IMISCOE Theory Conference
Interethnic Relations: Multidisciplinary Approaches
Workshop on Boundary, Inter-ethnic Relations and Differentiation
in Contexts of Impending Ethnicity
Lisbon, May 2009

"I'm not like all these *Latinos"*. From ethnicization to selective ethnicity appropriation as a lever for social integration overseas

Paolo Boccagni[*]

The paper reinterprets, building on the constructs of ethnicization and selective ethnicity, a translocal ethnography I have realized on an Ecuadorian migration flow, spanning between Southern Ecuador and Northern Italy. On the one hand, ethnicization may account for immigrants' distribution with respect to the labour market, housing and welfare services, as well as for their patterns of leisure and consumptions. Yet, while the host society's standard view tends to frame their "otherness" in supposedly ethnic terms, Ecuadorian immigrants generally share a *mestizo* background that emphasizes much more the cultural commonalities with the receiving society, despite the boundaries that distinguish them, in many respects, from the latter.

At the same time, immigrants may draw selectively from their own ethnicity patterns – as a shared repertoire of habits, ways of life and commonsense ideas, supported by a communal identity and background – in order to shape the interactions between their previous identities and lifestyles, and the standard ones overseas. Their ethnicity may be purposefully reshaped, for instance, in their ways of living and speaking, or in their sociability networks, as an effort of self-distinction from the stereotyped Ecuadorian (or even *Latino)* "ways of behaving". This is also expected to pave the way for a smoother and more egalitarian "integration" in the host society. Whatever the case, by de-constructing immigrant ethnicity from within, a diverse range of expectations and strategies towards the receiving society emerges – even apart from their own differentiation in terms of age, gender, education, social status, etc.

From either side, the implications of ethnicity-driven attitudes and behaviours will also be dealt with – both for immigrant incorporation overseas and for their transnational engagement back home.

Keywords: Ecuadorian migration – Ethnicity – Self-identification – Ethnic boundary – Integration – Transnationalism.

---

[*] PhD in Sociology and Social Research, Post-doctoral fellow, University of Trento, Italy [paoloboccagni@hotmail.com]. IMISCOE member, cluster B3 (Migration and Citizenship) and B4 (Work, Entrepreneurship and Economic Integration). I am indebted to the hundreds of Ecuadorian women and men I have met, talked with and observed – while struggling to question the confusing label of "immigrants" – during my PhD fieldwork.

Introduction

The football match of Ecuador, on the big TV screen out of the bar, is just over. A little Ecuadorian-only crowd has gathered around the tables – a few of them sitting as well. Among the first who stand up, leaving a bar corner with some other girls, I notice Julia and Loli. They are now passing by the male supporters group, somewhat looking down on them. No greetings. As it seems, for single (and beautiful) Ecuadorian girls like them it does matter to keep distance from their conational peers – at least as the latter are said to be drinking and making noise all the time. Maybe Julia and Loli see more Italian guys than the rest? Whatever the case, they came to the football pitch only once – as Julia was to be awarded a prize as Ecuadorian Reina *[Queen] of the tournament…[1]*

The paper reinterprets, drawing from the constructs of ethnicization and selective ethnicity appropriation, the insights of a translocal ethnography within a group of Ecuadorian immigrants in Italy. It explores the grassroots processes of ethnicity differentiation, and of ethnic boundaries negotiation, emerging in a local immigration context. My focus is on a recently settled immigrant group, sharing a basically communal ethnic background, along with significant affective ties – and far less developed relationships at a distance – with the motherland.

Ecuador, as a national society, is marked by a notable degree of ethnic diversity, as indigenous minorities reach 15% at least of the national population (Sánchez, 2005; de la Torre, 2006; Sawyer, 2004). This is much less the case for Ecuadorian emigration, in which indigenous populations are significantly under-represented (FLACSO, 2008), with a few exceptions (the better known being the *Otavalo* traders – e.g. Kyle, 2000). An average *mestizo* profile, whether originating from the Pacific Region (the *Costa)* or from the Andean one *(*the *Sierra),* accounts for the ethnic background of most Ecuadorians expatriated in the last decades (Ramírez and Ramírez, 2005; Herrera et al., 2005). This, however, by no means lessens – as I will try to show – the relevance of ethnic categories and boundaries, whether internally ascribed or externally attributed, in immigrants' negotiation of their trajectories of incorporation overseas (and, to a lesser degree, of transnational engagement with their mother country).

My ethnographic case study (Boccagni, 2009a; 2009b) concerns a small translocal migration flow (a few hundred individuals overall) between Southern Ecuador (El Oro Province, with especial respect to the town of Pasaje) and Northern Italy (Trento Province). Building on observant participation and on biographical interviews,[2] and involving both migrants and their family members left behind, I have explored the differential meanings and functions assumed by the ethnic boundary between Ecuadorian immigrants and Italian autochthons, both in "in-group" and in "inter-group" everyday social relationships. Even within an ethnically homogeneous population, a focus on the daily reproduction and re-modeling of ethnicity in instrumentalist terms (Hale, 2004) allows to reconstruct a significant internal differentiation in three domains: collective identity, identification with co-nationals and interactions with the autochthonous population.

---

[1] From my fieldwork notes (Trento, June 25, 2007).
[2] My fieldwork has resulted, on the one hand, in an ethnography within the Ecuadorian immigrants' informal sociability events and extra-work activities (e.g. parties, leisure gatherings, sport and cultural initiatives); on the other hand, in in-depth biographical interviews to 35 of them in Italy, and to 23 family members of theirs, in Ecuador (Boccagni, 2009a; 2009b).

At first glance, the broader category of nationality could seem enough to account for the Ecuadorian immigrants' communal identities and "ways of belonging" (Levitt and Glick-Schiller, 2004). They do share a manifest, nostalgic and patriotic identification with their motherland, in spite of living so far away, with poor short-term prospects for return. Approaching their life experience "from within", however, reveals diverse and fragmented identifications and alignments. As a result, the Ecuadorian immigrants' patterns of interaction combine various degrees of "openness" to the receiving society (on identificatory or instrumental grounds), and of allegiance to the mother country and the significant others left behind. What is, in either respect, the role played by their ethnicity as a shared and socially relevant cognitive construct (i.e. as "a perspective on the world", rather than as "a thing in the world" [Brubaker et al., 2004])?[3]

Social relations, as Banton recently put it,

have an ethnic dimension whenever one of the parties, consciously or unconsciously, regards any difference in ethnic origin (real or assumed) as a sign that the other person is to be treated differently. (Banton, 2008, p. 1274)

If this is the case – assuming migration as a key watershed for boundary-making processes (Barth, 1969; Wimmer, 2008) – the category of ethnicity is relevant for understanding the shape and the contents of autochthon/immigrant relationships, and even the internal differentiation of immigrant self-identification processes. Hence the need to deconstruct the common labels applying to the people I studied – immigrants, Latinos, Ecuadorians – in order to account for their own ways of negotiating and using their personal and group identifications.

Ethnic boundaries, as I will argue, do manifest themselves not only in discursive stereotypes, but also in the perceived distance of the Ecuadorian immigrants from autochthons; in the limited interpersonal relationships between them; in the externally imposed (and even in the spontaneous) processes of segregation. Against this background, I will propose an ethnographical mapping of immigrants' multifaceted "social alignment" (Banton, 2008), stemming from a twofold pressure (Nazroo and Karlsen, 2003): their self-identification by national origin (and to a lesser extent along gender and local origin lines), and the processes of ethnic categorization they face overseas – vis-à-vis their spontaneous patterns of concentration. Especial emphasis will be put on the role of ethnicity, and on the construction of its partially mobile boundaries, in immigrants' differential trajectories of integration and of transnational participation.

1. "They're all the same, they always stay together": ethnicity after migration, from without

Approaching ethnicity within a novel immigrant flow requires a crucial proposition to start with – although maybe a truistic one (Easthope, 2009). Whatever one's earlier self-identification, and even ethnic affiliation, migration affects pre-existing ethnic boundaries and creates new ones (Nagel, 1994; Banton, 2008), in two interrelated respects (Jenkins, 2008): the framing of one's identity from the outside (i.e. external identification), and the ways how one's own identity is renegotiated and demarcated (i.e. personal and social self-identification).

---

[3] In other words, ethnicity is relevant here as an *explanans,* rather than an *explanandum:* as a concept helpful to make sense of immigrants' attitudes and behaviours, once settled overseas, rather than as an object to be studied in its own right (Banton, 2009).

In this paragraph, and in the following one, I will explore from either viewpoint the use Ecuadorian immigrants make of their ethnicity, the transformations it undergoes, and the processes of negotiation of its boundaries.

As my ethnography suggests, distinct frames and sources of boundary-making affect the process of migrants' self-identification, on an individual or on a group scale. Their own expectations and life projects, which systematically interact with those of their significant others left behind, are faced with three key influences:

- to begin with, migrants' perceptions of the policies and the public discourse developed in the motherland with respect to them[4];

- in the second place – and more substantively – the coexistence with their co-nationals in the receiving immigration context. Other *Ecuatorianos* often belong to a common "social landscape" in the labour market and in housing, in consumptions and sociability patterns. They are an inescapable point of reference, for better or worse, for individual attitudes and behaviours in the public sphere, and even for one's transnational communication with those left behind;

- in the third place, whatever the relevance of the above, an obvious influence on the evolution of ethnic boundaries stems from immigrants' everyday relationships with autochthonous people and institutions in the host society – in terms of their personal acquaintances, of their patterns of interactions in such public realms as the labour market, schools, neighbourhoods, etc. A certain influence on their self-identification, as I have found out, is also exerted by the mainstream public discourse on "immigrants" as a supposedly collective – and often stigmatized – social actor.

This paragraph will specially deal with the external (i.e. the autochthonous) influences on the Ecuadorian immigrants' ethnic identification. Attention will be given to the ways how their "otherness" is constructed and dealt with in the receiving society. Such a process, however, involves a two-way relationship: migrants' own initiative will also be taken into account, as it often results in peculiar patterns of spontaneous self-concentration in the labour market, in housing, in consumptions, in informal sociability contexts. This by no means implies that ethnicization is a symmetric process. It does suggest, however, that it is a bilateral one, where migrants' networks and collective identifications have also a significant stake.

1.1. Ethnicization as an exogenous process: from categorization to segregation along "ethnic" lines

The broad construct of ethnicization[5] is helpful to appreciate, from a majoritarian society viewpoint, the processes of undifferentiated, and often pejorative treatment which apply on several levels – a cognitive, a discursive and a practical one – to immigrants. As the latter gain increasing visibility, entering for good the everyday life of a relatively homogeneous

---

[4] By the way, Ecuadorian emigrant policies – traditionally marked by a substantive lack of concern, as emigration was basically perceived as a "safety valve" and as a lever for remittances – have recently undergone a significant change. In the public discourse of the current Ecuadorian administration, emigrants are depicted as citizens that, although "expelled" by the past mis-governments, persist feeling a strong bond with their motherland and should even be facilitated in returning, provided they wish so (Boccagni, 2008b; Boccagni and Lagomarsino, 2009).

[5] I mean by this term, generally speaking, the predominance of ethnic categories and frames over any other available to describe and intepret social action, on an individual or a collective basis. Remarkably, although the term has wide currency, I have been unable to find any theoretical review specially dedicated to its meanings and uses.

host society (such as the Italian one), "ethnic schemas" – at the roots of the mainstream social representations – "become hyperaccessible and in effect crowd out other interpretive schemas" (Brubaker et al., 2004, p. 45). Immigrants' ethnicity – generally portrayed in rough and even reifying terms – is assumed as an all-encompassing variable, supposed to account for their "typical behaviours", on the one hand; for the treatment immigrants would deserve, on the same fictitiously collective basis, on the other.

Processes of ethnicization impinge on immigrant life trajectories to different degrees. They basically result in aliens to be treated under a special framing along ethnic lines, which may have also significant consequences on their life opportunities. To begin with, disadvantaged conditions in jobs, in housing, in social rights are typically constructed, in the common discourse as "pertaining" to immigrants (leaving aside their often greater vulnerability, compared to autochthons). At the same time, immigrant access to the labour market, to the housing market, to the broader structure of opportunities is often conditional on tacit selection mechanisms related not only to mainstream criteria (e.g. one's work skills and experience for a given employment; or one's economic resources, as a tenant). Hardly less relevant is the perception of their fitness, or of their reliability, contingent on their national or ethnic belonging – assumed as a reasonable predictor of their behaviours. A process of "statistical" – or, more properly, of "categorical" – discrimination (Banton, 1983), while insufficient as the only grounds for immigrant disadvantage, exerts a significant influence on it.

In many respects, the Ecuadorian immigrants I have met are perceived and treated as most extra-EU citizens ("extracomunitari") are in Italy. Having said this, the label of *Latinos* – which indistinctly applies, in the common discourse, to any Latin American immigrant – combines traits of perceived cultural proximity and others involving a still significant social distance. Hence a peculiar dialectics between similarity and otherness comes into play. Once the all-embracing label of immigrants is lifted, in the transition from abstract categorizations to daily interactions, *Latinos* in Italy are typically perceived – at the beginning at least – as much more proximate than most immigrant groups, supposedly on cultural and religious grounds. This applies for sure to Ecuadorians, no matter the poor knowledge autochthons have of their country of origin. In fact the proximity may prove, aside from the crucial realm of language, not so obvious; even less so as it regards not only the more submissive, early migrant women, but also their male counterparts and their adolescent children, expatriated via family reunion (Lagomarsino, 2006).

From the viewpoint of the autochthonous public, proximity seems to be conditional on socio-demographic factors such as gender, age, education and social class, aside from personal capabilities for mutual understanding and adaptation. Indeed, the Ecuadorian immigrants' ethnic identification from without is not related only to their being immigrants *per se*, but is rooted also – as for most foreign workers in Italy – in social class grounds. Ethnicization is especially visible in their patterns of employment, resulting from a labour demand that tends to be selective and discriminatory on an ethnic basis – and, of course, from their own flexibility in filling labour shortage niches. Low-skilled jobs in the personal care sector, or in cleaning, are the typical "immigrant woman" employment (at least as far as Ecuadorians are concerned), while their male counterparts are heavily concentrated in the building industry and in the carrying trade (Boccagni, 2008a).[6] A pattern of labour segregation can thus be found out, which is only marginally related to the differences that obviously exist – in national backgrounds, in legal status and (to a variable degree) in cultural terms – between local and Ecuadorian citizens. Similar segregative trends, although by no means fixed or

---

[6] Especially prominent is, for Ecuadorian female immigrants at least, their "extraordinary concentration in the lowest occupational category, domestic service" (Gratton, 2007, p. 581).

unmodifiable ones, can be traced in housing settlements, in consumptions, in the broader access to public spaces and facilities. To treat them only as a matter of "external imposition", however, would provide a naïve and inadequate explanation.

1.2 Ethnicization as a partially self-produced process: Ecuadorian migrants' spontaneous concentration

Segregation from the majority society, as a matter of fact, goes hand in hand with – and is not fully distinguishable from – the Ecuadorian immigrants' spontaneous concentration in the labour market, in informal sociability, in the spare time (if any). Social networks are, for sure, a key influence in this respect (Massey et al., 1998; Portes, 1995), from the very inception of the migration flow. Network configuration often accounts for the selected local context of destination, as well as for migrants' patterns of concentration in housing or in the labour market (cf. Boyd, 1989). The instrumental utilization of networks is not enough, however, to tell the whole story – nor are the segregative pressures of the host society. Co-ethnic concentration reflects the unspoken feeling that it is "natural" to stay with one's fellow-citizens, against a majority society often perceived in no less stereotyped terms – e.g. rich, racist, careless, work- or even profit-centred, frantic, etc. – than those employed in the broader public discourse vis-à-vis immigrants. Spending most time with co-nationals is not only a matter of sheer necessity or convenience, but also a way to recreate "Ecuadorianess" – or to feel "as if one were living" in Ecuador again (see below, par. 2.1).

In the standard social representation of the host society, the pattern of "endogamic sociability" that applies to most Ecuadorian immigrants – not unlike ethnic groups perceived as much more "distant" than them – is typically framed with two stereotypes, one more benign, and less common, than the other. Both of them, as I will argue, rest on quite thin empirical bases. On the one hand, immigrants' inclination to stay on their own in the labour market, in housing or in the leisure time may appear as an indication of their mutual solidarity, or of the strong cohesiveness of their "community". On the other hand, more often, their co-ethnic concentration is regarded as a demonstration of their reluctance to "integrate themselves" in the mainstream society.

In fact the real picture is far from that clear, as their spontaneous concentration is driven by competing interests, needs and pressures. The fact remains that, within a novel and unstructured migration flow such as the Ecuadorian one to Europe, co-ethnic concentration – while a source of mutual support and identification – is hardly an "added value" for immigrant social mobility, or economic achievement. It does not rest, as a matter of fact, on any significant "ethnic economy" basis (in the sense of Light et al., 1984). Such a pattern of mainly endogamic sociability impinges on the immigrants' lives on an expressive and symbolic level, more than on a functional, performative one.

At the same time, the crucial relevance of co-nationals is no guarantee for relationships among them to be harmonious or solidarity-based. The patterns of coexistence among compatriots tend rather to reproduce – and even magnify, in the face of immigration hardships – the typical social cleavages and divides of everyday life in Ecuador (and, possibly, anywhere else). How relationships with co-nationals evolve in the immigration context, against the background of a still significant attachment to their motherland, is the topic to be dealt with in the next paragraph.

2. "Though we're all Ecuadorians, there's no union among us": ethnicity after migration, from within

Feeling still Ecuadorian, and behaving – if possible – as such, is perceived as the "natural" (and the "right") thing to do by nearly all the immigrants I have met. Ethnicity matters for them, in the first place, as an elementary channel of self-distinction from the autochthonous society, and as a fundamental source of attachment to the significant others left behind, as well as to their past life experience. Judging from my fieldwork, the ways how immigrants identify themselves are still strictly related to the motherland and, to a lesser degree, to co-nationals in the context of settlement. The latter are also, generally speaking, their privileged reference points in the everyday life overseas.

Having said this, the role of ethnicity in immigrant identification processes, as well as in their in-group and out- group relationships, is far from predetermined. I have in fact encountered a significant diversity, both with respect to in-group alignments or reciprocal attitudes, and concerning their orientations and interactions with the host society. A twofold framework of ethnicity re-modeling thus emerges, that will be explored in this paragraph. The following one will focus, instead, on the impingements of the immigrants' ambivalent ethnic boundaries and identifications, when it comes to make sense of their social integration overseas and of their involvement with the mother country.

At first glance, immigrants' self-identification as Ecuadorians results in an overt counter-position to the self-representation of the majority society. In fact, a deeper analysis shows that the boundary between immigrant and autochthonous ways of self-identifying is more porous, and exposed to reciprocal negotiation and manipulation, than mutual stereotypes would suggest.

2.1 Where ethnicity grounds its roots: feeling still Ecuadorian and enacting "Ecuadorianess"

Although "individuals identify themselves socially in more complex ways than can be comprehended in census-style classifications" (Banton, 2008, p. 1282), there is no doubt that a self-identification as Ecuadorians – no matter the distance, in space and time, from the motherland – is still fundamental to the immigrants I have met. Their "ethnicity" – meaning by this a communal way of self-representing as *Ecuatorianos,* building on a shared national identity and on a significant life background in the motherland – is perceived as a natural and obvious one, which is not in need to be questioned.

It is easy to find, in immigrants' everyday life, some evocative trace of their motherland: whether in the decorations of their domestic spaces, in their objects of everyday use, sometimes – especially when it comes to the youth – in their ways of dressing. While not necessarily amounting to distinctive "ethnic markers", symbols such as national banners and maps, or even simple reproductions of the national tricolour (not to mention pictures), bear clear witness of their deep symbolic attachment to Ecuador. Frequent references are made, in the daily conversations with outsiders such as I (and even more so among co-nationals), both to Ecuadorian lifestyle, climate, colours or tastes, *and* to their family members left behind.

Reasserting their national identity as Ecuadorians, no matter the disenchantment for the "ever worsening" situation perceived in the mother country, results in a source of personal consistence, against the changes imposed by migration; in grounds for self-distinction from the national identity of the autochthons, and from their defective categorization as

immigrants; in the recognition of a personal, peculiar background – or even a "reservoir of sense" – they can by no means be shorn of, whatever the difficulties encountered overseas.

Ironically, however, the widespread identification with Ecuadorian symbols, rituals and reminiscences, generally coexists with a substantive disengagement from the current political life in their motherland. Nor the accessibility of relevant information via ICTs, nor the increasing investments of Ecuador in emigrant policies impinge for now – as far as I have found (Boccagni, 2008a; 2009b) – on immigrants' predominant lack of interest for the national institutions back home.

In a sense, their attachment to the motherland manifests itself in a form of patriotism, rather than of nationalism, at a distance. While their common sociability initiatives as *Ecuatorianos* are frequent, they do not reflect so much a link to their homeland institutions, as an attempt to rebuild some significant aspect of their earlier social lives (Guarnizo, 2003). The more visible marker of their continuing allegiance to the motherland, in other words, lies in their attempts to reproduce some distinctive features of "Ecuadorianess" overseas – in ethnic consumptions, in communal recreational activities, in the ways of spending time together (Pallares, 2005; Boccagni and Lagomarsino, 2009).

Still, feeling Ecuadorian is not only a matter of sheer patriotism, or of a merely symbolic evocation. As a social identity framework, it does impinge on the immigrants' patterns of sociability and consumptions, as well as on their expectations with respect to their children's socialization. Whatever the contents of "Ecuadorianess", and the practices to reproduce it, this is arguably the only identity frame that most migrants I have stayed with would adhere to without hesitation. Even a broader ethnicity category as *Latinos,* as my fieldwork suggests, is more a super-imposed label than a source of spontaneous self-identification.[7]

2.2 Practising ethnicity in everyday life: from a category to a social group?

In approaching Ecuadorian immigrants, at the beginning of my fieldwork, I would have thus expected to find grounds for them to express not only an intact national allegiance, but also a strong "collective identity" – in other words, an

Ethnic assertiveness, arising out of the feelings of not being respected or lacking access to public space… a politics of projecting identities in order to challenge existing power relations; of seeking not just toleration for ethnic difference but also public acknowledgement, resources and representation. (Modood, 1997, p. 290)

In fact, while the Ecuadorian immigrants' patriotic identification is a manifest and even an ostentatious one, the same does not apply to any *collective identity* of theirs – not, a least, as a terrain for common mobilization. I had rather to recognize that, in a recent immigration context (such as the Italian one) and with respect to a novel, long distance migration flow (such as the Ecuadorian one), arguments for a communal "ethnic assertiveness" far over-estimate the facts.

Judging from the sociability and the communal public life of the Ecuadorian immigrants I have personally met and observed, co-nationals – in a local context where *Latinos* are a tiny and visible minority – remain one's special group of reference. Most of them are accustomed to making resort to each other, in order to satisfy a need of communal identification, of easier

---

[7] All Ecuadorian migrants I met were keen to distinguish themselves from other Latino groups, such as Colombians or Peruvians, despite the commonalities (and the attributed stereotypes) they shared. See also, in a different context of settlement, James (2005).

communication and mutual support, and often (though not necessarily always) of sheer friendship. Still, belonging to of a common ethnicity-based category does not pave the way for any collective claim-making, as a communal reaction to the marginal position immigrants have in the receiving society. Calls for public recognition, or for a greater access to public facilities, are mediated by autochthonous organizations (such as trade unions, churches or anti-racist social movements), more than by any resort to their commonalities as Ecuadorian immigrants. No trace of an overtly politicized identity has emerged in my participant observation – apart from elite figures, scarcely representative of the rest. The assertiveness that migrants do show is rather a matter of their private lives alone – that is, a way to cope with their difficult life conditions in immigration: *hay que luchar* – one has to fight – to adjust overseas. What comes into play, here, is their commitment to survive (better), or to provide better life conditions to themselves, their family members and those left behind.

When the focus moves on their *public* social life abroad, a different picture emerges (Boccagni, 2009b). "Although we are all Ecuadorians", I have heard so often while in fieldwork, "there is no union among us!", as if – so the tacit argument goes – the opposite should "naturally" apply. In fact, neither their shared common national affiliation, nor the fact of being treated as one, supposedly homogeneous category result in a significant "group-making" dynamic (Brubaker, 2002), or in their life experience to be "constituted by the subjective feeling of its members that they belong together" (Banton, 2008, p. 1270). Their commonalities in local origin and in the context of settlement, in other words, are by no means sufficient for them to feel, and even less to act, as a cohesive social group.

As I found out, the Ecuadorian immigrants' "community" is deeply divided along gender, social class and parochial friendships lines. Its scope for collective action is generally poor – whether with respect to the majoritarian society or, even more, to their society of origin (Boccagni, 2008c). The deeper I was able (and allowed) to enter co-national networks, the keener my appreciation of the ever-switching sub-group boundaries that constrain social relationships among co-nationals. Against this background, their in-group social alignment is generally driven by such variables as gender, concentration in housing or in the labour market, or common leisure activities (e.g. sport, shopping, dancing, etc.), along with personal affinities, and mutual needs or interests.

Altogether, national belonging and shared ethnicity are relevant social attributes of the Ecuadorian migrants I have met, but more as a domain for mutual sociability than as a lever for collective action towards the external society. A better understanding of immigrants' relationships with co-nationals is needed to make sense of their shifting group boundaries, and of their in-group and out-group identifications.

2.3 Deconstructing the "community": from surface uniformity and cohesion, to internal social stratification

Aside from interpersonal social alignments, my ethnography has attempted to account for the cleavages that mark Ecuadorian immigrants' internal social stratification – in terms of differential social conditions and life opportunities – and social status, in their own perceptions. While a standard social stratification approach would assign nearly the whole of them to an indistinct "working class" category, an ethnographic perspective leaves room for some diversity.

In the autochthonous predominant representation, as the previous paragraphs suggest, the grounds for "stratifying" among immigrants – i.e. for distinguishing the social positions they

are perceived to occupy, even within a general downward framing – lie in their supposed proximity and ability to "integrate themselves", and of course in their non-perpetration of "deviant" behaviours, earlier than in their social and economic achievements.

In the view that prevails among co-nationals, the currency to gauge one's success – hence to construct a common standard for social stratification among their peers – is a different one. As regards the values that should underpin the public behaviour overseas of an *Ecuatoriano/a* (public morality being an obviously gendered one), ideal notions such as mutual respect, honourableness, commitment for one's family (including those left behind in Ecuador) and altruism are specially emphasized. When it comes, however, to assess one's personal "success" as an immigrant, economic achievement is by far the dominant standard. For sure, an immigrant's social status, in the eyes of their co-nationals, is not a matter of money alone, nor of one's lifestyles or patterns of consumptions – or even of remittances.[8] As much appreciated is the capability to safeguard one's personal reputation, an asset which may prove no less valuable (and vulnerable) than material well-being.[9] Co-nationals in Italy, and even in Ecuador, represent a mutual (though a contested) standard for the social definition of what is appropriate or not in the public sphere – as to immigrant attitudes, ways of behaviour and gender relationships. Reciprocal information and gossips, flowing on a local and on a transnational scale, exert a relevant moral influence on their everyday lives.

Having said this, the fact remains that one's professional condition is a crucial variable for the social status an immigrant enjoys in co-nationals' standard framing. Of relevance, here, are such aspects as occupational stability and remuneration, more than the congruence between one's job and their human capital, or the social status attached to an "immigrant job" in the public discourse of the host society. To give but one example, a bricklayer job – while perceived as a low status, and even a dangerous one, in the common discourse of the host society – is much appreciated, among the Ecuadorian men I have met, as it allows for a relatively good pay, compared with the other options available in the labour market. The same would apply, for their female counterparts, for a caregiver job in a residential setting – rather than in an informal, family-based one.

Apart from reciprocal representations and expectations, a variable which accounts to a reasonable extent for one's social and economic achievements is immigrant "seniority". The time-span spent in immigration is often correlated with less disadvantaged conditions of social inclusion in the host society, as well with a greater ability to deal with its structure of opportunities and, consequently, with a richer and more diversified repertoire of bridging (i.e. not ethnically-based only) social capital (see Anthias, 2007, among others).

Remarkably, one's local origin in Ecuador does not seem to exert, in itself, much influence on the immigrants' success in the country of settlement. Differences in the areas of origin – *Sierra* vs. *Costa*, and even more an urban vs. a rural background –, unperceivable as they are for the autochthons, do matter for co-nationals, but as grounds for reciprocal stereotyping, more than for coalitions or conflicts among them. Their chances of succeeding overseas are rather contingent on the selective lever of kin and friendship networks (not necessarily based on a commonality in the place of origin). No less important is the ability to entangle them in

---

[8] The money sent back home may be also a way to keep high one's social status back home – much more so if it is addressed to some community need, aside from the family ones (see, on the Ecuadorian case, Boccagni, 2008c).

[9] In fact, once one's social status is appreciated on a terrain wider than economic success alone, the case may even be that an immigrant's reputation does not parallel at all with their actual achievements. The case of co-national loan sharks – relatively wealthy immigrants performing a badly needed social function, but often blamed for their greed for money – provides a prominent example.

significant autochthonous reference-points. In this perspective, the selective appropriation and display of one's ethnicity attributes, in the everyday interactions with the majority society citizens, proves crucial.

2.4. Ethnicity as a malleable resource: self-distinction and the shifting boundaries of social alignment

After describing the relevance, as well as the limitations, of the Ecuadorian immigrants' identification with co-nationals overseas, a further step needs to be made.

While the boundary between "Ecuadorians" and "Italians" is still perceived as a clear one from both sides (with the possible exception of mixed couples), various forms of transboundary "positional moves" (Wimmer, 2008) do emerge in immigrants' everyday lives. This results, at the minimum, from their gradual and selective (though often denied) assimilation in the receiving contexts (i.e. their acculturation, as Gans [2007] puts it). Sometimes, however, such "crossings" are more deliberate and purposeful, as they are perceived helpful in accomplishing immigrant personal objectives. The key question, drawing from Banton (2008, p. 1276), is now the following: under what circumstances, among whom and in order to satisfy which needs or interests, does social *dis*-alignment from co-national immigrants occur?

In a nutshell, a preliminary answer could simply be: *when* systematic alignment with co-nationals is perceived as detrimental for one's reputation in the host society, or for one's chances of "moving forward"; especially *among* those in a less disadvantaged social position and, perhaps, with a greater reflexivity about their life prospects overseas; *in order* to achieve one's self distinction from the standard label of "Latino immigrant", possibly with some expectation of social mobility and, to some degree, as a result of personal acquaintances and interethnic affectional ties. The process is however a partial, selective and far from irreversible one.

Self-identification as Ecuadorians is often paralleled, in migrants' common discourse, with an emphasis on the blatant differences between daily life in Ecuador and in the society of settlement. Most immigrants would recognize, within the latter, the potential for opportunities unachievable in Ecuador. Still, the perception often exists that in Italy "life is only hard work"; "everything runs too fast"; "there are no opportunities to enjoy leisure time" (and even fewer to do so in an "Ecuadorian way"); "too many rules" are imposed on them.[10] A critical stance may also emerge towards the racism perceived in daily interactions and in the host society institutions.

However, the distance perceived from the autochthons is to various extents bridged, or selectively reduced, either on identificatory or on instrumental grounds. At the same time, migrants may develop a sense of self-distinction (and even self-criticism) from, on the one hand, the banal stereotypes of Latinos, supposedly being always late, noisy, fun-devoted and sometimes even scarcely reliable; and, on the other hand, from "endogamous sociability" practices – or at least from some of them – as they involve co-nationals alone, and the risk is perceived they may enhance derogative, all-encompassing stereotypes. As a result, immigrants' social alignment with co-nationals – along the simplistic but effective *we/them* divide – corresponds to the statistical "mode" of their behaviour. It cannot be assumed, however, as obvious and pre-determined under every circumstance.

---

[10] Cf. the analysis of Massey and Sánchez (2007) in the US context.

The manifestation, and probably the self-perception, of one's social identity as *Ecuatoriano* can be "socially layered". As a matter of fact, it is conditional on "the individual's perception of its meaning to different audiences, its salience in different social contexts, and its utility in different settings" (Nagel, 1994, p. 155). Hence the deliberate inclination of a few immigrants to selectively self-detach from the mainstream "Ecuadorian way". This often results in a greater impetus towards integration – a prospect which, however, is contingent also on favourable conditions within the host society. Where such conditions do not occur, straightforward isolation may be the more likely outcome.[11]

While some immigrant ethnic markers (such as somatic features, or language differences) are hardly negotiable, for many others the opposite is true. This applies, for instance, to ways of dressing, forms of non-verbal communication, typical consumptions, leisure activities. Rather than an overall dismissal of "ethnic" traits (or of those supposed to be such), processes of hybridization typically occur. Mixed couples and intermarriages are the more visible channels of selective ethnicity appropriation, although by no means the only one.

Examples of self-distinction from co-nationals, or of a purposeful avoidance of ethnicity-based definitions of the situation (or of the ensuing social practices), can be found in several domains of interaction between the Ecuadorian immigrants and autochthons.

When it comes to finding a job in personal care services, for instance, Ecuadorian women are likely to emphasize their specially sensitive and warm-hearted attitudes, or their supposed cultural and religious proximity, as a "value added" with respect to immigrant competitors with a different background. While they generally rely on co-national networks to find a job, however, they may simultaneously distance themselves from "the rest of Ecuadorians", insisting that negative stereotypes such as being latecomers and noisy do not apply to them.

A similar pattern can be found in Ecuadorian-only sociability events. Football matches among *Ecuatorianos* (or other immigrant groups), for instance, are a typical leisure situation which is relevant as much for the players, as for the crowds of co-nationals gathering around the football pitch. The real event, for most of them, lies in the very opportunity to stay together, to circulate the latest news and gossips on each other, to sell or buy ethnic food specially prepared right there – in a word, to "recreate" some fragments of their earlier social lives back home. However, the perception arises in some of them that getting involved in similar situations – depicted, in Italian common discourse, as typical "immigrant stuff" – may level down their public image with the average, highly stereotyped frame of their co-nationals. A framing which, no matter how simplistic, is for sure real – and often detrimental – in its social consequences.

One more example can be found in the development of co-national associations, which reflect immigrant endeavours to build forms of communal representation and advocacy vis-à-vis the host society. A denominator I have observed within such initiatives, whether addressed to cultural and recreational activities or to charitable ones, lies indeed in their self-distanciation from the mainstream Latino-related stereotypes. Catchwords such as "reliability", "timekeeping" and "good reputation" are often emphasized, successfully or not, by their leaders, while building on some shared (and positive) facet of "Ecuadorianess" as their *raison d'être,* and as grounds for negotiation with the host society.

All these examples of "boundary renegotiation" show a reflexive awareness that gradually emerges, to various degrees, in the Ecuadorian immigrants' life experience: interethnic relationships – in terms deeper than every day interethnic contacts – may reveal, despite the distances (or even the discriminations) that do exist, a significant potential for achieving one's

---

[11] See, in this respect, the typology of immigrant incorporation patterns in Engbersen et al. (2003).

life objectives overseas. To what extent this is indeed the case, and what the implications are for the relationships with co-nationals in immigration and back home, are the issues to be dealt with in the next paragraph.

3. "Move forward", "Don't pull up your roots", "Don't forget your people". Selective ethnicity appropriation, amid the dilemmas of integration and of transnational participation

The more elementary and visible form of selective boundary re-negotiation I have encountered, while in fieldwork, regards the use of language in interethnic communication. While I was accustomed to talking in Spanish with most Ecuadorian immigrants – an option which would often make communication easier and deeper –, a few of them systematically opted to talk with me only in Italian. Far from being accidental, or from reflecting a greater intimacy with me, the option seemed rather correlated with their high "scores" in some key variables: immigrant seniority, education, exposure to Italian acquaintances and social networks, and – of course – fluency in Italian. Sometimes, however, the attitude seemed also to reflect a greater interest than most co-nationals in making visible their wish to be appreciated on an equal footing with Italian citizens, and to gain a wider access to Italian acquaintances. Even the use of language, in other words, was a channel for the aspiration of a few Ecuadorian immigrants – women and youth, more often than men and adults – to be fully accepted as Ecuadorians, capable of making full sense of Italian mainstream "life rules" and of building on them, besides respecting them.

In this perspective their ethnicity background, rather than being perceived as a "natural" and a "given" one, can be selectively (and situationally) appropriated. While some identity and sociability traits are even proudly emphasized, others are discarded or downsized. Although the ensuing process of boundary negotiation applies – to a basic extent – to any interethnic relation, in some cases it does prove much more relevant and deliberate than in the rest. At the same time, the boundary flexibility is obviously conditional on hardly negotiable external constraints, such as immigrants' legal status.

On an individual scale, systematic attempts to bridge perceived ethnic distances, in terms of social identification and (even more so) of everyday interactions, are arguably related with clearer patterns of social integration. Whether this results also in greater chances of social mobility – a notion not necessarily coterminous with the former (Gans, 2007) – it is hard to judge with my research tools, and in the still short lifespan of a first generation immigrant flow. Even so, significant dilemmas remain open, which may expand the scope for immigrant "double absence" – or the risk of one's isolation from (and poor attachment to) both the society of origin and the host one (Sayad, 2004).

In the first place, co-nationals with greater exposure and access to autochthonous social networks are overexposed to the risk of being labelled as those who "act as the Italians", or are even "ashamed of being Ecuadorian". While this may be scarcely relevant for the few who have achieved significantly better life conditions (or even gained Italian citizenship), it does affect those who occupy an "intermediate integration space", and may find poor understanding and support both from co-nationals and from the autochthons. Unless significant relationships are cultivated on both sides, an immigrant may find herself still not accepted or stigmatized from the latter, while being questioned by the former in her national and group loyalty. Collective disapproval may be easily addressed to those co-nationals who

seem to be mimicking Italian ways of life, as these still appear – to the bulk of Ecuadorian immigrants – substantively alien.

In the second place, the partial negotiation of ethnic boundaries with the majority population – as it results, for instance, in the selective appropriation of ethnicity-related stereotypes – reflects a widespread expectation to *salir adelante,* or to achieve significantly better life conditions overseas. However, mobility and loyalty pressures – in other words, individualization and ethnic belonging ones – may contrast with each other. Every *Ecuatoriano* would in principle agree on "moving forward" as the ultimate goal of migration – though a fuzzy and far from granted one. At the same time, most migrants I have met would cultivate some suspicion as this may require a perceived loss of one's peculiar identity.

Quoting Fenton (2003),

Although migrants may share *collectively* a goal of improvement or of economic "betterment", the pursuit of an individual or personal path of self-advancement is an individualistic life-aim which is, in the end, contrary to the idea of family solidarity and even ethnic solidarity. Tensions within migrant or former migrant families, *and* within non-migrant families, frequently surround not so much whether individuals can pursue life-aims at the expenses of family solidarity, but *how* this tension is managed and *how* far detachment might go. [...] The tension is between the solidarity which is the ideal of family, extended family and ethnic community life, and the... individualism which is implicated in "success" in the new environment, a tension which is particularly acute for women. (Fenton, 2003, pp. 127-129)

In the third place, and as noteworthy, the risk of ethnic boundary negotiation to strain social loyalties and identities – or at least to deteriorate one's status and reputation among co-nationals – does not involve the immigration context alone. It impinges also on immigrants' social and moral interdependence with those left behind in the local context of origin. Hence a transnational understanding may prove helpful, and even complementary to a social integration one.

On the one hand, a communal loyalty expectation is shared – among the Ecuadorian migrants and non-migrants I have stayed with – which is not restricted to the moral duty of caring (basically via remittances) for the significant others left behind. A more abstract and deep-rooted moral imperative comes also into play: the one not to forget about one's *gente* ("people"), and not to disclaim one' "natural" Ecuadorian identity. As I have found out, a typical concern of non-migrant significant others is the fear to be "forgotten", not only as recipients of remittances. A more subtle, but not less significant moral "treachery" may occur as emigrants give no more proof – in their attitudes, in their lack of concern, even in their ostentatious satisfaction for living overseas – of *Ecuadorianess,* or of a shared sense to belong still, somewhat, together.

On the other hand, immigrants' strategy of self-distanciation may affect also, as time in immigration goes by, their attitudes towards the mother country. Difficult life conditions overseas, while sometimes leaving poor scope for remittances, are not the real issue at stake here. Even within transnational relationships with the significant others left behind, attachment and nostalgia intermingle with criticism and disenchantment for the "backwardness", the endemic corruption and the conservative or overtly opportunistic mindsets of non-migrant co-nationals. The balance between mutual needs, which underpins their relationships at a distance, is not necessarily a successful one in the medium term (Levitt, 2007; Carling, 2008). If this is the case, processes of selective ethnicity redefinition are probably one issue only, among the several that may drive well-settled immigrants to distance themselves from the motherland – unless in a discursive, "myth of return" perspective.

To put it briefly, the Ecuadorian immigrants' processes of ethnic boundary negotiation affect more their patterns of interaction overseas – whether with co-nationals or with autochthons – than their transnational relationships with the motherland. The latter ties tend to weaken anyway in the middle term, as a result of broader structural factors (e.g. the large distance from the motherland, the severity of immigration policies, the lack of a significant coethnic economy in the country of settlement – cf. Boccagni, 2009a).

Conclusions

In aggregate terms, whether on a cognitive or on a practical level, ethnicity is a significant factor of differentiation between the Ecuadorian immigrants and the autochthons, and even within the very Ecuadorians. Once ethnographically understood from the bottom up, in immigrants' life trajectories, ethnicity is however found to be a relatively fluid notion, resulting in a partially manipulable set of resources. Of course, its malleability varies with differences in education, in social class, possibly in immigrant seniority. Still, a focus on the selective and situational negotiability of ethnic boundaries helps understand the personal benefits and costs of immigrants' ethnic alignment, along with the scope for their incorporation, and the relevance of their ties – if any – with the motherland.

Ironically, the Ecuadorian migrants I have met would hardly have perceived themselves in an "ethnic" perspective, before leaving home. Migration itself is the crucial event that creates a significant ethnic boundary (Barth, 1969), as a result of the novel interactions, and of the ensuing processes of categorization, between aliens and autochthonous. Once settled overseas, Ecuadorians discover that their collective framing (for sure not the only, but by far the predominant, one) and their overall life opportunities are delimited – among other factors – by an all-embracing set of "ethnic" differences.[12] An ethnic boundary is quite real in its social consequences – and, to a lesser extent, in its substantive contents – with regard to the prevailing patterns of sociability and everyday concentration of the Ecuadorian immigrants; their differential structures of opportunities (compared to the autochthons, but not unlike most immigrants); and even more so, interethnic (i.e. reciprocal) social representations and stereotypes.

When the analysis is scaled down on an individual level, however, the scope is much clearer for boundary transgression. Ethnic categories attributed to the immigrants prove to be a matter of collective identification only on a broad, abstract and symbolic-patriotic level,[13] as their grouping patterns are highly fragmented and selective. Ultimately, reliance and identification with co-ethnics alone may be acknowledged as a constraint, as well as a resource. Hence the importance of understanding individual drives to gain greater access to interethnic networks and acquaintances, in the face of two segregative pressures: hostilities and discrimination emerging in the host society, and immigrant communal moral imperatives – in other words, their spontaneous self-identification in a traditional, relatively closed construct of *Ecuatoriana/o.*

In the medium, intergenerational term, a greater flexibility in interethnic boundaries is likely to qualify the mainstream pattern of incorporation of Ecuadorian immigrants. As of now it

---

[12] Or of "cultural" differences, in a more politically correct version which is driven, in fact, by the same "groupist" assumptions (Brubaker et al., 2004).

[13] Though not a socially irrelevant one: even symbolic ethnicity (Gans, 1979), as I have found, has social consequences – in sociability, in consumptions, in the second generations' socialization – far from symbolic only.

actually involves, as a purposeful strategy to achieve better life conditions and opportunities, a few immigrants only – often, but not always, those with a greater human and social capital. Even where individual processes of boundary negotiation or transgression are more visible, they generally turn out to be tentative and fragmented. Achievement of immigrants' expectations, thus, is by no means foregone.

The primary issue to cope with, ultimately, is how immigrants' drive to (and scope for) ethnic boundary negotiation is affected by their patterns of incorporation overseas and of transnational participation with the motherland. My case study suggests the former to be much more relevant than the latter. Even so, while the opportunities and constraints to co-ethnic dis-alignment in the host society are well-known, less understood is the influence of co-nationals on individual attempts at ethnic boundary negotiation. Judging from my fieldwork, such an influence manifests itself in the terrain of public morality and reputation, leaving a certain freedom to individual "transboundary moves". However, a focus on less "novel" flows, or on migration systems with a greater scope for transnational practices, may highlight the role of co-ethnic influence also on a different basis – such as an economic, a political or a religious one. Further developments are needed in the comparative application of an ethnic boundary framework in everyday immigrant life, in the light of the shifting balance (although by no means a "zero sum one") between immigrant integration and transnational engagement.

References

Anthias F. (2007), *Ethnic ties: Social capital and the question of mobilisability,* "Sociological Review", 55, 4, pp. 788-805.

Banton M. (1983), *Categorical and statistical discrimination,* "Ethnic and Racial Studies", 6, 3, pp. 269-283.

Banton M. (2008), *The sociology of ethnic relations,* "Ethnic and Racial Studies", 31, 7, pp. 1267-1285.

Banton M. (2009), *The ethnic dimension,* Keynote address at the IMISCOE Theory Conference "Interethnic Relations: Multidisciplinary Approaches", Lisbon, may.

Barth F. (ed.) (1969), *Ethnic groups and boundaries. The social organization of cultural differences,* London, Allen & Unwin.

Boccagni P. (2008a), *Votare per sentirsi a casa. Il transnazionalismo politico tra gli immigrati ecuadoriani in Italia,* "Polis", 1, pp. 35-56.

Boccagni P. (2008b), *Migrants' social protection as a multi-actor process: Public policies and emigrants' own initiative in the case of Ecuador,* paper presented at the conference "Migration and Social Protection: Exploring Issues of Portability and Access", University of Sussex, DRC on Migration, Globalization and Poverty.

Boccagni P. (2008c), *Whom should we help first? The case of Ecuadorians in Italy,* paper presented at the conference "Migrant diasporas and decentralized development", Rotterdam, Erasmus University-IMISCOE.

Boccagni P. (2009a), *Tracce transnazionali. Vite in Italia e proiezioni verso casa tra i migranti ecuadoriani,* Milano, Angeli.

Boccagni P. (2009b), *Private, public or both? On the scope and impact of transnationalism in immigrants' everyday lives.* In R. Bauböck e T. Faist (eds.), *Transnationalism and diaspora. Concepts, theories and methods,* Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming.

Boccagni P. and Lagomarsino F. (2009), *Celebrare da cittadini, vivere da immigrati. Una giornata elettorale in un cortile di Milano, "come se fosse in Ecuador",* Journal submission, under review.

Boyd M. (1989), *Family and personal networks in international migration: Recent developments and new agendas,* "International Migration Review", 23, 3, pp. 638-670.

Brubaker R. (2002), *Ethnicity without groups,* "European Journal of Sociology", 43, 2, pp. 163-189.

Brubaker R., Loveman M. and Stamatov P. (2004), *Ethnicity as cognition,* "Theory and Society", 33, pp. 31-64.

Carling J. (2008), *The human dynamics of migrant transnationalism,* "Ethnic and Racial Studies", 31, 8, pp. 1452-1477.

Easthope H. (2009), *Fixed identities in a mobile world? The relationship between mobility, place and identity,* "Identities", 16, pp. 61-82.

Engbersen G., van San M., Leerkes A. (2006), *A room with a view. Irregular migrants in the legal capital of the world,* "Ethnography", 7, 2, pp. 209-242.

Fenton S. (2003), *Ethnicity,* Cambridge, Polity.

FLACSO (ed.) (2008), *Ecuador: las cifras de las migraciones internacionales,* Quito, UNFPA - FLACSO Ecuador.

Gans H. (1979), *Symbolic ethnicity: The future of ethnic groups in America,* "Ethnic and Racial Studies", 2, pp. 1-20.

Gans H. (2007), *Acculturation, assimilation and mobility,* "Ethnic and Racial Studies", 30, 1, pp. 152-164.

Gratton B. (2007), *Ecuadorians in the United States and Spain: History, gender and niche formation,* "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", 33, 4, pp. 581-599.

Guarnizo L. (2003), *The economics of transnational living,* "International Migration Review", 37, 3, pp. 666-699.

Hale H.E. (2004), *Explaining ethnicity,* "Comparative Political Studies", 37, 4, pp. 458-485.

Herrera G., Carrillo M.C. e Torres A. (eds.) (2005), *La migración ecuatoriana: transnacionalismo, redes e identidades,* Quito, FLACSO - Plan Migración, Comunicación y Desarrollo.

James M. (2005), *Ecuadorian identity, community and multicultural integration,* working paper, available at www.runnymedetrust.org.

Jenkins R. (2008) [second edition], *Rethinking ethnicity,* London, Sage

Kyle D. (2000), *Transnational peasants: Migrations, networks and ethnicity in Andean Ecuador,* Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.

Lagomarsino F. (2006), *Esodi ed approdi di genere. Famiglie transnazionali e nuove migrazioni dall'Ecuador,* Milano, Angeli.

Levitt P. (2007), *Achieving simultaneity: Discontinuities and renegotiation in transnational social fields,* Paper presented at the conference "Gender, generations and the family in international migration", Florence, RSC-EUI.

Levitt P. and Glick-Schiller N. (2004), *Conceptualizing simultaneity: A transnational social field perspective on society,* "International Migration Review", 37, 3, pp. 1002-1039.

Light I. et al., (1994), *Beyond the ethnic enclave economy,* "Social Problems", 41, 1.

Massey D., Arango J., Hugo G., Kouaouci A., Pellegrino A. and Taylor J.E. (1998), *Worlds in motion: Understanding international migration at the end of the millennium,* New York, Oxford University Press.

Massey D.S. and Sánchez M.R. (2007), *Latino and American identities as perceived by immigrants,* "Qualitative Sociology", 30, 1, pp. 81-107.

Modood T. (1997), *Culture and identity.* In T. Modood et al., *Ethnic minorities in Britain: Diversity and disadvantage,* London, Policy Studies Institute.

Nagel J. (1994), *Constructing ethnicity: Creating and recreating ethnic identity and culture,* "Social Problems"; 41, 1, pp. 152-176.

Nazroo J.Y. and Karlsen S. (2003), *Patterns of identity among ethnic minority people: Diversity and commonality,* "Ethnic and Racial Studies", 26, 5, pp. 902-930.

Pallares A. (2005), *Ecuadorian immigrants and symbolic nationalism in Chicago,* "Latino Studies", 3, pp. 347-371.

Portes A. (ed.) (1995), *The economic sociology of immigration,* New York, Russell Sage Foundation.

Ramírez F. and Ramírez J. (2005), *La estampida migratoria ecuatoriana. Crisis, redes transnacionales y repertorios de acción migratoria,* Quito, Abya Yala.

Sánchez J. (2005), *Inequality, ethnicity and social disorder: The Ecuadorian case,* paper presented at the III World Bank Conference on Inequality: Inequality, Politics and Power.

Sayad A. (2004), *The suffering of the immigrant,* Cambridge, Polity.

Sawyer S. (2004), *Crude chronicles: Indigenous politics, multinational oil and neoliberalism in Ecuador,* Durham, Duke University Press.

Torre, C. de la (2006), *Ethnic movements and citizenship in Ecuador,* "Latin American Research Review", 41, 2, pp. 247-259.

Wimmer A. (2008), *Elementary strategies of ethnic boundary making,* "Ethnic and Racial Studies", 31, 6, pp. 1025-1055.

World Bank (2004b), *Ecuador: Development policy review. Growth, inclusion and governance: The road ahead,* Washington, The World Bank, Report no. 27443.