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From New York to Ecuador and Back Again: Transnational Journeys of Policies and People

Kate Swanson

Department of Geography, San Diego State University

In this article, I explore the surprising and unexpected turns that have developed since zero tolerance policing was exported from New York to Ecuador at the turn of the new millennium. Drawing from fifteen years of ethnographic research with young indigenous Ecuadorians, I demonstrate how the impacts of displacement can extend far beyond the local scale. Street work has long been a key survival strategy for the indigenous Kisapincha. Yet, as growing poverty forced rising numbers onto the streets, cities in Ecuador responded by importing punitive neoliberal urban policies to cleanse and sanitize the streets. Deprived of critical income, many Kisapincha turned to transnational migration to seek better opportunities in the United States. Since then, young Kisapincha men and women have endured brutal 9,000-km journeys through South America, Central America, and Mexico to work in garment sweatshops and as day laborers in the United States. This research reveals how existing inequalities are reproduced and exacerbated in the drive to gentrify and modernize cities. I argue that zero tolerance policing in Ecuador pushed many former street vendors to migrate to New York City. These transnational displacements and scalar disruptions have led to profound injustices and intergenerational trauma for the Kisapincha. To untangle the hidden geographies of urban change, I suggest that scholars adopt ethnographic and longitudinal approaches to expose the long-term and unforeseen ramifications of policy mobilities over time and space. *Key Words:* Ecuador, indigenous, migration, policy mobilities, zero tolerance.

我于本文中，探讨自新世纪以来，零容忍的警备从纽约引入厄瓜多尔后，令人惊讶且超乎预期的发展转折。我运用对年轻的厄瓜多尔原住民进行为期十五年的民族志研究，显示迫迁的影响如何远远超出地方尺度。对于基萨平查 (Kisapincha) 的原住民而言，街头工作一向是主要的生存策略。但随着渐增的贫穷迫使越来越多人走上街头，厄瓜多尔的城市，开始透过引入惩罚性的新自由主义城市政策来清洗并净化街道。被剥夺为生的关键收入后，许多基萨平查人转成跨国移民，到美国追求更好的机会。自此，基萨平查的年轻男女便开始忍受穿越南美洲、中美洲与墨西哥的九千公里之严酷旅程，以在美国的血汗成衣工厂工作，以及从事按日计酬的临时工。本研究揭露，既存的不均，如何在贵族化与现代化城市的驱力中再生产并加剧。我主张，厄瓜多尔的零容忍警备，将诸多过往的街头小贩推向移民纽约市之路。这些跨国迫迁与尺度化的扰动，已对基萨平查人造成深刻的非正义和跨世代的创伤。为了解开城市变迁的隐藏地理，我建议学者可采取民族志和长程的研究法，以揭露政策移动跨越时间与地理的长期且不被看见的后果。 *关键词:* 厄瓜多尔, 原住民, 移民, 政策移动, 零容忍。

En este artículo exploro los giros sorprendentes e inesperados que han surgido desde que el ejercicio policial de cero tolerancia se exportó desde Nueva York a Ecuador a la vuelta del nuevo milenio. Basándome en quince años de investigación etnográfica entre indígenas ecuatorianos jóvenes, demuestro cómo el impacto del desplazamiento puede llegar mucho más allá de la escala local. Desde hace mucho tiempo el trabajo callejero ha sido una estrategia de supervivencia clave para los indígenas kisapincha. Sin embargo, a medida que la expansión de la pobreza empujó a un número creciente de familias hacia las calles, las ciudades ecuatorianas respondieron importando políticas urbanas neoliberales punitivas para limpiar y sanear el espacio público. Privados de este crucial ingreso, muchos kisapinchas apelaron a la migración transnacional en los Estados Unidos, buscando mejores oportunidades de vida. Desde entonces, jóvenes kisapinchas de ambos sexos han soportado brutales viajes de 9.000 km a través de América del Sur, América Central y México, para terminar trabajando en talleres clandestinos de ropa y como jornaleros en los Estados Unidos. Esta investigación revela el modo como las desigualdades existentes son reproducidas y exacerbadas en el intento por aburguesar y modernizar las ciudades. Sostengo que las prácticas policiales de cero tolerancia en Ecuador impulsaron a muchos comerciantes callejeros a migrar hacia la Ciudad de Nueva York. Estos desplazamientos y perturbaciones transnacionales han conducido a profundas injusticias y trauma intergeneracional para los kisapinchas. Para desenredar las geografías ocultas del cambio urbano, sugiero que los

eruditos adopten enfoques etnográficos y longitudinales para exponer las ramificaciones imprevistas y de largo plazo de las políticas de movibilidades a través del tiempo y el espacio. *Palabras clave: Ecuador, indígenas, migración, política de movibilidades, tolerancia cero.*

Following policy over extended periods of time can uncover surprising interconnections between seemingly unrelated and distant phenomena. In this article, I explore the “unexpected turns” (Peck and Theodore 2012, 29) that have developed since zero tolerance policing was exported from New York to Ecuador at the turn of the new millennium. As is now well known, zero tolerance policing was developed under Mayor Rudy Giuliani and Police Commissioner William Bratton in New York City in the early 1990s. Since then, this “fast policy model” (Peck and Theodore 2001) has circulated around the world. It has gained particular sway in Latin America in the guise of *mano dura*—or iron fist policing—as local politicians attempt to showcase their hard-line approaches to crime. Of course, like many mobile policies, zero tolerance has mutated and transformed in its implementation. Elsewhere I have argued that zero tolerance in Latin America represents an especially punitive policing model that explicitly targets the region’s marginalized and racialized poor (Swanson 2013).

Here I am concerned with the long-term consequences of zero tolerance’s transfer to Ecuador. By “following the policy” (Peck and Theodore 2012) using a broad topographical approach (Robinson 2011), we can trace its surprising impacts across borders, states, and regions. In effect, we can trace how the transnational flow of zero tolerance policy from New York to Ecuador has had a direct impact on the transnational flow of undocumented people from Ecuador to New York. The connection between Ecuador and New York might seem counterintuitive; yet, it transpires from “studying through,” or following policy across space and time to explore the lives of those most affected (McCann and Ward 2012; Peck and Theodore 2015). In the Ecuadorian context, those arguably most affected by the importation of Ecuador’s zero tolerance policing strategies are those who earned their livings in the urban informal sector, particularly indigenous street vendors and beggars. I focus on the case of the Kisapincha, a high Andean Quichua migrant community that relied on street vending and begging as a significant source of family income (Swanson 2010). After the implementation of zero tolerance—which paved the way for gentrification and urban restructuring in key tourist districts

of Ecuador’s largest cities—it became increasingly difficult for the Kisapincha to earn a living on the streets. As a result, many decided to seek their fortunes on the streets of New York City instead.

Most often, policy outcomes are examined at the local scale and over short periods of time (Cochrane 2011). I have been working with Kisapincha rural–urban migrants in Ecuador for the last fifteen years and with Kisapincha transnational migrants in New York City for the last nine years. In studying connections and relations between sites within geographies of policy, McCann (2011) and Peck and Theodore (2015) suggested adopting a global ethnographic approach, often referred to as the extended case method. As stated by McCann (2011), this approach is valuable because it “focuses simultaneously on specific sites and on global forces, connections and imaginaries [and] reflects a concern with how to theorize the relationships between fixity and mobility, or territoriality and relationality, in the context of geographies of policy” (123). In this article, I examine unexpected connections between mobile policies and mobile people to uncover how zero tolerance has affected the lives of the Kisapincha over more than a decade. I argue that doing so uncovers profound injustices and intergenerational trauma, which can be directly linked to quick fix applications of zero tolerance policing. To do so, I draw from interviews, focus groups, informal conversations, surveys, and artwork, all of which were collected from indigenous children and adults living in Ecuador and New York between 2002 and 2017.

The rest of this article is structured as follows. I begin with a brief overview of the literature on policy mobilities and outline how my research furthers this field of study. I then dive into the specifics of the case study on the Kisapincha. I describe their motivations, their migration journeys, and their lives in New York City. I also examine the aspirations of children and young people who remain in Ecuador and explore their imaginaries of transnational life and migration. Finally, I discuss another unexpected twist in this tale of policy mobility: the long-term impacts of zero tolerance policing in New York and skyrocketing housing values in previously disinvested neighborhoods. For the Kisapincha, rapid gentrification in New York is leading to further displacement.

Zero Tolerance: Following the Policy

At a global scale, urban policies are on the move. As cities become more interconnected, politicians are increasingly looking abroad for examples of successful urban policies. Models that work are being replicated at rapid speeds, so much so that some scholars have taken to calling them fast policy (Peck and Theodore 2001). The speed and scale of connectivity have intensified as urban practitioners replicate models pertaining to creative cities (Florida 2002), urban drug policy (McCann and Temenos 2015), conditional cash transfers (Peck and Theodore 2015), governmentality (Robinson 2011), business improvement districts (Ward 2011), and zero tolerance (Swanson 2013), among others. Fast policy evangelists, such as Richard Florida and Rudy Giuliani, praise the triumphs of their models and are frequently contracted to replicate their policies around the world, garnering substantial consulting fees in the process.

Yet, context is everything; inevitably, conditions on the ground shape policy implementation. Local realities are often messy and unpredictable, which can lead to unanticipated outcomes. The area of policy mobilities is an emerging field in geography, and much of the research to date has explored immediate and short-term effects, partly due to methodological constraints (Cochrane and Ward 2012). Others have emphasized the role of policy actors and how key individuals circulate policies among cities (McCann and Ward 2012). My research shifts this approach to explore not only how a particular policy has circulated across cities but also how this policy has contributed to circulating *people* across cities. By following zero tolerance policy over an extended time period and an expansive geographical space, my research uncovers the unexpected ways punitive policing policies affect the lives of residents at the margins.

Zero tolerance policing first came to Ecuador in 2002. The mayor of Ecuador's largest coastal city, Guayaquil, contracted renowned "super cop" William Bratton to help shape the city's anticrime strategy (El Universo 2004). Although Bratton put forth an expansive list of reforms, the city lacked the resources to fully comply with what became known colloquially as Plan Bratton. As a result, the implementation was superficial and focused more on ridding the streets of undesirables than on tackling endemic police corruption and other policing problems. Reports of police violence and abuse became numerous as the city's most marginal residents were imprisoned, fined, and kicked off the streets. Key tourist districts were especially targeted as the city cleansed the

streets and plazas of street children, vendors, beggars, and others who offended newly developed municipal codes regarding "urban norms" and "citizen image" (Municipalidad de Guayaquil 2004).

The Andean city of Quito followed suit, although its program was based more on heightened police surveillance and active antistreet commerce campaigns. The end goal was the same: Push informal street vendors and beggars out of the key tourist districts. By 2003, the municipality had succeeded in removing 6,900 informal workers from the streets of the city's historical center. Thereafter, heavily armed police roamed the streets to keep them free of informal vendors. The physical presence of the police was also accompanied by a new high-tech video surveillance system dubbed "Eyes of the Eagle" (Swanson 2007). By 2006, Quito put forth an anti-street commerce campaign, with prominent signs posted around the city to discourage buying on the streets. The signs declared that by buying from street vendors, not only were you "putting your safety in danger," you were also encouraging delinquency and filth in the city. In 2007, President Correa's new administration also turned its attention to begging. Shortly thereafter, they launched a prominent diverted giving and media campaign to discourage begging across the nation. Although the Give Dignity for an Ecuador without Begging (*Da Dignidad por un Ecuador sin Mendicidad*) campaign does purport to invest in rural communities, some dispute the depth of this investment. As stated by Malena,¹ a twenty-seven-year-old Kisapincha woman who began working on the streets as a child, "How does it help us if they give us an apple and a bag of candy once a year? What's the point?"

These policy shifts were taking place in the larger context of rapid neoliberalization, increasing debt, political instability, economic crisis, declining rural incomes, and rising urban migration. With poverty rates at 60 percent nationally and almost 90 percent among indigenous peoples, many Ecuadorian families were struggling to make ends meet in the early 2000s (Sistema Integrado de Indicadores Sociales del Ecuador 2003). The situation was especially difficult for the indigenous Kisapincha, who live in the high Andean region of Quisapincha Alto in the province of Tungurahua. For hundreds of years, the Kisapincha have lived on steep mountain slopes overlooking Mama Tungurahua and Taita Chimborazo, two massive volcanoes that dominate the region's mountainous landscape. Until the 1990s, subsistence agriculture was the economic mainstay for the Kisapincha. During the same

period, limited access to education meant that illiteracy rates were above 80 percent. Moreover, poverty and a diet based largely on root crops meant that nine out of ten children were malnourished (Centro Ecuatoriana de Servicios Agrícolas 1992; Cruz et al. 1994).

Despite their remote location, mobility always remained a part of Kisapincha lives. Some migrated to the local markets in the city of Ambato to work as *cargadores*—heavy lifters for potatoes and grains, among other bulky items. In the 1970s, others migrated even further to work on coastal banana plantations to support Ecuador's growing banana economy. Life really began to change for Quisapincha Alto's approximately 6,000 residents with the construction of their first road in 1992. Up until that point, the only way in or out of the region was along steep and circuitous mountain paths, which took approximately two hours to traverse up or down. Although the new road did not necessarily decrease the time of travel—as the rainy season often made the road a slick river of mud—it did make it easier to leave the high Andean region, particularly for women with young children—and leave they did, en masse.

By the early 2000s, street vending, begging, and shoe shining in Quito and Guayaquil had become valuable sources of income for Kisapincha families. In the city, they targeted key tourist districts, which they dubbed *Gringopampa* (Kichwa for the “Field of Gringos”), as prime earning locations. Eventually, the Kisapincha gained a niche on the streets as beggars and vendors, much to the municipalities' chagrin. Given that they were no longer able to subsist from agriculture alone and they desperately needed money to pay for their children's educations, the money they earned on the streets went a long way toward improving their life conditions. Beyond education, they used their earnings to buy animals, such as sheep and cattle; replace mud and thatch homes with cinder block homes; open small community stores; purchase trucks to use as community transport vehicles; and buy commodities such as radios, televisions, and bicycles. Zero tolerance and punitive policing strategies eventually put an end to this. With rising harassment on the streets of Quito and Guayaquil, the Kisapincha were forced to look elsewhere for earnings. By 2005, a handful of Kisapincha women and children began migrating to Colombia's biggest cities to see whether begging and vending could be lucrative there. After the Colombian police temporarily seized a few of their children on the premise of child endangerment, though, they realized that they needed a better long-term strategy (Swanson 2007).

Ecuadorians have a long history of migration to New York (Jokisch 2002; Miles 2004; Pribilsky 2007). In fact, New York is often cited as Ecuador's third largest city (Weismantel 2003). Yet, much of this migration has been from southern Ecuador in the Cañar and Azuay regions. The first Kisapinchas to turn to the dangerous transnational migration route through the Americas left in 2007. Since then, many young Kisapincha men and women have endured brutal 9,000-km-long journeys through South America, Central America, and Mexico to work in New York City. Teenage girls I had previously encountered begging on the streets of Quito and Guayaquil now labor in sweatshops in Brooklyn; young shoe shiners I met on busy Ecuadorian streets now earn their livings as day laborers outside of New York City's big box construction stores. I cannot imagine that Bratton or Giuliani saw this coming.

As much as I would like to tell a neatly packaged story about linear cause and effect, I recognize that there is more nuance involved here. Although I argue that zero tolerance and punitive policing were instrumental in pushing indigenous Kisapincha off the streets and into transnational migration, I cannot discount the roles of ongoing poverty, marginalization, the search for better opportunities, and perhaps even a thirst for adventure. As the first Kisapincha migrants left and recounted their experiences and—more importantly—began to send remittances to their families back home, more and more young people decided to leave. What began with a few individuals triggered a chain migration; as of 2017, there were hundreds of indigenous Kisapincha living in Brooklyn's Bushwick neighborhood. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that most Kisapincha, particularly those with young children, would much rather remain at home than embark on such high risk and costly journeys. As stated by Pedro in New York, “Here, you're far from family, to fight and work and dedicate every day to work. . . . I know we make money, a bit of money here. But for me, I'd much rather live in my own country.” Yet, once zero tolerance policing made it increasingly difficult to earn a living on the streets, the Kisapincha were left with few other viable options.

Ecuador–New York–Ecuador

Tomás and his nephew were the first Kisapincha to migrate to New York City. They arranged the trip with a *coyote* over the phone and given that they were migrant pioneers from the region, the coyote took

advantage of their inexperience to charge US\$18,500 per person. After securing a loan from a *chulquero*—a high-interest informal money lender—they began their 9,000-km trek. Tomás thought the trip would be easy because the coyote reassured them that they would have plenty of food and shelter along the way. “*Pero no fue así*” (it didn’t turn out that way), he said. In retrospect, he added, he had no idea what he was getting into. They began by taking a four-hour bus ride to Quito and then traveled many more hours to the coast. From there they boarded a small fishing boat made for fifteen to twenty people. The boat was much fuller than that, though: It overflowed with more than 130 people. They were on the boat for ten days until they reached the coast of Guatemala. For most of the trip they were forced to stay in the hold so that they would not be seen by border patrol or customs agents. Tomás described his trip as “*entre vida y muerte*” (between life and death). Once they made it to Guatemala, they traveled by car, truck, or foot. He said that at times, they went days without food and suffered ter-

rible treatment at the hands of their coyotes. In total, his journey to the United States lasted seventy days.

When I spoke to Beatrisa and Natalia about their journeys, they both told me, “*El camino es feo*” (the journey is ugly). Like many of the more recent migrants, Beatrisa did not travel by boat. Instead, she flew to Honduras. From there, she traveled north in trucks and cars. At times, they were packed into the back of trucks for days “like sheep,” “*sin aire para respirar*” (with barely enough air to breathe). At the U.S.–Mexico border, they crossed the Rio Grande on rafts. After that, their guide abandoned them in the desert. Her husband, Carlos, had a similar experience a few years earlier. In 2008, Carlos recounted how he spent four days wandering through the Arizona desert without food or water. With temperatures that can reach 50°C during the summer months and descend to freezing during the winter months, the risks of hypo- and hyperthermia are high. This is especially the case for migrants, many of whom arrive wearing only the clothes on their backs (Swanson and Torres 2016).

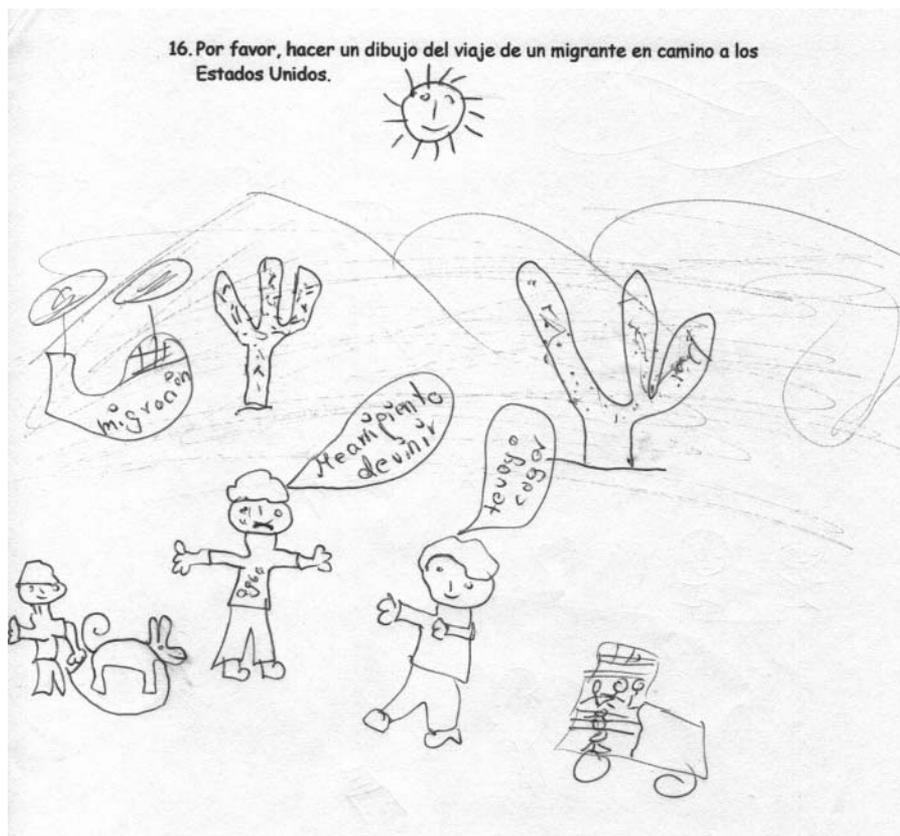


Figure 1. The prompt reads, “Please draw a picture of a migrant’s journey to the United States.” In this drawing, a sad migrant with his arms outstretched is about to be caught by the Border Patrol. The Border Patrol says, “I’m going to catch you.” The migrant says, “I regret coming.” His shirt says, “agua,” expressing his need for water in the hot desert.

Fortunately, Carlos and Beatrisa were found before their situations became dire.

Not everyone has made it across the U.S.–Mexico border. Manuel described how immigration authorities caught him in Sonora, a Mexican state adjacent to Arizona. This was after he had already traveled nearly 5,000 km. Isabel, a former beggar and one of Kisapincha's first high school graduates, explained how her husband tried to migrate to the United States twice and failed both times. He was detained once in Mexico and once in Arizona. Now they owe over US\$5,000 to the *chulqueros* and she has no idea how they will pay. Beyond debt and detention, there has also been death. In 2010, the Zeta cartel kidnapped and detained seventy-two Latin American migrants in the border state of Tamaulipas. After refusing to do the cartel's bidding, the migrants were lined up and massacred. Two of those killed were young Ecuadorian indigenous women from Quisapincha Alto. Elvira was

eighteen years old, and Magdalena was twenty-one. Both left young children behind as they journeyed to the United States in search of better opportunities (La Hora 2010). In 2013, another young Kisapincha man died on his way to the United States. Juan Toala Guamán, twenty-two years old, drowned on the last leg of his journey while crossing the Rio Grande (El Universo 2013).

Despite significant risks, many Kisapincha remain motivated to leave. During a focus group discussion I conducted with eight Kisapincha men in Brooklyn in 2012, Kléber summarized their reasons for leaving as follows: "Like everyone has said, the truth is that we migrated for necessity, for greater capacity, and due to political problems. The truth is that we want to give our children better educations and things we weren't able to have." All of them spoke about the intense poverty and lack of opportunity in Ecuador. They spoke about racism in Ecuador and difficulties for

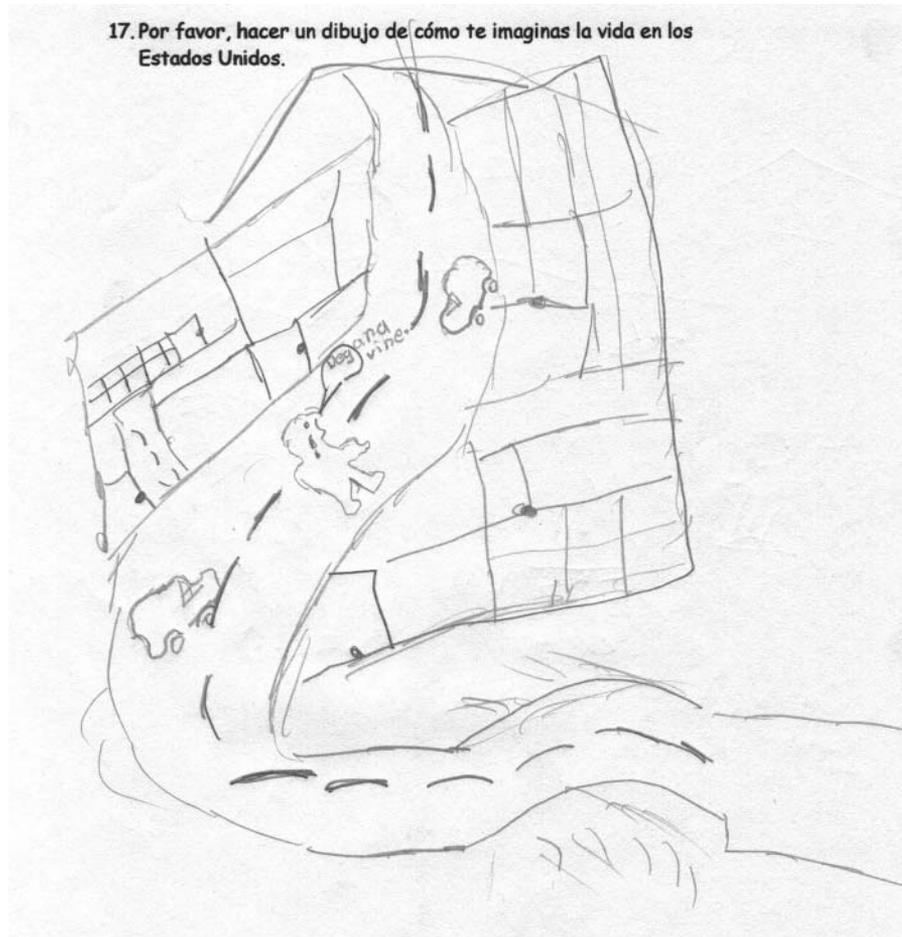


Figure 2. The prompt reads, "Please draw a picture of how you imagine life in the United States." In this drawing, a crying migrant walks along a busy city street and says, "I didn't want to, but I came."

indigenous peoples. They spoke about how they risked their lives to get to the United States, all so that they could improve the lives of their families and community back home.

Their lives in New York have not been easy, however, especially for the earliest migrants. Carlos explained how he arrived in January 2008 with no money, no work, and no warm clothes. He said, "For three months I went without work, and I struggled, struggled, struggled." Kléber added, "Now that I've arrived, I understand what life is like here. . . . If you work, you can eat what you like. But if you don't work, you can die of hunger." Another couple explained the precariousness of their lives in New York City. Natalia, who had worked on the streets of Quito and Guayaquil for years, migrated to New York in 2008 when she was nineteen years old. In the United States, she worked twelve-hour shifts, six days a week in a clothing sweatshop. Her husband, Nelson, worked as a day laborer in construction. Both of them supplemented their daytime work with nighttime flyer deliveries until 1 a.m. In general, they were lucky to get four hours of sleep per night. Meanwhile, they left their three- and one-year-old daughters in Ecuador in the care of their grandmother. Tomás explained how depression is now a part of his life in New York City; he struggles without his wife and three children and he is plagued by the traumas of his journey.

Children in Ecuador are also increasingly aware of the dangers of transnational migration. In a survey I conducted with sixty schoolchildren in 2015, I asked them to draw pictures of migrant journeys to the United States. Many drew grim scenes of thirsty migrants in the desert or of U.S. Border Patrol agents in pursuit (Figure 1). I also asked them to draw pictures of migrant life in New York. Although some drew pictures of happy migrants, others depicted loneliness and hardship (Figure 2). Despite this, many young people still wish to migrate, particularly among sixth-graders, which is often a terminal grade in Ecuador. In fact, 63 percent of sixth-graders said they hope to migrate to New York when they get older. Among ninth-graders, only 30 percent expressed a desire to migrate, perhaps because being slightly older, they experienced recent migrant deaths more viscerally. One ninth-grader explained how her parents do not want her to migrate because, "To migrate to the U.S. is to suffer. Sometimes they can't walk and they die. It's suffering." When I asked if she thought she would migrate regardless, she said, "Yes." Why? "Because it's beautiful and I want to be close to my family." Two of

her siblings had migrated to New York a few months prior to my survey.

The costs of zero tolerance policing in Ecuador have been significant for the *Kisapincha*. Deprived of key income on the streets of Quito and Guayaquil, many have put their lives at risk to endure great hardships as undocumented migrant workers in New York City. Their children back home have suffered, too. Although youth in Ecuador might benefit from remittances and a newfound ability to purchase coveted goods and gadgets, the emotional costs of growing up with parents in absentia are profound (Pribilsky 2007).

There is one more twist to this tale on the unforeseen consequences of policy mobilities. When the *Kisapincha* moved to New York, they settled in the Bushwick area of Brooklyn. Bushwick has long been a disinvested immigrant neighborhood known for high crime and poverty. When Natalia and Nelson relocated to Bushwick, they were able to rent a three-bedroom apartment for \$900 per month. They shared their apartment with several other *Kisapincha* to keep costs down. In recent years, however, Bushwick has been gentrifying rapidly (New York City Comptroller 2017). In fact, the long-term impacts of zero tolerance policing in New York City have led to rising rents across the city, displacing lower income residents into the region's outer boroughs. William Bratton, who once again became New York City's Police Commissioner under Mayor Bill de Blasio, takes full credit for dropping crime rates alongside escalating property values (Kelling and Bratton 2015). Yet, as homeowners benefit, renters suffer. In the search for affordable rents, Bushwick has become the latest urban mecca for hipsters, artists, and young urban professionals. Data demonstrating this rapid urban change are striking: Between 2000 and 2015, Bushwick's white population increased by 610 percent, whereas its Latino population decreased by 13 percent. Moreover, the U.S.-born population increased by 22 percent and the foreign-born population decreased by 14 percent (Small 2017). For Natalia and Nelson, this meant that by 2015 their rent had risen to more than \$3,000 per month, a price they could no longer afford to pay. Whereas some *Kisapincha* are being displaced further east to Canarsie—the last stop on the L train—Nelson and Natalia decided to pack their bags and move back to Ecuador instead. Ironically, then, Bratton's efforts to export zero tolerance policing to Ecuador not only pushed *Kisapincha* street workers from Ecuador to New York, but his ongoing efforts to restore "order and

civility across the five boroughs” (Kelling and Bratton 2015) served to push them back to Ecuador again.

Conclusion

Only by following policy over an extended period of time can we untangle the “surprising encounters, unexpected turns, and unforeseen conclusions” of policy mobilities (Peck and Theodore 2012, 29). In this article, I have traced the long-term impacts of zero tolerance policing across time and space to explore how it has shaped the lives of those at the margins. In doing so, I have demonstrated how policy mobilities can lead to surprising outcomes with far-reaching consequences. Zero tolerance policing has served as an impetus for the transnational dislocations and scalar disruptions experienced by the Kisapincha. They have been displaced across cities, states, and borders in their quest to improve the material quality of their families’ lives. Yet, although families might be materially better off, there are lasting emotional, embodied, and intergenerational consequences. For instance, when Natalia and Nelson moved back to Ecuador, their eight-year-old daughter rejected them outright. Despite her parents’ deep sacrifices, she refuses to live with them, preferring to stay with her grandmother instead.

By taking a global ethnographic approach and “studying through,” I have demonstrated the topographies of relationality between seemingly disparate and distant spaces (Jacobs 2012). I have traced zero tolerance policy in multiple directions—from New York to Ecuador and Ecuador to New York and back again. In doing so, I heed Peck and Theodore’s (2012) call to provide an ethnographic account that troubles and disturbs conventional wisdom. This research demonstrates that the impacts of displacement can extend far beyond the local scale. By focusing on those at the margins—in this case, indigenous peoples—it reveals how existing inequalities are reproduced and exacerbated in the drive to gentrify and modernize cities. The transnational displacements of the Kisapincha provides a cautionary tale for scholars. Space and scale are critically important if we are to untangle the hidden geographies of gentrification. As stated by Massey (2013), space is “like a pincushion of a million stories.” Whose stories are absent in top-down, short-term urban research? Although more methodologically challenging, urban scholars must embrace ethnographic and longitudinal research to uncover multiple stories over time and space. This is especially critical if

we hope to challenge unforeseen injustices, particularly for the most marginalized urban residents.

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Note

1. All names are pseudonyms.

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KATE SWANSON is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at San Diego State University, San Diego, CA 92182. E-mail: kswanson@mail.sdsu.edu. Her research interests include migration, inequality and exclusion in Latin America, and the U.S.–Mexico border region.