

Precarious but successful? Young Peruvian “Mercosur” Migrants in Brazil

Lorena Izaguirre, Ph.D. (UCLouvain)

DSA 2020 Conference “New Leadership for Global Challenges” – 16-19 June 2020



Presentation Outline

1. Contextualizing Peruvian migration to Sao Paulo
2. Situating the research
3. Methods and data
4. General trends of Peruvian migrants in Sao Paulo
5. The « Mercosur » generation (2010-2016)
 - 5.1 Dispositions to mobility
 - 5.2 The mobility pattern
 - 5.3 Pathways of incorporation in Sao Paulo
6. The mobile Peruvian working-class youth: From workers to self-entrepreneurs?

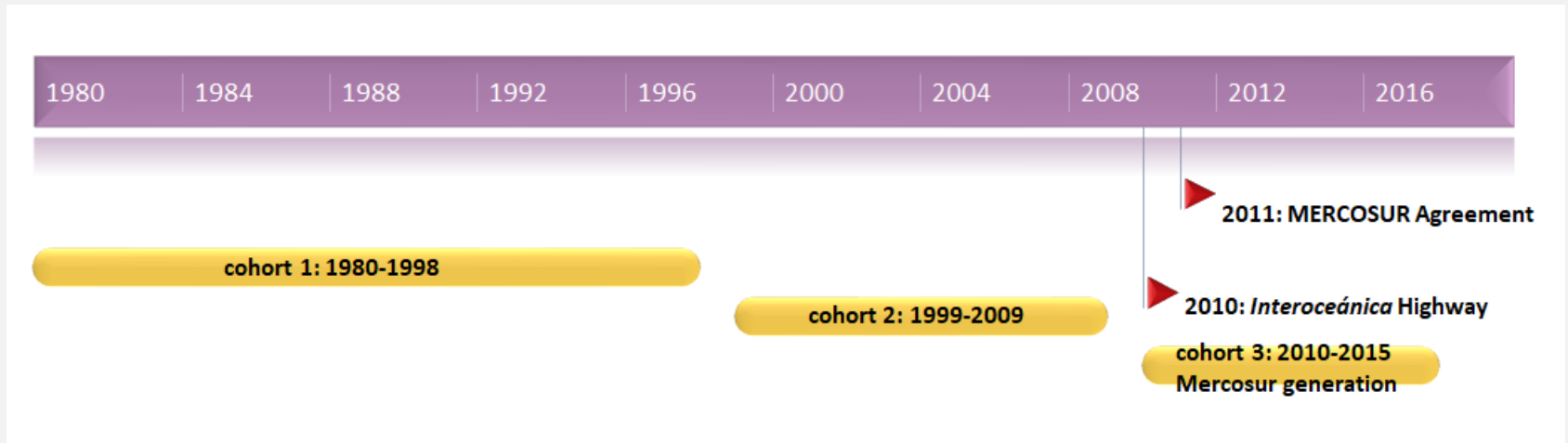
1/ Contextualizing Peruvian migration to Sao Paulo

- 10% of Peruvian households have at least one international migrant
- Peruvian emigration increased despite sustained economic growth during the past decade (OIM, 2012)
- Since 1990, Peruvian emigration is a multi-class and multi-ethnic phenomenon (Berg, 2015; Paerregaard, 2013)



2/ Situating the research

- Three migration cohorts of Peruvian migrants in Sao Paulo, three migrant types



The cross-border migrant entrepreneur



The proletarian of the handcraft workshop



The street vendor self-entrepreneur

3/ Methods and data

- Fieldwork: 11-month ethnography in Sao Paulo (Brazil) and Cuzco (Peru) between 2014 and 2016
- Biographical in-depth interviews and informal conversations with 64 migrants (44 men and 20 women)
 - Life stories were collected, transcribed and analyzed
- Quantitative data: 2010 Brazilian Census microdata

4/ General trends of Peruvian migrants in Sao Paulo

- **Sao Paulo:** Key location in the [South-South migration system in South America](#). Destination of cross-border, intra-regional, and transcontinental migration flows.
- One of the most significant intra-regional flows to Sao Paulo: between 1991 and 2000, Peruvian migration growth by 71% (Souchaud, 2010)
- A male and young migration
- A group with [significantly higher levels of education](#) compared to the rest of the population (including Brazilians and other foreigners):
 - 29% completed secondary education (only 11% in the rest of the population)
 - 38% pursued their education after secondary school (without completing it) (IBGE Census Data, 2010)
- Top 3 occupations: street vendors (15%), shopkeepers (12%), textile/garment workers (10%) (IBGE Census Data, 2010)



5/
**The « Mercosur »
generation
(2010-2016)**

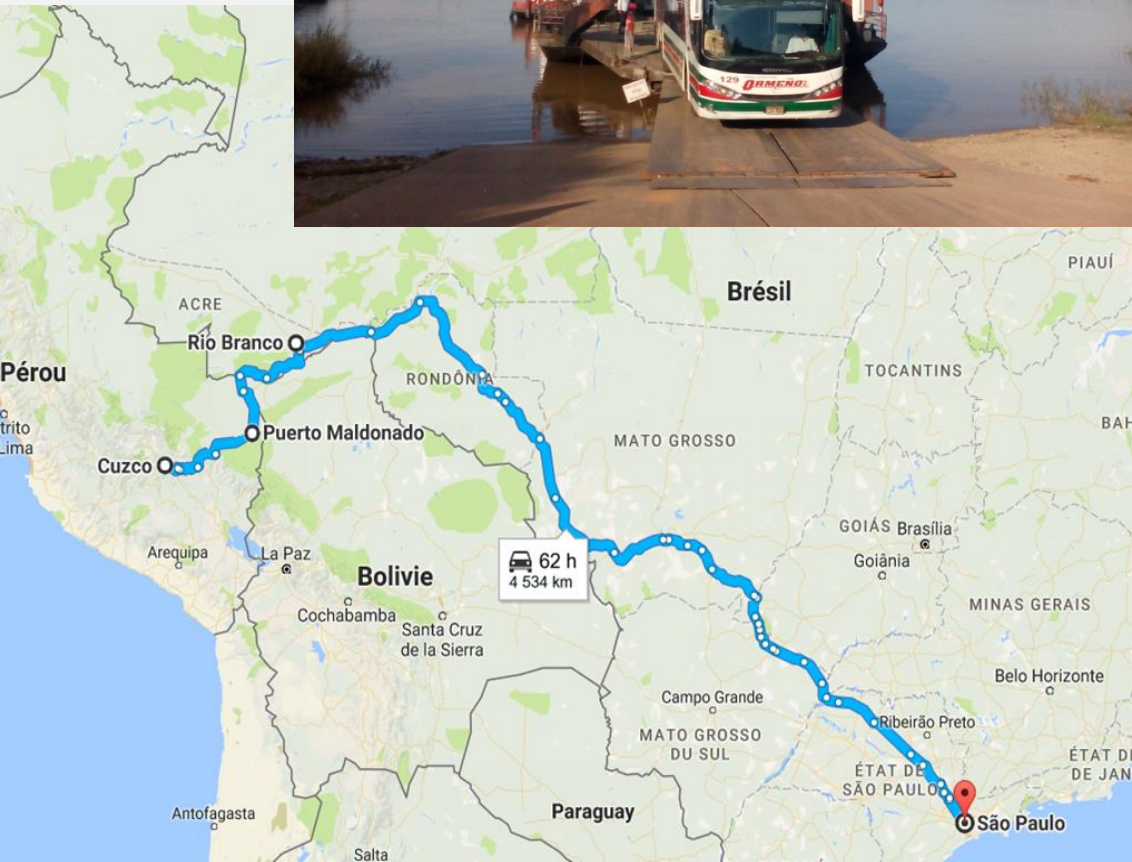
(5.1) Dispositions to mobility

- Migrants belong to the Peruvian “informal proletariat” (Portes and Hoffman, 2003): young people between 19 and 25 years of age, sons and daughters of farmers, traders or manual workers
- Migrants from urban and rural backgrounds, with internal or international migration previous experiences
- Migrants from Andean and mestizo ethno-racial backgrounds
- Migration increasingly appears as a project of (upward) social mobility competing with education, which no longer produces the expected results.
 - Pre-migration jobs were characterized by low pay, instability, lack of social protection and excessive working hours.
 - In Peru, 7 out of 10 young workers have a job of poor or very poor quality (MTPE, 2017)

(5.1) Dispositions to mobility

- Migration as the (only) opportunity to maintain the socio-economic positions attained by their parents
- International migration has become established in the national imagination as a plausible alternative, **gradually replacing internal migration** (Anderson 2012).
- For these Peruvians, migration makes it possible to work, accumulate, and “have something”: “To have something” is also “being someone”

(5.2) The mobility pattern



- 2010: The opening of *Interoceánica* Highway, connecting Brazil's Eastern cities to Amazonian and Andean Peruvian cities (5-day journey by bus)
- Changes in Brazilian migration policy and Peru's entering Mercosur Residency Agreement in 2011. Peruvian migrants can easily obtain a regular residency status
- **Precarious migrations:** short-term mobilities create a **liminal status** and a **permanent prospecting** for new destinations.
 - « *Les errants* »: the wanderers (Tarrius, 2015)



Feirinha da madrugada, Brás



Sao Paulo's downtown

(5.3) « Mercosur generation »: Pathways of incorporation

- **Peruvian youth « making do »** as street vendors of garment and handcrafts or garment workers
- **A rejection of wage labor?**
 - In urban Peruvian popular classes, informality and self-entrepreneurship **break the logic of patron-client** that has historically structured social relations in a country where social hierarchies are typical of an oligarchic society (Martuccelli, 2017)
 - « Free » availability of time (but workdays from 2a.m. to 6p.m.)
 - To be autonomous and self-employed is perceived as being master of one's own projects
- **Surviving through informality:** navigating between logics of subsistence and accumulation, and in the « **hustle economy** » (Thieme, 2017)
- **The entrepreneurship repertoire:** the neoliberal framework enhances the image of an individual "responsible for his fate and who must take his destiny into his own hands"

6/ The mobile Peruvian working-class youth: from workers to self-entrepreneurs?

- A *precariat* outside wage labor?
- A social class looking for « social and cultural aspirations » (Berg, 2015)
- A social class that incorporates the *injunction to mobility*
- The effects of *neoliberal subjectivity*: migration projects become more individual and based on romanticized self-exploitation

6/ The mobile Peruvian working-class youth: from workers to self-entrepreneurs?

- To what extent can we identify **upward social mobility processes**?
 - Perceptions of social mobility are grounded in social context (Van den Berg, 2011):
 - Precarious work conditions (i.e., informality, flexibility, uncertainty), may also facilitate migrants' incorporation into the labor market and the achievement of their migration goals. They constitute spaces of upward social mobility for migrants who, otherwise, should have very little chance to stay because of their migratory status and lack of knowledge of the labor market and language.
- However, most trajectories seem permanently embedded in precarity, specially for women



References:

Anderson, Jeanine. 2012. *La Migración Femenina Peruana En Las Cadenas Globales de Cuidados En Chile y España: Transferencia de Cuidados y Desigualdades de Género*. Lima: ONU Mujeres.

van den Berg, Marguerite. 2011. "Subjective Social Mobility: Definitions and Expectations of 'Moving up' of Poor Moroccan Women in the Netherlands." *International Sociology* 26(4):503–23.

Berg, Ulla. 2015. *Mobile Selves: Race, Migration, and Belonging in Peru and the U.S.* New York: New York University Press.

Martuccelli, Danilo. 2017. *Lima y sus arenas: Poderes sociales y jerarquías culturales*. Lima: Cauces Editores.

Ministerio del Trabajo y Promoción del Empleo. 2017. *Informe Anual Del Empleo Juvenil En El Perú 2016*. Lima: Perú: MTPE.

IOM. 2012. *Perfil Migratorio Del Perú*. Lima: IOM.

Paerregaard, Karsten. 2013. *Peruanos en el mundo: Una etnografía global de la migración*. Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú.

Portes, Alejandro, and Kelly Hoffman. 2003. *Las estructuras de clase en América Latina: composición y cambios durante le época neoliberal*. Santiago de Chile: Naciones Unidas, CEPAL, Div. de Desarrollo Social.

Souchaud, Sylvain. 2010. "A Imigração Boliviana Em São Paulo." Pp. 267–90 in *A Experiência Migrante. Entre Deslocamentos e Reconstruções*, edited by A.-P. Ferreira, C. Vainer, H. Póvoa Neto, and M. de O. Santos. Rio de Janeiro: Garamond.

Tarrus, Alain. 2015. *Etrangers de passage: Poor to poor, peer to peer*. Éditions de l'Aube.

Thieme, Tatiana Adeline. 2017. "The Hustle Economy: Informality, Uncertainty and the Geographies of Getting By." *Progress in Human Geography*.