

## The Rules of the Game in Lima

A Memoir of Barry and Bev's Two-Weeks Along the Inca Trail in Chile and Peru

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1. Travelling around Lima is a network game. Essentially it's a form of market signalling, except that instead of profit the reward here is successfully advancing your vehicle across the intersection. As the roads are extremely crowded, this is a game that must be played continuously. To make matters even more interesting, this is a game played on a field of potholes.

At an intersection, no driver knows each other, but no driver can safely advance unless all others cooperate. Yet each driver wants to get across first. Under these circumstances, success results from a mixture of competition and cooperation.

There are many vehicles and intersections in Lima, a city of 8 million, but only few traffic lights. Each intersection is a contested zone. (For Harvard types, it's like a more intensive and extensive version of Central Square, Cambridge.)

So how do vehicles get across? Certain rules operate: Cars on bigger roads have priority over those on smaller; bigger vehicles dominate smaller (buses and trucks do very well); older cars over newer (duct tape holding fenders together is a special advantage). S/he who honks first also gets many gamespersonship points. As in Boston, eye contact is covert. To look at others is to acknowledge your awareness of them, and hence their potential right to pass through the intersection ahead of you.

These are multiple, contradictory rules and not everybody knows them. (Like Toronto, Lima is a city of in-migrants, except that most are from the Andean highlands and mountains where the llama traffic is more sedate.) Nevertheless, at each intersection, about once per minute, each driver must calculate his/her odds on all of these rules, and -- just as importantly -- do the calculations for all other drivers. It's a speeded-up Meadian scene: taking the role of the others is necessary to predict how each of the others will behave at their common intersection. (For once, Harrison White oversimplified: After Lima, I'm convinced that the proper subject of his book should have been *Multiple Identity and Control*.)

Despite all this surface noise and all this apparent danger, the system works. In four days and forty exciting taxi rides, I and my network compadres (Bev Wellman, Vicente Espinoza, Katie Faust, Larissa Adler Lomnitz) saw only one minor fender-bending accident.

The intersection game is made especially exciting by the complementary taxi/bus game in Peru. There's been an extreme marketization of the Lima transport industry. (Read Herman DeSoto's *The Other Path* for a contrast with the old days of heavily bureaucratic regulated and inefficient bus transport.) Want to drive a taxi in Lima? Spend five soles (US\$2.00) for a large pink plastic suction sign that says "Taxi" (surely one of the most international of all words). When your boss doesn't need the car, put

five liters of gas in (everyone runs on near-empty), stick the sign on your windshield, and you're instantly in the taxi business. All perfectly legal: no special license or exam is required for you or your car. All fares are negotiable, and most drivers expect extra from presumably well-heeled foreign passengers. Cars vary from Brazilian-made VW bugs -- the mode -- to moonlighting limos: our biggest coup was to get a "taxi ride" to the airport in an Assistant Deputy Minister's Peugeot 605 spotless semi-limo: his chauffeur was making a few extra bucks as a free-lance taxi driver between official duties.

There's room for upward mobility. A few thousand dollars buys you a used car, so you can be a full-time (taxi) driver, \$8,000 gets you a used mini-bus or "collectivo". Decide which route you want to travel, scribble it on a sign, figure out what you want to charge, and hire a loud-voiced friend to shout your itinerary out the door when you stop in traffic. Voila, you're a bus company! If you prosper, there is nothing to stop you from buying bigger buses as long as the market will bear it.

The result is a marvellously available and flexible public transportation system. The number of buses and taxis and their routes are totally market-driven. If there isn't enough business on one route, the bus operator just scribbles a new sign and follows the crowd. We went into the farthest barrios of new Andean migrants, where the homes were made only of straw mats on poles, and we saw many buses and taxis bringing workers, shoppers, etc. to downtown Lima for about 30 cents per day.

It's not surprising that we noticed that Lima seemed to have the highest percentage we've ever seen of small shops devoted to vehicle repairs. Reportedly, there's even a market where one can go to repurchase parts that have been stolen from your vehicle. (This reminds me of Jackie Mason's politically incorrect joke that he goes to Puerto Rico every year -- to visit his hubcaps.)

In both Peru and Chile the US dollar is a widely-used alternative currency because there are no foreign exchange controls. Big-ticket items such as houses and cars are routinely quoted in dollars (although local inflation is low now). In both countries, the US Treasury was running TV ads telling Chileans and Peruvians not to worry about the new-look \$100 bill: the old one would still be legal tender. The foreign use of dollars is probably a major export item for the US.

My one fearful fantasy never materialized. I reasoned that with no controls on who could drive a taxi, this would be a fertile field for free-lance kidnappers. Look for a rich foreigner, pick him/her up, and drive to where your confederates were lurking. Fortunately, this game never was played, but it did help me to appreciate some benefits of regulation.

2. Why were we doing such a detailed study of Lima traffic? Katie, Vicente, Larissa, Bev and I were attending "red-lat" (its informal name), the founding conference of Latin American social network analysts. ("Red" is "network" in Spanish, or "castillano" as folks say in Peru and Chile.) The conference was organized by anthropologist Jeanine Anderson (who's come to several Sunbelt network conferences) and sociologist Aldo

Panfichi, both of the Social Sciences Dept, Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. (Reportedly the Pope takes his leadership responsibilities seriously, being involved in the discussions about who should head the university.)

There was a crowd of about 170 scholars at the conference (in fact registration had to be capped at that number), mostly Peruvians curious about social network analysis, but including sociologist Vicente Espinoza from Chile (trained in Toronto, I proudly add), Larissa Lomnitz from Mexico, an extremely bright, self-trained young Colombian (Juan Pablo Zuluaga), and a Uruguayan interested in decentralization (Ana Laura Rivoir). *Connections* co-editor Katie Faust (US) ran an all-day introductory methodological workshop that 50 people flocked to attend, despite the extra cost. I gave the keynote address (I thought of it as my papal blessing) about the privatization of community and talked about personal networks, Bev Wellman (Canada) spoke about how different kinds of networks channel people to medical or alternative health care, Vicente linked barrio relationships, social mobilization and collective identity, while Larissa compared Chilean horizontal and Mexican vertical political networks (she's a citizen of Chile who has lived/worked in Mexico for many years). The conference also had a special session honoring Larissa for her path-breaking studies of networks of marginals, middle-class and politicians: it seems that every Latin American sociology and anthropology student must read her work.

Interesting Peruvian papers included Jeanine Anderson on barrio community development, Aldo Panfichi using network data to question stereotypes that contrast supposed untrustworthy, apolitical, coastal "crillios" with supposedly trustworthy, solidary, politicized Andeans (primarily Indian), Oscar Jimenez tracing the transmission of AIDS through male youth gangs and their respectable and not-so-respectable girl friends. Although many of the other papers were at the early metaphorical stage of social network analysis, there was the promise that the interesting questions raised would soon mesh with more detailed ways of gathering evidence and more systematic ways of analyzing it. Most attendees were from Peruvian universities and NGOs, interested in discovering what this thing called "social network analysis" was about. I was reminded of how much European network analysis has developed in the decade since I gave the keynote address to an early French conference organized by Alexis Ferrand and LASMAS associates.

I came back with organizational thoughts for future conferences. It's great to have large introductory sessions, as the Peruvians did, to acquaint neophytes with network thinking. It's also necessary to have something to get people started on analyzing networks, such as Katie Faust's day-long methodological workshop. But there was also a strong need for another kind of session: seminars limited to professionals who would critique each other's substantive work and suggest research improvements based on network analytic lore. There were about 10 colleagues at the Lima conference who were ripe for this kind of discussion.

All sessions started 30 minutes to an hour late. Most people, familiar with local

practices, didn't even both to show up until then. We were told this was the Peruvian way (and also the Chilean way, as my lecture started 30 minutes late there too). We never figured out how the university's class schedule worked. What do people do when they two classes back to back?

3. "Have Gun, Will Stand" is surely the anti-Paladin motto of another major Lima industry: private security -- the obvious site for Bonnie Erickson's next project. On every block, there are at least three uniformed rent-a-cops wearing pistols, flak jackets and baseball caps (embroidered with the name of the security company they work for). Poor men often have two basic choices when they leave the army: crime or rentacop. I was glad so many chose the latter career path even though this ultimately meant that we consumers were paying them not to become criminals. One reason for avoiding the wrong side of the law may be that the National Prison Institute reports that 75% of the nation's 22,210 prisoners have not completed their trial, with some being held in prison for four or five years without sentencing (Reuters news service, as reported in the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, April 25, 1996). Indeed except for one urchin proto-pickpocket (foiled of course by Tilley pants), we were never hassled by criminals. Even the local supermarket, Blockbuster video and sub shop had one to five rentacops outside their doors -- although a sub shop in Lima is a trendy, upper-class thing. We knew we were staying in a very classy hotel because the security guys in it wore blazers and hid their guns in concealed shoulder holsters.

In the 1980s there were real terrorist and criminal attack problems. Armed security proliferated then outside commercial establishments and in middle-class neighborhoods; and houses and institutions got walls, gates and window grills. Security has stayed at a high level, even though the threat has diminished. We met one elderly midwest-American couple in Peru for their son's wedding to a Peruvian school teacher. Because he managed an important mine, he arranged for his parents to be met at the plane by a convoy of three armor-plated cars (remember *Patriot Games?*), and for his parents to be accompanied by a bodyguard even while sight-seeing at the Inca ruins of Machu Picchu.

We'd read about crime threats before we arrived and were apprehensive. Yet we never saw an incident, despite our sociological investigation of some of the more interesting neighborhoods. I suspect that the guards are less needed now, but they help people to feel secure and they soak up unemployment. Having a guard is probably a status symbol for a store or residential block -- no sub shop or neighborhood should be without one or else people won't shop or live there -- just like poor barrios only feel that they've arrived when they get their own community development worker. (When I was a kid in New York City, the only certifiably successful teenage gangs were those with their own "j.d. workers".)

4. Bev and my Lima experience was the culmination of our two and one-half week trip to Chile and Peru. We spent four days in Chile with Vicente Espinoza, including a lecture at his SUR (Santiago) research institution: my privatization of community

lecture again. Unlike Third World, widely-inegalitarian Lima, Santiago Chile is modern, stylish and with few visible signs of poverty. Its handsome ambience reminded me a southern European city. Even so, we encountered machismo in an unexpected place. Coffee shops, like the Cafe Haiti, are for men only, who stand at long bars downing quick cups. Starbucks is better. Bev was the only woman customer we saw in such a place, although she wasn't hassled. The coffee servers are all pretty, buxom young women clad in clinging lycra and short skirts, smiling broadly all the time. The situation was if the Playboy Club had bought Nescafe.

5. We visited the barrios where Vicente had done his thesis research. (There's an English-language paper forthcoming in my *Networks in the Global Village* book and a Spanish revision and translation of his Toronto thesis coming out as a Chilean book this year.) In a decade, mud/straw shacks that had sprung up in an "alegal" (to use Detelina Radoeva's nice term) occupation had been transformed into well-painted cement block, glass-windowed houses with electricity, TV and proper roofs. Many had wood siding and trim, and the telephone company was busy putting in lines. Blockbuster had opened a video store a few kilometers away.

6. Rural in-migration is currently much greater in Lima than in Santiago, and we were able to trace its development as Jeanine Anderson drove us from central Lima through the informal occupation area of Villa Salvador, housing many thousands of people. The barrios of Villa Salvador closer to central Lima are heavily developed, with multi-storied, well-built homes, factories and stores, along with all modern services. Further out, the paving ends, and the structures are mud-brick. (Nevertheless, much Peruvian furniture is made in mud-brick workshops.) At the outskirts, new "homes" are springing up in the desert. They're made of straw mats and often don't have electricity or water. Nevertheless, the occasional home is also a variety store, and some entrepreneurs are selling cement blocks and corrugated roofs to would-be renovators. (Ace Hardware has also opened several Lima stores.) Everywhere, the taxis, colectivos and buses cruise to take residents to other parts of Lima.

We saw one of their destinations when Jose ("Pepe") Tavares, a Massachusetts-trained political economist took us to Gamarra, the very dense heart of Lima's textile industry. (It's where some of your t-shirts, etc. come from.) The place was filled with small business, selling everything from buttons and thread to high style. It reminded me of the New York City garment center where my parents' and their relatives had sought their fortunes (but made only a living). We visited one shop selling low-end jogging clothes (you'll probably see them at Wal-Mart for \$5-\$10, and another rooftop place which was silk-screening the fronts of shirts. At the time, they were doing two jobs: printing highly-styled crosses on blue cassocks and Shell Oil logos on gas jockeys' shirts. All but the senior workers were women; one had her young son along. The working conditions compared favorably with the southern Chinese factory we visited a few years ago (where the rest of your t-shirts come from). Like China and Taiwan, I saw one restaurant selling snakes, live and ready-to-kill, cook and eat.

7. In Chile, we also drove with Vicente to his pretty birthplace, the hillside seaport of Valparaiso, where driving "straight ahead" means go along a twisty road that stays on the same level of the hills. We discovered "pisco sours" (much smoother than whiskey sours) and that Chilean wines comes in a variety of grades, with the upper end extremely wonderful. We visited Isla Negra, the funky seaside villa to where Pablo Neruda was actually exiled, and not the Italian island depicted in the (nevertheless wonderful) movie *Il Postino*. I especially liked the floor he had paved with beach pebbles in order to have a foot massage whenever he walked barefoot into his study.

8. Truly the high point of our trip was flying UP to Cusco and Machu Picchu from Lima: 11,000 feet (3,400 meters) up in fact. Cusco was the Inca capital and the subsequent heart of the Spanish empire -- transforming the political economy of America and Europe as a result of its Inca gold hoards and silver mines. Most Spanish churches were built on the foundations of Inca temples -- a simultaneous act of desecration and appropriation. (Our curiously-named "Hotel Liberador" had once been Pizarro's headquarters house.) With 11,000 feet comes altitude sickness: headache, nausea, malaise and loss of appetite. To compensate for the thin air (less oxygen per cubic inch), blood vessels in the brain expand (causing a headache) to divert blood to the brain from other, less critical parts of the body. The rest of the body partially shuts down, causing malaise and loss of appetite. We quickly gave up our plans to open a western restaurant, the Deli Llama, especially when we learnt that "llama" is pronounced "yama". (The Lima branch would be called the Deli Lima, of course.)

Fortunately, Machu Picchu, the well-preserved ruins of an Inca religious/military/farming community, is "only" at 7,000 feet, so our bodies were able to relax. Machu Picchu was great, especially when the day-trippers left at 2 PM. The only people left at the site were the thirty guests at the Hotel Ruinas. We wandered among the beautifully-designed buildings, with their precisely-cut stones fitting tightly in mortar-less walls, and their trapezoidal doorways giving good seismic protection against earthquakes. Five pleasant llamas are in full-time residence, doing lawn-mowing. (These were the only llamas we ever saw; they're being replaced by cattle and sheep at these lower altitudes although they supposedly are still the large animal of choice above 12,00 feet/4,000 meters.)

We walked along the Inca trail, built out of rock steps and mountain staircases. We climbed 1,500 feet halfway up nearby Huayna Picchu mountain before we were forced back by altitude sickness and a cliffside Inca staircase that was slippery when wet. We followed in Indiana Jones' footsteps (opening of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*) to see the sun rise and flash thorough a window that on June 21 is precisely aligned with a sacred altar. (Query of the day: Did Indiana Jones use Lomotil or Imodium?) Several tourists brought crystals which they put on the altar "to catch the energy". Perhaps that's why there was so much turbulence on the flight back to Lima.

9. As you might expect, the few people overnighing at the ruins had led interesting lives, and we made new friends and acquaintances:

-- Nicollete Berstein (Argentinian-Minnesotan American), a cultured philosopher and currently Swiss (skin) Care by Givenchy's chief South American marketing and make-up rep;

-- Her sister Michelle, a former Ailey dancer and now sous-chef at the up-market "Mark's Place" in Coconut Grove, just south of Miami (tell her we sent you). Up and coming (she recently cooked with Susar Lee of Toronto's Lotus in a demo), she dreams of opening her restaurant, "The Dancing Chef," featuring souffles *en pointe*.

-- Screenwriter/lawyer Phil polin (and geneticist son Mark), who "small-world" geography soon revealed to the nephew of Bev's theatrical guru, Violet Spolin.

-- A Finnish woman and her German-Bolivian husband who were off to the Amazon jungle (Iquitos) to sell drilling pipe to PetroPeru. They live in Houston, of course.

-- Steve, a CARE rep, travelling with a wealthy woman benefactor from Dallas (Nikki) who had the lovely idea of wanting to see what her donations were actually doing.

-- Reema, a young Jewish-American woman from Palo Alto, marketing Java for Sun, who had fallen out of a whitewater raft and been swept downstream for 8 minutes, probably breaking some wrist-bones;

-- Sister Margaret, an American nun and doctor, who was working on a week's surgical demo at the Cusco hospital for poor people. She splinted the raftee's hand, using my Swiss Army knife (carried in my Tilley pants, of course) and shirt cardboard from Knob Hill cleaners. In her 60s, she climbed the mountain we couldn't, while wearing her full costume. She has good habits.

10. So went the high points of our trip. It's interesting how with even the short passing of time, we're forgetting the annoyance of overnight flights, 3 AM wakeups to take the only flights/trains available, and lost luggage.

(AeroPeru didn't handle our lost luggage well, they kept changing their schedule, and we weren't pleased about the peeling duct tape holding together parts of the plane's interior. With privatization, they're now owned by AeroMexico. Privatization also means that many five phone companies compete in Chile, even for local calls. To push their campaign, Bell South brought former General Norman Schwarzkopf to Chile to lecture about applying the management of the Gulf War to business leadership.)

Somewhere in transit I developed my new quick coding scheme for identifying nations who are in the periphery, semi-periphery or core of the world-system. The impoverished periphery has neither toilet seats nor toilet paper, the semi-periphery has seats but no paper, and the well-equipped imperialistic core is fully equipped. Although this coding scheme uses categorical indicators for network phenomena, it is easy to use and always on the traveller's mind. Moreover, it reflects the high level of underinvestment in the periphery and the fact that the semi-periphery seems to have more funds available for capital investment (seats) than for maintaining what has been

built (paper). Fortunately, we only ventured as far as the semi-periphery, and as intrepid explorers, we carried our own supplies everywhere.

East Asia, of course, is the major exception to this coding scheme, with cultural and sanitary reasons causing affluent countries to have underdeveloped seating. Reportedly Bill Clinton will soon lead a trade mission to open up Japan to the aptly-named "American Standard."

On a grander scale, Lima has the most visible manifestation of the semi-periphery's unfortunate bias for capital investment rather than maintenance. It's an elevated metro-rail system way out in the suburbs that mostly consists of isolated half-built stations and pillars to hold up tracks that never were built and probably never will be. Reportedly, the previous president, Alan Garcia, made hundreds of millions out of this; he's absconded to Europe and is now fighting extradition.

As this example suggests, we had adventures and insights, often when we least expected it or even realized it at the time. (Late in the trip Bev turned to me and said, "I don't think seeing yet another barrio will make me a better person.") We came back full of beans, Lima of course. We had interesting times and met lovely people. It must have been the spell of the Incas.

Cheers,

Barry