CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

HIP HOP AND GUINEA PIGS
Contextualizing the urban Andes

---

Eric Hirsch and Kyle Jones

INTRODUCTION: THE ANDEAN CITY

What is the Andean city? Does it make sense to designate a genre of place we might call the “Andean city”? If so, what makes it Andean, and what makes it urban? In this chapter, we highlight three Andean cities, Cusco, Arequipa, and Lima, and the processes through which they are connected as a way to better understand the economic, cultural, and ecological dynamics of Andean cities more broadly. Though it is situated on the Pacific coast and often differentiated by its Spanish influences, Peru’s capital Lima has become Andeanized over many waves of urban migration and cultural diffusion by virtue of the pueblos jóvenes (literally, young towns, many seeking official recognition) located on dusty hills on Lima’s outskirts, as well as the restaurants and art galleries of its high-income neighborhoods. More fundamentally, these three cities share certain features of their spatial layouts that condition diverse forms of expression that emerge in political engagement, economic and ecological activity, and the creative, artistic, and adaptive networks that bind each city to its hinterland, just as they link Peru’s coastal regions to its mountains (sierra) and rainforest (selva).

Through two ethnographic cases drawn from people and ideas in motion through these cities, we explore practices of exchange and cultural production by zooming into the specific forms of association that occur across the “invisible walls” of the urban Andes (Gandolfo, 2009, p. 11). Distinctions of race and ethnicity are best understood as relational concepts rooted in place rather than as rigid or clear categories in Peru and much of Andean Latin America (Orlove, 1998; Romero, 2001). Given that, we inquire how urban associational spaces in these cities configure, and in many cases help to remake, the ways people relate and belong to their Andean communities.

We also zoom out to consider what urban nodes mean for the broader Andean region, describing several scenes in which urban spaces organize people’s economic lives, their ecological networks, and the way their livelihoods are physically distributed in space. Cities, we find, are revealing sites for learning about “the emerging new spaces of associational life” that are redrawing the boundaries and meanings of urban lives and livelihoods across the region (Fernandes, 2010, p. 161). As the Andes underwent transformation from a site of Inca domination to a key productive hinterland for Spain’s American colony and, later, a region encompassed by
independent republics like Peru, the diversified use of resources afforded by distinct altitudes magnified. Emerging channels of exchange connected newly dense reducción (colonial-era population consolidation) settlements and cities, incorporating kin networks, professional opportunities, industries, commodity chains, vertically-distributed resources, and cultural connections.

Today, many urban Andeans describe their living spaces as divorced from the rural economy, liberated from its arduous labor and icy mountain air, and newly encumbered by its expenses, congestion, and pace. Yet cities in Peru embody not just economic and geographic differences, but also racial ones. While it is not easy to “de-indigenize” and thus alter one’s class status, as many urban residents aspire to do in different ways (De la Cadena, 2000), cities represent the promise of social mobility through a combination of labor, education, and a greater number of opportunities to become class-mobile in one location. Multiple forms of difference dispersed throughout urban space create what the anthropologist Daniella Gandolfo calls “a world of ‘parallel cities’” and “invisible walls” (2009, p. 11, citing González Cueva, 1995). This means social difference in these places has come to revolve less around ancestry and physical appearance than one’s dress, occupation, language, education, music, and other cultural and expressive practices, and more on one’s place of birth or residence and movement in and across places (Weismantel and Eisenman, 1998).

Young people in particular seek multiple forms of mobility in urban spaces. They are tied to cities in unique and important ways that reveal those cities’ role in the broader Andean region. Many young urbanites tell of everyday experiences of being both marginal and central, sometimes silenced, and sometimes heard. As fundamental, and therefore contentious, subjects of social reproduction, young people bear a unique relationship to aspirations for upward urban mobility and societal change (Bucholtz, 2002; Cole and Durham, 2008). When young Peruvians move from villages to cities, participate in globalized cultural production, or start business ventures, they reposition themselves and the signifiers of racial and class hierarchies. As a result, certain tensions and issues—such as employment, political stability, criminality, and cultural change—have become magnified among Peru’s youth population (Jones, 2016).

We focus on the ways highly mobile young people experience, use, and remake Andean cities, and in doing so, argue that the city and the country are co-produced. We take the city itself to be both a physical entity and an organizing leitmotif in everyday Andean life. Building on works concerning the spatial dimensions of race, class, and gender across urban and rural lines (De la Cadena, 2000; Weismantel, 2001; Seligmann, 2004), here we focus on the ways the city itself is experienced, used, and remade.

Today’s economic lives and kin ties in the Andes depend on regular mobile exchange between urban and rural areas. The broader, largely rural Andean region is a socio-ecological system in which cities play an integral role. And elements of that rural life emerge through the pores and cracks of the city. In fact, rural prosperity and even rural resilience has historically required ecological networks and itineraries that thread lives together across the urban-rural divide. At the same time, the meanings and practices of urbanity and ruralness can be historically defined in contradistinction within the contemporary symbolic economy of Andeanness. They come into relation in public spaces, in activities such as markets, desfiles (parades or processions), the art of gastronomy, and the visual and musical elements of hip hop, an example we address below.
It is this important relationship between urban and rural spaces that defines what it feels like to live in Andean cities. In what follows, each of us will take the reader on a seemingly mundane urban journey with our interlocutors. We turn first to a discussion of hip hop in Peru, focusing on how hip hop events and organizations afford insight into young people’s livelihoods and popular culture in the urban Andes. We follow that with an analysis of the guinea pig as both the animal and the humans who engage with it travel between Andean cities and their hinterlands.

Focusing on cities as part of a broader urban-rural regional ecosystem can also offer an interpretive model for understanding the way Andean people move, exchange, and build relationships across spaces and between regions in general, from coastal connections to seasonal migrations to the selva. While our focus is on what is specifically Andean about this urban-rural co-production, we also show that the way each genre of space creates the other reveals a great deal about what being urban entails anywhere in today’s world.

**ANDEAN HIP HOP: CONFIGURING URBAN COLLECTIVE LIFE**

Festivals, parades, concerts, and other events that bring large and diverse crowds together are cornerstones of city life around the world. In the Andes in particular, some combination of raucous bands, bright costumes, or disciplined dance steps are staples of these public happenings, elements that are perhaps as expected as the accompanying street vendors selling snacks and drinks, or on-lookers snapping photos. As the energy of these performances fills crowded streets and sidewalks, snaking through an entire city district or occupying a plaza for days on end, the concentration of so many sights and sounds draws focus on the here and now. Urban dwellers’ focus is collectivized, trained on a shared set of sounds, images, and dramatis personae. Immediacy fills the gaps between beats and performances.

Yet traces of what it takes to realize an event always poke through its vibrant choreographed displays: someone handing out refreshments to sweaty performers; a long list of thank-yous during the ceremony’s ritualized inaugural speech; the name of a village or city many hours away painted onto a booming bass drum as it drives a regional dance style; the proudly carried standards that identify dance groups, parade floats, or fireworks towers with the names of cultural, occupational, or neighborhood associations neatly sewn onto them. Micro-level histories point beyond the seemingly immediate moment of the performance and the constrained urban space currently being occupied to a vast ecology of underlying networks of people, relationships, resources, and environmental systems that make these events possible. They offer reminders that these events live as much in their planning as in their execution, shaped in myriad ways by those who have a stake in them. They draw on past preparation and condition a future of collective memory. As such, the organization of these concentrated realizations of popular culture provides a revealing lens through which to explore lives and livelihoods in Andean cities.

Like many other parts of the world, Andean countries in recent decades have become home to thriving hip hop musical and cultural scenes. In Peru, hip hop experienced sporadic waves of popularity beginning in the mid-1980s, as hip hop movies such as *Beat Street* and *Breakin’* appeared alongside other American and international pop culture imports. Owing to several economic, technological, and social factors, by the late-1990s hip hop had begun to coalesce as a cohesive and deliberate “culture” consisting of four main performative elements—rapping, breakdancing,
deejaying, and graffiti writing—among young people in Peru’s working classes from across many of the country’s urban centers. Despite patterns of internal migration and the ways that mass media facilitated communication and access to the sights and sounds of hip hop, awareness of hip hop in other cities often remained limited. As a result, and combined with localized histories and circumstances, the material and musical styles, meanings, and practices of hip hop evolved somewhat differently across Peru’s larger and smaller cities.2

In addition to honing their artistic skills, hiphoperos (“hiphoppers”)3 also began to arrange their activities through various kinds of youth-led grassroots organizations. These self-described federations, associations, movements, consulates, collectives, and conferences drew on the unifying discourses of “real hip hop” and the experiences and efficacy of popular organizing in urban Peru from the neighborhood to the nation. Different kinds of events, such as regular gatherings, concerts, and workshops, became the cornerstones of these hip hop collectivities, playing a fundamental role in creating hip hop’s emergent audiences and in claiming its place in Peru’s cities. While hiphoperos often credited hip hop with uniquely low barriers to participation, securing various resources was nonetheless an essential element in putting on many kinds of events. The bigger the event, the more important obtaining these resources became. As a result, attending or putting on events became a way in which a younger generation of urban residents navigated the resources, relationships, and opportunities available and inaccessible to them.

A rapper by the name of Inferno had been organizing hip hop events in Cusco for nearly a decade when one of the authors (Jones) met him in 2011. He also had set up one of Cusco’s first dedicated rap studios, Ukhu Pacha Records (of the same name as his rap group), in a corner of his bedroom in 2006. Additionally, over the years he worked to transform the common designation of “Cusco hip hop” (often abbreviated as C2H) into a more formalized entity called the Asociación Cultural Cusco Hip Hop, adopting the iconic seal of the city of Cusco (the placa de echineque, an ornately carved Incaic golden disc) as part of the association’s logo and trying to get the association listed in various cultural center registries.

Inferno’s and many other Peruvian rappers’ use of Quechua in their lyrics and group, song, or event names, alongside an array of other historical or place-based signifiers of Andeanness, forms part of the broader societal and generational shift to reverse anxieties about embarrassment, racism, and backwardness that have long overshadowed Quechua’s use in Peru (Seligmann, 2004, p. 140; García, 2005; Tucker, 2011). The name of Inferno’s early studio and rap group takes on further significance in the subcultural context of hip hop. Ukhu Pacha refers to a subterranean world in Andean cosmology, and is often symbolized by a serpent (Webb, 2012). “So we would be the underground crew, and therefore Ukhu Pacha Crew,” Inferno explained, maintaining the English for the words “underground” and “crew.” “The same ‘underground,’ but returned to Cusco, the Cusqueño underground, called Ukhu Pacha.”

In a similar manner, the Asociación Cultural Cusco Hip Hop put on a recurring concert called Llakta Rimay, Quechua for “the people speak,” conveying the common sentiment that hip hop represents everyday voices and experiences. After numerous iterations,4 the flyer for the Llakta Rimay concert that took place in 2013 utilized a drawing by the Quechua colonial chronicler Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala depicting a gathering of representatives from the four suyus (administrative quadrants) of the Inca empire (Figure 35.1). In the same way that the coming together
Figure 35.1 Flyer for the 2013 Llakta Rimay concert that utilized a drawing by the Quechua colonial chronicler Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala depicting a gathering of representatives from the four suyus of the Inca empire.

Photo credit: Kyle Jones.
of the four suyus represented the union of the Inca empire, the coming together of the four elements of hip hop for this event represented the unifying formation of hip hop as a veritable culture. As many scholars have described, hip hop as a musical genre and broader cultural field obtains much of its discursive power and measures of authenticity directly from the experiences and struggles of everyday life that emerge from very specific cultural histories, social environments, and meaningful places (Rose, 1994; Forman, 2002; Pennycook, 2007). By interweaving Quechua and English, as well as Incaic history with today’s hip hop ideologies and terms of authenticity, Inferno and others like him strategically worked to stay true to both the storied, essentialized roots of hip hop as well as those of their city or region.

It was a sunny afternoon in early 2014 when Inferno and I (Jones) set out to secure sponsors for an upcoming concert featuring nationally-recognized rap groups from Lima alongside many Cusqueño groups. As usual, funds were already tight and many of the event details were in flux; the venue was still up in the air (and as a result the event’s publicity had yet to be designed), and an acquaintance had yet to find any good prices for participants’ bus or airline tickets. However, discounted lodging for the visiting performers and extra sound equipment had already been secured through similar friend and extended family connections. With the goal of just trying to break even on the event’s expenses that Inferno, myself, and several others had fronted, the plan for that day was to visit some of the clothing and accessory shops in the city’s touristic center, hoping to strike a deal in which the shops would contribute money to cover event expenses in exchange for advertising.

After we entered each store and found the manager or owner, Inferno introduced himself as being from the Asociación Cultural Cusco Hip Hop, and identified me as an anthropologist from the U.S. studying hip hop culture in Peru. Continuing in a soft, serious tone of voice, he described his past successes organizing well-attended events, stating that the popular rap group coming from Lima for the upcoming event would draw even bigger crowds, thus providing an excellent advertising opportunity. In one store, where we were surrounded by racks filled with international brand clothing, shoes, and accessories such as DC, Element, Ecko, and Dunkelvolk, Inferno implied that the concert’s audience would largely consist of the store’s target market: those who were young, urbane, and internationally-minded. The name of the business would be featured on all the banners and flyers that would appear across the city and in social media alike (such as in Figure 35.2), and the business would be thanked throughout the concert over the PA system for its much-appreciated support of Cusco’s growing hip hop culture. At other times, such sponsorship pitches included putting on nicer clothes or carrying a business-like folio and, in addition, young hiphoperos would often have with them some physical documentation—an eye-catching glossy flyer from a past event with the association and sponsor logos on it, or in some rare cases a certificate of recognition by a government agency.

We were unsuccessful in obtaining sponsorship during those particular visits, but Inferno’s and many other hiphoperos’ efforts to realize events and coordinate action through self-managed organizations resemble practices found across and between Andean cities. Organizing an event, hosting visiting performers, and getting out of one’s own town to perform required the thoughtful deployment and coordination of relationships, resources, and knowledge. Particularly for someone seeking support
for an event in a city such as Cusco, it became crucial to work across different (often competing) social contexts, negotiating the disparate worlds of informal everyday urban life and the polished professionalism of business or government (Anderson, 1999; Seligmann, 2004; Gandolfo, 2009).

As these young people sought to open new social, artistic, and economic opportunities for themselves, they rearticulated time-tested strategies for social mobility and economic opportunity. Many hiphoperos interpreted broader ideologies about “getting ahead,” “improving oneself,” and “progressing” through their involvement in hip hop organizations and events. They saw their activities as being productive of social relationships and of offering opportunities for economic gain, personal education, and meaningful expression (Leinaweaver, 2008). Growing themselves and their capacity to perform hip hop were often two sides of the same coin. Horizontal relationships among friends and hiphoperos of similar backgrounds afforded highly valued chances for performing in other cities to gain meaningful new experiences, and helped build new relationships to call on in the future. Vertical relationships, such as those developed with foreign, better-off, or higher-status individuals, provided additional ways to access social or material resources that would have otherwise been out of reach.

As an extension of Andean forms of social and economic relationships, these ties were framed in terms of mutual support and flexible expectations of reciprocity.
The exchanges hiphoperos seek to cultivate often involve invitations to perform at each other’s events, as well as collaborations on music recordings, video clips, and visual art, putting someone in touch with a useful contact (e.g., event promoter, well-known studio, or governmental official), or logistical or material support for an event, workshop, or other endeavor. Given that most young hiphoperos typically had little additional spending money, it was far less common for exchanges to directly involve cash than it was for them to consist of services or non-monetary resources. In this way, hip hop, especially for young men (Fuller, 2003), became a way to navigate the generational demands of status and mobility in a context consisting of shifting cultural media and economic opportunities within a globalized Peru.

When we conceptualize populations and their locus not as a single dot on a map, but rather, as nodes in a complex network, the reciprocal processes of hip hop’s associational practices become visible. Such a perspective enables us to understand things as commonplace as event flyers as indicative of the dispersed social and symbolic networks hiphoperos drew on to carve out and showcase their place in Peru’s cities. Hip hop associations such as the Asociación Cultural Cusco Hip Hop represented less formalized, structured organizations than they did flexible networks of people that performed or otherwise participated in or contributed to the world of hip hop. Moreover, the events that animate hip hop’s associational life comprise rich nodes of mediation and circulation where the provisional alignment of a range of social projects results in heightened, often self-conscious, productions and contestations of value and meaning (Mazzarella, 2004). In ways similar to those of radio DJs or parade organizers, hiphoperos worked as cultural “intermediaries” or “media workers” who grew their audiences as they reorganized the ideas and signs of the city and regional identity through their organizational activities and performances (Seligmann, 2004; Baker, 2011; Tucker, 2013). It is these intertwined processes that we suggest constitute the Andeanization of cities and the simultaneous “urbanization” of Andean villages. As we show below, the gourmet chefs of Peru’s gastronomy boom contributed to the structuring of the variegated Andean ecosystem in much the same way.

GUINEA PIG GOURMET: A RURAL–URBAN ECOLOGICAL NETWORK

The nearly one-million-person city of Arequipa, some 160 km from the dense network of the rural villages that make up the Colca Valley, is a key figure in daily life in those villages. It is hard to imagine Colca without the presence of Peru’s second city looming in the background of every exchange, from the biweekly produce market to the consumption of the locally preferred Arequipeña-brand beer. For many rural businesses, agricultural fields, family farms, and other livelihood contexts, Arequipa city is the region’s administrative, supply, economic, and jurisdictional center. Since Peru’s national vote to administratively decentralize in the early 2000s, Lima has devolved budgetary and policymaking power to regions and municipalities. This might seem, at first, to be a democratizing move. However, in practice, decentralization has effectively meant an elaborate, highly bureaucratized set of hubs and spokes that often structure “simultaneous engagements” in city and village economies (Paerregaard, 1998, p. 398). Those actors that frequently travel between cities and villages approach each not as a self-contained social space, but as an extension of
the agricultural “vertical archipelago” model of using multiple elevations, geographical zones, and multiple, simultaneous dwellings to ensure continual productivity and continuously strong social relationships (Murra, 1972; Brush, 1976; Hirsch, 2018).

For eighteen months, between early 2013 and mid-2014, the NGO Desco (Center for the Study and Promotion of Development) invested a small amount of seed capital in fifty young, village-based entrepreneurs in the rural Colca Valley. Participants were between the ages of 18 and 29. The NGO imagined these young people as uniquely situated to deploy some aspect of their rural ecological expertise and cultural and human capital to create innovative businesses. All they required was a small amount of financial support to start their businesses, along with basic capacity-building in branding, market diagnostics, and business formalization.

Given that these young people’s ears were to the rural ground, the NGO understood them as able to corner the market in many kinds of local resources, from eco-tourism, to organic quinoa cultivation for international export, to guinea pig breeding. A defining condition of investment was that aspiring entrepreneurs had to remain in their village homes. However, constant mobility and shifting residence between rural and urban nodes of life has historically defined the way many people sustain themselves in the Colca Valley. So the initiative’s mandate, in the guise of support for a “typically” rural way of life, sought to reconfigure Andean indigenous identity with a new spatial agenda centered upon an exoticized, touristic image of a primordial people tightly tied to their land.

That Desco project, and many other initiatives like it, suggest the need for clarifying that many Andean people do not situate their livelihoods in either rural or urban space, exclusively. In this section, we use the guinea pig to contextualize urban life within a broader social ecosystem that encompasses the city’s hinterland, suggesting that the city is not its own autonomous or sovereign space, but rather penetrates deeply into the pueblos and fields around it. Those pueblos and fields are also integral to the making of lives and livelihoods within the spaces of what many readers might imagine as a “city proper” with seemingly simple boundaries visible on a map.

Rogelio Taco was one of the young Andean entrepreneurs that received a Desco seed capital investment. With his 3,650 soles ($1,147.26 at the time), he sought to buy guinea pig studs and building materials for a small barn. The site of his business was his home in the Colca Valley village of Lari. He was the NGO’s success story, growing an initially unpromising business idea into one of the largest guinea pig breeders in Colca’s Caylloma Province, winning regional prizes and reaping significant profits (Figure 35.3).

I (Hirsch) met Rogelio in Arequipa, where he was taking care of an elaborate suite of errands, including meeting with an attorney to discuss the procedure for authorizing his business with juridical personhood (persona jurídica) necessary for tax payment, purchasing new guinea pig (cuy) studs, and making other small-scale investments for his business.

We met in Arequipa’s elegant plaza de armas (central plaza) at the historic city center and traveled together by taxi to examine the inventory of one of the city’s guinea pig livestock merchants, from whom Rogelio would occasionally purchase new animals. Rogelio was dressed in his city clothes: his best pair of jeans, a crisp button-down shirt, and dusty black wing tip leather shoes, having just come from the meeting with his attorney. The cab took us out of the center to a three-story cement block home in José Luis Bustamante y Rivera, a sprawling and economically diverse neighborhood in the city’s southeast.
Rogelio liked to surprise the merchants where he made his more substantial purchases so that they would not have time to obscure or beautify the everyday conditions of their farms and cages, which were an essential measure of the health of these cuyes. This strategy mirrored the work of the Desco NGO’s urban-based professionals in their rural site visits: they would frequently conduct surprise inspections of the participating entrepreneurs’ businesses, to ascertain an honest sense of their progress and commitment.

We rang the doorbell and waited. After a pause, the unkempt business owner came downstairs. Realizing the visitor was Rogelio, a customer, he swiftly brought us up through his cool, dimly lit home to the urban guinea pig farm he kept on the three-story residential building’s rooftop. The farm was configured according to the limits imposed by the flat rooftop shape and the neighborhood’s high urban density, built tall and long into three rows of ten by ten cages. From the edge of the rooftop, we could look out and see other rooftop spaces at various heights being used for small informal gardens, hanging clothing out to dry, and tiny patios where guests could gather. We looked at each guinea pig, ultimately selecting a stud for 140 soles from one of the cells.
Rogelio brought his new cuy back to Lari, where he expected to almost immediately reap the returns on his investment. Given guinea pigs’ frequent and prolific copulation, he explained, these animals represent ideal investment pieces. As Rogelio put it, laughing, “The guinea pigs pay for themselves!”

But those guinea pigs had help. They would not have been able to “pay for themselves” without an interconnected highland ecosystem that encompassed both rural and urban spaces. Rogelio’s trip to Arequipa positions the city as an indispensable dimension of Colca’s rural business infrastructure. The city is the site of Rogelio’s investment and expenditure. It is the administrative center in the nation’s bureaucratic system, where he met with a tax attorney to formalize his enterprise. If urban hiphoperos draw on their connections to and reflections on the rural Andes to legitimate their artistic expression, here, the city’s presence provides young people like Rogelio the basic conditions for a legitimated rural entrepreneurship to emerge. Just as rural–urban exchange relationships historically configured what it meant to be indigenous in Peru’s Andes, Rogelio’s journey between these spaces today was an effort to define his own identity as a committed, connected, indigenous producer.

Accessing Arequipa requires a time commitment of some three to four hours spent riding each way on the Chivay-Arequipa bus (see Hirsch, 2018). Additionally, for Rogelio and most of the other young Desco entrepreneurs, the entrepreneurial obligation to travel to Arequipa almost universally meant deploying already existing kinship connections, however tenuous, to access food, shelter, and aid in avoiding other potential expenses when the urban stay had to last longer than a single exhausting workday. In this way, the city’s organizing position in the rural economy was self-sustaining, as Arequipa and Colca co-produced each other.

Using the city in this fashion requires a transurban kinship network: it requires a place to stay, a suite of economic contacts, and knowing where to go and whom to ask for help. It means, for the Lari-born Rogelio, knowing Arequipa intimately. That deep embodied knowledge of the city as bulk supplier, legal center, and site for accumulating expertise and exchanging ideas about entrepreneurialism through urban markets, vendors, and offices, was key to determining how far Rogelio’s entrepreneurial—and thus personal—investments could go.

One of the reasons Rogelio won seed capital for his breeding business was that the guinea pig has emerged as an important signifier of Andean culture in Peru’s recent gastronomy boom. Indeed, this little animal has helped to redefine Peru as a mecca for foodies. Lima is now seen as a gastronomic equivalent to Paris, in no small part because chefs have incorporated the guinea pig, and other Andean staples such as quinoa and diverse potato varieties, into their innovative dishes (García, 2013). This emergence of the guinea pig on the national and international scene shows us how cities play a key role in anchoring and reproducing images of Andeanness based on its rural zones.

What might the political ecology of the guinea pig tell us about the Andeanness of Andean cities? Guinea pigs have long been considered a delicacy in the Andean region. If non-Peruvian tourists see in guinea pig consumption an exotic practice that is strange because of the animal’s role in other places as a pet, many Andean communities see cuy meat as the marker of a special occasion, the food for an honored guest, and the keystone dish in a festival.

565
In recent years, it has become clear that cuy consumption is no longer confined to rural Andean consumers. The anthropologist María Elena García (2013) has provocatively described guinea pig meat as a constitutive dimension of Peru’s urban-centered *novoandino* (“new Andean,” in the Italian-dominated idiom of food expertise) gastronomic boom that has taken off over the last decade. This cuisine’s signature innovation is a chef’s ability to incorporate elements of Andeaness into a dish. Andeaness, for this newly popular cuisine, means symbolically significant components like the cuy. Ideas about Andeaness are also conveyed on plates and in bowls through various other symbols to represent the idea that a given dish is uniquely rural and quintessentially Andean, while also cosmopolitan. The imperative to balance these values has led to the emergence of a class of cultural intermediaries able to travel and translate between Peru and the rest of the world, and between villages and cities, to discern how to make an elaborately produced but recognizable Andes palatable to a sophisticated diner.

For the *novoandino* gourmet guinea pig meal, the eyes, nails and fur, conventionally included in a cuy dish, often must be removed from view. García (2013, p. 511) describes an interview with a childhood friend of Gastón Acurio, Peru’s most celebrated chef, in *Gourmet* magazine. The friend spoke about the meaning of guinea pig cuisine while consuming an opulent meal that exemplifies the mediated fusion of the world-famous *novoandino* cuisine. “‘When I grew up, if you ate guinea pig you were a savage,’ [he] says, biting into a leg of roasted organic guinea pig nestled in its bed of oca ravioli in a pecan sauce with Pisco.” Now, that idea has been completely reversed: guinea pig meat, when composed in just the right way, has become a symbol of urbane refinement. Lima, in Acurio’s view, is the new Paris, the world’s latest destination for the foodie cutting edge. And Lima was able to become “Paris” because, as García puts it, people travel there “for ‘a taste of Peru,’ or ‘a culinary journey to the land of the Incas’” (2013, p. 511).

So guinea pigs have become trendy, engaging Lima as a consolidated urban site of mediation between its Andean and international influences. Analogous to the way Arequipa structures prices and norms of exchange, the city of Lima regulates and fixes ideas about what Andean cuisine means on the global stage, serving the world a definition of “Andean culture” just as it serves up its innovative cuy plates. Lima is also, crucially, a source of demand for guinea pig breeders and farmers like Rogelio in rural Lari, who is one of the many primarily village-based Andeans involved in the complex transformation from a living guinea pig eating alfalfa in a village pen to an extravagant menu item at the Andes’ global edge.

**CONCLUSION**

While Peru and its cities have changed rapidly in recent decades, scholars have been wary of overstating the newness of these transformations, seeking instead to draw attention to their imbrication in deeper historical legacies, viewed as permutations or embodying aspects of continuity (Panfichi, 2009, p. 158; see also Grillo Fernandez, 1998). This is, of course, not to imply the sense of timelessness or cultural authenticity heavily criticized by Starn (1994), or to suggest (contra Keeler, 2009), that maintaining “tradition” is the prevailing impetus behind young people’s uptake of globalized media. Rather, we offer this take on cities to make sense of what at first may seem like dramatic changes brought about by the recent
intensification of economic and cultural globalization. As we discussed above, contrary to the overstatements of rebellious agency often characterizing ideas about youth and globalized media, the strategies Peru’s hiphoperos have devised to imagine and achieve their desired futures do not necessarily entail a radical break from the aspirations of past generations (Durham, 2008; Cole, 2010; Jones, 2016). Nor does the guinea pig sit statically in spaces of timeless Andean tradition. Both of these cultural symbols are dynamically translated and transformed as they circulate physically and conceptually; they are constantly being “customized,” rewritten, and renewed (Greene, 2009).

Through its entrepreneurial hustle and emphasis on one’s socio-geographic location, hip hop aligns with other musical styles as part of a broader shift in Peru in recent decades to valorize the livelihoods and cultural productions of the country’s Andean urban working-class majority on their own terms, rather than through those of upper class mestizo respectability, cleanliness, and ease (Tucker, 2013; Butterworth, 2014). The everyday experiences and working-class values of hard work, humility, struggle, perseverance, and suffering find renewed articulation in hiphoperos’ own lives, artistic creations, and associational practices. These highly personal and visible activities illustrate the continued importance of popular culture as an avenue through which residents encounter and reconfigure signifiers of racial and class difference in Andean cities. By intertwining markers of locality with globally-aware urbanism, as well as nationwide and trans-Andean networks of communication and movement, hip hop comprises a domain that complicates the rigid boundaries underpinning long-standing ideologies about people and places in the Andes. The project to create a new generation of young gastronomy and other cultural entrepreneurs emerges out of a similar dynamic of networked rural–urban connections and personal values and symbols that animate today’s era of Andean cultural and economic revitalization. NGOs like Desco and municipal organizations like those in Lima, Cusco, Arequipa, and elsewhere are drawn to young people because of their ability to mediate between village and city life, and between Peru and the world. Because of that ability, these young intermediaries help to set the terms, the economic rhythms, and the timbres and tastes of the urban Andes.

Tracing hip hop and guinea pigs into and out of cities points to broader forms of urban-rural connectivity within the Andes. The forms of mass communication that have proliferated in Andean cities since the 1990s, from various kinds of pay-by-the-minute phone centers, to internet cafes, and inexpensive cell phones and other mobile devices, to today’s proliferating use of social media, offer intensified and more immediate modes of communication for Andean residents. Increasingly adopted over the years, these expanded lines of communication have buttressed the twisting roads that have historically connected cities to the countryside, and each other. They have brought people across the Andean region closer together, fostering new forms of commerce, consumption, and production, new kinds of associations, new renditions of taste. Yet while these forms of communication have added to the “porousness” of Andean cities (Orta, 2004), the normative meanings of the city as a particularly important social, economic, and cultural place do not dissolve so easily (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). If the power of place remains a pervasive part of everyday life, this chapter has sought to offer two glimpses into what it means and looks like to negotiate the boundaries within, between, and beyond Andean cities today.
NOTES

1 Peru follows the demographic trend of many other industrializing countries with people aged 15–29 constituting 27 percent of the population, and people under the age of 14 comprising another 22 percent (INEI, 2013). Also following global trends, approximately 75 percent of Peru’s youth demographic lives in cities (UNFPA, 2013).

2 For a fuller discussion of the many ways in which hip hop has emerged and circulated in Peru, see Jones (2016, pp. 59–119).

3 Here we use hiphopero as a general way to refer to those who practice hip hop’s performative elements, or who otherwise identify or affiliate with hip hop culture. While not employed by everyone, it was nonetheless a common term used to describe themselves or others involved in hip hop in various ways. In this sense, our usage also follows the sentiment of Pardue (2008).

4 See Jones (2016, pp. 251–269) for a fuller analysis of the semiotics and practices behind the flyers for this event and the media products for hip hop events in Peru more broadly.

REFERENCES


