysk 2000, 15). Suzana Sawyer attended the emergency hearings over two weeks in Quito
following the beginning of the June protests that had been called by President Sixto Durán. Her
accounts of the both the performativity of the hearings, as well as the arguments around land
usage, identity, and rights, are remarkable (Sawyer 2004). In attendance were the government
officials, the terratenientes (large landowners), and indigenous representatives, who reviewed the
law article by article, she states that the “debates lay out the logic that enabled the state to
relinquish responsibility for ensuring the well-being of its subjects and allowed it to assume the
role of a fiscal manager”(Sawyer 2004, 183), as well as the state’s attempt to create a “rational
agrarian landscape.” Ultimately the debates ranged between the ideal of liberal legality, in which all involved were subject to the same law and, conversely, that the not all land was the same. In sum, Sawyer shows that “reality of social disparity experienced by the raced, classes, and gendered indígena bodies around the negotiation table collided with bourgeois notions of the liberal subject” (2004, 199). At the end of the hearings, CONAIE was able to negotiate the stipulation that would have allowed the state to privatize communal lands, with the stipulation that this would only be possible if two-thirds of the community agreed to do so.

In Cañar, one event stands out in the collective memory of many people in the surrounding provinces. It captures the ethnic tensions between mestizos and the indigenous community, which still surface in daily interactions and as indigenous-owned businesses open up closer and closer to the central plaza. It also stands as a symbol of the potential corruption (rumored or otherwise) introduced by development projects. Tensions grew, ultimately exploding on June 14, 1994, when members of the Unión Provincial de Comunas y Cooperativas Cañarí (UPCCC) demonstrated in the town of Cañar. Towards the end of the day, several indigenous youths threatened mestizo shopkeepers.

A mob of mestizos from the urban center attacked the newly constructed headquarters (Nucanchic Huasi) of the UPCCC and then broke into and set fire to the building in the middle of the night. Propane gas tanks blew up, feeding the mayhem. When members of the indigenous community heard about the break-in they rushed to confront the perpetrators and a violent conflict ensued. According to witnesses’ accounts, a few people were hurt and one died. It is also rumored that prior to burning the building down, the attackers removed all the computers and other valuables. A woman affiliated with the UPCCC remembered:
A group of people tried to hinder others from entering the marketplace. ‘This is our living,’ the salespeople told them and this angered the group. Some even went around town smashing windows and threatening people. A mob soon surrounded our headquarters. They destroyed everything and plundered the store and the storerooms. Then the fire started. People panicked. People trapped inside were afraid of running out into the furious mob, so several jumped from the wall in the back. It is very high and several were badly hurt. One died. The fire brigade stood watching while the place burned down; the library, office, the store, everything went up in flames. Not until the rest of the town was threatened did the fireman try to put out the flames. It was a terrible blow to all of us, both mestizos and indigenous people. (Interview with Inocencio Lojo Alulema, quoted in Lundius 2001, 66)

Prior to the 1994 incident, the UPCCC was one of the most active indigenous organizations in the highlands, representing communities in Cañar, Tambo, and Suscal. The fire destroyed much of its momentum. This included its attempts to settle widespread tensions following the ill-fated dam-construction project sponsored by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).\(^{32}\) Community members accused UPCCC leaders of colluding with IFAD representatives. Rumors held that people physically threatened the officials, which increased tensions within the community.

Of this time, people reflected on the level of corruption that they witnessed. Two active members of the UCIOT told me, on separate occasions, that the indigenous representatives who were part of the fiasco used the funding from the IFAD collaborators to purchase vehicles and other items for the project. Once it ended, they were said to have sold the vehicles and used the money to finance their own migration journeys to the United States. While this may have been a rumor, the moral of the story seemed to be that NGOs caused unprecedented disruptions to local governance and that unfettered access to money led to self-interest and deception of the

\(^{32}\) In the early 1990s, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) launched a project to increase access and distribution of fresh water throughout the rural communities in the province of Cañar. The project engineers planned to construct a dam at the foot of the sacred lake of Culebrillas, which would entail submerging an Incan quarry and rebuilding the ancient irrigation canals that had been maintained by rural community members for centuries.
community at large. This was an important backdrop to conversations about the Co-Desarrollo Murcia-Cañar project (sponsored by the Spanish government) that was underway at the time of my research and which I discuss in Chapter Two.

Migration scholarship and the mobility studies framework

Just as the actual migration journey changed in the 1980s so did scholarship on migration. In the early 1990s, scholars of migration noted that immigrants were strongly influenced by the social ties and relationships in their home country, and they proposed reframing the study of immigration in order to account for the multiple ways in which migrants sustain these connections. Migrants maintain relationships with family, neighbors, and friends back home through various means of communication, such as telephone calls, letters, videos and photographs (and, more recently, Internet-based communications), or, on the rare occasion, an actual visit home. These social ties create a sense of community that crosses national boundaries, and also allow for the transfer of what have been termed “social remittances”: ideas, conceptions of the good life, and other systems of meaning (Levitt 1998).  

While in the 1980s migrants communicated with their family members via letters, expensive land-line calls, and video recordings, the 1990s brought rapid changes in technology. The increasing ease and speed of transferring ideas, goods, images, and knowledge, and even people, has allowed people to conceptualize themselves as increasingly connected to multiple spaces, which can destabilize the ideological and political boundaries of the nation-state.

As transnationalism expanded within immigration and diaspora studies, scholars focused on the collaborative nature of transnational migrant groups which underemphasized the complex realities encountered by migrants, and the contentions among them (Basch, Glick Schiller, and

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33 Chapter Four will expand on the role of social remittances in the changing dynamics within migrant households and communities.
Szanton Blanc 1993; see also Braziel and Mannur 2003). Early proponents of a transnational focus later argued, “our analytical lens must necessarily broaden and deepen because migrants are often embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind. As a result, basic assumptions about social institutions such as the family, citizenship, and nation-states need to be revisited” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). To this list of social institutions, I would add indigenous groups engaged in identity-based social movements, as is the case in Cañar with its well-established history of pan-indigenous organization and community leadership. Various scholars have begun this deeper analysis of the social institutions and the intersecting social fields within Ecuadorian migration (Torres and Carrasco 2008).

Studies within the field of consumption and material culture studies recognize the importance of markers of success and affluence within the transnational social fields of migrant groups (Rudolf Colloredo-Mansfield 1994; Boccagni 2014; Anderson 2009). After migrants pay off debts incurred by the migration journey, they often help finance the migration of family members. In some cases, young men of indigenous ancestry and/or rural backgrounds return bearing gifts, money, and markers of economic success. Jason Pribilsky writes that “return migrants donning new fashions and iony (American) pretensions were derided in Cuencan newspapers as ‘Cholo boys’ and ‘cholos lisos’ (slick cholos), a reminder that the symbolic capital of Western attire and the addition of a few English words into their vocabulary could not erase their indigenous and rural roots in Ecuador’s racial hierarchy”(2007, 42). “Cholo,” a term widely used throughout the Andean region, has slightly different meanings based on historical specificities in each country. In southern Ecuador, the term is used to derisively refer to a person of indigenous descent or rural background who “passes” as mestizo but still retains “backward”
ways. While a large body of literature on cholos provides a useful examination of social mobility and identity in the Andean region, I hesitate to use the term in describing the emergent forms of indigenous identity and modernity aspirations that come out of migration and access to remittances. In Ecuador, the reappropriation of the term as seen in the agricultural styles of ‘cholets’ in Bolivia, or in the expressions of upward mobility by indigenous Peruvians (Berg 2015), have not surfaced in self-affirmative identifications.

Conclusion

This chapter reviews the history of migration in order to make the point that the circulation of people is a fundamental element of Ecuador’s national development as well as part of the long history of indigenous people from the region. Through this analysis, I hope to better understand what might be different or distinct about the current wave of indigenous transnational migration. In the early twentieth-century, labor and resources circulate, not only between the highlands and the coast, but also between different haciendas in the southern highlands. The end of huasipungo and the agrarian reforms, alongside the demise of the Panama hat trade, led to increased international migration among middle-class merchant families. As indigenous peasants began to participate in the market, as wageworkers, they also began to migrate to the cities for supplemental work, as many of the plots they had access to were not sufficient to support families. In the late 1970s and early 1980s an economic downturn brought these marginalized wage laborers even more unstable conditions. Following the international migration patterns of the mestizos, more rural indigenous men migrated, albeit few from the Cañar region. Areas such as Deleg, and other small towns on the outskirts of Cuenca and Azuay had more ready access to

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34 For further reading on “cholo/a” and the variations that exist in the social construction of this identity throughout the Andean countries, see Weismantel (2001).
coyotes and knowledge about how to migrate. As this chapter demonstrates, labor and mobility are factors that have shaped the experiences of households and communities in the highland region for generations. Labor migrations have been part of the nation-building process, especially among rural highland laborers and indigenous groups. International migration has presented different challenges for community members, migrants and the local and national administration. Since 2000, international migration from across all different socioeconomic and other demographic groups has created a climate in which transnational ties are widespread and pervasive.
Chapter 2: Contemporary migration between Ecuador, the United States, and Spain

After a series of unsuccessful attempts, Mercedes finally crossed over into the United States. She waited a week at a safe house\textsuperscript{35} in southern California, finally separating from friends she traveled with through Mexico (both from highland Ecuador) and taking a flight to Portland, Oregon. After three long months of travel: by bus, fishing trawler, truck, intermittent periods of waiting at safe houses, long stretches of walking, and finally by plane, she met her husband outside the airport.

Mercedes stated,

“So I was here and saw the life in the U.S. We lived in a small place with (my husbands’) brother and two others.

I arrived very thin, and was not well....

Everything was so different here from life in a poor country. A hot shower, a machine to wash clothes – this was all new to me.

In this new world, I could see how poor we were in Ecuador, in the country, without the advantages of the U.S. We can survive, of course, but it’s so hard. Your husband has to work at the coast and come home only every few weeks, and having to wait for him to buy the food, without knowing what will happen. It was very difficult to understand...I never wanted to have to depend on my husband.

I had my two children...and I could see how difficult the situation was in Sidsid – sometimes I cried because I didn’t even have enough change for the bus to send my son to school. We passed many moments like that...”

\textsuperscript{35} This was a term that people used to describe the houses and compounds that they would stay at during the migration journey.
Mercedes made the migration journey to join her husband after two years apart to find a better way to support her young children in Ecuador. After her husband left, Mercedes struggled to subsist on her own wages as the remittances her husband sent home would go directly to pay off the $12,000 debt for his migration journey. As is customary in the region, the young married couple had settled in the husband’s community. The increased tensions with her mother-in-law, with whom she lived with her two small children, made the situation even more difficult. In earlier accounts, Mercedes stated that being separated from her own kin deprived her of critical support. Her family by birth included siblings who were involved in local politics, engaged with indigenous activism, as well as siblings who had migrated to New York. In terms of local social capital, she had access to a strong network of support but even the relative short distance between her home community (in a small sector of Cañar) and her residence in Sidsid (the neighboring town to Pamba), a thirty-minute bus ride, represented a significant break for her. Many times she didn’t even have the 25 cents, standard bus fare for an adult, to visit family and extended kin, or even send her children to school in a neighboring village.

Mercedes’ hopes for a stable family life were precluded by entrenched rural poverty in a nation-state unable and uninterested in alleviating rural and ethnic economic marginalization. Even though she had grown up in a household in which her father migrated to the coast seasonally, as was also customary in the region, the abrupt departure of her husband, and his prolonged absence was an isolating experience. Communication with her husband was limited to late night calls on a neighbor’s phone. She described having to wake her young children and walk through the cold and often rainy nights to speak with her husband with no privacy in a room full of her neighbors. The money sent home would be used up to pay off debt while she still struggled to cover their daily expenses, a story that resonates with many migrant households.
When Mercedes arrived in Portland, she was able to get a job fairly quickly through her husband’s connections. The plan was to work for two years and return home. However five years later, Mercedes and her husband still lived and worked in the Portland area. Their children still lived in Ecuador. Her future aspirations changed once she acclimated to the conditions of everyday life in the United States. She saw the conditions of poverty from a new perspective and they seemed even harsher in the stark light of modern amenities so easily taken for granted in the United States: appliances, running water, plumbing, affordable transportation, access to free public education through high school. She was well aware of the precarity of her life as an undocumented migrant, or legal liminality (Menjívar 2006). She struggled to balance wanting to return to Ecuador despite the economic advantages and trying to build her children a better future, to dig the family out of the pervasive poverty still prevalent in the region. The longer she stayed away, she reasoned, the greater the stakes in the sacrifice.

Indigenous Cañaris have been on the move for generations, including short-term migration to urban areas and the coast, as well as between haciendas in the highland region, as the previous chapter shows. For most of the twentieth century, these patterns of circulation were interspersed with periods of stasis, as legislation often bound rural people to labor relationships with landed oligarchs (latifundistas). However, contemporary migration practices impact rural and indigenous families, households, and communities, as well as local labor dynamics, in distinct ways. Many rural households are familiar with the absence of migrating family members although for shorter periods of time and with reasonable expectations of their return. This

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36 I contend that she entered into a liminal space, as conceived by Victor Turner in the late 1960s and more recently in migration literature, at the moment her husband embarked on his clandestine migration journey (Turner 1969; Menjívar 2006). Turner’s conceptualization that “liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between their positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (Turner 1969, 94), aptly describes her experiences of entering a stage in which she no longer understood the parameters of her family and household.
chapter outlines the recent period of international migration following the 2000 economic crisis and highlights some of the challenges indigenous transnational migrant families face in both the communities of origin and communities of destination.

Even as indigenous migrant households and families benefit from remittances, many contend with discrimination within their own families and communities. This inherent tension, between the potential benefits, as well as the risks, of transnational migration runs throughout the narratives and experiences of migrant communities. I do not intend to overemphasize either of these dimensions, rather, my goal, is to highlight them together throughout this text. Local and national discourse often casts migrant Cañaris as the harbingers of family and community disintegration and this negative perception circulates among indigenous communities. In destination countries, the marginalized position of indigenous and rural people rematerializes through processes of segmented assimilation,37 where indigenous identity makes immigrants more vulnerable to vigilance by authorities and to exploitation because of racial profiling and linguistic and educational barriers. Further, racialization among Latin American groups marginalizes indigenous migrants through discriminatory practices, especially between well-established migrant groups and new arrivals. Within these multiple intersecting social constraints, migrants and their families struggle to survive, to reunite, and to provide support for multiple generations. My research shows that international migration, while opening up new possibilities for indigenous migrant households, has contributed to greater social and economic

37 This term, coined by Alejandro Portes, usually refers to the assimilation experience of second-generation immigrants in the United States to help explain the divergent outcomes of different immigrant groups. (Portes and Zhou 1993) While the initial usage of the term to provide more nuanced understanding of the insertion of groups at different economic strata, and racialized in particular ways, more recent research takes into consideration the forms of social capital (education, language, business savvy, ethnicity, social networks, pathways to citizenship) that condition the prospects for second generations. I use the term here to explain to the ways indigenous people may encounter new forms of discrimination based primarily on language, legality, and ethnicity even within Ecuadorian and other Latin American migrant populations.
inequalities in the communities. Despite this, in terms of social mobility, access to remittances and migration has helped create new ways to for people to pursue modern aspirations and maintain indigenous identity.\(^{38}\)

**Increased International Migration: New Migrants and New Destinations (Late 1990s–present)**

The majority of Ecuadorians abroad have irregular status in their host countries, having traveled either via a clandestine migration network or by overstaying a student or tourist visa (See Figures 4 and 5 in Appendix, which compare citizenship status among Ecuadorians in the United States in 2008 and 2013). Researchers estimate that between two and three million of an estimated fifteen million total population were living abroad in the early 2000s (Gratton and Herrera 2004; Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002; INEC 2013). While migration flows to the United States have, as a whole, slowed down following the 2008 global economic crisis, migration from the Azuayo region has seen little decline. The most significant decline was in migration to Spain, which has suffered a prolonged recession since 2008 and which had only moderately recovered by 2013. Return migration has become more prevalent in the large urban cities of Quito and Guayaquil.\(^{39}\)

The post-2000 period of migration was remarkable not only for the sheer number of migrants but also for their changing demographics as well as their destination. While studies suggested that Ecuadorian migration was still predominantly male, there has been a gradual feminization of the migrating population (Gratton and Herrera 2004). Further, migrants were leaving rural areas and larger cities, including Guayaquil and Quito, and held a broad range of

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\(^{38}\) This is not simply a taking on of IONY identity but coming up with more flexible expressions of indigeneity. This is extremely important, these Andean fashionings, as described in Ulla Berg’s work on Peruvian migrants (2015), have also surfaced in architectural styles called cholets in Bolivia.

\(^{39}\) In 2013, net migration was -30,000 in 2012 according to World Bank estimates.
socio-economic and educational backgrounds. In the early 2000s, Ecuadorian migrants in Spain had higher levels of education and came from higher socioeconomic strata than those journeying to the United States (Gratton and Herrera 2004). These shifts seemed to be the result of the particular configurations of contemporary labor demands in Europe, principally Spain (until hit with a severe recession in 2008); Ecuador’s economic and political turmoil in the late 1990s; and the high risk associated with migration to the United States, both because of the dangers involved in the journey and the increasingly anti-immigrant position taken by many US officials.

While US consulates grant interviews for visa applicants, the US$200 fee, long waiting list, and almost guaranteed denial (based on seemingly arbitrary selection criteria), continued to discourage hopeful migrants from moving through legal channels. Increased attention to US national security since the attacks of September 11, 2001, has made immigration to the United States even more difficult. Until 2003, Ecuadorians were not required to have a visa to enter Spain. Spain has conducted numerous amnesty programs to grant residency to undocumented migrants. Based upon data from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (National Institute of Statistics and Census [INEC] in Ecuador), between 1996 and 2001, 49.4 percent of Ecuadorians in Spain had secured permanent residence there, while in the United States only 26.7 percent had gained residency status.

New migration patterns

Since the late 1990s, migrants have headed to destinations other than the gateway cities such as New York City, Miami, and Los Angeles, as they opt for less migrant-dense destinations with better work opportunities. For Cañari migrants, these include Minneapolis, which various Latin American groups view as a migrant-friendly city; Spring Valley, New York, which has a
long history of Haitian, Caribbean, and Mexican migration; and rural areas around many East Coast cities, where the Ecuadorian government has established satellite consulates. The extended absence of the husband-father-brother, often followed by the wife-mother-sister, contrasts with the family arrangements of earlier seasonal migrations within Ecuador where young men migrated to the coast for three to four months (Pribilsky 2007). Migrating couples frequently leave behind young children in the care of siblings or grandparents.\textsuperscript{40} The constraints of legal migration, the high cost of the clandestine journey, and the vulnerability of the undocumented in receiving countries together make return migration infrequent, if not impossible. This often results in the households left behind becoming both more dependent on remittances and more vulnerable due to the longstanding and potentially permanent burden of the absentee migrant members. If these young couples then have additional children in the United States, they become family divided not only by borders but also by immigration statuses.\textsuperscript{41}

Since 2000, women of different ages have begun to immigrate to the United States, Spain, Italy, and other destinations in Europe. In 2003, the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) and Plan Migración, Comunicación y Desarrollo co-published a collection of essays on the increasing feminization of migration. One of the studies surveyed 2,500 Ecuadorian migrants who resided outside of the country. Of those migrants surveyed, 60.8 percent of all the men were in the United States, while 30.7 percent were in Spain. Of women migrants, only 22.3 percent resided in the United States, while the largest percentage, 47.3 percent, resided in Spain. This represents a significant difference between migrant destination and gender.

\textsuperscript{40} The choice to leave young children behind is often made in consideration of the treacherous migration journey and the unknown living conditions that await one’s arrival to the United States.

\textsuperscript{41} Joanne Dreby (2015) conducted long-term ethnographic research on the inner dynamics of mixed-status citizenship within Mexican immigrant households. She found that tensions were exacerbated in communities with large concentrations of Mexican immigrants, as discussions of citizenship status became taboo.
While this feminization of migration seems to open up possibilities for women by allowing them to challenge gender disparities in the household, the degree to which this transition breaks with previous roles depends on what types of households are considered. As this migration includes women from across socioeconomic groups, there are certainly variations in their roles in relation to domestic decision-making processes and the allocation of household finances. Since the colonial period, Ecuador has been a largely Catholic country, in which patriarchal hierarchies of power and moral coding have been reproduced in households across different classes. While patriarchal ideologies are prevalent in the middle- and upper-middle-classes, the subsistence strategies of lower-income groups have resulted in shifts in gender roles. For many rural households, wives grew to have more decision-making power when husbands were engaged in seasonal work along the coast (Pribilsky 2007). Furthermore, the allocation of finances largely fell to women in managing social relationships at the market with other women and in barter exchanges for goods and services (Pribilsky 2007). Regardless of the previous distribution of gendered decision making, in most cases women are now assuming greater financial responsibilities and earning significant incomes on their own, which can generate tensions within households across class lines.

Young migrant women, especially those who made the trek alone, describe a perilous journey in which their lives and physical safety were at risk. Women’s accounts include taking Depo-Provera shots so that they would not become pregnant in case they were raped en route. Having arrived in the United States, women migrants often work in sweatshops, as cleaners in office buildings, or as caretakers for children or the elderly. In some cases, young women arrive

42 A broad body of literature exists on the power of the church and the legacy of the colonial church, and how this shaped, disrupted, and transformed mestizo and indigenous family beliefs and practices (see Larson 2004).
43 In Mercedes’ case, she expressed her fear of traveling alone and her husband dismissed her concerns, stating that he had never seen any cases of abuse. Her journey is detailed in the following chapter.
and are expected to be caretakers for a household of migrant men, in which case they do not achieve the independence they expected, and may even continue in this role until they are married. Migrant women’s multiple roles as caretaker, breadwinner, and transnational mother are examined in a growing body of literature (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997). Herrera, Carrillo, and Torres (2006) note that Ecuadorian female migrants also had a considerably higher level of education than the older migrant men in the United States. Despite these higher levels of education, many worked as domestic servants in Ecuador prior to obtaining similar work in Europe.44

Transnational ties

International migration has intensified throughout Latin America and other “developing” nations in the global south. The vast flow of people destabilizes national boundaries (Kyle 2003; Levitt 1998; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1993; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton Blanc 1995; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Migrants abroad maintain social, economic, and cultural ties with their countries and communities of origin through various means, from social and monetary remittances, to celebrating national festivals and events, to mobilizing to achieve dual-citizenship rights. These movements, activities, and networks challenge traditional conceptions of nation-state boundaries, citizenship, identities, and family types. Migrants engage in these networks even as they manage undocumented statuses (either their own or as part of mixed-status households); employment insecurity, poor access to health care, education, and housing, and racial/ethnic/linguistic discrimination, which exacerbates their separation from kin and other support networks.

44 There is a growing body of literature on the role of women from developing countries working in the domestic sphere in industrialized countries; their labor allows women from the industrialized countries to participate more in the labor market (Benería 2008; Eitzen and Baca Zinn 2012; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007).
Migration policies, national-level discourse on migration, and local-level economic and social dynamics all filter through to the communities of origin. These experiences are translated in different ways and inform the decision-making process of where, when, and how hopeful migrants will embark on the journey. Despite transnational connections, many migrant families seek ways to reunite in the destination countries. While family reunification programs exist, they involve complex processes with increasingly stringent criteria, and, in the case of the United States, the process can take up to seven years to complete successfully. In both Spain and the United States, family reunification is the primary avenue through which immigrants are able to attain residency and citizenship.

Migrants abroad successfully lobbied for political representation and were able to participate in presidential elections in Ecuador beginning in 2007. While migration flows to the United States have, as a whole, slowed down following the 2008 global economic crisis, migration from the Azuayo region has seen little decline. The most significant decline was in migration to Spain, which has suffered a prolonged recession since 2008 and which had only moderately recovered by 2013. Return migration has become more prevalent in the large urban cities of Quito and Guayaquil.

Immigrant life in the United States

The United States has enacted shifting immigrant policies in order to manage immigrant populations and assimilation processes. However, marginalized groups have also long existed outside of documented legal structures, including those without citizenship or legal residence.

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45 There is a growing body of literature on the ways migrants censor information about racism, discrimination, and exploitation that they experience abroad (Berg 2007).
These migrants have played a vital role in the economy. The Bracero programs (1942-1964) enticed laborers from developing nations with temporary seasonal visas to work in agriculture. While the United States has attempted to control waves of immigrants through legal channels, the permeability of the borders with Mexico and Canada and a flourishing infrastructure of clandestine immigration channels have created new challenges. The United States had virtually closed its borders to Latin American migration until it enacted the Immigration and Reform Act of 1965, which set more liberal quotas for migration flows.

In an attempt to control the flow of undocumented immigrants, the United States enacted an amnesty in 1986 that gave workers who had traceable work histories opportunities for legal citizenship. Since that time, the growing numbers of undocumented immigrants who continue to arrive to the United States have encountered an increasingly hostile environment. As policies became more restrictive, the flourishing informal economy of clandestine immigration became more treacherous, with many willing to bear tremendous risks for the promise of opportunities not available in their countries of origin.

Expanding immigrant populations and the decline of jobs in an unstable global economy generated debate that ranged widely from more lenient immigrant incorporation polices to those that argued for an impenetrable border and increased deportation. The George W. Bush administration worked to enact a comprehensive reform of immigration policy, but sparring political interests led to the reform’s demise. More recently, under the Obama administration, the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act gained traction, in an attempt to create avenues to citizenship for youths who arrived in the United States as young children and lived in the United States as “productive, good” citizens. Even though Latino identity is often portrayed as a unifying identity in the media, it has always been a complex
identity that reduces important distinctions between different national-origin groups. In many cases, these groups are themselves ethnically and socioeconomically diverse, and are less united under the “Latino” identifier and tend to have divergent political and ideological outlooks.

Recent migrants and especially indigenous ones are experiencing increased isolation from and exploitation by more established migrant groups. In densely populated urban areas, traditionally the destinations of new migrants, government migration officials are not visibly present except in cases of illegal factory work where Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents routinely raid sweatshops and place undocumented workers in detention centers for deportation. These “sweeps” are growing in suburban and rural areas, as more immigrants settle in smaller towns. Coupled with increasing animosity toward migrants in these suburban and rural areas, the raids heighten anxiety among undocumented workers. Fear leads to underreporting of workplace and domestic violence, underpayment and wage theft, and exploitation of new migrants by more established Latin American migrants.

In Spring Valley, recent indigenous migrants who are monolingual Kichwa speakers contend with this exploitation on a daily basis. Many find work in construction (mostly men) and as domestic servants (women) in the households of a very large Hasidic community. On one of my first visits, Daniel, a bilingual indigenous Ecuadorian migrant from Cañar, spoke about a family who had opened up a remittance-sending storefront that was said to be working with coyotes in Ecuador. When newly arrived Ecuadorians came to send money home, the tellers would exert pressure on them to make sure coyote fees were prioritized, even though the migrants wished to send more to their families. Local community service workers suspected that

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46 There is a growing body of scholarly work on the forms of exploitation that occur between Latino groups (Pribilsky 2007; Mahler 1995).
the family charged people fees for completing applications and other paperwork for free social services, creating an intermediary position for them within the US social service sector. The level of isolation that monolingual indigenous language speakers experience in largely Latino immigrant communities can be extreme.

Among Ecuadorians, citizenship increased slightly from 61.3 percent in 2008 to 66.3 by 2013. The majority of those who held citizenship were born in the United States, one or more of their parents having participated in the decades-long history of Ecuadorian migration to the United States. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) data for 2013 show that 9,470 Ecuadorians were nationalized, representing just 1.2% of all national-origin groups naturalized that year, and less than half the number of Ecuadorians naturalized in 2006 (17,489). While this may not represent significant numbers in comparison with Mexican immigrants, they do have one of the highest rates of naturalization from mainland Latin America.

Immigrant Life in Spain

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47 I first came to Spring Valley to give a presentation to a group of social workers who noticed a growing population of Kichwa-speaking immigrants; the social workers reported they could not communicate with these new migrants.

48 As more Mexican indigenous migrants arrive in the New York region, this linguistic barrier has become an obstacle for outreach and service providers.
The history of international migration to Spain follows a very different trajectory. The image above tells a larger story about the migration experience from Ecuador. First, it clearly draws on the image of social class as embodied but also situational, depicted through personal hygiene, posture, facial expression, and clothing. It also speaks to the mobility of the woman, which in Spain was likely facilitated by the numerous amnesty programs that granted residency status and allowed many Ecuadorian migrants to travel back and forth. Beyond that, the performance of success and affluence, and the importance of doing so, clearly resonated with the circle of Ecuadorian friends on social media.

After the death of fascist dictator Francisco Franco in 1975, Spain initiated a democratic transition and tried to strengthen its export economy. The fishing industry, export agriculture, tourism, and construction expanded rapidly in the immediate post-Franco period. Immigration increased to Spain in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as well as return migration by Spanish
nationals from Mexico and other European countries. In 1986, Spain and Portugal became members of the European Union. While migration had been occurring between Portugal, France, Morocco, and other Mediterranean countries, Spain never experienced huge waves of incoming migration until the late 1990s, with Ecuadorians among the most rapidly growing population (Herrera, Carrillo, and Torres 2006). The expansion of export agriculture created major labor shortages in the southern region of Andalucía. In the mid-1990s Spain created legal pathways for agricultural laborers to migrate from many Latin American countries. As with early migrants to the United States, these initial migrants brought family and other kin to live and work where they had settled.

Since the 1990s, Spain has enacted six amnesty programs for undocumented migrants, and kept a relatively open migration policy through the early 2000s (Gratton and Herrera 2004). Under the Convention on Regulation and Ordering of Migratory Flows, signed between Ecuador and Spain in May 2001, the Spanish government “has allowed for the orderly migration of a large number of Ecuadorians who were actually selected by Spanish entrepreneurs. These migrants travel under a work contract with social security protection, and enjoy the same guarantees as Spanish citizens” (IMF 2010). In Ecuador, the Casas de Migrantes and other agencies offer assistance to hopeful migrants to complete all the required application materials. As of 2008, Ecuadorians accounted for the second-largest migrant group in Spain, after Moroccans, and followed by Dominicans. Spanish census data show that by 2013, 474,074 Ecuadorians resided in Spain, of which 35 percent held Spanish nationality. However, these numbers do not include Ecuadorians with Spanish nationality that may have returned to Ecuador following the economic downturn. Most of those migrating to Spain during this time were from Guayaquil and Quito. They had higher levels of education than previous migrants to the United
States, and more of them were women.\textsuperscript{49} The feminization of this migration wave, as detailed earlier, suggests a higher level of family reunification, as many of the migrants were married with small children. The overall migration flow from Latin American countries to Spain between 1998 and 2004 shows the dramatic increase of Ecuadorian migration in particular, from 225 in 1996 to 91,120 in 2000.

In 2004, Spaniards overwhelmingly voted for the socialist candidate for Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero,\textsuperscript{50} over the previous Popular Party administration, led by José María Aznar; this was a demonstration of overall distrust with the Aznar administration’s handling of international relations after the terrorist attack on March 11, 2004. The tragic bombing of a Madrid commuter train, which killed 191 people and wounded 1,800, was carried out by Al Qaeda in retaliation for Spain’s involvement in the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This event took place a few days before the election and horrified the nation, possibly contributing to Zapatero’s political landslide. Since the “11-M” attacks undocumented migrants have suffered a rise in racial violence and abuse.

As migration to Spain increased, debates centered on how best to incorporate migrants. The redefinition of national membership, inclusion, and citizenship took place during a period in which the national borders were partially weakened since Spain’s membership in the European Union (1986). In addition, the European Union considered Spain a port country for incoming Latin American immigrants who would travel to other European nations. EU immigration policy largely superseded national-level policy.

\textsuperscript{49} Italy was also a popular destination. \\
\textsuperscript{50} Zapatero was re-elected in March 2008, but the election was disrupted by a terrorist incident and economic troubles, and he failed to win an overall majority.
Families Reunification and Brokerage

Many migrants in the United States are dependent on clandestine networks for family reunification. The sudden rise in 2014 in unaccompanied minors crossing the border into the United States signaled the need for more comprehensive programs as many families responded to rumors that new DACA legislation would provide a pathway to citizenship to all undocumented children in the United States. Families scrambled to send their children north to either reunite with their parents or extended family residing in the United States. Between 2012 and 2014, the number of unaccompanied children apprehended at the U.S.-border with Mexico increased 181 percent (24,403 in 2012 and 68,551 in 2014) (J. Johnson 2015, 31). This sharp increase was followed by a decrease to 39,970 in 2015, as more accurate information became available to families in the migrant-sending countries. Families are dependent on an informal economy of migrant brokers, who have also begun to specialize in smuggling vulnerable clients, such as children and pregnant women (Sánchez 2014). National portrayals of human smugglers cast them as entrepreneurial “bottom feeders,” whose greed outweighs their concern for human safety, though not all engage in exploitation. There is a wide range of activities involved in human smuggling. Some people facilitate local travel or provide safe houses. People undertake dangerous migration strategies, fitting into make-shift cargo-holds (old tankers and other containers) or perilous water crossings, to circumvent the increased vigilance of immigration control officials, both from national agencies and US Coast Guard officials. Gangs and drug cartels also abduct migrants en-route in order to extort money or services.

Migration often results in further difficulties for those who endure not only the extended absence of migrant family members but also disparagement in both local- and national-level discourse. This widely shared negative perception of the migrant household stands in contrast to
a perception of indigenous solidarity, based on ethnic identity as mobilized by indigenous leadership. People used the Tambo family’s situation as a contrast to the ideal indigenous family that was a valued member and active participant in the community. Families that did not participate in community project events (mingas) because of the absence of family members were penalized with fines. Even those families that paid their fines in full didn’t escape scrutiny as people reflected on their absence over shared meals during the mingas. These community events grew in significance for those who participated, especially as they made the absence of other members more apparent. Instead of forging a sense of solidarity through facing the shared dilemmas presented by absent migrants, community members engaged in a discourse of migrant abandonment, which contributed to the isolation of the migrant’s family.

A 2008 UNESCO report on children and immigration in Cañar found that 27 percent of children lived in a household in which at least one parent was living abroad. The rate was much higher among indigenous households (35 percent) than non-indigenous households (19 percent) (Escobar García and Velasco Abad 2008). These numbers reflect not only more recent migration but also the impact of migration dating back to the 1980s and 1990s; households may have multiple generations of migrant members. The first migrant from a household often relies on social networks within the community, based many times on earlier migrants, to establish ties with a coyote and to determine where to go. Migrants in the United States will often partially sponsor a migrant, making a small down payment that is repaid once the migrant arrives at the destination. Otherwise, families use small plots of land that they received or purchased the agrarian reform programs in the 1960s and 1970s as collateral for loans from local chulqueros (money-lenders).

Social networks influence the choice of destination. In certain regions of Cañar, New
York is no longer the top destination. Migrants are choosing new satellite communities in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Midwestern cities. Often, these families will use the same brokers, especially if they have been reasonable and successful. Since the surge in migration in 2000, more indigenous entrepreneurs are becoming brokers as they establish networks themselves. Earlier most migrant brokers in the region belonged to mestizo families who had cornered the market for the previous twenty years.

By 2008 indigenous coyotes were starting to facilitate the migration journey. Potential migrants viewed them positively or at least with less disdain than they did coyotes who were further removed from the community. When asked what made them these coyotes more appealing, responses varied. Some people stated that the primary benefit was their ability to negotiate with aspiring migrants in Kichwa. Others also contended that because these coyotes lived in the community, their relationships were enmeshed within social networks, which implied more social control and greater potential for fair treatment. Not everyone held this perspective, but it was a common thread in discussions about indigenous migration.51

While migration to Spain was less prevalent in Cañar than in the major cities of Guayaquil and Quito, there were small enclaves in the San Rafael sector and other outlying communities where migration to Spain was more common. The Murcia-based migrant associations were largely from this sector and the nearby small town of Zhud in Cañar province. In addition, two cooperatives for local lending-and-savings programs had established agreements with Spanish banks. Antonio Duchi, the principal of the bilingual Quichua-Spanish high school in Sisid, who had earned his master’s degree at FLACSO and also served as the Cañari representative on the Murcia-Cañar co-development working group, shared his story of traveling

51 Chapter Five analyzes changing perceptions of indigenous coyotes in the region.
to Spain for work in the 1990s and encountering racism even more startling than that encountered in Cañar. He returned to Ecuador in 1998, just missing the opportunity for one of the first Spanish government amnesty programs for undocumented migrants.

Rosa, a representative of Tucayta, a local organization that worked with migrant families, shared her perception of the differences in family life depending on where the family member migrated. She emphasized that the country where the migrant resided impacted not only the families but also community solidarity, since remittances allowed for active participation in and monetary contributions to festivals. Given their higher rates of naturalization and dual nationality, migrants in Spain are more likely to send for their children through the family reunification program. While this may suggest that the whole family has left the community, extended family members, such as parents and siblings, still often depend on remittances. Migrants in Spain are also more likely to make return visits that cost them only the price of the round-trip flight and the obligatory gifts for relatives. Clearly, migrant incorporation policies in Spain provided more opportunities for families to remain connected. As with most pioneer migration, many of those who traveled to Spain planned to return to Ecuador eventually.

These transnational opportunities for connection clearly differ from those available to migrant families in the United States, who were rarely able to visit, as this would involve a new debt of $12,000 for return passage.\(^2\) Not having the option of a family reunification program, as in Spain, means that children largely stay behind even when both parents are abroad. Migrants that return from the United States usually do so as a result of being deported or because they have had a family emergency. Many households now have migrant members who have been

\(^2\) In the last two months of my time in Cañar, an increasing number of migrants were deported from the United States.
abroad for more than ten years. The composition of the migrant household—who was left behind and under whose care—shaped how involved the household was in the community.

Families decide to send for their children at very young ages, and they do so for many reasons. Sometimes parents simply can’t cope any longer with prolonged separation. Other parents choose to bring their children to the United States so that they will enjoy more economic and educational opportunities. In 2012, the Department of Homeland Security announced new legislation, DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), which would provide work authorizations to applicants who had arrived to the United States as undocumented children. Widespread rumors about DACA stimulated an increase in child migration as parents hoped that they would benefit from programs that would provide pathways to citizenship.

**The Role of Intermediaries and the Migration Industry perspective**

Literature on the migration industry emphasizes the important role of intermediaries in both facilitating migration flows but also in controlling them. While migration industry does not constitute a theoretical framework, the conceptual tool is useful to describe the heterogeneous ensemble of actors and institutions, both formal and informal, in migration facilitation and support services (Spener 2009b; Hernández-León 2013; Nyberg Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen 2013). In the case of Ecuador, the government established a number of intermediary institutions to offer support services to migrant families and migrants themselves, in effect extending the role of the state in managing the migration crisis, internally and abroad.

Consular offices of the Ecuadorian government have expanded their role in migrant communities throughout the United States, Spain, and Italy, the countries with the highest numbers of Ecuadorian immigrants. Two regional-level organizations, Pastoral Social and
Asociación Rumiñahui, were integral to the formalization of state-level interventions included among others. In 2007, President Rafael Correa, newly elected, created the Ministry of Migration (SENAMI), which increased the roles of consulates abroad, launched awareness programs throughout the country to highlight the dangers of clandestine migration, and initiated a “welcome home” program in 2008 to incentivize citizens abroad though tax-free importation of cars and other domestic items, among other incentives to return to Ecuador (SENAMI 2008). SENAMI established *Casas del Migrante* (Migrant Homes) throughout Ecuador to offer assistance to migrant families and households. Consular offices were established in destinations with high concentrations of migrants, including more states throughout the United States, in Spain, Italy, and Germany. The Ecuadorian government established three consular offices in Mexico, in response to the increasing numbers of Ecuadorians detained en route. These offices aimed to fortify the connections between Ecuador and its citizens abroad through support for community organizations, hosting cultural events, and registering voters for elections. Although this agency cannot guarantee the rights of its citizens in the countries to which they have migrated, its activities bolster Ecuadorians’ sense of national identity.

SENAMI later evolved into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility. The government has further elaborated a Law on Human Mobility, which would serve as an umbrella for all legislation regarding immigration, including regional migration to Ecuador, predominantly from Colombia and Peru. The emergence of institutions and legislation, which directly responded to the migration crisis, supports the argument Nyberg Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen make, which contends that the migration industry is not only about the facilitators and intermediaries but the rise in legislation and state offices to contend with the mobility and international detention of migrants (Nyberg Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen 2013).
In 2008, the government established a Casa del Migrante (Migrants’ House) in Cuenca. The Casa offices were in an old colonial home on Calle Luis Cordero in downtown Cuenca. The building was recently renovated, the interior courtyard staged with an old cart, and small trees were planted outside. The main offices were on the second floor, along the balcony overlooking the courtyard. I had arrived for a photography exhibit put together by Walter Sinche, whom I would come to know later in New York City as the executive director of Alianza Ecuatoriana Internacional. The organization housed lawyers and social workers, who worked to address difficulties encountered by migrant households. The Casa was just installing a media center, which would include a small room for live video feeds for migrants and family members.

Non-governmental organizations

Since the 1990s, NGOs and low-level governmental organizations proliferated, creating complex interdependencies with indigenous and rural organizations. These development-focused, symbiotic relationships between indigenous/community organizations and NGOs/quasi-governmental organizations can have both positive and negative consequences. The presence of these organizations in economically depressed areas provides vital support; it also influences the kinds of demands made on local- and national-level authorities. Many of these organizations provide professionalization courses and have contributed to the organizational and discursive skill sets of indigenous leaders and intellectuals. While indigenous activists benefit from the experience gained through their participation in the organizations, the short-term nature of most projects can be problematic. Furthermore, as has been debated among scholars of development, the agendas of these organizations, including their notions of what will attract funding, have shaped the kinds of entrepreneurship that people deem viable. In Cañar, there were numerous

53 Walter ran on the ballot for the representative of migrants, in the U.S., under the Pachakutik indigenous political party.
organizations running projects at the same time, and I often met with which indigenous leaders when they were between meetings. The following section examines a state-centered project that attempted to redirect remittances into viable development projects through establishing collaborative relationships among municipal figures, governmental agencies, and migrant associations. The project, while the subject of contentious debates among communities not directly included, did set the stage for broader, and locally based, conversations about entrepreneurial activities.

**Cañar–Murcia Co-Development Project**

Spain also invested large sums in co-development projects, in line with those pioneered by French academic and policy advisor Sami Naïr and later also adopted in the Netherlands (Østergaard-Nielsen 2011). Naïr’s work emphasized the role of migrants as primary actors in the development of their communities of origin and as potential resources for revenue and entrepreneurial activity. Numerous small-scale projects formed between localities in France and Morocco, and between Spain and Latin America (Acebillo-Baqué and Østergaard-Nielsen 2011; Cortés Maisonave 2011; Østergaard-Nielsen 2011). “Co-development” refers to a collaborative effort between national and municipal entities in both Spain and migrant-sending countries and migrant associations in Spain. The agenda prioritized development projects in migrant-sending communities, which would provide alternatives to migration as well as incentivize return migration because of increased financial opportunities. Most migrant-sending countries had been colonies (Østergaard-Nielsen 2011). Furthermore, Spain began three programs in 2009 to promote the voluntary return of migrants—including a “pay-to-go” proposal—none of which have been very successful.

In 2006, the Spanish municipality of Murcia launched the Cañar-Murcia Co-development
Project, a collaboration between the two municipalities and Cañari migrant groups in Murcia. The project aimed to create alternatives for people who otherwise might migrate from the sending region and incentives for potential return migrants. It was based upon new development models that emerged in the late 1990s, which viewed development and migration as interrelated phenomena and began to incorporate migrants in development programming. Agencies that worked with migrant populations and local governments recognized the interdependencies of the social and economic landscapes of migrant destinations and origins. In the case of Spain, the objective of many of the early projects was to create conditions for migrant return (“migrant management”) by fostering better conditions in their communities of origin. The specific goals of each project differ depending on the migrant associations and the social and economic conditions in the region of origin.

The large presence of Cañari migrants in Murcia was the result of migrant labor recruitment projects in the 1990s in which agricultural producers actively sought laborers from highland Ecuador. The Co-development Project was well underway in Cañar in early 2008, with offices, conference and meeting spaces, and housing for representatives from Spain, as well as the construction of a business/professionalization school on the outskirts of town. Because conflicts arose regarding project proposals and implementation between representatives in Spain and Ecuador, the Spanish project director in Cañar, Juan Peris, was asked to step down. Migrants in Murcia complained that he deliberately ignored their input on possible project goals and initiatives, which ran against the premises of the entire project. Colleagues and informants report that the project suffered severe setbacks after a new interim director arrived.

The project did achieve some of its stated goals. Project leaders worked in collaboration with a cultural tourism initiative in Pamba and they established a central Internet and computer
hub for students, academics, and community members. They opened a school that offered programs in business entrepreneurship and other professionalization training in order to establish opportunities for indigenous and rural youth. Ironically, of the first class in the one-year program, more than half migrated to the United States shortly after graduation. One of the more remarkable aspects of this project, however, was the power exhibited by the migrant association in Murcia over leadership appointments in Cañar. While significant effort was made to include leaders from the communities involved, dissent over the allocation of funding and decision-making power created insurmountable tensions. It is unclear if the stated goals of the co-development model, as conceived by Naïr, provided an incentive for return migration or reduced migration flows to Spain. The near collapse of the Spanish economy in 2008 likely provided an incentive for return and even fueled a growing migration of Spaniards to Ecuador.

In addition to forming migrant associations, migrants themselves have launched advocacy groups and websites that offer support to migrants abroad, providing social networks, links to Ecuadorian media, posting information on how to apply for residency, and troubleshooting other issues that migrants might face. Connections with family members in Ecuador may seem more immediately accessible but migrants’ inability to return means that families remain fractured over decades.

Conclusion

This chapter analyzed some of the social, economic, and political conditions that migrant families encounter in Spain and the United States. By offering a broad comparison between migration to Spain and the United States, the chapter highlights the formidable constraints of migrant families and households, regardless of whether their migration followed legal or clandestine routes. The history of immigration and the shifting migrant incorporation policies in
these two destination countries shape the kinds of opportunities that families have to maintain close ties and reunite.

The role of intermediaries, or migration brokers, is more prevalent among migrant families in the United States, who face more restrictive policies. In the United States, similarly, entrepreneurial intermediaries sell the promise of acquiring legal papers. Migrant outreach groups, community organizations, churches, and lawyers have produced literature and held informational programs on how to identify fraud and what to do when victimized. Among Cañari immigrants in Spring Valley, for example, people pressured migrants to repay coyotes before sending money to family members, and lured by entrepreneurs who promised to fill out and file paperwork for free social services. Such encounters are not uncommon among new migrants, who also face other kinds of exploitation by better-established compatriots.

In Spain, the series of amnesty programs that allowed migrants to gain some measure of stability, and further apply for family reunification programs, suggested a more lenient and inclusive migration policy. However, the economic collapse of 2008 prompted large numbers of Ecuadorians to return to Ecuador. Moreover, in accounts of the their experiences, migrants reported experiencing high levels of racial discrimination to the extent that workers at Pastoral Social, a long-serving institution for migrant families in Cuenca, shared stories of migrants who left Spain to go to the United States in search of future prospects. This distinction highlights that despite more receptive legislation around migrant legal status in Spain, widespread racism superseded perceptions of future prospects of upward social mobility.
Chapter 3: Indigenous Mobility Strategies in the Migration Journey

On Saturday morning I left. Before that, with much regret, I took off my skirts, my polleras, and for the first time in my life I put on pants. I felt like I was wearing nothing. My brother Rafael accompanied me on the bus to Guayaquil, where we had the address of a hotel. There, a guide told me I had to be ready to leave at 8:00 that night. Rafael and I had something to eat at the hotel, and when I looked out the window into the patio behind the hotel I saw a crowd of more than 100 people waiting, like me, to leave. I began to tremble, seeing such a crowd. I didn’t know anyone, even though it turned out two women from Sidsid were there, but I hadn’t recognized them dressed in pants, without their polleras.

—Mercedes, a young Cañari woman, on her departure from the highlands at the onset of her migration journey

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the migration stories of those who migrate, attempt to migrate, and decide to forego migration in order to continue to work with community-level indigenous organizations. The guiding questions are: How does indigeneity figure in mobility strategies? In what ways is indigenous identity strategically employed in the migration journey? And how might indigenous migration merchants contribute to the expansion of migration? I aim to explain how international migration may help people redefine social meanings around indigeneity and analyze how indigeneity is deployed in the migration process. I contend that while indigenous identity may be used strategically and allow migrants to forge new transnational social networks, indigenous migrants struggle for legibility in the face of ethnic and linguistic discrimination, in communities of origin, along migratory routes, and in migration destinations. These stories also signal the modern aspirations that were woven into contemporary migration practices and which the previous chapter outlines.
Migration Routes

The tragic story of twelve year-old Noemí Álvarez Quillay, which made international news, and headlined in the NY Times, in April 2014, drew long-overdue attention to the unfolding humanitarian crisis of the rapidly growing numbers of young migrants en route to the United States (Dwyer 2014). Her untimely death highlighted the extreme fear, insecurity, and trauma that migrants experience in the migration journey. It also shed light on the dangerously inept system of national and international immigration controls throughout Central America and Mexico. Over the first half of 2014, detention centers throughout the Central American region, in Mexico, and in the southern United States were overwhelmed with the number of cases of young unaccompanied children. Despite enormous efforts by migrant shelters and other organizations working with migrants-en-route, the sequence of events that led to Noemí’s tragic end is not unusual. Traveling alone, Noemí departed Tambo, Ecuador and was en route to New York City, where both of her parents have lived since she was three years old. Authorities detained her in Juárez, Mexico, and sadly her journey ended in a local children’s shelter.

Kyle and Goldstein showed that migration from the Azuayo region (which includes the Azuay and Cañar provinces) constituted a regional migration industry, but they accord scant attention to indigeneity as a form of social capital that indigenous migration merchants (as intermediaries and facilitators) have mobilized within their social networks and intermediary organizations (Kyle and Goldstein 2011). Historical and regional social networks, economic practices and informal networks within the region are also extremely important in the growth of international migration from the region. My research shows that identity, as discussed by indigenous migrants and migration merchants, does shape opportunities and strategies both en
route and in recruitment by *coyotes* (Spanish term for migrant facilitators). This research thus contributes to a deeper understanding of mobility strategies within the migration industry.\textsuperscript{54}

Noemí had been detained in Nicaragua during her first migration attempt and was held there for two months. She returned to Ecuador, was reunited with her paternal grandparents, with whom she had lived since her parents’ departure, and returned to school. Shortly thereafter, her parents contracted the same *coyote* to arrange another attempt. Despite her reluctance and that of her grandparents, Noemí left Tambo a second time, traveling for six weeks until she was detained in Mexico. Authorities detained the coyote and the child on suspicion of unauthorized migration and brought Noemí to a children’s shelter, *La Casa de Esperanza* (House of Hope). According to accounts, migration officials interviewed her in a closed room with no other witness present. Afterwards a counselor noted that she appeared to be in a state of terror and shelter staff reported that she cried night and day. Clearly none of her caretakers fully comprehended or were equipped to handle the level of trauma she felt. Two days after the interrogation, on March 7, 2014, she committed suicide in the bathroom, using the cloth shower curtain as a noose. Her parents were unable to return to Ecuador for her funeral services because of their undocumented status in the United States.

Officials launched an investigation shortly after her death to ascertain if it was a suicide or if it had been coerced or staged. Investigators and journalists questioned whether a twelve-year-old child was psychologically capable of this kind of action. Evidence confirmed the initial cause of death and they closed the investigation shortly thereafter. While public outcry over the incident in part directed blame at the parents for subjecting their daughter to the risky journey,\textsuperscript{54} There is a growing body of literature on indigenous identity that aims to deconstruct reified and monolithic conceptualizations of indigenous identity, as used by state legislation (Andolina, Laurie, and Radcliffe 2009b; Torres and Carrasco 2008; Cadena and Starn 2010; Delugan 2010; Rudi Colloredo-Mansfield 2007; Pedreño 2007; Yescas Angels Trujano 2008). Rather than embark on the important discussion of identity as a conceptual category, I point to the moments in which identity is mobilized in different contexts.
people overwhelmingly viewed the interrogators with suspicion, who were thought to have prompted her extreme level of distress. Other than the interrogators, no one can be certain what they used to coerce her to give them information. Perhaps they threatened her family members in the United States or even those in Ecuador.\textsuperscript{55} Did she fully comprehend her rights during the interrogation? Was language a factor? The Secretary of the Network for the Rights of Children, José Luis Flores Cervantes, stated that Juárez city officials, by neglecting to have a witness in the room, violated international norms and protocols put in place to protect vulnerable populations, which includes children en route to the United States (Castañón and Sosa 2014). The poor handling of this case by both migration officials and workers at the shelter highlights that while international standards may exist, in practice there is a dangerous absence of training and enforcement of protocols.

In July 2014, the Ecuadorian Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, María Landázuri, gave a press conference in which she declared that the case had not followed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, noting that the Ecuadorian government had not been notified upon Noemí’s detention but only after her death (Landázuri 2014). This break between protocols and enforcement at the local level plagues many of the intervening countries along the migration route. Investigations over the following eleven months led to the arrests of forty-two people involved in her transport. In February 2015, investigations concluded that she had been sexually abused prior to her death. Speculation about the intentional withholding of evidence of sexual abuse further escalated debate about the role of the organizations involved in her detention and later her autopsy (Ortiz Uribe 2015).

\textsuperscript{55} The long arm of the \textit{migra} (shorthand for migration control) has a tangible presence in these communities of origin, as people clearly understand the precarious position of their undocumented migrant family members in the United States. People expressed fear in sharing information about undocumented migrant family members beyond close family and friends, which suggested either a fear of local surveillance or that of a sophisticated network of migration control.
For young Noemí, the context out of which she was migrating typified the limited opportunities available to many young indigenous girls. Her journey brought her through a myriad of contacts with migrant facilitators, detention officials, non-for-profit centers, the series of intermediary institutions that constitute the migration industry, yet they all failed to safeguard her (Castles and Miller 2009). Her parents made the decision based on their perception of limited opportunities and in the hopes of reuniting their family where they had established a new home. Indigeneity may not have figured into her migration experience in any strategic way but it certainly shaped the context out of which she migrated. As a young indigenous girl from a rural area, Noemí’s level of vulnerability along the route would have been extreme. Her story stands as inspiration for this analysis of the experiences of other indigenous migrants in the clandestine migration journey.

Indigenous Migrations

In order to better understand how indigenous migrants strategize and adapt in order to cope with increasingly difficult conditions in the migration journey, I examine cases in which indigeneity provided an opportunity for passage and social mobility. I contend that transnational social networking based on shared indigenous identity may materialize as more indigenous migrants from Latin American regions pass through Guatemala and Mexico, countries with large indigenous populations. In the case of migration merchants, a term used by David Kyle to describe a particular transnational mobility strategy, social connections and opportunities arise out of their participation in the migration industry through front-staging their identity to facilitate collaborations (Kyle 2003). At the same time, ethnicity may render groups more vulnerable to exploitation due to linguistic barriers and ethnic discrimination as in cases where coyotes use
them as a ‘sacrificial’ group order to divert attention from other groups. Further, while indigenous entrepreneurs may emerge from migrant communities, the for-profit nature of the business often results in a social distancing, much like that described by Hernández León in his work with *camioneros* in Mexico, a situation which arose in post-fieldwork conversations about migrant experiences with *coyotes* from the community (Hernández-León 2008).

Kyle’s ethnographic work in Ecuador in the 1990s culminated in the publication of *Transnational Peasants* in 2003 (Kyle 2003). He conducted a comparative ethnographic study in highland Ecuador and formulated two categories of migrants that drew attention to the “radically different economic strategies of transnational mobility” (Kyle 2003). These two groups of migrants, migration merchants and merchant migrants, typified, respectively, strategies among rural, indigenous migrants from the province of Azuay, just south of Cañar, and in the northern Andean region of Pichincha, working mostly with Otavaleño migration merchants. Migration merchants facilitated aspects of the migration journey, whether they were *enganchadores* (recruiters), *chulqueros* (money-lenders), or *coyotes*. Merchant migrants mostly referred to Otavaleño migrants who traveled internationally to sell artisan goods and music. Working in the same southern region, I examine what has taken place over the last ten years, among the groups he classified as migration merchants. My work advances the work he did to, “explore the ‘multiple conjunctural’ causes of migration operating simultaneously at several levels of analysis. For example, the same ‘variable’ of ethnic identity may be socially constructed differently at local, national, and international levels but can nevertheless be seen to shape migration at each of those levels” (Kyle 2003, 16).

56 It is important to note the escalating violence encountered by migrants as more narco-traffickers insert themselves in the human smuggling market to both coerce migrants to become drug runners or threaten them with violence in order to extract payment from them or from their families.
While I did not know Noemí’s family, I continually heard of families in very similar situations in Tambo. As migration becomes more common, frequently both young parents will migrate, leaving the grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other extended kin, as the caretakers of children left behind. In general, despite the symbolic marker of success in the form of a modern style home, people criticized the family’s arrangement and used them as an example for how migration caused the disintegration of the family values and parenting within the largely indigenous community. This negative perception of the family stands in contrast to a perceived solidarity based on ethnic identity and in fact, the situation was used as a counterpoint in the imaginary of an ideal indigenous family model that merited membership and actively participated in the indigenous community. Even those households that paid fines incurred by their lack of participation in community projects (*mingas*), people reflected on their absence over shared meals during said projects. These community acts grew in significance for those that participated even as they made the absence of members more apparent.

Noemi and her cousins resided together in a partially constructed *casa fría* (cold house) on the family property close to the grandparents’ adobe house. Cold houses, a local moniker for the cement block and rebar construction style, dot the landscape in the region as families invest remittances in modern style homes. The multiple story buildings with large windows stand in sharp contrast to the single-level, thick wall construction style of previous decades which retained heat better during the brisk highland evenings. My research findings supported Boccagni’s assessment that the housing became both symbolic markers of migrant success and of their absence (Boccagni 2014). ”Cold houses,” of course, also suggests the antithesis of a home, devoid of warmth, settlement, and family. For many, these houses symbolize success and prestige, a marker of visible social mobility previously unattainable because of institutional and
social barriers. These houses often remain partially constructed when remittances are interrupted or cease and stand as stark reminders of the absent migrants (see Chapter Four). More often than not the remaining family members occupy the first floor until construction is complete. In Noemi’s case, the children slept in the new house but still ate most meals with the grandparents in their home. These accounts suggest that instead of forging a sense of solidarity through shared dilemmas presented by absent migrants, the dominant reproachful discourse around migrant abandonment contributed to the isolation of the family even among those that remained in the community.

**Migration Testimonials**

The following section draws on the stories of indigenous Cañari migrants from the canton of El Tambo, the region where I conducted fieldwork. For each of them, indigenous ethnic identity figures in their experience in different ways. While regional and national identity helped create bonds with others while en route, instances of solidarity based on indigenous identity surfaced at different times within their accounts. Indigeneity became a performative identity that allowed migrants from Latin America to ‘pass’ as members of local indigenous groups by adopting clothing styles and linguistic terms, in order to trick migration officials who are most often monolingual Spanish speakers. This form of “passing” allows migrants to move through policed areas with more ease as ethnic discrimination renders indigenous peoples less visible to immigration officials. This strategy is supported by coyotes that stock clothing at safe houses and recruit local indigenous travelers to help the migrants blend in with local groups. These accounts, which were collected with the express purpose of understanding the journey, echoed numerous informal conversations I had with return migrants and families, as well as with migrants in the New York area.
From polleras to cortes

When Mercedes left the highlands, she traded in her skirts (polleras) for jeans for the first time. This was the beginning of her journey to join her husband in the United States. She described her fear of the unknown and the dangers she might face as a woman en route (despite her husband assuring her that the stories of sexual assault were all lies). She knew that people had been returned against their will (deported from the United States), or were captured in route, and sent back. She described her initial encounters upon boarding the fishing boat:

Once everyone was on board the guides told us to make ourselves comfortable however we could. The mestiza women who were from the city, those who were used to wearing pants, were given rooms with beds, with some privacy. I don’t know if there was a previous arrangement with the crew, but we indigenous women noticed the great difference. Some of us couldn’t even speak Spanish very well – Kichwa was the language of some women from Suscal, Zhontamarca, and other remote areas of Cañar Province. The mestiza women laughed at them, and this made me so angry. Poor women. Not only could they not speak Spanish, but along with this they were ridiculed.

In this retelling, Mercedes, as well as the other women, noticed how differently they were treated after they boarded, but these differences took on less importance later in the journey. After the group arrived in Guatemala, the coyotes took them to a safe house where they stayed for a very short time. Later they sent the group to another safe house, where indigenous Guatemalans lived:

We knew (they were indigenous) because they were dressed in their traditional clothing. They treated us well. They were Evangelicals. At that house many people were gathered—from El Salvador, Guatemala, from all parts...getting ready for the next part of the trip. We were given a place to sleep with other women in a big room.

“I’m also indigenous,” I said, “I’m wearing pants now but I wear my traditional clothing like you.” So they dressed me in their clothing: a long skirt called a corte, a blouse called a huipil, and special shoes.
The young woman with me didn’t talk very much; she wasn’t social like I was, always asking questions, wanting to know about everything... I went to the kitchen to help peel potatoes, I even went out with them to the market even though we had to pass by a police post. They said no one would know I was not a Guatemalan.

Mercedes perceived this moment of solidarity, in sharing her identity, and being offered indigenous clothing from the region, as an act of kindness and acceptance. She even ventures to the market, knowing that the police wouldn’t notice her or question her appearance. This friendship was further confirmed when Mercedes arrived to Mexico. She and her travel companion, a young woman from the same region in Cañar, arrived at a bus station and were robbed by the taxi driver. They couldn’t purchase the bus fare to meet the coyote at the next meeting place. In desperation, they called the women who had shared her clothing with them at the safe house in Guatemala, and told her their predicament. Without hesitation, the woman agreed to wire them the money, and instructed them to find a woman who would lend them her ID card so that they could collect the money. Interestingly, she pointedly told them not to ask a man, as he might not give them the money she was sending. They approached a ticket seller, who worked at the terminal, and the woman agreed. Within twenty minutes the money had arrived and they continued on their journey. Mercedes, described instances of solidarity based on ethnicity and gender, throughout her journey, as providing essential support. While adopting indigenous dress clearly made her feel more at ease, the following testimonies point to this strategy as more instrumental/intentional in the migrant’s effort to remain undetected.

*From migrante to enganchador (from migrant to recruiter)*

When José, a young indigenous man from highland Cañar, first attempted to migrate to the United States in May 2001, he arranged his travel with a coyote in Cuenca, the third largest city in Ecuador, a two-hour bus ride south from his hometown. He began his journey at night and
traveled the six hours by bus to the Pacific coastal town of Manta. Before sunrise, nearly one hundred hopeful immigrants waited on the beach for the small dinghy to bring them out to a larger fishing vessel. Once they commenced the journey on the tightly packed fishing boat, the hopeful migrants were forced to wait in the fishing cargo holds during the daytime but were able to spend the nights on deck. These water routes are increasingly patrolled by United States Central American coast guards. The cargo holds of fishing vessels serve as hiding spaces if another ship is sighted at sea and often passengers will be held there throughout the journey as a way to control the groups.

While there was no room to walk around, no violence or abuse occurred. Food and water were scant. After seven arduous days at sea, the boat arrived in Guatemala, where the travelers were packed onto a truck. José travelled through Guatemala and into Mexico over the next few weeks, staying overnight or a few days at houses “like hostages” and then being packed alternately into buses and pick-up trucks, at one point walking for over twelve hours across desert plains, followed by swimming and wading across rivers. The coyotes continually split people into smaller groups and paired them with others as they slowly approached the United States border. At certain points, in an area he referred to as “Tierra Blanca,” the group was split into much smaller groups and given 3500 Mexican pesos so they could pay the officials 200 pesos and later 500 pesos to each of the coyotes along the way. They were told to meet up at a hotel but two men, an uncle and nephew, never arrived, which José attributed to the men’s inability to read signage to find the right buses. The coyote simply informed the group that they were “lost.” In the hotel there were migrants from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Under cover of night, the coyotes brought the group by bus to Aguas Calientes near the U.S. border and reunited them with other Ecuadorians, twenty in total.
In this first attempt, José arrived in Texas after two and a half months but was immediately detained by U.S. border officials. In the beginning, officials asked them, “Who is Pancho Villa?” to determine if they were Mexican. After they could not answer, they convinced the guards that he and others from highland Ecuador were indigenous Guatemalans. While *mestizo* migrants have engaged in the same strategic move through memorizing maps of villages, street names and popular figures, the ability of indigenous migrants to use language to mask their national identity, especially when most migration officials are monolingual Spanish speakers, makes their ruse more convincing. I point to this “passing” strategy, made possible by the denigration of indigenous personhood and the ignorance of mestizo monolinguals as a form of mobilized invisibility. Ultimately José and his colleagues decided to admit their national origin in order to be able to return to their homes after such a long and arduous journey. He was kept in detention for three months, unable to communicate with his family, and passed the time with detainees from Colombia and other parts of Ecuador. He was in this detention center when the twin towers fell. Ultimately he returned to Ecuador on the 15th of October, 2001.

Having already invested US$2000 in the journey, José attempted to migrate once more in 2003. He followed the same initial route in Ecuador but this time the ship traveled all the way to the Mexican coast. Juan recounted the horrific experience of his eight-day trip at sea. Not only was there a shortage of food and water, but female travelers suffered violence and abuse, something that had not happened during his first journey. The passengers were also kept below decks for the entire trip. On the seventh day, a thirty year-old man from Paute, a small town just outside of Cuenca, committed suicide. He had been showing signs of distress and the crew had him tied up, but somehow he was able to escape. José witnessed the incident and said that the man tore off his clothes and threw himself off the ship. Since the man had never learned how to
— being from the highlands — he knew he would drown as soon as he jumped into the water. The next day, the Mexican coast guard detained the ship and all the passengers were sent back to Ecuador. “He missed them by just one day…one day,” José repeated in disbelief as we sat in a borrowed living room just off the main road through Sisid, a small town outside of Cañar. José attempted the journey one last time in 2005, but Ecuadorian officials detained the group on the coast before they were even able to board the fishing vessel. After a brief interrogation, they were left to find their own bus fare to return to their hometowns.

José’s migration story is similar to those of many in highland Ecuador. While José’s first attempt to enter the United States ended in his detention and deportation, his subsequent attempts demonstrate the increasing vigilance on the part of the Ecuadorian government and other countries in the region. José’s story depicts the brutality of the migration journey but also the difficulties faced and the sacrifices made by hopeful migrants in their quest for a better life. Unable to complete the journey, he now works as an enganchador, or recruiter, for a coyote in order to reduce his debt. Enganchadores have been a part of the informal economy in the highlands for over fifty years; previously labor recruiters from the coastal plantations would seek seasonal workers in the same highland regions, touting better wages and opportunities. Kyle describes similar incidences in his research and frames this as a centuries old institution of usurious middlemen in different economic periods. Put another way, the economic collapse stimulated a resurgence of subsistence strategies that rural and indigenous communities have relied upon over decades. When indigenous migration merchants entered the migration industry, they were initially viewed in a relatively positive light. Even so, José expressed remorse and disdain for his position but felt he had little choice since his debt was so high. He became ensnared in the migration industry, working with a local coyote who recruited him to help
increase his clientele. There may not have been an immediate or apparent fashion in which indigeneity created a moment of solidarity in his experience, but the indigenous leadership in Cañar was working with José to get him more involved in local community activities. Work with non-governmental organizations, based on his indigenous identity, opened up new livelihood possibilities.

*Migration ‘sin querer’ (‘without intent’)*

In 2003, Segundo made his first attempt to migrate to the United States. He worked in construction but had not been able to find work for a long time and his family was struggling. He began his account with the statement that he migrated without intent, *sin querer*. He explained that he started on the journey before having decided to leave. He said that his family in the United States had arranged for the initial deposit for his trip and he felt compelled to go. Segundo’s description relegated his own sense of agency in the decision making process to those who arranged the journey. At the onset of his journey, he worked with an *enganchador* from the small town of Sisid who traveled with him to the coast where close to 200 people were brought out to a fishing vessel that traveled eight days to the coast of Guatemala. The group was split apart once it reached the coast and his group traveled by truck to the mountains where a family housed them for six days. The migrants were told to bathe and given indigenous Guatemalan clothing. There were three separate groups with different *coyotes*. They weren’t allowed to leave the premises and were hidden from sight. Later the group was separated and they traveled on trikes, a common vehicle for taxis, and were grouped with Guatemalans to further hide them from suspicion. They arrived at another family home and were among 40-50 others from Ecuador, Peru and Colombia. From there they walked for hours and finally sought

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57 His account aligns with both Kyle and Hernandez’s portrayal of migration merchants having an incentivizing impact on the migration flow.
shelter at an abandoned house. Ultimately officials detained them in Tapachula, Mexico, where Segundo was held for three weeks until the Mexicans had enough deportable Ecuadorians to fill a plane.

Like José, Segundo mentioned that a few of his fellow travelers were able to convince Mexican officials that they were Guatemalan but he chose to return home. Segundo began his second attempt just one month after arriving home. He traveled a similar route to Mexico, even staying at the same safe houses until he was detained in the same region as before. He decided to forego another attempt, but later heard that those that did try one last time ultimately made it. Fortunately for Segundo, the coyote only charged him $700 instead of the full $2000 initial payment of the usual $12,000 fee. In 2008, three of his six children were in the United States and he was considering another attempt. He had become more involved in local politics and was a representative for the community for artisans and craft-workers. In this account, indigenous identity again served as a mode of passing, a strategic performance, aimed at confusing migration officials both during their travels through Guatemala and Mexico, and even upon detention. By convincing an official of their indigenous status, Ecuadorians would not have to begin the migration route as far back. This was tricky because they had to reconnect with the original coyote in order to find the local contact. It was unclear from his testimony how that may have been arranged but Segundo maintained ties with the coyote as he considered his next attempt.

Solidarity en route

Santiago, an indigenous Cañari man in his late thirties, shared his migration experience and how he successfully entered the United States after three attempts. Like the others, he worked with the same coyote who arranged all three attempts. Generally the local coyotes would
charge in installments and only demand the full fee once the migrant crossed into the United States regardless if they were detained and deported afterwards. Santiago was reluctant to share why he had returned to Ecuador but he had become very active in the activities of the indigenous community that is how we initially met. We discussed his experience, which was similar to the others in terms of the sea to land crossing. When asked whether he felt his indigenous identity played a role in his migration experience, he shared the following encounter. During his second attempt, he was staying at a safe house in Mexico and reported that he had been approached by an indigenous Mexican coyote who asked if he wanted to get into the business with him and not “let the mestizos make all the money.” This level of compadrazgo (comradeship), or ethnic solidarity, was touched upon in other migration stories shared by return migrants in Ecuador and in conversations with migrants in the New York City area. These migrants described learning indigenous Guatemalan and Mayan terminology and wearing indigenous clothing. By adopting the clothing, and in some cases, vocabulary, of an indigenous group, Segundo and others he traveled with used indigeneity strategically as a performative identity (Hall 1990; Andolina, Laurie, and Radcliffe 2009b; Cadena and Starn 2010). By tapping into the mutual experience of invisibility or at the very least ‘otherness’ of the indigenous groups by the dominant society, migrants were able to avoid detection. In the last instance, the Mexican coyote used indigenous identity as a basis for a potential partnership against the mestizo migrant workers.

Migration and reunification

I sat with a recently returned migrant, Luis, in his household complex (three small buildings and a non-functioning bathroom building). As a special treat, his elderly mother brought out curdled milk from the first milk produced by their new cow, who had just given birth. Luis had recently returned from New York, where he had worked for eight years in the
construction and restaurant industries. He had sent all his savings to pay for an operation for his mother and had come back home to help his family care for her. He was currently trying to migrate back to New York to earn more, but could not find any collateral to finance his return trip. He had also been trying to get work with a local cultural tourism project funded by a Norwegian NGO. The organizers planned to incorporate his mother’s medicinal garden in the tours, displaying how she grows herbs, flowers, and some traditional grains.

In 1999, Luis was the first to leave in his family, but by 2002, his two brothers, two sisters, and his cousins on his mother’s side had all migrated. Luis traveled with the support of the godfather of his marriage (padrino de matrimonio) who had already migrated. He flew with a legal visa to Guatemala and then to Panama under a false name. He then used false paperwork to travel to Cancún. At the time, it cost 200 sucres for the passport and 45,000 sucres (approximately US$8,000) for the rest of the journey. He took out a loan in his mother’s name for $20,000 sucres, using the family land as collateral, and the padrino fronted the rest. Luis took buses to Guayaquil and flew to Panama using a different last name on his passport. He spent approximately a month in Panama in a safe house with ninety-five others. They began to separate the thirty-five Ecuadorians into smaller groups. He finally took a bus to the U.S./Mexican-border (a journey which lasted two days and nights), with people from other parts of Ecuador. They spent a night at a hotel and then had to pay 3500 pesos to a merchant to make a false visa. He then crossed over into Texas in just ten minutes.

He spent four days in Texas and then traveled on to New Mexico and they were left there to their own devices. While he was there, he met some other Ecuadorians, many of whom were traveling to Minneapolis. A few were headed to New York. The coyotes gave them a bundle of

58 While this was the first time I heard the term padrino in the context of migration, it suggests a fictive kinship established through the informal economic practices of migrants.
bus tickets so everyone had to make their own way after this. Luis spent six months living and working in New Mexico before traveling to Minneapolis where he spent the following five years.

María, Luis’s wife, traveled by boat to Guatemala and then took cars all the way up. It took her one month to get to Minneapolis. Her trip cost $8000US as well, which they were able to get by mortgaging land and seeking informal loans from family. She used a different coyote since the one Luis had used had disappeared. Their two oldest sons stayed in Ecuador, one with Luis’s mother and the other with María’s. They both worked with false papers at a Minneapolis restaurant.

**Deciding Not to Migrate**

In this section, I recount the stories of two indigenous leaders who opted not to migrate despite having extensive social networks in the United States. Both Santiago Tesaca, a young, up-and-coming indigenous leader in Pamba, and Rafael Palchizaca, the president of the Tunis community, had the opportunity to migrate but elected not to, and subsequently became very active in local politics, working in collaboration with local NGOs. Their stories point to the importance of community-level projects, showing that they are sometimes the most viable livelihood option for young people who wish to remain in the community. NGOs and the leadership opportunities they provide create more than just opportunities for empowerment: they serve as alternatives to migration. These stories also point to the constraints on mobility that people in the region encountered, even though both men were presented with the choice and likely could have consolidated the means to go. While these leaders had the option, there were many households that were unable to access the resources to embark on the journey.
Santiago: Pamba

As we sat in one of the family’s three small buildings, Santiago shared his story about the pivotal moment when he decided not to migrate, despite having the entire trip already arranged. At eighteen years of age, he was going to be the first in his family to migrate to Minneapolis, where former neighbors, acquaintances, and cousins all lived. His older brother was the first to migrate internationally; he had headed to the Bronx in 1999 to join an acquaintance of the family. The journey took his older brother three weeks, traveling first by boat to Guatemala, then by bus overland, and then crossing the US–Mexican border on foot. His wife joined him three years later, but their four-year-old daughter stayed behind, living with her grandmother. According to Santiago, the cost of his brother’s journey in 1999 was 9,000,000 sucres (approximately US$400).59 Just before Santiago was to migrate, he learned that his partner was pregnant, and he decided to stay in the community. Since the trip was already arranged, one of his other brothers traveled to Minneapolis in his place.

When I met him four years later, at the age of twenty-three, Santiago was involved with numerous organizations. Both he and his wife had completed high school (bachillerato) and he was working with NGOs and attending professional development workshops in order to, as he put it, “improve myself here in my own community.” During my research, he was working with—and then became director of—a cultural tourism project in Sisid-Anejo and Pamba, called the Asociación de Turismo Comunitario Ally Tuta Manta Pampa y Sisid,60 which was partially funded by a Norwegian NGO. Like Santiago, many of the young Cañari leaders I met were working in various capacities with three NGOs that were funding projects in the area.

59 The equivalent value in US dollars is very difficult to estimate since the value of the sucre continued to decrease dramatically throughout 1999, dropping from 7,000 sucres to the US dollar to 25,000 sucres to the US dollar (Jácome 2004). I estimate that the real cost was closer to $3,000 according to other stories of migration before the dollarization of the economy.

60 The collaborating agencies included; Consorcio CICDA (Centro Internacional para el Desarrollo Agrícola), CEDIR y PROTOS.
Santiago confirmed that there were no coyotes or prestamistas in Pamba, but there were local enganchadores (recruiters) who worked to solicit clients for coyotes in Tambo and Tunis. Santiago, despite having the opportunity to travel to Minneapolis (clearly a favored destination over the Bronx), found an alternative in the local development projects.

Rafael: Tunis

Rafael, a man in his early thirties from Tunaspamba, a section of Tunis, was a great help to me as I tried to establish contacts. As the president of the Tunis community, which is comprised of seven sectors, he was able to introduce me to people and lend my research legitimacy. He had completed high school and was studying at the local university, and his wife had completed her fifth year in high school. They had two children, aged seven and ten. I often met with him at their home before we would head together to mingas and community meetings. During the rainy season, their house was severely damaged by a mudslide and they moved into a casa prestada (borrowed house). One evening, we met there and began to talk in more depth about his views on migration. Though his extended family network included immigrants in the United States and Spain, Rafael had never attempted to migrate and had not planned to until recently. The loss of his house and the increased costs of school-age children were weighing heavily on him, and he was debating whether to continue his education or to draw upon his numerous contacts and migrate. Of all the community leaders with whom I spoke, Rafael was the most disciplined in his academic pursuits, consciously minimizing his involvement with NGOs in order to dedicate more time to his university studies.

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61 All leadership positions have a term of two years but can be extended.
62 In Ecuador, there are six years of secondary school, starting at age 12 to 18, often broken into 3 year cycles.
Conclusion

This chapter sought to outline ways in which indigenous identity figures in the migration experience and also to engage with the broader debate on undocumented migration and on the role of ethnicity in its development. I have included accounts of indigenous migration from the communities of origin and throughout the migration journey. The tragic story of Noemí Alvarez Quillay is instructive, as child migration continues to increase in different regions of the world. What are the roles of intermediary institutions in safeguarding the basic human rights of these vulnerable populations? How do we understand the factors that shape the increase in migration despite the risks of the clandestine migration routes? In the four testimonies, each protagonist recounted a moment in which they strategically passed as a member of another indigenous group in order to avoid detention. For the men, facilitators along the smuggling route would store clothing at safe houses along the route in order to facilitate this and recruited people of these indigenous groups as transporters. For Mercedes, she made this request and saw the gesture as a moment of solidarity, which reinforced her sense of identity as an indigenous woman. She also knew that the police wouldn’t notice her in the market. In these instances, the strategic performance of indigenous identity clearly becomes a mobility tactic that relies on the virtual invisibility/legibility of indigenous people to trick monolingual mestizo migration officials.

Through employing the concept framing of a regional migration industry, we can better outline the role of intermediary institutions and actors and the impact they have on migration. But it is also important to understand mobility strategies as part of larger sets of practices that have a history. In southern highland Ecuador, regional migration, for labor and as part of expansive trade routes, has been part of regional subsistence strategies for many generations. At the community level, indigenous migrant entrepreneurs, or migration merchants, have
transformed economic and social relationships between regional mestizos and indigenous peoples. Kyle’s work pointed to the resurgence of ‘usurious’ middlemen that had played similar intermediary roles in former economic periods. While participation in the regional migration industry may open up possibilities for social mobility, indigenous migration merchants still contend with discrimination from regional middle-class merchants who disparage indigenous migrants and visible markers of economic success. However, in terms of migrant experiences, the presence of local, community-based, coyotes has created a more direct migration route from rural communities. The upsurge in child migration results from various factors, however many of the parents participate in the rapid increase in migration starting in the early 2000s. Over ten years later, the parents have begun to send for the children they left behind, who are now young teenagers. The coyotes, located in these communities, are able to start the process very quickly, and often these young adults will leave directly from the grandparents’ (or primary caretakers’) home without having spent any time in the cities or outside of their communities. This was very likely the case for young Noemí.

While it is difficult to ascertain how often indigeneity helps forge broad-reaching alliances in the migration route, there are a growing number of indigenous migration merchants in Cañar with the connections to facilitate migration. When the indigenous migrant merchant in Mexico suggested that Santiago and he work together as ethnic colleagues in the smuggling market, it presented an interesting case. There are far more accounts of indigenous groups being used as decoys, sent intentionally by human smugglers to be intercepted intentionally by migration officials, in order to move other groups of people over a different route (Sánchez 2014; Brigden, n.d.). In this way, the possibility for ethnic solidarity en route is overshadowed by the relatively disadvantaged position of monolingual indigenous people in the migration route.
Chapter 4: The Social and Cultural Impact of Remittances

“El último que sale, que apague la luz”
(The last one to leave, turn off the light!)
– Graffito in the city of Cuenca, 2002

Introduction

In the last chapter I showed how identity can sometimes serve as an important resource in the migration journey. At the same it may increase people’s level of vulnerability, starting with the social networking to plan the journey and continuing throughout migrant encounters with facilitators in the intermediary countries. This chapter examines migration-related transformations in rural communities, with a particular focus on remittances, both monetary and social, and how these have generated changing consumption and agrarian practices in rural areas, including construction styles and business investments. Based on participant observation, interviews with select families (as detailed in the methodology section of the introduction), and group meetings with community members, the chapter analyzes the impact on rural households and communities and details some of the efforts made by indigenous leadership to ameliorate conditions of poverty and lack of access to services. Again, we see the parallel dimensions of these changes, as both having the potential for alleviating poverty, while at the same time further disenfranchising those unable to participate or those whose migration project has failed (through deportation, inability to migrate, loss of family member contributions, and so on)

In 2013, Ecuadorians abroad remitted approximately US$2.5 billion, a slight decline from the US$2.8 billion sent in 2008, just prior to the global economic crisis (Maldonado and Hayem 2014). Remittances are typically sent to individual households in amounts of US$200–$300 per
month. In many countries with large numbers of migrants abroad, remittance recipients use the money to pay off the debt of the journey, to cover basic subsistence needs, or to purchase home appliances, land, housing, small businesses, taxi licenses, and vehicles. In some cases, migrants pool their funds to improve the infrastructure of their hometowns, paying for the renovation of roads or building schools and churches. They also contribute toward community festivals and provide scholarships for children (Castells and Portes 1989; Portes, Guarnizo, and Haller 2002; Durand, Parrado, and Massey 1996; Levitt 2001).

In the southern highland provinces, these kinds of collaborative projects were uncommon. The few initiatives undertaken have been complicated by logistical problems among collaborators, resistance on the part of regional elites and bureaucratic obstacles presented by municipal authorities. Additional reasons include a lack of trust of in-group administration of projects (influenced, in part, I would argue, by failed development projects in the recent past, such as one funded by IFAD), and largely, because of insufficient funds beyond family needs. Despite the absence of large-scale, migrant-sponsored projects, the widespread presence of migration and the very visible products of remittances presented new possibilities for many households. In most cases, remittances are used to help the immediate and extended family, with some small-scale entrepreneurial activities and investments.

The virtual exodus following the 2000 economic crisis changed the demographic composition of many small rural towns. As Giaconda Herrera, one of the top migration scholars in Ecuador, said to me, “We used to call the villages in the province of Cañar ‘the villages of women’; now we call them the villages of ancianos [elderly] and children” (July 2006). Not

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63 Chapter five details a large scale project that was partially funded by the Inter-American Development Fund, which never reached completion because of actions taken by ElJuri family members, a well-known elite family in Ecuador.

64 The FLACSO published a foundational study of international migration in 2005, which Herrera largely directed.
only did small towns struggle with the absence of vital, productive members, they were also burdened with caring for the most dependent individuals. Immigration, in this way, became associated with the abandonment of the nation. This sentiment was vividly expressed in a graffito seen in 2002 in the city of Cuenca, a city profoundly shaped by migration and remittances, which read “el último que sale, que apague la luz” (whoever is the last to leave, shut off the light).

The Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales and UNICEF conducted an extensive survey in 2008 on the impact of migration on children in the outlying areas of Cañar. They found that close to 34 percent of indigenous households with children under the age of eighteen had either one or both parents abroad compared to 19 percent among non-indigenous households.\(^6\) They found that 45 percent of the total population were indigenous households and 55 percent are non-indigenous, with rural households accounting for 81 percent of the total population in the region (Escobar García and Velasco Abad 2008, 23). Children who grow up in indigenous communities with high rates of migration often opt to migrate, generally between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, similar to a rite of passage. This creates a cycle of abandonment that alarms community leaders; however, some younger people decide to stay despite having access to the collateral and sponsorship of migrant family members abroad.

In Cañar, local politics played out in interesting ways, as privileged non-indigenous people attempted to maintain power even as indigenous entrepreneurs engaged in formal and informal economic activities. The strategic use of bureaucratic measures to limit the numbers of markets, fairs, and festivals sponsored by indigenous migrants and indigenous organizations as

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For further reading, see Herrera, Carrillo, and Torres (2006).

\(^6\) A documentary on the impact of migration on indigenous children, Pollito, was funded by patrons of the evangelical church in Chimborazo, where it was filmed and produced. This film and its sequels were very popular, and easily found among bootlegged DVDs in the markets around Cañar.
well as the strict enforcement of land titling on defaulted mortgages, demonstrate how discrimination materializes in local level politics. The deep history of racial discrimination in the region largely informed the perceptions of who and what deserved to be funded and supported. When analyzing these practices, it is important to recognize that local elites also suffered economic hardships after 2000 and were likely seeking ways to consolidate and preserve their own standing in the community.

As more households gain access to remittances, social and ethnic markers become temporarily destabilized, as markers of privilege associated with social class (education, cars, clothing, houses, and property and business ownership) no longer demarcate distinct groups. Social markers such as an indigenous surnames or languages, however, are still widely recognized as indicators of social status, as elites struggle to maintain control over political and economic interests. Addressing the impact of migration in the city of Cuenca (the third-largest Ecuadorian city, or fourth-largest if one counts the Ecuadorian population in New York City), Weismantel (2001, 27) noted that “the city’s ‘nobles’ blame[d] the collapse of their own local hegemony on this new working-class transnationalism, stating that ‘in shortcutting the spatial hierarchies between rural and urban, periphery and metropolis, young migrants…abrogated traditional structures of privilege.”

**Monetary and Social Remittances**

Scholars have debated the potential for remittances to contribute to long-term development and alleviate conditions of poverty in developing countries (Orozco 2005; Durand, Parrado, and Massey 1996; Maimbo and Ratha 2005; Conway and Cohen 1998; Portes, Guarnizo, and Haller 2002). Since 2004, Ecuador hosted several international and regional
conferences on how to direct remittances into productive investments at the local level. At the national and municipal levels, the focus has also been on the direct and indirect impact of remittances on long-term poverty alleviation. But even as remittances contribute to measurable changes at the household and community level, they may not result in the development envisioned by optimistic policy analysts. They can, however, challenge longstanding social and economic hierarchies in the region (Weismantel 2003; Miles 2004; Kyle 2003; Pribilsky 2007).

Figure 5. Cuenca-based courier service near the city's central plaza (photo by author, 2007)

Figure 6. Queens, NY-based Remittance sending agency on Roosevelt Avenue (photo by author, 2008)
In New York, the remittance-sending agency Delgado Travel, named after a successful Ecuadorian entrepreneur, helped migrants send remittances, purchase appliances for delivery to households in Ecuador, contribute to small cooperative banks in their home communities, and send other commodities to their families in Ecuador. Remittance-sending agencies, such as Quizhpi Express, have also opened up offices in migrant-sending communities, enabling families in Ecuador to send coveted delicacies (such as cuy or guinea pig), videos of celebrations and festivals, and other goods to their loved ones living abroad (see Figures 6 and 7 above).

A number of banks and credit institutions, with the support of national governments, have launched initiatives to reduce the cost of sending money home, including agreements between banks in the United States, Spain, and Ecuador that allow a migrant to deposit money directly into an account from which family members in Ecuador can withdraw almost instantaneously. These institutions also offer low-cost loans to cover home construction, land purchases, and
other goods in Ecuador. To further attract these migrant dollars, Ecuadorian-based companies hold housing fairs in communities with large Ecuadorian populations in the United States and Europe. Flyers and posters promoting new developments in gated communities outside major cities often provide the visual backdrop to many Ecuadorian-oriented events hosted in the United States.

Figure 8. "If your dream is to return one day, buy your house with us." (Poster outside first voting center for Ecuadorians abroad, photo by author, Queens 2008)

Furthermore, local municipalities in Spain and Ecuador have established co-development projects in which both agree to match funds with migrant associations in Spain to finance development projects in Ecuador. These have been launched in different cities throughout Ecuador (as well as in the Dominican Republic) with varying degrees of success. The projects are initially designed as five- to six-year endeavors with the intention of leaving stewardship of the programs in the hands of local municipalities in Ecuador. The governments both contribute funding but rely on the input of migrant association members in both the communities of origin and destination. Governmental involvement has incentivized collective community project

More background on co-development as a development model and on the Codesarrollo Murcia-Cañar project is provided in Chapter Two.
investments by migrants but also stirs up long-held skepticism around the potential and longevity of said-projects on the part of local community (indigenous) leadership.

The Informal Economy of Migration

The long history of migration has fostered a well-developed informal credit system in which lenders (prestamistas or chulqueros) advance a portion of the initial cost of the journey or cover the entire amount. At the onset of clandestine migration from the southern highlands, the prestamistas and coyotes were usually mestizos from Cuenca who had established the necessary social ties through earlier migration by themselves or by a relative. As stated earlier, in the early 2000s the covert migration journey typically cost US$12,000 to US$14,000, often with compounded monthly interest of 2 to 3 percent. The arrangement can include a down payment from either the lenders or a sponsoring migrant abroad, and subsequent installments are paid as soon as the migrant arrives at his/her destination. The coyote will make arrangements for the entire journey and the contract is considered fulfilled once the migrant arrives at his/her destination. In some cases, the coyote only guarantees the journey to a certain point at which migrants, or their families, have to then pay a coyote in another country to complete the journey.

The migration journey can require multiple attempts. If the migrant is unsuccessful at crossing the border or is waylaid on the journey, some coyotes will arrange for a second or even third attempt as part of the deal, with additional costs added to the charge. Unfortunately, for some, an unsuccessful attempt results in the loss of any mortgaged property or holdings and an insurmountable debt. The migratory network is highly vulnerable to multiple points of exploitation, and in the past few years, gangs in Central America and Mexico have begun

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67 In the late 2000s the average monthly salary in many sending areas did not exceed US$300, with many earning much less.
kidnapping migrants en route, demanding payments, and forcing migrants to labor as drug mules when crossing the border.68

Typically, it can take years before a migrant is able to pay off the debt and contribute to the finances of the sending household. The amount and frequency of remittances are susceptible to changing conditions, such as where the migrant works, and in most cases barely cover the basic subsistence costs of the household, especially with extended family networks. The responsibility of managing the money generally is in the hands of one close family member, such as the mother, wife, sibling or grandparent, but in many cases this is monitored by other family members and reported back to the migrant abroad. Family negotiations are often fraught with conflict. Evidence of remittances is most strikingly apparent in the (often partially finished) “California-style” houses that dot the landscape outside of urban centers, in stark contrast to the single-level mud-and-lathe construction prevalent in the highlands.

**Social Remittances**

In addition to monetary remittances, migrants abroad maintain relationships with family, neighbors, and friends through telephone calls and live conferencing, letters and care packages, videos and photographs, social media or, on rare occasions, an actual return visit. The social ties create a sense of community that transcends national boundaries. Such transnational connections allow for the transfer of ideas, conceptions of the good life, and other systems of meaning through what have been termed “social remittances” (Levitt 2001). These can include ideas about gender norms, acceptable social practices, identity formation, and cultural capital, and they often reshape the worldviews of those in the migrant-sending households. In Cañar, transnational

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68 Chapter three provides a more detailed examination of the migration journey.
connections are reinforced when families reciprocate with care packages, including shipments of *cuy* (roast guinea pig), indigenous herbal remedies for illnesses, grains, videos documenting festivals and family events, and photographs.69

To meet the needs of these transnational relationships, the town center is cluttered with a variety of services: Internet, money transfer, shipping, discounted international telephone, video filming, and legal assistance. Entrepreneurial Otavaleño merchants, eager to capitalize on the influx of remittances, have opened shops selling indigenous clothing from Otavalo and Central America, as well as music and movies. During my research (starting in 2008), along one short block of seven business storefronts in town, there were three shops competing for customers seeking to make international calls or use the Internet. In the afternoons, school children clustered around shared computers as they ate the small candies sold in little shops, alongside pens, pencils, and phone cards. In many outlying rural areas, landlines simply did not exist, but it was fairly common for at least one person in a household to have a cellular phone, which used prepaid cards sold at Internet cafes and small food shops. People often ran out of phone credit for a few days, simply losing touch until they could refill their cards, although they typically could still receive texts at no cost.

Social remittances shape conceptions of the good life, and helped reshape consumption practices and markers of prestige (such as clothing styles, technology, and property and business ownership) (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). In Cañar, one of these markers was the modern house, built with cement blocks and reinforced bars (“rebar”), a less laborious but more skill-specific construction style. These houses have been named ‘*casas frías*’ (cold houses) by those who tend and reside in them (described in more detail below). Other changes in consumption

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69 Berg (2015) offers nuanced analysis of the circulation of these images, videos, and materials goods. Within anthropological studies of transnational migrations, scholars have also employed material culture analysis to highlight the significance of goods in recreating nostalgic spaces.
include new clothing styles, music, food, technology, and popular culture icons. Many indigenous youths forego the styles of their parents and dress in Western jeans and t-shirts, while some, albeit far fewer, blend the practical wool skirts (*polleras*), sweaters, wraps and ponchos (often fabricated locally) with modern or mass produced (imported) pieces (Pribilsky 2007; Rudolf Colloredo-Mansfield 1999; Miles 2004; Weismantel 2003).

Changes brought about by remittances, such as consumption practices, business ventures, land acquisition, and forms of social mobility, do not go unchallenged. Race/ethnicity, class, rurality, and language are inextricably linked social markers in this region and, as such, those holding power see such transformations as a threat. Mestizo elites actively reproduce boundaries of inclusion and exclusion through institutional and ideological practices. When indigenous and rural people challenge established cultural and institutional barriers, some of the ways privileged mestizos resist are through disparaging discourse (negative representations of migrants and their aspiration in national and local media), migrant myths, overt discrimination, and bureaucratic obstruction including the denial of business loans, public-sector subsidies, and blocking other initiatives. One example of how linguistic and ideological discrimination appears in daily life is the story of a young indigenous couple and their infant son. Shortly after they registered their second child’s birth, they shared how happy they were that the registrar had not rejected their chosen name, ChaskiKusy. Three years earlier, the municipality denied them the right to give their elder son an indigenous name.70 This small instance of disempowerment is emblematic of the many forms of exclusion, violence, aggression, and discrimination in the interactions between mestizos and indigenous people.

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70 The requirement to use only “Christian” names on birth certificates has been enforced in many Latin American countries.
Disparaging Discourse and Migrant Myths

While policy makers at the national level see remittances as a means for economic progress, at the local level many residents of Cañar associate remittances with social disorder. Migrants are thought to be lured abroad by the promise of earnings, their absence bringing about family disintegration and the loss of traditional values and community ideals. From the perspective of urban mestizos, or Cañarejos, indigenous migrants are reckless individuals who abandon their children, wives, and culture in search of money, which is spent on ridiculously extravagant goods. The figure of the absent husband and his disorderly wife circulates widely as a commentary on this presumed social decline. Over coffee with a mestiza business owner near the town center, she told me a story about an indigenous woman whose husband was away; not only were her children arriving at school poorly dressed and ill prepared, but it was rumored that she was “taking up” with different men in the village. Moralizing stories of the harmful effects of migration and remittances abound: the frugal migrant who built a luxurious house, bought an expensive car, and promptly sealed it in the garage with cinderblocks to safeguard it until his return; the three-story house in a rural location with a functioning elevator; and the migrant ghost towns inhabited only by abandoned children and old folks.

While there are many instances of elaborate construction projects and a very real absence of men and women between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five, these stories have taken on a mythical quality. These widespread “migrant myths,” as I call them, contribute to a national-level discourse that frames migration as a problem by critiquing emigrants and characterizing their migration as an act of national abandonment, while downplaying the factors that prompt them to leave. These anecdotes of social disorder disparage the migrant and accuse the

71 People of Cañari descent refer to mestizos who reside in Cañar as “Cañarejos” and to themselves as “Cañari,” and I follow their use throughout the chapter.
remittance-receiving household of conspicuous consumption and impropriety. Local Cañarejo schoolteachers and business owners recounted these kinds of stories to me in everyday conversations throughout my year of fieldwork. These myths fuel the pervasive discrimination against indigenous migrant families, who are often caught in bureaucratic dilemmas associated with land claims, bills, and debts that are made worse by the irregular receipt of remittances. In most cases, bureaucrats and intermediaries involved in such encounters are non-indigenous and urban-based mestizos, who may not be elite but who certainly envision themselves as entitled to the privileges of *chanchullo* (favorable social networks). Migration is also discouraged in less personal ways, with billboards along the Pan-American Highway highlighting the dangers of the journey.

Anxieties about migration are not limited to mestizos, as local indigenous leaders also worry about how remittances affect social cohesion, community practices, and intergenerational cultural values. Beyond the migrant myths, these rural communities are transformed by the absence of migrants, increased social stratification, altered livelihood possibilities, and changes to the social order. While indigenous leaders recognize that migrant households do benefit, they also recognize the fragility of the system, as the flow of remittances is neither steady nor unending. Further, the cost of living has increased because of the influx of remittances. Indigenous leaders struggle to create collaborations with NGOs and governmental partners to support their communities, pointing to the decline of reciprocity and community participation in collective projects and festivities as a slow but relentless form of community disintegration. Still, at least one local leader felt that indigenous communities have stronger social support networks

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72 This again is a seemingly invisible privilege, the ability to navigate bureaucracy with relative ease, but is clearly apparent for those who often encounter numerous obstacles.
than more individualistic mestizo households, networks that they have relied upon over
generations of exploitation.

*Changing landscapes and casas frías*

As migration debts are paid off, many families purchase land and begin construction on
new homes, often opting for two-story “California-style” houses, constructed with cement block
and rebar (see figure 5). These *casas frías* (cold houses) have large windows and high ceilings
and offer little protection from cold evenings at an elevation of ten thousand feet above sea level.
While these houses do include plumbing and electricity, heating systems are rare, despite an
average daytime temperature of ten degrees Celsius (fifty degrees Fahrenheit), with evening lows
close to zero degrees Celsius. Earlier house styles relied predominantly on locally resourced
materials—mud and hay—and generally had thick mud-and-lathe walls, small windows, and low
ceilings, and were built around a central hearth (see figures 10, 11, and 12 below). While houses
in the newer construction style are common, most are only partially finished, due the intermittent
nature of remittances, and construction can take place over a period of years. In many cases,
migrant family members will reside in the first floor of the building while it is still under
construction.
Figure 9. Communal house in Pamba that will be used as display in cultural tourism program (photo by author, 2008)

Figure 10. Partially crumbled wall, shows depth of walls in older construction style (photo by author, 2008)
As with agriculture, community members built homes collaboratively. Coordinated with kin and community members, house construction projects generally took place over a few days. The family would provide food and drink for the duration of the construction process. The new houses tend to be built by Peruvian migrants who are skilled in the construction style. The materials are expensive and difficult to transport to outlying areas, because of frequent mudslides. Despite, or perhaps because of, these hardships, these “California-style” houses have come to symbolize success and affluence. This “architectural conspicuous construction” was evident in the northern highlands during the 1990s following the success of entrepreneurial Otavaleño migrant merchants (Rudolf Colloredo-Mansfield 1994; Kyle 2003). In the case of Sisid, a town just north of Pamba, these houses have come to symbolize a shift in power between indigenous Cañaris and mestizos. As Duchi (2007b), a scholar from Sisid, writes:
Until 1998, all the immigrants built their houses in the community of Sisid. … After this date, many of them realized that these homes weren’t even being used, much less generating any revenue. Because of this, many of them decided to invest in the city, buying locations and building new houses, principally in the canton of Tambo. Now there is a positive side to these investments, most of the largest and best houses are owned by indigenous people from Sisid, most of them are located on the main streets and plazas that serve all kinds of purposes. Today, in the canton of Tambo, one of the regions most marginalized historically in the province of Cañar is populated by big new houses, with housewares businesses, primary goods and services, electronic supply shops, etc. … [T]he canton of Tambo has been appropriated by the indigenous peoples of Sisid because of migration and the implementation of business ventures.

To have a town center filled with indigenous businesses, as in Tambo, is a significant transformation since historically mestizos owned the establishments in town. During my fieldwork, in neighboring Cañar, there was an Internet service shop, numerous clothing shops, small markets, and a photography studio all owned by Cañaris. Despite these gains, the illusion of grandeur and easy prosperity in the United States was continually debunked by family members and returning migrants. The myth of “money growing on the trees of Fifth Avenue” (Astudillo, Romero, and Cordero 1990) no longer enticed potential migrants in Cañar; they saw the migration project as a difficult, but sometimes necessary, undertaking.

*Peruvian migrants*

Given the absence of men and women in their productive years, the farmers who remain resort to paying for rural labor rather than relying on reciprocity networks (Jokisch 1998; Kyle 2003). In response to this labor demand and enticed by the favorable exchange rates in the now dollarized economy, Peruvian migrants began arriving in the early 2000s to work in the fields. While not numerous, they provide manual labor on farms and in the construction of the modern-style houses in Cañar. They generally share rented houses and keep to themselves. People spoke about Peruvian migrants as taking work away from others because they would work for less,
since the US dollar exchange rate was favorable to Peruvian soles, as many of these migrants sent their wages to families in Peru.\textsuperscript{73}

\textit{Migration and agrarian change in Cañar and Tambo}

While rural households have long employed diversified subsistence strategies, including regional migration, the rise of international migration has entailed a significant shift in how people manage household and community demands. An emerging analytical approach to rural development in Latin America and Europe, called “new rurality,” provides a useful framework for understanding the impact of such profound changes within the domain of livelihood strategies. This approach recognizes that agricultural practices may no longer be the primary subsistence strategy for rural communities (Kay 2008). In order to understand migration within the larger set of rural subsistence strategies, the following section analyzes changes in agricultural and animal husbandry practices, construction styles and property investments, and the impact on families and communities.

\textsuperscript{73} Since 2012, there have been growing migrant populations from different regions of the Caribbean Africa, of people who use Ecuador as a landing port and then migrating by land north to the United States. In 2016, a growing Cuban population has become more visible in Quito and Guayaquil.
Agricultural life in this region has undergone a number of shifts in the last century: indigenous peasants gained and then lost access to land; as migration grew, those left behind turned toward animal husbandry; and Peruvian laborers arrived, seeking to fill the migrants’ absence and engage in paid farm work. Like other indigenous groups in the Andean region, Cañari social and political ties were organized through extended family networks called “ayllus.” The pre-Incan ayllus were political, social, and economic networks that collectively held a parcel of land and were connected to each other through reciprocal obligations and exchanges (Alchon 1991). The arrival of the Spanish in the early sixteenth century destabilized ethnic ties (Solomon 2008), but certain long-held practices continue. Kinship networks in the rural communities of the cantons of Tambo and Cañar, for example, still follow the patterns of patrilocality, in which a new wife moves to her husband’s community but still retains property rights to her family’s land. In this way, the community and family relations still center around land, even as agricultural practices are changing.\footnote{Brad Jokisch (1998) examines these changes in agricultural practices.}
Since the 1990s, rural families increased investments in animal husbandry, purchasing pigs, milk cows, sheep, goats, chickens, guinea pigs (*cuy*), and bulls, mostly for sale in the market. Milk cows were thought to be less labor intensive and hence more easily managed by women and those remaining; however, the price of milk fluctuated weekly and provides only a small portion of the subsistence needs for the household. These “less laborious” cows must be milked several times each day, and people had to structure their daily schedules around the collection times. In 2000 there was one milk production company in the region, and by 2008 there were three.\(^7\)

\(^7\) In the town of Deleg, an area with an astonishing number of immigrants abroad, the mayor spoke with me about the exploitative nature of milk industry, stating that families were paid US$0.60 per gallon and the company sold it for US$2.60 per gallon following a very simple pasteurization process.
**Impact on Family and Community Solidarity**

The following section includes the accounts of families in both Tunis and Pamba who had migrant members abroad, either within their immediate family or as part of their extended kin as they share their experiences with changing agrarian practices, migration, and new family arrangements. Many of the accounts here and in other chapters show that families, in the initial foray into migration, often used the family plot as collateral for loans from local (mestizo) money-lenders (*chulqueros*). The land, parceled out during the 1960s and 1970s reforms, was often still under ownership of the parents. In some cases, the land was already divided. Land acquires, in these practices, an even greater significance as it allows for mobility even as it signifies an important stake (both literal and symbolic) in the region.

**Pamba**

Francisco Yupa Alvarez from Cruz Loma, a sector of Pamba, was his community’s first migrant to the United States, having left in the late 1970s. He had been very successful in the United States and sent for his family to join him. While people often referred to his story, they no longer idealized the migration experience.

When I asked Carlos, the president of Pamba, why so many people from Pamba opted to go to Minneapolis instead of New York, he stated “in New York, they treat us like Mexicans. It’s better to go to Minneapolis where they treat us with some dignity.” His statement clearly demonstrates that he was aware of both the negative perceptions and mistreatment of migrant workers and the limited opportunities available to them. He may have gained this knowledge from migrants abroad or the stories shared by return migrants. He also suggested that there were too many migrants in New York, which made finding work more challenging. His understanding
about US attitudes toward ethnicity was echoed in many conversations, which suggested a migrant cosmopolitan perspective that existed even among those who have never been to the United States. In particular, the perception of Minneapolis as a city that treats migrants with more dignity was reiterated many times by people I spoke to in Pamba, though less so in Tunis, where the majority of migrants still opt for Queens, the Bronx, and the small town of Spring Valley in New York’s Hudson Valley.

*Segundo and María*

“Cuando piensan, ya se van” (When they think it, they leave)  
- Segundo, a 36 year-old man from Pamba

Both Segundo and his wife, María Mercedes (twenty-nine) were home when I made my way along the twisting road up the hillside from Tambo. Both wore the customary white hats, with the colorful band and balls common among indigenous Cañaris. María was wearing a shawl, *pollera*, and leggings. Segundo was wearing a sweater over a shirt, black pants, and rubber boots (typical and very practical footwear during the rainy season). Segundo and María Mercedes were married when he was twenty-eight and she was twenty-one. Two of their four children sat with us during the conversation. José Darío (eight) and María Mercedes (four) were both wearing hats. Ruth (seven) and Segundo (two) were inside the house. José and Ruth were both attending the bilingual (Kichwa/ Spanish) school in Pamba.76

Their house was located in Cruz Loma, Pamba and was comprised of a series of small single-story buildings built in a u-shape. We sat on wooden benches in the small interior plaza. It

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76 Pamba seemed better organized and central than Chuichun, which was more dispersed and had lost the bilingual school (buildings) in a mudslide and had not been able to find funds to repair it (the location would also likely suffer multiple slides in the future).
was a sunny day, and chickens were roaming freely in the yard and walking through the garden of alfalfa (tall and green) that the family cultivated to feed to cuy. They were raising fifteen young cuy, which was down from the seventy they had earlier. The best (tasting) cuy is fed a diet of alfalfa, pasta azul, and grass. Each cuy can sell for close to ten dollars, more than a chicken but significantly less than a goat, but they also take up much less space and mature more quickly (three to four months). I knew the truck which normally arrived at the Sunday market to purchase live cuyes them from local vendors. Many of the households raised cuy but not all grew alfalfa, which the family also sold at market.

Segundo had just completed his two-year post as president of Cruz Loma and had taken a number of professionalization courses through UCOIT, including courses on leadership and community tourism. He watched his parents and grandparents travel to the coast for work and

Figure 14. Roasted cuy at local market (photo by author, 2008)
realized how hard it was. He missed his family when they were on the coast and decided to do something different so he got involved in community projects. On their participation, María Mercedes said, “we’ve just woken up – before we didn’t value our predecessors” to which Segundo replied – “Our parents fought for our future.” When he spoke about community, and the five sectors, Naunag, Cruz Loma, Centro, Zhīru (Jarro) y el Bolsillo, he stated that they used to be more unified before 1985 but the presence of NGOs had divided them.

On migration

Segundo had seven family members who had migrated to the United States, two of his brothers, later followed by their wives, a sister, and a sister-in-law had gone in the past few years. All of them used family land as collateral for the initial loan. His brother was the first to migrate in 2002. He later sent for his wife. They left their two children (a seven month old and a one and a half year old with the grandmother. Both of them traveled by boat to Guatemala and later overland. It was unclear how much time passed before the wife left to join him. It apparently took him a month to travel the whole way and cost him $8000. He used the mother-in-law’s land as collateral (also from Cruz Loma). His sister left to join her husband in 2006. Her journey cost $10,000. Her husband had left in 2003. They relied on help from a compadre in Cruz Loma. She made three attempts before she finally arrived to her destination. They had two children whom she left with their sister, who already had one child. The compadre used his land as collateral for them to migrate. Another unmarried sister migrated in 2004. His other sister got married in the United States to someone from Coyuctor, a small community in Tambo. They had one child. Each of them went with different coyotes.\footnote{I wondered at the time whether the connections that coyotes had were ephemeral or that people only stayed in the business for short periods of time. How competitive was it and how much did local coyotes actually benefit? Did they run out of social capital, get knocked out of position, or even migrate themselves?}
On land use

Segundo was the oldest of seven children and had inherited half of the 5000 square meter lot, in part stating “me he luchado” but also as a result of the death of two siblings in a car accident. Their mother had died in the late 1990s. In many accounts, the elderly mother outlived her partner and was often the caretaker of the land that they had acquired following the land reforms. They had to consent to the land being used as collateral. This established an important family hierarchy, with a matriarch. Furthermore, this land was to be inherited among siblings and likely divided. When the property was used as collateral, migrants were borrowing against their family and their future inheritance. As mentioned earlier, land is extremely important, even small plots, as they are often used for subsistence, but also in connection to indigenous community and identity.

Andrés and Petrona

Saben venir a Caguana, viene en carro pasando por la comunidad intentando convencer a la gente. Las autoridades saben muy bien que hacen esto – tienen su carro de lujo (les identifica como de afuera).

-- Petrona, 51-year-old Cañari woman, whose two adult daughters lived in the United States, wife to Andrés

Andrés, whose labor history is analyzed in Chapter Two, was a widower and had recently married a widow. Petrona, fifty-one, his second wife, had two daughters, twenty-six, and twenty-seven, both of whom were in the United States. He completed school up to sixth grade. Andrés was community president in 2003-2004, in 2005 and, in 2008, he was the treasurer. He was very worried about community participation and the local economy as well. He owns a house in Guayaquil, where he worked in the Cooperativa de Vivienda (see his coastal work history).
Andrés and his wife owned their own home separate from the daughter’s house and lived with their niece and three grandchildren.

His first son, Segundo, 31, was married with two small children, one boy, one girl, completed high school and was now living in Guayaquil after having been deported from the United States in 2002. Segundo’s wife, Juana, 25, also lived in the United States but returned once he was deported. They had two children, the youngest was just three months old. Segundo studied to become an industrial mechanic. Andrés’s daughter, 25, died from injuries sustained from an accidental fall at a party in Guayaquil.

Petrona’s family owned land, but it had been divided among family members (unlike many that I spoke to in Tunis). They used the land for growing food for sale and consumption but also to raise animals, which included one pig, a milk cow, and two sheep. They were raising five cuyes. In order to get loans from the chulqueros, her daughters mortgaged the mother’s land, but have since paid off the debt.

Tunis

The community of Tunis is situated at a lower elevation than Pamba and is prone to mudslides. The community once had a bilingual Spanish/Kichwa elementary school, but it had been destroyed by a mudslide, and there were no immediate plans to rebuild it due to a lack of funding. Students must travel by bus to nearby Tambo in order to attend school, a financial burden that was partially alleviated by the generosity of a local bus company owner, who allows young students from his community of Tunis to ride for free. The owner had used remittances to buy buses and start the company, and he was known for employing drivers and drivers’ assistants from Tunis. Mudslides had also damaged one of the main roadways between Tunis and the
school, forcing drivers into one lane on a blind curve. In 2008, a tragic accident killed more than thirty people, including schoolchildren returning from Tambo, when a speeding delivery truck hit one of his buses on that curve.

Sarapamba

One afternoon, I sat with a group of families after attending an early morning minga in Sarapamba, a small sector in Tunis, and we discussed the impact of migration on youth. Most people thought that social and monetary remittances led people to abandon the countryside. They stated that the majority of migrants didn’t accomplish much abroad and essentially abandoned their children to their grandparents, who quickly lost control of discipline. The youth all planned to migrate and leave the community behind. The long absences of migrant parents placed great stress on families and challenged their ability to maintain respect, uphold social controls, and foster a strong sense of community. In the course of this conversation, as well as in many others, people framed all social ills plaguing the rural community in relation to migration. One mentioned that it normally took three to five years to pay off the migration debt, which accrued 3 to 5 percent interest per month. According to the group, there were many cases in which mortgaged land was claimed by chulqueros (informal money lenders, almost always mestizos) if the debt was not paid. Most migrants depended on moneylenders from outside Tunis, though one member of the group mentioned that there was also an indigenous coyote in Tunis Centro.

During a Kichwa-language lesson hosted by the UPCCC, eight teachers from the local bilingual schools, mostly mestizo, discussed the absence of parents and the effect it had on their students. One remarked that children are completely unprepared for school as a result of being raised by their grandparents, who themselves only had a few years of formal schooling in their early youth, if at all. She mentioned that a young child had recently come to school after having
been doused in cold water as punishment. In the region, community members punish criminals by dousing them with cold water and leaving them out in the cold at night; because it is brutally cold in the upper highlands, this can lead to severe illness and even death. When asked why someone would do this to a child, the teacher indicated that the grandparents’ ideas about punishment were of their generation. Having been part of the huasipungo system, they likely would have experienced these harsh punishments from hacendados or even as part of social control practices among indigenous community members themselves. Another person responded that such severe punishment would only occur as a last resort, because the children did not respect their caretakers and did whatever they wanted. While the particular case of the child’s punishment was extreme, the concern with grandparents’ lack of control over youth was certainly shared by both teachers and community members. One such incident was documented in a film produced by an evangelical church in Chimborazo, entitled “Pollito.” It followed a young boy who sets off to find his father who had left to migrate to the United States. On his way, he stops in a village where a thief gets caught and the villagers retaliate by dousing him with water and leaving him outside to pass the night. While Pollito, a nickname his father had given him, remained the protagonist of the story, the moralizing narrative of both the treatment of the thief and portrayal of the mob-like actions of the people clearly carry more than just a message about the dangers of migration.

José and María

José and María did not have any migrant members but shared their perception of changing social and economic practices in the community. José María Pizha, fifty-six years old, was born in Cachi, a small sector of Tambo, and his wife, María Magdalena Loja, was born in Pamba. They lived on a small plot of land in the Tunis Center, on which sat two one-story
buildings. On the day we spoke about changes they had witnessed because of migration, we sat in the living room. It was filled with large amplifiers, which were part of the son’s DJ business. José María and María Magdalena lived with their two daughters, Rosa Elena, twenty-eight, and Magdalena Pilla, twenty-two. Both of their daughters were married, Magdalena was separated from her husband and they had a six year-old daughter. Rosa’s husband, twenty-nine, was away working in the mines in Machala. José María and María Magdalena had two sons, one of which lived with his wife and mother-in-law (who was in her fifties). The other lived in Cuenca. Rosa Elena studied until the third year of high school. Magdalena was in her fifth year and was still finishing up classes. Both sons were university students. José María was primarily a farmer but also raised cattle and worked as a part-time laborer. He worked in Tunis and would work two to three days, depending on demand.

On migration

Ellos buscan a la gente. Llevan a riesgo a la muerte, hacen perder sus casas, (que se) pierden por la deuda. No reconocen a los pobres muertitos. Coyotes no devuelven la plata si algo ocurre. Robo de la plata y engañan a la gente. Es todo mentira. (María Magdalena, 54-year-old Cañari woman from Tunis.)

When asked if they had any migrants in the family, they both seemed to get sad and said no, but when asked about migration and coyoterismo, the wife, who had been quietly sitting with us as she wove wool onto a spindle, spoke up. She said, “They look for people. They put people at risk of death. They make them lose their homes, because of the debt. They don’t even

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78 María Magdalena spoke rudimentary Spanish. I intentionally did not translate this so the reader could hear her voice. When she spoke Spanish, it was a bit broken, spoken tightly, at the front of her mouth, a way of speaking that I heard mostly from the older generation who were dominant in Kichwa.
acknowledge the poor dead. Coyotes don’t return the money if something happens. They steal the money and trick the people. It’s all a lie!” (translation from above).

Earlier that year, perhaps eight months before the interview, a small fishing boat sank off the coast of Ecuador. The vessel was headed to sea in the first leg of the migration journey to Guatemala. Ninety people died. Many of them were from the southern highlands. Given the couple’s reaction, they may very well have known someone who perished, or had been lost during another journey, but were unwilling to speak about it. The family had lived in Tunis Quesera for twenty-five years and owned their home. They were able to build it ten years earlier using savings earned while working milking cows on a hacienda in Tunis Centro.

On land use

The family owned about 900 square meters of land. They used the land for subsistence, and some cultivation for sale, and had access to water from the irrigation canals from Culebrillas. They also owned two pigs, two sheep, and six hens, all for food. In the last five years, they stated they had changed their use of the land to mainly support the raising of animals. They were also godparents to five different children in Tunis and in Pamba. When they needed help they would seek it out from the president of the community.

Maria and Raúl

María Esperanza Beatriz Simbaina, 46-year-old woman, was born and raised in Sarapamba (Tunis), and spoke both Kichwa and Spanish. She was married to Raúl, forty-eight, who was also born and raised in Sarapamba and never attended school. Three of their children had migrated to the United States and lived in Newark. Their son, Carlos, 28, lives in Newark with his wife. They had left in 2001. Their two children lived with the sister (ñana) of the wife.
Carlos spoke mostly Spanish and a little Kichwa. He attended school until fifth grade. Their second son, Raúl Clemente, 27, also lived in Newark. He was sick and had just had an operation the day before. He was single. He spoke only Spanish. Their third son died when he was 16, in 2001, killed in an accident while working in the mines.

Their fourth son, Eduardo, 19, was married, and had also left for Newark. His wife still lived in Sarapamba but they had no children. Their fifth son, 17, was single, had finished primary school, and still lived at home. Their sixth son, 14, lives at home but was no longer attending school. They had no daughters.

On migration

Maria and Raul have three sons who have gone to the YONI, and they all live in Newark. They also had five nephews in the United States. All of the men took different routes to the United States. Two were able to travel by boat on the whole route, others had to fly to Guatemala or Mexico and travel overland. They also had family in Guayaquil but they had left over twenty years before. “People get charged *harta plata*, some end up without their house, their land. The children don’t respect anyone and they no longer work for money,” Raul stated, “everyone who has left the community has never returned.”

Their son Carlos left in 2001. He had trouble traveling by sea as the boat he was supposed to take was overly full. During his second attempt it took him one month. He decided to go to Newark because he had cousins there. He paid 7500 for the trip. He was able to pay by taking loans from his parents-in-law and using the services of a family of chulqueros – a family with a long history of migration – los Falcón. When asked why their sons left, Maria responded that it wasn’t because they really wanted to, and that she wasn’t sure.
In a situation where decisions of this scale are made, I wonder if pressure from other migrants, who offer to finance the journey and initiate the process, in turn compel migrants to leave before they feel ready because they do not know if and when they might get another chance. When these large amounts of money are negotiated, does it really have an externalized power that makes migrants feel compelled to go regardless of the risks involved? As one testimonial from the previous chapter shows, “I started the journey without even wanting to go,” spoken by Juan de Dios, Cañari youth, from Pamba.79

Raul left in 2003, and it took him one month to travel. He paid US$13,000. On his first attempt, he was detained in Manta, and ended up riding to Mexico and then taking a plane. A coyote from Cuenca helped him but is no longer working as a coyote. He was not married when he left and did not have any children. Eduardo left in 2005 and paid US$9300 by taking out a mortgage on the family land. He sends money regularly, perhaps US$100 per month via Delgado Travel in Tambo. Since he got sick, he sent less frequently. When asked how the money was allocated, María told me that it went to first pay a portion of the debt, then for the family to buy food, and, if possible to put towards household savings but this largely depended on the frequency and quantity in which it was sent.

On land use

The family had lived in Sarapamba for generations. The house where they were living was two rooms, built in both mud and lathe and brick. They were adding another room. The land it was on was inherited from María’s parents. Altogether eight people resided at the house. The family also had one hectare of land which they used for growing and raising food for

79 With these words, Juan de Dios started telling me his story of the first of his three attempts to migrate to the United States. After his third unsuccessful attempt, he decided to work as a recruiter (engancharador) for the coyote in order to pay off his debt. His story is recounted in chapter four.
consumption. They were raising one pig and four cows, one of which was pregnant. They also were raising 50 cuyes, which they fed grass. They were currently growing carrots and aloe vera (alveja). She said they change their crops over the years, as it is better for the soil.

**Mingas and community practices**

In early February, I met Francisco, president of the UCOIT, at the office in Tambo. He wanted me to meet some of the community members and other leaders from the community of Tunis. We rode up in a truck, with Manuel, a town council member, and representative member of the Pachakutik political party. We rode north of Tambo and took a sharp left onto a dirt road going uphill, passing numerous smaller houses, built either in the traditional adobe style or with large red bricks but mostly on the smaller side in comparison with migrant houses. We arrived at the location where I saw men and women walking with large bags of dry cement on their backs. They wrapped them in the brightly colored shawls tied around their shoulders, a common way for women to carry children as well. They walked about ten minutes along the irrigation canal to a spot where others waited with buckets to mix the cement and repair the sides of the canal. The shifting earth, weighed down by the heavy rainfall, created problems along the roadsides as well as large tracts of the mountainside would slide across the roads. We were working to the north of Tunis and the repairs would ensure the water flow to the farmers lower down. The work continued for an hour, when a meeting was called. People ate small refreshments as Rafael, president of Tunis and Nicolas, dirigente of natural resources, talked about the upcoming trip to Montecristi which would address water distribution and community development. The meeting was conducted in Spanish with intermittent questions spoken in Kichwa. Francisco talked about his recent visit in Latacunga where he had met Lourdes Tibán, the leading representative of the Pachakutik party, who would later become an assembly person under the 2008 new constitution.
The decline of agriculture had prompted efforts by organizations such as Unión Cantonal de Organizaciones Indígenas del Tambo, UCOIT, a municipal-level (third-tier) organization. Bretón (2008, 584) explains: “The indigenous movement of Ecuador has a pyramidal structure, with autonomy for each level and for the organizations that form it. At the lowest...
located in Tambo and Tucayta (in Cañar) to reintroduce native crops, such as quinoa, corn, and potatoes (upwards of 50 varieties have largely disappeared) and create a better market for them. UCOIT was working to create a cooperative of organic farmers in three communities and to connect them to a cooperative of sellers and buyers, modeled after an organization in Quito. In addition to creating an organic food cooperative, UCOIT’s leadership also aimed to restore an abandoned mill for native grains. While they had secured some funding for the startup costs, they were engaged in heated negotiations with the municipality. UCOIT leaders were hoping to schedule a festival that would promote interest and awareness, but were unable to convince municipal authorities of the need to do so. One day, while I was interviewing the president of UCOIT, a mestizo municipal representative arrived, wanting to discuss the proposed festival and the overall project. An impromptu meeting was immediately convened and the pace and urgency with which they accommodated this representative contrasted sharply with the normal, unhurried nature of the meetings I had witnessed in many rural communities. While I do not know the personal backstory between this representative and the president, the interaction suggested a power disparity between the two and the assurance and clear expectation of immediate attention by the representative spoke of his sense of entitlement and authority despite the fact he was entering the president’s office.

level, there is a dense fabric of local organizations – called ‘first-tier’ or ‘basic’ – which includes the whole territory (communities, co-operatives and associations). Out of this level the federations or OSG (organizaciones de segundo grado, second-tier organizations) have been gradually emerging, each of which includes a greater or lesser number of first-tier organizations. Further up, we can find a third tier (federation of federations) that normally coincides with the province. The union of these federations gives rise to three big platforms that correspond to the natural regions of the country: ECUARUNARI in the Andes (Confederación de los pueblos de nacionalidad kichua del Ecuador), CONFENAIE in the Amazon (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana), and CONAICE on the coast (Confederación de Nacionalidades y Pueblos Indígenas de la Costa Ecuatoriana). The alliance of all three in 1996 produced CONAIE, which is the most representative organization at the national level, though it is not the only one; there are also FENOCIN (Federacion Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indias y negras del Ecuador), which is more class-based than CONAIE, and FEINE (Federación Nacional de Indígenas Evangélicos del Ecuador).”
Both UCOIT and Tucayta were concerned with the growing practice among farmers that allowed cattle to roam freely within communal lands in the páramo (highlands), thus contaminating the water in the irrigation canals with manure. The influx of remittances and the turn towards increased animal husbandry resulted in greater numbers of cattle and raised the issue of adequate grazing land. While awareness programs at communal meetings attempt to deter people from doing so, many still allowed their livestock to range freely. In contrast to these concerns about communal land use, Raúl, a local high school teacher, musician, and indigenous activist commented to me that all the land laying fallow in the migrants’ absence resonated with indigenous cosmology about letting land rest as part of a greater cycle of rebirth. His was one of the few positive reflections that I heard about the relationship between the land and migration. Months later I attended the baptism of Raúl’s young daughter at Laguna Culebrillas, a sacred lake in the upper páramo, which incorporated indigenous rituals drawn from local Cañari practices but also those of Central American indigenous groups which the ceremony shaman had learned during his travels to human rights summits.\(^{81}\)

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\(^{81}\) Warren (1998) discusses the early (1960s and 1970s) transnational connections of indigenous leaders and activists through their participation in human rights summits and other conventions.
Even those rare households that do not have migrant members abroad tend to be related by kinship to other households where members have migrated. The influx of remittances and the absence of the head of household often result in increased tensions within the extended kin network. I was told, siblings, aunts, and uncles—charged with the care of children left behind—were neglectful and even diverted remittances towards their own needs as opposed to those of the children (such as school supplies or clothing). In some cases, when a young mother was left in charge of the household, family members would report to the husband abroad how the money was being spent, disparaging his wife’s choices and even stepping in to “discipline” her.82 Given the charged discourse around remittances and migration at the national and local level, these personal accounts echoed national-level negative perceptions of migration. In the course of my interviews, people’s perception of the risks and consequences of migration influenced the decision-making process of potential migrants as they learned more about the risks of the

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82 There is a broad body of literature on gender and migration, see Weismane (2003), Radcliffe (1999), Pribilsky (2007), and Levitt (2001).
journey, the insecurity of working and living abroad, and the potential hardships of those family members who remained behind.

**Conclusion**

Not only does national and local-level discourse disparage migrant households, it delinks migrant decisions from the complex social, historical, and economic processes that prompted migrants to leave. This chapter examined migration-related transformations in rural communities through the accounts of families and local indigenous leaders. Based on the accounts herein, migration appears to have largely negative consequences for migrant households, as families struggle with the discipline and care of young children and balancing community participation and local agricultural practices. Even as people come to understand the hardships that migrants face abroad, they continue to migrate. For many they are already embedded in a transnational social network, where communities, kin and family ties are linked across various borders. People with transnational ties are better able to make informed decisions about migration, since they have access to more accurate information about job opportunities, ethnic discrimination, and hardship and are more likely to be skeptical of the early stories of migrant prosperity. The decision to not migrate, even with the social networks to facilitate the journey, is one which depends on viable alternatives. Presently, the most attractive alternative for indigenous youth is participation in local development projects which provide professional training and some funding.

At the same time, the informal economy of migration and access to remittances has shifted the underlying social and economic privileges previously enjoyed by mestizo landowners, business owners and professionals. The following chapter examines how indigenous identity
focuses on the mobility and entrepreneurship strategies employed by indigenous migrants and those who facilitate human smuggling.

Chapter 5: Indigeneity and Modernity Aspirations

We see migration in our vision – in the long view of history and the future – migration is a period of time that we let the land lay fallow – so that it can reenergize and regenerate. (Ranti Chuma, brother to Mercedes, son to Mama Mechi, a local healer and midwife, a teacher at the bilingual Kichwa/Spanish high school in Sidsid, and a fellow musician with Santiago)

In Latin America, large indigenous populations have organized both nationally and internationally, gaining political momentum and forcing many Latin American governments to redefine the rights and representation of the diverse interests of their citizenry. During the 1990s indigenous people emerged as serious political protagonists whose organizational capacity forced governments to incorporate their demands into national policymaking and law. In Ecuador and Bolivia, large-scale indigenous movements protested the implementation of neoliberal economic reforms and the legacy of colonial histories. Over the course of just ten years in Ecuador, the indigenous movement toppled three governments. Yet, despite these gains, the beginning of the new millennium brought significant challenges. In 2000, the political party, Pachakutik (Movimiento Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik-Nuevo País), allied with military officials in a coup to oust then President Jamil Mahuad in support of incumbent President Lucio Gutiérrez, but
later broke their allegiance to him when he pushed through neoliberal reforms. This break reduced the political traction that indigenous representatives had gained on the national stage.\footnote{Marc Becker (2011) cautions against an overly simplistic understanding of the indigenous movement and highlights the heterogeneity of many different movements that took place in the 1990s. Indeed, as his work emphasizes, indigenous groups were actively protesting at the local, national, and international level, as early as the 1920s. In the 1990s, groups from various regional areas prioritized distinct agendas and demands. Suzana Sawyer’s ethnographically rich account of the 1994 protests provides invaluable insight into how these diverse interests were debated (Sawyer 2004).}

This final shift took place during a national economic downturn that prompted huge numbers of Ecuadorians to migrate internationally. As previous chapters have shown, increased migration impacted the rural communities of Cañar in significant ways. These changes ranged from changing agrarian practices to consumption patterns that set the stage for important social and economic changes. This chapter further examines how the economic strategies of indigenous coyotes and migrant entrepreneurs complicate bounded notions of rural indigenous life. Negative national discourse around migration largely targets migrants who have left rural areas, or poor urban areas, citing the overwhelming burden on state institutions that their abandonment has caused. Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) point to these national mythscapes in their analysis of the constraints on mobility and stasis and the ideological function of mythscapes in the national imaginary. As stated previously, indigenous migrants suffer from an inverted national mythscape in which their indigenous identity becomes rooted in a nostalgic, fixed space against which modern aspirations (such as those sought by migrant households) are viewed as inauthentic. This discursive critique of indigenous migrants, however, arises from the challenge that migration presents to hierarchies within the economic and symbolic systems.

In order to understand what constitutes indigenous migration, it is useful to think through the lens of mobility. Through this we can understand people in motion, through space (over land and sea) and over the course of different historical narratives, and in terms of economic and
social status. My goal is to show how contemporary transnational migration, contributes to new understandings of indigeneity and modern subjects within the nation-state.

The Cañari

Before the Inca invasion, Cañari was the greatest culture existing in what is now Ecuador. The Cañaris were divided into a series of independent lordships, curacazgos. The names remain – Checa, Sigsig, Molleturo, Cañaripamba, and of course Hatun Cañar. Cañari society was highly stratified, a fact reflected by the great wealth of the furnishings of Cañari noble tombs. Gold and silver came from richly endowed mines within their territory. (Lundius 2001, 12)

While concepts of indigeneity are produced through historical processes, circulating even before the Inca occupation, the colonial encounter and later nation-state building created complex interdependencies between ethnicity, territory, and mobility. Prior to the spread of the Incan Empire to the north in the fifteenth century, the Cañaris occupied an area that included what is now Cuenca and that reached as far north as the contemporary city of (Hatun) Cañar. The long history of indigenous migration in what is now southern Ecuador took various forms: before the Spanish arrived, Incan rulers relocated settlers (known as mitimae) throughout the empire in order to discourage uprisings, facilitate tribute collection and establish linguistic homogenization. Trade was conducted across wide expanses throughout the highlands and Amazonia in what John Murra (1980) called “vertical archipelagos.” Intra-regional trade circuits and markets flourished before the arrival of the Spanish (Mayer 2002), and the Incan Empire actively subjugated peoples through demands for tribute throughout the Andean region. In Cañar, indigenous people resisted the Inca occupation until approximately eighty years before the
arrival of Spanish colonizers (Hirschkind 1995). The Spanish capitalized on this tension and offered to reward the Cañaris in exchange for collaborating in their battle against the Incas, who were in turn battling each other in a succession dispute. Despite their promises, Spanish colonizers, enticed by the gold found in tombs, heavily exploited indigenous labor in the region. Chapter two provides a brief historical overview of the centuries of Spanish criollo elite oppression of indigenous populations and the formation of the huasipungo system that lasted until the mid-twentieth century.

Frank Salomon (2009) examines the contemporary rise of “Inca-ism,” the claim to be of Incan descent by indigenous groups whose ancestors were in fact relatively independent of the Incas at the time Spanish arrived in the northern Andes. He argues that the colonizers’ penetration of outlying highlands primarily in their search of gold, sometimes as grave robbers, set the stage for this change. Widespread deaths from epidemics and violence, as well as efforts to concentrate natives in reducciones, also contributed to the decline in population (Newson 1995; Newson 1993). The weakening of the “ritual foundations of ethnic boundaries among natives” (Salomon 2009, 38) allowed for the blurring of divides between self-identified descent groups based on ties to specific and remote ancestors. Intermarriage across descent groups also helped to give rise to a more broadly defined ethnic identity, which contrasted with the non-native descent of the Spanish. This invocation of Inca descent plays a part in the struggle over the past twenty years between the municipality and surrounding Cañari communities for management rights over Ingapirca, Ecuador’s largest Inca ruin, which ironically is constructed over an ancient Cañari ceremonial site (Duchi 2007a).

In this blurring and mixing of peoples, the Cañari language was largely lost, with the exception of place names. The process that began under the Incas continued under Spanish
colonial rule and Kichwa became the dominant indigenous language in the region. Kichwa is now recognized as the primary indigenous language in the highlands. Oral tradition has maintained knowledge of sacred Cañari sites in the region, including Laguna Culebrillas, as well as the origin story of the Cañari people. Laguna Culebrillas, located in the upper páramo (moors) of Cañar at an elevation of 4121 meters (13,520 feet), provides water for irrigation canals that beneficiaries (under the administration of water boards in the communities) have maintained since their initial construction during the Incan occupation. Community projects (mingas) undertaken in the rainy season, when mudslides are common, often aim to clean up and strengthen the walls of these canals. In the early 1990s, a collaborative effort between local organizations and an international non-governmental organization undertook a development project with the intention of building a dam at the site in order to modernize the distribution of water (the IFAD project discussed in Chapter One). The project failed on various fronts, not least because organizers had not communicated any of the plans to local indigenous leaders until they were ready to break ground (Lundius 2001).
A Long History of Indigenous Mobility

A growing literature on indigenous migration looks at different aspects of the migration experience: from its significance in the destination countries, throughout the migratory networks, and within the nations and communities of origin (Andolina, Laurie, and Radcliffe 2009a; Torres and Carrasco 2008; Cadena and Starn 2010; Delugan 2010; Rudi Colloredo-Mansfield 2007; Pedreño 2007). Castellanos, Gutiérrez Nájera, and Aldama (2012, 9) examine how indigeneity is (re)defined within a transnational context through a broadly comparative approach. My research advances this approach by taking identity, territory, and community as mutually constructed categories as well as recognizing mobility as a fundamental aspect of indigenous livelihood.

For many indigenous groups, migration is not new, but part of a long history of mobility. Indigenous groups have participated in regional trade routes and circular migration, and have grappled with the delineation of national borders that cut across their territories. In the second
half of the twentieth century indigenous political activism often occurred within the constraints of the nation-state and this led to a temporally and territorially limited notion of indigeneity (Bretón et al. 2007; Torres and Carrasco 2008; Delugan 2010; Warren 1998). Kearney (1996), in his research on transnationalism and peasants, critiqued such state-centric notions of indigeneity, although some scholars problematize his perspective. Through transnational social networks, indigenous people “encounter new anchors for identity that aren’t fixed in territory or community, but rather formed through new spaces of social cohesion and socioeconomic and political relationships” (Torres and Carrasco 2008, 14).

In Cañar, these new concepts of indigenous identity circulate, largely due to pan-indigenous organizations, and local-level community efforts to preserve agrarian practices and community life. While people portrayed migrants as undermining community preservation practices, the indigenous coyotes and entrepreneurs didn’t face the same scrutiny (in the mid-2000s). The following section gives voice to these perspectives.

**Perspectives of indigenous coyoterismo**

*Men have been the ones showing up, more or less, they take the jobs from the mestizos. They work with more tranquility, seriousness, and honesty because they are part of the Kichwa community, the mestizos would take advantage of the lack of knowledge in these communities. These guys are bilingual, they explain everything in both languages, and explain it well, to the travelers. They are Cañari. Since 2002, there are Cañari coyotes. There’s more trust. Perhaps because of the security. Also people can hold them accountable. Before there wasn’t that opportunity. There are no Cañari chulqueros, they are all mestizos, because the mestizos wouldn’t let them in on the game and they got angry. Possibly that will change in the future. When they (the chulqueros) come for their payment, they are abusive. Back in 2001-2, there were no coyotes here, only in the cities, there was one in Cuenca, a mestizo, and there was a big fight. (Rafael, 34-year-old indigenous leader in Tunis)*
Not just anyone could become a *coyote*. In the early period of migration, only a few mestizo families occupied lucrative positions as informal moneylenders and *coyotes*, mostly due to connections in the United States through a migrant family member. As Chapter One suggests, middle-class merchant families, who had profited during the straw-hat economy prior to the decline in the market in the mid-1960s, comprised the first wave of migrants to the United States. They established and profited from the initial connections within the migration network. When indigenous migrants forged their own social networks and connections and became *coyotes* in the early 2000s, a critical shift occurred. Overall, indigenous community members welcomed this shift, as Rafael’s comments above suggest. When people talked about the relationship to the indigenous *coyotes*, there was an implicit expectation that they would be more fair, less likely to exploit or threaten the remaining family members for repayments, and also more likely to communicate in Kichwa. People contended that the community itself would have greater leverage over the actions of this person because they lived in the community.

Beyond the expansion of the smuggling network, migration prompted a well-developed informal lending economy in which lenders (*prestamistas* or *chulqueros*) advance a portion of the initial cost of the journey or cover the entire amount. At the onset of the rise of clandestine migration from the southern highlands, the *prestamistas* and coyotes were usually mestizos from Cuenca who had established the necessary social ties through their own earlier migration or that of a relative. The cost is covered through various arrangements, which can include a down payment from either the lenders or a sponsoring migrant abroad, and subsequent payments as soon as the migrant arrives at the destination. The *coyote* is responsible for making sure the migrant crossing into the United States and has passage to their final destination. In some cases,
the coyote only guarantees the journey to a certain point, at which migrants, or their families, have to then pay a coyote in another country to complete the journey.⁸⁴

Miguel, president of UCOIT prior to Francisco, provided further insight about the history of migration and its impact on social inequalities in the region.⁸⁵ As we rode up to Laguna Culebrillas one afternoon for a cultural tourism event, he commented that the recent appearance of indigenous coyotes had finally broken the control of former landholding elites and merchant families over indigenous Cañaris and peasant mestizos. Up to the early 1980s, most families subsisted on the small plots of land granted through the agrarian reforms of the late 1960s and early 1970s and on supplemental work. As economic and political conditions worsened in the 1980s and families struggled to keep up with rising living costs, migration to the United States surged. He contended that the main cause of economic hardship was corruption among the ‘forty’ families who consistently held power since the late 1800s. Substantiating his argument, corruption and inside connections were the driving force of politics (of state) in this area and the rural families were the ones who suffered the most (Ayala Mora 1983, 11:X). Miguel also pointed out that most coyotes in the region had deep roots in migration and were related to each other, going back to the pioneer migrants. These migration predecessors had an easy journey, which cost around 6,000 sucre (approximately $250 in late 1970s).⁸⁶ Family members

⁸⁴ In Luis’s testimonial, he shares that a padrino helped him with the initial down payment for his migration journey as early as 1999. Recently, albeit in unpublished work, researchers on Ecuadorian migration discuss the growing importance of padrinos in the migration strategy.

⁸⁵ Like Antonio Duchi, whose work is cited in the previous chapter, Miguel had studied to get his masters at FLACSO in Quito. His final thesis was precisely about the impact of migration in the region. Unfortunately, he never completed or deposited the project.

⁸⁶ The exchange rate in 1979 was 25 sucres to 1 USD. G. G Johnson and International Monetary Fund, Formulation of Exchange Rate Policies in Adjustment Programs (Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 1985).
continued their involvement until it became a family business, one that depended on well-established personal connections.

Once indigenous coyotes started to take the stage, the older families no longer had exclusive connections and social dynamics began to change. When men from rural areas began migrating to the United States in the mid-1980s, they would get dressed up before they visited the coyote in Cuenca, which in many testimonies was a mestiza woman.\(^8\) I heard stories like this numerous times from migrants who had made the trip or had family members who had left, following the initial pioneers. Luis contended that the coyotes had all the controls, playing an exclusive and privileged financial and social role in the community. He further recounted that later elite urban mestizos in Cañar and Zhud, a town just north of Cañar, began working in the migration industry. However, the dynamics changed once people from the rural areas became more connected in the migratory network.

When Raúl, an older Cañari man, commented that there was a Cañari coyote in the community, I asked how he might differ from mestizo coyotes; he responded that primarily the difference was the language barrier for monolingual Kichwa speakers who wanted to migrate. Most potential migrants could not communicate with a mestizo and wouldn’t understand what was entailed in the contract or what to expect in the journey. He pointed out that indigenous coyotes were more accountable to the community, as the ties were still considered to be strong if the coyote continued to reside there. The extended family and kin-networks (still identified through regionally identifiable indigenous surnames) were thought to temper the possibility of

\(^8\) Because coyotes relied on word of mouth to maintain their business, many accounts in specific rural locations, described a similar encounter with a particular coyote in Cuenca. In this case, many of those who migrated from the region shared the contact information for a female coyote. It may be the case that female coyotes were more prevalent at a particular time given the absence of male counterparts in the same entrepreneurial family as migration from the region was predominantly male led.
exploitation and abuse/threats by debt holding moneylenders or coyotes. This presents an interesting paradox in which entrepreneurs in the migration industry, coyotes and money-lenders were tolerated in the communities as they are seen to be part of the social fabric, while the migrant families were seen as contributing to the demise of social controls and community cohesiveness. One compelling reason for this tolerance, as I was told, was that coyotes serve an important role and people may eventually need their services. Informal interviews conducted seven years later actually showed a shift of perceptions of indigenous coyotes, who were now seen as disconnected from the community and engaged in exploitative relationships with migrant families. In his research with Mexican migrants, Hernández-León (2013) pointed to this social distancing as camioneros engaged in the for-profit business.

I first met Juan in Quito, where he had helped recruit indigenous migrant investors in a four-star hotel project in Cuenca; he was recently working on his own housing complex in Cañar, Residencia Cañar. Juan had played a large role in the formation of the Pachakutik indigenous political party, but had fallen out with the other organizers. Over the course of my first few weeks in Cañar, Juan shared his background as a former teacher and taxi driver, a dual career path that many teachers shared, as the teaching salary could not sustain a household. He shared his story about the Pachakutic party much later, when he told me that he had run to be a representative for the region, but had lost due to negative campaigning by another candidate. Apparently there were many disagreements and he no longer worked with any of the organizations. He never elaborated on the experience but at the time Pachakutik was formed in

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88 “In 1995, Indigenous activists in Ecuador launched the Movimiento Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik (MUPP, Pachakutik Movement for Plurinational Unity) as a vehicle to compete for political office. The MUPP, commonly called Pachakutic, emerged after years of debate on whether and how indigenous peoples should engage in electoral politics.” (Becker 2011, xi).

89 Taxi licenses were very expensive in Cuenca (approximately US$25,000-30,000). It was apparent that many return migrants invested in licenses as a source of income. Many teachers worked for companies, however, and made a very small salary in comparison to the independent drivers.
1995, Cañar was recovering from a violent encounter between mestizo business owners and indigenous Cañaris at the newly established cultural center (Lundius 2001; Andolina 1994). Tensions would have been high. Juan was also working on a start-up magazine and had a second housing development project closer to the coast. A few months later, I learned he was also a well-known indigenous coyote.

One afternoon I met Juan and his wife Josédina at the housing development they were spearheading. Juan spent the day giving the investors (all indigenous families) a tour of the construction site, which included a total of thirty homes in three construction styles. Afterwards the families gathered for a snack of soda and crackers and to review their payment history. His wife, who kept the logbooks, reviewed each family’s monthly progress in their three-year payment plan. Many of the family members (mostly women) had lapsed only a few months, but one woman in particular, who was trailed by three children in tattered clothes, was told that she was almost eight months behind in payments and was going to lose her share in the housing development. She was very apologetic, but argued that her husband had stopped sending money. Josédina admonished her and said there was nothing she could do. They argued back and forth until finally the woman left. Having been witness to an uncommonly loud and bitter dispute, I realized that not only did Juan and Josefina have significant power over numerous families through the development project, but that migrant households that no longer received remittances could find themselves in an even more precarious situation than before, especially when investments such as these were disrupted and they had no other alternative. Obviously this woman had diverted funds away from her household to pay for the investment and her evident poverty made the loss of these funds even more difficult.
Juan’s entrepreneurial history is impressive and diverse; he worked as a teacher, taxi driver, manager of a bus company (which I learned transported hopeful migrants to the coast during midnight runs), indigenous activist, and investor in the Cuenca hotel project, coyote, as well as housing development owner. In an interesting turn, the housing development, while evoking nostalgic images of Incan and Cañari heritage through the name and promotional materials, was sold equally as a modern neighborhood touting all the amenities and comforts of affluent lifestyles.

**Stymied Collaborative Investments**

While remittances make possible some forms of social and economic mobility, other indigenous efforts are blocked. In one case, for example, non-indigenous bureaucrats and business owners resisted the implementation of a remittance-funded project oriented toward the indigenous community. In the case of indigenous migration, the social, economic, and political mobility of those remaining in Cañar are constrained by discriminatory practices within local-level institutions. Rudi Colloredo-Mansfield (2007, 87) utilizes the term “vernacular statecraft” in his examination of indigenous political acts, and argues that throughout the 1990s, indigenous leaders’ statecraft involved mirroring bureaucratic practices, such as making lists, forming councils, drawing boundaries, and organizing on an inter-regional level. The following case illustrates how these two approaches intersect within the confines of local and national bureaucracies.

In 2002, a group of indigenous entrepreneurs approached the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) in search of funding for an indigenous-owned-and-operated hotel in the southern highland city of Cuenca. The IADB financed a feasibility study that concluded that the hotel would need to have at least three stars in order to be profitable and therefore would
require a franchise deal with an international chain. The plan proceeded and the organizers, according to one of their representatives, Edwin, were able to secure a donation of a large parcel of optimally located land from a German organization. Representatives of the project travelled to New York and Chicago and quickly sold shares of stock in the hotel to indigenous migrants. The project goal was to employ indigenous staff in the administration and operation of the hotel. At the end of seven years, following training at all levels of operation, the hotel would be completely managed and operated by indigenous workers and the profits would feed back to the initial investors in Chicago and New York. Even though the project would primarily function locally by creating jobs, in particular for indigenous workers, the profits would still exported, at least in part.

By mid-2007, the shares had been sold, the land title secured, and the building plans drawn up. However the project stalled when the group tried to acquire the franchise. There are a limited number of hotel chains operating in Ecuador, and they have strong ties to a handful of owners. According to Edwin, Juan Eljuri Antón, a member of a wealthy elite family that reputedly controls most of the imports coming through the city, met with the group and demanded a majority stake in the enterprise, declaring that otherwise he would use all his connections with the franchise representative to block the franchising of their hotel.

This case points to the historical power of elite families. Creator of a Cuenca-based empire, Juan Eljuri Chica, the father of Juan Eljuri Anton, presided over a regional group of businesses for over fifty years. Gladys Eljuri, Juan Eljuri Chica’s sister, who headed the family business after his death, was minister of tourism under President Lucio Gutiérrez in 2004. Juan

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90 I met Edwin through a contact in the IADB. Edwin positioned himself as the representative for many indigenous projects once they started to interact with the international lending agencies in Quito. It was unclear to me whether he was an initial participant in the project or came on board once the petition was sent to IADB.
Eljuri Anton, his eldest son, now leads the group of businesses, which has a large presence in Ecuador’s major cities and in the south of the country. They include Internet services, television (TV Cable and Telerama), the Banco del Austro, ceramic industries (Ecuaceramica and Rialto), airlines (Interboro Transport and Interborder), hotels (Marriot Hotel and a number of smaller ones), optical fiber, an electric-generation power plant, the bottle company Azuaya, hardware stores, and more than six thousand “Juan Eljuri” retail stores that sell electronic appliances. In the automobile sector, the group has a company that assembles Kia Rio and Pregio cars for the Andean region and owns car dealerships NeoHyundai, AEKia, Automotive Continental, Metrocar, Recordmotor, and Asiauto. The group also serves as a distributor of liquefied gas for the national gas company Congas. The group has over 6,000 employees. The assets of the twenty main companies total $410 million, and register sales of approximately $470 million annually (American Embassy in Quito 2008).

In 2008, when I last spoke with Edwin, the hotel project had come to a halt, as the indigenous investors rejected the terms. While the organizers were able to line up the financial and logistical sides of the project, they were thwarted by the political maneuvers of a member of the Cuencan elite whose privileged financial position gave him the power to make or break the deal. Whether or not his ultimatum was motivated by purely economic interests or was an attempt to maintain a certain social (read: ethnic) order is unclear. However, the privilege and power he exerted were enabled by a social, economic and political hierarchy dominated by Ecuadorian elite family groups with vested business interests. This event illustrates how difficult and complex collective action by migrants can be when challenged by the old guard, even when they have the support of the Inter-American Development Bank. The tensions between economically and socially advantaged mestizos, on the one hand, and indigenous and other less
privileged groups, ln the other, are not limited to major urban centers like Cuenca. As shown earlier, disparaging discourse by urban mestizos in Cañar continually critiques the indigenous Cañaris, as indigenous-owned stores opened closer and closer to the central plaza and as their customers engaged in what mestizo critics viewed as conspicuous consumption.

**Modern Aspirations**

In Cañar, migration took on an almost physical presence, in the cafes, in the plazas, and in the fields. After my initial visits, I began to make sense of the spaces in which migration had a most significant impact, in the small communities, in the schools, in the entrepreneurial endeavors, in the tensions between professional mestizo class of business owners, landowners, lawyers, doctors, administrators, and economically mobile indigenous people who had labored on the land and in service in the towns. I often sat in uncomfortable silence as business owners; feeling at liberty to commiserate based on an assumed ethnic comradery, spoke in the most appalling terms about indigenous migrants, of their debauchery and gross ostentatiousness, of their immoral abandonment of children and sexual promiscuity in the absence of partners. They regarded their newly constructed homes as naïve investments because of the financial ignorance of new money families. They spoke of the loss of ‘tradition,’ referring to a static notion of indigenous personhood as the antithesis of the modern subject, as if they betrayed themselves and their community through seeking access to modern amenities and economic stability through endeavors not tied to agrarian practices. Indigenous leaders, with whom I spoke the most, were less discriminating but struggled with the absence of community members as they sought to maintain community level networks and solidarity. Those that remained, the non-migrant families, and the family members left behind, often relied on these social networks for support.
The concept of indigenous culture as something static, enclosed, and pre-modern circulates at the national level as well. Even as indigenous groups strategize for change based on notions of identity and rights, migration provides “new anchors” for identity beyond those centered on the nation-state, region or locality. In terms of the political dimension of indigeneity, there is a growing cosmopolitan vision and international scope within the indigenous movement.

Alison Brysk (2000) addresses the issue of globalization and its effects, both positive and negative, on indigenous social movements in Latin America. While indigenous leaders in Tunis and Pamba, even in the UPCCC in Cañar, continued to engage in political protest throughout the country, the absence of indigenous community members presented huge challenges in preserving local communities’ practices and the inter-generational momentum and knowledge that the 1990s movements had started. Brysk argues that Indian identity politics are competing on a number of micro- and macro-scales, in both social and economic domains. Her approach to ethnic identity as “imagined,” as shaped by relations and interactions with outsiders, works with the idea that identity is negotiated depending on the situation, an idea credited to Max Gluckman of the Manchester School of Anthropology. Forms of ethnic identity occur not only on the tribal or kinship level, “across zones defined by state administrative units, by language group, bio-regions, transnationally, multi-ethnic, continental or hemispheric” (Brysk 2000, 38), but are also with the involvement of international actors. Identity is thus a pluralistic endeavor, intertwined with new levels of mobility.

Brysk argues that a new generation of “urbanized Indian intellectuals” has enabled new forms of physical and social mobility, but states that the variations of “internalization” of identity within indigenous groups in Ecuador complicate the task of demanding recognition and
rectification by the nation-state at the community level. Transnational migration and the emergence of indigenous entrepreneurs have, however, created new possibilities for expressing identity as both authentic and modern. At the very least these ideas of modern indigenous ethnic identities circulate among youth, as expressed in the Kichwa Hatari radio broadcasts in New York, but also in documentary films and social media in Ecuador.

In terms of US-based migrants, identity can have a very real impact on a person’s mobility and their perception of which spaces they can move within and between freely. With the threat of deportation, do they feel visible and how does this constrain their mobility? With these limitations, how might they create important and significant spaces in the community? Can these place-making, marking practices in communities with large populations of indigenous migrants held create indigenous connections?

Literature on strategic and performative identity (Klein, Spears, and Reicher 2007) highlights the importance of life stages in determining whether and how individuals understand and prioritize different aspects of their identity. Cañari younger generations increasingly shun clothing styles associated with indigenous life and languages, opting for manufactured modern clothing styles and music of the “yoni.” This became most readily apparent when schools let out. Even at a bilingual Kichwa/Spanish high school, where I co-taught a workshop on Anthropology and Cultural Documentation with Judy Blankenship, students of indigenous

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91 Critical indigenous studies, a field within Native American studies in the US and Canada, emphasize decolonization as well as the right to land and sovereignty. Conceptualizations of territory contrast with the claim making and engagement with the nation-state of many indigenous peoples in Latin America who are better able to express their identity apart from territory – which is part of what Alicia Torres states in her work on indigenous migration (Torres and Carrasco 2008).

92 Films by Tupac Gualán, a young indigenous Saraguran college student, provide interesting insight on these changes (See Indigenous Modernity YouTube channel). Also, there are emerging musical innovations, such as Kichwa/Spanish rap artists, Los Nin (Picq 2012).

93 In Cañar, the colloquialism people use to refer to the United States is ‘la yoni’, which is reputed to have derived from a very literal reading of I NY.
descent often wore western style jackets and shirts. Markers of prestige and success often show up through the use of Western styles of dress and notions of modernity. However, identity can be both individualized and collective. For example, while indigenous youth may forego indigenous clothing, they still actively participate in collaborative community projects.

Transformations brought about by both transnational migration and transnational social movements challenge the juxtaposition of indigenous and modern subjectivity. Through cultural expressions of indigeneity across transnational networks, contemporary migration dismantles the state-centric notions of indigenous identity. This is further evidenced in contemporary indigenous migration strategies, as shown in the preceding chapter, and as transnational networks and their access to remittances open up new avenues for further economic, social, and political mobility.

The young international migrants of the 1970s and ’80s, while becoming more affluent, faced scrutiny and derision, through the highly racialized term “cholo.” In other works on cholos and self-fashioning, upwardly mobile Aymaras in Bolivia, and among upwardly mobile urban indigenous Peruvians, emerged in newly symbolic ways. The racially driven discrimination echoes today, as “cholo” is still used derisively to describe those of rural or indigenous descent who are moving upwards by discarding the trappings of their heritage. This complicated measure of social mobility is most apparent in a website launched by a radio station in Cuenca, which features the cholometro.\textsuperscript{94} it measures your degree of cholo-ness and determines if you are a now a mestizo.

\textsuperscript{94} This ironic measure, while humorous, resonates with the broader sentiment of how people can pass or not, who is successful and how do they adopt this modern identity.
While indigenous ethnic identity can be empowering, especially between second-generation youth, this is not shared across generations or even within families, who may hold to different ideas about what it means to be indigenous. Does it necessarily require specific clothing, language, cosmology, ritual, practice, and social cargos? What does it mean when a new generation embraces a new form of indigenous identity, which merges with other forms? Loss of language is a very real threat as language can shape and reflect how people see and engage with the world.

Remittances have allowed some families to gain relative independence and start businesses, albeit with resistance from municipalities and elites. However broader steps towards social mobility have not happened, despite a push towards education, professionalization, property ownership, and political representation. Those in extreme poverty have little access to the means necessary to migrate and their condition is exacerbated in the context of remittance-induced inflation. Even with indigenous businesses becoming more common, derisive depictions of “dirty Indians” and cholos still circulate in the media, and these social divisions and forms of discrimination replicate themselves in the migrant destinations. More readily apparent is the increased social stratification between community members (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002).

Many of the older generations in the rural areas of Tunis and Pamba are illiterate, and rely upon school-aged children and grandchildren to read for them. Often when I would visit the households of migrant families, the multi-generational dynamic would play out in an interesting way. At the onset of the visit I would explain the project and read the informed consent form.95 When the adult realized that I was reading a script, they would call in a younger person, usually

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95 I had received an exemption from the IRB and was not required to collect written consent forms. However, I did have to read a script that described my project and how I would protect their identity and contribution.
between eight and twelve years old, to both witness and review what I had just read. When I realized the ritualized dimensions of this spoken contract, I would sign my name to the paper and give it to them. As we would begin the discussion, I would watch as the paper was tucked away in one of the few armoires or desks, or under the cloth belts.

There are many who can still remember working on the hacienda. They witnessed the monumental gains of the indigenous uprisings in the 1990s and now the exodus of their children and grandchildren to international migration. Critics blame social ills on migration’s disruption to the family and the community, as I indicated in Chapter Three. They claim that without parents present to provide guidance and discipline, there is a loss of social control over indigenous youth.

**Conclusion**

Negative national discourse around migration largely targets migrants who have left rural areas, or poor urban areas, citing the overwhelming burden on state institutions that their abandonment has caused. Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) point to these national mythscapes in their analysis of the constraints on mobility and stasis and the ideological function of mythscapes in the national imaginary. Indigenous migrants suffer from an inverted national mythscape in which their indigenous identity becomes rooted in a nostalgic, fixed space against which modern aspirations (such as those sought by migrant households) are viewed as inauthentic. This discursive critique of indigenous migrants, however, arises from the challenge that migration presents to hierarchies within the economic and symbolic systems.

What it means to be indigenous enters into conversations by urban business owners who disparage the activities and investments of indigenous entrepreneurs as conspicuous and
contradictory to ““traditional indigenous values.”” Racialized images generate other forms of violence, impoverishment, and inequality.

As international migration allows indigenous youths to upset social status hierarchies through access to remittances, prestige goods, and property, mestizos from the urban centers disparage the conspicuous consumption and loss of culture of the indigenous communities, as if culture were something static.\(^{96}\) And critiques of migration come from within, as well: indigenous leaders in local community organizations blame increased migration for the loss of agricultural and community practices of reciprocity (discussed further in Chapter Four). An interesting contradiction that kept resurfacing during my research was the dual narrative of community. From the perspective of many who remained, migrants had abandoned the community, which had now become destabilized, losing not only its labor force but also its political mass. They mourned the loss of traditions and a whole generation of political representatives for the community. In the eyes of those abroad, the notion of community represented a tie to home and identity. Through sending remittances and through various means of contact, migrants abroad often consider themselves as community members. Many migrants who left believed that at one point they would return to their hometown but most ended up staying abroad much longer than planned.

The mobilization of indigenous identity in different contexts underscores that it is not sui generis but rather changes in relationship to elites, governing bodies and within local communities. Transnational social networks create new ideas about identity beyond the nation state. But these are not universally accepted, and they create division in the communities left

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96 Alicia Torres takes up this point in a recent book on indigenous migration published by FLACSO. Her stance is that while broader cultures are constantly changing, normative views of indigenous culture define it as something static, moored in the past.
behind, both from elderly people who bemoan loss of social control, and from leaders, who long for more young bodies to organize.
Conclusion

When I first went to Ecuador in 2007, my research question was fairly straightforward. How did transnational migration and remittances impact the communities left behind? What was changing? At the time, scholars in Ecuador and elsewhere were just beginning to write about the massive changes. Articles on shipwrecks, detentions on the high seas, and the impact of migration on the economy and educational system surfaced frequently in the media. Non-governmental organizations, such as Pastoral Social, more in sync with on-the-ground shifts, had been working with migrant families for at least a decade. In the span of three short months, I attended four intraregional and international forums on migration and its development potential. Estimates of outmigration ranged from a few hundred thousand to 25 percent of the total population. As I slowly found my place in the field, I realized that, despite the growing literature on transnational migration from the region, hardly any research had been conducted on the impact of migration on indigenous communities.

The broader question of this project is whether or not transnational migration has facilitated political and social upward mobility among indigenous communities in Ecuador. Despite the economic promise of remittances, my research found that many migrant households face major hardships from the absence of key family members. At the local level, indigenous leaders struggled to maintain community practices because of the growing absence of migrant members. However, despite overwhelmingly disparaging opinions, the presence of indigenous storefronts and houses in town centers signified an important shift in economic and social dynamics. While research suggests that emerging indigenous elites have not attained high-level
governmental positions in Ecuador, in the same fashion as those in Bolivia or Peru, these changes are significant.

Since the beginning of this research project, the dynamics of Ecuadorian international migration have changed. An economic crisis in Spain in the late 2000s led large numbers of migrants to return to Ecuador. While the United States also experienced an economic decline in 2008, return migration was less prevalent, probably because a larger proportion of the Ecuadorian migrant population was from earlier migration periods and many were US-born Ecuadorian-Americans. The clandestine journey to the United States also changed. The dangerous sea journeys described in the testimonies have largely been replaced by flights between Ecuador and Guatemala or Mexico, with the final leg of the journey over land. The increasingly militarized policing of borders throughout Central America and between the United States and Mexico and extortion by gangs involved in drugs, arms trafficking and kidnapping have made the trip much more perilous. These transformations have made international migration more costly and more dangerous. Overall return migration has increased, both voluntary and as a result of deportations. Upon their return, migrants encounter conditions of limited employment in addition to inflation exacerbated by remittances. Despite the slowing of international migration throughout Ecuador, in the Cañar region, people still search for better prospects abroad, primarily in the United States.

The dynamics in Cañar have also shifted. In 2013, residents in Cañar elected the first indigenous mayor in the canton of Cañar, Belisario Chimborazo Pallchisaca. This marked a shift in the political landscape in the province of Cañar and was followed by three other elections in surrounding cantons of indigenous leaders from the Pachakutik political party. While Chimborazo did not garner many votes from non-indigenous urban Cañarejos in the first
election, he won a majority of the urban vote for his 2015 reelection. His explanation for his continued success is that he never promises more than he can deliver. He also comes to the position with a great deal of social and cultural capital in the form of professional training, higher education, and international travel experience. He holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Cuenca and a Master’s in Education Administration from the University of New Mexico. In addition, he has a long history of work with the Instituto Pedagógico Intercultural Bilingüe “Quilloac,” the Proyecto Cuenca Alta del Río Cañar (DRI-CARC) and “De Poncho y sin Complejas” (De Dignac95 2013). In 2014, the province of Tambo elected the first indigenous governor, Alfredo Pinguil, who received his medical degree in Cuenca. In my research, local development organizations clearly provided a vital livelihoods alternative to international migration. They were also resources that supplemented the underfunded education programs that launched many indigenous leaders on their career paths.

Research Findings and Recommendations

The main research questions of this dissertation were: How does transnational indigenous migration complicate bounded notions of rural indigenous life and how might the strategies indigenous migrants employ transform social and economic inequalities in the small towns of Cañar and Tambo? In order to answer these questions, I employed a theoretical framework influenced by mobility studies, which focuses on the specific constraints on mobility, in particular the intersecting social, temporal, and geographic limitations that affected Cañaris’ participation in migration. This framing is better able to capture the dynamics of people’s strategies within migration strategies. Among those who remained in Cañar, there were three main groups: indigenous leaders and activists who successfully navigated the opportunities for
professionalization and education, families with migrants abroad, and families whose limited social and economic capital prevented them from participating in migration.

My research found that indigenous identity, and the ways in which people began to strategically mobilize it within the migration experience, became a form of social capital that enabled them to successfully negotiate specific situations and encounters but also a disadvantage when coyotes sacrifice them as decoys to get non-indigenous people through. I also found that transnational migration presents new opportunities for both more cosmopolitan conceptions of indigeneity. These transformations, however, are challenged in various ways. Negative national discourse around migration targets migrants who have left rural areas, or poor urban areas, citing the overwhelming burden on state institutions that their abandonment has caused. Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) point to these national mythscapes in their analysis of the constraints on mobility and subsequent stasis and the ideological function of mythscapes in the national imaginary. Indigenous migrants suffer from an inverted national mythscape in which their indigenous identity becomes rooted in a nostalgic, fixed space against which modern aspirations (such as those sought by migrant households) are viewed as inauthentic. This discursive critique of indigenous migrants grows out of the challenge that migration presents to hierarchies within the economic, social and symbolic systems.

My research also showed how indigenous identity figures within the migration market and the transformations brought about by the increasingly cosmopolitan savvy of rural peoples. While indigenous migrant entrepreneurs did not market material cultural commodities, they would invoke shared identity and nostalgic symbols, such as photos of Ingapirca, in business names (for taxi and bus companies as well as housing developments), in order to appeal to indigenous remittance spenders. Even though the hotel construction project in Cuenca (described
in Chapter Five) was unsuccessful, indigenous identity served as a unifying incentive for collaborative investments.

Within the migration journey, people have been able to use their identity strategically, but being identified as indigenous is also a great risk. Coyotes at the Mexico-U.S. border have been known to intentionally let groups of indigenous migrants get captured in order to throw border patrol agents off the trail of other crossing groups. In Cañar, indigenous migrant entrepreneurs, including business owners, planners, and smugglers, have responded to economic shifts within their communities and their activities, along with other transformations, both economic and political, have weakened the privileged positions and monopolies of mestizo landholding and business elites. More indigenous entrepreneurs have opened businesses in the town centers of Cañar and Tambo. People have bought property, built houses, purchased cars and other domestic goods, and shifted away from predominately agricultural livelihoods. Through these activities, more people have been able to overcome entrenched political, social and economic inequalities. However these mobilities are even more vulnerable to global economic downturns, as occurred after the 2008 global economic crisis.

My research also found that transnational mobility networks were key elements in how people migrated and through which channels but these played across, class, gender, and race lines. The demise of the Panama hat industry, the end of huasipungo, and the sweeping agrarian reforms of the late 1960s profoundly impacted highland agro-artisan households (see Chapter One). Not only did these changes set the stage for increased international migration, they also contributed to forging transnational networks of entrepreneurial mestizo households in the informal economy of migration. At this early stage, migration networks were limited but presented an economic opportunity for middle-class households. In the 1980s and 1990s, these
mestizo smuggling facilitators still dominated the migration market and indigenous migrants often traveled to Cuenca to meet coyotes. Since 2004, indigenous coyotes took over, undermining the monopoly of the mestizo families (see Chapter Five). In bypassing local limited economic opportunities, indigenous smugglers and informal money lenders opened up strategic pathways for entrepreneurship, and despite widely circulated negative images of coyotes, people saw them as contributing members in the community (at least in the case of people who were contemplating migration in the near future).

Read together, the preceding chapters lay out the shifting terrains of rural life and of indigenous identity across an increasing globalized landscape, made possible through growing transnational networks and flows of monetary and social remittances. Transnational indigenous migration enables social mobility. However, increasingly restrictive legislation on migrant incorporation in destination countries and more militarized border policing make migration more difficult. In this way, migration control measures create conditions in which stasis or immobility are exacerbated. This happens through the continued inflation, unpaid debts, and absentee family members for those left behind and those forced to return.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CARC</td>
<td>Upper Basin of the Cañar River Rural Development Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>CREA</td>
<td>Centre for Economic Re-Conversion of Azuay, Cañar and Morona Santiago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFAD</td>
<td>International Fund for Agricultural Development Ministry of Social Welfare, Ecuador Netherlands Development Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCOIT</td>
<td>Unión Cantonal</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPCCC</td>
<td>Unión Provincial de Comunas y Cooperativas del Cañar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUCAAYTA</td>
<td>Second tier organization, with 14 communities, four agricultural cooperatives, and 1560 total families.</td>
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