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**The decision-making of the indigenous Ecuadorian youth
to migrate in the “age of migration dream”**

Master's Thesis

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Year of the defence: 2024

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 30th April 2024

Bc. Magdalena Trhlíková

References

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Abstract

The thesis will focus on the migration of the young Salasaka generation within the context of the "*age of the migration dream*" (Bude, 2010) and of three approaches to answering the question of why people migrate through migration theories: economic approach, systematic approach, and narrative approach. The work will aim to describe the narratives of a migration dream and how this dream is shaped, reproduced, and changed. This research emphasizes the importance of narratives as a crucial driver of migration. Narratives can significantly influence decision-making processes, serving as a key to understanding the creation of migration flows and play a significant role in shaping perceptions and attitudes towards migration within communities. The research field is the indigenous village of Salasaka in highland Ecuador, a village where traditional ways and cultural heritage are highly valued as indigenous people were discriminated against in Ecuador throughout history. However, the younger generation has developed different ways of living as they study at universities, dress differently, have a different occupation, or leave their village. The method will include a three-month ethnographic research using photo-elicitation method. The thesis tries to answer the question, "Why do young people in Salasaka migrate?". The research will further contribute to a broader understanding of migration as a social phenomenon, especially in the context of indigenous communities and the preservation of their culture in the context of globalization.

Abstrakt

Diplomová práce se zaměří na migraci generace mladých lidí ze Salasaky v Ekvádoru v kontextu "*doby migračního snu*" (Bude, 1980) a hledání odpovědi na otázku, proč lidé migrují, a to prostřednictvím tří základních přístupů v rámci teorie migrace: ekonomického, systematického a narativního přístupu. Práce si klade za cíl popsat narativy migračního snu a způsobů, jakým je tento sen utvářen, reprodukován a měněn. Vychází přitom z předpokladu, že narativy předávané v rámci komunity představují důležitý faktor ovlivňující migraci, že hrají významnou roli při formování postojů a vnímání migrace uvnitř komunit i v procesu rozhodování jednotlivců. Výzkumným terénem je vesnice Salasaka nacházející se v Andách v Ekvádoru, vesnice, kde jsou tradiční způsoby života a udržování kulturního dědictví velkým tématem i proto, že původní obyvatelé se v rámci historie potýkali se silnou diskriminací. Vesnice Salasaka se ale mění a prochází změnou v důsledku globalizace; a mladá generace žije odlišným způsobem života, studuje na univerzitách, opouští tradiční styl oblékání, vykonává odlišná povolání než jejich rodiče. Metoda bude zahrnovat tříměsíční etnografický výzkum využívající metodou foto-elicítace. Diplomová práce se pokouší odpovědět na otázku: "Proč mladí lidé v Salasace migrují?". Výzkum dále přispěje k širšímu pochopení migrace jako sociálního fenoménu, zejména v kontextu komunit původních obyvatel a zachování jejich kultury v procesu postupující globalizace.

Keywords: migration dream, indigenous community, young generation, migration narratives, migration from Ecuador, ethnography, photo-elicitation method

Klíčová slova: migrační sen, komunita původních obyvatel, mladá generace, migrační narativy, migrace z Ekvádoru, foto-elicitace, Ekvádor

Title: The decision-making of the indigenous Ecuadorian youth to migrate in the “age of migration dream”

Název práce: Rozhodování mladé generace obyvatel vesnice původních obyvatel v Ekvádoru v rámci “věku migračního snu”

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Introduction

Two years ago, amidst the global coronavirus pandemic, I spent two months as a volunteer in Salasaka, an Ecuadorian village. During my two-month stay, I was teaching English in an NGO called Escuela Katitawa in the local community alongside a fellow volunteer, Juan, who had recently returned to Ecuador from the United States. His family decided to return because of the pandemic's uncertainties, assessing Ecuador's situation to be a safer option. Even though he was born in Ecuador, he did not fit in well; his big and expensive car, American friendliness, and punctuality contrasted with the relaxed ways of living in an Ecuadorian village. While the pandemic shaped the immediate context, my focus shifted towards a different but also profound theme within the village — the migration, even though not at first apparent, was hugely influencing the lives of the villagers. I have not met any more return migrants; however, I heard many stories about people who migrated in the opposite direction – to the US illegally. Why would anyone migrate illegally to the US when some people who have experienced life there choose Ecuador over the US?

In the course of my volunteer work, I formed two strong connections with two new friends, who were both around my age - 23 at that time. The first was Sammia, who was organizing the NGO Escuela Katitawa with her mother, Yarina, and studying economics at a university in a nearby town. Simultaneously, she broadcasted on a local radio station, hosted events in the local community, and managed a greenhouse with tomatoes. She was also offered a job in a bank but later decided to decline. Her close friend, whom I was also able to befriend, was Edwin. He was recently employed in the ministry, organizing events celebrating his indigenous heritage. One of his other tasks was meeting with the representatives of various embassies. He got that job mainly because he could speak English, which he learned in the same NGO Sammia was co-organizing. He commuted every day for two hours from Salasaka to the capital, Quito, where the ministry is located. He also owned a business, the first bar in Salasaka, which he managed with his friends. He also shared with me that he struggled to find a job when the COVID pandemic started, so he did chicken farming.

The paradox following these two stories emerged when finding out the prevalent topic of migration. As Edwin later described - two-thirds of the village migrated during the COVID

pandemic. Covid worsened the situation, and people migrated illegally to the US. The popular explanation for migrating that there were no available job opportunities in Salasaka, in my view, could not apply to my friends. Both of my friends were, in my view, very successful and capable people who were proud of their community and culture and tried to support it. They did not seem to lack opportunities particularly, and that is why I was interested that so many people from the village decided to migrate illegally to the USA, where they would have to go through a complicated journey, would lack rights in the receiving country because of the illegality, and would be in constant danger of deportation.

All my friends knew some people who already migrated. I came across a few stories about relatives, friends, or acquaintances. One girl I knew through Sammia studied with her economy; she was very fashionable and seemed to have many things, but as Sammia told me, she and her brother had grown up just with her grandparents, and she did not see her parents because they were in the US. Another friend had colleagues previously working with him in tourism, in a pretty well-paid job as a tour guide. Now, they had left their families and children behind and lived in the US illegally, working in construction and sending home remittances to support their families. Many friends often had relatives they now just followed on social media or called through Skype. Materiality was also prevalent in the village, where huge empty houses were built from remittances supporting in that way the village and the families (Boccagni, 2021).

The village of Salasaka is acknowledged as a cultural heritage within Ecuador. The older generation still lived in a traditional way concerning dressing, livelihood, and traditions; they worked in agriculture, wore traditional clothes, and ate food they produced. The village was also going through a social change due to globalization when new aspirations and values would emerge within the community - there was a generational shift when the younger generation was deflected from the villagers' traditional ways. While their parents worked in agriculture and often had only basic education, and some of their grandparents did not speak Spanish or did not know how to read and write, the young generation often studied universities, worked in ministries, appeared on television, or moderated local cultural events or did artesian products. The customs and traditions were, however, proudly displayed and celebrated by the younger generation. My friends actively participated in their community, striving to uphold their clothing, such as poncho, language Kitchwa (the Ecuadorian dialect

of Quechua), and traditional celebrations. There, I realized the importance of everyone's responsibility to their community and their village. Also, there was a political effort in 2021 to focus on indigenous rights and support them.

On the one hand, life in the US was idealized through social media such as Instagram and Facebook, where people in the village could follow the different lives of their relatives in the US. On the other hand, there was a concern about the loss of the cultural identity and customs of the inhabitants. How do people choose from these options, or how do they navigate between both of these impacts? Moreover, what influences that decision-making when they have to choose whether to stay or to leave? And in general, why do young people from Salasaka decide to migrate? These questions about the reasoning for the migration of young people became the motivation for this thesis. Within the theory of the "*age of migration dreams*" (Bude, 2010, pp. 485-486), I will focus on migration narratives in the village, which critically influence the decision-making of the young generation (Gomez–Eastern, 2013). The research will focus on young indigenous individuals who are making their decisions about whether to migrate or to stay. I will try to answer the question of why young people migrate from Salasaka through different theoretical migration approaches. I will also explore the migration narratives in the village and whether they are translated to the dreams and visions of Salasaka's youth for the future.

Theoretical part

In the following part, I introduce the theory related to the research questions. Firstly, I introduce a postmodern sociology approach to the migration of the young generation. My approach to the following topic is that young people everywhere are being impacted by global influences and, therefore concepts such as the age of migration dream or liquid modernity can be applied to understand their decision-making. In the second part, I present the three main approaches to migration and its reasoning: an economic explanation, a systematic explanation, and a narrative explanation. I introduce how these explanations contribute to helping to answer the question of why youth in Salasaka migrate. In the third part, I discuss the concepts of cultural identity and cultural heritage, which are crucial to Salasaka, where cultural identity plays a major role and can also explain the process of migration and its connectedness to village narratives. In the fourth part, I further explain the case of Salasaka and its context.

1. Contemporary world and the age of migration dream

1.1. Postmodern world

Postmodernist sociological theories can be applied to the potential migrant's decision-making, as it is framed by today's globalized society. Youth in many places share things in common, such as following the same social media, so even though life is different, the influences of globalism can be applied. The case of the decision-making in Salasaka can be imagined through the eyes of postmodernist authors as Bauman (2000). The village of Salasaka is, on the one hand, a very traditional village but, on the other hand, a very globalized one, and the transnational community can be an example of that. In Salasaka, everyone holds international ties somewhere else, and the village can be seen as influenced by these experiences.

Bauman (2000) characterizes today's society by the term "liquid modernity." He argues that modern societies have moved from static structures and stable institutions to a fluid and fragmented state. Old traditional structures are falling apart, and today's society is disintegrated. Contemporary society, therefore, lacks certainties, is constantly changing, and long-term stability and commitments are disappearing. There has been a change from

traditional to postmodern in terms of internationalism, relationships, and identities, where social arrangements have become transitory and uncertain (Garforth, 2009). Society, therefore, has an anomic structure - with no clear norms and rules, which is in a time of change and where modernization, globalization, and transnationalism make the possibility to migrate omnipresent (Bauman, 2000).

It is not just a means to an end that is uncertain and which actors have to choose; it is also the goal itself that becomes unclear in today's society. If we accept that in today's society, there are no clear goals and means, it would also be a world where making a decision is complex and disruptive. For people, it is hard to choose because the means are unclear. A transformation that a community is going through can result in an anomic structure, which could lead to massive migration. The anomic structure is also influenced by the crisis (Durkheim, 1966), as is COVID or the following economic crisis, or by strong narratives and visual imaginaries that influence the decision-making.

People want to break free from traditional roles; however, to break free means getting rid of certain bonds as to family, place, or time. Going through this can result in a constantly changing and uncertain society; fixed and stationary is perceived as constraining; we, as postmodern actors, on the other hand, value anything that is open, unsettling, and dynamic. There is then a constant conflict between the certainties of families and birthplace and the freedom from that. According to Bauman (1999 in Beck, 2007), modernization pushes society away from static tradition towards openness, changeability, seemingly endless development, and new possibilities. And new forms of migration derive from these new space-time flexibilities and various new globalization forces (King, 2002).

“The world becomes an infinite collection of possibilities: a container filled to the brim with a countless multitude of opportunities yet to be chased or already missed. There are more — painfully more — possibilities than any individual life, however long, adventurous, and industrious, can attempt to explore, let alone adopt.” (Bauman 2000, p. 61)

Structures break down structures and thus give opportunities for the development of subjectivity and agency. What comes is individualization, when the responsibilities and the consequences and side effects are transferred to the actor. Modernization breaks down into

the decisions of individuals. Individuation is a paradoxical pressure to create and shape oneself not only in terms of one's own life but also in its bonds and webs of relationships to one's place, which influence the decision-making of people. Everything, including decisions within the actors' lives such as migration, work, or family, is a personal decision that we must understand as personal risks with all their contradictions. It is not just options that get individualized; it is also poverty, which becomes everyone's responsibility. There is always an option to improve the situation, to take responsibility for not having a job, and to migrate. The question is then if migration is an individualized decision or a means to achieve a particular goal of a village. However, personalized responsibility can play along a prevalent narrative in the village (Beck, 2007) (Bauman, 2000).

Social media contributes critically to making decisions as well. Globalization is experienced through the sharing of information through social media. People can learn how others live in different countries through Instagram or Facebook or how to migrate to the US on TikTok illegally. Social media contributes to the feeling of fragmentation, uncertainty, and risks and helps us visually see other options, possibilities, and choices; the risks in postmodernity are only our responsibility, and they can be seen through the flow of information as hidden. We then, as also possible migrants, are constantly evaluating from the globalized information we have if we migrate or not and how to take our individualized responsibility to the fullest.

1.2. Age of migration dream

As mentioned, according to Bauman (2000), we live in "liquid modernity" when time and space become fluid. This can also be seen in the concept of Bude (2010, p. 485-487), who describes the contemporary world as the "age of migration dreams." Globalization changes the perception of the fluidity of space, which makes the possibility of migration always present. Our world is not characterized as an age of migration but by its migration dreams. In this world, everybody is deciding if to migrate or not. This fact creates an existential dilemma, where the individual constantly operates with the possibility of mobility, the social costs of this mobility, and the possibility of self-realization. The options and choices seem to be enabling, but they are not always; "the gap between option and action can also mean immobilizing exhaustion" (Bude, 2010, p. 486).

“Bauman (2000: 38) perhaps points us to the existential core of the dilemma of mobility/immobility when he argues that in the end, it all comes down to the balance between ‘self-assertion and the capacity to control the social settings which render such self-assertion feasible or unrealistic.’” (Bude, 2010, p. 487)

There is a dichotomy within the migration of moving abroad or staying and waiting, as Ibañez Tirado (2019) describes a dichotomy of contrary action. Wolhfart (2015) states that a migrant’s dreams occur at two levels. The first one is a pre-migration dream, which is made within the local context of sending country and influencing migrant’s decision-making. The other one, the post-migration dream, was a dream that was challenged by the reality of the receiving country and its expectations about it. The post-migration dream and the notion of success in the receiving country also determine the pre-migration dream of the community in the sending country. In the search and trying for a post-migration dream, the pre-migration dream in the sending community is influenced. These two dreams are, therefore, interconnected and strongly influence each other. Furthermore, through these dreams of people, migration is facilitated. There is a try for a “good life” within all of the migration affords; the question is how to reach the dream of a “good life.” (Wolhfart, 2015).

There is a hope of a ‘victory of faith over experience’ while migrating abroad influenced by migration dreams (Bude, 2010, 486). However, staying can be seen also as a hope for things to get better. There is also a ‘faith that the future will be better’ as a reason to stay despite economic hardship. *“Many potential migrants stay due to ‘limitations of language,’ ‘attachment to the land of origin,’ and trust in proven survival strategies embedded in ‘social networks and family support . . . [that is] tied to the home base’”*(Wallace, 2002: 614f in Bude, 2010, 486). Bude (2010) recognizes two other ways to life journey besides migration. The first is to collectively improve the local situation (to change things locally). The other option is to resign in order to face poverty and lack of resources (Bude, 2010, p. 486).

According to Bude (2010), globalization also changed our sense of belonging. Belonging, being committed and engaged in a place and a community, becomes an accomplishment. *“This ‘banality of belonging’ is an essential part of the ‘concrete structuration of the world in which we live.’”* (Bude, 2010, p. 492). There is an emerging and active search for a place where a person belongs. The place is not given but has to be chosen, found, or created. There

is an urge to “really belong” and “admit the need for root,” which does not meet with satisfaction. On the one hand, the urge to find where a person belongs forces, people to look, take responsibility for where they live and change their space. On the other hand, it pulls people to their already familiar places and birthplaces or to be more conscious about their cultural identity (Bude, 2010).

2. Migration theory

2.1. Economic approach

In contemporary discussions on migration, the focus is often on economic motives and, recently, also on the emotional dimension of a migrant experience. However, the economic explanation is the most common explanation for migration in the current public debate. It could be argued that better wages in the US and the money difference it makes in Ecuador can be seen as the primary motivations for migrants. “Future migrants” acquire information from their counterparts and relatives in the USA and are attracted to the economic advantages that they hear about. For future migrants, the attraction of life in the US can often win in favor of migration against the stability of staying in their home country within the cultural context they know. In other words, how Sammia said, “*They do it for the money.*”

2.1.1. The most util option

Why would one migrate when it means crossing the vast barrier of illegal migration? People who decide to choose the “prosperous” opportunity to migrate must cross a vast barrier of the illegality of migrating. They have to find coyotes (people transporting illegally to the US), pay or borrow a large amount, and undertake a complicated (difficult) journey through the desert or through the rivers to the USA. There is a considerable danger connected to the illegal migration. Many people died on the journey to the US, and the reality of that danger is described in local news, for example, in the article: “*Crossing to the US looks like death*” (Extra, 2022). The illegal life in the USA consists of everlasting fear of deportation, no rights considering job situation, being dependent on the Latin American networks in the USA because of the lack of knowledge of the language, system, and job, and many more disadvantages in comparison to the US citizens or people staying on a visa stay (Enriquez, 2020).

The aspects of illegality represent a massive barrier to migration, but many still decide to migrate for the considered “better life.” According to economic approaches, the decision-making to migrate is juggling between the best optimal options. White (2016, p. 15) states that early formulation of the decision to migrate depends on the relative utility of the current location vs. alternatives. Individuals assess their optimal choices, facing the reality of the substantial wage disparity between the United States and Ecuador. Potential migrants estimate the costs and benefits of moving to an alternative option to staying and the returns they can expect from these decisions. Economic reasoning sees migration as finding the most suitable option and acting accordingly within the set system (Massey et al., 1993, p. 434). Migrants all strive to achieve a better life, and for that, the financial aspect is crucial (Massey et al., 1993). According to Wierucka (2022), whose research is focused on Ecuador, inhabitants from rural, more impoverished areas are forced to be on the move in search of better life opportunities (Wierucka, 2022, p. 1).

2.1.2. Push and pull

These economic factors, which attract people to migrate to a different country, are described by one of the classical migration theories: the “push and pull” migration theory. This theory describes that there are forces that make people either stay or migrate. The classic push and pull theory of migration explains decision-making processes based on the influence of push factors forcing individuals to leave their home country and pull factors attracting them to the receiving country. Push aspects are the influences that lead people to leave the country, such as bad job opportunities, a non-democratic political system, insufficient resources, a dangerous environment, or, in general, no possibility for social rise. Pull factors, such as specific lifestyle, material benefits, economic gain, and social rise, attract the people in the receiving country. Migration occurs only on the condition that the factors pushing the migrant out of the original space and those attracting them to the destination space reach a certain intensity (Drbohlav, Uherek, 2007).

The one thing that push and pull theory falls short of is explaining the influence of social inequalities on migration. The reality of migration is that it is not the poorest who migrate but the wealthier from, the poorer countries and those who are informed about the possibility of life in a different country and a different lifestyle connected to that. The most significant migration flows, therefore, do not originate in the most deprived regions and do not flow to

the most privileged ones, as push and pull theory implies. In short, people want what they know exists and what is better than what they have. According to Kafle et al. (2020, p. 1000): "*relative deprivation is the increasing function of not having something that one wants, sees someone else have, or considers it possible to have*" (Kafle et al., 2020).

2.2. Systematic approach

The ones who decide to stay in their place of birth can decide to do so because they have good opportunities and have built a life in Ecuador. These opportunities can come from the cultural heritage and the effort to keep the tradition alive by Salasakans, as well as from outside sources such as the support of the government and politics, where the Ecuadorian indigenous party is powerful. Other sources of income can be influenced from abroad, such as international business, tourism interest in traditional villages, or the support of local NGOs to provide education to communities impacted by social inequalities and racism by the majority. The life of a young villager can be influenced by various sources that develop throughout their life, and according to the systematic approach, individuals decide with consideration what the place and context offer in terms of opportunities and quality of life.

The migration from Salasaka can also be explained through a systematic approach. There is a structure within which the potential future migrant finds themselves, and they act accordingly (Bourdieu, 1998). The migration phenomenon, viewed through the lens of systematic theory, reveals a complex interplay of historical, economic, and social factors shaping the movement of people. "*Migration systems theory (like the historical-structural perspective) emphasizes international relations, political economy, collective action, and institutional factors*" (Castles et al., 2014, p. 23). To migrate is usually not a newly created decision. Migration movements generally arise from the existence of previous ties between sending and receiving countries based on colonization, political influence, trade, investment, or cultural ties (Castles et al., 2014). According to Boccagni (2011), "*migration has become a safety valve for citizen frustration with the failed economy as well as a channel of revenue from richer countries*" (Boccagni, 2011, p. 319). Migrant workers' wages can also be a form of social welfare provision (Boccagni, 2011). According to the systematic approach, migration tends to get a more prominent height in the migration flows during the crisis, as is the Covid crisis (Castles et al., 2014).

2.2.1. Historical links

The systematic approach explores the links between the sending and receiving countries, both where the migration flows start, how they flow, and where they end. Migration flows build up historically and reinforce and sustain themselves. These migration flows give the ground for future migration and the decision-making of migrants. In case of Ecuador, it is a country with historical migration flows, one of the strongest in Latin America (The Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration, 2013). Historically, people migrated to Spain and then to the USA. As one of my research participants, Yarina, confirmed, Ecuador is a country with one of the most substantial migration flows. People in Bolivia, Peru, or Brazil do not migrate as much, in comparison to Ecuadorians and Venezuelans. Also, migration is higher in the indigenous village of Salasaka than in other places in Ecuador.

2.2.2. Family ties

Once migratory flows are established, they generate 'migration networks': previous migrants help members of their families or communities with information on work, accommodation, and official rules. Within migration communities, there are micro-structures, which are the informal social networks developed by the migrants that help to sustain transnational family ties. Leaving can be seen as a sacrifice for the family's happiness (Patzner, 2018, p. 134). To become prosperous members of the community, individuals have the opportunity to utilize migration as a means to support their families and contribute positively to their community through remittances and gain a higher social status within these communities (Patzner, 2018, p. 142-145).

As part of systematic theory, families play a significant role in the historical and economic context. The main reason people migrate is to help their family, home, and community. As Patzner (2018, p. 134) states: *“One of the main justifications of migration is the will to help the family: parents and children, brothers and sisters, nieces, nephews, and cousins.”* *“Migrants and future migrants express the hope that their leaving for work abroad, seen as a sacrifice, will bring a “good future” to their family. They seek financial gains, freedom from want, and enough resources to fulfill their needs, but they also aspire to be a part of the modern consumption society. Those who migrate are seen as examples to follow and praised for giving up their comfort for the good of the kin group”* (Patzner, 2018).

2.2.3. Social capital

The potential migrants always face limited social capital transferability, which can be substituted by family ties and migration capital. These networks help to build cultural capital (knowledge of other countries, capabilities for organizing travel, finding work, and adapting to a new environment) and to start and sustain migratory movements (Castles et al., 2014). Social capital mobilizes individuals or communities and contains the links, power, and options in a country of origin and receiving country. Social capital is drawn from a person's way of relationships; however, by extension, this concept can also be applied to collective groups or communities (Vertovec, 2009, p. 27-52). Migrants, through migration, gain economic capital, which also transfers to social capital, which is recognized within the village (Bourdieu, 1998) (Bude, 2010, p. 486) (Erel, 2010).

2.2.4. Migration networks

Networks migrate, and it does not have to be individuals or households but also sets of people linked by acquaintance, kinship, and work experience. Social networks tie the communities through the flow of material and non-material resources. It can be; *“the nature of relational ties between actors might concern: evaluation (e.g. friendship), transfer of material resources (e.g. lending), affiliation (e.g. membership in a club), behavioral interaction (e.g. sending messages), movement between places (e.g. migration), formal relations (e.g. authority) or perceived biology (e.g. kinship or descent)”* (Vertovec, 2009, p- 33-34). These relationships and social networks are crucial for finding jobs and accommodation, circulating goods and services, as well as for psychological support and continuous social and economic information. Migrants, therefore, often migrate to specific places or to specific occupations. *“Migration is a process that both depends on and creates, social networks”* (Vertovec, 2009, p. 39) (Vertovec, 2009, p. 27-52) (Boccagni, 2011).

“Networks connect migrants across time and space. Once begun, migration flows often become self-sustaining, reflecting the establishment of networks of information, assistance and obligations which develop between migrants in the host society and friends and relatives in the sending area. These networks link populations in origin and receiving countries and ensure that movements are not necessarily limited in time, unidirectional or permanent” (Boyd, 1989: 641) (Vertovec, 2009).

2.2.5. Social inequalities

One of the influences, why people migrate is structural social inequality. For example, the social inequalities, which are prominent in Latin America and in Ecuador. „*Migration has enabled millions of families around the world to improve their incomes and living conditions substantially*” (de Haas, 2012, p. 16). Also, remittances can have positive effects on the economic growth and well-being of original communities. De Haas (2012) claims that migration can be seen as an insurance function in protecting people from destabilizing and ill-functioning markets, high inequality, corruption and authoritarianism, failing state policies, and a lack of state-provided social security and essential public services such as education and health care (de Haas, 2012, p. 16).

Migration can also be seen as a livelihood strategy and an investment pursued by a household to improve its social and economic status in the long term. In the case of Salasaka, the economic situation in Ecuador is getting worse; it is hard to find a qualified job after finishing university and to be able to support your own family with a wage; to find a good job, you need, as is common in Latin America - connections. When you are part of a minority, in this case, an indigenous community, you lack these social networks, which can help you find a well-paid job. The decision to organize on ethnic lines could be seen as a 'strategic choice’ (Castles et al., 2014).

2.2.6. Youth and the rural life

„*In many rural societies, the only way for youth to escape poverty is to move in search for an education that would open more occupational perspectives*” (Wierucka, 2022, 307). According to Wierucka (2022, s. 307), the young generation is particularly vulnerable to the influences on their decision-making about migration. They are neither children nor adults, so they have a unique position within society, which connects to their social status. “*Indigenous youth are particularly vulnerable to this because of their position in local societies – young people are not considered children; nevertheless, they are not yet fully adults and are more susceptible to manipulation or influences*” (Crivello 2009, p. 4 in Wierucka, 2022, p. 307). According to Bourdieu (1986 in Wierucka 2022, s. 307), youth aspirations are the reflection of structural differences. and it becomes especially true for modern economies, such as in South America, where wealth differences have deepened over the last decades. The main option for the young generation to move socially up is to migrate,

which can promise better job opportunities, better education, and a better life. Specifically, the younger generation is also much more perceptive to the influence of social media, where they can follow their friends living in the US.

In conclusion, all mentioned systematic factors, family ties, social status, history of migration, and political and economic background of the country collectively shape an individual's choice to migrate. The reasons why many people from Salasaka migrate are the long history of migration in Ecuador, the migration networks, information and social remittances coming from relatives, and the age of migrants, in which they are looking for opportunities. While some villagers find opportunities within the local context, a considerable number opt for migration due to the existing systemic conditions in which they find themselves. This theory supports Wierucka (2022); according to her, in Ecuador, migration increases with the level of poverty, pressures of the land as well as education.

2.3. Narrative approach

2.3.1. The age of migration dreams

Bude (2010, p. 485-487) describes the contemporary world as the "age of migration dreams," the world where the migration narrative plays a significant role in influencing decisions to migrate. An alternative approach to studying migration from the perspective of economic reasoning, utility decision, and systematic approach is through narratives. In order to understand the migration decision, one must consider it as a phenomenon shaped by stories, legends, and narratives within the village. This storytelling creates a migration dream in the village, which profoundly influences the decision-making of the younger generation. As a counter-narrative, the importance of indigenous heritage can also be seen, suggesting the need to support the local community and preserve cultural traditions (Bude, 2010).

Lévi Strauss (2007) argues that myths are essential for studying societies. He emphasizes the importance of the myths and stories circulating in society. These stories have specific patterns that can tell us something about society. Similarly, myths of migration can tell us about the process of migration and social norms connected to migration (Lévi-Strauss, 2007). Narratives are a practice of storytelling and the content of resources to tell stories and the auspices under which stories are told (Gubrium, Holstein, 1998 in Temple, 2001, p. 388-389). Narratives can be compared to oral histories, which give insights into migration

processes. Narratives, similar to oral histories, create and sustain migration flows through familial and communal networks. Through the narratives, we can study the migration processes, like the creating and the maintenance of migration flows and the reasoning behind migration (Mand, 2006) (Temple, 2001).

2.3.2. Collective and individual identities

According to Temple (2001), narrative plays a fundamental role in shaping collective identities. Narratives, including migration narratives, can be seen as a framework through which individuals structure their lives. Individual identities are constructed through narratives – the assembling stories define who we are and what we do. These narratives can be migration narratives and lead to accepting a concrete identity, leading individuals to migrate. Identities are constructed through narratives – the assembling stories define who we are and what we do. Narratives provide continuity and coherence. How we position ourselves within narratives is crucial for our understanding of narratives and the social world we live in. Narratives provide a framework for understanding the self, offering a sense of continuity and coherence. The personal narratives are connected to the narratives of the community, of the society, and of the political unit, and they cross borders through the family networks (Mand, 2006) (Temple, 2001) (Gómez-Eastern, Benítez, 2013).

2.3.3. Power control

Narratives work similarly to discourse as a kind of power control. The strongest and most common narratives prevail and control the creation of other narratives. Narratives can then be censored or supported by some groups. Foucault (1969) describes discourse as a form of pressure that can be social, cultural, or political. In the case of migration discourse, we could describe a discourse influenced by national politics and international influences and a discourse located in the community of Salasaka, which will differ from the national one but will be interconnected. The discourse is produced, controlled, chosen, and organized through many processes and through social institutions in society. It influences the decision-making of people, but it is also influenced by them (Temple, 2001) (Foucault, 1969).

2.3.4. Storytelling

Narrative practice can be defined as “*the activities of storytelling, the resources used to tell*

stories and the auspices under which stories are told” (Gubrium, Holstein, 1998 in Temple, 2001). According to Stephens (2014), narratives need to be cohesive, contextualized, and temporal, and they need to possess their own agency. The narrative method moves away from grand representations and offers the possibility to understand at the micro level and incorporate a diversity of experiences. There is an importance of the “*very value of narrativity as a mode of making sense of reality (whether the factual reality of actual events or the moral, symbolic reality of fiction)*” (Stephens, 2014, p. 428). There is also the time aspect of narratives. Narratives consider the history, the presence, and the future of a place (Yong Ade, 2021) (Mand, 2016).

“Narratives are stories that people tell in a variety of different contexts ranging from formal accounts that are performed and staged, or the telling of events and feelings to friends and family while in some cases they are relayed to researchers. The telling of a narrative requires an audience who participate in different ways and can determine the success of [a] story and identity of a narrator.” (Ochberg 1994:114 in Mand, 2016, p: 1060)

In the contemporary world, where there is how Bauman (2000) and Bude (2010) describe so much uncertainty, there is a lot of space for decisions to be influenced by local narratives. The theory that narratives play a crucial role in the decision-making of the young generation in Salasaka may partially explain the reality of a huge percentage of the population choosing to migrate to the USA. There is the question of what the narratives in the village are, how they are created, and how they are then applied by the young generation. Are narratives the primary reason for people to migrate, and do reality and practice differ distinctly from what narratives imply and how they reason social aspects?

3. Cultural identity and migration

To understand the movement of people in the case of Salasaka, it is important to focus on the migrant’s cultural identity as it can influence the migration practices and help us understand the migration flows. Cultural identity is essential for understanding the choices of a migrant because identity is linked to the sense of belonging and the search for belonging. If we understand the identity of people in Salasaka, we will also better understand their choices to migrate or, on the other hand, to stay. Identity as a self and collective

categorization can be seen as one of the determinants of an actor's choices.

3.1. Identification

Identities are made through an open-ended process of identification. As Bauman (2011) claims, identity behaves like a verb; however, it is a strange one that appears only in the future tense. Processes identifications of villagers can be also seen as a part of a transformation in the village. According to Bauman (2011), reconstructing and redefining identity can help as navigate uncertainty in the contemporary globalized society but has to (Bauman, 2011, p. 18-36). Identity is influenced and contrasted with the "other" both in cases of mass migration or identification against majority. According to Colomer (2017), globalization creates a new perception of social and cultural spaces and leads to changes in the expression of culture, identity, and belonging (Gómez-Estern, Benítez, 2013).

According to Castles et al. (2014, p. 197), migration changes communities in a complex way "*because returnees may import new ideas that unsettle traditional practices and hierarchies*". Social remittances include flows of normative structures, systems of practice, and social capital. Social remittances can be a significant mover of migrant flow and the transformation a village with massive migration is going through. Identity migrates with the migrants; however, it is rearticulated and influences the collective identity of the villagers. The village can be seen through a perspective of transnationalism and can be viewed through globalization and migration processes as a transnational community. A transnational community is "*a group that lives their lives across borders*" (Castles et al., 2014, p. 197) (Gomez-Estern, Benítz, 2013).

3.2. Cultural identity

Essentialists conceptualize cultural identity as a 'true self' shared by people with a common history and ancestors. The first to identity is through essentialism, which emphasizes perceived similarities that create a sense of 'unity,' representing the fundamental essence of the 'people' (Hall, 1996, 111-112 in Hussey, 2014). Essential categories include origin, tradition, language, traditional clothing, etc. This approach to cultural identity can also be observed within the indigenous people's movement and their activism. Hall's (1996 in Hussey, 2014, p. 203) second definition of identity is that it is more of a becoming process than a being. Through an ongoing and open-ended process, identity is reconstructed in

contrast to the “other” through history and the place. Identities are not a priori; they do not transcend culture, history, time, and place. They are historical; they come from somewhere; they change through power relations, and they are temporal, placed, spatial, and situational (Hussey, 2014). This is why Hall describes identities as “*the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past*” (Hall, 1996 in Hussey, 2014, p. 203).

3.3. Cultural heritage

Globalization, according to Colomer (2017), has led to fundamental changes and “*has affected people's ability to define their cultural identity and community, and consequently the meaning of heritage for them*” (Colomer, 2017, p. 915). Globalization creates new perceptions of social and cultural spaces and leads to changes in expressions of culture, identity, and belonging, and thus, the role of heritage today (Colomer, 2017). The continuing of tradition cannot be seen only as sentimental but also as a practical means. Globalization affects the perception of cultural heritage as well through “*heritage-making*” (Testa, 2020), when heritage becomes a medium of empowerment of ethnic identity and potential economic gain. Cultural heritage is also important for international politics and economic gain from potential tourism in Ecuador (Colomer, 2017) (Testa, 2020). According to Kyle (1999), cultural heritage can be connected to the opportunities to migrate. The Otavalo Kichwa people, known for their handicrafts, were among the first indigenous groups to migrate due to demand for their products (Kyle, 1999).

4. The case of Salasaka identity

4.1. Indigenous minority

Indigenous minority has a specific position within the culture as an ethnic minority with its own social inequalities. There is a continuous movement in Ecuador for indigenous rights and for continuing indigenous traditions. The indigenous political party called Pachakutik is one of Latin America’s strongest indigenous political parties and has gained a significant influence also at the regional level (Tym, Saturno, 2023). Ecuador has one of the biggest percentages of indigenous population with Bolivia, according to Edwin - 70 percent. The majority of Ecuador’s populace is, however, recognized as mestizo, a multiracial group of mixed Amerindian and European ancestry, 70% (Nagar, 2021). Salasakas belong to the

Kichwa Indigenous nationality, Kitchwa group is the largest indigenous nationality with nearly 800 000 members, which represent 12% of the population (iwgia.org) (unfpa.org).

Ecuador has changed politically over the last decade. According to Escobar (2010), Latin America is not going through a direct epochal shift. Escobar (2010) places the rights of indigenous inhabitants at the center of attention, emphasizing their right to decision-making and participation in the state's politics. Escobar (2010) underscores the importance of the representation of original inhabitants in political decision-making as well as in the production of knowledge upon which political decisions are based. Social movements are becoming more widespread, and they represent a positive sign of increased stability. The economy in Ecuador, however, remains highly dependent and reliant on primary commodity exports (oil), remittances, and tourism. *“Workers continue to struggle for fundamental rights like healthcare and decent wages, and much of the population remains economically marginalized. Governing and living in Ecuador remains difficult, he said, despite of the fact that “Ecuador has been profoundly democratized by popular struggles”* (wilsoncenter.org).

4.2. Salasaka village

Ecuador can be divided into three main regions: Amazonia, Highlands, and the Coast. Salasaka is located in the central highlands of Ecuador, in the Tungurahua Province. Province Tungurahua is densely populated; near Salasaka, there is a city, Pelileo, and further Ambato. The population of Salasaka is reported to be 5,195; however, Salasakas reports a distinctively higher number. They have their distinctive style of dress and tradition and speak their own language, Kitchwa; they also speak Spanish.

According to Powers and Corr (2012), rather than become another mestizo community during continual disputes between mestizo pueblos and indigenous communities in 1920, Salasaka became a zone of cultural refusal as indigenous actors made a conscious decision to maintain a specific indigenous cultural identity (Powers, Corr, 2012, p. 25). *“Ecuadorian writers have frequently described the Salasakas as fiercely protective of their territory and their cultural identity and as proudly refusing to show deference to whites”* (Corr, Powers, 2012, p. 8). They also value their traditions in response to the majority intruders: *“They are among Ecuador's most traditional indigenous people and are said to “have fended off encroachment by outsiders for centuries”* (Cassagrande, 1981, p. 267 in Corr, Powers, 2012).

Methodology

1.1. About the research

This study aims to describe the phenomenon of migration within a village of indigenous inhabitants, which has transitioned from a homogeneous, closed community (Kyle, 1999) to one strongly influenced by transnational factors and familial migration ties. The thesis seeks to contribute to understanding migration dynamics in a location where cultural identity and heritage play pivotal roles, both in personal identity formation and within the context of the minority status within the Ecuadorian state, as well as in economic opportunities both in Ecuador and abroad. The research thus delves into migration within a village undergoing transformation amidst processes of globalization, transnationalism, and capitalism. This transformation marks a significant shift from the traditional agricultural lifestyles of previous generations to a youth population highly influenced by social media and migration aspirations, attempting to navigate challenges such as limited job prospects and economic instability.

The research field of ethnographic research is the indigenous village in the highlands of Ecuador, Salasaka, characterized as a “*so-called remote locality*” (Okely, 2012, p. 4). My main research question is, “How is the migration dream created and constructed in the local village of Salasaka, and how does it influence the decisions of young people?” Understanding the microcosm of a migration dream in a village can help us understand people's decision to migrate illegally in many cases. The research will focus on youth and young adults. The primary focus of the thesis will be the youth and young adults around the age of 18-30 as they constitute the demographic most inclined towards migration in Salasaka (Jokisch, 2007) (Tayel, Ariel). Concerning migration, this age group can provide valuable data for understanding decision-making and the interplay of local and global narratives influencing migration.

1.2. Methodology

For this topic, it was necessary to choose a methodology that leaves space for the local culture and conditions in a transnational village. Ethnography offers flexibility in the research to comprehend cultures and communities from an emic view. The advantage of

ethnographic research is that it is flexible and open and thus responds to changes in the course of the topic. During ethnographic research, it is thus possible to focus on important topics and problems that gradually emerge as part of the research and advance it as it goes along. It also comprehends themes and information that, in other ways, would not be reachable as semi-structured interviews alone when the researcher does not have their own experience with the field and close relationships with research participants (Hammersley, 2007, p. 1-20).

1.3. The process of the research

The main framework of the research is ethnography. My ethnographic research builds upon the experience of volunteering in the village from July to September 2021 as an English teacher in NGO in Ecucla Katitawa. The main method of my research was ethnography, which lasted from mid-February to mid-May 2024. In preparation for the ethnographic research, three online interviews were conducted (two interviews with Sammia and one with Edwin). During my three months of ethnographic research, I engaged in English classes at the local school during the morning (7-12) and organized afternoon classes with three groups depending on age and level of English proficiency. Research participants were primarily recruited from these classes. I also attended local events such as local parties, cultural events, and anniversaries, and I accompanied research participants on trips, walks, running errands, or dinners. During my stay, I wrote an ethnographic diary from the conversations I had and from participative observation, and I conducted ethnographic interviews. Ethnographic interviews were led as an open-ended dialogue and as a conversation (Okely, 2012, p. 1-25); the longer interviews were recorded (8 interviews), and the shorter segments of conversation were written directly after. During ethnographic interviews, there was an emphasis on personal stories and decision-making processes.

As a part of the ethnographic interview, I also incorporated the photo-elicitation method by asking research participants about pictures of their family and friends they follow online. The images frequently arise spontaneously during these ethnographic interviews. The visual method of photo-elicitation offers to explore migration-related themes and bridge the communication gap between researchers and participants. Photo elicitation based on photographs created by the respondent then supports the subject's authority compared to the

classic distribution, where the researcher has the authority. The photo-elicitation¹ interview is also characterized by the fact that it helps to evoke specific experiences and emotions associated with it in the respondent (Harper, 2002). According to Ndione (2018), images have the advantage of showing situations and interactions rather than ‘universal categories or abstract types’ and could also uncover transnational narratives in visual form (Ndione, 2018) (Harper, 2002).

The primary research participants during this part of the research were (names are changed):

Sammia (29)– the coordinator of the NGO, has a major in the economy, on a Fullbright scholarship in the US in Michigan.

Edwin (32)– a friend of Sammia, previously in the ministry organizing cultural events, now unemployed.

Yarina (62)– mother of Sammia, working in agriculture and helping with NGO, advocating for teaching English in Salasaka.

Tayel (40) is a teacher of English in the local school, has a family and two daughters, and is worried about the political situation.

Rafael (35) is a construction worker with a family and a 7-year-old daughter who is thinking about migrating to the US.

Jordan (23) – is a student and a musician, making and recording music and video clips for the opportunities and contacts in the music field, wants to stay in Salasaka.

Ariel (27) – is a student and owns a company called Kausari Film, which broadcasts events in Salasaka and makes interviews, podcasts, and YouTube videos.

Jimena (28) – is a tour guide, a student at an economic university, now focusing on learning English, wanting to go to the US as Sammia did.

Ainara (24) is just finishing a gastronomy school, working part-time jobs (on the call) in Ambato, and wanting to have her own bakery in Salasaka.

Christian (30) is a university graduate who was able to afford it because of the financial support of his family from abroad. He is currently programming, doing Facebook and podcasts.

¹ During the research many pictures were able to evoke pictures, however some seemed more as a distant representation emotion of people, research partners were related to. However, there were new topics occurring because of the pictures and the introduction of the photos in the text was very valuable as a data and as description of the text.

1.4. Data analysis

My framework for the research is social constructivism. In my research, I emphasize dialogue and stories. The researcher is viewed as an active co-creator of data, engaging in interpretive processes that generate a new meaning. Researchers co-create data through “thick description”; therefore, all understanding is interpretation. According to the interpretive approach of Geertz (1973, p. 5): "*Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun*".

Interviews and the ethnographic diary were analyzed through thematic analysis. Recorded interviews were transcribed and coded according to the codes that emerged and were identified from the data. Some of the main themes within the codes were the American dream, collectivism, job problems, family ties, financial aspects, and cultural identity. I analyzed the themes in relation to the broader context of data (interviews, participation observation, and pictures), public statistical data, relevant literature discussing similar cases, and theoretical frameworks. I explore the implications of the findings, considering how the identified themes contribute to understanding the phenomenon being studied and addressing the research questions.

1.5. Ethics and Reflection

For obtaining ethnographic knowledge and also for establishing relationships, it is an important part of the ethnographic research to be an embodied participant observer and to establish close relationships. For my dialogues, I chose individuals I knew to ensure a trusting exchange. Through the research I try to portray the research participants as active actors. My research participants were often my students but also friends. Participation in the village led to having small, however important, encounters, knowing more about what is happening in the village, and being able to personally witness major events. One of the advantages of participating in the events in the village as well as teaching locals English also allowed for a slightly better acceptance by the locals, as some of the children recognized me, and their parents were glad that I was teaching their children English (Okely, 2012, p. 1-25) (Hammersley, 2007, p. 1-20).

An important concept in ethnography is serendipity, which determines the direction of the research on base of who the researcher meets, with whom he talks, and which information is obtained. To whom I met was dependent on my own personal characteristics such as age,

gender, or ethnicity. As a researcher, a white European and young woman, a student, and a volunteer, I have a specific position that influenced the course of the research in Salasaka. My position as the researcher, therefore, profoundly influenced the process of ethnographic research and the development of the interviews. My age and my experience working abroad (US, Spain) seemed to be an advantage and made me a better interlocutor for my research partners. However, being a “Gringa” might exclude me from some interactions or situations, which would not make me representable enough for the indigenous community. However, it also produced some interaction based on these cultural and ethnic differences (Okely, 2012: 5).

1.6. The language

During the research I spoke with research participants in Spanish (except Sammia and sometime Edwin). In Salasaka the local language is Kitchwa which is used between family members or friends, who know it and during more informal conversation for example in school. However, everyone knows Spanish and people who can speak Kitchwa often switch between the two languages depending on the situation and other people participating in the conversation.

The topic of my research was transparent and openly shared with the research participants. It has positive aspects as the research participants often shared information with me because they knew I was interested in this topic. However, sensitivity surrounding the topic of migration necessitated careful navigation of ethical considerations throughout the research process and could impose some exclusion on me as a researcher during some conversations or events.

During the research, there was, in my opinion, a reciprocal change between me as a researcher and the community. I helped the community with teaching English, I provided information from abroad, and sometimes practiced English during conversations with my research participants, and in return, I asked for ethnographic interviews and information about the village, culture, and migration. However, my presence could potentially influence migration both in a bad and a good way.

Analysis of data

In the following text, I introduce themes that have emerged during my ethnographic research. I analyze the data I have collected through ethnography research, ethnographic interviews, ethnographic observations, and photo-elicitation photos, with connection to the theoretical literature, literature about similar cases, and available statistical data. In the first chapter, I focus on cultural identity, symbols of cultural identity and collectivism of the Salasaka community with its connection to migration. In the second chapter, I explain the economic reasoning for migration, which in Salasaka was very strong, the money “talk” about the differences in earnings in the US and in Ecuador, I explain the COVID crisis and its consequences on migration and the most common saying in Salasaka: “*There are no jobs.*” In the third part, I continue with a systematic approach to migration as I further explain the struggles with finding a job within the current economics, the importance of family ties for housing and finding a job, and entrepreneurship, which results in a strategy to find a job in Salasaka. Finally, I describe the migration dream in Salasaka and the most prevalent narrative of a migration dream, which was the main migration strategy of Salasakans.

- 1) Illustration photo: Parade with traditional clothes representing the major festival Caporale during the celebration of Pawkar Raymi² in the center of Salasaka.

² Pawkar Raymi is a Kitchwa term that means many colors. The event is a celebration of the products of the earth. This festival is celebrated in several Andean communities during January, February, and March each year. The picture is from March 21st a day of beginning of the Andean calendar.



1. Cultural identity and migration

In the following chapter, I describe the perceived changes in Salasaka, addressing the topic of cultural identity and collectiveness, which emerged abundantly through the research and were perceived and deemed as important for the self-description of the Salasaka community and its culture. I discuss these themes in regard to migration.

1.1. Cultural identity and the poncho

According to (Lamino Jaramillo, Boren-Alpízar, 2023) some groups are more willing to migrate due to their cultural heritage, which could be true for Salasakas, recognized for their distinctive culture and heritage. Salasaka appeared very transnational with many migration flows, yet there was an effort to preserve its traditions. Two years ago, during my previous volunteer work in Salasaka, I went with Sammia to an “event” to help Willan make a new poncho. It was traditional clothing worn by men, a black woolen poncho with subtle white embroidery, sometimes in everyday life but always during traditional events. The poncho, traditional clothing worn by men, nowadays bought very expensive, was a black woolen garment with subtle white embroidery, worn sometimes in daily life but always during traditional events. The poncho was made from wool and required stomping to produce better cloth. Making wool threads was a daily activity, which could be observed among elderly

women in the village. In the backyard, there was a whole family, and a few men were stepping on the poncho while listening to music from one of the speakers. Clothes were hung out to dry; chickens, dogs, and children were running around; women were making lunch in a kitchen with bare walls on an open fire and plucking feathers from chickens. There was a big fridge, as in many kitchens here in Salasaka, but the clothes were washed by hand outside, as in all Ecuadorian households. We had cooked rice and some meat. During the meal, we ate together, and I sat with about eight other young people; we all looked at our phones.

Even though people in Salasaka mixed traditional clothes with their personal, more globalized style, they were immensely proud of their cultural identity and traditional clothing. According to Lamino Jaramillo and Boren-Alpizar (2023, p. 882): “*Indigenous Salasakas are famous for being strict in their cultural preservation, language, customs, agricultural practices, and costumes, which are considered unique.*” Traditional clothing was primarily worn while representing one's culture (pictures 2 and 3) and was perceived a synonymous with cultural identity and as a cultural symbol of preserving one's cultural heritage. Despite migration and transnational influences or the influence of the majority in Ecuador, traditional local cultural identity was firmly maintained, possibly also as a reaction to external pressures. However, the perceived importance of tourism could also play a significant role in attempting to preserve and perform its identity due to potential economic and political benefits.

2. Poncho was worn during public appearances at traditional or political events (Sammia, Edwin, Jimena or Ariel). Before I took this picture Ariel put on a poncho for the live broadcasting of interviews in Ambato during Fiesta de flores y frutas.
3. Tayel wearing a poncho while teaching his students; wearing a poncho was obligatory for the teachers in the local school. How he told me, Tayel didn't use to wear a poncho when studying at university.



“It is not important where you are born; it is important to have the capacity and the responsibility towards one's culture, language, and tradition. They can live in different countries. It is really important for intercultural relationships not to forget our estate. The family should be together.” (Sammia’s aunt)

Tayel, an English teacher whom I helped with classes in a school, was worried also worried about the situation in Salasaka, about the economic crisis, rising prices, and new criminality in Salasaka. However, he didn't recognize migration as a problem as long as it did not result in the loss of identity and family roots and the poncho was a symbol of not losing the culture abroad. *“They no longer wear the poncho. They (the majority) tell you not to wear traditional white pants, a shirt, or a poncho. It is like they transformed to the mestizo culture. The culture is lost.”* According to Tym and Saturno (2023) there is a *“culture of politics”* regarding indigenous rights in the indigenous villages in Ecuador, which reacts to the local values and interests as well as the global ones – concerning culture could be a part of it.

According to Wierutcka (2021), in Ecuador migration is the only path to social advancement in an indigenous village. However, Lamino Jaramillo and Boren-Alpizar (2023) describe that studying and conserving culture was perceived as the first option for a life path and migration as a second option. During my research in Salasaka, there appear to be two main ways in which people could be successful, which I observed: through cultural heritage

(sometimes supported by remittances) or through migration. Migration was only considered detrimental when people didn't keep their traditions and language or didn't wear their traditional clothing. If they didn't and represented their culture identity, they were still an honorable part of the Salasaka community. Additionally, even though not primary, it served as a means of raising awareness about Salasaka abroad therefore, could support future tourism as Salasaka had opportunities through tourism, such as making crafts in Salasaka and abroad.

There was no choice between staying home and supporting your community and leaving. It was a choice between staying and supporting the community and cultural identity and leaving and supporting the community through remittances and representing the cultural identity abroad. For example, Sammia did during her Fullbright scholarship, which now two of my students want to follow. One year ago, Sammie had to decide between taking a stable job within the politics of Pelileo (a nearby city) or accepting the Fullbright scholarship to teach Kitchwa and to represent her culture in the US; she chose the second option: *“It is a big opportunity, not just for me but for Salasaka. If I had declined the scholarship, they might have thought that Salasaka would be canceling later, too. I want to do it for Salasaka, to open the door for Salasaka women.”*

1.2. Migration as a collective support

During my research, Salasaka was often described in terms of collectiveness and unity (picture 4), also as in Lamino Jaramillo Boren-Alpízar (2023, p. 882) research. *“Here in Salasaka, it's a community; it's calm. We are together and united. It is safe here because we have indigenous justice³. When someone do something bad, we come together and punish him. We use nettle (a plant) to clean him. We do that, for example, with boys who steal because they want alcohol or drugs.”⁴* Tayel responded to me when I asked him about Ecuador's political situation, which was getting worse, and showed me the Facebook video capturing the event, there were a few boys in the center of Salasaka, just in their underwear, surrounded by people. Salasakas culture responds to such issues as “abandoned children” by

³ In Salasaka, there was a local municipality administering the village, as well as a political council. During my time in the village, I observed a group of men dressed in traditional clothing — white pants and ponchos, barefoot, which held significant cultural symbolism. William was partially involved with this group. According to him, there was a concept of indigenous rights, but its implementation was complicated and not often used. The political group had its rights to decide, but according to Ariel for many decision needed the approval from the municipality of Pelileo (viz. the website of the local administrative district of Salasaka: <https://gobiernoparroquialsalasaka.gob.ec/#>).

uniting (Lamino Jaramillo, Boren-Alpizar, 2023) and has the power to unite and fight against the Mestizo culture, as Corr and Powers (2012) describes. According to Bhugra (2004, p. 136): “Collectivism refers to a society in which people are cohesively integrated and which throughout their lifetime continues to protect them from aggression from outsiders in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.”

4. Women from the Salasaka museum explained to the taxi driver, "Salasaka is a community, which like to share." As photo illustrates a drum in the Salasaka museum, where is written “Viva la comunidad Salasaka 2011⁵”.



As Betrolli and Marchetta (2014) suggest, migration can be portrayed as a joint decision of migrants and some groups of stayers. “Collective remittance” from abroad can support relatives as a sign of not forgetting their own cultural identity, and therefore, it also supports the cultural identity of people in Salasaka and the fight for their rights against the majority. Remittances can, among other things, work as evidence of migrants' success and make migrants a “good” and important part of the community, which can be even more common in a country dependent on remittances, where 14% of adults receive remittances regularly (Jokisch, Pribilski, 2002), (Peter, 2010) (Boccagni, 2011).

There was a cultural tradition in Salasaka of sharing food, where tables were arranged into a long table covered with plastic, and people placed simple foods such as various types of

⁵ Translate to: “Long live the Salasaka community 2011.”

potatoes and corn, significant products of Salasaka, on it. This food was then shared and eaten together at the table (picture 5). The significant concept of sharing could also be applied to remittances when migrants strive to have something to share. Remittances can be viewed as a tangible result, and manifestation of the support migration provides to an indigenous village. Migrants collectively support the village, the education of children, and their future status in society.

According to Bhugra (2004, p. 137) *“collectivist societies prioritize common good and social harmony over individual interests. Individuals are bound by relationships, which emphasize a common fate. Individuals are encouraged to put other people's and the group's interest before their own. Concession and compromise are essential ingredients in promoting role-based and virtue-based conceptions of justice, and institutions are seen as an extension of the family.”*

5. Sharing food on a big table in a school during Teachers' day. This kind of tradition was also done during the celebration of Pawkar Raymi. Typically, there was mainly corn and potatoes on the table, brought by people, but in this case also cheese or a few pieces of meat.



2. Economical approach

In this chapter, I will focus on the economic approach discussed in also in the theoretical part. Firstly, I introduce how money was perceived in relation to the utility approach and how “exact” numbers were mentioned. In the second topic, I discuss the impact of issues connected to the COVID pandemic on migration, including its influence on migration patterns. I also describe the narrative prevalent in the village about money as “There are no jobs” or that working in the US was considered as more advantageous due to currency exchange differences.

1.3. ”They do it for the money.”

Money emerged as one of the most mentioned motivations for migration. *“They do it (migrate) for the money. Cause now everything is money anyway”* (Sammia). The exact numbers, the counting of money, and the wage disparities between Ecuador and the US were described as pull factors to migrate. As White (2016, p. 15) states, the early formulation of the decision to migrate depends on the relative utility of the current location vs. alternatives. Therefore the individuals were assessing their optimal choices by counting the differences between what a person can earn in the US and in Ecuador: *“In the United States, it says they earn 20 dollars an hour or 23 or 24 an hour. As a home consultant, the minimum one earns here is 25 dollars a day. It’s also 20 to 25 dollars but for a day”* (Tayel). Migration to the US opens up new opportunities in terms of earning money. According to Codesal (2014, p. 271): *“with the migration to the US, cash became available in quantities never before seen”* - as we can see in how Rafael explains the process of illegal migration and is amazed by how soon can you pay back the loan for migrating: *“To go to the US costs 10,000 dollars or 20 000, and many people have to take loans for that. There are also banks that specialize in these loans. You have to take loans; however, a loan of 20,000 can be paid in just one year”* (Rafael). That amount of money astounded people as it was unimaginable for them.

1.4. The Covid and the other crises

One of the push factors for migration can be an economic crisis, as the one which followed the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis can be compared to many other crises in Ecuador, as was the crisis due to dollarization in 1999, the economic crisis in 1990, or the crisis during the first decade of the 21st century (Vono, 2011 in Alarcón, Oradones, 2015). The economy

significantly worsened after the COVID-19 pandemic: *“The economy really after covid completely completely dropped”* (Rafael). It was during this time that migration to the US turned to mass migration as also many businesses closed down, prompting people to leave the area as Rafael’s brother: *“I think that last year, partially because of COVID and all that, many businesses were unable to sustain themselves, so they decided to emigrate there. My brother, too, because, well, due to the economic situation that was happening, he also could not stay here any longer, and that is why he decided to emigrate”* (Rafael).

During the Covid crisis, migration patterns changed, from migration to Spain, which was considered safer but more complicated, to migration to the US, which was viewed as easier but more dangerous. This change in migration was also influenced by the migration politics as new requirements for obtaining visas in Spain and also the economic situation and lack of jobs in Spain. During that time migration to the US seemed as a quick fix (Alarcón, Oradones, 2015): *“Also, because entering Spain is difficult, you need papers. So, there are people who travel with a passport. And during that time (during COVID), people realized that it was easier to enter the United States, so that's why it's easy illegally. Not so easy because many people have died, either on the death train, as they say in Mexico, or crossing the river. But still, people take risks looking for a future”* (Ainara).

In Salasaka, there were three main options for employment: (i) agriculture (also Lamino Jaramillo, Boren-Alpizar, 2023), a slowly dying field because of hard work, lack of payment, and recently also lack of water, (ii) construction, a field where people migrated the most because of the opportunities in the US and the difference between the wages and (iii) other fields such as selling indigenous products or working in a nearby city as a cook, messenger, tourist guide, or working in banks, ministries or politics. The choice to work in agriculture was the most common for the parents and grandparents of my peers and it was the only income source (Lamino Jaramillo, Boren-Alpizar, 2023). However, as Lamino Jaramillo and Boren-Alpizar (2023, p. 882) describe, *“the agricultural system changes have transformed Indigenous youth’s farming perceptions by considering agriculture antiquated, unprofitable, and a poor way of living.”* Working in agriculture was not only *“very hard work,”* as Willan described, but it also did not earn enough money to support one's family as the prices were rising as Yarina mentioned in the case of guinea pigs not being profitable any more.

The environmental crisis was also a concern as there was a problem with the lack of water in the village, another reason to migrate. *“It doesn't rain, there is no water. Before, there was water in rivers, and it rained. The agriculture is getting worse, that's why a lot of people go away/abroad and are gone.”* (Yarina)

1.1. “There are no jobs”

Salasaka was a community, as mentioned by research participants, and therefore, to get around the village, it was common to hitchhike a car for 25 cents. Once, when I was walking and hoping for a ride, a car that had just passed me stopped further and waited for me. It was how it was common in Salasaka, a pickup truck, in this case transporting guanabana (local fruits) in the back. There was a man and a younger man, and I squeezed in:

Man: *“Where are you from? From the United States?”*

Me: *“No, I am from the Czech Republic.”*

Man: *“So, a different place?”*

Man: *“And how is the economy there? Is there a work?”*

Me: *“In my city, there is work; I am from the capital, from Prague. It got more expensive after COVID-19; the prices went up, for example, in houses. But there is a work.”*

Man: *“And what about the construction?”*

Me: *“Hmm, I think it is good. We have a lot of people from Ukraine who work in construction in our country, and this is also because of the war in Ukraine.”*

Me: *“Do you work in construction?”*

Man: *“No, before I did, but now I have a plantation for guanabanas (local fruit). I ask for my son. I guess it's bad with work in the whole world, right?”*

Me: *“Yeah, I think after the COVID-19, it got worse all over the world. The businesses don't have money, and there are fewer jobs.”*

Man: *“Do you want to take my son to your country?”*

Me: *“Hm, rather not.”* (laughing)

The lack of job opportunities was a common topic of conversations and the expression, “No hay trabajo” (which translates to Spanish as “There are no jobs”) was frequently used as a reaction to my question of why people migrate. The mentioned conversation in the car proves the urgency of the lack of jobs in the desperation of a father to find a job for his son.

According to the local narrative, there were no jobs; the ones who had jobs, as previously Edwin, were considered the “*lucky ones*,” as Yarina and Tayel have told me. My friends often had jobs, but their large concern was whether they could earn enough money to support their families in the future. As most of the informants agreed, it was feasible to live on a daily basis in the village, but saving to buy a house seemed nearly impossible without financial resources from migration. When even low-paying jobs in big cities like New York or Paris exceed what can be earned in Ecuador it was not worth it to work in Salasaka anymore. (Lamino Jaramillo, Boren-Alpizar, 2023) (Jokisch, 2002, p. 523- 524).

“In Ecuador, we do not have a good salary. You can work all day, but you will not have enough to survive. My uncle, for example, worked in a mechanic shop, and he just earned at the end of the month 400 dollars, and it is difficult to live with this quantity of money. It is difficult for the whole of Ecuador and Latin America. The people who want to live better have to migrate for necessities, to take care of their families, and to risk their lives because it is difficult to get a visa” (Jimena).

3. Systematic approach

In the third chapter of the analysis, I describe the systematic influences of migration. Similarly, as in the case of systematic racism, there are historical, political, economical, and social influences that have a big impact on the decision-making of migration and on the built migration flows. I have already described the influence of COVID-19 and the environmental crisis, which can be seen as economical but also systematic. In the following chapter, I primarily describe the complicated job situation in Salasaka, the family ties, and their influences, and the entrepreneurship strategy, which ties both family ties and lack of jobs together and is an adaptation to the ill-functioning job market.

1.1. Looking for a job

While their parents worked in agriculture and often had only basic education, and some of their great-grandparents couldn't speak Spanish or read and write (Sammia), the younger generation studied universities, worked in ministries, appeared on television, or moderated local cultural events and use social media to promote their activities. According to Lamino Jaramillo and Boren-Alpizar (2023) the new generation is encouraged to continue studying

to overcome racial issues with academic preparation. Many, however, struggle to find a job after finishing university, while the economic situation worsened (Sammia), and they (also as an indigenous minority) lack contacts. None from Sammia's class from the economical university found and if they did, it was not a good payment, which she explained me on the example of her friend who, after almost two years of unsuccessfully searching for a job after finishing her university degree, took a job as a cashier in an electronic shop because. She felt bad that she still lived with her parent and was not contributing. According to Edwin the ones who didn't find a job were now abroad. *"There are many people who have studied, have completed a degree, or have a university degree, but there is no work, no work, for that reason they go"* (Tayel).

Looking for a job and giving CV seemed like an everyday task in Salasaka. One day, while walking with Jimena and her friend, we stopped at a house to submit a CV. Although Jimena worked as a tour guide and her friend made traditional musical instruments, they both applied for a newly available job counting water usage in the village, which had become a pressing issue. Edwin was also looking for a job as he job one month ago. He seemed different from when I last saw him. Previously he was very excited about working for the government, earning a very good salary, and being his own boss. However, the politics have changed; the strong support of the indigenous minority declined, and they let him go: *„Right now, I do not have much to do, and it is a little bit boring; I take care of the animals, clean the bar (he owns a bar in Salasaka), and meet my family. Before (in his previous job), it was stressful; I had to go to Quito. I was traveling a lot and working on weekends or in the evenings, but I liked it. It was good, tiring but good."* Now he was going to Ambato (1 hour), Quito (3 hours), or even Tena (6 hours away) to give his CV and documents. *"Work is work. It does not matter if it is in Quito"* (Edwin).

On the other hand, Sammia, a friend of Willan and Jimena, was in the US on a Fullbright scholarship teaching Kitchwa. Initially she was supposed to return home in one month back but did not want to go home and was seeking a way how to stay in the US for one more month with her relatives. She was planning and hoped to come back to study her Master's degree. Her mother, Yarina, supported her, as she told me that Sammia since she is an economics major, has more opportunities abroad. Sammia was now afraid of reverse culture shock and always reminded me to enjoy my time in Salasaka because life in Salasaka is more

relaxed, and she missed the traditional food and the cultural events, however she liked the job there in the US (Sammia).

6. Sammia taught Kitchwa for the first time in Michigan. She was nervous because she never taught Kitchwa before.
7. Sammia is presenting traditional clothes during her Fullbright program in Michigan, many of which she wore daily in the US when teaching Kitchwa (she didn't wear her traditional daily in Salasaka, just events). Her grandma borrowed her old wedding dress to present.



1.2. Family ties

“There are no homeless people in Salasaka”, Sammia told me. It was hard to afford a house, but all of the young people I knew live with their parents or relatives. Family played a crucial role in providing stability in housing, education and access to job opportunities, both within Salasaka (Ariel, Willan, more in the chapter 3.3) and abroad (Rafael, people were recommending each other states in the US were is a jobs) and protecting its members from ill-functioning markets, high inequality and lack of state-provided social seAriely (de Haas, 2012, p. 16). The transnational families had the advantage of majorly supporting their children in Ecuador despite the economic disadvantages and give them much better opportunities in Ecuador or abroad.

Going abroad to work was like earning a better salary at home, but this was for an indigenous minority, where the level of education was substantially lower and the poverty rate higher, extremely difficult (Swanson, 2018). The financial support of a family enabled a “*better life*” in the village as well through a more “*Western lifestyle*,” as we can see in the example of Jordan and his girlfriend. Both were very fashionable, Jordan and his girlfriend. He had a typically Asian haircut and was making music in his studio, and his girlfriend often wore jeans with holes and a woolen coat. Jordan was about 23 years old, making music, and wanting to learn English for his business. His normal day consisted of making music in his studio and having classes, a lifestyle which seemed very improbable without his father's contribution, which was working in construction in Spain.

Family can play a pivotal role in migration through remittances, but also the information it provides its members. As Salazar states, ‘*the motivations to cross borders are usually multiple but greatly linked to the ability of travelers and their social networks to imagine other places and lives*’ (Salazar 2011, p: 2 in Codesal, 2015). There were images of family abroad, through which people were communicating, which often appeared in conversation (pictures 8 and 9). When someone knew someone abroad in Salasaka the migration was also easier because of the online communication and social media: “*It is easier (to migrate) because you follow them online and have information, but most importantly because you can communicate with them through Facebook or WhatsApp*” (Tayel). The common usage and the importance of online communication with family abroad also proves the perceived biggest advantage of the internet is the ability to communicate with their families online.

8. A relative of Christian in his shop in New York.
9. Children of relatives who were already born in New York and are, according to Christian, too used to living there to ever come back.



However the research participants did not seem to idealize the lives of their relatives and friends. Many research partners emphasized the hard work and the very dangerous and difficult journey to get there. Two students of mine realized the problems connected to migration and mentioned the dangers of illegal migration to me: stories about daughters of people who migrated experiencing sexual, abuse while crossing the desert, about people not having the right to work and the option to speak up because they lived in illegality, about the fear of deportation in everyday life, about not being able to cross to the US and need to return, about spending all of the money you earned in the party in Caporale (local traditional festival) after the migrant came back or about dying in the US and not being able to experience the dreamed retirement in Salasaka. People in Salasaka were sometimes often proud of their relatives and friends making it abroad, but they were informed about the risks migration takes.

„Also, I would like to say thank you to all our brothers who are abroad in Europe or the United States. To all Ecuadorians, a big hug” (broadcasting of an interview, Ariel, Kausari films).

According to Christian, his uncle was one of the first to migrate to the US, and the other then followed. Sammia also followed her relative, her oldest aunt, who, according to her, was the first woman from Salasaka to the US. She was a teacher and met an anthropologist who was interested in Kitchwa and was advocating of teaching Kitchwa in the local schools and they

became friends with each other: “*She always took many books and everything, and I joke about: When will you take me with you in the luggage she asked. Once when she came, she asked, ‘do you really want to?’*” (Sammia’s aunt, Nina). This anthropologist later helped her to come to the US and become a sociology student without any previous knowledge of English. Sammia, as her aunt, later went to the US to teach Kitchwa as well, and her aunt proudly represented her culture there.

10. Sammia’s aunt Nina, whom I met at a celebration lunch for releasing a book about Salasaka, released by Sammia’s other aunt Rosa (2023). In the picture, she is with her friend, the American anthropologist in the US who studied the Kitchwa language, and with one Ecuadorian and one American dog.



1.3. Entrepreneurship

The family was also important for job opportunities and for owning its own businesses as entrepreneurship was a way to create jobs where there were none: “*I will live where there is a job. In Salasaka, living is easy, but there is no job. If you want to work, you have to have your own business. It is hard to work in the city, but there is work. Because in the village, there is everything: corn, rice, chicken, but in the city, you have to buy it, but I guess it is*

like that everywhere.” (Edwin) Opening a business was a dream for many young people in the village, for Jimena and Ainara. Ewin, Christian, Jordan and Ariel already had their own companies.

To have your own business in Salasaka, you needed either capital (what Jimena wanted to do) or support from a family, usually through remittances, which was possible for Ariel. Ariel lived near all of his family, but his uncles gradually migrated to Switzerland. During a visit to Ariel's grandmother's house, I witnessed the blending of traditional and modern elements in their lifestyle, the importance of family in Salasaka, and the support from abroad for the opportunities. Ariel lived with his grandma because, as he explained to me, if not, she would live alone. The kitchen we approached was a traditional Ecuadorian kitchen with bare walls. His grandmother was cooking and plucking the feathers off a chicken, and we talked about one of the traditional indigenous tales about him as an ethnic group that has teeth from dogs and, therefore, does not suffer any illnesses; at the end of the tale, however, he and neither his grandmother remembered.

The house was a traditional older house; however, when we went to the attic, through a wooden staircase with a wooden hatch, there was a proper IT laidback office with four sitting spots, all with two big screens and a notebook. From far away, there was a traditional mud house and had a more European house connected to it. The Ariel's brother was just drawing a tiger in Photoshop in the office as he was taking an online free course provided by the Ecuadorian government and simultaneously watching football on his phone. There was a sofa and two other guys working or having a break. As Ariel told me, one was a cousin, one a friend and they were all as a family. In another room, there were cameras, which they knew were shooting brand photos of alcohol. All equipment was not theirs but belong to the Ariel's uncle living in Switzerland. And they all learned about cinematography from him, broadcasting weddings and other cultural events, making promotional videos for their relatives or making political interviews or YouTube videos (picture 11).

11. Ariel worked with his brother and uncle, who lives in Switzerland, where he teaches at a film high school, when he come to Ecuador for one month during the summer he usually help the company. Ariel's brother showed me this picture when I visited their office.



4. Narrative approach

Finally, I introduce a narrative approach to the migration dream in Salasaka. Salasaka has a changing lifestyle, which is described as Western influence and an idealization of life in the US. However, the main narrative had more of a practical nature as it was not important to migrate to the US for a dream life there, but to migrate to the US for a dream life in Salasaka because of the saved money.

4.1. The migration dream

There were big cars, big remittance houses, and many options for traditional clothes in the village, none of which, however, had a long history. Tayel described to me that there was a Western influence that changed the traditional life in the village (picture 12) and the way people thought. *“Life was changing in Salasaka, and I believe that people also want to live a little differently”* (Rafael). People want to improve their standard of living, to have a car to move easily, own various traditional and modern clothes, or to have more food and food options.

12. *“Also, there did not use to be beer in the village, and people did not wear shoes before.”* (Tayel). *“Before”* shows Sammia’s family in traditional clothes and barefoot, as was also a tradition with a background of a “mud” house. Sammia picked this picture, which is depicting her cultural roots and grandma, which he describes as a strong woman.



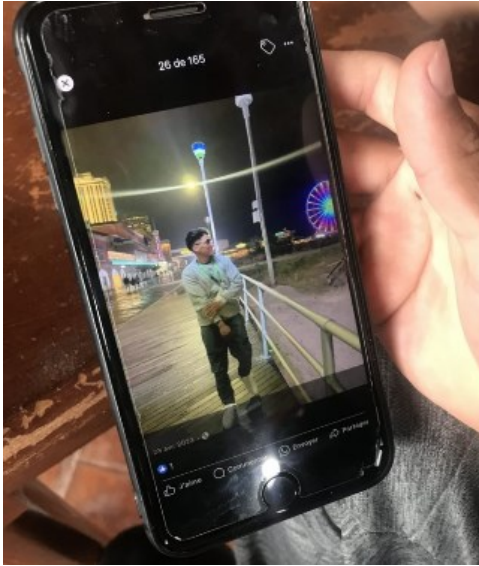
Two years ago, during the covid pandemic, there were no weddings in Salasaka, just one or two, as Willen told me. During my research, there was a wedding every weekend that was often financed by migrants abroad. Nowadays, a wedding in Salasaka means a three-day party for the whole village with beer and two bands playing for three nights. “*Before, the weddings were for a few people; they were for three days, but there was just a violin playing*” (Tayel). The weddings I have attended, even though very traditional, with traditional clothing and music, had not used to be as lavish in past as today. All of the weddings were also broadcasted as all of the cultural events in Salasaka (by the Ariel’s company). Migrants were in Salasaka perceived as heroes through their financial contribution to traditional celebration and parties or financing other cultural activities (Codesal, 2015). “*I want to thank my brother, who lives in the US!*” said a little bit too passionately a mother of a newly married bride on the stage of a big concert of an internationally famous band, which was ending the three-day wedding (picture 13). There was a change from traditional to modern, but the perceived traditional was also incorporating parts of modern and in the same time the traditional was becoming modern as well.

13. “*We greet all the people from Pelileo, Salasaka, Quito, Spain, and Brazil!*” (One of the singers of the band). The concert during a wedding in Salasaka with an internationally famous band playing traditional indigenous music.



The component of the migration dream also included idealizing life in the USA, perceived as “easy” and “comfortable.” According to Codesal (2015), there is a certain image of the American dream also because of the rise of social media and the entertainment industry. The perceived stereotypes I also encountered in Salasaka were that in the US, everything was better, bigger, and easier. As one of my students said: “*I want to go to the US because everything there is beautiful and big,*” According to Sammia, everything was easy in the US, from food to being able to do everything by pushing a button, life there in general was easier as well. (picture 14 and 15)

14. A picture that Jordan showed me as an example of relatives abroad – his cousin; he didn’t know where his cousin in the picture was.
15. Another picture from Jordan: welcoming relatives home.



As Bude (2010, p. 485-487) describes, the *"age of migration dreams"* makes the possibility of migration always present as time and space become more fluid. Migration in Salasaka was a common part of people's lives; therefore, the migration narrative was present in everyday life: *"Let's go to the US!"* said a man as a joke in a taxi when returning from the Salasaka museum in Ambato. *"Have you been to the United States?"* said the children, surprised and excited. *"Do you know Washington? My dad is in Washington; he works there in construction. And do you know (name of city)?"* *"Maybe it went to Spain,"* said my student from a younger group about a card with the number 12, which we could not find. The teacher wrote on the board as an example of the future tense: *"If my mother travels to Spain, she will have a good job."* Alternatively, it was visible through objects such as a scarf with an American flag that one of the children wore daily because it was a scarf his father, who works in the US in construction, sent him.

4.2. "Saving for a better life in Salasaka"

"I thought about moving somewhere where I could earn good money to live in a normal way" (Sammia). Even though there was some migration, the American dream and the life in the village was changing because of the Western influence, the decision to migrate was, according to the locals, much more practical. As Tayel stated, there was a dream among the students, which was pretty simple: to have money, a car, and a house. Codesal (2015) describes the creation of a migration dream through imaginaries in contrast with a lack of improvement within their village. People in Salasaka migrated to improve their lives in a complicated economic situation, which they find themselves in. The Salasakans did not want

to improve their lives by changing location, but through migration, they wanted to better their lives in Ecuador for the future. It was not the American dream; what was the main goal; the dream was to earn money abroad, a substantial amount, and come back to a dream life in Salasaka. In other words, people were just postponing their better lives in Salasaka, which they could have after migration. The migration dream didn't encompass the vision of arriving in the USA and life there, but more so working hard abroad, saving money, and returning to settle in the village (Codesal, 2015). As Gratton (2007, p. 581) said, "*El sueño americano* ' of the Ecuadorians was a dream about using modern means (such as migration) to realize traditional goals."

"People in Ecuador left rural districts and small towns to seek better prospects in the United States. They took on arduous occupations and saved their wages, intending to return home to buy land, build new homes, and give their families a better life" (Gratton, 2017, p. 581).

Life in Salasaka was hard because you had to work all day, and you did not earn money. In general, however, life was perceived as good, calm, community-based, and near your family. People wanted to live in Salasaka later, but for the money and the opportunities and the "better life" in Salasaka, they moved away, even though the aspects of illegality represented a massive barrier to migration. but many still decide to migrate.

"In Ecuador, we do not have a good salary. You can work all day, but you will not have enough to survive. My uncle, for example, worked in a mechanic shop, and he just earned at the end of the month 400 dollars, and it is difficult to live with this quantity of money. It is difficult for the whole of Ecuador and Latin America. The people who want to live better have to migrate for necessities, to take care of their families, and to risk their lives because it is difficult to get a visa." (Jimena)

One of my students, Jimena, had a plan to migrate. She was a friend of Sammia and a tour guide who planned to migrate; she wanted to do the same thing as Sammia and apply for the Fullbright program, and that's why she was so interested in learning English. Her plan was to earn money in the US for a house in Salasaka even though she didn't like the US and the life there as she has visited New York for a conference for indigenous people: "*For me, it is different because I live in a community. The US is not from me, there is a lot of noise,*

infrastructure, and people. And now, it is probably much more” (Jimena). Still she wanted to go to the US for the money, for a house and for a capital for a business in Salasaka.

As Codesal (2012) describes, land ownership is of great importance in Ecuador and even more so in indigenous rural villages. Owning a house promises stability within an economic and political problem. It also offers the promise of a good life in a village of origin, a dream for many I talked with.

There was the known model of going to the US to earn money for five or ten years, become rich, and then come home. According to an OPI survey, more than 70 percent of migrants planned to stay five years or less, depending on their fortunes abroad and the economic situation in Ecuador (Jokisch, Pribilski, 2002). *“Even though you have the lowest job in the US, you still earn more in the US. And you can just pay for someplace and food. And support your family back at home,”* said one of the students wanting to migrate to the US. His plan was to work there in a mechanic shop and then come home to open his own business.

According to Peter (2010), there is a social pressure that migrants often feel a compelling need to be perceived as financially successful as well as *“valid”* and *“good”* family members. However, competing with the money and life of friends abroad is difficult while being based in Salasaka. Swanson (2018) describes the reality of more and more people deciding to leave because of the money they see coming back in the form of remittances and because of the stories they hear. Many would prefer to stay at home, but they migrate for money and social pressure.

Part of the consideration is also perceiving time in emigration as time that is *“lost”* and is actually the price that must be paid. For example, Rafael was thinking of earning money abroad as well. I met Rafael at the first wedding, and he informed me about all the other events. He worked in construction, the field from which people migrated the most. Rafael had about 25 friends from his field who now worked in the US and was thinking about migrating. *“Something in the United States has not let me rest”* (Rafael). Because of his family, he wanted to stay but also to migrate. Rafael was well aware of the struggles connected to illegal migration and told me about how all his friends abroad always tell their families they are fine, but he knows they are not. He wanted to go just for two years, as he

did not want to go to the US at 35 and come back at 45 and lose ten years of life.

Conclusion

At the end of my stay, Edwin found a job through contacts from the ministry and the political party in administration in Ambato. During a meeting of a political party, his friend offered him a job, and another acquaintance offered him a candidacy, a promise of him a stable job. Sammia extended her stay in the US for one more month, as she wanted, with her family in Washington and intends to come back to the US afterward to study. Ariel planned to continue his studies at his online university in Ecuador and remain with his company for two more years; however, also, due to the energy crisis, declining politics, and his ambition, he contemplates migrating in two years, either to the US or Europe, where his relatives are.

The stories I referenced throughout the thesis were personal, and despite the fact that the decision-making of the research participants was influenced by the information from relatives and friends abroad and as well as narratives within the village regarding the lack of jobs and low wages, individuals were ultimately making decisions based on their own individual circumstances. People were deciding and calculating the options in their lives, which depended on their relationships and opportunities. The decision-making of my research partners was dependent on connections (abroad and home), work (abroad and home), opportunities (abroad and home), romantic relationships (abroad and home), the possibility of earning good money (abroad and home), chances for a better life (abroad or home), supporting their families (abroad and home) or conserving and supporting their cultural identity and heritage (abroad and home). Therefore, the theory of push and pull, previously neglected in my thesis, seems to describe decision-making and its utility.

The question of “why young people in Salasaka migrate,” which I attempted to answer in the thesis, proved to be more complex and, in some ways, unclear during my fieldwork as it was entangled into everyday life. The American dream (as a dream life in the US), even though prevalent in the village through as described “Western influence”, changing ways of lives of villagers and idealization of the life in the US, was not the primary driving force of migration. The main migration narratives in the village seemed to be more practical and economically based, for example, “*there is no job,*” or “*it is not possible to earn enough money in the village to support a family or buy a house,*” or that “*it is worth to go to the USA because it is possible to earn substantially more money there.*” Economic reasoning,

coupled with systematic inequalities, were sensitive, although compelling, reasons for considering migration.

The primal migration dream in Salasaka was not the “American dream” but to migrate to the US and earn money for a better future in Salasaka. As Gratton (2017, p. 581) describes, migration allows people to use modern ways to achieve traditional goals. “*El sueño americano*’ of the Ecuadorians was a dream about using modern means (as migration) to realize traditional goals.” Life in Salasaka was changing, and people wanted to live differently; they wanted to have a car and house and also be able to afford more of a variety of food or clothes. All of the people thinking about migration, however, wanted to come back, preferably in a few years. There was also a fear of migrants not being able to come back for their saved and wished-for retirement and the end of their lives as migration was perceived through a concept of lost years. Migration was an investment for later life, as saving money in Salasaka or having any other financial goals seemed impossible. The journey and life in the US were seen more as obstacles. The instability of the economic and political system was also a concern, and mainly indigenous people didn’t feel as being able to rely on the social system or any social protection (partially substituted by family).

Simultaneously, there was a fight of Salasaka against the majority in Ecuador (Corr, Powers, 2012), which was important for understanding the migration as the pride in cultural identity and the situation of being a minority enforced the migration flows. Cultural identity at home and abroad could be experienced and, therefore, represented through symbols significant for the cultural identity, such as a poncho, traditional clothing, or walking barefoot. Conserving culture was perceived as a choice; therefore, it was impossible to lose cultural identity solely as a consequence of migration. Migration was perceived positively and as helping to the community when cultural identity was proudly represented abroad through its symbols. There was not a choice between staying with your family and supporting the culture from within or going abroad and losing its culture, but there is a choice between staying and supporting your culture or leaving and supporting it from abroad by representing it. The topic of cultural identity emerged in my research as it was an important discussion within the village.

The “community” approach of the village enforced migration through transnational families.

The decision-making of people was influenced by the responsibilities towards one's family and the information about migration gained through families' or friends' connections. However, the stories people in the village heard weren't necessarily positive, as many stories described the difficult journey of migrating or the problems of living in a different country, either legally or illegally. Everyone knew someone abroad in Salasaka, and therefore, people were influenced by the stories they had heard from their friends or relatives and by the familiarity of these stories they encountered online or through visits of migrants in the village, but they were aware of the danger connected to migration through these relations.

The youth in Salasaka were "globalized". They knew about the lives of people abroad through social media and were influenced by international social media, news, or entertainment. Therefore, the young generation was similar to the young generation everywhere else. Young people were concerned about the housing crisis, criminality, and future politics in Ecuador; they had financial goals and career aspirations; however, they were living in a rural, indigenous village without many future prospects. The global influences, transnational families, and the current interconnectedness of the world have made migration easier for the young generation in comparison to the generation of their parents and grandparents. Some people were deciding to stay because of contacts, relationships, or opportunities, but many of the young villagers were directed by "push" and "pull" factors to migrate, so why shouldn't they?

Summary

Odpověď na otázku, proč mladí lidé v Salasace migrují, kterou jsem se pokoušela zodpovědět v práci, se během terénního výzkumu ukázala jako složitější a v některých ohledech nejasná, protože se zaplétala do každodenního života. Nicméně Americký sen i když přítomný ve vesnici díky, jak je popsáno, "západnímu vlivu", změnám způsobu života vesničanů a idealizací USA, nebyl hlavním hnacím faktorem migrace. Hlavní migrační vyprávění ve vesnici se jeví jako praktické a obsahovalo ekonomické narativy jako: "není práce" nebo "není možné vydělat dostatek peněz ve vesnici na podporu rodiny nebo koupit domu", nebo že "stojí za to jít do USA, protože tam je možné vydělat podstatně více peněz". Ekonomické úvahy, spolu se systematickými nerovnostmi, byly citlivými i přesvědčivými důvody pro zvážení migrace.

Primárním migračním snem v Salasace bylo odjet do USA ne kvůli životu v USA, ale kvůli vysněnému životu po návratu v Salasace. Jak popisuje Gratton (2017, s. 581), migrace umožnila lidem používat moderní způsoby k dosažení tradičních cílů. *"El sueño americano' Ekvádorců byl sen o používání moderních prostředků (jako je migrace) k dosažení tradičních cílů"*. Život v Salasace se měnil a lidé chtěli žít jinak, ale to v tom smyslu, že například chtěli mít své auto, dům, anebo si dovolit mít větší výběr oblečení nebo potravin. Lidé chtěli migrovat do US kvůli finančním důvodům a poté se vrátit zpět ideálně za pár let, protože dosahování finančních cílů v Salasace se jeví jako nemožné. To dokazovali vyprávěné příběhy lidí, které fungovali jako odstrašující příklad, kdy se migranti nestihli vrátit zpět do vesnice a prožít zde svůj vysněný důchod a zemřeli v zahraničí. Migrace byla vnímána skrze koncept ztracených let, která se nepočítala do života, který si lidé představovali ve vesnici, ale byla to investice pro lepší život v Salasace. Nestabilita ekonomického a politického systému byla také důležitá, kdy lidé zejména v rámci menšiny původních obyvatel se nemohli spoléhat na sociální systém nebo na jakoukoli sociální ochranu, kterou ačkoliv částečně nahrazovali rodinnými vazbami.

Zároveň Salasaka „bojovala“ proti většině v Ekvádoru (Corr, Powers, 2012), což bylo důležité pro porozumění migraci, jelikož kulturní identita a situace menšiny posilovala migrační toky. Existovaly také symboly významné pro kulturní identitu, jako je pončo, tradiční oděv nebo chůze naboso, jimiž byla kulturní identita v zahraničí projevoována a

také reprezentována. Zachování kultury bylo vnímáno jako volba a proto bylo nemožné ztratit kulturní identitu pouze v důsledku migrace. Migrace byla vnímána pozitivně a jako pomoc komunitě v případech, kdy byla kulturní identita hrdě reprezentována v zahraničí prostřednictvím svých symbolů. Ve vesnici si lidé nevolili mezi setrváním ve vesnici a podporou kultury zevnitř nebo odchodem do zahraničí a ztrátou kultury, ale mezi setrváním ve vesnici a podporou své kultury nebo odchodem a podporou své kultury ze zahraničí a následným návratem.

Migrace byla ve vesnici také posilována prostřednictvím komunitně založeného sociálního systému. Rozhodování lidí bylo ovlivněno zodpovědností, které měli k rodině a informacemi o migraci, které díky ní obdrželi. Příběhy, které lidé skrz rodinu lidé skrz rodinu slyšeli, však nebyly nutně pozitivní, protože mnoho příběhů demonstrovalo obtížnou cestu migrace nebo problémy spojené s životem v jiné zemi, buď legálně nebo nelegálně. Všichni v Salasace znali někoho v zahraničí, a proto byli lidé určitě ovlivněni příběhy, které slyšeli od svých přátel nebo příbuzných, a díky znalosti těchto příběhů, které získali online nebo prostřednictvím návštěv migrantů v obci, mimo to ale byli také obeznámeni s nebezpečími spojenými s migrací.

Mladí lidé v Salasace byli ovlivněni globalizací a znali životy lidí v zahraničí prostřednictvím sociálních médií. Mladá generace byla podobná mladé generaci kdekoli jinde na světě, sledovali podobná sociální média, filmy nebo hudbu a měla také podobné problémy. Mladí lidé se obávali krize bydlení, kriminality a budoucnosti nejisté politiky v Ekvádoru, měli finanční cíle a ambice v kariéře, ale bydleli v rurální, indiánské vesnici, kde chyběly příležitosti. Globalizační vlivy a současná propojenost světa zjednodušovaly migraci pro mladou generaci. Někteří lidé se rozhodli zůstat ve vesnici kvůli kontaktům, vztahům nebo příležitostem, ale pro jiné faktory „*push*“ a „*pull*“ směřovali k rozhodnutí migrovat.

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