

### Introduction

For those who are not familiar with our way of working, it might be good to take a peek into the work Iris and I did before: [here is a showcase of past projects](#).

One thing you could notice that South America is a continent we have not worked on before.

### What about Peru?

In November 2018, we made the short film '[Terra](#)' during a theater-workshop in Volterra, Italy. Among the many nationalities of the participating actors, there was César Vega Bedon from Peru. He did not participate in the film, but was genuinely touched by it and wrote us his compliments through Facebook Messenger later. He told us he was an art teacher at a school in Pomallucay, a small village in the Andes. He doesn't speak English and we speak only poco-poco Spanish, but with the help of Google Translate, a conversation got started. Pretty soon we got excited by the idea of doing a project in Peru, since César could introduce us to a world which is not easily accessed. It got even more serious, after he was chosen to become director of the Juan Velasco Alvarado school in an even smaller village nearby, called Canchabamba.

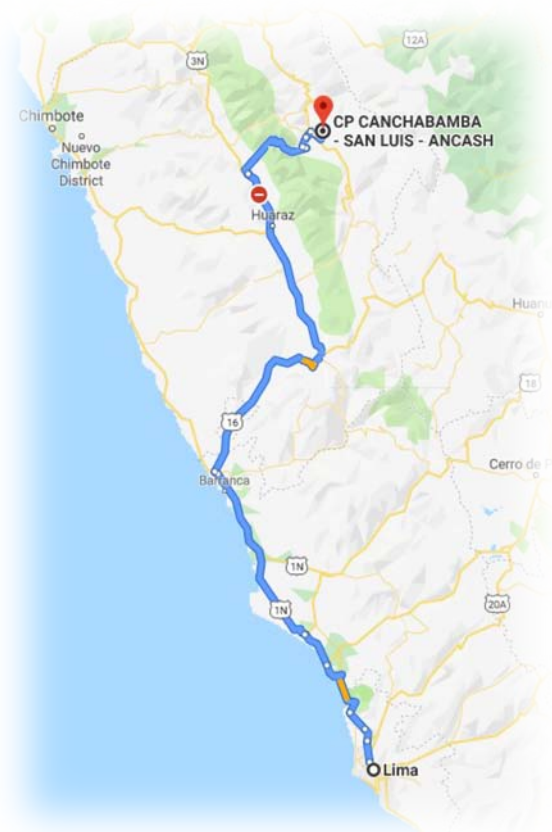
This not only meant he could directly introduce us to a less familiar side of Peru, but also that he has an infrastructure and a target-group for us to work with: the students, teachers and parents of his school. So after about a half year worth of back and forth communications, all was set and we booked us a ticket to Lima.

### About Peru

Yes, it's the country where they chew coca-leaves and eat Guinea pigs. It's five times the size of the UK, has three distinct climate-zones and is considered 'megadiverse' in terms of biodiversity. Most tourists visit Peru for its fusion cuisine and a visit to the Inca citadel of Machu Picchu. Or to walk the spine of this country, the Andes: the highest mountain range after the Himalayas. That is where we are located right now, although it would be hard to spot any tourists here.

On the western slopes, at 3500m, Canchabamba is a small rural village in the district of San Luis, in the Carlos Fermín Fitzcarrald province, within the Áncash region. Geography matters, since there's another 'Canchabamba' not so far from here and there are (for instance) no less than three *Cochabamba's* in Peru...

Between 3000m and 4000m lie the agricultural highlands, which support more than a third of Peru's population. It's inhabitants are 'campesinos', farmers with an indigenous background who speak, aside from Spanish, mostly Quechua: a language that is alive since Inca times. At least half of the 31 million people in Peru identify themselves as indigenous and those in rural areas account for 44% of the population below the poverty line, with those living in the Andes as sad peak of these statistics.

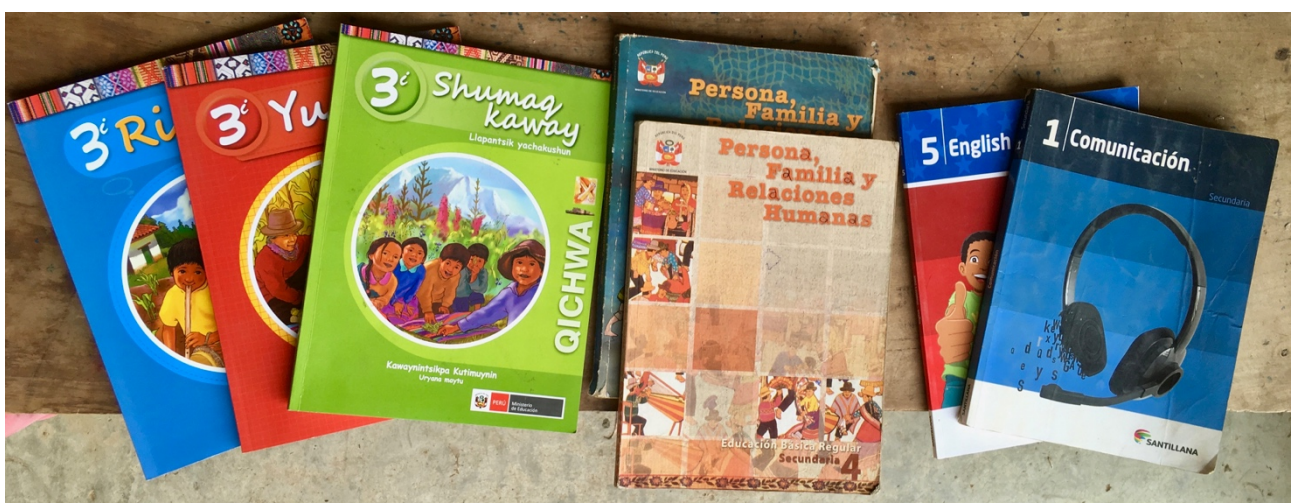




### About Canchabamba and César

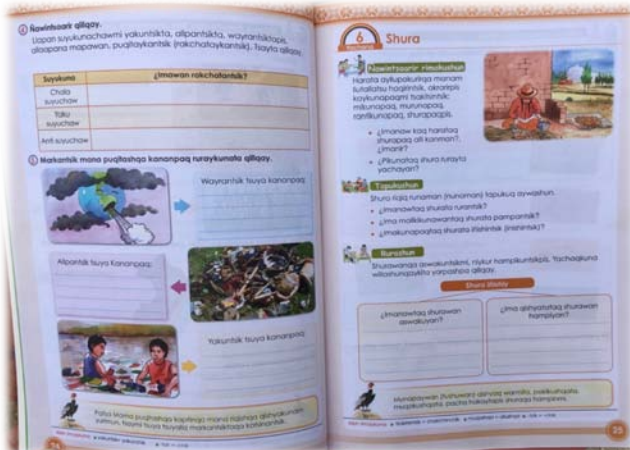
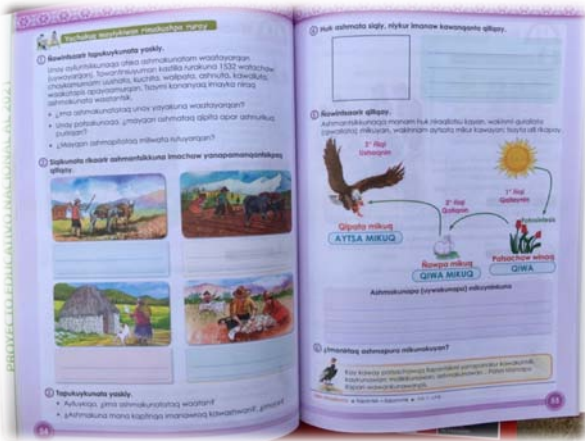
So that sets the stage where we have arrived: after a 12 hour flight and a 13 hour drive, we have found a place in this small, relatively poor rural community with this large school with over 240 students ranging, from 6 to 18 years of age. The definition of 'poor' is a slippery slope by all means: although life is very simple, all seems rather well in Canchabamba: there's a modern health post and new latrines have been built near the houses for better sanitation. There are a few small shops that sell the basic needs and the Italian Don Bosco foundation have a church here and try to do good where they can.

But the devil is in the details. César told us many people live on a small welfare-budget, given by the state since economic times have improved over the last couple of years. Some farmers sell the most valuable crops and live on a steady diet of what's left, meaning malnutrition with some of the students, leading to concentration disorders and a lack of interest. The school seems well organized, but is missing out on modern equipment to keep up with the level of education that is needed. The illiteracy-rate in the rural areas is high and the Carlos Fermín Fitzcarrald province tops that. The biggest problem according to César is the lack of interest in reading. Add to that the low wages and levels for teachers and we're in line with the statistics.



Some pretty modern looking schoolbooks: the 3 on the left are for the primary grades and are in Quechua...





It's remarkable how close the Quechua schoolbooks stay to the culture the children live in.

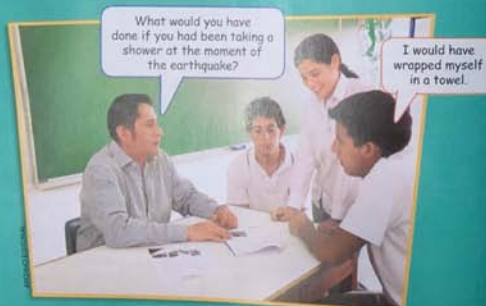




## If you had studied, you would have passed the exam

### Previous knowledge

- 1 Read the conversation. Are they talking about a real or unreal situation?
- 2 Answer the following questions:
  - Where would you have gone if you had been on the street at the moment of the earthquake?
  - What would you have done if you had been at a restaurant at the moment of the earthquake?
- 3 Discuss questions on the right with your partner.



What would have happened if...



... Robinson Crusoe had had a cell phone?



... Juliet's father had liked Romeo?



... Alicia hadn't run after the white Rabbit?

He would have called his family.



... Saruman, in the Lord of the Rings, had taken the ring?



... Harry Potter had never attended Hogwarts school?

### Expected learning

- Describe unreal situations in the past using the third conditional and logical arguments to support opinions.
- Recognize specific information about inventions and work.



Functions	Grammar	Vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking about unreal situation in the past.</li> <li>• Using logical arguments to support opinions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third conditional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Jobs: risks</li> <li>• Inventions</li> </ul>

With a background in TV as assistant director and as an actor, César is not your average headmaster. 'Move Fast, Break Things' is an adagio that fits him well. In just 8 months he introduced two very new ways to improve education. Kamishibai is originally a form of Japanese street theatre and storytelling that was popular until the advent of television during the twentieth century. Kamishibai was told by a narrator who travelled to street corners with sets of illustrated boards that he or she placed in a miniature stage-like device and narrated the story by changing each image.

César and his teachers now use this as a tool to whet the appetite for reading: we see a picture and the students are asked what is going on in the depicted scene. After that they are asked to write, tell or draw, (depending on age) what could happen in the next scene.

And he introduced animal-masks. Many students (and teachers) are shy when it comes to expression. The masks help both to step out of the ordinary relation into a fantasy realm which in turn empowers expression and communication. You have to see it to believe it.







A Kamishibai- session in the schoolyard at the start of the day.



Also, as I write, he has decided to skip the rather nationalistic week-opening, in which there's marching, a sung salutation to the flag, followed by the national anthem. Next Monday, he will replace that first ritual with 'El Condor Pasa'... Although he will not end up in jail for this, he faces fierce criticism from the old fashioned schoolboard. He doesn't mind: he's very passionate and wants to move fast, risking breaking things.

### **What about us?**

After a week in which we needed to acclimatize to this altitude and stock up in Huaraz, we are now two weeks in Canchabamba.





"For The Change"... Political slogans and propaganda are painted on walls all over.

We are staying in a small room in the backyard of Alejandro and Julia, a friendly couple in their late fifties with 4 kids that are studying in Lima and Huaraz. We are in the company of a dozen sheep and chickens, a varying number of pigs (depending on the menu) and two sweet dogs. Although it has not been without challenges (4 days without electricity and water) and the fact that as soon as the sun gets clouded or sets, it gets bitter cold, we have enjoyed every minute of it.

The views on the Cordilleras Blanca & Huayhuash are magnificent and the silence here is bliss (sound guy talking). The people are very friendly and we slowly are finding our way into campesino-culture. We have had help from Benjamin and Brooke, an American couple volunteering for Peace Corps Peru here in this area. Unfortunately they are rather busy, so most communication is with hands and feet and a little Google Translate. We are on the lookout for alternative translators, since when it comes to details, nothing should go lost in translation.

When it comes to this, it's clear why working with an NGO has its advantages: assistance is always around the corner and wrinkles are ironed out. In this case we are proud we have managed to pay for our own project and come this far, just by intuition and friendly smiles.

### **The Money...**

At this point we also like to mention we have had financial support from Iris' family: €120 from her aunt's senior Scouting Group and €300 from her mom. But most important is a financial support from our friends at the Emmaus Foundation: €1000 for the project and for materials for the school! We have been hesitant to mention this earlier on, because we wanted to make sure the money would land well and with the right people; from The Netherlands, such things are hard to tell. Also: if you arrive in a small community handing out money from the get-go, for sure money will not only change hands, but also minds. After we surprised the school yesterday, for sure we were asked for money this very morning by our host. Let's hope things won't get spoiled.

### And what we'll do?

It's obvious that what we'll do here, will be linked closely to the problems César has described. We will start off with a small documentary about the changes César is advocating; a request by him and the teachers. He's hoping it can help get more funding.

Our project will of course take place on the schoolgrounds but also, we might need to present it in San Luis, the nearest small city, an hour drive from here.

We have begun taking pictures, recording video, talking with a local radio station and are doing all other kinds of research, based on experiences in other projects, like in Sarajevo, Armenia and Uganda.

We have revitalized some group-exercises from Vietnam that help break down barriers in age, gender (and even IQ) and will do these with both students and teachers.



Iris with her drawing-class...

Iris has asked the children (from 6 and 7 years old) to make drawings of their house, family and the animals that live there. A second drawing about what they would buy with S/100 (€25). The third exercise was to draw themselves when they are 20 years of age.

These drawings give a good insight in the child's perspective and sometimes even psychological and emotional balance.

And I conducted a small survey with Classes 5 and 6 (16 to 18 years) about smartphones, favorite music and TV, but also whether or not their parents can read or write and when they have arguments with them: what are they about? I'll share the results in my next writings.

I'm thinking of letting them record interviews with their parents: experiments in The Netherlands show that if such a conversation has a different form, the answers are more likely to surprise the kids and they learn things about their parents they never knew before. And we hope to learn as well. If it is successful, we might broadcast it on local radio 'Onze 92.2FM'.





"Draw yourself when you are 20: how will you look and what will you do?".

Notice how kids that live in a mountainous area draw the sun...

One other thing is for certain: we want to work in the Quechua language. Everybody speaks it and it is closest to their hearts. But a century old history of discrimination and marginalization has made it a second-rate language, although it has been officially recognized since the early seventies by no other than dictator Juan Velasco Alvarado, after which the school is named. At least one thing he did well: empowering Peru's native culture, but it was not enough.

There is so much more to tell, but for now I'll leave it with the photo on the right. Next time I'll let you in on the plans we have with this object.

