

From Internal to International Migration in the Peruvian Andes

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Internal migration is widely regarded as the major economic, social, cultural, and demographic transformational force of the past 60 years in the Andean countries (Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, and Bolivia).

Internal migration generally precedes international migration. The nation State, to become consolidated, needs linkages among its regions, states, departments or provinces. This interlinking is not only political and administrative, but also social and cultural. In the economic sphere, however, such interlinking has not always been possible. In this context, internal migration has a decisive role by connecting the rural and marginal sectors with the cities, which in general are the political and administrative centres.

Historically, small farmers, villagers, and ambitious small-city dwellers have migrated to larger urban communities in search of educational and economic opportunities. In Peru, the urbanisation of rural communities is transforming the countryside and accelerating rural-to-urban migration. Peruvians are now migrating to mid-sized cities, not just to the capital (Lima), as well as abroad. More women than ever are flocking to the cities

in order to improve their lives. Local organisations in support of internal immigrants have flourished, building bridges to their communities of origin.

Historically, small farmers have migrated to larger urban communities in search of economic opportunities

A social and cultural effect of internal and international migration is the rise of translocal and transnational households, in which one or more members of the nuclear family live away, either in the country or abroad. This change in the family composition has advantages and disadvantages, but most people perceive the advantages to outweigh the disadvantages; hence migration has become synonymous with wellbeing and human development.

The first stage: migration to cities

Internal migration already existed in Peru before the Second World War but increased in the following decades as the cities began to grow economically and demographically and the need for labour increased. The scant presence of the State in the poorest areas encouraged internal migration to the big cities, mining enclaves, and high jungle settlements, all linked to the international market. The 1980s and 1990s saw internal migration intensified. Rural households commonly included migration in their plans; leaving and returning to the community increasingly became a part of rural culture. Depending on their farming activities, communities were temporarily, seasonally, or constantly on the move. The peasant farmer community – defined in territorial terms as a stable population with a definite role and functions and an ethnic or linguistic identity – became obsolete. Development programmes



run by government, international cooperation, and non-governmental organisations directly or indirectly encouraged migration by improving health and education and thus 'readying' the human capital for migration, with adverse effects for local and regional development. Land reform also encouraged the urban shift in Peru. Rather than strengthening rural areas, it depleted them of human and financial capital by freeing indigenous people and peasant farmers from the colonial legacy of haciendas and plantations.

The shift towards urbanisation began before the increase in migration. Educational programmes based on urban models, designed to transform students into Spanish speakers, also foster urban values such as individualism, competitiveness, and reward for academic excellence. Parents encourage children to buy into the values of the school and to become professionals and not mere 'campesinos'. Most rural areas now have primary schools, but to continue their education students must travel to a nearby city or to Lima. Many of them remain in the city forever, only occasionally returning home to visit. Leaving the village is the first step of moving into the world, a stage in the process leading to international migration.

Internal migration has been predominantly unidirectional, i.e., from the country to the city and not vice versa. In this sense it was the most important socio-demographic and cultural component of the urbanisation process. In the past 20 years, medium-sized cities have exploded in population. Abancay, Ayacucho, Cuzco, Huancayo, and Juliaca have all grown between 4 and 7 per cent annually, although Lima continues to receive more migrants in absolute terms. The advantage for the



migrants who move to the smaller cities is that they can keep in touch with their communities of origin and are able to return frequently.

Changing demographics

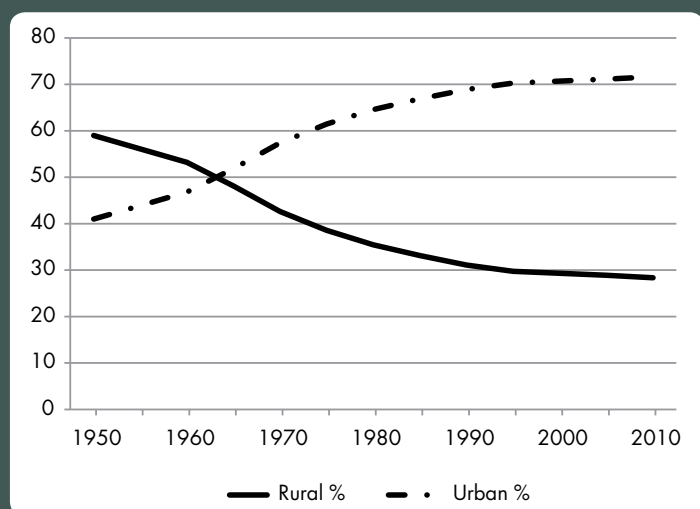
Internal migration in Peru has changed the distribution and character of rural and urban populations. In 1950, the rural and urban populations in Peru were 59 and 41 per cent respectively. By 2010, this breakdown had shifted to 28 and 72 per cent (Figure). The major driving force for this change has been internal migration from the Andes and the Amazon rain forest to the coast; 56 per cent of the total Peruvian population now lives on the coast, while only 30 per cent lives in the Andes and 14 per cent in the Amazon rain forest.

Internal migration has also widened rural-urban inequalities and allowed new social and cultural groups to emerge. Rural populations have become poorer and urban ones richer as the human and financial capital has moved from rural to urban areas. In the cities, the first and second generation of migrants have become the great urban middle class; they are the 'cholos', a racial and cultural mixture between the indigenous and white populations.

Mountain poverty: Internal migration in Peru has widened rural-urban inequalities

The distinction between rural and urban and between traditional and modern is no longer as clear as before. Socio-demographic and cultural evidence in the past few decades has shown intense interactions between the city and the countryside, and neither can be analysed independently of the other. Better highways and administrative links between country and city are contributing to greater mobility of the population. The small towns and capital cities of the provinces constantly

Change in rural and urban population in Peru, 1950–2010



Source: UN (2011) Population Statistics. Department of Social and Economic Affairs, Population Division (http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/panel_population.htm)

receive people from outside their communities. Visits to family members who have relocated to towns, trips for agricultural supplies, and exploration of new markets for rural zones entail movement between the countryside and the cities. Many migrants to the cities return periodically to their home towns because they maintain small businesses or farms there.

Growth of international migration

While the cities are growing, the globalisation of the economy, the media, and education, and the demographic transitions in the rich countries where there are progressively fewer young people, produce a demand for labour that cannot be covered internally. The scarcity of skilled and unskilled workers leads countries to open their borders to foreigners.

Economic and political instability in the poor countries triggers emigration. Demographic growth, still high, outpaces economic growth. This produces an oversupply of labour that these nations cannot handle, leading workers to emigrate. International migration has not replaced internal migration, but has become an extension of it.

In Peru, emigration in the 1960s was mainly instigated by accelerated economic growth following the Second World War, and was primarily towards the United States (Table). Emigration within Latin America was primarily

towards Argentina, which had achieved economic growth almost comparable to that of the United States, and towards Venezuela, which was experiencing an oil ‘boom’. To emigrate from Peru was synonymous with prestige and power, more so when the destination was the United States or Europe (which mainly attracted professionals, intellectuals, and students at that time). A relatively stable government from 1963 to 1968 facilitated emigrants’ return.

In the 1970s, economic and political conditions changed substantially in the country. The nationalisation of foreign corporations, the Agrarian Reform Law, and migration policy restrictions discouraged immigration, foreign investment, and the return of Peruvians from abroad but encouraged emigration, especially of the few elites controlling industry, mining, fishing, and landownership. At that time emigration was selective, coming mainly from the liberal professions and the upper and upper middle classes of Peru’s large cities. A small number of emigrants, however, came from the urban middle classes. The United States continued to be the country of preference, followed by Venezuela, as well as Ecuador and Europe, mainly Spain. Further, at the beginning of the decade, shepherds began to emigrate from Peru’s central highlands to the North American west (see Altamirano 1992, pp 136–153). University and graduate students preferred to go to Europe, Argentina, and Brazil, in part because Peru’s new University Law (1971) cancelled doctorate study at the universities.

Evolution of Peruvian Immigration

Destination countries	United States	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Latin America	Canada	Australia	Japan	Others
Phases								
1920–1950	New Jersey, New York	England, France, Italy, Spain						
1950–1960	California, Florida, Illinois	Belgium, Germany		Argentina, Venezuela				
1970	Connecticut, District of Columbia	Netherlands, Switzerland	Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, USSR	Costa Rica, Mexico, Venezuela	Eastern Canada	North and southeast		
1980–1992	All 50 states	Scandinavian countries	Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, USSR	Central American countries	Western Canada	North and southeast	Whole country	Caribbean, Israel, Republic of Korea, Arab countries, Asian subcontinent
1992–2010	All 50 states	All countries		All Latin American countries	All provinces	North and southeast	Whole country	Africa

The emigrant population in 1980 was only 500,000 (Altamirano 1992). In the 1980s, with the restitution of democracy, internal conditions in the country became relatively attractive. Nevertheless, most emigrants did not immediately return, and political conditions in the country remained unstable. The economy began to deteriorate, and political violence arose in the highlands. These two phenomena – violence and economic crisis – lasted throughout the decade, preventing tourism, investment, immigration, and the return of emigrants.

In the past 30 years, international migration has increased in an unprecedented fashion, more than in most other countries of the Southern hemisphere. Today, approximately 3 million Peruvians are living abroad – equivalent to 11 per cent of the total population. To put this figure in context, the world average recognised by the United Nations Population Fund in 2010 was 3 per cent.

Peruvians are now living in practically all countries of the world. About 40 per cent of Peruvians abroad are in the United States, 30 per cent in Latin America, 20 per cent in Europe, and 10 per cent in the rest of the world. However the data are imprecise, both because the high number of illegal or 'invisible' emigrants makes the



The distinction between rural and urban is less clear than before

statistics incomplete, and because migrant populations are mobile and constantly travel in and out of the country.

The revolution in communications enables potential emigrants to have more information about foreign work opportunities. The social and family networks established by households give potential emigrants more confidence, including those who decide to emigrate without papers (which explains the growing population of illegal immigrants). The fact is that with or without regulations and anti-immigration measures, emigration will continue.

This article is based on the following publications:

Altamirano, T (1992) Exodus: Peruvians Abroad. Lima, Peru: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú

Altamirano, T (2003): From country to city: internal migration. *ReVista*, Harvard Review of Latin America, Winter. Available at: www.drclas.harvard.edu/revista/articles/view/206

Altamirano, T (2010) Migration, Remittances and Development in Times of Crisis. Lima, Peru: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú