



Revanchist Urbanism Heads South: The Regulation of Indigenous Beggars and Street Vendors in Ecuador

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Abstract: Much of the discussion surrounding neoliberal urbanism has been empirically grounded in the North. This paper shifts the discussion south to focus on the regulation of indigenous street vendors and beggars in the Andean nation of Ecuador. Inspired by zero tolerance policies from the North, the cities of Quito and Guayaquil have recently initiated urban regeneration projects to cleanse the streets of informal workers, beggars, and street children. In this paper, I explore the particular and pernicious ways in which these neoliberal urban policies affect indigenous peoples in the urban informal sector. Grounded in the literature on space, race and ethnicity in the Andes, I argue that Ecuador's particular twist on revanchism is through its more transparent engagement with the project of *blanqueamiento* or "whitening". I further argue that Ecuador's "refinement" of revanchist urban policies only works to displace already marginalised individuals and push them into more difficult circumstances.

Keywords: urban restructuring, Latin America, indigenous, race and ethnicity, informal sector

Introduction

Héctor was 4 years old when he began working on the streets of the city.¹ His first trips were to beg with his grandmother. As he grew older, he migrated frequently to work as an itinerant cola vendor. Héctor only works in Quito and Guayaquil during summer vacations and on long weekends. The rest of the year he attends primary school in a rural indigenous community in the Andean province of Tungurahua. Poverty in his village is overwhelming; consequently, a large majority of his fellow villagers also earn their livings vending, begging and shoe shining on the streets of Ecuador's largest cities. Rural-to-urban migration is a popular strategy for indigenous peoples from the central Andean provinces of Tungurahua, Cotopaxi and Chimborazo. Conditions in many of these communities are similar. Agriculture is largely unviable due to excessive soil erosion, declining agricultural productivity, increasing land fragmentation, and neoliberal agricultural reforms. Temporary rural-to-urban migration is a strategy that allows many to improve their material conditions and finance their children's educations in the hopes that this will enable more prosperous futures. Yet, the livelihoods of informal

street workers like these are increasingly under threat due to punitive urban policies designed to cleanse the streets of urban undesirables.

Under the guise of “revitalisation” or “renewal”, cities around the world are re-shaping urban spaces in order to revive city centres and attract global capital. While the language of renewal may seem celebratory, it is triumphant only for some. In a world where image is everything, the dark side of renewal is that it effectively erases or, rather, “annihilates” urban spaces (Mitchell 1997) for itinerant street vendors, beggars, street youth, and the homeless. Smith (1996) refers to this restructured urban geography as the “revanchist city”. He describes it as a vengeful, right-wing reaction against the poor, as the dominant classes attempt to “tame the wild city” and bring it under their control.

To date, much of the discussion concerning the revanchist city has been empirically grounded in the North (Atkinson 2003; Belina and Helms 2003; Hubbard 2004; Macleod 2002; Macleod and Ward 2002; Slater 2004; Smith 1996, 1998, 2001, 2002). In this paper, I shift the discussion south to focus on the regulation of indigenous street vendors and beggars in the Andean nation of Ecuador. I focus particularly on the cities of Quito and Guayaquil, which have taken their cue from the North to implement harsh neoliberal urban policies. Relying upon imagery of cleansing (“Clean Quito!”) and modernity (“21st Century Guayaquil”), these cities’ urban regeneration projects are sanitising the streets of urban undesirables, many of whom are of indigenous descent.

In what follows, I explore tensions between the aesthetics of the city and the aesthetics of the body to argue that the urban renewal discourse of cleanliness and modern progress is projected against the image of the perceived “backward”, “rural” and “dirty Indian”. Keen to project a purified and sanitised image of the city, I argue that Ecuador’s particular twist on revanchism is through its more transparent engagement with the project of *blanqueamiento* or whitening. Certainly, race plays a crucial role in neoliberal urbanism elsewhere (ie Fassin 2001; Terrio 2004); yet, within the Ecuadorian context I argue that this engagement is much more blatant. In Ecuador’s “modern” view of the nation, “dirty Indians” most certainly do not fit in.

Detailed empirical studies on the intersections between race, ethnicity and urban regeneration are limited (see Taylor 2002; Wilson and Grammenos 2005; Wyly and Hammel 2004). Following Hubbard (2004:666), who states that he wants to prise open “debates on the neoliberal city by highlighting the gendered injustices wrought by neoliberal policy”, in this paper, I wish to highlight the *racial* injustices wrought by neoliberal policy. By drawing upon a detailed 18-month study on how Ecuador’s neoliberal urban policies affect indigenous street vendors and beggars—the majority of whom are women and children—I hope to widen the scope on debates surrounding the revanchist city. I further respond to Slater’s (2006) call for a revival of critical

perspectives on displacement by revealing how some indigenous street beggars and vendors have chosen to become involved in more risky transnational migration to Colombia due to excessive municipal persecution in Ecuador.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. I begin by providing a brief overview on the impacts of neoliberal restructuring in Ecuador, while paying particular attention to how these have affected rural indigenous peoples. Next, I describe local municipal responses to neoliberal restructuring in order to contextualise exclusionary actions in both Quito and Guayaquil. I then delve into the literature on race, space and ethnicity in the Andes in order to uncover the historical roots for the contemporary racial displacement of indigenous street vendors and beggars. Finally, I move into the empirical data from Quito and Guayaquil and draw upon interviews with urban planners, municipal employees and members of the metropolitan police forces. I use this empirical material to reveal how hygienic racism (a racism that pathologizes indigenous bodies as sick, contaminated and dirty) informs urban neoliberal revitalization strategies.

Ecuador: Neoliberalism and Indigenous Peoples

This small, South American country is perhaps a curious focus for this paper. As demonstrated by Waquant (2003) and Caldeira (2001), within South America, Brazil may seem more apt given its well-known neoliberal and punitive urban policing methods, often harshly directed towards street youth, informal workers and the poor. Yet, Ecuador makes for a fascinating case study. It is a country besieged by political instability, high income inequality, poverty, and massive debt. In the last ten years (1997–2007), seven presidents have held office—three of whom have been overthrown. Gaps between the rich and poor are vast and among the highest in the world (Lind 2005). Close to 60% of Ecuadorians live in poverty, while this figure rises to almost 90% among indigenous peoples (SIISE 3.5 2003). This means that an astonishing nine out of ten indigenous Ecuadorians are unable to meet basic needs for food, housing, health services and education.

Like elsewhere in Latin America, neoliberal restructuring has had a significant impact on the nation. Ecuador underwent its first round of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in the early 1980s. Among other things, these led to currency devaluation, higher fuel prices, decreased subsidies for staple products, a switch to export-led growth, a rise in interest rates, and a reduction in government spending on health care, education, and social services (Weiss 1997). Ecuador's political and economic situation became particularly dire between 1995 and 1999. During this five-year period, the nation went to war with Peru, endured various government scandals, suffered a severe El Niño and observed

large-scale crop destruction. Falling world oil prices also beleaguered the nation, particularly since Ecuador's economy is largely supported by the export of Amazonian oil. By 1999, Ecuador was in the midst of its worst economic crisis in recent history. In an attempt to curb rampant inflation and stabilise the economic situation, Ecuador adopted the US dollar as its official currency in 2000. Even so, by 2000–2001, Ecuador's per capita debt was the highest in Latin America (Lind 2005).

Indigenous peoples have not endured this situation passively. Ecuador now has the strongest indigenous political movement in Latin America and contesting neoliberalism is a key part of its *raison d'être*. However, there is much class stratification within Ecuador's indigenous movement. Many of its key leaders are from the northern community of Otavalo, which is now one of the wealthiest indigenous communities in Latin America due to an international trade in ethnic tourist commodities. Yet, there has been little substantive change in Ecuador's poorest indigenous communities, despite this active movement of resistance.

Agriculture has long been an economic mainstay for the nation's rural poor. Yet, the nation's neoliberal restructuring programmes have made this sector increasingly difficult. For small-scale rural agriculturalists, recent neoliberal policies effectively blocked access to the key resources needed for continued agricultural production—such as land, credit, high quality seeds and new technologies (Martínez 2003). While the nation's neoliberal development policies have focused on large-scale, export-based agriculture (ie floriculture), the majority of small-scale rural agriculturalists have been left behind. Consequently, across the nation, many rural indigenous peoples have abandoned their plots and have chosen to pursue non-agricultural activities—most often in the urban informal sector (see Korovkin 1997).

As a result, Ecuador's streets are overwhelmed by poor indigenous migrants trying to make a living selling candies, fruit, prepared foods and small commodities.² Young women circulate the streets with babies strapped to their backs while asking passers-by for an *ayudita* or a little bit of help for their babies. Children are ever visible on the streets as shoe shiners, candy vendors, flower sellers, entertainers and beggars. But with rising numbers of itinerant street workers, municipal governments have begun cracking down.

Municipal Responses: Guayaquil and Quito

Quito and Guayaquil have seized upon tourism as a possible remedy for many of their economic woes and, consequently, have been working hard to reshape their urban images. As Ecuador's largest cities and the main gateways to the Galapagos Islands (where large-scale tourism began in the 1970s), Quito and Guayaquil are particularly well situated to benefit from tourism. The most symbolic outcome of this recent economic shift

was Ecuador's successful bid to host the Miss Universe Pageant in 2004, much of which highlighted these cities' regenerated areas.

Yet, this new tourist-friendly image is an image of a city without informal street workers. While street vendors have been part of Ecuadorian cityscapes for centuries (Gauderman 2003), they are increasingly perceived as threats to urban revitalization and international tourism (Middleton 2003). Global cities like New York and Miami (cities that are imagined as lacking chaotic urban informal sectors) are the urban ideal in Ecuador. In regenerated sectors of Guayaquil, it is not uncommon to hear people praise the new boardwalk as being "just like Miami", a compliment of the highest order (Garcés 2004). Indigenous street vendors, however, do not fit into the global city ideal. They are perceived to betray Quito's and Guayaquil's lack of modernity and backwardness to tourists. Consequently, efforts to remove them from sanitised urban spaces have been ongoing.

In the city of Guayaquil, American-style revanchist policies have been implemented with particular rigour. In 2002, the Municipality of Guayaquil contracted former New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton to help shape the city's urban regeneration strategy (*El Universo* 2004a, 2004b). Bratton is well known for co-authoring New York City's *Police Strategy No. 5* along with former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Smith (1998:2) tellingly describes this document as the "founding statement of a fin-de-siècle American revanchism in the urban landscape". Flown in from the United States, Bratton was paid an enormous sum of money for three days of work. He suggested an overhaul of Guayaquil's anti-crime structure, which later became dubbed "Plan Bratton" (*El Universo* 2002).

This new anti-crime structure is part and parcel of Guayaquil's urban regeneration project, which embraces modernity in its title of twenty-first century Guayaquil. In this modern Guayaquil, urban undesirables caught working in regenerated areas face harsh sanctions. Beggars and itinerant vendors can be imprisoned for up to seven days, while fines can be as high as US\$500 (Coordinator of Municipal Operatives, Guayaquil Metropolitan Police, 1 July 2003).³ The magnificent and newly constructed boardwalk—Guayaquil's showcase for its affiliation with the modern and hence dubbed *Malecón 2000*—is monitored by heavily armed police who individually assess who can enter the gated grounds and who cannot. Within the regenerated area, there are now at least 52 police-operated video cameras running 24 hours a day. This municipal gaze is not only concerned with crime control; rather, a key function of the cameras is to monitor the regenerated areas for the occupation of public space—particularly by informal workers (*El Universo* 2003a).

In Quito, similar processes are taking place. However, due to more left-of-centre political leanings in the Sierra, the pace of this change has been slower and the regulation less harsh. The historical centre,

which showcases Quito's colonial past, has undergone the most dramatic change in recent years. Although it was declared as a UNESCO world heritage site in 1978 (Bromley and Jones 1995), tourism did not come onto the development agenda until 1994. Within this agenda, informal street workers were highlighted as a problem for tourism and, thus, their removal from the historic centre was deemed crucial (Middleton 2003).

As elsewhere in Latin America, Quito's modernization discourse tends to conflate cleanliness and hygiene with progress; spaces of modernity must remain clean (see Tomic et al. 2006). As I discuss in the following section, there also remains a colonial logic that perceives indigenous peoples as dirty and contaminated. Consequently, indigenous street vendors are blamed as the principle cause for a host of morally suspect and unsightly problems, including litter and public hygiene concerns. Of course, these problems could be overcome with improved garbage collection services and public sanitation facilities. Yet, rather than focus on costly municipal solutions, it would seem that the municipality would rather sweep informal workers off the streets. Perhaps the problem is not the litter per se but, rather, the perceived visual contamination caused by indigenous bodies.

However, it was not until 2003—during this fieldwork—that the majority of the historical centre's informal street workers were successfully removed. This came after almost a decade of negotiation and deliberation (Middleton 2003). By May 2003, the municipality succeeded in removing 6900 informal workers from the streets of the city's historical centre. The majority were relocated to 10 municipally run urban markets—most of which were far removed from the city centre and, consequently, the tourist's gaze. By June, the streets of the historical centre were virtually free of informal vendors largely due to the presence of heavily armed police charged to monitor and regulate the area. The physical presence of the police was also accompanied by a new high-tech video surveillance system dubbed "Eyes of the Eagle". Yet, while those who belonged to informal trade associations managed to relocate into these municipally run markets, those who were not (ie itinerant street vendors) were largely displaced.

Despite the glorification of American urban ideals, it is curious that Ecuador should turn to the North for inspiration considering its vastly different socio-economic and political landscape. As Smith (2001:73) astutely notes, one of the dangers of the New York model is exactly that it could become a "template for a global, postliberal revanchism that may exact revenge against different social groups in different places, doing so with differing intensities and taking quite different forms". In this paper, I argue that this is precisely the concern in Ecuador. Ecuador is a country traversed by deep racial inequalities—particularly for indigenous peoples. The importation of revanchist urbanism further compounds

problems faced by Ecuador's indigenous peoples, many of whom make their livings in the urban informal sector.

Researchers elsewhere have pointed to the locally distinctive strands of revanchism in the North (Atkinson 2003; Macleod 2002; Slater 2004). In Ecuador, revanchism is also taking a distinctive form, namely through its more blatant engagement with whitening. Although indigenous peoples have long been part of urban cityscapes, city officials have decided to take the city back using high-tech police surveillance and heightened regulation. Revanchism in Ecuador is also being driven by a different set of criteria than in the North. Unlike many cities in North America and Europe, beggars, street children, and informal workers are not being displaced to build luxury condominiums for Ecuador's middle and upper classes. Rather, beggars, street children and informal workers are being displaced to make way for the global tourist class.⁴ In other words, revanchism is not being driven by the demand for gentrified housing but rather by a re-orientation of the city to the tourist economy.

In the following section, I contextualise urban neoliberal responses to increased urban informal sector activity by focusing on the intersections between race, space and ethnicity in the Andes. In Andean geographical imaginaries, there is a strict racial-spatial divide between rural and urban spaces. There is a belief that Indians and blacks belong in the rural whereas white-mestizos⁵ belong in the urban (Radcliffe and Westwood 1996; Rahier 1998). Whites and Indians are, in fact, often constructed in an oppositional binary; modernity and urban progress are associated with whiteness whereas backwardness and rural decay are associated with Indianness. These types of imaginaries are further informed by a longstanding hygienic discourse that is used to legitimise efforts to sanitise and cleanse public spaces of undesirable elements, particularly indigenous bodies (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998). As I demonstrate in the final section of this paper, these racist rhetorics pervade current neoliberal responses to indigenous street vendors and beggars.

Space, Race and Ethnicity in the Andes

Race is purely a social construction with no basis in biological reality; yet, it continues to operate in the popular imaginary as a powerful and exclusionary force (Wade 2002). Grounded in the "separation of human populations by some notion of stock or collective heredity of traits" (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992), race establishes a contextual and relational boundary between those who can and cannot belong. In the Andes, race remains a social fact that naturalises economic inequality. It is the basis for a social hierarchy that posits whites at the top and blacks and Indians at the bottom (Weismantel 2001:xxx).

Mestizaje is a core concept for discourses pertaining to race and ethnicity in the Andes. It is generally understood as a process of racial

and cultural mixing, which involves the blending of Spanish, African and indigenous ancestry. Yet, there is a hierarchy in this mixture: those with more Spanish ancestry (or rather those who are whiter) are looked upon as the pinnacle of this process. *Mestizaje* is not only about physical whiteness, but also about discursive whiteness. The ideology encourages individuals to gradually evolve from “primitive” Indianness into more “civilised” states of being—states that eventually become incompatible with indigenous ways (Bonnett 2000; de la Cadena 2000). At the same time, degrees of Indianness are partly measured by phenotypical markers such as “dark hair, “slanted eyes” and “less refined features” (Roitman 2004:18). White skin and fair features are prized above all. Therefore, the process of *mestizaje* is not so much about mixing, as it is about a progressive whitening of the population—often referred to as the process of *blanqueamiento*. In fact, mothers who give birth to whiter children are often lauded for “improving the race” (personal interview, 12 December 2002).⁶ For this reason, scholars often use the term *blanco-mestizo* or white-mestizo to refer to the dominant sector of society. Individuals within this sector are generally classed by wealthy elites as mestizo but self-identify as white (Whitten 2003).

Mestizaje and *blanqueamiento* are also strongly cultural processes. There is an assumed malleability of race and ethnicity in the Andes, which points again to this discursive nature of whiteness. As stated by Clark (1998: 203), referring to the construction of the Ecuadorian nation from 1930 to 1950, “dominant ideology assumed that an Indian who learned Spanish, left behind his poncho and moved to the city would immediately begin to partake of national culture as a mestizo”. This is well illustrated by the now widely cited words of former Ecuadorian president General Rodríguez Lara in 1972: “There is no more Indian problem. We all become white when we accept the goals of national culture” (Stutzman 1981:45). In this view, the goals of national culture are to build a white, westernised nation far removed from its indigenous roots. If everyone is white-mestizo, then the “Indian problem” disappears. What does this then mean for indigenous street vendors and beggars on city streets, many of whom have not left behind their ponchos or *chalinás*?⁷ Are they a visible affront to the project of *blanqueamiento*? Given the growing importance of tourism, do they betray the nation’s Indianness to the modern world?

Andean geographical imaginaries are tied to romantic notions concerning indigenous peoples’ connections to the earth, rural spaces and agrarian life. Images circulated by tourist agencies depict rosy-cheeked, colourfully dressed indigenous men and women, smiling while working the land. These images suggest that “this is where they belong”. These contrast with images of the downtrodden and misplaced Indian in the city, imagined to have lost his culture and his land. Contemporary newspaper articles thus depict pictures of migrant indigenous

women selling bundles of carrots and onions who are “out of control”; who are “invading the streets” (*El Comercio* 2002a:D4). When Indians “invade” the city, they disrupt popular geographical imaginaries and racial divides. Among white-mestizos, indigenous peoples’ perceived association with the earth further reinforces their backwardness and inferiority. It stresses their distance from national urban culture and their presumed lack of civilisation. It further incites a fear among white-mestizos of contamination due to their perceived proximity to mud and dirt (Orlove 1998).

In the Andes, the exclusion of indigenous bodies from the urban sphere is often barely concealed through a form of hygienic racism (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998). In Ecuador and Peru, this hygienic racism stems from late nineteenth and early twentieth century discourses surrounding eugenics, biology and disease (Capello 2005; Kingman 2006; Wilson 2004). Using these discourses, white elites from this period managed to re-work the definition of urban space to exclude indigenous bodies from urban markets and streets. According to Wilson (2004:178), they emphasised “a new semantic division between the uncivilised, disease-ridden, ignorant Indian whose presence in town posed a threat to social order and the image of the honourable, respectable mestizo labouring classes worthy of inclusion as subaltern citizens”. Concerns over the spread of typhus and smallpox were blamed upon the “appalling ignorance of Indian women” (Wilson 2004:175). Due to the elite’s fear of contamination, municipal authorities and the church concurred that Indians should be prevented from coming to town as much as possible. Indigenous market women were perceived as particularly reprehensible since “they were transgressing boundary lines—in the minds of the elite—between town and country, health and disease, women’s work and men’s work, and public and private space” (Wilson 2004:175). The infusion of this hygienic racism into today’s neoliberal urban strategies is a continuation of this late nineteenth/early twentieth century rhetoric.

Even though indigenous peoples are constructed as a contamination risk for white-mestizos due to their perceived proximity to dirt and disease, it would seem that they too are subject to reciprocal contamination from urban influences. During a meeting I observed between municipal authorities and social workers concerning indigenous migration and informal work on the streets of Quito, an urban planner said, “They may arrive *sana* [healthy] but they will leave *contaminated*”. A social worker re-iterated, “We want them to maintain their culture. We don’t want them to become *contaminated*” (2 September 2003).

These represent different exclusionary strategies but re-map the same spatial boundaries. In the Andes, clothing is a key marker of indigenous identity (Radcliffe 2000). For some, Nike baseball hats and Walt-Disney t-shirts, as increasingly worn and embraced by indigenous youth, are evidence of the contaminating forces of the urban sphere. Others express

much dismay at the way urban influences are changing rural communities. Prior to my departure from Ecuador, a peer wished to introduce me to an “authentic” indigenous community near Cayambe. We drove several hours along isolated dirt roads to arrive at the community of Oyacachi. However, she was very dismayed with what she saw, akin to what Rosaldo (1989) terms “imperialist nostalgia”—an innocent longing for an imagined past that is complicit with fundamental inequality and domination. “They never used to have electricity or tin roofs”, she said. “It was better before”.

As I argue in the following section, municipal strategies to revitalise urban centres are heavily informed by these intersecting discourses surrounding race, hygiene and aesthetics. By relying on high-tech police surveillance and increased regulation, municipal authorities are actively working to sanitise city streets of “dirty Indians”. Within these neoliberal urban strategies, indigenous working bodies are perceived to contaminate the aesthetics of the modern city. Yet, these neoliberal displacements only serve to deepen racial inequalities in the nation.

Sanitized Spaces of Exclusion in Quito and Guayaquil

Quito Limpio: Fuera mendigos, fuera vendedores! [Clean Quito: out with the beggars, out with the vendors!] (*Social worker* 2 September 2003).

While the above quote is a sarcastic mockery of the “Clean Quito!” municipal campaign, it effectively captures some of the tensions between the aesthetics of the city and the aesthetics of the informal street worker’s body. Indeed, the project of urban renewal is absolutely informed by a discourse of purity and defilement. According to one municipal urban planner, “We need to change the image of the city . . . We need to fight to make this a better city, so that the city looks better, so that there are no longer beggars in the streets” (8 September 2003). In the city’s newspapers, critics cite long lists of urban undesirables including “supplicating shoe shine kids, ragged beggars with extended hands, migrants hanging on to threads of hope” who “degrade the [city’s] beauty”, who are “incompatible with tourism”, and who are “the shame of the city” (*El Comercio* 2002b). Beauty queen candidates for the City of Quito 2003 campaigned on a collective desire to improve the image of the city. According to one candidate, “As Quiteños, we must fight the problems that tarnish the beauty of our city”. Another made an emotional appeal and expressed her wish for “begging to disappear from all of the city’s streets” (*El Comercio* 2002c).

As Cresswell (1996) has described, particular places are often connected with particular meanings to strengthen ideological positions. Despite a long history of indigenous vendors working on the streets

of Quito and Guayaquil, Ecuador's geographical imaginaries dictate that Indians belong in the rural sphere. Through hygienic racism, their presence in the urban sphere is constructed as a potential source of contamination for white-mestizos. This racism manifests itself in everyday occurrences: I was once with a mixed group of white-mestizos and indigenous peoples when a white-mestiza doctor began to scratch her leg and complain loudly about being bit by fleas, while looking around and noting that it had "been a long time" since she had spent time with Indians. In order to keep city spaces sanitised, dominant groups rely upon strategies of social and spatial distancing to keep these "defiled" peoples out (Sibley 1995).

In Ecuador, indigenous beggars and street vendors are perceived to threaten the "proper" meaning of urban space or, rather, threaten the dominant ideological construction of space. If the ideological construction of urban space is to be a space of "beauty" or a space for tourism then, "ragged" beggars become incompatible with this meaning. These taken-for-granted aspects of place are thus used to turn attention away from social problems and reframe the issue in terms of the quality of a particular place. The issue thus becomes more about removing indigenous street vendors and beggars from the streets (framed in the common sense discourse that "the streets are no place for a child", for instance) rather than trying to alleviate the larger forces that push them there in the first place.

My interviews with urban planners, municipal employees and police officers revealed how these processes take shape through everyday geographies of racism and social exclusion. For instance, shortly after the successful removal of informal workers from the historical centre, I interviewed Quito's Chief of Police to gauge his thoughts on what had happened. He expressed much admiration for the Municipality's work. He said:

It feels like the colonial part of the city again and I think it'll bring tourism, which is the principal object of this project: a source of income for the country and the city. In my opinion, this is a great accomplishment. But we need to maintain it and at the moment, it's my job to keep it clean (5 August 2003).

By keeping the historical centre "clean", the Chief of Police recognises his role in preventing the perceived source of pollution—poor informal workers—from re-contaminating the area. As a result, police presence in the historical centre is overwhelming. Police pick-up trucks routinely circulate in the area, carrying officers in the back who are ready to jump out at a moment's notice. Meanwhile, officers on foot monitor the area with large Rottweilers in tow.

The image of the city is at the heart of these exclusionary strategies. When police officers were asked why they are forcing shoe shiners,

vendors, and beggars out of the historical centre's plazas, they replied: "Because they look bad for tourists" and "they damage the image of the city" (3 June 2003). When I asked an employee of the Ministry of Social Welfare her opinion on indigenous street vendors and beggars, she said:

It's terrible. I mean it totally affects the [urban] image. For starters, it's not sanitary to have these children here. I mean they perform their "necessities" on the streets. They don't use a bathroom. So, already that decays the image. And to see begging children, who can just grab onto your leg and say "please give me some change" and this and that ... [she trailed off] (3 June 2003).

Again, the emphasis is on cleanliness, hygiene and the damaging aesthetic impacts of indigenous bodies.

Much of this is also about social and spatial distancing. As stated by Sibley (1995:49), "portrayals of minorities as defiling and threatening have long been used to order society internally and to demarcate the boundaries of society, beyond which lie those who do not belong". In this case, those who do not belong are "dirty Indian" children who urinate and perhaps defecate in public space. The issue is not the lack of public facilities for street workers but, rather, that they contaminate the streets and become threateningly close to middle-class government workers who are repulsed by their touch.

In Guayaquil, similar discourses circulate. The new boardwalk is truly the city's pride and joy. It is a manicured, sanitised boardwalk adjacent to the River Guayas. It has cafes, benches, gardens and even a McDonalds. Yet, this too is guarded and monitored by heavily armed police during all opening hours. The gates close at midnight to prevent undesirables from sneaking in and spending the night. This boardwalk was designed with tourists and Guayaquil's upper-middle classes in mind. In order to keep it this way, in 2003 plans were underway to build a new boardwalk in the *barrios* or in the poorer suburbs of the city. According to the Chief of Police, this was being built because:

On Saturdays and Sundays, you're sure to encounter a lot of people from the poorest *barrios* on the boardwalk. And this will make you suspicious or it'll give you a bad impression when there's only short people, ugly people, etc. So they're building a new boardwalk in the suburbs, where people can go without losing their merit, without losing their dignity, where they can mingle amongst themselves. It's just easier that way (1 July 2003).

In a classic example of social and spatial distancing, the plan is to keep the new boardwalk as striking as possible and free of "short people", "ugly people" (which can be understood as euphemisms for the non-white and working class) and any other suspicious-looking individuals who disrupt the image municipal authorities intend to project.

Race and ethnicity intersect all of these exclusionary strategies. Municipal employees in Guayaquil spoke of the city's strong regionalism and "disdain" for indigenous vendors and beggars. According to one woman, "it is because, undoubtedly, indigenous people have hygienic customs that we on the coast reject". When pressed further, she said that indigenous people "do not bathe", and went on to talk about the differences between the ways blacks and Indians smell (noting that blacks "have a special odour too, but it's not because they don't bathe, it's because of their diet. Another woman in the same room suggested "it's also because of the colour of their skin"). Trying to prove that they were not, in fact, racists, they went on to talk about how much "admiration" they have for Afro-Ecuadorians and how much they enjoy listening to their "voices" and their "music". When I brought them back to the topic of indigenous people from Sierra, they again spoke of regionalism and said that people wish that Indians would "go back to where they came from" (27 June 2003).

In both Quito and Guayaquil, race, hygiene and urban aesthetics have become intertwined to justify the displacement of indigenous street vendors and beggars for the sake of tourism. Through everyday geographies of racism and social exclusion, municipal rhetorics stress the need for purified urban spaces free from the defiling impacts of indigenous bodies. And, in order to maintain these purified spaces, municipal authorities have invested in heightened police surveillance and regulation to keep them clean.

Social Control and Regulation

Ecuador's hosting of the Miss Universe Pageant 2004 speaks to its successful re-orientation towards tourism. During the broadcast of this event, carefully selected and sanitised images of the nation were displayed to millions of viewers around the world. The bulk of this event was hosted in Quito. Recognising that they had a captive audience that consisted of the world's beauty queens and the global media, the city launched a publicity campaign promoting Quito's beauty, cleanliness, order, and its open arms to tourists (Pequeño 2004). Yet, this campaign went hand-in-hand with an attempt to cover up the more unsightly parts of the city. In the months leading up to the pageant, itinerant vendors and beggars complained of increasing police harassment and arrests on the streets. The mayor denied these accusations and claimed that these operations had been in place for "several months" (which they likely had been, in preparation for the arrival of the world's beauty queens and the global media). Denying that beggars were being jailed, he said that elderly beggars were being brought to shelters to develop a "dignified life". But this was regardless of whether or not they were being brought and held against their will (*El Comercio* 2004a, 2004b).

Regulation and control are key parts of Quito's and Guayaquil's neo-liberal urban policies. Quito's Chief of Police described the regulation of itinerant workers as "a game of cat and mouse". Due to excessive regulation, vendors have learned to hide in stores and doorways in order to avoid having their merchandise seized. These seizures are not uncommon; in fact, I witnessed vendors lose their goods on a number of occasions. Sometimes the goods were clearly pocketed by the police for personal use. Quito's Coordinator of Urban Management and Control does not deny that police take goods for their personal benefit but he insists that "they're not gluttons" (*El Comercio* 2003a). Because police officers are highly underpaid, earning a mere US\$140–200 month, corruption in these types of situations is common. My experiences while living in Ecuador led me to believe that, unfortunately, police corruption is widespread and bribery is the expected norm.

Many informal street workers complained of physical abuse at the hands of the police. One street outreach worker vehemently described how she observed police officers hit young male shoe shiners, seize their boxes, and forcibly remove them from Quito's historical centre's plazas. In the same area, she reported seeing an officer gas an elderly beggar and throw him to the ground (2 September 2003). Upon hearing these claims, an urban planner made light of them and joked that, *El orden es de sacarlos a palos* or "The order is to remove them with sticks" (2 September 2003). Quito's main newspaper similarly reports abuses by the municipal police. One informal vendor was cited as saying, "They hit or throw gas at us men and they call women daughters of [whores]". Another said, "We have to hide like we're thieves" (*El Comercio* 2003b).

There has been much criticism concerning the social impacts of these revitalisation projects. Newspaper articles are replete with complaints from informal workers who denounce harassment and abuse at the hands of municipal police. Violence has played a larger role in the repression of informal street vendors in Guayaquil than in Quito. In 2003 alone, the media reported 10 cases of excessive police force in Guayaquil, many of which were captured on film (*El Universo* 2003b). One article describes a 53-year-old man who was shot and severely injured during a forced eviction from an informal street market (*El Comercio* 2003c). These evictions were part of the Municipality's attempt to move informal workers into organised markets "where they'll be more comfortable" (1 July 2003). While admitting that "a few" police have violated procedures (*El Comercio* 2003d), the Chief of Police recognised that "Unfortunately, the role of the police . . . has always been more repressive than preventative" (1 July 2003).

In Guayaquil, informal workers are by no means permitted in the regenerated areas of the city. At nights the streets are patrolled by truckloads of what appear to be travelling "goons"—young, heavily armed police officers on the lookout for any signs of trouble (see Garcés 2004).

The mere sight is intimidating. A new municipal ordinance also allows for and, in fact, encourages private surveillance to play a role in the regulation of informal workers in the regenerated area.⁸ This is worrisome since this places the rights and interests of property owners above those of informal workers and all those who are perceived to violate subjective notions of “proper moral conduct” and “décor”. In order to protect the city centre for tourists and the middle class, spaces are being increasingly sanitized of troublesome images of poverty. As stated by the Head of Municipal Operatives for the Metropolitan police, informal workers in the municipality’s tourist spots are “definitely a problem” (1 July 2003).

The Permanent Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (*Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos*) has denounced Guayaquil’s police for arresting five minors between the ages of 9 and 16 years of age (*El Comercio* 2003c). According to the director of Guayaquil’s Program for the Working Kid (PMT), these boys and girls were arrested for five days and held in an adult cell for selling water, candies, and cleaning windshields (30 July 2003). When I inquired about this, the Chief of Police admitted that they have detained “many minors”, but stressed that most are “drug addicts” or “prostitutes” (1 July 2003). While it is true that a number of children have substance abuse problems, a much larger number of children labour daily on the streets—their only crime being the occupation of public space.

At the beginning of this paper, I described the case of Héctor, a 12-year-old indigenous boy who has spent much time on the streets of Guayaquil and Quito. Héctor’s most recent job in Guayaquil was as an itinerant cola vendor; he wandered the streets selling cola to pedestrians for 10 cents a cup. But the municipality has cracked-down on this activity with particular rigour. Targeted because their consumers litter plastic cups throughout the streets, cola vendors are now subject to a \$500 fine and up to seven days in prison if caught working in the regenerated area. According to the mayor, itinerant cola vending causes “mess and chaos—and that’s what I don’t want” (*El Comercio* 2003d).

In July 2003, a group of Héctor’s friends and family were arrested in Guayaquil. His grandmother, four of his aunts and a group of others from his rural indigenous community were imprisoned for seven days for begging and selling gum. When his relatives were seized, one 6-year-old boy managed to escape to inform his relatives what had happened. Had he not run away, he would have been imprisoned along with the community’s women since, as the Chief of Police said, “if we can, then logically children are [detained] with their mothers” (1 July 2003).

Due to increasing levels of municipal harassment, many women and children from Héctor’s community have decided to become involved in more risky transnational migration to beg on the streets of Colombia. This is worrisome since several women have had their young children

temporarily seized by Colombian authorities. Because they travel to Colombia with no documentation, speak Spanish poorly and represent a very low strata of society, they are accorded few rights in the city. In fact, in at least one case, Colombian authorities threatened to put an indigenous woman's child up for adoption because she did not have his birth certificate—a document that many indigenous peoples lack (personal interview, 6 July 2006).⁹ The very fact that indigenous women and children are now willing to risk migration to the streets of Colombia speaks to the profound importance of the income they earn on the streets of Quito and Guayaquil.

According to an Assistant Director at INNFA-Guayas, although tourists and visitors congratulate and commend the municipality for the work they have done to “clean up” the city, he does not agree.

I mean honestly, what's happening in my city, it's like putting make-up on a face and making it pretty when the liver is in bad shape, the kidneys are bad, and the heart has caused paralysis. Few of these people have seen the outskirts of the city. [If they did] they'd see that not much has been done. There are still sectors of the city that don't have water, that lack basic services. But we're investing a ton of money to cover up only the things we can see (26 June 2003).

This cover-up of unsightly visual blemishes—including indigenous bodies—represents a particularly racialized version of the revanchist city. While tourism is deemed a saviour for Ecuador's economic woes, at the moment, it is doing very little to help those in the poorest sector of Ecuador's economy—namely indigenous street vendors and beggars.

Conclusion

As Wacquant (2003:198) notes in Brazil, New York-styled neoliberal penalty is “all the more seductive as well as all the more nefarious when it is applied to countries traversed by deep inequalities”. In Ecuador, the implementation of revanchist urban policies has only served to exacerbate existing racial-spatial divides. This paper has highlighted the various racial injustices wrought by neoliberal urban policies. I suggest that Ecuador's particular twist on revanchism may be through its more transparent engagement with the project of *blanqueamiento* or whitening. As discussed, in Ecuador modernity and urbanity are imagined as white, whereas backwardness and rurality are imagined as Indian. For this reason, the mere presence of “dirty Indians”, “short people” and “ugly people” in tourist areas threatens to betray the nation's Indianness and backwardness to the world. Consequently, a particular imperative for Ecuadorian revanchism is to push these individuals beyond the city limits and back into the hidden folds of the Andes where Indians are deemed to “belong”.

Quito's and Guayaquil's neoliberal urban policies are effectively erasing spaces for the poor and working class while creating spaces for global tourists. They are promoted through carefully constructed notions of civic pride and accompanied by reduced freedoms, enhanced surveillance and an increasing number of privatised spaces that are accessible to few. Guayaquil, in particular, has justified its revanchist urban policies through the defence of an imagined collective urban identity known as *guayaquileñidad*. This is an essentialist and regional construction of identity that allows little room for Indians (who should "go back to where they came from"). In fact, as Andrade (2005) points out, there is much irony in Guayaquil's civic pride campaign, popularized under the slogan "*Más Ciudad*" or "More City". Although this slogan implies more city space for everyone, it in fact results in "*Menos Ciudad*" or "Less City" for the majority.

In the end, Ecuador's punitive neoliberal urban policies are only displacing troubling social problems. By constructing city space as a sanitised space for tourism and global capital, Guayaquil's and Quito's urban regeneration campaigns merely turn attention away from the pressing social problems forcing indigenous peoples onto the streets in the first place. They displace them in an out-of-sight, out-of-mind type mentality. Yet, these problems persist—forcing some to engage in more dangerous activities, such as transnational migration.

As argued by Slater (2006), a critical focus on displacement is largely absent in current literature on gentrification and urban restructuring. This paper has revealed how Ecuador's "refinement" of revanchism has encouraged blatant racial displacement. However, this is a different take on displacement since the individuals in this research are not being displaced from their homes (Newman and Wyly 2006; Slater 2004), but rather from their livelihoods (see Curran 2004). In fact, these revanchist urban policies are recasting the politics of national space by pushing rural-to-urban migrants into more risky transnational migration. This finding highlights how the importation of New York-styled neoliberal urban policies can result in harsher consequences for the most marginalised of people—particularly when local contexts include profound racial and economic inequality. It provides empirical evidence of how the diffusion of neoliberal urban policies from the global North to the global South can worsen the life conditions of the poor. By drawing attention to how neoliberal urban policies displace marginalised people from their livelihoods and push them into more dangerous transnational migration, I hope to revive critical perspectives on displacement both in the North and South.

In conclusion, this paper has provided an example of the differentiated ways in which revanchism takes shape in the South, thus furthering geographical debates surrounding the revanchist city. It has revealed how Ecuador's reorientation towards global tourism is founded upon a

hygienic racism that deepens pre-existing racial–spatial divides. Unfortunately, this paper substantiates Smith's (2001) fear that the New York model would become a global template for postliberal revanchism. Indeed, these harsh neoliberal urban policies have diffused to Ecuador's largest cities, even though political, social and economic conditions vary dramatically from those in the North. This is worrisome given that revenge is being enacted in a particularly repressive and racialised form.

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Endnotes

¹ All names in this paper are pseudonyms. Research for this paper was conducted over a period of 18 months (2002–3) and involved a total of 125 interviews. Thirty-seven of these interviews were with indigenous street vendors and beggars, while 88 were with community members, indigenous leaders, teachers, politicians, academics, NGO workers, religious leaders, urban planners, municipal employees, police officers and government members.

² I do not want to suggest there are only indigenous migrants on the streets because this is certainly not the case. Yet, the majority of street vendors and beggars are non-white (being either indigenous, mestizo or Afro-Ecuadorian). While I focus particularly on indigenous street vendors and beggars in this paper, many of the arguments presented here would also apply to Afro-Ecuadorians.

³ All interviews were tape recorded and conducted in Spanish. All translations are mine.

⁴ Of course, tourism is often a justification for urban regeneration elsewhere; however, it is generally only part and parcel of the process rather than the *raison d'être*.

⁵ The term *white-mestizo* is used to describe individuals who generally self-identify as white but are described within the nationalist ideology of *mestizaje* as mestizo. The term *mestizo* was originally intended to signify racial and cultural mixture between whites, blacks, and indigenous peoples but has since come to signify much more. This will be explained further in the following section.

⁶ See also Weismantel (2001:154–9) for similar conclusions.

⁷ A *chalina* is a shawl commonly used by indigenous women.

⁸ Articles 12.2 and 16 in the Ordenanza Reglamentaria de la Zona de Regeneración Urbana del Centro de la Ciudad (2004), Municipalidad de Guayaquil.

⁹ In 2006, I conducted a series of interviews with indigenous women and youth from Héctor's community. Funding for this research was provided by the University of Glasgow's John Robertson Bequest.

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