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# Channeling globality:

## The 1997–98 El Niño climate event in Peru

### ABSTRACT

We examine the unfolding of a planetary climate event, the 1997–98 El Niño, in a single country, Peru. Rather than seeing the worldwide attention to the event as an instance of globalization, we look at the actors who, in our terms, channeled globality by evoking a worldwide scale to build connections between disparate elements in cultural and political projects. We document how participants in Peruvian media and in everyday conversations attended selectively to certain international images and ideas as they related to the El Niño event and reworked them in distinctively Peruvian fashion. We also examine the specific context and tactics that allowed the state to succeed in channeling globality to further its ends. [*globality, state, public, media, attention, climate, Peru*]

**A**mong natural phenomena, the 1997–98 El Niño event received an extraordinary amount of print and electronic media attention around the world, surpassed only recently by the coverage of the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In part, this interest was attributable to the planetary scale of the event. The shifts in the oceans and atmosphere affected every continent, leading to increased rains in some areas and droughts in others and, consequently, to floods, epidemics, landslides, forest fires, and crop failures. Equally impressive was the proliferation of the phrase “El Niño,” which traveled around the globe accompanied by dramatic imagery and diverse political responses. The social and cultural processes that interacted on multiple scales as the 1997–98 environmental event unfolded allow interpretation, from a range of theoretical perspectives, of how global phenomena acquire meaning for different actors.

To examine this large-scale event and to gain the insights it can provide into globalized environmental incidents more generally, we trace its trajectory in a single country, Peru. By considering one country, we can see more clearly the connections between actors who were engaged with the event. El Niño events have a particularly strong impact in Peru, and Peruvians have been aware of them since the late 19th century, longer than people in most other countries, so this case offers some specific and attractive features to consider.

In our account of the El Niño event in Peru, we note elements that originate from outside the spatial and social boundaries of Peru—currents of warm water that cross the Pacific Ocean, Internet images, scientific models of ocean and atmospheric circulation, foreign experts, funds from international agencies—and link up with other elements that come from within Peru—the national government, national and regional NGOs, media

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(newspapers, magazines, and television channels), and forms of humor identified with the country. The scale and nature of these connections bring to mind the word *global*.

Many writers describe globalization as a phase that the world has entered, marked by the unimpeded extensive movement of people, objects, ideas, images, and capital; they suggest that elements move, or flow, under their own power. One famous formulation (Appadurai 1996) describes the scapes, the fluid, amorphous, interconnected spaces of the contemporary world, that have replaced an earlier, more structured hierarchy of centers and peripheries. This notion of flow has informed studies of many widely varying topics, including migration, media, social movements, and religion (Brenner 1999; Hannerz 2003).

The distinctiveness of the strand of work on which we draw most is suggested by the contrast between different ways of talking about the nature of movement associated with a globalized era. Anna L. Tsing (2005) uses the word *friction* to contrast with the earlier term *flow*, which suggests an ease and spontaneity of movement and a lack of interruption. The term *friction* condenses in a single word four different attributes of connection. Friction enables motion (as Tsing points out, wheels can turn and move because they grip the road; without friction, they only spin on their axles). Friction also directs motion: The friction on a surface can cause an object to move straight ahead or to turn. Friction slows objects down, so that something can move only if it is given additional force or impetus. And the heat created by friction serves as an example of the consequences—often unanticipated—of movement. In Tsing's view, globality is not a preexisting scale, given in the current international order. She writes, "Scale must be brought into being: proposed, practiced and evaded, as well as taken for granted" (Tsing 2005:58). This active creation of globality is particularly striking in the undertakings that Tsing terms "global projects." She provides a detailed example of a corporation created by Canadian entrepreneurs, who sought to use science, publicity, and discourses of global development to direct international capital to a gold mine in Indonesia. She carefully analyzes the frictions that supported the enterprise and also led to its demise—the linkages between different entrepreneurs and political actors, the use of imagery of untapped nature, the availability of certain forms of labor in specific regions. Her view is quite different from one that presents such enterprises as characteristic of an era of globalization in which capital, expertise, and labor flow to a mining site, balanced by a counterflow of commodities.

Aihwa Ong and Stephen J. Collier (2005) also find an alternative to the discussion of flow with their discussion of "global assemblages." This term stresses the active construction of links between diverse elements on a variety of scales. The globality of the assemblages often derives not only from the long distances that separate the elements they contain but also from the placelessness and universality of

the claims to the commonality of these elements. They are linked within discursive frameworks that are worldwide: scientific systems, sets of humanist values and ethics, and neoliberal structures of exchange and governance. Ong and Collier present two clear, if distinct, examples of global assemblages: stem-cell research and the trade in donated human organs. These assemblages require technoscientific expertise and international capital to come into being; they also rest on ethical principles about human needs and human rights that make the specific treatments of human tissue comprehensible and valued and on the systems of regulation that create uneven and complementary distribution of these activities in different parts of the world. The unevenness of elements in an assemblage and the tensions between these elements, like the friction in Tsing's discussion, contrast with a view of ready flow around the globe.

We draw from these discussions the idea of globality as a worldwide or universal scale of connections between disparate elements, and we use the word *channeling* to underscore the way that these connections are actively constructed. Like the word *friction*, *channeling* contrasts with *flow*. Even more than *friction*, it suggests an intentional directing of distant or new elements along certain paths. The term seems well suited to our case, granted the active seeking of linkages to globality on the part of many individuals and organizations in Peru. The term also conveys that Peruvian culture and media attend selectively to certain international images and ideas, only to rework them in distinctively Peruvian fashion, while finding other international images and ideas less engaging. Moreover, some efforts to channel globality succeed in attracting considerable public attention, whereas others fail; we find that certain features of Peruvian public attentiveness help account for this difference. In this instance, attentiveness was fueled by the political *telenovela* (soap opera) starring then president Alberto Fujimori, whose theme revolved around El Niño and whose actions involved intrigue, humor, and manipulation.

### El Niño

A brief explanation of the El Niño phenomenon illustrates its global scale. El Niño is a combined oceanic-atmospheric phenomenon. Every two to ten years, the body of warm water normally located in the western Pacific Ocean shifts eastward toward South America. This movement alters the circulation of winds and rainfall patterns around the globe (Glantz 2001). El Niño events vary greatly in their intensity and duration.

Multinational research programs since the 1950s have increased observation and collection of environmental data. This research has led to the establishment of the World Climate Program, run by two branches of the United Nations, the UN Environment Program and the World Meteorological Organization. The World Climate Program organized

international programs in the 1980s and 1990s to understand El Niño events. Much of this research resonated with growing public concern about ozone thinning and global warming, problems often perceived by the public to be causally linked (Kempton et al. 1996). Scientists now can predict the onset of an El Niño event and its likely regional impacts several months in advance. This scientific advance has led to major international efforts to disseminate climate forecasts. Climate-forecast institutions link their efforts to those of development agencies. These activities have created what can be called, in Ong and Collier's parlance, a "global assemblage" that connects El Niño researchers, program administrators, applications specialists, and many social groups with each other and with elements of universal discourses of technoscience and development. Through its treatment of information as a resource to be sold and invested, this assemblage connects with the universal discourse of neoliberalism as well. Nonetheless, we note that, despite the efforts of international organizations to study the climate and share weather data, national meteorological services of individual countries retain control over local data, predictions, and dissemination of information.

Although research and prediction efforts occur among a worldwide network of organizations, impacts manifest themselves on a local scale. In Peru, strong El Niño events bring torrential rains and flooding to the normally arid north coast. Ordinarily cool coastal waters turn warmer, sparking mass migration and die-offs of commercially important fish species. Elevated air temperatures and increased moisture create health problems throughout the country. Strong events lead to economic downturns, as agriculture and fisheries are severely affected and roads, bridges, and ports are damaged.

The 1997–98 El Niño was one of the most powerful of the century and the one most extensively forecast as well. The first official announcement that an event was developing was made by a Peruvian governmental agency in June 1997, following earlier rumors. When air and water temperatures in coastal Peru in 1997 did not drop as usual during winter months (June, July, and August), the country as a whole realized that an El Niño was likely. Satellite images and speculative articles appeared in several media, emergency meetings were held, and government committees were created to develop action plans. Debate was intensified by public disagreement among scientific agencies over the potential magnitude of the event, and rumors about the event became a major focus of conversation. In September 1997, President Fujimori presented a mitigation plan to the congress that focused on massive public-works projects; although the opposition strongly disagreed with this plan, its implementation was assured by Fujimori's successful use of global imagery and his authoritarian control of congress and other key institutions. An international meeting held in Lima in October

1997 led to more debate over the nature of the event, but it did not undercut Fujimori's position.

Heavy rains fell in late December and washed out roads and bridges, damaged many buildings, and created standing water that led to disease outbreaks. These rains continued through April 1998. In May, reconstruction efforts began, largely funded by loans from international agencies. This reconstruction coincided with political scandals, which later led to Fujimori's downfall (Zapata and Broad 2001). Despite these problems, the proactive response, facilitated by advances in forecasting, averted suffering of the magnitude of the 1982–83 event, when many hundreds of people died and thousands were permanently displaced.

## Prologue

It is worth emphasizing that the El Niño event unfolded in the context of recent Peruvian political instability, characterized by radical shifts from the military government that took power in 1968 to the return of elections dominated by older political parties and the emergence of new ones in the 1980s. These shifts resulted in increases in local political autonomy, particularly evident in the election of municipal officials who formerly were appointed. The 1980s are commonly referred to throughout Latin America as "the lost decade." In Peru they saw deep economic recession and hyperinflation; they also saw great violence associated with the extremism of the Shining Path and the military counterterrorism programs. Such instability set the stage for the rise of a political outsider, Fujimori, an agronomist of Peruvian–Japanese descent and rector of a major public university. Given the nickname "El Chino" (a familiar and somewhat pejorative term perhaps best translated as "the Chinaman") because of his Asian origins, Fujimori presented himself as a technocrat who could bring global prosperity to Peru. He promoted the 1993 constitution that strengthened the executive, weakened the legislature, and allowed him to run for a second term. He won by a large margin in 1995 because of the partial economic recovery, his popular public works and relief programs, and his success in defeating the Shining Path. In 1996, he set up the Ministry of the Presidency (MIPRE), a kind of executive branch within the cabinet, which came to control over one-fifth of the national budget, with little oversight from congress (Zapata and Suiero 1999:61). With congress weakened, much of the opposition to Fujimori was concentrated in municipal governments and in NGOs, which often worked in concert (Markowitz 2001).

### *March–May 1997: Early rumors*

The first Peruvians to become aware that an El Niño event might be underway were the fishers on the north coast, who noticed that the ocean waters were warmer than usual and that tropical species, ordinarily found only in the warmer waters off Ecuador, were appearing in large numbers. Stories

of these unusual phenomena spread quickly through the coastal fishing towns.

The first images of the El Niño event to reach Peru arrived in April 1997, when staff in Peruvian scientific agencies accessed the Internet website of the U.S. National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA). This site presented maps that showed sea surface temperatures characteristic of such events. We note that the Peruvian scientists actively sought out these images on their own, rather than receiving them passively as e-mail attachments, as bulletins or alerts, or in other forms. By May, newspapers carried stories of the unusually warm weather and sea temperatures and suggested that an El Niño event might soon begin.

**June–August 1997: The search for a plan**

The public awareness of the impending event increased sharply in early June, when *El Comercio*, the most cosmopolitan of Peruvian newspapers (and sometimes identified with the opposition), published an image of the pool of warm water that was moving eastward across the Pacific (see Figure 1). This newspaper has a narrow, although influential, readership among wealthy and educated urban residents. The striking image was seen by many people who did not purchase the paper, because it was prominently displayed in newspaper stands throughout the country. This image, downloaded from the NOAA website, was edited to make the threat of the event more palpable, as indicated by its caption, which can be translated as “Strong Blow” or “Devastating Impact.” A broad range of tones—dark blue, light blue, orange, and red—was used to indicate the different temperatures of water. Although this image presented some details of the ocean conditions differently from the original NOAA image—the temperature ranges for the bands of warm water that were indicated in the legend included discontinuities that are physically impossible—the use of color succeeded in underscoring a key point, the unusual heat of the warmest water. Arrows, absent in the website image, were added to give a narrative dimension to the newspaper image. Above all, the visual power of the image derived from its vivid depiction of a red blob about to hit Peru, whose national territory was shaded in a different color to make it more noticeable within South America. Building on the attraction of this and other related images, *El Comercio* developed a section later in the year that was dedicated to El Niño and included scientific and personal-interest coverage.

The wide appeal of this image constitutes the first example of channeling globality that we discuss. It is worth noting that the image did not simply flow from some cosmopolitan center to Peru but, rather, that specific actors—members of the staff of a newspaper—located the image, brought it to Peru, and modified it before circulating it. (This transformation of a global image into a more comprehensible form is broadly similar to the “translation” of universalis-



Figure 1. Map on the front page of a major Lima newspaper, June 1997.

tic discourses into local terms that Timothy K. Choy [2005] discusses in his account of environmental politics in Hong Kong.) The national scale of the public for which they reworked it was shown by the circulation of the newspaper in major towns throughout the country, by crediting the map to a government agency (SENAMHI, the national weather and hydrology service), and by the emphasis on Peru on the map.

Of equal importance to the production of the image was its reception. The urgency of the situation and novelty of this sort of map accounted for some of its appeal, as did the authority it derived from its links to international scientific agencies, mentioned in the article that accompanied it. We note that the image did not simply present itself to passive

readers but, rather, quickly elicited the great attentiveness of Peruvians to news and to other sources of information and evaluation of public life. As Michael Warner points out in his discussion of publics, individuals can belong to a social class or a nation because of their position in a social structure or system of classification “whether they are awake or asleep, sober or drunk, sane or deranged, alert or comatose” (2002:61), but they are part of a public only when they pay at least some attention to its discourse. Warner talks broadly about the reflexive circulation of discourse, the temporality of this circulation, and the possibility of alternative, oppositional, or counterpublics (cf. Hayden 2003). Our interest here is to note, in the context of discussions of globality, that this attentiveness is an important element to the popularity of the image. These points—that attentiveness is variable and that some images are widely taken up whereas others are not—are congruent with Tsing’s discussion of friction and show its difference from earlier conceptions of flow. We return to some specific features of this attentiveness.

Also in the month of June, three government scientific agencies, one connected with meteorology and hydrology, a second with oceanography and fisheries management, and a third with geosciences and seismology, gave contradictory forecasts about the possibility of an El Niño (Broad et al. 2002). These agencies faced two opposed influences: The information from NOAA and other sources suggested that an El Niño event was impending, but political forces pressed the government agencies to avoid announcing environmental problems that could lead national and international banks to cut credit. Moreover, the agencies used different sorts of analyses, reflecting their specific areas of expertise. The leaders in each of the agencies also felt a concern to distinguish themselves from the other two. This complex situation led their forecasts to vary, adding to the public concern to anticipate the coming event.

As warming continued in June and July, news of the event rapidly spread. A second example of channeling globality occurred around this time, in the rumors that circulated widely in many sectors of society. We heard them in small fishing villages on the desert coast and in cafes in exclusive neighborhoods in Lima, in provincial government offices and in urban fish markets, and in other settings as well. Some stories explained that the anomalously warm waters nearing the Peruvian coast were a result of French or Chinese nuclear bomb testing in the Pacific and that powerful groups had succeeded in suppressing this information, and others attributed the warm waters to an unspecified intervention by the United States and Europe to keep Peru underdeveloped. Other stories mentioned that Fujimori had access to private sources of information in Japan that he used to track the event, or that he had a unique access to Internet information through his special computer experts, popularly called “cibernautas”: The word combines the roots *ciber-* (the Spanish equivalent of the English *cyber-*) and *-nauta*, corre-

sponding to the *-naut* in *astronaut* and *aeronautics*. These rumors illustrate one kind of friction, in this case an ambivalence on the part of many Peruvians toward developed countries that includes admiration, or envy, of their greater power and fear that they will exploit poor countries.

Rumors are a near-constant feature of conversation in Peru as in so many other countries. At this time, some rumors centered on a variety of topics set in Peru or neighboring countries, such as corruption in congress, secret arms deals between the Peruvian military and left-wing Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas, and the whereabouts of Abimael Guzmán, the then still-uncaptured leader of the defeated Shining Path movement. In contrast, the rumors of the El Niño event all located Peru in a global context and presented the country as the passive victim of more powerful foreign countries. It was the Peruvian public itself that channeled globality in creating and circulating these stories that made sense of the new forecasts.

A sign of how rapidly the event became part of everyday reality can be observed in an advertisement produced in July by an upscale department store in Lima, Saga Falabella. Reproduced in Figure 2 are the two sides of the advertisement, printed in color on heavy stock and delivered by hand to residences in prosperous neighborhoods in Lima. On one side, the reader could complete the phrase “El niño nos ca . . .” with the syllable *gó*, “El niño nos cagó” [The child shat on us]. This phrase is inescapable given the image of the chamberpot in the advertisement. The reader who turns over the card, however, finds that the other side contains a different ending: “El niño nos cambió la moda” [The El Niño event changed fashions for us]. The humor lies not only in the near mention of the verb *to shit* but also in the link between the two sides of the advertisement; they evoke the theme of *engaño*, or trickery, because the advertisement tricks the viewer into completing the word incorrectly. The warmer temperatures associated with the El Niño event meant that clothing retailers in Lima were unable to sell their inventory of winter clothing, so they reduced prices greatly. The advertisement encouraged the reader to take advantage of this temporary situation and stock up on cheap winter clothes.

This humor represents an interesting counterpoint to the rumors. It shows that the attention that Warner discusses derives from more than an instrumental concern to follow events of political significance—the sort of interest that leads people to look closely at a map in a newspaper that depicts impending disaster. More broadly, this attention comes from a wish to keep up with the changing elements in public discourse. In Peru, as in many other countries, people like to tell rumors and jokes to others who have not heard them before, and people like to hear new rumors and jokes. Each telling has an intrinsic value (of information, titillation, and humor) and, an additional value of timeliness and alertness.

To gain insight into different forms of such public attention, an excellent starting point is the work of the art



Figure 2. Advertisement distributed in Lima, July 1997.

historian Michael Fried, in particular, his 1980 book about French painting in the middle of the 18th century, a period of interest not only because it led up to the French Revolution but also because painting itself was widely viewed and debated at that time, especially at the Parisian salons. These salons were annual events that lasted several weeks; men and women of divergent social backgrounds gathered in a large building to view and to discuss the hundreds of paintings that were displayed (Crow 1985). Fried describes two different modes of attention in this period, noting these types both in the people depicted in the paintings and in the beholders of the paintings. He terms the first “absorption,” a sustained, engrossed, contemplative engagement, often directed at a self-contained object that evokes general or abstract themes. The second, “theatricality,” is quite different: a more transient and self-conscious appreciation, often directed at an object that makes an effort to catch the viewer’s eye. Fried shows that these two modes coexisted and were in competition. He traces many fascinating issues involving these modes, including the debates about their merits

(some argued that the sincerity of absorption could tend toward sentimentality or banality, whereas others claimed that the sophistication of theatricality could lead toward artifice and frivolity) and the way that these two modes both supported the dominant view of the superiority of paintings of historical scenes over other genres such as portraiture and landscapes. Writing a few years later, Jonathan Crary (1990) considers more broadly the coexistence of multiple forms of observation; he traces other cultural theorists whose works can be understood as efforts to demarcate transitions in the history of attention, including Walter Benjamin’s discussion of the flaneur and Michel Foucault’s account of the spectacle.

For the purposes of our discussion, Fried’s work is of use because it suggests the possibility of describing different sorts of public attention, a kind of parallel to Tim Ingold’s (2000) more anthropological consideration of the many specific forms of attention. The examples of the map, rumors, and joke that we have just discussed demonstrate a third mode of public attention, one that we call “viveza.” This word is commonly used by Peruvians to describe a specific



sort of alertness that combines sharpness, wit, and a refusal to be tricked or fooled. This *viveza* can be considered a core cultural value, because Peruvians generally speak of it positively. The possibility of an El Niño event provided an excellent opportunity for many people to display this value by closely following the news and by circulating rumors and jokes. *Viveza* has a direct relation to *engaño*, discussed earlier, because the person who has more *viveza* can trick others and is less likely to be tricked. As we discuss below, this particular form of attentiveness was clearly evident in the public's active reception and circulation of images associated with the El Niño event. (We note the complexity of discussions of *viveza* within Peru, especially the apparently contradictory pride and embarrassment with which many Peruvians speak of this key element in a kind of national self-awareness [Herzfeld 1997].)

Our discussion can now return to the particular situation in August 1997. At that time, the Peruvian public recognized that the warm temperatures of the ocean and atmosphere meant a strong likelihood of heavy rains late in the year and early in 1998. This possibility evoked memories of the destructive floods during El Niño events in earlier decades. These concerns led to the question of what responses could be taken. Two major alternatives coalesced. In June, Fujimori set up a government commission, composed of representatives of four ministries, soon joined by members of the military's civil defense organization, to coordinate planning of mitigation programs. They focused attention on civil defense and planning to reinforce bridges and roads, to dig drainage canals to divert flooding rivers around major cities, and to strengthen sea walls in coastal towns against storm surges. These actions showcased Fujimori's technical skills and offered him political advantages by garnering him support in certain critical regions of the country and by allowing him to control a large budget. In addition, the government commission proposed public health campaigns to curb expected outbreaks of cholera and dengue fever and subsidized credit for homeowners to reinforce their dwellings.

Municipal governments, NGOs, and universities, all active in the political opposition, formed a loose network that developed an alternative program. Two of the most active NGOs were located in the northern coastal departments of Piura and Lambayeque, historically vulnerable to severe flooding in El Niño years. These NGOs and local universities had long been involved in studying historical records of El Niño events and formulating local response plans, although they did not have the extensive scientific background of the national agencies or the sophisticated familiarity with the Internet. The alternative program emphasized emergency food relief and credits to agricultural producers and homeowners. It included civil defense projects as well, although its plans suggested a larger number of somewhat smaller and more decentralized projects than the plan formulated by

the government commission. It proposed channeling funds through municipal offices rather than national ministries, because this system would allow support to reach local actors more effectively, and because the opposition parties, although weak in congress, held over half the mayor's offices in provincial towns (Tuesta 1998).

A sense of uncertainty continued to pervade the country as the anticipated rains drew closer. The August 14, 1997, issue of *Caretas*, a national magazine associated with the opposition, carried a cover image of an Asian boy, clearly President Fujimori, standing under an umbrella; the caption reads, "Will he stay dry through the downpour?" suggesting that the readers of the magazine were aware of the forecasts of heavy rains to come. Implicit in the cover is the question of Fujimori's political stability. More broadly, the cover of this national magazine shows the naturalness of the assumption that the state was the key entity that would address the impending threat.

It was the president's plan, rather than the opposition plan, that triumphed in September 1997. In hindsight, it is not surprising that this plan won. Fujimori had tight control over his party, which held nearly 60 percent of the seats in congress. The remaining seats were split among a number of smaller parties. It is very difficult to imagine that a strong coalition of opposition parties and defectors from Fujimori's party could have defeated his plan. Nonetheless, there was less debate in congress over this proposal than over many of Fujimori's other programs.

Fujimori put considerable effort behind his proposal. It fit in well with his self-presentation as an engineer with great technical expertise, and it also met his concern to shore up support in critical regions, especially the north coast. He chose Daniel Hokama, the Japanese-Peruvian minister of the presidency, to present the program to congress on September 15. Hokama's speech contained many elements of channeling globality, which were reinforced by his own visible Asian ancestry.

The speech contained detailed figures and charts that emphasized Fujimori's access to scientific information; two congressional representatives had told us in August 1997 that they were sure that the president and his top ministers had personal sources of information on the event but that they kept that information secret so that they could develop a plan to respond to the event. The speech also emphasized the international basis of market economic rationality. In making the point that spending government funds on public works to prevent El Niño-related damage was an investment that would benefit the national economy by reducing future expenditures in reconstruction, Hokama gave figures in dollars rather than in the national currency of the *nuevo sol*. More broadly, he alluded to the economic model of neoliberalism that emphasized the integration of developing countries into global markets and that Fujimori strongly supported (Campodónico et al. 1993; Castillo 1997; Gonzales 1998).

Ironically, other neoliberal policies of Fujimori's had increased the vulnerability of many Peruvians to the climate event. For instance, because of elimination of protections for labor (e.g., minimum-wage laws and minimum periods for work contracts), industrial fisheries workers were fired before catches declined; during earlier El Niño events, catches also declined, but workers retained some wages and insurance. In the agricultural sector, the heavy rains favored rice producers who produced a bumper crop, but imports of inexpensive Asian rice dramatically deflated prices, leading to a massive supply glut. In most sectors, subsidized credit to take preventative measures was unavailable so that, even with advance warning of impending floods, those most vulnerable were unable to take significant action.

Fujimori's plan could be described as an instance of what Tsing has termed "globalist projects." In Tsing's terms, the global scale of Fujimori's reach was not merely preexisting but, rather, was "brought into being" (2005:58) through specific acts that drew some elements at a global scale together with other elements at different scales. Like the entrepreneurs Tsing describes, Fujimori's combinations seem a kind of conjuring, carried off in an audacious and imaginative fashion. Tsing's accounts emphasize the varieties of scales (she writes, partly tongue in cheek, about "articulations of partially hegemonic imagined different scales" [2005:76]). In the case of Fujimori, though, it is the importance of the national scale, rather than the multiplicities of scales, that is most striking, not merely because Fujimori drew on his control of national institutions but also because of the importance of national scales of attentiveness. Fujimori showed his *viveza* in accessing distant, novel information sources through advanced technology and commanded the attention of the public, which also displayed its *viveza* in creating images, jokes, and rumors about him. This public engagement with Fujimori is an example of a broader aspect of state power that Begoña Aretxaga describes as the way that the state evokes an insatiable fascination because of its nature as "a screen for political desire as well as fear" (2003:394).

We note a more specific aspect of state power as well. The nature of the El Niño event places state organizations in a position from which they are well poised to channel globality. Indeed, there is a kind of affinity between El Niño events and national governments. The large spatial scale of the events means that the responses have to be coordinated over a large area; many NGOs have proven themselves most effective at the local level, rather than at a provincial or national level. Moreover, the global division of labor has assigned climate-related concerns such as aviation and national security to national institutions. Because of their long temporal continuity, wide spatial coverage, and access to public funding, these institutions are better suited to these tasks than smaller public agencies or private institutions. By working together, national weather services in different

countries can develop common standards of measurement and share data, allowing them to perform their tasks more effectively. The major climate organizations in Peru, as in most countries, are national agencies and provide key outputs—data and forecasts—to the central government rather than to NGOs. El Niño events are not the only atmospheric issues that have been addressed largely through national governments; others include air pollution and acid rain (Morag-Levine 2003), ozone thinning (Benedick 1991; Litfin 1994), and, more recently, global warming. National governments are the central actors in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its key agreement, the Kyoto Protocol, and in the somewhat more activist-oriented mobilization around climate change in the Arctic. The Arctic Council, composed of the United States, Canada, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Russia, has sponsored major studies of impacts of global warming on natural and social systems at high latitudes and has pressured other international agencies to take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In sum, this general association of national governments and weather services gave Fujimori an additional advantage, one that he seized very effectively.

#### *September 1997–November 1997: The president takes charge*

With a clearly formulated and well-funded program in place, the Peruvian public might have settled down after September, trusting that their president had used forecasts, which had been unavailable in previous El Niño events, to protect them from the rains that were projected to begin in December or January. Instead, the event continued to receive media coverage and remained a major topic of conversation. In part, this attention came from structural causes. Media institutions and government organizations offered different forecasts because the scientific models were not in complete agreement and because a novel forecast attracted more attention than a familiar one. This attention also came from the public's insatiable appetite for information, a quality that we discuss in subsequent sections.

In particular, rumors continued to circulate in many different social sectors. Members of the public were eager to obtain new information that would allow them to develop plans to face the coming event. One woman who worked part-time in a fish processing plant thought that the plant managers had been told that the El Niño event would reduce fish stocks but that they would not pass that information on to workers. Instead, the plant managers wanted the workers to keep hoping that they would remain employed. A midlevel bank employee was denied information by some scientists; he explained that certain government scientists withheld the truth because of industry pressure or their wish to act as consultants to private firms. Distrust associated with the flow of climate information was also evident at the household level. In interviews, spouses of both artisanal fishermen and



industry executives expressed doubt about whether their husbands were telling the truth about the imminent arrival of a damaging El Niño or were merely using the event as an excuse to reduce the wives' allowances. These very different people had all discussed the El Niño event with coworkers and others and had all arrived at the same belief: Their scope of action was limited by the hidden actions of powerful figures. Aretxaga points out that such views of states are common; she writes of the "shroud of secrecy surrounding the being of the state" (2003:400). This general perception is particularly strong in Peru, a setting in which *viveza* is emphasized; conversations often turn to the possibility that someone is concealing information, or that someone is attempting trickery, or *engaño*.

The nature of public attention during this time of uncertainty can be seen by the reception of a major Climate Outlook Forum that took place in Lima in October. We discuss this conference in some detail because it represents an interesting example of a failure to channel globality. Sponsored by the governments of Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Chile, and Bolivia, with support from NOAA and Peruvian private industry, it was widely covered by the Peruvian media. The topic of the day was whether the impending El Niño event would be as severe as the 1982–83 event, the most severe in recent history. The Climate Outlook Forum was publicized as a meeting of experts intent on answering the question "Is this the El Niño of the century?" This conference, organized like other Climate Outlook Forums held in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and elsewhere in Latin America, illustrates the transformation of globalized environmental knowledge as it enters a national setting. Following the emphasis in current development culture on participatory approaches, international agencies were balanced by local expertise from western South America; there were efforts to involve "stakeholders" at the meeting and to disseminate information broadly. These seemingly altruistic, although perhaps paternalistic, goals were largely thwarted by political rivalries and individual greed. No NGOs were represented, and several key governmental groups were excluded because of competition with other agencies. Participation from provincial areas was limited, and high entrance fees further reduced attendance. A powerful subset of the fishing industry dominated the meeting and pressed for interpretations of evidence in accord with its interests.

Rumors circulated to discount the conference. Many observers, aware of pressure from fishing concerns and of the eagerness of individual scientists to obtain consultancy positions with private industry, discounted the conference's conclusions about El Niño's likely impacts; some of these observers told crude jokes that suggested the intimate nature of the relations between the state and private industry and that evoked the *engaño*, or deceit, with which the state and industry tried to trick the public. The international climate scientists who participated in the meeting assumed that

the globalized types of information brought to the forum—climate information derived from a worldwide environmental observational network and multinational computer modeling collaboration—was nonpolitical; these scientists were surprised by the way that these data were reinterpreted in the context of the national meeting to serve private interests.

The clearest failure to channel globality can be seen in the final product of this conference, a map that presented the consensus forecast developed by the scientists in attendance. This map divided western South America into subregions (see Figure 3). For each of these subregions, the map provided three numbers, the probabilities that rains in coming months would be above normal, near normal, or below normal, with these probabilities always totaling 100 percent. It is here that the friction that shapes global projects can most clearly be seen, as this map closely resembled those prepared with NOAA direction at Climate Outlook Forums elsewhere in the world. The media, however, did not publish this map. This was perhaps the most globalized of images in terms of the range of inputs into its creation. Its contents—the outcome of two days of intense debates among international experts armed with the latest computer-generated predictions—represented the newest developments in climate science, although it was hand-drawn with felt-tip pens. Newspaper and television reporters covered this conference extensively, expecting it to resolve debate over the event's magnitude, but they never reproduced or referred to this visually confusing map. The lack of attention to this map, which contrasts so sharply with the interest in other images, suggests that the Peruvian media and public did not passively receive all images from global sources but, rather, selected the ones that they found most attractive. Some media representatives expressed surprise (and even laughter) at the technological crudeness of the hand-drawn map, implying that Peruvian audiences expect graphic sophistication and forceful presentation on a par with the developed world. The lack of concrete, vivid description of the consequences of the projected rainfall may also explain the lack of popularity of this image, given that much of the reporting accompanying this El Niño was sensationalistic (Zelada 1998). We note that the conference map was provided by the same agency that produced the map that was redrawn by Peruvian graphic specialists and printed in *El Comercio*, reproduced here as Figure 1. It is not the source of the image that grants it authority but, rather, its usefulness and legibility to particular people at a particular time that give it potential interest.

The Climate Outlook Forum only increased public confusion and concern. It underscored Fujimori's lack of confidence in his own scientific agencies. In response, he intensified personal involvement in the prevention efforts and turned to a small group of close advisers, reinforcing the public perception that he had a monopoly on the latest technology, information, and expertise.

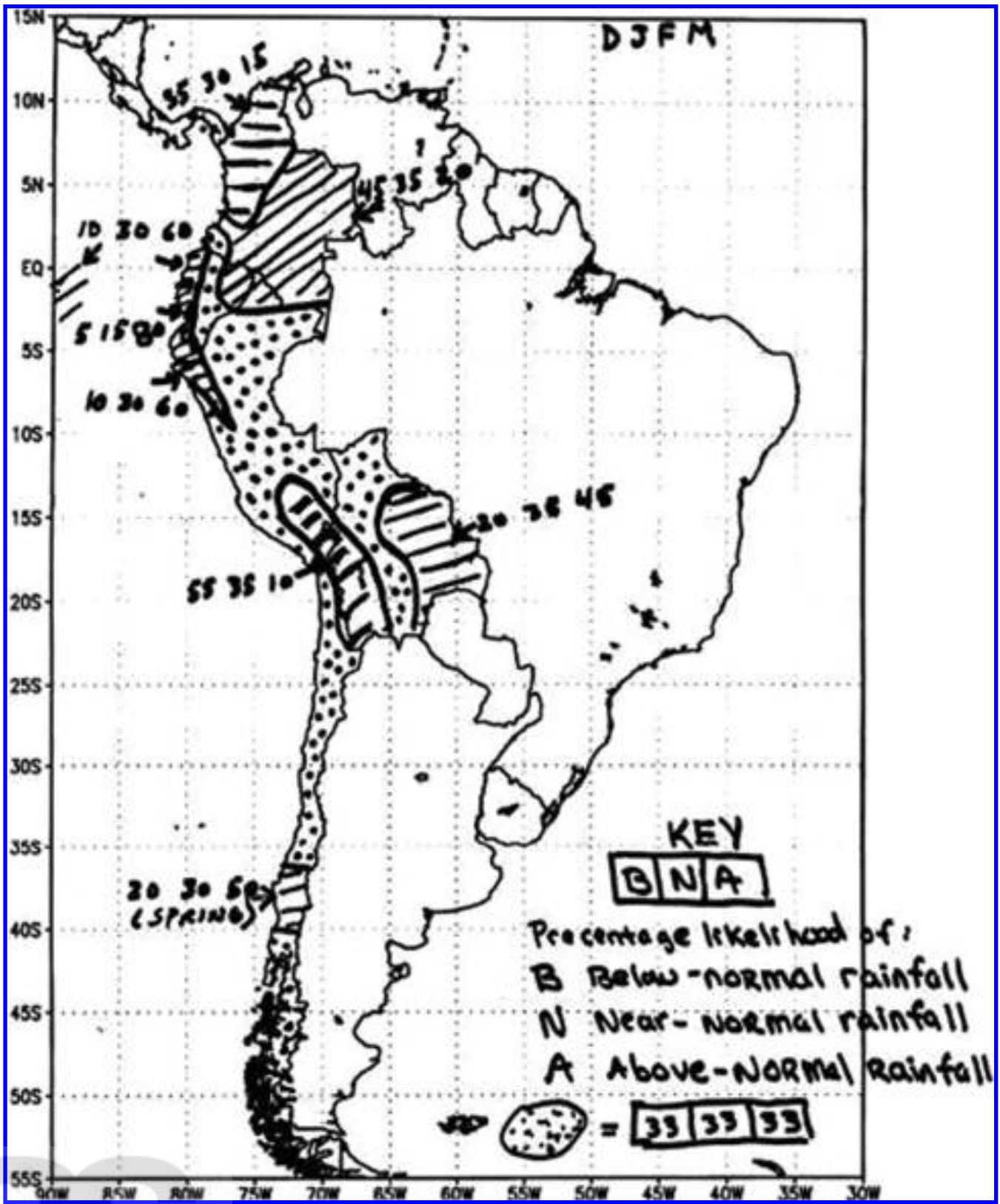


Figure 3. Map produced by atmospheric scientists at Climate Outlook Forum, October 1997.

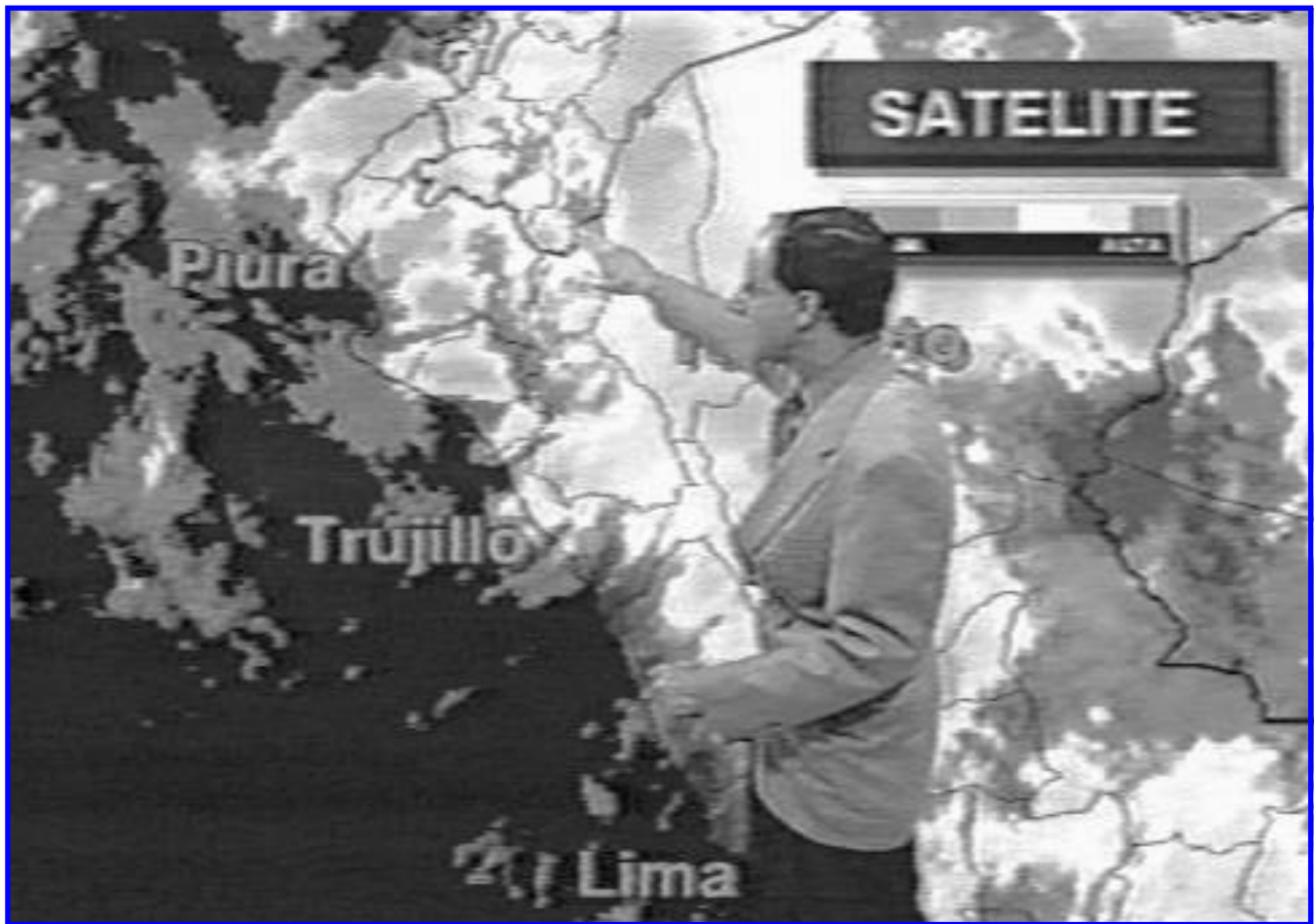


Figure 4. Screenshot from television program, Lima, January 1998.

This failed conference resembles the global assemblage discussed by Ong and Collier, in that it drew together global forms and other entities to occupy “a common field in contingent, uneasy, unstable interrelationships” (2005:12). A multiplicity of actors and images came together in networklike fashion, very different from the flow or diffusion of information outward from centers envisaged by many globalization theorists. The universality of the global that Ong and Collier describe was present as well, at least from the perspective of the international agencies, who saw the Climate Outlook Forum in Peru as one instance of a generic structure, with Latin American “stakeholders” easily substituting for African or Asian counterparts in other instances.

Peru’s oldest and largest television network, America-TV, was more successful in satisfying the public thirst for high-tech images of the El Niño event. This network, founded in Peru in 1958, established a new television feature in November 1997. It aired twice a day in Peru throughout the event (see Figure 4). The name of the program, *SATEL*, was an acronym for “Sistema de Alerta Temprano para El Niño”

(Early Warning System for El Niño) and referred to the satellites that provided real-time images of El Niño-related storm systems. Its daily updates on the event—accompanied by colorful satellite maps of the country—attracted many viewers. Some of its success came from the trust many Peruvians place in television show hosts, who are often seen as being unbiased, and from the broad perception that the weather announcer was not aligned with government agencies or political parties. This success may further be attributed to the belief that the images, beamed down to Peru from international satellites, somehow escaped the interference of powerful forces in Peru. The references in the show to current temperatures in cities in Peru also confirmed the belief that the show was broadcast live and so was not open to manipulation. (Indeed, talk shows, broadcast live, are generally popular in Peru [Fowks 2000].)

This emphasis on global technologies was a key element in the program’s popularity, even though the program continued to rely on established land-based weather stations, run by the national meteorological agency SENAMHI, for much of its information, such as daily high temperatures in

cities throughout Peru. It is interesting to note that a national media organization channeled globality so effectively. Even the richest of the provincial television stations did not have the resources to produce and distribute a program on this scale, but, more importantly, Peruvians perceive weather as a phenomenon that is national (it makes sense to listen to the daily high temperatures and precipitation levels in different cities, much as one might follow soccer scores or election results in other parts of the country) and global (it can be observed on a planetary scale from space).

In her thoughtful account of Egyptian television, and of the ways that it reflects and shapes understandings of the nation, Lila Abu-Lughod (2005) examines a particular form, the serial drama that focuses on a particular theme or situation and that runs for a fixed number of episodes rather than for one or more yearly seasons, as most U.S. television programs do. This focus, short time span, and novelty concentrate attention and allow viewers to engage deeply with the complex issues of addressing the profound differences within Egypt and the location of Egypt within wider regional and global contexts and with universal fields such as development and education. Despite its links to the genre of news rather than drama, *SATEL* had many of the attributes of such serials in its focus, temporal limits, and novelty; the distinctive personality of the announcer, the videos of moving storm systems, and the repeated references to particular cities and regions added significant dramatic elements as well. Large audiences tuned in to *SATEL* for emotional engagement as well as receipt of information. The program allowed them to locate their nation in the universal fields of progress and technoscience.

## The main event

### *December 1997–April 1998: The rains arrive*

In December 1997, the heavy rains began. Flooding occurred on the north coast and, surprisingly, in the south-central department of Ica as well. Tens of thousands of houses were damaged or destroyed, and hundreds of people were killed. Despite the extensive prevention works, these rains rendered sections of the major coastal highway impassible and disrupted transportation nationwide. The major commercial fisheries were heavily impacted. The highland areas received a mix of drought and flood, leading to mudslides, damage to crops, and the inability to transport goods to market (Colegio de Ingenieros del Perú [CIP] 1999).

Fujimori continued to lead the government response. Although he had initially stated that Peru could handle El Niño alone, by the end of 1997 he had actively sought aid from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, receiving \$450 million in foreign loans while spending approximately \$162 million out of the Peruvian treasury (Zapata and Suiero 1999). This international flow of capital

occurred after global images had circulated widely in national media and discourse and political alternatives had been debated. Although international financial institutions are widely understood to have a strong hand in shaping policy in developing countries, this instance, at least, shows the national dimensions of politics and supports a view of globalist projects, or global assemblages, rather than of a rapid flow of capital in an era of globalization. To gain support for his programs in September, Fujimori channeled globality by drawing on global imagery, rather than by receiving promises of support from international institutions. Despite the common perception that international institutions had shifted their focus to community-level projects, often run by NGOs, money for El Niño-related activities flowed directly to the central government.

Fujimori and his advisers in the Ministry of the Presidency organized another international meeting, held in January 1998. Recognizing the need to assure the continuity of external funding for reconstruction projects, they wished to show off a level of technical expertise and national consensus that may not have been entirely genuine. They invited the national oceanographic agency, IMARPE, and the UN Development Programme to review work completed in the different provinces. International experts were brought in to lecture and to provide legitimacy to the event. Video teleconferencing linked conference attendees to the provinces, where mayors and civil defense leaders reported on the status of prevention efforts and current climate conditions. The immediacy of this novel communication form, although awkward for the participants, was a first attempt at involving the provinces in the centralized show of competence. The modes of information flow point out, ironically, the relative ease in obtaining information from international sources and the difficulty of utilizing information within national borders. In this venue, some participants in the provinces fleetingly sensed shifts toward cosmopolitanism, along the lines envisioned by some globalization scholars; for once they were contributing to a discussion rather than being the passive receptors of information generated in Lima, joining, at least momentarily, the imagined community of El Niño researchers. Although its linkages were somewhat shaky, this global assemblage held together, for the span of a few days at least. The friction from this meeting helped Fujimori receive approval for funding a few months later.

The El Niño event continued to receive attention in television and other media once the heavy rains began in December 1997. The competition between media outlets to appear as having privileged access to information is exemplified by the following headlines that appeared within a day of each other in two major newspapers: “El Niño may be arriving at its end” (*El Comercio* 1998: 1) and “The worst of El Niño has not happened, it will occur in next month” (Castillo 1998: 3). *Caretas* devoted five of its covers in January and February of 1998 to the event—an unusual number for a magazine that





Figure 5. Cartoon from popular Lima newspaper, January 1998.

usually features politicians, movie stars, and soccer players on its cover. Radio discussions of the event expanded as well.

A more overtly comical image appeared on the front page of the January 9, 1998, issue of *Chesú!*, a newspaper published in Lima and sold throughout Peru (see Figure 5). This newspaper was displayed and sold widely in newsstands, so many pedestrians who did not buy it still saw the cover. It plays on the crude humor typical of the tabloid press, known in Peru as *la prensa chicha*, the press that appeals to the lower classes, especially of mixed-race background, and that Fujimori often used to run smear campaigns against opposition leaders. The image, in full color, shows a woman and a man standing in the ocean. The woman says, “Oh, the ocean is really warm,” and the man replies, “Yes, that’s because of the ‘El Niño current.’” The alternate meaning of the “El Niño current” is evident in a boy urinating in the water as he whistles and averts his eyes in an unsuccessful effort to avoid being noticed. This cartoon plays on the favorite theme of *engaño*, deception; here, the man has fooled the woman about the nature of the water in which they are standing.

It is interesting to compare this image with that of the advertisement in Figure 2. They appeal to different classes, and they also make reference to different races. The child in the advertisement is clearly blond, whereas the relative Indianness of the people on the cover of the tabloid is marked by the woman’s dark skin, the man’s short stature, and the boy’s cheap sandals. This range suggests the wide appeal of humor across social divisions. The two portrayals show the dramatic shifts from the original religious association between the El Niño current with the Christ child to the newer incorporation of El Niño into Peruvian popular culture.

Fujimori also used visual media to display cleaned waterways, new dams, and reinforced bridges. We include here a representative image, taken from a document produced by the Ministry of the Presidency to showcase his efforts to address the landslides on the north coast of Peru (see Figure 6). Other elements in the popular press, however, incorporated the El Niño event into critiques of Fujimori’s other problems, such as high unemployment rates, human-rights violations, and widespread corruption. The tongue-in-cheek cover of a leading national news magazine shows these connections. The headline reads, “Watch out! The attack of the Super-Niño, or the kryptonite of being the center of attention.” It suggests that if Fujimori wishes to present himself as a kind of hero with superpowers, he is also vulnerable to a kind of kryptonite. The muddy, bare foot of a brown-skinned person suggests an ordinary Peruvian, the victim of flooding associated with the El Niño event (see Figure 7).

#### May 1998–December 1998: The nation cleans up

The connection of distant locales within Peru was by no means wholly illusory. The country witnessed countless stories of individual and community heroism during and after the floods, in which blocked roads were cleared, survivors were dug out from landslides, and neighbors assisted one another. The government had averted a disaster of the magnitude of the 1982–83 event through its short-term infrastructure improvements, allowing Fujimori to gain some popular approval. The reconstruction period, however, further highlights the place-based political underpinnings of societal vulnerability to recurring environmental shocks.

In June 1998, Fujimori formed the Executive Reconstruction Committee for El Niño (CEREN) to oversee reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, using loans from international organizations and some matching funds from the government. The reconstruction process was marked by periods of sporadic intensity that seemed to correlate with the lobbying and campaigning leading up to the municipal elections in October 1998 (Zapata and Suiero 1999). Unsurprisingly, the reconstruction process followed many of the patterns previously described: petty corruption, political favoritism, interagency squabbling, and bureaucratic inefficiency. Rebuilding began in the shadow of the torrential rains and floods, and the government, claiming pressure from the IMF, partially held back on its promise of matching funds, thus reducing the amount dispensed by the international agencies.

The sense of distrust reflected in both jokes and rumors, particularly the sensitivity to *engaño*, or deception, proved to be reasonable, given that the public statements of major officials differed from their actions. Although they promised to address the needs of all the Peruvian people, the funding was concentrated in infrastructure projects in large cities



Figure 6. Photograph of President Fujimori in Lambeyeque from government publication, February 1998.

(reinforcing the Pan-American Highway and other major roads and clearing riverbeds in coastal capitals) and in credit to large agricultural firms. These actions were certainly a necessary step to avoid the major disruptions akin to those in the 1982–83 El Niño event. Nevertheless, residents of smaller towns and poor neighborhoods expressed a sense of their neglect by the central government, which did not address the impacts that most directly affected them.

The period of reconstruction after the rains ended in April provided Fujimori and his associates with opportunities to be photographed as they led the nation out of the disaster—and gave the opposition visual moments as well, for example, when poorly constructed bridges and retaining walls collapsed. Attention tapered off late in 1998, especially after the municipal elections in October; the *SATEL* program was terminated at the end of the year.

### Epilogue: The limits of perception management

Ideologically, no dramatic shifts occurred in the established political forms as a result of Peru's location at the epicenter of

this global environmental phenomenon. The strength of the state was not undermined by the new imagery and knowledge, and no shifts in identity took place. And although El Chino may have beaten El Niño, his glory was short-lived, and the same visual media that he had used to manage his image as the efficient technocrat triggered the end of his rule. The event that precipitated Fujimori's fall from power was the release of a video in September 2001 showing his secretive adviser, Vladimiro Montesinos, bribing an opposition leader. Further investigation revealed that thousands of similar tapes existed, tools of extortion used by Fujimori to retain political advantage. (Later that year, the owners of America-TV, the channel that developed the successful *SATEL* program, fled to Argentina after a video showed them receiving bribes from Montesinos to air pro-Fujimori programs.) Fujimori's flight to Japan rejuvenated claims about his Asian, non-Peruvian identity and opened space for an interim government that led to the 2002 election of Alejandro Toledo, who played on his globalized identity with Indian peasant roots and Stanford education, at ease in both the remote countryside and in the boardroom.



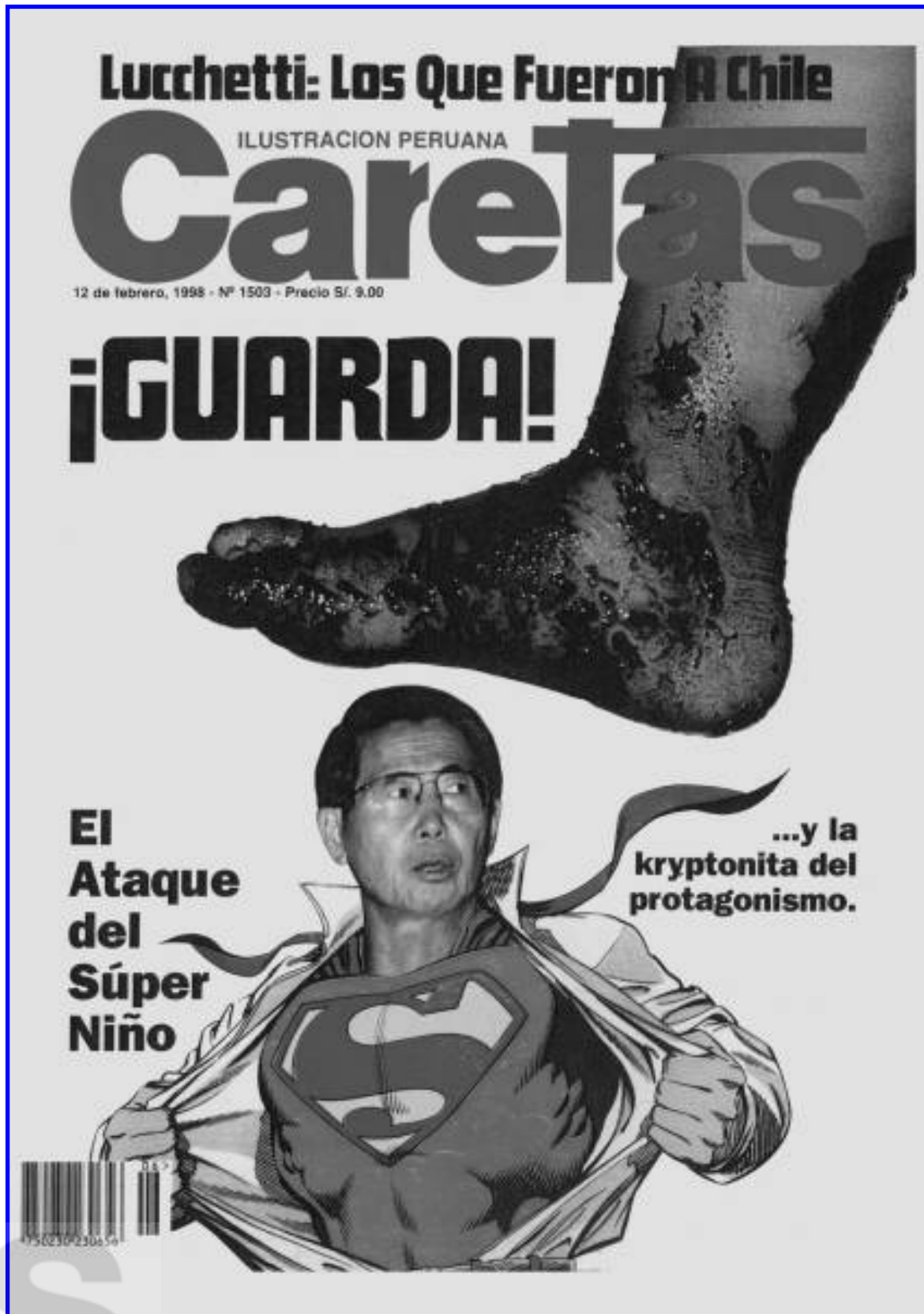


Figure 7. Cover of major Peruvian news magazine, February 1998.

## Conclusions

The 1997–98 El Niño climate event in Peru offers a useful case for considering globality. Descriptions of this event, written closer in time to its occurrence, might have drawn on earlier models of globalization and emphasized the importance of flow: the flow of satellite images from major international centers to a peripheral country such as Peru that would have built awareness of the event, the flow of experts who would have traveled to conferences in Lima and who would have shaped the perception of the event as very serious, the flow of funding for relief programs that would have favored political organizations in Peru best suited to receive such support. In contrast, our account emphasizes the agency of actors in Peru in selecting and, moreover, in seeking out certain global connections (and in recasting these connections in their own terms) while refusing other such connections. The Peruvian press and public adopted, and reworked, one NOAA image (see Figure 1) but rejected another (see Figure 3). Two sets of political forces in the country developed plans to protect against anticipated flooding and other impacts; only after one of these forces triumphed were international funds solicited. This emphasis on a contingent interweaving of elements at a global scale with elements at other scales is much closer to Tsing's discussion of globalist projects or Ong and Collier's presentation of global assemblages than to an earlier view of globalization as a process of unimpeded flow of images, capital, people, and objects. We use the term *channeling globality* to refer to efforts to establish linkages with entities on a global scale. This term indicates the active nature of efforts that are made to establish connections at a global scale. It also draws on another sense of the word *channeling* to suggest that some actors gain power by claiming special personal powers in linking with distant sources of value. Finally, the term *channeling globality* also serves to suggest that actors make connections on established routes, drawing on specific modes of attending to images.

These reflections raise the question of the autonomy of actors in selecting the terms by which they link with global entities. Some recent works have proposed two major constraints on actors: the importance of universal discourses and the role of immediate conjunctures. Ong and Collier suggest that discourses that can be seen as universal, such as technoscience and neoliberalism, often play a crucial role in supporting global assemblages; by their great abstractability, they facilitate the connection of diverse elements across spatial scales. Capable of being decontextualized, they can be recontextualized in new settings. In a related vein, Tsing discusses universals such as prosperity and freedom. These abstractions rest on basic elements of human existence and, because of this, can link elements together in global projects. But, Tsing reminds us, "Universals are effective within particular historical conjunctures that give them content and

force" (2005:8). She suggests that this conjunctural feature of universals can be called "engagement," and discusses what she terms "engaged universals." Indeed, the world is replete with examples of such engaged universals. To take only one, Nils Bubandt (2005) discusses the growing global discussion of security, especially since the end of the Cold War and after September 11, 2001, and traces the development of specifically Indonesian forms of this concern. He considers the presence of the Indonesian military in villages in the remote eastern island of Helmahera and shows the ways that local and regional actors draw on this universal focus on security and create their own Indonesian variety of it, which he terms "vernacular security."

We note that the case of the El Niño event could be read in terms of such specific conjunctures. They could help explain why the universals in this case—human security against disasters and technoscience, in particular—have selective appeal. The *SATEL* television program drew large audiences for months, whereas the equally sophisticated NOAA map of the Climate Outlook Forum was rejected by the Peruvian media and public, who found it visually crude and quite literally illegible. Fujimori's program to address security needs received broad support, whereas the program articulated by the opposition failed. Other elements of universal security and technoscience, such as climate forecasts, were recombined with established cultural forms, such as rumors and salacious cartoons in the popular press, very much the kind of recontextualization that Ong and Collier discuss. In other words, the effectiveness of the universals could be seen as quite specific and conjunctural, as was made so explicit in the ways that concrete social and cultural formations shaped the use of discourses of citizenship and human entitlements in the struggles on the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Katrina (Lipsitz 2006). We would note two particular elements of the historical conjuncture in the Peruvian case, the salience of the national scale and the concrete form of public attention. The salience of the national scale is striking in the basic framing of the Peruvian nation as the object of the event and the Peruvian state as the key actor in the response to it. We have discussed as well the state's use of forms of public attention. Tsing notes that engaged universals "convince us to pay attention to them" (2005:8). Indeed, an aspect of the historical conjuncture would be the pattern of public attention itself, the *viveza* (a kind of clever alertness that guards against trickery) that underlay the rapid spread of news of the El Niño event beyond major media and official pronouncements into the everyday world of conversation, rumors, and jokes, that created a concern to stay up-to-the-minute and to be among the first to hear news, and that Fujimori and the Peruvian media drew on so successfully.

We suggest, however, that this analysis would press the term *conjuncture*, with its associations of temporal brevity, to serve more broadly than it readily can. To be sure, some specific situational elements can appropriately be described

as conjunctural: the strength of Fujimori's party at the time and his effective use of the well-funded Ministry of the Presidency, the concentration of media organizations in the national capital, and the like. Nevertheless, powerful state institutions and deeply rooted patterns of attentiveness have long histories; they are woven through the everyday worlds of experience or, if one prefers, of habitus. They exist in some middle ground between the universal and the conjunctural, a ground once unselfconsciously described by such terms as *structure* and *culture* and that might now more neutrally be called "context."

Whether one wishes to use the word *conjuncture* broadly or, as we suggest, to distinguish between a more temporary frame of conjuncture and a more enduring frame of context, we suggest that these elements have their counterparts in many settings around the world. Climate events create various forms of engaged universals, through their connection with conjunctural features in specific projects, with contextual elements of states and forms of attention, and with the abstract systems of technoscience and human security. Fujimori and his administration played one climate event brilliantly. George W. Bush and his counterparts proved far less able to turn public attentiveness and state institutions in the United States to similar advantage when another event, Hurricane Katrina, approached and struck the Gulf Coast far more rapidly than the warming ocean and atmosphere impacted Peru. It remains to be seen how public attention and state institutions will respond, in the midst of other pressing conjunctures, to the much slower, but much more powerful, planetary warming that is bearing down on us all.

## Note

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