

Ecuadorian immigration in Switzerland. Transnational social networks; social capital and its influence on structural and sociocultural integration (Thesis project)

Structural and Socio-cultural Integration

Integration: Structural integration is related to the position occupied by ethnic-cultural minorities in the socio-economic stratification of the society. Sub dimensions of structural integration are the position in education, employment, income, quality of housing, and political rights. Socio-cultural integration is measured through features like the proficiency in the language of the host country, the amount of social contacts with the local population, and the acceptance of norms prevailing in the host country.

Social Networks

Research at the macro level has shown that social networks and social capital are determinants in individual migration decisions, particularly networks which are based on family relationships, friendship, and community ties (Boyd, 1989; Palloni et al, 2001).

Social Capital and Integration

Following the distinction made by Putnam (2000) I will differentiate between *bridging social capital*, which is defined as open networks which are "outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages", and *bonding social capital* which consists of "inward looking networks that tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups".

In migration studies, this distinction between bonding and bridging social capital approach and its relationship to integration has not been sufficiently researched.

Transnational Activities and Integration

Empirical studies are inconclusive regarding the impact of transnationalism on integration: On the one hand there is evidence that transnational activities and successful integration do not rule out each other (Portes et al, 2002; Itzigsohn & Giorguli Saucedo, 2002); on the other hand transnational involvement represent some degree of hindrance due to the continuous identification of immigrants with the sending society and isolation from the receiving one (Snel et al, 2006, p. 287).

Research Question: This dissertation will endeavor to understand structural and socio-cultural integration of Ecuadorian immigrants in Switzerland and what is the impact that social capital and transnational activities may have in it

The case study. Ecuadorians in Switzerland

Growing migratory flow. From 626 in 1995, to 2036 in 2008. (Office Federal de la Statistique)
Increased feminization
Relatively recent immigrant community.
Mainly first generation immigrants
Many more Ecuadorians, amounting to 15,000, live without legal status (Montalisa Vivas, 2007).

I will aim to compare how documented and undocumented immigrants engage in transnational activities, view the different strategies they take; and see how these are related to integration.

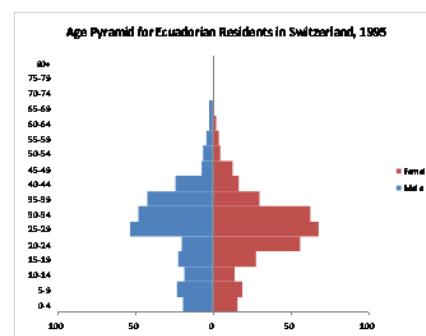
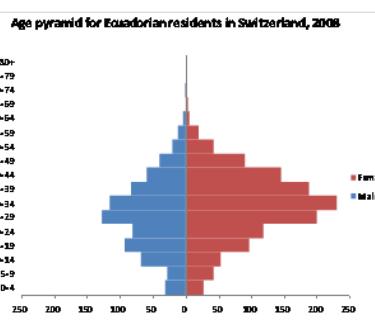
Methodology: Quantitative and Qualitative

Questionnaire: A survey questionnaire based on name generator questions and resource generator ones will be distributed to at least 100 Ecuadorians in order to elicit transnational social networks, transnational practices, measure social capital and its variants (bridging and bonding); and as well the different sub dimensions of integration. (McCallister & Fischer, 1978; Van der Gaag, Snijders, 2005).

Participant observation: Participant observation will assist me in looking at how active immigrants are creating bridging social capital, or if instead, they are quite bonded in their community and isolate themselves from the rest of population (Svendsen, 2006, pp. 46).

Interviews: At another stage, I will choose a sub sample of at least 30 networks in order to carry out semi-structured interviews.

In case funding will be granted for it, I would add empirical data from interviews in Ecuador.



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