

## Regulating mobility in the Peruvian Andes: road safety, social hierarchies and governmentality in Cusco's rural provinces

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Regulating Mobility in the Peruvian Andes:

Road safety, social hierarchies and governmentality in Cusco's rural provinces

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Significant developments in road safety regulation have taken place in Peru during recent years, reflecting international efforts to reduce worldwide fatalities and injuries. A series of measures has sought to bring about transformations in governmentality among passengers on public transport. Seen ethnographically, these have had uneven success on the ground. In rural provinces of Cusco, situated histories and sociologies of mobility have sometimes led to ambivalence, unobtrusive resistance, or reinforcement of discriminatory attitudes. This article explores how reception of the regulations has been refracted through class, ethnic and geographical divisions within Peruvian society, and argues for both the applied and theoretical utility of anthropological study of road safety governance.

**KEYWORDS** roads, Peru, governmentality, transport, hierarchy

This article explores the effects that a series of regulatory measures to improve road safety has had in recent years in a rural area of the Peruvian Andes. The promulgation of these measures by the Peruvian state was prompted by the renewed emphasis that international organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations (UN) and World Bank now place on road safety<sup>1</sup>, and is linked to similar resolutions passed concurrently in other Latin American countries<sup>2</sup>. Despite their international antecedents, however, in practice such policies must inevitably reckon with situated sociologies and histories, specific to the local context on which they impact. As a result, the widespread discourses of modernity, development, and – more recently – social equity that impelled these changes often jar uncomfortably with their effects on the ground. By presenting the local history of mobility and contemporary ethnographic data, I illustrate how such discrepancies have complex effects on road safety in the Andes. There, ‘immobility’ is a quality with distinct ethnic and class connotations. Consequently, regulatory measures –

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driven by laudable aims of reduction in injuries and fatalities – act subtly to reinforce inequitable distinctions between rural and urban populations.

These regulations envisage passengers participating in the active monitoring not only of their own risks, safety behaviour and infractions, but of those run by the transport operators also. Informed by liberal assumptions of autonomous citizenship and the freedom to judiciously minimise risk, this outlook ignores the constraints placed on rural Andeans' exercise of full choice and the reasons why mobility may at times seem to be as prized as safety. Effacement of these considerations obscures the factors leading rural residents to continue taking risks with their health and lives. Recent ethnographic accounts have shown the potential that close examination of routine travel by public transport holds as a means of revealing the interplay between power, habitus, identity and social hierarchies (Elyachar 2011; Ghannam 2011; Yazıcı 2013); this study follows their lead in this respect, but builds on it by examining the links with safety regulation and governmentality. The theme of road safety measures here becomes a way to explore questions of space, governmentality, ethno-class identity and discrimination.

I do so by first describing the significance of roads as markers and 'enablers' of participation in the modern Peruvian nation, and go on to explore the implications for practical citizenship of those whose mobility has been curtailed by historical power relations. Against this background, the safety measures passed in recent years have been only partially successful, as examples of their subversion by rural passengers show. I point to the embodiment of social hierarchies in the routine arrangements of passenger transport and show why expectations that passengers themselves will enforce safety standards have been disappointed. Finally, I suggest that the implementation of road safety both reflects and reinforces established

discriminatory attitudes in the Andes, making it a contributing factor in the construction and reconstruction of rural-urban distinctions.

### **Roads, Sovereignty and Citizenship in Peru**

Roads themselves have long held enormous appeal in Peru both for the state and for the general population, particularly those sectors, such as the highland peasant communities, that in many respects feel themselves to be only tentatively integrated with the wider national culture and economy (Harvey and Knox 2008). From this perspective, roads act as conduits for modernity – viewed as progress, civilisation and affluence – and as the capillaries through which national sovereignty pulses to the constituent regions of the country (Harvey 2001; Kernaghan 2013:503; Nugent 1997:189-195; Cohn 2012:95; Wilson 2004). Acquiring connectivity through the establishment of road linkages not only holds out the possibility of improved mobility and access to wider markets, but by eroding the material constraints of isolation it is expected to have knock-on emancipatory effects on local subjectivities<sup>3</sup>. Such a view is deeply rooted in Peru's modern history, from the discourses that impelled the national road-building projects of the Leguía (1919-1930) and Belaúnde (1964-1968) governments, to the massive roads programme of Alan García's second presidential term (2006-2011). The provision of roads has therefore long eclipsed road safety in the concerns of the state, and it is only since the turn of the century that the latter has moved up the agenda significantly. The human and economic toll of road accidents was previously seen as a regrettable but inevitable incidental side-effect of infrastructural development. From a focus on the government of territory – encapsulated in the potential of road-building to subjugate unruly Andean and Amazonian terrain to state access and control – a partial shift has now occurred toward the government of population, as the mode of power exercised by the state comes to incorporate consideration of the health and mobility of its citizens. There is now a legitimate expectation

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that the well-being of the population should be promoted through a governmentality that monitors, regulates and intervenes in the details of everyday life (Foucault 2007), including travel.

Peruvian road safety initiatives can thus be seen as ‘apparatuses of security’ (ibid:11) that aim to manage both territory and population. ‘Territory’ remains significant within the policy framework, reflecting its continued importance to the state’s political claims of sovereignty. This is apparent in the invocation of the Peruvian constitution as the legal foundation for the legitimacy of these measures: Article 2 guarantees citizens the right to free movement across the national territory and is often cited to hold government to account for its implementation of the safety regulations, on the grounds that such a right is meaningless in practice without safer public transport (Defensoría del Pueblo 2006:11).

This constitutional guarantee makes two sovereign claims: first, it confers a universal and undifferentiated right on the population by virtue of holding citizenship, and secondly it classifies the whole of the national territory as its legitimate domain, a homogeneous space through which the Peruvian citizen can move at will. Yet the ‘watertight national entity’ (Ong 2006:78) envisaged here, within which the state’s enabling and protective power evenly permeates both national space and national persons, is challenged by a number of factors that mediate individuals’ and communities’ experience of national citizenship. These stem partly from the historical weakness of the Peruvian state (at its most acute in the 1980s, when armed insurrection and economic meltdown brought about a crisis of legitimacy), and partly from the sedimentation of colonial and republican categories of race and person. Whites and mestizos were overwhelmingly associated with cities, while indigenous ‘indians’ were closely identified with the countryside and with backwardness (Goldstein 2004:12), and hence not

fully part of the modern nation (Canessa 2012). Such modes of differentiated citizenship, defined by geographical location, resulted in forms of ‘graduated sovereignty’ (Ong 2006:75) that are best described as ‘concentric.’ Goodale, writing of Bolivian society, characterises this understanding of power as one where its

distribution is concentrated in cores – defined in terms of location (city versus countryside), ethnicity (mestizo versus indigenous, “white” versus mestizo), mode of production (urban office worker versus campesino [Sp. peasant])<sup>4</sup>, and so on – and then radiates and weakens, as it spreads outward. (2009:74)<sup>5</sup>

Andean Peru shares with Bolivia this understanding of differentiated gradations of power and by extension citizenship, privileging mestizo and urban-dwelling populations over their counterparts. From this perspective, space, ethnic identity and occupation overlap significantly as features of the social hierarchy (see Goldstein 2004:8-13). Often they come to be considered virtual equivalents, with mestizo identity defined by location in, or at least access to, urban areas and associated employment and educational opportunities. Indigeneity, on the other hand, with its connotations of poverty, is reserved largely for those rural inhabitants living with close constraints on their mobility and traditionally dependent on mestizo intermediaries to broker their trade and administrative dealings with wider Peruvian society (Harvey 2001; Wilson 2004:540). It is against this background that improved road links rank so high for rural communities among the demands they seek to make of the state.

### **Fieldsite and Method**

My fieldwork took place in the city of Cusco and on the roads connecting it with its rural hinterland. I initially became interested in the topic of road safety regulation in the course of

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a study of health problems among peasant communities. The difficulty of accessing suitable transport to reach medical facilities in the city, and the risks and devastating consequences of road accidents, featured as significant concerns for the families with whom I worked. While that study was underway, the regulations described here were introduced and it became clear that the effects merited investigation in their own right. Much of the fieldwork from which this article is drawn took place over 18 months in 2007-8, and during a shorter visit to the area at the end of 2010. Earlier experiences of rural transport during visits in both 2004 and 2006 gave me a perspective on the situation before the regulations had been introduced.

The core element of fieldwork was regular travel as a passenger along the main routes and more remote minor roads of Cusco and its provinces, allowing for participant observation of how the laws were put into practice or breached. Most often, I travelled by passenger bus (when travelling to and from Cusco) or hitching a ride on trucks (when travelling between villages). This article draws upon ethnographic observations made during these journeys. In order to balance my situated perspective on these journeys with the experiences of others, I undertook semi-structured interviews with 17 users of public transport who lived in rural areas<sup>6</sup>, a multitude of casual conversations with other passengers in which regulation and safety were discussed, and the perusal of relevant local press reports. Taken as a whole, this revealed a more complex picture than is to be found in the official state reports on Peruvian road safety.

The road system along which we travelled reflects Cusco's historical legacy of relative economic decline between Peruvian independence and the later years of the twentieth century. Road-building in the region frequently did not keep pace with what economic growth did occur, and much of it focused on accessing resources from jungle areas rather



than on connecting highland settlements. While today the departamento of Cusco<sup>7</sup> has a greater total length of paved national roads than any other in Peru with the exception of Lima<sup>8</sup>, the total length of its unpaved regional and local roads remains over 85 times that of its paved ones (Ministerio de Transporte y Comunicaciones 2012). In the light of the associations that roads in Peru have with modernity, affluence and civilisation, its historically limited road infrastructure was one of the elements that used to forcefully mark Cusco out as emblematic of the poorest and most indigenous of Peru's departamentos. Now such contemporary contrasts in road surfacing, size and maintenance continue to demarcate internal hierarchies within Cusco's disparate territories and populations.

In keeping with the 'concentric' model of power and resource distribution outlined earlier, rural and indigenous highland communities tend to be a low priority for road infrastructure. With low population density and a local economy largely based on farming maize, barley and potatoes and rearing livestock, these localities are relatively marginal to the needs of capital. Unless mining takes place in the area – in which case vastly improved roads are often constructed – little seems to justify either state or private investment in road improvement, and even the most affordable precautions, such as roadside safety barriers, are lacking.

However, poverty and poor roads are not the only factors contributing to the link between indigeneity and immobility. Socio-political barriers also constantly threatened the freedom of movement of the indigenous rural populace. For example, an abortive attempt was made by the Odría government (1948-1956) to reinstate the requirement – previously abolished in 1851 – for 'Indians' to hold internal passports in order to be allowed to travel within the country (Davies 1970:28). Though this measure never became law, local realities were still hugely restrictive: popular memory among informants in my main provincial field-site still

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recounts how, before the Agrarian Reform of 1969 diminished mestizo control, mestizo land-owners forbade their indigenous tenants from entering the town itself unless sent for, much less from travelling further afield. Then in the 1980s and 1990s, ubiquitous military checkpoints posed a constant threat to indigenous travellers in particular, who came under constant suspicion of involvement with the Maoist insurgency that was convulsing the country (Poole 2004:35-36). Hence it was neither by chance nor as a result of poverty and remoteness that indigeneity came to be so closely linked with immobility, but as the result of deliberate local and national political strategies.

Francisco, now in his late sixties, was able to give a long-term perspective on mobility and transport in the area of Paucartambo. He spoke of how the hacienda system had restricted the freedoms of the majority of campesinos: ‘We worked like dogs, so they could educate their children. We couldn’t even come to the town [Paucartambo] without permission. They didn’t want us to see other places and learn.’ Following the 1969 Agrarian Reform and redistribution of lands, things had improved, but, ‘They still came from Cusco to tell us how to farm, they bought our barley to take away. That’s how it was. They only paid us a little, because they had the trucks to transport our produce. Them, the mistis [mestizos]. We didn’t know another way – we had to accept.’ Indeed, in this period the peasant communities were heavily dependent on, and hence exploited by, middle-men in selling and transporting their crops (Seligmann 1995:48-50). Things had since improved: ‘Now we campesinos go to Cusco, we talk about prices there. They wanted us to remain poor indians. Now my grandchildren work in Cusco. [...] Now when my health is bad, I see the doctor in Cusco. Before, it wasn’t like that.’

Compared with the economically disastrous years of the eighties and early nineties, when both the supply of transport and the enforcement of regulation were minimal, rural transport in Cusco had indeed improved. My informants mentioned a number of contributing factors, including the end of hyper-inflation and conflict in the 1990s, and greater political will: ‘They don’t forget about us [in the countryside] like before.’ One town-dwelling businessman mentioned the lifting of restrictions on the importation of used vehicles, allowing entrepreneurs to boost considerably the number of minibuses in Peru (although many of these third- or fourth-hand transports were ageing and dangerous (Guerrero 1998), a factor in the safety risks now so widely decried). Demetrio, who travelled to Cusco regularly on business for the campesino co-operative of which he was a member, commented that ‘It is better now. Before, maybe the driver was drunk and maybe he wasn’t – we travelled anyway! There was no choice. It still happens now, but we can get off, there are other vehicles.’ He and others in Paucartambo province were delighted that the road to Cusco was being asphalted in 2010: ‘Without the road, we can’t progress.’

In Paucartambo, Canas and other provinces, interprovincial buses – previously few in number and sometimes irregular – increased in frequency during the first years of this century. Though licences are granted by local government, such transport has always been a matter for private provision, usually by small private firms (often owned by the descendants of the former hacienda owners, who had both the capital and the local connections to invest in such an enterprise). More recently, in villages nearer the city, better-off campesinos have sometimes been able to acquire vehicles and run a local minibus service. Further from urban centres, most rural transport still means hitching a lift on any available cargo trucks transporting market goods to the villages (Figure 1), with passengers often stowing themselves among agricultural produce, goods or even livestock. Prior to the increase in bus

services, this form of travel predominated even on journeys to provincial capitals, as attested by numerous anthropologists' accounts of how they first arrived at their field-sites. It is also occasionally possible to journey pillion on one of a burgeoning number of motorcycles – fruit of a free trade agreement with China that brought down prices and made them affordable for a small number of campesinos – or in the 4x4s belonging to the municipal government, NGOs or the local churchmen, though increased enforcement of insurance and safety laws have made many reluctant to offer lifts. Overall there has been a significant increase in the availability of passenger transport, although the growing tendency for drivers to refuse to pick up passengers indicates that this is to some extent tempered by regulatory measures.

Thus, though still disadvantaged by comparison with the general population (Thorp and Paredes 2010), today Quechua-speaking campesinos face fewer obstacles to mobility and progress than in the past. The constitution upholds their right to travel freely just as it does that of other Peruvians, and their increased integration into state structures means that they must now do so more often, for health visits to specialists, educational purposes, temporary work, administrative and legal errands, visits to relatives now living in the city, and to sell their produce and buy goods. But memory of historical restrictions remains. This legacy is one reason why the *bloqueo* ('road-block') is accorded such significance locally as the dominant form of organised popular protest. The *bloqueo* – long used by peasant and urban unions alike to call attention to abuses on the part of private or state entities or for fairer distribution of resources (including expenditure on transport infrastructure) – physically prevents any vehicular travel on the roads for a specified time. Besides its obvious effects on the economy and everyday activities, the significance of the *bloqueo* is that it enables campesinos to stage a reversal of the normal order of sovereignty and assert their own control over travel through the national territory. The power of this action can be read as an

affirmation of their ability to impose temporarily on the wider population the kind of immobility that has been so closely linked to their own marginalisation, making it a powerful ‘spectacle for the state’ (Goldstein 2004) with both practical and symbolic dimensions.

Though campesinos greatly value the improved mobility now open to them, they are also conscious of its dangers. Over the last decade some of the principal rural roads have been asphalted, which has helped to reduce the risks posed by the terrain; nevertheless, hairpin bends, the danger of landslides, and sheer precipices which rarely feature safety barriers (Figure 2, Figure 3) all mean that accidents are a constant possibility. It is sometimes said in Cusco that fatal accidents are the result of the sentient earth taking human sacrifice in exchange for permitting – or in retribution for – the construction and maintenance of a road (see Knox and Harvey 2011:153), a suggestion that conveys the unpredictability of the terrain and the sense of menace that it invokes.

### **Road Safety Interventions, Social Equity and Active Passengers**

To address growing concern about the rate of accident-related injuries and deaths, between 2006 and 2011 a number of road safety initiatives were launched in Peru (Huicho et al. 2012:4). Perhaps the most prominent and widely discussed was Decreto Supremo 035-2006-MTC, which came into force on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2006 and is commonly referred to as Operación Tolerancia Cero (‘Operation Zero Tolerance’, hereafter OZT). Rather than laying down additional elements to the highway code, the focus of this legislation was to codify a new regime of surveillance on the roads: notably, it set out the powers of the police to inspect vehicles (articles 2, 3), and announced that a declaration by a minimum of four passengers would now be sufficient grounds to launch legal proceedings against transport firms for breach of safety regulations (article 8). As well as putting greater onus on law enforcement

officials to be diligent, therefore, the measures aimed to encourage the emergence of what might be thought of as ‘active passengers’: citizens inclined to take responsibility for monitoring and acting on how satisfactorily the transport firms they use observed fundamental safety requirements.<sup>9</sup> The hope was that passengers and transport police would work together to inculcate a new regime of safety for interprovincial travel. In practice, as the legislation first came into effect, passengers more commonly reacted with anger, as buses were sent back to the point of departure on failing checkpoint inspections and their travel plans were thus disrupted (Diario del Cusco 2006a, b). However, OZT has now become a familiar and largely uncontroversial part of the public transport landscape.

Although the Ministry of Transport and Communications has proclaimed OZT’s successes (Ministerio de Transportes y Comunicaciones 2011:7-8), there have also been criticisms that it has not fully achieved its aims (Huicho et al. 2012; Sagasteguí 2010). Of these, what interests me most here is the argument that it has not persuaded passengers to take as active a role in raising safety abuses as was hoped. Not long before OZT was launched, Peru’s Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office lamented that too few citizens were coming forward to lodge complaints against the transport companies putting their lives at risk, an omission that it attributed to the state’s neglect in not actively promoting their involvement in monitoring offences (Defensoría del Pueblo 2006:60-61). Participation and the exercise of citizens’ rights emerged as the key problems in this reading; the proposed solution was an intensified effort of governmentality, one that would conduct passengers in the direction of an internalised safety imperative.

Ethnographic, interview and evaluation data suggest that such an undertaking has at best been only partially successful. Although passengers have sometimes taken advantage of the

opportunity to denounce corner-cutting and abuses by transport firms, they have more often turned a blind eye to safety violations. On inter-departmental routes, GPS monitoring has now been introduced, in the hope that it will prove more effective than passenger report (Ministerio de Transportes y Comunicaciones 2011). Given that the Peruvian and international literature constantly reiterates that the disproportionate health impact on the poor of traffic accidents makes road safety fundamentally an issue of social equity (Peden et al. 2004:10; Defensoría del Pueblo 2006:3), it is of note that travellers in more deprived areas seem unlikely to report infractions. The rhetoric centring on citizen empowerment and social equity has clearly not translated effectively into practice, for all that reduced accident rates, greater conscientiousness on the part of drivers and transport owners, and a more meticulous inspection regime are all acknowledged as highly desirable by much of the population.

### **Regulation and Resistance on the Roads**

The extent of the challenges faced in the operation of OZT are illustrated by a curious ritual that regularly took place on the inter-provincial bus journey from the small rural town of Paucartambo to the regional urban centre of Cusco, during my fieldwork in 2007, 2008 and 2010. Although the bus, in accordance with the law, carried only seated passengers when it set out, by the time it reached the outskirts of Cusco it had invariably picked up so many standing passengers from the peasant communities en route that they packed the aisle, occupying nearly all available space. It is forbidden to carry non-seated travellers in this way on pain of a fine, but a few minutes before arriving at the principal police checkpoint on the southern approach to the city, word from the driver passed back through the bus: ‘Sit down. Sit down.’ Those cluttering the aisle would sit on the floor, duck down or squat, so that they were no longer visible from outside, and remain in this position until the checkpoint had been passed. The deep familiarity of this routine could be seen in how rarely anyone would

hesitate or need the process explained. It is hard to believe that the authorities were entirely taken in by this practice, since it occurred on a daily basis and had done for a number of years; it was even condemned publicly in the local newspaper for its blatant defiance of road safety regulations and for putting lives at risk in order to maximise the number of fare-paying passengers (Diario del Cusco 2006c). If the bus had been boarded even a few times in this period it would soon have become clear what was happening, but on every occasion I passed the checkpoint on this route officials were content to check the drivers' papers outside the vehicle. In contrast, buses arriving at the same control point from the southern department of Puno, or from Bolivia or Brazil, were usually boarded, indicating that inspections were not so cursory when questions of smuggling, rather than road safety, arose.

This instance of non-compliance is striking for the degree of collective participation and the almost pantomime quality with which passengers play out the performance of concealment. However, it is not otherwise exceptional, as an episode on a bus journey to another of Cusco's rural satellite towns indicates. The bus set off shortly before noon from outside one of Cusco's larger markets, crammed mostly with peasant women of a range of ages who had come either to sell or to buy, and the children accompanying some of them. It had not gone far beyond the main streets before it was stopped by a police check. The officer objected to the number of passengers and insisted that some would have to disembark before he would allow us to proceed on our way. The passengers objected vociferously: there would be no other scheduled bus for the rest of the day; how were they supposed to return to their communities; were mothers just to be left on the street with their young children; what about the more elderly travellers? The policeman initially appeared implacable, and from my vantage point towards the rear of the bus I heard surreptitious murmurs flowing among the passengers:



We'll get down. Tell the driver to wait for us 200 metres further on. We'll be able to get back on there.

Three of those who had proposed this plan had already stepped down from the bus, when the policeman abruptly relented. Telling them that they could get back on, he waved to the driver that we could continue on our way. Whether he had been bribed (unlikely, since a short walk around the checkpoint seemed to be all that was at stake) or won over by the women's protests, OZT once again proved toothless in the face of passenger resistance.

In both these examples, generalised collusion enabled surplus peasant bodies to travel in defiance of the state's regulations. The hoped-for enlistment of active passengers in the enforcement of safety standards had not materialised; in its place, something resembling a collective sense of resistance to the safety legislation developed. The measures have had an undeniable impact at the level of individual drivers: while previously, for a small fee, car or truck owners would commonly find ways to squeeze those needing to travel into their vehicles in some way, whether in the trunk or on other passengers' laps, now – conscious of the potential sanctions or insurance liabilities – they are somewhat less likely to offer to transport casual passengers. This shift has reduced overcrowding and doubtless contributed to passenger safety, but it has also increased the difficulty of obtaining affordable transportation in rural areas. The narrowing of other transport options encourages campesinos to collaborate in finding indirect ways to defy OZT's edicts, attenuating its effectiveness and accounting for much of the reluctance to take on the role of 'active passengers.'

In a social setting as deeply traversed by ethnic and class divisions as Andean society, such responses inevitably reinforce common perceptions that classify passengers into different groups. While residents of Cusco or of the small provincial capitals are able to book their passage on inter-provincial transport ahead of time, thus ensuring themselves a seat, campesinos – most of whose communities are situated within intermediate space along the routes – must hope that vehicles will stop when passing their dwellings and content themselves with a standing position in the aisle on journeys which may last several hours, if they are to travel at all. The habitus of public transport in rural areas is one where humbly dressed farming men, or peasant women in their characteristically voluminous skirts, stand crowded against each other in the space between rows of seats where town-dwellers sit more comfortably, revealing an urban-rural split in residential capital that is characteristic of the Andes.<sup>10</sup> It contrasts strikingly with the other common means of transport used in the countryside: piling into the back of a truck where everyone – save for two or three willing to pay extra to ride in the cabin – must make their own space, uncomfortable as it may be, on an equal basis amidst the cargo. Yet being positioned uncomfortably in the aisle is still preferable to being left stranded by the side of the road, an experience which OZT's restrictions on overcrowding has made more common for rural families. Through such processes, the concentric modes of power described by Goodale (2009) come to form part of embodied experience.

Campesinos with whom I spoke were conscious of the riskiness of public transport in their area. Most had tales of accidents in which they, or their relatives or friends, had been involved. While a number of causes could be adduced for these mishaps, drivers were overwhelmingly the targets of campesinos' attributions of blame. Although they were aware of other risk factors, such as poor road maintenance, overloading, or the often old and unsafe

vehicles used, they reasoned that these affected most trips alike. Since relatively few resulted in crashes, it seemed to follow that careless or inexperienced drivers were the decisive influence that made the difference. This was clearly expressed in the following statements:

It's like the drivers still have their learner's jackets.

When the drivers don't know the road, they try to pass too quickly [i.e., without exercising caution on blind curves and narrow stretches of road]. Too many drivers here are too young – they haven't learned. They should be herding sheep, not driving buses!

They go really fast on the road to Cusco. It's like they want to win a race ... Better to get there alive and an hour later.

This analysis is doubtless accurate in many respects, but it is also significant how thoroughly it diverts attention from practices such as overcrowding that might implicate these passengers alongside their drivers. OZT's measures regarding vehicle inspections did little to identify transgressions by drivers such as speeding during their journeys; instead, it relied on passenger declarations to act as a deterrent. The observations described above of passenger collusion in other aspects of safety infractions suggest that such declarations are rarely made, and indeed, although my interviewees complained of the risks run by drivers, they generally dismissed the possibility of volunteering an official statement. 'If I did that, then how would I travel?' was one characteristic response. 'Nearly all the drivers here are the same.' Other campesinos worried that they might be barred from travelling on the buses if they were to inform in this way.

This partly explains why everyone I interviewed expected OZT to make little difference to safety standards. Direct criticism of the measures was extremely rare, although some did mention the inconvenience caused by the restrictions on taking extra passengers in cars or trucks<sup>11</sup> and the consequent reduction in transport capacity. Also highlighted by some were the effects on travelling with goods. For example, Susana, a thirty-something campesina who regularly made the hour-long bus journey from her village to one of Cusco's suburban markets to sell her produce and to bring back processed foods to sell on, confirmed that the rules on maximum numbers of passengers were regularly circumvented in her experience. However, she had had disagreements with drivers on the quantity of goods she was now allowed to take with her:

Before 'Zero Tolerance,' they let me take what I wanted. And it was OK, it's not as if we crashed every time! Now they just let me take a little – because of the laws, they say. But the drivers themselves are taking all they can carry! Between the drivers and the police, we just earn a little now from trading...

Apart from effects such as these, OZT was viewed in the rural provinces as well-meaning but unlikely to have much impact on the risks of the road. As well as the limits of surveillance capabilities, interviewees questioned the commitment of the authorities to implementing the measures, echoing the suspicions expressed in a local newspaper editorial shortly after Tolerancia Cero was first launched:

Sirs, if you are not going to apply the measures announced, you would do better not to implement any ‘tolerance’ that doesn’t convince anybody. (Diario del Cusco 2006d:18)

It was commonly suggested that the owners of the transport firms paid bribes to the police to ensure that inspections were not rigorously carried out. While in urban Cusco a wish for more ‘zero tolerance’ – indeed, “‘minus one’ tolerance’ – was often expressed, resigned cynicism seemed to dominate in rural areas. A few travellers half-heartedly suggested that requiring better training and higher standards before granting driving licences would be the most effective measure the authorities could take, but resignation to the risks mostly predominated.

The interview data thus did little to affirm hopes that passengers would take it upon themselves to voice their concerns over transport safety. These travellers questioned whether OZT would be enforced in their provinces and, to a lesser extent, the effects that reduction in transport capacity might have on their mobility. They were themselves regularly implicated in defiance of OZT’s edicts with regard to maximum numbers carried. A key consideration in this was the added expense that they might incur by respecting the official limits. In explaining why they chose to travel in such crowded conditions, campesinos pointed out that, in the absence of a way to book seats from their home villages, they would need to make an additional journey to ensure that they could occupy a seat from the bus’s point of departure, rather than trusting that they would be able to crowd into the aisle when the bus passed near to their homes. This would cost them time and money. Additionally, the fare for travelling the full route is often higher than for travelling only a part of it, meaning that passengers who live along the road prefer to get on at an intermediate point. They were also very aware of the strong possibility that abiding by lower passenger numbers would lead transport firms to raise

fares. The sums of money at stake are not large, but for some campesino families they represented a significant outlay. Relative poverty hence figured in their accounts as an important obstacle to peasant mobility.

That limited income and lack of transport options restrict the ability of rural travellers to play the role expected of them as ‘active passengers’ comes as little surprise, though it was apparently not considered significant in the planning and implementation of OZT. Middle-class sections of Peruvian society, for whom the term ‘campesino’ is generally seen as synonymous with poverty, are aware of the constraints on how the inhabitants of rural areas can choose to travel. Often this occasions sympathy; at other times, however, responses are less positive, particularly when other passengers are directly affected by these conditions. I witnessed one tirade that makes this very clear when a seated passenger objected to the number of passengers squeezing into the bus:

[raising his voice to the driver] Let’s go! Let’s go! How many more people are going to get on? We don’t want to be crushed... [turning to the boarding passengers] What are you doing? Do you think there’s space for everyone? ... Are you sheep to be tied up and piled up together? Are you llamas? Don’t you know how to travel like civilised people?

Such unabashed public racism has become rarer in Peru over the last few years, but Margarita Huayhua (2013) records further examples of professionals treating fellow passengers from rural backgrounds with contempt, at least partly because of the conditions under which they travel. As in Turkey (Navaro-Yashin 2002:44-45) and Pakistan (Khan 2006), the habitus displayed by travellers is taken in Peru to reveal indices of the ‘modernity’ of a population.

When some travellers ‘squat in the aisle like peasants in the fields,’ as one teacher put it to me, it reinforces preconceptions that mark them out as less urbanised, less educated, less possessed of respectable norms of bodily space, and less ‘modern.’ The links between these qualities and ethnicity are so dominant in Cusco that these journeys by public transport become another among the many sites where ethno-class hierarchies are re-inscribed in the daily experience of passengers. Unlike the overall effects of urban traffic, which ‘overturns hierarchies of personhood’ through the effacement of personal identity, as class, gender, age-based or ethnic forms of deference evaporate in the face of who has right of way (Truitt 2008:14), inter-provincial transport around Cusco reinforces such hierarchies by positioning peasant passengers differently from others.

The same phenomenon was illustrated when in 2010, pedestrian behaviour became a new focus of road safety governance with the issue of Decreto Supremo No. 040-2010-MTC. This legislation set out a series of punishable pedestrian offences and the fines that these would henceforth incur. In Cusco’s largely colonial centre, however, narrow streets and neighbourhoods planned without motorised transportation in mind, coupled with a dramatic increase in urban population over recent decades, have resulted in a situation where jaywalking, or walking in the road, are common, and at times unavoidable. Fines were therefore frequently levied under the new measures, and in the central thoroughfare of the city, the Avenida del Sol, officials were decked out in the outfits of the region’s traditional dance groups (Figure 4, bottom right) and equipped with whips, which they used to strike the legs of offenders in admonition. Despite almost all having been fined at least once for transgressing these measures, my middle-class friends and acquaintances in Cusco were universally in favour of the restrictions. This was in some ways puzzling, since they freely admitted that they did not observe the regulations themselves and when pressed further,

accepted that it was often unrealistic to stick to them and that most people did not. But the most common spontaneous response was that the laws were necessary because campesinos who came to the city did not know how to cross roads correctly, and were hence a danger to themselves and to others. The very same people who made this accusation freely admitted that they themselves constantly disregarded the laws and there was little evidence to support the idea that campesinos arriving in the city were particularly reckless. What seems to underlie their approval, however, is the association they make between a more orderly citizenry, held in check by regulation of movement and traffic, and an aspired-to modernity which, through enforcement, they will over time become disposed to internalise (cf. Khan 2006:95). It is the rural, indigenous peasant population that immediately springs to mind as furthest from this desired ideal and hence in more need of the transformations it is expected to effect. The implied transition to modernity is even explicitly depicted on a poster outside the municipal offices, illustrating the stages of evolution of the ascent of man as intervals of crossing the road and acquiring increasing levels of pedestrian sophistication (Figure 4, upper right).

This popular interpretation , according to which the pedestrian restrictions are needed to govern the campesino population in particular, is revealing of how ethnic and class attributions operate in Cusco. Overcrowding of passenger buses likewise is constructed as a particular problem of the countryside and of indigenous areas. Even though cramped, overfull combis were the norm in urban Cusco too, by comparison dominant discourse and official attention tended readily to overlook the problem within the city environment. An important element of this is perhaps recognition of the greater risks posed by overloading on the precipitous, narrow and badly maintained switchback roads of the provinces, than in slow-moving city streets where emergency help would be closer at hand. Yet awareness of



the risks of rural travel is not matched by understanding of how severely restricted mobility in rural areas might become were the safety measures of recent years to be enforced as intended, nor of how reluctant villagers might be to accept such developments. Consequently, continuing violations of the regulations of the road are seen as a failure on the part of both transport providers and of passengers, or even – at the extreme – as a ‘refusal of road safety’ that reinforces prevailing prejudices about the irrationality of the campesino population. In this way, OZT acts both to highlight and produce the ‘unsuitability’ of campesinos as subjects of mobility. The reduction of travel safety to questions of governmentality hence distracts attention from questions of availability and provision – the systemic factors that shape the realities of rural transport to at least as great an extent as monitoring by passengers can hope to do.

## **Conclusion**

The materiality of roads and the role that they play in the construction of power and social hierarchies are themes that have been productively explored by anthropologists in recent years (e.g., Dalakoglou and Harvey 2012; Larkin 2013). Roads are ‘matter that enable[s] the movement of other matter’ (Larkin 2013:329); however, the extent and manner in which they do so is dependent on a host of other influences and connections – in the case of Cusco, these include international and national drivers of safety legislation; constitutional claims about sovereignty, territory and the right to free movement; embodied gradations of citizenship; routinised judgements of ethnicity, class and status; and economic, commercial and political decisions determining which vehicles are available in the provinces. These factors interact and are continually contested by the various actors implicated in the regulation of roads: the Ministry of Transport and Communications (MTC); the Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office; transport providers; passengers of a range of backgrounds and views; the media and regional

public opinion. Dominant narratives emerging from the MTC describe steady progress towards improved security, more effective regulation and the inculcation of a governmentality of safety, while others dispute the extent of this success but not the overall direction of travel. Nonetheless, this article has shown that other stories could be told – ones that draw attention to how regulation plays out in specific localities with specific histories, and that diverge from the liberal conception of passengers as individual citizens unencumbered by collective identities or unequal access to social resources.

The strategic drive behind OZT and related measures has sought to instil a form of governmentality that would alter the ‘risky’ habitus heretofore characteristic of public transport in Peru. The broad sweep of national safety statistics and accounts inevitably obscures some of the challenges to this approach. Context-bound obstacles, such as the associations of immobility with ethnicity or the collective resistance of crouching passengers, only become apparent within the crevices of national policy if exposed by locally-embedded ethnography. Yet they have important implications, revealing that passengers in provincial Cusco have not simply ‘failed’ to internalise the new governmentality, but rather have opted for a rejection rooted in history, practice and opportunity. Greater efforts to understand the lived experience of safety regulation in this way might thus offer keys to more effective approaches to reducing fatalities and injuries on the road.

Ethnographic studies of safety regulation are potentially a significant, and as yet largely unrealised, complement to the anthropological study of roads. I have shown how, in addition to the applied use of this work to investigate behaviour and bring about safer travel (Forman, Watchko and Seguí-Gómez 2011), further avenues for theoretical exploration are located within the interaction of road safety with cultural assumptions about territory, population and

self-government, and with the diverse forms assumed by inequality between different social sectors. The field of mobility studies has given considerable scrutiny to some of these themes, yet to date has left under-researched the socio-cultural operation of safety regulation. As the World Bank, UN and WHO impel increased monitoring and further developments in road safety policies across a range of low- and middle-income countries, the time is propitious for expanded anthropological inquiry into their reception and effects in the networks, highways and communities we study.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> An influential WHO report predicted that by 2020 traffic accidents will be the third most significant cause of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) lost globally (Peden et al. 2004). This forecast intensified the sense of urgency in a number of institutions to take steps to reduce the toll of these side-effects of mobility, contributing to the creation of the UN Road Safety Collaboration, to the decision by the General Assembly to declare 2011-2020 the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety, and to the World Bank's initiatives to incorporate road safety as an integral part of its interventions in the provision of transport infrastructure (Borowy 2013; World Bank 2011).

<sup>2</sup> See Diez-Roux, Taddia, de la Peña & de la Vega (2012).

<sup>3</sup> For example, the construction of new roads has been predicted to lead to the empowerment of women (Bravo 2002), promote cosmopolitanism and national integration (Goodale 2009:9), or to advance the cause of democratisation by enabling local populations to bypass widespread clientelistic forms of rural power broking (Harvey and Knox 2012; Nugent 1997).

<sup>4</sup> The relationship between indigeneity and class in Peru is complex. Unlike in neighbouring countries, many rural Peruvian Quechua-speakers reject the adscription 'indigenous' as demeaning and pejorative. They prefer to identify as 'campesinos' (peasants), the term that I generally use in this paper. Whichever identifier is used, it is widely accepted that this population continues to face significant discrimination and economic disadvantage.

<sup>5</sup> This description has striking echoes of Foucault's own analysis of eighteenth-century urban planning (2007:17-18). In it, he drew attention to the appeal of models deriving from the human circulatory system. Such

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designs explicitly centred on an architectural ‘heart,’ where power and prestige were concentrated, then radiated out through increasingly peripheral sectors of urban and semi-urban space.

<sup>6</sup> The interviews focused on their experiences of inter-provincial transport, road safety and the impact of the new regulations. Interviewees were identified from three different villages in the province (male = 7; female = 10). Most were small-scale peasant farmers, one an agronomist and two provincial government employees. All spoke Quechua, but some of the men preferred to be interviewed mostly in Spanish.

<sup>7</sup> Peru is divided into 24 departamentos (departments). The city of Cusco gives its name to one of these. Provinces (Sp. provincia) are the largest administrative sub-division in Peru after departamentos. Cusco contains 13 provinces.

When I refer in this article to inter-departmental transport, this implies national and larger regional roads; when I refer to inter-provincial transport, I mean more local routes and subsidiary road networks in predominantly rural areas.

<sup>8</sup> Reasons for this include the high levels of international tourism in parts of Cusco (which encourage the authorities to maintain better road surfaces) and the routing of the recently completed Inter-oceanic Highway (linking Peru with Brazil) through the region.

<sup>9</sup> This drive is but one aspect of broader state efforts to promote ‘technologies of subjectivity’ (Ong 2006:6) that encourage active self-government among rural as well as urban citizens. The most significant in the rural context is Programa Juntos, a scheme that provides peasant families with cash payments in return for meeting specified conditions. These include the self-management of health, nutrition, hygiene and school attendance – monitored regularly by professionals – and more recently the introduction of individual savings accounts in formal financial institutions for deposit of the payments, as an explicit step towards financial self-reliance. As well as a means of poverty relief for the poorest citizens, Programa Juntos is thus also a project to induce self-transformation and self-management in those at whom it is targeted (Meltzer 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Margarita Huayhua’s (2013) interactionist analysis of confrontations and social status during combi journeys between Cusco and a nearby village shows how starkly ethno-class hierarchies are brought into focus by this arrangement.

<sup>11</sup> While my interviewees mostly attributed this to OZT – which for many has become shorthand for all current road safety regulation – the drivers themselves refer more to SOAT (Peru’s national driving insurance scheme) and the risk of being held liable for any injuries sustained by passengers to whom they might give a lift.

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