

Migration policy during Ecuador's turn to the left: Governing migration through the migration-development nexus and the migration-security nexus

Abstract

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In the early 21st century, following an exodus of nearly 1 million people and the simultaneous increase of immigration coming from the northern and southern borders, Ecuadorean governments made attempts at reforming an outdated migration policy. However, the administration of Rafael Correa (2007-2017), aligned with South America's "pink tide", undertook the largest migration policy reform in decades. In this context, I ask: What kind of migration policy model was constituted during Ecuador's turn to the left? Research was conducted using documentary analysis of a corpus of official government documents and statements from politicians. The paper argues that the 2007-17 decade saw the emergence of a migration management model in Ecuador, which laid upon the distinction between the "desirable" and the "undesirable" migrant subject, and, at the same time, was founded on a dichotomy between emigrants and immigrants. Drawing on critical studies of migration management, I aim to show that the division between emigrant-oriented and immigrant-oriented policies in Ecuador constitutes two dimensions of the contemporary governmentality of migration: the migration-development and the migration-security nexuses. I argue that those dimensions are tied together by nationalist values at the core of the Correa administration's political project. The paper contributes to 1) critical studies of migration management, concurring with the argument that recent migration policy reforms in South America do not represent an exception to the global regime of migration control; 2) debates on contemporary political regimes in Latin America, questioning the extent to which leftist governments have delivered progressive responses to issues defining their societies.

Author's Bio

Mercedes Eguiguren is a visiting lecturer at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO – Ecuador), where she teaches at the Graduate Diploma in International Migration, Development, and Human Rights, and a lecturer at San Francisco de Quito University (USFQ). Her work focuses on the relationships between mobility, socio-spatial inequalities and the subjective experience of migration, and on the links between the State, migration, and governmentality. Her book, *Movilidades y poder en el Sur del Ecuador, 1950 – 1990*, received an Honorable Mention at the Premio Iberoamericano Book Award 2021, hosted by the Latin American Studies Association, LASA.