

## **I'll come back to water the fields - Transnational migration, productive investment and quality of life<sup>1</sup>**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Investment and other means of participation make transnational migrants present in their communities of origin, in this case situated in the High Valley of Cochabamba Department. The author also analyzes the impact of productive migrant investment on the quality of life of the families in the region.

### **Saying Goodbye the Bolivian Way**

“I believe we were born to migrate”, said Diógenes Escobar when he was asked how the desire to live outside the country arose. “It’s almost an obligation for us,” added Primitivo Sánchez, referring to the first of his many journeys. Generally the replies collected in the region of study to the question of the multiple motives for the migrant adventure oscillated between the need for better working conditions (linked to duty), and the intention of finding personal fulfillment (linked to hope).

Men and women have the right to search. Searching is the drive that obliges change, and the intention to change, accordingly, is the motivation for one of the most well-established practices of the human condition: travel. According to Raúl Prada Alcoreza, it is, in truth, the history of human collectivities. “Some type of habit, history and policy of contact, mutual exchange and journey has always been present behind their formulations of residence” (Prada, 2002:17).

Population displacement – the demographic face of travel – can be probably studied in every culture. Likewise in the highlands and inter-Andean valleys, migration has been a social, cultural and economic phenomenon invariably present throughout history. The ancestral cultures of the Altiplano, that would later unify in the Aymara space and become annexed to the

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Incan Empire, had regular migrants with the mission of traveling to the Lowlands to bring food that was not produced in the Highlands. “Known by the name of *mitimaqkuna*, [...] they were the vital link that united the interregional and multiecological economy, so crucial for the nuclear populations of the Altiplano” (Klein, 1997:33). The *mitimaqkuna* or *mimitames* functioned as settlers (*colonos*) who received from the *ayllus* llama meat, potato, *chuño*, quinoa and wool products; and in exchange delivered fish, guano and salt, if they came from the coast or the great salt flats - or maize, coca and fruit - if from the valleys or subtropical regions.

In this way, migration already integrated the logic of subsistence enter into the first organized cultures which we know about in our pre-Columbian history, according to a system that Murra described as “an archipelago of ecological floors”. According to this notion of ordered migratory displacements, which would later be deformed by the institution of the *mita*, the custom of traveling did not only signify change, but also permanence.

In the case of the Cochabamba valleys, the migratory tradition of journeys and permanence could have been strengthened in a special way during the Colony and the Republican period, given that the peasants of the region, called independent *piqueros* and self-defined as *mestizos*, constituted the first authentically free peasants in condition to migrate to the landed estates (*haciendas*), the mining zones and then towards neighboring countries in search of working conditions that allowed to make profit and invest in their own land and continue to improve their quality of life. This initial migratory capacity – inherited from displacement capacities of the region’s dwellers, especially those from the High Valley, would have rescued from their habits of transporting huge commercial caravans, always searching for the most advantageous markets - was possible because, at the time mentioned, this collective managed to display a capacity which J. Sterne called “adaptation while resisting”, describing the long process of social conquest through which small-holding producers from Cochabamba gradually inserted themselves into the spaces of power of the great landowners while still having to confront adverse conditions (Larson, 2000; Sánchez, 29 May 2006).

Interviews conducted with migrants, family members and fellow countrymen of migrants from the High Valley of Cochabamba allow us to believe that this logic of travel, adaptation, resistance and return still abides. As with the immemorial *mitimaes*, the new *colonos* extend the dynamic of their coming and going towards a new scene: that of an archipelago of transnational ecological floors. Their communities, substituted in terms of residence for Washington, Madrid, Buenos Aires and other cities, fulfill the function that, for those travelers, the ethnic headwaters round the sacred lake accomplish. Following the principles of behavior that the Murra School called “Moral Economy”, the displacements in function of a permanent center continue.<sup>3</sup> In the profile of this Bolivian manner of saying goodbye, as can be observed from the data regarding a specific province, the need for a multifaceted return continues, amongst whose many epiphenomena the productive investment in the community of origin is found.

This article shows that investment and other means of participation (in this case situated in the High Valley of Cochabamba Department) make the apparently absent transnational migrants present in their communities of origin. Migrant investments can be understood as being teledirected, as to carry them out does not entail abandoning a sustained circulation in the transnational social spaces of labor migration.

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<sup>3</sup> According to Xavier Albó, quoted by Martha Giorgis (2004), the Quechua and Aymara peasants continue to apply to a certain extent the scheme of space occupation, as defined, since their periodic journeys to the Yungas region and the valleys are frequent, in which it is not unusual for them to maintain parcels in a complementary form. As shall be seen throughout this article, these practices maintain clear resemblances to the experience of traditional internal migratory processes (to the Bolivian tropics and lowlands).

Now, far from a debate which only focuses on the interest for remittances, these pages intend to analyze the impact of migrant productive investment on the quality of life of the families in the region. Although the hypothesis which opened a methodological path for this search linked both phenomena in a more or less direct way, only upon the completion of the study could many other elements that had to do with the way work and remittances function (well or badly) as a suture to family wounds be noted in their real dimension (Giorgis, 2004).

Due to the limits of space, this article will not analyze in depth some of these other elements, for example: the hero status that in some cases migrants achieve at the culmination of their process of social mobility; the transmission of social remittances; the characteristics of the complicated procedures involved in the benevolent donations made by migrant collectives to the place of origin; and the expectations of community adscription that migrant collectives (treated as the genesis of a social movement) can achieve for projects that coincide with group interests.

To gain access to the migrant families, approach techniques through trust-based relationships and networks were applied, achieving very fruitful conversations. With regard to producer families – indeed legally registered, associated and organized into irrigation areas, according to the data of an up-to-date register with a high level of confidence – it was in fact possible to apply quantitative techniques of proportional stratified sampling. Thus out of a total of 334 peach orchards registered in the district, 26 families were interviewed in depth. Together with these interviews and a detailed participative observation in the region, other encounters were held with Bolivian migrants from diverse groups and experts in the theme, lifting the total number of interviews to 49, carried out in more than 40 visits to the region between 2002 and 2005.

### **Narrative scene 1**

“Good afternoon. Are you listening? We are going to begin the prize-giving in this fair, which although being so new, is important and loved by all the residents of Arbieto. Let’s give a welcome to his Excellency the Mayor, the members of the Honorable Municipal Council and all the visitors from different populations of the Third Section of our Province, of the whole valley and from the city of Cochabamba, that today have come to this square to try these juicy peaches and participate in this beautiful fiesta.

In a short while we will also have Betty Veizaga y Bonanza with us among other well-known national and international artists. But before anything else I’d like to ask for warm applause for our brother residents in Argentina and the United States who have made this fiesta possible with their support in contracting the band, the sound systems and these famous artists (applause).

So, if we could see some of our residents from the United States, I know some are here.. Ah, yes... ( pointing to some tables near the stage...) (Applause). Many are here, but many are also there and we want to thank them for making this fair year after year. In this way our fellow countrymen tell us, “Yes, we are here in our country, even though we had to abandon it for the difficult situation we endured.” Next week we’ll be with them through the images we’re recording... so that we can accompany them in our minds. “We’re one, don’t forget. Long life our land. (Applause) And here we are with you, Betty Veizaga...”  
(Master of Ceremonies, Peach Fair, Arbieto. 19 February 2002 and 6 March 2005).

### **Bolivia abroad and its investments**

Two out of every ten Bolivians are not in Bolivia. The Population Division of the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimate that of 175 million

transnational migrants in the world in 2004, about a million and half were Bolivian (Hinojosa, 2004; Sagárnaga, 2004). After the treatment of this theme stayed reserved for the government sphere, a surprise report of the National Service of Migration at the end of August 2004 raised the number of Bolivians outside Bolivia to 1,366,821. According to the last National Census of Population and Housing (2001) the population resident in Bolivia rose to 8,274,325 (UNDP, 2004). As with other countries in the region, the total figure for transnational Bolivian migration is hard to calculate because of the illegal status of many of our compatriots abroad.

Two important characteristics should be mentioned when describing current Bolivian transnational migration: their organization with regard to finding work and the integration that the phenomenon seems to oblige between rural community, national (urban and rural) and transnational contexts. In Bolivia, migration coincides with the economic marginalization of the traditional farming sector. Before a rural crisis already transformed into a lasting ailment, leaving seems to present itself as a constituent element of a *new rurality* (Hinojosa, 2004). Despite it is true that the project of labor migration can also be observed in the youth population of lower, middle and upper urban social strata, affected by the hard conditions of labor flexibilization (De la Torre *et al.*, 2004), it is necessary to stress that the families that remain linked to a greater or lesser degree to the rural areas are the most affected by chronic poverty as the main cause of economic exile. In the work cited above, Hinojosa reminds us that 217 out of 314 municipalities in the country are expellers of population. While the structural conditions do not change, thousands of Bolivian workers will continue to head to work niches in more developed regions.

Faced with the image of migration as economic exile, the Bolivian begins to frequently present optimistic readings of the impact remittances have on the families that receive them from migrants. According to a study of the Multilateral Fund for Investment of the Inter-America Development Bank (MFIN- IDB) to Bendixen & Associates, presented in October 2005, 55% of family remittances are destined for investments that range from education to buying property, passing for saving to direct investment in businesses. How much are we talking about? A great deal of money. The cited source reveals that 11% of the adult population of Bolivia receives (on average 165\$US, eight times a year) an estimated annual total, a quantity equivalent to 38% of the total of exports in 2004 according to the official data of the National Institute of Statistics (NIS).

Before being acquainted with the study of Bendixen, Sagárnaga estimated that during 2004 the remittances that Bolivia received from the United States, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Japan, Israel and other points of origin (even though the estimate does not take into account those sent from Argentina, Brazil and Chile) reached the sum of 500 million dollars. Only within this range, the remittances had constituted the second source of income for export, just below those reported for natural gas and above those for soy. The amount has tripled, as well, direct foreign investment (162 million in the year mentioned) on the verge of the records set in the '90s. As with the demographic figures the real totals of remittances cannot be determined in a believable manner. It should be indicated that for the Central Bank of Bolivia, the official figure from remittances from formal channels in 2004 hardly reached 126.9 million \$US (*Los Tiempos*, 10 April 2005); nevertheless the IBD signals that sending informally is the preferred method for transfers to families in the region.

So, following the thread in a discussion that the author Olga González (2005) proposed for the Columbian case, the “optical utilitarian” asks very many “uncomfortable questions” about the reality about transnational migrant families. Granted the importance of this debate and its repercussions, in the research for this article we incorporated an analysis of the impact of remittances on family and familiar life in a particular region. From this point of view of Gonzalez and other Latin American researchers who demand information about the real quality

of life of migrants inside and out of the country, their processes of social movement, the equilibrium of gender and generational roles, etc. Much research is necessary.

Reference is made, in the first place, to knowledge of the reconfiguration of migrant networks in real terms related to changes in the manner of usage space and time; which is to say new destinies for more or less lengthy periods of residence. We should also study migratory displacements in exceptional times (increase of control in the US and Spain, economic recessions as in the US in 1991 or Argentina in 1982 and 2001 etc). Secondly, research referred to could analyze the reconfiguration of migratory networks in qualitative terms. We talk of logic and strategies (economic, social, cultural, etc.) that could better describe the culture of mobility, such as the structural and unlinked phenomena inherent in the development of our national life, which for years has been displayed out side Bolivia (Hinojosa, 2004; De la Torre, 2004).

On 25 and 26 November 2004, a circle of academics and humanitarian organizations supporting migrants and other institutions met in La Paz to subscribe to the “Declaration of La Paz” in which they asked for the recognition of the importance of the migratory experience, asking that the concepts of security and terrorism be brought into their analysis. The participants also demanded an immediate recognition of citizen rights (identity documents, the vote, etc.) to compatriots outside the country, as well as preferential treatment for migrant women and children. They also talked about interregional treaties that not only sought free trade but also unlimited human circulation as an action that *the right to migrate* facilitated.

Within this framework, one should note that at the end of 2005 an important media debate occurred in Bolivia on the opportunity to vote of Bolivians abroad. The demand won in the Court of Justice, but President Rodriguez Beltz  downplayed the possibility of such suffrage for presidential elections of December 2005 because the voting list closed on September 5 (*Los Tiempos*, 9 September 2005).

## **Narrative Scene 2**

A number of children in white school dustjackets passed by running from school. “Our villages are made up of children and old people” Adriana S., from Arbieto but resident in Virginia, said to me. The door of a small store was open, so we called to see if we would have the fortune of anyone talking to us. An elegant older man came out to give us his hand, while his woman observed from the bread stand. Our conversation brought us to this theme.

- Good day. We’re from the University studying families whose children have gone abroad.
- This house, for example, replied don Paulino Vargas O. before presenting himself.
- Look at our luck. The study has hardly begun.
- Son, if you want to go the United States to see this closer up, tell me because my sons can pick you up from the airport in their autos. They live in Maryland.
- Thank you. The most important is to talk to you. What I want to see is the village and the families without their sons.
- This is what touches the soul, he said, after a silence which we did not dare to cut. We noted that Don Paulino had started to cry. Only the children of deputies and senators can do this. For the rest – the children of the proletariat it’s impossible.
- In vain they ruined their eyes studying, his wife added from behind, coming to back up Don Paulino. The country gives them nothing.

(Arbieto-Tarata, 20 August 2002)

### **Family life, poverty and migration**

A comparison of demographic data from the Census of 1992 and 2001 show an important leap in the improvement of the quality of life for the families of the 3<sup>rd</sup>. section of Esteban Arze Province of Cochabamba Dept, the region of this study. According to the data updated by the Unit of Analysis for Economic Policies (UDAPE), the indicator “percentage of poor” for 3<sup>rd</sup>. Section of Esteban Arze fell from 87% in 1992 to 54.4% in 2001. That 39% had overcome the poverty threshold in this time converts the Arbieto municipality, together with Cliza, Quillacollo, Tiquipaya and Kanata (Cercado), into one of the most successful in the department. The municipality displays some of the lowest indicators of “indigence” and “marginality” in Cochabamba (7.91 y 0%, respectively). Its municipal indicator of Human Development (IHD) – an indicator of recent use in Bolivia is 0.568 whilst those of the remaining municipalities of the Valley fluctuate between 0.652 and 0.420. (PNUD, 2004). Finally and probably related to the migratory phenomenon, 23.7% of the homes in the region have fixed or mobile telephone lines, reaching a figure that is barely topped by Tiquipaya and Kanata. According to these recent observations during the study, this index has been amply superseded.

Naturally, poverty is far greater than that described in these figures. In field work perceptions and personal definitions are gathered for the concept of poverty, attempting to measure through them advances and retreats in the quality of life of the community members from their own analysis. As is known, this focus corresponds to the vision of Mahbub ul Haq, who collects documents from the United Nations to think about development “(...) from the latest objectives of development itself; which is to say from the fulfillment of people’s aspirations, from the progress they search for what they need and want to do.” (UNDP, 1998: 6).

Poverty was, as some migrants recall, “eating a morsel of pigeon, whilst dying of hunger and having to keep the rest for the next day” (Diógenes Escóbar, 2 August 2005); “Eating *wisa*, just cow’s fat” (Ana María Guarachi, 30 March 2005; Sebastián and Juana Miranda, 1 July 2005; Inés Moya, 14 April 2005);” not knowing what to put in the pan next day” (Octavio Córdova, 20 June 2005) and “Working all day and realizing it wasn’t enough” (Román Belmonte, 4 August 2005), among other perceptions. These ideas of poverty which stress basic unsatisfied needs were repeated as we recovered the arguments for frequent lack of money which made the welfare of the families impossible. “Difficult to be happy” (Abraham Soto, 9 August 2005); “We had no food, clothes, school supplies” (Inés Moya, 14 April 2005) and “If money’s lacking, everything’s lacking” (Abdón Sejas, 9 August 2005), before replying anymore to our questions, “Sure I keep thinking the same about the word poverty: It’s about not having.”

Before the boom in peaches, life for the majority of families interviewed was organized around migratory movements to Argentina (and Venezuela at certain times) and traditional productive activities in agriculture in the dry season. They sowed and harvested maize, wheat and even quinoa for the local market. Some other harvests, like potatoes were divided between sale and family consumption for the whole year. Activities like cheese-making, *phiri* and other craft products complemented the reduced economic income of the home.

Before this historical portrait and taking into account Mahbub ul Haq’s vision of development these questions arise in our investigations. “How do people live their lives?” and “How to change it?”, which can be interpreted in productive terms as a future desired from the past by many families consulted is to achieve a source of income as from peaches with the structural cooperation of the economy of transnational migration.

Dreams of progress are pertinent in the debate on poverty and I could prove it in the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Section of Esteban Arze province where subjective positions on desired progress ended by converting into agreements which integrated the aspirations of migrant families and moved to their fulfillment.

One understands by *migrant family* or *transnational migrant family* everyone who participates in the migratory phenomenon through one or more of their nuclear family unit, composed of father, mother, brothers or from another generational perception, of children, husband or wife. This operative definition has methodologically served in the finding in a good part of the interviews not to refer to the debate over the nuclear or extended systems taken into account; but, principally, to the nature of these phenomena of these manners of “the participation in the phenomenon through a migrant relative”.

In fact, based on an earlier investigation, the families were identified by their daily relation to migration through the impact of remittances, the demonstrations of family and community solidarity, the customs of social division that the phenomenon dictates and other transnational practices that go from the organization of important patronal fiestas, to simple but routine telephone calls (De la Torre, 2004).

In this sense, it is probable that the analysis includes family units that participate in the phenomenon through a family member of the second rank or related, given that, as was just indicated, the emphasis of the focus of initial classification consisted in the display of the mentioned transnational practices. Thus one could work with the case of the small family unit made up of Maximiliano Luna and his mother. Both, from the department of Chuquisaca, care for the little peach plot of José Paz, who Max considers his “affective uncle”. They talk by telephone each week and receive occasional gifts from the United States. Once finishing school and military service, young Max plans to meet up with Sr. Paz abroad according to the possibilities opened up in his construction business. As can be seen, migrants and non-migrants (including those who are not relatives) could affiliate themselves to mutually dependent transnational activities. So the North American researcher Peggy Levitt (2001), has proposed in a recent study on Dominican families living in Boston. Those that stay after the first bonds also could and usually do become absorbed in the social transnational fields created by the migratory phenomenon. Their context has become *Transnationalized*.

The decision to work with migrant families rather than only with isolated individuals also comes from having observed a dynamic of double dependency that shows how migratory decisions influence the family dynamic and how each family structures the form of life of the particular adventure of the migrant. One can observe this, for example, in the decisions (individual and family) over the use of migrant remittances, also in the amounts and frequencies of sending. When they are tied to the to the food security of an abandoned home – which mainly happens to families in the region during the first year after the farewell – generally migrants and their families agree to attribute obligation to the sending, even though the working conditions of the migrant abroad be hard. “We are saying in the village that the family is the most important. You can’t let down the family” (Primitivo Sánchez, 4 August 2005).

Inés Moya, for example, recalls that at the start of the adventure, her husband was routinely sending the cost of the basic family bread-basket, even though this was abandoned some years later when his children joined him in the construction business in the Washington Metropolitan area, and she herself became self-sufficient thanks to the peach harvest. Of course, for the plot to become a reality investment, as we shall see in a separate section, investment from abroad was needed.

Some family systems, as with the college student, who preferred to stay anonymous, show that they know how to shove their own to remind them of duties and obligations. “My father was in the US and returned. Now he’s here and I have to study but I don’t have enough money. I want

him to go back and sent me some money” (28 November 2004) The family economy is also directly dependent on the remittances in the case of new migrants who, although preferring to choose Spain for their work, have in common not having such solid networks with folk in the area as in the States, and the future of poorer families.

Emiliano Moya informs that thousands of dollars arrive each month, drop by drop, but not so much as in the ‘80s, when people in the area counted on what was sent from San Francisco, Teletransfer, Harasic and many private postal services (2 August 2005). For his part Primitivo Sánchez said that after the Twin Towers attack, Bolivians did not feel safe in the US for fear of being deported. According to him and considering that the illegals do not have bank accounts, it was now necessary again to send capital in the custody of family members (4 August 2005)<sup>4</sup>.

The family systems discovered are, above all, dynamic. Their main flexibility consists, naturally, in sorting variable space to spread their lives (and in many cases their productive activities) dividing strategically the work energy to achieve real presence at both poles of their extended residence. Many of the families interviewed, including those most economically successful, were obliged to start from zero again, owing to falls that always occur in the hard migratory experience.

When the fruits of production begin to appear, problems don’t magically disappear. The demands of fruit production work are distinct to agriculture without irrigation. For greater benefits require unstinting work from the nuclear family members which in the majority of cases corresponds to an adequate agreement between spouses. “My husband has to come to help me each year,” says Inés Moya, a teacher turned into a peach producer. As with many women, Inés attends the association meetings and always improves the family plot she is in charge of, while her husband and sons work in the States (14 April, 2005).

In many of the families observed, migration seems to strengthen or accelerate the clearly differentiated role classification between husband, wife, children and brothers. All the elder children interviewed discover their responsibility of the first born, almost always as a result of migrating and sending remittances to help parents and for the education of younger brothers. In Mamanaca, an informant informed us that thanks to moneys regularly sent from the States, his 6 younger brothers had successfully taken degrees at University. For their part frequently the younger son or daughter feels the obligation to care for the parents or the family goods. This situation can be seen in more than one case, it being the younger children who showed the plots as their effort towards the productive mission.

That fulfilling family roles or the impossibility of doing so for private limitations are some of the few understandable motives for not living outside the region, refers to the strong sense of obligation that this life project imprints on families. The issue, already remarked on in earlier sections of this article, interrupts the declarations of Abdón Linares. “If a healthy youngster of the flock stays too long in the village people say You’re wasting time. Why not go and work?” and no-one understands when he tries to explain why he’s decided to stay.” According to these rules, there’s no doubt that the privileged generation was born between 1960 and 1970, often in Argentina. It is difficult to find someone from this realm who does not live outside of Bolivia and is not in a healthy economic situation, after years of sacrifice. Many of those interviewed manage to get to the States with a limited visa. Once established legally they visit their families annually. Their families describe the journey as told and normally they behave according to the agreed division of roles.

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<sup>4</sup> A similar situation is noted in interviews with Bolivian youths who live illegally in Sweden “All that I earn goes to Bolivia. If one day they catch me on a bus, they’ll deport me with what I’m wearing. I can’t keep anything because that way I lose everything (Nahim V. 2 December 2004).



Some years ago, the cooperation of these migrants became visible in an unusual manner with the explicit creation of an Institute of Cooperation for the Peoples of Esteban Arze. El INCOPEA. It is a long-standing football championship which migrants of the area sustain in the States and at the same time in the Valley. The inscriptions and fines gathered give an initial sum which later grows thanks to lunches and other events destined for works in Bolivia. INCOPEA began under the supervision of *tarateño* residents and somehow attained the complex organization it has today.

When the championship was taken on by the folk in 3rd. Section, it became “[...]really productive” (anonymous informant, 4 August 2005). This success consists in the rotative assignation of profit between participants and is clearly related to the Andean tradition of rotative work or *ayni*, which has permitted the construction of complete schools, churches, squares, roads and other tasks in almost all the communities visited.

These figures explain well the economic possibilities of this phenomenon. The Arbiето municipality received from the State in 2003, the sum of \$US.202,813 for Tributary Coparticipation. Also, there corresponds \$US.59,375 for foreign debt relief under HIPIC II and \$US.76,380 from the National Fund for Productive and Social Investment. The total increase in resources that the municipality received corresponded to, according to a State report, 67% (INE, 2002). However, the investment from migrant remittances that the 9,438 inhabitants received periodically came to the same or more than that received from the National Treasury, which was the \$US.338, 568 the Government delivered to the Municipality in the mentioned period, which could have been generated by the annual work by nine of the migrant youths employed in building work in Virginia.

### **The migrants and their productive influence**

Genevieve Cortes proposed the idea of rurality of absence as “a socio-spatial reality in relation to processes at the same time demographic and economic” (2004: 167). If it is certain that in many rural Bolivian municipalities migrations responsible for the exit of a great part of the rural population (migration as the “enemy” of rurality), the reality observed, Cortes explains, is more complex and at times contradictory. As I indicated in the first lines of this article, absence does not necessarily signify not being present. In the case of the region studied here, migrant investment through which one can intuit that many families go in order to stay, observed mainly in the buying of land, the building of large houses and a series of productive enterprises of which the peach cultivation stands out.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Section of Esteban Arze province, situated in the High Valley of Cochabamba, land is the most significant of goods to be exploited by a rural family, and has been the initial objective of many families interviewed, that they record as having been attributed to their first migratory adventure. “Thanks to Argentina I bought the majority of this land” (Emiliano Moya, 2 August 2005). Almost similar words were used by the wife of producer Sebastián Miranda: “We didn’t have even a bit of land. With our work over there we got everything. Sebastian worked double shifts, we saved the money and bought land. That’s what we did” (Juana Miranda, 1 July 2005). These and other peasants declared that their aim was to possess, free themselves of debts or to extend their own land, these were the first links in an organized chain by actions that ended in the arrival (or return in the case of families that owned great extensions) in productive activities more or less self-sufficient.

The house was the following target of investment for migrating families. Walking through the streets of Arbiето, Tiataco, Villa Mercedes, Santa Rosa and other populations of the region, it is difficult not to notice the houses of reinforced concrete that contrast with the adobe of older constructions. Next to the road, sometimes exposed, at times hidden in adjacent streets are large buildings like sleeping elephants. The picture is completed in the majority of cases, by a small,

satellite construction, older and of lower quality, in the corner of the plot. In this house lives a peasant family, contracted as guardians, or even the father or the wife and some children of the migrants, taking care of the property so that the owner can enjoy it for a few brief days each year. Only in a few select neighborhoods of Cochabamba can one find such imposing houses as in this municipality of peasant extraction.

“I know what you’re thinking when you see these houses”, says Diógenes Escóbar. “Sure, you’re asking: how did they do this?” (2 August 2005). Everyone in the region knows, of course, who the owner is and where the money to build it came from, the same as the Municipal authorities. If, comments one of these people, this small place has more than 70 houses of two or three floors, which are well-constructed in European style” (anonymous informant, August 2005) according to these calculations, the Mayor of this village wouldn’t depend on State resources if it can begin to raise taxes on these great houses.

Based on the possibility, one finds the force of migrant families and the community’s fixation in achieving such houses before investing in anything else, except for daily sustenance. “If I’m the son of a poor family, I send so my mother has a worthy house. If I went to work for my own family, the house comes first. (Ana María Guarachi, 30 March 2005). One of the most experienced migrants explained that the land and house come before other investments for the vice of fear of poverty of the rural Bolivian workers. All these goods are the fruits of effort, with few exceptions business comes later. “If the business goes badly you lose the \$US 20 thousand you brought?” (anonymous informant, 2 February 2005)

To end the description of investment in the zone, we must mention the cultivation of peaches. The true turn to its production for marketing in good conditions for profitability occurred only 15 years ago. For some families their production came on the back of easy credit of development agencies. However it was the community option that impelled the majority of the productive enterprises. Migrant capital, principally from building work from those who came from the region, resident in Argentina, Spain and to a large extent the US between 1990 and now, without the phenomenon showing signs of ending.

“This is now the money they brought from abroad” (Marcelino Becerra, 8 February 2005); “yes, but for this they were already *Americans*<sup>5</sup>”(Casiano Amurrio, 2 August 2005); “They brought the money from abroad” (Abraham Soto, 9 August 2005); “Sí, Korimayu, Arbieto, all this work with the help of migration” (Abdón Linares, 29 July 2005); “From all this investment, just a little for the peaches” (Elías Mamani, 3 March 2005). As one can see, following Cortes and Hinojosa, transnational migration seemed to be generating basic conditions for intensifying certain productive activities carried out by families participating in the so-called *new Bolivian rurality*.

In this time, the region became the second most important peach producer in Cochabamba and one of the most important in the country. According to Israel Alconz Canqui, the municipality of Arbieto had 140.5 hectares of peach in 2003. With the information brought up to date with producers and specialists, the zone now has between 160 and 170 hectares of the fruit, with a total quantity of between 90 and 100 thousand plants.

During the first years after the cultivation on a large scale, the peach did not have much profit. This period of investment allowed for acceding to institutional loans which required interest from the beginning. The totality of producers interviewed manifested that the migrant families

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<sup>5</sup> In the region it was agreed to call *americans* or *arlingtonians* those family members linked directly to transnational migration. Before these people, the imaginary local distinguished clearly the *jalisco*, *mexicanos* or simply the *latins*, originally from poor zones or inhabitants of the region who lived the phenomenon indirectly, either as traditional producers or as contractees for families of the first group (De la Torre, 2004).

suddenly presented themselves as sources of ready start-up capital without return which began to give good dividends after four years. “Bring money and make it work” was one of the most repeated phrases registered.

According to the technical corps of the Agricultural Producers of the High Valley (APHV), there are two ways to see this system: or a person brings the capital of long migratory periods or the family sends the funds to the producer without moving their more or less stable residence abroad. Here are the *Americans*, the most visible investor group of the moment who had mixed strategies; sending money for production on family land or bring the start-up capital to buy land and start intensive production. In the region one observes the raising of plots which before – the last 50 years of traditional agriculture – would have been unthinkable.

Those in charge of APHV say that some of the beneficiaries receive monthly support from their family members for the most expensive months of the productive cycle. Those plots directed from distance are moved thanks to this capital through weekly communication of precise reports. One of the biggest producers in the zone commented that the plot most needs taking advantage of residence papers he received years ago in the States. He travels in the pruning seasons and arrives before 3 months are up. There he sacrifices his quality of life but can bring up to eight thousand dollars, to continue producing. “I go calling my folk about the condition of the plants and when they’re beginning to flower, I catch an aeroplane and I’m immediately here” (anonymous informant, 9 October 2004)

Without needing to dig own wells, the investment for a plot of approximately 1000 plants requires, at least between four and five thousand dollars, to buy cuttings, move the soil, digging the holes, polytubes, irrigation material, pesticides and labor by hand. Now, those who can find irrigation have to invest in a well. To the cost of a well should be added, generally, enough cable to bring electricity (between 500\$US and 1,500\$US according to the distance to be covered) as well as the tariffs for this service. A deep well can cost \$8,000 US. In conclusion, to make a model plot can cost over \$12,500US if and when you don’t have to buy the land, sold in zones with irrigation at \$6,000 or more the arrobada (3.622 m<sup>2</sup>). (Ana María Guarachi, 30 March 2005).

After two years of investment, one could show that for the most experienced producer families, the plot moves with the capital generated by its own sales. “I believe if they ask, I could still send; but I’ve already helped a lot”, said Emiliano Moya describing the economic independence that peach production has made possible (2 August 2005). “At least one of the family members has to stay,” Ema Fernández completes, before adding one of the most frequent phrases in my register, “You know that the look of the owner makes the cow grow fat” (3 March 2005).

To end this part, it is possible to confirm that the future production of peach in the region is promising. According to APHV technicians, the producers of the zone should seek earlier or later harvests so as to avoid competition with Chilean production or other regions of the country in times of abundance. The hope of families in the region points to a more authentic participation in the Santa Cruz, La Paz markets and in other Bolivian cities through a system of grouping and direct stocking that allows trucks to be filled on site to avoid the costs of intermediaries. Nevertheless, other experts assure that these are unreal projections while adequate wells do not exist to truly increase the volume of total production and reach high standards of quality. Including in this the struggle for the care of a sustainable economy in respect of the risk of the salinity of the soils (which is happening in neighboring municipalities) the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Section of the province could draw near one of its biggest dreams: exportation.

### **Narrative Scene 3**

Don Ernesto has just landed from flight 121 of Lloyd Aéreo Boliviano in Miami to take a connection to Washington where his two sons await. The 21 days of his visit will be unforgettable, as always. Next week is dedicated to Carnival he will recharge the batteries and a hangover is difficult to hide. Nevertheless he will behave with propriety as he has done all through his 26 years of residence in the States, working nearly every day and paying his taxes.

For this he thinks it's madness, after so many years of stability, to have dared to bring a small packet covered with plastic hidden in his hand luggage. Many times he'd felt tempted to do so, but he'd always desisted. Until now, knowing he's lost his last opportunity when the air hostess hands him an immigration ticket and he declares he's not carrying anything out of the ordinary. Standing in line and waiting his turn to confront the immigration official, Don Ernesto goes over his lines. He will lie, saying that he entered the country during Reagan's amnesty to work in agriculture and things like that. Suddenly the moment he feared arrives; the official asks help from a policewoman who speaks Spanish and Don Ernesto is conducted to a small cubicle to begin the interrogation.

Then the policewoman reminds the suspicious one that this traffic is sanctioned under the law, he begs pardon explaining that what he's got is for personal use. The discussion goes on for a few moments until the Bolivian resorts to his authentic and submissive excuse: "It was a request of my boss, who does government contracts." Many miles north, flying towards Washington, safe and sound Don Ernesto thanks his luck without being astonished at the efficiency of the control. "What crazy gringos, such a mess just for a bunch of peaches". Following his wife's advice, the migrant has brought an example – the juiciest – so that his boss knows of which fruit his employee talks so much about. The other two are for the kids and he plans to eat them tomorrow, so as not to go sadly to the construction site.

(Based on data supplied by Inés Moya. Arbieta, 14 April 2005).

### **New sources of work and social remittances**

The boom in constructing big houses, the need for staff to care for the growing peach production has brought a considerable increase in the demand for manual work in the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Section of Esteban Arze province. "We create work, the government, no," says the migrant Claudio Castellón, referring to one of the most important side effects of the phenomenon in the region. On no day I visited Arbieta and other populations on this and other investigations, could you fail to see bricklayers at work on more than one building plus small gangs of laborers (between 3 and 10 on each one I registered) contracted for the months most needed.

If one doesn't come accompanied by one's own family units, many of the laborers are contracted by the day, displaying the same system of work through the ecological floors practiced by their bosses, but in the modest framework of internal migration. Other families receive no wages at all, but participate in a type of society where the dividends of agricultural production are guarded. Generally the treatment of these families includes caring for the house of the transnational migrant family. Despite these conditions which could be interpreted as close to exploitation, declarations of unease are not known among the workers, who generally arrive to escape indigence. Some receive chocolate, clothes and small quantities of money as gifts from the bosses. With whom they try to form godparent relationships.

Emiliano Moya says that one of the objectives of peach visionaries (many of whom united their efforts into forming APHV) was precisely to avoid migration of these families to the coca production areas of the tropic of Cochabamba. Conceived as such or not, this has occurred. Now, according to some people in the area, the next phenomenon to be seen is the displacement of

impoverished migrants to new destinations of rural-transnational migration, such as Spain and other European countries.

#### **Narrative Scene 4**

Don Leónidas left to walk very early and could hardly greet the few, who like he, we out to brave the early morning cold. “What can one do on a day like this?” he asked himself, knowing that in winter the peaches gave no work and the people of the village were dedicating themselves to other crops. Also, there were his small stores selling almost nothing that don Leónidas came across on his walk, so he had the excuse to go to the “gaucha” on the corner of the square and this building.

The people of Arbieta had been investing much in raising big buildings and Don liked thinking that couldn't even find these in Tarata. “Where are all the contracted folk coming from?” he asked himself on seeing the village so empty. The reply came from the center of the Square. Under the roof of a small ornamental kiosk, together to avoid the cold, slept eight men. When the morning dawned they awoke to place themselves on the sidewalk waiting for someone to contract them, even for a day's work. Don Leónidas looked at the unknown men and surprised by anguish said: “Caramba, here we also have our Latinos”. (On the tale of don Casiano Amurrio, Arbieta, 6-8 February 2005.)

Before closing this section and following the American Peggy Levitt, it is necessary to mention that migration transforms populations where the migrants are from and their respective productive processes by the effects of economic and social remittances. Widely commented on, the economic remittances do not need to be so broken up as the social remittances, understood as “(...) the normative structures (ideas, values and beliefs) the systems of practice and the social capital that flows from resident families in the resident families in the host society to the society of origin.” (Levitt, 2001:54).

Emiliano Moya assures us of the fact that he has worked as a foreman in Argentinean constructions which has allowed him to better confront his condition of responsibility in ASPAVAL when he arrived from the neighboring country to become a peach producer when 50 years old. For his part, Abdón Sejas claimed that it would have been very difficult to construct his house and do other work of his plot if he had not learnt so much as a metallurgical technician abroad. Other experiences gathered along the way in the region migrants bringing concrete ideas for new crops and irrigation procedures.

Commenting of the notion of social remittances of Levitt, especially in relation to its influence of productive activities, we should mention that one of the interviewees called it “forms of thinking learned over there” (Primitivo Sánchez, 4 August 2005). Migrants and producers replied to questions on the issue accepting that proceeding in the executive style and in a direct way of North American business activity, for example, is the idea that workers practice in conducting their plots and constructions.

Under the influence of new logics, this research placed the evidence of the continuity of ancient logic. This to say that while it is true that one can see new notions in specific areas of migrant activity, the structure of the main daily practices seemed to be a function of structural principles from immemorial cultural data. The practices that are lived out in the details of migration, that Peggy Levitt calls *path-dependent* and we would “dependent on a path already taken”, show signs of principles which condition them. In a future debate, the complex conjunction between two possible types of dreams of future success will be analyzed, which could be encapsulated in the concepts of *American* and *Andean dream* (De la Torre, for publication).

## **I'll come back to water the fields: preliminary conclusions**

*How far I am from my anxiety  
My river, my flower, my sky will be weeping  
But I shall return, don't cry my love  
No-one will put walls before our reality  
No evil lasts a hundred years  
Nor a people that resists so long  
They will pay, don't weep dear,  
I'll be back soon.*

Nilo Soruco, *La caraqueña*<sup>6</sup>

“We were going to raise the world,” responded Diógenes Escobar asked about the state of mind that his brother and he to begin the migrant adventure. to raise the world, perhaps starting with his own region.

This research dedicated to supporting the discussion about migration, poverty and the quality of life in a specific area of rural Cochabamba ends by approaching to a great extent its initial hypothesis that the evidence shows and allows saying that “From 1990, the migratory phenomenon has permitted the continuity of productive processes in non-traditional agricultural activity in the area of origin. These processes have brought positive changes for families in the zone, directly or indirectly involved in the transnational networks of migration.

Without any doubt, deeper research is needed in the main debate of the reach of possible definitions about ideas of the quality of life which at the moment is focused on the same families in the unit of analysis understand this.

It is convenient that migrants encounter manners of participating in their land of origin and one of these is “to water the land” so that it produces well and maintains its freshness for the anxiously waited moment of return. Between the effects of this phenomenon, as with the speedy boom of construction and the demand for care of houses and plots perhaps the most significant is the generation of new sources of work for poor families in the regions near and far, although one should not forget to note that for them the project of a life related to transnational migration also beckons.

It is probable that the principal motivations for migrant initiative in the region are overwhelmingly familial, but from this the traveler finds perhaps a way of generating income, pursues the possibility of reconstituting the family balance broken at the moment of the first departure. Work heals the family wound, generates unforeseen local opportunities. Participation from a distance or not of the migrant families and their vital capital could still be taken advantage of by legitimate associative systems with concrete aims from digging wells to the improvement of production in general, looking, for example towards exportation.

These and other regional hopes could be worked at local level, with municipal entities planning them. Arbieto's municipality and a number of others from different regions of Bolivia massively related to the diaspora count on a structure to carry forth these actions, but will only be able to do so within the framework of an authentic national awakening strategy on the theme.

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<sup>6</sup> The cueca of the Tarijeño Nilo Soruco bears the name of *La caraqueña* because it was composed in Caracas, Venezuela, during the political exile of the author. Beyond its militant lyrics, *La caraqueña* ended up becoming a hymn for Bolivians residing abroad.

Meanwhile, the initiatives taken by groups like the one studied should be highlighted, who show that they are still planning *communal utopias*, even though such adjective may diminish somewhat the scope of this grand word.

Reading this type of non-dramatic knowledge which describes migration not as an exceptional and circumstantial situation, but as a form of existence that millions of people go through every day in their biographies of the new world order (Pries, 1999). The new migrants do not practice in only one place but in pluri-cultural and transnational locations. To give the needed attention to legitimate conditions of the migratory discourse in regions of origin- where for them the productive transformation is most transcendent – seeks to search for collaboration for the rise of a long-term vision and theories recently born to Bolivian academia. In the case of my interest, I sincerely aspire that this study allows other researchers on migration and its impact on local development to face with more resources of knowledge, the characteristics of taking this decision and practice of migrating.

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