

Slide show Peru /// Marias story 1981 /// Afterword August 2022:

People's analyzes and narratives, based on subsistence living on small economic margins, always have something very important to say about the surrounding society in question. In these narratives, there are of course always the contextually specific during that period, but also various factors that are stable and more generally valid over time.

We humans are always within a flow of resources that are necessary for our survival and existence. When the flow of these resources changes so, do the possibilities for our current form of living.

In the case of Maria and her family, it is possible to follow how their living conditions worsened due to drought and crop failure in the countryside. Something that forced the family to move and establish themselves in the outer parts of the big city, the suburbs of Lima. In this case, from the 1980´s, it is possible to understand how the changes of "flows of resources" works from a mainly local and regional national level.

First in this short text, Maria's story, from 1981, that involves hopes for a better existence financially and in terms of resources, however, urbanization on a large scale is of course not a new phenomenon. Then in this text, the continuous "paradox of different opportunities" when it comes to an existence without access to any major economic resources. Then and finally, something about the new or more precisely "partly new" when it comes to live within the economic margins, at the time for this writing linked to the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Maria's story:



"Maria" is 39 years old. For three months, she has lived here together with most of her family, i.e. her husband, four of her younger children, and an adult daughter with two children of her own. The house they live in is about twenty square meters in size. It is built from bast mats. When it's windy, the sand blows in. In one corner stands a small kerosene kitchen /// Maria's adult daughter would actually live in a similar house next to her parents', but so far she has not been able to afford it because each bamboo pole costs 500 soles (about 1 dollar/1980) and it takes fifteen poles to build a house.

The family originally comes from a mountain village ten miles southeast of Lima. In the village, they had access to a plot of land where they, among other things, cultivated corn. They also had sheep, chickens and ducks. The family members worked for the owner of a hacienda and earned about 2-300 soles a day (half a dollar/1980) and they did quite well.

In 1980, things got much worse. There had been a prolonged drought, the sheep died and prices rose. According to Maria, they had no longer the option to stay, the family had to move to Lima. The first night they slept on the sand, the next day bast mats were procured and the house began to be built.

Maria's husband does not have a permanent job. He weaves ropes from bast which he sells on the streets inside Lima. By selling rope, he earns about 700 soles for three days' work. Maria works washing clothes for other households. When she does laundry for others in the same suburb she earns 500 soles per day, in Lima she earns 1000 soles per day. In order for the whole family to get by, they need to bring in about 1,500 soles a day, and often it's only one meal a day. The staple food is beans and rice /// Usually the members of the family get up early in the morning and go to bed at eleven or twelve in the evening. There are no resources for new clothes and certainly not for school uniforms for all of the children. Therefore, only one of the children can go to school.

Maria still says that she hopes that the family will get better, little by little, that her husband will get a better job, that they will have the opportunity to build a real house and that the children not will get sick /// In addition to her adult daughter, Maria has three more children. She has left them with her parents in the village.

The continuous within the paradox of different opportunities, are when people in more secure economic, social and political positions in a society often try explaining to others to reject and not be part of a specific economic development, a growth that not will work for everyone in the society in its structural level. For example; urbanization, a mass-behavior based on intense consumption etc. In

these days, as an example, we have the contemporary processes of “rejection of consumption with its associated lifestyle” which is about our possibilities in terms of coping the ongoing Climate Change Crisis.

However, the processes of rejection can also come from needs such as not having the financial means to be able to stay together and start a family even if it takes place from a traditional point of view, and, **the continuous part of the paradox of different opportunities, from my writings 1981:**

Try to explain

To reject

To people

Who almost never had anything, to reject

Yet, this is not the same as nothing changes over time. For several of these women in the suburbs/barriadas of Lima, the new living conditions in the long term also meant the beginning of a change in their position within both the family and society, as their income from paid work often was of more significant value than their husband's. It is possible to analyze the situation based on the classic anthropological figure "adaptation and transformation".

In other words, a lot of the previous social life patterns were maintained when the families were moving to the city of Lima, the changes to come were partly only with new labels. But something new also occurred in this process. Although, what the outcome of these various ongoing forms of adaptation and processes of changes/transformations will be in the end is always difficult to know in its present state.

The visionary and the real in a society do not always harmonize, in fact quite rarely. However, the development for many women equal to Maria's life situation at that time, was also the beginning of a liberation process. However, the expressions of these emancipation processes with female/feminist signs looks very different in their contemporary appearance.

Yet, the anthropological figure "adaptation and transformation" makes it easier to understand what's actually “new or not” within these or similar processes, Peru included.

Something about what's "partly" new according to living within small margins economically in its present state:

What's "partly" new is the very speed of these "flows with vital material resources" in a global and local perspective. How an incredibly large amount of material resources are stored and controlled in this flow based on daily consumption. The above is highly evident at the time of this writing concerning Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, i.e. how the direct consequences of the war lead to a reduced flow of resources such as fuel, grain, etc. Where people who live within the small margins economically all over our world are badly affected, Peru included.



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