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"Hoy por ti, mañana por mi"*

***Reciprocal strategies in agricultural production between
discourse and changing practice.***

A case study in the Bolivian municipality of Taraco at Lake Titicaca



Author: Sophie Baumgartner
Supervisor: María Andrea Nardi

* *Spanish: "Today for you, tomorrow for me"*

Abstract

Cooperative and reciprocal practices within agriculture have been widely discussed as important strategies in order to reduce risks and costs of labour and capital acquisition. Within the Andes reciprocal norms appear to be particularly institutionalized due to their historical rootedness in Andean culture. With the present case study I sought to examine reciprocal exchange practices in agricultural activities in the transitional context of rural highland Bolivia, in the municipality of Taraco located at the banks of Lake Titicaca. The purpose of this thesis was to investigate how and why people from Taraco practice reciprocal exchanges; especially *Ayni* (reciprocal labour exchange), and what main factors affect these local economic strategies. Therefore I used interviews and observations as main research methods and theories on reciprocity and globalization as conceptual framework. The research findings suggest that reciprocal exchange serves as a reliable and cost-effective tool in order to access labour and means of production but it also re-affirms social relations, moral norms and cultural values. Processes of globalization such as increasing mechanization, rural-urban migration and increased access to money have been found to influence reciprocity institutions, sometimes decrease its significance and on other occasions even underscore its relevance for local peasants in order to negotiate with globalization as agents.

Keywords: *reciprocity, Ayni, Aymara, agriculture, non-monetary economy, Bolivia, Taraco, rural-urban migration, globalization, agency*

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Resumen

Las prácticas de cooperación y reciprocidad dentro de la agricultura han sido ampliamente discutidas como importantes estrategias para la reducción de riesgos y costos en la mano de obra y la adquisición de capital. En los Andes, las normas de reciprocidad parecen estar más institucionalizadas debido al arraigo histórico en la cultura Andina. Con el presente estudio he tratado de examinar las prácticas de intercambio recíproco de las actividades agrícolas en el contexto de transición del altiplano rural de Bolivia, en el municipio de Taraco localizado a las orillas del Lago Titicaca. El propósito de esta tesis fue el de investigar cómo y por qué las personas de Taraco practican intercambios recíprocos; especialmente el *Ayni* (intercambio recíproco de mano de obra), y cuáles son los factores preponderantes que afectan estas estrategias en la economía local. He usado la entrevista y la observación como los principales métodos de investigación, y las teorías sobre reciprocidad y globalización como marco conceptual. Los resultados de la investigación sugieren que el intercambio recíproco funciona como una herramienta fiable y rentable para fines de acceso a mano de obra y medios de producción, pero también reafirma las relaciones sociales, normas morales y valores culturales. Se encontró que los procesos de globalización, tales como el aumento de la mecanización, la migración rural-urbana y el incremento en los accesos al capital monetario, influyen las instituciones de reciprocidad, a veces disminuyendo su relevancia y en otros casos resaltándola a los campesinos locales para así negociar con la globalización como agentes.

Palabras clave: *reciprocidad, Ayni, Aymara, agricultura, economía non-monetaria, Bolivia, Taraco, migración rural-urbana, globalización, agencia*

Foreword

I take the chance to write a foreword because I feel that I have to clarify how it came to this study and how it came to this end product of my thesis that might surprise people that know me and my political and academic opinions. As you might know my point of departure for this research was my disappointment about the prevailing neoliberal economic system that fosters certain attitudes and behaviour, such as greed of gain, competitive behaviour and individualism.

Within alternative spaces we often discuss the need of a changing economic paradigm, especially facing the multiple crisis, such as economic, ecological and social crisis that originate in a highly unequal, unjust and unsustainable economic system that fosters rather competition instead of cooperation. This led me on a search for alternatives which I thought I would find in cooperative economic strategies, such as *Ayni* (reciprocal labour exchange).

Bolivia seemed to be an exciting place to study these reciprocal practices, with a changed political realm that is supposed to strike a new path opposing neoliberalism, imperialism and neocolonialism. However when I arrived and started engaging with local people from Bolivia I encountered a totally different situation compared to what I was imagining. I was surprised and astonished by the local narratives the people, the *altiplano* and the streets of El Alto were telling me; narratives that resided between indigenous culture, globalization, migration etc. I found contrasting realities everywhere and felt overwhelmed with the different shades of a phenomenon that was so clear beforehand in my head.

I tried my best to adapt my romanticising ideas, and shifted my research towards new questions and frameworks since my initial ones apparently were inappropriate to explain my empirical data. I tried to depict as much as possible the voices of the research participants because it appeared to be the only solution for myself and the challenge of doing fieldwork in a different culture.

The result of this exhausting, nerve-wracking, contradictory, often incomprehensible but at the same time inspiring, insightful, instructive process lies in your hands. I cannot express how grateful I am for all these wonderful people that have walked this path together with me. **Thank you.**



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Arribar a Bolivia, la ciudad de El Alto y La Paz, no fue del todo fácil para mí a pesar de que no era mi primera vez viviendo en el extranjero. Sin embargo, fui afortunada de encontrarme con un grupo de personas increíbles que hicieron de mi estadía en La Paz una experiencia inolvidable. Por lo tanto, muchas gracias, especialmente a Rutger, Ángel, Jelena, Christina, Pablo y Mario, por disfrutar la belleza de La Paz juntos, pero también por compartir charlas sobre inseguridades en la tesis, limitantes y placeres del campo de trabajo. También quisiera agradecer a mis amigos de intereses antropológicos y sociológicos Froilan, Dimelsa, Alcides, Janeth, Miguel y Honorio por acompañarme en mis viajes de campo e introducirme con la cultura local y becarios.

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Con respecto a mi apoyo académico, estoy segura que esta tesis no hubiera sido posible sin mi extremadamente atento grupo de supervisión, Elena, Camila y Malin y mi supervisora Andrea. Y especialmente, muchísimas gracias a Andrea, mi supervisora, por acompañarme en este camino pedregoso, lleno de retos y dificultades. Me has guiado cuando estuve perdida, ¡muchas gracias!



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***“If nature has made you for a giver, your hands are born open,
and so is your heart;
and though there may be times when your hands are empty,
your heart is always full,
and you can give things out of that,
warm things, kind things, sweet things,
help and comfort and laughter,
and sometimes (...) kind laughter is the best help of all.”***

Frances Hodgson Burnett, „A Little Princess“

First of all I would like to thank those ones that made this research possible: all the families that have participated in my research! Thank you for serving me food and accommodation, you treated me like a queen and answered all my questions with endless patience. The experiences I had during my stays with you, the conversations we shared about life and the things I have learned from you are invaluable and go far beyond this thesis. I will never forget you, *juspagara!*

Moreover thanks to all the experts for such interesting interviews that unfolded so different perspectives and allowed me to understand Aymaran culture better and capture a lot of contradictions involved in the research subject.

Although it was not my first time living abroad, arriving to Bolivia, the city of El Alto and La Paz, was not at all easy for myself. Fortunately, I was lucky to meet a range of incredibly awesome people that made my time in La Paz an unforgettable experience. Therefore, *muchas gracias* especially to Rutger, Angel, Jelena, Christina, Pablo, and Mario. For enjoying the beauty of La Paz together, but also sharing talks about thesis insecurities, hardships and pleasures of fieldwork. I also would like to thank my anthropologically and sociologically interested friends Froilan, Dimelsa, Alcides, Janeth, Miguel and Honorio for accompanying me on my field trips and introducing me to the local culture and scholars.

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I have learned so much out of this process and finally I would like to share this saying with you because it reflects a lot of what I have learned in the last months:

In your path through life – Do not run when you could also dance.

Auf Deinem Weg durchs Leben - laufe nicht wo du doch auch tanzen könntest.

En tu camino de la vida – No corras si también podrías bailar.

Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass. It's about learning to dance in the rain.

Leben bedeutet nicht auf das Ende des Sturms zu warten. Es geht darum im Regen tanzen zu lernen.

La vida no se trata de esperar el fin de la tormenta. Se trata de aprender bailar en la lluvia.

Thank you all so much for sharing this long thesis dance with me!!!



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Note on identities of participants and translation

The names of the research participants from Taraco and El Alto have been changed in order to protect their identities. I consciously decided to use fictitious names in order to maintain the narrative character of their stories. Nevertheless, the names of interviewed experts have been used normally or anonymised, depending on their preferences.

I translated the parts of the interviews that I used within this thesis from Spanish to English. I included the original quotes in the footnotes. Moreover, I also translated citations from Spanish literature to English.

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Abbreviations

CIPCA	<i>Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado</i> (Centre for Research and Support of the Peasantry)
IMF	International Monetary Fund

INE	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estadística de Bolivia</i> (National Statistics Institute of Bolivia)
IPDRS	<i>Instituto para el Desarrollo Rural de Sudamérica</i> (Institut for Rural Development in South America)
MAS	<i>Movimiento al Socialismo</i> (Movement towards Socialism)
MNR	<i>Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario</i> (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UN	United Nations
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Aymaran glossary

<i>Ayllu</i>	traditional social and political unit of a certain territory (Burman 2011)
<i>Ayni</i>	literal translation of reciprocity, and particularly reciprocal labour exchange
<i>Chacra</i>	parcel of land
<i>Chuño</i>	freeze-dried potatoes (Rist 2000:313)
<i>Mallku</i>	condor or leader (Kohl/Farthing 2006)
<i>Minka</i>	payment in kind (Walsh-Dilley 2012)
<i>Pachamama</i>	Mother Earth
<i>Taraceños</i>	people from the municipality of Taraco
<i>Waki</i>	reciprocal exchange between two families of land, seeds and harvest (Rist 2000)
<i>Yatiri</i>	„the person that knows“ – specialist in rituals and natural doctor (Burman 2011)

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of cooperation and reciprocity for agricultural organization has been pointed out by many different authors (e.g. Erasmus 1956, Salazar 1996, Sajor 2000, Suehara 2006, Kinga 2008, Pierre 2009, Seiser 2012, Gezelius 2014). Cooperation and reciprocity have been discussed as important strategies to reduce risks and costs of labour and capital acquisition, and thus increase the viability of farm economies (Gezelius 2014). Reciprocity can contribute to the construction of mutual insurance arrangements among farmers in order to counter illness, production failure, and environmental uncertainty, as Dasgupta (1995) suggests. Also international organisations such as the World Bank seem to increasingly acknowledging the importance of these social networks as a form of social capital which contributes to decreasing poverty rates (World Bank 2008, Narayan/Pritchett 1999).

In general, reciprocal exchange is an informal agreement to give something with the expectation of receiving compensation in kind (e.g. labour, goods) in the future ¹(Kranton 1996:830, Polanyi 2001). In the Andean context, reciprocity has been discussed as an important principle underpinning their societies, and the significance of reciprocity in economic and social life has been subject to a wide range of investigations (Alberti/Mayer 1974; Murra et al. 1974, Isbell 1977; Mayer 1974, Mitchell 1991, Ødegaard 2008, Ferraro 2006, Wutich 2011a, 2011b, among others). Within this literature, the norm of returning favours seems to be stronger and more institutionalized in the Andean highlands than in other parts of the world (cf. Walsh-Dilley 2012:100). Within Bolivian agriculture, reciprocity is considered to be an important local economic strategy since it serves as a mechanism to acquire needed resources (cf. Salazar /Llanos 1999). A recent study with a particular focus on reciprocity institutions within Bolivian Andean agriculture has been the dissertation of Marygold Walsh-Dilley (2012). She emphasizes the importance of reciprocity institutions as a “toolkit” for local people in order to “*negotiate their fragmented, uneven, and contradictory experiences with global systems*” (ibid.:224) and to contribute to group solidarity, community development and local livelihoods. Reciprocal exchange has been discussed as a way to adapt to exclusion, deprivation and incomplete markets such as the lack of credits and labour that make it necessary to engage in them (ibid.).

¹ In contrast to negotiated exchange, reciprocity “*unfolds tacitly through contributions separated in time*” (Gezelius 2014:210). Gezelius (2014:210) furthermore explains that **money** is a strong representative symbol for negotiated exchange, although reciprocal exchange can also happen in a monetary way, and vice versa. Nevertheless, I will use it within this thesis mostly in this dichotomous way since major parts of my data and this thesis focus on the non-monetary reciprocal exchange of labour (*Ayni*) as opposed to pay workers in cash.

Nevertheless, reciprocity institutions are often portrayed as endangered by processes of globalization such as increasing market penetration and commercialisation of agriculture, as Temple (2003) and Sajor (2000) note. Also Erasmus (1956) argues that reciprocal exchange loses its importance with increasing technological process in agriculture, individualization of rural societies and the use of money.

These assumptions are particularly interesting to investigate in Bolivia which is experiencing highly transitional times (Fontana 2012). Bolivia has initiated a “process of change” in 2005 when the socialist MAS (*translated: Movement towards Socialism*) government came into power and is assumed to search for an alternative more “indigenous” development path (Gudynas/Acosta 2011, Postero 2013). However, the negative outcomes of the neoliberal legacy Bolivia from the decades before are still present to some extent, such as the economic dependency on resource exploitation (cf. Fontana 2012). Nevertheless, the changed political context is often associated with increased chances for indigenous people in terms of political participation (Postero 2013). However, the increasing attention indigeneity receives has been widely discussed as a place of essentialising and romanticising indigenous people (cf. Fabricant 2013).

These romanticising discourses concerning indigenous people and the transitional situation of contemporary rural Bolivia make critical research and the construction of empirical data on the actual significance of indigenous practices such as reciprocity highly relevant. This is especially the case considering that current empirical research on reciprocity institutions in the Bolivian Andes appears to be scarce. Weismantel (2006), for example, claims that anthropologists have dropped the topic in the last couple of years since they consider the traditional Andean communities (*Ayllus*) as highly commodified. Yet, she argues that it has been re-discovered by indigenous activists and used as a discursive instrument for political struggle against Western modernity; by imagining how traditional Andean communities *could* be, rather than how they are (ibid.). Coherent to this notion, Spedding (2011) criticises recent studies that highlight reciprocal exchange as being totally opposed to the values of Western capitalist economy, for their lack of empirical profoundness and required long-term fieldwork for claiming so.

These discourses and the apparent lack of empirical data make me wonder what reciprocity actually means to the local people in today's rural highland Bolivia. Why do they engage in reciprocal exchange? To what extent do reciprocity institutions change in the light of altered economic and political context and living conditions? How do they relate to monetary and market exchange? Furthermore I agree with Wilk and Cliggett (2007:170) when they claim that every analysis of

reciprocal exchange has to include how local people think and feel about it, how they value it and what it means to them.

Thus, in this thesis I seek to answer these questions by mainly drawing on the local explanations I encountered in the Bolivian highland community of Taraco. Investigating reciprocal strategies as important local economic practices and how and why they change should help us to unfold the broader contemporary transitions Bolivian rural communities experience. Moreover, departing with this thesis from a post-development² point of view implies for me to contribute to a better understanding of local meanings and narratives of people living in the Majority World³. It means getting closer and trying to understand which strategies the local people themselves – as agents rather than “victims” - have established and constructed; in contrast to the imposition of economic strategies on local people in the Global South under the disguise of development, a strategy commonly criticised in post-development theory (cf. Escobar 2012). Such a local (economic) strategy could be reciprocal exchange and therefore I seek to explore its meaning in the Bolivian community of Taraco in the following chapters.

1.1 Research approach, purpose and questions

Following this research interest, this master thesis represents a case study on reciprocal exchange practices in agricultural activities in the Andean highlands. My main research methods have been participant observations and semi-structured interviews. The research site, the Bolivian municipality of Taraco, is located at the banks of Lake Titicaca. Access to the field was facilitated through my preceding internship with the local NGO CIPCA Altiplano (Centre for Research and Support of the Peasantry).

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how and why *Taraceños* (people from Taraco) practice reciprocal exchanges; and what main (external) factors affect these local economic strategies. In both questions I mainly draw on the perceptions and explanations of these peasants⁴. My study is

² Post-development theory criticises the prevailing hegemonial development project and paradigm for failing to abolish poverty, but rather reinforcing unequal power structures, domination of the „Western“ agenda over poor countries and over-emphasizing the neoliberal capitalist economic development as the mere path towards development (cf. Escobar 2012, McKinnon 2007).

³ I consciously use either the words Global South or “*Majority World*“ in order to refer to the so-called developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. This term should remind us of the fact that the majority of the global population lives in these countries and contest the assumptions of superiority and inferiority linked to the terms First/Third or Developed/Developing World, as Clark (2009:11) highlights.

⁴ The term „*peasant*“ can be understood in different ways and its definition is indeed a subject of contestation and ideologization (Edelman 2013:2, Seiser 2012:388). I follow the definition of Akram-Lodhi and Kay (2010:178) that

limited to the forms of *balanced reciprocity* (see below for typology of reciprocity) since it would have gone beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate also generalized and negative forms of reciprocity. Out of the different forms of reciprocity institutions, the research is particularly focussed on *reciprocal labour exchange*, called *Ayni* in the Bolivian research site.

Following this research interest, I pursue the following (main) research questions:

- *How and why do local people in the Bolivian Andes engage in reciprocal exchange in agricultural activities?*
- *How do the local people explain the main factors affecting reciprocal exchange in agricultural activities?*

1.2 Disposition

After this introduction, I turn towards the second chapter, the conceptual framework, by drawing on theoretical concepts of reciprocity, globalization and situated agency in particular. In the third chapter, the empirical context is explained including a general introduction to the history and current political situation of indigenous people, the transformations of rural highland communities and reciprocal strategies. I outline the methodological choices in chapter four, and then turn towards the analysis in chapter five. Finally I conclude and discuss these findings in chapter six.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the following chapter I introduce the conceptual framework I chose in order to analyse reciprocal exchange and its transformations, namely theories on reciprocity and globalization.

2.1 Reciprocity – on giving and receiving

A wide range of anthropological and sociological researchers have dedicated their investigation to reciprocity and gift giving (see for example Malinowski 2005 [1922], Mauss 1990 [1942], Gouldner 1960, Sahlins 2004 [1972], Weiner 1980, Gregory 1982, Godelier 1999, Temple 2003, Komter

understand peasants as „*female and male agricultural workers whose livelihoods are primarily but not exclusively based on having access to land that is either owned or rented, who have diminutive amounts of basic tools and equipment, and who use mostly their own labour and the labour of other family members to work that land*“ (ibid.). Despite the controversial discussions about the term I will use it in the present thesis in order to refer to the research participants in Taraco since their livelihoods seem to correspond to the given definition. Nevertheless, during fieldwork I missed the opportunity to ask if they themselves identify with the term and this definition. The common translation of “peasant” into Spanish would be *campesino*, a term that has in turn different connotations in Bolivia due to its historical use (cf. Lagos 1994).

2007). In the following I introduce some of the main concepts that seek to explain the causes and effects of reciprocal exchange.

Primarily, it is essential to acknowledge that reciprocity is „*an important part of everyday social interaction in any society*“, as Eriksen (2001:191) points out. Marcel Mauss (1990), probably the most prominent author on the topic, claims that people always feel obligated to return received favours or gifts; therefore one could argue that gifts are never really free and reciprocity is thus much more common than we would expect. Others such as Komter (2007) argue that the expectation of a reciprocal return increases the likelihood that people give.

Another example for wide-spread reciprocity is when it occurs as the principle which makes citizens of social democratic countries accept contributing to state-run assistance programs and benefits (e.g. unemployment benefits), since they know that they will also receive help when they are in need (Sandbrook 2011:430). Hence, reciprocity is a principle that permeates society and influences our behaviour to a large extent (cf. Wilk/Cligett 2007).

2.1.1 Categorization of reciprocity

Due to this widespread occurrence it is necessary to demarcate the research subject and therefore I draw on Sahlins' categorization in *generalized*, *balanced* and *negative* reciprocity (Wilk/Cligett 2007:162). Generalized reciprocity is giving without recording the exact value of what has been given; e.g. the everyday giving between parents and children ⁵(*ibid*). Balanced reciprocity can be considered as direct exchange in which the persons involved expect the reciprocation of the same or a bit increased value within a limited period of time (*ibid*). In the present thesis I have exclusively focussed on this latter type of reciprocity due to the limited scope of the thesis and personal research interest⁶. Negative reciprocity occurs when both parties intent to receive more than they give, such as haggling, gambling and chicanery (Sahlins 2004:195).

2.1.2 Community-level reciprocity in premodern societies and today

One of the most famous authors on reciprocity has been the economist Polanyi (2001 [1944]) with

⁵ However it is assumed that something will be returned at some point in the undefined future in generalized reciprocal exchange (*ibid.*).

⁶ Another reason for this decision was as well that generalized reciprocity happens so frequently that it is nearly impossible to observe it or notify the values exchanged, as Wilk/Cligett (2007:163) point out. Moreover, negative reciprocity as a rather impersonal exchange situation was not something local people were referring to when I asked them about reciprocal exchange within the community.

his concept of embeddedness (Sandbrook 2011). As opposed to (classical) capitalist economic theory, he claimed that economy should not be autonomous, but rather subordinated to and embedded in society, as it was until the 19th century, when reciprocity, redistribution and householding were the main principles of economic systems (Block 2001:xxiii-xxiv). Following his argumentation, community-level reciprocity appears as a possible contemporary means towards development for countries of the Global South, as Sandbrook (2011:433-9) explains. Forms of reciprocity in small-scale communities are presented as capability to resist difficult conditions such as poverty, war and environmental disaster, satisfy needs and to build and strengthen social relations and traditions within the community (ibid.). In many cases of the Global South, mutuality and reciprocity appear as an answer to the absence, or missing ability, of the state and donors to solve local problems, and thus the communities construct their own systems of „*mutual insurance and social economy*“ (ibid.:434). These moral economies suggest embeddedness through their integration in communitarian social norms and values, as Sandbrook (2011) and Argumedo and Pimbert (2010) highlight⁷.

2.1.3 Dimensions and functions of reciprocal exchange

Various authors (e.g. Mauss 1990, Lévi-Strauss 1996, Komter 2007, Wilk/Cligett 2007) highlight how reciprocity fulfils different dimensions and functions, such as economic, social, moral, cultural, symbolic, religious, political, and juridical ones. Several authors (Komter 2007:94, Walsh-Dilley 2013:226, Wilk/Cligett 2007:155) agree that the multiple purposes and different dimensions make gift giving to an effective instrument that serves at the same time as a means to exchange things or services, creates social relations and reinforces moral and cultural values. In order to structure the analysis I used three categories of reasoning and thus explain them in the following section:

- **technical and economic reasons**
- **moral reasons**
- **social, symbolic and cultural reasons**

Technical and economic reasons

One dimension of reciprocal exchange is its *economic* utility and the rational reasoning behind choosing these strategies, concerning the question of how it benefits the individual (Wilk/Cligett 2007). In agricultural work in particular, reciprocity might serve as a strategy to help construct a livelihood (Kinga 2008:32). Walsh-Dilley (2012:85) highlights how reciprocal practices are used as

⁷ Nevertheless, community-based reciprocity could exclude outsiders, hamper the extension of solidarity norms to the national level and implicates the danger of deepening clan, ethnic and religious conflicts (Sandbrook 2011:433-439).

a reliable mechanism to organize and distribute resources for agricultural production (e.g. labour) between different families, and defines this kind of reasons as *technical* ones. According to White (2014), the economic utility of reciprocity is especially high in resource-scarce environments. Reciprocal exchange can serve as a strategy to answer the lack of economic resources ⁸(Erasmus 1956:466, Sajor 2000).

Moreover, the norm of reciprocity sustains mutual insurance arrangements that come into play for example in case of illness or production failure, as Dasgupta (1995) states. Within reciprocal relationships people would help as long as support is needed since they know that the other person will do the same when the favour is returned (ibid.). According to Molm et al. (2007:201), reciprocal practices communicate information about the exchange partner; and thus by bringing evidence of the other one's predictability and trustworthiness they reduce uncertainty and risk involved in exchange.

Within the literature on reciprocal exchange in agriculture, shared labour arrangements have received particular attention due to its technical and economic utility. For example Kinga (2008:52) and Suehara (2006:56) state, they are an essential coping strategy for farmers in case of labour shortages, especially in busy farming seasons. Moreover, as Pierre (2009) notes, reciprocal labour exchange could relieve heavy workloads, and work tasks could be finished faster, Pierre (2009) notes. Erasmus (1956:463) argues that reciprocal labour exchange leads to higher quality of the work since the worker knows that the quantity and quality of effort brought to the other one's field will be the scale on what will be returned on the own plot⁹.

As the previous arguments already indicate, the widespread notion of economic rationality being opposed to cooperation such as reciprocal exchange is a common prejudice having been rebutted in many studies on farming communities, as Salazar (1996:78) highlights. Also Komter (2007:103) claims that gifts can be simultaneously altruistic and self-orientated, an “*elegant combination of self-interested concerns with the requirements of social life*” (ibid.:103)

Moral reasons

Another important aspect that drives people to engage in reciprocity is the generalized moral norm

⁸ In the study of Sajor (2000) in the Northern Philippine Uplands, local people have been found reliant on their previously established forms of labour mobilisation such as reciprocal exchange due to the lack of state patronage and thus external capital support.

⁹ Furthermore, in contrast to hired labour, reciprocity institutions usually do not follow the market rules and mechanism of “demand” and “supply”, as Kinga (2008:52) claims. Thus, even in times of peak labour demand the amount of reciprocated labour remains the same (ibid.).

underlying it, as Gouldner (1960:170) argues. Following his explanations, the norm of reciprocity appears to be universal and in case it is internalized it ensures that people help those who helped them previously (ibid.:171). Also Walsh-Dilley (2012:225) points out that reciprocity is rooted in ethical considerations, concerning the question how people should deal with the social and material world. Dasgupta (1995) stresses how this norm becomes internalized through communal living, role models, education, and the experience of rewards and punishments. This process that starts at an early age ensures that people would feel guilt or shame when they disobey the norm of reciprocity (ibid.). Sandbrook (2011:434) also highlights that refusing the norm of reciprocation might jeopardize the social standing of a family or individuals.

Social, symbolic and cultural reasons

Different authors (Mauss 1990, Eriksen 2001, Sahlins 2004) emphasize how reciprocity constructs and reaffirms *social* relations and fulfils an important social function. But why do people give at all if everything is returned at some point, as Mauss (1990) wonders? He reasons that it is exactly this social link which the gift, and reciprocation of it, creates between people, and highlights how giving a gift binds one person to the other (ibid.). Also Eriksen (2001:181) emphasizes how gift giving is indeed socially integrating, since it establishes a net of vague obligations among a group of people. This web of obligations ultimately builds society itself, as Wilk and Cligett (2007:159) argue.

Furthermore, Komter (2007) and Temple (2003) argue that mutual help arrangements construct and strengthen affective values such as social cohesion, friendship and recognition as well as ethical values such as respect, trust, equity, dignity, and compassion. Reciprocal exchange systems build trust, but also require trust and face-to-face interaction in order to be feasible, as Sandbrook (2011:434-6) and Gudeman and Rivera (1990:110) highlight.

Moreover, reciprocity interactions provide spaces where community and its cohesion are reproduced through solidarity and civic engagement (Walsh-Dilley 2012:110, Wilk/Cligett 2007:157). Subsequently, Walsh-Dilley (2012:110,225) points out how reciprocal exchange serves *symbolic* purposes since it contributes to the construction of individual and group identity and status, and thus, influence how people present themselves in the world. This also corresponds to the *cultural* function reciprocity has by re-affirming cultural norms and identity, as Wilk and Cligett (2007:157) stress.

2.2 Negotiating globalization and modernity

After listening to the *Taraceños*' explanations of changes in rural agrarian life, the concept of globalization appeared to be appropriate to explore the broader picture that condition and surround the transformation of reciprocity institutions in the Bolivian context. Globalization is a highly complex phenomenon that can hardly be captured in its entirety within this thesis. Thus, within this chapter I will first explain some main characteristics of globalization that have been found to be central in the study of reciprocity and the Bolivian rural context. I will then introduce the concept of the *situated agent* that I apply in order to examine how *Taraceños* deal with the effects of globalization and which role reciprocity assumes in this.

2.2.1 Characteristics and dimensions of globalization

By drawing on Woods (2007:487), globalization in this thesis is understood as a “*dynamic and multifaceted process of integration and interaction that enrolls localities into networks of interconnectivity organized at the global scale and facilitating the global circulation of people, commodities, ideas and representations*“. Globalization entails social processes that increase and intensify global social interdependencies and exchanges in various domains of life, and constitutes economic, political, cultural, ideological, environmental and various other dimensions, as Steger (2003:13-15) defines. Within this thesis I am particularly interested in its economic consequences.

One of the most known concepts relating to globalization is 'disembedding', a phenomenon introduced by Giddens (1990) and explained as „*the 'lifting-out' of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space*“ (ibid.:21). Distance and space become increasingly irrelevant by processes of globalization such as enhanced means of transportation and communication, increased mobility of investment capital and global exchange of goods (Eriksen 2007:16).

Giddens (1990:22) argues that one disembedding mechanism is the creation of *symbolic tokens* which are means of interchange that can be handled by any individual or group, such as money. Simply put, money allows people who are separated in time and space to carry out transactions and thus contributes to time-space compression (ibid.:24). Money-like instruments also existed in traditional societies, but in contrast to modern money could not be used as a universal kind of payment, as Eriksen (2007:20-1) highlights. Whereas barter and other reciprocal exchanges depend on trust and personal relationships between the exchange parties (Sandbrook 2011), universal money works without these preconditions as long as people believe and agree upon its economic

value¹⁰ (Eriksen 2007:21).

Disembedding mechanisms lead to the aforementioned time-space compression which means that time becomes increasingly separated from space (Giddens 1990:28), and thus causes the minimization of distances and the acceleration of life, as Steger (2003:12) argues. Paradoxically, despite enhanced technological opportunities and accelerated communication, transportation and production, the experienced pace of life and the felt time pressure has been heightened, as Rosa (2013:131) emphasises.

The economic dimension of globalization encompasses the internationalization of trade and finance, and the rising power of multinational corporations and international economic institutions (e.g. International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, World Trade Organisation (WTO)), as Steger (2003) suggests. Economic globalization is often dealt synonymously with neoliberalism and the notion that free trade and decreased state interference regarding economic issues will deliver wealth to every place of the world, as Eriksen (2007:11) explains. This notion has been widely contested since the implementation of measures promoting liberalization and opening of the market economy, enforced by international economic institutions such as the IMF, caused a decline in living standards in many countries ¹¹(Klein 1998, Stiglitz 2002). Although I agree with Eriksen (2007:11) that globalization goes far beyond neoliberal market economics, I consider it as essential to understand its dimension as a driver for change in agrarian structures and rural places (cf. Kay 2008). Neoliberal policies usually aim at the conversion from state-directed development towards a decreased role of the state which involves measures such as privatization of public enterprises, economic deregulation, trade liberalization, reduction of public spending, and market expansion, as Steger (2003:41) and Keeling (2004:1) argue.

Globalization as an uneven process has affected the different parts of the world in diverging ways with the Majority World in particular not profiting from intensified global networks and infrastructure to the same extent than other areas do, as Steger (2003:13) claims furthermore. Moreover, neoliberal globalization has tremendous effects on environmental degradation (Keeling 2004).

¹⁰ Yet, trust is an important precondition for the functioning of modern money, but it is not trust in individuals but rather in abstract institutions, as Giddens (1990:26) clarifies.

¹¹ According to Klein (2014:19), the project of globalization was always less concerned with facilitating trade across borders but rather aimed at establishing a global policy framework that gave multinational corporations immense freedom in order to „*produce their goods as cheaply as possible and sell them with as few regulations as possible – while paying as little in taxes as possible*” (ibid.).

But how does globalization relate to transformations of rural areas, agrarian structures for small-scale farming and indigenous livelihoods? Despite regional differences, processes of globalization and structural adjustment¹² have often led to increased precarious situations in rural areas and heightened pressure on the economic survival of small-scale farmers, as Bebbington (2004) states. The globalisation of agriculture has been accompanied by the expansion of large-scale, capital-intensive, labour-displacing agriculture (Mahtaney 2013). According to Kay (2004, 2008) and Kostić et al. (2015), neoliberal globalization has affected agricultural producers in different ways. While peasant farmers in the Majority World were challenged through subsidized food exports of richer countries, large-scale farmers and big corporations were benefiting from liberalization of land, labour and financial markets and new opportunities for exportation, due to their access to larger land property, capital, technical instruments and international markets, and higher influence on agricultural policies¹³ (Kay 2004, 2008, Kostić et al. 2015).

When peasants, especially those living on marginal lands, are not able to compete with the lower costs of large-scale farmers, they are increasingly tempted to move to urban areas in search for better income opportunities¹⁴ (Grau/Aide 2008:3). Globalization, as a process that tremendously intensifies and accelerates the mobility of people worldwide, further facilitates migration (Eriksen 2007:105, Nash 2001:22). Also Kay (2008:926) highlights that significant transformations of rural areas in Latin America include migratory flows between rural and urban areas and thereby increased rural-urban interactions.

In many places, peasants have also responded to globalization through the increasing participation in various income activities, especially non-agricultural ones, a phenomenon discussed as pluriactivity (Torres 2008) or diversification of rural income activities, such as handicrafts, rural tourism and other services (Kay 2004, Davis et al. 2010, Çukur 2014). Young people in particular seem to be less attracted by agricultural work due to downgrading of agricultural work and political neglect of small-scale farming, thus preferring to search for better income or education opportunities in the cities, leading to further alienation from agricultural work, White (2012) notes. Also lifestyle and consumption patterns change in rural areas as a common consequence of economic globalization, and the increased availability of consumer goods has raised the demand for

¹² Hecht (2010:163) defines structural adjustment programs (SAPs) as concerned with „transforming the influence of the state in the economy by emphasizing the centrality of uncontrolled markets in national development, privatization of public companies and fiscal austerity, and the transformations of tenurial regimes“ (ibid.)

¹³ For example new technology such as mechanization can often not be accessed by peasants due to its high costs (Kay 2004).

¹⁴ Thus, today the majority of the global population (54 %) lives in cities, as figures published by the United Nations (UN 2014:1) suggest. On a global scale, Latin America is one of the most urbanized regions (ibid).

cash income, as Bebbington (1993:279) and Sandbrook (2011:434) explain.

In relation to indigenous people, globalization has caused huge challenges for their livelihoods and cultures but also opportunities such as the creation of a transnational indigenous identity and mobilization, as Brysk and Bennett (2012) argue.

2.2.2 Situated agency and the negotiation of globalization

Globalization is indeed frequently perceived as threatening traditional values, cultural identity and rural communities, especially through its urbanizing effect, as Stiglitz (2002:247) claims. Despite the negative consequences of (economic) globalization, the widely deduced notion of resultant weak and fragile rural livelihoods and economic organization being exposed to global processes has to be questioned and contested, as Bebbington (2001) argues.

Thus, I draw in the present thesis on concepts highlighting the agency of peasants, having strategies to negotiate with globalization, within the bounds of social, economic and other structures. In the face of expanding capitalism peasants are often portrayed as only having two pathways to choose: resistance or integration into markets (Van der Ploeg 2010). Yet, authors such as Walsh-Dilley (2012), Tassi (2012) and Bebbington (1993) claim that a third option constitutes of the aforementioned negotiation *on their own terms* with the market and neoliberalism.

Coherent to this approach I view globalization from a relational perspective which means to understand it not (merely) as a top-down process, but instead emphasizing its reproduction through local places (Woods 2007, 2014; Massey 2005). Therefore, I found especially the concept of the *situated agent* as suitable which I encountered in the literature of Bebbington (1993:289). He uses it in order to frame indigenous technical knowledge as a “*dynamic response to changing contexts*“ that farmers generate as *situated agents*, within a cultural, economic, agro-ecological, social and political context. Following this approach, I am interested in the interplay of agency and structures.

Moreover, I also lean on the research of Walsh-Dilley (2012) that shows how reciprocal exchange has been reinforced through integration into, or negotiation with, larger structures. She argues that integration into “modern” systems or markets do not necessarily undermine reciprocal strategies but could also revitalize or strengthen elements of them, since these non-market institutions can help to overcome incomplete markets and thus reciprocity can be even a means to facilitate the

participation in markets¹⁵ (ibid:137). The capability of Bolivian indigenous highland peasants to negotiate globalization in their own terms has been emphasized by various authors (Walsh-Dillely 2012, Tassi 2012, McNeish 2002).

Yet, it is also important to acknowledge the criticism actor-orientation is facing, namely how this approach might obscure structural constraints, unequal power relations and unfavourable macroeconomic dynamics that condition livelihood strategies of poor households and families and often increase instead of abolish poverty, as Cleaver (2005) and González de la Rocha (2007) argue. Social support systems among poor people should be rather strengthened by social policies than taken for granted, González de la Rocha (2007) further suggests. Taking this criticism into account, I try to critically examine the agency of peasants by also taking into consideration the inequitable structures that often surround and constrain their actions.

3. *EMPIRICAL CONTEXT*

Exploring the particular context and conditions is of high relevance in order to understand reproduction and adjustment of reciprocity institutions, as Sajor (2000) underscores. Therefore, in the following chapter, I explain the empirical context of the Bolivian highland including the economic and political situation of indigenous people, changes within rural highland communities, an introduction to reciprocal strategies, and the particular context of the research site Taraco.

3.1 *The national scene: Bolivian highland*

3.1.1 *Agriculture at 3,500 meters above sea level: Arriving to the Bolivian highlands*

The landlocked country Bolivia in the centre of South America is a culturally and ecologically very diverse one, considering the diversity of species and ecosystems (USAID 2008:3-6), and the more than 36 officially recognised indigenous peoples (Parellada 2015:172) within its population of ten million inhabitants¹⁶(INE 2013). My research is focussed on the Andean highland in the Western

¹⁵ Also Sajor (2000) rejects the notion of a necessary decay of pre-existing non-monetary strategies in order to achieve agricultural market integration, as a too dichotomised perspective, and argues rather for the opposite: they might serve as “*creative and strategic forms of engagement by marginalised upland peasants enabling them to engage in commercial production*” (ibid. no pagination). Another voice in this regard comes from Suehara (2006:64) arguing that reciprocal exchange systems as typical phenomena of moral economies do co-exist with the market economy, and are not necessarily “*part of the past or confined to backward societies*” (ibid.).

¹⁶ Bolivia is considered to be the country with the highest percentage of indigenous people in South America (Girard 2012). Between the census of 2001 and 2012, the percentage of Bolivians that self-identifies as indigenous decreased from 62 to 41 % (INE 2013). Nevertheless, this could be explained as a result of the way the question was differently posed in the 2012 questionnaire asking if people self-identify with the category *indígena originario campesino* (originary peasant indigenous), a question that probably caused some confusion among the respondents (Albó 2013).

part of Bolivia, one of the few areas in the world where agriculture is practised above an altitude of 3,500 meters above sea level, as a result of ancient knowledge of the environment and development of techniques and technologies (Vidaurre de la Riva et al. 2013).

3.1.2 Indigenous history between exclusion, exploitation and resistance

Since the Spanish colonialization, the indigenous population has experienced incredible discrimination, domination, exploitation, expropriation and exclusion, but also resistance has characterised its history (see Picture 1)¹⁷(Galeano 1973, Gruzinski/Wachtel 1997, Kohl/Farthing 2006, Postero 2007). During Spanish domination, indigenous people were deprived of most of their rights and treated mainly as cheap labour force, a situation that persisted until the early twentieth century (Barragán 1998). Among others, Kohl and Farthing (2006:34) argue that throughout large parts of Bolivian history the state has always been concerned with the demands and needs of the wealthy elite consisting of foreigners or a national non-indigenous minority. The colonial legacy also set the cornerstone for the high dependency of the Bolivian economy on the exploitation and export of primary materials that shifted from silver, tin, quinine, rubber, coca and most recently natural gas (ibid.).



Picture 1: A mural in El Alto showing the indigenous heroes Tupac Katari and Bartolina Sisa that were leading an indigenous uprising in the late 18th century (Klein 2011:75-6). The legendary last sentence of Tupac Katari before he was killed by the Spanish was allegedly: “Volveré y sere Millones...” (“I will return and be millions”) (Albó 2007:37). (Source of picture: Author)

¹⁷ One example of this incredible injustice and exploitation indigenous people experienced is the Bolivian city Potosí: The colonial rulers have exploited its extremely high silver deposits at an unforeseen level, and used the indigenous slaves as cheap labor, as Galeano (1973) highlights. Today, Potosi is one of the poorest cities in Bolivia (ibid.), although it has been home to the probably richest hill in the world (Waltham 2005).

In particular, the extension of the *hacienda* (large landholder) system has made Bolivia one of Latin America's most unequal land distributed countries, with the indigenous population experiencing extreme exploitation within this system through land expropriations and work obligations, Klein (2011:209-10) argues¹⁸. With the national revolution in 1952 this old social, economic and cultural structure favouring large-scale landholders lost its legitimacy and mainly indigenous disenfranchised peasants increasingly achieved to recapture land (Kohl 1978, Klein 2011:115).

This national revolution was linked to the growing importance of successful indigenous mobilizations linked to class struggles, that expressed the heightened discontent with unequal structures and the divide between indigenous and non-indigenous population, and influenced the following decades until the present day, as Schaefer (2009) highlights. Particularly the neoliberal reforms and political phase in the 1980s and 1990s has often been discussed as having caused rage among the indigenous population, by causing rising levels of unemployment; rural-urban migration due to decreased opportunities for small-scale farming and increasing poverty (Postero 2013:29, Webber 2011)¹⁹. The following protest years of 2000 till 2005 were a politically unstable and tumultuous time period that has been characterized by many (indigenous) uprisings (most prominent among them the Water War of 2000 and Gas War in 2003) and the toppling of two presidents²⁰(Postero 2013:30). These processes finally led to the takeover of the MAS party in 2005, as Webber (2011:3) argues. In the following section I turn to this new political era and its implications.

3.1.3 The new political context: Bolivia in the search for alternatives

Bolivia acts among several other South American left-wing democracies within the emerging post-neoliberal and post-capitalist policy framework, as stated by Ruttenberg (2013:78). The proclaimed “process of change” (*proceso de cambio*) has been heralded in 2005 with the new Bolivian government of president Evo Morales – the first of indigenous, more precisely *Aymaran*, origin in whole South America – and his MAS party. The process of change should initiate a new era of democratization, de-colonialization and increasing political participation and representation of the

¹⁸ In concrete numbers this implied that 92 % of the cultivated land was in the hands of six percent of large-scale landowners. Alternatively, the majority of landowners (60 %) possessed only five hectares or less; and controlled in total not more than 0.2 percent of the land (Klein (2011:210).

¹⁹ Especially president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (*Goni*) deepened the previous reforms and very much adhered to the recommendations of IMF and World Bank through massive privatizations of public enterprises, decreasing public jobs, limiting social services and abolishing agricultural subsidies (Schroeder 2007, Postero 2007, Kohn/Farthing 2006).

²⁰ Also the previously mentioned president *Goni* has been toppled since he created extreme hostile response to his plan of piping natural gas from Bolivia on to the United States and Mexico (Albó 2007:37-8).

indigenous people (Postero 2013:25, Webber 2011). The proclaimed new development paradigm should - in contrast to the Western one - happen in harmony with *pachamama*²¹ (“Mother Earth”) and includes indigenous concepts such as *Vivir Bien* (*suma qamaña* in Aymara meaning “to live well”) (Kaijser 2014). In contrast to previous political governments that sought to integrate the Bolivians under a “*mestizo*” identity²² (ibid.:77), the MAS government's intention has been to ensure co-existence and same rights of all indigenous cultures by the implementation of their “plurinational” state project, including rights to territorial autonomy (Postero 2013).

The previous neoliberal model has been challenged by the current MAS government through certain measures such as the (re-)nationalization of resources (e.g. natural gas), expansion of social services and redistributive measures (Postero 2013:26). Nevertheless, despite their political successes of the first ten years of governance, such as decrease of poverty rates (Webber 2013, Grugel/Riggirozzi 2012), the government has faced increasing criticism for their inconsistency between their rhetorical discourse and lack of political actions taken, especially in the field of environmental politics and indigenous autonomy (see for example Fontana 2012, Fabricant 2013, Kaijser 2014). The Bolivian economic development of the recent years highly depends on exploitation of commodities, while the ambitions of following a more “indigenous” alternative development path seem to recede into the background²³, as Fontana (2012:194) claims.

Reciprocity is part of this aforementioned political and academic (neo-indigenist) discourse on indigenous “cosmovision”, alternative developments and *Vivir Bien*. Hence, it was included as well into the new political constitution, as one of the leading values and principles in the territorial organisation, for the decentralized and autonomous entities, the plural economic system, and the use and access to water (Asamblea Constituyente de Bolivia 2008: CPE Art 8. II, 27 II, 55, 142 III, 270, 306 III, 373 I).

3.1.4 The changing rural countryside in Bolivia

Rural communities and peasant agriculture in the Bolivian highlands are experiencing transitional

²¹ The rights of *pachamama* have been even institutionalized in the Law number 300, the *Ley Marco de la Madre Tierra y Desarrollo Integral Para Vivir Bien* (Legal Framework on Mother Earth and Integral Development for Living Well) (Asamblea Legislativa Plurinacional 2012) (cf. Kaijser 2014).

²² *Mestizos* are persons with mixed indigenous and non-indigenous origin (cf. Albro 2010:74).

²³ Even economic politicians such as Marianela Prada Tejada (Ministry of Economics and Public Finance) laments that a complete break from neoliberalism has not yet been achieved and confirms that the current development approach is to “take advantage of the possibility of growth through the exploitation of natural resources, with the state capturing the surplus and redistributing it to social programs” (Webber 2013, no pagination)

times due to economic, demographic and political changes such as increasing levels of rural-urban migration, the diversification of rural incomes, and enhanced access to public policies among other factors, as Colque et al. (2015) highlight²⁴. Within this section I introduce these phenomena due to their relevance for the research subject.

In the Bolivian highland, rural areas are still characterised by small-scale farming for the sale on local and regional markets (60%) and subsistence production (40 %) (Jiménez/Lizárraga 2009:261). The unfavourable conditions for agriculture in this area represent major challenges for the peasants such as the lack of fertile land, weak infrastructure and adverse climatic conditions (frost, drought, hail) (ibid.:256). Family labour often serves as a substitute for the lack of agricultural machines (Medeiros 2009).

Different studies show that rural incomes in Bolivia are increasingly based on incomes from the non-agricultural sector, and the particularly high degree of diversification in the *altiplano* region (Valdivia 2004, Jimenez 2007, Jiménez/Lizárraga 2003, 2009). Income generating activities include paid work in construction and other services (e.g. domestic work) and the commercialisation and sale of products (Jimenez 2007:64). Valdivia (2004:70-1) portrays income diversification as an essential livelihood strategy in order to maximize the use of family resources and to reduce risk such as harvest failure, particularly considering the lack of insurance systems and the frequent occurrence of adverse climate events in the Andes.

Moreover, rural regions in Bolivia, especially those close to the capital and bigger cities, experience high levels of rural-urban migration ²⁵(Jiménez/Lizárraga 2009:244). Attempts to explain this migration deliver diverging arguments but some aspects are particularly salient, including the better income and education opportunities in the cities and general economic pressure (Balderrama Mariscal et al. 2011:24), the weakening of peasant agriculture due to neoliberal reforms in the past (Kerssen 2015:493), the fragile ecological conditions for agriculture that have even deteriorated as a consequence of increasing climate change (Girard 2012), and the marginalisation of the peasantry by the actual and past governments (Colque et al. 2015). Migration to urban areas could be also linked to changed consumption patterns and needs, Balderrama Mariscal et al. (2011:24) for

²⁴ Rural areas in Bolivia are characterised by vast regional differences between the highland in the West, the lowlands in the East and the valley area in between in terms of population groups, ecological conditions, rural economy etc., and the different population groups living in these regions have responded in diverse ways to neoliberal globalization, as Schroeder (2007:114) argues. Due to the research site, I focussed throughout the thesis on the highland area.

²⁵ Within three decades the rural population decreased from 58 % to 36 % in 2009, and due to the increasing urbanization Bolivia's population became a rather urban than rural one (ibid.).

example found in their study that young Bolivian people migrate because of the low income gained through agricultural production that would be insufficient to satisfy their consumer needs: clothes, radio, MP3-Player and education. Migration of young people due to the lack of agricultural land and income is also often discussed as a consequence of the specific inheritance system in the Bolivian highland that distributes the family land among all children, and thus minimizes the parcels of land to “*minifundios*” (tiny plots) and so causing territorial fragmentation, as the NGO Fundación TIERRA (2015:47) explains.

Rural-urban migration has particularly increased the population of the Bolivian city El Alto at the basin of the capital La Paz and it is characterised by frequent interactions and strong relations between urban and rural areas²⁶ (Albó 2007, Calestani 2012). Many Alteños have both rural and urban residency (Albó 2007). Rural-urban migrants do return frequently to the countryside and keep up relations due to their (often inherited) land and relatives on the countryside (Crandon-Malamud 1991:116). Despite the apparent time constraints these migrants face, they seem to perpetuate cultivation of their land. This could be explained as a way to ensure some kind of food sovereignty while living in the city (Crowder 2003:274). Other reasons could be the danger of losing unused land due to the communitarian norms for land ownership, e.g. the obligation of cultivating land and participation in the communitarian political organization²⁷ (Albó 2007:35). Although rural-urban ties can be a fruitful base for exchange, the migration and (possible) return of migrants might also lead to tensions between the people staying in the village and those that migrate (*residentes*), as Kerssen (2015) states.

The rural economy changes as well due to new social benefits introduced by the MAS government such as conditional cash transfer programs for school children, the elderly, and payments for pregnant and new mothers (Undurraga 2014:299, Gray Molina 2008:12). Nevertheless, the decrease of the country's poverty did not change its regional concentration in rural areas where still 70 % lives in poverty, as Colque et al. (2015:15-6) claim. Furthermore, the MAS government has taken some steps in order to support the peasant and indigenous agriculture, e.g. implementing an agrarian insurance system, land grants, the provision of tractors, agrochemicals, and other subsidies (ibid.:36). Yet, Colque et al. (2015:36) argue that these policies are insufficient and peasant agriculture further loses its significance and percental share of food production since agribusiness, located mostly in the East of the country, grows at an incomparably higher pace.

²⁶ El Alto has experienced an exponential population increase from 11,000 residents in 1952 (García Linera et al. 2004:591) to 870,000 residents in 2007 (Albó 2007:34).

²⁷ In most cases this implies taking over the rotational task of being an indigenous authority for one year.

3.2 Reciprocal strategies in the Andean agriculture

Egalitarian relations of reciprocity were underpinning traditional rural communities in the Andes before and during the Inca empire (Wachtel 1973, Alberti/Mayer 1974:14). Furthermore Alberti and Mayer (1974:18) argue that the Spanish conquest violently distorted the cultural, economic and religious organization of the *Ayllus*. Facing the expansion of the *hacienda* (large landholder) system, exploitation, and uprooting, the indigenous population resorted to reciprocal forms of exchange, especially mutual help in agricultural production, as a means for survival (ibid:20). Reciprocal exchange strategies have persisted in an altered way until the present day, as Weismantel (2006:95) claims.

Although focussing within the present thesis on reciprocal exchange in agricultural activities, it is crucial to mention that reciprocity depicts an important principle underpinning different areas of (rural) life such as political organization, *fiestas* (celebrations), and spirituality (e.g. libations for *pachamama* (Mother Earth)), as the Aymaran university professor Choquehuanca explained to me in an interview. Since I focus in the present thesis on reciprocal strategies within agricultural activities I introduce the three main forms *Ayni*, *Minka* and *Waki* that are essential to understand the following sections²⁸.

Probably the most famous of these reciprocal practices within the agricultural organization is ***Ayni***. In times of high labour demand, such as planting and harvesting season, *Ayni* is used to organise work parties (Walsh-Dilley 2011). It basically means that family A helps family B for a couple of hours, or even days in order to accomplish planting or harvesting. When the time comes that family B is planting or harvesting, they expect that family A comes and helps them as well (ibid.:11). Within the community of Taraco, the families explained it to me often in the following words: "*Hoy por ti, mañana por mi*" (*Today for you, tomorrow for me*).

Minka is another reciprocal practice and means that debts or labour are paid in kind following other rules than cash payments, as Walsh-Dilley (2013) explains.

²⁸ Another reciprocal strategy discussed in the literature on the rural Andes would be the so-called *Trueque* which is barter realized between families of the highlands, valleys and yungas (Bolivia's tropical and subtropical forest ecoregions) by travelling to other ecological zones and exchanging products (Rist 2000, SERNAP 2006). It is based on close relationships between the families of the highlands and the valleys, and equal to other reciprocal practices, the exchanged amount does not depend on (market) prices (ibid.). Due to the little significance *Trueque* has in the municipality of Taraco according to the research participants and facing the scope of this thesis, I excluded it from the analysis. Moreover, it is a reciprocal strategy in relation to consumption in contrast to *Ayni*, *Minka* and *Waki* that concern specifically the agricultural organization of work.

Waki is defined by Rist (2000:311-312) as a cooperation of two families, where one family has surplus land they could not cultivate without the help of the second family which provides their surplus labour. Finally the harvest is distributed equally among the two families (Figure 1). He furthermore argues that such practices even different opportunities of families in terms of access to land, labour and other resources, and seek to provide a minimum level of subsistence for everyone in the community (ibid.).

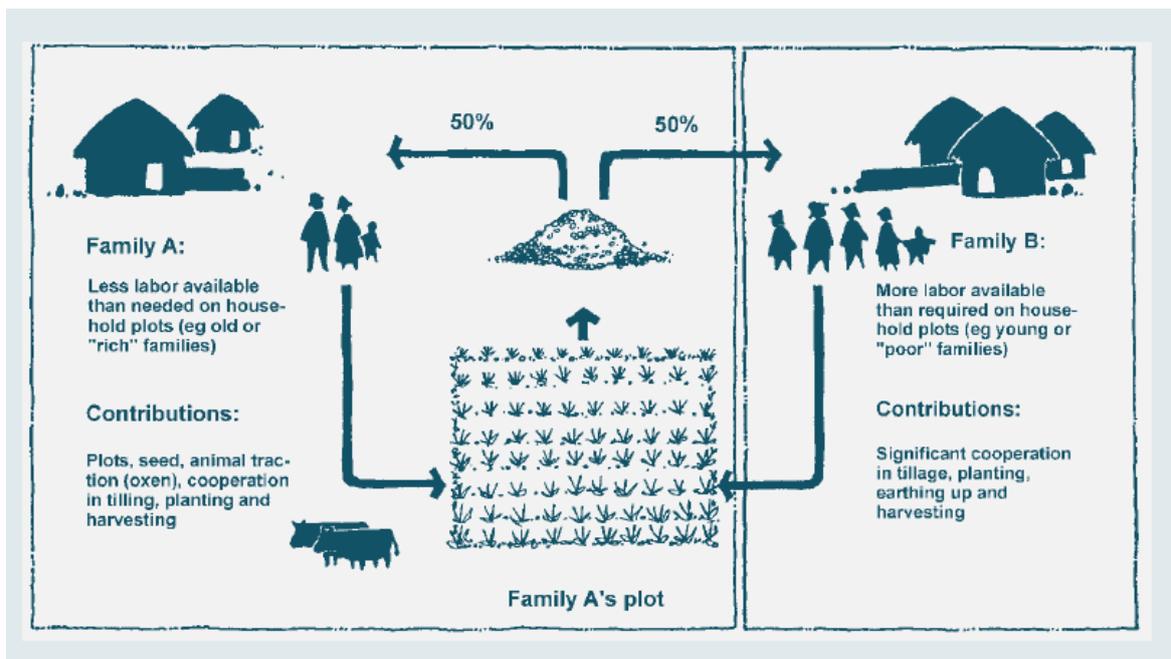


Figure 1: Waki: A reciprocal strategy in the Andes (Source: Rist 2000:312)

3.3 The local scene: The community of Taraco

The municipality and peninsula of Taraco, part of the province Ingavi and the department of La Paz, is located in the East of the capital La Paz, and reachable within three to four hours bus ride from El Alto²⁹ (Figure 2). The municipality is structured into three *Ayllus*³⁰ and 16 communities (CIPCA 2012). The research was mainly focused on the communities Ñachoca and Ñacoca (Figure 3).

²⁹ Due to the lack of academic research and literature on the municipality of Taraco, I mainly draw on internal documents from my internship organization CIPCA and data from the National Statistics Institute of Bolivia (INE).

³⁰ *Ayllu* is a traditional social and political unit of a certain territory (cf. Burman 2011). Albro (2010:86) defines ayllu as a "pre-Columbian form of characteristically Andean social and political organization that continues to be present in different parts of Bolivia" (ibid.).



Figure 2: Location of the municipality of Taraco within Bolivia (Source: CIPCA 2012)



Figure 3: Location of the villages Ñachoca and Ñacoca (circled in black) within the municipality of Taraco (Source: INE 2012)

According to the census of 2012, Taraco has nearly 6,600 inhabitants (INE 2013), and in 2001 still approximately 70 % of the population indicated agriculture as their principal occupation (INE 2002).

Most of its population self-identifies with the indigenous group of Aymara (INE 2001). Taraco has a semi-dry climate (three to five dry months per year) and as a part of the Bolivian *Altiplano* (highland) the region suffers from difficult agricultural circumstances such as the high altitude of about 3,800 metres above sea level, fragile soils and weather extremes (CIPCA n.y.).

Socio-economic situation of the research participants

Since the specific context is highly relevant in order to understand the analysis, I include some information regarding the socio-economic situation of the research participants living in Taraco. The families I was staying with had between two and eleven children. Characteristical for the area, their land property was rather small with two to ten hectares. Their land was mainly used for the cultivation of potatoes, other kinds of tuber such as *oca* (*Oxalis tuberosa*) and *papa lisa* (*Ullucus tuberosus*), fava beans, quinoa, and onions, but also as fallow land, a typical practice in the Bolivian highland in order to restore the soil fertility (Rist 2000:311). The families indicated that most of their agricultural crop production was used for their subsistence, and to a lesser degree sold on markets in Taraco, El Alto or in other Bolivian or Peruan villages that are located at the shore of Lake Titicaca and reachable with their own boats.

All the families had livestock including a few cows and calves, sheep, and sometimes also donkeys and lama. The decrease of fishes in the Lake Titicaca was a common complaint by the research participants. However, two out of six families still used fishing as a livelihood strategy. Since both fishes and cheese could be sold at a relatively good prize on local markets in Taraco and El Alto, they were less consumed within the families. As I will discuss in the analysis, the peasant families engage in other non-agricultural income activities in order to sustain their livelihoods. In order to give the reader an impression of the research site I include some pictures I took during fieldwork (see Pictures 2-6).



Picture 2: Fish from the Lake Titicaca (Source: Author)



Picture 3: Typical cheese production in Taraco (Source: Author)



Picture 4: The use of yoke with bulls (Source: Author)



Picture 5: A common picture in Taraco: The use of small tractors (Source: Author)



Picture 6: Cows serving as essential livestock in Taraco (Source: Author)

4. METHODOLOGY

In the following chapter I outline the methodological choices including the research design, data construction methods, the process of analysis, quality of research as well as ethical considerations.

4.1 Design of the study

With the present study I follow a *qualitative* research approach since I am interested in exploring and understanding local meanings and reasons for choosing certain strategies, and subjective perceptions of changes, and acknowledge the complexity involved in social world (Brockington/Sullivan 2003:57, Creswell 2009:4; Stake 2010). As philosophical viewpoints of the researcher are considered to influence the research and guide the selection of approaches and methods, it is recommended to make them explicit, as Creswell (2009:5) suggests. Thus, my ontological position based in *constructivism* implies that I believe in the social construction of the world, and the existence of multiple realities (Bryman 2008, Moses/Knutsen 2012). Coherent to this point of view I engage with *interpretivism* as an epistemological position by understanding social sciences as a field that requires a different procedure than natural sciences since the social world (people and their institutions) cannot be explained with the natural order (Bryman 2012:28). An interpretivist tries to understand the subjective meaning human actions have for individuals and interpret it as much as possible from their point of view (ibid:30).

Coherent to the common tradition in qualitative constructivist research my study draws mainly on an *inductive* approach (Creswell 2009:9), since the collection of empirical data preceded the election of suitable theories and concepts, and the generation of new theoretical insights was prioritised over the verification of certain hypotheses³¹(Mikkelsen 2005:168).

The research design of this study is a *case study* which allows a better understanding of an issue or problem through focussing on a case as an illustration, and implies an in-depth investigation of a phenomenon in its real-life context³²(Creswell 2007:73, Yin 2009:18). Thus, this thesis is the case study of *(changing) reciprocal strategies in agriculture in the context of changing rural Bolivian*

³¹ However, as Silverman and Marvasti (2008) argue, qualitative research is often not purely inductive, and also my research was informed by certain ideas gained through the previous literature review.

³² Besides the case study approach I considered as well an *ethnography* as an appropriate strategy of inquiry in the initial research phase, since the research objective is also to understand cultural practices (reciprocity) in a culture-sharing group and the underlying reasoning (Creswell 2007:70). Yet, a full scale ethnography usually encompasses a long time period on the research site (Yin 2009:15), and given the limited scope and time frame of this thesis' research I was not able to do so. Nevertheless, fieldwork techniques such as participant observation were "*borrowed*" from ethnography for the present case study, as Wolcott (2008:43-4) suggests.

highland communities, especially due to the influences of globalization. Subsequently, contextual conditions are considered to be highly relevant for this research on reciprocal exchange, another common characteristic of case study research (Yin 2009).

The *single-case study* has a *holistic approach* since one *unit of analysis* – reciprocal exchange – is examined (Yin 2009:50). Moreover, it is an *instrumental case study* which means to provide insight into an issue or engaging with generalizations beyond the studied case (Silverman 2010). As usual in a case study design, *generalizability* in my thesis concerns the question to which extent the research can generalize or expand theories and concepts (*analytic generalization*), and not how it can be generalized to certain population groups (*statistical generalization*) (Silverman 2013, Yin 2009:15). With this research I hope to render a small academic contribution to the already existing research on reciprocal exchange in agriculture, particularly in the Bolivian Andes, and to the field of relational studies on globalization.

4.2 Data Collection and Construction

As a common practice in case studies I used multiple sources of information (Creswell 2007:75). The cultural context appeared to be highly relevant in order to understand reciprocal practices, and thus I drew on ethnographic fieldwork techniques with interviews, informal conversations and participant observations as main research methods (cf. Brockington/Sullivan 2003:65). The fieldwork has been conducted between December 2014 and February 2015. Within this time period I spent about 18 days in Taraco with six different families while doing participant observations and accompanying them in their everyday life. I conducted also semi-structured interviews with five of them.

In order to gain a broader picture of the dynamics between rural and urban areas and inhabitants, I additionally visited and interviewed five families that moved from Taraco to El Alto. Complementary, I was also able to interview 18 experts, most of them with an academic background³³. Their knowledge and theoretical as well as empirical experience with reciprocity in the Bolivian context has proved to be a valuable contribution for understanding but also contrasting the observed phenomena on the countryside. Thus, the research is mainly based on primary data collected through interviews, observations and informal conversations, and to a minor extent on secondary data concerning the context of rural Bolivian highland and the topic of reciprocity.

³³ I used the word “*experts*” for the persons with particular research interest in reciprocity or the persons that have been presented to me as particularly knowledgeable on this topic. Yet, I would like to highlight that in my view the *Taraceños* are as well experts regarding their own environment, culture and thus reciprocity, and it was just a matter of distinguishing these two groups that I used experts only for the researchers.

4.2.1 Sampling

The research site, the community of Taraco, was selected *purposefully* following theoretical considerations and questions of accessibility (Silverman 2010). One reason why I chose this particular municipality was the previous contact and access I had to the area through my preceding internship with the Bolivian NGO CIPCA Altiplano³⁴. By visiting this community on a weekly basis during my internship I was able to get to know a few local families and increasingly established relations of trust which was inevitable for conducting fieldwork. Moreover, I found Taraco to be an appropriate research site out of theoretical reasons since it illustrates the phenomena of interest and thus allowed me to study them (Silverman 2010:141-5): the significance and change of reciprocal strategies in a rural community of the Bolivian highland. Furthermore, due to its proximity to the capital (3 hours bus ride) and high level of rural-urban migration I consider Taraco to be an interesting place to study the influences of globalization on local cultural practices and its transformations.

Concerning the selection of research participants in Taraco I used *purposeful* and *snowball sampling*. Especially in the initial fieldwork phase, the selection of research participants was limited to the contacts the gatekeeper – my internship organization – had established. Later on, the previous research participants recommended and introduced me to other local families as new participants, a common strategy called snowball sampling (Mikkelsen 2005:193, Creswell 2007:127). Nevertheless, within the thesis' scope, local families were also selected purposefully according to their ability to speak in Spanish and capability of expression³⁵. This was an essential selection criterion, given that the fieldwork was restricted to interviews and short stays with local families³⁶. Also the research participants in El Alto as well knowledgeable experts in the urban area were selected purposively and through recommendations. In Appendix 1 I include a list of research participants.

Out of the 16 villages of Taraco, I passed my fieldwork stays only in the two neighbouring villages

³⁴ I spent a three-month internship with CIPCA (Centre for Research and Support of the Peasantry) as part of my master programme, from September till November 2014. The local NGO supports peasants in the Bolivian highland with trainings in agro-ecological methods and in their exercise of local power at the municipal, provincial and departmental level through capacity building for peasant indigenous organizations.

³⁵ Purposeful sampling means to choose individuals or sites that can inform an understanding of the central phenomenon (Creswell 2007:125).

³⁶ According to my experiences in the communities, nearly all families in Taraco were able to speak Spanish, apart from the older generation. Nevertheless, I experienced the local people to be not very talkative which made it difficult to understand what reciprocal exchange means to them and how they explain changes within the communities.

Ñacoca and Ñachoca, not as a theoretically sustained decision but rather as a consequence of previously established contacts I had and the confidence I gained in this area. Nevertheless, I had also contact with inhabitants of other villages through my internship and informal conversations in busses and during events such as a school graduation. I consider the selection of these two villages as rather trivial to the research findings since I encountered similar notions regarding the research subject in other villages. Despite this focus, I used the name of Taraco in this thesis out of concerns regarding readability.

4.2.2 Interviews

I conducted in total 28 in-depth *semi-structured interviews* with *Taraceños* and experts. I used an interview guide including the predetermined topics of interest in a flexible way by asking also new questions and picking up as well themes that emerged during the interview, as Mikkelsen (2005:169) suggests for semi-structured interviews. I used three different interview guides for local families in Taraco, rural-urban migrants in El Alto and experts, and adapted them during the fieldwork process in order to include emerging topics. Examples for these interview guides can be found in Appendix 2.

The interviews with the local people from Taraco were conducted in their houses or outside of them, in most cases in the presence of the whole family including children and grandparents that were listening whereas the parents answered my questions. Although it would have been beneficial to interview family members alone, it appeared to be very difficult to separate them, also due to cultural notions³⁷. Thus, by interviewing the whole family I could maintain a more natural setting. The interviews with the experts were mostly conducted at their workplaces. All interviewees were informed about the purpose of the research, the availability of the thesis online, confidential treatment of the data, the possibility to withdraw from the research at any moment and in case of the rural and urban families from Taraco the anonymization of their names³⁸. After this introduction I asked for their consent to participate in the interview and as well to be audio-recorded during the interview with a digital recorder³⁹. The first four interviews on the countryside were also done in

³⁷ The family and community have particularly high importance as social groups within Aymaran culture and activities such as decision-taking, organization of work, or praying, are done with reference to these groups, as Albó (2010:17) highlights.

³⁸ In contrast to the research participants from Taraco, the experts were asked if they wish that their names appear in the thesis or prefer that I use them in an anonymised way. Some experts would have experienced the use of the given information without quoting them as plagiarism, whereas others wished that their names do not emerge since they critically discussed the political situation in Bolivia which might result in negative consequences for them.

³⁹ Despite the audio-recording I took as well notes in my research diary during the interviews in order to retain the main statements and claims of the interviewees.

Aymara with an interpreter whereas the other interviews were conducted in Spanish⁴⁰. The interviews lasted between 12 and 119 minutes.

4.2.3 Participant observations

Participant observation was chosen as a classical anthropological method since it allows the researcher to better understand cultural knowledge and symbols, and legitimizes to a certain extent the interpretation of the interview data (Mikkelsen 2005:88, Brockington/Sullivan 2003:65). By staying several days with different families in Taraco and conducting participant observations, I sought to gain a deeper insight into their social world and culture.

Before the actual stay with a family I visited or called them in order to ask for their consent to participate in the research and host me for a few days. During the fieldwork I joined the everyday activities of the families, such as working on the field, carrying for the livestock, chatting, cooking, eating and revelling; and this told me a lot about their culture, organisation of work, principles, values and reasoning. As suggested by Creswell (2007:138) I took *descriptive* and *reflective* field notes.

4.2.4 Informal conversations

The interviews and observations were complemented by informal conversations during the fieldwork period. In order to maintain the natural situation I did not record these conversations, but I tried to make field notes as soon as possible after the conversation. These informal talks have proved to be sometimes even more useful and rich than the actual formal interviews in which the use of audio recorder might have distorted the local people a little bit and can impede open, honest talking.

4.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis for this thesis started already during fieldwork as a dialectical process of going back and forth between data collection and initial analysis, and resulted in several repetitive loops that

⁴⁰ I speak fluent Spanish but conversations in *Aymara* required a translator. *Aymara* is widely spoken in the research site and therefore I used two *interpreters* (*Aymara*-Spanish), one female and one male, on some occasions. Due to the financial burden it was not possible for me to pay an interpreter during the whole time of my field work. Nevertheless, I experienced it as not necessary since most people spoke at least some Spanish. Furthermore, translation might result in the shortening or distortion of the actual content (Devereux/Hoddinott 1992:25). The presence of interpreters might also bias interviews and research, for example when female interpreters are not accepted in traditional villages. However, in my case the interpreters rather appeared as research assistants that helped “breaking the ice” through their cultural knowledge and fluency in the local language (cf. Leslie/Storey 2003:131-133). Nevertheless, due to the financial burden and ability of most local people to speak Spanish, I decided to do the interviews in the later research phase without an interpreter's help.

deepened and shaded my knowledge every time a bit more (cf. Silverman/Marvasti 2008:193). In general, the data analysis was guided by Creswell's (2009:185-9) analysis approach including six sequential steps.

First, the data was prepared and the interviews partly transcribed⁴¹. Following my research interest, the main data source for the analysis constituted of the interviews and fieldnotes I took during my stays in Taraco. The interviews with rural-urban migrants were used in order to complement this data, and the interviews with experts as a sort of academic literature. After the data preparation, I was reading through all the data in order to grasp its overall meaning (ibid.:185). Then, the data was segmented into meaningful categories (or codes) and then used in order to generate descriptions and themes (ibid.:189), following the research questions and conceptual framework. Thereby, I tried to use as much as possible *in vivo codes* which implies labelling the codes with the exact words of the participants (Creswell 2007:153). In the final steps, these descriptions and themes were interpreted, and the written analysis generated in which I interweave findings and interpretation.

4.4 Quality of the Research Process

In the present thesis I applied different *validity* strategies in order to check the accuracy of findings, as Creswell (2009:191) suggests for qualitative research. *Triangulation* was one of them by using and cross-checking different data collection methods and information sources (Mikkelsen 2005:197). Additionally I sought to include *discrepant information* that contradicted my other data and findings into the analysis⁴² (Creswell 2009:192). *Reflectivity* implies to clarify how the researcher might bias the study (ibid.:192). My own background as a white, educated young woman from a rich Western country has been frequently discussed with my research participants and resulted in curiosity and interest but also distrust and envy. Thus, I am aware that these feelings towards my background biased the research, and the research participants might have behaved and answered questions in a different way in the presence of for example a male, indigenous Bolivian researcher. Moreover, my own background has most probably shaped how I did analytical interpretations especially due to the cultural difference between myself and the research participants. I tried to gain a better cultural understanding through my fieldwork but I consider the different

⁴¹ Thus, the main source for my analysis, the five interviews with local people in Taraco, were fully transcribed, whereas the interviews with rural-urban migrants and experts were only partly transcribed. A full transcription of these interviews appeared to be not necessary since I additionally took notes during the interviews and thereby summarized the main statements of the interviewees.

⁴² My initial intent was as well to do *member checking* by bringing the findings back into the community to see if they make sense for the local people (Creswell 2009:191), but given the limited time scope this was not possible. Nevertheless, I included themes that emerged in the initial research phase into my interview guide and tried to check previously encountered notions and themes in the subsequent interviews.

interpretation due to the own background as not evitable and acceptable due to my constructivist approach. Furthermore, I tried to ensure *reliability* through the detailed documentation of the research process.

4.5 Limitations

The present research has been limited especially through the given time frame I had for conducting fieldwork. The probably most important reciprocal strategy in the agricultural exchange of labour force - *Ayni* - is mainly done during planting (September, October) and harvesting season (March-May). Since my research has been conducted between December and February I was not able to observe these exchanges. Therefore, the research and analysis is mainly based on the narratives I have encountered within the interviews, the stories people told me about reciprocal exchanges. Yet, as a qualitative researcher I aim at “*understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem*” (Creswell (2009:4) and thus, it has been more important for me to listen to the local people and their explanations instead of seeing it with my own eyes.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Ethically sound research is concerned with the responsibility of the researcher towards the research participants (Mack et. al 2005). Especially within international fieldwork where histories of colonialism and development come into play, researchers have to be aware of not perpetuating relations of exploitation, domination and control, as Sultana (2007:375) points out. Various ethical dilemmas might arise from research within the development field and thus I address issues of positionality, representation and essentialism in the following section.

In general, I sought to consider the needs and concerns of the participants, and ensure dignity, privacy and safety, as Scheyvens et. al (2003:139-140) propose for ethical research. Thus, I asked for informed consent before doing research, and anonymised the family names in order to protect them. Concerning the names of villages and municipality I decided against an anonymization since the research participants did not anticipate any negative effects for them by using the original names.

As discussed by Bourke (2014), our own *positionality* influences our research and the relations to the participants. I agree with Kapoor (2004) that this requires a high degree of *self-reflexivity* and thus, I had to acknowledge and deal with my very privileged position as a white researcher coming from one of the richest countries in the world, a topic that has been felt and discussed in the contact with the research participants, mostly poor rural indigenous people living in Bolivia where their chances to acquire good education, material wealth, health insurance etc. appear to be very limited.

There are no general solutions to this; however I always tried to act in a sensitive and respectful way, as Scheyvens et al. (2003:139-140) propose. Especially since I owed them a lot for offering me accommodation, food and a lot of time for my endless questions, I always tried to give at least “something back” by showing my gratefulness, helping on the field, bringing some food to the families, and of course returning the pictures I took during my stays in the families.

Moreover, international studies such as the present one are often perceived as *representations* for people in the Global South and this can have unconsidered implications, for example the opposite we might want to achieve as researcher, marginalisation or silencing of the research participants rather than empowerment, as Kapoor (2004:286) warns. Therefore, I tried to conduct *mutually defined research* by writing *with* the people instead of *about* them, for example by negotiating meanings such as the definitions of reciprocal exchange (cf. Sultana 2007:381). Since I have been concerned if the theoretical concepts I use would make sense for the local people I chose the analytical framework after and not before conducting the fieldwork by following the use of *fluid analytical frames* instead of fixed ones⁴³ (Ragin/Amoroso 2010:75). This allowed me to adapt theoretical choices to the narratives of the research participants (ibid.). Concerning the language I strongly agree with Nagar (2002) demanding that we have to “*dismantle the existing hierarchies of knowledge*” (ibid.:185). Therefore I wrote my thesis in an accessible, tangible way, and I would like to offer a summary of my thesis in Spanish to the research participants.

As discussed above, research on reciprocity is often associated with *essentialism* and romanticisation of indigenous people (Spedding 2011). It is considered to be part of a discourse that portrays the „other“ (see Said 1979) - the indigenous groups - as living in perfect harmony with nature and other human beings, and their communities as static since the Spanish conquest (ibid.). As Rodríguez Márquez (2008:2) argues, this so-called indigenism (*indigenismo*) involves the risk of using and copying parts of colonial discourse, such as its ideology, conventions, and language. Thus, I am aware of these hazards involved in writing about indigenous people and the principle of reciprocity, and subsequently I seek to avoid reaffirming such stereotypes of indigenous people but rather try to engage in a more critical discourse based on empirical data.

⁴³ I still wonder if it is ethically right that most of *our* research, in this case my thesis, might not be understood and hardly used by the research participants, the local people we are accompanying and observing for a long time? (cf. Nagar 2002 on the „utility of theory and theoretical language“). Since the day I entered academia, I have experienced feelings of refusal when I noticed how exclusive and discriminatory the academic world is by using a certain difficult language, creating (financial) barriers for „common people“ - especially in the Global South - to read publications, acceptance tests and high enrollment fees for universities, etc.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1 *The multidimensionality of reciprocal exchange*

By drawing on theoretical insights on gift exchange and reciprocity, the first section of the analysis concerns the question on how and why local people in Taraco engage in reciprocal exchange. As discussed in the conceptual framework, reciprocal exchange reflects in most cases different dimensions of human nature and out of these various angles and concepts I used the following categories of reasons:

- **technical and economic reasons**
- **moral reasons**
- **social, symbolic and cultural reasons**

Among the forms of reciprocal strategies I was focussing on (see in the section „Reciprocal strategies in the Bolivian Andes“) *Ayni*, reciprocal labour exchange, was the mostly discussed one in my interviews. *Ayni* was frequently associated with reciprocity as the literal Aymaran translation of the word ⁴⁴(Chávez Siñani 2009). Moreover, among the discussed types, *Ayni* as the exchange of labour appeared to be the one that most sets itself apart from usual forms of payment in cash, and thus delivered most topics of conversation during the interviews. Therefore, I particularly focus in the following sections on this form of exchange.

5.1.1 *Technical and economic reasons*

Within my interviews, three aspects have been highlighted by the research participants that relate to this dimension: Reciprocity is useful in order to complete work faster, save monetary resources, and furthermore it is considered to be a reliable tool to access means of production such as labour, seeds, and as well food.

Faster completion of work

One of the main arguments for engaging in *Ayni* (reciprocal labour exchange) I have encountered was that the work would be accomplished faster through it. This reciprocal institution is associated with the tradition of staying on the field until the whole planting or harvesting has been finished; and the helpers would not leave before they complete work; in contrast to paid workers that could

⁴⁴ The Aymaran word *Ayni* could be translated as reciprocity, cooperation, and helping someone else with work under the same condition of reward, as Chávez Siñani (2009:68) explains. Also in *Quechua*, the word *Ayni* is understood as reciprocity (Walsh-Dilley 2012).

virtually leave whenever they want. Ilda also told me “*like this we finish the work*” in an informal conversation⁴⁵. Andrés and Pascuela, an older migrant couple that cultivates land in Taraco, bring up an illustrative example on how much faster they are with mutual help:

*“With this people we hurry up, we make the furrows fast, (...), so in three to four days we finish as well. If the two of us are going to do it, it will take us 12 days. One gets tired as well. It is not easy.”*⁴⁶

As discussed by Erasmus (1956) and Dasgupta (1995), people engaging in reciprocal labour exchange usually know that the amount and effort they show determines how the given favour will be returned. Therefore, local people such as Andrés and Pascuela “*hurry up*” when they do *Ayni* for others since they want their neighbours and friends to work as well fast for them.

Saving „cash“

Furthermore, *Ayni* saves financial resources, the families do not have to pay workers in cash and therefore they save money for other expenditure, as Valentin told me:

*“It is that we do not pay, sometimes we do not have money, so therefore, it is convenient for us.”*⁴⁷

Reciprocal labour exchange can be used in order to circumvent the lack of monetary resources due to missing income opportunities or credit systems, as Sajor (2000) and Erasmus (1956) explain. However, as I will argue further below, this motive for doing *Ayni* seems to lose importance in Taraco due to the increased access to money within the community.

Reliable tool to access means of production and food

The local families emphasized that reciprocal exchange implies a strong social norm within the villages (see below); thus, it ensures that people can expect that others return given favors. As Walsh-Dilley (2012) suggests, also my research revealed that *Ayni* is a useful and reliable tool for the *Taraceños* in order to acquire labour force and answer possible insecurity within the recruitment of workers.

Moreover, another reciprocal strategy, the so-called *Waki*, has been presented by the local people as a tool to access means of production. María and Javier argued that it is especially useful for families that do not have (enough) land or seeds, and thus they cultivate a piece of land together, whereas

⁴⁵ „*asi terminamos el trabajo*“

⁴⁶ „*Con esta gente apuramos, rapido surco salimos, (...), entonces casi de tres hasta cuatro dias ya terminamos tambien. Si los dos vamos haciendo unos 12 dias vamos a hacer. Se cansa tambien. No es facil.*“

⁴⁷ „*Es que no pagamos, a veces no tenemos plata, entonces de eso, nos conviene*“

one family adds the seeds and pays the tractor driver; and the other one provides a part of the family land. The incurring work such as planting, weeding and harvesting are done together and the harvest is shared equally among both families that mostly come from the same kinship.

This reciprocal practice gives those ones that do not have land the opportunity to cultivate potatoes and other crops they need. Particularly families that have migrated to the city could still access land through *Waki* by collaborating for example with a sibling, as Javier explained to me. The other family benefits from the seeds they bring, thus they do not have to use their own crops as seeds (e.g. potatoes) or even buy seeds, as Veronica told me when we were sitting outside her house. She further emphasized another advantage, the possibility to receive seeds from another potato variety or a better quality from the other family. Families engaging in this kind of reciprocal exchange highlighted these technical motives as pivotal to engage in *Waki* which helps them to balance different access to means of production between families, as discussed by Rist (2000:311-312).

Minka, the payment of workers in kind, has also special advantages, as Andrés and Pascuela explained to me. Some workers would prefer to do *Minka* instead of being paid, because they receive a big pile of unselected potatoes and thus could use them for different purposes: “*the bigger ones for selling, the smaller ones for planting and the tiniest for making chuño*”^{48,49} and in total it would be more convenient and cost-effective for them, as Pascuela said. They receive potatoes in exchange for labour and thus they do not have to buy them.

Moreover, as Dasgupta (1995) suggests, reciprocal exchange can help to encounter misfortune such as harvest failure. After a heavy thunderstorm and hail I arrived to the field of María, and while she was crying she told me that the year’s harvest has been nearly entirely destroyed. But then she calmed down and told me: “*I am not worried, because the others will endow me with potatoes*”⁵⁰. She was referring to the practice of *Minka* and that she will work for others in exchange for agricultural crops that she needs for her own consumption.

5.1.2 Moral reasons

Within this category of reasoning, *Taraceños* indicated that reciprocal exchange would be fulfilled due the strong internalized moral norm it has within the communities and in order to maintain the

⁴⁸ *Chuño* are transformed potatoes that have been frozen and then dried in the sun in order to make them durable for many years (Rist 2000:313).

⁴⁹ “*mas grandecitos, se vende, chiquititos para semilla, y mas chiquititos para hacer chuño*”

⁵⁰ “*No estoy preocupada, porque los demás me van a regalar papas*”

family's social standing.

Moral norm and social standing

As mentioned above, *Ayni* and other reciprocal practices represent a very strong moral norm among the families I interviewed, given favours have to be returned, come what may. Relating to this, Ángel told me: “*It is always help. Those who come are family, friends. We have to always remember, we have to carry, equally we have to go.*”⁵¹. If families would reject to engage in reciprocal exchange or would not comply with the obligation of returning favours, their neighbours would “*look at them*”⁵² in a negative way, Humberto explained to me. Thus, violating the reciprocal norms seems to endanger the social standing within the communities of Taraco, congruent with Sandbrook's (2011:434) assumptions. Even young children in Taraco would know what *Ayni* means and implies when I asked them during my fieldwork stays with the families, an example that illustrates how the social norm of reciprocity appears to be internalized among the local people from early ages onwards, as Dasgupta (1995) argues. The moral norm of reciprocity seemed to be an unquestioned and unwritten law among the villagers that has to be fulfilled, also in order to circumvent possible internal punishment (guilt and shame) or external punishment through the other villagers (cf. Dasgupta 1995).

5.1.3 Social, symbolic and cultural reasons

The testimonies of the research participants suggest that reciprocal practices in Taraco reaffirm trustful social relations and uphold cultural values through the commemoration of the elderly.

Construction and reproduction of social relations

As local people such as Javier told me reciprocal exchange happens always with “*personas de confianza*” (trustworthy persons), and also Ángel affirmed that it is only conducted with “*acquaintances, with relatives, with other ones it is difficult*”⁵³. The very nature of mutuality and reciprocity is based on face-to-face interaction and trust (Sandbrook 2011:434-436, Gudeman/Rivera 1990:110), and my empirical data seems to support this notion. As my research participants claimed, reciprocal exchange in Taraco is mainly based on kinship and neighbourhood relations. The local people told me that in some cases they do not even have to ask for help; their neighbours see that support is needed and come, as Andrés expressed in the following words: “*They*

⁵¹ „*Siempre es ayuda. Los que vienen son familiares, vecinos. Tenemos que recordar siempre, tenemos que llevar. igual tenemos que ir.*“

⁵² “*Nos miran*”

⁵³ „*Siempre conocidos, con familiares, con otros es difícil*“

think (...) just two are working, I will help, (...), therefore they come."⁵⁴. The neighbours show solidarity through reciprocal exchange, and thereby strengthen and reproduce social networks and relations within the community, a function of reciprocity that has been highlighted by various authors (Mauss 1990, Eriksen 2001, Sahlins 2004, Wilk/Cligett 2007, Sandbrook 2011).

Commemoration of the ancestors

For some, engaging in *Ayni* and *Minka*, in reciprocal exchange, is a way of commemorating their ancestors, their great-grandparents and grandparents. Upholding traditions such as *Ayni* is perceived as a means to remember them and show pride of one's origins. Ángel explained this to me in the following words: "*Ayni, Minka (...) is our great-grandfather, we can never forget, we have to remember him always*"⁵⁵. As Wilk and Cligett (2007:157) suggest, reciprocal exchange in Taraco appears to reinforce cultural identity and to be an expression of the cosmology of the cultural group.

5.1.4 Concluding remarks on the multidimensionality of reciprocal exchange

Reciprocity institutions have been found useful by the local people in Taraco out of different economic, moral, social, symbolic and cultural reasons. These different dimensions reinforce, overlap and condition each other: for example, if there would not exist such a strong moral norm of returning *Ayni* within the community, the local people could not profit from its economic advantages. If reciprocal exchange would not be based on trustworthy relations, it would lose its potential to deal with uncertainty in the labour recruitment, and the *Taraceños* could not rely on it. Thus, is this interplay of technical and moral aspects that makes reciprocity to such a useful tool for indigenous communities, Walsh-Dilley (2013:226) argues. My empirical data from Taraco suggests, reciprocity can be a useful tool for even enhancing economic success (cf. Salazar 1996:77).

Thus, facing this multidimensionality of reciprocity, I agree with Wilk and Cligett (2007:155) that the spheres we create between rational choice, social goals and morality are socially constructed. This line of thought relates to Polanyi's concept of embeddedness criticising the separation of economy and society in the capitalist market economy (Polanyi 2001). As the given example of Taraco suggests, reciprocity institutions are highly embedded in communitarian social and cultural structures such as norms and values (cf. Sandbrook 2011, Argumedo/Pimbert 2010).

⁵⁴ „Ellos ya piensan (...), dos no más estan trabajando, ayudaré (...) por eso vienen.“

⁵⁵ „El ayni, minka (...) eso es nuestro tatarabuelo, no tenemos que olvidarnos por nada, tenemos que hacer recuerdo siempre.“

5.2 Changing reciprocal exchange

After having explained the reasons for engaging in reciprocity, this section deals with the second research question by looking at the factors that shape and transform reciprocity institutions according to the local narratives. Drawing on the local interpretations I could identify three main aspects that change reciprocal patterns:

- 1) technological change**
- 2) rural-urban migration and dual residence**
- 3) access to money**

All three aspects relate to processes of globalization, and have been discussed also in previous literature as relevant phenomena when discussing contemporary reciprocity institutions in the agricultural context in different countries (Salazar 1996, Walsh-Dilley 2012, Seiser 2012). I analyse these changes affecting reciprocity institutions and the responses to them with concepts on globalization and through the lenses of situated agency focusing on how the local people negotiate with globalization processes.

5.2.1 Technological change

Conversations with the local people about planting patterns and the involved reciprocal labour organization and how they change have been often associated with the increased use of tractors in the area. The introduction of tractors on the research site has been explained by many as a useful way in order to facilitate and reduce the agricultural work of planting. Today planting on the research site is mainly done with the help of contracted tractor owners that often live in the same village and charge 100 *Bolivianos* (the national currency, about 12 €) per hour. Despite this high price for families which have an average monthly income of 1,000 *Bolivianos* (about 122 €) according to a survey of my internship organization CIPCA (2011), they are willing to pay for this service since it shortens the planting time so tremendously, as Valentin told me. Many times local people explained to me how the specific mode of operation of tractors - digging four furrows - makes it necessary to plant as well with four workers. Especially in times of increasing rural-urban migration and scarce labour force it is essential to have developed a reliable way of contracting workers at the time the tractor and its driver appear, such as *Ayni* which is associated with a strong norm to return previous favours, as university professor Elizabeth Jiménez told me in an expert interview⁵⁶ Tractors as a modern means of production did not make the local indigenous practice of

⁵⁶ However, previously there was even a higher labour demand, since the preceding use of yoke (of oxen or bulls) required more time and effort, for example Valentin claimed: „*What we had to plant before with yoke within a day, we*

Ayni redundant, but rather increased its importance. Thus, as Bebbington (1993:276) suggests, (agrarian) modernization does not necessarily erase indigenous cultures, it depends on the degree that rural inhabitants manage to incorporate and use it. The given example demonstrates how indigenous rural people negotiate with globalization by making use of its opportunities (agricultural machines), and try to circumvent its negative outcomes (decreased number of rural inhabitants due to migration) by relying on local indigenous strategies of labour force recruitment, as Walsh-Dilley (2012) highlights⁵⁷.

5.2.2 „There are no people“ - Influence of rural-urban migration and dual residence

In this section I focus on rural-urban migration since it has major relevance for transformations of reciprocity within the agricultural realm, according to the research participants⁵⁸. Like many other rural areas in the Bolivian highland (cf. Jiménez/Lizárraga 2009:244), Taraco faces a high level of rural-urban migration⁵⁹. According to many local testimonies I encountered, income and education opportunities in the Bolivian city of El Alto appear to be the main drivers leading to rural-urban migration in the region, as in many other Bolivian rural areas that face a weak rural economy and environmental vulnerability (cf. Balderrama Mariscal et al. 2011). Globalization processes appear to present increased income opportunities to the people moving from Taraco to El Alto. Many of them such as Pablo, Carlos and Rina told me how they established their family enterprises within the textile industry; and successfully take advantage of global markets by selling their products at the Chilean or Peruvian border where the Bolivian producers profit from the higher prices.

Relating to rural-urban migration, the dual residence and the periodic return of migrants in order to cultivate has often been assumed to change the local economy and reciprocity institutions. Many urban dwellers still travel to the community every week or two weeks in order to take care of their inherited piece of land or visiting their family. The rural families ascribe a special role to these

plant today in one hour with tractor“ („Lo que tenía que sembrar antes con yunta un día, ahora ya sembramos en una hora con tractor“). Apart from easement of work, the yoke is avoided since it makes people appear poor, something the local families seek to avoid, as Javier told me. Thus, the use of tractors is associated with prestige and material wealth.

⁵⁷ Also Seiser's (2012) study on Austrian farmers revealed how mechanization did not “liberate” them from kinship and neighbourhood networks, but rather reinforced those ties, since family farms relied on each other through coordinated purchases of agricultural machines. Also in the Bolivian highland, or more specifically in Taraco, I observed that local people rely on borrowing the tractors of their neighbours; nevertheless, these services are hired and paid, and not reciprocally exchanged.

⁵⁸ However, the villages I visited also face a high level of migration to other countries, and nearly every family told me of relatives having migrated overseas to Argentina or to a fewer extent to the United States.

⁵⁹ Unfortunately I could not find quantitative data on how many inhabitants of Taraco have left the municipality in order to live in El Alto. Yet, my research participants clearly stated that it has been highly affected by migration, and this has been frequently a subject of informal conversations in the field.

migrants within the changing pattern of reciprocal exchange, and believe that their presence on the countryside has tremendously metamorphosing effects on the rural life, such as the availability of labour force, changing time and space relations, access to money and relation to agricultural work, as I will discuss in the following section.

Availability of labour force

Most of my research participants, such as for example Carlos, explained to me how the high levels of rural-urban migration leave a tiny population on the countryside, mostly the elderly. This makes it difficult to find neighbours or friends that could participate in reciprocal labour sharing (*Ayni*). When I asked Valentin why they engage less in *Ayni*, he answered, “*Because before there were more people here, (...). Now since they have gone to La Paz, there are few people here.*”⁶⁰. The increased employment and education possibilities drive especially the (young) people in employable working age away from the rural areas to the cities. Furthermore, similar to Colque et al. (2015) that denounce the marginalisation of the peasant agriculture, also university professor Fernanda Wanderley expressed in an interview her concern that small-scale farming does not receive enough political attention although there are some efforts to revitalize the rural economy. This leaves the countryside with a considerable lack of labour force, thus affecting reciprocal exchange.

Furthermore, I observed that major work tasks were often postponed to the weekend, and when I asked Ángel for the reasons, he answered that it is the weekend when most of their relatives from the city do not have to work or study, and therefore it is most probable that they find time to visit and help them. Whereas the agricultural cycle determined the rural organisation of work in previous times, nowadays it appears to be increasingly influenced by surrounding circumstances such as urban labour demands, pointing towards the next section, the changing time constraints, resources and pressure linked to urbanization and globalization.

Change of time and space – limited time resources of migrants

Some peasants such as Ángel argued that the *residentes* cannot fulfil *Ayni* due to the higher time constraint they face that would hinder them from engaging in labour exchange. Following my own observations, rural-urban migrants appeared to be busier and more stressed than their relatives in the countryside. It was quite difficult for me to arrange interviews with them also because they seemed to travel constantly between rural and urban area. Some refused my request to interview them and complained that they would not have time for it, a refusal I have never heard on the

⁶⁰ „Porque antes había más personas., (...). Ahora como se han ido a La Paz, ahora hay poca gente.“

countryside. Thus, rural-urban migrants appear to experience time pressure much more than rural families in Taraco. Since urban areas are usually much more globalised than rural ones, the felt time pressure of *Taraceños* in the city of El Alto could be linked to the disembedding tendencies of globalization and the felt acceleration of time as a consequence of it, as discussed by Steger (2003) and Rosa (2013). The experience of a higher pace of time seems to make it hard for some migrants to accomplish the duties emerging through reciprocal labour sharing.

However, other migrants that stay more time on the countryside such as *Eugenia* emphasized the opposite. *Ayni* is a very important strategy for her due to the aforementioned characteristic of faster work completion, since she cannot work on her “*chakra*” (plot of land) every day as „normal“ peasants could do. From the perspective of *situated agency*, Eugenia uses the local practice of *Ayni* to deal with the altered structures: the higher time demands rural-urban migrants face in an increasing globalized world (cf. Rosa 2013).

Alienation from agricultural work due to community norms

Growing up in the city also might alienate first and second generation migrants from the agricultural work, as White (2012) discusses. For example Andrés that moved to El Alto already many years ago expressed in an interview:

“My children would have to go [to cultivate the land] instead of me with my 63 years. The children have to do it, but they want to stay in El Alto, but we do not abandon land”⁶¹

Since Andrés' children seem to refuse to engage in farming, but community norms oblige the family to do so in order to keep their plot, it is Andrés - although advanced in years - that still cares for the agricultural cultivation. The reasons for young people to reject this work could be manifold and have to be examined against the cultural background. When I visited for example the young migrants Pablo and his sister Ana María in their family-owned tiny textile workshop, they told me that inheriting the agricultural land from their parents would be rather a constraint to their urban life at the moment. Apart from the time-consuming agricultural work they would have to become active in the indigenous peasant organization as a consequence of the community rules, both obligations that David and Ana María seek to avoid. Others such as Veronica claimed that the migrants would reject agricultural work since they do not want to “*ensuciarse*” (get dirty). Regardless the reasons for their refusal, it can be assumed that further alienation from agricultural work would also decrease the reciprocal strategies within this realm.

⁶¹ „Mis hijos tendrían que ir en vez de mi por ejemplo con mis 63 años. Los hijos tienen que hacer, pero quieren quedarse en El Alto, pero no abandonamos el terreno.“

5.2.3 „Everything is money“ – the (accredited) role of money

The rural research participants ascribe the access to money a leading role in changing the importance of reciprocal non-monetary exchange. Asking the local people about the role reciprocity has in their life I have nearly always confronted with explanations like the following from María:

“Before we used to do Ayni, “today for me, tomorrow for you”, now it is not like that anymore, everything is money, everything is money.”⁶²

Thus, I explore in the following section why there is an increased demand for money, how people in Taraco achieve to earn more money and how these processes affect reciprocal exchange.

„They want money” - changed consumption patterns and needs

Most of the rural research participants, themselves rather in the age group between 30 and 50 years, claimed others, namely young people, to have a higher need of money, and thus prefer payment in cash instead of engaging in *Ayni* or *Minka* which would imply to be „re-paid“ with a return of labour force or payment in kind. Following this line of argumentation, young people seem to reject non-monetary reciprocal exchange, because they need money for education expenditure, clothes, shoes and *refrescos* (soft drinks), as Javier expressed for example in the following quotation:

“But the young people need money. The young change shoes, (...), they use valuable ones (...). They say 'Why can't I change [my clothes, shoes], I want to work and with this I will buy'”⁶³

Furthermore, this statement depicts the widespread ascription within the community that young people have higher demands for consumer products, a common phenomenon in rural globalized communities, as Bebbington (1993:279) and Sandbrook (2011:434) claim. Also the phenomenon of migration plays a central role in the increased demand for money. The life in El Alto has been often described as more expensive, and migrants such as Pablo and Andrés complained that they would have to spend more money for electricity, water, gas, housing, food and as well the small “*dulces*” (sweets), chips and soft drinks that can be bought nearly everywhere on the streets of El Alto. In contrast to this, the *Taraceños* living in the rural villages, for example Angelica, claimed their need for money as being quite limited, especially due to their subsistence production of food (mainly potatoes, beans, cheese and vegetables).

⁶² „Antes era pues ayni, “hoy día para mí, mañana para vos”, ahora ya no es, todo es plata, todo es plata“

⁶³ „Pero los jóvenes necesitan plata pues. Jóvenes cambian zapatos, (...), uno de valor usan, (...). Dicen "porque no puedo cambiarme, quiero trabajar y con eso me voy a comprar"”

Increased access to money

Naturally there occurs the question how increased access to cash has been achieved, and I have found three aspects as crucial in this process in Taraco: 1) influence of rural-urban migration and migrants, 2) the diversification of income activities and 3) social benefits and other public policies. All this leads to enhanced access to money that in turn seems to decrease the importance of non-monetary reciprocal labour exchange according to the local people.

Influence of rural-urban migration and migrants

As discussed above, many research participants explained the increased access to money as a consequence of rural-urban migration, dual residence and the money flow coming from family members that migrated to the city, as María explained with the following statement:

“They have gone to La Paz, they had a secure work place, now they have come with their salary, pension, here they hold on persons „come, come, I will pay you“. Those ones have made us lose Ayni ... they are children, grandchildren who come from there.”⁶⁴

As María claims, the migrants often have the financial resources to pay for hired labour, and do not depend on reciprocal labour sharing when they return to Taraco for the cultivation of their inherited piece of land. And since many of them do not have the time for reciprocal labour exchange either, as discussed above, it seems to be of less utility for them. As they are able to pay their workers, they also expect to be paid when they help others on their agricultural land, and this makes rural inhabitants such as Veronica claim that *“they want the others to handle money”*⁶⁵. The urban life in El Alto has major income opportunities, but it is also associated with higher expenditure, as I have discussed above. Through the close ties between rural and urban spaces, these urban demands appear to affect as well rural areas.

Diversification of income activities

The enhanced access to money could be also explained as a consequence of diversification of income activities. The families I visited in Taraco partly engage in non-agricultural activities within the community or in El Alto, such as paid construction work; offering spiritual services as the local *yatiri*⁶⁶ or also offering the service of weeding and soil preparation with either the yoke (of bulls) or

⁶⁴ *„ellos se han ido a La Paz, ellos estaban con trabajo asegurado, ahora se han venido con su sueldo jubilados aquí agarran a las personas nomas “ven, ven, te voy a pagar” ellos han hecho perder el ayni ... Son como hijos, nietos que vienen de allá.”*

⁶⁵ *„por demás quieren manejar la plata.”*

⁶⁶ A *yatiri* is a natural doctor and specialist in rituals (Burman 2011).

a small tractor. Also within the reviewed literature (e.g. Jiménez/Lizárraga 2009) and my interviews with experts, the diversification of income activities has been presented as a common livelihood strategy in the Bolivian *altiplano*. Researcher Nico Tassi and university professor Fernanda Wanderley argue that rural inhabitants have increased opportunities in order to earn money, e.g. the increasing transport business circulating also between Taraco and El Alto (buses, mini-vans, shared taxis), paid construction work, and other services.

Social benefits and other public policies

One part of the current changes rural economies experience constitutes of the increased welfare spending by the Bolivian government leading to decreased poverty and inequality rates, as for example Undurraga (2014:299) discusses. These social benefits have hardly been mentioned by my research participants, since they seemed to be less comfortable talking about the financial help they receive. Nevertheless, it is probable that most families directly or indirectly benefit from these social benefits, since they reach out to nearly every school child and older person without rent in Bolivia (cf. Undurraga 2014, Gray Molina 2008).

6. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

In the present thesis I discussed the role reciprocal exchange has in agricultural activities in the local community of Taraco in the Bolivian Andes, how changes of these local economic strategies are explained, and which role global influences have in this by drawing on theoretical concepts of reciprocity and globalization. My research findings suggest that reciprocity is an important local economic institution out of economic, social, moral and cultural reasons and the interplay of these dimensions contributes to its utility. The embeddedness of reciprocity institutions in social and cultural structures illustrate that economic activities are not merely led by rational considerations but as well influenced by social, moral and cultural ones.

Moreover, I argued that reciprocal practices are changing due to processes of globalization. The notion that increasing market integration would make reciprocal non-monetary exchanges vanish has been contested by the research findings. In contrast to this one-sided perspective I encountered in Taraco the co-existence and use of both reciprocal and market strategies, depending on exchange partners, the needs of both sides, and as well the specific situation. Also Salazar (1996:31) argues that farmers achieve to combine market and nonmarket relationships well with each other, although they often appear as incompatible from a theoretical point of view.

In relation to the theoretical concept of peasant agency, some research participants appeared to use reciprocal labour exchange in order to answer consequences of increasing globalization such as the enhanced use of tractors, the lack of labour force due to migration, and increased time pressure. Reciprocal exchange seems to be useful in order to use globalization's opportunities and circumvent its hardships, and thus negotiate with it. At the same time I introduced the manifold structural transformations peasant farmers are facing in times of increasing global integration, and despite the capabilities they are showing in dealing with it, I do not aim to sweep under the carpet how unequal and unfair the structures are that economic globalization produces. This research on the interactions between structures and agency in relation to globalization has revealed manifold, contradictory and diverging pictures and narratives. Again, this complexity makes it essential to engage in critical research, particularly in the Bolivian context where indigenous culture and traditional practices seem to be portrayed in a quite romanticising way, as I have argued before.

Reciprocal norms are still highly associated with the agricultural and rural realm, and this thesis does not represent an exception to this perspective. But which role does reciprocity play in the lives of the many rural-urban migrants? To which extent do cultural norms such as mutuality and reciprocity occur in the urban context, especially in El Alto where Aymaran culture seems to have a tremendous influence and rural culture seems to be transferred to urban areas? Despite my personal interest in these questions, I could not pursue them within this thesis' scope but would suggest them for further research.

The emerging public policies, including the new social benefits, increased accessibility of rural credits and agrarian insurance discussed above might have even broader implications on the reciprocity institutions than those of decreasing monetary poverty. They can be also examined as potentially shifting the solidarity of proximity re-affirmed through reciprocal exchange to structural solidarity as an important principle in social welfare states, as university professor Fernanda Wanderley argued in an interview with me.

Although reciprocal exchange systems have considerable potential in order to enhance the viability of farms and their strengthening would be desirable, especially in the Majority World; it appears very questionable if they could substitute state insurance systems, other social protection and rights of citizens. Thus, critically examining reciprocal institutions also implies to acknowledge these limitations. As stated previously, reciprocal practices have been maintained as a consequence of scarcity and economic exclusion in Andean history (cf. Walsh-Dilley 2012). If these are tackled

through increased access to credit and agrarian insurance, reciprocity might lose its importance, but local people would have officially recognised rights towards certain services instead of relying on communitarian insurance systems. In any case, the aforementioned social policies and the process of the Bolivian state towards increasing social protection have been elicited by the MAS government within the last years; and therefore I agree with Undurraga et al. (2014:299) that it is probably too early to draw conclusions on the effects these policies have on reciprocal exchange. However, it remains an interesting question for future research.

Considering the contemporary political, economic and social context in Bolivia that appears to be highly transformative, I wonder in which direction it will develop in the coming years, and how rural highland communities and practices such as reciprocal exchange further change. How will the MAS government implement the promises of a different development paradigm and which role could reciprocity and mutuality play within these policies? To which extent will reciprocity shift towards other areas of life such as *fiestas* (celebrations)? How will young people deal with traditional norms such as reciprocity and to which extent will they be incorporated into their worldviews? My research has generated many new questions and I believe that contemporary Bolivia remains a highly interesting place for researchers that do not fear encountering highly contradictory but fascinating narratives telling a lot about the complex interplay between indigenous cultures, traditions, modernity, and globalization, and showing hybridity, agency, contestation, and resistance most probably all at once.

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8. APPENDICES

Appendix Nr. 1 - List of research participants

Interviews with families in Taraco

Nr.	Pseudonym	Date of Interview	Language
1.	Martha and Javier	04.12.2014	Aymara/Spanish (with interpreter)
2.	Patricia and Ángel	04.12.2014	Aymara/Spanish (with interpreter)
3.	Angelica and Valentin	18.12.2014	Aymara/Spanish (with interpreter)
4.	María and Juan	19.12.2014	Aymara/Spanish (with interpreter)
5.	Veronica and Humberto	05.02.2015	Spanish
6.	Ilda and Marcelo	Only fieldwork stay with this family, no formal interview has	Spanish

	been conducted	
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Interviews with families in El Alto

Nr.	Pseudonym	Date of Interview	Language
1.	Ana María and Pablo	02.02.2015	Spanish
2.	Rina and Carlos	11.02.2015	Spanish
3.	Pascuela and Andrés	21.02.2015	Spanish
4.	Rosmery (husband did not participate in the interview)	06.03.2015	Spanish
5.	Eugenia (has no husband)	08.03.2015	Spanish

Interviews with experts

Nr.	Name or in case of anonymization profession of the person	Institution	Date of Interview
1.	Marygold Walsh-Dilley	University of New Mexico, University Honors College	24.11.2014
2.	Ivonne Farah	Higher University of San Andrés (UMSA), Postgraduate Studies of Development Sciences (CIDES)	21.11.2014
3.	Economist		21.11.2014
4.	Pedro Brunants	Restaurant Armonia, Circulo Achocalla	01.12.2014
5.	Fernanda Wanderley	Higher University of San Andrés (UMSA), Postgraduate Studies of Development Sciences (CIDES)	02.12.2014
6.	Simón Yampara	Public University of El Alto (UPEA), Department of Sociology	02.12.2014
7.	Javier Medina	National Programme 'Biocultura', Circulo Achocalla	09.12.2014
8.	Anthropologist		09.12.2014
9.	Elizabeth Jiménez	Higher University of San Andrés (UMSA), Postgraduate Studies of Development Sciences (CIDES)	17.12.2014
10.	Oscar Bazoberry	Higher University of San Andrés (UMSA), Postgraduate Studies of Development Sciences (CIDES); Director of IDPRS (translated: Institut for Rural Development in South	17.12.2014

		America)	
11.	Nico Tassi	Centro de Investigaciones Sociales (CIS)	03.02.2015
12.	Alison Spedding	Higher University of San Andrés (UMSA), Department of Sociology	11.02.2015
13.	Elvira Espejo	Museum of Ethnography and Folklore	25.02.2015
14.	German Choquehuanca	Higher University of San Andrés (UMSA), Department of Library Sciences	26.02.2015
15.	Cancio Mamani Lopez	Vice Ministry of Decolonization	03.03.2015
16.	Marcelo Saiduni	Chancellery	03.03.2015
17.	Clemente Mamani	Radio San Gabriel	05.03.2015
18.	Sociologist		08.03.2015

Appendix Nr.2 - Examples of interview guides

Interview Guide 1 – Families in Taraco

Introduction

- Presentation of myself and the research aim
- Explanation of the use of the research for my master thesis and availability of the thesis online
- Treatment of the data of research participants (names will be anonymised and the data gained through interviews and observation kept confidential)
- Duration of the interview (about 1 hour, but could be extended if participants agree)
- Interviews and in general research participation can be stopped at any time by the research participants
- Asking the research participants if they are willing to participate and as well if they agree with the audio-recording of the interview
- Asking if the interviewees have any questions before starting the interview

Questions

1) Questions about the life in Taraco

- Could you please tell me a bit more about your life here: How many children do you have? Where do they live and what do they study/work? Which size does the family plot have? Which crops do you cultivate? What do you do with your agricultural production (for example selling, consuming etc.)? How much livestock do you have? Do you also fish? Are there other sources of income the family has apart from the agriculture? And if so which ones?
- Do you receive any financial support from your family members or relatives (that have for example migrated abroad)?
- What do you like or dislike about living on the countryside?

2) *Reciprocity*

- What is reciprocity for you?
- What is *Ayni*, *Minka*, *Waki* and *Trueque* for you? Do you know these practices and if so why?
- When and how do you do these reciprocal practices?
- When and in which activities do you help each other in the community?
- What do you think about these practices?
- How do these practices affect the community?
- How do young people engage in reciprocal exchanges?
- How did you do reciprocal practices before, for example 20 years ago? How were they different in comparison to the practices you are doing today? (And if something changed, what do you think are the reasons that it changed?)

Interview Guide 2 – Rural-urban migrants in El Alto

Introduction

- Presentation of myself and the research aim
- Explanation of the use of the research for my master thesis and availability of the thesis online
- Treatment of the data of research participants (names will be anonymised and the data gained through interviews and observation kept confidential)
- Duration of the interview (about 1 hour, but could be extended if participants agree)
- Interviews and in general research participation can be stopped at any time by the research participants
- Asking the research participants if they are willing to participate and as well if they agree with the audio-recording of the interview
- Asking if the interviewees have any questions before starting the interview

Questions

1) Questions about the life in El Alto

- Since when do you live in El Alto and what were your reasons to move?
- Could you please tell me a bit more about your life here: with whom and where do you live? What do you work/study at the moment? What do you like or dislike about living in the city?
- How do you finance your life here? What are the main expenses you and your family have by living in the city? Do you receive any financial support from your family members or relatives (that have for example migrated abroad)?
- How and where do you sell your products? At what price? Do these prizes appear just for you?

2) Reciprocity in urban relationships

- To what extent the people help each other here between neighbours, relatives and friends?
- In which activities do they help each other?
- Do you know people from Taraco that live as well in El Alto? To what extent do people from Taraco help each other in your neighbourhood in El Alto?
- What is for you reciprocity? What do you think about *Ayni*, *Minka*, *Waki* and *Trueque*?

3) Reciprocity in rural-urban relationships

- To which extent and how do you maintain the contact to the countryside? With whom do you have contact there? When you go to the countryside, what are your main reasons to do so?
- Do you or respectively your family and people from the countryside help or support each other (for example with work, labor force, material, money)? And if yes, could you please tell me more about this help/support?
- How do young people participate in reciprocity such as *ayni*?

Interview Guide 3 – Experts

Introduction

- Presentation of myself and the research aim
- Explanation of the use of the research for my master thesis and availability of the thesis online
- Asking the experts if they wish that their names will appear in the thesis or prefer that I use them in an anonymised way
- Duration of the interview (about 1 hour, but could be extended if participants agree)
- Interviews can be stopped at any time by the research participants
- Asking the research participants if they are willing to participate and as well if they agree with the audio-recording of the interview
- Asking if the interviewees have any questions before starting the interview

Questions

- 1) What is reciprocity for you? Which significance do solidarity and reciprocity still have in the rural areas in Bolivia, especially in the highland?
- 2) Which forms, practices and institutions of reciprocity do you know? What do you think why rural people (and as well urban ones) engage in these practices of reciprocity? Which Bolivian regions or communities continue to practice reciprocity to a high extent, where are they maintained?
- 3) What is *Ayni*, *Minka*, *Waki* and *Trueque* for you?
- 4) What is your opinion on these practices?
- 5) In Bolivia, alternatives to capitalism, consumerism and the Western development model, as well indigenous economies are frequently discussed in the public discourse. Which role does reciprocity play in finding alternatives? To which extent could they be used in order to construct alternative economic systems?
- 6) How do these reciprocal practices influence the community life?
- 7) How and why have forms of reciprocity changed in the last 20 years?
- 8) Do you have any recommendations regarding literature on this topic? Do you have any recommendations in terms of experts I could interview about this topic?