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Material and Social Remittances in Highland Ecuador

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Summary of Thesis

This thesis explores the material and non-material transfers from and to two rural settings in Andean Ecuador. Within the broad realm of the research on remittances, it explores in depth the type, nature, composition, uses, meanings, re-workings and negotiations of the transfers between migrant and non-migrant villagers.

Two villages in the Ecuadorian highland provinces of Azuay and Loja are the main research locations. These two provinces receive high remittance transfers, albeit from different origins: remittances to Azuay mainly originate in the US, whereas remittances to Loja are very likely to come from Spain and Italy. Due to very different socio-cultural features and different forms of migrants' integration in the two destination areas, these two highland Ecuadorian provinces provide an excellent comparative context to research material and social remittances. Fieldwork was carried out in migrants' villages of origin as well as in their new places of residence. This multi-sited ethnography was supported by a mixed-method approach involving a questionnaire (to gather information about material remittances), interviews (to shed light on social remittances) and participant observation (to provide the broader context for comprehending nuances in the data).

This research incorporates socio-demographic variables, such as gender, family structure and generation, in the analysis of material remittances. The relationship between remittance senders and receivers, that is usually overlooked, is regarded as a very important locus of power and negotiations. A refined typology of material remittances, taking into account remittance senders, receivers and non-receivers, is also provided. Finally, there is a micro-ethnographic account of material remittances' uses which problematizes over-simplistic pictures of remittance expenditure by embedding remittances into broader socio-cultural contexts.

Surprisingly, given the large amount of academic work on remittances, there are still unexplored areas. Social remittances are one such area. By systematically researching social remittances, this thesis adds to the limited existing theoretical knowledge on social remittances, providing new information on their creation and content.

*Para todas las madres adoptivas que me regaló la vida
(de géneros, edades, espacios y tiempos distintos)*

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Per l'Arnau. Per tot. Pel teu suport constant i incondicional. Per acceptar el repte de viatjar amb mi al bell mig dels Andes i tornar-te una mica nòmada. Pel teu esperit positiu inesgotable, per agafar-me i tirar-me endavant. El fet que el treball de camp hagi estat la millor experiència de la meva vida té molt a veure amb tu. Personalment i acadèmica aquesta investigació et deu molt. Gràcies de tot cor per ser amb mi.

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Chapter 1

Introduction.

Setting the Pathway

Andean populations are famous for their textiles. Since time immemorial, they have produced beautifully crafted clothes out of what appear to be rough materials and simple techniques. Many Andean villages, apparently isolated, are in fact interwoven into a complex socioeconomic and cultural fabric which spans the high Andean mountains, reaching such far away and disparate places as New York City or the Canary Islands. For two Andean villages in the Ecuadorian provinces of Azuay and Loja, this thesis disentangles each of the threads that shape the final textile. It looks at the material as well as the socio-cultural yarns that villagers knit back and forth, crossing State borders, between their Andean villages and the worlds beyond. I use the concept of 'remittances' as the academic equivalent for the 'thread and yarn' metaphor.

Figure 1.1: Map of Ecuador



Ecuador is an extremely interesting country in migration terms. Like other Andean populations, Ecuadorians have traditionally been very mobile. After the successive economic booms in the country which led to important internal movements of population (first to the Coastal banana and cocoa plantations, and then to the Amazonian oil extractive areas), international migration quickly became a real alternative for many Ecuadorians. In the 1950s business people associated with the fruit export industry started to migrate to US cities where they had already forged contacts due to their export businesses. New York, a key node of entry and management of the fruit trade business, became the chosen destination area for a number of wealthy Ecuadorian businessmen (Pribilsky, 2007). However, it was not only higher ranking Ecuadorians within the fruit export business who started to migrate to the US in the 1950's. The manual labourers working for the United Fruit Company, which held the monopoly on the exploitation and trade of bananas from Ecuador, also started to head towards the US (Pribilsky, 2007). The crisis in the Panama hat production (which despite its name is woven in Ecuador's Southern highland provinces) also forced a number of heavily dependent small producers from the provinces of Cañar and Azuay to migrate from the 1950's onwards (Kyle, 2000). Most of them chose the New York metropolitan area because, as with the fruit exports, this city had been the main destination of the Panama hat industry. Ecuadorians living regularly or irregularly in the US were initially highly concentrated in metro New York. Current estimations provide a figure of over half a million Ecuadorians living in the US, most of them as irregular migrants (Gratton, 2007).

In 1998, due to the so-called 'lost decade', with the implementation of harsh structural adjustment programmes, the already weak Ecuadorian economy collapsed. The Ecuadorian population had to endure hyperinflation, a plunge in real production and the total collapse of the banking system, together with a lack of trust in the political institutions. Politically the country was highly unstable; in the decade from 1996 to 2007 the country had ten different national governments. The Ecuadorian population, which had been enduring a prolonged economic decline, was badly affected by this crisis. Even worse, due to the political instability and lack of institutional credibility, there were no signs of an early solution. International migration became a way forward particularly for the newly impoverished urban middle classes. The US alternative was by then more expensive and riskier than the European one, although quite a lot of Ecuadorians still stick to it because, if successful, the rewards are higher (Gratton, 2007: 586).

Several features made Spain at this time a very attractive destination. Firstly, there were already a few Ecuadorians in Spain, mainly Otavalo traders and Lojanos from the country's southernmost province (Jokisch and Pribilsky, 2002: 84). Secondly, Spanish immigration policy was still underdeveloped at this time. The Spanish-Ecuadorian treaty of 1963 allowed Ecuadorians to enter Spain as tourists without a visa. The Spanish authorities only asked for proof that the 'tourists' could support themselves while on holiday in Spain. A comprehensive business of money lending was quickly established in Ecuador. The required amount, called *bolsa*, was borrowed from *chulqueros* (loan sharks) or gathered together by the family (Jokisch and Pribilsky, 2002: 83). Thirdly, it is important to keep in mind that, although Spain has a very high official unemployment rate, the Spanish economic structure relies heavily on a booming shadow economy. At that specific time, undocumented female Ecuadorian migrants were fully welcomed to fill a recently created labour niche: the need for domestic workers to take care of an ageing population (Gratton, 2007: 595).

Ecuadorians have become one of the biggest foreign populations in Spain: there were almost 400,000 Ecuadorians with residence permits at the end of 2010, the third largest immigrant group (OPI, 2011). They became very visible, in everyday life and also in the Spanish press. The regularisations of 2000, 2001 and 2005 helped many Ecuadorians who had entered as tourists and over-stayed to achieve legal residence. But then a major change occurred with the introduction of the visa requirement in 2003. This immigration policy measure brought down the number of new arrivals and left family reunification as the main route of legal entrance to Spain (and by implication also to Europe).

After the US and Spain, Italy is the country that hosts the highest number of Ecuadorians. Jokisch (2007) estimated that in 2005, 120,000 Ecuadorians were living in Italy, half of whom were in an irregular situation. The Italian case closely follows the Spanish experience in terms of gender distribution. Three-quarters of the Ecuadorians holding a *permesso di soggiorno* or 'permit to stay' in December 2006 were women working in the labour niche of domestic workers. As in Spain, there is a high degree of informality, with most migrants clustering in big cities.

After the global economic crisis of 2008, which strongly hit Spain, the US has recovered its position as the main destination for Ecuadorian migration, at the same time as the range of destinations has broadened to include new destinations such as the UK or Israel.

Migration from Ecuador to the US and Europe was initially very different. Migration to the US was male pioneered. Migrants were usually single males seeking to escape a long-lasting economic and agricultural decline. Most of them did not hold regular legal status in the country. The path most of them chose to enter the US was crossing the US-Mexico border on foot after an overland route through Central America and Mexico (Jokisch and Pribilsky, 2002). Conversely, pioneering migrants to Europe were initially married women who fled the economic crisis of 1998, looking to enhance future opportunities for their children, the so-called 'remittance-children' (Pribilsky, 2001). Although Madrid and Barcelona are the main residence areas of Ecuadorians in Spain, their presence is also significant in rural settings, such as those in the provinces of Murcia and Navarra (OPI, 2011). As time has gone by, and especially with the Spanish 2003 visa introduction for Ecuadorians, those initially very marked differences have diluted. The range of destinations has broadened, and the differences in the socio-demographic features of the migrants have been tempered through family reunification. However, differentiated patterns, mostly in terms of gender (predominantly male in the US) and legal status (predominantly irregular in the US), still prevail.

1.1 Remittances to Ecuador

The pattern of migration is mirrored in the form of the remittances sent to Ecuador by Ecuadorian migrants abroad. In 2010, Ecuador received 2.32 billion US\$ from its citizens abroad (BCE, 2011). Financial remittances to Ecuador are the country's second highest income after oil exports. Remittances are important for the macro-economy, as well as being at the core of the survival and improvement strategies of a large number of Ecuadorian families, both in rural and urban areas. Unsurprisingly they are also a hot topic in the Ecuadorian everyday debate in the public sphere: in press accounts of supposedly wasted remittances in rural areas, criticisms by local academics about lack of development in areas of remittance reception, or the expressed concerns about children portrayed as abandoned by their mothers abroad and spoiled by the remittances they receive each month. The money sent by Ecuadorians abroad is a recurrent topic of discussion in Ecuador, alongside the less material consequences of migration which are also very apparent and have created their own imaginaries. This is the case of the multiple discourses surrounding female migration, returnee migrants bringing back the vices of the 'rich countries', the risk of family disintegration, or the prospects of diminishing religious engagement.

All these features mean that Ecuador is in fact a very attractive location to research migration and remittances. Spurred by the amounts involved, the importance of the changes triggered, and the high number of families involved, this thesis is concerned with remittances in two rural areas in highland Ecuador. Ecuador also provides a unique field for studies on remittances due to the country's two differentiated traditions of international emigration from rural areas. In the contiguous provinces of Azuay and Loja, the rural dwellers from the two selected research sites, around 400 km. apart, have been migrating to very different places and under very different conditions. This situation is ideal to try to look for divergent as well as convergent patterns of remittance sending and receiving practices and consequences.

Because remittances have been extensively researched, there is a danger that this research could be regarded as yet another study about remittances. However, there are some aspects of my research, both in theoretical and methodological terms, which make it innovative. Firstly, it presents an interdisciplinary approach to the issue of remittance uses stemming from the field of Migration Studies. Within that optic, remittances are conceived in this thesis in a broad sense to capture the bi-directional material but also the non-material resources sent and received by migrants. Secondly, this research tries to fill an interdisciplinary vacuum. There is an urgent need for more contextualized studies about remittance uses; studies that go beyond anecdotal data and macro-econometric models based on very scarce and deficient data. Because current research on remittances overwhelmingly relies on macroeconomic data, ethnographic accounts of material remittance reception situations constitute an important gap in migration research. All these issues can make the findings of my research very valuable. It can (hopefully) help to advance our understanding of the remittance-development nexus, by de-constructing some well-established assumptions in the field, and making operative (or discarding) the concept of social remittances. It can ultimately provide an interdisciplinary analysis of the remittance reception phenomenon (defining remittances in a broad sense) by means of a multi-layered ethnographic analysis that also takes into account economic foundations, and is undertaken in the complex, intriguing and exciting Southern Ecuadorian highlands.

1.2 Research Questions

This thesis aims to unpack and disentangle the research questions listed below in a concise way. They will be expanded, challenged and complicated throughout the following eight chapters and particularly in the four core chapters (five to eight). I do not provide the answers

here, limiting this stage to anticipate the problems and realities this thesis will deal with. Questions refer to material remittances, comprising both financial and in-kind remittances, and social remittances.

Regarding material remittances:

- What is the exact meaning of the term 'remittances'? Is it too generic a term? Does it accurately describe the reality of what is taking place in rural places like the two research villages?
- What is the socio-demographic environment in which remittance reception takes place?
- What are the power and symbolic negotiations taking place between remittance sender(s) and receiver(s)?

Regarding financial remittances:

- What are the main uses of financial remittances?
- What is the developmental potential of financial remittances in rural areas?

Regarding social remittances:

- How are social remittances created, if created at all?
- What is the particular content of social remittances in the two selected research settings?

Regarding material and social remittances:

- Are there any linkages between material and social remittances?
- If so, what is the nature of such links?

1.3 Thesis Outline

Chapter two provides first a detailed overview of data on financial remittances from international sources worldwide and in Ecuador. It also outlines some of the literature which has informed this thesis. It particularly focuses on the literature on the socio-demography of remittances and remittance uses and impacts (particularly the so-called Migration-Development nexus). More specific sources are presented in each core chapter. In the second part of this chapter, the broad theoretical framework from which stems the critical analytical approach in this thesis is presented.

Chapter three is the methodological chapter. It presents the multi-sited ethnography and multi-technique approach of the research, as well as my positionalities, including my ethical stance, as a researcher. It describes the techniques used to elicit data: a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Positionalities are reflexively discussed, as are the ethical considerations prompted by the research. This chapter also constitutes the most personal part of the thesis, so I tend to use a different writing voice, more personal.

Chapter four provides a qualitative and quantitative overview of the two research sites. It draws on a variety of sources, such as historical accounts, villagers' memories, census and questionnaire data, to provide as complete a sketch of the villages as possible. The research sites are introduced, embedded in complex structures.

Chapter five is the first core 'results' chapter, introducing my analysis of material remittances. It deals specifically with issues of definition and typology. I felt increasingly uncomfortable with the static and narrow way of looking at material remittances in most of the literature. I had the feeling that those involved as senders and receivers (what I have named in this thesis as 'dyads') had a lot to say about *their* remittances. As a consequence of this academic uneasiness, I propose a typology which takes into account senders and receivers' conceptions. The typology is made of six types of material remittances transfers. This chapter also explores the data on material remittances elicited through the questionnaire. Although the hard data for this chapter come from the questionnaire, in order to fully comprehend it I also rely on interview data and insights from participant observation. Participant observation was more relevant at this point than I had originally foreseen, not least because many people cannot verbalize reasons or meanings. So useful information can be obtained by looking at what people do instead of what they say they do.

Chapter six also deals with material remittances but focusing on how they are used. After reviewing the data sources about remittance uses in Ecuador and stating their limitations, this chapter presents the questionnaire data on the uses of financial remittances in the two research sites. Items such as housing or education were identified as recurrent ways of spending financial remittances. Differences between the two research sites, as well as similarities, provide much input for the analysis. This chapter also covers the collective practices of sending and receiving remittances. It develops further the main case of collective

remittances encountered, money for festive and religious purposes, in what can be considered a way of sanctifying money.

Chapter seven introduces my analysis of social remittances. In spite of the sharp criticisms I sometimes encountered when I explained the contents of my PhD proposal, I was determined to research social remittances. Many researchers seemed to have strong opinions about this popular topic, but none of them are based on systematic research. My research curiosity was strong enough to take the risk of researching social remittances, which could just turn out to be merely an academic invention or an incorrect way of framing research into migration consequences. This first chapter on social remittances goes through the social remittances' creation phases I found among migrants from both villages. This chapter heavily draws on interview data. Hence it is profusely sprinkled with quotations.

Chapter eight also deals with social remittances, this time inquiring into their specific content in the two specific research settings. Five domains are identified and discussed in this chapter, namely gender, financial aspects, political engagement, practical and work skills, and ethnicity.

Chapter nine concludes the thesis, summarizing and integrating the results. It is also the place where I engage in a dialogue between the two sets of the chapters on material and social remittances, which otherwise would not have been talking to each other. In this chapter, some linkages between the two broad types of remittances are explored. This last chapter also highlights the main findings of the thesis, as well as its limitations and potential ways forward.

Chapter 2

International Remittances.

Power Inequalities

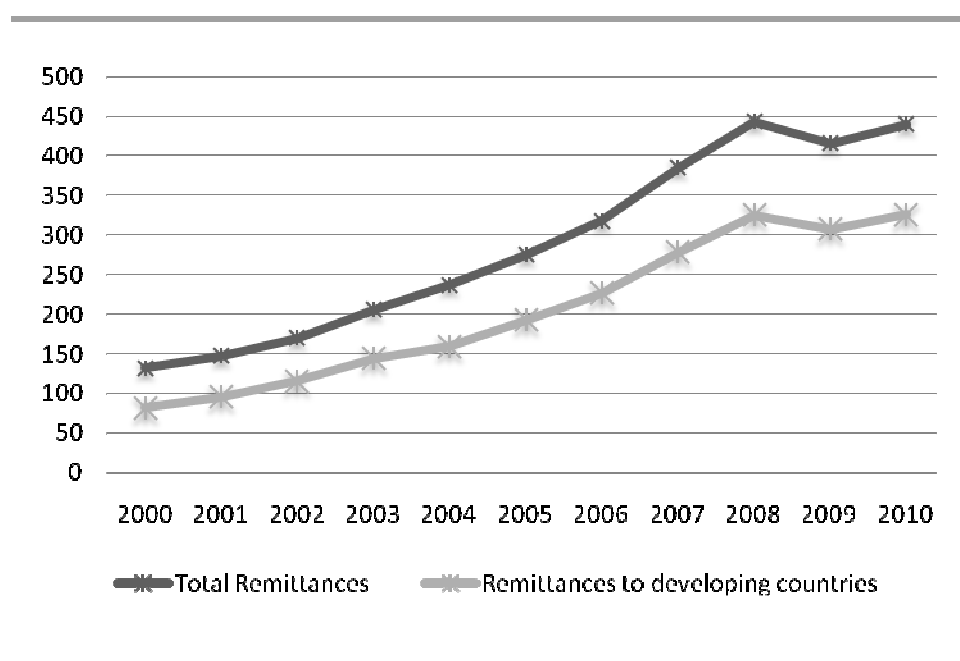
In this chapter I present an overview of the literature on international remittances. Some economic data are presented in the first section, in order to focus the debate. Very broadly these figures aim, on the one hand, to illustrate the available data sources on international remittances, and on the other hand they provide a snapshot of the importance of this form of financial transfer worldwide and for Ecuador. Mirroring the image sketched by these broad figures, the following section focuses on the academic production over recent decades on remittances from international migrants. As the body of this literature is very large and in constant growth, I do not aim to review an exhaustive list of publications on the topic here. I will instead create a snapshot of the state-of-the-art on remittances, identifying the main threads of research. This chapter also highlights the common approaches, as well as the under-researched issues, in the field. I will argue for the consequences of (and probable causes for) such an unbalanced distribution, and the potentialities of informing new research on remittances and their impacts by different disciplines. This chapter develops two further strands of research within the broad topic of remittances: the socio-demography of remittances, and the impact of remittances on development (or underdevelopment).

In the second part of the chapter I argue for the need for cross-disciplinary approaches to remittances, and particularly praise the usefulness of the field of Migration Studies when researching remittances. As a consequence of the importance of interdisciplinarity when studying migration and remittances, I argue that my research stance is very much informed by Migration Studies, as well as by Anthropology. More specific theoretical developments and references are presented in each of the four main empirical chapters, two on material and two on social remittances. Finally I engage with broader theories of power inequalities in the global arena. Hence I aim to articulate and make sense of my empirical ethnographic data within a global scenario of mutual but unequal transnational relations.

2.1 International Remittances: Numbers, Disciplines and Topics

Before attempting a literature review on remittances, I provide a brief overview of financial remittances from international sources. Although this research is concerned with a broader understanding of international remittances (financial but also in-kind and social remittances), I focus here on financial remittances for simplicity and data availability reasons. Financial remittances have been extensively researched and there are several sources containing ‘hard’ data, although quality caveats must be kept in mind at all times. In addition, the large magnitude of the macroeconomic figures on international financial remittances means that they are systematically used as a justification for research on the topic. Illustrating their large scale, the next graph shows the evolution of international financial remittances over the last decade, both globally and for the so-called developing countries¹.

Figure 2.1: Evolution of international financial remittances (in billion US\$)



Source: World Bank (2008 and 2011)

It is important not to forget the nature of the data shown in the graph, as only financial remittances from international sources which are sent through official channels are shown.

¹ Although I profoundly disagree with the developed-developing countries terminology, I maintain the term ‘developing countries’ in the graph for accuracy with the data source.

Remittances from internal sources are not captured², neither money sent through unlicensed channels, as in the case of the *hawala* or *hundi* systems in Southern Asia or in countries without a regulated banking infrastructure (e.g. Somalia or Afghanistan). In the case of Latin America in general, unlicensed or informal transfer mechanisms are thought not to be very important (Orozco, 2004: 7). Official statistics do not cover either the so-called ‘pocket remittances’ (remittances delivered personally by a traveller, often a returning migrant or a migrant on holiday), a common form of remittance transmission in the case of remittance corridors between contiguous countries such as the cases of Greece-Albania or US-Mexico. All this suggests that recorded data on international remittances is likely to skew the reality and under-represent the true magnitude of the transfers of money made by worker migrants from their countries of current residence to other countries (whether to their countries of origin or to third countries). Although official statistical data leave unrecorded a significant quantity of transfers, Figure 2.1 clearly shows that the increase in international financial remittances has been spectacular. However, part of this increase is due to better measurement implemented by the countries and the compilation measures of international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and the increased surveillance of international monetary flows and anti-money laundering measures implemented since 9/11. It also needs to be pointed out that there are discrepancies between recorded remittances by sending and receiving countries as recipient countries have developed better measures.

Figure 2.1 also shows that, although discussions and research usually focus on peripheral countries, some developed countries are also important remittance receivers (indicated by the gap between the two lines on the graph). In 2010 countries such as France, Germany and Spain actually ranked in the top ten of remittance recipients. Nonetheless, for these countries international remittances are not usually an important macroeconomic variable, as they are for smaller, peripheral and/or unstable countries. Much depends on whether the absolute or

² Internal remittances are likely to be as important as international remittances, if not in their numerical magnitude, at least as regard to their impact on senders and receivers livelihoods. There is the underlying and never explicitly stated assumption that the development of a country on its whole is of international interest, compared with uneven development within countries which is perceived as each country’s internal affair. As Wimmer and Glick Schiller argue ‘Internal migration [...] is not considering a problem deserving special attention and either goes completely unnoticed or is seen as a part of the study of urbanization processes and thus dealt with in academic fields separated from migration studies’ (2003: 585). There is also a statistical reason behind the lack of studies on internal remittances as it is also more difficult to capture internal than international money transfers because the former is usually the consequence of seasonal migration where migrants can carry the money by themselves creating a statistical invisibility of these internal transfers.

relative macroeconomic importance of remittances is being measured. Table 2.1 lists on its left-side the main remittance recipients in absolute terms. Unsurprisingly India, China, Mexico and the Philippines are ranked at the top of the list. These are hardly ‘peripheral’ or ‘unstable’ countries; rather they are big countries demographically, with lots of migrants remitting from abroad. On the right side of the table countries are ordered based on remittances as a percentage of each country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The different ordering criteria (international remittances in absolute and relative terms) create two very different lists, as the latter list does consist of small, peripheral states overly dependent on remittances.

Table 2.1: Top ten remittance-receiving countries in total amount and as % of GDP

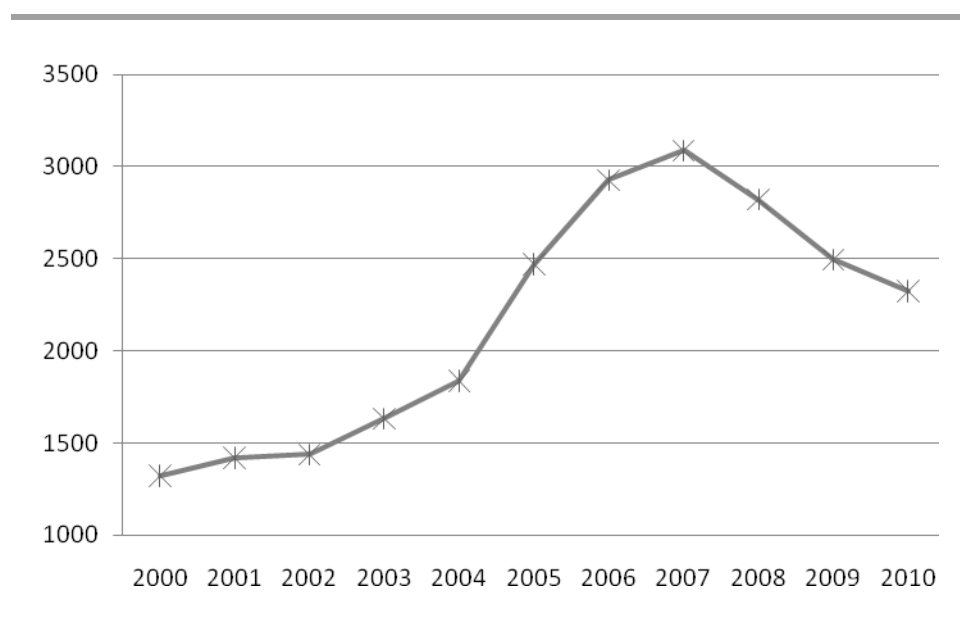
Top 10 remittance recipients in 2010 (US\$ billions)		Top 10 remittance recipients in 2009 (percentage of GDP)	
India	55	Tajikistan	35.1%
China	51	Tonga	27.7%
Mexico	22.6	Lesotho	24.8%
Philippines	21.3	Moldova	23.1%
France	15.9	Nepal	22.9%
Germany	11.6	Lebanon	22.4%
Bangladesh	11.1	Samoa	22.3%
Belgium	10.4	Honduras	19.3%
Spain	10.2	Guyana	17.3%
Nigeria	10	El Salvador	15.7%

Source: World Bank (2011)

Focusing now on Ecuador, the evolution of remittances received from abroad is also very significant. The Ecuadorian Central Bank has made an important effort to develop and implement remittance measurements from 2006 when this institution systematically started to collect, compile and disseminate data on international remittances. A legal requirement was imposed on the country’s money transfer operators to report money inflows and outflows to the Ecuadorian financial authorities. This development is not accidental as international remittances were by then, along with oil exports, one of the main entries in the Ecuadorian

balance of payments in a context of a severe national economic and political crisis. As will be shown, remittances have become the most tangible source to finance development and the Ecuadorian government, among others, is very willing to draw on remittances (albeit more in discursive than in practical terms).

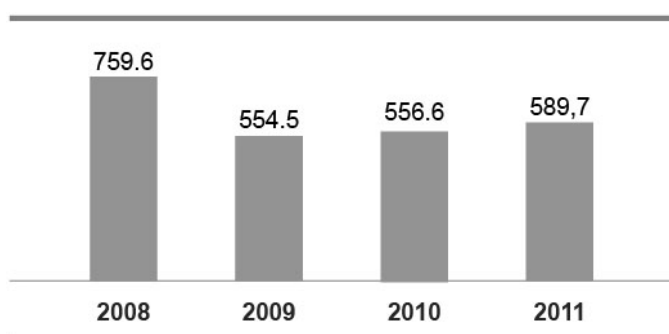
Figure 2.2: Evolution of international financial remittances to Ecuador (in million US\$)



Source: World Bank (2011) and Ecuadorian Central Bank (2005-2010)

International remittances to Ecuador, according to the Ecuadorian Central Bank, grew by an average of 19% annually in the 2004-2007 period, peaking in this latter year and subsequently declining in the following three years (2008-2010). Preliminary data for the first term of 2011 suggest that Ecuador's international remittances may be slowly recovering after the impact of the world financial crisis in previous years (Figure 2.3). It is, however, too early to make any serious statement about the evolution of international remittances in the short term to Ecuador, particularly given the uncertain economic situation in the countries where remittances to Ecuador originate, such as Spain and Italy.

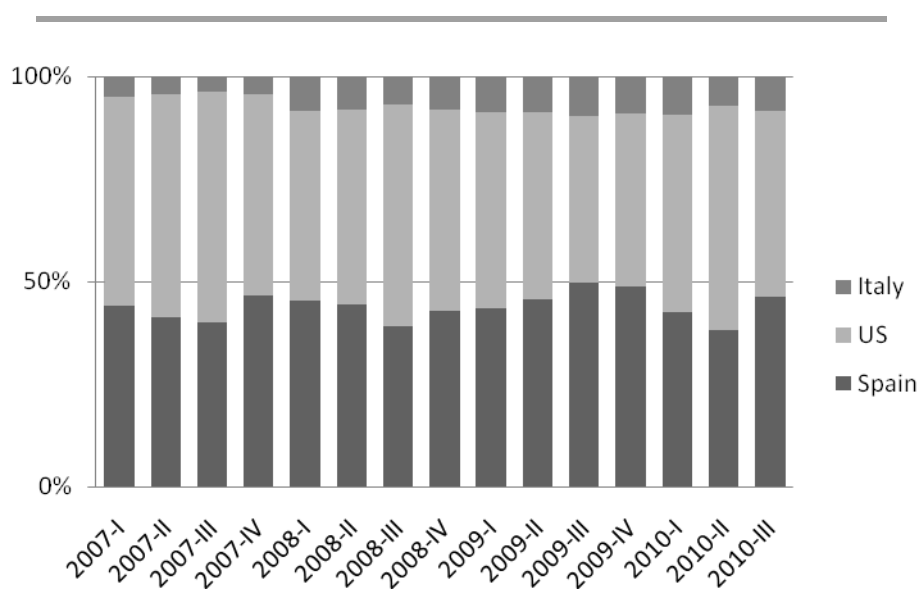
Figure 2.3: Recorded financial remittances to Ecuador first term of each year (in thousand US\$)



Source: Ecuadorian Central Bank

International remittances to Ecuador show a very marked distribution according to the countries they originate from. Spain, the US and Italy systematically account for over 95% of the total received amounts (see Figure 2.4). The dominance of the US and Spain, with consistently 40-50% of the remittances each, naturally reflects the size of the Ecuadorian migrant populations there. This fact was an important influence over the research design of this project.

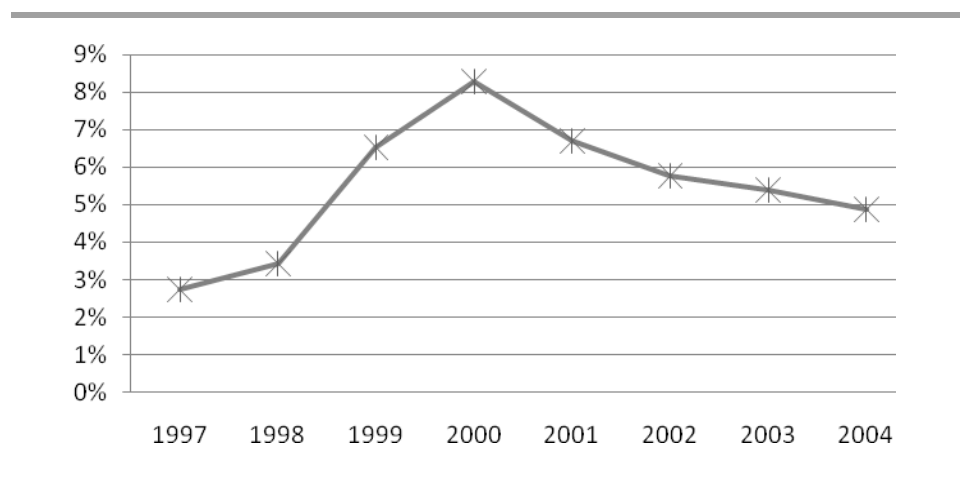
Figure 2.4: International financial remittances to Ecuador by country of origin (in percentage)



Source: Ecuadorian Central Bank

In 2004 workers' remittances received in Ecuador accounted for almost 5% of the country's GDP (IADB, 2011). This percentage must be read within a national economic context of increasing incoming remittances and decreasing GDP. Incoming international remittances peaked in 2000 after the country's dollarization.

Figure 2.5: Remittances to Ecuador as percentage of the GDP



Source: IADB DataGob (2011)

In order to better understand Ecuador's dollarization I briefly describe here the main features of the Ecuadorian economy, which closely follows the economic history of most Latin American countries. Ecuador's economy was, and still is, heavily dependent on a few agricultural exports (first cocoa, then banana), whose prices in the international markets are very unstable. In the 1960s and 1970s the country started a State-led modernization process under the strategy of Import Substitution Industrialization (the ISI model), mostly funded by the country's oil revenues and an extensive availability of international credit. The 1980s were the 'lost decade' for Ecuador, when the country's external debt exceeded its earning power, leading to an inability to repay the debt and to a vertiginous accumulation of interest. The international financial institutions forced Ecuador (as well as many other peripheral countries with high external debts) to implement harsh structural adjustment programmes after 'encouraging' nationalizing the debts of the private banks. This already dire economic situation worsened in the 1990s due to bad political management and instability, natural disasters (the Niño weather phenomenon in 1997) and a drop in global oil prices.

Ecuador's banking system went through a total collapse in the 1990s. Due to bad management and the concentration of credit in few hands, at the end of the 1990's the larger Ecuadorian

banks were at serious risk of collapse when most of their loans were likely not to be repaid. The banks turned then to the State for support. The country's traditional oligarchies were both at the top management positions in the banks and the government, hence the government (headed by Jamil Mahuad) drafted a plan to rescue the banks with public funds in 1999 (*salvataje bancario*). That plan included the emission of currency by the Ecuadorian Central Bank to pump liquidity into the banking sector which led to a devaluation of the national currency, the *sucre*, and to a process of hyperinflation. In order to cope with the fact that many small savers were rushing to withdraw their money from the collapsing banks, the authorities decreed a freezing of the banks' accounts. Even with the total support of the State, the cash injection and the rescue strategy, ten of the country's large banks had to be taken over by the State and some of them even closed down (Cortés, 2010: 210).

Ecuador's real economy plummeted. The economic situation was unsustainable by 1999 with a 7.3% contraction of the GDP, annual inflation of 52.2% and a 67% devaluation of the *sucre*. Unable to repay the external debt, president Mahuad passed regulations which severely affected the population such as tax increases, a spectacular hike in the price of State-subsidised petrol, along with privatization and deregulation measures. Ecuador's poverty levels dramatically increased as a consequence. It led to a context of social unrest, with large-scale protests and strikes against the harsh structural adjustment measures implemented. Finally, in January 2000 president Mahuad announced the dollarization of the Ecuadorian economy as the last resort to control the country's hyperinflation. However, the exchange rate between *sucres* and dollars was set at 25,000 *sucres* for 1 dollar. This conversion rate benefited those elites who had foreseen or knew about the measure in advance and maintained their savings in dollars. Most small savers held their savings in *sucres*, and with the country's dollarization in a context of frozen bank accounts, the value of their meagre savings sharply depreciated. Many Ecuadorians, faced with this economic and political situation, decided to migrate internationally, and started to send remittances to their relatives in the country. In this way, international remittances have become a mainstay of the country's economy.

The Ecuadorian Central Bank also gathers data on the geographical distribution of remittances within Ecuador. The provinces of Azuay and Loja, the geographical locus for this research, are two of the main remittance receivers for the whole country, along with the provinces of Guayas (the province where the city of Guayaquil is located, the main Ecuadorian port) and Pichincha (where the national capital, Quito, is located). On the left side of Table 2.2 are listed the top five remittance receiving provinces by total amounts. On the right side of the table, the

provinces are ranked according to the remittances received per head of population³. The provinces of Azuay and Loja rank higher, above Pichincha and Guayas, when the total amount of remittances is weighted by the population.

Table 2.2: Geographical distribution of international remittances in Ecuador in 2010

Top 5 receiving provinces by total remittances (\$US million)		Top 5 receiving provinces by remittances-per-head (\$)	
Guayas	618	Cañar	727
Pichincha	458	Azuay	594
Azuay	423	Loja	239
Cañar	164	Pichincha	178
Loja	107	Guayas	169

Source: Own elaboration with data from the Ecuadorian Central Bank (2011) and the provisional provincial results of the 2010 Population and Household Census (2011)

Leaving aside the numerical data, I move now to present a different view on remittances by focusing on the academic research dealing with this topic.

2.1.1 Brief snapshot of academic production on remittances

Scholarly production on remittances has experienced a boom in recent years. However, this surge is not evenly distributed among all the disciplines in the social sciences. Equally, there is also an uneven production regarding different themes of research.

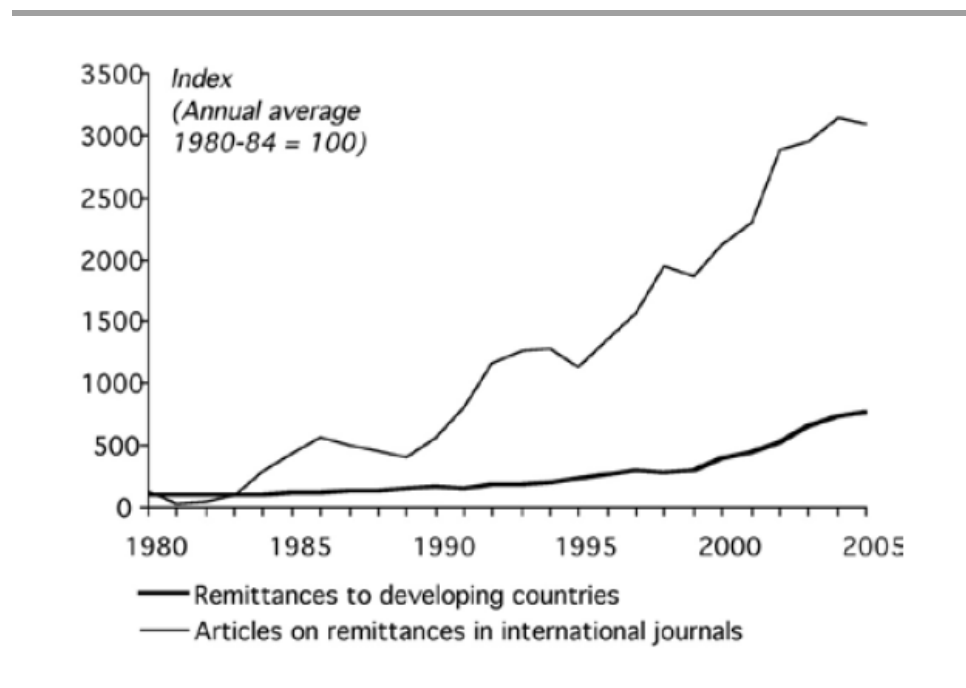
a) Regarding time

The salaries earned in a place by workers and sent back to their families is not a new topic of research. Initially remittances were researched in the context of internal migration, usually urban-to-rural remittances (Adams, 1998; Banerjee, 1984; Connell et al., 1976; Irvin, 1975; Johnson and Whitelaw, 1974; Rempel and Lobdell, 1978; Skeldon, 1990; Trager, 1984). Although it is still possible to find some references on internal remittances (particularly in the case of big countries such as China, see for instance Murphy, 2006), most articles on the topic deal with remittances from international sources. Figure 2.6 shows the academic output on remittances –measured as the number of articles listed in the Social Sciences Citation Index of

³ Total remittances received in 2010 are divided by each province's population in 2010 according to the preliminary results of the 2010 Census.

Thomson Scientific with 'remittances' and a migration-related term in the title, abstract or keywords– and the total amount of international financial remittances to developing countries (in US\$ billions).

Figure 2.6: Remittances to developing countries and journal articles about remittances



Source: Carling (2008a: 45)

According to this graph, elaborated by Carling (2008a: 45), an accelerated upward trend in the number of journal articles published about remittances started around the mid-eighties. Although the amount of financial remittances to developing countries also shows a consistent upward tendency (even during periods of crisis), the eighties is not a decade which marked any change neither in the direction nor in the intensity of the actual financial flow. In comparison, not only the number of articles dealing with remittances is on the increase since the eighties, at the time there was also a crucial qualitative change: remittances went from being one of the consequences of migration to the central object of study, a topic of research in itself.

Carling states that the reasons for the current academic enthusiasm come from outside academia, although he does not provide any clue about the origin (2008a: 45). Undoubtedly the rise in the debate on the migration-development relationship is key to understanding this

surge (see Skeldon, 2008). I would argue that another key reason was situated in the change of paradigm in the eighties. At that time there was a decline in the traditional sources of external funding. Many of the accounts on remittances then stated the relative importance of remittances as an external financial flow, in terms of quantity and quality. These accounts were usually made by economists who often portrayed remittances as very positive (Gammeltoft, 2002; Ratha, 2003). Comparisons were usually drawn with other flows such as Official Development Assistance (ODA) or Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Compared with the ODA, international remittances were appraised for their bigger quantitative magnitude. When compared with FDI, remittances were portrayed as a far more stable external flow. Some authors emphasised the counter-cyclical nature of international remittances (Ratha, 2003)⁴. These comparisons between remittances and other traditional sources of external funding were not politically or ideologically naive because they implicitly justified the privatization of the development efforts, very much on the line of the neoliberal principles. By the end of the eighties the change of paradigm was completed, and neoliberalism stands as the capitalist solution to the oil crises in the seventies. With this reading, the interest placed on remittances as a source of development makes sense. When globalization became a buzzword both in and outside academia in the nineties, it drew scholars' attention towards issues of (inter)dependency among nation-states and the links, financial in the case of remittances, among them were subjected to much scrutiny. These two tendencies brought scholarly importance to remittances – and that is still in place two decades after.

Hence, although the quantitative magnitude of financial remittances probably lies behind the surge in academic interest on remittances, different authors have framed their research within different approaches. Thus, it is possible to track changes in the approach to the topic of remittances over time. Broadly speaking two extreme stances can be identified: the rather pessimistic conceptualizations of remittances by the dependency theorists in the 1970s and 1980s, contrasting with the over-optimistic neoliberal accounts of the following two decades. The authors within these two tendencies have opposing views on the causes and effects of migration and its links with development. Remittances, therefore, are also perceived very differently by these two schools. The dependency or structuralist school considers migration as one of the capitalist mechanisms to exacerbate world inequalities (Frank, 1969; Wallerstein,

⁴ Recent research on international remittances using the context of the current international financial crisis has nuanced this optimistic picture. Vargas-Silva using data from Mexico found that 'remittances could, in fact, be considered countercyclical flows in some periods, but that this relationship is not stable over time. At other times, remittances behave like pro-cyclical flows, especially when the host economy (i.e. remittance-sending) is also experiencing an economic downturn' (2011).

1974). Remittances are conceived as a source of social inequality in the reception places between those who receive and those who do not receive remittances. Remittances are not portrayed as a possible source for independent development because of the ways they tend to be used, functioning as a sort of short-term diversion by increasing the living standards that remittance receivers can enjoy in the short term. This approach argues that in fact remittances set in place a cycle of external dependency which can only be sustained by new out-migration over time which will feed the transfer of remittances. Although dependency theory fell out of fashion in the 1990s, in the first decade of the 21st century a few authors, drawing on some of the postulates of this approach, emphasize the unequal frame of international relationships that remittances stem from and are embedded in (Delgado-Wise et al., 2010). On the opposite side of the research spectrum, neoliberal economists portray remittances as the most important development fund many peripheral countries have because of their quantity and stability. Optimism is such that these authors have incorporated remittances in their win-win equation, where migrants and their relatives benefit (by diminishing poverty), sending countries benefit (by addressing macroeconomic unbalances) and receiving countries benefit (through cheap and flexible labour) from international migration (Maimbo and Ratha, 2005). Currently there are interesting calls for a more nuanced and less manichean positioning on the effects of migration and remittances, to overcome the simplistic 'versus' debates (negative vs. positive; brain drain vs. brain gain; dependency vs. development). In de Haas' words: 'now that the migration and development pendulum has swung from sheer optimism to sheer pessimism and back again, it is time to nudge it steadily towards the middle' (2011). This thesis takes seriously these calls for more nuanced and realistic accounts by raising more specific and localized research questions on remittances.

b) Regarding disciplines

Which disciplines are most interested in remittances and their associated impacts? For illustrative purposes, I use the bibliographic database ISI Web of Knowledge as a proxy because of its coverage and also quality measures, whilst keeping in mind all the pitfalls of only focusing on one database. Table 2.3 shows the results of the number of articles for the ten most occurring disciplines (873 articles in total) after performing a search with the word 'remittances' in the title or topic, not time-bound, on 3rd May 2011.

Table 2.3: Top ten disciplines by number of articles dealing with remittances

Subject Area	Number of articles	Percentage over the first 500 results
Economics	164	32.8%
Demography	97	19.4%
Planning & Development	77	15.4%
Geography	45	9%
Area Studies	37	7.4%
Sociology	36	7.2%
Political Science	28	5.6%
Ethnic Studies	26	5.2%
Anthropology	24	4.8%
Environmental Studies	24	4.8%

Source: Web of Knowledge-Thomson (2011)

As we can see, remittances are a relevant topic of research for almost the entire spectrum of the social sciences. Unsurprisingly, Economics is the discipline which has produced the most articles on remittances (more if the field of Planning and Development is considered within Economics). It is followed by Demography. However, it is important to note that Demography ranks highly because this specific database catalogues Migration Studies within Demography. Geography (mostly Human Geography), Sociology, Political Sciences and Anthropology also share an interest in remittances. Interestingly, several interdisciplinary fields (Planning and Development, Area Studies, Ethnic Studies and Environmental Studies) have also produced a significant number of articles on remittances.

Linking back to the previous section, it is possible to establish an association between the approaches to the topic of remittances and the disciplines these approaches stem from. Broadly speaking, the structuralist accounts were usually the product of anthropologists, in comparison with the more functionalist or neoliberal analyses mostly carried out by economists. This is in comparison with the more nuanced accounts many of which are made by Migration scholars.

c) Regarding topics and areas of research

Due to the large number of publications dealing with remittances (whether specifically or not), it appears more useful to group them thematically in order to identify the main topics of research. Research on remittances has achieved such a high level of specialization that this is quite a complex task. Figure 2.7 on page 25 provides a visual overview of the seven main overarching research topics regarding remittances. The second column must be read as a non-exhaustive list of the subtopics within each realm.

It is not unreasonable to suggest that most publications fall within one of the broad seven categories listed in Figure 2.7. The first row includes research on the nature of the transfers themselves. Remittances can be classified as the transfers made by or to migrants of money (financial or pecuniary remittances), or of non-material stuff such as ideas, normative structures or aptitudes (social remittances), or of non-cash items such as clothes, food or technology (in-kind remittances). Any of the previous three transfers can also be sent or received by groups or with collective purposes (collective remittances). Simultaneously, when transfers are sent to migrants they have been labelled as reverse remittances (e.g. reverse in-kind remittances). The nature of remittances has been used as an ordering criterion to organise this thesis: chapters five and six specifically deal with material remittances (financial and in-kind), with collective remittances covered in the second part of the chapter six, chapters seven and eight focus on social remittances. The concluding chapter attempts to draw some linkages between the two main types of remittances. Literature specifically on collective and social remittances (not dealt with in this chapter) is analysed in depth in chapters six and seven respectively.

The second row in Figure 2.7, which I have named as 'macroeconomic data', covers not only the primary sources on macroeconomic data (basically balance of payments and large scale surveys) as well as secondary compilations, but also the macroeconomic dealings carried out with such data. They include analyses (mostly econometric) on economic determinants of remittances and their links with economic variables such as inflation, trade or foreign investment.

Published work dealing with transfer mechanisms is usually a more hands-on type of research often commissioned and/or funded by international institutions with a development interest. Mechanisms to transfer material remittances are broadly divided between regulated and

unregulated means, also known respectively as formal and informal. Informal or unregulated transfer mechanisms receive different names and work differently in different parts of the world (Ballard, 2003; Blackwell and Seddon, 2004; El Qorchi et al., 2003; Maimbo, 2003; Maimbo and Passas, 2004). Informal mechanisms, where available (and here there are large disparities worldwide), are often preferred by migrants because of their speed, price and convenience in terms of their ability to reach even remote populations and because there is no red-tape involved such as the need for identification, something very convenient for migrants who are in an irregular legal situation. Unregulated mechanisms such as the *hawala* system, largely used in the Muslim world, are based on trust. After the 9/11 attacks, there were political concerns about the role of these unregulated mechanisms in the transfers of funds for terrorist activities and an upsurge of research on the topic was carried out in the aftermath (Ehrenfeld, 2007; Looney, 2003)⁵. Research dealing with regulated transfer mechanisms is frequently concerned with measures to improve their efficiency. Improvement is usually in the form of cost reduction although there are also some attempts to reduce red-tape, and to increase speed and coverage both in the sending and the receiving contexts.

Another strand of research, also relatively hands-on and partially linked with the one above, is concerned with the impact of financial remittances on the banking and financial system of the recipient countries. Remittance reception can enhance otherwise weak financial systems, boosting the banking sector in places of reception and increasing credit availability (Quisumbing and McNiven, 2007). In this line of research, some authors call for measures to incentivize the use of formal transfer mechanisms, either by reducing costs (Orozco, 2006) or by relaxing identity requirements (Frisch, 2004; Sander and Maimbo, 2003). The idea behind this reasoning is that transferring remittances through official means can be beneficial for all those involved. Migrants would reduce the cost of sending money home and become integrated into the banking sector of their areas of residence. Those who receive the money would, without extra burden, improve the credit availability of their countries and help to establish sound financial systems. Governments would have more control over this flow of external finance, both in terms of development planning and data availability. If remittances are sent through the formal banking system, it can be argued that it is likely that some remittances (at least after covering daily expenses) may stay in the banks in the form of savings. In this way, receivers may find it easier to access financial products. This realm of research usually involves pleas and strategies for 'banking the unbanked' at both ends of the

⁵ It was clear that both informal remittance transfer mechanisms and the regulated banking sector were used to transfer funds for terrorist purposes (Passas, 2006: 324).

transfer, remittance senders and receivers (Orozco, 2003). In the rural areas, where the percentage of population incorporated in the official financial or banking system is systematically lower than in urban areas, the need to meet the challenge to offer financial products and services tailored to remittance receivers is even more urgent. Some scholars are also looking at innovative approaches and products set by credit unions and micro-finance institutions which endeavour to become relevant players in the remittance transfer market (Grace, 2005; Grell et al., 2005; Sasuman, 2005; WCCU, 2004). In rural contexts, micro-finance and credit cooperatives have a very important role to play, and have achieved interesting results, as in the case in Southern highland Ecuador (Cortés and Ortega García, 2008).

A fifth broad topic of research concerning remittances has a more policy-oriented approach. Regarding remittances, there are different sets of policies which some scholars have argued for and a few countries have tried to implement. There are policies which seek to increase the inflow of remittances (usually by decreasing the transfer costs), policies to affect the way in which remittances are used (for an overview see Bobeva, 2005), and policies facilitating or matching collective remittances for development purposes (as in the well-researched Mexican 3x1 programme). Unsurprisingly, countries with large populations abroad are most likely to take on board academic calls for implementing policies. The Philippines, where migration and remittances are part of a national development plan, is a case in point (Bagasao et al., 2004). This is also the case for several Pacific island-states whose economies are based on Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy, in what has been called the MIRAB model (Connell and Conway, 2000; Poirine, 1998). To a lesser extent remittances are part of the national development strategy of countries such as El Salvador, Mexico or Bangladesh, to mention a few. Currently, most scholarly analysis advises against public efforts to capture or tax remittances based on the fact that remittances are private flows and must be considered as such by the authorities. As with any other financial flow, the best policy for attracting remittances is to create a stable economic and political environment.

Figure 2.7: Main topics and subtopics of research regarding remittances

Topics	Some research threads
Nature of remittances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Financial remittances -In-kind remittances -Social remittances -Collective remittances
Macroeconomic Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Global and regional figures -Balance of Payments data -Economic determinants of remittances -Links with other macroeconomic parameters
Transfer mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Informal transfer mechanisms (e.g. hawala or hundi systems) - Formal transfer mechanisms (e.g. Money Transfer Operators such as Western Union) -Costs
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Microfinance -Banking of remittances -Development of the financial sector
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Policies for attracting remittances -Policies for affecting remittances' uses -Home Town Associations and Diaspora engagement
Social Demography of Remittances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Senders -Receivers -Motivations to remit -Relationship between senders and receivers -Links to some other socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, generation, type of migrants (e.g. students, highly-skilled, undocumented)
Remittances' uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Remittance spending patterns (e.g. housing, education, food, clothes, health, income-generating investments, religion and festivities, land) -Developmental impact of remittances' uses -Collective remittances -Poverty and inequality

Source: own elaboration based on a literature review conducted in 2008 and updated in 2011⁶

⁶ I am heavily indebted to Jørgen Carling with whom I carried out the extensive literature review in the months of October and November of 2008, when I was an intern at PRIO. I have updated the references to 2011.

I will focus now on the two items at the bottom of Figure 2.7 which are of more direct concern to this thesis: the 'social demography' of remittances, and their uses, including their impact at the family and village level.

2.1.2 Social demography of remittances

This thesis aims to disentangle the family dynamics triggering and modified by remittance sending and receiving practices (where remittances are conceived as translocal socio-economic transactions). By the 'social demography' of remittances I refer to any discussion of remittances in relation to social and demographic variables such as gender, generation, age or education. Most studies on this topic have revolved around remittance senders or receivers, and in only a few cases on the relationship between the two. This is an under-researched topic where more questions need to be raised and empirical data collected, which is what I have tried to do in this thesis.

Surprisingly, the sending side of the equation, the migrants, have been largely taken for granted in the literature. It is assumed to be unproblematic: a worker who sends money home. However, remittance sending behaviour, whether one is talking about social or material remittances, is intrinsically linked to migrants' features and their situation in their new places of residence. There are a few exceptions in the literature, such as Datta et al. (2006) who brought attention to remittances from low-paid migrants and the exploitative relations they need to endure in order to secure salaries to send remittances back home. As the authors state, 'little attention has been given at the micro-level to how migrants actually generate remittances in the first place and the widespread exploitation as well as self-sacrifice they endure in order to meet the demands of remittances sending' (Datta et al., 2006: 2). In a very different context, but on the same lines, are Lindsey's (2007) and Akuei's (2005) analyses of remittances which result from forced migration. These authors highlight the fact that sending remittances can actually be a burden and a source of distress for migrants. Nevertheless, whether sending money home can be understood as an altruistic or selfish act by migrants, it does undoubtedly impact on migrants' everyday lives. And researchers need to account for it.

The remitting behaviour of different types of migrants is a research topic which has not received that much attention to date. There are, though, a few studies on the remitting practices of particular types of migrants, which I will now list. As far as I am aware, there are such studies on irregular migrants (Chiuri et al., 2005; Marcelli and Lowell, 2005), highly-skilled

migrants (Brown and Connell, 2006; Docquier and Rapoport, 2004; Ouaked, 2002), domestic workers (Anderson, 2000; Asis et al., 2004; Gamburd, 2003; Heyzer and Weerakoon, 1994; Lan, 2003; Salazar-Parrenas, 2001; Silvey, 2006), and temporary migrants (Basok, 2003; Bauer and Sinning, 2005; Glytsos, 1997; Rogaly and Rafique, 2003). The type of migrants, this thesis will show, does heavily affect remittance behaviour, particularly regarding social remittances. The scarcity of empirical data specifically focused on social remittances creates a gap in the otherwise large literature on remittances. This thesis will try to partially redress this gap.

On the other end of the sender-receiver connection, remittance recipients have received more scholarly attention. Gradually, research on remittance receivers is complicating the picture by incorporating socio-demographic variables such as gender or generation. Both variables, gender and generation, can be conceived as relational variables (gender and generation are always in relation to someone else), more complex in the case of generations, as for instance I am a mother *in relation to* my children, but a daughter *in relation to* my own mother. Hence, I consider it more opportune to reflect on these variables within the sender-receiver relationship in what I have operationalized as 'dyads' (see chapter five for the full development of this reasoning).

Therefore, more interesting, in my view, than the separate analysis of senders and receivers, is the relationships forged among senders and receivers. In those 'grand debates' about the potential role of remittances for development or underdevelopment, there is systematically a black box which stays untouched: what happens between the remittance sender(s) and receiver(s)? The literature on migrants' motivations to send remittances is concerned with this scale of analysis. The seminal work by Lucas and Stark (1985) defined the three main motivations to remit that are actually placed in a continuum: from pure altruism to pure self-interest, through different types of co-insurance. These hypotheses have been tested and refined by several authors. I will not go into a detailed analysis of the literature on migrants' motivations to remit (for a good overview see Hagen-Zankera and Siegel, 2007). Many of these accounts overlook the hierarchical organization of the households, and the changes in power negotiations brought about by migration. Two strands of research deal, though, with this issue: feminist research on migration, and research on the transnational family. Feminist research first reported the gender-blindness of migration studies several decades ago (one of the first 'classics' is Morokvasic, 1984). Some authors are currently reporting this same gender-blindness of most research on remittances. Authors such as King et al. (2006), King and Vullnetari (2010), Kunz (2008), Piper (2005) and Sørensen (2005a), as well as the publications

resulting from a United Nations funded project on remittances and gender⁷ (see for instance García and Paiewonsky, 2006; García and Pérez Orozco, 2008; Paiewonsky and Pérez Orozco, 2007; Pérez Orozco, 2007; Ramírez et al., 2005; and most recently Vullnetari and King, 2011) have shown the gendered nature of the impacts of remittances. This thesis very much draws on these authors' postulates.

Another interesting branch of research is the literature on the transnational family. This strand of research applies transnationalism principles to the domain of the family. As Bryceson and Vuorela state, 'transnational families [...] live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely "familyhood", even across national borders' (2002: 3). Physical separation is the defining element of this type of families. Academics initially directed their attention to the issue of care in the cases of female migration (usually the case of Latin America or the Philippines), although remittances are also important, sometimes setting in place global chains of care. Transnational families are a locus of negotiations and power, as in any other family arrangement and as such are a site of research worth looking at (Hongdagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997; Pribilsky, 2004).

2.1.3 Remittances in the migration-development nexus

This thesis is also concerned with financial remittances and changes triggered by their uses. The literature on the so-called Migration-Development nexus is very relevant therefore as remittances are central (along with return migration, Diaspora involvement, and codevelopment issues) for this thread of research. To the best of my knowledge, the Migration-Development nexus is an expression popularized after a large research project with that same title carried out by Centre for Development Research in Copenhagen (results were published as a special issue of *International Migration* in 2002, see the introductory article by Sørensen et al., 2002). The links between migration and development (or lack of development) have been extensively researched for decades (see for example Skeldon, 1997 for a comprehensive early synthesis, or de Haas, 2010, for a more recent one). Some initial accounts, rather negative (Binford, 2003; Kearney, 1986), gave way to enthusiastic accounts in which migration, and particularly remittances, became the 'new development mantra' (Ratha,

⁷ The studies have been carried out by INSTRAW-International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. Since 2004, UN-INSTRAW has been working on the issue of migration, which focuses on the theme 'Gender, Migration, Remittances and Development'. It has published six case studies (with more studies in progress) examining nine countries of origin with global migratory flows which explore South to South, South to North, and rural to urban movements.

2003). Currently, accounts are more moderate and scholarly knowledge usually provides more balanced accounts, stating the positive as well as the negative consequences of remittance reception. At a macro-scale remittances are very important in some countries' balance of payments. At a micro-scale, they can be very important in the households' survival and improvement strategies. This second scale has received relatively less attention than the global figures and it is this scale that the empirical work of this thesis deals with.

The link between remittances and development is usually conceived through the actual utilization of remittances. Initially, the image about (financial) remittances was quite a simple one. Material remittances were either consumed or invested (Adams, 1989; Russell, 1986; Stahl, 1982; Stark et al., 1986). Consumption was somehow regarded as a waste of resources. This consumption might be positive in terms of poverty alleviation (Acosta et al., 2007; Adams and Page, 2003; Ratha, 2007), but not to set the basis for future development. Later accounts even doubted the ability of material remittances to fight structural poverty, as remittances were unable to change the underlying structural reasons for that poverty (Canales, 2007). On the other hand, it was posited that investment would establish independent sources for future income. The prospect of a remittance-decay over time would not be a threat anymore and the migrants' economies of origin would not get into the whirlpool of dependency that subsumed non-migrants into a 'culture of migration'.

This initial separation between consumption (often labelled as 'conspicuous') and investment has led to somewhat more sophisticated models. Some models talk about consumption-type investments and categorize health and education expenses under this labelling, in the vein of human capital approaches (Adams, 2005; Zarate-Hoyos, 2004). When these new variables are introduced into the analyses (mainly econometric ones), the results are not so straightforward, and different studies come up with different findings. Nonetheless, some of those authors are aware of the still too weak assumptions guiding their modelling (Taylor and Mora, 2006) and the lack of data they must deal with (Castaldo and Reilly, 2007).

Secondly, some studies have tried to determine the multiplier effects of remittance expenditure (Durand et al., 1996; Glytsos, 2002; Zarate-Hoyos, 2007). Even in those cases where remittances are used for 'conspicuous consumption', that consumption can still have positive effects on the productive sector. However, these results have not gone uncontested. Some examples, and counter-examples, illustrate this point. House building has usually been regarded as a highly inefficient way of spending remittances. However, it can also spur an

economic sector that is very labour intensive (and thus able to provide jobs for unskilled workers) and that has close links with other sectors, such as construction materials and specialised traders. Critical accounts, on the contrary, point out that it can create inflation, and those not able to receive remittances, unless they can work as building workers, will be worse-off (Binford, 2003: 309). In a similar way, the purchase of land can have two very different outcomes (that usually take place simultaneously). Because land demand increases, prices go up, and those unable to obtain cash from abroad cannot deal with those higher prices. This would condemn them to become landless workers. On the other hand, remittances can stimulate the purchase of land and its productive use. Finally, the example of consumption of items such as clothes or electric devices also faces the same contradictions: if those items have been nationally or externally produced, their consumption can support national industries or stimulate imports. The latter would worsen the national balance of payments, levelling down the positive macroeconomic impact of remittance flows. All the previous examples support the need for more contextualized and detailed studies of the local consequences of remittance uses, such as the one proposed in this research. Context-specific variables play a determinant role in the final outcome. Ethnographic studies can provide the foundations to understand complex relationships between remittance uses and potential development aspects. The ultimate goal of the research in this thesis is to challenge current universal claims regarding remittance uses by means of providing information about a very specific socio-cultural, economic and geographic setting. The aim is *not at all* the substitution of old universal conclusions by new ones.

2.2 Disciplinary Connections

This research is framed within the broad field of Migration Studies. Compared with more established and stable disciplines, in Migration Studies it is not the discipline which creates the object of study, but instead it is the object of study (complex, multifaceted, dynamic) which creates the field of study. Migration Studies is interdisciplinary⁸ in nature to respond to the challenges posed by the topic of research. Migration crosses the boundaries of disciplines such as Economics, Anthropology, Politics, Sociology, Cultural Studies or Human Geography. Particularly within the realm of Migration Studies, my research is heavily indebted to those

⁸ Interdisciplinarity is different from multidisciplinary. Differently from an interdisciplinary field, in multidisciplinary research cooperation between disciplines is not interactive but just accumulative. Each discipline maintains their own methodologies and approaches. I have opted for the term interdisciplinarity instead of transdisciplinarity (with similar meaning as the prefixes inter- and trans- both recall similar idea of crossing through) because the former is more widely used in the Anglo-Saxon academic discourse.

migration scholars who have introduced a gender dimension in their analyses of migration (see for instance Ghosh, 2009; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2011; Mahler and Pessar, 2006; Silvey, 2004; Sørensen, 2005b). Different from feminist research, with its own theoretical and methodological approaches, the work of those migration scholars who explicitly apply a gender lens to their analysis generally do so in a more tempered form. In my view, they exemplify a more adequate positioning to ask questions, search for answers and interpret such answers. Gender is important in this research because, first of all, the gender composition of the migration flows is very different in the two case studies that I deal with. It responds to different contexts of arrival and deploys itself differently regarding remittances (both material and social). This is not to say that gender is an ultimate variable in this research. It is so, partly, because some other variables (such as the legal status of migrants abroad) have consequences which in some cases exceed the effects of gender on these transfers. But more importantly, gender is not considered 'the' variable because this thesis does not conceive 'gender' as an independent variable in the analysis. Similar to the pleas of gender-sensitive migration scholars (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2011: 220), this thesis conceives migration as a gendered set of processes, which include the creation, the sending and the receiving of remittances. This thesis is heavily indebted to these scholars because they have opened up a new realm of inquiry which has proved very valuable in the context of remittance reception: the household.

Secondly, this research also feeds from critical stances, partly associated with postmodern processes of de-construction, which emphasise the importance of terminology. This research is interested in definitions and non-explicit assumptions because definitions and categories are not innocuous. The explanation and ordering of an issue does create the issue itself, or at least the way that issue is perceived. In this line of reasoning, and as Sassen aptly argues, there is a need to destabilize stable topics (2011). Remittances have become a stable term in Academia. This thesis aims to partially destabilize it, by surgically diving into the topic and adding complexity to it. What are we exactly labelling as remittances? Why are we (as social scientists) so interested in labelling that (specific type of) money that migrants' send to their families? What are the assumptions underlying such labelling? By making definitions explicit, we can inquire about how appropriately they capture and explain the reality they are trying to describe. Which are the underlying assumptions and motivations? I hope these questions will be answered in the following chapters. I would like to mention that I have tried to be extremely careful with the issue of labelling, selecting very purposely the expressions and words I use in this thesis. I have tried not to take for granted or use a term, just because it is the one currently in use. Using one word instead of another is not naive, and has

consequences. Following that reasoning I use the expression '*migrants' new places of residence*' instead of '*migrants' destinations*'. Like Näre (2009) I do not use the term 'flow' that appears usually in the literature (e.g. material flows) because in fact nothing is flowing. Instead, money is earned, put aside, sent and received with effort by migrants and their relatives. Hence I label remittances as '*transfers*' instead of '*flows*'. By remittances I refer to the transfers sent or received by migrants, irrespective of the nature of the transfers: financial, in-kind, social or collective remittances. This thesis deals with all these types of remittances.

2.3 Power Inequalities

Within Migration Studies the paradigm of Transnationalism (for what is considered the foundational work see Glick Schiller et al., 1992), with its emphasis on inter-connectedness, simultaneity and multiple-directions, has acted as the broad optic which provides the feeling of mobility and dynamism this thesis aspires to achieve. However, such inter-connectedness does not connect parties with equal shares of power, as the system is intrinsically asymmetrical. This asymmetry is present at several levels.

At the global level, Neoliberalism has become the dominant paradigm, and it has 'appropriated' migrants and their material and non-material resources, i.e. financial and social remittances. Remittances are presented as a cost-free resource available to migrants' countries of origin (Hernandez and Coutin, 2006); they are portrayed as the logical counter-payment to these countries, in exchange for their citizens' labour. A discourse emerges which overlooks intrinsic power inequalities between migrants' countries of origin and countries of residence, and justifies such extraction as a fair deal. It is, however, far from a fair deal, as it is usually the case when parties involved are asymmetrically positioned. To start with, 'extraction' takes place at no cost for the extracting countries, as migrants themselves pay for their 'relocation expenses'. The journey cost is the most clear of such expenses. In the cases of irregular migration involving far distant countries as the cases of Ecuador and the US or Spain, this journey cost can reach an astronomical price, contributing to the unregulated and profitable sector of the migratory industry (Kyle and Koslowski, 2001). 'Relocation expenses' are not only pecuniary, as these migrants are also forced to accommodate physical separation in their lives abroad from their places of origin and relatives. This leads to the reconfiguration of their family and social lives. Such reconfigurations can be dramatic in some cases. It is important to note that remittances are in many cases the direct consequence of immigration regimes that prevent migrants from bringing over their close relatives.

Once in their new places of residence, the type of migrants I deal with in this thesis usually become a flexible and easily exploited labour surplus. Legal status is perhaps the most perverse and efficient mechanism to maintain migrant workers in such a position. Preventing migrants from holding regular legal status denies them their basic human rights. Some migrants in their attempts to regularize their legal situation spend a considerable amount of resources in the legal sector of their countries of residence. Denial of legal 'presence' is not the only mechanism to discipline migrants. In the case of Spain, where most of the migrants I worked with have regular legal status, increasing discrimination translates into repetitive calls to migrants to go home, in some cases even in the form of State-sponsored 'voluntary return' programmes. This approach results from a narrow conceptualization of migrants as only workers and aims to keep the supply of migrant labour even more flexible than what it is already.

Having said all that, it is obvious that remittances are not cost-free. They are wages earned usually by vulnerable, easy to exploit and marginalized workers who are often denied their basic rights as workers and human beings. Research on remittances often fails to capture this. Research has traditionally approached migrants in their role as either emigrants or immigrants. This approach obscures the relational nature of migrants' positioning and the fact that both roles take place at the same time, although with regard to different spaces. Such narrow conceptualization of migrants explains why migrants can be simultaneously conceived as agents of development in their communities of origin, and as increasingly unwelcome members in their countries of residence, where they face growing exclusion. As Glick Schiller acknowledges 'major global financial institutions, which portray migrants as agents of development through remittances that sustain impoverished communities, seem unconcerned that these very same people are increasingly disdained and excluded in their countries of settlement' (2010: 25).

There is a need to insert family livelihood strategies in the context of transnational hierarchical relations; to ground their transnational practices, both in migrants' origin and residence spaces, understanding such spaces not only as geographical entities but also as political and economic spaces. At this level then, remittances must be understood within a broad frame of mutual but unequal relations between (at least) the following pairs: between remittance senders and receivers; between remittance senders and non-senders; between remittance receivers and non-receivers. All those pairs are shaped by socio-demographic variables like

gender. Within this frame of unequal relations I embark on the task to research remittances to Ecuador, and to analyze these contrasting pairs.

2.4 Summary

This chapter started by providing selected data on financial remittances. It has also covered literature on remittances. Due to the amount and disparate quality of the publications on remittances, it would have been unwise to provide here a conventional extensive literature review. Most likely it would have become a long and uncritical list of publications. Familiarity with the literature on remittances has allowed me instead to identify the main axes of research regarding remittances: studies on the nature of what it is actually 'remitted'; attempts to provide more 'raw' data on financial remittances; research on transfer mechanisms and policy issues; studies on the socio-demography of remittances; and analyses of remittance uses and impacts.

This chapter has also laid down the theoretical backcloth behind the research in this thesis. I have argued that research on such a fashionable topic as remittances can benefit and address current pitfalls by drawing on interdisciplinarity. Migration Studies provide such an invaluable stance. Finally, a theoretical framework was presented where power inequalities are taken into account at several levels, and which enables us to critically position remittances within a global context of mutual but unequal relations, and simultaneously within very specific and localized socio-economic contexts. Remittances are often portrayed as a compensatory transfer to labour-sending countries, and much celebrated, without looking at the experiences of senders and receivers.

Chapter 3

Methodology.

Fieldwork Accounts

The interdisciplinary approach of this research on material and social remittances is reflected in the methodology by means of a double triangulation of sites and techniques. This research is based on a multi-sited ethnography with a mixed-method approach. Triangulation is a term that originally comes from topography (Jick 1979). The underlying reasoning is that multiple viewpoints allow for greater accuracy (Wilson 2006). Transposed into the social sciences, triangulation has come to mean ‘the integration of different perspectives on the investigated phenomenon’ (Kelle 2001: 1). I conceive triangulation as a way to increase scope, depth and consistency in my methodological procedures. In my research I opt for triangulation as a means to obtain varied and multi-textured data about the web of transfers two Andean villages are immersed into. Triangulation is intended for data comprehensiveness instead of data convergence because multi-methods and multi-sited research are not only about attaining uniform results from different perspectives, but are also about complementary perspectives to produce data from different angles and approaches. In the second part of this chapter, I describe the context in which my data and information were produced, reflecting on my multiple positionalities in the field. In the final section, I examine the ethical considerations that stem from the fieldwork.

3.1. Multi-Sited Ethnography

In 1995 in a seminal article George Marcus summarized what would become the privileged methodological approach when researching migration and transnationalism in the following years (Marcus, 1995)⁹. In a context of mobility (physical or mental), a multi-situated ethnography provides ethnographers with tracking strategies to follow the people, the thing, the metaphor, the story, the plot, the life or the conflict (Marcus, 1995: 106). Such a multi-sited fieldwork strategy is, however, not cost-free. The need to research within a plurality of

⁹ For two excellent edited works that analyse and revise this approach see Falzon, M. (2009). *Multi-sited ethnography. Theory, praxis and locality in contemporary research*, Farnham: Ashgate; and Coleman, S. and P. Von Hellermann (2009). *Multi-sited ethnography: problems and possibilities in the translocation of research methods*, London: Routledge.

places usually takes place in a context of limited financial and time capabilities; certainly this was my case.

A multi-sited ethnography appears as the most convenient methodological approach as this thesis is concerned with the presence, nature and creation of remittances (material and social) in two small rural settings of Southern Andean Ecuador: Xarbán, in the province of Azuay, and Pindo in the adjoining province of Loja (both villages' names are pseudonyms¹⁰). These apparently isolated villages are situated into bigger socio-cultural contexts that span national borders. Both villages exhibit very high out-migration rates, although to different destinations: while Xarbán villagers migrate almost exclusively to the US (mainly to the states of New York and New Jersey), Pindo villagers migrate to Europe (and mainly to Spain). Remittances sent and received from and to Xarbán cannot be understood without applying a transnational lens on both Xarbán itself and Xarbán villagers living in New York City. Pindo villagers' more diversified mobility routes also need to be taken into account. Villagers' current places of residence, mainly in Spain, are essential to understand changes and continuities in the village of Pindo. Although the core of the fieldwork took place in the two Ecuadorian villages (four and a half months in each), I also carried out shorter periods of fieldwork in New York City (six weeks) and in a more fragmented way in Spain. I did it always aiming not to become 'decentred' from the villages. There were constraints, financial, academic and personal (particularly exhaustion towards the end of the fieldwork in the US, stemming from nomad-like feelings), that I could not ignore. It would have been unwise to overlook them, so I tried to incorporate them as productively as possible into my research, being aware of the dangers of spreading myself too thin (Wogan, 2004: 134) and consciously avoiding 'hit-and-run' ethnographic strategies (Geertz, 1998: note 3). It was challenging to maintain the right balance of depth and length.

3.1.1 The villages of Xarbán and Pindo in Ecuador

In summer 2008 I spent two months in Ecuador. This was my pilot and reconnaissance phase and my first time in the country. It was an attempt to obtain key contacts in local universities, and to select among the short-listed villages (based on census data) the final two on which I

¹⁰ I have decided to use pseudonyms instead of the real names of the two villages for two reasons. First, I consider pseudonyms the most efficient way to maintain the anonymity of my informants. The second reason is more pragmatic. The official names of the two parishes are very long and their recurrent use throughout the thesis would have broken the reading flow at times.

was going to base my thesis. By providing me with basic operational information, the pilot visit endowed me with the certainty that I would be able to carry out fieldwork far from home¹¹.

Six months later I was back in Ecuador, this time for the 'real thing'. Having read so much about the power of gatekeepers and how they could bias research results or even prevent access at all (Campbell et al., 2006; Mandel, 2003; Sanghera and Thapar-Bjorkert, 2008; Suter, 2009; Wanat, 2008), I was aware of how crucial the access stage was. I did not want to trap myself with time-consuming or biasing gatekeepers, so I planned to diversify my access routes as much as possible, including if possible un-mediated ones. I designed a three-fold access strategy. First I wanted a formal introduction that provided me with the support of the local authorities. Out of the fifty community leaders in the village, I held a meeting with around thirty of them, where I explained my project and my offer of free English lessons. My second access strategy took as direct a route as possible. I wanted to be seen and approached by villagers who may have not heard of me through the leaders, or who were unsympathetic to them. I assumed that if villagers could talk to me, this might destroy the idea of me being friends with the local authorities. I tried this unmediated access by walking around the village in the days before and after I moved in. These walks also helped me to sketch a geographical map of the village. When villagers saw me they were very curious about what I was doing there, but encounters were always friendly.

Third, given my condition of 'outsider'¹², I wanted to insert myself into the social fabric of the villages, creating some sort of temporary both-side belonging. Because of heavy international emigration to the US, English was held in very high esteem in Xarbán. My offer of free English lessons was indeed very attractive. Teaching English was not only an access strategy, it was also an ethical commitment to reciprocate – a point I return to at the end of this chapter. English lessons had a two-fold consequence. On the one hand, they helped to build rapport, and the parents (usually the mothers) of the children I was teaching in the two local schools were always willing to help me with my questions. On the other hand, the idea of doing research (and probably my unsuitable and over-detailed explanations) was difficult to

¹¹ I had previously carried out research among Ecuadorians living in the city of Santander (Spain) for my Master's thesis. However I perceived doing fieldwork in Ecuador as much more challenging than this previous experience.

¹² As many authors have pointed out, the division of insider/outsider is far more problematic than it was originally assumed (Ergun and Erdemir, 2010; Merriam et al., 2001; Mullings, 1999; Naples, 1996; Sherif, 2001). I just account here for my position as a person coming from abroad to the villages and aiming for a limited insertion into the villages' social life by means of some of my roles (particularly as an English teacher).

understand by villagers. Instead, me being an English teacher sent by the government or an NGO was easier to understand given villagers' frameworks of reality. Combined with an unclearly defined offer from my side and what I came to call the 'NGO syndrome'¹³, I was increasingly asked for more and more English lessons: for this sector of the village that could not join another because of previous drunken fights, for the young people, for the older ones, for the children, even private English lessons, on different timetables and so on. I grew more and more annoyed with their demands. Hence, although teaching English opened many doors, it also became an unforeseen heavy burden and a source of misunderstandings.

Living in the village was also a source of trust, as I was '*their gringa*' (white foreigner). I lived with a lady and her 15 year-old grandson whose direct relatives were all in the US (including the boy's parents). I not only lived with the villagers, I also tried to live 'like them'. I was eager to engage with any village activity: attending *mingas*¹⁴, milking cows, spinning wool, or cooking in the customary way. The fact that I washed my clothes by hand with cold water as villagers did instead of taking them to the laundries in the canton capital brought me closer to them than my white skin had initially located me. The issue of food was a source of curiosity for many villagers. It was common for female villagers to ask my landlady about my eating habits. When they knew I tried to follow the local diet, they felt very proud. I had many conversations about food that tapped into other topics, so essential is food in the socio-cultural world of Xarbán¹⁵.

When I moved to the second research village, Pindo, I already had the experience of fieldwork in Xarbán. I had learnt that living with a family in the village centre would locate me within the social map of the village, giving me more visibility. After turning down offers to live in empty houses or in very poor households that lacked facilities I was not sure of being able to live

¹³ What I call the 'NGO syndrome' is partly a consequence of several international NGOs having offered things villagers do not even consider important. Hence, they have grown used to always asking for more, not really complying when asked to shoulder their fair share. The most poignant case was linked to a Spanish NGO, MPDL, whose (human, time and financial) resources were completely wasted due to corruption at several levels (including local clientelism practices), local inefficiency, misunderstandings and jealousies. Still at the time of my research, several years after, villagers did not know what had happened. One of the NGO projects consisted of strawberry greenhouses. As soon as the NGO stopped funding the agricultural inputs in order for the production to become self-sustainable, villagers completely gave up. As one villager told me they grew used to asking for help, and because resources were provided to them cost-free they did not value them. Of course, the NGO was also responsible for the complete failure by hiring inadequate people, and loose planning, among other mistakes.

¹⁴ *Minga* is a form of communal work present throughout the Andes, also known as *minka* in Peru.

¹⁵ This food centrality appears to be common to most of highland Ecuador given the number of academic works on foodways in this area (Abbots, 2008; Bourque, 2001; Weismantel, 1988); and probably applies more widely.

without (such as a toilet or running water), my partner and I moved into the house of the primary school principal. His wife quickly 'adopted' the young researcher, mainly it seemed, because I reminded her of their daughters of around the same age who lived in Spain.

I needed to modify my access routes as the geographical dispersion of Pindo discouraged the walking-strategy (it was beyond my scope to walk around all the sectors of this fragmented and scattered village), and the offer of English lessons. Due to dispersion and poor intra-village communication routes, there were twelve primary schools some of them with no more than a handful of students; hence offering English lessons to some and not to others would have created rivalries. Three circumstances, however, eased my access. First, the local authorities and the local priest openly supported my project. The recently elected political authorities were willing to take on board any project about/for the village. The local priest, far more involved with the village's social life than his equivalent in Xarbán, also introduced me and my research in the Sunday morning mass. Many villagers from the most isolated parts of the village attended this weekly service. Secondly, many villagers had relatives in Spain or had themselves been to Spain, which created fruitful common grounds for interaction. A few families were reluctant to talk to me because of the bad experiences they or some relatives had experienced whilst in Spain. In these cases I emphasized my links to the UK instead. Thirdly, the higher educational background of the population (compared with Xarbán) made my research develop more smoothly. University students in Ecuador must write a thesis in order to be awarded a BA degree. Many villagers have children or grandchildren who had attended university. Hence as soon as I explained to them I was doing my doctoral thesis, they were willing to help me because I reminded them of their children. Although all these three factors provided me with easy social access, the actual physical access was a logistical nightmare. The village was comprised of many different sections, really difficult to locate and poorly connected by steep muddy paths unsuitable for motor vehicles. It all meant I had to get up at five in the morning (the heat was unbearable from 12 to 5pm) to walk for several hours to be able to reach the most isolated sections of the village. These discomforts eventually bore fruit as all village sectors were finally represented in the research.

3.1.2 Following villagers to 'the Big Apple' and Europe

After nine months in Ecuador, the fieldwork was not over yet. I still needed to obtain extra information from migrants' new places of residence. I followed Xarbán villagers to the borough of Queens in New York City (in the Roosevelt Avenue area) and the town of Port Chester, a Latino enclave in the state of New York. I also talked to some Pindo villagers in Spain.

I had always foreseen that access to Xarbán migrants in the US would be very difficult. On top of the fact that most Xarbán migrants hold irregular legal status in the US and work very long hours, I had a constraint imposed by my sponsor regarding the time I could stay in the US (only six weeks). I did not have a very high expectation of what I could obtain out of my time in the US. I could not have been more wrong. Surprisingly, access was extremely smooth. Because Xarbán villagers living in Ecuador and the US belong to the same transnational village, once I managed to become inserted into Xarbán's social life in Ecuador, I was also, without knowing, being granted access to the villagers in the US. Their relatives had talked to them about me, they had seen me in many photos and videos sent from Ecuador to the US, and I even met personally some villagers who lived in Xarbán at the time I was there and who had managed to arrive safely in the US in the meantime. For six weeks I stayed with the husband and three children of the lady I had lived with in Ecuador. Using their social networks, I was able to attend Xarbán villagers' religious gatherings, a baby shower¹⁶, sports events (an outdoors volleyball match and some matches of a Latino football league), family gatherings, etc. In these events, some of them only attended by Xarbán villagers, I could meet and talk to many villagers.

I must disclose that I did not carry out fieldwork as such in Europe. This was due to several factors. First, Pindo migrants in Spain and Europe are very scattered and it would have required an unavailable amount of resources in terms of money and time. Secondly, due to the fact that many Pindo villagers hold regular legal status in Spain they can travel back and forth. I met several migrants on holidays whom I interviewed while I was in Pindo. Moreover, having lived in Spain and the UK and having Ecuadorian friends in both settings for a long time, I was familiar with Ecuadorian social sites and practices in Europe. Finally I already had more material than I could wisely use for a PhD thesis. I did however interview some Pindo migrants in Madrid and the Canary Islands.

¹⁶ A baby shower is a party organized for heavily pregnant women organized by their partners or fathers before giving birth. It is a US tradition which Xarbán villagers in New York have adopted.

3.2. Multi-Technique Approach

The triangulation of sites was complemented by a second triangulation of techniques. Given the overall aim of the thesis of creating a micro-ethnographic account of the creation, meanings and types of material and social remittances in two rural settings, a mixed-method approach appeared useful to capture different types of information. As Branner states ‘mixed-methods research means adopting a research strategy employing more than one type of research method. [...] Mixed-method research also means working with different types of data’ (2005: 4). Although qualitative data were preferred, it was not wise to dismiss the importance of quantitative data when researching remittances, since ‘for a researcher with a primarily qualitative orientation, which focuses on social processes in rich and proximate detail, the inclusion of some background quantitative material, perhaps in the form of local or national demographic data, can help in making the research part of a bigger set of observations’ (Mason, 2006: 3). The data at the heart of this thesis were produced using three complementary techniques, each technique enhancing the data collected by the other two by providing information of a different nature: a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The questionnaire was designed to gather information about material remittances, interviews aimed to shed light on social remittances, and participant observation was carried out to provide the broad context to insert all the data within.

3.2.1 Questionnaire

I present here an overview of the questionnaire survey, the results of which are presented in chapter four where I describe each of the villages. English and Spanish versions of the questionnaire can be found in the appendixes. The questionnaire had five sections: questions about present household members, migrants, contact between migrants and the household members, remittances, and changes since starting to receive remittances. With the first section I collected data on age, gender, occupation and previous internal and international mobility of the household members, as well as living arrangements created as a consequence of international migration. For clarity of definition, I define household members as those living in the same house, whether sharing kinship links or not, but with some sort of life in common. In fact, this definition, despite its simplicity, was not challenged at all as accommodation arrangements in both villages are quite simple, based on nuclear families. The second section in the questionnaire aimed to collect data on migrants: age, gender, current and previous places of residence, year of departure, current occupation, legal status abroad and times they have returned to Ecuador. When questions arose about who is a migrant from a household, I

encouraged participants to decide for themselves. I was particularly cautious about the legal status question, phrasing it always in a positive light but differently in Xarbán (Is your relative abroad already a 'resident'?) and Pindo (Does your relative abroad have 'papers'?). The third section sketched the contacts that each household has with its migrant(s). If there was contact I asked about the channel, direction and frequency of it. In the fourth section of the questionnaire I asked about remittance sending and receiving practices: the kind of things being sent (whether money or other kind of material remittances), the direction of the sending (from or to the migrant), the sending channel, and the frequency of sending. I also inquired about the decision power: who decided about what and when to send, as well as how to send. I was also interested in changes over time, although data I could gather were limited to broad changes. In the case of Xarbán, for instance, repayment of the journey debt was a key date regarding financial remittances that most respondents mentioned. Periods of extended illness of either migrants or their relatives, also have an impact strong enough for the respondents to remember, but little more was remembered beyond this sort of events. Finally in the fifth section I tried to ascertain changes in the household triggered as a result of receiving material remittances. I consciously avoided phrasing the question in the standard fashion as 'How do you use remittances?'. Instead I opted for the less loaded approach of asking about changes experienced since starting to receive remittances. I specifically asked respondents to focus on several domains (housing, transport, income-generating activities, savings, agriculture, land and cattle, education, health care, emergencies, leisure and foodways), as well as encouraging them to talk about changes in any other domain they considered worth talking about.

Sample selection was problematic as the census data were not comprehensive enough to allow me to select my sample completely randomly. At the very minimum I tried to cover each of the village census sectors, trying to keep numbers representative, questioning more houses in more populated sectors. Problems arose when I could not find anyone at home. It was easier to repeat visits in the most accessible parts of the villages, but it was not possible to make repeated visits to those districts too difficult to reach, where I had to make specific transport arrangements for instance. My personal security was also at stake. Isolated houses were very likely to have dangerous dogs, so if after repeated verbal calls from a safe distance no one appeared, I opted not to question people in that specific house. I took this decision after several nasty encounters with dogs. I usually asked for the head of the household. Sometimes it was not possible and I asked to talk to any adult present with information on the issue. I feel I can defend my questionnaire data as representative. I want to note that my target population were households with migrants abroad, and that these are not randomly

located in the villages. Those households in the village sectors with better access were more likely to have relatives abroad compared with households in the most isolated areas. International migration, as I will show, allows for residential improvement including moving into the better parts of each village, as settlement 'is in many ways the spatial expression of the social hierarchy' (Skeldon, 1990: 68).

I administered each one of the questionnaires myself, face to face with the respondent, so in a sense the questionnaire survey also consisted of direct, highly structured interviews. My partner was often present, particularly when questioning far away houses (see section on accompanied fieldwork). Thanks to previous tests in Europe with Ecuadorian migrants, I did not have to make any changes regarding questionnaire content. Nonetheless I needed to tailor questions regarding language and expressions in each of the villages. This different labelling was also a source of information, as it made me realize that my initial basic definitions of remittances did not completely explain receivers' views, a point I shall return to in chapter five.

Before carrying out any of the in-depth interviews, I decided to start filling in the questionnaires. As a newly arrived first-time ethnographer in Ecuador, I anticipated I would feel more confident initially within the frame of the closed questions of this technique. It was also useful as a first introduction of my research to the villagers, who were more used to being asked to fill in surveys or census data than to hold conversations. They perceived the former as 'proper research' compared with the 'just talking' of the interviews. Furthermore, because the questionnaire household sample had to comprise households from all of the village sectors, I made myself very visible. I was aware of people asking each other whether I had already talked to them. As time went by and I became more acquainted with the specific realities of the remittances in each of the two research villages, I was able to use the questionnaire to obtain more information, asking extra questions and inquiring further into potentially interesting issues. Following Ryan and Golden (2006) and Carling (2002), I followed a reflexive and qualitative approach to fill in the questionnaires. After each working day, during which I would usually complete between one and three questionnaires, I wrote detailed information about each questionnaire regarding things like the setting or the questionnaire interviewee's attitudes as well as extra issues to research further. This work was very exhaustive and time consuming, particularly for the first set of questionnaires in each village. As information started to reoccur, the workload diminished. At this stage I started to carry out more in-depth interviews. By the time I started to interview villagers, the questionnaire data had provided me with a map of transfers for each village, very useful for designing the semi-structured interview

guides. Focusing on what the questionnaire had highlighted as important helped me to decide what I wanted to know more about, such as relevant exceptions, changes over time and space and issues I could not make sense of only with the questionnaire data. Quite often I realized that people I had questioned could give me much more insight and information than what I could gather in the closed structure of the questionnaire, so I asked them to come again for an interview.

3.2.2 Interviews

Complementing the questionnaire and focusing more on social remittances, I interviewed 83 people in four different places: the villages of Xarbán and Pindo in Ecuador, the New York borough of Queens and the town of Port Chester in the US, and Madrid in Spain. I also carried out one interview over the phone with a migrant in the Canary Islands. Interviewees were migrants in their places of current residence, migrants on temporary return in Ecuador, permanent returnees (either deported or voluntarily returned), non-migrant villagers, and people with specialized knowledge about local issues such as local teachers, local political authorities, priests, NGO local delegates and health care workers. It was not possible to interview migrants on temporary return in Ecuador in the case of Xarbán because most migrants have irregular legal status in the US which prevents them from returning temporarily. Table 3.1 lists the number of interviews regarding the village of origin of the interviewees (either Xarbán or Pindo), the place where the interview took place (sometimes different from the place of current residence), as well as the role of the interviewee: migrant, returnee, non-migrant or villagers with specialized knowledge about local issues.

Previously gathered questionnaire data were very useful to structure and inform the interview guides. The guides were not a list of closed questions. Instead I encouraged interviewees to talk around the issue of migration in order to grasp what was important for them. I nonetheless had several topics I wanted to cover. Hence if they did not come up naturally in the conversation I asked about them. As time went by, I crafted a growing list of questions I usually asked because they worked well, either to develop trust or to channel the conversation. This method was very time-consuming and some of the interviews lasted for hours. Nonetheless as I became more acquainted with my research scenario, interviews started to focus and shorten.

Table 3.1: Summary of interviews

Village of reference	Place of current residence	Place where the interview took place	Number of interviews	Role of the interviewee
Xarbán	Xarbán	Xarbán	19	Returnee
			6	Non-migrant
			9	Specialized local knowledge
	US	State of New York	10	Migrant
	Europe	Xarbán	1	Migrant
Pindo	Pindo	Pindo	27	Returnee
			1	Non-migrant
			4	Specialized local knowledge
	Europe	Pindo	3	Migrant
		Europe	3	Migrant

The initial methodological design also included focus groups. Once in the field I quickly realized how unsuitable this strategy was. Due to gossiping and jealousies, common in rural settings, villagers were very unlikely to reveal sensitive information in front of their peers. The pressure to comply with the group was very strong. In informal group chats, all the villagers gave exactly the same information about the assets they have, about remittances or their relationship with their migrant relatives. Villagers were however very happy to talk to me as long as I went to their houses in their spare time. Once I reassured them that I would not disclose any data from our conversations, villagers started to talk more honestly and openly about migration and remittances. There were also logistical obstacles (long distances and lack of transport facilities) that further hampered carrying out focus groups, so I abandoned this idea.

After the extended period of nine months' fieldwork in Ecuador, I transcribed all of the interviews. Although this was very time-consuming, it allowed me to become familiar with my data. I did not make any audio-recording of the interviews I did in the US. This was partially the consequence of my transcription exhaustion but more concretely a consequence of a different research setting. Due to the intense social life of many Xarbán migrants in New York and their long working hours, it was difficult to arrange one-to-one interviews. Most interviews therefore took place during social gatherings where the background noise and the attention it would have attracted discouraged recording the interviews. Due to the geographical dispersion of Pindo migrants in Spain, I interviewed two migrants in Madrid in face-to-face interviews, and one migrant over the phone, as well as the three migrants on holiday I had previously

interviewed while in Ecuador. I coded all the interviews, either their transcription or the detailed interview notes, following the same structured nodes strategy that I had used for the fieldwork diary entries.

I selected interviewees on the basis of both representation and exception: those who belong to groups relevant for the research, and those who I identified as exceptions. The aim was to register as many different voices as possible. It meant that I had to interview all sorts of people, including people who I really liked and people who I quite disliked. This has obvious ethical consequences, which I will pick up on later. The interview quotations in this thesis were selected on the basis of their representativeness and articulacy. Interview quotations are thus, paradigmatic examples. For the purpose of clarity, among those quotations conveying the same information, I have selected those where the discourse was more fluent or better expressed.

3.2.3 Participant observation

The information from both the questionnaires and the interviews was enriched by constant participant observation. Participant observation is the ethnographic¹⁷ technique *par excellence*, ‘an omnibus field strategy’ (Genzuck, 2003: 2). A wide set of qualitative data-production techniques has been grouped under the umbrella of ‘participant observation’, i.e. informal interviews, natural conversations, note taking, etc., although observation and informal conversations are the most common ones (Kawulich, 2005). In order to carry out proper participant observation, the researcher is required to carefully balance feelings of estrangement and familiarity. To be able to make sense of the new reality, the researcher needs to feel puzzled but clear-headed at the same time. This includes taking a step back to look with ‘fresh’ eyes at what are normally considered ‘natural’ or ‘normal’ cultural expressions. This forced naïveté or estrangement is key to avoid taking for granted cultural expressions and frames of meaning within which group members deploy their lives. However, this estrangement needs to be supported by knowledge fine enough to allow the researcher to perceive and make sense of those frames and expressions. Hence, ‘the challenge is to combine

¹⁷ Ethnography has traditionally been defined as the written description of a culture or social group (from the Greek *ethnos*, people; and *graphein*, writing). However, following Agar (2006), it seems more adequate to understand ethnography as a research logic and practice whose aim is to understand and communicate, in a holistic manner, socio-cultural manifestations. All socio-cultural manifestations are considered as belonging to a whole. Only with regard to that whole can those manifestations make sense.

participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the experience as an insider while describing the experience for outsiders' (Genzuk, 2003: 2).

Less intrusive observation¹⁸ as for instance walking in the village fields, observing the village housing-scape or watching the villagers performing agricultural chores, was complemented with more active participation. I participated in different roles: as an English teacher in Xarbán, as a guest in social gatherings in Xarbán and Pindo and also in the US, or as a player in the local female football team. In all these situations I systematically observed and reflexively registered the situation. But I not only observed. I also smelled, touched, tasted, heard... I was there with my whole body¹⁹. My physical apprenticeship provided me with subtle information that otherwise I would have missed. Food was for instance sometimes crucial to build trust. As food is used to mark oneness and otherness (Fischer, 1988: 275), my earnest attempts to adopt villagers' eating habits portrayed me as someone trustworthy. I also experienced the hardships of agricultural chores performed in a traditional way that quickly dispelled any bucolic ideas about life in the countryside: ideas that are central in the critical discourses of the local elites towards migrants.

Towards the end of my fieldwork in the US, I experienced acute exhaustion on three levels: resources, data and personal exhaustion. As already mentioned, the multi-sited ethnography requires a heavy investment of time and money. Living on a grant and with sponsor constraints, I could not extend the fieldwork longer than I did. The second exhaustion (data saturation or redundancy) took place in Ecuador after nine months, when answers started to provide diminishing new information, until they reached a point where they became an exact replica of previous conversations. These conversations led me into a state of constant *déjà-vu*. Data in the US were opening up new fields of research, interesting for future research projects but objectively beyond the scope of my abilities and constraints within the present study. By constantly comparing new with old empirical data, researchers take the decision that data saturation has been reached (Tuckett, 2004: 55). Finally, I was physically very tired. Although fieldwork was an immensely rich and interesting experience, it was also very draining. Being involved in all the stages of a multi-sited and mixed-method research project is personally

¹⁸ The idea of the anthropologist as a non-obtrusive observer has long been contested, as their presence itself introduces a modification in the events observed that needs to be accounted for (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Monahan and Fisher, 2010; Patton, 2002).

¹⁹ Although my research was not concerned with the senses, I applied (in a very limited way though) the methodological premises of the Anthropology of the Senses (Herzfeld, 2007). I have written about this elsewhere (Mata-Codesal, 2011a).

exhausting (Wray et al., 2007). Because I lived in the research villages and communications were not easy, I could not physically distance myself. My personal saturation point also meant that I was unable to process any more information, finding it difficult to handle all the data I managed to gather. I needed to step back and distance myself, objectively but also subjectively from the data and the whole fieldwork experience in order to feel ready to go back and start making sense of it all.

Once back in Europe, I experienced a feeling of discomfort and being out-of-place. I realized that I had been so concerned trying to equip myself for the fieldwork that I had forgotten to prepare myself for the post-fieldwork period. It took me over a month to be able to listen and transcribe some of the interviews, particularly those of people I had become quite close to. As ridiculous as it might appear, I also experienced problems realizing when the fieldwork was over. It never occurred to me that I should have thought about how and when to finish the fieldwork. With the current communication technologies, although I was not in Ecuador or the US anymore, it took me a while to consider the fieldwork closed. I was receiving new information through phone calls, emails, and uploaded photos and comments in social network sites. I was struggling to process all that information (I was possessed by some sort of comprehensiveness fever of wanting to record everything) while going through intense ethical considerations (particularly regarding information from social networks). Fortunately, things improved as soon as I decided that the period of data collection was formally over. I then started enjoying photos and emails for what they were, acts of personal communication and friendship.

3.3 From Where I Look: Positionalities and Situated Knowledge

Feminist, post-colonial and post-modern authors have urged us to account for the context in which knowledge is produced (Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Haraway, 1988; Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002), because knowledge is situated (Cook, 2005; Rose, 1997). In the field, knowledge is created in a dialogical engagement between the researcher and the research subjects (England, 1994: 82). In spite of traditional representations of fieldwork as the self put in standby, anthropologists bring to the field their systems of beliefs, as well as their social abilities (Fontana, 1994: 204). 'The ethnographer, as a positioned subject, grasps certain human phenomena better than others. He or she occupies a position or structural location and observes with a particular angle of vision. [...] The notion of position also refers to how life experiences both enable and inhibit particular kinds of insight' (Rosaldo, 2000: 532). It all

influences the research process and the outcome, making it essential that researchers exert an ongoing reflexivity throughout the entire research process. Researchers need to be aware of their sense of belonging and identities and how each is deployed in their research interactions, i.e. their positionalities.

As key as reflexivity is in the ethnographic process (Marcus, 1994), introspection does not have to be too intense so as to paralyse one's action. The degree of introspection cannot be externally defined and depends on the researcher and the particular research context. Thanks to an intense reflexivity and introspection (not time and space bounded), I was aware of many layers of my identities and belongings. In the field it meant that I was able to activate at my wish different 'coatings' depending on the situation. This selective activation proved very useful to build rapport as I could highlight the identity layer(s) most convenient for each interaction.

I am compelled to write into my research some of the positionalities which I deployed in most of my field interactions. While some of them are 'classic' positionalities (gender, ethnicity, age, education, geographical ascription), others are not (religious stance or personality for instance). It is not, of course, an exhaustive list as they also interact with each other creating further positionalities. For instance, my age (28 at the time of the fieldwork) interacted with my education creating a person who was for local standards too old to be a student; and with my gender, creating a woman too old to be childless. One cannot fully envisage, even less control, the politics of representation, particularly in cross-cultural research (Twyman et al., 1999). My layers of identity and belonging interact with each other to convey a specific image of myself. Nonetheless this image is not uniformly decoded by all of the people I interacted with in the field. What I am offering here is my own subjective interpretation of the relational aspects of my fieldwork. As Rose has brilliantly written, researchers can reflect on the consequences of their interactions but they cannot be sure of the underlying reasons or meanings these interactions have for their interlocutors (Rose, 1997: 306).

In the pilot visit to Ecuador and anticipating the discomforts of two months travelling up and down the country on a very tight budget, I cut my hair very short and packed comfortable loose clothes. Compared with my own standards, gender roles are incredibly rigid in rural Ecuador, even taking into account the fact that *gringas* (foreigners) are not expected to comply as strictly as natives with gender rules. Not being able to clearly label me as a man or a woman was a continuous source of stress for some respondents. They were too concerned

trying to make sense of my ambiguous gender that they barely listened to my questions. Hence, before going on fieldwork the year after, I let my hair grow and mentally prepared myself to behave in a more feminine way. The presence of my male partner in the field dispelled any remaining doubts caused by my physical aspect, but generated a new whole set of issues I reflect on later.

I became acquainted with the term '*gringa*' already in the pilot visit in the summer of 2008. Contrary to Spain, my home country, where the word *gringo* is a pejorative nickname for US citizens, *gringo* in Ecuador applies to any white foreigner (Weismantel, 2001: 273). Other Andean citizens in Ecuador do not deserve this label, as a *gringo* must be unambiguously a foreigner; whiteness and language are their main distinctive traits (Meisch, 1995: 444). Although Europeans and Americans are both regarded as *gringos*, they do not provoke the same reaction among locals. As throughout most of Latin America, in Ecuador the US are simultaneously admired and disliked. The emotional relationship with Europe is less charged and as a result less problematic. Due to the pervasive outmigration to the US from Xarbán, *la yoni*²⁰ is psychologically very close in the villagers' minds. Europe, on the contrary, was out of their world map of reference. I was asked many times where Spain was in relation to New York. Hence being a *gringa* from other than the US was quite exotic to the villagers. As time went by, my obvious *gringaness* evolved into some sort of Spanishness. In Pindo, where most migrants live in Spain, reactions depended on the experiences their relatives, or themselves if returnees, had gone through in Spain. Successful migrants and returnees were more willing to talk to me and show me their improvements, while I needed to gain trust with those who did not have very nice experiences abroad. Interaction was easier because we shared more behaviour codes (such as linguistic modes of address) than in Xarbán. In both cases villagers felt very proud about having me around. The fact that I lived in the villages with local families instead of travelling back and forth sped up the process of trust building.

My multiple geographical attachments turned out to be quite useful instead of being a source of hassle as usual. I am a Spaniard but enrolled in a UK university. I speak Spanish but also English. I am from Spain but not from Madrid or Barcelona (but my partner is). I have travelled a lot but – at the time of my stay in Ecuador – I had not been in the US. I could activate each layer at will. Either I tried to emphasize common grounds with the person I was talking to, or to highlight my ignorance about topics or places I was interested in, or to detach myself from

²⁰ The informal way Ecuadorians refer to the US. The expression comes from the popular sticker 'I♥NY' (Kyle, 2000: 230).

behaviour or places that were or had been a source of pain for them. For instance in Xarbán, where I was interested in knowing about their experiences in the US, I could easily dispel fears by telling them I had never been there before. If someone had endured racist behaviour while in Spain, I could emphasize my attachment with the UK instead.

I never introduced myself as a researcher. In Spanish the word *investigadora* translates for researcher but also for investigator. In a context of irregular migration it was unwise to use this term. Introducing myself as a student worked in two different ways. It was less intimidating than saying 'researcher' and downplayed attempts to obtain financial returns from me. However, it also meant that I was an almost 30 year-old PhD student. This scenario, which is difficult to understand for my grandparents, was also difficult to understand for the villagers. Aware of it, I tried to provide my interlocutors with as much context as I could. This way I expected to portray myself as something different from just another eccentric *gringa*, which would have led them not to take me seriously. I think I was quite successful as in both villages the rate of refusal was almost non-existent. In my first encounters in Xarbán, with all the naivety of a first-time ethnographer who wants to be transparent, I explained in a very detailed way what my studies were and what doing a thesis implies. I only received bored or non-understanding faces. After a while I gave up this strategy and introduced my research as 'being interested in the villagers' lives and the village's changes over time because of the migration'. Fortunately I did not have to try very hard to gain access because my strategy of offering free English lessons in the village's two primary schools worked well. Due to the fact that I taught in the local schools, my status as a student transformed into my new local status as a teacher, enough for the villagers to want to talk to me (they were grateful for me teaching English to their children) and not to dismiss me as a bizarre *gringa*. In the second village, Pindo, where many young villagers had university education, villagers were aware of the word thesis. Most times I only needed to say I was doing my thesis. In this sense I found it incredibly easy to get respondents to fill my quota of questionnaires in Pindo, compared with the logistical nightmare of reaching the villagers' scattered houses.

Being supported by a grant, enough to live on but not to make me able to have a house or a car of my own, also explained my financial situation. The fact that the grant was competitive and that I had held scholarships for the whole of my academic life also portrayed me in a positive light in the villagers' eyes. Particularly in Pindo, where education is held in high esteem, I could easily tap into my educational background to emphasize common ground. This was not so clear in Xarbán, where many villagers did not understand why I could 'waste' so

many years of my life studying. Even worse when I could regularly travel to the US and earn good money there. I remember one person during my fieldwork in New York could not make sense of me being in the US and not wanting to stay there, given that I could earn a lot of money.

The most problematic positionality to me before, during and after my fieldwork was religion. My doctoral research is concerned with remittances themselves (material and social) and changes triggered by them. Religious imagery was being sent to the US, while remittances heavily impacted on the villages' annual religious festivities. Hence, I could not overlook this realm. Due to my personal biography I have feelings against the Catholic hierarchies. These feelings became more negative after witnessing the power of the Catholic Church in rural Ecuador. Hence I found it increasingly difficult to keep my annoyance quiet. The need to negotiate a minimum coherence with my personal beliefs while not hindering my access to the field or missing relevant information for my research was a source of stress throughout my fieldwork. Like other authors who have reflected on the impact of their religious stances in the field (Llera-Blanes, 2006; Steward, 2001), I did not come up with a definitive path. I developed changing strategies to cope with it, also given the different scenarios I was involved with, so my data collection and analysis would not be compromised by my religious stance at any point.

Although I do not share Moser's deterministic psychological ideas on personality, she makes a clear case for thinking reflexively about the ethnographer's personality as a form of positionality which should be taken into account (2008). I was very scared before going on fieldwork, mainly because I was well aware of my poor social skills. Contrary to my expectations, my shyness and quietness were positive research assets. Rural highland villagers are also very quiet and shy, perhaps stemming from centuries of marginalization. The fact that someone who had come from so far away was willing to listen to them was a pleasant novelty to them.

3.3.1 Power relations

As Meisch states, there is in the literature the assumption that 'power relations are invariably weighted on the side of foreign or First World tourists [anthropologist]' (1995: 443). Doubtless my whiteness opened up many doors, particularly in elite circles as in local universities, and I am sure it eased the building of trust with the villagers. However, its interplay with my other positionalities, particularly with the fact that I was a young female student, blurred my

theoretically superior status as a white person. The fact that I was unable to perform very basic social rituals and lacked simple skills was a source of amusement for the villagers in both villages. Many times I experienced the feelings that Nigel Barley insightfully described in his 'Innocent anthropologist' (1983). I was like a child that needed to learn many basic things, again to the villagers' fun. I did not know how to wash my clothes by hand, nor the local names of things, not even that I should always wear a hat in the Andes unless I wanted to get sunstroke (which happened a few times). My incompetence was very clear regarding food. Many times I came home from the market with fruits I ate fresh, only to discover they should have been boiled beforehand. Villagers laughed at my completely wrong suppositions. My failed attempts to behave like them were a clear clue that I needed to be taught and accompanied. I could be a white PhD student but I did not even know the name of basic foodstuffs. My supposed power superiority was also contested the many times I had set up an interview just to discover that after two hours of exhausting walking the person had forgotten about it and was not at home. Like Swanson I also encountered the situation where children were in charge of me (2008: 57). Particularly in Pindo, where houses were very scattered and difficult to find, several times the adults I had just questioned sent one of their children to guide me to the next house.

Emotionally it was also difficult to state that I was in an advantageous power position regarding the villagers. I was away from my family with whom I could not communicate that often. In a sense this situation also created a common ground with people whose families were abroad. In both villages, the adult female person I lived with stepped in as a substitute mother. I became emotionally quite dependant on them. In those days when everything went wrong I could always go to the safe haven of the house where I knew I would be nurtured by them.

3.3.2 Accompanied fieldwork

The PhD research was based on nine months of fieldwork in Andean Ecuador. I needed to find a way of keeping up with aspects of my family life. This is the kind of issue I had not read much about in all the preparatory work I had done. And I was aware I was not the only one, as the question of how to manage fieldwork and personal life was often posed by fellow PhD students at conferences and seminars. The image of the 'solitary anthropologist' still persists even though it is increasingly common to do fieldwork accompanied (Amit, 2000: 6). The special nature of Anthropology means that the usually easy distinction between personal and

professional life is difficult to maintain. The edited volume by Flinn et al. (1998) is one of the few works which has explored the effects of the anthropologist being accompanied (whether by their children or partners) while on fieldwork. Authors like Cupples and Kindon (2003), Frohlick (2002), Levey (2009), Starrs et al. (2001) and Sutton (1998) have reflected on the fact of taking their children with them to the field.

My long-time partner eventually decided to travel with me, but not before agreeing that he must have his own independent project that would not create obstacles for my own research. The outcome was very productive for both of us; for me as an anthropologist and for him as a photographer and film maker. Our work fed back to each other but never interfered. My ethnographical insights greatly improved the focus of my partner's documentary (*The Weight of Gold*), while his photos became a token of reciprocity for many families who wanted a picture to be sent to their relatives abroad. Also his photos of traditional crafts and sports enriched my research giving me contextual data that otherwise I would have not looked into with so much detail.

Nevertheless, my partner's status as the '*follower*' puzzled Andean villagers, particularly in the village of Xarbán, where males migrate to the US and women stay put or follow them after a while. Perplexity increased when villagers learnt that we both cooked and did the domestic chores. In this sense we became closely monitored. The observer became observed. As Cupples and Kindon argue, this interaction with a member of my own culture (my partner) made me appear less anomalous to the villagers (2003: 214).

I can see how my partner's presence spared me numerous questions about what a young woman was doing on her own so far away from home. It did spur, though, innumerable inquiries about me not having children and 'contraception methods'. Obviously there was something wrong with me because in my late twenties and with a stable partner I did not have children and nor were they one of my priorities in life. Although my partner's presence saved me from some of the ugliest manifestations of machismo (I was never harassed or molested in any way), it also brought to the surface some others, particularly regarding educational background. I found it very annoying that in the early stages of the fieldwork in Xarbán some men addressed him as '*Señor ingeniero*' (Mister Engineer) while I only deserved a '*Dianita*'²¹.

²¹ Modes of address in rural Ecuador are quite rigid. They use the term '*usted*' (the Spanish expression of respect which is nowadays quite outdated in everyday conversations in Spain) even to talk to friends or relatives. On the other hand they quite often use diminutives (Dianita), particularly for young women

He also provided me with access to aspects of the village social life that otherwise I would have never been able to catch a glimpse of, particularly regarding young male villagers' socializing practices. I need to account for the fact that my partner was present while I filled in many questionnaires (he was not though when carrying out semi-structured interviews). Trying to minimise the impact of his presence, he stayed quiet throughout the whole filling-in process. Overall his presence was not perceived as a threat as he was performing a traditional male role of accompanying and protecting his female partner. Villagers showed their contentment about him performing his masculine task of protection.

3.4. Ethics

Like all PhD students enrolled in a UK university, I was required to fill in a 'research ethics pro-forma' before proceeding on fieldwork (adapted from the Social Research Association). Informed consent was one of the most important requirements I had to comply with, obtaining it 'preferably in writing' (SRA, 2003: 54). Once in the field I realized that the ethical concerns I was made to worry about in the UK had little to do with reality in Andean Ecuador. The idea of carrying around a paper to be signed before talking to anyone as a proof of informed consent was simply surreal. It was not a way of lowering ethical standards for the fact of not being in the UK. I was trying to adapt ethical considerations created in a completely different environment to make sense in a small village in the middle of the Andes. For instance many people did not know how to properly read or write; hence the informed consent in writing was unsuitable. I also considered that it would create unnecessary suspicion. What I did was to make the reasons of my presence as understandable as I could to the villagers. I explained to them (as many times as needed and in many different ways till fully understood) that the data I gathered with the questionnaire and the interviews would be anonymized, processed and analysed and only used for the purposes of my thesis. I always sought to keep my ethical standards as high as I could, not because I was bound by a form I signed several months ago in the UK, but because I was truly committed to respect and be honest with the people I was researching. I considered honesty and respect, with myself and with the others, my ethical guidelines. But I needed to tailor these two grand words to changing contexts. By

and children. '*Mija*' (from *mi hija*, my daughter) is their most affectionate term. People with education beyond primary education are addressed as *bachiller* (with high school education) and *licenciado* or *ingeniero* (if holding a university degree). For the record my partner has not finished university and I am doing my PhD, which is completely levelled out by the fact that he is a man and I am not. Rigidity in codes of address was more marked in Xarbán than in Pindo, and stronger among those who had never migrated abroad.

honesty I do not mean always telling everything. I mean never lying or hiding information. As in any personal relationship, what one is willing to share, and how much, changes as reciprocal trust develops. As acquaintances become friends we feel more inclined to share. Personal relations in the field are not different in this sense. In a few interviews I found it tricky to manage personal boundaries, either because I had a friendship with the interviewee or because I disliked his or her ideology or actions. In all the cases, I always tried to create a setting of respect for the interview, no matter how much I might dislike the interviewee. Regarding people I liked, interviews were very obviously easier to carry out. I declined to formally interview any of the few people I became close friends with, as it would have made it difficult to maintain boundaries between the research interview and the friendship. Nonetheless, like Rabinow (1997), I also learnt a great deal from conversations with these people. I only incorporated information in the form of quotations when I had the interviewees' consent and the quote was created in the context of a previously agreed formal interview. Nevertheless, I could not erase from my mind what I had been told in a non-interview setting. After intense reflection I resolved not to explicitly mention things told to me as a friend but because I cannot stop knowing them I must account for them, as this knowledge inevitably affects my analysis.

Reciprocity was also a source of ethical reflection. Readings about reciprocity in the Andes had warned me how omnipresent it was in the area (Barlett, 1980; Corr, 2002; Montes del Castillo, 1989; Tousignant and Maldonado, 1989). Coming from an urban environment, I was sceptical at the beginning, but I quickly discovered how pervasive it was. Very often I was fed with bread and soft drinks when visiting villagers' houses and came home with bags of fruits, vegetables, eggs, milk or whatever villagers had at hand to give me. Usually they were agricultural surpluses; however at other times villagers' presents represented a clear burden to them. The few times I refused a present (because I could clearly see how heavy the burden was) or food (because I had been well fed before), it provoked a reaction of sadness. Villagers felt I did not consider their presents good enough for me. It led me to always accept their presents, expressing passionately my happiness and thankfulness. Like Huisman I also 'made continued efforts to substitute a colonialist approach of "taking" for one of mutual exchange' (2008: 386). I tried to reciprocate by giving free English lessons in Xarbán and free copies of the photos my partner took in both villages.

The different rights to mobility (mine and those of the people I worked with) unexpectedly became one of the most poignant ethical issues I had to face whilst on fieldwork. As an EU

citizen I am entitled to an almost unlimited geographical mobility. I can travel freely within Europe or go as a tourist to the US or Ecuador without having to apply for a visa. This mobility is denied to Xarbán and Pindo villagers, which impacts profoundly on their lives. Xarbán villagers have to risk their lives and endure extreme discomfort in a long and expensive journey to arrive in New York, which to me means no more than an eight-hour flight. This injustice caused me a great deal of anxiety, and as much as I knew I was not directly responsible for it I could not help but feel guilty. The different frame of mobility entitlements is in fact at the very core of this research, as legal status proved to be essential to explain Xarbán and Pindo migrants' material and social remittances. I hope this thesis will at least draw attention to this unfairness and the undesirable consequences it has on many people's lives.

3.5. Summary

In this chapter I have covered the methodological design of the thesis, as well as the context in which the information was created and the ethical issues I needed to face in that context. A double triangulation of sites and techniques is the methodological scaffold of this thesis. I carried out eighty-three interviews as well as extensive participant observation in the Ecuadorian villages of Xarbán and Azuay as well as in the borough of Queens (New York City), the town of Port Chester in the state of New York, and the provinces of Madrid and the Canary Islands in Spain. A questionnaire was administered in Xarbán and Pindo to collect social and demographic data and to comparatively sketch the profile of material remittances in both villages. The researcher's positionalities are key in the production of knowledge (Rosaldo, 2000). Dialogic interaction is at the core of knowledge production processes based on ethnographic and qualitative techniques (England, 1994). Due to intense reflexivity in all of the research sites, I have been able to consider in depth my multiple positionalities as a researcher: my gender, age, ethnicity, geographical attachments, education, religious stances and even my personality. Given that fieldwork took place 'away from home', I was forced to find ways to reconcile my personal and academic life. The fact that my partner lived with me in Ecuador had an impact (overwhelmingly positive) on the research outcome. In the last part of this chapter, I have argued for the usefulness of applying honesty and respect towards the people we work with as field researchers and towards ourselves, as my ultimate ethical guideline. In the line of much feminist research, I also see the resulting frame of interaction suitable to overcome colonial ethnological approaches (Huisman, 2008). Finally, as it could not be otherwise, legally-

entitled versus actual mobility has not only crucial content consequences for this research but also methodological ones.

Chapter 4

Research Sites.

Two Andean Villages

Before looking specifically into the issue of material and social remittances, this chapter provides background information about the two research villages, Xarbán and Pindo. As a migration scholar with an anthropological background I privilege holism, being positive that specific traits only deploy their full significance when read within the broader context to which they belong. Remittances (both material and social) do not take place in a socio-economic and cultural vacuum. Instead, they stem from very specific economic and socio-cultural configurations, inserting into and changing pre-existing structures. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the two research villages based on qualitative sources as well as quantitative ones (from the 2001 Ecuadorian Census and my own questionnaire), easing the way towards the following more analytical chapters on material and social remittances. Figure 4.1 is a simple location map of the region.

Figure 4.1: Map of Southern Ecuador



4.1. Qualitative Overview

In this qualitative overview of the villages of Xarbán and Pindo, I have prioritized historical accounts because I found them useful to explain current configurations in the two research settings. These configurations are crucial to make sense of the villages' remittance maps. The economic frame of each village, very much linked to geographical and agricultural factors and resulting from their different historical developments, is also important in the analysis of the villages' remittance patterns. The sources for this section are very wide, ranging from historical accounts from local archives, elderly villagers' oral stories, academic sources, and agrarian development plans among others.

4.1.1 Xarbán

The parish of Xarbán is located in the province of Azuay, whose capital is Cuenca, and in the canton of Gualaceo, capital of the same name²² (see Figure 4.2). Xarbán is about 40 kilometres away from Cuenca (an hour and a half by bus), and around ten kilometres to Gualaceo (half an hour by bus). It is very well connected with Cuenca and Gualaceo by bus every hour and by private taxis running non-stop up and down. The eighteen square kilometre area of the parish is divided into two main sectors.

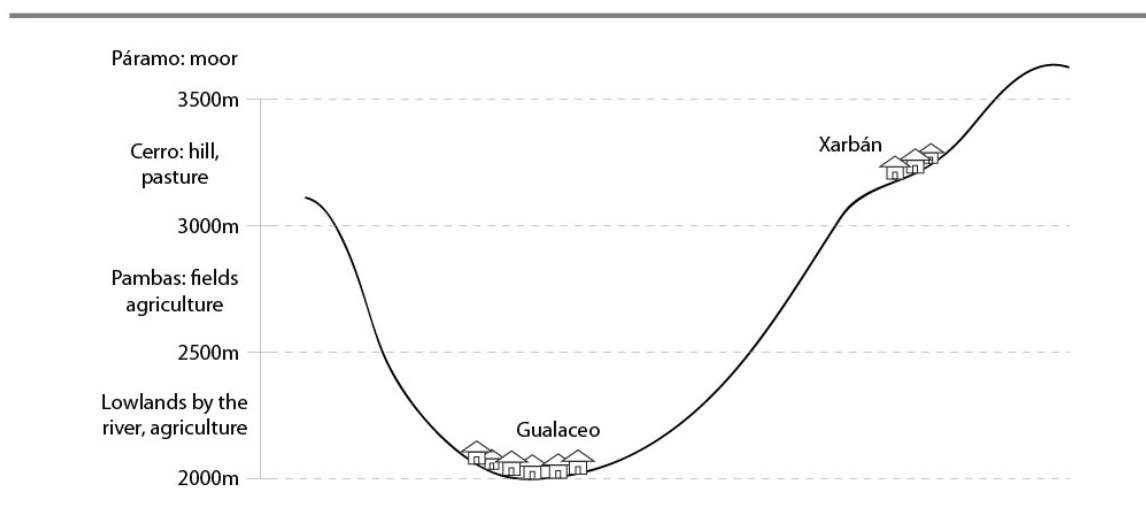
Figure 4.2: Location map of Cuenca (province capital) and Gualaceo (canton capital)



²² Parish and canton are administrative divisions, equivalent to municipality and county. Parish is the smallest administrative unit in Ecuador. I use the term village and parish interchangeably throughout the thesis.

Xarbán is located in the East slopes of the Gualaceo valley. As illustrated by the cross-section in Figure 4.3, the valley has four eco-strata (altitudinal ecological zones). By the river, in the lowlands around the canton capital (stratum 1), fruit trees and sugar cane are grown. Moving up, the village's lands (strata 2, 3 and 4), located between 2,500 and 3,500 meters above the sea level, are divided into the three higher strata: in the lowest one up to 3,000 metres, houses are located and maize, broad beans, peas and some fruit trees are grown; the following stratum (3,000-3,500m.), where there used to be *cascarilla* trees²³, is currently used as pasture for cattle; and the moor (locally known as *cerro*) over 3,500 metres is not suitable for agriculture. The climate is high-altitude tropical with frequent rains, and a dry and wet season. Erosion is the consequence of the seasonal rain falling on the parish's steep slopes.

Figure 4.3: Xarbán and its agro-ecological niches



a) History: indigenous roots

In the canton of Gualaceo the presence of Cañaris prior to the Inca arrival has been stated. There are some discussions around whether this group was a political unity or just an ethnic group which shared cultural traits in a clearly defined territory (Rudel, 1992: 20; Herbreteau, 2004: 22; Abbots, 2008: 75). The Cañaris were up in arms against the Inca Empire, the *Tawantinsuyu*. Hence when the Spaniards arrived, Cañaris supported them against the Incas (Oberem, 1974: 263). As a consequence, this ethnic group was relatively well treated by Spaniards (Rowe, 1982: 112). There is currently a local re-appreciation of this past, avoiding

²³ The scientific name of the *cascarilla* is *croton eluteria*. It was used to extract quinine, key in malaria treatment.

the Inca period and going beyond the Spanish domination. Nevertheless, Xarbán villagers still self-identify as *mestizos*, i.e. of mixed indigenous and Spanish descent, with their rural origin as the most salient trait of their local identity. Only once did I encounter a villager who described his mother as indigenous (holding a negative meaning). Villagers distance themselves from any sort of ethnic identification regarding their most visible feature, the women's traditional outfit (*chola cuencana*)²⁴, and explain it in terms of tradition and rural identification.

It is thought that there was a Spanish settlement in Gualaceo (*Gualaxio* in its indigenous denomination) by 1534 (Ruiz de Villa, 2010). Gualaceo was a gold producing site, mainly in the river Santa Bárbara. Small-scale gold mining in the rivers and springs has continued till current times. In the late 1980s this sort of mining reached its peak, with many Xarbán villagers involved.

Xarbán was a residual area used by colonial local *haciendas* to raise cattle and collect *cascarilla* (Herbreteau, 2004: 24). The *hacienda* system used semi-slave labour in the form of *huasipungueros*. After *cascarilla* production decreased due to the better quality of that produced in Loja, plus soil exhaustion and a general economic crisis in the Ecuadorian highlands, local *hacendados* lost interest in the higher parts of the canton and the *haciendas* started a process of subdivision (Coronel Feijoo, 1990: 223). While keeping the lowlands, *hacendados* sold the middle lands to the incumbent labourers, leaving the highlands as open access for the new owners. Between 1860 and 1930 in what is nowadays Xarbán two different systems existed: a mass of free small peasants in the southern part of the parish, and *hacienda* lands in the north (Herbreteau, 2004: 25). The *hacienda* of almost eight hundred hectares in the northern part of the parish, belonging to the Bermeo family, started a process of subdivision in 1890 and by 1930 (more than thirty years ahead of the Agrarian Reform) it was completely distributed among its heirs and former *huasipungueros* (Coronel Feijoo, 1990: 223).

²⁴ In the Andes, costume is central to the groups' sense of identity and identification (Meisch and Rowe, 1998). The '*chola cuencana*' attire (named after Cuenca, the capital of the province of Azuay, and present throughout the province) is made of a colourful skirt called *pollera*, a lace edging blouse and a hand-dyed shawl. Women also wear their hair braided in two pigtales under their Panama (straw) hats. It is an unsettling feeling to watch these women dressed as delicate dolls performing hard agricultural jobs in the hilly fields of Azuay. The figure of the '*chola cuencana*' has received some scholarly attention (Abbots, 2008; Weismantel, 2001). The term '*chola*' or '*cholo*' is used as a pejorative term in Ecuador to refer to those *mestizos* of rural origin, particularly if they have migrated to the cities. Although in the city of Cuenca there are attempts to portray the '*chola cuencana*' as a tradition without negative connotations, in fact these women are still perceived by local elites as backward and ignorant. We have here another example of female costume (along with the Muslim hijab, the Southern European traditional female outfit, etc.) comprising ideas of femininity and tradition (Abbots, 2008; Weismantel, 2001).

Villagers in the northern part of the parish did not have access (neither do they today) to communal land as a result of this differential process of *hacienda* fragmentation. Hence, by 1930 parish lands were divided between communal land and *minifundio*²⁵. As time went by, *minifundio* resulted in *microfundio* due to villagers' high fertility rates, equal inheritance laws for all children and the inability to expand the agricultural frontier.

The current property landscape is made up of communal land, construction plots next to the main communication routes, *microfundia*, and a limited process of land accumulation in the middle eco-strata of the parish. This land consolidation is linked to cattle-raising and is a direct consequence of international remittances. Most villagers have property deeds but there is still some confusion regarding this issue.

b) Economy: the importance of crafts

With Carpio Benalcázar I find it very useful to think about the peasant household in terms of 'survival and improvement strategies' (1992: 46). Agriculture provides the basis for survival, but as many of my informants stated, it does not allow for improvement (*progresar*). This 'improvement' has relied on the successive booms the villagers have become involved with: gold mining, craft making and migration (both internal and currently international).

-Why do you think villagers started to migrate?

[...] Because the economy was unstable. People grew plants, raised cattle to live. They had to eat, clothe themselves but they could not save money to buy a car, to build a concrete house. So that encouraged people from here to migrate [to the US]. They could not *progresar* (improve) here. That is the word, *progresar*.
(MT, Xarbán, 31 year-old, villager who tried to migrate)

Maize is essential in the agricultural landscape of Xarbán, as it is throughout the Andes (for some accounts see Corr, 2002; Hastorf and Johannessen, 1993; Murra, 2002: 145; Weismantel, 1991)²⁶. Each plant produces a maximum of three corn cobs a year. Villagers pick the green cob

²⁵ In many parts of Latin America the land tenure system is based on a '*latifundio–minifundio*' twofold structure. This dualistic tenure system is characterized by few large commercial estates (of over 500 hectares), *latifundios*, alongside numerous small properties, *minifundios* (under five hectares). When properties are smaller than one hectare then it is a *microfundio* system.

²⁶ A clear indication of the importance of maize is the variety of local names for every part of the plant. Before living in Xarbán, my indigenous Spanish from Spain only had one word for maize, '*maíz*'. One of my initiations was to learn all the different names that locals use for maize and its constituent parts

to eat within the household, on a pick and eat basis. Otherwise, it is left on the plant to ripen. The ripe corn cob is sun-dried and stored throughout the year. Maize is usually planted along with other crops in the orchards and fields around the village. Kidney beans and broad beans are the most common crops, running up the stem of the maize plant. This way there is no need to set guiding branches for the beans to attach to. Cereals (except for maize) are not grown in the village anymore and this is the consequence of a change in the whole country's diet. Cereals have been substituted by rice (imported or grown in the country's lowlands) which is currently the main staple, having lost its status as a 'treat' (*golosina*).

Villagers also grow tomatoes, *zambos* (a variety of squash), herbs, potatoes, some fruit trees (such as peaches or passion fruits) and flowers in the small orchards by their houses. Orchard production is consumed within the household or given away to neighbours or friends in the case of surplus. Very rarely is it sold in the market. Most households also raise chickens and guinea pigs (*cuys*). Some others also raise pigs, cattle and lambs, but not in the orchards next to the houses. Pigs are raised to be slaughtered at special events or to sell in the market. Those who own cattle must walk up the hills twice a day to milk them. Each of these walks takes between 30 minutes and 2 hours along muddy and steep paths. Because the fields are not fenced, cattle are kept using the *sogueo* system (the animal is tied with a rope several meters long that needs to be changed every day for the cow to have constant access to green grass).

I would like to stress that agriculture is more than a survival or economic activity. It is culturally loaded. This explains why, in a context of high remittances, some agricultural activities are not abandoned. Certain foodstuffs, vegetables and meat, are central to the village's social and cultural practices. The more salient ones are maize and guinea pig (*cuy*) in Xarbán, and banana (*guineo*), yucca and creole chicken in Pindo. These foodstuffs are so central to the villagers' cultural world that they travel physically between Ecuador and the US/Europe (in a kind of 'reverse in-kind remittance' transfer).

The current acute *microfundio* situation means that agricultural production has long been insufficient to cover peasant household needs. Xarbán families have traditionally tried to make up for this situation through a strategy of income diversification, which supports insufficient agricultural production and minimizes risk in a context of irregular crop output. Non-farming activities have historically been very important, especially craft production and spatial

(*choclo*, *mote*, *moroch*, *tusa*, *tostado*, *cangil*, *zampón*, *chicha de jora*, etc.) and taste corn in all its varieties, colours and preparations.

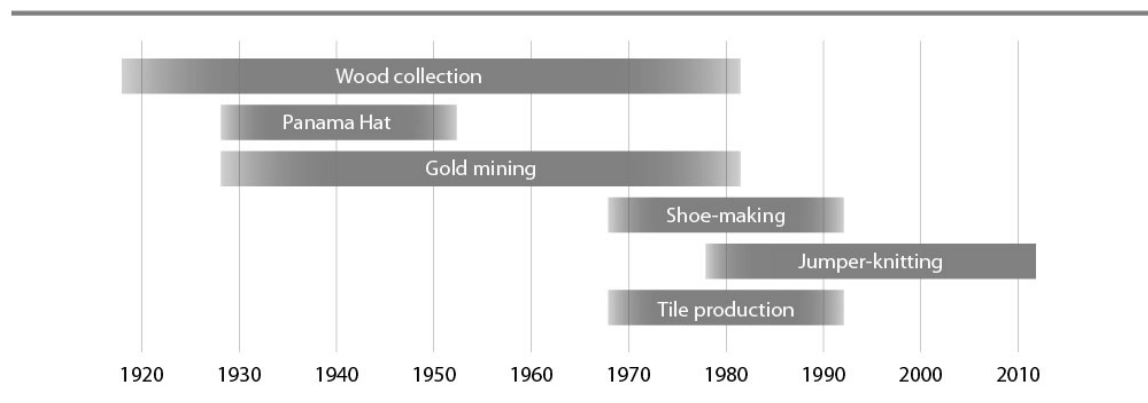
mobility. The local importance of crafts and mobility implies that quite early on land stopped being the main factor of production in Xarbán and became a secondary element: it changed from agricultural fields to construction sites (Coronel Feijoo, 1990: 228, 241). This has a decisive impact on current remittance houses, as I will show in chapter six. The opportunity structure for Xarbán villagers has been very dynamic with the appearance and disappearance of opportunities. The first market-oriented activity that villagers can recall was wood collection from the communal forest in the high part of the village to sell in the canton capital for construction and cooking purposes in the early 1920s. This income source stopped being available once the forest became completely deforested. Small-scale gold mining also provided economic prosperity to the village during certain periods between 1930 and 1990.

Only in the 1930s, when Gualaceo became linked to the province capital Cuenca, did the possibility arise to market crafts in a broader way. Xarbán was linked to Gualaceo by a path, and people and crafts were taken by horse. A paved road was opened only in the 1990s. Craft production is always present in a peasant household to cover its members' needs. However, crafts become a source of money in an increasingly monetized economy when they are produced for the market. The first craft bonanza Xarbán villagers became involved with was the Panama hat. However, although very important in the province (Kyle, 2000: 58), locally not many villagers had the required skills. Currently some old ladies still make a living from weaving this product. The two most important crafts have been shoe-making and jumper-knitting. In the 1980s and 1990s most villagers, of all ages and genders, were involved in these two activities. Everyone recalls this time as a golden age. Men picked up pre-cut shoe designs from Gualaceo and spent the weekdays assembling and shaping shoes. However as soon as Colombian shoes (cheaper and better quality) were allowed into the Ecuadorian market, local artisan shoe-making decreased. Due to lack of investment and an unskilled local workforce, most Gualaceo producers could not face external competition and quickly went out of business. Some years later women started to make money out of knitting jumpers. Otalavos, an indigenous northern Ecuadorian group, were very successful in the 1990s at marketing in Europe big jumpers loosely knitted with thick wool (Meisch, 2003). They were so successful that they could not meet demand with their own production and had to travel all over the Ecuadorian highlands buying from locals their poorly knitted jumpers (Kyle, 1999). Xarbán women knitted for these middlemen. Once again, jumper-knitting stopped being as profitable when European markets became saturated with these 'ethnic' jumpers. A number of women still knit today but the wool thread is now thinner, designs more complex and attention must be paid to size. Tile production was also quite profitable for a while, in particular because of

the house construction boom generated by international remittances. Fortunately soil from one section of the village has the right type of clay to make tiles. With the expansion of cheaper metal roofs, tile production declined.

As shown above, and diagrammatically in Figure 4.4, consecutive economic bonanza periods characterize Xarbán history. International migration is the current boom. Each of these booms is accompanied by a feeling that prosperity will never end. Unfortunately each of these booms does end, starting the cycle all over again. Each boom first starts in the canton capital, expanding from there towards the more isolated areas in the canton. Profitability diminishes as more villagers become involved. Each activity residually remains after its peak, experiencing subsequent shorter periods of revival. Hence, the following crafts timeline must be read in the light of these variegated patterns of boom, bust and marginal survival.

Figure 4.4: Timeline of crafts for Xarbán



Agriculture and crafts for the market have been complemented by migration. Andean peasants, due to geography, have always been characterized by a high mobility between different ecological niches (Buren, 1996; Murra, 2002; Stadel, 1990). In the case of Xarbán, this mobility has increased as windows of opportunity opened and then closed. In the 1950s there was an extension of the agricultural frontier towards the *Oriente* (the Amazon strip) in a State-led colonization. Some villagers migrated seasonally, hired by State-owned companies, which built infrastructure such as roads and dams in the region. Others applied and were granted land deeds, moving permanently to raise cattle and grow tropical products. Around the same time the sugar cane plantations in the lowlands (the Coastal strip) were in need of unskilled labour. This migration was seasonal just for the harvest (*zafra*) and only for male villagers. By the mid 1970s this migration came to an end.

International migration quickly came into Xarbán's mobility map at the end of the 20th century. As with the other booms, international migration started first in Cuenca, the province capital, then expanded to Gualaceo, the canton capital, and eventually arrived in Xarbán where many villagers started leaving the parish in the early 1990s. Remittances from New York City (where most migrant villagers live) are currently the main income source for most households. Nowadays, all the other income sources are disregarded as time consuming and of low reward by the villagers. I do not state this pejoratively, as remittances are just wages which have crossed a national border. US migration, if successfully accomplished, yields financial returns higher than any other activity villagers have been involved with before. Nonetheless the initial 'investment' is also very high²⁷. The smuggling fees to irregularly migrate to the US were over \$15,000 in 2009. Migrants can only start sending remittances after one or two years working in the US, as the journey debt captures migrants' earnings during this time. I will say much more on this in chapter five.

4.1.2 Pindo

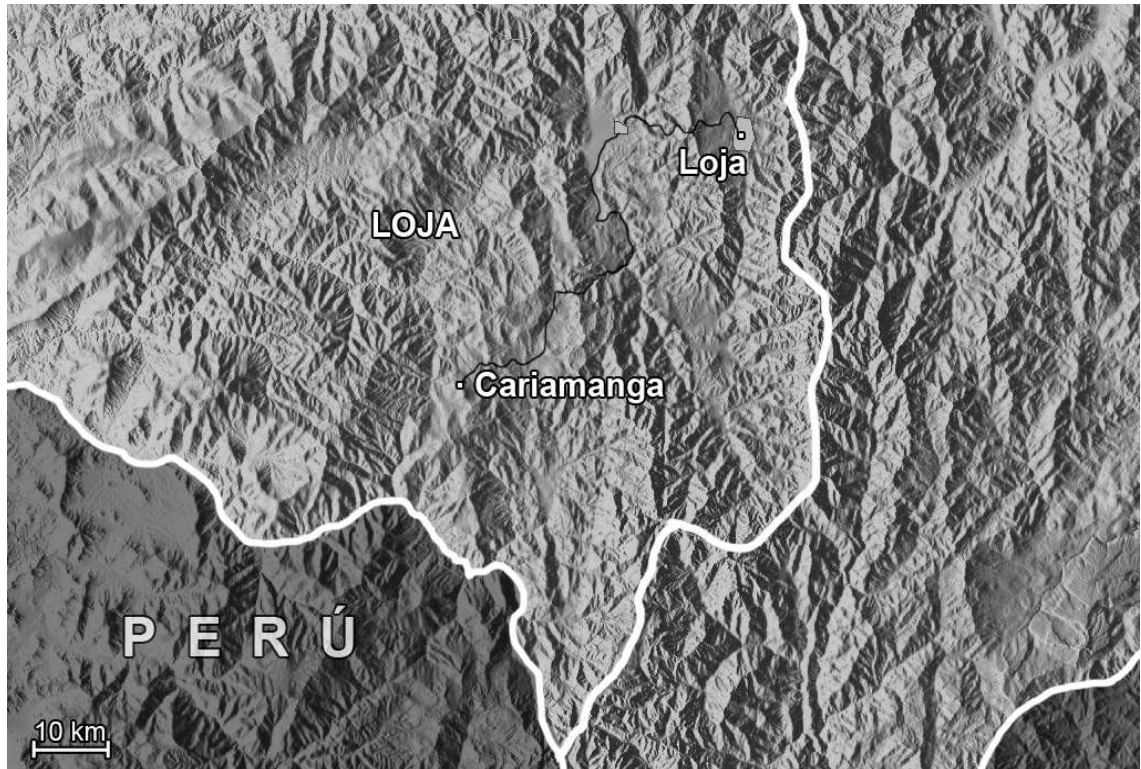
The parish of Pindo is located in Loja, Ecuador's southernmost province, in the canton of Calvas. It is 135 kilometres away from the province capital in a four-hour nightmare drive. It is only twenty-five kilometres away from the canton capital, Cariamanga, but due to the bad condition of the route it takes over an hour to arrive²⁸. The Andes are lower in this province but the terrain is more rugged, with crags and very narrow valleys that give the province a crumpled paper look (Figure 4.5). Pindo lands range between 1,200 and 2,000 meters above sea level. Terrain is very uneven with steep slopes inadequate for agricultural purposes. Temperatures are higher than in Xarbán, with 22 °C on average. The parish has a desertification problem in those areas away from constant sources of water, the main source being the Pindo river, although an irrigation channel was recently built. The climate is dry except for the rainy season when rains are very heavy. These seasonal rains together with the parish's very steep slopes generate problems of acute soil erosion. While in Xarbán altitude is the key issue regarding agriculture, for Pindo it is irrigation. As I will show in chapter six,

²⁷ I am talking about the financial burden. All journeys crossing the Mexican-US border irregularly are inherently risky. However from villagers' stories, and much to my surprise, risks seem to be lower than what I had anticipated.

²⁸ It is more difficult to reach the canton capital in the case of Pindo than in Xarbán. In Pindo there are buses every couple of hours. Some private cars can also give a lift, but the most common and uncomfortable way of travelling is by *chiva*, a truck used as a bus with wooden benches. The fact that the road is not paved means that it is really dusty in the dry season and full of potholes and puddles in the rainy season; either way this makes the one-hour ride really painful.

international remittances affect the patterns of access to lower lands in Xarbán and access to water in Pindo.

Figure 4.5: Location map of Loja (province capital) and Cariamanga (canton capital)



Pindo's population is spread over many small hamlets, some of them made up of just a few houses. The larger populated area is simply called 'the parish centre'. Although villagers know the name of the different hamlets, the main distinction is between the 'parish centre' and everywhere else, locally named 'the fields' (*los campos*), with most of the parish population living in the fields. This population distribution is very important to understand migration patterns, social remittance effects, and differentiation caused by material remittances.

a) History: colonial haciendas

There are very few accounts of pre-Inca presence in the province of Loja. Most attention has focused on the Saraguro group in the north of the province (Belote, 1997; Ogburn, 2007), far away from the parish of Pindo, which is close to the Peruvian border. Some authors talk about the presence of the Paltas or Calvas ethnic group (Almeida, 1983; Guffroy, 1986; Lecoq 1983), but there is little archaeological support. It can be easily assumed that this area was a route between Cuzco and Quito during the Inca expansion. Currently, there are lukewarm attempts to reappraise/create pre-Hispanic traditions. Nonetheless, it is ethnically still more rewarding

in Ecuador to reinforce a direct association with colonial Spaniards that are positioned higher in the hierarchy because of 'whiteness'. There are more detailed accounts of the *hacienda* system that Spaniards introduced (what has been called the '*gran hacienda lojana*'), the consequences of which are still visible today. The *latifundio* system reached its climax by the 1850s, and quickly deteriorated during the Agrarian Reform years in the 1960s (Faroux, 1986: 673).

The province's economy was initially determined by two economic booms: gold mining and *cascarilla* production. Due to its location, Pindo was not directly included in either of these booms. Elite families from the city of Loja used the money amassed from the *cascarilla* boom to buy land (Faroux, 1986: 677), including land in Pindo. Land between Cariamanga, the canton capital, and the banks of the Pindo river was agriculturally marginal. Although located by the Peruvian border, this area neither currently nor in the colonial times, has strategic importance as a route to Peru. Crossing routes were preferred in the lowlands through Huaquillas. In the current parish area, there were two (or three, it is not clear to my informants) *haciendas*. The most important one was the *El Tablón hacienda* which belonged to the Eguiguren family who lived in the city of Loja²⁹. The *hacienda* was run by a *mayordomo* who sent the *hacienda* production to the city of Loja. Local *haciendas* were mainly devoted to raising cattle, producing some crafts such as saddlebags, and to grow sugar cane for the market in the irrigated low parts. Landless peasants worked for the *hacienda* in exchange for the right to cultivate small plots of land in the less productive parts of the *hacienda*.

In 1941, in the context of war against Peru, the Calvas canton was bombed. The on-going conflict with Peru (with periodic outbreaks till the 1998 peace agreement) has prevented any substantial integration between the northernmost Peruvian and the southernmost Ecuadorian regions.

The Agrarian Reform impacted strongly on the social and economic structure of Pindo. Social unrest peaked in the Land Reform years (1964-1973). One of the bloodiest events took place in what is now the parish: the Santa Ana massacre in 1968. Landless workers of the *Santa Ana hacienda*, in the context of severe drought and blocked Agrarian Reform, in despair started growing yucca in the *hacienda* pasture lands. *Hacendados* with the support of the army killed

²⁹ In fact this family owned most of the current canton lands in what was called the 'United States of Calvas' (Fauroux, 1986: 679).

many of these peasants (Fauroux, 1983: 247)³⁰. Anticipating the Agrarian Reform consequences, *hacienda* owners sold the less productive lands to their own *hacienda* workers and workers from nearby *haciendas*. Some of my informants still remember the number of cows they or their parents had to sell in order to save enough cash to buy small land plots. *Hacienda* owners kept for themselves the most fertile lands by the river, which are currently leased to the *Monterrey ingenio* (sugar refinery) of Catamayo. The parish centre was drawn from scratch in 1974 by technicians of the IERAC (Ecuadorian Institute of Agrarian Reform and Colonization). They drew a map, parcelled the land and sold it. Because very few *hacienda* workers lived there (this part used to be a cattle enclosure), land was bought by people moving from other nearby *haciendas* and Cariamanga, where land prices were higher. Those less advantaged had to buy cheaper plots away from the parish centre and the main communication routes. It is for this reason that Pindo villagers do not have such strong consciousness of a shared belonging, as villagers' arrival in the parish and the creation of the parish itself is very recent. The presence of the *haciendas* in Calvas, and the Land Reform, created important internal migrations that fragmented any possible long-lasting common local history.

Disparity between the parish centre and 'the fields' has grown since then. The outlying villagers have more difficult access to local power positions. The fact that the Parish Board premises are located in the parish centre makes it impossible for villagers in the most remote areas to arrive there without a car. There are very few chances for them to win the election, but even if they did, they would find it extremely difficult to reach the parish centre on a daily basis. Hence, the field dwellers' needs are usually overlooked by the local authorities.

Finally, I would like to mention that Cariamanga was the hometown of the only Ecuadorian drug cartel, the Reyes Torres family. The 'cocaine boom' in the late 1980s and early 1990s brought some economic benefits to the villagers but its extent is difficult to measure.

³⁰ This event has to be read within the context of one of the most serious droughts the province of Loja has ever experienced. Droughts are periodical in the region, and they have been a determinant reason for Loja dwellers to migrate internally. Lojanos are famous in Ecuador for their mobility, being present in high numbers in Quito, Cuenca, the province of Sucumbíos by the Colombian border (following the oil boom) and the province of Santo Domingo de los Colorados, among others.

b) Economy: mobility at the core of economic strategies

Pindo villagers' survival and improvement strategies revolve around agriculture and mobility. Contrary to Xarbán, where to a greater or lesser extent all villagers are involved in some sort of improvement strategies, in Pindo there are families who are left behind, surviving on their own agricultural production. The overall picture is more complex than in Xarbán because of the presence of marked social hierarchies. Better-off villagers live in the parish centre or in one of the most populated and better accessed sectors. Usually they work as civil servants (mainly teachers in one of the many primary schools in the parish) or run their own businesses. Owning a coach and a share in the Cariamanga transport cooperative or a *chiva* is one of the most profitable activities, along with having some technical qualification, working as welders for instance. These families also run most of the little shops located in the parish centre. They usually also own fields in the irrigated lands of the parish, growing commercial crops or ranching cattle for the market. Finally they also control all the local power positions: the parish board, the water board, irrigation board, the (failed) local savings bank, etc. Although migration to Spain allowed some poorer villagers from the parish centre to improve their livelihoods and some villagers from the fields to move into the parish centre, all in all and contrary to Xarbán, international migration and remittances have widened the socio-economic gap. Because better-off villagers had the knowledge, the resources (sometimes achieved during previous migration to the US) and the support networks in the destination, they were the first to migrate to Europe, and the ones who reaped the biggest rewards from the venture. When villagers from the most isolated areas of the parish started to migrate, migration was not such a profitable activity as it used to be, and they were strongly hit by the economic crisis in Spain. Some had mortgaged their meagre houses, land plots, or animals and did not have time to repay the journey debt.

Agriculture in Pindo is determined by access to water. Irrigated lands are located by the river and in the fields watered by a newly built irrigation channel³¹. Commercial crops are grown in these fields, including tomatoes, maize, coffee, sugar cane, and fruit trees (mango, *guineo*³², oranges, and avocados). Pindo's non-irrigated lands stay dry for most of the year, only allowing some scrawny animals to graze and yucca to be planted. In the rainy season, maize and some other orchard crops are grown. As a result of periodical droughts, marked seasonality

³¹ The sixty or so kilometres of the irrigation channel built in 2008 (thirty-three of main channel and twenty-four of secondary branches) provides water for two hundred plots that total one thousand hectares (SENPLADES, 2008).

³² It is a sort of small sweet banana eaten unripe in soups and ripe as a fruit.

combined with heavy rains, steep slopes and lack of trees, the parish soil is badly eroded, yielding low productivity. There is no mechanization in non-irrigated land because peasants cannot afford it; the plot sizes are too small and the slopes are usually too steep. Communication routes are so poor within the parish that they do not allow the machinery to reach most land plots. The fact that the parish paths are so badly maintained is the consequence of soil and climate conditions, but also the lack of access by the villagers from the fields to positions of power within the parish. The Parish Board, in charge of the maintenance of the routes within the parish, have traditionally had priorities related to access to markets for local agricultural production instead of enhancing the internal cohesion of the parish itself.

Animal husbandry is at the core of Pindo economic and social life. Unlike Xarbán where the appearance of cattle is closely related to international migration, cattle-raising activities have traditionally been very important in Pindo. This feature was first forged in the *hacienda* times when animal husbandry adapted better to a situation of labour scarcity and land concentration (Fauroux, 1986). Cattle breeds are different in both villages: in Xarbán they are for milk while in Pindo they are for meat. Wealthier Pindo villagers raise cattle while most households have chickens. For those in remote areas donkeys still provide a convenient means of transportation. Cattle also act as a living bank account, and it is not uncommon to maintain international remittances in this living form. For this reason the occurrence of frequent cattle thefts is a serious problem in the parish, particularly in the fields.

Finally, mobility is at the core of villagers' survival and improvement strategies. Their internal mobility map is quite complex: seasonal male migration to the shrimp farms in the coastal province of Machala, seasonal male migration to the gold mines in the contiguous province of Zamora, male or family migration to the province of Sucumbíos by the Colombian border to work for the oil companies as unskilled workers, seasonal male migration to the coastal sugar cane and banana plantations, and male and female migration to Quito and Loja city to work (males in construction and females as domestic workers) or to study. Some of these mobilities are not currently attractive to Pindo villagers. The gold declined after some villagers lost their savings buying the right to wash gold in small land plots in Zamora. As in Xarbán, I have heard of returnees from abroad who are planning to go back to wash gold after rumours of gold's 'return'. Seasonal migration to the shrimp farms in Machala is still today the main source of income for many poor male migrants from the fields who stay away from the village for around six months a year. This work is increasingly dangerous because of the aggressive thefts of shrimps from the huge artificial pools. Some of the villagers' mobilities led to a permanent

settlement of the migrants and their families, mainly in the case of migration to Sucumbíos, Quito or Loja city. During the annual parish religious festivities in August, the village becomes crowded with all of these villagers who have settled down in other parts of the country, as well as with villagers living abroad who are back on holidays³³. Permanent migration, whether prior to, during or after international migration, is an important feature of Pindo villagers' mobility, which is absent in Xarbán. Interestingly, there is Peruvian seasonal immigration towards Pindo of very young females to work as live-in domestic workers (becoming one more link in an international care chain) and young males to work in agriculture. At the time of my fieldwork Peruvians could enter Ecuador without a visa. Many of these Peruvian labourers take over jobs left by villagers who have migrated abroad. International remittances provide the funds for their salaries.

Mass international migration from Pindo was the result of an eight-year-long opportunity to travel to Spain and Italy without a visa between 1996 and 2003. Previously a few villagers went irregularly to the US. The range of destinations in Spain is quite wide, but they are mainly concentrated in Madrid, Valencia, the Canary Islands and Murcia. Pindo migrants also have secondary movements within Spain and Europe, in contrast with migrants from Xarbán who almost never migrate once in the US. Italy and the UK are the main destinations migrants from Pindo are heading towards after living in Spain for a while. Many villagers are returning to Ecuador because of the current acute economic crisis in Spain. Some of them return to Pindo while others go to Quito, Cariamanga or Loja city.

Finally it is important to note that the US has never ceased to be regarded as the most profitable destination in Pindo villagers' perceptions. Spanish citizenship has allowed some returnees to go to the US on holiday trying to figure out their next move. Finding life too different and faced with the prospects of falling into irregularity, so far no one has decided to stay. As money first saved from US migration financed the first journeys to Spain, money earned in Spain has made journeys to the US possible. Returnees without Spanish citizenship also find it easier to obtain a tourist visa to the US due to the properties and savings they have managed to obtain because of their work in Europe.

³³ This is in clear contrast with Xarbán where the impressive and expensive religious festivities (funded by villagers in the US) lack attendance, as the irregular legal status of most villagers in the US prevents them from physically enjoying these festivities.

4.2. Quantitative Overview

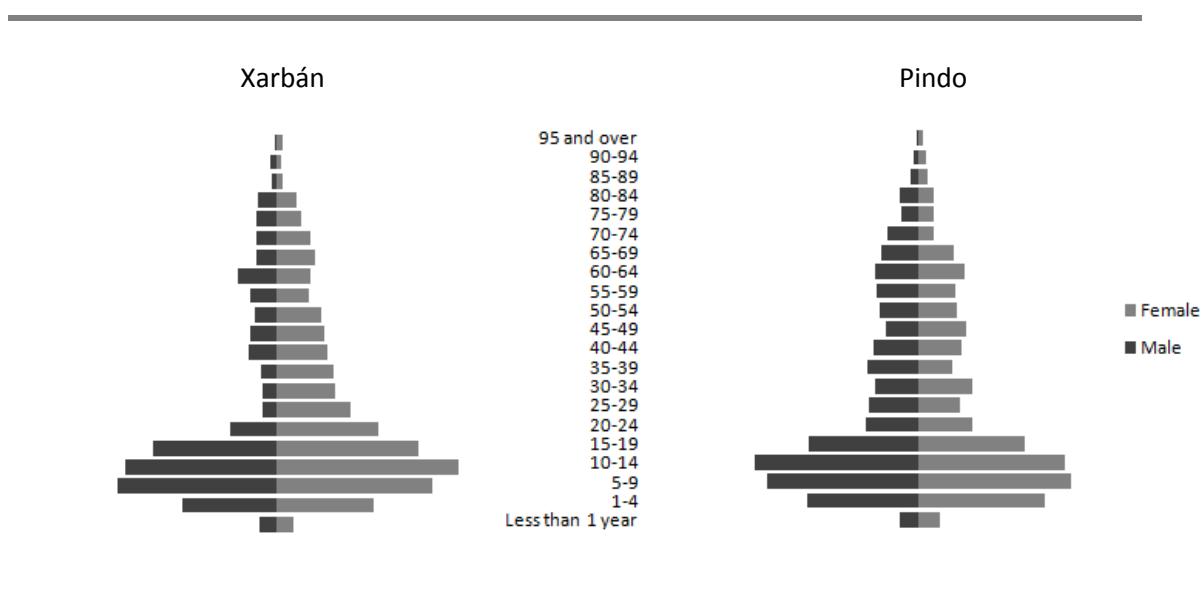
In order to complement the historical and economic overview I have presented above, I now provide in this section some quantitative data, mainly population and housing variables. Drawing from census tables and my own questionnaire data, quantitative figures about Xarbán and Pindo provide the context within which migration and remittances are inserted. The latest available population Census for Ecuador with data at the parish level is from the year 2001. Data from the questionnaire I administered in the two villages in 2009 does not show significant discrepancies with the earlier census; both census and survey data sketch similar migration panoramas for each village.

4.2.1 VI Population and V Household census

It is difficult to make comparisons over time regarding both parishes because of their changing administrative borders. Xarbán belonged to a broad parish comprised of four current parishes. It was created as an independent parish in 1936. An important chunk of Xarbán territory was segregated in 1993 to create a new parish. Pindo was officially created in 1974. In 1997 part of its territory became a new parish.

According to the 2001 Census, Xarbán has 2,032 inhabitants, overwhelmingly self-identified as *mestizos* (98%), and where, due to heavy international male migration to the US, almost 60% are women (INEC, 2001). The population of Xarbán belongs to 928 households (on average made up of 2.1 members each), and lives mostly in villas (91%). Pindo's 2,440 inhabitants have a more balanced gender ratio (49.8% men and 50.2% women), and the same overwhelming *mestizo* self-identification (96%). The Pindo population lives in 597 households scattered over more than ten sectors. Pindo has 29.5 inhabitants per square kilometre (Comité Desarrollo Cantonal, 2001: 3), a much lower density than Xarbán (over 100/km²). As noted earlier, there is a wide gap between parish centre dwellers and those who lived scattered in what is called 'the fields'. Pindo has many small population centres and many isolated houses which are difficult to reach. As I pointed out in chapter three, fieldwork was logistically more challenging in Pindo than it was in Xarbán.

Figure 4.6: Age pyramids of Xarbán and Pindo



Source: own elaboration of data from the 2001 VI Population and V Household Census

Clearly both villages have young populations (Figure 4.6.), although one can foresee a demographic change with a reduction in fertility. In Xarbán, this is due to men's absence while in Pindo the change has more to do with women's encounters with modernity due to international migration. Many women in Pindo talked to me about how bad '*cargarse de hijos*' (literally 'overload oneself with children') was and how not to do it by means of '*cuidarse*' (i.e. using contraception). Particularly in Pindo, paternity is very irresponsible: there are many children who do not have an official 'father' and many women with children from different men who do not support them. This is not the case in Xarbán where community pressure, either in Ecuador or in the US, makes it very difficult for men to skip their parental responsibilities. Throughout Ecuador international migration is portrayed as the main cause of family disintegration. Surprisingly, given how extended this myth is, I encountered very few divorced couples in both villages. It is essential to mention that international female migration from Pindo is usually the consequence of irresponsible paternity and marital problems. Therefore migration is not the cause of breaking-up or divorce, but just an accompanying factor (Pedone, 2002; 2008).

The mode of rooms per house for both villages is two but this measure obscures a skewed distribution for Pindo, with a big disparity between houses in the parish centre and those in the fields. In Pindo there is a housing problem with overcrowded houses, which are isolated from main communication routes and lack adequate construction materials. Sometimes

nuclear families are enlarged with relatives such as children of migrants or older indirect relatives. In the first migration stages of Pindo migrants, where there are children left behind and remittances are not yet regularly arriving, the problem of overcrowded housing becomes exacerbated. As will be discussed in chapter five, in Pindo the 'fraternal group' (siblings) is not only important for migrants' living arrangements but is also key while analysing material remittances. In Xarbán, grandparents (usually grandmothers alone as their husbands are also abroad³⁴) in charge of their grandchildren whose parents are currently in the US is the most common living arrangement, as well as wives with one or two children whose husbands are working in the US. In Xarbán, as well as in Pindo, there was clear evidence of what King and Vullnetari have labelled 'orphan pensioners' (2006): old people living alone as a result of their children's international migration.

Most villagers in both villages have completed primary education (66% in Xarbán and 54% in Pindo); the percentage of illiterate villagers is higher in Pindo than in Xarbán. In Ecuador there is a wide gap in terms of the quality of the education between rural and urban educational establishments. In Pindo, most primary schools located in the fields have only one teacher for all the pupils ranging from six to twelve years old. In spite of the personal commitment of some of these teachers, the outcome is far from perfect. Due to an absolute lack of control though, a minority of these teachers can easily overlook their professional obligations.

The labour market structure is different in Loja and Azuay provinces, which is reflected in each village's occupational structure. First of all, formal work integration, measured as workers covered by some public insurance system, is stronger in Pindo than in Xarbán. In Ecuador, formal workers are covered by the IESS (Ecuadorian Institute of Social Security) or, for those who live in rural areas and work in agriculture or craft making, by the *Seguro Campesino* (Peasant Insurance)³⁵. IESS provides health insurance, retirement pension, disability and other (very limited) benefits for employees. However, a high percentage of rural population working in the primary sector does not qualify for the IESS compulsory membership, so a specific social security system was created in 1968 to cover them: *Seguro Campesino* (Barreiro, 1998: 2). It has parallel health care structures in terms of primary care units (*dispensarios*) and hospitals.

³⁴ It is important to note that time distances between generations are shorter in Ecuador than in Europe. Moreover, in Europe, it is not uncommon for parents in their 50s to be raising teenager children, something socially not regarded as a problematic situation. This contradicts local criticisms in Ecuador which emphasise the fact that old people cannot adequately take care of their grandchildren.

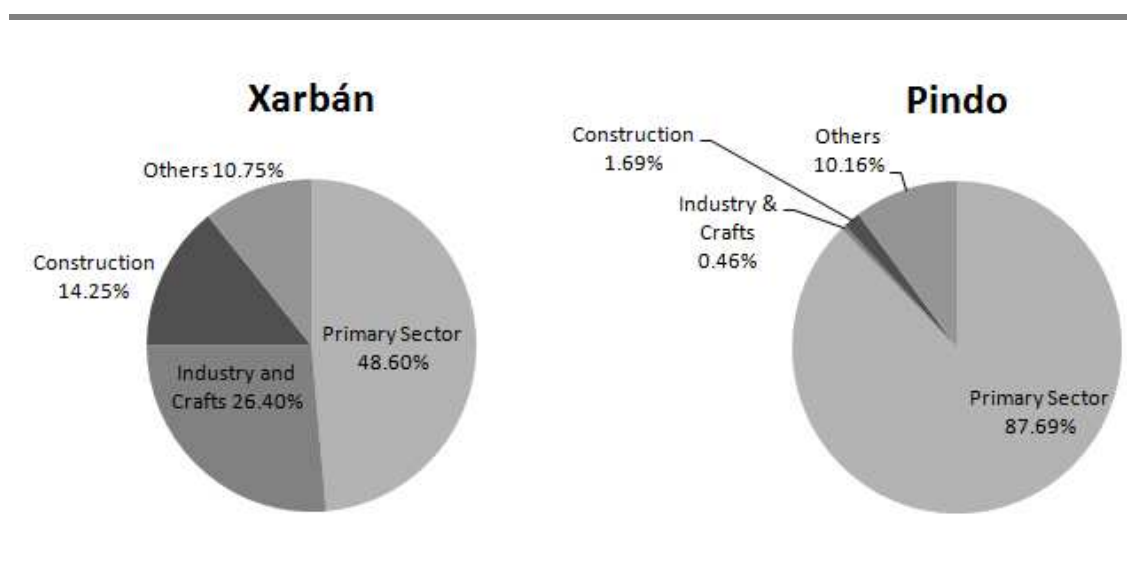
³⁵ Recently the Ecuadorian State has created the '*afiliación voluntaria*' (voluntary membership). This sort of insurance has been created to cover the population left out by the main system (domestic workers, students, etc.) but also with the aim to attract migrants' contributions.

Beside health and dental care, it provides retirement pension (when the member is 65 years old and after ten years of membership), disability and funeral benefits. The whole family is covered by the health insurance. 'Peasant Insurance' has been modified partially as a result of the new situation created in rural areas with high international emigration rates. Along with the traditional membership form of '*jefe de familia activo*' (active household head), the Peasant Insurance also recognizes now the '*jefe de familia inscrito*' (registered household head). The latter will not receive a retirement pension but in the meantime his family (the whole regulation takes for granted that the household head is a man) is entitled to public health care. During my fieldwork I encountered many families who were covered by the Peasant Insurance under this form of protection, the '*jefe inscrito*' being a male migrant abroad. Although migrants' relatives in Xarbán are entitled to free health care, unless they suffer from minor illnesses, remittances allow them to seek private health care, which is held in higher esteem. The province of Azuay has experienced a boom in the private health care sector, directly linked to international remittances reception. This province's clinics rank among the best in the country. Loja province does not provide such an outstanding health care supply. Peasant Insurance dues are quite low but the retirement pension is also very low (\$40/month at the time of my fieldwork) and health care is rather poor. Similarly IESS health care in rural areas is of poor quality as these units are staffed by final-year Medicine students.

According to the 2001 Census, 85% of the working population in Xarbán and 57% in Pindo are not covered by any public social security system. Pindo villagers, even though geographically more isolated than Xarbán's, are more integrated into the formal economic structure of the country. Many civil servants (police, teachers, etc.) live in the village. In Xarbán none of them live in the village as easier transportation allows them to go back daily to their houses in the province or canton capital. Remittances also act as a social security mechanism in Xarbán. They allow villagers to access private health care (regarded as quicker, more convenient and of better overall quality) and save for their retirement (in the form of asset accumulation: houses or land to rent, shares in a transportation cooperative of buses, coaches or taxis). Hence, they do not see the need to contribute regularly to the Peasant Insurance, whose rewards are perceived as insignificant. Finally, I would like to mention that some returnees from both the US and Spain are starting to realize the importance of the Peasant Insurance in cases of serious diseases or surgery. Some returnees are also taking out private life and medical insurance through bank accounts or credit cooperatives.

The following graphs (Figure 4.7) show the importance of each economic sector for each village. In both settings, villagers overwhelmingly work in the primary sector. This is especially the case in Pindo. In Xarbán craft making is important as is construction (linked to the construction of remittance houses).

Figure 4.7: Main economic sectors for each village



Source: own elaboration with data from the 2001 VI Population and V Household Census

4.2.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire provided recent data regarding the mobility of current migrants (through their relatives in the village) and villagers' previous migration. It presents a good snapshot, updating and enhancing the scenario outlined by the 2001 Census.

The questionnaire collected data from about 15% of Xarbán and Pindo total populations (based on 2001 Census data): 306 villagers in Xarbán and 370 in Pindo. In Xarbán 60% of the questioned villagers were women, which is consistent with the census data, belonging to 76 households. As expected, due to international migration, there is a high percentage of empty houses, usually big villas made of concrete. Data from a recent survey carried out at the time of my research suggest that this situation has accentuated since the 2001 Census (SELBEL, 2009)³⁶. The construction of modern concrete houses has allowed many families to move away from adobe houses (which are sometimes maintained as shelters for animals or agricultural

³⁶ This data can only be used for illustrative purposes because the survey was not completed yet.

tools) into newly built concrete ones. In Xarbán only six of the households surveyed live in adobe dwellings. The mode and mean of members in each house is four.

In Pindo I obtained information about 370 villagers living in 74 houses, located in thirteen different sectors of the village. I gathered data from 32 houses in the parish centre and 42 in the fields, as most of the parish population lives in the fields. Sixty per cent of the surveyed houses are made of adobe with houses scattered in the fields being more likely to be of adobe than houses in the parish centre. Due to the hot temperatures in the area and the presence of mud walls, the *chagas* disease is endemic in the region³⁷. The gender ratio is more balanced in Pindo than in Xarbán, with 47% of surveyed villagers being women and 53% men. This is consistent with the fact that migration to Spain was initially female-led. The mode of members in each house is also four but the mean is five. Xarbán households are usually comprised of a spouse and two children (the other spouse usually away in the US), while in Pindo households are bigger (usually young people with migrant or 'unknown' parents).

Interestingly, almost a quarter of respondent villagers in Pindo had previously migrated within Ecuador, compared to only 7% in Xarbán. In both villages a similar percentage, 3.5%, had both internal and international previous migratory experience.

In Xarbán I gathered information from 213 migrants (68% of whom are male) and in Pindo from 185 migrants (59.5% male). The mode of migrants per house is three for Xarbán and only one for Pindo, which is consistent with Xarbán's longer time horizon and the presence of a culture of migration in this village. Current ages of migrants (not ages at the time of migration) range between 19 and 65 years for Xarbán, with median and mode at 35, and between 10 and 55 for Pindo, with median and mode of 30.

Regarding destinations, the questionnaire data closely follows those from the 2001 Census³⁸. In Xarbán, 211 migrants (out of the 213 I gathered information about with the questionnaire) are in the US, and most of them in the contiguous states of New York and New Jersey. Only two migrants (both females) live in places other than the US (both in Spain). On the other

³⁷ *Chagas* disease is a very serious condition with no vaccination or cure so far, although it can be treated. It is produced by the bug *rhodnius*. A study made in one of Pindo sectors found a high number of bugs in the mud walls of the houses (Grijalva et al., 2005).

³⁸ The 2001 Census registered 286 migrants from Xarbán, most of them male (74%) of whom 99% were in the US. The same Census gives a figure of 355 migrants for Pindo, 56% of whom were men. Migrants from Pindo went overwhelmingly to Spain (88%).

hand, 84% of Pindo migrants live in Spain with only fifteen migrants (out of 185) living in the US, and fourteen more living in countries other than Spain and the US (Italy, Israel, Switzerland, France and a grant holder Medicine student in Cuba). Figure 4.8 gives an overview of migrants' residence places.

Xarbán migrants show a very high concentration in the US. Most of them live in the Roosevelt Avenue area in the New York City borough of Queens (which they called '*la Rusvel*'). In fact, their residential concentration is such that most of them live in two specific blocks.

Those Pindo migrants who live in Spain are mostly in Madrid, Murcia and the Canary Islands. Madrid and Murcia are traditional destinations for Ecuadorian migration to Spain³⁹. The presence of so many villagers in the Canary Islands is the consequence of the establishment of a migratory chain by a Spanish Canarian priest who stayed briefly in Pindo. He recruited female villagers to work as domestic workers in the islands. These pioneer migrants helped to bring their male relatives (mainly siblings) afterwards. Some other Pindo migrants live in new destinations of Ecuadorian migration such as London, Israel or Switzerland.

The appearance of Israel as a new destination for Ecuadorian migrants has been acknowledged by Herrera et al. (2005: 20). Kalir (2005) explained this 'new migration' as a personal (not family) decision of migrants who decide to migrate without transnational connections in destination and with little information. I also found that the information migrants relied on before migrating to Israel was inadequate.

-What did you know before going to Israel?

Nothing! I knew nothing. I imagined that it would be such a beautiful place, from the things I had read in the Bible. I thought it would be as it is described in the Bible. But when I arrived there, it was completely different.

(Pindo, 39 years-old deported female migrant from Tel-Aviv, 1996-2003)

³⁹ On March 2010, Madrid, Catalonia, Valencia and Murcia were the five Spanish Autonomous Communities with more Ecuadorians legally residing (OPI, 2010).

Figure 4.8: Map of migrants' residence places (top maps for Xarbán, bottom for Pindo)

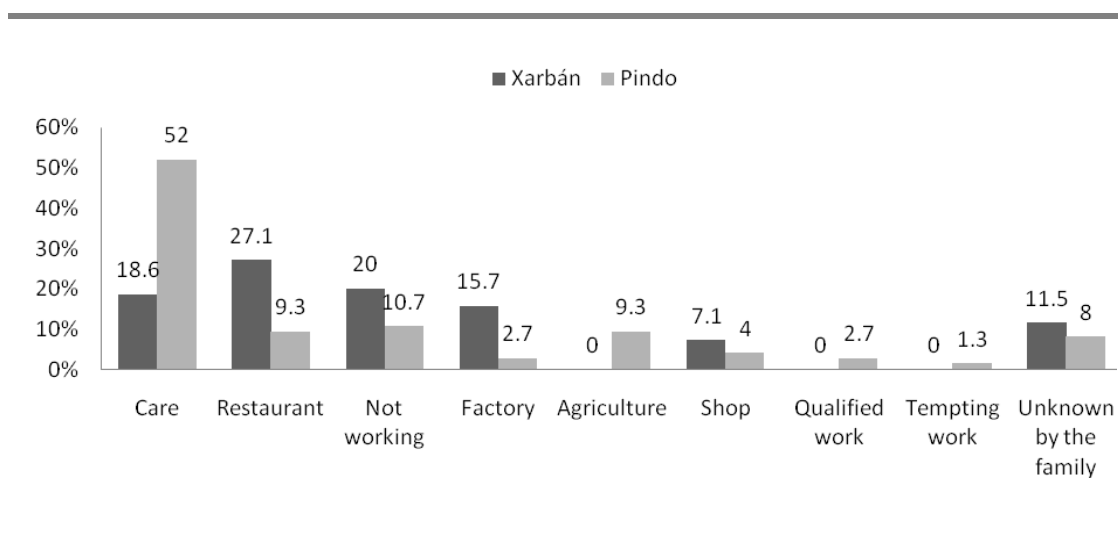


Residence very much determines occupation. In the US, construction is the star niche for work of Xarbán villagers, who are overwhelmingly males. Although virtually all of them have no legal right to work, they easily bypass this limitation. They do it by either working for bosses who do not require them to have work permits or with fake or rented papers⁴⁰. The fact that they do not always work in the same places also makes them more difficult to spot by the authorities. In Spain agriculture was an entry point for migrants, particularly for recently arrived male migrants without a work permit. The police presence is weaker in rural areas of Spain so the risk of being caught is less. Most migrants, once they were granted a work permit, tended to move to better paid jobs. In the golden years of the Spanish real estate boom, construction was regarded by male migrants as the most profitable activity. This type of employment explains why the crisis that was unleashed in mid-2008 has so strongly hit Latin American migrants. Female migrants' job entry in Spain was as live-in domestic workers. The fact of living and working in the same place made migrants very vulnerable. However, as many returnees and migrants noted, it also allowed them to save money quickly as they did not have to pay for food and accommodation. Also, because of their very long working hours, they did not have time to spend money – many of them only have one free evening a week. Many of these women moved out as soon as they managed to bring their partners to Spain, but this created tensions between employers and the women, as the former relied on live-in servants to keep up with their professional lives. Many of these women started working as domestic workers or cleaners on an hourly-paid basis. They started earning less money but their quality of life increased: for the first time they could have a social life outside the family they were working for. Experiences as live-in domestic workers were entirely dependent on the employers, with some women having a great time (in spite of the intrinsic power imbalances of the situation), while others were bullied and going through a nightmare.

Figures 4.9 and 4.10 show, respectively for female and male migrants from Xarbán and Pindo, the gendered distribution of their sectors of employment.

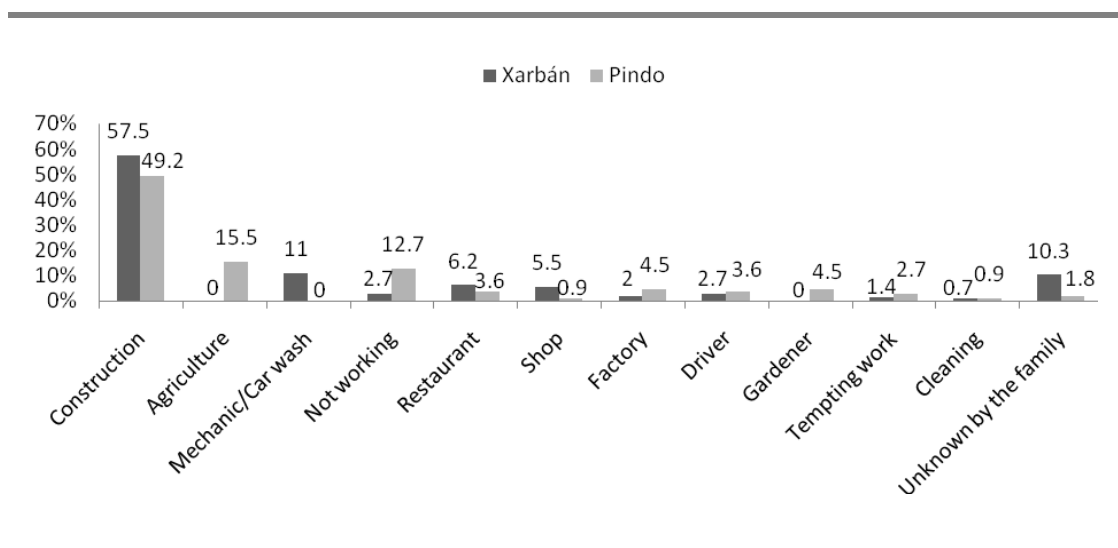
⁴⁰ Xarbán villagers in the US have similar practices to cope with their irregular legal status as the ones described by Vasta for irregular migrants in the UK (2008).

Figure 4.9: Percentage of female migrants working in each occupation



Female migrants are clustered in care jobs (domestic workers, cleaners, babysitters, etc.). Those Xarbán female migrants in the US who work usually do it for a few hours a day taking care of children – usually of other Ecuadorian families they are friends of. In the case of Pindo migrants in Europe, this job is more professionalized, working more hours and in some cases covered by Social Security. The percentage of female migrants not working in the US is also quite high. As villagers and migrants put it, these women ‘work for their husbands’ – meaning taking care of the house and the kids. Gender relations are maintained rather unchanged for Xarbán migrants in the US.

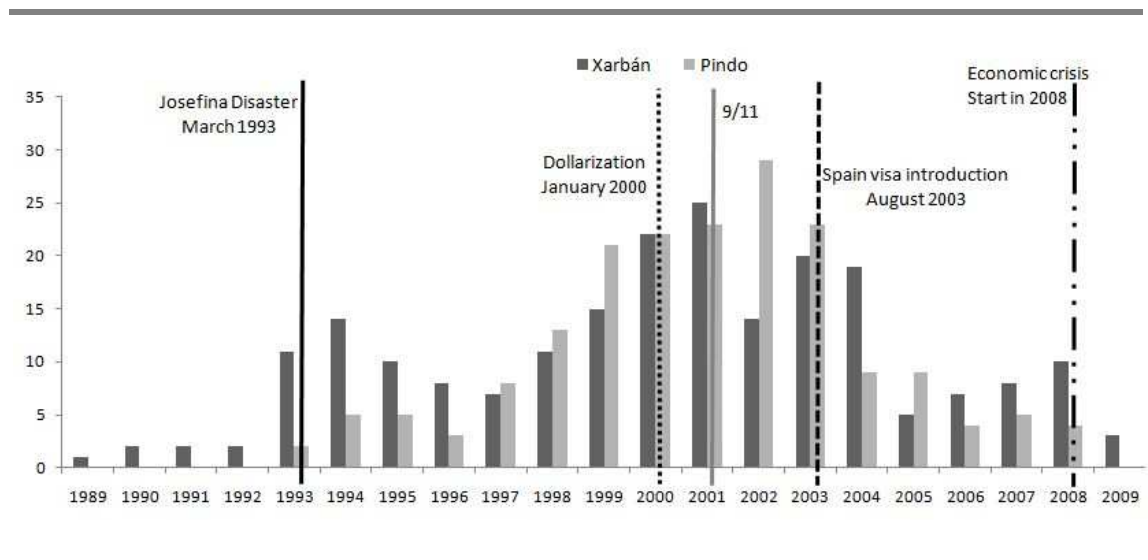
Figure 4.10: Percentage of male migrants working in each occupation



Male migrants from Xarbán in the US and in Europe from Pindo work overwhelmingly in construction. Construction is more profitable in the US but it is also subjected to higher seasonality than in Spain where there used to be construction work throughout the whole year. Pindo male migrants in Spain also work in agriculture, while Xarbán migrants in the US work as mechanics or in car washes. The higher percentage of male migrants not working in Europe compared with those in the US is easy to explain. Unlike in the US and due to social security benefits, unemployed migrants in Europe can support themselves at least for some time. Irregular migrants in the US have no such social security safety net.

The graph in Figure 4.11 shows migrants' year of departure for both villages. It also shows the main events impacting on their migration decisions. For Xarbán villagers the three most relevant events were the Josefina disaster in March 1993 (black line), dollarization in January 2000 (dotted line), and the 9/11 attacks in New York City in 2001 (grey line). For Pindo migrants the two more influential events were Spain's visa introduction for Ecuadorians in August 2003 (dash line), and the economic crisis that started in 2008 and is still going on (irregularly dotted line).

Figure 4.11: Year of departure of migrants in the questionnaire



International migration from Xarbán exhibits a wider time dimension than in Pindo. By the time of my field research (2009), Xarbán villagers had been migrating to the US for two decades. Departures are intimately linked to disastrous events in Ecuador. In March 1993 a

landslide caused flooding in the lowlands in the Gualaceo canton in what has been called the 'Josefina disaster'. Outmigration from Xarbán spiked in the months following the disaster. Something similar happened after Ecuador's dollarization in January 2000. Many returnees from the US discovered that their savings had virtually disappeared because of the 25,000 *sucre* per dollar conversion rate. The number of emigrants leaving Xarbán peaked the year after. Following the 9/11 attacks, which were translated into a climate of uncertainty and the worsening of work and living conditions in the US, migration to the US from Xarbán slowed down. The number of annual departures from Xarbán to the US has never recovered since. Nonetheless migration has not come to a halt, and I was aware of migrants leaving the village during the months I lived there. I was deeply moved to find these (usually very young) migrants safe and sound when I myself turned up in New York City some months later.

Migration from Pindo is more time-limited, with the boom taking place between 1997 and 2003. Pindo migrants who migrated internationally before 1997 went to the US city of Newark in the state of New Jersey. These migrants came from relatively wealthy families from the parish centre. Even at the time of my research, Pindo villagers were aware of the higher financial returns that migration to the US provided compared with migration to Spain. They were equally aware of the higher cost and risks involved in the journey, as well as the lower quality of life they would enjoy as irregular migrants in the US. Money saved by the first wave of migrants to the US was later lent to pay for other villagers' journeys to Europe during the migratory boom. Pioneering Pindo migrants to Spain were those working or studying in the provincial capital or in the canton capital. These migrants were young female villagers from the parish centre with at least some secondary education. They lacked the contacts⁴¹ and money to migrate to the US. When the opportunity to migrate to Spain without a visa appeared, they did not hesitate to go. Spain's visa introduction for Ecuadorian citizens in August 2003 has been the event with strongest impact on migration from Pindo. After this date villagers who migrated to Europe could only do so through family reunification to Spain or Italy, with nominal work permits obtained by their relatives already there (taking around a year and several journeys to Quito before having all the paperwork for the work visa ready), or irregularly migrating to new destinations such as the UK. The acute world financial crisis since mid-2008 (grey line) has impacted both migration flows, from Xarbán and from Pindo, but due

⁴¹ This is different from Xarbán. Due to the pervasiveness of migration to the US in Xarbán, virtually all villagers have the contacts to navigate them into the US (*pasadores*) and the contacts to welcome and support them (*quien les reciba*) in their first weeks in the US. Migration to Spain prior 2003 was much cheaper than the journey to the US (in a relation 1 to 10), with no physical risks associated, and no need 'to be received' due to the common language and the option to work as live-in domestic workers.

to the more serious situation in Spain it has a stronger impact on Pindo. Return by Pindo villagers is appearing quickly on the mobility map. At the time of my fieldwork, some villagers were starting to return but most of them, supported by limited social benefits in Spain, were waiting for positive future economic developments in Europe. Some migrants were temporarily back in Ecuador, on long holidays, trying to minimize expenses. The most innovative migrants (who happen to be also the ones with higher education backgrounds) are making secondary international movements. Taking advantage of their Spanish citizenship, some of them are moving from Spain to the UK in search of better work opportunities. Generally speaking, Pindo migrants not only show a wider range of residence places, they also have higher secondary mobility, both internal and international.

Migrants' residence places and legal status are intimately related. As a rule of thumb migrants in the US do not hold legal status in the country while an overwhelming majority of those in Europe do. Many Pindo villagers in Europe, because of their legal status, have been able to bring their parents and children to Europe through the family reunification programmes, although not without considerable delays. Family reunification is not possible for Xarbán migrants as most of them do not hold legal residence: only 5.2% of migrants from Xarbán have legal status abroad (two of whom are in Spain), compared with 87% of Pindo migrants in Europe. Table 4.1 summarizes the 'non-standard' cases for each village: Xarbán migrants with regular legal status abroad, and Pindo migrants with an irregular one.

Table 4.1: Unconventional cases regarding legal status abroad in each village

Xarbán Eleven migrants (out of 213) with regular status abroad, 5.2%	Pindo Twenty-three (out of 185) migrants with irregular status abroad, 13%
<p>Two migrants in Spain (both female)</p> <p>Five migrants in the US since 1989, 1990, 1993, 1994 and 1995 respectively (all males)</p> <p>One migrant in the US since 2009 (female reunified by her husband)</p>	<p>Twelve migrants in the US</p> <p>Three migrants in Israel</p> <p>One migrant in Switzerland</p> <p>One migrant in the UK</p> <p>One migrant in Italy</p> <p>Five migrants in Spain, one of them gone in 2007, two in 2006, one in 2005 (all after Spain visa introduction)</p> <p>One migrant in Spain since 2002 who held regular status at some point but fell into irregularity later on</p>

The patterns regarding legal status are very clear for the two villages. In Xarbán, migrants who hold regular status are those who have been in the US since the early 1990s and those who

migrated to Spain before 2003. Most Pindo migrants hold regular status abroad but those who do not, fall into one of the following cases: they are in countries other than Spain or Italy; or they migrated to Spain after 2003, when visa for Ecuadorian migrants was introduced following European immigration policy harmonization. There is also the case of a migrant in Spain who fell into irregularity after holding regular status. The Spanish residence permit system has been criticized for linking the residence permit to work. This means that migrants can easily go in and out of irregularity (Cornelius, 2004: 413). Contrary to expectations, most of the migrants in Pindo achieved legal residence through work contracts, and not through one of the large-scale regularization programmes that took place in Spain and Italy.

In the US there is currently no route to achieve regular status for those migrants who entered the country crossing the Mexican-US border, which is the case for virtually all Xarbán and Pindo migrants in the US. Before 1998 there was a law that opened the back door to regularization. For those migrants who entered the US without being inspected by an INS officer (which meant irregularly crossing the Mexican-US border), who have ever been unlawfully employed in the US, or who failed to always maintain lawful status in the country, under what was called the 'adjustment of status' procedure. In 1998 this law, the so-called section 245(i), was phased out. There is still a slim chance, though, for those who enter the US lawfully with a visa but then overstayed. The US immigration system is so iniquitous that some unauthorized migrants (to use the US mainstream expression) pay their taxes in the hope that it will help them if the opportunity to regularize their situation would ever appear. In the meantime none of them risk returning to Ecuador to follow the procedures set by the US as they are aware of the almost sure negative outcome of it. As will be shown, migrants' legal status is crucial to an understanding of their material and social remittance practices.

Regarding legal status, it is worth mentioning that Israel is the toughest destination regarding immigration policies. Due to the militarization of the country and the climate of insecurity, irregular migrants are very easy to spot. Some returnees told horror stories of their lives in the country, especially when imprisoned in detention centres:

[Shouting] Migration, migration [the immigration police]! I was working on the third floor. I jumped from the second floor and ran. I hid in the sea while the police was searching for us. Three months later they came to my house. I spent one month in a prison in Tel-Aviv. It was underground, with grilles, around 500 people.

-Why did you stay in prison for so long?

They did not want to deport me. I have my money, I told them, and I want to leave. There are no flights till August, they told me. They did not even feed me properly. They threw some tomatoes on the floor, rotten fruits. [...] There was no place where to sleep. I slept on an old piece of cloth. It was very very hot. I just kept on drinking water. I survived almost half a month without eating properly.

(OM, Pindo, 30 years-old deported male migrant from Tel-Aviv, 1996-1997, and returnee from London, 1997-2005)

4.3. Summary

Xarbán and Pindo, two villages in Andean Ecuador with similar demographic profiles, show very different migration patterns as well as historical and economic settings. Out migration from Xarbán is almost exclusively an irregular flow towards the US. Together with some other factors, this generates a high residential concentration of migrants in the borough of Queens in New York City. The same legal irregularity also enhances migrants' orientation towards Xarbán, as permanent settlement in the US is not possible. Irregularity then reinforces the presence of strong links between villagers, both in Ecuador and the US. These links allow villagers to be monitored in either of the two locations. The presence of such a strong sense of common belonging, stemming from historical reasons, in a context of high outmigration has given rise to a culture of migration where irregular migration to the US is a rite of passage for young male villagers: they need to succeed before being considered socially as adult villagers. The presence of such sense of belonging is key to understanding the changes and continuities derived from material remittances and to the lack of relevant social remittances in this context. These changes and continuities will be explored in the following chapters.

Contrary to Xarbán, Pindo villagers' attachment to the village is not very strong. The Agrarian Reform which distributed *hacienda* lands in Pindo generated internal migrations and fragmented settlement patterns. Mobility is hence at the core of the survival and improvement strategies of Pindo villagers. International migration only became salient in this village's mobility map in the late 1990s. Spain has been the preferred destination for villagers, although their destinations also include countries such as Italy, the US, Israel, and the UK. Most Pindo migrants who live in Spain hold legal residence. The current economic crisis has hit them very hard and return (to Pindo and to other Ecuadorian cities) is currently appearing on the

scene. Migration and remittances to Pindo have widened the socio-economic gap based on geographical location between the parish centre and 'the fields'.

As the chapter seven on social remittances will show, the fact that Xarbán villagers feel they belong to a same socio-cultural space, while Pindo villagers do not, is crucial to understanding each village's social remittances panorama. Migrants' legal status abroad has also proved to be very important for an analysis of the meanings and practices of different types of remittances.

Chapter 5

Material Remittances.

Issues on Definition and Typology

This and the next chapter present my ethnographic data on material remittances in Xarbán and Pindo, as well as some theoretical implications derived from the empirical data⁴². This chapter narrows in to provide basic and usually taken-for-granted details on material remittances supported by tabulated data from the questionnaire as well as by interview quotes. In the first section I interrogate the exact meaning of the term ‘remittances’. Remittances are a buzz-word in Economics and in Development Studies, but where does its meaning come from? Is it too generic a term? Does it accurately describe reality? The chapter moves on to present the questionnaire data on material remittances in Xarbán and Pindo. The next section provides what I call an emic typology of material remittances stemming from the empirical data collected through the questionnaire and enlightened by interview data. Instead of focusing only on senders or receivers, I use the term *dyad* to focus attention on the relationship between remittance senders and receivers. It allows me to analyse the power negotiations taking place regarding material remittances. Finally I argue for the disaggregation of ‘material remittances’ into six main transfers: ‘emic’ remittances, migrants’ savings, debt repayment, emergency money, gift money, and collective remittances. I will deal with this last transfer in the next chapter where I will broaden the focus out to present the use structure of material remittances and to show the changes taking place at the village level as a consequence of their reception.

5.1. What are Remittances?

Disregarding how obvious the term remittances might appear at first sight, and possibly a consequence of my own deconstructivist stance, I feel obliged to look into the definition of remittances itself. Labels create or obscure realities (Lakoff and Johnson, 2005): they are not

⁴² This thesis is only concerned with remittances from international sources. Although internal migration has been and is still part of the mobility map in Pindo, money earned somewhere else in Ecuador and transferred to Pindo or Xarbán is in quantitative terms much lower than international remittances. In addition to the marginal quantities involved it is also a transfer very difficult to capture due to its irregularity. During the fieldwork only one type of internal remittances was detected, and it was very marginal.

innocuous or value-neutral. We have all grown increasingly used to the term ‘remittances’ to mean the money migrants send back to their families in their places of origin. The word ‘remittances’ has the same etymological origin in English as it does in Spanish (*remesas*), Italian (*rimessi*) or Portuguese (*remessas*). In all four cases the word comes from Latin: *mettere*, to send. The prefix ‘re-’ adds the meaning of back (Harper, 2010). Hence ‘remittances’ originally just meant ‘to send back’. Remittance as ‘return of money’ is already recorded in an English etymological dictionary in 1675 (Bailey, 1675). The term ‘remittances’ is not present in other languages. French-speaking migrants or academics need to resort to a whole expression, *‘envois d’argent provenant des travailleurs émigrés’*, to capture the meaning of the word ‘remittances’. In Albanian the absence of this term has forced those people who send and receive money to come up with their own terms which draw on references to ‘wages’ or ‘pensions’ sent from abroad (Vullnetari and King, 2011). Looking at these alternative terms sheds light onto the meanings and types of ‘monies’ which actually form part of the bigger transfer, ‘remittances’. The incongruence between the mainstream grand term and the emic nuances of senders and receivers that Vullnetari and King (2011) found in Albania, as I did in Andean Ecuador, is the basis for most of the theoretical developments in this chapter. The point I am trying to convey is that the term ‘remittances’, prolifically used by researchers, policy makers and politicians, as well as in the design of surveys, census and other data-collecting tools, obscures a more complex reality. Some bitter criticisms of the ‘inadequate’ use of remittances are born from the fact of not taking into account a dual system of meanings: the one by academics and policy makers, and the one of the actual senders and receivers. The latter identify different types of transfers that are subsumed and homogenised into the main ‘remittances’ transfer. In order to understand and design policies to enhance the developmental impact of the money migrants send to their families, the presence of these diverse types of money transfers must be acknowledged and incorporated into the analysis.

5.1.1 What do economists mean when they talk about remittances?

In this thesis I use the term ‘remittances’ in a very broad sense, to capture the ideas, money and ‘stuff’ being sent and received between migrants and their relatives in their places of origin. By material remittances I mean the money and goods sent between migrants and their relatives. I will use the term ‘social remittances’ (with all the cautions) to label the ideational exchange taking place between migrants and their relatives in migrants’ places of origin. As economists have come to control the discourse on remittances, I feel compelled here to provide a quick (and hopefully understandable) overview of their jargon on remittances.

Macroeconomic data on remittances, like the recent set of statistics compiled by the World Bank in its *Migration and Remittances Factbook* (WB, 2011), is firstly recorded by each country's Central Bank (or the equivalent financial authority) in their Balance of Payments. The Balance of Payments is the statistical statement where countries record their economic transactions with the rest of the world. The 6th edition of the Balance of Payments Manual by the IMF has a whole appendix on remittances (IMF, 2009), as the way remittances are recorded has recently been substantially modified. The IMF defines remittances as the 'cash and noncash items that flow through formal channels, such as via electronic wire, or through informal channels, such as money or goods carried across borders. They largely consist of funds and noncash items sent or given by individuals who have migrated to a new economy and become residents there⁴³, and the net compensation of border, seasonal, or other short-term workers who are employed in an economy in which they are not resident' (IMF, 2009: 272). Remittances are captured in two items of the balance of payments: compensation of employees (the income of border, seasonal, and other short-term workers who are employed in an economy where they are not resident, and of residents employed by non-resident entities such as embassies, international institutions or non-resident companies), and personal transfers (all current transfers in cash or in kind made or received by resident households to or from non-resident households)⁴⁴.

Remittances should be registered twice, as an outflow by the migrants' country of new residence and as an inflow by the migrants' country of origin. For instance, money sent by an Ecuadorian migrant in Spain will be registered as an outflow in the Spanish Balance of Payments and as an inflow in the Ecuadorian Balance. Unfortunately there are discrepancies between inflow data recorded by remittance-receiving countries and outflow data recorded by remittance-sending countries (Irving et al., 2010). Unsurprisingly, those countries which receive large amounts of money from their citizens abroad have developed better

⁴³ The concepts of personal transfers and remittances are based on the notion of residence instead of migration status. A resident is a person who has been present for one year or more in a territory or intending to do so, irrespective of migratory status (IMF, 2009: 276).

⁴⁴ Previously remittances appeared in the Balance of Payments under three different headings: workers' remittances (wages sent by migrants who have stayed abroad longer than a year), compensation of employees (wages sent by migrants who have stayed abroad less than a year, for instance seasonal, short-time or border workers) and migrants' transfers (what migrants actually take with them and report at customs when they return to their countries). In the *Sixth Balance of Payments Manual*, workers' remittances have been replaced by personal transfers (IMF, 2009). Unlike the previous item, personal transfers are defined independently of the source of income of the sending household, the relationship between the migrant and the receiving household, and the purpose of the transfer (IMF, 2009: 273).

measurement mechanisms (Rucaj, 2009). The Ecuadorian Central Bank provides quarterly updates on financial remittances.

Macroeconomic data are good for showing the relative macroeconomic importance of remittances, but the quality of the data (in terms of definition and their ability to capture 'hidden' flows) is questionable. Data only capture formal financial flows recorded by the authorities, leaving aside non-financial flows, money sent through informal channels and non-declared goods and money in customs (Olivié et al., 2008: 6). If data on remittances' global figures are so precarious the situation is even worse regarding the uses or impacts of remittances. This information is usually gathered through surveys and such sources for Ecuador are critically reviewed in the following chapter.

5.1.2 My own survey data

Away from those big numbers, I spent nine months knocking on Xarbán and Pindo villagers' doors to fill in a questionnaire about material remittances. In this section of the chapter I present the data on material remittances (both financial and in-kind, to and from the migrants) for the two villages. The questionnaire was designed consciously to avoid questions on remittances use. Instead, I phrased the questions to focus on the changes that villagers with relatives abroad had experienced since starting receiving money from abroad. Explanations about common and different patterns between the two villages are provided in this chapter; data on remittance use and the changes triggered by remittance inflows in Xarbán and Pindo will be presented in the next chapter.

As I pointed out in chapter three, the target population of the research was made of households with members abroad. My main research concern was the impact of remittances on households and not so much the motivations to send money. All of the households surveyed in Pindo with members abroad receive money (or have received money at least once in the previous year) from their relatives abroad. Only three households in Xarbán did not receive any money from their members abroad. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 set out the resultant survey data.

Table 5.1: Sending migrants

	Xarbán	Pindo
Total number of migrants who send money (as % of total migrants)	158 (74%)	156 (84%)
Total number of migrants who DO NOT send money (as % of total migrants)	55 (26%)	29 (16%)
Total number of registered migrants	213	185

Table 5.2: Receiving households

	Xarbán	Pindo
Total number of households which receive money (as % of total households)	73 (96%)	74 (100%)
Total number of households which DO NOT receive money (as % of total households)	3 (4%)	0 (0%)
Total number of questioned households	76	74

Due to the maturity of emigration from Xarbán, households in this village are more likely to have more than one migrant compared with Pindo, where most households only have one member abroad (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Percentage of households by number of migrant members

	Xarbán	Pindo
1 migrant	24%	32%
2 migrants	20%	30%
3 migrants	30%	18%
4 migrants	16%	8%
5 migrants	4%	4%
6 migrants	5%	4%
7 migrants	0%	4%
8 migrants	1%	0%
Total	100%	100%

The different number of migrants in each household explains why a smaller proportion of migrants from Xarbán send money to their relatives in the village compared with Pindo migrants. More than one migrant member in a household means no need for all migrants to send money. This can be captured by the migrant-household member ratio which illustrates

the proportion of household members in Ecuador supported by a single migrant. As expected the ratio is higher for Pindo than for Xarbán. A sending migrant from Pindo (this is a migrant who effectively is sending money home) is supporting with their money more than two people in Ecuador while a migrant from Xarbán supports less than two members (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Migrant-household member ratio

	Migrants (M)	Sending migrants (SM)	Household members (HHm)	Ratio HHm/M	Ratio HHm/SM
Xarbán	213	158	306	1.44	1.94
Pindo	185	156	370	2.00	2.37

Table 5.5 shows the percentages of migrants who do send financial remittances at least once a year according to how often (and regularly) they send money. I have shaded the rows in the table that provide the most interesting insights on remitting frequency. Most migrants from both villages send money to their relatives in Xarbán or Pindo on a monthly basis (darkest shaded row). In the case of Xarbán, 16% of migrants send money more often than once a month (medium shaded rows). This fact is closely related to migrants' income structure abroad. While in the US most construction workers are paid on a weekly basis; in Spain wages are usually paid at the end of the month. It is more likely then for Xarbán migrants in the US to send more than once a month than for Pindo migrants in Europe. There are also important percentages of transfers in Xarbán (8%) and Pindo (12%) which do not follow any periodicity (light shaded row). These irregular transfers fall within any of the following categories: they are gifts for special occasions (e.g. birthdays, visits to Ecuador, Christmas), transfers for emergencies (usually to pay for unexpected health expenses) or the consequence of migrants' inability to send more regularly. It is important to realise that if migrants do not have stable jobs or work in casual short-term jobs they will not be able to sustain a regular sending pattern. As will be explained in the final section of this chapter, financial remittances must be read within the possibility framework created by migrants' income and expense structure. This structure is different depending on migrants' place of residence, length of stay abroad and ideas of return.

Table 5.5: Remitting frequency by migrants

Frequency	Xarbán		Pindo	
	Number migrants	%	Number migrants	%
Weekly	11	7	0	0
Twice a month	14	9	1	1
Monthly	69	44	63	40
Every two months	1	1	24	15
Every three months	22	14	17	11
Twice a year	21	13	17	11
Once a year	7	4	15	10
Irregularly and one-off	13	8	19	12
Total	158	100%	156	100%

Annual remitted amounts to Xarbán and Pindo households range from \$20 to \$25,200, with an annual average amount of \$3,430 for Xarbán and \$2,100 for Pindo households⁴⁵. The mean of monthly received money per household is \$285 in Xarbán and only \$175 in Pindo; and the mode is \$200 for Xarbán households and \$100 for Pindo (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6: Descriptive statistics of received amounts by household (all figures in US\$)

	Xarbán	Pindo
Minimum annual received amount	40	20
Maximum annual received amount	25,200	17,800
Mean annual received amount	3,430	2,106
Mode annual received amount	2,400	1,200
Median annual received amount	1,200	1,200
Mean monthly received amount	285.83	175.47
Mode monthly received amount	200	100

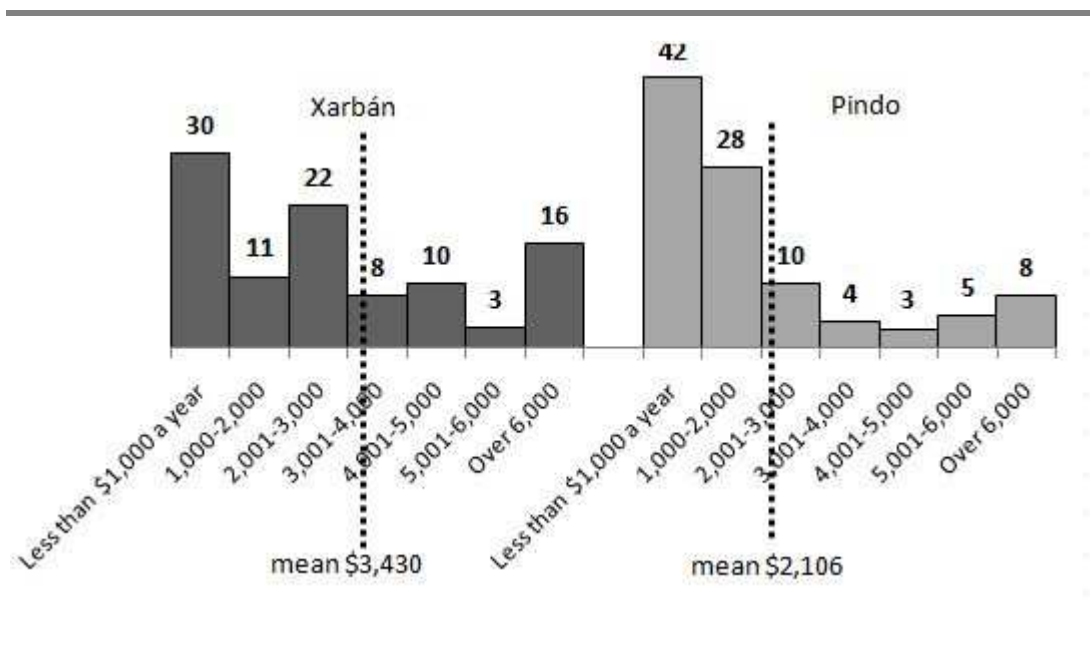
⁴⁵ All the amounts are given in US dollars, as this is the currency in Ecuador since 2000 when the country was dollarized. Due to the currency exchange rate between the euro and the dollar, remitted amounts from Europe are subjected to higher variability (BCE, 2007).

If households in each village are grouped by annual received amount (Table 5.7), Xarbán shows a more equal distribution. In Pindo there are bigger differences among receiving households in terms of amounts received. Figure 5.1 converts the data into a visual representation.

Table 5.7: Households by received amount per year in US\$

	Xarbán		Pindo	
	Count	%	Count	%
Less than \$1,000 a year	23	30	31	42
1,000-2,000	8	11	21	28
2,001-3,000	17	22	7	10
3,001-4,000	6	8	3	4
4,001-5,000	8	10	2	3
5,001-6,000	2	3	4	5
Over 6,000	12	16	6	8
Total	76	100%	74	100%

Figure 5.1: Households by received amount per year in US\$ (in %)



Not only is money sent to the villages. Xarbán and Pindo are also the origin and destination of in-kind transfers. Almost half of the migrants abroad had sent in-kind remittances to their

relatives in Ecuador at least once since they have been abroad (see Table 5.8). As shown in Table 5.9, the most common type of in-kind remittances are clothes, followed by toys, and technology such as laptops.

Table 5.8: Migrants who send in-kind remittances

	Xarbán		Pindo	
	Migrants	%	Migrants	%
Yes	105	49	81	44
No	108	51	104	56
Total	213	100%	185	100%

Table 5.9: Type of in-kind remittances sent by migrants

	Xarbán		Pindo	
	Migrants	%	Migrants	%
Clothes	91	87	70	86
Clothes & Technology	5	4.8	1	1.2
Clothes & Toys	5	4.8	4	4.9
Toys	1	0.9	1	1.2
Electrical Appliances	1	0.9	0	0
Technology	2	1.9	0	0
Food	0	0	3	3.7
Clothes & Medicines	0	0	1	1.2
Tobacco	0	0	1	1.2

Due to the transfer cost and the increasing availability of products in Ecuador, migrants are currently less willing to send in-kind remittances to their relatives. No sending of in-kind remittances for commercial purposes is taking place in any of the two villages, contrary to the situation in areas like the North of Africa (ECA, 2007: 5) or the Pacific Islands (Brown and Connell, 1993).

Migrants are not only remittance senders but also the receivers of ‘reverse remittances’, a term recently brought to the literature by Mazzucato (2006)⁴⁶. Although Mazzucato focused her analysis on the non-financial support Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands received from their non-migrant relatives (2009: 1113), she very successfully attracted attention towards the presence of two-way transfers. It is a useful step forward within a postcolonial approach on migration and remittances (Faist, 2010: 81). Sometimes these reverse remittances are independent of other types of remittances being sent by migrants, although this is not always the case. For instance the sending of traditional *pollera* skirts from Xarbán to the US is in fact a counter-transfer of the collective remittances sent from the US to fund the local *fiesta*. Reverse in-kind remittances are far more common than its counter-transfer, particularly in the case of Xarbán, where almost ninety per cent of households with migrants abroad have sent them in-kind remittances since migration took place. In Pindo, the percentage is lower but still significant, as shown in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10: Reverse remittances by sending households

	Xarbán		Pindo	
	Households	%	Households	%
Yes	67	88	51	69
No	9	12	23	31
Total	76	100%	74	100%

Food is the reverse remittance par excellence: 98.5% of those households that send remittances to their relative migrants at least once since migrants’ departure in Xarbán and 96% in Pindo have sent them food. This is particularly intense in Xarbán where there is an incessant traffic of food parcels to New York City. These parcels play a crucial role because in a context of ‘meaningless’ food to just feed working bodies, the food parcels that are sent from Ecuador are essential in the relationship between migrants and their relatives back in Ecuador (Mata-Codesal, 2010). *Cuy* (guinea pig), a culturally loaded foodstuff throughout the Andes (Archetti, 1997), is often sent from Xarbán because it ‘travels well’ (Abbots, 2008: 225). In Pindo, food parcels to Europe are not as common as from Xarbán. It is the consequence of striking differences between sending mechanisms to Spain and the US (in terms of cost, availability and time). On average, sending a two pound parcel to New York from any of the

⁴⁶ The origin of the term itself is unclear. Some authors were in fact dealing with reverse remittances long before Mazzucato labelled them as such (see for instance Connell et al., 1976; or Skeldon, 1990).

numerous sending agencies located in the Gualaceo area would cost around 6 dollars and take 3 days (summer of 2009). The same parcel will take over 8 days to get to Spain and will cost 22 dollars (same agency and same date).

Several reasons explain why parcel sending mechanisms to and from Spain are poorly developed compared with those to and from the US. Among others are the age of the flow (older in Xarbán), the different legal status of migrants (that permits migrants' mobility to and from Europe allowing them to bring and take their own products), and a different gender composition of migration: males in the US from Xarbán do not know how to cook customary foods, while females in Europe do (Mata-Codesal, 2010). In anecdotal cases, clothes or medicines, such as traditional medicine brands migrants cannot find abroad, are sent. I also encountered one case in which non-migrants were sending money to migrants in the US, where the latter were encountering difficulties due to the current crisis. This phenomenon has been acknowledged by some journalists in the US (Penaloza, 2009) although its extent is still unclear (Ratha, 2009).

Depending on who is the actual receiver, we also encounter family or collective remittances (Goldring, 2004). The questionnaire captured data on collective remittances. Collective remittances are mostly intended to fund fiesta and religious events, as well as to pay for basic development projects in the villages (e.g. potable running water). Table 5.11 shows the percentage of migrants in the questionnaire who had ever sent remittances for a collective project. Due to the specific features and consequences of this type of transfer, I will deal with it in greater depth in chapter six in the context of changing fiesta and community landscapes in the villages.

Table 5.11: Collective remittances from migrants

	Xarbán		Pindo	
	Migrants	%	Migrants	%
Yes	136	64	102	55
No	77	36	83	45
Total	213	100%	185	100%

5.2. Typology

By weaving together questionnaire, interview and participant observation data, I have developed an emic typology of material transfers between migrants and their villages of origin in Ecuador. Some authors have similarly provided remittances typologies. Goldring (2004) and Levitt (1998) provide probably the two best-known categories of remittances. Levitt focused our attention on the non-material sending by migrants, what she labelled as 'social remittances', which will be exhaustively treated in chapters seven and eight. As an explanation for the low amounts of remittances which were 'productively' invested, Goldring proposed a three-category typology: family, collective and investment remittances (2004). Although useful, I do not consider her typology detailed enough to cover the wide spectrum of money transfers taking place in Xarbán and Pindo. Before looking at the main transfers which emerged from my own survey data, I present first some theoretical considerations.

5.2.1 Remittance dyads

Studies looking at remittances have traditionally focused on the sender and/or the receiver. Some recent scholarly work has produced gendered perspectives on remittances (García and Paiewonski, 2006; Ghosh, 2009; King et al., 2006; King and Vullnetari, 2010; Kunz, 2008; Piper, 2005; Sørensen, 2005b) which focus on the relation between the sender (or senders) and the receiver (or receivers). Following Carling (2007), I use the tag 'dyad' to convey this relationship. Remitters can send money to more than one person, and one non-migrant can receive money and gifts from more than one migrant. To capture this complexity, I use the terms 'main dyad' and 'secondary dyad(s)'. As not all relationships are equally strong or bonding, I label as 'main dyad' the most strong and stable of the relationships between a remittance sender and the receiver. While each migrant only can belong to one main dyad, they can have weaker and less stable links within 'secondary dyads'. For example, a married male Xarbán migrant in the US whose wife and children live in Xarbán can have them as his main dyad, while at the same time also sending occasional amounts of money or gifts to his elderly parents, who are his secondary dyad.

The gender of migrants combines with their civil status to explain different remittance behaviours. Single migrants tend to be the main dyad with their parents and sometimes with their younger siblings living in the parental house. Once female migrants are married they are

more likely to stop sending money to their parents, in contrast to their husbands' parents, who are more likely to continue to receive money from their son. In patriarchal societies, daughters are not expected to contribute to their parents, while sons do even after they become married, as Smith found for Albania (2009: 559). Married migrants' main dyad is usually their spouse and children, unless these family members are abroad with the migrant. As I will show later on, the fact of having young children encourages the establishment of stronger and more stable dyadic relations.

In Xarbán the most common dyads consist of married male migrants sending money to their spouses with children, and migrant couples sending money to their children in Xarbán. In the village, children can live on their own if they are old enough, or with a relative who takes care of them. Quite often grandchildren are taken care of by their maternal grandmother, as Bastia also found in Bolivia (2009). In Xarbán, dyads do not tend to challenge traditional gender roles, as men are still the main breadwinner from afar and women stay at home taking care of the children. In Pindo there is a greater variety of dyadic relationships as family arrangements are more complex, not just because both females and males migrate but also because of irresponsible paternity that led many mothers to migrate in the first place. The fact that in Pindo, female villagers pioneered the flow directly undermines the traditional gender role structure in the village. Migrant mothers are portrayed as mothers who abandoned their children (Pedone, 2008), while those husbands who receive money from their wives abroad are subjected to a lot of social pressure as a result of this change in the traditional gender division. In Pindo, fathers are very often absent, hence children of migrant mothers are taken care by female relatives (the maternal or paternal grandmother, older sisters or aunts), creating female-only dyads. Table 5.12 presents the most commonly-occurring dyads in both villages, listed in order of importance.

Table 5.12: Most common main dyads in the two villages

Xarbán		Pindo	
Abroad	In Ecuador	Abroad	In Ecuador
Married male migrant	Wife (with or without children)	Single female/male migrant	Parents
Couple	Children alone	Married female migrant	Children alone
	Children with relatives (usually maternal female relatives)		Children with father
Single male migrant	Parents	Couple	Children with relatives
			Children alone
		Siblings	Children with relatives (usually maternal female relatives)
			Siblings

One unexpected and very interesting dyad is the ‘fraternal group’: siblings who send remittances for the daily expenses and education of their siblings living in their parents’ house in Ecuador. Julca has also acknowledged the importance of this group among Peruvian migrants in New York City (2005: 16), and Lindley for Somalia (2006: 6). The kind of support this group provides goes well beyond remittances. For instance older siblings abroad financially support their younger siblings’ migratory projects by acting as guarantors or lending them the money to pay for the journey (as in the case of Xarbán), or making possible a legal journey to Spain or Italy for their siblings (as in the case of Pindo). They also support their recently arrived siblings abroad by welcoming and accommodating them and using their network of contacts and information to help them find a job. Mutual support also continues after return. This is for instance the case of a Pindo, 30 year-old male returnee who upon return to Pindo pooled together his savings with his brother’s and applied for a joint loan to buy a coach in Ecuador. Both brothers now share the financial burden as well as the workload.

a) Power issues

Contrary to literature on migration that identifies the household as a harmonious unit (as in the New Economics of Labour Migration approach pioneered by Lucas and Stark, 1985), dyadic relations are not problem-free and there are power imbalances within the household that also need to be taken into consideration (Åkesson, 2004; Cliggett, 2005; de Haas, 2010; de Haas and Fokkema, 2010; Rodenburg, 1997). Following Sanz Abad (2009: 390), I find it useful to think about who decides what to do with the remittances (decision power), who manage them (management), and who eventually enjoys the consequences (enjoyment). It is also important

to look at the control mechanisms available for decision-takers. In schematic form, the model I have in mind is set out in Table 5.13:

Table 5.13: Power realms

Decision:	Who decides what to send? [Nature of the remittance] Who decides when to send? [Frequency of the sending] Who decides how to send the money? [Sending channel] Who decides what to do with the money? [Uses]
Management:	Who manages the money?
Control:	What supervision mechanisms are there in place when the person who decides what to do with the money is different from the person who manages the money?
Enjoyment:	Who enjoys the benefits brought about by the money?

There are decisions to be taken regarding four aspects of material remittances: the nature of the remittance, the frequency of sending, the sending channel, and the eventual uses. Depending on the transfer we are talking about, the sender, the receiver, or both, agree what (either money or gifts) and when to send. Migrants are usually the ones who decide how to send the money, as it is, first and foremost, their money in most cases. They also have a better knowledge of the available channels, although the type of transfer very much determines the channel. Depending on the transfer as well, senders or receivers decide what its use should be. Some sending, either money or goods, is clearly targeted while some other remittances are not sent out with a clear aim in mind by the senders. In the case of in-kind remittances, it does not make sense to talk about untargeted in-kind remittances. Gifts like a washing-machine or clothes can seldom be used for other than their original purpose. Regarding financial remittances, sometimes receivers are the ones who decide, do the actual management and enjoy the consequences of their decisions. In other cases, senders decide what to do with the resources transferred, and will enjoy (or suffer) the consequences of their decision. Nonetheless they cannot implement their decisions by themselves and need to rely on other people, mainly the receivers.

Control is irrelevant when the person who decides how to use remittances is the same as the person who does the actual management. This is the case of the small regular amounts sent by

migrants to cover their direct relatives' daily expenses in Ecuador. Recipients decide how to distribute the relatively small amounts received among their competing needs for food, transport, utilities, education, or health care. As non-migrant receivers do the actual management and they will enjoy the consequences of their decisions and management, migrants do not usually supervise this type of transfer. Sending in-kind remittances is a type of control mechanism where senders make sure their decisions will bring the expected outcome. Control is crucial in the case of migrants' savings sent to Ecuador; money sent quickly to cope with unexpected emergencies; and money sent to repay debts, particularly journey debts or to pay the monthly instalments of loans or mortgages. Control is also very important in the case of collective remittances, where migrants have developed specific mechanisms to closely monitor non-migrants' management to make sure that they actually follow their instructions – more on this in next chapter.

There are some supervision mechanisms in place for senders to monitor receivers' behaviour. Gossiping is perhaps the mechanism par excellence, particularly in the case of Xarbán due to migrants' and non-migrants' residential concentration and the fact that everybody knows everybody else (see also Guerra González, 2008: 65). Through telephone calls, gossiping travels back and forth in what Dreby labels as 'transnational gossiping' (2009). In the meantime, the content becomes distorted, making gossiping potentially very destructive. Videos and photos are also an important supervision mechanism for migrants who can check how non-migrants' manage their money. This is very important in the case of remittances to build houses (Carrillo Espinosa, 2007: 291) and to fund fiestas. Migrants can also implement disciplinary measures, such as ceasing to remit or keeping savings abroad, if they suspect that their relatives are not following their instructions or mismanaging 'their' money.

It might appear obvious but, as Pribilsky found (2004), those families who learn to *convivir* (to live side-by-side) and have better relationships are more likely to perform better economically and socially. There is nothing better than having a good relationship, which usually implies that migration and remittances are a joint venture between husband and wife, among siblings or between children and parents. Because decisions are agreed, the need to control and monitor is less (de Laat, 2005).

The issue of enjoyment, as straightforward as it might appear, requires acknowledgement and engagement with the literature dealing with the motivations to remit. Although the reasons to send or not to send are not the primary scope of this thesis, I would just mention that under

the altruism approach the concept of enjoyment becomes in fact widened. In a less economic jargon than the one used by Lucas and Stark (1985), migrants' enjoyment can be derived from the happiness of those they love or care for. Hence, enjoyment would be a shared and self-feeding situation. However, in the list above, I was not that much referring to vague feelings of happiness and accomplishment, but to the concrete act of enjoyment. Migrants can be happy because of the fact that one of their relatives is wearing proper shoes, whereas the actual pleasure of having the feet warm and comfortable goes to the person who is wearing the shoes. Under this narrow conceptualization I present the issue of enjoyment for each transfer in the typology below.

5.2.2 My proposed typology: main cases

Six transfers constitute my proposed typology: emic remittances, migrants' savings, debt repayment, emergency money, gifts and collective remittances. This typology is obviously an analytical construction and, as such, a simplification of a more complex and dynamic reality. I cannot provide stable percentages of the shared importance for each type of transfer because the presence and importance of each transfer is heavily dependant on the stage and features of the migratory project. For instance, debt repayment is far more important in Xarbán than in Pindo, and more so in the first stages of migration than later on. Nonetheless, as clearly stemming from the data, emic remittances are by far the most common and important transfer in both villages.

a) Transfer 1: emic remittances

The first transfer is what I have tagged as 'emic remittances'. My decision is based on the fact that it is this transfer that receivers themselves identify as 'remittances'. Xarbán and Pindo villagers have internalised the term 'remittances' and use it, but they also feel that it does not quite fit their reality. During my first questionnaires I realised something was not working as the answers I was given were incoherent. I asked villagers how much and how often they receive remittances and they usually told me about the small periodical amounts they receive. However, when asked about the last received amount I increasingly came across much higher figures. I thought villagers were not willing to disclose their real income and they were just lying to me in the first place. However, why would they want to answer the truth to my second question? I could not make much sense until I started to inquire further when given incongruent answers. When asked directly about why they did not have reported those high figures when asked about remittances, villagers looked puzzled and plainly told me that I had

asked about remittances, and those big amounts were not remittances: they were migrants' savings, not remittances for them. Hence I came to eventually understand that villagers were in fact answering the truth to my both questions. By 'remittances', villagers understood the small amounts of money sent periodically to them by close migrant relatives abroad to pay for food and utilities, and to cover the normal expenses of a household including children's education and recurrent small medical expenses. Unexpected high medical expenses are not met by this type of transfer. Money is sent every month or with another specific periodicity. Respondents often used the expression '*no más para la comida*' (only for food) meaning for their 'physical' reproduction (food, utilities, transport, education...). Their and the migrants' 'social' reproduction are not funded by these small amounts. As two respondents put it:

-Do you save any of the money that your sons send you from abroad every month?

Not at all. I eat the money. I eat it all.

(Pindo, 64 year-old female, widow, mother of two migrants, one in Spain and one in London)

-Do you save any of the money that your husband sends you from abroad every month?

No, it is all for the stomach ('*todo es para la barriga*').

(Pindo, 47 year-old female returnee, wife of migrant in Madrid since 1996)

As this transfer is intended for the basic physical sustenance of the household members, there are no remaining resources to be saved or invested. The tautological circularity in the definition creates a tension that has policy implications. Let me explain. When policy makers and academics bitterly complain about the overwhelming share of 'remittances' spent on daily expenses (Abeywickrema, 2004; Ali et al., 1981; Bendixen, 2003; Durand et al., 1996; ECLAC, 1998; Ellerman, 2003; Muliaina, 2006; Pendleton et al., 2007; Tabuga, 2007), they are overlooking the fact that (emic) remittances are such because they precisely are sent to cover daily expenses. Emic remittances are drip-feeding many households in Xarbán and Pindo, and as such they can be considered maintenance funds.

I live better here [since her relatives are in the US] because they send me money. It is just a small amount but I can survive on that.

(Xarbán, 29 year-old female, wife of migrant in the US, in charge of her daughter and the four children of her migrant sister)

Here you can live on US money.

(Xarbán, 51 year-old female, wife of migrant and mother of three more migrants in the US)

Thanks to this transfer, levels of well-being of receiving villagers have dramatically increased, as consistently stated by all my informants. This improvement is partly the consequence of very low initial levels of material well-being. However, this increase in material well-being does not come without a negative side. Loneliness and family separation is often mentioned as a drawback by remittance receivers.

Sometimes I miss them [her children abroad]. I did not want them to migrate. 'We can't just stay with you here starving', they told me. Now I buy 50 cents of bananas and they go off, there is no one to eat them. I wish they would eat them. It is bad when people are alone. Sometimes you have to be hard-hearted.

(Xarbán, 48 year-old female, widow, mother of four migrants in the US)

-Is your life better since your parents went to the US?

I am not sure. Yes, my life is better although I do not have my parents' affection now.

(Xarbán, 16 year-old female living with her three brothers, both parents are in the US)

There is a tension between money and family: either to migrate without the family and earn money, or to stay put in Ecuador with the family but without access to stable sources of income. This discourse is verbalized by both migrants and non-migrants, each group praising their decision but aware of the intrinsic trade-off:

On one hand it is easier [life in Pindo since her husband migrated to Spain], on the other hand it is difficult, loneliness is difficult to deal with. If only we had money and the family was together...

(Pindo, 45 year-old female wife of migrant in Spain since 2002, four children)

The issue of power imbalances inherent to the sender-receiver dyad is very important. Non-migrants are aware of their precarious condition and the possibility of stopping receiving

remittances is always present. Migrants can either avoid their family financial responsibilities (married migrants might become involved with someone else for instance) or they can become unable to meet them (if unable to work). However non-migrants are not powerless victims, since they develop different strategies to cope with this uncertainty and vulnerability, such as self-imposed restrictions on expenses in order not to get used to a lifestyle unsustainable without international remittances:

I live modestly. If the money ever stops arriving and I am used to living a comfortable life, bad. Suddenly something goes wrong with my husband...and used to the high life, then I am fucked [*enseñada a la buena vida, ahí me jodo después*].

(Xarbán, 45 year-old female wife of migrant in the US since 2001 with no children)

Emic remittances usually take place within the spouses' dyad, with or without children in Ecuador. When migrants have children in Ecuador all respondents, remittance senders and receivers alike, agree that the obligation to send 'emic' remittances becomes stronger than when married migrants are still childless. Having a child, and particularly if it is a boy, is very important for women whose husbands are abroad, particularly in Xarbán where women seldom migrate. A baby boy means more reliable and higher emic remittances.

-Did you send money for your children when you were abroad?

Yes. When one goes there and the children stay here, one *must* [his emphasis] send money every month; money for the household expenses, for food, for education, for everything.

(Pindo, 38 year-old male returnee from Spain, married with four children)

Once I had kids my life improved. More so, after having my baby boy. Before he sent \$20 a month for me. He didn't care whether I had shoes or not. Now he sends \$400 a month. Because of the children he must send.

(Xarbán, 30 year-old female wife of migrant in the US with two daughters and one son)

Non-migrants with children do not usually need to ask for emic remittances. There is an agreement, either implicit or explicit, between migrants and their families in Ecuador regarding the amount and the regularity of the sending.

She [his wife] is responsible for that [meaning she is charge but also that she is reliable].

(Pindo, 39 year-old male with two teenage children, husband of migrant in Spain)

He must send because of the children. He knows he has to send every month 300 dollars. For food and for the school. The school is a lot of money. There is no need to be asking.

(Xarbán, 32 year-old female with two teenage children, wife of migrant in the US)

I don't ask him. He knows he has to send for food.

(Xarbán, 49 year-old wife of migrant in the US)

Single migrants usually send remittances to their parents and younger siblings living in the household. This situation changes when migrants marry. They become 'obliged' towards their spouse (*ser de obligación* meaning being married), and their parents' household usually stops being their main household of reference, although migrants can still send some residual remittances to their parents or siblings if migrants' income allows. Emic remittances to older parents profoundly disrupt generation roles. Bajic (2007) documented how disruptive this unintended consequence of remittances can be for receivers in the Serbian context. Parents who are traditionally portrayed as their children's providers, become remittance receivers and as such dependent on their children:

How can I complain [about his children] if we live on them! Before we were the parents, now they are our parents.

(Pindo, 69 year-old male non-migrant with six children abroad)

When there are several migrants from the same household, the financial burden of sending emic remittances is shouldered by all of them, which lightens considerably the financial responsibility.

As they are so many it is enough for them to put ten dollars each. With that they have enough to send us every two months.

(Pindo, 60 year-old female, mother of seven migrants in Spain)

In the case of parents with migrant and non-migrant children, the former are usually in charge of providing the money while the latter do the actual physical care of the old parents. This is another example of the importance of the fraternal group or group of siblings.

Emic remittances also include money to cover education expenses of the young members of the household in Ecuador. Emic remittances have to be higher if intended for secondary or tertiary education as well as for other daily expenses. In this scenario migrants are less likely to save. Parents are usually the ones in charge of sending money for their children's education, but it is not uncommon for older migrant siblings to pay for their younger siblings' education. This is often the case when the father is dead, he does not meet their financial obligations, or he has not migrated internationally. This is the case of a 28 year-old female in Xarbán whose oldest brother in the US paid for her studies to become a beautician when their father refused to support her. It is also the case of a 30 year-old male migrant who supported his younger sister in Pindo:

My sister told me she was at high-school and needed a computer. I said OK and gave her 1,200 dollars to buy the computer. One year later she dropped out of school.

-How did you feel about it?

I would have killed her [laughing]. And that wouldn't have been enough. I paid her studies from Spain, buying her everything she needed, just for her to stay at home and study. She ran away with her boyfriend instead of finishing her last year of high-school. Now she regrets. Someone who is not a high-school graduate is worthless. For any job, employers ask you to be a high-school graduate. Everywhere, even for washing dishes. She got her chance and missed it. If she would have kept studying, she would be at university by now. That would be great.

(Pindo, 30 year-old married male returnee from Spain)

Emic remittances are usually sent through money transfer operators (MTOs) based on convenience to send and receive money because of their extended network of branches in rural areas.

b) Transfer 2: migrants' savings

The second transfer of this emic typology is made of migrants' savings sent to Ecuador. Amounts sent as migrants' savings are higher than amounts periodically sent as emic

remittances. I cannot provide a comprehensive overview of exact amount as the irregularity of this type of transfer makes it very difficult to capture specific amounts. Differently from emic remittances, this transfer is not intended to cover the daily expenses of the receiver household in Ecuador. Informants in the villages do not tend to talk about the destinations of this transfer because they do not consider it their money. They are only taking care of their migrant relatives' savings in Ecuador. Parents of single migrants (who are the ones with the highest capacity to save) are usually in charge of managing their migrant children's savings.

I worked four years very hard [in Spain] to build my house here [in Pindo]. I sent the money for the house to my parents in Ecuador, to save here. In Spain I would have spent all the money [laughing].

(Pindo, 30 year-old male, returnee from Spain)

I encountered a few female-only dyads, where a female migrant sent her savings to her mother, aunt or sister, instead of to a male relative. Female relatives are perceived by female migrants as more reliable than males.

-Did you keep your savings in a bank in Spain?

Yes. I kept them in La Caixa [a Spanish building society]. There I had a bank account. I opened my account and put my money there. Before that, well yes, I sent money to some relative of mine to keep it in Ecuador.

-To your husband?

No, no, no. Men are not to be trusted. They are fine and unexpectedly they give you a surprise. A bad surprise. That is how it is. You never really get to know men. Like a book you never finish to read. It is how I tell you. Well, not all men must be that way but I don't trust them. I sent the money to a sister or an aunt to save. Not to him.

(Pindo, 31 year-old female, married, returnee from Spain)

Unlike emic remittances, considered by migrants as part of their expenses, migrants' savings take place if, and only if, there is any remaining money after migrants have paid for their living expenses in their new places of residence, paid debts and sent emic remittances to their direct relatives in Ecuador. Migrants can either keep their savings with them abroad or send them to Ecuador. In Ecuador money can be kept as such or used for investment purposes. Most migration from Xarbán and Pindo is targeted towards building or buying one's own house in

Ecuador. Hence building a house is the first main investment made by migrants once they manage to save. The range of business opportunities available in Xarbán and Pindo, after building a 'proper' house, is rather narrow. Many migrants and returnees opt for setting up little shops, but these are very time intensive and yield very low profit. In the case of male returnees, owning a vehicle provides them with a stable job as a taxi or bus driver.

The issue of control is key for this type of transfer. Theoretically migrants are the ones who decide how to use this money. They can obviously be advised by their relatives in Ecuador regarding investment opportunities or the bank accounts with the most favourable conditions, as their relatives in Ecuador have a more updated knowledge of the financial situation in the country. However, migrants' decisions are not always followed. This is the case in the next quote where the wife in Xarbán did not agree with the house design sent from New York by her husband. She perceived it as not suitable for the village, so she asked the builders to follow a different design:

He sent me a picture of a house in the US for me to build one here. But I thought I was going to be the one to live in it [laughing], so I did not follow his model.

(Xarbán, 33 year-old female, wife of migrant in the US since 1994)

Control is a two-way issue. As seen from the previous quotations, non-migrants can use the money for purposes other than what they were told to. Nonetheless, migrants can also hide information about their real earnings and expenses, while keeping money in bank accounts in their new places of residence.

-Do you save any of the money you are sent every month?

There is no way I can save. They do not send enough. They may have some money with them over there [in the US]... I don't know.

(Xarbán, 34 year-old female, wife of migrant in the US since 2001)

-Do you save any of the \$150 your wife sends you every month?

Not at all. And we don't even know if she has something saved over there [in Spain].

(Pindo, 39 year-old male with two teenage children, husband of migrant in Spain)

As Vullnetari and King found for Albania (2011: 107), Xarbán and Pindo migrants also tend to favour banks to transfer their savings. This is in contrast to emic remittances, where money

transfer operators are preferred. MTOs are also used for emergencies where speed is the priority. Migrants look for safe and cheap channels when transferring savings. Some banks charge a fixed rate to send money (up to a relatively high amount), which makes them attractive to send high amounts but very expensive to routinely send small amounts. Some Spanish building societies and banks were very keen on attracting migrants, and offered attractive ways of remitting money to their countries of origin. La Caixa was one of the most active ones which led, among other things, to an agreement with the Ecuadorian Central Bank to transfer money to Ecuador (BCE, 2006; Carriel et al., 2010).

Two issues were repeatedly mentioned in relation with this transfer: the impact of the 2000 Ecuador dollarization, and the current financial crisis. Due to the time horizon, while dollarization was not a big issue for Pindo migrants, it had a huge impact on Xarbán migrants' remittances and savings kept in Ecuador, as shown in the next quotations.

With the *sucre* [Ecuadorian currency before dollarization] it was better.

(Xarbán, 64 year-old female, mother of three migrants in the US)

Dollarization fucked up everything.

(Xarbán, 45 year-old female, mother of four migrants in the US)

Before 2000, remittances from the US were sent in dollars and converted into *sucres*. It provided senders and receivers alike with room for manoeuvre, converting dollars into *sucres* whenever the exchange rate was favourable. This manipulation was possible for savings but not so much for emic remittances that needed to be sent periodically to cover daily expenses irrespective of exchange rate variations. As noted in chapter two, dollarization was unexpectedly announced in January 2000, setting a currency exchange rate of 25,000 *sucres* per \$1. This depreciated exchange rate was favourable for those who kept their savings in Ecuador in dollars, but strongly hit savings kept in *sucres* (virtually all Xarbán households with savings). Dollarization also brought a general increase in prices. Both events had a heavy effect on Xarbán; emigration from here increased after the dollarization took place. Many returnees decided to migrate once again, faced by the prospects of depreciated savings and a general price increase.

Dollarization did not have much impact on Pindo, as migration to the US from the village was not important at the time, and migrants in Europe had not yet had time to save. On the other

hand, Pindo migrants have been hit very hard by the financial economic crisis that was unleashed in 2008. The crisis has had a huge impact particularly for those migrants who are in Spain. It has affected migrants' employment and income, which determine migrants' expenses and savings structure, and thereby their remittance-related behaviour.

c) *Transfer 3: debt repayment*

The third type of transfer, made of relatively high periodical amounts and present in both Pindo and Xarbán, is destined to debt repayment. This money is not intended for receivers' physical survival and as such is not considered by them as emic remittances. The types of debt in each village are very different. Pindo debts are normally post-migration, whereas in Xarbán they result from the journey itself.

The journey to the US is not only dangerous but also very expensive, which forces most migrants-to-be to become heavily indebted. As shown by some authors, the stricter the immigration barriers, the higher the cost and risks involved for migrants (Andreas, 2001; Cornelius, 2001; Donato et al., 1992; Gathmann, 2008). Most Xarbán villagers know *coyotes* or *pasadores* (smugglers) to take them, via many different routes, to a final destination within the US, normally the house of a relative in New York City. At the time of my fieldwork in 2009 prices ranged from \$12,000 to \$20,000, with most journeys costing around \$15,000. Price variation is based on the reputation of the *pasador*, and the agreed 'comfort', speed and safety of the journey, which often does not turn out as arranged. Travelling by boat to some Central American country is the cheapest but also the most dangerous way of travelling. The only villager from Xarbán who has died in the journey was a man in his late teens who drowned while trying to reach Central America in an overcrowded boat that sank.

Money lenders (*chulqueros*) and smugglers are not usually the same people (Kyle and Liang, 2001: 8; Pedone, 2003: 69). Loan sharks have been able to remain invisible behind the figure of smugglers. Wealthy inhabitants of the canton capital, whose wealth come in many cases from hacienda properties, lent money to the first Xarbán villagers to migrate to the US in the early nineties. This respected social group became richer and richer while their social status was untouched by the stain of migration smuggling. The lender, in a completely legal procedure known as 'direct sale' (*'venta directa'*), 'bought' some of the borrower's properties (lands or houses usually) in exchange for the required amount. As soon as the debt was repaid, the property was 'sold back' to the original owner. If borrowers failed to pay, the money-lenders kept the property which was already legally theirs.

-What if you could not repay the borrowed money for your journey?

My parents were my guarantors. Naturally if they didn't pay in that time the law favoured what they call now *chulqueros* (loan sharks). The law was good for them. They had all the privileges. If my parents did not pay, they took the land or the house away from them. It is not like that now, if you do not give them the deeds of the house, there is no problem. Before, if you missed just one payment, loan sharks seized your house.

(Xarbán, 42 year-old male, returnee twice from the US)

Since the eighties and with an increased informal credit supply, which includes now borrowers' relatives or fellow villagers with family in the US, conditions for borrowers have improved. Interest is still monthly and only when the monthly interests are paid up, money goes into deducting the borrowed capital. Nevertheless 'direct sale' does not usually take place. Instead, lenders and borrowers sign a contract (*'letra de cambio'*) stating the borrowed amount, although not normally the interest rate. Lenders usually give a paper stating the received amount each time and the remaining debt. Nowadays borrowers are more protected by the law. When they cannot (or they refuse to) pay, the lender must go to the authorities. This can be a costly and lengthy procedure, involving hiring a lawyer and endless journeys to Cuenca, the province capital. If the judge rules in favour of the lender, a public auction of some of the borrower's properties is set. If the property is sold, the lender receives the amount owed. Unlike some villagers who lent money and lacked the knowledge and contacts to ensure repayment, canton elites have the insider knowledge about the type of agreements to draft and the contacts in the province capital to enforce the signed agreement if something goes wrong, although the risk of non-repayment is still very high (Kyle and Liang, 2001: 9). Formal financial institutions (usually credit cooperatives) are unwilling to lend money for the journey. Nevertheless as Cortés found, in some cases they are willing to lend money once the migrant is already in the US (2010: 483). Migrants can this way pay off their onerous initial loans and acquire better repayment conditions in the formal financial sector.

Journey debt takes between one and two years to be fully repaid. During this time migrants make incredible efforts to earn and save as much money as possible in order for the debt not to keep on growing. During this time, no matter how hard, migrants cannot even consider returning to Ecuador:

Many villagers once they arrived to la Yoni [New York] regret having gone. They want to return right then. But because of the debt they can't. Once they have finished with the debt, they are already used to life there (*'ya se han enseñado allá'*) [in the US] and they do not want to return.

(Xarbán, 56 year-old female, all her direct relatives are in the US except for a grandson)

-Do you get used to life in the US the first time you went there?

To be honest I never paid much attention to it because all I had in my mind was the debt. No matter how much I wanted to return, I couldn't, I was sold out by the debt I had.

(Xarbán, 42 year-old male, returnee twice from the US)

As many migrants and villagers complained, the 'journey debt eats all our money' in those first years. This time is very hard for migrants and their relatives in Xarbán as a consequence of the debt-generated stress at a time when adjustments take place as a result of migration. Relatives in Xarbán are constantly worried about migrants not meeting their obligations, which would lead to the loss of the warranted property. The case below of the father of a male migrant in Xarbán is typical. He handed in some land plots as guarantee for his children's journey cost, which fortunately he did not lose:

Thank god, they [his children] were responsible and repaid the debt. Otherwise we would be living by the road under some plastic and sticks.

(Xarbán, 61 year-old male, father of two children in the US)

The day the journey debt is fully repaid is a very happy day for migrants and their relatives. From that time on, migrants will be able to save money or live more comfortable lives if desired. At that point many migrants buy some presents (such as TV sets or small electric appliances) for their main dyad: spouse, parents or children in Xarbán.

One's own journey debt is not the only debt Xarbán migrants get into, as they usually help to fund journeys of younger relatives. They can either lend some of their savings, or can act as guarantors for loan sharks in the canton capital. This way the whole indebted story starts all over again. The situation of the next male migrant from Xarbán is a case in point. Trying to bring over his family to the US where he arrived in 1994, he has spent a very large sum of

money. He went to the US '*de mojado*' (by boat). He came with a brother. The journey cost \$6,000. He asked a friend who was already in the US for \$3,000 and he borrowed the other half in Gualaceo. He was taken to work in construction by a friend. He knew nothing about construction work before migrating. The boss was Italian, so he managed with the language. He worked two years in construction, and as soon as he repaid the debt he quit the job. He remembers it being a really hard time, just thinking about repaying the debt. It was hard but he could not even think of returning, as he was indebted. His initial idea was to come for three years, repay the journey debt, save to buy a house and set up a shop in Ecuador. After eight years waiting for him, his wife decided to join him in the US. Although he did not want her to travel, they paid \$4,000 as a deposit to a man to get her a fake visa (*visa montada*). But she could not leave the country, neither through Guayaquil, nor Quito. He thought that was the end of the story, but his wife was determined to come to the US, even against her husband's will. He thought his wife was still in Ecuador when she phoned him from Guatemala where she had arrived by boat. He had to send money for her to keep on with the journey North. She eventually arrived in the US. Once she was in the US they decided to bring over their three children. This migrant has spent so far almost \$90,000 in journeys to the US, excluding interest payments, which will dramatically increase the final amount: \$6,000 for his journey, \$14,000 for his wife's, and \$16,000 for each of his three children. He had to pay the journey for the oldest son twice because of his three attempts. *Pasadores* provide two attempts in the initial price, the third attempt must be paid as a new journey. And he had to pay a further \$4,000 in legal fees for his second son who was caught by the US authorities at the US-Mexico border.

Trying to achieve regular legal status in the US is a time and money investment that few Xarbán migrants choose to do. Most of them, aware of the slim chances of becoming regularised in the US, are not willing to spend large amounts of money. This 'financial investment in papers' does not usually yield positive results:

My brother went to the US with a real tourist visa, then he sent his passport to Ecuador to be stamped here and he stayed in the US as an illegal [sic].

-Has he managed to sort out his legal situation in the US?

No, no. He is trying but no. It is such an amount of money (*gastadera de plata*).

Sometimes you cannot do it, you are not lucky. So he decided to stop trying.

(Xarbán, 24 year-old female, sister of migrant in the US)

The features of the emigration flow from Pindo create a very different debt transfer. Migration to Europe from Pindo was time-bounded (from the beginning of the 1990s to 2003 with the Spanish visa ruling for Ecuadorians). The cost and comfort of the journey were nothing like those endured by Xarbán villagers in their journeys to the US. Journeys were on direct flights from Quito to Madrid. Migrants were required to have around €3,000: a thousand for the return flight ticket and two thousand for *la bolsa* (money to show at the Spanish border to prove one was a 'proper' tourist and had enough money to have a holiday in Spain). The *bolsa* was returned as soon as the migrant was out of the airport and the same money was then recycled and used as *bolsa* for many different migrants (Jokisch and Pribilsky, 2002: 83). Pindo villagers initially borrowed the money ('*plata arrendada*') from villagers who had migrated to the US⁴⁷ or from some wealthy canton capital dwellers. Villagers from the fields, who usually migrated later than those from the parish centre, borrowed the money from villagers from the parish centre who had relatives in Europe. Nonetheless, the journey debt was never such an issue as it was for Xarbán migrants, and it was repaid within a few months. The main debts Pindo migrants incurred were post-migration. As a result of migrants' experience in Europe, Pindo migrants are used to dealing with the banking system. Hence applying for loans in Ecuador to build houses, buy cars or set up businesses is not uncommon. As I will show in chapter eight, migration to Spain has made migrants knowledgeable about the formal financial system and has provided them with a privileged position to apply for loans. Formal financial institutions, such as banks and credit cooperatives, are perceived by villagers as more likely to give loans to migrants or to families who have migrants abroad. Migrants with work permit and relatively stable jobs in Spain can use their payment slips or properties in Spain as collateral to apply for loans in Ecuador. In this way, Pindo villagers without property in Ecuador but with migrant relatives abroad can access formal credit in Ecuador. In this case, the transfer 'debt' is used to repay the monthly instalments of the loan or mortgage in Ecuador.

My son X and my daughter Y sent money to pay for almost half of the house. They asked the bank for the other half. Now Y sends \$400 every month to pay the mortgage to the bank.

(Pindo, 60 year-old female, mother of seven children in Spain)

⁴⁷ The interplays between mobility to Europe and US are indeed fascinating. In Pindo money earned in the US funded pioneering migration to Europe. Pindo villagers with double citizenship (Ecuadorian and Spanish, the latter allowing travelling freely as a tourist to the US for up to three months) travelled to the US once the crisis hit Spain to test their chances. To the best of my knowledge, none of them have stayed in the US.

d) Transfer 4: emergency money

This transfer is made up of money sent by migrants to their families in the villages, who need it to cover unexpected and usually relatively high expenses. Unexpected serious health problems are the most common cause of migrants sending one-off amounts of money in this way. Money for emergencies is directly related to the emergency itself, such as the price of the surgery, and the ability of the relatives abroad to gather money in a short period of time. They can either use their own savings if kept abroad, or borrow the money from someone in their social network.

-Do you live better since your children migrated abroad?

Not a lot, but more or less. They will send us money if we ever get sick, even if they have to get indebted there [abroad].

(Pindo, 54 year-old female married to non-migrant, four children in Spain)

Our sons tell us that if we ever get sick, they will figure out how to get the money, because they are younger and it will be easier for them to borrow the money in Spain to send us.

(Pindo, 67 year-old female, all her seven children in Spain)

Through this type of transfer, migration reduces vulnerability as it increases the resources to draw from in case of emergency or negative shocks. Hence, migration in Xarbán and Pindo acts through this transfer as a type of family insurance (de Haan, 1999; Stark and Lucas, 1988; Taylor, 1999). 'Emergency money' is clearly a buffer transfer which eases unexpected shocks.

-Has your life changed because of your brother's migration to the US?

Honestly, not, because I already had my family here. But it gives me hope. If I am sick I know he will worry about it. He will send me a hundred dollars. That gives me peace of mind. Some brothers do not care but he does care about me.

(Pindo, 39 year-old female, married to non-migrant with children, one brother in Newark)

In case of serious emergency, and faced with underdeveloped credit and insurance markets in rural Ecuador, villagers can rely on their migrant relatives abroad. Migrants have a broader pool of resources to draw from.

With our delicate health, it is very hard because they [their children] are not physically with us. But imagine it they would be here, there would be no way they could get the money.

(Xarbán, 70 year-old female, all her eight children in the US)

Within main dyads, emergency money is not expected to be repaid – as neither are emic remittances. This is the case, for instance, when migrant children send money to their elderly parents for hospitalization or surgery in Ecuador. However, when asking money within a secondary dyad (e.g. married siblings in Ecuador to their married migrant siblings), migrants usually provide the money in the form of a loan. Even under this circumstance, villagers are still better off than having to resort to the abusive conditions of local lenders.

This transfer shows a different sending pattern from other transfers as it is speed of sending which is the determinant variable to select the channel, as compared to lowest cost for emic remittances. Migrants do not mind incurring higher transfer charges in exchange for the guarantee that the money will arrive as quickly as possible to where it is urgently needed. Western Union is the channel that most respondents mentioned as the preferred one to send 'emergency money' because it only takes minutes for the money to be ready for collection in the canton capital branches of Gualaceo or Cariamanga. Sending \$1,000 from New York to Gualaceo is charged \$50 (5% of the amount sent). The sending from Spain is charged at only 1.787% but the Euro-US currency change is calculated at 1.375 in contrast to the 1.39 'official' change rate. Hence in order for Pindo villagers to get \$1,000 in Cariamanga their migrant relatives in Spain must have paid in €740.25. These prices were checked on 8th November 2010 on the Western Union webpage (<http://www.westernunion.com>).

e) Transfer 5: gifts

Some villagers mention they receive gifts (ranging from cards, chocolates, or flowers, to washing machines or fridges) or money for treats (*'plata para golosinas'*). This transfer is numerically not very important, as money or gifts are usually sent no more than once or twice a year on special occasions such as birthdays, Christmas or Mother's Day. Money sent as a gift is on average lower than \$50. This type of gift money does not have much impact on receiving

households' material wellbeing, beyond the momentary happiness of receiving a gift or a bit of extra money on a special occasion. Nonetheless, this type of transfer is a clear way of showing affect and re-invigorating bonds of love.

Clothes and shoes are sometimes sent, but most often money is preferred by senders and receivers. They agree most products are already available in Ecuador and it is not worth paying to send packages. The availability of remittances has spurred the appearance of modern clothes shops in both Gualaceo and Cariamanga to cater for the remittance receivers' tastes. Money is also preferred by migrants who have been away for a long time and are unaware of their relatives' current tastes and desires. This is the case of a Xarbán villager who migrated to the US when his daughters were in their early teens. The poignancy of the following quote, revealing the pain of parents' separation from their growing-up children over many years, should not go unnoticed.

I cannot send them clothes [to his two daughters in Ecuador]. I don't know their sizes. I've been here for so long that I still think of them as my two little girls, and now they both have babies of their own!

(New York, 51 year-old male migrant in the US since 1994)

Electrical appliances such as fridges, washing-machines or food blenders are sent on very special occasions, as when the journey debt is finally repaid by Xarbán migrants. Quite often, due to the high cost, several migrants contribute together. Migrants from Xarbán and Pindo do not resort to companies or the big stores in cities like Barcelona, Madrid, Murcia or New York, where products can be selected and paid by migrants and delivered in Ecuador to their relatives. They rather rely on non-migrant relatives to buy the products in Ecuador and deliver them to the final receiver.

Many teenagers ask their parents or older siblings abroad to send them the latest laptops, mobile phones or mp3 players. Technology is highly appreciated by the teenager children of migrants in Xarbán and Pindo, and by the young migrants abroad, which sometimes competes with migrants' ability to send remittances. These gadgets powerfully signal the modernity and success of their owners. Although technology is relatively cheaper in Europe than in Ecuador, and much cheaper in the US, these products are not often sent. The need to buy insurance to avoid damage or theft of the package must be added to the initial high cost of the gadget

itself. Food parcels sent from Ecuador as 'reverse remittances' also fall within this category of 'gifts'.

I would like to mention three cases of cosmetic surgery funded by migrants I came across in my fieldwork. In all three cases the operation involved nose surgery. In the Andes the nose is a visible marker of ethnicity, hence thinner 'white' noses are very much preferred (Moreno, 2007: 83). In two cases there were male teenagers who asked their older siblings abroad to pay for their surgery, resorting to a sort of emotional blackmailing. These teenagers were using the dominant discourse according to which villagers migrate for the sake of their families. They see themselves entitled to these expensive gifts as they are the ones 'left behind' in Ecuador. Although this sort of expensive treat is not common, the example highlights the complex emotional negotiations taking place between migrants and non-migrants.

5.2.3 Migrants' income and expenses structure

Remittances cannot be read outside the framework of possibilities created by migrants' income and expense structures. The income part of the equation is given by the labour market incorporation of migrants in terms of earnings and job stability. Migrants in low-paid and unstable jobs are very unlikely to develop sustainable, regular money transfers to Ecuador. Some authors have criticised the academic euphoria that depicts remittances as the new development mantra (Kapur, 2004), partly because this approach overlooks the daily hardships that low-paid migrants must face in order to earn and save money to send to their relatives (Datta et al., 2006; 2007). This is clearly the case of some migrants in Spain who do seasonal piecework in agriculture, and of those irregular migrants with temporary jobs, who in both cases cannot sustain a regular sending of remittances.

Not only are remittances dependent on migrants' income, they are also a function of migrants' expenditure patterns. Migrants must distribute their earnings among alternative uses. As a result, remittances compete with alternative money allocations. Obviously, the more money is spent in the US or Europe, the less that can be sent to Ecuador. This situation generates tensions that must not be overlooked (Julca, 2005: 23). Migrants' desires for increasing everyday comfort and material signals of success in their countries of residence, directly affects their ability to send money to their relatives in Ecuador. These expenses cannot be automatically disclaimed as superfluous or wrong, as in a context of migrancy material comfort in the form of better housing, car ownership, holidays, and so on is a way of dealing with the sense of estrangement in migrants' lives.

Not all of the main six transfers in the typology presented are considered equally by migrants: some are considered as expenses, while others are seen as savings. As taken for granted as this differentiation may appear, it has decisive consequences. 'Emic remittances' are considered by migrants as an expense along with their everyday expenses abroad such as rent, utilities, transport, and so on. This transfer is then directly deducted from migrants' income. Money to repay debts is also an expense migrants must face before any surplus or savings can be created out of their income. On the other hand, migrants' savings, gifts or collective remittances are sent *if and only if* there is any remaining money after expenses are met. The status of money for emergencies is more context-determined as it depends on many other variables: whether migrants keep savings abroad, the required amount, or migrants' ability to pool money from different sources, including access to formal or informal credit.

Migrants' expenditure patterns change over time, affecting migrant's remitting behaviour. As Carling argues, striking differences in remitting patterns are in many cases the result of different stages in the family migration history (2008b: 589). On average, and over-simplifying, in the cases of Xarbán and Pindo three main stages can be identified: the initial stage where migrants are recently arrived with usually high journey debts to repay; the second stage where the original migration aim is finally accomplished (usually building a house in Ecuador); and a final and more blurred stage surrounding the issue of return. Throughout all the stages the idea of return influences migrants' expenses and as such affects their remitting behaviour: migrants intending to return are generally more likely to remit, and remit larger amounts (Cai, 2003; Gubert, 2002; Merkle and Zimmermann, 1992; Pinger, 2010; Sanz Abad, 2009: 341).

I provide here two brief and stereotypical overviews of the changes over time in remitting behaviour of migrants, one from Xarbán and one from Pindo. The average Xarbán migrant in the US is a married migrant whose wife stays in Ecuador. He does not have regular legal status in the US, and little chance to become regularised. His main migration target is to build his house in Xarbán and save enough money to make a living once he returns to Xarbán without having to migrate (either internally or internationally) ever again. In order to arrive in New York he needs to pay between \$15,000 and \$18,000. In Queens some relative will provide him with shelter and contacts to find a job. He usually starts working on construction, in a car wash or in any other menial work, which allows him to repay his journey debt and its fast-growing interest (up to 10% monthly) in around two years. Forced by the journey debt to endure the

hardships and discomfort of their first years in the US, migrants nevertheless start to get used to life in the US.

In the second stage migrants send money to build the house, and their levels of comfort in the US start to increase resulting in higher daily expenses, with some migrants moving from crowded houses to better accommodation, or starting to wear more expensive and trendy clothes. From this point on, the sketch blurs. Some migrants start to think about bringing over their spouses and older children, incurring new journey debts which prevent them from saving. Other migrants return to Ecuador: either because they have managed to build their house and have some savings to live on or to set up a business in Ecuador, or are forced by an accident which prevents them from working – construction-related accidents are very common. Returning migrants have usually made high investments on social status in Xarbán through their collective remittances, as will be seen in the next chapter. Consequently when they return to Xarbán they take up a privileged position within the village social structure. Some other migrants, although very few, stay in a situation of in-betweenness, detached from Xarbán and oriented towards the US and the ‘American life style’. They spend most of their earnings in order to live up to the American dream, and stop sending money to Ecuador. Their legal status makes it unwise for Xarbán migrants to opt for this final situation, as irregular migrants in the US will find it very difficult to meet their needs once they become too old to work.

The reality of Pindo migrants in Spain – my second ‘ideal type’ – is very different from the previous sketch. Pioneer migrants from Pindo were women with and without children. Their journey debt was much lower (around 3,000 US\$). Their labour market incorporation was usually very precarious, with low earnings and high job instability. Although building a house in Ecuador is also one of their priorities, securing legal status in Spain is also very important for them, as this will open the door for family reunification with their spouses and children. Once they bring their children over, migrants’ ability to send money to Ecuador dramatically decreases (for the impact of different stages of family migration see Carling, 2008b: 589). In this second stage, migrants’ expense structure is also affected by their legal status which allows them to travel between Spain and Ecuador, which they often do, incurring high expenses. Pindo migrants’ alternative orientation to Spain or Ecuador is complex and some migrants decide to settle down in Spain.

The crisis that hit Spain more severely than the US has changed the whole sketch that was starting to take shape for Pindo migrants in Spain. Many migrants have lost their jobs, although it is difficult to estimate what proportion as moving in and out of work in Spain has always been a fluid and precarious process. Unemployment has placed them in an uneasy situation regarding their newly acquired and still mortgaged properties. Migrant villagers' reactions to the crisis vary. Some of them are moving internationally, towards the UK for instance, some others are currently living from hand to mouth in Spain, while a growing number are returning to Ecuador. Returnees stay in Pindo while they try to figure out what to do next, or while they are waiting for the situation in Spain to improve. Nevertheless, due to their previous mobility and higher educational background, returnees are willing to engage in post-international migration mobility. The lack of basic services, such as running water, electricity, TV signal or proper roads, and the problem of insecurity (particularly in the poorest areas of the village where often there are cattle thefts), also discourages migrants to permanently settle down in Pindo. Moreover, due to the history of the village as a recent creation by workers from other nearby haciendas, migrants do not feel as attached to their village as Xarbán villagers do.

5.3. Summary

This chapter has provided a fairly detailed analysis of material remittances from and to Xarbán and Pindo. It has covered definitional issues while arguing for the usefulness of a more detailed typology of material remittances which takes into account senders' and receivers' perceptions. Five transfers of my proposed typology have been analysed: emic remittances, migrants' savings, debt repayment, emergency money, and gift money. There is a sixth transfer, collective remittances (usually in the form of 'devout money'), which I will deal with in the next chapter. To cover the whole network of remittance transfers to Xarbán and Pindo, I will deal with social remittances in chapters seven and eight.

Emic remittances clearly improve the material environment of receivers. This money enables receiving villagers to live in houses which are more comfortable than the traditional two-room mud houses; they are well-fed and well-dressed; and younger members of the household can pursue further education. Debt repayment takes place but for very different reasons in Xarbán and Pindo. The journey debt literally haunts Xarbán migrants during their first months in the US. Only when emic remittances and debt repayment are covered can migrants save. 'Emergency money' does not directly increase the everyday material lives of receivers, but

plays a very important role, cushioning unexpected shocks. Finally gifts, although much less important from a macroeconomic point of view, are emotionally very important and must be read as materializations of affection.

The proposed categorization of remittances based on emic principles is more than a mere academic exercise. It does have developmental consequences, the most important of which is the possibility to develop different measures for different transfers. Migrants' savings are clearly the portion of remittances to target by development projects, and not 'emic' remittances. Equally this typology also shows the need to develop specific financial products for migrants' savings (allowing maybe joint management by migrants abroad and their relatives in Ecuador) as well as better credit mechanisms to deal with debt repayment.

Table 5.14 provides a summary overview of the five main transfers of the emic typology of remittances, excluding collective remittances and social remittances. The table provides a kind of overall synthesis of much of what I have presented and discussed in this chapter. In the first column are listed the main features of each type of transfer under the criteria of nature, receiver, direction, periodicity and target. The second and third columns list the most frequent uses and associated dyad for each type of transfer respectively. The next column summarises the relevant power negotiations for each transfer (regarding decision, management, enjoyment and control). The final column states the way each transfer is considered by migrants: either as expense or saving.

Table 5.14: Material remittances' main transfers

Type	Features	Main uses	Most common dyads	Power negotiations	Relation with migrants' income/expense structure
Emic Remittances	Financial Family From migrant Periodical Non-targeted	Daily expenses (including education)	-Spouse -Children -Parents (for unmarried migrants) -Siblings	Decision (receiver) Management (receiver) Enjoyment (receiver) Control (irrelevant)	Migrants' Expenses (Income- Expenses)
Migrants' Savings	Financial Family From migrant Irregular Targeted	Savings or investment (on construction, land, shops, cars)	-Spouse -Parents -Siblings -Female relatives	Decision (sender) Management (receiver) Enjoyment (sender) Control (key)	Migrants' Savings (Income-Expenses= Savings)
Debt Repayment	Financial Family From migrant Periodical Targeted	Journey debt, loans, house mortgages	-Spouse -Parents	Decision (sender) Management (receiver) Enjoyment (shared) Control (important)	Migrants' Expenses (Income- Expenses)
Emergency Money	Financial Family From migrant Irregular Targeted	Health expenses	-Parents -Spouse	Decision (sender) Management (receiver) Enjoyment (receiver) Control (important)	Migrants' Savings (Income-Expenses= Savings)
Gift money	Financial, In-kind Family From migrant Periodical Non-targeted	Clothes, shoes, treats	-Children -Spouse -Parents -Siblings -Other kin (including fictitious kin)	Decision (receiver) Management (receiver) Enjoyment (receiver) Control (irrelevant)	Migrants' Savings (Income-Expenses= Savings)

Chapter 6

Material Remittances.

Main Uses and Collective Remittances

This chapter follows logically on from the previous one where material remittances were first defined, and a typology of transfers developed. The chapter has two main sections. In the first section data on the actual uses of material remittances to Xarbán and Pindo are presented. It examines the main uses made of these resources once daily expenses are covered. Among these uses, housing, education, health, vehicle acquisition, land, agriculture and livestock stand out. This section concludes with some observations on the investment-consumption role of some of the expenses analysed. In the second part of the chapter, collective remittances, or ‘devout money’ as I have decided to name it, are analysed.

6.1. Uses of Material Remittances

6.1.1 Data sources on remittances uses in Ecuador and their limitations

All the surveys on the uses of remittances in Ecuador, irrespectively of their scope, clearly state that an overwhelming percentage of remittances are used for daily expenses. Table 6.1 provides a synthetic view. I have reviewed all the available studies with primary data on remittances’ uses in Ecuador. I have, though, decided not to list in the table studies which were methodologically unsound or with very small samples, like the study by García Samaniego et al. on remittances to the indigenous canton of Saraguro in the province of Loja (2009). There are problems with the study carried out by FLACSO-Ecuador using data from the Living Standard Survey 5th Round-ECV5R (fifth row) as figures provided in the final report are not accurate (percentages of uses for males do not sum up to one hundred). I still show it in the table for time coverage purposes.

Discrepancies over results reported by each study can be partially explained by their different space and time contexts. The two first studies, carried out in 2002 and 2003, reported very high figures of debt repayment as outmigration was still quite recent. The study commissioned by the Pew Hispanic Centre and the Multilateral Investment Fund (Bendixen, 2003), which is often cited, has several serious limitations. First, only urban dwellers were surveyed, which completely overlooks the different and extensive reality of rural Ecuador. Moreover, the way questions regarding remittance uses were phrased is highly problematic, as the questions use morally loaded expressions as 'superfluous expenses' or 'luxuries'. The Ecuadorian Living Standard Survey 5th Round (ECV5R) also has information on remittance use, although it does not provide numerical data. The Living Standard Surveys' main drawback is the fact that they have not been specifically designed as remittance surveys, which means that remittance data are usually residual and broadly coded. The only available information in ECV5R is the expense category (and respondents could choose only one) that international remittances are reported to be used for. The most recent study, based on a sub-sample of remittance-receiving people in the ECV5R, is the most comprehensive to date (Olivié et al., 2009; Ponce and Olivié, 2008). It provides a disaggregated list of remittance uses where clothes, education and health are considered separately from food.

Table 6.1: Main studies on remittances' use in Ecuador

Author	Date	Scope	% Daily Expenses	Other items	
Pastoral Social Loja	July 2002	N= 2,814 people from rural areas of the province of Loja	53%	21% Debt repayment 15% Investment 5% Relatives' journeys 6% Other	
UTPL	2003	N=2,500 questionnaires, whole country	33.48% (including food and clothes)	10% Debt repayment 30% Education 7% Housing 1% Vehicle 3% Electric appliances 13% Health care 2% Businesses 1% Other	
ILDIS-FES and SJM	January-June 2003	N=2,870 families in the South of Quito, 398 of whom have some migrant abroad	57%	20% Debt repayment 12% Investment 11% Other	
MIF-IADB and the Pew Hispanic Center	March- April 2003	N= 3,320 people in fifteen urban areas of the country, 476 of whom received money from relatives abroad	61%	8% Investment 8% Savings 4% Property acquisition 2% Education 17% "luxuries"	
Living Standard Survey 5th Round- ECV5R	November 2005 - October 2006	N= 13,581 households in the whole country (55,666 people), 2,781 people reported having received international remittances in the previous 12 months	90.1% 87.7% sent by male migrants 92.4% sent by female migrants		
RIE-FLACSO	2007	N=935 people (selected among the 2,781 people receiving remittances in the ECV5R) in the 8 provinces with the highest international emigration rates (Pichincha, Guayas, Azuay, Esmeraldas, Cañar, El Oro, Loja and Tungurahua)	48.62% (including food and clothes 5.07%)		

Source: Author's own compilation based on Bendixen, 2003; FLACSO and UNFPA, 2008; INEC, 2006; López and Villamar, 2004; Olivie et al., 2009; Ponce and Olivie, 2008; Sanchez Mendieta, 2004; UTPL, 2003; Villamar et al., 2004.

Like my own study of Xarbán and Pindo, all previous studies clearly state that important percentages of international remittances are used for daily expenses. In order to make the percentages from the different studies as comparable as possible, I have incorporated education and health expenses under the heading of daily expenses. Figures range from 53% in the study carried out by the Social Pastoral of Loja in 2002, to 90% from the ECV5R (Table 6.2). These high figures are unsurprising and strongly support my own typology set out in the previous chapter, where the transfer of emic remittances is based on the circularity of the definition.

Table 6.2: Percentage of remittances used for daily expenses in six different studies

Study	% Daily expenses (including education and health)
Pastoral Social Loja	53%
ILDIS-FES and SJM	57%
MIF-IADB and the Pew Hispanic Center	63%
RIE-FLACSO	72%
UTPL	75%
ECV5R	90%

I would also like to note that the type of remittance senders and receivers I deal with in this research also help to explain the presence of this high percentage of remittances used for everyday expenses. Some literature suggests that a lower proportion of remittances from better-off migrants are used for daily expenses compared with remittances from migrants from poorer families (Conway and Cohen, 1998: 28), and the latter is certainly the case of Xarbán and Pindo migrants.

6.1.2. Main uses of remittances

In the case of Xarbán and Pindo, resources available after daily expenses are covered are systematically used for education, health, housing, vehicles, land, agriculture and livestock. Table 6.3 states the percentage of households which experienced changes in each of the above-mentioned items since starting to receive remittances from abroad.

Table 6.3: Households experiencing positive changes as a result of remittance reception

Realm	Xarbán	Pindo
Education	69%	60%
Health	72%	74%
Build new house	84%	42%
Vehicles	14%	18%
Land	42%	30%
Agriculture inputs	0%	1%
Livestock	14%	22%

I move on now to unpack each of these uses.

a) Education

Econometric studies carried out in different countries do not show a conclusive link between remittances and education⁴⁸. Remittances seem to increase school enrolment, although this positive effect is sometimes outweighed by parents' absence, with the reduction of the household adult workforce as a result of migration leading to child labour. The presence of lower education aspirations of children in households and communities with many migrant members can also create a negative link between remittances and education.

Financial remittances are used for education purposes in both Xarbán and Pindo. All migrants agree that one of the reasons to migrate was to secure their children's education. Being a graduate has high esteem in Ecuador and widens the chances to find a proper job⁴⁹. Many people nowadays perceive education as a real alternative to international migration.

⁴⁸ See for Mexico Borraz, 2005; Hanson and Woodruff, 2003; Kandel and Kao, 2001; McKenzie and Rapoport, 2006; Meza and Pederzini, 2009; Sawyer, 2010; for El Salvador Acosta, 2006; Cox and Ureta, 2003; for Ecuador Calero et al., 2009; for Haiti Amuedo-Dorantes et al. 2010; for the Philippines Yang, 2003; for South Africa Lu and Treiman, 2007; for rural Pakistan Mansuri, 2006. Acosta et al., 2007 provide interesting insights into the impact of remittances on education and health outcomes for several Latin American countries.

⁴⁹ A graduate in Ecuador is anyone who has finished high-school, college or university education. In rural areas like Pindo and Xarbán where education levels have been traditionally very low, the word 'graduate' applies to anyone with education beyond primary school.

In Ecuador, there is only proper work for graduates. Otherwise, you have to migrate. Education is very very important.

(Pindo, 45 year-old female wife of migrant in Spain since 2002, four children)

In Xarbán many migrants' children attend the bilingual private high-school 'Liceo Particular Bilingüe Nuevo Mundo' in the parish canton. The monthly tuition fee is \$49, excluding transport, books, uniforms and lunches. In the case of Pindo, attending a high-school in the canton capital for those students who do not live in the parish centre implies renting a room in town. It is important to mention that education expenses beyond primary school imply far more than tuition fees, transport expenses, books and uniforms. There are extra activities surrounding education that have to be met, such as special celebrations, equipment, or journeys.

Data from the questionnaire (Table 6.4) show that since starting receiving remittances almost 70% of households in Xarbán and 60% in Pindo have experienced positive changes regarding their children's education. No changes were reported regarding education for adult members of the household or for people not in the household such as distant relatives or fictive kin.

Table 6.4: Percentage of households reporting positive changes in their young members' education

Xarbán				Pindo			
Yes	%	NO	%	Yes	%	NO	%
44	68.75%	20	31.25%	33	60.00%	22	40.00%

Although percentages of change are similar for the two villages, there are differences in the nature of the changes (Table 6.5). In Xarbán almost 40% of the households with children use financial remittances to provide them with better schooling in the form of private education. In Pindo, on the contrary, importance is overwhelmingly placed on providing them with further schooling, that is to say continuing education for more years and to a higher level, with many migrants pursuing secondary and even university education⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ I will show in chapter seven that previous education is key in the process of creation of social remittances for migrants abroad. As it will be seen in the chapters on social remittances, Pindo migrants are initially better positioned to create social remittances compared with their Xarbán counterparts.

Table 6.5: Type of changes in children's education

How?	Xarbán	Pindo
Better schooling	38.60%	15.15%
Further schooling	56.80%	81.81%
Better equipment	4.60%	3.03%
Total	100%	100%

Although financial remittances are used in both villages for pursuing education beyond primary school, the presence of a culture of migration in Xarbán affects young villagers' educational aspirations and discourages many males from attending further education. As in the case of Mexico (Sawyer, 2010), and in fact in many countries worldwide, in Ecuador secondary and tertiary education is increasingly needed to secure access to stable and well-paid jobs. Nonetheless, education beyond primary education does not yield any rewards in the US labour market as an irregular migrant (Kandel and Kao, 2001: 1210; McKenzie and Rapoport, 2006: 26). As Vasta and Kandilige (2010) showed for Ghanaians in London, emigration to the big metropolis involves a process of 'levelling down'. Having relatives currently or previously in the US increases the likelihood of successfully arriving in the US (Kandel and Kao, 2001) and affects negatively educational aspirations (Meza and Pederzini, 2009). As Kandel and Kao found for rural communities in Mexico (2001), migration to the US, instead of education, is seen in Xarbán as a path to social and economic mobility. This situation has a gender reading. Because female Xarbán villagers are not expected to migrate and they have the financial resources (in the form of remittances), they are able to study. Young female villagers in Xarbán are getting ahead in education terms compared with their male peers. All the cases of successful educational investment in Xarbán were women who, supported financially by their parents in the US, had finished university education and at the time of my research had successful careers. This is the case of four women in their twenties in Xarbán who finished university degrees in Education (two of them), Law and Economics and who now have careers as primary school teachers, lawyer and accountant respectively.

Returnee parents who have provided their children with education usually tend to be unsupportive of their children's mobility aspirations:

-If one day your children tell you that they want to go to the US...

I would not support them. Because in the US or in any other country, as things are now...if you save a lot of money and come back and just spend, and spend and spend, at some point all the money is gone. But a career, a degree, that is forever. Maybe as a doctor or an engineer. That is my idea.

(Xarbán, 42 year-old male returnee twice from the US, three children)

-What if your children tell you that they want to go to the US?

So far my kids want nothing to do with the US but I don't know in the future. If they migrate to use what they have learnt then I cannot destroy that opportunity. But if they just go as I did, I wouldn't agree, because here they have a career and they could live on that... I don't think it is worth migrating to wash dishes after having studied for 23 years. It is not worthy.

(Xarbán, 42 year-old male returnee twice from NY, married with two children)

-What if your children tell you in the future that they want to go to the US?

Oh my God, I would die [laughs]. I don't want them to go crossing the border, lots of people die, and on the other hand one goes there [in the US] to suffer. There their education is useless. I have worked there with doctors, lawyers and we are all the same because we wash dishes, cook, clean toilets... So education is useless there.

(Xarbán, female returnee from New Jersey)

While most teenagers in Pindo attend public high schools, either in the village or the canton capital, those Xarbán teenagers who are at high school attend one of the two private high schools in the canton capital. The girls tend to attend the religious *Santo Domingo de Guzman*, and boys the secular *Liceo Nuevo Mundo*. There is a widespread perception in Xarbán that private education is better than public education, and that urban schools are better than rural ones. Official figures support this idea. Using official statistics Calero et al. (2009:1147) found that private schools enjoy much lower student-teacher ratios and almost half-sized classes than public schools. Ponce (2000) also found that private schools are more efficient in terms of educational attainment than their public counterparts. Private education in Ecuador has been favoured by the country's middle classes, who opted for private solutions once they became disappointed with public education in the 1980's (Arcos Cabrera, 2008: 42). Indigenous, poor and rural people were excluded from this type of education (Ponce et al., 2003: 1).

International remittances are enabling Xarbán villagers to overcome their traditional lack of access to an education of quality by attending urban private educational establishments.

On the other hand, so far, the education system in Ecuador has not properly responded to the context created by mass international migration. As Pedone found for Ecuador (2006: 166) and Bastia for Bolivia (2009: 391), educational institutions tend to repeat simplistic discourses that stigmatize children of migrant families, as teachers of local primary schools interviewed in Pindo and Xarbán did:

Children are the ones who suffer most from migration [to Spain], because of their families' disintegration. They have been brought up by their grandparents, aunts; they are not well taken care of...This is the consequence of leaving kids with old people who can barely take care of themselves. Here there was a case of two girls raped by their uncle. Little girls whose mother went to Spain and their father was dead. These are the consequences of migration.

-Not because of having a bad uncle?

But it was because their mum wasn't around. She had to migrate to send a bit of money. Children are the ones who suffered most. Yes, they get into bad habits, stay out, families are destroyed...

(Pindo, female teacher of local primary school)

As parents have money they prefer their kids to attend private schools, and they pay 60, 70 dollars a month. [...] They think that because they have money, they just spend it. Such a foolish way of wasting money. How are children compensated for their parents' absence? Sending them lots of money, fashionable clothes. What do youngsters do? Just sitting around waiting for the remittances to arrive. Remittances to pay for bad habits, vices.

(Xarbán, male teacher of local primary school)

There is a risk that remittances reduce the pressure on authorities to provide more and better education, as those who receive remittances can afford private education. In the Mexican context, Dustman and Speciale found that high remittances were associated with a decrease in public expenditure in education (2005). There is no data on this issue for Ecuador except for a flawed study by Ordoñez which seems to point in this direction (2010). Return migration from Europe, where there is generally good public education provision, could reverse this trend if

returnees (having been exposed to the European education systems and lacking the financial resources to afford private education for their children in Ecuador) exert their demands for better education on the State.

Some migrants with legal status are considering staying abroad, despite the acute financial crisis. They are aware that, by them staying abroad, their children will be more likely to access university education than if they return to Ecuador.

-What are your plans for the future?

Because of my daughter I see myself here [in Spain]. As I could not study what I wanted when I was young, now I want my daughter to study.

-You think it will be easier if you stay in Spain?

Of course, education is better here. In Ecuador you need a lot of money, and I would need a career to be able to help my daughter to get ahead. Here I have a job and there is also a bit more of [institutional] support. She will be able to study whatever she will want. She is now at school, takes ballet classes and she just started karate. She is my world, my life. She is everything for me. I keep contact with her father but I am the only one in charge of her because he cannot take care of her.

(Pindo, 30 year-old single female migrant in Spain with a daughter living with her)

Finally, it is important to mention that remittances increase the availability of funds and reduce the dependency of households on their younger members (at least once remittances start arriving). However, as seen in the previous chapter, financial remittances must be allocated among competing uses. Money for education in Xarbán and Pindo competes with money to build one's own house.

Money runs out, but land, the family house and my children's education stay. Giving them education is very important, so they can get by on their own. My husband told me it's better to give our children education first than to build a new house.

(Xarbán, 42 year-old wife of migrant in the US since 2001, three children)

Overall, Xarbán migrants do not appear economically irrational in their education choices. Is it economically rational to invest in education? Not if people see their future abroad, either in the US as irregular workers (as de-skilling may occur leading to personal frustration) or in

Europe (in a regular situation but constrained to a specific labour niche). Moreover, the important informal sector of the Ecuadorian labour market does not require qualified workers (Arcos Cabrera, 2008: 60). However, all this does not mean that, from a more holistic approach, education must not be appreciated as a way to personal development and fulfilment. The issue is where that personal fulfilment can be best achieved.

b) Health

Improvements in the health status of remittance receivers are not only a direct consequence of increased expenditure on health care. They can occur for several intermingled reasons such as better housing conditions (Duryea et al., 2005), better nutrition (Civilizyand and Urrusti, 2009), or social remittances (Frank and Hummer, 2002), whose effects are very difficult to trace and isolate. Hence I limit the discussion here to the direct destination of remittances to health care expenditure. A very high percentage of households in Xarbán and Pindo reported positive changes in health care since they started receiving remittances (72% and 74% respectively). It is important to note that some of the households which reported no changes in their level of health care may not have needed it. Remittance receivers such as migrants' spouses and young children are less likely to need health care than if the receivers are migrants' elderly parents.

Positive changes can be in the form of more and/or better health care. Although the Ecuadorian National Health Service (IESS and the *Seguro Campesino*, outlined in chapter four) is slowly improving⁵¹, many Ecuadorians who can afford it still prefer to seek private health care. Remittance receivers in rural areas have joined this group (Murrungarra suggests a similar pattern for Armenia, 2002: 43). The city of Cuenca has an important private health care sector with many premises, doctors and treatments available. I came across several Pindo villagers from the most successful remittance receiving households who travel to Cuenca for medical treatment. Not only is the quality of public health care lower than the private one in Ecuador, but there is also a high percentage of people without formal access to public health care (Bedoya Vaca, 2008: 30). International remittances, as Frank et al. (2009: 1230) and Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo (2009) found in Mexico, allow individuals without formal access to health care to gain access to it through the private health care sector.

⁵¹ Less so in rural areas. In Xarbán at the time of my fieldwork, the doctor had been ill for two months with no replacement. In Pindo, the local medical centre lacked many facilities, so patients had to travel to the canton capital for many tests. When undergoing surgery in a public hospital patients must pay for the medicines, blood, saline solutions or any other input needed.

c) Housing

Remittances have dramatically changed the housing landscape of both villages, more intensely in Xarbán. Migration is often targeted at the specific objective to build one's own house, and migrants go through much hardship in order to save enough to build a concrete house. This is usually the first big expenditure made by migrants after daily expenses are covered and debts repaid. Most households in both villages reported experiencing significant changes in their housing conditions since they started receiving remittances (Table 6.6).

Table 6.6: Percentage of households that have experienced changes in housing conditions since they started receiving remittances

	Xarbán %	Pindo %
New built house	84%	42%
Bought house	17%	42%
Refurbished house	18%	31%
Furniture	59%	34%
Electrical appliances (blender, washing-machine, etc.)	62%	42%
Electronics (TV, computer, etc.)	62%	42%

Due to different migration outflow patterns and each village's specific geographical features, remittances have produced different housing outcomes in each village, as shown by the different percentages of households building and buying a house in Xarbán and Pindo. In Xarbán most migrants and their families opt to stay in Xarbán and build their own house in the village. For Pindo, many migrants opt to move to the canton, province or national capital, where they buy already-built houses. Some Pindo migrants have also decided to buy property abroad, something beyond the scope of migrants from Xarbán who are in an irregular situation in the US.

In Xarbán the housing landscape is easier to analyse because there is little internal variation in migrants' housing decisions. Architectural styles in rural Xarbán have been profoundly altered in the last 40 years: from the open-structure houses built with internal remittances during the 1960's and 1970's from the Coast and the Oriente, to the current houses built with '*plata de los Estados Unidos*' (US money). There are at least three reasons to build a house in Xarbán

(instead of renting out, building or buying property somewhere else). Firstly, the vulnerability that the irregular legal status attaches to migrant villagers in the US forces them to try to build their house as quickly as possible as the fear of deportation is always present. Building in one's own village in Ecuador is the cheapest option, although with little future business opportunities for returnees. It is a common practice for parents with enough land to donate land plots to their children while they are still alive. These donations usually take place when the child gets married. A high percentage of newly-married couples do not have to buy land in order to build their houses, and this is a strong incentive to build in the village. Migrants' vulnerability also unfolds in another way. According to one of my informants, buying property in the US is not an option (56 year-old, migrant's wife in the village). In terms of procedures, it should not necessarily be a problem; however, if one is deported, one cannot take care of the property any longer. If the house has not been completely paid by then, it is quite likely that the money already paid will be lost. The relative cost, compared with a house in Ecuador, is also a reason why migrants prefer to build or buy houses in Ecuador instead of in the US.

A second reason to build in the village is the result of the combination of the irregular status in the US and the weak Welfare State in Ecuador. Everyone in Xarbán is very aware that no irregular migrant can stay in the US without working, so remaining beyond their working age in the US is not an option. On the other hand, in rural Ecuador, the monthly pension (*Seguro Campesino*, Peasant Insurance) for entitled peasants in 2009 was less than \$40, insufficient to make ends meet (personal communication with the *Seguro Campesino* local nurse). Remittance houses play an insurance role in this context of non-existent or precarious social security. Many of my informants expressed their concerns about old age. It is possible in Xarbán for elderly people to cover their minimum requirements in terms of shelter and food if they have a house and some land to raise small animals and grow crops. In this sense, building a house is also seen as a safety net for the future, in case everything else goes wrong.

Finally, the third reason to build in one own's home village is more culturally-driven and affects both Xarbán and Pindo migrants. In a country with a high proportion of peasants, land is still imbued with strong cultural meanings. The struggle for land is still a big issue in the memories of some of my informants. They can still recall their grandparents being landless *huasipungueros*. This internalised feeling becomes mixed, in the case of migrants, with the strong and unsettling sense of mobility. Houses are then immobile assets for people who are primarily defined according to their mobility. Building a house in one's village, where one was born and most of the villagers are related by blood or marriage, is investing in 'roots of

concrete'. It is important not to downplay the emotional role that remittance houses play for migrants. For people who have experienced situations of homelessness or precarious housing prior to or during migration, a 'proper' house is a must. In a sort of over-compensation, migrants erect their 'dream' houses at the core of their migration goals. The physical entity of the house can act as an emotional substitute for the home (Conway 2005: 267). It is in the remittance house's material presence that the shared project of people living apart becomes real.

The fact that most remittance houses in Xarbán stay empty is the result of immigration policies well beyond migrants' control. Migrants build houses because there are very few alternatives to build houses in the village. The business environment in rural Ecuador is not favourable. There are almost no business opportunities in places with poor basic infrastructures, and far away from main population centres. The houses remained empty for many years because migrants' legal situation in the US prevents them from living, albeit temporarily, in their houses.

In Xarbán remittance houses impact on migrants' lives but they also have effects on other villagers' lives. Before migration it is quite common for newly married couples to live in their parents' house, usually with the rest of the family. These houses tend to be small (one or two rooms for several family members), well away from the main paths and roads, and built in adobe. Remittances allow the spouse (normally the wife) and the children who stay put in the village to move away from their parents' or their parents-in-law's house. The new house – built with money from the US – is bigger, with longer-lasting materials, concrete and blocks, and better located by main roads. All these features allow migrants' spouses and children to live in more comfortable dwellings in terms of independence, size and location.

The issue of the family-in-law is crucial in the villages. Family-in-law can either smooth the hardships of physical separation between spouses, or on the contrary make unbearable the life of the spouse who stays put. My research clearly shows that having a child – especially a male – makes the lives of migrants' wives more stable. Remittances arrive in a more regular way. If possible, the wife is allowed to live on her own with her children. In this case the family-in-law has less impact on migrants' wives and children. Pauli (2008), who conducted research in Mexico, states that migration mitigates in-laws' control. My data strongly support this explanation. A female villager whom I interviewed bitterly complained about her current housing conditions. She lives in a crowded house with her husband's family. She does not get

on well with her in-laws. Her husband works long hours as a bricklayer, so she spends lots of time in the house with her in-laws. She dreams of having her own house:

More than anything else I want my husband to migrate. We do not have a house here [...] My dream is to have a house. I do not want to live here forever [the house of her parents-in-law]. It is not my house. I'd love to live in a very beautiful house with my son.

(21 year-old female, father and two brothers in Queens)

Remittance houses in Xarbán have positive effects not only for migrants and their close relatives. They also have more diffuse effects throughout the whole village. The most noticeable impact is on the labour market. Remittance houses provide working opportunities for non-migrant male villagers or returnees. Construction workers tend to be hired locally, with a strong preference for relatives. Skills are important but not essential, as stated by a local bricklayer:

I knew nothing about construction. I used to be a shoemaker. I started working with a bricklayer. He taught me everything I know now. Sometimes we did not know how to do things. We have to figure out each time. Also to learn about the new materials.

(56 year-old male, one son in the US).

Construction work in Xarbán is directly related to remittances from the US. With the current crisis, the speed of new constructions has slowed down. Many houses stay unfinished as the money from the US dried up. Nonetheless, villagers are positive about the effects of the financial crisis over the longer term. Very few people have returned to the village as a result of the lack of employment opportunities in the US. Some people are using the crisis to justify their return, when usually there are other more personal problems behind their decision. Construction work is one of the very few employment opportunities available to villagers who have no further education and no savings. This source of income has allowed them to build their own houses. Remittance houses act as a leveraging mechanism to narrow the growing gap between those who receive remittances and those who do not (or not enough, as not all migratory ventures are equally successful in terms of monetary returns to the family in the village).

Remittance houses' effects are gendered. They have a direct impact on job opportunities for male villagers. They have a different set of effects on female villagers' lives, which the following examples illustrate. A 61 year-old female, whose five children are in Queens, lives alone in a three-storey house her son has built with remittances. Before moving into her son's house, she lived away from the village centre, in her husband's house. Her son's house allowed her to move out from the family house and away from a husband she does not get on well with. The case of a 76 year-old female, with three children living in Queens, is more extreme, as it involves pervasive domestic violence. She lives alone in her son's remittance house as well. She used to live in her parents-in-law house with an alcoholic and abusive husband. She eventually managed to move out of this marital nightmare thanks to the son's house. A 68 year-old female, with one son in Queens, also managed to move away from a violently abusive husband who used to beat her up. She still has physical consequences from the beatings she suffered from her still-alive husband. She found a safe haven living with her daughter-in-law and her grandchildren in the big house her son built with remittances from the US. Had it not been for the remittance houses, she would have not been that welcome to move in with her daughter-in-law into a smaller property. Remittance houses, as in these three examples, have improved the lives of many women in the village.

All these three women were close relatives of migrants in the US. However, remittance houses also improve the lives of those who do not have relatives in the US. Building a house in Xarbán can take several years. In order to avoid squatters or village youngsters using the unfinished houses during the weekends, some poorer relatives or villagers are invited to stay in the unfinished construction. During my fieldwork, I came across the case of a very old lady who used to live alone in a neglected adobe house at the top of the mountain. She currently lives in an unfinished remittance house much closer to other houses and the main road. She is not a relative of the house owners. However they decided to ask her to move to the house to prevent youngsters from using the premises for partying and drinking. These are just some examples of how remittance houses provide the opportunity to improve living conditions, not only in a material way but also and more importantly in the general well-being of migrants' relatives and villagers in general. As seen, these improvements are gendered and deployed in different ways.

In Pindo, the housing scenario resulting from remittances is more complex. First, because of regular legal status abroad and the real-estate bubble in Spain many migrants bought properties in Spain. With the financial crisis, many of these migrants were forced to hand in

their properties to the banks and lost all the money they have paid so far. This situation created an important group of Pindo migrants who currently do not have a property, neither in Spain nor in Ecuador.

A second group of migrants bought or built a house in Ecuador, but not in Pindo. They were looking for a sustainable return to Ecuador and decided to settle down in places with more job opportunities, such as Cariamanga, Loja city, Quito or Guayaquil. Very successful migrants managed to build a house in Pindo and buy a house somewhere else in Ecuador, but these cases are quite exceptional. This is for instance the case of a returnee, who has built a holiday house in Pindo following a plan he brought from Spain, where he worked as a construction worker.

-Did you always want to return to Ecuador?

Yes. As soon as we migrated we started to build this house [a massive two-storey house in Pindo], I even brought the plan from Spain. We were very excited about finishing our house. But we could not buy all the furniture. The job in Spain started to worsen and we did not have enough money to buy the sofas and all that. [...] I arrived just one month ago. Now we have decided to live in Loja, as we also have a house there. As there are more jobs in Loja. Because of my work, I spend more time in Loja than here.

(Pindo, 30 year-old married male returnee from Spain 1999-2009)

A third group of migrants, usually not from the centre of the village but from the fields, have built a house in Pindo. These migrants were usually late-leavers from the most isolated parts of the village. They aimed to buy or build a concrete house in the village centre, which is better situated with regard to communication and safer than living out in the fields where there is a serious problem of insecurity (attacks, cattle theft and burglary). Living in a house of concrete instead of a mud house has positive health consequences in a region where the Chagas disease is endemic, due to the bug that transmits the disease living in adobe walls. In some cases, having a house in the village centre also enables these migrants to set up a little business upon return, as the case of this female returnee from Spain:

I lived in X [the fields] in a small wattle and daub house. We lived there with my seven children. [...] I worked first in Madrid, and then I went to Murcia. [...] I worked, I paid the money [the journey debt], and managed to buy a small lot of land [in the village centre]. Well, I did not stay very long in Spain. I returned soon and asked the bank here for a loan. With the loan I built my house. So, I built my house and with the little remaining money I set up this little shop.

(Pindo, 45 year-old married female returnee from Spain 2001-2003)

Both in Xarbán and Pindo, building a house is one of the initial motivations to migrate and save money. Xarbán migrants almost always decide to build their house in Xarbán, while Pindo migrants show different and diversified behaviour regarding their housing decisions. Housing is perceived as a secure investment in a highly insecure investment environment because 'brick lasts'. Due to the insecurity in some parts of Pindo, few new houses are built in the peripheral 'field' areas of the village.

d) Vehicles

There is abundant anecdotal data in the literature on remittances being used to buy vehicles (for Mexico, Cohen and Rodriguez, 2005: 57; and Zarate-Hoyos, 2007: 47; for Albania, King et al., 2006: 414; and Maroukis, 2005: 217; for West Africa, Cotula and Toulmin, 2004: 18; and Smith, 2007: 111; for Moldova Ghencea and Gudumac, 2004: 64). The potential to generate income out of this expenditure has not been sufficiently investigated. In Xarbán 14% and in Pindo 18% of households have bought a vehicle (usually a car, but also buses, coaches or trucks) since they started to receive remittances. The percentage is higher in Pindo because cars are high in the list of priorities of migrants' relatives and returnees due to the scattered pattern of the village. It is not uncommon for migrants to buy cars while abroad which are then used by some relative in Ecuador.

Cars are very expensive in Ecuador, partly because most of them are imported and there are high import tariffs⁵², and partly because only big cars are suitable to drive in rural areas because of the bad state of roads. This is particularly so in the case of Pindo where even the road to the canton capital is a winding, unpaved and bumpy track. American-type pick-ups are the most convenient car because of the state of the roads, but also because they can be used

⁵² As in the Dominican Republic (Levitt, 2001: 206), in Ecuador since 2009 under the official plan of 'Welcome Home', returning migrants to Ecuador can import one car tax-exempt. The car must be newer than four years old, up to \$20,000 maximum value and less than 3 litres engine capacity (SENAMI, 2011).

simultaneously to drive people and loads such as livestock or agricultural production. The prices of these pick-up vehicles at the time of my research started at \$18,000, with the models I most often saw costing around \$25,000.

Private car owners do not have to depend on the unreliable local public transport, which is particularly important when villagers need to take their crops to the market. Private vehicle ownership is a must to support any sort of investment, whether agricultural or not, in Xarbán and Pindo. In Pindo, for instance, returnees and migrants' relatives growing market crops must have a car of their own to assure that they will be able to take their crops on time to the regional markets. Private vehicle owners can also make some extra money by taking people as informal taxis. Hence having a car increases the comfort of the household members, as well as providing a modest and irregular income. However private cars are not a regular and profitable enough source of income. Official taxis and buses, on the other hand, are an important source of income. Most taxi, bus and coach services in Ecuador are provided in the form of transport cooperatives. In order to become a member one must buy one's own vehicle as well as membership in one of the local transport cooperatives. As Da Ros shows, most of the country's transport cooperatives are such only in name (2004: 18). In fact transport cooperatives (created under this heading to attract fiscal benefits) create an oligarchy, with all the drawbacks associated with lack of competition. These cooperatives are closed bodies with restrictive entrance (Da Ros, 2004: 18). Cooperative members have incentives to maintain the number of the cooperative members low in order to keep local transport competition low and prices high. This limited and tightly controlled supply combines with an increasing demand for cooperative membership. Remittance inflow has triggered a taxi and bus boom in places of high remittance reception, as remittances also allow people to move more and in more comfortable ways. This situation is very visible in Xarbán. The high profits made by taxis and coach owners – who often are not the drivers and who sometimes own more than one vehicle – have attracted the attention of migrants and returnees who see cooperative membership as a profitable way to invest their remittances and savings. Given that cooperative membership is tightly controlled by the current cooperative members, the rising demand to become a cooperative member has enormously increased the entrance fee. As an example, in 2009 the membership entrance fee (provided there was an opening at time) in one of Xarbán taxi cooperatives was \$6,000. Adding the cost of the car, this is an investment which few villagers can face. Wealthy migrants and returnees are using remittances and savings to gain access to this closed sector and enjoy the associated benefits. Once inside, they have no incentive to introduce changes. Remittances and returnees are thus not introducing progressive changes in

the corporate world of Ecuadorian rural transport cooperatives, and structural problems in the transport sector remain.

There are a few cases of remittances earned by female migrants used to buy vehicles. It has a very interesting gender reading. In Xarbán, but mostly in Pindo (where more women migrated), some female migrants and returnees opt to use their savings to buy cars and cooperative memberships for their male relatives (given that women do not traditionally drive in rural Ecuador). As Bastia (2011) found in Bolivia, the women who challenged traditional gender roles with their international migration were as a result subjected to much criticism in Ecuador. Upon their return these women are willing to comply with the gender status quo in order to be able to convert their economic success gained abroad into local social mobility. Many of the women interviewed by Bastia 'use the taxi to reinstate their husband's role and confirm his identity as the main breadwinner while at the same time positioning herself as a housewife' (2011: 1525). This way, female migrants' remittances and savings re-state male domination which had been touched by female migration. This suggests that 'women migrants prefer to barter the gender gains accrued abroad for upward social mobility' (Bastia, 2011: 1526).

e) Land, agriculture and livestock

Referring back to Table 6.3, we can see that in Xarbán 42% of households reported having acquired land since starting to receive remittances, compared with only 30% in Pindo. Conversely, more households in Pindo acquired livestock since receiving remittances (22%) than in Xarbán (14%). No significant changes were reported on agricultural inputs in both villages, suggesting that no major active investments are taking place in agriculture in either of the two villages, although there are a few successful cases in Pindo which are worth analysing. These differences are meaningful and respond to different ecological features of each village and its associated migration.

First of all, it must be clarified that land can be bought for agricultural or urbanization purposes as well as with land speculation in mind. As seen, remittances have allowed an improvement in the housing landscape of both villages, more pronounced in Xarbán. Previous agriculture plots have become building-site plots. This tendency has been acknowledged in other parts of the Azuay province (Jokisch, 2002: 525). With the remittance boom the price of land by the main communication routes in the village has dramatically increased, which is an incentive to

accumulate land for speculation purposes. In Xarbán the most valuable land plots are alongside the main communication routes in the least high parts of the village. Due to the high altitude of Xarbán, land above 3,000 meters is unsuitable for agricultural production.

In Pindo, where land is located at a lower altitude, water is the main scarce resource. Irrigated land by the Pindo river or along the recently built irrigation channel is too expensive for households without migrants abroad to supply the capital, and money earned abroad, first in the US and later in Europe, has been key for the accumulation of irrigated land. International remittances have allowed a process of land concentration in relation both to the quantity and the quality of the land. Irrigated land, very scarce and too expensive for average villagers to buy, is unequally distributed, with parish centre dwellers hoarding most. Some villagers have set up farms where they have orchards, cattle, pigs, chickens, and fish (*tilapias*) for the market. These farms depend on agricultural workers, some of whom are landless villagers but most often Peruvian migrants from across the nearby border. The biggest obstacle these few families encounter in order to set up a truly sustainable market-oriented agricultural production in Pindo is transportation. The Loja-Cariamanga route was only built in the 1950s and the route between Pindo and Cariamanga is often closed off. Middlemen in La Toma (the province's commercial town near Loja city) control the agricultural and cattle distribution for the cities of Loja, Cuenca and Guayaquil, diminishing the potential benefits for Pindo farmers. Moreover, the market tends to become oversupplied with seasonal products as most villagers plant the same crops. In Pindo, where initial economic differentiation was bigger, poor families used remittances to improve their precarious living conditions by building houses. Wealthier families with already higher levels of material well-being living in the parish centre used remittances to acquire more land and livestock for business investment purposes. Mestries also found this same pattern in his study in the Mexican state of Veracruz (2008: 106).

Only in Pindo did I find a few families of very successful migrants who were already above the village average before migration using remittances to invest in agriculture. They are usually considered by other villagers as examples to follow. They create jobs, but poorer villagers are only hired on a temporary basis such as for the harvest, because permanent workers are all Peruvians. This labour substitution does not take place in Xarbán, further away from the Peruvian border, and where the agriculture-cattle substitution has been more intense due to the inability to cope with the labour shortage resulting from emigration. The fact that emigration from Xarbán is predominantly male has also added an extra obstacle for agricultural production. Because of this and previous reasons, commercial agriculture does not

take place in Xarbán. In Pindo, although plots are bigger, the bad condition of the communication routes prevents this sort of agriculture to take off. I was told stories by farmers in Pindo about having lost their whole tomato harvest because the communication routes from the village were cut off and they could not take the fruit to the market.

-Can you use here [in Pindo] any of what you learnt [working in agriculture in Spain]?

The greenhouses... But here we cannot rely on the roads. Here tomatoes grow well. From January to May here there are a lot of tomatoes but if roads become impassable, how can we take the tomatoes to the market? Sometimes both roads [linking Pindo with the canton capital and the province capital] are closed in winter. It starts raining in December till May, and then if the roads are closed we lose all the tomato production.

(Pindo, 43 year-old male returnee from Spain 2001-2009)

In both villages the small size of the plots (in a context of *minifundio* and even *microfundio* in Xarbán) and the uneven relief of the Andes discourage making any substantial investment in agricultural machinery. Machinery is hired for the days when it is needed – for instance a combine harvester for the harvest period, or a plough for the sowing season.

The fact that remittances are used in agriculture in Pindo but not in Xarbán is partially explained by the different time horizon of the out-migration in both villages. Emigration from Pindo is more recent than from Xarbán. As Herrera and Martínez hypothesized for the South of Ecuador, in places of recent emigration, remittances are just one type of household income along with agriculture and livestock (2002: 40). In places with a longer story of emigration, like Xarbán, receiving households have come to rely almost exclusively on remittances from abroad. In this situation agriculture is no longer perceived as a central source of income. In case of active investment, remittance receivers prefer to look for less risky and more stable sources of income than agricultural production. In Xarbán 'to buy land is no longer an economic objective but a symbolic one: land as a sign of status, and remittances as a way to break with traditional local hierarchies' (Herrera and Martínez, 2002: 41).

The different percentages in livestock acquisition in both villages tell a very interesting story⁵³. History also plays its part in the explanation of this difference, as the Pindo region has been a traditional rancher area since the *hacienda* times. In Xarbán, as in other parts of the Ecuadorian Andes (Rebaï, 2009) cattle are taking over many traditionally agricultural lands. As raising cattle is an activity less intensive in labour than agriculture, this substitution is a normal reaction in a context of high emigration and scarcity of labour. In Pindo, due to its geographical location by the Peruvian border, Peruvian labourers have taken over some jobs left by the villagers who migrated. In Xarbán this substitution is not taking place, so the substitution of agriculture by cattle is more accentuated. Cattle can fulfil two different functions. Some families maintain cattle for milk (no more than thirty head), while others raise cattle to sell, usually in larger herds. In the first case, the sale of milk and cheese provide a regular, albeit small, source of income for these families. In the second case, wealthier villagers make a living out of selling cattle either in the Gonzanamá or Loja market, or in Guayaquil. They own many more cattle and must draw on relatives' work or hire labourers. Instead of keeping savings in bank accounts, money is kept in the form of livestock. Cattle buffer shocks in a context of poorly developed credit and insurance markets by smoothing consumption (Rosenzweig and Wolpin, 1993; Zarate-Hoyos, 2007: 117), as cattle can be easily converted into money at the important weekly livestock markets. As cattle can be converted into cash quicker than land, they act as a sort of live bank account. Some other returnees and migrants' relatives are making progress raising pigs, fish, guinea pigs and chickens. This suggests that remittances have set the foundations for an autonomous and sustainable source of income for some families. However, with limited access to credit and insurance, and in the absence of remittances, it is not clear what the future of these agricultural initiatives will be.

6.1.3. Some issues on the classification of remittance uses

Most studies on remittance uses tend to classify them either as consumption or investment (see for example, Adams, 1989; Gupta et al., 2007; Lucas, 2005; Russell, 1986; Stahl, 1982; Stark et al., 1986). Some studies provide also a third category, savings, which is, nonetheless, difficult to detect and define and often stands outside migrants' and receivers' emic definition of remittances, as we saw earlier. Consumption (often labelled as 'conspicuous') is regarded in most of these studies as a waste of resources, to the detriment of investment ventures.

⁵³ Cattle makes up for the most part of the increase in livestock. The number of horses and donkeys is reducing because they no longer function as transport means. Sheep also decline as wool fabric has been substituted by cheaper synthetic garments. Pigs, guinea pigs (in Xarbán) and chickens (in Pindo) are considered differently by villagers as they are usually kept in the household compounds.

Consumption might be positive in terms of poverty alleviation (Acosta et al., 2007; Adams and Page, 2003; Ratha, 2007), but not able to set the basis for future development independent of remittances. Some accounts even doubt the ability of material remittances to fight structural poverty, as they are unable to change the underlying structural reasons for that poverty (Canales, 2007). On the contrary, it is argued that remittance-fed investment would establish independent sources for future income.

Following this line of reasoning, and given that what has been labelled in this thesis as emic remittances is traditionally considered as non-productive consumption, financial remittances are broadly speaking not a source of sustainable development on their own. This initial separation between consumption and investment has given way to more sophisticated models. Some models talk about consumption-type investments and categorize health and education expenses under this labelling, in the spirit of human capital approaches (Adams, 2005; Zarate-Hoyos, 2004). Even in the case of these latter explanations, there is an excessive 'economization' of academic accounts of the impacts of remittance uses. Mahler's powerful critique of the underlying ideas behind explanations of the 'productive use of remittances' highlighted that, on the one hand, most of these studies use a conservative and narrow definition of 'productive use' (2000). Under such a heading only 'remittances invested in business ventures or placed in savings accounts where the capital can be invested by the banking system' are considered as yielding productive use (2000: 31). On the other hand she also noted that not only are definitions of investment too narrow, they are also laden with infelicitous socio-cultural connotations, particularly regarding gender:

When remittances are spent on consumption then, a subtle gendered critique emerges, one in which women are portrayed — albeit inadvertently — as failing to put remittances to their best use, or inhibiting investment. One reason for this characterization is the fact that remittances are not studied holistically (Mahler, 2000: 31).

Stemming from Mahler's critique, Ghencea and Gudumac in their study on remittances to Moldova came up with the distinction between active and passive investment (2004), which I consider to be a way forward in the Manichaeian investment-vs.-consumption approach to remittances' uses. Following these authors, I define those expenses which may produce an income in the future but which were not initially made with such an aim as passive investment. It is active investment, then, when the expenses are purposely and primarily made to produce

an income or revenue in the future. Linking back to my ethnographic data, it is easy to see that remittances used for housing purposes are passive investment. It is a passive investment because the primary aim of their owners was not to produce an income, but to provide a better material environment for their relatives and a place for migrants to return to. However, it is an investment because the house can produce income in the future. As Grigolini found for Mexico (2005), in Pindo and Xarbán the new, bigger and better located remittance houses can provide an income because rooms can be rented out to people who work in the village, or shops, restaurants or stores can be set up. These revenue-generating activities are not possible in traditional houses because they are not big enough to accommodate the family members, less so to rent out; they are uncomfortable and usually located in less accessible parts of the villages, either away from the parish centre or from the main communication routes. Moreover, housing is not only a passive investment but it also has important multiplying effects in the local and regional economies, as Durand et al. first showed for Mexico (1996). The construction boom in Xarbán and Pindo has created business opportunities which some villagers have been able to exploit. This is the case, for instance, of a male villager in Xarbán who could not reach the US and who works as a welder and has his own glass shop, or a female returnee in Pindo who set up her own ironmonger's with the money she saved while in Spain.

Remittances used for education and health expenses, that increase human capital and thereby provide better income in the future but which are not initially pursued with that specific aim, are also passive investments. On the other hand, remittances used to acquire livestock, vehicles, or to start new small entrepreneurial activities (as for instance the acquisition of a gold mine), are an active investment as they respond to the primary aim of producing a sustainable source of income.

6.2 Collective Remittances: Devout Money

There is a sixth type of material transfer in Pindo and Xarbán which I did not cover in the previous chapter: collective remittances. According to Goldring, collective or community-based remittances is the 'money raised by a group that is used to benefit a group or community with which it is affiliated' (2004: 808), often in the form of projects that help migrants' communities of origin. Goldring's two requirements, the presence of groups at both ends of the transfer, appears too rigid and leaves out unclassified money sent for collective purposes but not raised by a group. Therefore, I will use the term 'collective remittances' as an umbrella heading for

the sending, in any direction, of either money or goods for a collective goal, irrespective of the way money was raised.

Collective remittances acquired academic and political relevance in the mid-nineties with the efforts of governments to capture and channel those funds as a high-quality substitute for public expenditure on development projects. The Mexican 'Programa 3x1 para Migrantes' is the most thoroughly documented case (Fernández de Castro et al., 2006; Iskander, 2005). There is by now an extensive literature on collective remittances, particularly in the Mexican-US context, and in relation to three main themes: Home Town Associations (HTAs) (Alarcón and Escala-Rabadan, 2007; Bada, 2004; Çağlar, 2006), the role of Diaspora in the development of migrants' places of origin (Newland, 2004; Orozco, 2000), and the proactive role of migrant-sending and remittance-receiving States (de la Garza and Cortina, 2005; Delgado-Wise et al., 2004). The scope of this section is narrower. I will provide here neither an analysis of the changing approach of the Ecuadorian State towards their citizens abroad (for a good summary see Cortés, 2010: 252), nor the appearance and features of Ecuadorian associations abroad. Rather, I aim to provide, through a micro-level ethnography of the types of collective remittances in Xarbán and Pindo, an account of the specific transfer mechanisms, migrants' motivations to participate in the sending of collective remittances, and non-migrants' perceptions of these collective remittances. I will also look at the power negotiations around this transfer, not only between migrants and non-migrants but also between migrants and the local authorities.

6.2.1. Collective remittances in Xarbán and Pindo

In both villages, money has been sent by migrants abroad for collective purposes. Most often money is sent for religious uses, whether to pay for the local church's property acquisition/improvement, or to fund religious festive events. There are also some unstructured and non-periodical practices of transnational charity by relatively successful migrants. They consist of food and clothes, never money, for very poor families in the villages (often very old people without anyone to take care of them). Migrants send small amounts to some relative to buy food or clothes and hand the goods and foodstuff to the poor families in the parish. These actions are completely up to the migrants, discontinuous and not institutionalised in any way. Migrants' motivations (or the lack of motivations) to send money for collective goals derive from their situation abroad and their plans about the future. These motivations interplay with the specific features of the respective villages, to create collective frames of possibility, which

are different in Xarbán and Pindo in terms of the nature of the collective goals and the collective structures in place.

In Xarbán important amounts are regularly received to improve the village church fabric and to fund festive and religious events. The biggest amounts are sent to fund Xarbán patron festivities such as the Lord of the Miracles every September, but smaller quantities are also regularly sent for less important festivities. In Pindo, on the contrary, in only a few cases is money asked to migrants to fund fiestas. However, money was sent to buy a plot of land and build the village cemetery, tile the church building, as well as for a project to channel water in partnership with a NGO. In Xarbán no money has been sent for development projects, due to the acute distrust between migrants and the village political authorities.

Regarding the collective social structures where goals are decided, fundraising activities organized and the sending takes place, often cited in the literature as HTAs or '*clubs de oriundos*', the differences between Xarbán and Pindo are striking. In Pindo money is not raised in a communal way. Families ask their relatives abroad to send extra money beyond emic remittances and the relatives themselves hand the money in to the person in charge of each collective project. No appeals are made directly to migrants. There are several reasons that explain why a collective organization has not emerged among Pindo migrants. As I will show for the case of social remittances in the following chapters, the regular status of most Pindo migrants in Spain means that their attachment to Pindo is more practical and casual: they can travel back and forth and they can even consider staying abroad. Regular legal status also leads to residential dispersion of migrants in their new places of residence, thus making interactions with *paisanos* less frequent. It translates into a less intense disciplinarian peer-power, lessening migrants' obligation to comply. Wages are on average lower in Spain than in the US, consequently migrants' financial ability to send money beyond the family is rather limited. Finally, it can also be argued that the time horizon of Ecuadorian migration to Europe is shorter than Ecuadorian migration to the US, not providing enough time yet for any collective structure to develop.

Interestingly, Xarbán migrants in the borough of Queens have developed an embryonic association, based on the presence of dense communication networks between Xarbán and Queens, and strong peer-control structures. Xarbán migrants in the US, due to their irregular status, are keen to retain their links with Xarbán, where they will eventually return. HTAs provide the social space for migrants to exert a transnational membership, in order not to

become detached from their places of origin. HTAs can also work as a venue for prestige within the migrant community abroad while confronting downward social mobility in migrants' current places of residence. Unlike Pindo migrants in Europe, in Queens there is such a thing as a Xarbán community. Consequently Xarbán migrants have strong incentives to take up roles in collective structures as a way to acquire prestige both within the Xarbán community in the US and in Ecuador. Upon their return to Xarbán, returnees can draw on this accumulated prestige for social and/or economic rewards.

Because in Pindo money for collective purposes is sent through the family, it is hardly visible. Non-migrants, unless explicitly told, cannot distinguish which resources come from migrants and which do not. This creates no room for public criticism, and power negotiations stay within the household realm. In Xarbán, on the contrary, because collective remittances are not sent through the family, they create a whole new set of power negotiations and discourses. Migrants who send collective remittances want the effect of their money to be as visible as possible, as part of their strategy of reinforcing transnational membership. Their money compensates their physical absence and makes non-migrants remember migrants' desire to maintain their belonging to Xarbán. Migrants must carefully select the collective goals to fund. Goals must be visible, socially appropriate in order not to attract criticism from non-migrants and other migrants, and their implementation must be easy to monitor. Funding religious fiestas in Xarbán satisfies each of these requirements. First, fiestas are very visible, and as such very easy to monitor via videos, photos and attendees' accounts. More importantly, it is expenditure difficult to criticize if presented within a framework of devotion to the saints. There are few alternative collective goals whose rewards are as big as religious fiestas. For instance, money for development projects in Xarbán is likely to attract bitter criticism and eventually fail due to lack of proper expertise and monitoring systems as migrants' irregular legal status makes them unable to physically follow the projects. In the very few cases of migrants attempting these projects, due to inherent jealousies in small rural settings, they have been heavily criticized, information was distorted and misunderstood, and the project either never took place or failed. This was the case of a migrant with regular status in the US (via a marriage of convenience⁵⁴) who tried to set up a weaving cooperative with Xarbán women. He planned to sell the jumpers in the US bypassing the control of Otavaleño

⁵⁴ A marriage of convenience with a US citizen was for this migrant a route to regular legal status in the US, unlike most of his fellow villagers, because he entered regularly to the US with a tourist visa and then overstayed. For migrants who did not enter the US through a checkpoint (that is, they irregularly crossed the US-Mexico border) at the time of my research there was no regularization route without leaving the country first, and then with low chances of success.

middlemen. Rumours spread in the village about his ‘true’ intentions, and he was heavily criticized for divorcing his wife in order to marry a US citizen. He did not manage to take villagers onboard with his development project (which would have meant an alternative source of income for the villagers, although quite a risky one). This migrant failed to take advantage of his privileged position as a legal US resident, which allows him to travel freely between Ecuador and the US. His attempts to set up this alternative route for prestige started after he failed to enter the collective structures already in place in Queens, which I move on to explain now.

6.2.2. Lord of the Miracles: patron saint of Xarbán and their migrants in the US

I will focus now on the best case of collective remittances I encountered and which deserves further examination, the funding of the Xarbán patron saint annual festivity: the fiesta of the Lord of the Miracles⁵⁵. I will try to show the underlying motivations of collective remittances for festive and religious purposes. First of all, it must be clarified that in rural Andean Ecuador it is unrealistic to separate fiesta and religion: *fiesta is religion* in the Andes. While administering the questionnaire on material remittances, I realized quite early on that the differentiation that I had made beforehand between money for the fiesta and money for the church did not make sense to my respondents.

Financial remittances have altered and enriched the festive panorama in many rural areas of the Andes. In Xarbán the festive panorama comprises religious and non-religious fiestas, as well as regular and one-off fiestas. Table 6.7 shows some of them.

Table 6.7: Main fiestas in Xarbán

	Regular	One-off
Religious	Eastern-Via Crucis parade (March-April) Blessed Virgin (29th May) The Holy Cross (12th June) St. James-Santiago (11th July) Lord of the Miracles (24th September) Christmas-‘Pase del Niño’ (25th December)	Baptism First Communion Confirmation Religious wedding
Non-religious	Official village fiesta-Parroquialization (5th February) Carnival (February-March) Mother’s Day (second Sunday of May)	High-school graduation University graduation Quinceañera House finishing ceremony

⁵⁵ The Lord of the Miracles is worshipped throughout the Andes, as shown in the works of Merino (2004) and Paerregaard (2008).

Interestingly, alongside traditional fiestas there are also non-traditional ones, such as graduation parties and '*fiestas de Quinceañera*'. Graduation parties were unthinkable a decade ago when few Xarbán villagers finished secondary education because of lack of resources. Currently, not only there is a reason to celebrate, there are also the resources to pay for the celebration. Remittances sent from the US have enabled young villagers to pursue secondary and university education. Remittances have also allowed people to lavishly celebrate their academic achievements. Another example of a non-traditional fiesta is the *Quinceañera*, a celebration of girls becoming women when they turn fifteen. This fiesta, of contested origin but widely celebrated among Mexican migrants in the US (Davalos, 1996), is increasingly common among remittance-receiving rural families in Ecuador. Ecuadorian upper and middle-class urban families have been celebrating these events for many decades, but only with the receipt of international remittances are rural families starting to celebrate it. Although these villagers are criticized for importing foreign traditions, it is more likely that they are replicating the festive behaviour of the Ecuadorian rich urban classes. These events, as most of those which take place one-off, are funded by remittances, usually in the form of gift money, but not through collective remittances. Collective remittances are sent to fund the Lord of the Miracles fiesta, as well as other minor patron festivities (such as the Blessed Virgin, St. James, the Holy Cross, or '*Pase del Niño*' in Christmas).

The appropriation of religious images by means of localizing them is quite common in popular religiosity (Velasco, 1989), as it is the desire of the faithful that their patron saints meet their current needs (Vanderwood, 2006: 226). The greatest current spiritual need of Xarbán villagers is related to their irregular migration to the United States. Therefore, the Lord of Miracles is not only the patron saint of Xarbán but also the patron saint of Xarbán migrants abroad. This process has taken place in other settings of intense emigration. The most paradigmatic case in Ecuador is the Lord of Andacocha, some fifteen miles away from Xarbán, also known as San Coyotito (Saint Little Smuggler). Those migrants who are about to migrate to the US usually go on a pilgrimage to the Lord of Andacocha sanctuary to ask for safe arrival in the US. The sanctuary's walls are covered with gratitude plaques and migrants usually send money for the Lord of Andacocha.

Figure 6.1: Details of the Lord of Andacocha sanctuary



Source: photos by the author

This specialized protection of migrants is also present in other parts of Ecuador. Some saints or images⁵⁶ have been reworked to meet the current needs of the population. This is the case of Our Lady of Quinche (located near Quito), nicknamed as the ‘Virgin without papers’ by irregular Ecuadorian migrants in Spain⁵⁷. The most striking case of re-appropriation by migrants’ seeking protection is the case of Juan Soldado in Mexico (Vanderwood, 2006). Now I focus on the case of the Lord of the Miracles fiesta and their links with collective remittances.

6.2.3. Transnational cargo system

Religious fiestas in rural Ecuador are sponsored and organized by *priostes*. I use the term *priostazgo/prioste* instead of the better known *cargo system/mayordomo* from North and Central America (Cancián, 1965), because the former is exclusively used in the Andes (Montes del Castillo, 1989). With the intense emigration of young male villagers, many of the *priostes* of the Lord of the Miracles fiesta are currently living in the US. The Xarbán migrants’ association in Queens stems from and reproduces the traditional institution of the *priostazgo*. Nowadays

⁵⁶ A saint’s physical representation comes to be worshipped as the actual saint in many parts of the Andes, originating from the way the colonization took place (Celestino, 1998).

⁵⁷ These processes are by no means an exception in the Andes. Popular religious festivals in the Andes have undergone processes of syncretism and appropriation of disparate ritual elements (see for instance Cahill, 1996). Rituals from very different backgrounds have merged into the current Andean festive panorama. This is the case, for instance, of the processes of redefinition of the Catholic iconography imposed by colonizers with pre-Hispanic rituals; for example, Our Lady of Quinche, one of the most popular religious symbols of the country, which according to Richard Salazar could be located in the same place as an ancient Inca Sun Temple (Salazar, 2000: 50). It is also the case of Inti Raymi (the Sun Festival in quechua) who came to identify with the Catholic feast of San Juan (Hill, 2004: 213).

there is a mirror *priostazgo* structure, where US-located *priostes* fund and decide about the Lord of the Miracles annual fiesta, while Xarbán-located *priostes* (the few who have stayed put in Xarbán and some returnees) are in charge of the actual organization. The latter have little or no decision power.

-Do you know how the money is gathered in the US?

[...] the villagers tell the main *prioste* how much money they are going to collaborate with. Their names and the quantities are written down. [...] The main *priostes* usually put in more money, 200, 300 dollars each. The others give 20, 50 dollars. In total they gather 3,000, 2,000, 1,000 dollars. They sent it altogether. I receive the money and follow their instructions. I cannot do as I like because it is not my money. It is their money. So they tell me, we send you the money and you are going to do this and that.

(Xarbán, male in his forties, non-migrant and Xarbán-located *prioste*)

Xarbán migrants raise money in two different ways: in a personal way through many, usually small, contributions; or collectively through the organization of events in the US. The most important event is the fiesta of the Lord of the Miracles in Queens that US-located *priostes* organize each year in September. It is a dance with traditional Ecuadorian music, food and drinks. There is an entrance fee and the remaining money after covering the cost of the organization (renting a hall, hiring a band, buying the inputs, etc.) is the main part of the collective remittances sent to Xarbán. Money is also raised in periodical religious gatherings where a copy of the image of the Lord of the Miracles is worshipped. Ever since the image was created in Ecuador and sent to the US, Xarbán villagers are worried about migrants stopping sending as much money for the 'real' Lord of the Miracles, now that they already have their own Lord of the Miracles. The US-located image is hosted in the houses of their devotees, where fortnightly prayers are organized. On these occasions, attendants are fed Ecuadorian food and a bingo takes place with prizes donated by the image-keepers. The money is maintained in a US account and sent once a year, several months ahead of the Lord of the Miracles fiesta in Xarbán, with detailed instructions of how the money should be used.

In the case of collective remittances, the issues of decision-making, management, control and enjoyment are, as with the other five transfers, interesting to examine. The issue of control is very relevant because there are more money and people involved. US-located *priostes*, who

hold all the decision power over their collective remittances for the fiesta, must rely on Xarbán-located *priostes* to carry out the actual management. In order to assure that their decisions are followed, migrants have developed intense monitoring structures. As with the other transfers, gossiping is very important, more so when the whole village population usually attend the fiesta events and they can report back to their migrant relatives. US-located *priostes* every year send extra money for the Xarbán-located *priostes* to film every aspect of the fiesta. DVDs and photos are then sent to the US-located *priostes*. Outside this collective structure, multiple photos are also sent within families. Migrants can check this way if their indications were followed. They can easily threaten with not sending money for the next fiesta if what they watch in the video is not quite what they had decided⁵⁸.

Once the fiesta is over, we send them [to the *priostes* in the US] the videos they asked for. They fund the fiesta under that agreement. For example, they say, we send you 3,000 dollars, but you have to send us souvenirs, videos to check how the fiesta was.

(Xarbán, male in his forties, non-migrant and *prioste*)

The fiesta has undergone massive changes. Before the 1970s there was only one night of dancing to a local small band playing traditional songs. With the seasonal male migration to the Coast in the seventies and eighties, available money in Xarbán increased, which impacted on the fiesta. In fact Skeldon argues that in the context of Peruvian rural-to-urban migration 'demands to support [the fiesta obligations] were one of the major reasons why villagers initially extended circuits of short-term mobility' (1990: 182). Currently, with the money coming from the US in amounts never before available, there are four days of fiesta. Many non-villagers come to the fiesta, attracted by how spectacular it is, and making up for the absent villagers. Currently in the fiesta there are famous bands and singers, fireworks, parades, masses with the church fully decorated with flowers and other ornaments, horse-riding games, food and drink for the musicians, the priest, the horse riders, etc. My own estimations, from figures given by several informants, provide a cost of about \$3,000 per day of fiesta.

The issue of enjoyment is also interesting. Both migrants and non-migrants enjoy the fiesta, although in different ways. For non-migrants, the Lord of the Miracles fiesta implies four days of fully funded fiesta, with music, dancing and much other entertaining. For migrants, it is an

⁵⁸ Videos and photos are also used in other contexts as a monitor tool, as Carrillo-Espinosa reported for the case of Ecuadorian migrants' houses (2009: 72).

occasion to make themselves visible, restating their membership from abroad. In order to do so migrants have developed several strategies to maximise their visibility. The presence of US flags, along with Ecuadorian flags, is a constant visual element throughout the whole fiesta, such as in the church, the parades, the masses, or during the dancing. Right before each funded event, the list of the names of those migrants who have given money for that specific event is read aloud. Each name is followed by the given amount of money. The reading of these lists can take some time, as long and as detailed as they are. The lyrics of the songs the hired bands play, as well as the speeches by the hired professional presenters of the events, often mention New York and the migrants.

Figure 6.2: Ecuadorian and US flags in the Lord of the Miracles 2009 fiesta in Xarbán



Source: photo by the author

Due to this constantly scrutinized visibility, migrants become the target of much criticism. Their funding activities are closely scrutinized by non-migrants. In order to avoid criticism, migrants place their donations within a framework of 'exacerbated devotion'.

6.2.4. Devout money: transnational membership and migrant-non-migrant negotiations

When asked about the motivations to send money to fund religious or festive events, both migrants and non-migrants placed devotion at the core of their collective financial behaviour. 'Out of devotion' acquired the category of a *leitmotif*, as can be seen from the following quotes.

Everything is based on the faith of each one, for devotion [talking about the reasons to send money for the Xarbán fiesta].

(Xarbán, 32 year-old female migrant in Queens since 2005)

Youngsters here, the *priostes* from Xarbán make devotion through the game of *escaramuza*, horse-riding. [...]

-Do they play for a prize?

No. It is for devotion. To give thanks for some miracle, they play the *escaramuza*. They spend the whole day horse riding from 8am to 6pm, only resting to attend the mass.

(Xarbán, male in his forties, non-migrant and *prioste*)

Migrants have invested ever since I am here, around \$40,000 [to refurbish the church building].

-Why do you think migrants send the money, if they cannot attend mass in Xarbán?

They have faith. They do it for the Lord of the Miracles, for him to help them in the US with their health, work, in everything...in their lives. It is sheer devotion.

(Xarbán, male in his fifties, non-migrant and religious trustee-*síndico* of the Xarbán church)

Money undergoes a process of purification, becoming 'devout' in the meanwhile. Gallo has also acknowledged a similar pattern of money purification in Kerala where 'gold becomes god' (Gallo, 2011). It means that it cannot be criticized as it is not socially appropriate in Xarbán to criticize sending money or any other behaviour which takes place because of devotion to a saint. Non-migrants may argue if devotion is the true reason to send money, although this criticism needs to be more sophisticated and becomes less efficient. Nevertheless, migrants' devotion is not only a discursive tool to counterbalance criticisms towards their collective remittances-expenditure practices. Migrants do see their devotion enhanced as a consequence of migration (for a wonderful account of the role of religion in the migratory process see Hagan and Ebaugh, 2003).

Migration inserts uncertainty into migrants' lives which increases their previous and ambiguous devotion: the journey and the hard living conditions abroad generally increase migrants' religiosity. The dangerous journey to the US clearly impacts on migrants' religiosity, as seen in next quote:

My father used to send money for the fiestas. He must have forgotten about the saints by now. My husband does not send, he has never sent. He is rather non-devout [*indevoto*]. Only in the journey [as an irregular migrant to the US], there he did need the saints [she laughs].

(Xarbán, 34 year-old female, daughter and wife of migrants in the US)

Many migrants send money or visit sanctuaries upon their return to show their gratitude for the protection awarded by the gods in their journey, either to the US or to Europe. The photographs in Figure 6.3 were taken in the sanctuary of the Virgin of the Swan in the province of Loja.

Figure 6.3: Gratitude plaques of migrants to the Virgin of the Swan (Loja)



Thanks to the Blessed Virgin of the Swan for having granted me the miracle of arriving in New York without problems.



Source: photographs by the author

Once in the US, migrants' precarious social incorporation restricts them to moving within the limits of the Xarbán social group. Religious gatherings, to pray and raise money to send to Ecuador, provide a unique framework of sociability where migrants enact their group

membership and de-centre their lives from work and the ever-present obligation of sending remittances to the family (Mata-Codesal, 2011b).

Collective remittances not only must be understood within a framework of negotiations between migrants and non-migrants. There are also power negotiations between migrants and the local catholic hierarchies, which tried to capture collective remittances obtaining the power of decision over them. Although most Xarbán villagers are catholic and there is no religious conflict in the village, relations with the official catholic hierarchies are not straightforward. Villagers show an ambiguous relationship towards catholic rituals, appropriating and reworking some of them while keeping at bay the priests' demands for 'purer' and more restrained rituals.

The new priest does not want us to hire bands, nothing. He says we are wasting the money [*gastando en vano*]. He thinks we should instead give him the money to do charity. For the poor families in Gualaceo [...] He says that if we do not listen to him, then he will not celebrate the mass.

(Xarbán, male in his forties, non-migrant and *prioste*)

Remaining money after the fiesta is handed in to the *síndico* (the person in charge of the church building maintenance) who saves it for repairs. In 2004, the church building underwent an expensive refurbishment which was fully funded by migrants in the US:

We refurbished the church building five years ago. [...] it cost around 27,000 dollars.

-Where did the money come from?

From the migrants who live in New York. There are many villagers there, and a group of *priostes* of the Lord of the Miracles, our patron saint. They gave the money. They hold meetings there, gather money.

(Xarbán, male in his fifties, non-migrant and religious trustee-*síndico* of the Xarbán church)

The church building is property of the Catholic Church, not of the village authorities. The more money is spent on fiesta, the less there is remaining for church repairs. These repairs enhance the Catholic Church patrimony. Hence migrants must balance the discourse of devotion to

block criticism from non-migrants but also tailor their behaviour to the demands of the local catholic hierarchies.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the most frequent ways of spending financial remittances in the two villages after daily expenses are covered: specifically I have looked in turn at education, health, housing, vehicles, land acquisition, agriculture and livestock. I would like to make two final clarifications regarding the uses of financial remittances. First of all, pessimistic or critical accounts of their impact tend to be partial and ignore the overall context in which utilization decisions are taken. In economic terms, both in Xarbán and Pindo, as well as in many rural areas of Latin America, the lack of a reliable financial system, the presence of a poor communication infrastructure, the lack of understanding of basic market management, lack of transparency and information in dealings with the public sector (including the presence of petty corruption), and an unstable political and economic national environment are not the best breeding ground for any entrepreneurial initiative. Given this context, using remittances in 'traditional' ventures of productive investment is more an economic suicide than an economically rational decision.

Secondly, it is important to clarify the scale of the analysis, as remittances' effects can be different at different geographical and social scales. This thesis examines financial remittances' uses and their consequences at the village level. I do not reckon these effects scale up to the regional or national level. As such there is an imperative need not to confuse levels of impact. At the macro-level remittances may or may not foster a country's development. At this point, we are obliged to ask about what kind of development are we talking about (economic, human development, etc.) and also about the responsibility of migrants (compared to other groups) in the development of their countries of origin. As the ECLAC put it, the 'so-called productive use of remittances has been a mirage created by migrants' countries of origin. These countries' policies want to treat as captive agents those who are beyond their scope and demand behaviours and commitments of migrants that they do not demand of the rest of the society' (ECLAC, 1998 cited in Mahler, 2000: 33). I will reflect on this in the final chapter of this thesis.

At the family level, though, international remittances have become a substantial part of the life strategies of relatively vulnerable groups. As such, agency must be central to any discussion of remittances' uses and effects. Analysis of remittances' uses must be cognisant of

the ways decisions are taken and negotiated in the context of changing environments and priorities. This research cannot provide accurate data of changing usage patterns over time. Nonetheless, I acknowledge the presence of such changes in remittance usage patterns over time based on changing context variables (both in origin and new places of residence) and priorities over the life cycle of senders and receivers. With Conway and Cohen, I also conceptualize decisions over remittances' uses as '*resistance* actions of people attempting to survive in a crisis-ridden structure of dependent capitalist relationships [...] Such purposive action even by those with little space to manoeuvre is empowering. Vulnerable they may remain, but not totally bereft of options' (1998: 33). This approach looks at remittance uses as an inherent and important part of the life strategies of those who decide

This chapter has also covered the sixth remaining material transfer of the typology presented in previous chapter. Both in Xarbán and Pindo migrants send money for collective purposes, mainly to improve the village's church building, and to fund religious festive events, and occasional development projects. As seen, collective remittances can create their own collective transfer mechanisms (as in Xarbán), or they can be transferred through family members (as in Pindo). Due to different migrants' features (irregular legal status abroad, dangerous journeys, precarious social incorporation in migrants' new places of residence), Xarbán migrants have more incentive to send collective remittances than their Pindo counterparts.

In Xarbán collective remittances fund the village patron saint festivities every year as well as maintaining and improving the church building. Sending money for the fiesta or to rebuild physical structures of the church is a non-controversial way for migrants to become visible. US-located *priostes* are very aware that sending money to the church avoids problems in Xarbán as it is a pious activity that no one would dare to criticize. Giving money for other sorts of project (such as investment or development projects) is very risky because of gossiping, misunderstandings and previous tensions between families. Collective remittances are then presented by migrants within a framework of exacerbated devotion. This devotion, in some cases already present before migrating, is accentuated by the dangers and uncertainties of the expensive journey to the US and by migrants' very precarious social position there. These collective remittances, always within the 'devotion discourse', enable migrants to maintain and reinforce their membership from abroad within the social and symbolic structures of Xarbán. The collective sending of the money takes place within the traditional Andean institution of the *priostazgo*, which has been transnationalized.

Neither in Xarbán nor in Pindo has money ever been sent for the village civil authorities. Everyone agrees that they have their own (public) sources of funding. In Xarbán any attempt to link local village authorities with the fiesta is quickly dismissed as a way to politicize the fiesta and the *priostazgo* system. In the case of Xarbán, US-located *priostes* also want to limit local priest involvement. It results in an ongoing tension between the current priest and the *priostes* who are unwilling to give up decision power over their collective remittances.

Collective remittances for religious and festive events are the only socially accepted routes for migrants' collective expenditure practices. As for family remittances, there are no true investment options for collective remittances in Xarbán and Pindo. In the case of collective remittances it is even more complicated because migrants' control and monitoring is very difficult to exert. Nonetheless, collective remittances for festive events create strong economic multiplier effects (Durand et al., 1996) in the businesses surrounding fiestas such as stationery, flowers, hairdressers, fashion, musicians, photographers, catering, or pyrotechnics.

After this extensive coverage of material remittances, I move now to unpack social remittances. I will deal with the processes of creation of social remittances in chapter seven, and with the content of the social remittances themselves in chapter eight.

Chapter 7

Social Remittances.

Processes of Creation

This chapter provides a theoretical approach to social remittances which will be fleshed out with fieldwork data in the following chapter. The chapter starts by providing a critical overview of social remittances, with emphasis on their initial definition and later empirical applications. In my attempt to further theorize social remittances I describe the phases in their process of creation. Migrants' experiences prior to migration situate them differently in the very first phase. It also affects the nature, quality and quantity of migrants' interactions, which are the locus where exposure to different forms of knowledge (in a broad sense) happens. Exposure takes place mainly in migrants' work sites, leisure time and through the family, and is heavily mediated by legal status and language. All the acquired knowledge needs to be transferred to Ecuador, through channels with or without physical contact (the former delivering better performance). Finally, transferred knowledge has to be incorporated back in Ecuador in order to trigger changes. The role of non-migrants is essential in this last stage. I will argue for the need to fulfil each phase in the creation of social remittances. As will be seen, although I present phases in a linear order, some phases determine or influence others, and processes of feedback are common. The Pindo and Xarbán migratory contexts provide an excellent comparison because of their different migration scenarios and initial settings. I will discuss in the following chapter what is actually created (or not) as social remittances in these specific research settings.

7.1. Dissecting Social Remittances

'Social Remittances' was an expression first coined by Peggy Levitt in her seminal 1998 article 'Social Remittances: Migration Driven Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion'. The term focuses attention on the non-material changes triggered by migration in migrants' places of origin. However, although the term as such is Levitt's creation, as early as the 1970s some demographers were focusing their attention on the non-material elements brought by returning migrants and the non-material changes triggered by migration, in what has been called the 'ideational shift' in demographic studies (see for instance the work by Connell et al., 1976 on migration from rural areas in the Third World; Cleland and Wilson, 1987 on the

diffusion of small family norm; or Skeldon, 1990 on the introduction of commercial ideas in rural Peru). Apart from coining and popularizing the term of 'social remittances', Levitt, contrary to these early authors, places more importance on migrants, instead of the migratory system itself. Previous authors rather ruled out the possibility of 'virtual' transmission. According to them, social remittances could only be brought by returnees. The concept of social remittances opens the door to some sort of sending without migrants having to return, permanently or temporarily.

On the first page of Levitt's article she states that '[s]ocial remittances are the ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities' (Levitt, 1998: 926). Levitt was clearly concerned with issues of cultural diffusion. Studies about cultural globalization have researched the ways in which economic and political globalization has shaped cultural representations. However, there is another form of cultural diffusion, which is 'local-level, migration-driven' (1998: 926). Levitt defined three different kinds of social remittances: normative structures, systems of practice and social capital. 'Normative structures are ideas, values, and beliefs' (1998: 933) and 'systems of practice are the actions shaped by normative structures' (1998: 934). She does not provide an equally concise definition of social capital and refers the reader to a set of the main authors researching social capital. There might be a conceptual mistake in the way these three categories are defined. Systems of practice and social capital are just two specifications of underlying normative structures. Any action is always driven by a set of, explicit or implicit, ideas, values and beliefs.

'Social remittances' has been an extremely successful term that paradoxically has not been theoretically developed further or empirically applied. Most of the articles dealing with the developmental impact of remittances cite at one point or another the presence of social remittances (e.g. Agunias, 2006; Ellerman, 2003; Sørensen, 2004). However, very few go beyond that. Some studies use the term social remittances to signify those remittances that are not sent by individuals, but by social groups. This application is clear in the Home Town Associations literature (Alarcón, 2000; Goldring, 2004; Rivera-Sanchez, 2003). More recently, Levitt and Lamba-Nieves have created the concept of 'collective social remittances' to bridge the streams of research on collective remittances and social remittances. According to them, collective social remittances 'are exchanged by individuals in their role as organisational members and are used in organizational settings such as hometown associations, church groups or political parties' (2011: 13).

Social remittances have also been researched in the context of technical knowledge transfer. The skills that migrants bring back when returning to their places of origin have long been considered a potential source of development (Ammasari and Black, 2001; Chevannes and Ricketts, 1997). Another thread of literature keen on the term social remittances, but again narrowing the term to its most technical meaning, is the one dealing with Diaspora development engagement. The Diaspora literature also emphasizes material contributions, above all financial investment in the homeland. There are usually strong motivations to try to engage the Diaspora, as usually their members have education and income levels above the average in their regions of origin (Brinkerhoff, 2006; Hanifi, 2006; Johnson and Sedaca, 2004; Kapur, 2001; Leichtman, 2002; Tanner, 2005). The reasons for the previous conceptual reductionism lie in the concept of social remittances itself. Theoretically social remittances is a highly attractive term. It is extremely flexible, allowing for a number of materializations. But this malleability can also make it empirically inapplicable. Technical transfers are non-material resources easier to comprehend than other normative structures and values. It would explain the trend to equalize social remittances with knowledge transfers.

Finally I would like to mention the effort of other authors to broaden the term. Juan Flores (2009) has coined the expression 'cultural remittances' to supplement social remittances, focusing on cultural transfers (such as music, or art) within a post-colonial approach. Although a very interesting theoretical development, in my opinion both cultural and social remittances should be included under the same label, and as such I incorporate them into my analysis.

In order to avoid unrealistic notions of culture change, social remittances must not be conceptualized as a one-way flow. Rather, their genesis should be understood as a circular process. The ideas, values and meanings that are eventually introduced (or rejected) in the local imaginary of migrants' origin contexts have previously been de- and reconstructed several times. First of all, it is useful to keep in mind that migrants, as persons previously brought up in specific socio-cultural contexts, are not blank canvases where the socio-cultural contexts of destination places can be painted on from scratch. When moving, migrants bring with them specific frames of meaning. Once in a destination, they use them to try to make sense of their new situations. As time goes by, that frame evolves, as it would evolve in a non-migrating context. Nonetheless, in the migratory context, aspects of the new residential milieu become an integral part. Migrants, with their frames of meaning, act themselves as powerful filters of what would be eventually sent back to their places of origin. Those frames direct

migrants' attention towards certain areas, overshadowing others, and making sense of some aspects that could collide with the generally accepted one. It is also important to mention that migration itself, unrelated to migrants' new places of residence, is a source of change and knowledge for migrants. In her earlier paper, Levitt saw social remittances as ultimately 'the north-to-south equivalent of the social and cultural resources that migrants bring with them which ease their transition from immigrants to ethnics' (Levitt, 1998: 927). Against later criticism of destination-value prevalence, Levitt has revisited her work to highlight the influence that migrants' original frameworks of mind and their different patterns of interaction with the destination society had in the creation of social remittances (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 2011).

Secondly, talking about a 'culture' in migrants' new place of residence is also misleading. Cultures are not monolithic, static constructions; not in the places of origin of migrants, nor in the places of residence. The idea that cultures are always in process, contrary to the traditional perception of culture as something finished, fixed and ready to use, has been brought to the fore by post-modern authors such as Arjun Appadurai with his emphasis on –scapes (1996), Ulf Hannerz and his flows and hybridities (2000), or Peter Jackson and his transnational spaces (Jackson et al., 2004), to mention just some of the most influential. This perception of cultures as fluid entities continually under construction stands as one of the key theoretical foundations for my research. There is, then, a double cultural fluidity of migrants' origin and new residence socio-cultural contexts. As time goes by, migrants are more likely to achieve a finer knowledge of what it is going on in their new places of residence. They are also more likely to become in contact with and/or be aware of a wider set of internal variations within that social-cultural environment. This means that what migrants can, consciously or unconsciously, transmit as social remittances is highly dynamic and evolves as migrants stay longer in their new residence places.

Finally, the people back in the origin areas do not play a passive role, as most literature on migration and transnationalism implicitly assumes. Some studies on material remittances are starting to incorporate non-migrants into the analysis, highlighting the presence of power imbalances between remittance senders and receivers. By default, the senders (i.e. migrants) were thought to be the ones who decide about remittance usage. However, recent studies, like the one by Pribilsky (2004), have acknowledged the complementary role that both senders and receivers play, not only in the remittance affair but in the whole migratory venture. Regarding social remittances, this means that those back in origin areas do not passively

accept anything sent to them. Values or ideas thought as positive by migrants do not have to be considered as such by those who stay put. Good and bad are nonetheless relative terms; something can be good here and now but it can be considered inadequate in a different place or time. Those who receive social remittances, conscious or unconsciously, can regard them differently from migrants. As a last resort, they will be the ones inserting, adapting or rejecting those non-material resources into their social and cultural lives. Hence, social remittances potentially face another transformation. Nevertheless, the cycle is not closed and constantly feeds back. In the 'social remittances revisited' 2011 article, Levitt also states that social remittance receivers do not play a passive role (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 2011). On the contrary, as I will show, they actively re-work ideational inputs. By doing this, she rightly places non-migrants (or would-be migrants) in the transnational sphere and gives them the relevance that studies about transnationalism usually ignore.

My research discards the over-simplistic image of social remittances as ideas, values or practices flowing smoothly uni-directionally from migrants' destination to origin places. Instead, it conceptualizes social remittances as ideational resources being crafted in their (circular) flight. This implies a conscious attempt to incorporate recent conceptualizations of culture as something highly fluid, changing and patchworked in nature.

Social remittances can be methodologically useful because they focus and delimit our attention as researchers on specific domains of social change. By initially isolating these spheres we can start to make sense of the general social change resulting from partial adaptations to the new situation brought about by migration. They are also useful because under this approach migrants are conceived as active agents of change or continuity (within, of course, enabling and constraining structural dynamics) and not as mere pawns in broad migratory systems.

7.2. Creating Social Remittances

In spite of the profound critical stance I have taken in the previous section, social remittances can still be a useful tool 'to think with/of' in the context of migration and development. Levitt in her seminal work set up the definition but she did not inquire further into the ways social remittances are created (Levitt, 1998). Most studies limit themselves to mentioning social remittances en passant, stating the concepts' potential importance but without providing any additional empirical data or theoretical developments. As a result, social remittances are

theoretically underdeveloped. Recently some very limited work has addressed the specific ways in which social remittances are in fact created (Brees, 2010; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 2011). In this section I analyse the four stages that I identified earlier in the creation of social remittances based on my ethnographic data. To refresh the memory, these four stages are: prior to migration in migrants' socio-cultural contexts of origin; exposure in migrants' new residences; transmission; and incorporation, reworking or rejection again back in migrants' contexts of origin.

7.2.1. Prior to migration: the importance of migrants' background

As noted above, one of the most pertinent criticisms of the concept of social remittances is that its initial conceptualization overlooked cultural fluidity and bi-directionality. This colonial and Western-centred frame neglected the simultaneous and iterative circulation of any cultural product. The first stage in the creation of social remittances takes place actually before migrating. What migrants do and know before migration has a decisive impact on what they eventually bring or transfer back home as social remittances. As stated by Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 'people's experiences before migrating strongly influence what they do in the countries they settle; this, in turn, affects what they remit back to their homelands' (2011: 1). Data from Xarbán and Pindo clearly support the need for widening the time and space focus, towards origin settings before migration. Although there is a myriad of variables that affects future migrants' 'configurations' (including their attitudes, aptitudes and potentialities), I focus here on two, interests and education, as the most salient.

a) Interests

Every person (either migrant-to-be or not) has specific interests. Those interests explain why that person seeks involvement in some social spheres while consciously avoiding others, or not being aware of yet others. Migration does not automatically make people discard their previous interests or hobbies. As a result, even when migrants come into contact with different ways of doing or being in new places, they may not consider this new knowledge relevant or worth sharing with relatives and friends back in Ecuador.

The pioneering work by Levitt described Dominican migrants as heavily involved with politics both in the US and the Dominican Republic (1998). Jiménez also found that Mexican migrants in the US transmit 'democracy' back to Mexico (2008). Hence I was puzzled when many of my informants systematically and explicitly stated an absolute lack of interest and knowledge of

political affairs regarding the US or Spain⁵⁹. It took me a while to understand that this lack of interest was not born from, or the result of the migratory experience. It is nothing that appears in the destination, but rather a continuation of a scenario well-rooted in rural Ecuador. The presence of the state is very weak in rural Ecuador, and petty corruption and clientelism practices are very common. Most *mestizo* villagers in rural Ecuador are thus inclined to dislike politics, and to distrust politicians and institutions. The situation has slightly changed with the arrival in office of President Rafael Correa and his 'Citizens' Revolution' in 2007. Apart from bringing institutional stability to a country which has had six presidents in a decade (Correa was re-elected in April 2009 and is still in office in 2011), it is also creating a new scenario which is allowing room for some returnees to introduce changes in the political panorama of rural Ecuador. Further data on political engagement are introduced in the next chapter.

Ecuadorians are, on the contrary, really keen on sports, football and *ecuavolley*⁶⁰ as the most widely played and followed sports. In Ecuador there is a high number of football and *ecuavolley* leagues. Both men and young women regularly meet to play championships. Migrants do not give up this passion. Instead, they bring it with them to their new places of residence. This explains why 'Ecuadorian' leagues and meetings around sports are so common in Spain and the US⁶¹. These sporting events trigger periodical and elaborate social gatherings, where traditional music and food are usually present⁶².

These two examples clearly illustrate the continuity of migrant interests between the origin and new residence places of migrants. This continuity leads to processes of selective involvement which would eventually generate contact or not with specific realities in migrants' new places of residence.

b) Education

The second trait which has the potential to heavily impact on migrants' ability to create and transmit social remittances is their educational background. When migrants (and non-migrants

⁵⁹ I must nuance this picture by saying that some migrants show an interest in discourses about immigration reform. They, nonetheless, have a very limited and fragmented knowledge regarding this issue.

⁶⁰ A three-team variation of standard volleyball with a higher net and played with a soccer ball where players are allowed to slightly hold the ball in their hands before passing it.

⁶¹ I have met migrants in the US who simultaneously play in three football leagues.

⁶² For different locations in Spain see Llopis and Moncusí, 2005; Moncusí and Llopis 2008; Müller and Ludwigs 2008; Cortez 2004: 10; for London see James, 2005: 4; for New York city see Kyle 2000: 37; Pribilsky, 2007: 221-222. In spite of these works, these events have not received as much academic interest as they deserve.

alike) come into contact with new realities, people or knowledge, not every migrant makes the same out of that exposure. I agree with Williams that ‘all migrants are knowledgeable, with *potential for learning* and knowledge transfers’ (Williams, 2008: 2, my emphasis). However, not all migrants have the same potential or eventually fulfil it. Education is key for migrants in order to notice, absorb, rework and use knowledge from one sphere into another. Migrants with higher levels of formal education are better positioned to cope with new realities, ways of doing and being, abstract information and as a result, of creating social remittances.

Levels of formal education, on average, are quite different for Xarbán and Pindo migrants. As with the income and geographical distribution, education is also more unequally distributed in Pindo than in Xarbán. Pindo shows a more extreme distribution of values, with more illiterate villagers and also more villagers with secondary and university education than in Xarbán. Table 7.1 shows the data on education from the 2001 Census for both villages, although data for Pindo is of poor quality with high ‘unknown’ percentages. It would be extremely useful to compare the differences in education attainment with the data from the 2010 Census. Unfortunately at the time of writing up this thesis, these data were not yet available at the parish level.

Table 7.1: Education overview (% of total population)

		Xarbán	Pindo
Illiterate		9.87%	15.05%
Levels of education	None	5.57%	14.34%
	Primary or below	65.75%	53.68%
	Secondary	24.16%	7.87%
	Above secondary	0.56%	0.94%
	Unknown	3.97%	22.88%
Villagers with a BA degree		1	6

Source: Own elaboration from data from the 2001 Census

Data from the fieldwork clearly indicate that many Pindo migrants (some of them returnees by then) were at university or about to go to university, when the ‘migratory stampede’ exploded (Ramirez Gallegos and Ramirez, 2005). They realized that they had the opportunity to go to Spain and save money for their studies. But money was not their only motivation to migrate. Many of them wanted to see what Spain was about, so they were more open to new experiences than their Xarbán counterparts, whose clear target is to migrate to the US to save

money to build one's house in the village and save some money for their old age. Moreover, in the case of Xarbán, where there is clearly a 'culture of migration' in place, non-migrants face a very disrupting situation. They are warned by migrants in the US about the hardships of life abroad, and at the same time they encounter endless photos and videos of cheerful social events in the Xarbán community in the US. A 28 year-old female migrant from Xarbán in Port Chester since 2008, recalls once she arrived to the US how different things were from what she thought they would be like when still in Ecuador. As she put it: 'one does not believe what one is told by the migrants about life in the US. Or it is only that one needs to have the experience'.

Formal education is an easy indicator; however informal education is also relevant, but much more difficult to measure. Previous mobility is an example of it. Those migrants who have been already exposed to different realities due to previous mobility, have acquired an ability to deal more productively with new places and situations. These previous internal mobility patterns refer in the case of Xarbán migrants to migration to coastal sugar cane plantations in their youth or to the *Oriente* to raise cattle or work in public infrastructures. In Xarbán there are also several cases of migrants who have been twice in the US, in spite of the high cost (in terms of money and risk) of the journey. These migrants/returnees agree that only the second time were they able to fully understand what was going on in the US and managed to make something out of the whole experience. Pindo migrants show a more complex mobility map, with previous internal migration within Ecuador (to the coastal shrimp farms, to the Amazon gold mines, to the cities of Guayaquil, Quito and Loja, etc.) and also in the cases of international re-migration, both within their new country of residence (for instance moving from rural Murcia to Madrid in Spain) and between countries (from Madrid to London for instance). It is important to appreciate that for Pindo villagers international migration is just one more step in their mobility map. For Xarbán villagers international migration is the opportunity not to have to migrate ever again and stay put in their village.

Curiosity is usually mentioned by migrants with more detailed knowledge of their new residence places. There is anecdotal evidence in the literature of the role of curiosity on voluntary migration. However one could argue that curiosity has not received enough academic attention and it is usually downplayed in analyses of migration (for two exceptions see the early work by Skeldon, 1990; or more recently, Marcus, 2009). With the current emphasis on migrants' agency, a re-appraisal of curiosity as a driver to migrate could be expected. Curiosity, explicitly mentioned as such by my informants, is a recurrent topic in conversations. In some cases it was one of the reasons to migrate – sometimes as the main

reason to migrate, more often as a secondary supporting reason to the main economic motivation. In Pindo many returnees mentioned the desire to experience other realities as a reason to migrate. The fact that so many villagers from both villages live abroad, and that communication was quite frequent, meant that non-migrant villagers had many resources to create their own imaginaries about life in Spain or the US. For non-migrant villagers, the lives of their fellow-villagers abroad were something not difficult to imagine (albeit in many cases only partial imaginaries could be created as a consequence of the selective transfer of information made by migrants themselves). They feel familiar enough with their relatives' and co-villagers' environment abroad. This information helps to reduce the psychological distance with the US or Spain (and more specifically with *la yoni* and Madrid or Murcia), to allay fears, to fuel curiosity and to encourage the desire to migrate.

-Did your sister encourage you to go [to Italy]?

No. Actually I made up my mind by myself because everybody was going. It was a bit like getting caught up by that curiosity. It motivated me. Not my sister, honestly. Because she did not get used to life in Italy, she didn't want me to go.

(Pindo, 31 year-old female returnee from Rome-Italy, 1997-2003)

-Were you interested in politics when you were in the US?

I was. As I was there, I felt a member of that place and then, you know? In this sense I have always liked to know a little bit, being informed, when I had free time of course. Just out of curiosity to know what it is going on in the world and in the place where I was living.

(Pindo, 42 year-old male returnee from Newark-US, 1992-2005)

This same curiosity, in a sense, also encourages migrants while in their new places of residence to make the most out of their (sometimes precarious) lives. Curiosity is also the engine which pushes migrants to learn new work skills with the medium-term aim of improving their job situation.

I learnt about how to work in the fields by myself. Watching other workers, I learnt to work. Only watching, because we lived in the countryside where they grew potatoes. On Saturdays I drove with my car to the fields and stayed there, in the car, watching how they worked. Sometimes I asked them, as I had friends there

who went to the field [*trabajar en la huerta*, a expression meaning working in agriculture], how do you do it? How?

-Have you always been curious?

Of course. I have always had a lot of curiosity. I was curious about different tasks in construction. I had my work but in the lunch break, that wasn't the same for all the workers there, I became friend with those who put tiles. They were Ecuadorians, and we became friends. They taught me how to put tiles. I learnt a lot by watching and asking.

(Pindo, 30 year-old male returnee from Orihuela-Spain, 1999-2009)

I started working for this company. Within fifteen days I stopped being the washing-up person. While I was washing I was looking around and learning everything the cook was doing. In two months, I was cooking pizzas. I quit washing up. [...] They told me to look, learn and do it. The quicker, the better. In four months I managed to become a cook. But I used my free time to learn, instead of hanging around, I was always with the cook, helping him out. Watching how he did this and that. I was always around with a pen and paper, taking notes. At home, I checked with the internet, and more or less it was the same. Then I only needed to improve my performance, being quicker.

(RSC, Pindo, 27 year-old male migrant in the Canary Islands-Spain since 2002)

The way financial remittances are spent may have long-term effects on the creation of social remittances and vice-versa. If financial remittances are spent on education, non-migrants will be more able to grasp knowledge transmitted by migrants. It can also be useful if they become migrants in the future. However, the presence of a culture of migration can prevent the use of resources for educational purposes, as migration is the ultimate goal (this is the case of Xarbán). In a context like the US, where chances to become regularized are almost non-existent, and Ecuadorian irregular migrants are bound to a very specific labour niche, education does not make much of a difference. Higher education does not automatically lead to higher income or better jobs. Some migrants, though, realize the importance of education, although its effects cannot be immediately applicable.

7.2.2. Exposure: migrants' contact zones

Once in their new places of residence, migrants come in contact with ways of being and doing which may differ from those they were used to in their places of origin. Hence, in the case of migrants, new knowledge can be generated from their exposure to new ways of doing and being. Some new experiences can also shed a different light into already-known practices and value systems. For the knowledge to be realized and learnt, the contact has to be relatively continuous. Otherwise, it is not more than anecdotal information that migrants can at the most describe but not analyse or rework.

As already noted, migration itself, unrelated to the destination, is an important source of knowledge in migrants' case. Many returnees and migrants agree that migration has provided them with a sense of self-pride, of being-able-to-achieve, something they lacked before migrating.

-Did you feel more able to do things?

Yes!

-More confident or not?

Yes, yes, I feel more confident about doing things, planning properly how to do them not to make a mistake. I feel more mature.

(Pindo, 24 year-old male returnee from Madrid-Spain, 1998-2009)

Socio-cultural realities are not monolithic entities. Knowledge is socially situated, depending on people's standpoints. Migrants' knowledge will be mostly determined by the kind of exposure they are subjected to. Inquiring into potential and actual contact areas between migrants and other practice and value systems is key to understanding the kind of knowledge migrants are exposed to. As I have argued elsewhere (Mata-Codeal, 2007: 13), there is a need to go beyond the study of borderlands and start focusing on the presence of contact-zones, where real mundane interaction actually takes place. Broadly speaking, interactions in our societies take place in three different domains: in the workplaces, during time off (with acquaintances, friends and social events we attend) and in family time (particularly when migrants have young children or are in mixed marriages). However, two underlying variables determine migrants' interactions in these three domains of interaction: legal status and language.

a) Legal status and language

The first and foremost variable is migrants' legal status in their new places of residence. There is some research on the impact of migrants' legal status on their remitting patterns regarding financial resources (Amuedo-Dorantes and Mazzolari, 2010). Legal status is also a key variable regarding social remittances. Migrants' legal status largely determines their 'action systems': what things to do, how to do them, who to contact and who not to contact, what places to avoid and which ones to go, etc. Legal status is different for Xarbán and Pindo migrants. Very few of Xarbán migrants have legal status in the US. Their irregular legal status forces them to live 'parallel lives' in the US, which generates little contact with mainstream society and other ethnic groups. The presence of high numbers of *paisanos* (fellow villagers) and a long migratory presence have also put in place parallel structures within which migrants can live their entire migrant lives in the US. Because of their irregular status, Xarbán migrants need to resort to certain pockets of corruption in US society. While on fieldwork in Xarbán I was amazed by the amount of detail villagers who have never been in the US could describe to me the street where their relatives live in the US, their daily routines, or the shopping malls migrants buy in. However, they did not have any broader knowledge or they had distorted ideas about socio-cultural issues in the US. Migrants living in the US are in fact really good at negotiating their 'irregular' lives, and as such they can send that knowledge back to Ecuador. Non-migrant villagers could describe to me the parallel 'society' their relatives live in the US (e.g. where to buy a fake driving license for identification purposes, how to find jobs, how to avoid legal problems): in short, how to live as an irregular alien in a huge US metropolis such as New York. In the case of Xarbán, as shown in chapter six, legal status also has an important impact on migrants' housing decisions, which in turn influences the messages migrants are transmitting back home and fuelling more migration (as houses are very visible signals of success). Most Pindo migrants in Spain and Italy have legal status⁶³. Legality in fact broadens their sphere of interaction and contact, although their labour market insertion is also quite precarious, as I will show later on.

Legal status effects do not stop there, as it also affects migrants' mobility frame and their ability to go back and forth between Europe/US and Ecuador. Irregular legal status prevents migrants from going back to Ecuador, unless they are willing to pay again the high price of a repeat journey into the US. Because physical presence is the best possible channel (the only

⁶³ Fewer than expected, given the facility, have double citizenship Ecuadorian-Spanish. Most of them – both in Spain and Italy – have temporary residence permit. Migrants in the UK either have Spanish citizenship or are in an irregular legal situation.

channel through which complex ideas can effectively be passed on) to transmit social remittances, legal status not only largely determines what to learn but also what can be transmitted. Pindo migrants, with the current acute economic crisis in Spain, are able to plan their eventual return. I have encountered several cases of 'let's-see-what-happens' return in Pindo, which are obviously not possible in Xarbán. Pindo migrants go back for several months (depending on residence permit renewal deadlines) while they wait for positive developments in the Spanish economy and also to see what is going on in Ecuador. This ability to return and plan ahead in the form of a temporary return, which can eventually become a permanent one, is key to set up migrants' sustainable return. This type of return is actually a wonderful opportunity to put new ideas to work in Ecuador, as the case of a male migrant in Spain planning a long-term return to Ecuador illustrates. This migrant is currently in Ecuador, trying to figure out the institutional and economic environment he will re-enter upon permanent return to Ecuador. He is also very keen in transferring some agricultural innovations he has learnt in Spain. Because he has double citizenship he has been able to return to Ecuador without the pressure to return to Spain to renew his residence or work permit. Once everything is in place, he will bring his wife and children who are still in Spain.

Finally, legal status affects migrants' chances to interact, but it also affects their self-esteem, which in turn also influences their desire and ability to interact, as the next interview quotation shows:

When I got my papers [work permit], I kissed that paper. I said from now onwards no one is going to mistreat me. I have put up with everything till now, but that's it. No more. My boss was saying around that I took advantage, that all Ecuadorians are the same, we are here only for the papers. He was the only one who took advantage of me because I had to put up with everything, marginalized. While I did not have papers I could not even go out for a drink. Once I went for a drink and my boss got to know. The day after he reprimanded me, what have you done? Going out without papers! Police can catch you and that will mean problems for me. He completely controlled us. He controlled our entire lives. He knew everything. He paid attention to everything I did. [...] Once you get the papers nobody marginalizes you because you already have a voice to reply. Before I had to stay quiet, I couldn't reply back. They could tell me, you don't have papers here so shut up. I was always scared that the police will catch and deport me.

-Did they use the fact that you had no papers to control you?

Yes, he frightened me. But once I got my papers, I lost my fears. I am not scared anymore. This is me, and this is my work. I am responsible for it.

(Pindo, 27 year-old male migrant in the Canary Islands-Spain since 2002)

For all these reasons, Pindo migrants are far better positioned than Xarbán migrants to become exposed to new realities that generate new knowledge. They are also better off because of the second variable: language. Language is a key variable which mediates contact. Without knowledge of language, little if any meaningful interaction with non-Spanish speaking groups can take place. In the case of Pindo migrants in Spain, language is not an issue because, apart from the accent and some words, communication can take place right away although this does not necessarily mean that there is no discrimination based on idiomatic differences⁶⁴. By contrast, most Xarbán migrants in the US do not have a command of the English language good enough to maintain a meaningful conversation. Because in the US (and particularly in New York City) there are big pockets of Hispanics, it is possible to make a living speaking only Spanish. Differently from these two groups, Pindo migrants in the UK and Italy are faced by a different context but they also have different personal characteristics. They usually have higher education than Xarbán migrants in the US and because there is not such a strong *paisanos* presence, these migrants usually learn English or Italian quicker than their peers in the US.

b) Sites: work, leisure and family

Language and legal status, as the most important variables, although not the only ones, interact with each other to create the frame of possible interactions, at work and in migrants' leisure and family time. I will focus on these three domains of potential contact for Xarbán and Pindo migrants. Migrants' labour market insertion offers a good snapshot of the type and amount of interaction they have with co-ethnics, with other ethnic groups and with 'mainstream' groups in their new places of residence. This incorporation is radically different in

⁶⁴ Non-migrants in Pindo are very critical of returnees and migrants on holidays in the village putting on a 'Spanish' accent. And some returnees pride themselves for not having adopted the 'Spanish way of talking'. This does not happen for Xarbán returnees, where slipping some words in 'Spanglish' is positively regarded by most. I do not have a clear explanation for this difference, apart from the fact that migration to the US in rural Ecuador is usually held in higher esteem than migration to Spain. Migration to the US is not attached with the stigma posed to those female-pioneering migrants to Spain (often with children in Ecuador). On the contrary, due to the hardships of the journey, migrants in the US are imbued with some sort of heroic aura if they manage to arrive safe and sound in the US. These different conceptualizations, along with the fact that English is obviously a different language, might explain it. Nonetheless, this is just a tentative hypothesis.

the US, Spain/Italy and the UK, although in all places insertion is in enclave niches, precarious, and gendered.

Most Xarbán migrants in the US live in and around cities and districts that are in fact Latino enclaves. Xarbán migrants have no interaction at all with English-speaking society. The three factors of legal status, language and presence of a very solid Latin enclave in Queens (fuelled by a strong Mexican presence in the area) all combine to prevent Xarbán migrants from widening their exposure to other ways of doing or thinking, thereby hindering the creation of social remittances. Each of the three factors feed back. For instance the presence of the enclave discourages learning English. Not knowing English increases isolation and forces migrants to stay within the enclave limits. Irregular status also discourages learning English and going outside the enclave. Male Xarbán migrants work overwhelmingly in construction. They have usually Latino fellow workers and Latino, Italian, Jewish, Korean or Irish bosses. In all cases bosses speak Spanish or use some other worker as a translator. The few female Xarbán migrants in the New York-New Jersey area do occasional work taking care of the children of other Ecuadorian migrants, cleaning, or in factories. Many of them do not work and stay at home looking after their own babies.

Pindo migrants in Spain encounter a completely different scenario. Language is not a barrier and most of them hold legal status. Their labour market incorporation is also very different. Male migrants work in construction and agriculture. Their first jobs were in agriculture but as soon as they managed to obtain legal residence they moved onto construction sites where income was much higher. The current crisis has disrupted this sector, and many migrants are now unemployed. The unemployment rates for Spaniards and foreigners in 2009 were 16.8 and 29.7% respectively (Pajares, 2010: 40). Ecuadorians were the migrant group strongest hit by the loss of employment in 2009 when 23.4% of active Ecuadorian workers in Spain lost their job (Pajares, 2010: 62). The first female Pindo migrants started working as live-in maids, and moved out as time went by but stayed in the care sector. Some of them work in agriculture or in restaurants and hotels. As a result, exposure to Spanish society differs according to gender. The fact that many female migrants have children with them also increases the chances of contact. Taking children to school helps to know other parents. Usually mothers are in charge of taking care of children (although this gender role assignation is more flexible than in the village of origin). Pindo migrants' are also very spread within Spain, and other European countries, so I cannot talk of a transnational social group here, at least not as strong as in the Xarbán case. Pindo migrants know of other Pindo migrants' whereabouts, but their

acquaintances are by no means limited to other Pindo migrants. They have contacts with Ecuadorians other than those from Pindo, with other Latino groups, and with Spaniards.

The situation of Pindo migrants in Italy is very similar to the one described for Spain, with males working in construction and females in the care sector. Although obviously language is an important difference regarding Spain, the fact that most migrants from Pindo in Italy have a higher educational background partially downplays this difference. Moreover, it is clear that Italian is easier to learn for a Spanish-speaker than English.

Pindo migrants in London face a different scenario, both from those migrants in Spain as well as from those in New York. They need to learn the language. The lack of a significant Ecuadorian presence in the area prevents processes of enclavization, pushing migrants into learning English. Pindo migrants in London are also pioneer migrants, with little if any network support in the city. These first migrants are innovators and adventures – driven not only by economic motivations, but also by a strong desire to experience new realities. Their labour market incorporation, similar to most Latino migrants in London (McIlwaine and Velasques, 2007), working in the cleaning sector in non-social hours, does not help to create and sustain social interactions. However, Latino migrants in London do not have to face such negative and stereotypical images as they do in the US. Latinos in the US are sometimes stigmatized as the consequence of being the largest, fastest-growing and most visible minority in the country (Guyl et al., 2010). Compared with the number of Latinos in the US or Ecuadorians in Spain, there are few Latinos in London. The most recent estimations report a figure of 70-90,000 Ecuadorians in the UK (McIlwaine and Velasques, 2007: 3). Accurate data remains elusive with official statistics reporting figures of only a few thousands due to the irregular status of most Ecuadorian migrants in the country. Overall, they are a relatively invisible group. This is currently changing with some organizations and academics pushing hard for recognition, e.g. Ecuadorian Community Association, the Latino free newspaper Minka, the Latin American welfare group CARILA, and academics such as McIlwaine. As a result Latinos in London are often 'exoticized'. This is particularly the case of female migrants who the native population think of as 'sexy latin@s'. In spite of the moral and practical problems this can generate, in the short term this image makes Latino migrants in London worth meeting. As one informant voiced:

Look, when I worked in Holborn in some offices of... I don't remember the name now. Workers there liked Latinas. Englishmen like Latinas. A clerk who works

there flirted with me, even though I was married. So if one starts flirting back you can convince them. Do you understand me? There are Colombians married to Englishmen, Ecuadorians... I told you about this guy, and my two friends are with English men.

(Pindo, 38 year-old female returnee from London-UK, 2000-2006)

Migrants are frequently perceived through the conceptual lens of mobility and work-related activities, and although work is central in the lives of migrants I met and talked with, there is also room and need for non-work related activities. Outside work, migrants in both the US and Spain, following their original interests prior to migration, are very keen on sporting events, as I noted already. These events can be spontaneous, with some friends gathering, playing and betting, but more usually they require careful organization. Matches are played outdoors in parks during good weather, and in rented premises such as city council, schools or colleges' sport facilities in winter. In the case of the states of New York and New Jersey, organizers can make substantial profits from teams' subscription fees, selling food and entrance tickets. These leagues, both male and female, are not closed to non-Latinos, but they are usually played by Ecuadorians with sometimes Colombian and Peruvian players. Usually players are work colleagues or co-villagers. During the spring and summer months these events become more festive. Food, alcohol and music are consumed in the parks⁶⁵, as families spend the day out. These events reinforce links with fellow nationals but they do not provide much room for interaction with other communities/groups. Müller and Ludwigs very positively foresaw the transfer of economic and symbolic capital acquired by Ecuadorian migrants in Spain through sport leagues into the political sphere (2008: 118). Three years later, their prediction has not yet proved true.

As seen, in a context of precarious legal presence of Xarbán migrants in the US, most of them are Ecuador-oriented and this includes their leisure activities. Festive rituals in the US are crucial to create gathering spaces where the idea of a shared commonality is nurtured, and migrants re-enact their original membership of their village of origin. These events counterbalance the centrality of work and saving money in the lives of these irregular Ecuadorian migrants, particularly in the borough of Queens in New York City. In this area, because Xarbán villagers have *transplanted* their original 'village', they are reproducing most fiestas they have in Ecuador. As I have shown in chapter six, there is also a revival,

⁶⁵ Alcohol consumption is moderate abroad compared with rural Ecuador, even though it can still be regarded as excessive by local populations (Conde and Herranz, 2004).

appropriation and transmission of fiestas, enabled by migration and financial remittances. Along with traditional fiestas such as the village patron saint, Christmas and other religious festivities, in Queens migrants also celebrate baby showers, weddings, or *quinceañeras*. These events provide a unique environment to re-enact links of *paisanazgo*. Their attendance is even more selective than in sport events. During my fieldwork in New York I attended a baby shower and a religious meeting in Queens – where most events of this kind take place. Guests at both events were Xarbán villagers. As a result, these festive events do not provide much contact with 'non-Xarbán' realities. Nonetheless, they are creating a type of leisure that can be considered as transnational, as it is Xarbán-oriented⁶⁶.

Pindo migrants in Spain have more opportunities to interact with people outside their *paisano* and kin circle. It is obviously very dependent on the place of residence (either rural or urban) and also on the labour sector of migrants. As a rule of thumb, and based on the different versions provided by my informants, interaction tends to be easier in rural milieus, particularly in those with a previous intense neighbourhood life. However, migrants' long working hours, and usually anti-social hours, do not provide them with a lot of leisure time. When the family is reunified, migrants spend more time with their family and there are fewer incentives to network outside.

Both in Europe and the US, although more in the latter, migrants usually spend their time off (particularly when bad weather does not allow outdoor activities) in shopping centres. Shopping centres are places where to buy but they are also places to hang around and take photos which are sent back to Ecuador. I have seen many photos taken in malls while in Ecuador. It is a shocking comparison to be shown these pictures of opulence in rural highland Ecuador. For migrants shopping malls are symbols of modernity and achievement, the excess of everything compared with the relative deprivation they endured in their villages prior to migration. Malls are not the best place for interaction, although differences arise between Europe and the US. In Europe, usually malls are not designed to provide a site for interaction of any sort, not even with the staff, as in most big chains clients pick up their own products. In the US, malls provide more room for interaction as they usually have indoor spaces with seating areas and eating facilities where shoppers can relax and perhaps interact.

⁶⁶ I have argued somewhere else that through leisure these migrants are exerting their agency and contesting the process of double dehumanization they are subjected to: as workers in their new places of residence (as part of vulnerable and very flexible labour) and as remittance-senders in their places of origin (Mata-Codesal, 2011b). I will develop this idea further in the final chapter of this thesis.

Finally, family life also opens the door to a third field of exposure. Children are in fact a very interesting means for contact. Thanks to them, parents (mainly mothers) come in contact with institutions such as education centres, the health care sector, or the social services (Jones-Correa, 1998: 340). They can also interact with other children's parents and become acquaintances with people from outside basic limited networks based on kinship and *paisanazgo*. Children also act as translators for their parents and some Xarbán mothers with children of school age are learning basic English as a result of helping their children with their homework⁶⁷. This case is more the exception than the rule for Xarbán migrants in the US as it does not apply to those female migrants who do not have children or have young babies, which are the most common situations experienced by the few female migrants in the US, although a change is likely to happen in the near future. Xarbán migration is currently undergoing a profound change. More female villagers are migrating to the US, either following their husbands or more interestingly as young single women. Right now, families are being set up in the US and babies born. Once those children grow up and attend school they will become channels of exposure for their parents.

The case of Pindo migrants in Spain, as well as the case of the two female migrants from Xarbán in Spain, is diametrically different. Many pioneer migrants to Spain were women and quite a few had children at the time of migrating. Once these women achieved regular legal status abroad they could exercise their right to family reunification⁶⁸. Some of them brought over their children and their partners, with whom some of them had further children in Spain. These older children attend education institutions providing contact zones for their mothers who got in contact with different ways of life. The issue of different child-rearing practices in Ecuador and abroad has been a source of social remittances, as will be shown in next chapter.

⁶⁷ The fact that children of irregular Xarbán migrants' born in the US are American citizens generates a complex situation I would like to research further in the future (the mixed-status families). These children are known in the US Academia as 'anchor children' because they anchor their parents to the US. The issue of siblings with different nationalities is very interesting as well as problematic. In a same nuclear family it is not uncommon to find the presence of siblings who can freely travel between Ecuador and the US or Europe (by the same token, having the legal right to a global mobility) along with (usually older siblings) who do not have such a right because they were born in Ecuador.

⁶⁸ The reunification process can be very long, which in some cases creates tensions in the mother-child relationship due to long periods of physical separation as Gil Araujo has showed (2010: 81). Generational problems in migrant families tend to be portrayed as cultural problems. The Spanish city council of Barcelona, aware that the so-called integration problems of some reunified minors are actually the consequence of problems within the family due to the long times of absence, have created an official programme of guidance and support for the family reunification process (for an overview of the programme see Rendón, 2010).

Having a partner from a country other than Ecuador is also a good way to become 'exposed'. However, the case of mixed marriages is not common, neither for Xarbán nor for Pindo migrants. Endogamy is very marked, as marriages usually take place not even within the Latino or Ecuadorian community, but only within the group of fellow migrants. This is consistent with other studies. James, talking about Ecuadorians in London, states that 'rates of marriage outside the Latin community are relatively low' (2005: 6). García García et al. likewise found that for the rural part of Murcia (Spain) Ecuadorians marry almost entirely within the group (2010: 287). For Pindo and Xarbán, the rate of endogamous marriages is high, with migrants usually becoming involved with other migrants from the same village. This gives us an idea of how closed are the social networks Xarbán and Pindo migrants move within in their new places of residence. This endogamy is stronger for Xarbán migrants as some female migrants from Pindo have got involved with European men. Some female returnees regarded this involvement as problematic when permanent return was on the table.

7.2.3. Transmission: transferring back to Ecuador

As potentially energetic actors of social change, migrants need to transmit back to their areas of origin their acquired impressions and knowledge. In order to do so, there is the need for constant and meaningful communication between migrants and their relatives, friends or *paisanos* in Ecuador. Migrants and their relatives and friends in Ecuador communicate regularly through different means: phone calls, sending of presents, photos and videos, and in person when migrants or relatives visit each other or upon migrants' return. In their interactions (physical and technology-mediated) they share information of all sorts, including potential social remittances. Four determinants set the frame for potential meaningful knowledge sharing. First, even though non-material 'bits and pieces' such as knowledge, attitudes or ideologies (aka potential social remittances) can be transmitted from an array of channels, not all of them are equally effective and valued by migrants and non-migrants. Physical contact is obviously the best-regarded one. Second, complex, sophisticated or unheard-of ideas are difficult to explain without sustainable long-term face-to-face contact. Phone and 'virtual' channels suit anecdotal or easier knowledge, while they are not appropriate for other sorts of knowledge. Also the more similar the origin and new residence environments are, the more transferable will be the generated knowledge. For instance, it is always easier to incorporate agricultural know-how learnt in migrants' villages of residence into their original rural environments, than urban-developed knowledge into a rural milieu. Third, the nature of the information and the mastery migrants achieve of it implies whether it can be transferred or not. Migrants sometimes only achieve operative knowledge, not deep

enough to make it transferable (beyond anecdotal issues). Most unskilled jobs, like in a factory production line, are completely based on repetitive simple movements. Little can be transmitted and re-used from such a context-bounded, simple knowledge. Finally I would not like to overlook the fact that migrants actively select what to transmit back home. Obviously some migrants have an interest in keeping some things hidden, or portrayed them in a negative light.

In the cases of Xarbán and Pindo, households communicate very regularly with their relatives abroad by mobile phone or landline. In Xarbán all of the households surveyed maintain some contact with their relatives abroad and nearly all do it (98%) in Pindo. Most Xarbán households communicate on a weekly basis, while most Pindo households do it monthly. In the case of Xarbán, where migrants usually stay in the US for many years, phone contact is usually the only means of interaction between migrants in the US and non-migrants in Ecuador. There are very few landlines in the village and although younger villagers know how to use the internet, at the time of my fieldwork there was no internet service available in Xarbán. Hence, contact is limited to frequent calls to mobile phones. It was quite common to see ladies dressed in the traditional *chola* outfit in the fields talking on the mobile phone to their relatives in the US. The expansion of mobile coverage and usage has been very quick in Xarbán. Many villagers still remember the time when they had to queue in the canton capital in order to receive a call from their relatives abroad, which not always took place. They had to pay to the phone owners, usually wealthy dwellers in the canton capital, in order to receive the call. Misunderstandings and the complexity of the logistics of agreeing a time meant that communication between migrants and non-migrants was scarce, irregular and entailed huge organizational skills.

-Did you talk to your family when you were the first time in the US [in 1989]?

Yes, I did it every three or four months. Back then there were no mobile phones. I had to arrange for them to go to Gualaceo if I wanted to talk to them.

-What did you talk about?

To start with we talked about debts [laughs]. That was the very first topic. I greeted then and asked about the debt interest. At that time interest was very high. I asked money [for the journey to the US] at a twenty per cent monthly interest rate.

(Xarbán, 42 year-old male twice returnee from the US, 1989-1996 and 1997-1999)

As seen from the experience of this early migrant to the US, phone calls in the nineties were restricted to issues such as the journey debt repayment, and little time was left to talk about anything else, including migrants' experiences abroad which could result in social remittances. Although most migrants from Pindo migrated later in the nineties, the first migrants from the village and those in locations without a strong Ecuadorian presence also faced the same communication obstacles as their Xarbán peers.

-How did you communicate with your family when you were there [in Israel]?

It was very difficult and expensive. It was very very expensive. That time [in 1995] we paid, five dollars per minute. So if we called just four minutes it was twenty dollars.

(Pindo, 32 year-old male returnee from Israel 1995-2003)

For Pindo villagers living in the parish centre the contact is usually through landline or mobile phone. There used to be internet in the village centre but not at the time of my fieldwork. Villagers *en los campos* have far more difficult communication as in some parts there is no mobile reception. Overall for Xarbán and Pindo, mobile phone is the channel most often used. As Horst found for Jamaica, and it is also the case of Xarbán and Pindo, mobile phones are 'transforming the role of transnational communication from an intermittent event to a part of daily life' (2006: 143). Although mobile phone ownership in Ecuador enables non-migrants to contact their migrant relatives abroad, unless there is an unexpected or urgent event, communication is usually initiated by migrants, because of the cheaper call rates and convenience of calling from abroad.

Although phone calls to landlines or mobile phones is the communication channel most often used by Xarbán and Pindo migrants to communicate with their families back in the villages, there is also an intense visual communication in the form of photos and videos sent from and to the migrants. This is more intense in the case of Xarbán than Pindo. A 41 year-old Xarbán male migrant in Queens since 1994, told me: 'I have lots of photos. When I was on my own in this country [the US], I used to look at them'. And he showed me photos of his children. Migrants see their children growing up in a succession of photos and videos sent to them from Ecuador. He also had many photos of the different construction phases of his house in Xarbán. Photos are a transmission channel but also, as I have shown in chapter five, a means of control over migrants' projects in their places of origin, usually regarding the construction of their houses.

Only in the case of Pindo, where many migrants hold legal status abroad, can they go back and forth. Return, either temporary or permanent, is a privileged way of transmitting knowledge back to Ecuador. In this situation, migrants themselves can incorporate new behaviours and belief systems once in Ecuador. Migrants themselves, by performing new behavioural codes are transferring non-material stuff. This way, non-migrants can learn and incorporate these new behaviours and codes by means of copying those migrants on temporary or permanent return. Non-migrants can in this way exemplify some sort of 'incorporation-from-copying'. However, this is not without problems, as returnees can be subjected to a high level of scrutiny and criticism by non-migrants. It is important to note also that Pindo migrants return in their working age. Most Xarbán migrants, on the contrary, return when they are unable to work in the US (due to an accident or old age) or they are approaching their retirement age, so their ability and motivation to introduce new knowledge back in Ecuador are weaker. In Pindo at the time of my fieldwork, migrants were starting to return from Spain, due to the financial crisis. I can anticipate that this fact will have a profound social and economic impact in Ecuador. However it is still too soon to see any effects, as most migrants are still in a standby phase, trying to figure out their next move: whether to stay in Spain, to move to a different country (e.g. the UK), or permanently remain to Ecuador.

Hence it is obvious from the above account that the extension of phone coverage has eased and multiplied the contacts between migrants and non-migrants. With the development and expansion of relatively cheap communication, transnational families can develop and sustain meaningful and continuous communication. Thus, under these new circumstances social remittances can be more easily sent and received.

7.2.4. Incorporation, rejection or re-workings: non-migrants' active role

The last phase in the creation of social remittances takes place back in migrants' places of origin. Non-migrants need to make sense of what migrants are telling them or how they perceive what returnees are doing. For this reason, knowledge which has originated in similar settings is also easier to grasp and to implement. There is a real risk of social remittances being lost in translation. However, it is not only that non-migrants have to make sense of social remittances; they, like the migrants, actively select what to try to make sense of and what not.

In general terms, non-migrants are more conservative than migrants or returnees, as in the following case of a returnee keen on setting up a fish shop like the one where he used to work in the US:

-Are you thinking of setting up your own business?

Returnee: I would like to but it is too risky [he talked before about financial insecurity in rural Ecuador]

His wife: He wants to set up a fish shop in Gualaceo but I'd rather not. What if it goes badly? We would lose everything and we would get indebted once again [referring to the journey debt]

(Xarbán, 46 year-old male returnee from Queens-NY-US, 1996-2004)

Every returnee agrees that after migrating they 'think bigger' (i.e. feel able of doing more and bigger ventures).

-Have you changed the way of thinking because of your stay in the US?

Yes.

-How?

Before migrating I had, how can I tell you? The ideas were... I had maybe the same ideas but not with such a wide frame of mind as I have now. Let's say, I want to grow something. The same I am doing right now, but I would have done it at a smaller scale.

-Did you feel more able now?

Yes. I feel more mature. More confident. I know I can deal with things and be successful.

(Pindo, 42 year-old male returnee from Newark-US, 1992-2005)

The key question in this last stage is how migrants orient themselves in terms of investment, emotional attachment and physical presence. In other words, where they consider the place where to build their own future. The answer to this question is diametrically different for Pindo and Xarbán. Xarbán migrants migrate now in order not to have to migrate in the future; Xarbán is always the place to which to return, in part because many migrants return close to their retirement age. However, more importantly, migration is embedded in the social life of the Xarbán community: to become an adult, one must migrate. Male villagers do not continue with their studies because they are waiting for the right time to migrate. They do not consider

education to be a way forward because it takes too long to save enough money to build one's house. Migration allows one to accumulate sufficient capital within an acceptable period of time. There is clearly a culture of migration in place. It explains why migrants do not move internally upon return. Their rite of passage represented by their arrival and life in the US, is only useful in the social context of the village, where it is socially rewarded. The rite-of-passage means that migrants must go to the US; but also that they must save and come back. For those who are tempted to 'ride out' and try to stay in the US, or those who return to other places, mechanisms of social control exist. Rumours and criticism in the village are crucial to exert this control⁶⁹.

For Pindo, migrants' orientation is blurred, more complex and multifaceted. As shown in chapter four, they do not have such a long shared history as Xarbán villagers, and they cannot trace kin relationships before the Agrarian Reform in the 1970s. Many current Pindo migrants and returnees were studying in the province's capital at the time the opportunity and 'stampede' to Spain started and stopped their studies to migrate. Some of them have returned to Loja city and are studying again.

The final stage in this last phase is linked to the way in which new information or social remittances disseminate within Ecuador. Information arrives first to the close family circle of the migrant: the migrant him/herself, parents, children and siblings. From there, it disseminates to the rest of the villagers. Information transmission mechanisms are very faulty in both villages. In Xarbán I found myself countless times with the sense of living in a 'Chinese whispers' situation, with information distorted at every step of the transmission.

Finally, even in the case where all the previous phases have been ticked off, there are structural constraints to consider. These constraints can prevent changes from being implemented or allow the information to survive so that it is put in place. Some ventures are off the table due to structural variables, especially geographical or political ones.

7.3. Summary

This chapter started by examining the existing literature on social remittances. Apart from the pioneering article by Levitt (1998) and her follow-up more than a decade later

⁶⁹ Gluckman's account of different groups using gossiping and rumours as disciplinary strategies in different parts of the world shows how common they are (1963).

(Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 2011), few theoretical developments have been made. Addressing one of the main criticisms directed to the initial definition of social remittances, this chapter has shown that as long as culture and social traits are understood as fluid and dynamic, social remittances are a useful methodological device.

Trying to cover the academic vacuum on theoretical developments based on social remittances, this chapter has outlined the necessary stages in order for social remittances to be created. It is important to note that social remittances are triple-context specific: to migrants' places of origin, to migrants' places of residence, and to migrants' personal idiosyncrasy and background. All those spheres contribute different variables which then interact with each other to create (or not to create) social remittances. Four stages are crucial and were identified: migrants' stances prior to migration (which include their aptitudes, attitudes and interests); the exposure migrants experience in their new places of residence; the transmission back to migrants' places of origin; and finally, processes of incorporation, reworking or rejecting taking place in Xarbán and Pindo. Non-migrants play a fundamental role in this last stage, which highlights the need to take non-migrants into account in any analysis of transnational practices and fields.

The next chapter is also devoted to social remittances and will cover their realms of content for Xarbán and Pindo migrants and returnees, emphasising the differences in the two settings.

Chapter 8

Social Remittances.

Realms of Content

I aim to examine here the content of social remittances in the specific settings of Xarbán and Pindo. As seen in the previous chapter, for social remittances to exist, all the four creation phases must be fulfilled. The criteria are rather difficult to fulfil because, for social remittances to come into being, they need to be created, transferred and taken into account in migrants' places of origin in order that they can effect changes. Different social remittances have different potential to trigger social change, which can be positive or negative, and more or less profound and long-lasting. Five realms of content were identified in my field research and are presented and analysed in depth in this chapter: gender (including child-rearing practices); dealings with the banking system; political engagement; practical know-how and work cultures; and ethnicity.

8.1. Are There Any Social Remittances?

We saw from the previous chapter that, in order for social remittances to generate changes, and consequently to exist as such, migrants must be exposed to new ways of being and doing, adopt them, transfer them back home via one of the array of possible means of communication, and non-migrants must integrate them into the fabric of their lives. Xarbán and Pindo's very different migration profiles generate ways in which social remittances are created. Differences between the two villages regarding social remittances start with the migrants themselves. As Levitt identified in her seminal work, migrants range from recipient observer to purposeful innovator, with some other migrants lying in between as instrumental adapters (1998: 931). Which category migrants fall into depends on their patterns of interaction with their societies of residence (1998: 931). However, the case of Xarbán and Pindo villagers shows that such patterns of interaction are not completely independent of migrants' previous characteristics and experiences, which include their levels of formal education and prior migration histories, either internal or international. The higher the education levels and curiosity, as well as the greater the amount of previous migratory experience, the more likely it will be that migrants develop interaction patterns that bring them close to Levitt's category of purposeful innovators.

There are also differences amongst non-migrants, as their attitudes as well as their receptivity to new values, knowledge and systems of action are important. Non-migrants range, like migrants, from 'eager receptors' to rigid conservatives, with most of them exerting some sort of selection and appropriation of received social remittances (in phone conversations with their relative migrants abroad for instance) or perceived changes in returned migrants (whether permanent or temporal). Similar to the example cited by Levitt regarding clothes worn by non-migrant Dominican women, the behaviour of migrants on temporary return can affect non-migrants' behaviour (1998: 932). Migrants on holidays can have more room for manoeuvre compared with permanent returnees. The latter can feel more pressed to follow and not challenge villages' socio-cultural practices, if they want to re-incorporate themselves fully into the villages and not to face the risk of social exclusion.

In-between migrants and non-migrants' specific characteristics, there is an array of features that shape different migration scenarios, which in turn affect the potential creation of social remittances in the two villages. In the case of Xarbán, migrants' low education and irregular legal status in the destination lead to a precarious incorporation into the US labour market. Most of them have a very limited knowledge of English, in many cases just jargon expressions and the name of their job tools. Their irregular status also means that migrants do not try to engage fully with mainstream US society because they are well aware of the temporary nature of their stay. This temporariness usually lasts for many years, but no matter how long they live in the US, migrants know they cannot eventually settle down there, and that sooner or later they will have to return to Ecuador. It means that their work and even their leisure activities are orientated towards Xarbán. This clear orientation generates transnational bonds and practices – of which remittances are probably the most visible – which interweave Xarbán migrants in the US and villagers in Xarbán into the same *transnationalized* space and social field. The residential concentration of Xarbán migrants in Queens eases the appearance and maintenance of such a 'transnational village'. Belonging to such a group is a disincentive for Xarbán migrants to come into contact with new sources of knowledge or new frameworks of action and values. Xarbán migrants, then, find it very difficult to obtain enough contact or exposure to create social remittances in the first place. Their low educational background and their sort of target-migration further obstruct the creation of social remittances. Due to their irregular status, they also find difficult to enact the transmission phase, as their legal status prevents face-to-face transmission, a must when difficult information is to be transferred. Permanent returnees are the main potential carriers of complex knowledge. The fact that

origin and destination places are so different adds an extra layer of difficulty when transferring information. Although this is the situation for Xarbán migrants in the US, I do not claim any general validity of such processes anywhere else.

In contrast to Xarbán, migrants from Pindo usually have higher education levels and a greater 'curiosity' for new realities, as well as more extensive previous migration experiences. It is worth recalling here that 10.5% of questionnaire-surveyed Pindo migrants have previous internal migration compared with only 3.5% of Xarbán's. Particularly in the case of Pindo migrants in Spain, they have enough contacts and of sufficient quality to generate new knowledge to be transferred back to Ecuador. In other European countries such as Italy or the UK, migrants' higher educational background also helps them to learn the language quicker than Xarbán migrants in the US. The fact that migrants have no already-existing transnational community in the destination to insert themselves into is also an incentive to learn the language. Pindo migrants can sustain most of the first creation phases, yet their attachment to Pindo is not as strong as in the case of Xarbán. Xarbán, as we have seen, is a village whose members share kinship relations going back centuries. Pindo was 'artificially' created as a result of the 1974 Agrarian Reform. It is an administrative village but its members do not feel a shared belonging to it as Xarbán's do. There is a huge gap between dwellers in the parish centre and those who live in 'the fields'. Aware of the huge structural obstacles Pindo migrants would have to face if they ever returned and settled down in Pindo, some migrants opt to stay in Spain, move on, or return to a bigger city in Ecuador where they have more work and education opportunities. They keep their attachment to Pindo in a more pragmatic way, as the place of their roots and the place where to spend holidays. However they are very aware of the limited chances of making a sustainable life in the long term in Pindo. Hence, the last phase in the creation of social remittances is seldom fulfilled in the case of Pindo.

For these reasons, specific groups such as the ones I deal with in my research cannot fulfil every stage in the social remittance creation process all the time. It explains why there are such limited changes resulting from social remittances, or they are too fragmented to make a lasting impact. Nonetheless some relevant social remittances do in fact exist in both settings which I move on now to disentangle.

8.2. Realms of Content

In what follows, I analyse five realms where social remittances are present: gender issues, financial dealings, political engagement, work-related issues, and ethnicity.

8.2.1. Gender issues

Gender has generally received insufficient attention in Migration Studies. Some authors have researched the potential of migration to establish more equal gender relations between migrants, both abroad and in migrants' places of origin (e.g. de Haas and van Rooij, 2010; McIlwaine, 2008; Pribilsky, 2004; Taylor et al., 2006). Results do not show clear one-way influences between migration and gender relations, and this is also the case in my research. Migration in the cases of Xarbán and Pindo, and these results do not automatically generalize outside these very specific contexts, has created spaces for gender contestations, tensions, continuities and changes. Some of those changes and continuities are directly attributable to social remittances. Change is, however, very slow and loops back and forth. As Taylor et al. (2006) found in Guatemala, financial and social remittances, as well as other factors, enable a gradual erosion of gender inequalities but change is slow because entrenched structures resist rapid change.

Because of socialization and, for some, partial integration in their new places of residence, some migrants are slowly incorporating new behaviours and thought systems regarding gender. However, changes in the realm of gender relations can be the result of the type of migration rather than the presence of more equal gender relations in the countries of residence of migrants. Hence, in order to obtain a better understanding of the origin of the changes, instead of taking migrants' countries of residence as the unit of analysis, it is more meaningful to take into account migrants' specific contexts of departure and arrival. Migration from Pindo and Xarbán usually involves an initial move from rural areas to urban milieus. This has an impact on gender practices and ideologies because in urban areas gender relations tend to be less hierarchical. Hence, migrants' exposure to new gender practices is in some cases more related to the fact of living in an urban environment than of living in a different country.

Secondly, the type of migration is also very much related to the gender of the migrants' themselves. Male and female migrants have different interaction patterns in their new places of residence as well as different interests. Consequently, male and female migrants are differently positioned to potentially adopt different information regarding gender, and have

different interests in adopting changes. Although migrants always select what to adopt, reject or transmit, and under which light (either positive or negative), differences between male and female migrants' patterns of selection are very clear. For instance, Xarbán male migrants in the US cook and clean on a daily basis. However, it is a matter of need and does not have a lasting impact on their underlying gender ideologies. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) makes the same point in her research on male Mexican migrants in the US. And likewise, as McIlwaine (2008) found for Latino migrants in the UK, men can perform 'female roles' while abroad, because they have to, but it does not mean the underlying gender ideologies are changed. The following interview clip from my own fieldwork illustrates this point.

I had never cooked while I was here [in Xarbán] because before I got married my mother cooked for me. But there [in the US] we had to cook. Even if we did not know how to cook, we had to eat.

-Do you like cooking now?

Here I do not cook. Not at all. Over there I always cooked.

His wife: he had to [*por obligación*]

(Xarbán, 33 year-old married male returnee twice from the US)

Most males only experience changes at the role level that can be easily reverted once back in Ecuador. So, male migrants, once they return to Ecuador, generally go back to the 'Ecuadorian way of doing things'. In many of my interviews with returnees and migrants, there is the same dichotomy: the difference between 'here' (Ecuador) and 'there' (abroad), migrants and returnees switching between action systems depending on location, and supporting the hypothesis that behaviour is highly contextual. The next extract, from my interview with a young male returnee from Madrid, exemplifies this 'here and there' contrast:

-Do you think in Spain the relationship between men and women is different?

Yes, it is different. There men and women are equal. They are almost the same... everything is very different there.

-What do you think of how things are there?

I like it.

-How is it with your current girlfriend, like there or like here?

No, now I do it how it is done here.

-So, if you think that it is better in Spain, why do you change in Ecuador?

Because when I was there [in Spain] I adapted myself to the Spanish customs. Once I am here, I adapt myself to the customs from here. Of course. It is the same with food. When I was there I had their eating habits. Once I came here, I go back to the Ecuadorian foodway. Once I come here, I live according to the ideas of my country.

(Pindo, 24 year-old male returnee from Madrid-Spain, 1998-2009)

Very few migrants do retain changes upon return, but it is a personal decision and they usually need to confront non-migrant villagers' reactions. The case of the returnee in the following quotation was more the exception than the rule. Villagers usually gossiped about the fact that this returnee usually helps out at home after returning from the US.

-Have you brought any habit from the US? Something you liked from there?

Mmmm...habits...well, the habit I brought is that one has to do everything in the house. Cooking, washing, ironing [laughing] because that is what one has to do there. If one wants to save money, one must do all that. Then one gets used to it. So, here I wash and cook. This is more than a habit. It is an obligation. So, I keep doing it here in my own house.

(Xarbán, 42 year-old married male returnee twice from Queens-NY-US, 1989-1993, 1993-2003)

Migration to Europe, which was usually pioneered by women who were in many cases married with children, has created room for further gender contestations. Women's incorporation into the labour market was initially as live-in domestic workers in the houses of middle-class families where both spouses worked. These jobs provided these women with an advantageous stance to obtain information of the intimate domain of gender relations within the household. Moreover, some of these women, as pioneering migrants, were the ones in charge of reunifying their husbands and children, which in some cases strengthened their position within the family. When the husband is the pioneering migrant, with the power to reunify or not with his wife, things tend to be harder for women, as previous power imbalances are reinforced.

My husband told me that I had to go to Quito [to take a flight to Spain]. He did not ask me first. I knew nothing about Spain, nor even the job I was going to work in. I arrived there very scared. My boss wised me up little by little. Sometimes I

considered breaking up with my husband, but I have four kids, who is going to help them then? My boss [the woman she worked for] told me: leave him Maria, let him suffer. Such a pity to leave your kids back in Ecuador to come here and live with this abusive man...[...] In Ecuador men are the bosses, we [women] are nothing. The husband is the head of the household here. Spain is much better. Women have more freedom.

(Pindo, 47 year-old married female returnee from Spain with four children)

Women's emancipation abroad was achieved through their working-life incorporation by engaging in paid work. This has important consequences for their return to Ecuador, as most married women once back in Ecuador do not usually engage in formal paid jobs. Nevertheless, they still shoulder a very important share of the household workload, agricultural tasks, raising animals, and taking care of children. They also engage in informal ways of earning money and set up little businesses such as modest restaurants, high school canteens or tiny shops. These are nonetheless regarded as secondary income sources, even though in many cases the household relies periodically only on this income. Hence female migrants' gender gains quickly revert upon return, which usually generates friction with their partners. The following quotations from interviews with female returnees emphasise the importance these women place on having their own money, and how upon return to Ecuador they find it difficult to cope with the fact that they no longer have a regular income.

I don't let my husband dominate me. I get into trouble with him because of it, because I don't let him.

-Were you like that before migrating or is it something that developed while you were in Italy?

No, no. I have always been a little bit like that. I think I became more aware there because you feel more powerful. If I hadn't been there and felt powerful I would have let him dominate me. If I hadn't had a job I would have had to depend on him. But I was independent, I had my job.

(Pindo, 31 year-old married female returnee from Rome-Italy, 1996-2008)

-Did your relationship with your husband change when you migrated to Spain?

The thing that changed between us was that I didn't put up with as much as I used to, because my husband is a womanizer. Before, I was subjugated to whatever he said, that is what we did. So when I started having my own job, my own money...

then I liberated myself a bit. I changed. [...] I realised things were not the way I thought they were. Here one has the mentality that the husband is the one in charge. When I was away I realized that I was very dominated here, washing, cleaning, cooking, obeying my husband. And even if you disagree, you cannot complain.

(Pindo, 41 year-old married female returnee from Madrid-Spain, 1997-2007)

Here they are very very *machistas*. Over there, it is different. There, if a man goes out, the woman also has the right to go out. You know that my husband has returned with a different mentality? I do not have to be asking him for money – please give that much because I want to buy a bottle of water, or whatever. No. I manage my money, and he manages his money.

-Did you act like that before migrating?

A little bit. But there we learnt it more.

-Which way do you think is better, like here or like there?

I think it is a bit better like there. Here, I see my mother asking my father, I want to buy rice, or meat or whatever, she has to ask him for the money. Something I really miss is working to have my own money. I got used over there that if I felt like buying anything, I bought it. No being asking my husband for money, no, no.

(Pindo, 38 year-old married female returnee from London)

Some of these women opt not to return to Ecuador, particularly when they have been confronted with the gender inequality they experienced prior to migration as well as becoming aware of the painful re-adaptation faced by those married women who had returned. Nevertheless, most women do aim to return at some point. In spite of the potential gender gains of marrying a European man, some of my informants express a preference for Ecuadorian men, as they are aware how much more difficult return will be if they become involved with someone other than from Ecuador.

-How long were you with your Italian boyfriend?

Three years.

-But did you already think about marrying an Ecuadorian man?

Yes. At the end I wanted an Ecuadorian man, after trying an Italian one.

-Why?

Because I wanted to return and live here [Ecuador]. I wanted to come back to my country.

(Pindo, 31 year-old female returnee from Rome-Italy, 1996-2008)

As mentioned in the previous chapter when analysing transmission channels, those channels involving physical contact perform better when dealing with complex issues, as gender relations certainly are. So far I have used interview quotations from permanent or temporary returnees. However, although less conclusive, there is also the possibility of transmission through non-physical channels, such as regular phone calls. This next case of a non-migrant woman in Pindo who talked often with her daughters in Spain illustrates the ability of some migrants to transfer knowledge without having to return permanently:

That is what my daughter told me: 'why do you have to ask dad for permission to go? Just say him that you go, and that's it'. No, no, because we were taught to do that way, so if I want to go somewhere I ask him, can you please let me? [...] Here women put up with everything (*somos aguantonas*). If I got a bad husband, I have to put up with him forever. But now it is not as much as it used to be.

(Pindo, non-migrant women mother of two daughters in Spain)

The previous quote also points in the direction of a theoretical argument put forward by Pessar (2005). She states that one of the possible outcomes of migration regarding gender regimes is the appreciation by migrants that changes have been occurring also in their places of origin. Thus, they would be more likely to accept and push forward such changes (Pessar, 2005: 6). McIlwaine found empirical support among Andean migrants in London of such a scenario (2008: 10). The previous interview quotation also points to the possibility of change among non-migrants thanks to social remittances. Through social remittances, migrants can also make their non-migrant relatives and friends aware of such changes and influence them to be more open to accepting them.

a) Child-rearing practices

Child-rearing practices and ideologies can also be included under the category of gender work. Children and teenagers are usually the main 'absentees' in Migration Studies, and even the few works dealing with them tend to look at the topic from an adult-centred perspective (cf. GIIIM 2010). There are some studies focusing on migrant youngsters abroad, the so-called 1.5 generation (children who were born in their parents' places of origin and then brought over to

their parents' places of current residence) and on the second generations (children born in their parents' places of new residence). Little research has been carried out on the impact of migration and remittances on the children and teenagers who stay put in their parents' places of origin (Camacho and Hernandez, 2007; Cortés, 2007; Cortina, 2008; de la Garza, 2010). The expression usually attached to these children – the 'left-behind children' – is morally loaded and implicitly creates an image of these children that may not have much to do with their reality. First of all, the expression implies that, by being simply 'left behind', these children and teenagers have little impact on their parents' migratory decisions. This is often indeed the case, although it must be said that the most common and explicit motivation of migrants with children is that migration is for the sake of their children's future. The fact that they are sometimes not taken into account, furthermore, does not automatically imply that they are the powerless victims of their parents' migration without any agency. Quite the contrary, these children are immersed in the changes and negotiations brought about by migration, as social remittances affects recipients. The migration of the parents often creates the need for rearrangements in the family, and in rural Ecuador the more so if the mother migrates as the reproductive work is entirely shouldered by women in this society.

Migration can be the source of new child-rearing practices, as a consequence of the required arrangements because of the parents' migration but also because of social remittances on new understandings about child-rearing practices linked to ideologies of childhood. Social remittances, transmitted by migrants and more often implemented by returnees, have an impact on migrants' children who have stayed in the origin country. Female migrants are better positioned to fulfil most of the stages in the creation of social remittances in this realm of content. First, as mothers, they usually nurture a genuine interest in children and child-rearing practices. Second, and particularly if employed as domestic workers in households with children, they have plenty of contact with alternative child-rearing practices. Thirdly, whether through their usually regular phone contact with their children or upon their return, these women can incorporate some of the practices and ideas about children they were exposed to abroad into their own child-rearing practices. Finally, and more broadly, they may have an interest in reducing the number of children they have. They may wish to liberate themselves from the 'traditional' pattern of continuous child-bearing and large families (and challenge their husbands/partners in this regard).

One issue that arose in most interviews with returnees was how different child-rearing practices and childhood conceptions are in Ecuador and abroad.

-Did you see if there [in the US] children were brought up differently?

Yes, it is very different there. There, one cannot treat kids badly, one cannot tell them anything.

-Why cannot one treat kids badly?

Because the neighbour reports to the police that one is mistreating a kid. If they see the kid is crying too much, they call the police. And the kid, as early as six years old, learns how to phone the police if the father mistreats him. The police arrest the father and take the kid away.

-Do you agree with that or not?

Sometimes parents have to tell off the kid, but not too much, because some parents are too rude, they do not know how to do it. But it is fine because a child is a child and has rights and has the right to live.

(Xarbán, 47 year-old female returnee from Queens-NY-US, 1995-2003)

-So, in which way is it worse [the way kids are being raised abroad]?

So, they are brought up differently because they cannot be corrected because they call the police to protect them. That is the way there. In Spain it is the same, I imagine, because there, women, children and pets are protected [laughing]. Yes, there is no way of mistreating a pet because someone calls the police to report it.

(Pindo, 30s female returnee from Madrid-Spain, 1994-1997, and Newark-US 1998-2009)

Most returnees, especially women, have a quite balanced view of child-rearing practices. They agree that the way some children used to be treated in the past in rural Ecuador was not good, with lots of child abuse. However, they feel children are given too much power in the US and Europe. In the case of parents with an irregular status abroad and their children born abroad, children's power is even more perverse, as children have the legal right to be abroad: American citizenship is automatically acquired by being born on US soil, while Spanish citizenship for children of Ecuadorian migrants is achieved after one year of residence if they are born in the country. This creates an unusual asymmetry between these children, who are citizens, and their parents, who are not.

Returnees also emphasized the importance of traditional family values in Ecuador, which in their view, were absent abroad.

-Did you see in the US how the relation between parents and children is? Is it different from Ecuador?

Of course. There is no relationship between parents and children over there. There you leave the house early to go to work and leave the kid in a nursery till late in the evening. Then dinner and sleep. So most of the time the kid lives without the parents. In the nurseries. The kid's home is there, their friends are there, in the nursery.

(Xarbán, 42 year-old male returnee twice from Queens-NY-US, 1989-1996, and Connecticut-US, 1997-1999)

This quotation and many similar ones from interviews with returnees I encountered in the field have to be read within a reactive or 'post-facto' context. As I will show in chapter nine, a discourse of 'money for, but without the family' is used by migrants and returnees to counter-balance all the criticisms they are subjected to in Ecuador. Within this frame, two more specific and poignant discourses are, firstly that which portrays migrants' children as the 'remittance children' (Pribilsky, 2001): idle, wasted youngsters only waiting for their parents' remittances to arrive each month. The second discourse, targeting parents, is very critical of migrant mothers who are depicted as abandoning mothers (Pedone, 2008).

The fieldwork data show a clear gender bias in this realm of content, with women more likely to be interested in child issues. Of course, this could be argued to be a near-universal gendered custom. However, anecdotal data, mostly from Xarbán, support the existence of changes in male migrants and returnees towards less hierarchical and more love-based father-children relationships. This is in line with what Pribilsky found amidst Ecuadorian male migrants in the US (2007). These migrants saw the development of 'more modern and progressive' fathering practices to be a positive outcome of their migration (2007: 270). These changes were not so much the consequence of exposure to different ways of doing (as male migrants' lives in the US very rarely produce contact zones with child-rearing practices), as resulting from the conditions created by the migration itself – which often involves long periods of physical separation. The fact that migration, independently of migrants' new places of residence, can

be a source of knowledge and changes on its own has already been mentioned, but it is worth repeating it here.

I would like just to recall here that changes in gender relations have been a recurrent topic throughout my thesis, as I have also dealt with them in regard to material remittances, which are profoundly gendered.

8.2.2. Financial exposure: dealings with the banking sector

Social remittances impact heavily on migrants', returnees' and their relatives' financial behaviour. This has very clear developmental consequences. A solid, reliable and extended banking system is a need for any developed economy, where usually a high percentage of their populations have bank accounts or other financial products. A recent trend dealing with the positive impacts of remittances on development is concerned with the ways remittances can enhance previously weak financial systems. Remittances can boost the banking sector in places of reception and increase credit availability (Quisumbing and McNiven, 2007). However, there are some key non-economic determinants that most of these analyses overlook, and which the comparison between Xarbán and Pindo can help to illustrate.

The banking sector in Ecuador has improved both its performance and regulation since the 1998 country's economic collapse which led to the 2000 dollarization. However, the impact of the dollarization is still fresh in the minds of many small savers. The currency exchange rate between dollars and *suces* prior to 2000 was very profitable for remittance-receiving households with relatives in the US. With the official dollarization in Xarbán many people saw their savings, once converted from dollars into *suces*, devalued. This event heavily impacted on Xarbán villagers' savings and an emigration upturn happened in the subsequent years, as we saw in chapter four. Dollarization is still a recurrent topic of conversation in the village, becoming a 'lost paradise' story. Dollarization did not have such strong negative consequences, neither material nor emotional, for Pindo villagers as not that much migration money was yet around. Nonetheless, Pindo villagers have also suffered from a poorly regulated and extremely bureaucratic banking sector. Villagers from 'the fields' do not usually have bank accounts because they are illiterate, poorly linked with Cariamanga (where the nearest banks and credit cooperatives are located), and their savings (if any) are too low for the banks to actively target them. Moreover, in Pindo there is still the tradition of keeping savings in the form of cattle.

Credit cooperatives are quite successfully reaching rural populations usually overlooked by the banks. Twenty minutes away from Xarbán, in the county capital Gualaceo, villagers can access the main credit cooperatives and some banks (such as the cooperative *Jardín Azuayo*, cooperative *JEP*, *Banco del Austro*, or *Banco del Pacífico*). After migration to Spain from Pindo took off and remittances started to come into the village, a local credit cooperative was set up. The ultimate aim was to receive remittances in the village and not to have to do the one-hour drive to Cariamanga to pick up the money. The attempt failed for lack of know-how, and some villagers who were wealthier than average lost some of their savings. Both in Xarbán and Pindo, some families also lost their savings in pyramid systems.

My data for Pindo and Xarbán clearly show two different trends regarding migrants' financial behaviour abroad. Sending financial remittances is one of the most important features of such behaviour. Migrants and their families choose remittance channels based on reliability, price, speed and convenience, but only after they become familiar with them. For Xarbán migrants in the New York area, exposure to the financial sector does not really occur. Because most are in an irregular situation, working with fake social security numbers or without them, they are paid in cash. Utilities, rent or any other important expense are paid by cash or under the name of a relative or friend with a residence permit. As time goes by, Xarbán migrants are starting to open bank accounts. They approach those banks whose requirements to open bank accounts are less strict. In some cases, migrants only need to provide their passports and a US address in order to open the bank account. According to my informants, who do not do online banking, different branches of a same bank have different requirements, with some of them being more proactive in trying to attract new clients while others having tougher application requirements. In no case do migrants without papers qualify for credit cards. Banks also provide a cheap way to send money to Ecuador for high amounts as they usually charge fixed rates, contrary to courier agencies. Citibank was often cited by my informants with a bank account in the US. In August 2011, for Citibank, the daily money limit to Ecuador was \$3,000 with each transfer charged \$5 if the money is sent to a bank account in Ecuador, or \$8 if the money is picked up in cash (checked at https://online.citibank.com/JRS/popups/remittances_ecuador.html). However migrants do not usually send big amounts, and tend to use money transfer operators (MTOs) to send the money to their families in Ecuador. Those MTOs, locally known as *agencias*, are usually staffed by fellow Ecuadorians, making senders feel more comfortable. In 2010, according to the Ecuadorian Central Bank, 54.5% of the total money transfers to Ecuador were made through MTOs (BCE, 2010). This percentage has stayed relative stable since 2005, when

it accounted for 57%. The largest MTOs in Ecuador are Delgado, Western Union and MoneyGram (Bendixen, 2003).

By contrast, most Pindo migrants in Spain are very well integrated into the Spanish banking system. Their wages are paid into a bank account – or at least part of them, as in agricultural and construction work an undeclared share of wages is usually paid in cash. Utilities are usually paid in Spain through direct debit and not many alternative ways of paying are available. Spanish banks and building societies have seen migrants' customer potential and have invested in capturing this new market share. Some migrants, always searching for cheaper ways to send their money to Ecuador, use banks to remit their money. With the Spanish real estate boom, some migrants mortgaged to buy property in Spain. As seen, sadly, many of them were unable to keep up with their monthly repayments and their properties were seized. However, migrants became used to dealing with such issues. During their holidays in Ecuador, they open bank accounts for their relatives to receive their remittances. Upon permanent return all of them have bank accounts in Ecuador, and quite a few consider loans as a possible option.

Xarbán villagers and returnees deeply distrust the financial system. They avoid becoming indebted to build a house – a process that usually takes several years because it is built as money comes in – or set up a business. They resort to kinship networks and local lenders, probably because this is how they obtained the money for the journey up North in the first place. Credit cooperatives, such as the *Jardín Azuayo*, are slowly becoming an option for Xarbán villagers, although more as a place to keep savings upon return than to resort to credit. In Pindo, on the contrary, houses are built in one go with migrants' savings and a mortgage. Remittances are used then to repay the monthly mortgage instalments. Pindo migrants and returnees also set up bigger investments because on top of their savings they can also access credit. Hence, their exposure and dealings while abroad with the banking sector have provided them with knowledge which is very useful and profitable in Ecuador.

8.2.3 Political engagement

As mentioned in chapter four, rural Ecuadorians and particularly those who self-identify as non-indigenous, are not very interested on politics⁷⁰. This situation began to change through

⁷⁰ Indigenous groups have been very active in Ecuador in recent years, becoming a political force in the national arena. The CONAIE (Confederation of Ecuadorian Indigenous Nationalities) was key in the overthrow of the president Jamil Mahuad in 2000.

the process of migration and because of a deep structural change in the national political arena. At the local level, returnees are breaking traditional hierarchies and taking over political posts such as members of the parish board or the water boards, as well as in other local associations without explicit political aims such as the *priostazgo* institution, thoroughly examined in chapter six. These posts were traditionally occupied by particular village families, more so in the case of Pindo, by a few better-off families living in the parish centre. Simultaneously, changes implemented by migrants from abroad and returnees are possible because of the shift in the broad political arena in Ecuador. Hence, the bottom-up changes brought about by migrants, returnees and their relatives, meet top-down changes implemented by the national authorities, resulting in a new scenario of political participation at the local level.

Following my discussion of the creation of social remittances in the previous chapter, migrants' involvement in political structures and formal associations prior to migration tends to be rather limited. In fact, the historical discrimination of peasants in Ecuador created disillusionment with political life and a feeling of powerlessness as a result of peasants' exclusion and the lack of structures to exert their demands.

Once abroad, the migratory experiences of villagers from Pindo and Xarbán do not provide the optimal conditions for exposure to more democratic values, as some authors have found for other migrant groups, particularly Mexicans in the US (see, for instance, Perez Armendáriz and Crow, 2010; Jiménez, 2008). It is important to note that the right to vote and to be elected is not possible for most Ecuadorian migrants abroad. Most Xarbán migrants in the US do not hold regular legal status abroad and hence they are not entitled to vote. In Spain, neither irregular nor regular non-European migrants had the right to vote before 2011. However, those Ecuadorians who had been living regularly in Spain for at least five years were entitled to vote for the first time in the May 2011 local elections. The importance and impact of this change for the political exposure of migrants still needs to be analyzed and more time is needed for studies on this issue to appear.

However, the lack of structures that might allow political participation in migrants' residence countries is countered by the attempts of the Ecuadorian government to engage their citizens abroad. Ecuador is 'a textbook case in terms of state-led political transnationalism' (Boccagni, 2011: 77). With the growing discursive and numerical importance of migrants in Ecuador, notably in terms of pecuniary remittances, the current Ecuadorian president established the

right to vote for Ecuadorians abroad in 2006. Ecuadorian migrants abroad have been called the 'Fifth Region' in reference to the country's four distinctive geographical areas (the Coast, the Highlands, the Amazon and the Galapagos Islands). Boccagni has argued that 'external voting' in Ecuador belongs to a broader strategy of looking at migrants not only as remittance providers, but within an innovative frame of migrants' rights (Boccagni and Ramírez, 2009). Other authors support Boccagni's analysis, showing that the proactive approach of the Ecuadorian government towards their migrants abroad – which includes the implementation of external voting, the passing of laws to facilitate property acquisition from abroad, as well as the rhetoric of encouragement to invest in Ecuador – 'has given migrants a collective voice that routinely finds room in their country of origin' (Jiménez, 2008: 13). It has resulted in migrants becoming 'politicised' because of their migratory experience. Hence, as a result of Ecuadorian government efforts but also as the natural consequence of being away from home, migrants become more interested in Ecuadorian politics, both at the national level and also at the level of their villages of origin, where they can actually follow the performance of their local political authorities, as well as influencing their relatives' political behaviour. In Xarbán and Pindo, migrants are keen to promote any project on infrastructure which embellishes the villages. These projects are quite visible and easy to follow by migrants through photos. Unfortunately, this is to the detriment of less visible but more needed projects, such as issues of better management and more transparency.

There are several reasons for migrants to become engaged in local politics. First, their migration and exposure abroad have partially destroyed their initial disillusionment and feelings of powerlessness towards the potential returns of political participation. Politics are not perceived by returnees as a mere source of hassle to avoid but as a route to implement change. They do feel there is room for change and improvement. Secondly, using the local political structures is a good way to become re-inserted into the village structures. Thirdly, and related with the changes implemented by the Ecuadorian national authorities in their fight against corruption, these political posts, which were traditionally unpaid or underpaid, provide a local source of income as they are currently paid.

Some returnees are taking over some of the available local political posts by drawing on the symbolic and material capital they created thanks to their migratory ventures. They are perceived as good managers and leaders; hence some people are willing to vote for them for local political posts. At the time of my research the presidents of both the Xarbán and Pindo parish boards were returnees. In the case of Xarbán, the president has been twice in the US

where he saved enough money to build a nice and very well-located house, buy a car, some land and cattle, whilst also maintaining his marriage. The case of Pindo is even more interesting because for the first time a villager not from the parish centre was elected as president. This returnee from Spain has managed to buy a car with the money he earned abroad, which enables him to drive everyday to the parish centre and meet his political obligations.

The term 'successful returnee' does not have the same social connotations in Pindo as in Xarbán; in the latter criteria are stricter. Three cases illustrate this point. First, a 25 year-old male tried twice to reach the US but was deported both times. He is definite about not trying again. He is not considered as a 'proper' adult because migrating successfully to the US is a rite of passage that Xarbán's young male villagers must comply with before being seen as full-fledged adults, and hence able to take part in the village's socio-political life. However, arriving in the US and returning is not in itself enough to earn the status of 'respected adult'. A 32 year-old male managed to arrive in the US, where he worked for a few years. However, he did not meet his financial obligations towards his son in Xarbán and dissipated most of his earnings abroad. Upon his return, he was not considered as a proper adult either. Third, being deported, no matter how much has been achieved in financial or social terms, also strips returnees of the aura of respectfulness they need to access the local political posts. Rather, migrating to the US, working hard, bringing back savings to one's own house and buying some land, while maintaining one's family obligations through the regular sending of remittances; these are seen as the right things to do. A 33 year-old male returnee from the US met all these criteria and, although he was not finally elected, he was put forward by a political party as they thought his successful migratory experience would go down well among their fellow villagers.

As the saying goes, there is no need to be a hundred years old to know about life.

To know about life requires having a lot of experiences. It could be that a 15 year-old boy knows more than a 60 year-old man, because he has had more experience.

And I had a lot of experience, this is what I brought back with me, that is what I would say to anyone. That is what makes a person wise, experience.

(Xarbán, 33 year-old married male returnee twice from the US)

In Xarbán, there is an alternative to the political arena through the fiesta structure. Although in chapter six I have dealt with the fiesta of the Lord of the Miracles, in fact, the 'fiesta structure' in Xarbán is much broader and includes the organization of a whole set of other fiestas and

sporting events. Some returnees opt to invest their social capital and prestige in this way. Usually, returnees who opt for this pathway to prestige have accumulated symbolic capital while abroad through collaborating in the fiesta structures which are present in the US. In both cases, returnees are using the social capital and prestige they gather while abroad to reinsert themselves into Xarbán society, whether through political organization or the fiesta.

8.2.4. Practical skills and work cultures

Several of the studies which have looked at social remittances have restricted their meaning to practical knowledge transfer (Ammasari and Black, 2001; Chevannes and Ricketts, 1997). I am aware that this is one among many other possible transfers in the form of social remittances and as such I deal with it here. Taking into account that migrants' lives revolve very much around work issues and that they spend most of their time abroad working, it is worth looking at the presence or absence of social remittances in this realm. Different from the migrants in this thesis, research on the transmission by migrants of knowledge and work cultures is usually related to elite or highly-skilled members of the Diaspora (Hanifi, 2006).

Migrants' work-niche incorporation abroad is central to the discussion when considering the content of social remittances potentially being created. Migrants are clustered in specific job-areas, which differ according to place of residence and gender. We can be reminded that construction is the predominant occupation for male migrants from Xarbán: 57.5% of the migrants in the questionnaire and 49.2% in Pindo; and care for females: 18.6% of female migrants from Xarbán worked in the care sector and 52% of Pindo's (see chapter four for the detailed figures).

A considerable number of migrants have acquired construction skills abroad. Some of them have applied them to the construction of their own houses in Ecuador, but building styles and tastes are different in rural Ecuador, so there is limited applicability of their new knowledge to the local construction market. A 30 year-old Pindo male returnee from Spain is a case in point of the overall situation. He built his own house following a plan he sent from Spain as well as some Spanish traditions – for instance, he was very proud of having a bath tub in the toilet. On the other hand, he was aware of the little chance of his new skills to be of any use in most of rural Ecuador:

-Did you work always in Spain as a plasterer?

Yes, all the time.

-Can you use that knowledge here in Ecuador?

No, because here there is no plaster. I think there are some people working with plaster in Guayaquil

-What about the city of Loja?

No, no, no. I know about Guayaquil because a friend of mine returned with the equipment from Spain to work as plasterer.

(Pindo, 30 year-old male returnee from Spain, 1999-2009)

Regarding migrant women, the fact that they overwhelmingly work in the care sector has little impact on their acquisition of new skills as they are the ones in the Andes traditionally in charge of the reproduction tasks. Nonetheless, as already explained, women's labour incorporation has exposed them to different gender regimes and child-rearing views, which in some cases have translated into social remittances.

This lack of match between migrants' acquired skills and the demands and tastes in their places of origin is not an exceptional scenario. A considerable older literature exists about the inappropriate skills migrants learn overseas. As several authors pointed out in the 1970s and 1980s, there is often a mismatch between skills acquired abroad by migrants because their 'largely unskilled industrial work experience in foreign countries has little relevance to the agrarian economies to which they return' (Gmelch, 1987: 131). As seen, due to the specific characteristics of migrants' insertion into the labour market in their new places of residence, most of their acquired know-how is not applicable back in Ecuador. For those migrants who have done factory work in production lines, acquired knowledge is so mechanical, repetitive, simple and context-bound that it cannot be used in another realm – although the broad work culture they come in contact with while doing that job can be useful. Moreover, some migrants are not able to transfer knowledge from the realm in which it was initially created into another one in Ecuador. An example is a female returnee who worked in a fast-food restaurant and on a production line in a clothes factory while in the US and does not see how to use that knowledge in other than the original setting:

-Do you think that something of what you learnt in your jobs in the US can be of any use here in Ecuador?

No. Here there aren't those types of jobs. I don't see any Macdonalds here. In Cuenca I haven't seen any yet.

(Xarbán, 31 year-old female returnee from Hackensack-NJ-US, 2000-2009)

More interesting is the case of migrants who have migrated to rural areas where they were in contact with agricultural techniques such as more efficient irrigation systems, new crops, or techniques such as pruning. This rural-to-rural migration is more relevant in Pindo than in Xarbán. With the current crisis, some of these migrants are planning a 'sustainable' agriculturally-based return based on implementing this knowledge supported by the financial capital they have managed to save due to migration and/or the resort to credit. It will be interesting to make a follow-up of the situation in a few years' time, as these projects are by now too embryonic to bear fruit.

Migrants, as well as acquiring new skills also come in contact with different work cultures. The pace of work in their new places of residence was different but, more importantly, as a result of their status as economic migrants, they tended to work long hours. This was the case of a Pindo migrant in Israel:

-You work a lot everyday!

Of course. [His wife: he works too much, too much]

-Is it a habit you brought from Israel?

Yes, yes, yes.

-Or maybe you were already like that before migrating?

Not that much. Uff, over there I learnt it. You become more disciplined, a lot of responsibility. This is their ideology. [...] All we need is to have the money. To work and have the money. That is all [...] So, everyday like that during eight years there, it is difficult to forget.

(Pindo, 32 year-old male returnee from Israel)

Punctuality was also a big issue that migrants were confronted with abroad.

I am punctual since before going to London. But there I learnt even more. I was working in the house of a French woman. I started at 8am, and I arrived at five past, ten past eight. The first time she did not tell me anything. Second time she told me that if I arrive late again, she would fire me.

(Pindo, 38 year-old female returnee from London)

Some migrants and returnees want to incorporate new ideas generated in the interplay between 'here' and 'there'. Unfortunately, innovative migrants have to face structural obstacles that sometimes prevent any chance of success. These constraints are important and lead in many cases to a compliance or opt-out strategy because 'the very factors that led individuals to opt for opportunities abroad are the ones constraining the potential of migrants to transform the communities' (Jiménez, 2008: 121-122). This is very clear regarding work cultures. In Xarbán, as many male villagers have been in the US, the 'American work culture' is kept in high esteem, and successful returnees are preferred as labourers, as they are regarded as punctual and hard workers. In the case of Pindo, where migration has not been so pervasive and there is still a high number of villagers who have never migrated, changes are slower to be implemented.

-Is there anything of what you learnt while in the UK that it is useful for you here in Ecuador?

No. Nothing. English language is the only thing but I am already forgetting it, as I do not use it here.

-And the way of working?

You need to be very punctual there. Being on time. Otherwise, you wer fired.

-And here do you expect people to be on time for work?

Yes, but they don't care. Yes I do, sometimes when we hire day labourers, they arrive late. I tell them, if you were in London, you would have lost your job by now. Fired. Right after arriving [in the UK], on two occasions I was fired because I arrived as we usually do here, half an hour late. I didn't know. I thought I was still in Ecuador [laughing].

(Pindo, 21 year-old male deported from London-UK, 2007-2009)

8.2.5. Ethnicity

Migrants' become exposed abroad to a new ethnic landscape and 'racial' classifications which confront their previous frameworks. Xarbán migrants in the US, while keeping their rural origin as one important layer of identity and differentiation in an urban setting, become aware of the presence of many other ethnic groups. The groups they encounter in their daily life (apart from Latinos of course) are Asians (mainly Koreans who live in the Flushing area next to the Ecuadorian enclave), Irish, Italians and Jews, who are usually their bosses. Generally speaking Xarbán villagers admire all these groups and, through admittedly limited communication, they come in contact with ethnic diversity. Such ethnic divisions are also present in Ecuador, but

here the indigenous groups are dismissed and viewed as backward people. '*Los morenos*', as Xarbán villagers name African Americans, are a close but unknown 'other' for the villagers in the US. Most villagers reproduce US racist discourses about Afro-Americans with scary easiness, portraying them as guilty of crimes such as benefit fraud, other scams, or violent attacks. On the other hand, Pindo migrants are confronted with the fact that they are not in fact as 'white' as they pride themselves to be in Ecuador. Inhabitants of Loja province are regarded within Ecuador as whiter, resulting from 'unmixed' Spanish origin, a vision sustained by the limited existing knowledge about the province's pre-Hispanic history. Pindo migrants also encounter a native image of Ecuador as an indigenous country.

There [in Spain] everybody thinks that here [in Ecuador] we are all indigenous, short [in stature] and long-haired. They see us as 'weirdos' [*bichos raros*] but once they go there [her daughters and other migrants from Ecuador] and say no, there are all sorts in Ecuador. The same as here, we are all the same, some live better, others worse. [...] She [her daughter] took photos of Ecuador with her when she came for her papers, photos, souvenirs for her bosses. They said her 'we didn't think that Ecuador was like this'. They thought that everybody here wore *pollera* [the traditional skirt] and that they only took it off when they go to Spain.

(Pindo, 50 year-old female villager, two daughters in Spain)

These encounters with diversity have led to a limited re-appreciation of the country's cultural heritage, particularly regarding the Kichwa language, by some migrants:

My niece [who lives in Catalonia] tells me: 'auntie I already speak Catalan and Spanish', they are two different languages aren't they? And she is learning English. She is going to end up speaking three languages. That is what I like about Europe. One can learn lots of languages.

-But you have Kichwa here.

Yes, but we do not value it. It is like we are ashamed of it. I like to be honest. In the university we have to pass four courses of English and none of Kichwa. Do you see how we devalue it? It shouldn't be like that. They should ask us to study Kichwa and then English. But I don't know a single word of Kichwa.

(Pindo, 38 year-old female returnee from London-UK, 2000-2006)

So far, and despite the encouraging few examples shown, deep and sustainable changes towards a general appraisal of the country's ethnic diversity are not taking place.

8.3. Conclusion

The particular migratory regimes of the two Ecuadorian villages I studied do not encourage the large-scale creation of social remittances. Both groups of migrants are often not able to fulfil all the required phases for the full realization of social remittances. Hence, although social remittances are not very common or widespread in Xarbán and Pindo, the research has identified five realms where migrants and non-migrants are appropriating and reworking new behavioural and value codes. Gender practices and ideologies are affected by migration and migrants' exposure to different gender regimes. The quantity and quality of social remittances transmitted or brought back by migrants regarding gender issues are very much dependent on the type of migration and of course, on the gender of the migrants themselves. Migration to Europe, with a greater female presence, has more potential to effect changes towards more egalitarian gender relations, albeit within the frames set by a patriarchal society. The emancipation processes of migrant women, clearly evident from the research, are almost entirely dependent on these women having a paid job. Consequently, upon return to Ecuador these migrant women can easily find their gender gains reduced as formal paid jobs for women are scarce, especially in the rural areas of Ecuador. The potential of migration and social remittances to bring about changes in gender ideologies is not independent of the origin conditions. As Pessar (2005) has stated, as a result of migration migrants usually become more aware and sympathetic to changes and tendencies which were already under way in their places of origin. Hence, the changes and continuities in gender issues are possible because of the three-way interplay between variables in migrants' places of new residence, places of origin, and migrants' own characteristics.

The realm with the most promising changes is the acquired knowledge and expertise of migrants regarding their conceptions and dealings with the banking system. As a result of their migration, in terms of exposure to a more developed banking system but also because they have increased their money input, migrants are acquiring a form of knowledge that they use and disseminate in Ecuador. Migrants and their families have

become more involved in the Ecuadorian financial sector, with the acquisition of mortgages and loans, particularly in the case of Pindo. Most Pindo migrants in Spain hold regular legal status and are inserted into the Spanish financial structures due to their wages payment, the setting up of direct debits to pay for utilities, sending money to Ecuador through banks, and in some cases even with the acquisition of home mortgages for their flats in Spain. They do not have the acute mistrust of the Ecuadorian banking system as dollarization was not such an issue for them as it was for the Xarbán villagers, who found their banked savings had virtually disappeared. This mistrust, along with Xarbán migrants' very limited use of banks in the US, means that social remittances in the financial realm are not bringing about such important changes as in Pindo.

Regarding the realm of politics, returned migrants have been successful in accessing local village positions in both villages, because of their material and symbolic capital acquired during their migration ventures. However, the extent to which they are incorporating changes in political behaviour and attitudes is rather limited. Limited impacts were also found in the final realm of social remittances analysed in this chapter; attitudes towards ethnic and racial classifications, both in the US and Spain, and with reference to the richly textured ethnic panorama of Ecuador itself.

In the realm of practical know-how, as other studies have shown before, this research has highlighted the irrelevance of the skills acquired abroad by migrants. The exception is the case of agricultural innovations in the cases of rural-to-rural migration, mainly from Pindo to Spain.

The creation of social remittances analysed in this and the previous chapter has to be read jointly with the scenario created by material remittances (financial, in-kind and collective) explained in chapters five and six. This is one of the tasks of the next, and concluding, chapter.

Chapter 9

Concluding Reflections

This final chapter fulfils several functions. Apart from a concluding chapter's orthodox functions of presenting in a summary way the main findings and contributions of the research, identifying limitations and proposing possible ways forward, this chapter also deals with three overarching aspects not covered yet in this thesis. First, it is the place for a dialogic engagement between material and social remittances. Initially the links between these two types of remittances were at the core of the research design. From the fieldwork data it emerged that such links were not as strong as expected. This does not mean, though, that there are no links at all between material and social remittances. There are, and they are explained in this last chapter. Secondly, this chapter emphasises the importance of clarifying the level of analysis or scale we are actually dealing with. In the case of remittances this is even more pressing because their impacts are fundamentally different at different levels. Finally, and in line with the attempts to 'destabilize' stable topics, this chapter lays out some recurring discourses in Ecuador regarding migration and remittances. Some of those discourses are hegemonic, reactive, constantly feeding back and, in some cases, academically supported. Researchers do have a responsibility with the images and discourses our research, explicitly or implicitly, helps to support or reject, not only with the results of the research itself but also with our approaches. If academic studies present social traits or situations as problematic, without previous critical filters, they can be contributing to actually turning such situations into social problems. To some extent, this is what is happening with migration and international remittances in Ecuador.

9.1 Links between Material and Social Remittances

The initial research questions hypothesized the key importance of the links between material and social remittances. Empirical data have not unequivocally supported such a hypothesis. This is the consequence in part of the smaller than expected importance of social remittances in both fieldwork settings, for very different reasons in each village, as explained in chapters seven and eight. There are, however, three spheres where there are clear linkages between material and social remittances: the impact of social remittances on financial dealings and the use of material remittances for property acquisition; the gender ideas sent in the form of social

remittances and their onward impact on education expenses; and as a more embryonic association the practical know-how acquired by some migrants abroad about agriculture and the use of financial remittances for cash-generating agricultural activities.

The most established link between material and social remittances takes place in the realm of migrants and their families' financial dealings, and particularly regarding their financial behaviour. This link has clear development implications. The final scenario created from the interplay between these types of material and social remittances is very dependent on other contextual variables, mainly the migratory profile of each village and the experiences with the Ecuadorian banking system prior to migration. This explains the diametrically different outcomes for Xarbán and Pindo. Due to their irregular legal status abroad, Xarbán migrants must on the one hand pay a very high price for their journey to the US, in both financial and personal terms. In order to gather the required amount, migrants must resort to informal credit suppliers who charge abusive rates of interest. Migrants in the US need on average between one and two years to fully repay the journey debt and then be able to send emic remittances on a regular basis as well as to start saving. The journey debt is a very heavy and lasting financial burden which has important symbolic consequences. Because of that debt, Xarbán villagers and migrants try to avoid getting into any type of debt ever again, including debts with the formal banking system in the form of loans or mortgages. The effects of the journey debt on migrants' future financial behaviour are reinforced by the fact that, once in the US, most Xarbán migrants stay in an irregular legal status for most of their time in the country and very few of them have regular interaction with the banking sector. Remittances are sent through MTOs instead of banks, and the presence of networks of support among fellow villagers means that migrants in need of carrying out any type of urgent financial transaction can resort to one of the few Xarbán migrants with regular status in the US with a bank account. Otherwise Xarbán migrants can live their lives with none or very few interactions with the banking system. This situation hinders the appropriation of knowledge and the development of familiarity with this sector. A third variable that explains Xarbán migrants' and their relatives' detachment from the banks, is that they deeply distrust the Ecuadorian banking system after its collapse in the late 1990s which led to the country's dollarization. Many Xarbán villagers saw the savings they had managed to gather with their migration to the US, first frozen in the banks and later virtually stripped of their purchasing power with the dollarization and the aftermath of general price increases.

Pindo villagers' migratory profile and their lack of experience with the Ecuadorian banking system prior to their international migration have created a completely different set of interactions between the type of material and social remittances I am dealing with here. The linkages have created in this case a situation where migrants can interact successfully with the Ecuadorian banking system. Pindo migrants in Spain are usually well integrated into the Spanish banking system, with some of them even buying property abroad, although virtually all of them lost it as a result of the crisis in Spain. Moreover, they are not reluctant to use the Ecuadorian banking system because they were not hit as hard as Xarbán villagers by the 2000 dollarization. The cost of the journey to Spain was, in comparison to the journey to the US, not so onerous, as the approximately \$3,000 for the trip were easily returned – particularly for those migrants who migrated first. Repayment became more complex for those villagers from the 'parish fields' who migrated later. International migration has provided migrants with a sense of familiarity when dealing with banks as they routinely perform financial operations such as, for instance, withdrawing money, sending financial remittances, applying for loans or mortgages and in some cases doing online banking. Migration has also imbued migrants with a feeling of self-respect and accomplishment, and some of them have even developed the sort of 'think bigger' that Levitt and Lamba-Nieves mentioned in their work (2011: 14). These new knowledge and attitudes, along with migrants' accumulated financial resources abroad in the form of wages, savings or properties, have enabled them to overcome their initial non-existent or very marginalized experience with the Ecuadorian banking sector. Migrants' savings are targeted by some of the country's financial institutions (banks and credit cooperatives trying to enter the profitable Ecuadorian remittance transfer market), and some of them are opening branches in the rural areas of Ecuador which are currently receiving large amounts of remittances. Migrants are little by little not only having bank accounts, but also applying for loans and other credit instruments. Some banks in Ecuador accept a Spanish work contract as guarantee to grant loans, and this is a way through which migrants and their families, who were traditionally excluded from the credit in Ecuador, are able to bypass such limitations thanks to their migration abroad.

Overall, Pindo migrants are not as averse as Xarbán migrants to becoming indebted. Pindo migrants, as opposed to those from Xarbán, resort to credit in Ecuador to build their houses, buy vehicles and set up small investments in the form of shops, restaurants or agriculture. This is not taking place in Xarbán where houses are not built one-off but in stages following the arrival of money from the US. In Pindo the money that arrives from abroad is destined to repay the monthly instalments of the borrowed money to buy the house in one go.

A second set of links between material and social remittances was identified in the realm of child-rearing practices and gender. Firstly, financial remittances – by means of increasing cash availability – reduce pressure on younger members of the household to work, indirectly incorporating changes in ideas of childhood and the role of children within the household. There are social remittances involved as well, as notions of childhood in Europe or the US are sent back by migrants (who can discuss child rearing strategies with their partners in Ecuador) or directly implemented by returnees. These reworked ideas of what a child must do or not do, can lead to demands of cash for schooling or health expenses. And the whole set of influences feedback and evolve endlessly. As described, it is clear that changes are currently taking place in relation to ideas about childhood. It is more remarkable, in a way, because traditional and new ideas are simultaneously evident. For instance, while children could be seen sitting on the floor of long-distance coaches or even nestling in the space between seats designed for the feet, some children started to demand a seat of their own. Most passengers were not used to it so they kept on sitting in any seat where there was a child, and this leads in some cases to angry discussions among passengers.

Secondly, financial remittances are enabling young females to pursue further education. In the case of Xarbán, where a culture of migration has developed, young male villagers are expected to migrate to the US; hence they usually are not very keen on studying beyond primary school. Further education is not a valuable asset for irregular migrants in the US. Young female villagers are not expected to migrate. Because of the intense male outmigration the marriage age has increased. This has created a time gap between the age of finishing primary school and the age of getting married. With the new ideas which portray women's education as something worthy and achievable thanks to the available financial resources in the form of remittances sent by male relatives abroad, increasingly female villagers with close relatives in the US are pursuing secondary, college and even university education. The most successful examples are all young female villagers with close relatives abroad. This gender difference is not as marked in Pindo where education is kept in high esteem and education levels tended to be higher before villagers started to migrate to Spain – the first pioneering villagers were in fact at university when they decided to migrate.

Finally, in Pindo agriculture is also the locus of interaction between material and social remittances. Agricultural cash-producing activities are set up by migrants and returnees thanks to migrants' savings and because of migrants' dealings with the banking system abroad. This

exposure has provided them with enough expertise and confidence to become integrated into Ecuador's banking system and apply for funding. There is a third variable in this equation, as returnees are deploying their new knowledge in the field of agriculture that they have acquired through their migration abroad. They are growing market crops. This type of practical know-how is almost exclusively for Pindo migrants who migrated to rural areas in Spain and worked in agriculture, often in the massive greenhouses growing vegetables in the province of Murcia.

9.2 The Importance of Clarifying Levels of Analysis: Migradollars and Remittances

Some authors, usually those using a macroeconomic perspective, emphasize the impact of remittances on countries' national economies. There is a prevalence of studies on the impact of financial remittances at the upper level, and not so many on the impact of remittances on the everyday life of millions of senders and receivers around the world. Aggregated financial figures on remittances to Ecuador were presented and analysed in chapter two, and given the scope of this research, little more can be added to that, in contrast with data and explanations at the meso and micro-level, which I discuss further below. I would like, however, to make a final note on the difference between remittances and migradollars. Migradollars, a term coined by Durand (1988), refer to the aggregated figure of the money transfers made by the citizens of a country living abroad. This macroeconomic magnitude appears in the countries' balances of payments. Migradollars are very useful if defined in contrast to remittances, because each term labels what are in fact two different levels of analysis of the same phenomenon. Migradollars enter countries, while remittances are earned by migrants and eventually reach the hands of migrants' relatives where they are used or saved. Migradollars are a pure economic phenomenon; remittances in contrast are not only an economic phenomenon but also, and very much so, a socio-cultural one. My concern in this thesis has been with *remittances*, and not that much with *migradollars*. Once migradollars have entered Ecuador and acquire 'materiality' in the hands of Xarbán and Pindo villagers, they become remittances, and as such create a social reality that has been at the heart of this research.

In focusing down to the micro-level, the 'hands' of the senders and receivers, it is unavoidable to go through the village level. I will not go here into the specific situation created in both villages as a result of receiving material and social remittances as it has been covered in depth

throughout the chapters in the thesis. Rather, I will analyse here the overall impacts of remittances at the village level in terms of socio-economic inequalities.

The research in this thesis is quite conclusive regarding the fact that the impact of remittances at the village level is completely dependent on conditions prior to migration. Migration and remittances alone do not make substantial changes as they 'reinforce already existing, more general patterns and trends of social, economic and political change – whether these are more negative or positive' (de Haas, 2011: 72). This research has provided detailed contextual data supporting such a theoretical statement at the meso-level: remittances do not create previously non-existent social differentiations, but socio-economic inequalities prior to migration are reproduced or exacerbated as a result of international migration and financial remittances.

In spite of the large amount of dollars received in Xarbán – considerably more than in Pindo – socio-economic differentiation is not taking place in the village, by and large. The fact that Xarbán villagers owned, and still own, a sense of common belonging as well as having little socio-economic differentiation before villagers started to migrate internationally, explains why international migration and the receiving of remittances have *not* increased socio-economic inequalities. Very importantly, in this village there are several mechanisms which have levelled the differences that migration and remittances may potentially have created. The mechanisms to avoid excessive social differentiation include transnational gossiping, kin work or the fiesta funding-structure. The levelling mechanisms also include socially sanctioned venues for trickling down the positive effects of migration and remittances. These local mechanisms include a preference for village workers over those not from the village. As seen in chapter six, this is very clear in the case of house construction where local workers are hired in spite of their limited construction skills. This is also the case with agriculture or domestic work where male and female villagers respectively are hired on a temporary basis to help out. *Mingas* (communal work parties) are another social mechanism for preventing inequalities from becoming too large. In Xarbán it is common, on the part of female and older villagers who receive remittances from abroad, to pay a fellow villager to take on their responsibility for attendance at the recurrent *mingas* that take place in the village. This 'monetarization' of the *mingas* has been bitterly criticized as a negative consequence of international remittances in rural Ecuador. This change, which has been traditionally understood as the disappearance of an Andean tradition and the erosion of rural communities' solidarity and reciprocity, can instead be read under a different logic. Using remittances to pay fellow villagers to carry out

one's own *minga* work duties is in fact another levelling mechanism. And more so if we take into account that the workers hired are usually young villagers who do not receive remittances from abroad; they are the only ones willing to do physical work for a few dollars a day. In some cases, employers have a genuine interest in helping those villagers who could be falling behind and to whom they may be related through blood or fictive kinship ties.

The effects of levelling mechanisms are not always positive, however, and can pull in opposite directions. In one direction, social inequality is not increasing because of the rather ubiquitous distribution of remittances amongst the households of the village, so there are not marked tensions resulting from migration and remittances. However, in the other direction, those same levelling mechanisms prevent larger economic initiatives from succeeding. Remember the case described in chapter six of the migrant villager who wanted to set up a weaving cooperative in Xarbán to export the knitted clothes to the US. Transnational gossiping stressing this villager's 'outsiderness' and his questionable behaviour in divorcing his Xarbán wife led to the project's failure.

Contrary to Xarbán, and even though, Pindo villagers' survival and improvement strategies revolve around mobility more than their Xarbán counterparts, in Pindo remittances are not benefiting everyone and social inequality is increasing. Here, is a growing disparity between those villagers who have been able to migrate abroad and those who have to rely entirely on agricultural production and seasonal internal migration. It seems that international migration generates room for improvement while internal migration and small-scale non-market agriculture are intimately related to villagers' survival strategies. Therefore, in contrast to Xarbán, where to a greater or lesser extent all villagers are involved in some sort of improvement strategies, in Pindo there are families left behind, surviving on their own agricultural production. The presence of marked social hierarchies prior to international migration has meant that, once international migration took place, those initial social inequalities were exacerbated due to the magnitude of the 'new' resources generated (international remittances are of a magnitude never before seen) and the absence of levelling mechanisms.

In Pindo there are no mechanisms to redress excessive inequality because this village is not as much a community as Xarbán is. In this thesis I have tried to avoid the term 'community'. However, in the few places where I use it, like here, I follow Rapport and Overing (2010: 60). By community I mean a group of people sharing a common locality and socio-cultural

structures, linked by extended kinship (either fictive or blood), who can recall a common past going back centuries and more importantly, who are aware of their common belonging. In this sense, community is understood more as a matter of degree than a with/without category. In villages like Xarbán, levelling mechanisms and strategies are important because excessive social differentiation creates tensions that could lead to its social disintegration. The fact that Pindo villagers do not comply with the criteria in the previous definition of community, and that initial inequalities were higher than in Xarbán has historical roots which were traced in detail in chapter four. The creation of Pindo in 1974 as a consequence of hacienda disintegration after the Ecuadorian Agrarian Reform and the subsequent settlement of migrants from other areas are the key factors which explain why there is no widespread awareness of common belonging among the villagers. Better-off dwellers from somewhere else bought land in what was designed by State technicians as the parish centre. People with fewer resources, and unable to afford property in the parish centre, had to buy land in the more remote areas of the village, in *los campos*. The initial geographical differences between the parish centre and the fields, which correspond to a marked economic stratification, increased in the following two decades, even before villagers started to migrate internationally. The fields are insecure areas with very poor communication routes, and no infrastructure. The village authorities are the ones in charge of maintaining and improving the tracks that connect various parts of Pindo, but their members have always come from the parish centre, which implies that they had different political priorities. These structural constraints prevent any improvement strategy in the fields (e.g. decent housing or market-oriented agriculture) from successfully developing. International migration and remittances have increased those initial large disparities, and the gap in well-being and opportunities between the dwellers of the fields and the parish centre has widened.

Pindo's creation *ex novo* had also led to a lack of common history in what is nowadays the village. When talking with Pindo migrants abroad, their emotional attachment is more with the rugged and arid Andean landscape of the village than with any other social marker, whether religious – as for instance patron saints – or cultural, in the form of village traditions or festivities. Hence, villagers from the parish centre, as well as not being related to the field dwellers, do not feel they belong to the same entity. This has created a fragmented social situation where levelling mechanisms like the ones present in Xarbán, are absent. For instance, in Pindo there is no particular preference for local workers. Villagers living in the fields, who are the ones more in need and who consequently would agree to work for lower wages, are perceived as backward by the parish centre dwellers who do not tend to hire them, preferring

Peruvian workers instead, who are readily available due to Pindo's location close to the Peruvian border. In Pindo there are quite a few male Peruvian agricultural labourers and very young female live-in domestic workers. These workers are preferred because they are easier to discipline than labourers from the village. They work and live away from their places of origin, which means that they do not have social networks of support in Pindo.

Finally, and below the village level, this thesis has also researched the deployment of remittances at the micro-level. As argued in chapter five, the household, conceived oversimplistically as a harmonious whole, is not necessarily the most convenient unit of analysis to study remittances. Moreover, focusing only on the sending or receiving part of the equation can also lead to accounts that miss the dynamic interplay between the relevant individual parties. The relationship between individual senders and receivers, that is the sender(s)-receiver(s) dyad, provides a fruitful research locus. The 'dyad' is a methodological device which facilitates socio-demographic readings of remittances, principally in terms of gender and generation. From the research in this thesis it is clear that dyadic relationships do not have to be necessarily symmetrical, nor does it mean that one extreme is completely powerless. Both ends (which could comprise more than two people) are immersed in constant negotiations. The dyad provides the focus to analyse the potential of remittances to empower or to add burden, to both senders and receivers. The methodological device of the 'dyad' sheds light on the fact that quite often these two processes are not mutually exclusive. In some cases it can be found that processes of empowerment and burdening are simultaneously taking place in different realms, or that both processes take place in a dyad but at different points in time.

Broadly speaking, and following Pribilsky (2004), those remittance dyads, both in Xarbán and Pindo, which have managed to build on a relationship of trust and mutual support are more likely to perform better at several levels. This type of relation is of course more rewarding in emotional terms for everyone involved (gift remittances are very important in these dyads as they strengthen the dyadic bonds), but they also perform better socially and economically. Because of the presence of a shared project and mutual trust, there is little need to supervise each other's behaviour. Communication is at the basis for the development of this sort of positive relation. The possibility of cheap phone calls from the US and Europe and the extension of mobile reception coverage and ownership in Ecuador provide the dyads with the means for a fluid and almost immediate communication.

9.3 Discourses and Images: Migrants' Double Instrumentalization

Migration has often been the subject of strong images and discourses. In Ecuador, negative discourses on the effects of migration flourished when the 'migratory stampede' to Europe took place. In a country with a very long migratory history, internal and international, it was surprising that discourses were so virulent and spread so quickly at that precise point in time. In Azuay, where men have been migrating to the US for over four decades, associated discourses were not so derogatory, because the wife stays behind in her role as mother to raise the children. In this male migration, the man is still playing his assigned role, bringing money home, but instead of working in the village, or migrating internally as previously, he is sending the money from abroad. The reproduction structures did not change. In the case of male migrants, no one blames them for abandoning their families. They are still providing for the family, the traditional male role in this patriarchal area. As Pedone (2008) showed, migration to the US does not challenge the traditional patriarchal roles of the Ecuadorian society. 'Adventurous males' were making their way to the US in a very dangerous way crossing the US-Mexican border. They became the breadwinners, albeit from afar.

Migration to Europe is very different from migration to the US. Because it was female pioneered, the associated discourses are extremely negative. Mothers are blamed for 'abandoning' their children. Migration is portrayed as the cause of family disintegration. It is common to hear stories of abandoned children whose mothers were in Spain, and who, by the way, were very often taking care of their children from abroad, both in financial and affection terms. Female migrants are taking over a male role and reworking their traditional role of care-givers, hence this creates a lot of criticism towards these mothers. Migrant mothers have been blamed for not fulfilling the roles they had traditionally carried out in Ecuador because with their international migration they were challenging them by taking over the productive role – which many of them were already doing, albeit in precarious and concealed ways. These discourses of abandoned children are so pervasive and perverse in Ecuadorian society that even the mothers and their children themselves have internalised them. It is very problematic because it creates feelings of abandonment in the children and guilt in the mothers abroad, no matter how much they actually care for their children.

These blaming discourses and images about migration are not only present in everyday conversations, mass media accounts and political statements. They can also be found in Ecuadorian academia, part of which has engaged in their very creation and reproduction. A

review of some BA and MA theses available from the University of Cuenca (the public university in the province of Azuay and one of the biggest in the country) clearly reveals the repetition of the above themes about migrants and the negative effects of mass international migration in rural areas⁷¹. Three topics were recurrent in these theses. One topic is related to issues of identity and belonging: the fact that migration, particularly of peasants or people from Ecuadorian rural areas, perverts their identity and creates uprooted migrants. That assumption is not compatible with my empirical data. Rather, my research has shown that migrants, and this is very clear in the case of Xarbán, tend to reinforce their roots, whether investing in 'roots of concrete' in the form of remittance houses or through the sending of collective remittances for religious or development projects but always with the aim to re-enact migrants' transnational membership.

The second widespread topic is that migration, especially of females, leads to family destruction. In fact migration has not destroyed the current family structure in rural Ecuador, but has profoundly transformed it. Migration, and particularly remittances, are at the core of the transnational strategies of survival and improvement of many rural families in Ecuador. In some cases these transnational families are even stronger and more egalitarian than families without migrant members. Through their transnational family structures circulate not only money, but love and care is also exchanged in the form of phone calls or in-kind remittances, in a context of physical separation. As many of my informants voiced, there is a tension between money for the family but without the family, versus staying with the family but without the money and resources to set in place any improvement.

The third topic, very much linked to the previous one, is the effect of migration and remittances on migrants' children. Children with migrant parents often appear linked to issues of criminality (Ambrosi, 2008), educational and psychological problems (Cardenas, 2005; Naula, 2008; Ortiz, 2008), and as vulnerable to rape and sexual harassment (Ullauri, 2005). The research usually states a direct cause-effect between having the parents abroad and the supposed social problems these children suffer from. The following quotations from two of

⁷¹ I selected all the theses with a migration-related topic I was able to access from the very limited University of Cuenca electronic thesis online service (only accessible from university-owned computers). Eventually there were ten BA and MA theses. Therefore, this review is by no means exhaustive and it has only illustrative value. This diagnosis is neither extendable to all academic production in Ecuador, as very interesting pieces of research have been made by Ecuadorian researchers which challenge those over-simplistic images (see for instance Herrera and Martínez, 2002).

these theses illustrate the sort of negative associations commonly present in this kind of academic product:

What happens when the parents migrate? The family loses stability. The children are separated and *abandoned*. They feel very strong emotions like sadness, as the consequence of their parents' absence [...] The *mother's absence* creates serious disorders in the children, as for instance shyness, lack of communication and even aggressive behaviour [...] Migrants' families are helpless and particularly the children who may start suffering all sorts of abuses (physical, psychological and even sexual) *because* of the absence of the mother or father.

(Naspud and Ochoa, 2007: 1, 2, 34, emphasis mine)

The children of those who migrate are, without knowing it, the actors of the dramas created by the emigration. They are the victims of the family destruction; they are exiled from family affection.

(Ochoa, 2007: 8)

The topics selected for research in these theses and their working hypotheses clearly reflect the social imaginary that portrays migration as a social problem in rural Ecuador.

Remittances are not very different from migration in terms of their associated representations and imaginaries, many of which are again quite negative. Migrants' families, particularly those from rural areas as with the cases of Xarbán and Pindo, are portrayed as unsuitable to manage the resources they receive from abroad, failing to put them into 'productive' uses. They are blamed for 'wasting' remittances, thereby delaying the development of their places of origin. Not only is money wasted, but according to these images, migrants are also selecting all the wrong ideas and values and sending them back to Ecuador in the form of social remittances. Their relatives are described as being very eager to engage with those ideas on consumerism, and to embrace a culture of 'high-life' and 'easy-work'. As we saw in chapters seven and eight, social remittances stem from both origin and new residence contexts, and are heavily influenced by migrants' broad background; hence this idea of social remittances eroding identity and cultural values in migrants' places of origin is misleading and far from the truth. Cultural traits are not fixed but in constant flux and subjected to processes of appropriation, re-signification and negotiation. In-kind remittances such as trendy clothes or gadgets are often pictured as the examples of the commoditization of rural life in Ecuador. This picture is

again partially misleading as it completely overlooks the fact that those parcels are in fact tokens of love and affection in families who live physically apart but maintain common interests.

A very interesting discourse emanating from the migrants, their relatives and non-migrant villagers is what I call the 'money for but without the family' discourse. Migrants and their families must deal with the tension of staying put without much chance to secure a comfortable present and a stable future, or migrate which will probably widen the chances but then brings physical separation to these families. The following quotations illustrate the presence of such a tension.

Over there [in the US] you learn to value your family. There you only think of earning money and sending it. And that is all. However now that I am here, I see, I receive money, but to me it is useless. Of course, I live better. I have money, I can buy whatever I want, but sometimes it is not enough. At least for me, to me it is useless. He [her husband who is still in the US] might be sending me a thousand dollars per day, but if he is not here, with me, with my daughters...The best thing is to have a family, isn't it?

(Xarbán, 31 year-old female returnee from the US, 2000-2009)

I already abandoned [sic] my son for a while, but not because I am a bad mother, but out of necessity. For them to have a better future. My oldest sons did not go to school, only the youngest daughter, only she is studying. I could not send my other children to the school. I could not, as much as I wished it, I could not.

(Xarbán, female returnee from the US, 1998-2002)

Here, we live peaceful lives. Of course, there is not much money but you live better [than in the US], with the family.

(Xarbán, 33 year-old male returnee twice from the US)

Little by little you get used to the lifestyle over there, to work. The economic logic sort of absorbs you. You see money; things are working, so you put up with it a bit longer, although you sacrifice being with your family, you sacrifice living a normal life, calm, as you live it here. You think the money makes up for those sacrifices.

(Pindo, 42 year-old male returnee from the US, 1992-2005)

We were poor but we lived all together [before her husband migrated to the US].

(Xarbán, wife of male returnee from the US)

Contrary to most perceptions, physical separation does not have to inevitably have negative consequences and lead to family break-up. As seen in this thesis, as a result of migration and physical separation, some families have created less patriarchal dynamics. Equally, the so-called *niños de las remesas* (remittances' children; Pribilsky, 2001), are in some cases really successful examples of educational attainment, more so in the case of females it seems from my evidence.

In this thesis I have tried to unpack those rather negative discourses on migration and remittances, while restating the importance of the 'money for but without the family' discourse. This choice is based on two premises. First, because this latter discourse is articulated by the migrants and their families themselves. Migrants and their families are not mere objects in others' discourses without any decision or negotiation power. They are, in fact, subjects with agency. By listening to and providing space in these pages for their narratives, this social group – international migrants from rural highland Ecuador – who are often voiceless, can be facilitated to present their own ideas in a dialogic encounter with the dominant discourses. Their agency, deployed in complex, changing and contradictory ways, is thus acknowledged. The second reason that makes this emic discourse very valuable is the fact that it is quite a balanced discourse, without intrinsically good or bad components, but conveying an unresolved tension that has more to do with the lifeworld of the real subjects of research.

At a different level of analysis, while migrants and their families are depicted as embracing all the vices of consumerism and the easy life, in aggregate terms they are portrayed under a very different light. As shown in chapter two, not only have the amount of research and political importance of remittances dramatically increased in recent decades, but the approach to remittances has also changed. International migration in Ecuador was initially constructed as a problem (Cortés, 2010: 373). In parallel with negative accounts of migration, migrants were portrayed as traitors, who ran away in the difficult times. Quite often, and particularly when migration is not restricted to the upper classes of a country and becomes mass migration, migrants are heavily criticized for abandoning the country. To migrate is an offence to the country, a lack of loyalty. With the renewed interest in remittances and the understanding of

the large amounts involved, international migration in Ecuador went from being perceived as a problem to being portrayed as an opportunity. This is not restricted to Ecuador. As Kunz has shown, we are witnessing a 'heightened interest of different actors—governments, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and private sector actors—in the development potential of international migration and remittances' (2008: 1391). Hence, at the same time as remittances were portrayed as 'beautiful' within the international community (Kunz, 2008), migrants have become remittance-senders and as such the images attached to them have been radically transformed. Migrants have become a source of funding whose transfers in the form of financial remittances will improve their countries' usually poor macroeconomic figures. Migrants are charged with the task of developing their own country, and when this does not take place (because, as some authors are currently emphasizing, and my own research also shows, migration and remittances alone do not have the capacity to achieve it), migrants stop being depicted under the positive light of investors who develop the country, and become the conspicuous consumers who waste useful resources. In this scenario, migrants are not only responsible for their families but also for the development and future of their places of origin. If migrants' families and places of origin are not properly sustained or development never takes place, it is a failure of migrants, so the narrative goes. This is clearly a privatization of development efforts, where very dangerously, remittances are portrayed as cost-free national resources (Hernandez and Coutin, 2006). There are serious attempts to 'capture' migrants' money both in practice, through policies and the creation of initiatives, and in discourse. The latter usually implies grand statements on national belonging and citizen loyalty, in order to reinforce migrants' symbolic bonds and common belonging to a country which has traditionally excluded them. The sharp improvement in remittance measures and reporting requirements set in place by the Ecuadorian monetary authorities must be read within this frame of the government 'appropriating' remittances away from the individual agency of the migrants.

Hence, as seen, migrants have virtually switched in recent years from being 'traitors' to becoming 'heroes'. Both discursive images – 'blaming' migrants on the one hand for the multiple failures of development, or over-optimistically praising them on the other – are exaggerated, if not perverse. Through the latter discursive frame, migrants are induced into what some authors have called the 'hero syndrome'. This expression was first coined in the context of Filipino migration, where the Philippine authorities have been very eager to draw upon the bodies, labour and money of their citizens abroad. Hence the Philippine authorities inculcated 'in the Filipino minds the notion of "new heroes" of the country largely because of

the bulk of remittances sent. Still, it subliminally evoke feelings of sacrifices for the family, martyrdom[...] and unrealistic care or kin work for families back home, making them victims instead of heroes of the nation' (Arenas, 2011: 14). Hence, in the switch from negative to positive images, migrants' depiction remains instrumentalized, while denying them any agency and decision-making rights.

Research on remittances must avoid the epistemological trap of presenting low-skilled migrants as remittance senders, and to classify those migrants who do not send money to their places of origin as the 'abnormal' exception to the rule. Interestingly some migrants do not need to comply with this idea because they have been categorized under a different label. This is for instance the case of student migration or the mobility of expats. Neither of these categories are expected to send money home, whereas 'economic migrants' or 'labour migrants' are. That most migrants remit money back home does not have to imply that it must always be that way. Falling into that trap will lead, once again, to a reductionist image of migrants who stop being persons to become, as has happened before in the literature and in political discourse, mere labour units. And it has perverse consequences, as 'the dehumanization of migrants allows for them to be manipulated and controlled' (Glick Schiller, 2010: 46).

Mirroring Sayad's 'double absence' (2004), migrants are also doubly instrumentalized: in their new places of residence as workers and in their places of origin as remittance-senders. They are only immigrant-workers and emigrant-remitters. On migrants' new residence places, the necessary evils of their arrival/presence are only accepted as long as they work in specific niches. At the other geopolitical pole, migrants who do not send remittances are considered as 'anti-patriots', and abnormal or the exception to the rule. Good migrants are those who work hard in their new places of residence, send money home and return to set up a business which will help the development of their places of origin. This discourse, increasingly common in academic and policy milieus, is established around the image of the 'normal migrant'. If we look at the way questions are formulated in surveys about remittances, they tend to assume that some sort of sending or receiving money is taking place. I remember at the very beginning of my fieldwork a person feeling ashamed to confess that she did not receive any money from abroad, as if receiving should be the norm. This discourse is internalized and pressures senders and receivers to comply with the image of the 'normal migrant'. A normal migrant must send money and must want to return. This way an over-simplistic image of migrants as workers/entrepreneurs is created, which in turn affects researchers' approaches towards

migrants. It explains why migrants are barely researched outside their work sites – in their leisure practices for instance.

Hence by ‘abnormalizing’ all those migrants who do not send remittances, a discourse developed within academia actually helps to instrumentalize and discipline migrants.

9.4 Main Findings and Limitations of the Thesis

This research has been an analysis of financial, in-kind and social remittances and their impact on the daily life and socio-economic structures of two Andean villages with very different migration and remittances profiles. It is an ethnographic account of the material and non-material transfers originating from and directed towards two rural areas in highland Ecuador. Ethnography cannot aspire to statistical representativeness; instead with its holistic and relational approach, it enables us to look in depth at remittances. Remittances are understood as a whole, spurred, triggering and attached to socio-economic transformations and continuities. Remittances, both material and non-material, are at the core of the economic, social and cultural life in the villages of Xarbán and Pindo. These villages are not geographically confined to the Southern Ecuadorian highlands but they stretch to incorporate their migrant villagers abroad.

Research on material remittances is often flawed as studies tend to de-contextualize remittances by not embedding them in family dynamics and broader socio-cultural and economic structures. In chapter five questionnaire data for the two research sites was presented, looking at the reception scenarios of remittances in terms of amount, frequency and type of material remittances for the two villages. This thesis has also argued that the social demography of remittances has not received sufficient attention, although it is clear by now that both migration and remittances are highly gendered processes. By looking at the relationship between remittance senders and receivers, in what I have labelled the remittance dyad, the gendered nature of remittances is better understood, as well as the dynamic nature of the relations between remittance senders and receivers, with constant negotiations taking place. Different dyads have developed different power balances or imbalances which were sometimes present before migration and are redressed or expanded as a result of remittances. The ‘dyad’ as a methodological device to guide research on material remittances enables us to

look at the negotiations, changes and continuities in four realms⁷²: decisions over the nature of the remittance, the frequency and channel of the sending, and the uses; management; enjoyment; and control if who decides is different from who carries out the actual management. I will not go into each realm here because Table 5.14 provides a good synthetic overview.

The narrow economic definition of remittances and the improving but still conflicting statistical measurements in countries' balances of payments are only capturing a limited part of the total story of global remittance transfers. Migradollars and remittances complement each other to create richer and more realistic accounts of a specific social reality. Hence, there is room for refining the global figures of national accounts and the rough typologies of material remittances. Different from traditional typologies of remittances which broadly divide them between consumption, investment and savings, this thesis has developed an emic typology of material remittances which takes on board the perceptions and meanings of the senders and receivers, and which captures in a more meaningful way material remittances as a socio-economic phenomenon. My emic typology of material remittances – based on the views of my survey respondents and interviewees – comprises six items: 'survival' or 'drip-feeding' remittances, savings, debt repayment, emergency money, gifts, and collective remittances. Emic remittances capture the meaning of what the receivers themselves identify as remittances. This category refers to the small amounts of money sent to the receivers periodically by their relatives abroad and which are used to pay for the food, utilities and everyday expenses in a household. Savings are very different from the 'drip-feeding' emic remittances. Receivers do not usually consider savings as their money, as they are aware of their solely managerial and holding role regarding this type of transfer.

I would like to emphasize that the importance of each category in the typology depends on the context and has a time dimension. For instance, due to the irregular nature of the migration from Xarbán to the US, the journey debt repayment absorbs most of these migrants' financial remittances in the first couple of years. Conversely, in Pindo, debt repayment is not as significant and often is not associated with the initial mobility costs but with loans and mortgages acquired post-migration. Legal status abroad not only determines migrants' lives in their new places of residence; it also heavily affects their remittance behaviour and that of

⁷² Data from the two research sites showed the importance of these four power realms. It does not mean that they are the only possible realms or that they have to be always present in other parts of the world or in other types of migration. Seasonal migration is likely for instance to weigh differently each of those four power realms, because at least control is easier to exert.

their families. Context not only refers to migrants' places of origin but also to their places of current residence, as migrants' income and expense structure, which changes over time, creates the framework of possibilities regarding material remittances. The time dimension is crucial in the case of money sent for emergencies, whether from or to the migrants.

Gifts are generally material objects but can also take the form of small amounts of money sent one-off or on special occasions. In-kind remittances acquire their fullest meaning when read as tokens of affection and as means to re-enact loving bonds between people who live physically apart but who share a common project. Remittance dyad persons who drift apart and follow different projects, are very unlikely to send or receive in-kind remittances.

Education, health, housing, vehicles and agriculture-related expenses were the most common outcomes of material remittances. Their impact has been analysed in chapter six. In some cases, material remittances appear in the form of collective remittances. In this research collective remittances have been defined as those resources sent in a collective way or for collective purposes. The best example, what I made a special study of, is the transnational funding of the Lord of the Miracles festivities in Xarbán.

Although remittances have attracted much scholarly attention, there are still areas not comprehensively researched. One such area is social remittances. Social remittances have proved themselves a good methodological device to research migration and social change. Some might argue that there is no need for a new term to label an old research topic. However, social remittances are a useful concept in at least two ways. First, they focus our attention on specific realms of socio-cultural life. Secondly, by using social remittances instead of the broader topic of 'social change,' the agency of the migrants is made explicit. Authors who research the socio-cultural changes and continuities as a consequence of migration systems usually overlook the agency of migrants and their non-migrant fellows who actively select, transfer, rework, reject and incorporate changes. The concept of social remittances also helps to analyse the negotiations and alliances between these two groups.

This research has contributed to advancing understanding on social remittances by researching the specific ways in which social remittances are created. Four non-linear stages were identified. The first one, along the lines of what Levitt proposed in her 2011 follow-up article on social remittances (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 2011), takes place unrelated to migration and is linked to the personal features of the migrants-to-be. Obviously some of a person's traits can

only be explained as a result of personal idiosyncrasy, something unfeasible to systematize. For instance, people with natural leadership skills are more likely to become involved in some sort of political or civic organization, and these natural skills can be unrelated to that person's educational background. However, some other traits are encouraged or hindered by specific socio-economic and cultural realities. For instance, the socio-economic reality of Pindo, stemming from recent history and the climate and geographical characteristics of the village, has encouraged villagers to become very mobile. Mobility has been at the core of the survival strategies of Pindo villagers, complementing their often irregular and insufficient agricultural production. Previous migratory experiences within Ecuador (to the country's main cities, the coastal plantations or the Amazon) have proved to be a very valuable asset when Pindo villagers migrated internationally. These previous experiences have helped to configure migrants' attitudes and behaviours to create specific patterns of interaction while abroad. Education, both formal and informal, is also an important variable that shapes migrants' likelihoods to achieve meaningful interactions abroad. Those interactions create zones of exposure with different behavioural and value codes, whether with the mainstream society or with other minorities in their new places of residence – this is the second stage in the non-linear process of the creation of social remittances. Exposure is a direct consequence of the type and quantity of interaction of migrants with other ways of being and doing. Work places, family life and leisure activities are the three sites where interaction usually takes place. Legal status and language, and particularly the former, are determinant variables at the 'exposure' stage for the two case studies in this thesis. The fact that virtually all Xarbán migrants in the US hold irregular legal status in the country generates specific expectations, labour-market incorporation, and transnationally-oriented leisure among other situations, limiting migrants' exposure to different ways of being and doing, as migrants seldom interact outside the Xarbán community abroad. The third stage involves the transfer of the new knowledge learnt by migrants to their places of origin. Transmission of social remittances can be through channels involving physical contact (through migrants' temporary or permanent return, and again their legal status creates or denies the possibility of temporary returns) or without that physical contact (through phone calls for instance). Back in Ecuador, in the final fourth stage, non-migrants have a role to play as they are not mere receptors of information. They actively make sense of what they are told by migrants or they see from returnees. On occasions the content of social remittances is strongly resisted while in other cases it is reworked or goes unnoticed.

Although social remittances turned out to be not as important as expected, neither in quantitative terms nor in qualitative ones, there are some realms where their influence was

found to be noticeable. Gender is one such realm, although change is neither one-way nor purposefully aimed. It meanders instead, creating on occasion spaces for improving and reinforcing previous trends, or even undermining gender equality. More definitive is the presence of social remittances regarding migrants' financial dealings. International migration has equipped some migrants with both the experience and personal security as well as the necessary financial resources (i.e. wages or savings) to overcome their initial marginalized insertion into the Ecuadorian financial system. Finally, data from Xarbán and Pindo about what has been often considered the social remittance par excellence, practical know-how, project a rather discouraging picture, reflecting a mismatch between the acquired and transmitted skills and the market requirements in migrants' places of origin.

Although this thesis has studied in-depth the material and social remittances of two Andean villages, and as such is an original piece of research and, I would claim, a significant contribution to knowledge in the field, it does have its limitations. In fact, the main limitation of this research is a consequence of its main strength: ethnography provides very rich data, as well as deep insights into the relations between different realms of analysis and spheres; however the results are very time and space limited. There is a need to balance depth and comprehensiveness with time and space coverage. Regarding space, the results of this research cannot claim representativeness anywhere else, although some theoretical developments can be tested in different contexts, in order to refine the typology of material remittances for instance. Regarding time, this research has tried to incorporate a time dimension by reading current developments within the framework created by the history of both places. However, while this can be tried backwards, towards the past, it is not possible to do it towards the future, as readings about the future and the creation of unfounded predictions are not sound scientific practice. A panel study would doubtlessly have been able to capture changes over a larger time span. Due to this time constraint, this research has not been able to incorporate analysis on the impact of remittances in the medium and long term, particularly regarding the current financial crisis.

Future research could also help to nuance visions which portray Andean villagers as entirely dependent on remittances. International remittances are currently an important part of a transnational strategy of survival and improvement, as internal migration or craft-making were before. As previous booms faded away, international remittances could also face the same fate, substituted by other sources of income in the future. Unfortunately, the time horizon of this research was not long enough to make any sensible readings. Future ethnographic follow-

up research could compensate for this limited time coverage without compromising depth. Within the context of such a follow-up it would be useful to look at the way the different financial institutions in Ecuador, such as credit cooperatives and banks, have responded to the new situation created by the transfer of resources into rural areas of the country. For a more pragmatic and broader scale of future research, it would be useful to analyse the different financial products offered in different countries which are tailored to migrants and targeting their savings as well as credit and investment opportunities, and their availability and feasibility in the context of rural highland Ecuador.

Independently of the time limitation, two areas for future research have clearly arisen from the thesis (and I would love to carry out such research sometime soon in the future). First, following the unexpected importance of siblings in the management of material remittances, it would be interesting to look specifically at such dyadic relations. I would be particularly interested in looking at the way in which fraternal relations are shaped and influenced by immigration regimes. In Xarbán and Pindo, for instance, such fraternal relations are mediated by the different legal entitlements to mobility within the same group of siblings. Those children born in the US or Spain are (almost) automatically entitled to American or Spanish citizenship, which entails an almost unlimited work mobility, in contrast to their Ecuadorian-born siblings whose legal right to mobility is much more limited. This situation is surely likely to impact on the configuration of the fraternal group and the relations between siblings. Moreover, such configurations and relations are likely to be highly gendered, and hence differentiated according whether brothers or sisters are involved, and in which combinations and relations to legality and citizenship. The second issue which deserves more attention is related to the practices of fathering in a context of female migration. There is limited literature on transnational fathering (Pribilsky, 2007; Salazar-Parreñas, 2008) and even less attention has been paid to how the 'left behind' cope with their parental duties, particularly in the case of female migration.

9.5 A Final Word

I started this thesis with a reference to local textiles, and I return to the metaphor of weaving in the final remarks. Costume is a powerful identity marker throughout the Andes (Meisch and Rowe, 1998). *Ikat* is a traditional technique to dye hand-woven shawls in the Gualaceo area. These finely hand-spun and dyed shawls are used by Xarbán women to wrap their bodies in the cold nights of the *Sierra*, as well as to protect themselves from the strong Andean sun.

Cariamanga, with a pre-Hispanic past still to be researched, does not have the pride of such ancient weaving techniques; however the villagers still spin rough-looking but very robust saddlebags. They are not as widespread in Pindo nowadays as they used to be, because fewer donkeys and horses remain. However, men and women in the village still use the bags to carry yucca or corn by placing them on top of one of their shoulders. Villagers carry their food and their heavy agricultural tools in this way. These bags, originally designed for beasts of burden and now used by men and women, seem also to represent their tireless ability to cope in adverse circumstances.

Villagers have mastered the art of hand-weaving the old and the new, which appear to repeat century-old patterns. They have been weaving the external influences into their clothes and handicrafts and appropriating them all the while. Incorporations and appropriations are nowadays more complex and wide-ranging, but still in the process they are not just consumed but fed instead into the socio-cultural and economic lives of these Andean villagers. Like the threads in Xarbán shawls and Pindo saddlebags, remittances have been knitted into the socio-cultural and economic fabric of many villages in the South of Ecuador. International migration and remittances are at the core of the socio-economic and cultural life of Xarbán and Pindo villagers. Villagers migrate to secure the social reproduction of their villages. Paradoxically, with their physical absence they are maintaining their villages' socio-cultural presence. *Váyase mija, váyase a volver*, is a popular Ecuadorian expression which means 'to return soon'. A literal reading of the expression conveys a slightly different meaning, that of 'go to return' (*ir a volver*). It feels the perfect end for this thesis as this expression condenses the reality of places like Xarbán and Pindo, where villagers migrate to be able to return, to change in order to remain.

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Appendix 1. Questionnaire in English

Part I: Household characteristics

[Description of the house, including location]

	Name and Kinship with the respondent	Gender	Age	Occupation	Migratory stories	
					Internal	International
1	Respondent				-Destination -Year of departure -Length of Stay -Reasons to migrate -Reasons to return	-Destination -Year of departure -Length of Stay -Reasons to migrate -Reasons to return
2					-Destination -Year of departure -Length of Stay -Reasons to migrate -Reasons to return	-Destination -Year of departure -Length of Stay -Reasons to migrate -Reasons to return

Part II: Characteristics of the migrants

[illegible]

Part III: Contact

Migrant	Contact Yes/No	Channel (currently)	Usual direction (currently)	Frequency (currently)	Changes over time	
					At the beginning	Relevant changes
1		-Phone: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ own mobile ◦ own landline ◦ <i>locutorio</i> ◦ other villagers' phone ◦ other 	-From the migrant -From the non-migrants -Both		-Channel -Frequency -Direction	
		-Internet (skype, messenger, webcam, emails, other)				
		-Letter				
		-Videos or photos				
		-Other villagers				
		-Other				
2						
...						

Part IV: Remittances

- From the migrant: Yes / No [currently or at any point in time since s/he migrated (one table for each migrant in the household)]

	Kind	Frequency/ When	Amount	Channel	Changes over time
	<i>Who decides what to send/bring?</i>	<i>How decides when to send remittances?</i>	<i>How decides how much to send/bring?</i>	<i>How decides how to send remittances?</i>	
Money to the family	Last amount in \$			-Banks -MTOs -Post -Other	
Gifts to the family	-One-off -Recurrent				
Periods back in the village -Holidays within Ecuador -Eating out -Other					
Remittances not to the family -Fiesta sponsor -Religious events -Charity, emergencies -Other					

- Towards the migrant: Yes / No [currently or at any point in time since s/he migrated (one table for each migrant in the household)]

	Kind	Frequency/ When	Amount	Channel	Changes over time
	<i>Who decides what to send?</i>	<i>How decides when to send remittances?</i>	<i>How decides how much to send?</i>	<i>How decides how to send remittances?</i>	
Money					
Gifts					

Part V: Changes caused by remittances

Do you (or have you) set aside remittances for specific purposes? Yes/No

- When? _____
- For which purposes? _____

Have you experienced changes since you started receiving remittances (and as a result of) in the following issues?

- House
 - Have you built a new house? Yes/No Where? _____

 ■ Have you designed it? Yes/No If yes, did you get inspired by some model? _____
 - Have you bought a new house? Yes/No Where? _____
 - Have you made improvements in your house? Yes/No Which ones? _____
- Home furnishings
 - Have you bought furniture? [*muebles*] (e.g. sofa, bed) Yes/No
 Which ones? _____
 - Have you bought electrical appliances? [*electrodomésticos*] (e.g. blender, food processor, washing machine) Yes/No
 Which ones? _____
 - Have you bought electronic goods? [*aparatos electrónicos*] (e.g. TV, radio, computer, phone) Yes/No
 Which ones? _____
- Have you bought an automobile (car, van, truck)? Yes/No
- Have you bought land? Yes/No

- Have you bought livestock? Yes/No
- Have you bought agriculture machinery or inputs? (e.g. fertilisers, tools, tractor) Yes/No

- Are you saving more? Yes/No With a target? Which?
- Have you set up a business of any kind? Yes/No Which one? (shop, taxi, lodging, lending, etc.)
- Debts
 - Have you repaid old debts? Yes/No
 - Does anyone own you money now? Yes/No

- Have this household increased the amount of money spent on...
 - ...Education for children in the household? Yes/No
 - How?
 - Changing them to a 'better' school ☐
 - Better uniforms, stationery ☐
 - Pursuing further education ☐
 - Training courses ☐
 - Other ☐
 - ...Education or training for adults in the household? Yes/No
 - How? _____
 - ...Education for others not in the household? Yes/No
(e.g. sponsoring nephews/nieces)

- Have this household increased the amount of money spent on...
 - ...private health care? Yes/No
 - ...dentists? Yes/No
 - ...medicines? Yes/No

- Do you reckon you have changed your foodways in any way? Yes/No

- How? (e.g. more quantity, more diversity, new foodstuffs, eating out – *chifas*, *comedores*, etc. – invite over friends or relatives)

- Do you spend more money on leisure? (e.g. going out, travelling, holidays, clothes for special events) Yes/No

- In what?

- Is there anything else you feel you can do now that you could not do before receiving remittances?

- Is there anything else you feel you can have now that you could not before receiving remittances?

Appendix 2. Questionnaire in Spanish

Sección I: Características del hogar

[Descripción de la casa y su localización]

	Nombre y Parentesco con el entrevistado	Sexo	Edad	Ocupación	Experiencias migratorias miembros presentes	
					Dentro de Ecuador	Al extranjero
1	<i>Entrevistad@</i>				-Destino: -Año de salida: -Tiempo que se estuvo: -Razones para ir: -Razones para regresar:	-Destino: -Año de salida: -Tiempo que se estuvo: -Razones para ir: -Razones para regresar:
2					-Destino: -Año de salida: -Tiempo que se estuvo: -Razones para ir: -Razones para regresar:	-Destino: -Año de salida: -Tiempo que se estuvo: -Razones para ir: -Razones para regresar:

Sección II: Características de los Migrantes

[illegible]

Sección III: Contacto actual

Mi gra nte	Contacto en el último año Si/No	Canal	Dirección habitual	Frecuencia	Cambios a lo largo del tiempo	
					Cómo era al principio	Cambios significativos
		-Teléfono: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Celular propio ◦ Fijo propio ◦ Cabinas ◦ Teléfono en la parroquia ◦ Otro (especificar): 	-Desde el migrante -Desde usted -Ambos/Indistinto		-Canal: -Frecuencia: -Dirección:	
		-Internet (skype, messenger, webcam, emails, otro):	-Desde el migrante -Desde usted -Ambos/Indistinto			
		-Carta	-Desde el migrante -Desde usted -Ambos/Indistinto			
		-Videos o fotos	-Desde el migrante -Desde usted -Ambos/Indistinto			
		-A través de personas en la parroquia:	-Desde el migrante -Desde usted -Ambos/Indistinto			
		-Otro (especificar):	-Desde el migrante -Desde usted -Ambos/Indistinto			

Sección IV: Remesas

¿Recibe usted remesas de ? Si / No [actualmente o en algún momento (una tabla para cada migrante)]

	Tipo	Frecuencia/ Cuando	Canal	Cambios a lo largo del tiempo
	¿Quién decide qué enviar o traer?	¿Quién decide cuando enviar?	¿Quién decide como enviar?	
Dinero	Última cantidad \$		-Bancos -Remesadoras -Correos -Otro (especificar)	
Regalos	-Una vez -Periódicamente			
Visitas	-Vacaciones en Ecuador -Ir a comer fuera -Otro (especificar)			
Remesas no a la familia para	-Fiestas -Eventos religiosos -Caridad, emergencias -Otro (especificar)			

¿Ha enviado usted dinero o regalos a

? Si / No

[actualmente o en algún momento]

	Tipo	Frecuencia/ Cuando	Canal	Cambios a lo largo del tiempo
	<i>¿Quién decide qué enviar?</i>	<i>¿Quién decide cuando enviar?</i>	<i>¿Quién decide como enviar?</i>	
Dinero				
Regalos				

Sección V: Cambios inducidos por las remesas

¿Alguna vez ha guardado usted algo o todo lo que recibía para alguna cosa en concreto? Si/No

- ¿Cuándo? _____
- ¿Para qué? _____

¿Ha notado usted cambios desde que empezó a recibir remesas en las siguientes cosas?

◦ **Vivienda**

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|
| ◦ ¿Ha construido usted una casa nueva? | Si/No | |
| ¿Dónde? _____ | | |
| ◦ ¿La ha diseñado usted? | Si/No | ¿Se ha inspirado usted en algo? |
| _____ | | |
| ◦ ¿Ha comprado usted una casa nueva? | Si/No | ¿Dónde? |
| _____ | | |
| ◦ ¿Ha hecho usted mejoras en su casa? | Si/No | ¿Cuáles? |
| _____ | | |

◦ **Cosas para la casa**

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| ◦ ¿Ha comprado usted muebles nuevos? | Si/No |
| ¿Cuáles? _____ | |
| ◦ ¿Ha comprado usted electrodomésticos nuevos? (ej. licuadora, lavadora) | Si/No |
| ¿Cuáles? _____ | |
| ◦ ¿Ha comprado usted aparatos electrónicos nuevos? (ej. TV, radio, computadora, teléfono) | Si/No |
| ¿Cuáles? _____ | |

¿Ha comprado usted carro ? (furgoneta, camión, carro)	Si/No
¿Ha comprado usted tierra ?	Si/No
¿Ha comprado usted animales ?	Si/No
¿Ha comprado usted maquinaria o productos agrícolas ? (ej. fertilizantes, tractor, herramientas)	Si/No

¿Siente que ahorra más? particular? _____	Si/No	¿Está ahorrando para algo en
¿Ha puesto usted algún negocio ? _____	Si/No	¿Cual? (tienda, camioneta, pensión, préstamos, etc.)
¿Ha pagado usted deudas que tenía?	Si/No	
¿Le debe dinero a usted alguien en este momento?	Si/No	

EDUCACIÓN

¿Ha aumentado este hogar la cantidad de dinero gastado en...	
...educación para los chicos?	Si/No
¿Cómo?	
• Enviándolos a un colegio/escuela mejor	O
• Mejores uniformes, mochilas, cuadernos, etc.	O
• Haciendo que puedan seguir estudiando	O
• Otros cursos (idiomas, computación) o clases de apoyo	O
...educación o formación para los adultos?	Si/No
¿Cómo? _____	
...educación para otros que no viven en esta vivienda? (ej. sobrinos, ahijados, hijos de compadres)	Si/No

SALUD

¿Ha aumentado este hogar la cantidad de dinero gastado en...	
...doctores particulares?	Si/No
...dentistas?	Si/No
...medicinas/remedios?	Si/No

ALIMENTACIÓN

¿Cree usted que ha cambiado la alimentación en este hogar de alguna manera?

Si/No

¿Cómo? (ej. más cantidad, productos distintos, yendo a comer más a comedores o chifas, invitando a comer a amigos o parientes)

¿Gastan ustedes más dinero en ocio? (ej. viajando, vacacione, ropas especiales, bebida, fiestas)

Si/No

¿En qué?

- ¿Hay algo más que usted sienta que puede hacer ahora y que no podía hacer antes de recibir remesas?
- ¿Hay algo más que usted sienta que puede tener ahora y que no podía tener antes de recibir remesas?