

Universal Citizenship Through the Discourse and Policy of Rafael Correa

Jeffrey D. Pugh

ABSTRACT

This article investigates political opportunities and constraints associated with incorporating the concept of universal citizenship into migration debates. Analyzing the speeches of Ecuador's president Rafael Correa over eight years, the article argues that Correa strategically crafted a narrative of universal citizenship to undergird politically beneficial policies. Political constraints from constituents and rivals, and the populist nature of his governing style, hollowed out progressive migration policy innovations to the point that universal citizenship became a rhetorical device more than a substantive policy agenda. Through this empirical case, the article develops a more nuanced critical understanding of universal citizenship discourses as sites for negotiating the relationship between states and migrants.

Territorial borders and legal and social boundaries separate insiders from outsiders and create barriers to full integration for migrants in a host country's political community. This article explores the concept of universal citizenship as a discourse legitimizing the extension of belonging beyond territorially bound citizenship by drawing on cosmopolitan ideals or human rights narratives. At the same time, it examines critically the ways that the mismatch between this discourse and its corresponding policy implementation may mask a project to extend sovereign state control over new bodies while making invisible the claims of certain migrant populations who fail to adhere to the host society's expectations, or who are portrayed in a securitizing rhetoric as threats to the host state.

Universal citizenship promises to create a new type of political relationship between migrants and their host states, one in which the rights guarantees are attached to people by virtue of their humanity or their physical residence in a territory (even when it is not their country of origin), rather than being contingent on their membership in the political community of a nation-state. The analysis shows that the reality often falls short of this promise, but that state actors, migrants, and nonstate intermediaries negotiate the boundaries of belonging, influenced by political and economic incentives and employing the discourses of cosmopolitanism or universal human rights strategically and selectively.

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Ecuador, the largest recipient of refugees and asylum seekers in Latin America (UNHCR 2016) and a major producer of economic emigrants to Europe, has integrated the language of universal citizenship into its constitutional framework, domestic programs, and international initiatives to a greater extent than most countries. Taking seriously the idea that speech acts represent spaces in which meaning is contested and states and societies define the intersection of collective values and policies (Cerbino et al. 2016), this article examines the discourse of Ecuador's president Rafael Correa (2007–17) over the first eight years of his administration.

Ultimately, universal citizenship promises a shift from national citizenship as the primary boundary for inhabitants' rights, protections, and obligations to common humanity and territorial presence as the foundations that define the community. President Rafael Correa's discourse followed this logic, expanding the geographic base of obligations to the state by mobilizing a new constituency of enfranchised Ecuadorian emigrants abroad, who, he claimed, owed political engagement and economic support to their country of origin in exchange for Ecuador's vocal promotion of their right to free movement and pressure on their host countries to ensure their protection. The state expanded its capacity and control mechanisms to enforce laws within Ecuador, and in doing so also expanded the reach of its demands for loyalty and compliance into geographic areas of the country that had previously had weak state presence, and to new migrant populations. However, the reciprocal side of this expansion—giving new bases for rights-based claims to non-citizen migrant populations in Ecuador and abroad—remained contingent on a clientelistic show of support. Political inclusion and economic benefits were given at the discretion of the president and could be withdrawn arbitrarily, in practice, as a response to public criticism, which was interpreted as a sign of disloyalty to the nation and a violation of political invisibility expectations. Those populations who were constructed as others and outsiders, including foreigners, poor, and indigenous groups, found themselves excluded and silenced within a state of exception that belied the universal citizenship narrative.

This article explores this argument with an introduction to the universal citizenship and open borders literature and an engagement with the complexities of migrant belonging and rights. It contrasts these universalizing discourses with the contingent membership boundaries of *el pueblo*, the national community at the imagined core of the populist “Bolívarian” regimes in the Andes region during the 2000s. A brief overview of Ecuador's complex migration experience as both a sending and receiving state provides the context for tracing the dramatic impact of President Correa's election, policy agenda, and evolving discourse on the treatment of Colombian immigrants and refugees in Ecuador and Ecuadorian emigrants in Europe. The discussion provides a critical analysis of the ambivalence with which the regime attempted simultaneously to leverage the universal citizenship discourse to strengthen ties (and economic and electoral support) with Ecuadorian emigrants abroad and to hollow out its practical implementation in policies toward immigrants in Ecuador. This article argues that, constrained by the informal expectations of migrant political invisibility in Ecuadorian host society (the “invisibility bar-

gain”), migrants and their civil society allies used Correa’s rhetorical commitments to hold him accountable and to achieve some limited protections.

THEORIZING UNIVERSAL CITIZENSHIP AND MIGRANT ACCEPTANCE

A rich and diverse literature has debated the question of how many immigrants countries and societies should allow to enter, and under what conditions. More open cosmopolitan arguments draw on normative defenses of free movement based on human rights (Soysal 1994) or global justice (Carens 2013; Bosniak 2000), while more restrictive communitarian arguments appeal to national or communal self-determination, democracy, fairness, security, or political reality (Weiner 1996; Dowty 1987; Walzer 1983; Miller 2016). Living peacefully in a complex, ordered society requires a social contract that for centuries has been resolved by sovereign states exercising authority over a particular territory and its borders, providing protection and security against external threats and internal disorder in exchange for people’s loyalty and compliance with collective rules. In migrant-receiving states, where those residing in the territory were not necessarily born there, alternative institutions and norms are needed that delineate a reciprocal logic of protection and membership that is equipped to handle the complexity of transnational movement across state borders (Sassen 1999).

Because they are excluded from traditional mechanisms of political participation, migrants have developed innovative frames for rights claiming and alternative spaces for political participation that do not rely on citizenship or recognized membership in the territorial nation-state. These alternative narratives have the goal of securing protection and achieving a political voice in decisions that affect them. Monisha Das Gupta argues that a transnational complex of rights, drawn from local norms and values, national laws of sending and host states, and international law, provides alternative bases for rights claiming that can be mobilized through migrant-serving organizations and the alliances they create to promote migrant rights and resolve conflicts in the host country. She argues,

in this transnational complex migrants want rights to mobility rather than to rootedness and citizenship. They want rights to move with them. Like citizens, they too want to materialize themselves as subjects of rights. . . . In demanding their rights, the immigrants constitute transnational organizations and call upon multiple dispersed actors and rights regimes. (Das Gupta 2006, 20)

In Hannah Arendt’s famous formulation, this is a struggle for the “right to have rights” (Arendt 1951, 177). In this struggle, the experience of exile can open up new modes of participation, even as it imposes challenges (Roniger 2017).

A number of scholars have tried to complicate the false dichotomy between philosophical “ideal theories” of cosmopolitan open borders and pragmatic policy prescriptions based on power, political incentives, and popular opinion (Gibney 2004; Weiner

1996). David Miller argues that this balancing act can be achieved by conceiving of a reciprocal relationship of rights and obligations between migrants and their host state. This relationship is based on values of “weak cosmopolitanism” (assuming that migrants are humans with moral standing even if they are not automatically owed the same treatment as citizens), national self-determination, fairness, and the goal of an integrated society in which diverse people can coexist and interact without devolving into destructive conflict. The approach to achieving these goals emphasizes

the reciprocal relationship between immigrant and receiving state, according to which all immigrants are entitled to fair treatment (which in the case of those who stay long-term includes access to the full panoply of civil and social rights) but are expected in return to contribute to society and uphold its legal and social norms. (Miller 2016, 127).

Linda Bosniak (2006) and Paulina Ochoa (2016) both argue that territorial presence, not recognized national membership, is the basis for migrants’ claiming rights. Migrants’ ability to carry out the duties that all people coexisting in a territory must fulfill (especially to assist each other and take care of their own dependents) requires the reciprocal right to access public services like police and firefighters without fear of arrest or deportation and the right to work and to participate in local decisionmaking that directly affects their lives. Social or physical exclusion that deprives migrants of these rights prevents them from carrying out their place-specific duties, which harms other members, including citizens, who have to pick up the slack and who suffer greater insecurity because of these ruptured social relationships (Ochoa 2016). It is important to note that these host society norms and rules to which migrants are expected to adhere are often based on a differential treatment of foreigners. The acceptance of migrants’ territorial presence is often contingent, in practice, on their exclusion from full social and political participation in the host society.

The perpetual liminality and precarity of some of these immigrants (Cebulko 2014), especially those marked as visibly or audibly different from the host population, is enforced through a set of informal host society expectations known as the invisibility bargain, the violation of which is likely to spark a nativist backlash against immigrants (Pugh forthcoming). Under this “bargain,” migrants are expected to contribute economically to the host society while remaining politically and socially invisible. Not being full members, their status as “good guests” is contingent on their not making overt demands on the government or violating social expectations, including public displays of religious, racial, or linguistic differences that fail to align with host society norms.

While there are differences in the intensity of the legal vulnerability experienced by migrants in different categories (i.e., refugees vs. undocumented immigrants), the functioning of the invisibility bargain as an informal institution that shapes social relations works in similar ways across categories (Pugh forthcoming). Because the state generally has a political incentive to prioritize the interests of its own citizens (who vote) and not foreigners, this invisibility bargain may lead to the state’s complicity or active scapegoating of migrants who are marked as visibly different or who make political rights-based claims. When NGOs and other actors in civil society

take on more of the role of protection and negotiating local-level access to resources and decisionmaking spaces for migrants, their status as members of the host political community provides them with a basis for holding the state accountable and ensuring the place-based exchange of rights and duties for all inhabitants (Pugh n.d.).

DEBATES IN LATIN AMERICA OVER MEMBERSHIP IN *EL PUEBLO*

Latin America has a long democratic tradition, and it has also been a laboratory for different forms of governance mediating between society and the state. Countries in the region at various times have conceptualized the state as a corporatist structure representing organized sectors of society, or as an articulator of aggregated individual interests in pursuit of collective goals, or as a revolutionary vehicle for a strong leader to restructure oppressive oligarchies in the interest of *el pueblo*, the collective “people” who constitute the nation, as defined by the leader.

Frances Hagopian’s 2007 criticism of the underperformance of Latin American civil society and the oversupply of passive citizens highlights the region’s historical emphasis on formal legal texts and constitutional design as guarantors of democracy, even in the face of frequent states of exception, “brown areas,” or pervasive informal institutions in which such laws have little meaning in practice (Agamben 2005; O’Donnell 2004; Helmke and Levitsky 2006). The boundaries of the sovereign state, carefully defined in text and discourse, have often been quite flexible in practice, subject to the interests and discursive framing of the leader.

In the Andes region of South America, a populist, antihegemonic “pink tide” ushered in a wave of leftist presidents in the early 2000s in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador. They drew on Bolivarian narratives of revolutionary liberation combined with a strong state capable of dismantling elite structures of power and serving as a moral referent for policies that promoted good living (*buen vivir*) for *el pueblo* (Montúfar 2013; Ulloa Tapia 2013). These regimes promoted, in principle, the idea of a plurinational state, in which certain group identities and rights, especially of indigenous people, provided alternative bases for autonomy and claims beyond simple citizenship. In practice, however, they sought to expand the role of the state in articulating a collective vision for the country and in arbitrating who was a legitimate member of *el pueblo* and who was a threat to national unity to be confronted and marginalized.

These populist, Bolivarian regimes expanded the ways poor and marginalized citizens could participate in politics through performative acclamation, resulting in “the mobilization and active participation of common people in mass rallies, [in] demonstrations, and in elections where they voted for their leaders. Populist followers had the sensation and the feeling of being actors and shapers of their own political destinies” (de la Torre 2017, 10). While visible, physical presence in public spaces was a key component of this “participatory democracy,” its legitimizing function was narrowed, so that *el pueblo* included only citizens who conformed to dominant identity ideals and whose embodied presence supported the president’s political agenda.

TWO-WAY MIGRATION AND ECUADOR'S COMPLEX IDENTITY

Few countries illustrate the complex challenges of migration better than Ecuador. Traditionally a country that sent economic emigrants abroad, Ecuador became a major sending country after an economic crisis in 1999 and 2000 resulted in hyperinflation, a freeze on bank deposits (with catastrophic loss in the value of most people's savings), escalating unemployment, and rising prices that came with the dollarization of the economy (de la Torre and Striffler 2008). In the wake of this crisis, more than 10 percent of Ecuador's national population left the country, mostly for Spain, Italy, and the United States (Herrera et al. 2005). Remittances from these emigrants became a crucial source of foreign capital, which was vital to the country's economic recovery over the next decade. In fact, remittances from abroad were the second-largest source of foreign income, after petroleum exports, during the decade following the crisis (Soruco et al. 2008).

At the same time, Plan Colombia, which began in 2000, provided U.S. military assistance to the Colombian government to increase its capacity to fight the FARC insurgency in Ecuador's northern neighbor. The resulting escalation of military operations, and violent clashes in far-flung regions of Colombia that had previously been under the de facto control of the guerrilla, led to a dramatic surge of displacement, as Colombians fled their homes and death threats from guerrillas and paramilitaries alike.

Ecuador, the closest territorial neighbor and the one with the fewest legal barriers to entry, became the new destination for large numbers of Colombian refugees. Approximately 233,000 people have claimed asylum in Ecuador since the 1990s, with more than 60,000 recognized as refugees. As of 2015, 95 percent of refugees in Ecuador were from Colombia, totaling 53,000, with an estimated 133,000 "persons of concern" in need of protection (UNHCR 2016).

Ecuador is the largest recipient of refugees and asylum seekers in Latin America, according to the UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR 2016). Neighboring countries like Venezuela also received large numbers of displaced Colombians, but restrictive laws led to only 3 percent being accepted as refugees, and many were deported arbitrarily (Carreño Malaver 2014). Thus, in the space of a few short years, Ecuador became simultaneously a major sending country of economic emigrants and the primary receiving country for refugees in the region. The timeline in figure 1 traces the important events in Ecuador's recent political history that have influenced its stance toward migrants and that form the context in which the universal citizenship concept is applied.

The dominant narrative toward migrants and refugees promulgated by the governments before Correa's election in 2006 was a securitized rhetoric that emphasized the threat of cross-border violence and organized crime. It reinforced the perception that Ecuador was unfairly burdened with the cost of managing Colombia's problem, both in terms of refugee flows and cross-border aerial fumigation of coca plantations (Hoy 2004). Presidents Gustavo Noboa (2000–2002) and Lucio Gutiérrez

Figure 1. Timeline of Recent Ecuadorian History Relevant to Migration

1999	-Economic crisis in Ecuador leads to hyperinflation and the emigration of more than 10% of population, largely to Spain, Italy, and the U.S.
2000	-Plan Colombia leads to more clashes with the FARC guerrillas, and thus more displacement of Colombians into Ecuador
2003	-Gutierrez government places visa restrictions on incoming Colombians and adopts a national security control-oriented migration policy
2006	
2007	-Rafael Correa elected president on a platform of human security/Plan Ecuador
2008	-Colombian bombing of FARC camp in Ecuador leads to cutting of diplomatic ties
2008	-Constituent assembly passes new constitution, which is ratified by 70% of population; contains progressive rights and protections for migrants/refugees
2009	-Ecuadorian government & UNHCR jointly sponsor 'Enhanced Registration'
2010	mobile brigade initiative in northern border, doubling # of registered refugees
2011	-Foreign ministry backsteps, placing expiration dates and renewal requirements on refugee visas
2012	-Correa issues Decree 1182 that abandons Cartagena Declaration criteria for refugee status determination and establishes 15-day eligibility period for requesting refugee status after entering country
2013	
2014	-Constitutional court declares portions of Decree 1182 unconstitutional
2015	-Detention/expulsion of Manuela Picq
2017	-Human Mobility Law signed into effect

rez (2003–2005) both tightened border controls and yielded to political pressure to harden visa requirements for Colombians entering the country. Part of the practical political incentive for deploying these securitized communitarian narratives was to deflect blame and attention away from the government itself for the perception of rising crime and economic instability in the country, and to reinforce a strong national identity that could legitimize state rule. This was particularly important given the inchoate electoral and street politics of the decade between 1996 and 2006, when ten presidents served in as many years and no elected president finished a complete term (Madrid 2005; Pugh 2008).

During the same period, popular sentiment, reflected in the media, combined sadness at the humanitarian plight, resentment toward Colombia for its perceived failure to share responsibility for the costs of dealing with the crisis, and fear of the newcomers, who were stigmatized as being guerrillas or delinquents. A media content analysis of Ecuadorian print news stories showed that more than three-fourths of the articles about Colombians analyzed in 2002 were negative and unfavorable in their representation of foreign migrants (Rivera 2012). Examples of such representations are found in the following media narrative: “One of the primary purposes of Citizen Action is greater control over the border, and the expulsion of the undocumented” (Rivera 2012, 294). Typical of the stigmatizing frames used is this passage

from a news story: “In the face of the increasing violence in Colombia, there has also been a growth in the quantity of displaced people arriving in Ecuador, many of whom are involved in informal and nefarious activities that reflect the stigma of their place of origin” (Rivera 2012, 300).

THE CORREA EFFECT AND THE POLITICS OF UNIVERSAL CITIZENSHIP

The rhetoric and policies of the Ecuadorian government changed dramatically with the election of Rafael Correa to the presidency in 2006. Correa is a leftist former economics professor who promoted a “citizens’ revolution” to address inequality and the concentration of power in the hands of the traditional economic elite and to resist U.S. hegemony through economic autonomy and diversification and the rejection of U.S.-imposed military solutions to the drug-trafficking problem. He blamed neoliberalism and the global capitalist hierarchy for creating conditions that forced the poor to migrate and for offering militarized solutions to social problems. In an appeal to Ecuadorians who had emigrated (and their remittances and potential votes), he said, in a campaign speech in 2006, “We dream that Ecuadorians will no longer feel that they have to leave the country. We dream that all human beings can have universal citizenship” (Correa 2006).

In direct contrast to Plan Colombia, Correa’s campaign platform promised to develop what he called Plan Ecuador, which would emphasize economic development, social justice, the protection of human rights for migrants and poor Ecuadorians in the border region, and the reversal of the harsher visa controls imposed by his predecessors. Once he was elected, this became a major part of his early agenda, along with the drafting of a new constitution, which contained explicit protections and rights guarantees for migrants and refugees. In a 2007 speech, he presented the idea for his program.

We propose, before the world, Plan Ecuador, the policy of the state for the northern border, which considers human security to be the result of peace and development. It includes an international relations policy of equality and solidarity, and a defense policy based on the protection of the population, of our resources and patrimony, and an effective control over the national territory. . . . There are no illegal human beings. (Correa 2007a)

Correa explicitly articulated the discourse of universal citizenship.

We have always supported and protected our migrant brothers. We are believers in the free circulation of people and in universal citizenship. We reject the hateful and xenophobic migratory policies of those Northern countries who defend the free circulation of goods and capital but who construct walls between human beings. (Correa 2009).

He was opportunistic in his appeal to human rights discourses to denounce migration practices, drawing more on populist discourses and protective savior images

than on human rights that assume truly universal applicability not subject to the interpretation of state interests or majority whims. Correa attempted to distinguish between human rights institutions and what he viewed as the more important economic rights that were violated by bankers and corporations, resulting in the massive emigration from Ecuador to Europe. “Millions of brothers and sisters were expelled by hunger and lack of opportunities because of the biggest robbery by the most corrupt bank in the country, and no one went to call the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights—we must never forget” (Correa 2011).

He also denounced the human rights discourse promoted by the Organization of American States and the United States as a continuation of imperial justifications for intervention in Latin America: “During the Cold War, the bloodiest dictatorships were tolerated in this region without caring at all about freedom of the press, human rights, or democracy itself. . . . The invasions and interference during those years were based on the fight against Communism. Now the argument is ‘defense of Human Rights’” (Correa 2015). This rhetorical record indicates that the international human rights regime was not the major basis underlying Correa’s conceptualization of universal citizenship, and that he preferred to define which rights he thought were most important for Ecuadorians, rather than appealing to the human rights regime, whose normative power was external to the state. This is consistent with the structure of Bolivarian populism, which places the president, the articulator of the voice of *el pueblo* and moral referent for the national community, as the primary decisionmaker over who is included in the community and how broadly the state’s jurisdiction should apply.

The citizens’ revolution and the political structures laid out in the new constitution passed in 2008 resulted in the stripping of influence and power from traditional parties and economic elites, the stacking of powerful positions with Correa party loyalists, and a rebuke of powerful global economic actors (especially the United States), which increased Correa’s prestige as a regional leader to fill the place of an ailing Hugo Chávez (Montúfar 2013). By delegitimizing militaristic responses to migration and security concerns, Correa was criticizing Plan Colombia and its U.S. backers, as well as the history of U.S. intervention and drug policy in Latin America. By advocating a policy of universal citizenship, he was appealing to the interests of an important economic resource and a new electoral constituency, Ecuadorian emigrants abroad. At the same time, he was pointing out the inconsistent immigration policies of the United States and Europe, which often failed to live up to liberal democratic ideals in their treatment of foreigners.

In proposing his new approach to migration and border issues, Correa embraced the discourse of cosmopolitanism and rights. His weakening of the independence of civil society NGOs, and his reliance on “states of exception” (Agamben 2005) to incarcerate immigrants who violated the political invisibility expectation of the invisibility bargain, however, exposed an underlying assumption that the public interest was subject to the protection (and control) of the president, rather than being based on international or human rights or even the rule of law (Salazar 2015).

Nationalism is a key component of the populist form, but members are not defined only by being born within the borders of the state. In Ecuador, internal territorial boundaries—such as rivalries between the Coast and Sierra regions—and identity boundaries like race and indigeneity have historically represented even harder barriers to the recognition of transferred rights and belonging than international borders (Borman 2012; Picq 2017). “Universal citizenship” was not even guaranteed internally across domestic groups (Young 1989), much less across populations of different national origins.

Varying and overlapping subnational identities show the complex boundaries of belonging that both Ecuadorians and migrants must negotiate. Survey respondents who reported that their national identity resonated more strongly than their local identities decreased by 13 percent between 2010 and 2014 (Zepeda and Carrión 2015). Compared to other ethnic and racial subgroups, indigenous Ecuadorians provide an interesting window into the complex relationship between nationalism, power, and identity. When obliged to choose whether they felt a stronger identity as Ecuadorians than as citizens of their locality, indigenous respondents had the highest percentage selecting the national identity compared to other ethnic groups. But when given a third option of “both,” indigenous respondents selected the dual identity more than mestizos, Afros, or whites, and selected the exclusive national identity least (Zepeda and Carrión 2015).

This finding suggests that indigenous respondents, who are frequently excluded as the “other” in Ecuador, may feel a strong need to claim a national identity in order to avoid marginalization within the state but prefer a dual identity that recognizes both political-cultural and local membership. The Ecuadorian state has exploited this desire by employing a politically correct discourse that recognizes overlapping identities within a plurinational state while resisting policies that would allow concrete rights claims—including bilingual education, territorial autonomy, protest rights, or communal self-governance—to be associated with these competing identities (Martínez Novo 2016).

Indigeneity was thus co-opted in Ecuador to legitimize the authenticity of the government’s holistic Buen Vivir development agenda (Martínez Novo 2016), but actual indigenous activists who opposed the president’s environmental policies were attacked as terrorists or infantilized as manipulated pawns (Picq 2016). Likewise, the universal citizenship narrative and the transnational presence of Ecuadorians abroad led the president to include migrants of all sorts in the political community. They were to be passive recipients of the state’s generous protection but not rights-bearing participants who could claim, through overt political action, the rights that were guaranteed in the constitution. Those who criticized the government in Ecuador became enemies of the state and of *el pueblo*, to be sanctioned for their ingratitude and impudence or banished from the territory.

The connection between government speech about migration and the populist polarization of good and evil frames, rooted around a national ideal and against foreign(er) threats, especially in times of economic unease or crisis, follows a familiar pattern identified by Didier Bigo: “Securitization of the immigrant as a risk is based

on our conception of the state as a body or a container for the polity. It is anchored in the fears of politicians about losing their symbolic control over the territorial boundaries” (2002, 65).

A key example of the clash between the narrative of universal citizenship and the flexible boundaries of the political community defined by Correa’s populist regime is the case of Manuela Picq, a Brazilian–French journalist, activist, and professor who was arrested and beaten during a 2015 protest against the government’s environmental policies, the removal of presidential term limits, and the repression of indigenous activists. The partner of the president of the indigenous federation ECUARUNARI, Picq was held in an immigrant detention center known as the Hotel Carrión while her visa was summarily revoked; a judge’s order that this revocation was illegal because it did not follow due process was personally ignored by the minister of foreign affairs. A few days later, Picq left Ecuador for Brazil under the threat of deportation, and she has not been allowed back into the country since (Picq 2017). According to Picq,

My expulsion, under the argument that foreigners cannot participate in national politics, sparked a controversy over who is inside and outside of the political arena, and who has civil and political rights. At first glance, the principle of “universal citizenship,” established in the new Constitution, was in play. The supposed free human mobility was fine for tourists, but not for migrants escaping conflict zones or seeking economic opportunities, and a racism similar to the anti-immigrant narratives in the United States and Europe emerged: rhetoric that claimed to protect the nation from poor immigrants, who supposedly come to rob, rape and poison the population with drug trafficking. (Picq 2016, 133)

This securitization of immigration, which coincided with perceived political challenges to the regime’s power, illustrates how the rhetoric of universal citizenship could be hollowed out by the discursive exclusion of immigrants from *el pueblo*, seeking to legitimize their exclusion from political spaces, or even their physical expulsion from the country.

Correa broadened the label of refugee to refer to Ecuadorian emigrants who had gone to Europe in 1999 and 2000 as a result of the economic crisis. He claimed that they were forced migrants who had to flee from death by poverty, which was intentionally imposed on them by the corrupt bankers and the government. This narrative reinforced his populist framing of an economic battle between good and evil that was just as much a war as any military dispute, and in which Ecuadorian emigrants abroad (and the remittances that they sent home) had played an important supporting role, for which they deserved the country’s gratitude and a greater political voice. Invoking the historical liberator Simón Bolívar in this narrative, Correa argued,

Bolívar would be the first to declare solidarity with the destiny of the [migrant] families, . . . refugees from poverty, expelled from their land by neoliberalism, immigrants arrested and thrown in prison for the crime of not having papers. Bolívar would be the first to declare that “there are no such things as illegal humans, only illegal practices,” and among these, racism, xenophobia, and intolerance. (Correa 2007b)

The combination of populism and antihegemonic regionalism inherent in Correa's political project was consistent with Bolivarian theory and with the idea of enhancing the greatness of the nation as a rallying framework for *el pueblo* by dismantling borders imposed by imperial or colonial external powers while strengthening the state's discretion to draw internal boundaries between "good members" and enemies of the people. The universal citizenship rhetoric was useful for legitimizing the first of these goals, while its selective application in immigration policy implementation contributed to the second goal.

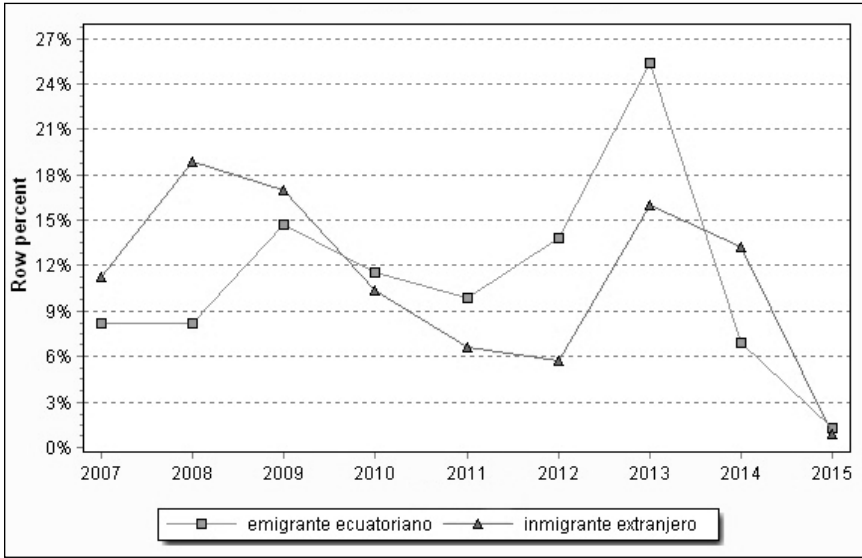
CORREA'S DISCOURSE AND ECUADORIAN COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Because his Citizens' Revolution was based on a permanent campaign waged through saturation of the media, weekly televised addresses in which he framed the official interpretation of issues of public interest, and a personalized and emotional rhetoric that established moral reference points for *el pueblo*, an analysis of Correa's speech acts over time serves as a revealing representation of the negotiation of collective meaning in Ecuador (Cerbino et al. 2016). Although he used the language of universal citizenship both to advocate for the rights and protection of Ecuadorian emigrants abroad and to argue that foreign immigrants in Ecuador should be greeted with open arms, a careful analysis of Correa's discourse over eight years of his presidency reveals a greater priority of Ecuadorian emigrants abroad, who represented an important electoral and economic resource.

All 437 of the public speeches given by Rafael Correa from January 2007 to March 2015 that were publicly available on the web archive of the Ecuadorian Presidency were analyzed using QDA Miner and WordStat software. A text search identified all mentions of migration, and each mention was further coded by referent group. Of all the instances mentioning migration in Correa's speeches, 60 percent referred to Ecuadorian emigrants abroad, compared to only 27 percent that referred to foreign migrants and refugees in Ecuador. (The remaining 13 percent of the coded instances discussed migration in the abstract, without a specific referent group).

When tracing the year-to-year changes in Correa's speeches mentioning Ecuadorian emigrants versus foreign immigrants and refugees, one notes a striking pattern, illustrated in figure 2. Of all the mentions of Ecuadorian emigrants abroad, the largest percentage occurred in the election years of 2009 and 2013. In these years, Correa campaigned among the newly enfranchised Ecuadorian diaspora in Europe and talked frequently about the important role of the "migrant brothers and sisters" in sustaining the Ecuadorian economy during and after the "long neoliberal night" before his administration. In contrast, Correa mentioned foreign immigrants and refugees in Ecuador most often in 2008, largely as part of a security narrative in the aftermath of the bombing of a FARC camp at Angostura in Ecuadorian territory by the Colombian military; and again in 2013, as he justified his regressive hardening of migration policy in the face of electoral pressure from citizens concerned about rising crime.

Figure 2. Percentage of Mentions of Foreign Immigrants vs. Ecuadorian Emigrants in Correa’s Speeches

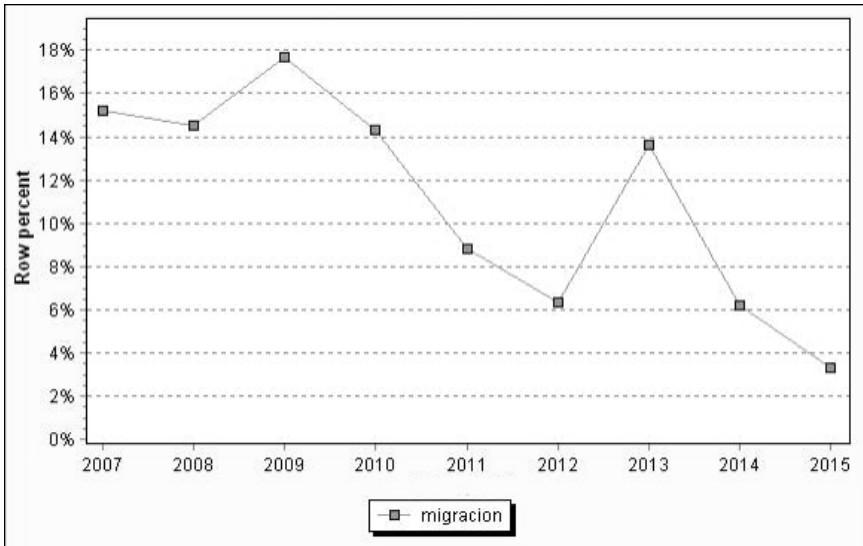


Source: Author analysis of Correa speeches, 2007–15

Measuring the overall percentage of speeches mentioning migration, figure 3 shows that Correa talked frequently about migration during election years, although over time he began to deemphasize the issue. The peak years for overall migration discourse were 2009 and 2013.

Correa’s specific appeals to universal citizenship and open borders (illustrated in figure 4) declined dramatically over time after peaking in 2009. In the face of the pushback from the Ecuadorian population against a perceived lax refugee reception process, Correa began talking less about universal citizenship in his speeches, emphasizing instead the security issues around the Colombian conflict and the associated refugee flow. This pattern is also reflected in Ecuadorian public opinion. A national survey of Ecuadorians asking how strongly respondents identified as “citizens of the world,” compared to other supranational identities like Latin American or South American, found a dramatic decrease during Correa’s latter years in the percentage claiming to identify as citizens of the world, from nearly 30 percent in 2010 to 20 percent in 2012 and only 4 percent in 2014 (Zepeda and Carrión 2015). This suggests that as Correa’s universal citizenship rhetoric was hollowed out, so too was its emotional resonance with the population.

Figure 3. Yearly Percentage of Migration Mentions



Source: Author analysis of Correa speeches, 2007–2015

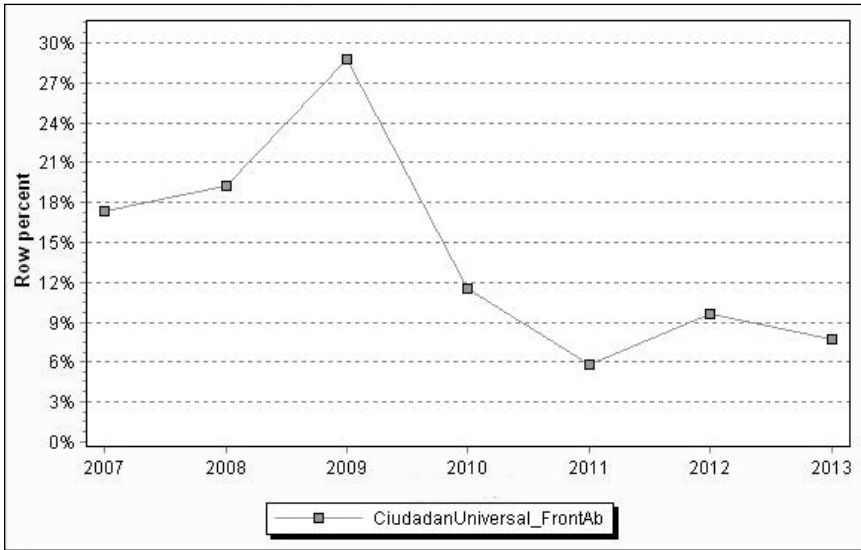
STATE AND NONSTATE CONTESTATION OF UNIVERSAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE BOUNDARIES OF *EL PUEBLO*

Correa realized that he had to navigate competing pressures to maintain the consistency of his arguments and international critiques while responding to discontent from Ecuadorian citizens and elements of his government, which blamed the increase in migration and the open borders policy for a widely perceived increase in urban crime (Carrión 2013).

The Ecuadorian government expanded a set of policies to help returning Ecuadorian emigrants reintegrate by subsidizing housing and small business loans and launching an information portal for families affected by migration. The 2008 Constitution contained progressive protections for migrants and refugees, banning discrimination based on nationality or migratory status, giving refugees many of the same basic rights as Ecuadorians, recognizing the right to migrate, and guaranteeing refugees the right to public health and education services. In practice, however, many of these protections were frequently denied to migrants, and even refugees with documentation often suffered discrimination by neighbors, employers, and government officials (Pugh 2015).

The evolution of the government's migration policy mirrored the declining use of discursive speech acts justifying open borders: compared to 2009, when nearly

Figure 4. Yearly Percentage of Universal Citizenship and Open Borders Mentions



Source: Author analysis of Correa speeches, 2007–15

half of asylum claims were accepted, by 2012, only 13 percent of asylum seekers were accepted as refugees (ACNUR and Instituto 2014). Later years reportedly had even lower acceptance rates, but the official refugee statistics available on the Foreign Ministry's webpage stop at 2013, which is also the year that the UNHCR was excluded from refugee status determination commission meetings, where it had previously had a voice but no vote (NGO officials 2016). Simultaneously, the government began encouraging Colombians fleeing violence to apply for a MERCOSUR economic visa, which had a simpler process and was easier to attain, without the stigma of the refugee label, and which would allow them to regularize their status for two years before renewal would be required (NGO officials 2016). Many migrants followed this path, but one result was a reduction in the percentage of accepted refugees (whose rights were grounded in international law and treaty obligations and overseen by UNHCR) compared with MERCOSUR holders, whose visa was more subject to the government's (revocable) interpretation of their contribution to the national interest (Migration Policy Consultant 2015).

The sweeping rhetoric of universal citizenship was tempered by racial and class hierarchies inherent in Ecuadorian society and by the populist assumption that the president was the primary agent distinguishing between poor or marginalized people to be included in *el pueblo* and poor or marginalized people who were undesirable, threatening, or "enemies" of *el pueblo*. Because of the visa restrictions placed on Cubans, Haitians, and Colombians within mere months of the establishment of open borders, in contrast to the encouragement of investment immigrants and

tourists from North America, Europe, and China, Manuela Picq argues, “You can see that universal citizenship is for rich people” (Picq 2017).

Not only did the level of economic contribution that particular migrant groups offered appear to affect the reality of universal citizenship as they experienced it in practice, so did their perceived support or challenge for the political project of the regime. Political invisibility was expected, but primarily if the political participation was in opposition to government policies. Picq contends that in the case of foreigners in Ecuador, “You have an access to the outside that many indigenous and Ecuadorian civil society members don’t have, so you are more dangerous, and you are framed as an enemy. But if you collaborate with the government, you are celebrated, and they preach universal citizenship” (Picq 2017). The transnational identity and resources available to migrants, then, were used to define them as potentially suspect and different from the national project of *el pueblo*, even as the incorporation of broad universal citizenship language in the constitution and the human mobility laws were used to enhance Ecuador’s standing in international forums.

Shortly after assuming office in 2007, Correa fulfilled his campaign promise to remove the requirement that Colombians entering the country must show a police record, which many refugees fleeing violence did not have and which, many human rights activists argued, was a violation of international law on refugees. In the face of constituent pressure about national security concerns and potential delinquency, however, Correa reinstated the police record requirement the following year, in the middle of his campaign for re-election. In rationalizing this policy reversal, Correa argued that although universal citizenship was the desired ideal, he had to be realistic in his application (and modification) of this principle.

We believe in universal citizenship, established in the new constitution. We have eliminated visas for all foreigners who want to visit our homeland, but one characteristic of statesmen must be to distinguish between their wishes and reality. We cannot deny the reality that Colombia does not protect its southern border, so Colombian criminal gangs enter into Ecuadorian territory, then return to the Colombian border, where our state authorities cannot act. . . . (Correa 2008)

In 2009 and 2010, the Ecuadorian government partnered with UNHCR to carry out an innovative Enhanced Registration initiative, which sent mobile registration brigades traveling throughout the northern border region, condensing the refugee status determination process from three to six months into a day and adopting a more permissive standard for refugee status determination, based on the Cartagena Declaration (McGrath 2011). This initiative more than doubled the number of registered refugees in the country and was widely lauded by the international community (ACNUR 2010). It also gave the Ecuadorian government more information about the nature and location of the migrant population in its territory, which helped it to increase its capacity to provide security in migrant-receiving communities and led to an expansion in refugee reception offices and infrastructure in the border provinces (Jacome 2010). This initiative was an example of a concrete policy achievement that was framed in the universal citizenship discourse but that

also strengthened state capacity to apply communitarian standards of admission to previously unidentified populations.

Despite these successes, however, elements of the Ecuadorian military and of the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs were opposed to what they viewed as overly lax controls on refugee acceptance. Together with media and public attention to a few cases of criminals arrested with refugee cards, these actors put pressure on Correa to slow down the initiative. The Enhanced Registration program, which raised the visibility of refugees in the Ecuadorian collective consciousness, did not continue beyond 2010, ending several months earlier than anticipated, partly because of political heat on Correa (Local Parish Official 2012).

Over the next two years, Correa found himself defending his advocacy of open borders against criticism from Ecuadorians and some members of his own government (Tinoco 2011). He argued, "It is not true that the open borders policy is generating greater delinquency in the country," pointing out that no disproportionate number of Colombians were in Ecuadorian prisons, and shifting blame for insecurity in the border region toward Colombia for failing to control the illegal armed groups in its own country (*China International News* 2011). In a speech to the National Assembly in 2010, he repeated this position, but simultaneously vowed to investigate possible linkages between migration and violence. In a stark illustration of the invisibility bargain's warnings about the unreliability of the state as a security guarantor for all inhabitants, Correa declared,

In questions of security, we must not devolve into demagoguery or xenophobia. It is absurd to claim that because of our policy of free human mobility and planetary citizenship, insecurity has increased. . . . However, we are doing a very careful study to see if there is any relationship between the entrance of citizens of certain countries and the increase in insecurity. If this hypothesis is verified, you can rest assured that we will make any changes and take any measures that are necessary. We have our priorities clearly in mind, and the primary one is the welfare and security of the Ecuadorian people. We cannot fall into romanticism. I repeat, if it is necessary to harden our immigration policy, that is what we will do. (Correa 2010)

STATE, SOCIETY, AND THE INVISIBILITY BARGAIN: TESTING THE UNIVERSAL CITIZENSHIP DISCOURSE

One explanation for this ambiguity is the set of informal expectations that host societies hold, in which they tolerate the presence of foreign migrants on the condition that these migrants contribute economically to the host country and that they maintain political and social invisibility. In other words, the invisibility bargain, introduced earlier and developed in related work (Pugh n.d.), requires migrants to remain in the shadows, to be economically productive, but not to make overt rights claims on the host government or society and not to allow their differences to become too publicly visible, because violating these expectations might result in a backlash among the native population against migrants like the one that followed the Enhanced Registration initiative (Balyk and Pugh 2013).

The resulting situation of migrant presence, but without access to rights or a formal channel for making claims on the government, illustrates the difficulties in sustaining the mutual obligations that permit the reciprocal system of coexistence highlighted by Linda Bosniak (2006) and Paulina Ochoa (2016) in the first section. When migrants are subject to obligations but do not have access to the rights they need in order to fulfill these obligations adequately, conflict is likely. Although migrants' contributions and fulfillment of their social obligations to help their neighbors often produced peaceful coexistence with Ecuadorians at the local level, this outcome resulted more from their behavior's coinciding with local norms than from their embodiment of human rights claims recognized by government agencies. The state narrowed the boundaries of *el pueblo* to exclude migrants and frame them as potential threats when they became too visible or attempted to make claims based on rights.

In this context, migrants often build coalitions with NGOs, international organizations, and other informal groups in Ecuadorian civil society that can support advocacy efforts without sparking a backlash (Pugh 2016). Migrants have negotiated access to protection and local decisionmaking by emphasizing the types of mutual obligations and assistance that Ochoa (2016) claims are the foundation of local-level territorial coexistence (Lee 2008). Local communities benefit from Colombians' entrepreneurship and labor and from international refugee assistance, which also supports their host communities. Colombian migrants, in turn, report greater trust in nonstate actors than in state institutions like the police or courts (Pugh et al. 2017). Manuela Picq argues that such nonstate actors were powerful allies in holding the state accountable to its own promises of universal citizenship during her detention.

I spent four days behind bars, in juridical limbo. There were no charges against me, only declarations from the government that foreigners could not participate in politics. My crime was dissent, and my freedom depended on the pressure applied by a team of human rights lawyers, social movements in the streets, intellectuals abroad, social networks, and intense media coverage. (Picq 2016, 125)

Even if the Correa administration's intention was to undercut the practical implementation of universal citizenship when that step did not serve its political interests, the narrative's availability gave a robust civil society an entry point to defend migrant rights and hold the state accountable to its own policies.

The state's undermining of its official universal citizenship discourse through regressive policy changes became a target for civil society demands for consistency and accountability, which leveraged these same universal citizenship narratives to achieve greater migrant protections. For example, Correa's opponents in his second re-election campaign in 2012 criticized his border policies as contributing to delinquency and insecurity. While denying these arguments, Correa nonetheless issued Presidential Decree 1182, significantly curtailing the protections offered to forced migrants in Ecuador. It abandoned the Cartagena Declaration criteria for refugee status determination and reverted to the narrower Refugee Convention criteria of

1951. It also weakened the due process and appeals allowed for asylum seekers, gave broader authority to officials to deny claims or even to deny a hearing of refugee claims, and imposed a 15-day limit to register as an asylum seeker with the Foreign Ministry on entering the country. This last measure was destructive, because many Colombians enter through rural areas in the border region, where they may not immediately claim refugee status because of fear, crisis situations, lack of knowledge, or lack of economic means to get to a government office.

The decree was denounced by human rights activists in Ecuador, as well as by international actors like Human Rights Watch (2013). Ultimately, some portions of the decree, including the 15-day limit for claiming asylum, were declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court in response to a lawsuit by these civil society activists (Vásquez 2015).

Correa's political dilemma was apparent in his nuanced and contradictory rhetoric that accompanied Decree 1182. Three days after signing the regressive decree, he defended Colombian migrants against Ecuadorian xenophobia, saying that his political opposition was exaggerating the level of insecurity in Ecuador and unfairly blaming it on Colombian migrants: "They are accusing our Colombian brothers, which is tremendously unfair, because for every Colombian who is in prison, there are 100, 200, or 500 Colombians who have made themselves a great asset to this country, who work honestly, who feel like Ecuador is their own homeland" (*El Espectador* 2012). He accused his opponents of distorting a sensitive issue in order to gain political advantage during the presidential campaign.

In an interesting and curious fusion of his universal citizenship argument and the realities of the invisibility bargain, Correa responded to his opponents' criticism not by declaring that he would change his policy (in fact, he had just adopted a regressive policy that hardened controls against migrants in order to defuse the criticism) or by making a strong defense of universal citizenship and open borders. Instead, he called on Colombians to publicly defend themselves by denying their role in delinquency and pushing back against the politicians who were blaming them: "Beloved Colombians, organize yourselves and reject these candidates who act as demagogues and try to demonize and vilify our Colombian brothers who are so dear, as well as our Peruvian and Spanish brothers" (*El Espectador* 2012). In saying this, Correa seemed to be reframing his defense of an active policy of universal citizenship enforced by the state, but was instead choosing to maintain its rhetorical shell while leaving migrants to demand the enforcement of its content on their own—an overt political claim-making strategy which, according to the invisibility bargain argument, would probably incur a backlash from the citizen population.

Correa continued to make a rhetorical commitment to universal citizenship a major part of his government's foreign policy (Flores 2014), but he increasingly focused his substantive interventions on defending the rights of Ecuadorian emigrants abroad (*El Telégrafo* 2014). Civil society, meanwhile, sought to contest the securitized government discourse by tying its political advocacy to the human rights and universal citizenship narratives that Correa had articulated, attempting to leverage these rhetorical commitments into greater policy accountability and migrant

protection. The Human Mobility Law, for example, passed by the Assembly and signed into law in 2017, unified disparate and outdated pieces of legislation for refugees, economic immigrants, and tourists in Ecuador; Ecuadorian emigrants abroad; and returned emigrants, using language that was consistent with the constitution. As a law passed by the Assembly, it had greater durability and legal weight than the executive decrees that had previously governed much of Ecuador's refugee and migration policy (Larreategui 2017).

This law again promulgated the language of universal citizenship, simplifying the administrative processes for visa petitions and for returned emigrants to access needed services (Asamblea Nacional 2017). Originally proposed by civil society groups and migrant coalitions, it was developed, modified, and debated over some eight years before being enacted, and was welcomed as a positive step forward by the UNHCR and other nonstate actors. At the same time, it was criticized for perpetuating the securitization frame for immigrants in Ecuador and leaving ambiguous criteria, in Articles 137 and 143, for excluding or deporting foreigners who become involved in Ecuadorian politics, or for deciding that such involvement is synonymous with being a potential threat to national security if it represents dissent with the state (Arcenales Illescas 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

Ecuador's experiment has resulted in one of the most visible attempts in the world to invoke the concept of universal citizenship explicitly in the implementation of concrete open border policies. President Correa's vacillation, throughout his ten years in office, between promoting policy innovations that put the concept of universal citizenship into practice and regressive backpedaling at the expense of migrant rights and political inclusion shows the limitations and contradictions of implementing the concept of universal citizenship in policy. This leads to two important observations.

First, even in a state that has claimed to take the concept more seriously as a policy program than most other states, the cosmopolitan universal rights that are supposedly extended to all people by virtue of being human are still subject to the fluctuations of political expediency, particularly as re-election campaigns approach and the government faces electoral pressure from constituents. In this sense, Correa's use of the universal citizenship concept seems more like a slogan for the political benefit of his government's agenda and a way to selectively include in *el pueblo* populations that extend beyond Ecuadorian citizens in the territory than a substantive embodiment of cosmopolitan ideals that would reshape the relationship between migrants, citizens, states, and rights.

Second, however, is the observation that migrants and their civil society allies were able to take advantage of the deployment of universal citizenship discourses to negotiate greater protections and to hold the state accountable to its own formal policies and laws, even when the government's intention may have been to undermine this discourse in practice for reasons of political expediency. Because of the resources and political capital that were invested in supporting the implementation

of universal citizenship policies, NGOs and international actors were present and more highly coordinated with the state in migrant-receiving provinces (Balyk and Pugh 2013; Pugh 2015). Networks linking migrants and organizational allies were stronger, and greater transnational social capital and activist networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998) were available to those advocating for more migrant protections than in provinces with less civil society presence.

This article's empirical examination of the Ecuadorian case deepens our theoretical understanding of belonging and community across overlapping territorial and identity boundaries, leading back to the initial discussion of the theoretical bases for the idea of universal citizenship. Examining even cases of rejected or failed claims for universal citizenship may, in the words of Judith Butler, "expose the parochial and exclusionary character of a given historical articulation of universality, [thereby] extending and rendering substantive the notion of universality itself" (1997, 366–67). By studying imperfect manifestations of the universal citizenship ideal, as the Ecuadorian case surely is, we may gain greater understanding of the possibilities and limitations of how this narrative leads to negotiation of rights claiming and political relationships between migrants and their host states.

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