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IMPROVING US AND EU IMMIGRATION SYSTEMS

Migration Industries: A Comparison of the Ecuador-US and Ecuador-Spain Cases

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MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE

**Improving EU and US Immigration Systems' Capacity for Responding to Global
Challenges: Learning from experiences**

**Research Report
Case Study
EU-US Immigration Systems 2011/15**

**Migration Industries:
A Comparison of the Ecuador-US and Ecuador-Spain Cases**

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Improving EU and US Immigration Systems' Capacity for Responding to Global Challenges: Learning from experiences

The project is co-funded by the European Commission in the framework of the Pilot Projects on “Transatlantic Methods for Handling Global Challenges in the European Union and United States”. The project is directed at the Migration Policy Center (MPC – Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies – European University Institute, Florence) by Philippe Fargues, director of the MPC, and Demetrios Papademetriou president of the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) the partner institution.

The rationale for this project is to identify the ways in which EU and US immigration systems can be substantially improved in order to address the major challenges policymakers face on both sides of the Atlantic, both in the context of the current economic crisis, and in the longer term.

Ultimately, it is expected that the project will contribute to a more evidence-based and thoughtful approach to immigration policy on both sides of the Atlantic, and improve policymakers' understanding of the opportunities for and benefits of more effective Transatlantic cooperation on migration issues.

The project is mainly a comparative project focusing on 8 different challenges that policymakers face on both sides of the Atlantic: employment, social cohesion, development, demographic, security, economic growth and prosperity, and human rights.

For each of these challenges two different researches will be prepared: one dealing with the US, and the other concerning the EU. Besides these major challenges some specific case studies will be also tackled (for example, the analysis of specific migratory corridor, the integration process faced by specific community in the EU and in the US, the issue of crime among migrants etc.).

Against this background, the project will critically address policy responses to the economic crisis and to the longer-term challenges identified. Recommendations on what can and should be done to improve the policy response to short-, medium- and long term challenges will follow from the research. This will include an assessment of the impact of what has been done, and the likely impact of what can be done.

Results of the above activities are made available for public consultation through the websites of the project:

- <http://www.eui.eu/Projects/TransatlanticProject/Home.aspx/>
- <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/immigrationsystems/>

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Abstract

There has been growing attention recently in what has been labeled alternatively the “migration industry,” the business of migration, or migration merchants. This paper describes two of the most significant cases of migration industries facilitating large-scale labor migrations from Ecuador to first, New York City and, then, Spain. We compare the organization and impact of these two separate migration industries and their ability to impact key features of Ecuadorians’ labor mobility and settlement at these two destinations. We discuss the historical context of the sending regions and the policies of the destination states to better understand the conditions under which such migration industries can flourish. We argue for a robust conception of migration industries, comprised of a diverse set of formal and informal economic activities, increasingly able to shape migration patterns and outcomes.

Introduction: The Orderly Business of Disorderly Migration

There has been much attention recently in what has been labeled alternatively the “migration industry,” the business of migration, or migration merchants. Much of the literature on international migration emphasizes either the role of social networks and social capital or highly-stylized economic explanations. There is growing dissatisfaction with conventional models of migration, even when packaged together within a migration systems framework, for explaining contemporary migration patterns generally, and the rise of migrant smuggling and trafficking specifically. Apart from focusing on the institutional intermediaries, the migration industry concept allows for an analysis of more asymmetric economic and political power relationships shaping the migration process and subsequent patterns of transnational mobility.

This paper describes two significant cases of migration industries facilitating mass labor migrations from Ecuador to first New York City and then Spain. Circa 2000, Spain had transitioned from a country sending migrants abroad for over a century to a country with the largest increase in migrant arrivals in Europe. At the same time, Ecuador went from immigration obscurity in Europe to the second largest foreign national group in Spain. This report explains the meteoric rise of Ecuadorian immigration to one of the most important immigration destinations in the early 2000s. We compare the development, organization, and impacts of these two distinct migration industries and labor migrations and their ability to shape key features of Ecuadorians’ labor mobility at these two destinations.

The “business of migration” is often used casually to refer to the mostly legal set of formal businesses profiting from migration and human mobility more generally; at times, this is also used interchangeably with the “migration industry.” However, in both the academic and popular literatures, migrants and others inhabit either an entirely legal world facilitated by for-profit businesses and non-profit organizations in which they follow the regulations and laws, or they use criminal syndicates who smuggle them. In contrast, the migration industry concept includes a broader set of actors (variously labeled “migration merchants” or migration entrepreneur), but also potentially blurs the lines between legal and illegal businesses, recognizing that migrations are shaped by the complex interplay of economically motivated individuals and organizations, the legal frameworks established by states, and the culturally embedded rationality of migrants themselves.

There is widespread agreement about the core definition of the migration industry. Kyle defines a “migration merchant” as anyone (individual or organization) profiting from the commodification of the migration process, legally or illegally, without specifying the many commercial activities connected to migration and transnational social life in sending, transit, and destination regions.¹ Similarly, Castles and Miller define the migration industry as “a broad spectrum of people who earn their livelihood by organizing migratory movements . . . [including] travel agents, labour recruiters, brokers, interpreters, housing agents, immigration lawyers, human smugglers (like the ‘coyotes’ who guide Mexican workers across the Rio Grande, or the Moroccan fishermen who ferry Africans to Spain), and even counterfeiters who falsify official identification documents and passports.”² Hernandez-Leon’s definition of a “migration entrepreneur” is similar to Kyle’s notion of a migration merchant, including an emphasis on embedded social relationships, though its rubric is restricted to co-ethnic relationships and the term is reserved for individuals. For Hernandez-Leon, a migration entrepreneur is “a distinct type of ethnic entrepreneur who specializes in the migration-driven mobility of people, remittances, and goods across international borders and moving between formality and informality, legality and illegality, depending

¹ Kyle, David. 2000. *Transnational Peasants: Migrations, Networks, and Ethnicity in Andean Ecuador*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

² Castles, Stephen and Miller, Mark J. 2009. *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. 4th ed. New York and London: The Guilford Press: 201.

on the activity, financial resources, and other circumstances.”³ A migration industry, then, is the “ensemble of entrepreneurs who, motivated by the pursuit of financial gain, provide a variety of services facilitating human mobility across international borders.”⁴

These migration industries consist of the specialized services that have arisen in response to migration challenges and opportunities, becoming significant players in the perpetuation of the flow. Some of the common features of organizations that make them attractive and even necessary to contemporary migration within this mix are the higher levels of ongoing trust formalized in ways that transcend the concept of “social capital” for the very same reasons that orgs organizations have proliferated in every area of social life today, they also prevail in migration industries. They can be tailored to the unique demands of regional, economic, political and social dimensions growing or diminishing in size, developing or eliminating new products or services and dynamically engaging with partners, subcontractors and other migration industry actors in an ever-changing economic and policy environment.

How the role of migration industries evolves in relation to state immigration policies and enforcement strategies is most striking in the case of Mexico. Until the 1990s, most Mexican migrants and others coming from further south quite often crossed the border without a guide or coyote; if they used a coyote it was more out of convenience. However, in the 1990s it became increasingly desirable as it would increase one’s chances in successfully crossing the border--today, it is rare not to use a smuggler or intermediary organization. With higher and higher smuggling fees, the direct costs of the transportation of the journey is now only a minor part of the total cost, especially when interest on smuggling debts is included. Mexican emigration, as striking as it may be, however, may not provide the most appropriate model for understanding the current and future role of migration industries connecting sending and destination regions without the longstanding ties or long contiguous border of the US and Mexico. Specifically, the Mexico case, may lead one to view migration industries as mostly responsive rather than as robust actors shaping many features of the migratory circuit, including initiating it.

To the extent that a migration industry’s independent impact in shaping many aspects of migration patterns in ways that transcend either supply-demand models, or more sociological social network models, is debatable, we may conceptualize a “weak” versus more “robust” model of migration industries. In the weak version, migration entrepreneurs are more or less neutral middlepersons profiting from migration services without fundamentally shaping migration systems in significant ways. For this reason, this view would also not attribute to contemporary migration industries much historical significance in that similar migration entrepreneurs have operated for centuries. Under a more robust conceptualization, the combination of punitive and restrictive immigration policies, while giving economic markets more power to organize nearly all aspects of social and political life, lead to novel forms of migration industries that increasingly act as gatekeepers and exert much sway over the evolution of migration flows. Thus, Castles and Miller note that “[Their] development...is an inevitable aspect of the social networks and the transnational linkages which are part of the migratory process [and] in time, the migration industry can become the primary motive force in a migratory movement.”⁵ As we will see in the following section describing two Ecuadorian cases, the more robust model fit both, but it was the second national migration industry connecting Ecuadorians with travel to Spain in which it was the “primary motive force” from the very beginning.

³ Hernández-León, Rubén. 2008. *Metropolitan migrants: the migration of urban Mexicans to the United States*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press: 198.

⁴ Ibid., 154.

⁵ Castles, Stephen and Miller, Mark J., *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*: 202.

Two Distinct Migration Industries from Ecuador Linking the US and EU

Ecuador's first major wave of out-migration, from roughly 1980 to 2000, resulted in approximately half a million Ecuadorians residing in the United States, with a vast majority in New York City.⁶ Half of the Ecuadorian diaspora is estimated to live in the US. Between 1999 and 2000 alone, 400,000 Ecuadorians joined their one million compatriots already in the United States.⁷ This migration was initially transnational and was regionally focused to the sending areas of Azuay and Cañar. This region's historic socio-economic structure and long-standing ties with New York City facilitated a regional migrant export industry, all without the facilitation or direct recruitment of Ecuadorian labor by North American employers. Understanding this mass migration requires an examination of the social class hierarchy in the regions of Azuay and Cañar, the historical socio-economic relationship between Ecuador and NYC that allowed for preexisting migration flows and, most significantly, the individual and group actors (migration merchants) involved in the regional migrant export industry.

Ecuador's second major wave of emigration—this time to Spain—occurred at a much more rapid pace and drew migrants from every region of Ecuador. Mass Ecuadorian emigration to Spain began in 1999 as a trickle and quickly spiked in the 2000 to 2002 period. This occurred during a severe economic and political crisis in Ecuador; in contrast, this was a boom period for the Spanish economy. Ecuadorians quickly outnumbered all Latin American foreign nationals living in Spain—including those with long-standing ties and established communities and soon became the second largest immigrant group after Moroccans. While Ecuadorian migration to Spain during this period can—and should be, in part—contextualized by traditional “push-pull” factors, Ecuador's economic crisis and Spain's favorable immigration and labor-seeking policies do not adequately explain the significant spike in migration flows. Arguably, this is a case in which the migration industry actually initiated one of the most striking cases of international migration in recent history given its scale and virtual lack of preexisting social ties compared with other South American countries such as Argentina.

Ecuadorian Immigration to the United States: A Regional Migration Industry

From 1980 to 2000, a historically unprecedented number of Ecuadorians migrated to the United States, the vast majority to New York City. These emigrants came from the mostly rural south-central Azuay and Cañar provinces, a region that also encompasses Ecuador's third largest city, Cuenca. This region was linked historically to New York City due to the once burgeoning Panama hat trade, in which New York City investors became the principal importers and distributors. After the decline of the hat trade in the 1950s and 1960s, small numbers of Ecuadorian “pioneer migrants” journeyed to the United States via social networks and connections generated by the old trade. This transnational labor migration, characterized by male “target earners” typically did not result in permanent residence or family reunification.⁸ However, by the time Ecuador's economy plummeted in the 1980s, sufficient migratory structures were in place to facilitate the migration of hundreds of thousands of economic migrants from the regions of Azuay and Cañar to New York City.

The Ecuadorian migration to New York City was region-specific rather than national in scope; to understand why, we must examine the region's historical dependence on a unique export-oriented industry. The institutionalized role of the intermediary buyers and money-lenders developed during

⁶ Jokisch, Brad and Pribilsky, Jason. 2002. The Panic to Leave: Economic Crisis and the “New Emigration” to Ecuador. *International Migration*. 40 (4): 75-97. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-2435.00206/pdf>: 81.

⁷ Kyle, David and Siracusa, Christina A. 2005. Seeing the state like a migrant: why so many non-criminals break immigration laws. Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham (eds.). *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press: 160.

⁸ Kyle, David, *Transnational peasants: migrations, networks, and ethnicity in Andean Ecuador*: 33, 37; also see Piore, M. J. 1979. *Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Societies*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

the Panama Hat trade transformed into a contemporary migration industry in which Ecuadorians in this region exported each other rather than straw hats.

Ecuador experienced very little out-migration before the 1960s.⁹ Though geographically (socially and physically) isolated, this region was the first area in the country to connect with global markets. The region's economy relied heavily on revenue generated from the production and export of straw-woven "Panama Hats," introduced by local elites in the mid-1800s following independence from Spain.¹⁰ The nature of this export-oriented regional economy was due in large part to the deeply entrenched merchant elite-peasant class hierarchy, which stemmed from colonial and post-colonial social structures.¹¹

The embedded social class structure provided a foundation for the development of a wide-scale, vertically-integrated division of labor and production efficiencies. Elites recognized the profitable potential of the Panama hat trade early on and capitalized on historically preconceived social classes to assign roles for the industry. They institutionalized a brokering system which employed a hierarchy of buyers for export houses and independent brokers, known as *perros*, who would sell to buyers after paying the hat weaver slightly less for the hat than what the buyer would have initially paid. At the height of the trade, over a quarter of the population worked in the industry.¹² As a result, by 1910, the city of Cuenca exported hats not only to Latin American countries, but also to London, Hamburg, Paris, and New York, fast becoming the center of the garment industry.¹³

New York City was by far the most significant partner in the Panama hat trade. The buyers were not only the primary importers of the hats, but exported them all over the world as well. Therefore, even before the mass out-migration in the 1980s and 1990s, Ecuadorians living in Azuay were linked to New York City by historic socio-economic ties. By 1947, the Ecuadorian-organized Panama hat trade suffered from decrease in overall demand and competition from industrialized Asian countries, which offered a cheaper version of the hat. The sharp decline of the Panama hat trade severely affected Azuay and Cañar's foreign-trade dependent economy. Laborers were forced to find work outside of the geographically isolated region and many participated in seasonal migration to more urban areas.

The resulting economic depression unevenly affected the social hierarchy, especially two groups that were intimately involved with the industry: the export elite and rural peasant weavers, both of whom began to migrate in small numbers to New York City. These "pioneer migrants" would eventually be joined by their neighbors and family members during the 1980s and 1990s in what quickly turned into mass out-migration and the classic "migration fever" taking hold in many communities. In a 1990 University of Cuenca survey, 45.5 percent of the respondents declared they had at least one family member living in the United States.¹⁴ By 1991, the New York Department of City Planning estimated that there were approximately 100,000 Ecuadorian migrants in the New York

⁹ Jokisch, Ecuador: Diversity in Migration; Kyle, Transnational peasants: migrations, networks, and ethnicity in Andean Ecuador.

¹⁰ See Kyle, David Transnational peasants: migrations, networks, and ethnicity in Andean Ecuador: 55-64 for a discussion of the region's connection to "Panama hats."

¹¹ For a more detailed discussion of the historical antecedents to Panama hat trade, see Kyle, Transnational peasants: migrations, networks, and ethnicity in Andean Ecuador, Chapter Three: The Panama Hat Trail from Azuay.

¹² Kyle, David and Liang, Zai. 2001. Migration Merchants: Human Smuggling from Ecuador and China. Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, San Diego. Working Paper, No. 43, October 2001. <http://www.ccis-ucsd.org/PUBLICATIONS/wrkg43.PDF>: 7.

¹³ Ibid., 6.; See also Dominguez, Miguel E. 1991. El Sombreo de Paja Toquilla: Historia y Economia. Cuenca (Ecuador): Banco Central del Ecuador.

¹⁴ Kyle, Transnational peasants: migrations, networks, and ethnicity in Andean Ecuador: 64; Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales (IDIS). 1990. "Propuesta para la investigación de migración al exterior." Unpublished manuscript, Universidad de Cuenca, Ecuador.

City area—a 100 percent increase since the 1980 U.S. census.¹⁵ This spike in out-migration cannot be explained by preexisting migration flows alone. Without the direct recruitment by North American employers to facilitate the financially, psychologically and legally arduous journey, how were hundreds of thousands able to successfully migrate?

Ecuador's national economic crisis during the 1980s and 1990s intensified the regional crisis in Azuay and Cañar. Inhabitants of these regions could no longer migrate within the country to find seasonal employment, as the national unemployment rate rose and even urban dwellers were out of work. Under these dire economic circumstances, the regional economy—once centered around exporting goods—quickly shifted to exporting labor. This mass 'export' of people was facilitated by the same economic and social institutions as the straw hat trade, relying heavily on usurious middlemen who provided the financial capital, brokered outside relationships, and forged documents and social contacts needed to migrate. The region was already structured to provide the roles and services necessary and the economy benefited greatly from shifting to the export of people—the Azuayan branch of the Central Bank estimated that remittances from migrants abroad amounted to \$120 million in 1991, equivalent to sixteen years of straw hat exports at 1990 levels in Azuay.¹⁶

Traditional roles and economic repertoires used during the Panama hat trade period converted with relative ease—facilitators that once brokered relationships with buyers and exporters for the hat trade shifted their efforts to providing services necessary to migrate to the U.S. This new generation of facilitators, known as *tramitadores*, would recruit potential migrants in his or her home village and offer to arrange all national documents needed to leave Ecuador, visas for intermediary countries, physical travel arrangements, and, depending on the type of trip, a falsified U.S. visa or passport. *Tramitadores* would work with a myriad of corrupt local officials and a network of professional forgers in order to acquire all of the necessary materials for the journey. In addition, the *tramitador* would arrange for the migrant's travel with legitimate travel agents. The migrant journey generally fell into one of two categories: a direct route to New York City, using a "borrowed" passport or forged visa, which also entailed a significant amount of guidance on how to look and act like a "residente"; or an overland route that included a sophisticated network of Central American and Mexican contacts, "safe houses," and "coyotes" (those who actually lead the migrant across the Rio Grande).

In order for the migrant to adequately finance the journey, which on average amounted to \$6-10,000, the *tramitador* would connect the migrant with a local money lender, or *chulquero*, who would provide the funds necessary for all of these services. The *chulquero* would lend the money at usurious interest rates—10-12 percent, compounded monthly—with the migrant's land, animals and possessions held as collateral.¹⁷ This pyramid structure of migration merchants and migrants themselves required a high level of trust and loyalty amongst all involved. In general, this trust relied on the kin- and community-based regional networks that tied the actors together. Migration merchants were often in the same family; in one medium-sized Azuayan town with high levels international migration, all of the money-lenders were members of just five families.¹⁸

The intimate nature of this regional migration industry, based on social networks, trust, and loyalty, allowed for the sustained increase in out-migration. Between 1999 and 2000 alone, 400,000 Ecuadorians joined their one million compatriots already in the United States.¹⁹ The regional

¹⁵ Kyle, Transnational peasants: migrations, networks, and ethnicity in Andean Ecuador: 36. Kyle states that this figure does not account for nearby communities and undocumented migrants, which would likely bring the total to 200,000.

¹⁶ Ibid., 64.; Serrano, Alejandro. 1992. "El poder municipal: Situación actual y tendencias." In Cuenca y su futuro. Quito: CORDES.

¹⁷ Kyle, David and Liang, Zai, Migration Merchants: Human Smuggling from Ecuador and China: 8.

¹⁸ Ibid., 8-9.

¹⁹ Kyle, David and Siracusa, Christina A., Seeing the state like a migrant: why so many non-criminals break immigration laws: 160.

migration from Azuay and Cañar to New York City continues today, though the transnational nature of it has transformed into permanent settlement and family reunification due to stricter entry requirements and immigration policies following 9/11. As of 2005, of the estimated 550,000-600,000 Ecuadorians residing in the United States, almost two-thirds live in the greater New York area.²⁰ Half of the Ecuadorian diaspora is estimated to live in the US.²¹ In the following section, we consider the other global destination for Ecuadorian migrants.

Ecuadorian Immigration to Spain: A National Migration Industry

By 2004, approximately two million Ecuadorians—15 percent of the total population—were working abroad (Anthony hall working paper 2005; CEPLAES 2005, IOM 2005)²². One account asserts that from 1998 to 2000 alone, 10 percent of the Ecuadorian population emigrated.²³ While many Ecuadorians with transnational social ties to New York City migrated to the US, a majority of the migrant population during the economic crisis in the late 1990s fled to Spain in hopes of securing employment in the state's burgeoning economy. Prior to the mid-1980s, Ecuadorian out-migration to Spain was minimal, especially in comparison to other countries in the region with stronger historical relationships—Argentina and Colombia in particular. However, by 2000, in the height of Ecuador's economic, political and social instability, 7,000 Ecuadorians per month left for Spain.²⁴ This figure is in stark contrast to the number of Ecuadorians migrating to Spain just six years prior—5,000 in the entire year of 1994.²⁵ After Moroccans, Ecuadorians became the second largest immigrant group, surpassing the British, Germans, Colombians, French and Portuguese foreign national populations.²⁶

The 1980s and 1990s brought Ecuador and its Latin American neighbors substantial economic setbacks that challenged the relative prosperity seen in the 1970s. The falling price of oil challenged Ecuador's economic stability and raised legitimate concerns about its levels of foreign debt. In addition, Ecuador's export-oriented economy (oil, bananas and shrimp) was threatened by flooding due to El Niño rains, which caused US \$2.8 billion in total losses to damaged agro-export infrastructure.²⁷ This volatile combination of internal and external factors prompted inflation, falling wages, high unemployment rate and an overall increase in the amount of people living below the poverty line. Between 1985 and 1995, the country took six stand-by loans from the International

²⁰ Jokisch, Brad. 2007. Ecuador: Diversity in Migration. Migration Information Source, Migration Policy Institute. <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=575>. Data from 2005 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau. Refer to Jokish, Ecuador: Diversity in Migration (section titled Counting Ecuadorians Abroad) for discussion of the difficulty of estimating total number of Ecuadorians.

²¹ Kyle, David and Siracusa, Christina A., Seeing the state like a migrant: why so many non-criminals break immigration laws: 160.

²² Hall, Anthony. 2005. Globalized Livelihoods. International Migration and Challenges for Social Policy: The Case of Ecuador. London School of Economics and Political Science a.l.hall@lse.ac.uk. Draft working paper presented at Arusha Conference, "New Frontiers of Social Policy: Developing in a Globalizing World" –December 12-15, 2005

²³ Lucero, Jose Antonio, Crisis and Contention in Ecuador: 60

²⁴ Kyle, David and Siracusa, Christina A. 2005. Seeing the state like a migrant: why so many non-criminals break immigration laws. Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham (eds.). *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press: 160; Jokisch, Brad and Pribilsky, Jason, *The Panic to Leave: Economic Crisis and the "New Emigration" to Ecuador*: 82-83; Direccion Nacional de Migracion, Policia Nacional, Ecuador. 2000. *Estadisticas de Migracion*, Direccion Nacional de Migracion, Ecuador.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ortega Perez, Nieves. 2003. Spain: Forging an Immigration Policy. Migration Information Source, Migration Policy Institute. http://www.unityblueprint.org/_documents/research-and-policy/legalization-in-other-countries/11.Nieves-Spain%20Immigration%20Policy.pdf.

²⁷ Kyle, David and Siracusa, Christina A. 2005. Seeing the state like a migrant: why so many non-criminals break immigration laws: 160.

Monetary Fund. As Ecuador's national currency (Sucre) rapidly depreciated in value, Ecuadorians and foreign-investors alike began to panic.

During this period of economic crisis, Ecuadorians lacked stable national leadership. Rapid turnover in the ministry of finance and the presidency—six presidents in ten years²⁸—caused widespread discontent and anxiety amongst the Ecuadorian public. Lower, middle, and upper classes alike lacked confidence in the government's ability to bring economic stability back to the country.²⁹ Many observers at the time also suggested that the country was on the brink of social disarray; a survey revealed over two-thirds of Ecuadorians supported an indigenous uprising and an even greater number approved the takeover of Congress.³⁰ In 1998, social democrat Jamil Mahuad entered the presidency by boldly stating that Ecuador would be able to “leave the crisis behind”.³¹ However, in the eyes of the Ecuadorian public, Mahuad's promise quickly dissipated. From late 1998 to mid-1999, in an effort to bail out national financial institutions, the Mahuad administration transferred more than \$6 billion to failing banks while simultaneously cutting social spending by about 50%.³² While banking institutions received government bailouts, formal and public sector employees were not getting paid. Medium and small-scale bank accounts were indefinitely frozen, urban unemployment surged to 15.1 percent and the number of people in poverty increased to 56 percent, up from 34 percent in 1995.³³

With the price level increasing by approximately 30 per cent per month,³⁴ frozen bank accounts and a sharp decrease in social spending, Ecuadorians faced an untenable situation. In 1999, as Mahuad's popularity quickly decreased, the president began to prime the public for his plans to dollarize the economy. This “quick fix” would replace the Sucre with the U.S. dollar as the national currency. The value of the dollar against the Sucre rose by 362 percent between 1998 and 2000.³⁵ Dollarization, therefore, was meant to assure foreign-investors that Ecuador was a safe and legitimate place to do business and remedy the dismal economic crisis. However, proposed dollarization and other neo-liberal policies did little to ease the mounting concerns of Ecuador's suffering citizens. Consequently, populist and indigenous groups began to collaborate in efforts to oust the Mahuad government. On January 21, 2000, the National Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), assisted by the military's tacit approval, led a group of popular protesters to the government buildings and successfully removed Mahuad from the presidency. Dollarization was eventually implemented in September 2000 by Mahuad's successor Gustavo Noboa. However, the Ecuadorian public remained disenfranchised and protests continued. It was during this period of prolonged economic and political instability that unprecedented numbers of Ecuadorians—primarily the middle class—left the country.

²⁸ Berríos, Rubén. 2006. Cost and Benefit of Ecuador's Dollarization Experience. *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 5 (1-2): 55-68.

<http://docserver.ingentaconnect.com/deliver/connect/brill/15691500/v5n1/s3.pdf?expires=1306960225&id=63001023&titleid=5430&accname=University+of+California%2C+Davis&checksum=F66DC14DC5D9296036D1588C65248238>: 57.

²⁹ Kyle, David and Siracusa, Christina A. 2005. Seeing the state like a migrant: why so many non-criminals break immigration laws: 164.

³⁰ Lucero, Jose Antonio. 2001. Crisis and Contention in Ecuador. *Journal of Democracy* 12(2): 59-73. http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v012/12.2lucero.html: 65.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

³² *Ibid.*, 62.

³³ See Parandekar, Suhas; Rob Vos and Donald Winkler. 2002. “Ecuador: Crisis, poverty and social protection.” Pp. 127-176 in *Crisis and Dollarization in Ecuador: Stability, growth and social equity*. Paul Beckerman and Andrés Solimano, eds. Washington D.C.: The World Bank: 133.

³⁴ Beckerman & Solimano, 2002

³⁵ Lucero, Jose Antonio, *Crisis and Contention in Ecuador*: 60

Approximately one-fifth of Ecuador's labor force left the country during the economic crisis (Anthony hall working paper 2005; CEPLAES 2005, IOM 2005).³⁶

Ecuador's precipitous decent into economic ruin was matched in the opposite direction by Spain's meteoric booming economy following entry into the EU in 1986. Prior to the mid-1980s, Spain was characterized as a country of net emigration, exporting labor to the Americas (approx. 3.5 million between 1850 and 1950) and Western European countries (from 1950s to 1970s).³⁷ Spain suffered from high inflation and an unemployment rate that reached 21.5 percent by the mid-1980s.³⁸ However, after joining the European Union in 1986, Spain entered a period of rapid economic growth and needed sufficient labor to meet its developmental and infrastructural needs. As the standard of living and education level in Spain rose, it became difficult to find Spaniards willing to work service sector jobs, particularly in construction, agriculture and domestic service. Thus, Spain quickly shifted from a migrant-sending country to a migrant-receiving country as its demand for labor significantly increased.

In accordance with the demand for labor, Spain's first major immigration law, 1985 Ley de Extranjería (the Law on the Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners in Spain) conceptualized migrants as temporary workers who would fill labor shortages, rather than permanent residents. The policy placed immigrants under the auspices of the Ministry of Labor and excluded content on immigrant rights. The government instituted an annual quota in 1993 in an effort to provide work permits to foreign nationals willing to work in sectors that were now unattractive to Spaniards. The quota was increased from 20,000 in 1993 to 30,000 in 1999.³⁹ Ecuadorians far outnumbered other South American countries in the amount of allocated work permits. As the number of total allocated work permits increased, the number of Ecuadorians receiving work permits spiked: In 1999, 8,396 work permits were granted to Ecuadorians out of 118,538 total.⁴⁰ In 2000, 68,476 work permits were granted to Ecuadorians out of 627,795 total.⁴¹ Only Moroccans surpassed Ecuadorians in the number permits allocated to any foreign national group.⁴²

Most importantly the 1963 Hispano-Ecuadorian Agreement permitted Ecuadorian entry into Spain for 90 days without a visa (until 2003).⁴³ While Spain required migrants to have proof of a legitimate job offer before applying for residency and/ or work permits, Ecuadorians were able to enter Spain under the guise of tourists and subsequently secure formal employment during the 90-day grace period. Ecuadorians and other South American laborers shared Spain's cultural and linguistic background and were generally welcomed as a labor source. Although there was also a large influx of North Africans during this time (most notably, Moroccans, Spain's largest immigrant group), Spanish employers felt that significant cultural and linguistic differences prevented integration.⁴⁴

³⁶ Hall, Anthony. 2005. Globalized Livelihoods. International Migration and Challenges for Social Policy: The Case of Ecuador, London School of Economics and Political Science a.l.hall@lse.ac.uk. Draft working paper presented at Arusha Conference, "New Frontiers of Social Policy: Developing in a Globalizing World" –December 12-15, 2005

³⁷ Corkill, David. 2010. Spain: A "New Immigration Center". Segal, Uma A., Elliott, Doreen, and Mayadas, Nazneen S. (eds.). *Immigration Worldwide: Policies, Practices, and Trends*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press: 138.

³⁸ Bentolila, S., O. J. Blanchard, Calmfors, L., de la Dehesa, G., and Layard, R. 1990. "Spanish Unemployment." *Economic Policy* 5(10): 233-281. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1344579?seq=2>: 234.

³⁹ Corkill, David, Spain: A "New Immigration Center": 147.

⁴⁰ Ministerio del Interior. 2000. Tabla III.11: Permisos de Trabajo Concedidos, Segun Dependencia Laboral, por pais de nacionalidad. *Anuario Estadístico de Extranjería 1999*. Comisión Interministerial de Extranjería, Madrid. 119.

⁴¹ Ministerio del Interior. 2001. Tabla IV.2: Resumen general. Trabajadores extranjeros en alta laboral en la seguridad social según continente y nacionalidad por sexo y grupo de edad. *Anuario Estadístico de Extranjería 2000*. Comisión Interministerial de Extranjería, Madrid. 143.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Jokisch, Brad and Pribilsky, Jason. 2002. The Panic to Leave: Economic Crisis and the "New Emigration" to Ecuador. *International Migration*. 40 (4): 75-97.<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-2435.00206/pdf>.

⁴⁴ Corkill, David, Spain: A "New Immigration Center": 145.

Lack of visa requirements, favorable bilateral agreements, flexible immigration policies and cultural-linguistic similarities provided the overall opportunity structure for Ecuadorians to migrate to Spain. However, this explanation of Ecuadorian emigration to Spain, which aligns with the post-hoc “push-pull” framework, omits consideration of how Ecuadorian migrants financed their journey to Spain in such a dire economic period. With such a high rate of unemployment, lost savings due to frozen bank accounts, and devaluation of the national currency, how did nearly half a million Ecuadorians successfully emigrate to Spain? In order to answer this question, one must consider the multitude of actors—formal and informal, licit and illicit—involved in the Ecuador’s second major wave of emigration.⁴⁵

A national migration industry developed not with smugglers (coyotes), but legal travel agencies lacking tourists reaching out to the sector squeezed the most, Ecuador’s “middle class.”⁴⁶ While Ecuador’s economic crisis affected all segments of the population, the urban middle class arguably endured the greatest change in overall standard of living. Currency devaluation, hyperinflation, and loss of savings pushed many middle-class Ecuadorians below the poverty line—“the poverty index rose from 40 to 45 percent between 1990 and 2001” (World Bank 2004); the Gini coefficient of income inequality increased from 0.44 in 1990 to 0.62 in 2001 (EIU 2004).⁴⁷ Upward mobility was stunted as the middle-class lost their jobs and could only find work in sectors once reserved for the poor. As a result, this segment of the population chose to migrate to Spain, hoping that they would be able to secure employment given their professional experience in Ecuador. One account, provided a professor in Quito who emigrated in 2000, describes flights to Spain during this period as being “filled with Ecuadorian professionals,” who were the first to leave the country at this time.⁴⁸

Spain’s Ley Organica 4/2000 Immigration law required migrants to have visas rather than work permits. As a result of this policy, between 2001 and 2004, 30,829 foreigners were denied entry to Spain⁴⁹. Of this number, near one-third of them were Ecuadorians⁵⁰. Therefore, a successful migrant journey to Spain was even more dependent on the migrant’s knowledge of the particular mechanics of the Hispano-Ecuadorian Agreement, which permitted Ecuadorian entry into Spain for 90 days without a visa. Entry would only be granted via this policy if the migrant had adequate proof of their travel plans and financial stability. If the migrant was unable to present “approx. \$2,000 for ‘la bolsa’, a credit card, tourist plan, hotel reservations, confirmed return flight, and justification for being in Spain, then he or she may be denied entrance (excluded) and forced to return immediately.”⁵¹ Navigating these entry prerequisites required careful calculation on the part of the Ecuadorian migrants.

Since this journey involved tourism, whether legitimate or not, Ecuadorian travel agencies offered complete ‘travel packages’ that ensured successful entry into Spain, as well as initial coaching and financing. Travel agencies were able to conceive of and structure a new pathway using an existing method reserved for a specific ethnic group, the Otavalans, who were able to finance tickets to Spain

⁴⁵ David Kyle conducted field research in Spain in 2001 and 2002 during the rapid influx of Ecuadorian migrants, exploring migrant strategies for moving and settling in Spain. Much of this section comes from that research.

⁴⁶ Like its Andean neighbors, Ecuador has high levels of inequality. In the Ecuadorian context, we use “middle class” here to primarily refer to those who have a formal sector employment or businesses and have been able to purchase a home and automobile.

⁴⁷ Hall, Anthony. 2005. Globalized Livelihoods. International Migration and Challenges for Social Policy: The Case of Ecuador. Draft working paper presented at Arusha Conference, “New Frontiers of Social Policy: Developing in a Globalizing World” December 12-15, 2005.

⁴⁸ Marrero, Pilar. 2004. Immigration Shift: Many Latin Americans Choosing Spain Over U.S. Pacific News Service. December 9, 2004.
http://www.imdiversity.com/villages/hispanic/world_international/pns_immigration_shift_1204.asp

⁴⁹ Corkill, David, Spain: A “New Immigration Center”: 146.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Jokisch and Pribilsky, The Panic to Leave: Economic Crisis and the “New Emigration” to Ecuador: 83.

and other foreign destinations paid with future earnings.⁵² Travel agencies scattered throughout Ecuador, though vertically integrated, capitalized on this profitable venture during a time when Ecuador's tourism industry lost a significant amount of business due to the economic and political crises. Though the 2000 coup was bloodless, the international community viewed Ecuador as increasingly unsafe. In 2000, *The Economist* described Ecuador as "Latin America's most unstable country".⁵³ Tourism revenues decreased by 25 percent from 1998 to 1999.⁵⁴ As a result, once popular travel destinations suffered and travel agencies lost significant amounts of business. Travel agencies increased their profits by loaning money to the migrants for the flight and *la bolsa*.

The combination of Ecuadorian travel agencies needing business, middle-class Ecuadorians needing financial and logistical emigration assistance and Spain needing labor resulted in a favorable union for everyone involved. Thousands of middle-income Ecuadorians could now emigrate by paying off loans to travel agencies with future earnings in Spain—an attractive, low-risk option, especially when compared to the more dangerous and expensive journey to the United States, often by boat to Central America and then continuing overland via Mexico.

In addition to Kyle's field research during this period, Laura Oso Casas findings confirm similar strategies and financing structures linked to legal travel agencies engaging in backroom deals. She analyzes "migration strategies" as the mechanisms migrants use to leave their home country (investment, loans, obtaining the papers) and to arrive to Spain (transportation, ways of avoiding the border controls, integration to the society). Focusing on women working in clubs, bars or houses, all the women interviewed arrived to Spain as tourists.⁵⁵

Casas lists the three main elements of the migration strategy⁵⁶: 1) Financing; 2) Avoiding border control, and 3) finding a required contact in Spain. Because most were cash poor, they financed their trip by borrowing from banks, family, friends, and directly from the travel agencies loans. Most Ecuadorian women interviewed took non-direct flight to Madrid to avoid the border control. They would enter the "Schengen" space arriving via Amsterdam or other European cities. Though more expensive, travel agencies advised buying a plane ticket from a European airline as the border police would not pay as much attention to them. To become convincing tourists, travel agencies also advised them to dress as business executives, wear elegant clothes, dye their hair, wear fancy jewelry, and conspicuously don a camera or a map. Travel agency coaching also included the kinds of answers to be given when questioned by authorities, such as famous tourist destinations. Having a contact in Spain or an arrival address was a necessary component of the tourist visa requirements, while many immigrants had family members in Spain who could help them to adapt and find a job and provide the

⁵² Kyle, David. 1999. The Otavalo Trade Diaspora: Social Capital and Transnational Entrepreneurship. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22(2): 422-46.; Kyle David, Transnational peasants: migrations, networks, and ethnicity in Andean Ecuador.

⁵³ Berríos, Rubén. 2006. Cost and Benefit of Ecuador's Dollarization Experience. *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 5 (1-2): 55-68.
<http://docserver.ingentaconnect.com/deliver/connect/brill/15691500/v5n1/s3.pdf?expires=1306960225&id=63001023&titleid=5430&accname=University+of+California%2C+Davis&checksum=F66DC14DC5D9296036D1588C65248238>: 60.

⁵⁴ 1999. A crisis desocupa hoteles. *Diario HOY*. 19 October 1999. <http://www.hoy.com.ec/noticias-ecuador/la-crisis-desocupa-hoteles-10519-10519.html>

⁵⁵ Oso Casas, Laura. 2003. Mechanisms for Colombian and Ecuadorian Women's Entry into Spain: From Spontaneous Migration to Trafficking of Women. P. 55-74 in *Gender and Insecurity: Migrant Women in Europe*, edited by Jane Freedman. Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate. Research for the chapter done during 2000 and 2001 in Madrid, Pamplona and Galicia. She interviewed 141 women; 40 Ecuadorians (37 of them were domestic workers, 3 of them were sex workers. p.56); Oso Casas, L. 2000. Estrategias migratorias de las mujeres ecuatorianas y colombianas en situación irregular: servicio doméstico y prostitución en Pamplona y Galicia. Comunicación presentada al II Congreso sobre la migración en España, Madrid, 5-7 de octubre.

⁵⁶ Oso Casas, Laura, Mechanisms for Colombian and Ecuadorian Women's Entry into Spain: From Spontaneous Migration to Trafficking of Women: 57-64.

“letter of invitation,” either travel agencies would provide an address or, in some cases, Ecuadorians already living in Spain would charge for the letter of invitation.

Alongside these migratory strategies which depend on community networks and migratory chains, there is a whole layer of organizations in the countries of origin which participate in arranging the exodus of immigrants for purely profit-making ends. . . .they function principally as a means of lending money to migrants to finance their journeys. Several of our respondents from Ecuador who were working in the domestic service industry had used a bank loan to finance their journey to Spain. A guarantee is needed to get a loan of this type, and in general it is family or friends in the country of origin who own property who serve as guarantors. . . .For many . . . obtaining a bank loan to finance their voyage is not possible. . . .Therefore, they have to recourse to the services of a ‘travel agency’. These agencies act as lenders, but also participate in the organization of the journey and in instructing the migrant in the necessary ‘savoir-faire’ for passing the border controls. The travel agencies also charge high rates of interest on the money loaned. In the same way as with bank loans, the money for the ‘bolsa’ has to be transferred back to the agencies as quickly as possible or else the rates of interest will rise considerably. These agencies also ask for the same types of guarantees as banks.”⁵⁷

Casas compares these travel agencies to smuggling of migrants because they profit from organizing the journey and getting the migrants across the border, though “unlike other trafficking networks they do not provide contacts for jobs or accommodation in Spain. This study is thus not one of clandestine immigration in the sense that the initial entry into Spain was not illegal. The immigration was in fact initially legal, and these women become illegalized immigrants by virtue of their overstaying of their tourist visa.”⁵⁸ An Ecuadorian woman recounts her experience of an agency:

Over there everyone thinks that only the travel agencies can get you over here. I came with my husband through an agency. They sell you a ticket at a much more expensive price – that’s how they make money. Then they offer to lend you money necessary for the customs, so that you can come into Spain as a tourist. As there were two of us we borrowed 4,000 dollars from them. There’s a person who receives you at the airport and you give him back the money. Over there you leave a blank cheque in case you don’t give the money back” (focus group discussion with Ecuadorian domestic workers, Madrid) (65).

Spain’s 2007 “National Survey of Migrants” (INE) found that Ecuadorians who had arrived since 1990 to that point overwhelmingly had family members as contacts prior to migration.⁵⁹ Very few said that intermediaries provided them with contacts. Some explanations for why the role of a migration industry may be hidden from even the best designed national surveys is that most likely did have family members, but it was the crucial first 2-4 years that provided the initial linkages. Of course, the role of legal travel agencies helping migrants skirt immigration and labor laws may also not be something many want to reveal or would even identify as “intermediaries.”

⁵⁷ Oso Casas, Laura, *Mechanisms for Colombian and Ecuadorian Women's Entry into Spain: From Spontaneous Migration to Trafficking of Women*: 64.

⁵⁸ Oso Casas, Laura, *Mechanisms for Colombian and Ecuadorian Women's Entry into Spain: From Spontaneous Migration to Trafficking of Women*: 57.

⁵⁹ Reher, David S., Requena, Miguel and Rosero-Bixby, Luis. 2009. *Ecuadorianos en España*. David-Sven Reher and Miguel Requena (eds.). *Las múltiples caras de la inmigración en España*. S.A., Madrid: Alianza Editorial. 139. See

Gráfico 7 p. 139 “Al llegar a España, los inmigrantes ecuatorianos se dirigieron a... (inmigrantes llegados después de 1990)” Fuente: INE, Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes (2007).

Conclusion

These two distinct migration industries in Ecuador developed in ways that put them at the center of regional and national economies, foreign policies, and domestic politics. One includes conventional smugglers or coyotes, the other a set of mostly legal businesses engaging in backroom deals using a range of formal and informal financing strategies. Far from being isolated cases, migration industries are developing under a range of economic, cultural, and political contexts, with a common set of core features, especially financing strategies.⁶⁰ We argue that a more “robust model” of migration merchants’ role, as evidenced in the two Ecuadorian cases, better characterizes their centrality in migration systems in ways that go beyond a mostly-legal migration industry prior to the modern era of “crimmigration,”⁶¹ in which states criminalize relatively minor infractions of immigration and labor laws.

A significant reason that migration industries have not been integrated into policy formulations with sustained attention is due to their framing as largely tainted by criminality or at a minimum, informality. This, in turn, fuels the very foundations of the migration industry by increasingly marginalizing and criminalizing otherwise straightforward economic activities consistent with globalization. As states criminalize and take increasingly punitive measures against migrants, refugees and smugglers alike, the power of some key players in the migration industry increases.⁶²

Today, in addition to crossing borders, migrants must also navigate various legitimate and illicit intermediary organizations—it is nearly impossible to migrate without an organization, whether it is help navigating state bureaucracies such as immigration and labor agencies, or crossing borders using legal transportation or illicit smuggling strategies. Like the rise of bureaucracies everywhere, once the logic and capacity of organizations to successfully compete in transnational markets has taken hold, apart from the initial conditions from which they arose connecting supply with demand, they increasingly begin to play more of a gatekeeping role and assert strategic control over sectors, territories and modes of transportation.

There is a growing parallel not simply historically with past migration services, but specifically a global revival of a new form of indentured servitude in which most migrants and refugees today are expected to have invested large amount of resources in both their human capital but also go into debt, often without the protection of the state. Contemporary migration industries are much better at profiting from the journey and usurious financing than profiting from resettlement or regularization. Even under conditions of global recession, employers continue to find ways to reach migrant labor they so desperately feel they need.⁶³ The truly novel aspect of migration industries today is the increasing power to transform migration into a new indentured servitude with ever-higher smuggling fees financed with future earnings. While the fact of for-profit intermediaries playing a role—even a significant one—is not entirely novel in the history of human mobility, these contemporary examples underscore two significant dimensions beyond the sheer numbers they are able to facilitate: illicit journeys or border crossings and the fact that they are indebted to intermediaries or facilitators, not employers. Profits can now be gained not only from labor at the destination, but extracting more of

⁶⁰ Kaye, Jeffrey. 2010. *Moving Millions: How Coyote Capitalism Fuels Global Immigration*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

⁶¹ See Stumpf, Juliet. 2006. “The Crimmigration Crisis: Immigrants, Crime, and Sovereign Power.” *American University Law Review* 56(2): 367-419.

⁶² Kyle, David. 2000. *Transnational peasants: migrations, networks, and ethnicity in Andean Ecuador*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.; Andreas, Peter. 2001. *The Transformation of Migrant Smuggling Across the U.S.-Mexican Border*. David Kyle and Rey Koslowski (eds). *Global human smuggling: comparative perspectives*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. 107-125.

⁶³ Kaye, Jeffrey. 2010. *Moving Millions: How Coyote Capitalism Fuels Global Immigration*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

their income through the debts, real or imagined, incurred by the journey itself and by the ongoing vulnerability of the immigrant population. The global scale and diversity of this phenomenon is new.

Organizations with the financial, informational, and above all, social resources to either navigate or overcome state barriers have quietly taken center stage in the migration process. The future of migration in the context of climate change and the resulting social and political complexities will certainly require an appreciation of the significant role of migration merchants.

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