

Identity, work, and mobility amongst Bolivian market vendors in El Alto and São Paulo

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Abstract

This thesis follows the narratives of Bolivian market women to explore how their real and aspired processes of social and spatial mobility articulate different identities in the intersections of gender, race, and class. The thesis draws on a multi-sited ethnographic research, carried out over a nine-month period between October 2015 and August 2016, at the markets of *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*, in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, and *La 16*, in the city of El Alto, Bolivia. Both in Brazil and in Bolivia, market women are racialised as being ‘*indian*’ or at least ‘*more indian*’ than others around them – labels which reproduce the coloniality which underlie these categories. In contexts of precarious and flexible labour conditions, market women are aware that being othered as indigenous might compromise their claims to mobility. Resisting these categorisations, they use various strategies adapted to the particular forms of intersecting exclusion in each context. For instance, putting on a *pollera* – a type of multi-layered skirt – and becoming a *cholita* has been a strategy for indigenous women to consolidate their processes of social and spatial mobility both historically and presently. This has been chiefly achieved through commerce, to the extent that the *chola* identity has been conflated with that of market vendors, as a racially ambiguous, socially mobile woman. Market women in São Paulo do not wear a *pollera*, but they too rely on ambiguous use of categories to highlight their processes of mobility. As their expectations of social mobility rely on uncertain economic gains, market women in this study reinforce their claim for an urban, dynamic and economically ascending identity by contraposing it to

stereotypes that also cast indigenous women as rural, traditional, backwards and poor. I conclude that, while this might individually uphold the success of their socially upwards trajectory, it contributes to reinforce the stereotypes these very women are subjected to daily. These results show how even successful cases of social mobility, in contexts of high inequality, can contradictorily reinforce other processes of stratification along racial, gender and class lines.

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List of Acronyms

ASSEMBOL: *Associação de Empreendedores Bolivianos da Rua Coimbra* (Association of Bolivian Entrepreneurs of Coimbra Street) – Brazil

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

CONDEPA: *Conciencia de Patria* (Conscience of the Fatherland) – Bolivia

ILO: International Labour Organisation

MAS: *Movimiento al Socialismo* (Movement Towards Socialism) – Bolivia

MNR: *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (Revolutionary Nationalist Movement) – Bolivia

NEP: *Nueva Política Económica* (New Economic Policy)

PT: *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party) – Brazil

SAP: Structural Adjustment Programme

UNESCO: United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

US: United States

UK: United Kingdom

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Introduction

The scenario is a typically ‘Bolivian’ one – at times, I could even forget that I am in Brazil. The products, the smells, the language... The blaring sound of *chicha* music coming from a DVD stand. *Sateñas, pasteles, apí*, and dramatically decorated cakes... Some restaurants and stands are offering a ‘family menu’ for lunch and, indeed, I can see many families walking together. In general, most visitors are relatively young and there are more men than women amongst them. All are impeccably dressed. As for the vendors, most of them are women as well. But curiously, none of them are in *polleras*. I wonder why...

(Author’s fieldnotes journal, October 17, 2015. *Coimbra*, São Paulo, Brazil)

As is often the case with many researches that involve a period of fieldwork, I left England with some questions in mind to find new questions as soon as I stepped into the markets. The fieldnote above comes from my very first visit to one of the ‘fields’ in my research: a Bolivian street market located in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. Although situated some thousands of kilometres away from the Andes, *Coimbra* – as well as the other major Bolivian market in the same city, *Kantuta* – shares many features with the Andean markets in highland Bolivia. I do not just mean the nationality of the majority of vendors at and visitors to these places. If the lack of *sorojchi* – altitude sickness – made it clear that I was not in La Paz or El Alto, the products, smells and noises at *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* created a multisensorial experience that took me back to these two Bolivian cities in the blink of an eye. And in *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*, as in many marketplaces in the Andes, vendors were mostly women of rural origins. However, as I noted to myself in the passage above, a difference was made conspicuous by its absence: where were the world-famous *cholita* market vendors?

Back in Bolivia, *cholitas* were pretty much ubiquitous in my other ‘field,’ *La 16* – an immense street market located in the city of El Alto, over 4,000 metres above sea level. There, market vendors were also mostly women and most of them were, paradigmatically, *cholitas*. Sporting numerous pleated skirts (the *polleras*), a shawl and a derby hat, the flair of the *cholitas* is usually complemented by extravagant jewellery, framed teeth and *a lot* of attitude, which arguably helps them in their business. Although there were vendors who were not in *polleras*, including men, there is no male equivalent to the *chola* who would likewise be defined by their garments. And because of their sartorial distinctiveness, *cholitas* have been often taken as repositories of Andean cultural traditions, and their image figures prominently in very different contexts, from postcards to globally travelling representations of the recent emergence of a new indigenous political and economic elite in Bolivia. In the markets in Brazil, the absence of this quintessential Andean character was somewhat unexpected to me, and many other questions followed that initial interrogation. Talking to the market women in these three markets, I learned that the absence of *cholitas* as market vendors in *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*, from a seemingly trivial surprise, was revealing of much more complex narratives.

In this thesis, I follow these narratives to explore how market women’s real and aspired processes of social and spatial mobility articulate different identities in the intersections of gender, race, and class. Through the narratives of these market women, it is possible to see how these intersections have been transformed through time, creating different spaces of exclusion and inclusion, forms of domination and potentials for struggle. Market women’s fight against everyday forms of racism and sexism, and their efforts for economic ascension, simultaneously reflect, reproduce and transform these intersections with ambiguous results. Market women use various categories to

distinguish themselves from, and to classify others, employing categories which are, from the onset, also ambiguous. In doing so, these women incorporate, appropriate and reject forms of exclusion to which they are often subjected. These processes are fraught with ambivalent appraisals of their work, of their rural-indigenous backgrounds, and of the results of their desired and/or acquired economic prosperity. My goal is not to appease these tensions. Rather, my aim is precisely to dwell on the contradictions, for they reveal key dynamics about the prospects and challenges faced by these women and many others in the present context of heightened mobilities, flows and inequalities. In order to do so, this research takes place at three informal urban street markets: *Kantuta*, *Coimbra* and *La 16*. The market women and their stories connect these spaces to different moments and spatialities, and these narratives constitute the main focus of this research.

1. MOBILITIES, INFORMAL ECONOMY AND STREET MARKETS

Spatial mobility and (its much sought-after couple) social mobility are key elements to understand the socio-spatial identities of the people I met in these street markets. In order to comprehend the effects of mobility, I must follow the connections and ruptures, continuities and transformations that it brings about. I follow Rachel Silvey (2005: 139) in understanding mobility as a *process*, which is ‘interconnected in its meaning and operation to changes in the economic and cultural landscapes of which it is a constitutive part.’ *Mobility* does not merely refer to movements traceable on a map, but also to the *relational* motion of people, capital, goods and ideas through space and time – and, by contradistinction, to forms of relative immobility ‘that are enabled or enable mobilities’ (Cresswell 2010: 552; see also Conlon 2011; Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006).

Mobility is, furthermore, a socially embedded process, which is ‘organized and ascribed with meanings in and through existing hierarchies and spatialities of power, rather than as a result of them’ (Silvey 2005: 139). Mobility involves a ‘sense of change,’ of ‘reconfiguring’ definitions of class, gender and racial relations (Rao 2014: 872). These changes, however, are not necessarily unidirectional (Yeoh and Ramdas 2014; Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006). They might, for instance, simultaneously question or reinforce ‘traditional’ gender roles and/or national ideals (see, for instance Rao 2014; Yeoh 2005). Although mobility has been associated with a diminishing sense of belonging, it is also the case that places, as well as local connections and practices, are often reproduced through and along processes of mobility (McDowell 1999; Ødegaard 2010; Rao 2014).

While having control over one’s own mobility might be used as a source of social and economic capital and a as means for status promotion (Catarino and Morokvasic 2013), the present increase in spatial mobility has been accompanied by ever-more precarious labour conditions and the lack of control over one’s opportunities and choices (Oso and Ribas-Mateos, 2013). In this vein, the advance of neoliberalism in the last decades of the 20th century had considerable impacts over the dynamics of mobility. In Latin America, domestic and international migrations have been propelled by economic crisis and structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in a context of increasingly global liberalisation, leading many migrants to the informal economy (Chen 2012: 3; Robinson 2008: 19). The pauperising effects of SAPs have also contributed to push women towards the informal labour market, either in the role of the main or sole source of household income or sharing the responsibility with their partners or other family members (Bromley 2018: 12). Addressed as a cheap and flexible – and even disposable (Wright 2006) – workforce, women have been preferred

for part-time, temporary and precarious forms of employment (Yeoh 2005). In this context, the observed ‘feminisation of labour’ can be understood as both the growing participation of women in paid labour under precarious conditions and the increased participation of men in the type of activities seen as ‘women’s work’ (Chant 2003: 218; Robinson 2008: 247).

Since the beginning of the 21st century some of these overarching trends have been at least partially reduced in Latin America – a result largely associated with the rise of the centre-left governments throughout the region, the so-called ‘Pink Tide’ (see Loureiro 2018). However, in Bolivia, the governments of Evo Morales of the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (Movement towards Socialism, MAS) have not necessarily affected the size of the informal economy in the country, which in 2017 corresponded to over 80 per cent of the employed workforce (ILO 2018: 33). This large proportion does beg the question of whether the distinction between the formal and the informal economy still holds, and, more specifically, if the formal sector is any parameter or model to assess the informal economy. Regardless of the size of the sectors, and casting aside other considerations about the informal economy relating to compliance to tax payments, I sustain the need to focus on the experiences and the dynamics of those who work in the informal economy. For this reason, I use the formal-informal division as a way of highlighting the working conditions of the women in this research, underscoring their lack of a ‘secure work, worker’s benefits and social protection’ provided by labour laws (ILO 2002: 12).

Street markets have been analysed within the frame of the informal economy because they concentrate a varied range of petty entrepreneurs and own-account workers (Simon 2003), who often deal in products of dubious origins (Hepworth 2015; Ødegaard 2010), and show an overall lax adherence to state regulations (Bromley and

Mackie 2009). These informal marketplaces are normally configured as a set of non-permanent structures (i.e. stands), raised in public, open-air areas, and removed on the same day on a periodic basis (Hiebert, Rath and Vertovec 2015). These street markets can be officially recognised by state institutions or not, and not necessarily all practices, activities and workers are licensed. Vendors usually vary with regards to the type of goods sold (retailers/wholesalers, specialists/generalists), as well as to whether they own a fixed (even if not permanent) position in the market or if, on the other hand, they work as pedlars, constantly moving through the space of the market (Brown 2006; Bhowmik 2010b).

Although the ‘dynamics and forms of spatial materialisation [of street markets] differ greatly in character,’ their constitution is ‘generally tied to political and economic transformations’ (Mörtenböck and Mooshammer 2008: 347). While earlier studies have presented these informal marketplaces as resistant – and even inhibitive – to capitalist development, wealth, and modernity (see Geertz 1963), they are an enduring – and even expanding – feature of most cities. Urbanisation and international migrations, as well as the effects of SAPs and globalisation, have all impacted the demographics, products and the size of street markets around the world.¹ Street markets have been characterised by a certain interstitial quality, marked by constant flows and various forms of socio-spatial and economic in-betweenness, as spaces of encounter and intermediation, which blur and transverse the boundaries between domestic and public spheres, rural and urban, local and global (see Duruz, Luckman and Bishop 2011; Evers and Seale 2015; Seligmann 1989). As Peter Mörtenböck and Helge Mooshammer (2008: 348) have highlighted,

¹ See, for instance, Abdulazeez and Pathmanathan (2015); Bromley and Mackie (2018), Coletto (2010); Milgram (2011).

cultural paradoxes of globalisation make themselves manifest conspicuously [at the street markets]; the traditions of spatial appropriation and self-organisation of markets are intimately tangled up with the dynamics of neoliberal globalisation, in the shape of accelerated network formation, movements of capital, people and goods, transterritorial spatial production and cross-cultural experience.

As such, marketplaces can reveal a ‘particular history that carries meaning and is transformed by the ways that people perceive and use it for a multitude of purposes’ (Seligmann 2000: 3). And, if the long history of Andean street markets goes back to colonial times, these recent processes have also had a great impact not only on the markets’ present-day configuration, but also on the lives and identities of those who produce these spaces through their everyday practices. This thesis thus explores how Andean market women, through processes of social and spatial mobility, navigate, contest and reproduce complex social hierarchies and the identities associated to them. This requires casting a sharper light on these market vendors, focusing on their gender, class and race dynamics.

2. STREET MARKETS AND MARKET VENDORS

The multiplicity and simultaneity of the dynamics of Andean street markets are highlighted in various studies on the subject. In particular, Linda Seligmann’s (1989) description of markets as inscribed by various forms of socio-spatial ‘in-betweenness’ captures the general understanding of these places (Seligmann 1989). And, as the main agents and products of the relations and practices that take place at the markets, market women have been characterised by a certain ‘isomorphism’ to these spaces (Seligmann 1989: 698).

These forms of in-betweenness, both of street markets and of the women that produce them, have been extensively explored in the literature. Mary Weismantel (1988: 34, quoted in Ødegaard 2010:12) has highlighted the position of *cholas* as

brokers ‘who mediate between “Indian” and “white,” between rural and urban, between integration into the cash economy... and an unbreakable dependence on precapitalist economy.’ Various authors have built on these conceptualisations, highlighting how the consolidation of the Andean urban street markets rely on the continuous mobilisation, by market vendors, of indigenous practices of use and control of the territory, of vast social and cultural ties rooted in the rural indigenous community, and on the capacity of intermediating and employing different cultural codes (Ødegaard 2010; Rivera 1996b; Seligmann 1989; Tassi 2017). Beyond the rural-urban divide, marketplaces have also been described as constituted across the duality between domestic and public spheres, with market women simultaneously engaging in productive and reproductive activities (Babb 1989; Mayer 2005; Ødegaard 2017; Sikkink 2001). Furthermore, the economic exchanges taking place at the market have been seen as standing somewhere in between formal and informal, capitalist and reciprocity-based economies, or as grey areas that either connect or are simultaneously constituted by these practices (Mayer 2005; Müller 2017; Ødegaard 2017).

Underneath the overarching notion of intermediations, lie the socio-spatial dualities that constitute the imagery of the Andean world: indigenous-nonindigenous, rural-urban, traditional-modern, permanence-mobility, feminine-masculine (see also Albro 2010a; 2010b; Buechler and Buechler 1996; de la Cadena 2000; Haynes 2013; Peredo 2001; Weismantel 2001). Located ‘in between,’ *cholas* simultaneously embody and challenge the validity of these dualities, resulting in an inherently ambiguous identity (see also Weismantel 2001). This is exemplified by various forms of description of *cholas* as ‘urban indigenous’ (Bigenho 2006), ‘indian mestizas’ (de la Cadena 2002), ‘neither “indio” nor “mestizo”’ (Albro 2010a), ‘at once Indian and white’ (Weismantel 2001), or ‘hybrids’ (Tassi 2010). These terms highlight the tensions and

contradictions that racialise the *chola* as ‘an indian.’ At the same time, the social and spatial mobilities of the business-savvy, urban-market women also contradict the representations of womanhood as confined to the space of the home and as dependent on the labour of men, as well as of indigenous individuals and groups as essentially rural, anachronistic, immobile, poor and backward. As will be explored throughout this thesis, *cholitas* and their inherently mobile dynamics confront, transform and at times reinforce fixed representations of gender, race and class.

The Bolivian market women in the markets of Brazil were also racialised. The city of São Paulo has been a major destination for Bolivians since the 1990s, who have constituted a foothold in the city’s garment industry (Buechler 2014; Freitas 2014; Xavier 2014). Although the everyday dynamics of the Bolivian migrants in this city are usually invisible to the public eye, the often-exploitative living and working conditions experienced by many has been exposed in the Brazilian media as ‘akin to slavery’ (Leite, Silva and Guimarães 2014; Manetta 2012).² Differently from the ‘africanised’ historical slavery in the Brazilian context, this particular form of ‘modern slavery’ is racialised as ‘indian’ (Alves 2012; Vidal 2012). This has to do with a general representation of Bolivians, whose phenotypical features and ‘traditional’ celebrations communicate a homogenous ‘indigenous culture’ to Brazilian eyes (see Freitas 2014; Silva 2006; Simai and Baeninger 2012; 2015; Vidal 2012).

At the Bolivian marketplace, one of the few spaces in São Paulo where this migrant community congregates in public, market vendors – most of whom also work in the garment industry – simultaneously reject and confirm associations between ‘Bolivianness’ and indigeneity, and between these representations and the ‘slave-work’

² For examples in the media see, for instance, Leila Suwwan for *O Globo* (2011), Ricardo Senra for *Folha de São Paulo* (2016) and Maria Laura Neves for *Marie Claire* (2017).

conditions at the workshops. And, although the market women who work at these markets do not present themselves as *chololas*, their identities are also characterised by an ambivalent relation to their supposed indigeneity, on the one hand, and to their real and aspired social and spatial mobility across national borders, on the other. This thesis thus explores how market women, whether they identify as *chololas* or not, disrupt the supposed dualities of the Andean world in their processes of mobility, continually contesting, in ambiguous ways, identities, hierarchies and classifications that are, themselves, ambiguous.

3. NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Both in Brazil and in Bolivia, Bolivian market women were *racialised* as ‘indian’ or, at least, ‘more indian’ than others around them – in spite of the fact that most of them did not perceive themselves as such. There are two points to be highlighted in this sentence. Firstly, although indigeneity has been often addressed from the perspective of ethnicity (Wade 2010), market women defined their identity both within and against indigenous identities, in ways that were not straightforwardly political – that is, not in terms of a consciously collective, politicised form of identity (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 2005: 6).³ When I note that they are racialised, I am emphasising the underlying *coloniality* (see also Quijano 2000; 2007) of these categorisations, that is, I am invoking

distantly or immediately, a long history of colonial encounters, slavery, discrimination, resistance and so on. This does not mean that ethnic history cannot be long and conflictive, but [...] it is necessary to highlight the history of race by *calling it by its name* (Wade 2010: 19, my emphasis).

³ In this sense, I am following Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis’s (1995: 6) understanding of ethnicity as ‘the active face of ethnic consciousness [which] always involves a political dimension [...]’. Ethnicity involves partaking of the social conditions of a group, which is positioned in a particular way in terms of the social allocation of resources, within a context of difference to other groups, as well as commonalities and differences within (in relation to the divisions of class and gender, for example within the group).’

As such, I understand race and racial ideologies as ‘elaborate social constructions’ which have been initially ‘worked as vital signifiers of difference during European colonial encounters with others’ (Wade 2010: 14). However, racial categorisations are not static and do not work on their own. As will be discussed with more detail in the following chapter, these categories are necessarily produced in and through other markers of difference such as gender and class (see also McClintock 1995).

The second point relates to the use of categories in this thesis. Some of the terms used here, particularly ‘indian’ (and its Portuguese and Spanish equivalents *índio/indio*) and *chola*, have been used by colonisers to categorise and subalternise the populations in the Americas, and they are often used, in the present, with pejorative connotations. In the case of ‘indian,’ some authors prefer to use the term ‘indigenous’ (*indígena*, both in Portuguese and Spanish) instead. However, this is not unanimous. Olivia Harris (1995) and Andrew Canessa (2005; 2012a), for instance, use the term ‘indian’ with the explicit intent of emphasising the ‘arbitrariness involved in defining some people as “native” and others not’ (Harris 1995: 377) and the ‘historical continuity ... [of] the unequal power relations’ that underlie the use of this term (Canessa 2005: 24).

The word ‘indigenous,’ on the other hand, is much more recent, and it has botanical connotations which implies a sense of rootedness in space that can complicate and be complicated by processes of mobility. The Portuguese/Spanish noun *indígena* and the English adjective ‘indigenous,’ however, are preferred by many present-day social movements, so I once again follow Wade (2010: 164) in adopting this term for most occasions. Bearing that in mind, I use the term *indian* (and *índio/indio*) both in reference to the colonial category and when I wish to emphasise the objectification of, and the racism against indigenous peoples. There is no ‘less polemic’ choice for the

words ‘*chola/cholita*,’ and, more importantly, market vendors use these terms when referring to themselves – hence, I keep these words.

As final notes, the term *chola* is not used in reference to an identity/category of the Latina Culture in the United States. The word *indian* does not refer to a national grouping (people from India). The categories referred to in this thesis such as *mestiza*, *chola* etc., are ‘understood to be culturally and socially constructed, to have contested meanings’ (Canessa 2005: 25) and to ‘vary over space and time’ (Wade 2010: 164). All these terms will be written in lower case and, as with the term ‘race,’ without inverted commas. All terms in a foreign language will be italicised – a short definition for them is provided in the Glossary at the end of this thesis (Annex One). Quotations will remain as written in the original.

4. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

In the present section I summarise the contents of the chapters before advancing some of the conclusions, and contributions, of this thesis. After this introduction, *Chapter One* presents and discusses the framework for the development of the thesis. I begin by introducing the intersectional approach that will serve as the backbone of the analysis, which posits gender, race and sex as articulated dimensions of oppression, as bases for processes of forming and transforming identities, and as sources of resistance and struggle. I highlight that these mutually enforcing dimensions emerge together in the colonial context and continue to be reproduced through different discourses of power, leading to the persistent invisibilisation of the experience of working-class, nonwhite women. In particular, I indicate how processes of mobility articulate and contest race, gender, and class in different ways through time and space. After this initial discussion, I provide a brief background of how three central

categories in this thesis, the *mestiza*, the *chola* and the indian/indigenous, have developed from the colonial period to present-day Bolivia. I highlight that mobility has played an important role in how the relation between these categories are thought, having served as a strategy for evading forms of exclusion, but, in this process, also producing ambiguous subjectivities. In the final section of the chapter I locate myself within the broader context of the research. I detail the practical elements of fieldwork, discuss the methodological approach to narratives, before reflecting upon my position in the process of this research.

Chapter Two introduces the reader to the street markets of this research: the *Feria del 16 de Julio* in El Alto, Bolivia; the *Feira da Praça Kantuta*, and the *Feira da Rua Coimbra*, both of which are located in São Paulo, Brazil. After providing a historical background on the emergence of marketplaces in the colonial Andes, I introduce the *Feria del 16 de Julio*. I discuss the origins of this market in the context of economic crises and neoliberal reforms in Bolivia, highlighting how rapid urbanisation and the growth of informality are reflected in the dynamics of the market as it is today. I highlight the importance of the vendors' associations and of women in organising the everyday life of the market. Finally, I discuss how the multi-varied origins of products sold at *La 16* reveal the multi-connectedness of this particular Andean market to a global economy. I then proceed to the *Feira da Praça Kantuta* and the *Feira da Praça Coimbra*. I tie the emergence of these markets to the broader dynamics of Bolivian migration to Brazil, highlighting the markets' relation to the dynamics of the garment industry in São Paulo – which employ many migrants – as well as their role in creating a sense of shared community of Bolivians in Brazil. I highlight how these marketplaces have been built in the image of markets in the Andes, playing an important role in the construction and consolidation of the Bolivian community in São Paulo. I then discuss

the tenuous balance between the invisibilisation and the stigmatisation of Bolivian migrants in Brazil, highlighting that the markets are less of a claim for incorporation into the Brazilian society and more of a celebration of the achievements of Bolivians in Brazil.

Chapter Three discusses the migratory narratives of market vendors, focusing on ruptures and continuities observed through the processes of social and spatial mobility. After a discussion of domestic and international migratory patterns within/from Bolivia, I discuss a series of continuities and ruptures that are presented in the narratives of market vendors. On the first aspect, I highlight how rural migrants activate social-spatial networks in order to facilitate their insertion in the urban context, as well as to guarantee the continuity of indigenous practices beyond the rural community. Two strategies are particularly relevant in this context, activating or developing fictive kinship ties (*compadrazgo*) and keeping dual residency (*doble residencia*). I then discuss how mobility can be related to an active effort of distancing oneself from indigeneity, underscoring, in this context, that the prospects and effects of processes of spatial and social mobility have differed along gender and racial lines. Finally, I highlight how, in Brazil, migratory trajectories also present uncertain gains for Bolivian migrants in São Paulo. In this vein, I show how the connections between Bolivians' work in garment workshop and forms of 'modern slavery' contribute to alienate the agency of migrants, constraining their perspectives of social mobility in Brazil. I emphasise that processes of mobility of rural indigenous peoples from Bolivia involve both permanence and change, transformations and continuities, but that – contrary to a view of indigeneity as rooted to the rural environment – rupture does not necessarily render one less indigenous to the eyes of others: in fact, it might be precisely the opposite.

Chapter Four focuses on market women's understanding of their work – even if, at times, some market women do not see it as work. After discussing how rural Andean understandings of complementarity are different from a sexual division of labour, I show that both forms of gendered, and gendering divisions of tasks, can be seen as devaluating the work of women. I also discuss how the work at the markets traverses spatial categorisations that are also understood to be gendered – by breaching the divide between productive and reproductive spheres, these women have the ability to make (some) money while tending to their children. At the same time, market women's autonomy and strength are often portrayed as masculine traits, and this gendered ambiguity is also at the heart of what constitutes the *chola*. Market women in Brazil are also ambiguously located, and fighting against this ambiguity they at times reinforce bourgeois expectations of womanhood from which they, as working-class, nonwhite women, do not stand to benefit unequivocally. This chapter thus underscores how market vending provides ambiguous gains for women, who adjust and reconcile their aspirations for mobility with more practical necessities, who need to perform domestic duties and the work outside of the house, and who at times even incorporate an ethos which compromises their acquired autonomy.

Chapter Five focuses on the categories used by market women to describe themselves and others. I begin by addressing different 'types' of women, whom, in Bolivia, have their identities conflated with the type of clothes they wear. In order to understand the opposition between *señoritas* and *cholitas*, I retrace the adoption of the *pollera* as a strategy for social mobility and as an indicative of spatial mobility. I argue that more than the clothes, the terms imply different definitions and expectations of 'womanhood,' built through various intersections between gender, race, and class. I underscore that, while many women today adopt the *pollera* as a marker of their urban

credentials, *polleras* are also used by rural women, who are often belittled by those in the market as an effort of establishing a distinction between them. I furthermore contend that market women, in assessing the adequacy of other women to certain types of clothes and to certain norms of behaviour, simultaneously reproduce and contest hierarchisations and categorisations of ‘types of women.’ Finally, I focus on the narratives of market vendors in Brazil to highlight how social mobility and processes of *mestizaje* work together to create new subjectivities, in ways that are complex and ambiguous, often leading to the reproduction, by market women, of the same stereotypes to which they are subjected.

Chapter Six concludes this thesis and highlights some of the contributions of the present research, which I summarise here in advance. This thesis shows the relevance and the need to see processes of mobility as articulated through, as well as articulating dimensions of gender, race and class. These processes create forms of exclusion and potentials for inclusion which are riddled with ambiguities, which might require from these market women to break from their rural backgrounds to try to consolidate uncertain gains in the urban context. As a result, an ambivalent process obtains. While market women fight racism and sexism, which consistently assign them their ‘proper place’ in society, they often reproduce the same underpinnings which perceive women’s work as less valuable, and indigeneity as necessarily associated with poverty and rurality – the same types of prejudice to which they are subjected. Conversely, then, this thesis shows that processes of (im)mobility offer a privileged vantage point from which to observe, criticise and contest contemporary articulations of gender, race and class.

This research thus contributes to the analysis of intersectional inequalities and identities by highlighting how the processes of mobility engendered by these women

generate ambivalent gains in economic, gender, and racial terms, and how mobility in turn reveals these multidimensional articulations. Focusing on the narratives of market women, it is possible to observe how their experiences connect to that of other women across the Global South – although the analysis also allows for reflecting on how gender, race, and class reinforce one another in contexts of mobility in the Global North as well. The main contribution of this thesis, however, is empirical, and it focuses on the people and their stories: by highlighting the experiences of these women, I emphasise both their agency in their processes of mobility and the intersecting forms of exclusion which act upon them.

***One.* Getting to the field: Methodological considerations**

The market women I met in Brazil and in Bolivia used myriad terms to describe themselves and others – *cholas*, *mestizas*, *chotas*, *campesinas*, *indias*, *indígenas*, *señoritas*, and *bolivianas*, to name the most common. Although the majority of these terms bear a lasting *coloniality*, their meanings and uses have not remained stagnant since colonial times. Some of them have been used as tools for domination and keys for social struggle, as core bricks in processes of state-building and as barriers for social inclusion, as ideals and as insults. The ways through which market women use these terms brings together various, at times competing, narratives and creates a story through mutually enforcing, ambiguous and always shifting hierarchies of race, gender, and class.

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of this thesis and discusses the development of the key concepts that guide the analysis, structured around an intersectional approach. Combining contributions from Crenshaw (1989; 1991), Collins (2000; Collins and Bilge 2016); Lugones (2007), Wade (2009; 2010) and Rivera (2010), a framework is developed that sees race, class and gender as articulated dimensions or vectors of oppression, all of which are necessary to cast light on the particular experiences of nonwhite, working-class women. Moreover, it is argued that these forms of classification and hierarchisation, as well as the discourses of power that

underpin and sustain them, can simultaneously be challenged, reproduced and transformed through market women's processes of social and economic mobility.

This chapter also discusses the historical evolution of the key terms and categories used in the thesis, such as *mestiza*, *chola* and indian/indigenous, based on three considerations. First, as indicated above, race-based or -inflected terms have inescapably colonial roots, as well as enduring colonial dimensions, so they must be apprehended in their development from the onset of colonisation (see, amongst others, Quijano, 2007; Wade, 2010). Second, these categories are, in and of themselves, constantly undergoing changes, so a dynamic approach to their meanings and impacts is required. Moreover, in light of the intersectional and narrative approach that I adopt, these racial concepts are inextricably defined in their articulations with class and gender, which are also undergoing changes of their own, hence calling for a historical take on the unfolding of multi-faceted social hierarchies. Third, these hierarchies are repeatedly being challenged and reshaped through, amongst others, processes of social and spatial mobility, which also emerge in market women's narratives. As argued below, it is by showing how, over time, mobility has stretched and redefined these social boundaries that the contradictions and ambiguities of social hierarchies can be revealed. In other words, through intersectional forms of inequality, and the resistances encountered in this process, mobilities cast light on the shape, the efficacy and the limits of social hierarchies and categorisations.

This chapter is organised as follows. First, I present the fundamentals for advancing an intersectional approach, incorporating the contributions of different authors to develop a framework adapted to the object of this thesis. This is followed by an analysis of the key categories and their historical development along several social, economic and political processes, tracing these developments since the beginning of colonisation

until the recent period. I then locate myself in the ‘field’ and the very process of doing fieldwork. In doing so, I offer reflections about my position in conducting this research, which are reflexively incorporated in the interpretation of this work, and describe the methods and procedures used in the field.

1. THINKING INTERSECTIONALITY

This research takes on an *intersectional* approach. The term first emerged in the literature in the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), who highlighted that monistic understandings of categories of oppression rendered the experience of women of colour invisible. As a result, racism and sexism should not be taken as discrete dimensions which could translate the subordination of women of colour by a mere addition (Crenshaw 1991:1244; see also Carastathis 2016). Rather, ‘social inequality, people’s lives and the organization of power’ can only be understood when acknowledging that the various ‘axes’ of social division ‘work together and influence one another’ (Collins and Bilge 2016: 2) constituting what Patricia Hill Collins (2000) has referred to as a ‘matrix of domination.’ ‘Intersectional paradigms,’ adds Collins (2000: 18),

remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice. In contrast, the matrix of domination refers to how these intersecting oppressions are actually organized. Regardless of the particular intersections involved, structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power reappear across quite different forms of oppression.

These definitions of intersectionality reflect a conscient move towards an understanding that different structures of oppression lead to an ‘experience [which] is greater than the sum [of its parts]’ (Crenshaw 1989:140). Yet, the image of separate axes coming together at a crossroads – often invoked in descriptions of intersectionality – can also reproduce a similar idea of independent, discrete forms of oppression which reiterate, rather than contest the invisibility of those located at the intersections

(Lugones 2007: 192-93). I take this criticism into account and, although I do not discard the concept of *intersectionality*, I incorporate Peter Wade's (2009) use of the concept of *articulation*. Wade draws his use of the concept from Judith Butler (1993), who argues that understanding different forms of oppression as merely 'parallel or analogical relations,'

not only misses the specific histories of their construction and elaboration, but also delays the important work of thinking through the ways in which these vectors of power require and deploy each other for the purpose of their own articulation (Butler, 1993: 18).

Accordingly, Wade (2009: 26) presents the notion of articulation as capturing a more dynamic interaction between these 'vectors of power,' which reflects both an idea that ensembles are built from elements that 'do not have an inherent connection but can – through ideological and material labour – be rearticulated into other formations,' as well as the discursive character of these ensembles. For Wade (2009: 25), sexuality can be seen as 'a means through which or a site which other vectors can intersect,' that is, as the 'glue' creating these articulated ensembles – a notion he draws on the work of Collins (2000). Focusing on the Latin American context, he further underscores how the regulation and control over sexuality are fundamental to the processes of colonisation as well as of building, reproducing, and bounding the nation after the end of colonialism (Wade 2009: 28). This becomes particularly salient in how processes of *mestizaje* or miscegenation are represented in the Latin American imagery. On this note, Mary Weismantel (2001: 155) remarks that *mestizaje* is underlined by a 'brutally simple sexual paradigm:'

In the act that creates the mestizo [...], the man is white and the woman is not. Or one could say, the white is male and the nonwhite is not. Two profound inequalities – between nonwhites and whites, and between women and men – combine to make the bodies of nonwhite women into receptacles for white men's physical passions. According to this account of our sexual history, the mixture of races that can be read in faces and bodies across the continent is visible proof that a wealthy white man can get what he wants.

This emphasis on sexuality helps to understand how power has been exerted through sexual and sexualised metaphors and practices, frequently to the detriment of women – particularly nonwhite, working-class women. In describing this ‘nativity scene deformed by racism,’ Weismantel (2001: 155) actually reveals that there is more to race in the relation between ‘the white man, the Indian woman, and their *mestizo* child.’ In fact, it is only when considering how race intersects with sex, gender and class that this scene acquires its full meaning.

Sexuality is thus a crucial element for understanding how gender, race and class intersect. However, I also highlight María Lugones (2007: 206) contribution, for whom understanding power (and the coloniality of it) is ‘not only [about] control over sex, its resources and products but also of labor as both racialized and gendered.’ In this sense, other forms of violence and oppression also coalesce in the construction of the gendered category of ‘woman,’ including the forms under which they are incorporated in the labour market. For Lugones (2007: 202), in order to

think the scope of the gender system of global, Eurocentered capitalism it is necessary to understand the extent to which the very process of narrowing of the concept of gender to the control of sex, its resources, and products constitutes gender domination. [...] The sense is that the reduction of gender to the private, to control over sex and its resources and products is a matter of ideology, of the cognitive production of modernity that has understood race as gendered and gender as raced in particularly differential ways for Europeans/whites and colonized/nonwhite peoples. Race is no more mythical and fictional than gender – both are powerful fictions.

Dominating definitions of womanhood necessarily include restrictions to sexuality, but, importantly, they are also regulated through women’s racial features, their occupation, their class position and even their use of space. In this thesis, sexuality does come to the discussion, but not as the focus of the analysis. Rather, I focus on how different gendered representations, in particular different representations of

womanhood – all of which are also racialised and ‘classed’ – are at the heart of many of the processes analysed here.

Although I will discuss the *categories* listed above later in this chapter and throughout the thesis, it is useful to introduce an example to illustrate this point. I will do so by taking a brief look into the concept of *marianismo*, proposed by Evelyn Stevens in the 1970s. After a period of fieldwork amongst upper and middle-class women in Latin America, Stevens (1973, 1994) proposed the concept to analyse the supposed ‘cult of feminine superiority’ throughout the region. Being ‘a real woman’ in Latin America entailed, noted the author, abiding to a prescribed chastity, passiveness, self-sacrifice, and dependency (Stevens 1973, 1994). Openly informed by patriarchal-Catholic values and the widespread cult of the Virgin Mary across the region, Stevens presented *marianismo* as a feature of all *mestizo* classes (in this case, read middle-class) in Latin America. It was not, however, particularly pronounced amongst indigenous groups (the bulk of the working classes) who remained ‘culturally pure’ (Stevens 1994: 5).

What is particularly interesting for the present discussion is when Stevens ponders about the increasing participation of women in the paid labour market. Considering the economic and social changes in the 1970s, Stevens (1994: 14) asked herself about the ‘value of throwing large numbers of women into the already overcrowded labor market’ of these countries, and drew two conclusions. One is that expertise in Latin America is so scant that a woman there is more likely to find a good job than her counterparts in the US or Western Europe. The other was that, as mothers, Latin American women were likely to face less conflict between continuing their domestic duties or taking up a job. For one, because employers would be more complacent in light of their sanctified role of mothers. That was not the whole reason,

however: according to Stevens, ‘*middle-class* women who have marketable skills also have [...] other *female members* of the extended family, and an abundant *supply of low-cost domestic servants* [available] for day-to-day care of dependent children’ (Stevens 1994: 14, my emphasis).

Stevens’s concept having been described as an ‘ahistorical, essentialist, sexist, and orientalist fabrication’ (Navarro 2002: 270), unfit to describe the experiences of *real women*, but I find the silences very revealing. The whole argument is indeed considerably patronising, and also here *sexuality* – or more precisely, the lack of sex – is presented as a central feature of Latin American femininity. Yet, Steven’s construction of Latin American femininity is very illustrative of the invisibility of the *work* and, actually, of the very *existence* of nonwhite working-class women. Here middle-class women are *women*, and her extended family members are *female*, but her servants are nothing but a *low-cost, abundant supply of care*. This ‘supply’ is arguably also composed of women who were already inserted in the paid labour market precisely as domestic workers. Yet, their experiences and subjectivities are completely erased from the Stevens’s record. *Their labour does not count as work, as they simply do not count as ‘real women’* – not necessarily because they do not comply to the Mater Dolorosa described by the author, but also because they were *not women* to begin with.

Bearing that in mind, I am able to return to Lugones’s (2010: 747) argument that in order to see beyond the erasure of these women from the narrative it is first necessary to understand that they have been subalternised through a ‘combined process of racialization, colonization, capitalist exploitation, and heterosexualism’ – the intersection of which Lugones refers to as the *coloniality of gender*. This combined process has been used to dominate and exploit the bodies and minds of indigenous peoples in the Americas – a process which began in colonial times and continues to be

reproduced through present-day power structures, even if its content has varied over time. Underlying this notion of *coloniality* is the acknowledgment that while colonialism as a political order no longer exists in Latin America, it has left an indelible mark on power, knowledge, the economy and ‘forms of being,’ a mark which is ultimately represented by the social category of *race* (Maldonado-Torres 2007; 242; Quijano 2010: 170-71). But more than that, as Anne McClintock (1995: 5) succinctly argues in her analysis of British imperialism, race, gender, and class, emerge in colonial context not ‘distinct realms of existence,’ but rather only ‘come into existence *in and through* relation to each other – if in contradictory and conflictual ways.’

Bearing this in mind, the second step is to see how these intersecting dimensions of power have been continually resisted in ways that are also conflictual and contradictory. Lugones (2010: 748) refers to this following the subjectivities that inhabit the ‘fractured locus of the colonial difference,’ who are ‘constructed doubly, who perceives doubly, relates doubly, where the “sides” of the locus are in tension, and the conflict itself actively informs the subjectivity of the colonized self in multiple relation.’ I find this notion particularly powerful for understanding the processes lived and the categories used by market vendors.

Building on this idea of fractured differences, I take on Silvia Rivera’s (2010a) notion of *ch’ixi* and Peter Wade’s discussion on *mestizaje* to highlight the ambivalences in processes of resistance. For Rivera, the notion of *ch’ixi* embraces contradictions of antagonistic cultures which simultaneously produce and reject one another. For her, the result is not homogenous, but one which highlights and lives with difference, albeit in perpetual contentiousness. *Ch’ixi*, argues Rivera (2010a: 310-11), can be seen as a

flecked grey, constituted by an infinity of black and white dots which are perceived as one but remain pure, separate. It is a mode of thinking, speaking and perceiving, which is sustained by multiplicity and

contradiction. [...] It is thus opposed to the ideas of syncretism, of hybridity and of dialectical synthesis, which are always striving for the undivided [*lo uno*], for the overcoming the contradictions through a third element, harmonious and complete in itself.¹

I, however, take issue with the idea that such antagonistic cultural positions as implied in the notion of *ch'ixi* remain *pure*. In this sense, I find that Wade's (2005) discussion of *mestizaje* brings an interesting addition. For Wade (2005: 246), processes of *mestizaje* similarly entail the co-existence of differently 'racialised elements and heritages' which do not necessarily fuse into an undifferentiated totality. However, for Wade the end-result is that these opposing positions are, also, mutually constitutive. As such, it is not only about *difference*, but also about how *sameness* is understood (Wade 2005: 243). This does not eliminate the hierarchies and the conflict between these elements, but rather highlights that, while co-habiting the same subjectivity(ies), these elements are also transformed.

Furthermore, it is necessary to underscore that processes of *mestizaje* in the Andes have always entailed some form of *mobility*, both spatial and social. Moreover, people in the Andes have always been mobile. At times, they moved to escape colonial impositions, at times, to seek better lives for themselves and their children, and at other times to claim rights. These processes of mobility have never been, however, unidirectional. In fact, processes of mobility also reveal how these categories are (re)produced and contested in ways that are necessarily intersectional. In so doing, they also reveal the inherent tensions and contradictions in the various categories and dimensions of social hierarchies, conferring the study of mobility a privileged place in understanding inequalities and their contestation.

¹ This translation as well as other translations of quotes originally written in a language other than English were done by myself. In order to avoid repetitions, I will not signalise this again in the body of the thesis.

In the following section, I discuss how some of the categories – mainly indian and indigenous, *mestiza* and *chola* – have developed through time in the Andean colonial and in the Bolivian context. This intends to provide an initial discussion on the issue, which will be resumed and further explored in the following chapters of this thesis.

2. ON THE CHANGING USES OF CATEGORIES

The origins of the terms used by market women to describe themselves and others in the context of the market go back, as already noted, to the colonial period. They emerge as part of the effort of the colonisers to classify, control, segregate and consolidate their domination over the population in the colonies (Paiva 2015). Out of the diverse groups that inhabited the continent prior to the arrival of Europeans in the 15th century, colonisers ‘created’ *indians* as a homogenised administrative category, upon which taxes and tributes, in form of labour and produce, were levied (Harris 1995: 354). Tributary indians were, from the onset, part of the development of the internal market in the Andes, albeit in very different conditions to the non-indians, that is, ‘as the source of revenue rather than as its beneficiaries’ (Harris 1995: 354).

America, with its richness of labour and material resources, was depicted in the imagery of the conquistadors as ripe for being subdued, explored and exploited. Its inhabitants were imagined as the wild infancy of the Europeans, their ‘internal alterity transported across the Atlantic,’ and specifically a ‘female one’ (Canessa 2012a: 245). Under the guise of ‘Christianisation’ and ‘civilisation,’ Europeans penetrated the lands, minds and bodies of the colonised, simultaneously reinforcing the opposition between dominating and dominated groups and giving birth to a host of intermingling subjectivities between them (see also Wade 2009; Lugones 2010).

In the case of the Andes, the colonial world was imagined as consisting of separated moieties, translated into the idea of a socio-spatial colonial order split between the Republic of the Spaniards and the Republic of Indians – the latter based on the indigenous communities, but under strong regulation and control by the former (Wade 2010: 27). However, the supposedly insurmountable divide between these two groups was challenged by process of mobility, as well racial and culture mixture (*mestizaje*). From the early days of the colonies, indigenous women were taken as wives as well as assaulted by Spanish men. Unions were arranged by indigenous communities in the hopes of guaranteeing their survival, and sex was continuously used as a tool for guaranteeing the control over the indian (Rivera 2010b; Wade 2009).

Consensual or forced, but always hierarchical, these sexual encounters produced new subjectivities and, along with those, new categories to classify them (Paiva 2015). In a context where ‘purity of blood’ mattered, these ‘non-pure’ groups, or *castas*,² were defined in terms of percentage of indigenous blood, with the *mestizo* being closer to Spaniards, and the *cholos* closer to the indian (Seligmann 1989: 696).

Along with these different categories, new possibilities for social mobility emerged. *Passing* from one category to the other could free individuals from certain tribute obligations and was thus employed as means to avoid impositions by the Spanish and to facilitate upwards social mobility, so that even some ‘pure’ indians claimed to be *mestizo* of some form (Seligmann 1989). However, for indigenous individuals, passing also involved a rupture with the community of origin, either as a result of spatial mobility, or by denying or diminishing an individual’s indigenous descent (Harris 1995: 358-59; Rivera 2010b: 75).³ In fact, claiming the illegitimacy of

² A term that paradoxically stems from the Portuguese/Spanish word ‘chaste’ or ‘pure.’

³ Rossana Barragán (1992) refers to this growing middling sector as constituting a ‘Third Republic’ in reference to the division between Republic of Spaniards and Republic of Indians.

their offspring was a common strategy for women seeking to grant their children a *mestizo* status (Harris 1995: 359).⁴

Mobility and miscegenation are thus products and producers of the exchange of cultures and practices (Peredo 2001: 25). Women had an important role in these processes of change, not just passively as bearers of mixed children, but in the search for better living conditions. That being said, while providing some individual benefits for those who could pass, these (ex)changes and mixtures also culminated in ambiguous positions for *cholos* and *mestizos*. As an example, the term *cholo* was already mockingly used in the 16th century to address *mestizos*, indians and even *criollos* – that is ‘pure’ Spaniards born in the Americas – ambitioning social mobility (Bouysse-Cassagne and Saignes 1992: 132). The grudge implied by this use of the word, highlights how colonial forms of *mestizaje* can be read as a challenge to the privileges of colonisers, laying bare the contradictory tenets that sustained the colonial order without, however, fully dismantling the basic antagonism between the indians and the Spanish.

As colonialism came to an end, this underlying duality acquired new meanings. In the 19th century, the rise of biologising discourses around race brought a new (pseudo)scientific gloss for the hierarchy between the colonial categories. With social-Darwinism a well-accepted approach to nation-building, indians were perceived as an inferior race, and thus refractory to any form of modernity and doomed to annihilation by the forces of progress (Quijano 2008). This included state-sponsored attempts at fully incorporating indigenous lands to private and public ownership, while indigenous communities became progressively marginalised in the process of building the

⁴ The very word *mestizo* was often used in the Spanish colonial context as a *synonym* for ‘bastard’ or ‘natural child’ (Paiva 2015: 179).

Bolivian ideal of national identity (Postero 2004: 193). As a result, under the rule of *criollo* elites, indians were incorporated to the territoriality of the new nation-state, but not regarded as citizens.

Racial purity continued to matter and the mixed *cholos* and *mestizos* were still regarded with certain animosity by the *criollo* elites. Cast between the civilisation of the *criollos* and the barbarism of the indian, *mestizo* and *cholos* were represented in the nationalist literature of the period as degenerate beings, bearer of the defects of the races that bore them (Sanjinés 2005; Soruco 2011; see also Arguedas 1977 [1909]). Ximena Soruco (2011) has underscored that the categories of *cholos* and *mestizos* were used interchangeably in 19th century Bolivia, although marked by internal class-based hierarchies and regarded as superior to the indians. According to Olivia Harris (1995: 366-67),

in the republican period [the *mestizo*] became more clearly an economic and political grouping. The relationship between Indians and mestizos became a quasi-class one [...]. [But] it is possible to argue that it was precisely because the relationship between mestizos and Indians was not securely a class one that ethnic difference became so important a means for mestizos to legitimate their domination over indians. This would help explain the paradoxical nature of *mestizo* 'identity,' which in some cases seems to reside in nothing more secure than *not being Indian*.

However, in the first half of the 20th century, the *mestizo* category emerged under a different light. As the predicted disappearance of the indigenous element proved to be incorrect and eugenics was condemned as state policy, *assimilation* increasingly became the most accepted method to eliminate difference (Sanjinés 2005). In this context, this new perspective on *mestizaje* broke with previous derogatory views of racial mixture (Quijano 2008). In Bolivia, *mestizaje* became a core element in the process of nation-building engendered with the 1952 Revolution. In this context the school, the barracks, land reform, universal suffrage and the strengthening of labour unions became important tools of incorporation of a largely disfranchised indigenous

population and to instil and promote the ideals of this newly imagined collective identity (Gill 1994; Rivera 2010).

The ensuing governments sought to promote the modernisation of the country through a series of reforms, which included the expansion of political and social rights and a thorough land reform, but also chiefly through a new citizenship regime, in which the *mestizo* emerged as the idealised Bolivian citizen. Imbued with the ideals of *indigenismo*,⁵ indigenous culture was portrayed under a folkloristic aura and as part of the cultural past of the *mestizo* (Sanjinés 2005). Ambitioning to overcome the archaisms of a colonial heritage, but without fully obliterating the colonial racial divide, discourses of *mestizaje* entailed the ‘de-racialisation’ of identities. While the *mestizo* was presented as a racially homogeneous identity, indigenous subjectivities were ‘peasantised’ (*campesinadas*) and the term *indio* was erased from official records (Rivera 2003). These processes not only meant the imposition of a class identity over other forms of subjectivity and socio-spatial organisation. Implied in it was the profound association, in official discourse, that the *indio*, now *campesino* (peasant), was necessarily tied to the rural environment and would thus be subdued by the processes of urbanisation and modernisation the revolution envisioned.

In the forge of this new *mestizo* nation, *cholos* remained ambiguously positioned. Focusing on neighbouring Peru, Aníbal Quijano (1980 [1964]) underscored what he referred to as a process of *cholificación* of indigenous cultures and forms of sociability. For Quijano (1980 [1964]: 63), centuries of miscegenation and the more recent processes of social and economic transformations in the country had led

⁵ *Indigenismo* emerged as a political orientation regarding large indigenous populations in the context of building a nation. As a general rule, *indigenismo* proposed the inclusion of indigenous populations in the national *corpus*, propelling the notion of *mestizaje* as the basis for an idealised citizenry in former colonies (Canessa 2006; Stavenhagen 2010).

certain sectors of the peasant indigenous population gradually to abandon some elements of an indigenous culture *x* and adopt other elements that characterise the Western *criolla* society, and by so doing, they develop their own lifestyle that is simultaneously different from the fundamental cultures of our society, without necessarily losing its original ties with them.

For Quijano, in a context of growing migration to the cities and the modernisation of the economy in the mid-20th century, the *cholo* was both a product of and a strategy for processes of social and spatial mobility of indigenous individuals. Quijano, however, rejects the idea that the *cholo* was an acculturated indian: albeit marked by internal conflicts, the *cholo* stood as an identity of its own. In Bolivia, however, this ambiguous position led them to be considered by the *criollo-mestizo* elites as ‘unstable moderns’ (Albro 2010a:153). As argued by Robert Albro (2010a: 153), *cholos* were ‘imagined to be caught in the act, the process, of *becoming* – either as middle class, or mestizo or citizen in good standing’ (Albro 2010a: 153).

Soruco (2011: 127) similarly highlights the *cholo* as in ‘perpetual transition,’ somewhat caught between their indigenous past and the economic ascension that would ultimately lead them to become *mestizos*. For Elizabeth Peredo (2001: 31), this underlying idea of progression towards *mestizaje* should be also be understood as a ‘mechanism of resistance and transformation’ of the experiences of segregation the indigenous individual endures in the urban context, a ‘search for an incorporation/transformation of a world that discriminates them and keeps them from being what they want to be.’ ‘Indeed,’ argues Cecilie Ødegaard (2010: 58), an underlying sense of progress ‘appears to involve an attempt to re-define a rural Andean background by seeking to acquire some kind of urban mestizo-ness ... [it may involve] a desire for “otherness,” that is, to become more like the “other” and less like one’s “origins”.’

That being said, the lived processes of social and spatial mobility of *cholos* were not accompanied by the expected abandonment of indigenous practices or their reduction to folklore, as desired by the national discourses around *mestizaje*. In their recalcitrance to become fully acculturated lied a conundrum: if indigeneity belonged to the rural and was thus expected to disappear with urbanisation and migration, how could it survive through the practices of the *cholo*? In the words of Albro (2010a: 153):

At once key cultural brokers, in transit, and iconoclastic, cholos are florid reminders of undesirable schisms, fissures, and convergences of Andean and Spanish worldviews, Indian and elite, assimilation or rejection of the national project, as they disrupt the middle-class promise of ethnic and class homogeneity.

However, *cholos* were not only the subject of contempt by the *criollo-mestizo* elites. In the 1960s/1970s, indigenous sectors were discontent with the unfulfilled promises of inclusion to the citizenship via the exclusion of indigeneity promoted by nationalist discourses of *mestizaje* (Stutzman 1981). Reclaiming their historical agency and resistance against state-sponsored oppression, *indianismo* became a major orientation behind the political mobilisation of indigeneity in Bolivia during the second half of the 20th century. *Indianismo* recovered the term *indio* as the identity of struggle against the colonial oppression, famously presented by Fausto Reinaga's saying that goes: 'As indians we were enslaved, and as indians we will liberate ourselves.' Reinaga was Bolivia's most celebrated *indianista*, and heralded the recovery of the agency of the *indio* as the one who rebelled (*indio alzado*) against domination.

Reinaga was, however, explicitly referring to the indian *man*. The indian woman was, for him, an 'open wound that breaks the soul,' bound to procreate and work, giving birth to a horde of *cholos* (Reinaga 1969, see also Canessa 2010: 181-82). These, for Reinaga, were the worst – the birth of *cholos* was a result of the emasculation of the indian man, their pecuniary success achieved at the expenses of indian labour (Reinaga

1952; 1969; see also Canessa 2010). To the *chola* market women (*khatera*) he reserved particular hatred: they were described as ‘ferocious’ beasts, who ‘robbed’ indians of their produce to reinvest the profits into the education of their mixed-race children (Reinaga 1969: 131-32). Interestingly, for Reinaga as well, the *cholo* and the *chola* represent a socially ascending social group.

By the end of the 20th century and in the beginning of the new millennium these categories underwent other transformations. After a profound political and economic crisis in the beginning of the 1980s, Bolivia initiated, in 1985, a period of neoliberal reforms. This new orientation was marked by a considerable reduction in welfare policies, an unmistakable opposition to collective entitlements and labour rights, and a renewed emphasis on the primacy of the individual (Hale 2002: 486). Mass dismissals, privatisation of public companies and the closure of state mines led to rampant unemployment, a significant rise in informality and a migratory boom to urban centres (Ledo 2009).⁶ In a context of higher integration of the global economy, however, the naturalised superposition of national societies and state territory was challenged by the emergence of ‘factional forces and fragmenting effects of widespread individualism, rapid social change, and all the ephemerality that typically attaches to capital circulation’ (Harvey 1990: 108). As a result, a process of social reconfiguration obtained, leading to a ‘crisis of social identity in all social groups, but particularly amongst those whose identity still is – or already was – ambivalent [*vacilante*], pushing them towards an urgent search for other, new identities’ (Quijano 2008: 116).

Around the same period, the consolidation of a legalistic and internationalised approach to indigeneity, to which many non-indigenous Bolivians were also

⁶ As of 1988, approximately 70 per cent of the Bolivian labour force was in the informal economy (Kohl and Farthing 2007).

sympathetic, contributed to a twist of the general understanding of the *indio* – now *indígena* – that altered the relations between the socio-spatialities of indigeneity and the nation-state. In this scenario, the Bolivian neoliberal state devised a multicultural framework through which cultural difference could be incorporated into the citizenry. Charles Hale's (2004) notion of '*indio permitido*' (authorised Indian) is useful for understanding the period, as it points towards the distinction between what could be legitimately accepted as indigenous or not according to the interests of the neoliberal state.

Rising against (and along) this, indigeneity rapidly transcended the limits of institutionalised politics and set the foundations for a broader popular platform in the beginning of the 2000s. Urban and rural social movements took the streets and highways of Bolivia to protest against neoliberal reforms, and a shared sense of 'being indigenous' worked as a glue bringing different sectors together (Fontana 2012). The early years of the new millennium were marked by intense social turmoil with the Water War, in 2001, the Gas War, in 2003, and finally the election of Evo Morales in 2005. In this context,

[n]ot only have indigenous people gone from the margins to the centre of Bolivian politics; but, rather more interestingly, it appears that central political issues, national issues that affect everyone, are represented as indigenous issues [...]. Indigeneity is becoming the language of protests over resources and the defence of the patria against the forces of globalisation; it is breaking out of its specific concerns and offering a language of political engagement for a much broader public (Canessa 2006b: 254).

In this manner, indigeneity is presented as transcending 'divides of rural/urban and ethnicity/class and articulates a sense of cultural heritage and Andean tradition with nationalist sentiments and class-based opposition to domination by foreign and domestic elites' (Perreault and Green 2013: 46). Interesting to observe is how, in spite of past grievances, *cholo* sectors and rural indigenous are more conflated under the

banner of a loosely defined, but increasingly politically and economic relevant indigeneity (see, for instance, Albro 2010b; Canessa 2014; Maclean 2018). It is of particular interest that, differently from the previous homogenising processes, centred on the *mestizo* identity, Morales's government advanced a proposal for a new (pluri)national identity centred on the image of 'the indigenous.' In this scenario, a new ideal of citizenship arose, in which the *indígena* was not merely recognised as a citizen, but actually became the country's 'paradigmatic citizen' (Canessa 2012b).

Having presented this overview of how the use of these categories have changed in their meanings throughout the centuries, I am aware that the gender dimension has been obscured. And this was done precisely with the idea in mind that the experiences of women are often lacking in the representations of these categories. Bearing that in mind, throughout the thesis I seek to emphasise how these categories are understood and used by market women to define themselves and others, relating their personal narratives and experiences to the broader dynamics behind these terms.

Categories also change through space. As market women leave the rural context for urban spaces, and Bolivia for Brazil, the practices and content associated with certain categories do not remain intact. And as they move, these women become subjected to different forms of oppression, but new opportunities for struggle also arise. These processes are conflictive, and the strategies used by market women to fight them can, at times, reinforce the processes of subalternisation to which they are subjected. In this thesis, I explore these contradictions to reveal how intersecting forms of oppression mutually enforce one another, and cannot be defeated as a result of gains in one of these dimensions.

I also discuss in this thesis the relation between (im)mobility and the transit between categories from the perspective of market women. Given that connotations of

indigeneity emphasise an anchorage to the land, but also poverty, it is important to discuss how spatial mobility and processes of economic ascent highlight the racialisation of class and of space. However, as processes of migration and labour insertion are also informed by gendered dynamics, it is possible to grasp the meanings of how these various dimensions intersect in the experience of the market women. In fact, it is by emphasising how mobility articulates the intersecting forms of oppression and the dimensions of their identities that it is possible to understand their mutual workings.

3. SITUATING (THE RESEARCHER) IN THE FIELD

Many ethnographical accounts have a section detailing the researcher's process of 'arriving in the field.' This section also begins with my very first interaction with a market vendor in Brazil. After an initial prospective visit, I had summoned enough courage to approach a potential participant. I was having a friendly conversation with a vendor about the products she sold and felt it was the perfect opportunity to explain my research to her and ask whether she would be interested in participating. The answer was a categorical 'no.' She said she had had enough of people who arrived with 'microphones,' 'cameras,' 'questions,' and gave nothing in return. Confident that I could try and 'make myself useful,' I asked her what was that I could do to 'help.' The answer was, again, categorical. No one has ever gone to the Brazilian Federal Police, she said, and explained to border officers that the goods crossing from Bolivia on their way to the markets in São Paulo were not 'illegal,' but legitimate merchandise, not 'rubbish,' but nourishing, natural food. When I told her I felt powerless in relation to the Brazilian customs bureaucracy, she shrugged and told me I should 'write *this* down' instead, and politely asked me to leave.

This first failed attempt of reaching out to an informant served as a very powerful reminder of issues pervasive to social research. The grounds for her assertive refusal highlighted the often extractive and even colonial character of the academic gaze over the ‘Other.’ It also highlighted that different expectations and understandings of the researcher’s position within broader hierarchies of power and, deriving thereupon, our capacity to act against (or to reinforce) structures of oppression through the medium of our work and presence in the field.

In this section I locate myself (i.e. the researcher) *in* the field first by detailing the process of fieldwork and then by reflecting on my position throughout fieldwork and after it, during the analysis of the material and the writing-up of the thesis.

3.1. General description of the field

My fieldwork was conducted over a period of nine months, divided into two rounds. The first round took place between October 2015 and April 2016 and the second round, between June and August 2016. The first three months (October 2015 – January 2016) of the initial period, and the last month (July – August 2016) of the second period were spent in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, where I carried out research at the street markets (*feira*, in Portuguese) of *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. The remaining period (January – April 2016 and June-July 2016) was spent in the cities of La Paz and El Alto, in Bolivia. There I focused my research on the street market (*feria* in Spanish, or *qhatu* in Aymara) of *La 16 de Julio*, in El Alto.

I decided to begin my research in the city of São Paulo because I expected to trace back links from Brazil to Bolivia and anticipated that initial contacts would be harder in this context. Before coming to England for my PhD, I had lived in São Paulo for two and half years during my Masters’, in which I studied the politicisation of

indigeneity in Bolivia. Although I was a ‘Bolivianist’ and was aware of the big number of Bolivian migrants who lived in the same city as I did, I had never visited *Kantuta* or even heard about the existence of *Coimbra* while living in São Paulo. In fact, the size of the migrant community contrasts with the invisibility of their everyday lives. To the extent they are *seen*, it is usually under the lens provided by media reports about ‘slave work’ conditions in the garment manufacture (see more in chapter three). Addressing what lies beyond this overwhelming representation of Bolivians in Brazil as ‘slaves’ was an important motivation behind the present work. Although I am not claiming to have the power to ‘give them a voice,’ this thesis contributes with a more nuanced analysis of the dynamics, practices and identities of Bolivians living in Brazil.

If *Coimbra* and *Kantuta* were initially thought of as gateways to the informants, they became the background and locus of the analysis. The early observations of the markets, as well as the interactions and relations with market vendors and visitors shifted the focus of the research. Instead of tracing the continuities and ruptures of indigeneity, the identities, processes of mobility and labour insertion of market vendors became the cornerstone of this research. Accordingly, the choice of carrying out the research in *La 16* was informed by this renewed focus.

During my Masters’ I had also lived in Bolivia for four months, two of which I had spent in the city of La Paz. Although I had been to countless markets while living there, I had never visited *La 16* before the PhD fieldwork. Market vendors in Brazil were the first to suggest that I should carry out my research at that market, a suggestion later reiterated by other researchers I met once in Bolivia. Although the cities of La Paz/El Alto have numerous open-air markets, the choice for *La 16* is further rooted in four other reasons. Its location, at the borders of the cities of El Alto and La Paz; its size, arguably one of the biggest open-air markets in South America; the multivariate

products sold; and its periodic occurrence, taking place twice a week. If the size makes for a considerable difference between the markets in this research, in all three of them the majority of vendors come from the department of La Paz and trade various goods.

Research methods mainly involved participant and non-participant observations at these markets and unstructured interviews with market vendors. Every trip to the market included visits to the market stands where I would carry out informal conversations with the vendors. These unstructured interviews and the information recorded in my fieldnotes constitute the basis for the narratives presented in this thesis. Participation was voluntary and all informants were previously briefed about the content of the research and the importance of their involvement.⁷ Oral consent was sought and given by all the informants, but mostly not recorded. The reasons for that were stated in the form submitted for ethical approval – which was granted in September 2015 – as (partially) reproduced below:

Formal documents – such as the informed consent form, which presents a legalistic language, official stamps and requires people to provide their name, contact details and signature – are likely to be taken with suspicion by participants. Written forms have been long used as a means to categorise indigenous peoples, being related to some form of advance of the state, international agencies and other private organisations over their lives and as a means to seize indigenous land and curb their rights.

Illiteracy, poor knowledge of the official language (Spanish or Portuguese) and difficulties in understanding the content of the document are also hindrances to the use of written forms. That being said, participants can be sensitive to being faced with a formal written document and might feel their confidence undermined when presented with one.

In Brazil, many of the people coming from [Bolivia] are undocumented and fear of deportation might add up to the negative assessment of any form of formal documentation. A feeling of insecurity and suspicion might arise from the use of written consent forms, breaking the trust relation that must be built in order to advance the conversation. In so being, written consent will not be used.

As is standard in anthropological research, oral consent will be used and preferably recorded. Some participants might have objections towards the use of voice recorders for similar reasons as in reference to the written consent form. In these occasions, it might be impossible to record their agreement. Nonetheless, their oral consent will be required and the

⁷ For the sake of readability, I will use the words ‘participant’ and ‘informant’ interchangeably throughout this section.

information they provide will be used only when agreed upon by the participant.

All participants were adults and, although I have interacted with children in the course of this research – as they are very present and lively at the markets – these interactions are not recorded in this thesis. During the whole period I have met and talked to countless vendors and customers at the markets. However, I chose to focus on the former group for two main reasons. Firstly, because their regular presence at the markets – as opposed to visitors and customers – allowed for the type of constancy required for building trust-ties between us and, consequently, to engage in deeper conversations with participants. Secondly, as already highlighted in the introduction, market vendors in general, and market women in particular, have been a consistent topic of social research in the Andean context (see, for example, Babb 1989; Barragán 2006; Buechler and Buechler 1996; de la Cadena 2000; Maclean 2013; Ødegaard 2010; Rivera 1996; Seligmann 2004; Weismantel 2001; Tassi 2017). These studies thus served as a benchmark for analysing market vendors practices and identities in the present thesis, through which I also contribute to this literature with my perspective.

Amongst market vendors, there was a group of main informants, with whom I built ties of friendship and whom I occasionally helped behind the market stands. In Brazil, they consisted of twelve women – six of whom working solely at *Coimbra*, four working exclusively at *Kantuta*, and two women who worked at both markets – and six men – four of them at *Coimbra*, one in *Kantuta*, and one who worked in both markets. In Bolivia, my main informants consisted of nine women and two men. Although men have participated in this research, they will take the backseat in the analysis.

I attempted to ask market vendors to indicate potential participants, but, because vendors generally refused or ignored my requests, snowballing was not used as a technique for finding new informants. During my second research period in Bolivia, I was suggested to try and find new informants to widen the scope of the research. Aware of the difficulties I had to find participants in the first place and having only a couple of months to find new ones, I decided to contact a gatekeeper – a locally-based social scientist named Richard Caniviri with personal contacts working at *La 16*. He introduced me to three interviewees (one man and two women), with whom I had semi-structured in-depth interviews which Richard also attended. These were the only interviews which were recorded, as by Richard's suggestion. He has, however, not participated in other stages of the present research.

All participants were Bolivian nationals and the absolute majority of them were born the department of La Paz, in Bolivia. The majority of them were born in the rural areas, although some were born in the city of La Paz.⁸ Two participants were born in the rural areas of the department of Cochabamba and two were born in the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, in the department of Santa Cruz. One participant was born in the city of Sucre, in the department of Chuquisaca. In earlier conversations, many market vendors born in rural communities concealed their rural origins and presented themselves as 'born and raised in the city.' These stories and others related to participants' migratory trajectories are addressed in chapter three of this thesis.

Informants varied considerably in age, ranging from early twenties to late sixties. They also varied in terms of their level of formal education. There is, unfortunately, a lack of precision in this information due to resistance from market vendors to provide

⁸ Before the La Paz and El Alto became separate administrative municipalities, in the year of 1985 (Lazar 2008: 30).

details of their educational background. However, a few indicated having little formal education while a few others had attended or were attending higher-education. In Bolivia, market vendors often spoke a mixture of Aymara and Spanish, and sometimes exclusively Aymara – a language I, unfortunately, do not speak. Our interactions were usually held in Spanish although, at times, market vendors in São Paulo expressly requested for the conversations to be held in Portuguese. Amongst those I met in Brazil, although the majority could speak an indigenous language at some point in their lives – for those coming from La Paz, usually Aymara, for those coming from Cochabamba, Quechua – many market vendors reported ‘having forgotten’ these languages.

Market vendors in this research dealt with a great variety of products. They were mainly in the business of selling clothes, dried food produces, freshly prepared beverages, and bric-a-bracs. Most of the market vendors owned the position from which they traded, but some of them were employed at a third-party stand. In Brazil, all market vendors worked from a metal-assembled structure. The same applies for Bolivia for all vendors but three, who worked on a stretched canvas on the ground upon which they displayed their products (often laying a cloth, the *awayu*, on top of the canvas). The women comprised the majority of the traders in both contexts, which is also reflected by the sample in the present work. Participants were chosen opportunistically and do not correspond to a representative sample of the market vendors in any of the studied contexts. That being said, as will be shown throughout this thesis, the narratives presented here are indicative of broader dynamics not only amongst market vendors, but also, and importantly, of processes taking place at broader scales.

3.2. Analysing the field: underlying narratives

Throughout this thesis, I refer to the personal stories told to me by market vendors during our quotidian interactions at the street markets as *narratives*. Narratives usually share three main features: they are *chronological*, or sequential; they are *meaningful*, in the sense that they convey a coherent causality; and they are *social* in that they are performed for a certain audience (Devereaux and Griffin 2013: 24; Elliott 2005: 4). This is not to say that narratives are straightforwardly factual and devoid of misjudgements, stereotypes, or contradictions (Hubble and Tew 2013: 20). As will be seen throughout this thesis, market vendors' stories are filled with ambivalences, and this does not preclude them from having social relevance or meaning.

Bearing that in mind, not all that was related to me took the form of a narrative: at times, they were casual remarks about the events happening around us, or a short exchange of ideas and experiences. At other times, I was not even directly involved in the interactions. Rather, I was present as an observer of interactions amongst market vendors and their reactions to customers, other vendors, friends and family members. These candid interactions added nuances and details to the stories, but, most importantly, they served as the immediate background against which these women framed and structured their stories. These quotidian, fragmented interactions, contributed to create a common understanding of our surroundings and serve as a basis upon which our 'long conversations' would take place. Market vendors were aware of the context of our conversations and considered both how they were perceived by others and my position as an interlocutor in order to frame their stories in ways that could be seen as meaningful to me (see also De Fina 2003).

In the case of this research, these stories usually began with a recapitulation of their migratory processes from rural areas to El Alto and from Bolivia to Brazil. What

usually started as short answers to simple questions, such as ‘why/how did you come here?’ became more detailed with time, as the relation between market vendors and myself became closer, resulting in the narratives that constitute the basis for this thesis. The small fragments which comprised these more complex stories were also narrative in nature, that is, they were located in space and in time, with a more or less clear sequence of events unfolding as we talked around the market stands. While writing up these stories, I am also producing a narrative, that is I am ‘[establishing] intertextual connections not only with other stories, but with other “discourses” [...] circulated through institutions and media’ (De Fina 2003: 30), as well as in academic literature. As such, these stories are also a product of my own narrative processes.

More than their migratory trajectory, however, I was interested in what these narratives could also tell me about the identity of these market vendors. The process of retelling personal stories can be described as the ‘building blocks of identity’ (Deveraux and Griffin 2013: 23-4), or as the means through which ‘we achieve our personal identities and self-concept’ (Keppler 2013: 8). Personal identities, however, were rarely explicitly formulated in these interactions. Market vendors would not say: ‘I identify myself as such or such;’ rather, they would provide accounts, cues and comments that positioned them in relation to others – including me – as well as to their past, present, and future selves. Narratives thus comprise both verbal and nonverbal elements. Recording the details of emotional reactions, as well as the use of language and of the body, contributed to a more nuanced picture of how these narratives come to life and acquire meaning in the present.

This indirect form of addressing one’s identity also emphasises the relevance of performance for narrative identity (see also Butler 1993; 1997; 2002; Holler and Keppler 2013; Hubble and Tew 2013). In this sense, narrative shares elements with

Judith Butler's (1993, 2002) understanding of gender acts. It involves a repetition, which 'is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation. [...] There are temporal and collective dimensions to these actions, and their public character is not inconsequential...' (Butler 2002: 178-79). As such, they are neither the expression of an essence nor are they completely detached from cultural, social and political discourses (Keppler 2013: 21). Addressing their identities from a narrative approach thus allowed me to cast some light on how various discourses around categories and processes converge and compete in their understandings of themselves and of the others around them.

The interactions I had with market vendors were not registered with a recorder, apart from the three exceptions already noted in the previous section. This means that I did not carry out a structural analysis of the *content* or *form* of the narratives through the processing of audio-transcripts (see Elliott 2005). Furthermore, our interactions were also fragmented, in the sense that the narratives presented here are not the fruit of a sole encounter with the purpose of recording market vendors' life-stories all at once. In order to bring together the various elements and stories presented here, I proceeded to the analysis of the fieldnotes to outline patterns and themes that emerged in the interactions. These should not be seen as mere product of my whim as a researcher, but as the result of a search of 'things articulated, patterns found, [which] therefore express at least an unconscious comprehension of certain underlying elements as well as the topographical ones, and [hence] not simply evocations of opinions' (Hubble and Tew 2013: 23).

Using the software NVivo, I first categorised all the notes to highlight the main topics around which the reported conversations took place. After that, I proceeded to a

finer analysis of interactions, seeking for similarities and differences, as well as for underlying motifs. I coded the data according to overarching and related themes, before focusing on how these interacted with one another. For instance, the issue of gender was approached from multiple perspectives. At times, market vendors were explaining to me the difference between this or that type of woman, or they were talking about their relation to their husbands and other family members, or to what a woman should or not do, or where they should or not be. In analysing the data, I realised that ‘gender’ was not a topic amongst others, but an underlying element to various themes.

Some of the themes were *guiding* the research, so they had emerged *prior* to fieldwork. For instance, indigeneity was central to my concerns, so I actively included this topic in our conversations and was attentive to how it emerged in the interactions, even if it did so quite indirectly through the narratives of the market vendors. Others would become more relevant *during* fieldwork, such as the market women’s ambiguous relation to their work (see chapter four), which prompted me to revisit earlier notes and to be more attentive to how this issue emerged in further conversations. However, during the analysis of the data and writing-up of the thesis, three broader themes became more visible and they constitute the main topics of the chapters three to five: migration, work, and identity. All these themes are permeated by issues of gender, race, class, and origins. As it became clearer in the process of the analysis of the data, these issues were both articulating of, and articulated by overarching narratives of mobility: of how their understanding of themselves varied as they moved through space and along social hierarchies, creating new positionalities and, with that, new frameworks for their narratives.

I am aware that the stories presented in this thesis are also the product of a narrative effort on the part of the researcher – that is, me. This includes the way my

questions and expectations affected the stories that were narrated to me and my interpretation of them, from the moment of writing down and analysing fieldnotes, to the processes condensing, arranging and presenting this material in the form of a thesis. As will be discussed with further detail in the next section, I must acknowledge that my own positionality mattered for what market vendors were telling me and in which ways they chose to frame their narratives or even to present themselves to others during my presence.

3.3. The researcher in the field

As tools to reflect and act upon the power imbalances inherent to research, *reflexivity* and *positionality* serve to locate the researcher within intersecting hierarchies of power and refer to the ‘ambiguous identity work in the process of research’ from its inception, through fieldwork, to the analysis/writing up period (Ali 2015). More than a mere navel-gazing from the part of the researcher, the effort of reflecting about one’s position in the field is a process, contingent upon the constant interactions and relations at ‘the field’ and beyond it (herising 2005). It is ‘imperative, for researchers, then, [to] take a critically active stance that takes into account (and accounts for) multiple histories and traces diverse trajectories that gives shape to various meanings, authorities, power, and ways of knowing’ (herising 2005: 133). This section involves a bit of navel-gazing because my position matters for the relations I built with market vendors, and for reading the information they shared with me and the outputs I am presenting here. Throughout the thesis, I will continue to be present, but much less so, so it is important to know where I stand as a person and a researcher.

I begin by highlighting that I am also a type of *mestiça*. And while my mixed genetic pool often renders me racially ambiguous, I am also a middle-class woman

attending a postgraduate course in Europe. This combination of factors had some implications for how I was perceived at the field. While I was in Brazil, whenever I was alongside market women behind the stands, the few Brazilians that stopped by the markets often addressed me as Bolivian. Some would ask me if I was born ‘already’ in Brazil, or try to speak to me in Spanish, or even in loud-and-slow-Portu-gue-se – basically the universal way of making oneself understood if the interlocutors do not speak the same language. After this had happened a couple of times, I simply stopped trying to dissuade them and enjoyed with some amusement and academic curiosity. On the other hand, no Bolivian – neither in Brazil or in Bolivia – was similarly confounded by my ‘ambiguous’ looks. None of them ever thought I was Bolivian. And more interesting to the matters here, for all my mixture I was not necessarily racially ambiguous to them. Once, talking about ‘how England looks like’ with market vendors at *Coimbra*, they expressed some disbelief when I said that most people here were not only white (‘as you are?’, they asked), but actually ‘whiter than me.’ Even though I am aware that my class and education ‘whiten me,’ I never ceased to be surprised to be interpellated as white because that is not how I would present myself.

Because of the multi-sited character of this research, I expected, from the onset, to be positioned differently in each country. As a Brazilian, at *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* I was a member of the ‘receiving society’ in relation to the Bolivian migrants. Contrastingly, in *La 16*, the foreigner was me. In neither case, however, I was an insider to the context of the markets and my presence was not always welcomed. At times, it was ignored. Approaching market vendors for the first time was often a vexing experience for both sides in the interaction. I was self-conscious about bothering their daily routine, and many made it clear that *indeed* I was being bothersome. The Bolivian markets in Brazil do not receive much of a Brazilian public and, in the beginning,

market vendors would not bother much to engage in a conversation if I came to their stand. In Bolivia, however, this disregard was considerably more pronounced. In some cases, I could hardly convince vendors to acknowledge my presence in front of them, let alone to participate in the research. Many working-class, indigenous Bolivians regard foreigners with mistrust, and this was clear to me from the onset. I did not, however, feel in the position of adopting the 'role of the supplicant' (England 1994) or forcing interactions with them, although I understand that this is widely expected from researchers.

Comparing my experience with that of others has been often revealing of different dynamics in the field. Talking to other female researchers I have heard different accounts about how *they* interacted with *men* while doing fieldwork and, with other colleagues, I have addressed some previous experiences of sexism that we have found emotionally disturbing (see Freitas *et al.* 2018). While I mostly interacted with women in the context of this research, I was at times bothered by some men's level of interest over my personal life – which is, bear in mind, precisely what I did *as a researcher*. The fact that I was 'alone' – that is, without a man – made me simultaneously a point of criticism, judgement, and, at times, desire. Considering the anxieties generated by previous experiences of mine, I opted to say, while in Brazil, that I was married (which I am not). While this did not completely eliminate the scrutiny by these *men*, it certainly reduced their approach to me. However, I was tormented for having lied to the *women*, while expecting that they would not do the same to me. But with the markets in Brazil being so small, I felt like sharing conflicting information would lead to a general mistrust from part of the vendors.

This situation was completely different in Bolivia, where I was never approached in such manner. Market women *were* also interested in my life, but I never felt the need

to omit or lie about any detail. There, I was also scrutinised, but in different ways. Some took every opportunity to poke fun at me, but I never felt invaded. They used to mock the way I dressed – ‘these are men’s clothes’ – criticise my body – ‘you’re too thin, men don’t like it’ – and scrutinise my language abilities – ‘you cannot speak Aymara!’ Although these comments were all done with a friendly face, I am also well aware that disparaging comments about these women’s clothes, bodies and other abilities have been directed to them not with the goal of cracking a joke, but to belittle them. Keeping a balance between building bonds between myself and these women while also obtaining information from them, even with the best of intentions at heart, does not necessarily make it less of an extractive practice.

Although I was not able to address the issues related with the crossing of goods from Bolivia to Brazil – neither with the Brazilian Federal Police nor as a central point of debate in the present thesis – I have tried to ‘make myself useful’ to market vendors throughout the process of fieldwork. These collaborations were mostly practical – helping them go about in their business, but also keeping them company. In less busy days, vending can be a boring activity and they expressed being satisfied for having someone with whom to talk. If anything, I built real ties of friendship with some of the vendors and I am still in touch with some of them. This, of course, is not sufficient to eliminate any form of difference between us. In a day of heavy rain, I helped Doña Linda Condori to cover her goods from the pouring water. As the level of the water rose in the streets, she told me to take cover, looking as the water covered both my feet. I told her that she too was drenched in water and that both of us would finish the work quicker. She agreed and as we were done covering the stand she added, ‘but you are the researcher, you are our guest, you shouldn’t be wet.’

As Gillian Rose (1997) has highlighted, the possibility of achieving a fully ‘transparent’ reflexivity relies on unachievable pretences and demands a quasi-omniscient researcher to fully explore all the visible and hidden dynamics of power which constitutes the field. Such requirements would paradoxically reproduce a similar type of power imbalance which gives the researcher the upper-hand in the research relations. While the literature acknowledges that the researcher has the power to choose and present the data as suits them – particularly in the process of writing up – relations in the field are not necessarily always to the disadvantage of the researched. During the process of fieldwork, potential informants might choose not to cooperate, while others might withdraw information or lie. Given that this is a widespread problem in all empirical research which involves people, at the moment that I am writing this thesis I bear in mind that I need to be careful in the selection of information they shared with me and how I present it to the reader. That being said, I am aware that simplifications are inevitable. People are too complex to be faithfully grasped by a piece of academic work.

In spite of some early difficulties, the constancy of the visits to the markets and my return for the second round of research were welcomed by market vendors, helping to consolidate the bonds between us. I had countless pleasurable moments during what they often referred to as ‘our long conversations.’ Although I arrived at the markets with a set of key issues in mind, these conversations were crucial for determining the central axes of this thesis. All but one of the participants are presented under pseudonyms – the exception is noted when I discuss her stories in this thesis. Although not all of them are directly mentioned in the body of this work, all participants collaborated with invaluable information, support, and affection. To that, I am forever glad and thankful. After the thesis is assessed and reviewed, I intend to return and share

the thesis, the photos, and the memories with these women and resume our long conversations in person.

Two. La 16, Kantuta and Coimbra

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies of urban street markets around the world highlight how these spaces, once thought to be mere remnants of practices of yore and tokens of traditions likely to disappear (Geertz 1963), are thriving in a globalised economy (see, for instance, Bhowmik 2010a; Cross and Morales 2007; Müller and Colloredo-Mansfeld 2018; Pang, Sterling and Long 2014; Seligmann 2001b). Their continued existence has not happened at the cost of cultural homogenisation (or social hygienisation), even if marketplaces and those who work in them have been and are continuously subjected to state-sponsored violence, gentrification, cultural commodification, and prejudice (see Brown 2006; de la Cadena 2000; Milgram 2012; Seligmann 2012, Tassi 2012). For many, they constitute the beating heart of diverse communities (see Hiebert, Rath and Vertovec 2015; Radice 2016), a point of encounter and cultural celebration (see Silva 2005), the starting point and end-result of a globalisation from below forged against the imperatives of transnational capitalism (see Kothari 2008; Tassi 2017).

At the same time, much of what is shared between street markets throughout the globe reveal gloomier effects of uneven processes of development and searing social and economic inequalities. The number of vendors on the streets picks up during periods of economic crisis when formal employment contracts (Chen 2012; Rivera 1996b). As a result, for many, market vending is not merely a choice to express their

entrepreneurial abilities and ambitions (see de Soto 1989), but the only way to make a living (Green 2015). This tends to be even truer amongst the poorest, the less-educated, the migrants, the women, and those whose racialised identities puts them amongst the subaltern groups of society (regardless of their numeric relevance in the total of the population, hence, not necessarily minorities) (Chen 2012; Hall 2017; Ødegaard 2010). Market vending provides them with prospects for social mobility, but also dubious promises in terms of stability in a world of rapid change.

In spite of their present-day ubiquity and close association with indigeneity, the marketplace was a virtually inexistent institution in the Andes prior to the arrival of Europeans. As part of the colonial endeavour, the incorporation to the market economy was an early result of both imposition by Spaniards and the own initiative of indigenous peoples. However, the latter's involvement with urban trade constituted a conundrum. The socio-spatial conception of the colonies was segregated between the cities of the whites and the rural spaces where indigenous peoples were allowed to dwell. If forbidden, indigenous presence in the cities not only existed but has been vital to the development of the urban economy since colonial times. Against this persistent duality, the Andean marketplace is described as located at the '*intersection* between rural and urban sociospatial environments' (Seligmann 1989: 695, my emphasis). Rather than just a buffer area, market spaces show the impending contradictions in a dual order that still depicts the rural as backwards and indigenous, and the urban as modern and non-indigenous.

The notion of intermediation, of being 'in between,' continues to offer a valuable critique of a persistent dualistic approach. The relations that constitute the markets of today, however, extend much further, as they trade in more than agricultural goods bought by vendors directly from the producer before retailing them to urbanite

consumers. As commodity and labour flows become increasingly globalised, street markets have also changed throughout the centuries. Rather than just strongholds of local traditions, the development of the Andean marketplace is, from the onset, part of broader processes taking place on regional, national and global scales (see Buechler 1978: 357; Rivera 1996b: 164; Tassi 2017: 8). Nonetheless, the participation in these multi-scalar flows and transformations is coupled with the reproduction of indigenous practices and colonial dualities, their contradictions and ambiguities.

In this chapter, I introduce the three street markets of this research – *La 16*, *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* – and argue that their constitution is rooted in historical and contemporary dynamics happening in local, national, regional and global scales. This will be done as follows. After this introduction, I discuss the colonial origins of the Andean marketplace and indicate the involvement of indigenous peoples in the development of an incipient, and increasingly global, market economy – both by imposition of the colonisers but also by indigenous peoples’ own initiative. I argue that, while the terms of the exchanges enabled by the colonial encounter were uneven, exploitative, and violent towards the indigenous population, these peoples also used their agency in order to navigate the structures of colonial society. With this background in mind, I introduce the three markets in this research, starting with *La 16*, in El Alto, Bolivia, before going to the two markets in São Paulo, Brazil, namely *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*. In particular, I present the emergence of these markets in relation to processes of domestic and international migration, to the cities around them and to changes in the economic environment. All of these processes are marked by gendered and racialised dynamics that contribute to reinforce certain historical facets of Andean markets – both in Bolivia and abroad – but also reflect current processes happening on global scales. Furthermore, I underscore how, in spite of the ‘lack of

form' associated with the informal economy, market vending and the marketplace are organised by the market vendors themselves. I then proceed to the final remarks.

2. COLONIAL BACKGROUNDS OF ANDEAN STREET MARKETS

The present section provides a background discussion to the understanding of present-day street markets, tracing the emergence of the Andean marketplace in the colonial context. I begin by underscoring the social embeddedness of economic practices in precolonial Andes, before indicating how the region was propelled into the world economy chiefly by exploiting indigenous labour. Going further, I argue that indigenous participation in the economy was also carried out by the own initiative of indigenous individuals, families, and communities, who manipulated imposed categories in order to navigate the social ranks and spaces of the colonial society. These points are relevant for discussing the importance of categories like the *chola* in the understanding the identities of the market women. Of greater relevance for the present chapter, however, they indicate the importance of mobility in the constitution of the Andean marketplace – a process that continues in force to this day.

Prior to the arrival of Spanish colonisers to the Andes, the highland areas of today Bolivia were governed by an Inca elite centred in the city of Cuzco, in what is now Peru. This elite ruled, for a mere 75 years, over a multi-ethnic population sprawled across coastal, highland, valley and forested areas, ranging from present-day Chile to Colombia. The production and distribution of goods was not carried out by means of monetised exchange. Instead, a complex system of complementarity, redistribution and reciprocity between various ecological niches was employed (Larson 1995: 9). This system has been described as constituting a 'vertical archipelago' – a term coined by

John Murra in the 1970s.¹ As to the ‘islands’ in this archipelago, they are known as *ayllus* – non-contiguous and territorially scattered socio-spatial organisations based on real and/or fictive kin and productive complementarity (Klein 2011: 22).

Economic activities were deeply embedded in the Andean social fabric, entailing an intricate relation between the *ayllus*, ethnic authorities and the Inca state (Sánchez 1982: 158). Reciprocity exchanges were founded on the diversified production in disperse ecological tiers and ‘circulated according to ethnic and political criteria that placed high value on self-sufficiency of the relevant kin, ethnic or political group and the distributive “generosity” of Andean leaders and conquerors’ (Stern 1995: 76). Short-term forced labour (*mita*) was also employed – for mines, infrastructure construction, army and domestic service – but compensated for (Klein 2011: 19). Through this complex system of reciprocity, the Inca empire was able to sustain and expand its vast territory, while maintaining a considerable measure of social and economic justice (Klein 2011: 19; Larson 1995: 9).

Half a century after the Spanish invasion – which happened in the 1520s – the Andes were catapulted into the heart of the development of the mercantile colonial economy. Silver extracted from the mines of Potosí ‘lubricated the economies of Western Europe and hastened the dissolution of feudalism, fanned the flames of inflation across Iberia, and quickened the tempo of commercial capitalism on a global scale’ (Larson 1995: 10). These broader transformations also had substantive effects over the social, political and territorial autonomy of Andean peoples. By the end of the 16th century, the introduction of the Toledo Reforms by the Crown explicitly targeted tightening the control over its lucrative colonies (Klein 2011: 35). In the Andes, the

¹ See Murra (1975) for a compilation of articles on Andean political and economic forms, including his 1972 seminal work on the vertical control over ecological tiers (in Murra 1975: chapter 3).

concentration of the population via the ‘deportation’ of thousands of mobile and disperse indigenous groups into fixed villages, the *reducciones*, contributed to disrupt kinship ties and the remaining territorial control of many *ayllus* (Klein 2011: 36; Murra 1975: 75).² Reorganisation also meant spatial segregation between colonisers and colonised, as *indios* were forbidden to dwell in the incipient colonial towns while Spaniards were likewise proscribed from living in *reducciones* (Barragán 1990: 20).

By and large, the Spanish Crown was successful in implementing a system that combined colonial and pre-colonial means of control over the indigenous population. Class and status distinctions between peasant and noble *indios* were kept and reinforced (Klein 2011: 43). *Reducciones* were headed by ethnic lords – *kurakas*, *mallkus* or *caciques* –³ imposed or consented by the colonial administration yet under the control of the local representatives of the Church and the Crown (Saigues 1995: 168).⁴ Big *haciendas* (private landed state, latifundia) developed where traditional communities had broken down, using their land and labour force, but did not attempt to destroy the *ayllu* structure (Klein 2011: 49). Communal obligations, such as the *mita*, were maintained for regimenting indigenous labour force for various colonial enterprises and domestic service, as well as for organising tributes. At the basis of the colonial economic and social order, the (male) *indio* still living with his kin group (*originario*)

² Denise Arnold and Alison Spedding (2009: 154) note that ‘[the] spatial constitution of the *reducciones* were at the service of the task of the reconfiguration of the subjectivity of the indigenous man as a Christian subject, stripped of their own gods and of parts of their lands. From then on, the history of the various efforts of appropriation of indigenous land unfolds ... as do the many intents of agrarian ownership [*propiedad agraria*] reform, in accordance with colonial [and, later on,] republican forms of management over the territorial space and the assignment [*destino*] of its production, connected with the attempts of controlling [indigenous] jurisdictions.’

³ *Kuraka* and *Mallku* are, respectively, the Quechua and Aymara terms for the ‘lord’ or ‘leader.’ The Carib term *cacique* was used by the Spanish rulers throughout colonial America to refer to local ethnic lords. These terms are used rather interchangeably in the literature, although *kuraka* and *cacique* are more widely employed in the colonial context.

⁴ Jesuits played an important role in the catechisation and regimentation of Indians for forced labour at the mines (Arnold and Spedding 2009: 142; Larson 2004: 41; Murra 1975: 75).

maintained access to land rights but was also subjected to *mita* and due to pay tribute to their *cacique*, under increasing pressure from the Crown (Klein 2011: 48).

Spatial, political and social segregation between the Spanish and Indian Republics were less enforceable in practice than in formal terms. If power asymmetries between indigenous peoples and Spaniards cannot be said to have offered even terms of exchange between these groups, it is also true that indigenous peoples made use of the colonial system in their own terms. The effectiveness of state-sponsored divides was complicated by indigenous intervention in the market economy, their mobility across the territory, and the inevitability of (not always consensual) sexual encounters that led to the emergence of a growing mixed population.

Andean indigenous peoples have always made use of a vast territory and continued to do so in spite of *reducciones* (Harris 1995: 357; Stern 1995: 87). Amongst the *originarios*, increased tributary pressures led to the abandonment of some communities and to an increasing indigenous floating population. When arriving in a new community, the now *forasteros* (foreigners) would generally lose their claim to land but could also be relieved from *mita* and tax obligations (Klein 2011: 48).⁵ Those who adopted a different style of dress and learned an urban craft or engaged with trade, became *yanaconas* (dependents), who were also freed from *mita* (Saignes 1995: 184).⁶ Transitioning to a different fiscal category was a widely employed strategy for those seeking to evade tributary impositions and did not necessarily entail a complete disruption to ethnic ties and duties (Harris 1995: 358). As *cholos* and *mestizos* were also exempted from some tributes and duties, these categories were appropriated by

⁵ *Forasteros* did not have to pay tax until the mid 18th century (Klein 2011: 48; Larson and León 1995: 251).

⁶ *Yanaconas* is a Quechua word used, in the colonial period, in reference to an 'Indian dependent, service Indian miner, or agricultural labourer no longer attached to an *ayllu*, but often bound to a Spanish master' (Harris 1995: 395).

indigenous individuals, families and groups, who claimed different statuses to navigate the social ranks and spaces of the colonial Andes (Bouyette-Cassagne and Saignes 1992: 136). That being said, apart from those who could successfully *pass* as *mestizos*, all the categories were still classified as belonging to the Republic of Indians – even though many of them actually lived in cities (Harris 1995: 358).

Manoeuvring the power dynamics of the colonial world meant that, in some cases, *ayllus* were able to maintain some form of political-territorial autonomy and continue their economic practices largely apart from the monetised economy (see, for instance, Harris 2000: chapter two).⁷ Florence Babb (1989: 58) highlights that,

[t]hroughout the Andes, gradual capitalist penetration has contradictory effects on noncapitalist systems of exchange; where peasants and pastoralists contribute to capital accumulation, systems of reciprocity [may have persisted], while in other regions traditional economies [experienced] dissolution as capitalism [intruded].

Sustaining previously existing economic and political practices by indigenous subjects was, however, not necessarily antithetical to the penetration of the market economy in the Andes – even though this also entailed changes. While the degree of indigenous involvement with the markets varied considerably, there is widespread agreement in the literature that indigenous peoples – individually and collectively – have engaged in commercial activities since the early colonial period, often by their own initiative (Harris 2000: 57; Lehmann 1982: 25).

In fact, adaptation to the new economic imperatives was, at times, the available route to avoid more exploitative economic transactions and even to maintain

⁷ Arnold and Spedding (2009: 141) underscore that the successful continuation of ecological complementarity in the Andes has oscillated since the arrival of the Spanish invaders to present times, largely impacted by regional economic trends.

indigenous forms of sociability, as well as their own economic and political organisation (Saignes 1995: 190; Stern 1995: 90). As Steve Stern (1995: 90) notes,

Andean peoples, under conditions of colonial rule, did not enjoy the luxury of viewing ‘commercial’ and ‘subsistence’ sectors as necessarily antithetical. The key issues concerned the specific relationships and power balances that shaped the consequences of colonial market penetration on the one hand and Andean market interventions on the other.

The successful interventions in the market economy by *indios* – as well as *cholos* – were impacted by numerous factors.⁸ They responded to changes in the broader political and economic environment, but also varied in accordance to the proximity or distance of indigenous communities to cities, mining centres and trade routes; as well as the availability of and access to land and other resources. Indigenous individuals, families and groups were crucial actors in the development of domestic trade in Bolivia. Production was overwhelmingly carried out by indigenous labour both in *reducciones* and *haciendas*; whereas transportation and commercialisation were largely performed by indigenous subjects both in rural and urban areas (Barragán 1990: 36-38). The wholesale of internally produced goods was mostly carried out in periodic rural produce markets (*ferias*), as well in roadside posting houses and inns (*tambos*) located in the extra-mural dwellings leading to and around the cities (Barragán 1990: 49).⁹

⁸ There are numerous examples of successful intervention of Andean indigenous subjects in the market economy. Steve Stern (1995: 77) enumerates some of these instances in the following quote: ‘[e]thnic groups, led by their chiefs, sold and occasionally bought labor services; rented, bought and sold lands; produced marketed and bought commodities of Andean and European origins; and invested, in mines, obrajes [textile workshops] and trading companies. Andean individuals and families, acting more independently of ayllu and ethnic groupings, participated in and sometimes dominated various labor, land, and product markets. And in the great center of Potosí itself, the efforts of Indian men and women to intervene directly in silver ore and product markets sparked serious struggles for leverage over the conditions of labor and marketing.’

⁹ The *tambo* constituted a pivotal economic institution in the pre-colonial Southern Andes. ‘The tambo constituted the articulation of a network of stone paths, stores and taverns disseminated throughout the territory allowing the connection of different ethnic domains and ecological zones and the circulation of products and people’ (Tassi 2017: 116).

Crucially, indigenous participation in colonial economic networks allowed them to amass further resources to fulfil tributary demands (Arnold and Spedding 2009: 143).

The involvement of indigenous peoples in commerce was not restricted to the *tambos* outside the city limits and rural seasonal produce markets. It also played a major role in the urban development of the city of La Paz. From its early years, La Paz constituted an important distribution centre, serving as a link between the coast, the mining producing centres in the highlands and the coca growing area in the valleys of the Yungas (Klein 2011: 32). Founded in an area that concentrated a vast indigenous population, La Paz location proved strategic for controlling various ecological and economic zones as well as for being a source of indigenous labour force (Barragán 1990: 19; Klein 2011: 47). Following Spanish rules of spatial segregation, the Spaniard settlement of La Paz was built into one side of the Chuquiabo river (see also Nuñez, 2011). To the other side of the river, a *reducción* named Chukiyawu¹⁰ concentrated a substantial part of the local indigenous population – although later other indigenous neighbourhoods (*barrios*) began to form closer to La Paz (Barragán 1990: 22).

As La Paz grew, so did its indigenous population. Xavier Albó (1997) indicates that the presence of indigenous individuals as permanent residents and temporary migrants in the city is as old as the La Paz itself – as escapees, transporting and commercialising foodstuffs, and completing labour duties such as free domestic service. ‘[P]ermanent migration [of indigenous subjects] to the cities,’ adds Olivia Harris (1995: 375),

created a class of urban artisans, traders and other workers, and this has always involved a shift of cultural identity. During the colonial period, the shift was often from Quechua- or Aymara-speaking peasant to Spanish-speaking yanacóna, but during the nineteenth century [that is, after the

¹⁰ The name Chukiyawu translates from Aymara as ‘parcel of precious metal’ (Albó 1997: 111). More about the use of the term in reference to the maintained relevance of the ‘indigenous city’ in present-day La Paz/El Alto will be discussed later in this chapter.

colonial period,] it was increasingly to mestizo. Recent migrants in the segmented urban labor markets do the dirtiest, often the hardest, and always the worst paid jobs. Only insofar as they distance themselves from their Indian origins they move upward in the employment ladder.

For recent arrivals, then, being able to manipulate the term and the content of the category of *cholo* also constituted a strategy of incorporation to the urban environment (Seligmann 1989: 697). Crucially, indigenous women became important ‘agents of change,’ actively engaging such processes of spatial and status mobility on their own behalf, or their children’s and partners’ (Saignes 1995: 184). Women, notes Silvia Rivera (2010: 193), left their mark in the process of emergence of these urban, market-related activities, paying the price of a subordinate social role in the hope that further generations would be ‘free from a fate like their own, allowing them a space in the borders, in the interstices of the colonial society.’ However, whereas *cholos* in general became gradually identified with urban, informal jobs, street vending became an important labour niche for the *cholas* (Peredo 2001: 36; Seligmann 1989: 697).

Indigenous labour was part and parcel of the development of La Paz as an important market centre. Crucially, the dynamics surrounding the urban marketplace meant that its relevance exceeded its economic import. Markets constituted important inlets for indigenous individuals to the city – and, in particular, indigenous women. These were spaces where the relations between the supposedly segregated rural and urban spheres associated with the Republic of Indians and the Republic of Spaniards were mediated. These were ‘the *real places* where producers, consumers, and intermediaries *encountered* each other, fettered though they were by the interventions and abuses of colonial rule’ (Saignes 1995: 191, my emphasis). The exchanges taking place at the markets transformed the Andean city but also what it means to be indigenous, once in the urban sphere (Saignes 1995: 191). At the same time, these ‘spaces of intense commercial life’ were also spaces of ‘undeniable permanence of the

Andean culture' in the colonial city (Peredo 2001: 39). In fact, marketplaces revealed that these spheres were not completely separated, but constantly connected through permanent economic, cultural, and social exchanges.

Revisiting the colonial underpinnings of the emergence of Andean marketplaces raises important elements for the analysis of the street markets of today. It points to the development of a segregated socio-spatiality – one which has been challenged and transgressed from the beginning. It also shows how indigenous peoples were continuously relegated to a subordinate position, denied access to the urban sphere, and forced to perform the most physically demanding – yet undervalued – labour. At the same time, it reveals indigenous agency in the process, their intervention in the markets and their efforts to adapt, manoeuvre and change colonial categories and restrictions imposed on them – with a particular emphasis on the role of women for enacting these transformations. Finally, it reveals the ambiguities and contradictions in this process. For some, abandoning one's traditions emerges as one of the few ways of keeping them alive. On the other hand, imposing structures and hierarchies require the subversion of their own rules in order to be maintained.

In the following section, I turn my eyes to the street markets visited during the course of this research and observe that some of these dynamics are still very much constitutive of the marketplaces of today. However, if the emergence of colonial markets were already related to broader social, economic and political processes, in the globalised context of today the heightened intensity of the flows of peoples, ideas, monies and products also brings new elements to the discussion and connect these markets to other spaces. These flows have paradoxical effects, profoundly changing the relations that create the market and exacerbating some of their characteristics. These marketplaces are spaces of interaction, created in the juxtaposition of various –

and sometimes apparently unrelated – elements. They are ‘constructions out of the intersections and interactions of concrete social relations and social processes,’ both old and new, expanding and retracting, taking place concomitantly and mutually reinforcing one another (Massey 1994: 132). Bearing that in mind, in the following two sections I present the three markets in this research, *La 16* in El Alto, Bolivia (section 3), and *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*, located in São Paulo, Brazil (section 4), before proceeding to some concluding remarks.

3. AT LA 16

After a certain curve on the highway, the first orange tents began to appear on the right-hand side. To my left, the city of La Paz stretched in a mix of dust and shiny tin roofs, the imposing snowy top of the Illimani mountain peering over it. On Thursdays and Sundays, stepping out of the packed minibus – the preferred medium of transportation around and between the cities of La Paz and El Alto – a short flight of stairs would take me to the sea of stalls that comprise the famed *La 16*.

In this section, I introduce the *Feria de la 16 de Julio* (Street Market of 16 de Julio Avenue or, simply, *La 16*). I start with a short walk through the market, describing common scenes that constitute the quotidian of a market day. I then retrace the narratives about the markets’ origins, locating it within the urbanisation process that also shaped the city of El Alto – where *La 16* takes place. Further on, I discuss how the growth in the markets – following that of the informal economy – is marked by economic transformations which further reinforce racial and class forms of segregation. I then discuss how market associations play an important role for connecting the marketplace with the rural indigenous background of vendors, later looking at how the gendered character of street trade makes the *chola* the stereotypical market vendor.

Finally, I highlight that the products sold at the market indicate that, beyond the rural-urban connections that are part of the market from the onset, they have also expanded to include increasingly broader networks of trade.

3.1. Walking through *La 16*

At the *La 16* one is met with a profusion of smells and voices, endless choices of products, and over-crowded streets. Walking between the stands, a man enumerates the benefits of a traditional medicine for male impotence and kidney stones, alternating between Spanish and Aymara, from a van's loudspeakers. A bit further, a *cholita* selling car parts is sleeping over her *awayu*.¹¹ Not far away, another is talking to a neighbouring vendor over a *chicharrón de chanco* (fried pork) beside a huge pile of used winter coats imported from somewhere in the United States or Europe. A young woman in jeans passes by pushing a trolley and selling schoolbooks and stationary. From the loudspeakers a catchy song with the multiplication table is playing – and will continue to do so in the back of your mind for the next couple of days. Passing through the smells of freshly-pressed orange juice, you arrive at an area where young men negotiate over the price of second-hand mobile phones of disputable origin.

The area where the market takes place is of mixed occupancy. Although most buildings are residential, on the main avenues they also host their own selection of arcades and ground-floor shops. These shops offer miscellaneous goods – from traditional clothing to sewing machines – and host a wide range of services – from courses of oratory and rhetoric, swimming classes, and cash loans. Most of the façades are of exposed redbrick, and many of them seem to be undergoing some form of

¹¹ These multicoloured, weaved cloths are used for various purposes in the Andes, most notably to carry loads and children closely wrapped to the carrier's body.

extension. Increasingly, however, a more flamboyant architecture colours the landscape. As the literal rise of neo-Andean architecture – as Freddy Mamani, the style’s most famous master refers to what everyone else knows as *cholets*, in an amalgamation of the words *cholo* and chalet – indicates, the seemingly poor neighbourhood also houses an up-and-coming class of urban indigenous people.

Figure 1: A sea of stands



This picture gives a good idea of the extension of *La 16*. Here, the lining stands stretch as far as the eye can see, and this is but one of the many streets that comprise the market. El Alto, Bolivia, 2016
Source: The author.

At the edge of the market, a young woman in jeans is carrying her baby on her back while waiting for an appointment with a *yatiri*.¹² Steps ahead, another woman in sports leggings hides her face behind enormous sun-glasses as she steps out of the cable

¹² In Aymara, ‘the one who knows.’ The *yatiri* is alternatively described in the English as a ‘ritual specialist’ or ‘medicine person’ (Fabricant 2012: 16; Lazar 2008: 39; Sikkink 2001: 3). Furthermore, the *yatiri* are also fortune-tellers (*advino*), ‘which in terms of religious practice is not opposed [to healer], but complementary [roles]’ (Spedding 2004: 42).

car station towards the market. Not much further, vendors celebrate the creation or anniversary of a traders' association, pouring some beer on the ground and some in their mouths. On a different street, passers-by stop by a DVD stand to watch a video of a flash flood carrying away a truck and its driver under the desperate screams of a woman. The same, or a similar footage, is on in a loop every day and it never fails to gather a significant crowd of potential buyers. Nearby, an elderly woman begs for some coins in front of a *choripan* (sausage sandwich) stand. An occasional cab or van drives through the crowded avenues, where many women in *polleras*, the *cholita*'s multi-layered skirts, sell and buy fresh cuts of beef. The stench of hundreds of small chicks fills the air in some areas, while cool winds cut through the edges of the market. Chaos and tranquillity alternate rapidly.

3.2. Origins of *La 16*

Placed at the fringes of the city of El Alto, *La 16* overlooks the city of La Paz, with the snowy peaks of the Illimani and the Huayna-Potosí in the background serving as permanent reminder of the altitude. Conveniently located near the beating commercial and transportation heart of the Ceja (literally, the 'brow') of El Alto, the market takes advantage of the great number of people that circulate around the area on an average day. At the Ceja, thousands of shops and the intense street commerce are fuelled by the constant flow of people arriving on the myriad informal minibus termini that connect the area with various neighbourhoods of La Paz and El Alto, as well as the rural areas of the department (*provincias*). 'Everyone is there with a purpose,' observes Sian Lazar (2008: 35), 'to travel through or to buy or sell.' On market days, an endless stream of visitors and vendors – as well as the money and products they bring – crowd

the market area, arriving not only by road, but also by the newly built and modern cable cars inaugurated in 2014.

The commercial vocation of the area and its ease of access play a crucial role in the present success of *La 16*, as they did during the market's origins in the late 1970s/early 1980s. I have heard different stories about how the market came about, which, although not identical, complement one another. Depending on whom is asked, the *feria* (street market) began around Libertad Square, at the cross of the 16 de Julio and Alfonso Ugarte avenues. Although the infrastructure was precarious, the number of potential buyers prompted some women to start a small produce market at the spot. Alternatively, *La 16* began as a small farmers' market nearby the Juan Pablo II avenue – which was then used as a terminus for buses coming from the *provincias*. Avoiding the need to distribute heavy loads further around the city, peasants established their trade in the area, hence prompting an early congregation of other vendors. Finally, *La 16* was created by a group of women who were not granted a place at a recently created *mercado* (indoor market) at the 16 de Julio Avenue. These women organised and decided to start their own commerce outside, thus taking advantage of the *mercado*'s customers. When narrating these stories, most people carefully emphasised the semi-spontaneous emergence of the *feria* as opposed to a more systematic enterprise. In all of these accounts, the market is created as a space of commercialisation of rural produce either by producers themselves or through intermediaries – i.e. professional market vendors. Furthermore, in most cases, the first vendors were women.

As indicated earlier, women's association with market vending has a long trajectory in the Andes. Women street vendors – and the *chola*, in particular – 'represent crucible between the international-national economy and local-national socioeconomic organization and mores' (Seligmann 1989: 695). Except for the thread

that presents the *La 16* as constituted by producers-traders, the narratives about the origins of *La 16* ascribe market women this role of intermediation between the rural-community producers and the urban consumption markets. This particular position reveals important aspects of class, race, and gender dynamics associated with these spheres which become embodied in market women's 'in-betweenness' (Seligmann 1989) – a point to which I will return in chapter five. If these local and historically sedimented patterns are important for locating these women at the cradle of *La 16*, the creation and expansion of this market is also position these women in relation to other contemporary processes happening in other scales.

In fact, the growth of the *La 16* accompanied that of the city around it.¹³ El Alto's population increased massively in the second half of the twentieth century. From a modest congregation of around 11,000 people in the 1950s, the city arrived in the new millennium (2001) with over 600,000 inhabitants (Webber 2011: 189). According to the latest Bolivian census (2012), El Alto's population is around 850,000 people (INE, 2018). El Alto grew in relation to its neighbouring La Paz, being often referred to as a 'dormitory city' for those working in Bolivia's political capital (Lazar 2008: 31). In fact, these two cities constituted one single municipality, until they became separate administrative units in 1985 (Lazar 2008: 30).¹⁴ The same events leading to the impressive growth of El Alto transformed Bolivia's economy and society, as well as exacerbated certain socio-economic inequalities. Rising amidst urbanisation, economic

¹³ I could not find any recent data on the number of traders working in *La 16*. In 1996, Silvia Rivera has argued that the number of stands between *La 16* and the nearby permanent market of *Ceja-Tiwanaku* numbered around 11,000 (Rivera 1996b). Using data from 2005 provided city government of El Alto, Simón Yampara, Raúl Mamani and Norah Calancha (2007) estimated that in *La 16* alone there were some 10,000 fixed market stands.

¹⁴ Xavier Albó (1997) dates the official separation between El Alto and La Paz to 1988.

crises and reforms, as well as turbulent political times, El Alto and *La 16* materialise many of the dynamics affecting the region as whole.

Figure 2: Outskirts



This area of *La 16*, margining the highway that leads to La Paz, was usually full of stands and visitors, but was less busy on this Thursday, allowing to see the Bolivia's capital city below. El Alto, Bolivia, 2016.

Source: The author.

Far into the 20th century, Bolivia remained a largely rural country. However, from the 1980s onwards, the country underwent a dramatic urbanisation. In the years between 1980 and 1990, Bolivia's urban population grew around 49 per cent, and another 47 per cent in the following decade (Baldivia 2002: 82). This late process was hastened by severe droughts afflicting the Andean highlands (Altiplano) – the result of an abnormally harsh El Niño in the years of 1982/83. This climatic event caused the extreme pauperisation of some rural households in the hinterlands of the department of La Paz – prompting an increased flow of rural migrants to the cities of La Paz and El Alto (Balderrama *et al.* 2011: 13-14). The socio-economic effects of the drought, however, were intensified by an ongoing debt crisis and prolonged through the ensuing

enactment of SAPs with an impact on the livelihoods of rural-urban migrants, as well as affecting the country as a whole (Arbona and Kohl 2004: 258).

3.3. Economic change, mobility and informality

In Bolivia, decades of nationalist-authoritarian regimes were succeeded by a turbulent process of re-democratisation (1982) and a staggering economic crisis. In response to that, the country would be the first to advance a fully-fledged neoliberal restructuring. Similar to other cases in Latin America, the implementation of the New Economic Policy (*Nueva Política Económica*, NEP) in Bolivia sought economic stabilisation through austerity (Kohl and Farthing 2007: 111).¹⁵ The model, however, did not exactly live up to its promise and despite its success in controlling inflation, economic stagnation and political turmoil unfolded (Harvey 2005: 88). Mass dismissals from state-owned companies and the so-called ‘relocation process’ of miners were definitive steps towards the debilitation of labour unions, which had been the most important intermediaries between the state and society during the previous period (Kohl and Farthing 2007: 132-33; Webber 2011: 119). As the state shrunk and lacking the safety net once provided by unionism, inequality, unemployment and poverty skyrocketed in the country.¹⁶

All of these factors contributed to accelerate an ongoing process of urbanisation. The cities of the so-called ‘central axis’ – La Paz/El Alto, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz – became magnets for former miners and peasants seeking for more dynamic urban

¹⁵ Enacted in 1985 through the Supreme Decree 21,060.

¹⁶ In the decade spanning from 1980 to 1990, unemployment rose from 6.1 per cent to 18.8 per cent, peaking around 20.3 per cent in 1987 (ILO 2015). There is no data available for the 1980s on the share of Bolivia’s population living under the poverty line nor on the changes in inequality (for example, Gini index) for the same period. As there is a lack on more nuanced information to describe the fluctuations of poverty and inequality in the period, it is worth noting that in 1986 GDP per capita fell to its lowest point since 1960, which is the earliest year for which the World Bank provides data (World Bank 2018).

environments (Baldivia 2002: 74).¹⁷ In this context, the contraction of the formal labour market contributed to fuel the rise of the informal economy. Between the years of 1976 and 1987, the activities classified in the urban informal economy grew from 43 to 55 per cent of workers, with a sharper increase observed *after* the implementation of the NEP, in 1985 (Pradhan and Van Soest 1995: 277).

The linkage between processes of economic adjustment – i.e. crises and/or reforms – and the rise of the informal economy is not exclusive to Bolivia (see also Carr and Chen 2001: 2). Indeed, similar processes have been known to impact the presence and expansion of street markets elsewhere. Examples from Asia, Africa and other areas of Latin America, indicate that rapid urbanisation, economic crisis and the enactment of SAPs are common factors affecting the demographics and dynamics street markets (see, for instance, Abdulazeez and Pathmanathan 2015; Bhowmik 2010b; Brown, Lyons and Dankoco 2010; Coletto 2010; Milgram 2011; Roever 2010). These studies also show that, rather than the remnants of ancient economic practices destined to disappear with modernisation, the expansion of street markets is deeply imbricated with processes of economic development throughout the world. For instance, Sharit Bhowmik (2010c) points out that, throughout India, urbanisation coupled with the lack of formal opportunities for migrants with little or no formal education are important factors for the increase in the number of street traders. Ching Lin Pang, Sara Sterling and Denggao Long (2014) underscore similar phenomena in China – in this case represented by their study of a popular shopping centre in Beijing. Looking at Africa, Caroline Skinner (2010) argues that (domestic and international) migration and the lack of labour opportunities for migrants constitute core determinants of the proliferation of

¹⁷ It is worth noting that the coca-growing area of the Chapare, in the department of Cochabamba, also attracted a substantial number of internal migrants – particularly ex-miners (Webber 2011: 114).

street markets in the continent. And, in the Global North, street trade and informal markets have also been associated with an increasingly diverse demographics brought about by a surge in international migration in the last decades (Hall 2017; Hiebert, Rath and Vertovec 2015).

In Bolivia, internal migrants also resorted massively to the informal economy. Indigenous subjects, who constituted the bulk of the working classes in the mines and cities, as well as the majority of the peasants in the country, were particularly hit by the severe climate as well as mass dismissals in the period (Webber 2011: 20). Their reinsertion was met with further inequalities of the labour market, as those perceived as indigenous were historically more likely to be employed in precarious roles. As a result of the 1980s crises, over 18,000 unemployed workers living in La Paz resorted on street vending for a living (Hummel 2017: 1543). As living conditions worsened, existing lines of spatial and social segregation along racial lines were reinforced – even today, ‘rural and indigenous people continue to struggle to get a foothold in the city and make a living, because noncommercial, stable jobs remain the exception’ (Müller and Colloredo-Mansfeld 2018: 6). That being said, the presence of these migrants also brought a new lease of life to urbanistic practices, social and political forms of organisation, as well as to the street markets.

The constitution of Bolivian cities has been, as noted above, marked by persistent social cleavages. In the case of La Paz, these have endured well after colonial proscriptions had been lifted.¹⁸ Using data from the 1976 census and extensive ethnographic research, Xavier Albó (1997) presented a city geographically divided along racial lines (see also, Albó, 2006). Indigenous populations were concentrated in

¹⁸ After the end of the colony, policies enacted by the Bolivian state had the effect of banning indigenous presence from certain areas of the city (see, for instance, in Stephenson 1999)

the higher portions of what was then only La Paz, while the white/*mestizo* dwellers lived in the lower parts of the city. For Albó these cities had also two distinct ‘essences.’ ‘One,’ he argues, ‘is notorious La Paz that is the center and the life of the country. The other, hidden but nonetheless extant – Chukiyawu – is the heart of the Aymara world’ (Albó 1997: 111).

The spatiality of the city entailed intersecting cultural, social, and economic distinctions which were racialised. The precolonial settlement and the colonial city were still coexisting, by the end of the 20th century, as ‘two faces of the same dialectical reality’ (Albó 1997: 111). Although present-day borders of El Alto are not coextensive to the divide explored by Albó, his analysis provides an important account of how the spatially marginal areas of La Paz were constituted by indigenous dwellers.¹⁹ Overlooking La Paz from the edges of the Altiplano, El Alto is no longer hidden. Rather, it shows its distinctive indigenous face upfront.²⁰ The two last national censuses show that the city has a consistently higher indigenous population than the average of urban centres in the Bolivia – regardless of the disparities between the two surveys. In 2001, El Alto’s indigenous population reached 81 per cent, as opposed to the 34 per cent of other Bolivian cities; in 2012 the figures were, respectively, 49 per cent and 18 per cent.²¹

This strong indigenous element is also present in *La 16*. Aymara is widely spoken between vendors and customers, as well as amongst traders themselves. Conversations shift rapidly from this language to Spanish and vice-versa, making some of them

¹⁹ It is worth noting that the original study predates the official separation of the two cities.

²⁰ Mauricio Antezana (apud Barragán and Soliz 2009: 492) argues that, rather than indigenous, the city of El Alto should be considered *mestizo*, for many of its Aymara inhabitants have been urban dwellers long enough to lose their indigenous specificities. This argument illustrates the ‘impossibility’ of being simultaneously urban and indigenous, a point that is raised throughout this thesis and will be discussed with further detail on chapter five.

²¹ Data from the two last Bolivian censuses are included given that the disparity in the results have been largely attributed to a change in the categories included in the surveys.

impossible to follow if one is not fluent in both languages. Official market signs are written in Spanish and Aymara – as well as in English – although most of the shop signs are monolingual and in Spanish. Vendors and customers alike have indigenous origins – embodied in their dress, speech and phenotype – although, as I will discuss in chapter five, they do not necessarily consider themselves to be indigenous.

The constant movement between the city and the countryside connects these two spheres. For those living and working in El Alto, rural to urban migration and the relations established between these two spheres do not follow a linear progression (Lazar 2007: 238). As will be discussed with more detail in chapter three, many of those living in El Alto split their lives between the city and their community of origin by keeping dual residency. Frequently, they return to the *provincias* to attend festivities and to participate in sowing and harvesting of crops (Burman 2016: 32). For those who left the countryside, this constant movement keeps their socio-spatial ties to their community alive, as well their sense of self and belonging (Canessa 2012a: 164).

3.4. Market associations

If this constant movement guarantees the inhabitants of El Alto's continued social and physical presence in the *provincias*, civic and trade organisations in the city also bring ritual practices and community ties to El Alto and its markets. Underneath the chaotic appearance, market activities are regulated through the highly orchestrated cultural, social and political activities of the market associations, or *asociaciones*.

Market vendors of La Paz/El Alto have a long history of organising, with a guild-like system (*maestrerio*) in place since colonial times (Barragán and Soliz 2009: 499; Peredo 2001: 89). Present-day *asociaciones* have retained many of the previous structures, albeit also influenced by more syndicate-like types of organisations

(Barragán 2006: 115; Rivera 1996b: 208). In *La 16*, the *asociaciones* are usually established either on the basis of the products sold or by geographic location within the market – although superimpositions and multiple memberships are not rare. These local *asociaciones* are further nested in the city-based federation and the national confederation of traders constituting a three-tier system (Buechler and Buechler 1996: 140). These organisations congregate a considerable proportion of El Alto's inhabitants. On a visit to the city's Federation of Street Guilds (*Federación de Gremiales de la Ciudad de El Alto*) I was informed by a directive member that their affiliates numbered around half a million. Although likely an exaggeration from my interviewee, Calla Hummel's (2017: 1551) recent study presents an equally impressive – yet considerably smaller – membership of around 250,000 for both La Paz and El Alto. Another disparity observed in this visit was that, contrasting with the general feminine presence at the markets, the Federation directive board was comprised largely, if not exclusively, by men.

In *La 16*, *asociaciones* are as multiple as the tasks they perform. This complex organisational network choreographs the economic, social, cultural and political lives of the market. This includes a series of ritual celebrations and patronal festivities (*fiestas*) (Tassi 2012: 83). In fact, such is the importance of the *fiestas* that they constitute a crucial obligation for the leaders of these organisations, and financial contributions and attendance is expected from, if not compulsory to, affiliated vendors (Buechler and Buechler 1996: 164). Hans and Judith-Maria Buechler (1996: 169) highlight how *asociaciones* constitute markets in similar ways as 'rural communities, where – at least in the past – all household heads were required to hold a series of civil and religious offices.' Actually, in some cases, affiliation to the *asociaciones* is based on kin and rural community of origin (Tassi 2012: 83). *Fiestas* thus have an important

role in reproducing rural indigenous forms of sociability within the urban context of the markets.

Marketplaces, however, are more than spaces for establishing and consolidating social ties. They are also ‘territorial and political achievements’ in which the *asociaciones* play a crucial role (Tassi 2012: 98). These organisations constitute important means for advancing vendors’ demands, such as the designation of market areas, as well as protection against state-sponsored policies of social hygiene and police violence (see, for instance, de la Cadena 2000; Seligmann 2000). Moreover, *asociaciones* work both in parallel to the state and as intermediators between the public administration and vendors (Lazar 2007: 242-243). This position might be used as leverage to guarantee members’ discipline and affiliation, but also for personal and/or collective benefits from the state (see also Hummel 2017: 1546).

On the grassroots level, the *asociaciones* of *La 16* are responsible for regulating vendors’ entry to the markets, as well for the distribution, ownership and use of vending spaces, penalising traders who fail to abide to their rules (Hummel 2017: 1545; Rivera 1996b: 208). They organise the collection of taxes and appoint a ‘market police’ for controlling sanitary conditions and security, as well as for mediating potential conflicts between vendors (Buechler and Buechler 1996: 140). In many cases, *asociaciones* also provide professionalising courses and varied workshops – from accountancy, to rhetoric, to history – for the training of their affiliates.

Figure 3: Abarrotes/Khatu/Groceries

Women carrying heavy loaded *awayus* at *La 16*. The sign indicates that the area deals on groceries, but it also dealt on car parts and accessories. On the background the posts for the extension of the cable car lines, which goes over the market and was inaugurated in 2018. To the right, amidst the bare-brick constructions, there is a yellow-red building in the neo-Andean style, a *cholet*. El Alto, Bolivia, 2016. Source: The author.

Vendors are expected to take on administrative roles within the *asociaciones*, which are usually rotative. Leaders are elected and consensus around decisions is built in long meetings during which members are encouraged to express their positions. According to Lazar (2008: 237), leaders should – at least ideally – ‘enact the will of the bases’ which, in turn, ‘have the means of disciplining leaders who do not do this adequately.’ Vendors referred to this practice as *vida* or *tradición orgánica* (organic life or organic tradition) – a term that indicates that civic duties are both a quasi-natural consequence of being a vendor and a culturally sedimented practice. The vendors I met

in *La 16* placed a high degree of importance on their *vida orgánica* – although not all of them sounded equally excited about the prospect of taking an administrative or leadership position within their respective association ranks.

Within the *asociaciones*, relationships are presented, at times, like constituting a family – hierarchical but loving – or through the more egalitarian, leftist ethos of *compañera/o* (comrade) (Lazar 2008: 240). From many vendors, I also heard the *asociaciones* were like a school, where they learned about the workings of the market world and how to cooperate with one another. For the women I met at *La 16* the local level of the *asociaciones* were more attractive than the masculine environment at the levels of the city and national federations. Here was where they could really help and be helped by others, deal with the actual nitty-gritty of everyday market life and constitute important bonds.

3.5. Women in *La 16*

Although varying considerably in terms of age, vendors at *La 16* are largely women – a feature that holds true for other markets in El Alto. As briefly indicated above, in the Andes,

[m]arket women are called *cholas* because of the isomorphism between their functions as brokers and their social heritage of members of an intermediate mixed race [...]. The label of *chola* is applicable to market women because of the identity between salient characteristics of the more general category of *chola* and the relations of production and exchange of market women [...] so market women are called *cholas* because they mediate between those considered as indigenous and nonindigenous people in the market place (Seligmann 1989: 698, my emphases).

With their braided hair, voluminous pleated *polleras* and derby hat, the *chola* or *cholita* is often described as *the* actor of the Andean marketplace (see in Peredo 2001; Rivera 1996a; Sikkink 2001; Weismantel 2001). Here, market vending is an activity

usually carried out by women but, more specifically by the *chola*, to the point that being dressed in *polleras* can help with one's entry to the markets (see also chapter five). Women I met in *La 16* were not all *cholitas*, but in the market they constitute a considerable proportion of vendors, if not the majority of them. As noted above, being a *cholita* means performing a cultural, social and economic brokerage role, but it is also a matter of attitude (de la Cadena 2000; Ødegaard 2010; Seligmann 1989).

The strong feminine component of market vending relies heavily on the long-held commercial prowess of the *cholas*, which favoured women's insertion in informal trade. However, recent socio-economic changes affecting the labour market as a whole have contributed to strengthen this association (Chant 2003: 212). Cuts in manufacturing and state-owned mines primarily affected men – who constituted the majority of the labour force in these cases (Loayza 1997: 62). As a result, households had to rely on other sources of income, in particular those provided by other members of the family such as the women and older children (Rivera 1996b: 205). According to Silvia Rivera (1996b: 205), this combination of factors led to a 'physical and economic growth' of street trade in La Paz and El Alto in the 1980s and 1990s comparable to an 'oil stain. New street marketing areas were established, and those already in place underwent a notable demographic and spatial expansion.'

The presence of women in street markets throughout the global South varies. Concerning the street markets of India, Bhowmik (2010c: 27) highlights that women comprise a well-organised and sizeable share of vendors in the city of Ahmedabad, whereas they constitute an 'invisible category' in other cities of the country. According to him, there is a systematic pattern throughout most South Asian countries of disfavoured women vendors. Women tend to be relegated to less-profitable strands of business and less-attractive vending spots – a point also emphasised by Benjamin

Etzold (2016) for the case of markets in Dhaka, Bangladesh. In Morocco, the open-air marketplace, or *souq*, has been traditionally depicted as a masculine sphere – although urbanisation, inflation, and privatisations have increasingly pushed women to street trade as they did in Bolivia (Kapchan 2001: 162-63).

In many countries, however, women outnumber men as street traders (Brown 2006: 4). Ghana is a case in which women have traditionally been the major force in street markets and, in 2000, it was reported that around 73 per cent of the women were self-employed in the country (Brown 2006: 8). The feminisation of street vending in Vietnam – in particular, within certain trades – is also of notice. Lynne Milgram (2012: 203), for example, highlights the generalised connection between women and the used-clothes and fresh-produce trade in the country. Such is the gendered character of some trades, that an interviewee told Lelia Green (2015: 22) that only ‘desperate men’ would vend food on the streets. In Java (Indonesia), women also correspond to the majority of the vendors in agricultural and manufactured products – although men comprise the biggest share of those involved in wholesale (Alexander and Alexander 2001: 55). All these cases indicate a strong presence of women in urban informal street markets and the interaction of these spaces with broader economic processes such as neoliberal reforms. Furthermore, they also indicate that a certain gendered division of tasks within these spaces, as women tend to be allocated to less profitable areas or trades.

In *La 16*, the gendered lines observed in the market tend to follow other forms of social division on labour. Market vending aligns with activities that are generally perceived as feminine roles, such as child rearing and cooking (Harris 2000: 173; Peredo 2001: 53).²² The continuation of some form of a sexual domestic division of

²² See chapter four for a discussion on the gendered character of market vending and other forms of work performed by market women.

labour can be seen in marketplace, where women comprise the bulk of vendors working in the sectors of prepared and dried food, as well as livestock and groceries. That being said, women constitute the overwhelming majority of vendors in most sectors – such as the sales of new and used-clothes, both traditional and Western – and in the market as a whole. Men tend to preponderate in the sales of DVDs, books, car parts, vehicles and household appliances – in short, higher value-added goods. In my observations, men were seldom working on their own, being usually accompanied by another man or, more commonly, by a woman. This sectoral division of task along gender lines reiterates the description of other Andean marketplaces in the literature, which has indicated that women tend to be the majority in the retail of perishables, whereas men tend to be concentrated in wholesale, long-distance trade and the commercialisation of durable manufactured items (Babb 1989; Seligmann 2004; Weismantel 2001).²³

Women's praised success in informal trade contrasts with a persisting income gap. In 2017, based on data from household surveys (INE, 2017), the average wages²⁴ of men and women, as well as of informal and formal workers, varied substantially. Considering only urban residents, and disregarding unpaid family workers, the average monthly wages of all men (in formal and informal positions) was Bs 3,616, while that of women was Bs 2,695 – which meant men made, on average, 34 per cent more than women.²⁵ Formal workers of both sexes, in turn, had an average wage of Bs 4,536, compared to Bs 2,568 for informal workers (or 76 per cent more). Looking at informality and sex at the same time reveals further dimensions of the income gap, as men working in the formal economy had an average monthly wage of Bs 4,879 and

²³ This gendered division of labour within the markets will be discussed with more detail in chapter four.

²⁴ Wages are used as shorthand for the income that individuals derived from their main occupation, which includes self-employment income, formal and informal wages, and profits.

²⁵ Bs stands for Bolivianos, the Bolivian currency.

men working in the informal economy of Bs 2,948, whilst women working in the informal economy had an average monthly wage of Bs 4,004, and women working in the informal economy of Bs 2,024. In effect, a formal, male worker had an average wage 2.41 times that of an informal, female worker in an urban area. In previous studies, the racial dimension of this gap could also be seen as indigenous women earned less than all other categories.²⁶

3.6. Produce, products and circulation

When considering the gendered division of businesses at *La 16*, the variety of products being sold at the market also comes to light. Although the relevance of the rural-urban relation is maintained, as noted above, this street market deals in much more than just rural produce. On market days, one can find virtually anything on the stands of *La 16*. From dried food, fresh produce and coca leaves to clothes, make-up and video-games. From furniture and domestic appliances, to cars and – it is rumoured – even airplane parts. For many of these products, the market stand is the culmination of a long journey across oceans and state borders.

In *La 16*, the increasing internationalisation of products can be observed in the overwhelming presence of inexpensive Chinese manufactures. Whereas the commercialisation of imported goods was a domain of the *criollo* and *mestizo* elites until relatively recently, since the 1980s ‘traders of lower urban strata, with rural backgrounds and of indigenous origin, have created geographically expanded commercial circuits,’ participating intensively in the importation of Chinese goods

²⁶ José Luis Exeni (2010: 35), writing for United Nations Development Programme and using data from 2007, shows that in the informal economy nonindigenous men had the higher mean monthly income (Bs 1,614), followed by indigenous men (Bs 1,268), nonindigenous women (Bs 945) and, finally, indigenous women (Bs 681, or around 42 per cent of the income of nonindigenous men).

(Müller and Colloredo-Mansfeld 2018: 3). From the fabric of *polleras* to new electronic gadgets, fortunes have been made around this expanded network of imports trade. In La Paz/El Alto, the successes of Aymara entrepreneurs in niches less explored by the ‘traditional’ (read westernised, *criollo* and *mestizo*) business elites indicates the new opportunities brought by the development of global exchange networks (Tassi 2012; 2017). Their prosperity, as described in the work of Nico Tassi (2017), relies on the in keeping with ethnic forms of sociability and well-versed cross-cultural communication.

The visibility of this success in trading on imports has sparked the interests of many vendors I met at *La 16*, even though entry requirements – both social and financial capital – are not equally accessible to all. One of the participants dreamed of the day she could abandon her trade of second-hand *cholita* clothes to the more promising contraband of Chinese hardware. Although smuggled products might enter the country ‘illegally,’ vendors do not necessarily regard contraband as a criminal offence, but rather as part of legitimate transactions. Discussing contraband in Peru, Cecilie Ødegaard (2017: 348) argues that it is seen as a form of ‘social banditry,’ legitimised by the moral codes of the market. According to this codex, providing for the family constitutes a higher priority, even when this might contravene state laws (Ødegaard 2010: 186).

In fact, the arrival of foreign manufactures by means of contraband is as common as it is normalised. Contraband being sold at *La 16* and in other markets in La Paz and El Alto commonly cross the border from Chile, having arrived in the port of Iquique from various places around the world. They are then sold to a variety of customers. One of my interviewees – a young man – explained to me the routes taken from Chile to El Alto bringing industrial and domestic kitchen appliances to be sold at the markets. Consumers, he noted, did not care if products were lacking formal paperwork. In fact,

there was a general preference for smuggled goods as they could be arranged for much more swiftly without the hustles and hassles of the customs' bureaucracy.

The commercialisation of inexpensive imported goods – particularly those coming from East Asia – is described to '[have] enlivened multiclass and multi-ethnic trading spaces ... [engendering] cultural innovation as class status, accumulation, and cultural capital have a flexibility unheard of when national manufacturing and restricted imports limited popular commerce and consumption' (Müller and Colloredo-Mansfeld 2018: 2). Growing up in Brazil, I remember when 'fancy' imports began to be more easily available in the early 1990s, yet they were still too expensive for most – even for middle-class families. The alternative was clear: products 'from Paraguay' – actually cheaper and/or counterfeit versions of global brands, produced mostly in China but making their way to the popular commercial streets in Brazil via the neighbouring country (see also Lins Ribeiro 2009; Pinheiro-Machado 2012).

Contraband goods sold in popular markets make their way to lower strata households as well as to fancy supermarkets in wealthier parts of the city, thus re-entering the 'formal' economy – as illustrated by Julianne Müller (2017: 398) with the case of the Eloy Salmón market in La Paz. Discussing the used-clothes trade in these two Bolivian cities, Kate Maclean (2013: 964) shows how the products – mainly imported from the US – bring together rural migrants, members of the working class and women from the rich areas of La Paz looking for bargains. As Maclean (2013: 964-65) underscores, noncompliant as it might be, contraband affords vendors a livelihood and renders 'luxury' consumption goods available to a broader audience.

The widespread presence of counterfeited, cheaper Chinese products in Bolivia is not so much frowned upon as seen to allow previously disfranchised groups to access standards of living (largely through consumption) which are in many ways

unprecedented. Consumption of smuggled products breaks class barriers, but also show the blurred lines separating formality and informality, legality and illegality. However, contraband does not necessarily provide a path to great wealth for many of those involved. Small-scale, retailing contraband is usually done by the poorest women, which, as opposed to bigger wholesalers, provides them with little conditions to ascend economically.

These stories raise important questions about persisting dualisms, as products circulate between poles and create new economic opportunities while also revealing consistent socio-economic inequalities on a global scale. The outcomes of the engagement of market vendors in a growingly internationalised marketplace are ambivalent. On the one hand, these forms of ‘globalisation from below’ (Lins Ribeiro 2010) underscore how marginalised groups who prosper might do so without having to compromise their cultural backbone. On the other hand, this success does not trickle down to all or most of those involved in the informal economy, and it hits poor, indigenous women even harder in the struggle to make ends meet. The promotion of ‘self-sustaining’ forms of economy, where the petty entrepreneur is able to keep a livelihood on their own terms, is often hailed by neoliberal theorists and international agencies alike (Antrosio and Colloredo-Mansfeld 2015: 23; Lincoln 2008: 262). Simultaneously, however, they show the unevenness of the processes of development and the precarity in which many of these people live and work. These exchanges position these street markets within present-day neoliberal globalisation, as well as the flows that constitute it and the barriers imposed on some of them. In a context where capital and commodities and labour cross state borders, *people* themselves are met with various obstacles in their processes of mobility.

4. AT KANTUTA AND COIMBRA

When stepping out of the metro station and walking for a few blocks on a crowded commercial area on Saturdays or into sleepy streets on Sunday mornings, it is hard to imagine what *Coimbra* and *Kantuta* hold in store for the visitor. Both areas show little indication that once getting into these street markets one feels like leaving São Paulo and walking into the Andes. The sounds, the smells and the foods brought here by Bolivian market vendors recreate a familiar environment in a foreign context.

In this section, I present two Bolivian street markets in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. One is the *Feira da Praça Kantuta* (Street Market of Kantuta Square, henceforth *Kantuta*), the most established marketplace of the Bolivian community in Brazil. The other, *Feira da Rua Coimbra* (Street Market of Coimbra Street, or just *Coimbra* from now on) is the biggest market of this community in the city of São Paulo. After a short description of these marketplaces, I underscore how their emergence is deeply intertwined with the migratory trajectories of Bolivians, who mostly arrive in Brazil to work in the clothing industry. I introduce the negative stereotypes that derive from their involvement in a labour market characterised by precarious living and working conditions and emphasise the emergence of the street markets associated with the clothing industry circle, but also as a space of consolidating Bolivian forms of sociability beyond the garment workshops. I then highlight that *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* are spaces built not with the perspective of intercultural conviviality in mind, but with the clear purpose of tending to Bolivian demands and consolidating their community within the space of city. Further on, I highlight how market vendors' associations are crucial actors for the fulfilment of these two main objectives, noting how some practices that constitute Andean markets are transposed to Brazil. Finally, I indicate

that one apparently small change can shed light on broader transformations and dynamics constituting these two markets in Brazil.

4.1. Andean markets in the heart of São Paulo

Taking place every Sunday, *Kantuta* is the oldest and most famous Bolivian street market in São Paulo. Located in a cul-de-sac in a low-income residential area of the Canindé neighbourhood in the expanded city centre, *Kantuta* offers products aiming at attracting both Brazilian customers and the Bolivian community. For the tourists, a wide range of ‘typical’ Bolivian products and services are available. Various choices in arts-and-crafts and an ample selection of Bolivian ‘superfoods’ – such as the ever more popular quinoa – are available, as are other products that look foreign to Brazilian eyes, such as *tunta*, *chuño* and purple maize.²⁷ At one corner of the square, a man who presents himself as *yatiri* never fails to attract curious visitors. After a short walk through the market streets, most Brazilians make a strategic stop on the big stand selling *salteñas* – a juicy pastry that is always tricky for beginners.

Although there is a visible effort in emphasising *Kantuta*’s touristic appeal to make it more attractive to Brazilian visitors, the majority of the market’s public is composed of Bolivians, who are looking for a less ‘exotic’ experience.²⁸ They usually skip the *salteña* to have an ‘*almuerzo familiar*’ – a filling set lunch menu that often includes soup, main dish, dessert and a drink. Main dishes include *lechón* (pork roast), *fricasé* (a kind of pork stew), or fried chicken, and are usually offered by a spokesman

²⁷ *Tunta* and *chuño* are two forms of dehydrated potatoes widely consumed in the Bolivian Andes. They vary slightly in their taste, texture and appearance. The *tunta* looks like a small, white pebble, while the *chuño* is usually even smaller and dark-coloured. A general description of the process of production involves leaving potato to freeze overnight and thaw during the day for some days. After that, the *chuño* is left to dry in the sun while the *tunta* is submerged in water for a longer period, before being ultimately sundried as well.

²⁸ A similar point is also raised by Iara Rolnik Xavier (2010: 118).

(*vocero*) who invites, in Spanish, visitors to come in. Telephone cards for international calls are easily found and bus tickets to main cities in Bolivia can be rapidly arranged for. The *yatiri* also works on another stand for a company that makes international remittances. For celebrations, a stand selling *chicha* (fermented maize drink) is the meeting point for many men. Inexpensive Chinese imports are also present here, visible in the myriad types of bric-a-bracs that can be bought at the market. For entertainment, pirated DVDs cater to all movie and music tastes. For better looks, clothes and hairdressers are available.

Figure 4: Sunday morning at *Kantuta*



Visitors arriving at *Kantuta* street market. São Paulo, Brazil, 2015.
Source: The author.

At the centre of the market, a sports pitch and a DJ set the mood for the day. Songs in Spanish emanate from the loudspeakers and are broadcast live through one of the many Latin American and Bolivian online radios based in Brazil. Depending on the day, the central pitch might serve as the scenario for fashion shows, celebrations,

parades, and many football championships. Around it, children run freely to and from a big bouncy castle and slide that are inflated every Sunday morning. A group of *tinku* or *caporales* dancers hold their rehearsal, much to the delight of watching visitors.²⁹ Others just roam around the square or rest sitting on a low wall around the sports pitch. They escape the glaring sun of São Paulo under the shade of a big tree, enjoying an ice-cream and whatever presentation is taking place at the centre of the market.

Not that far away from *Kantuta*, *Coimbra* is located in the popular commercial area of Brás, also in central São Paulo. The two blocks of Coimbra street where the market is assembled on weekends also host various Bolivian shops and offices. Here, like in *Kantuta*, almost all vendors and customers are Bolivian nationals and their Brazilian-born children. In many ways, *Coimbra* feels less concerned about attracting a Brazilian crowd and most products here are clearly targeted to the Bolivian public.

From one of the stands the strong smell of *quilquiña* makes visitors stop and talk about their childhood memories.³⁰ Other herbs for cooking and for healing, dried foodstuff and freshly baked bread prepare people's stomachs for a hefty *almuerzo familiar*. Much like in *La 16*, a DVD stand attracts a small crowd of passers-by, but here they watch a bit of a comedy show or some video of Andean *huayno* or *chicha* music. A couple of stands offer freshly-pressed orange juice and *refrescos* – drinks made with dehydrated fruit or cereals and a lot of sugar. All sorts of products for personal grooming are available, from hair gel to tooth brushes, and clothes befitting various tastes and seasons are also found.

²⁹ *Tinku* is an Aymara/Quechua tradition and the name can be used in reference to both a ritualistic form of combat or to a type of dance, to which I refer above. *Caporales* is a Bolivian dance of multiple cultural references, usually performed on religious occasions and on Carnival.

³⁰ *Quilquiña* is a herb commonly used for garnishing in the Andes and that tastes and smells like cumin.

Figure 5: Coimbra from above

Coimbra street and the market on a Saturday, seen from a nearby building. São Paulo, Brazil, 2015.
Source: The author.

Although more Bolivian-orientated, this market also includes some Brazilian vendors. A smiling man, born in the same state as myself, comes for a visit and offers fresh cheese. Another Brazilian man is grilling delicious-smelling beef and pork skewers, while another one crosses the market selling ice cream. Two youngsters selling used smartphones lurk in a corner of the market, eyes attentively looking for any sign of a police officer. At the edges of the market, unlicensed (or not befriended) *ambulantes* (pedlars) flock the nearby streets. Amongst those, migrants of various places – from French-speaking African countries and from other Latin American countries, including Bolivia – and some Brazilians are selling mobile phone accessories, second-hand items, or a new Chinese product with endless purposes.

At both *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*, consumption seems to be but one of the reasons to pay a visit. These spaces offer migrants the possibility of direct contact with Bolivia through voice, money, travel or their belly. Spanish is the language most spoken amongst the visitors, although it is not rare to hear Aymara and Quechua. *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* also present visitors with the opportunity to address bureaucratic and business issues, find a job and guarantee the reproduction of their lives in Brazil. These markets are spaces of encounter, of community-building, and of celebration. Here is where they meet colleagues, friends and future lovers. During the day, customers arrive neatly dressed; men's hair sharply cut and styled, women with their long jet-black hair let down, always in the latest fashions. Families enjoy some quality time together.

The spatial, social and cultural ties that connect these spaces with the Andes are multiple. If rural to urban migration is a key for unlocking the practices that constitute the Andean marketplace, they are also relevant here but so are the processes of international migration that brought Bolivians to Brazil. Inevitably, crossing national borders brings about changes, but the continuities expressed through these markets reflect migrants' intentions of reconstituting the familiar Andean socio-spatial dynamics in Brazil.

4.2. Bolivian migration and establishing 'spaces of Bolivianness' in Brazil

Bolivian migration to Brazil started in the 1950s, but the profile and insertion of this group of migrants began to acquire its present configuration – that is, associated with their labour insertion in the clothing industry – in the last decades of the 20th century (Silva 1999: 111). This change follows the same processes that triggered urbanisation in Bolivia. Movement sprawled across national borders, and migratory flows to the global North – chiefly Spain and the US – increased, as did South-South

mobility – mainly to neighbouring Argentina, Brazil and Chile (Ledo 2009: 84). Data provided by Bolivian censuses offer little precise information about international migration, but it is estimated that there has been a massive upsurge in the number of Bolivian nationals living abroad in recent decades (Pereira Morató and International Organization for Migration 2011). Other sources indicate that there are between 20,000 and 300,000 Bolivians living in Brazil – although the actual figures might fluctuate between these extremes (see further discussion on chapter three, section 2.3).

In Brazil, the city of São Paulo has been, since the 1980s, the top destination for Bolivians – most of whom originate from the *provincias* of the departments of Cochabamba and La Paz (Silva 2006: 160).³¹ Migratory trajectories vary, but, in this context, they are largely associated with work in the *oficinas de costura* (garment workshops) (Freitas 2014). Most of these migrants have little formal education and many arrive in the country without any formal documentation (Buechler 2014: 22; Pereira Morató and International Organization for Migration 2011: 39). The dire labour conditions endured within the *oficinas* overshadow other practices and dynamics of the group, enmeshed in a growing public awareness over reports of modern slavery following raids promoted by the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Public Defensory. As a result, in spite of constituting one of the largest – if not *the* largest – recent migratory influx to Brazil, the everyday life of members of the Bolivian community is, to a great extent, invisibilised.

The origins of the Bolivian marketplaces in São Paulo are also connected to the world of the *oficinas*. In the early 1990s, in the area surrounding Padre Bento Square – a traditional neighbourhood for incoming immigrants to the city of São Paulo since

³¹ More details on the Bolivian migration to Brazil, their relation with the garment industry as well as personal narratives of this process as told by market vendors of *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* are discussed at length in chapter three.

the 19th century – a ‘parallel market for outsourcing’ labour for the *oficinas* began to take shape (Freitas 2014: 93). At Padre Bento square a hectic process of negotiation happened on Sunday evenings between Bolivian migrants and the owners of *oficinas* – by then mainly members of the Korean migrant community (Souchaud 2012: 83). By the end of the decade, the increased presence of Bolivian migrants at that spot attracted fellow nationals who realised a new business opportunity, establishing a couple of bars and food stands in the area. This first Bolivian market thus served as the background to the process of bidding and hiring for the *oficinas* that unfolded on weekend evenings (Freitas 2014: 94). The market at Padre Bento square also served numerous other purposes. In 2001, a publication in the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* referred to this congregation as an ‘embassy’ offering services targeted at facilitating migrants’ lives in the city, but also a place where Bolivians met ‘for their sacred Sunday gathering’ of booze and fun (Chaim 2001).³²

³² Also quoted in Patrícia Freitas (2014: 94).

Figure 6: Saturday afternoon at *Coimbra*

A new line of negotiators is forming at the end of the day at *Coimbra* to contract workers and garment workshops. São Paulo, Brazil, 2015.

Source: The author.

Until this day, *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* are part of this subcontracting circle of the clothing industry in São Paulo (Freitas 2010: n.p.). As the day approaches its end, a new group of negotiators arrive at the markets with a bag of garments and a notebook under their arms. These are no longer mainly members of the Korean community in Brazil, as many Bolivians have also come to own *oficinas*. They form a line or a semi-circle in one area of the market and a confusing bid for hiring new workers and/or outsourcing the service of smaller *oficinas* begins. The garments are carefully analysed by the interested parties, who are told what type of service is requested, deadlines, as well as the intended payment – usually on a piecework basis or on the value of aggregate orders. Working agreements are reached: usually characterised by small incomes, long labour hours and, for those living at the *oficinas*, inadequate housing conditions.

If the precarity of the working and living conditions dominate the media discourse around Bolivians, it appears alongside two other common stereotypes associated with the group. On the one hand, Bolivian migrants are victimised: naïve ‘*indios*’ (indians) who are unable to fend for themselves. On the other hand, their presence is criminalised: ‘clandestine’ migrants working in shady businesses (see also Manetta 2012; Simai and Baeninger 2012).

Against this overwhelming focus on the associations between the Bolivian community and the clothing industry, Sidney da Silva (1997; 2006; 2012) pioneered the study of Bolivian sociability in Brazil since the 1990s. For Silva (1999: 118), public places of congregation – amongst them, street markets – played an important role for the incorporation of the migrant community in São Paulo. By hosting traditional celebrations and festivities, these spaces showcased Bolivians’ positive cultural contributions to the Brazilian melting pot, as noted in the following quote:

[t]he celebrations at the [Latin American Memorial, in central São Paulo] communicate ... a positive national identity as the idea of nation as an ‘imagined community’ ... would be safeguarded in that moment. This happens because, in spite of the sociocultural differences ... regional differences... and ethnic differences ... they all recognise themselves and are recognised by Brazilians as Bolivians. They invite the society of São Paulo to see them ‘*con otros ojos*,’ that is, from a different perspective (Silva 2012: 25).

Silva’s argumentation is in line with the literature, particularly salient in the studies of informal urban markets in the global North, that present marketplaces as spaces of ‘cosmopolitan conviviality’ (see also Gilroy 2004). According to this view, the everyday encounters at the street markets are part of the process of constructing vernacular forms of globalisation in the context of the ever more diverse demographics of cities of the global North (Radice 2016: 436). As such, the quotidian encounters of the marketplace help people to ‘develop methods of intercultural engagement and learn a repertoire of intercultural skills’ (Hiebert, Rath and Vertovec 2015: 8). Albeit critical

to multicultural arguments of integration via assimilation, some of this literature emphasises that the consolidation of hyper-diverse spaces like street markets bring (immigrants) together, simultaneously blurring and sharpening the differences between them (Hiebert, Rath and Vertovec 2015: 17; see also Vertovec 2007).

Following this argument and, in line with Silva's perspective detailed above, *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* could be seen as instrumental spaces to overcome the negative stereotypes associated with Bolivian migration in Brazil. The text from *Folha de São Paulo* mentioned above stands as evidence that Silva's concerns were not unfounded. The newspaper article is riddled with belittling remarks and allusions to the 'illicit' and 'clandestine' character of Bolivians' presence, work and gathering in central São Paulo (see Chaim 2001). Silva's point, then, is to challenge the stereotype that present the marketplace as legally and/or morally degenerate, fostering an idea that these are spaces for sharing the richness of Bolivian culture with the Brazilian public.

While praising diversity and the multicultural contacts it generates is commendable, such perspective can fail to address the prejudices migrants confront on a daily basis. 'Super-diversity,' as Suzanne Hall (2017: 1568) underscores,

is frequently invoked as a way of exploring social exchange incites where migration has amplified in recent years [...]. As much as cities are sites of cross-cultural participation, they are also sites of growing inequality where global processes of migration intersect with durable inhabitations of "race" and class.

These systematic inequalities are hence not necessarily lifted by the effective participation of migrants in informal businesses and the shared experiences it enables once abroad. At times, they contribute to 'reproduce a sense of duality' with 'less of a conceptual emphasis on the fluid interactions' between the groups of migrants and between them and the 'local' community (Duruz, Luckman and Bishop 2011: 599). In Brazil, prejudices against Bolivians were, and are still, rife. Furthermore, *Kantuta* and

Coimbra were not built with the clear purpose of creating intercultural bridges. As Chaim's article above also implies: these places are made by and *for* Bolivians.

4.3. The markets and the city

The orientation of the markets towards the migrant community can be seen in the very process of their creation. *Kantuta* is, in fact, the present-day successor of the earlier market at Padre Bento square. As that incipient informal *feira* (street market) grew, it attracted the resentment from locals who claimed the influx of Bolivians brought along drunkards, drug dealers and users, muggers, and dirt (Silva 2012: 22). Asserting that they had kept their peace and quiet in the area for more than a century, neighbours demanded that the square should be free from Bolivian migrants – a request embraced by the local government at the time (Freitas 2014: 94-95). As a result of the commotion around the presence and further eviction of Bolivian traders from Padre Bento square, the *prefeitura* (city government) of São Paulo surveyed potential places for relocation. I was told, however, that it was not the *prefeitura* but vendors themselves who found the new spot.

What is now Kantuta square was then a derelict cul-de-sac with no name, in an isolated area near the highway that delimits the expanded centre of São Paulo, the Marginal Tietê.³³ With the nod from the *prefeitura*, vendors appropriated the location and baptised it after the Andean flower that bears the same three colours as the Bolivian national flag, the *kantuta*.³⁴ Present-day *Kantuta* hosts some seventy stands, although the numbers tend to fluctuate on a weekly basis. Surrounding Kantuta square is a federal technical school, a waste facility for the local area's landscape services, a

³³ The highway is built on the flanks of the homonymous river.

³⁴ Since the new constitution, promulgated in 2009, the Plurinational State of Bolivia has two official flags: the red-yellow-green referenced here and the checked, multicoloured *wiphala*.

council-housing high-rise, and a hostel for the homeless – which also hosts numerous migrants, mainly coming from various African countries. On Sundays the area usually feels empty as few businesses are open, save for some bars and evangelical churches in the market's vicinity. There are a few Bolivians living in the area, but no permanent Bolivian business to be accounted for.

More than a decade after its foundation, there is little integration between the surrounding buildings and dwellers and the market. Before *Kantuta* is assembled, usually about a dozen African migrants – all of them men – meet there, using the free wi-fi service at the square to avidly check their smartphones. Most of them are gone during market hours and I could not confirm whether they were uninterested or kicked out by the market security men – as are the homeless people who wander around the area. Other Brazilian neighbours do visit *Kantuta*, but not in great numbers and mostly to bring their children to the bouncy castle.

Coimbra is set in a very different scenario, but the lack of interaction with the surroundings is also similar. Brás is an area historically associated with Portuguese migration, as well as the manufacture and trade of textiles – the name of the street (after a city in Portugal) and its link to the clothing industry stand as testimonies to the area's traditional vocation (Xavier 2010: 114). *Coimbra*, I was told, dates back to the 1990s when the street hosted numerous *oficinas*. What was initially just a few stands catering for those working locally underwent a considerably growth in the mid-2000s. It was also in this period that some *oficinas* gave way to shared and single-family accommodations, as well as to more permanent businesses owned by and targeted at Bolivians.

Nowadays, the two blocks of the Coimbra street where the market takes place are inhabited by various shops offering Andean products, at least one online radio station,

tourism agencies, numerous restaurants, bakeries and bars, as well as telephone, internet and cash-transfer services. There are offices providing legal advice, a small branch of a Brazilian public bank, sewing material suppliers, uncountable hair salons and barbers – always full and visited largely by a masculine clientele – and a nightclub. Although the actual *oficinas* are gone, the ample selection of Bolivian products and Bolivian-oriented services continues all week round. Perhaps because of the long working hours many Bolivians are subjected to, the street feels rather empty on weekdays, apart from around lunchtime when some customers can be seen. Although the market is set in a busy commercial area, Brazilians seem to almost completely, if unconsciously, avoid this stretch of the street.

Coimbra street really comes to life on weekends. Although the market takes place for most of the day on both Saturdays *and* Sundays, only the Saturday market has been formalised by the *prefeitura* of São Paulo. Official recognition came in November 2014, after eleven years of struggle with public authorities.³⁵ Regularisation led to a considerable reduction in the number of stands allowed to operate in the market – from 500 to 150. It also meant that vendors were required to apply for and possess a license in order to hold business at *Coimbra*, as they also do at *Kantuta*. Vendors, however, reported many benefits deriving from the regularisation such as traffic diversion and waste collection. With formalisation, vendors also reported receiving fewer visits from the dreadful *rapa* – the city tax inspectors.

The lack of interaction between the Bolivian community and the city of São Paulo deserves some further considerations. During my first months at *Kantuta* I had the opportunity to observe a project working towards improving the area as well as

³⁵ Vendors were clear in praising the then mayor Fernando Haddad, from the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party, PT) in his effort of tending to the demands of São Paulo's migrant populations.

fostering the markets' integration with its neighbours.³⁶ *CasaLatina* was a shared project between the *prefeitura* of São Paulo and the art collective *casadalapa*, and it worked with the aim to 'promote the valorisation of public space through artistic actions and urban interventions' at Kantuta square (casadalapa 2015). *CasaLatina* built a community garden, arranged the installation of public lights and free wi-fi coverage, painted the walls with striking graffiti art and promoted workshops and activities focusing on bringing together vendors and visitors, as well as neighbours of the market.

In spite of the visible changes, there was little interaction between the public of *Kantuta* and *CasaLatina*, except for the children who spent hours in their tent located right behind the bouncy castle. In fact, when talking to vendors most of them were unaware that the changes were at all related with the project. One of the members of *CasaLatina* commented on the difficulties in establishing a dialogue between themselves and the vendors. When asked if the project had any intentions of expanding to *Coimbra*, this same member noted that initiating a conversation there was even harder.

CasaLatina advanced on what they perceived to be a gap in Bolivians' 'right to the city' (see Lefebvre 2011). The lack of interaction was but one of the issues. The areas where these markets take place were largely disregarded by public authorities. During weekdays, the emptiness of Coimbra street contrasts with the garbage accumulated in the gutters. Kantuta square houses many homeless people and, before the arrival of *CasaLatina*, the general infrastructure was slowly decaying. Vendors also did little to improve the market areas in a more permanent way. On a different but related note, from various interactions at the market I could attest to the fact that many

³⁶ On their weblog, the organisation responsible for carrying out the project states that the main goal was 'to strengthen the sense of belonging to the city and foment the construction of new relations between the people that live, work and study [at Kantuta]' (casadalapa 2015).

Bolivians were also largely unfamiliar with important places of the city, even though the group is territorially dispersed around São Paulo.³⁷ However, if long-term Bolivian intervention in and interaction with the areas surrounding the markets were generally sparse (see also Cymbalista and Xavier 2007: 122), the very existence of the markets was a strong indicative of how Bolivians were organised and fighting for their space in Brazil's largest city.

Figure 7: 'Somos todos Estrangeiros': Street art at Kantuta



The art on the walls surrounding Kantuta square were a product of the *CasaLatina* intervention, which included a community garden, also in the picture. Paintings include Andean motifs and the sentence 'We are all foreigners.' São Paulo, Brazil, 2016.

Source: The author.

The lack of dialogue between the project and market vendors/visitors indicates that these two groups started off from different understandings of the role of the market for the Bolivian community. Rather than spaces for establishing intercultural relations and/or showcasing Bolivian folklore to a Brazilian public, *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* are the basis for constituting a common sociability amongst Bolivians. These 'spaces of Bolivianness' (Grimson 1997: 100) are more like small-scale versions of the impressive street markets found in Andean cities than a Bolivian iteration of the many

³⁷ On the geographical dispersion of the Bolivian migration in the city of São Paulo, see the works of Renato Cymbalista and Iara Rolnik Xavier (2007) and the latter's Masters dissertation (Xavier 2010).

street markets that can be found in São Paulo where produce is sold. They send a clear notice to members of the community that the city also belongs to them. While tending to the needs of the Bolivian community in the city, *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* play an important role in the *constitution* of this very community in São Paulo.

4.4. Associations and the organisation of the markets

In Brazil, as in Bolivia, vendors' associations set the pace of the everyday life of the market and their purposes and structure mirror that of the *asociaciones* found in *La 16*. Because of the markets' considerably smaller size, *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* have only one *asociación* each – respectively the Association of Bolivian Entrepreneurs of Coimbra Street (*Associação de Empreendedores Bolivianos da Rua Coimbra – ASSEMPBOL*) and the Bolivian Gastronomic Cultural and Folkloric Association Padre Bento – Kantuta Street Market (*Associação Gastronômica Cultural e Folclórica Boliviana Padre Bento – Feira Kantuta*). That being said, the sustained importance of civic, trade and political associations in Bolivia is also reflected by the myriad similar organisations formed by workers and owners of *oficinas*.

In Brazil, I had the opportunity to observe the workings of ASSEMPBOL more closely than the *asociaciones* in the other two markets – although, even here, access to the vendors' association was far from what I had hoped for. This *asociación* is organised hierarchically, but also democratically. Affiliated members included market vendors and the owners or shop keepers of the various permanent businesses of Coimbra street. The president and the triad directive board were elected amongst members, who largely stood by their leaders' decisions. Differently from Bolivia, though, relatively few vendors I met had taken a leadership position in ASSEMPBOL or in its *Kantuta* equivalent. That being said, most of them were active members of these

organisations, helping collect the compulsory market fees from other vendors and participating in their monthly meetings. While I was there, ASSEMPBOL's meetings used to take place at Coimbra street's nightclub. The dancefloor was turned into a makeshift, poorly lit assembly hall, where the procedures were long and passionately debated by vendors and shopkeepers.

Fees constitute an important source of revenue for the *asociaciones*, although healthy donations from patrons also contributed for ASSEMPBOL's budget. With this money, *asociaciones* were able to organise *fiestas*, cover immediate needs of the market and pay for services such as cleaners and private security – both activities being usually carried out by Brazilians. In *Coimbra*, the security men kept a close eye in every move of the market, mediating conflicts and kicking out arbitrarily defined 'vagabonds' – generally drunkards, homeless people, and unfamiliar pedlars. They were often seen flaunting pistols on their belts. Contrasting to the ostentatious character of *Coimbra* security men, it was only on the last day of my research in *Kantuta* that I met someone working for their security – and he could tell me *exactly* which stands I had visited the most during my time there.

In *Coimbra* what really stood out for me, however, was ASSEMPBOL's political engagement. As in Bolivia, the *asociación* was also chiefly responsible for keeping vendors in line with the parameters established by themselves and the *prefeitura*, but it was also responsible for representing vendors' interests vis-à-vis public authorities. They were, after all, the main actor in the negotiation with the city mayor for the regularisation of the market a year before my arrival. However, ASSEMPBOL's ambitions stretched beyond that.

While I was carrying out my research, the *asociación* managed to put forward a candidate for the district council (*subprefeitura*) election. Although non-citizens are

not allowed to vote in mayoral elections in Brazil, in São Paulo they have the right to run and vote for local representatives if they prove a connection with the council. Vendors were rightly aware that the capacity to interfere in local budget decision could affect *Coimbra* positively, if in the right hands. The then-president of the *asociación* was the chosen name amongst ASSEMPBOL's affiliates, but as he was not the only Bolivian contender – the others were 'horrible choices' I was told – members went to great lengths to push people to the ballot. One of the three directive members drove vendors and visitors to and from the voting polls. A couple who sold sweetened beverages and fresh juice at the market went from stand to stand with a freebie to try and convince fellow vendors to vote. Neither the *asociación*'s president nor the other Bolivian candidates were elected, perhaps because of a split in the Bolivian constituency. But the joint effort of its members highlights a clear intention of ASSEMPBOL to influence politically their position in the city.

Another important function of the *asociaciones* is organising festivities. They follow a busy calendar of patron *fiestas*, as well as regional and national commemorative dates from Bolivia. This makes for a hectic chain of events and almost every month there is a celebration to be organised at the markets. Some dates call for a bigger venue – such as the La Paz tradition of the Alasitas fair (January), Carnival (February/March), Our Lady of Copacabana (August) and the Day of the Republic (August). In such cases, a great function is prepared in hired spaces outside of the marketplace – some of which are co-organised with other non-market *asociaciones*, such as those of *oficina* workers and owners.³⁸ These big events constitute an important

³⁸ The favoured venues of the *asociaciones* of *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* are, respectively, the Latin America Memorial complex and Dom Pedro II park – both of which are located within easy reach of the markets by public transport.

moment for congregating the Bolivian community in Brazil and a rare occasion were its magnitude can be – even if still partially – appreciated.

Parallel to these grand events and on almost every other possible occasion, celebrations, parades and folkloric dance presentations also happen at the marketplaces. Much like in Bolivia, the organisation and relevance of these occasions can often be traced back to rural practices re-enacted in the urban marketplace, and financial contributions and participation from vendors constitute a social obligation (Yampara, Mamani and Calancha 2007: 69). In Brazil, however, they also play an important role in strengthening a sense of belonging based on a shared national identity amongst migrants. While reinforcing their ‘Bolivianness,’ these migrants pick and recreate traditions brought from the country of origin, emphasising their difference with regards to the Brazilian community (Grimson 1997: 103). This amalgamation of rural and urban practices originated in various regions of the country is later presented as a more or less cohesive ‘Bolivian tradition,’ which is then shared with people who might not be involved in such celebrations had they not been living outside Bolivia.

As it has been shown, *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* reflect, in many ways, the forms of sociability and political organisation of the Andean markets. There is, however, a notable absence to be accounted for. As noted in the introduction, although the work behind the stands continues to be mostly carried out by women, *cholitas* are rarely seen amongst the market vendors. This is not to say that women dressed in the distinctive *polleras* are completely absent from the market space. But *polleras* usually appear during the above-mentioned celebrations and parades, and moreover in their shorter, sexier version as a *caporales* costume. While it is tempting to see *cholitas*’ absence as a tendency of rendering social and cultural practices into folklore once abroad, I argue that this is also chiefly related to the personal processes of social and spatial mobility

of market vendors as well as to the negative stereotypes associated with certain categories in Bolivia and Brazil.

5. FINAL REMARKS

In this chapter, I highlighted that, in spite of the inexistence of the marketplace in precolonial Andes, indigenous peoples have, from the onset, participated in their constitution. From this early involvement with the market economy, it is also possible to observe how imposed categories were manipulated and utilised by these indigenous peoples in order to navigate the structures of colonial society. In spite of that, a dualistic socio-spatial order still populates the imagery of the Andes in political, economic and social discourse. While the breaches in, and the transgressions to this dual order have existed throughout, it is also true certain forms of inequality continue to fall consistently across racial (and gendered) lines.

With this background in mind, I have introduced the markets as well as the processes, relations, and dynamics that constitute them. Starting with *La 16*, in El Alto (Bolivia), I discussed how historically consolidated cultural and social practices, as well as recent economic processes, have jointly contributed to the expansion of street markets. I highlighted how processes of urbanisation and informalisation have changed the demographics of the country, but also how they brought important forms of rural indigenous sociability to the urban sphere. Furthermore, in a context of heightened mobility under globalisation, the exchanges that take place in the street markets of today stretch beyond the local relations between the rural and urban socio-spatial spheres. They include broader scales and extended networks of social, cultural and political exchange. All of these changes have ambiguous effects, simultaneously transforming and reinforcing the practices at the heart of *La 16*.

I then turned to the markets in São Paulo, Brazil. *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* are the result of increased South-South migration, which, in Brazil, directs Bolivians to the clothing industry. These markets are not only a product of the increased numbers of these migrants, but they are also associated with the process of labour outsourcing for the garment workshops. This overwhelming association between this migratory influx and the precarious labour conditions in the industry dominates the public discourse in Brazil about Bolivian migrants, who remain otherwise relatively isolated and largely invisibilised in the city of São Paulo. The markets, however, rather than aiming at promoting Bolivians' integration with the inhabitants of São Paulo, are important places for community-building and for exercising their forms of sociability, consolidating *their spaces* in the foreign city.

In the three sections of this chapter, identity, mobility, and labour emerge as crucial categories for understanding the dynamics and practices taking place at the markets. The types of exchanges and intermediations that take place at the markets connect different spaces and cityscapes, the rural and the urban sphere in changing ways. Women emerge as the key actor for the creation of the marketplace in the Andes. In *La 16*, as well as in *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*, they are the main vendors, following historical pattern of women's insertion into the labour market, but also the transformations in the latter since the 1980s. The ambiguous roles played by the markets are also embodied in the identities of market vendors in Bolivia, where the *chola* highlights how categories of race, class, origins and gender are articulated. However, as hinted in the last section, the *chola* market vendor is conspicuous by her absence in the markets in Brazil. While some practices do not translate well in a foreign context, I argue that this absence helps to unravel broader dynamics of mobility, identity, and labour that become manifested in the markets. The following chapters of

this thesis will address these three topics introduced here, using the narratives of market vendors to reflect on power structures, inequalities, and the everyday practices that produce markets.

***Three.* Mobilities: Narratives of migration amongst market vendors**

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1982 the sun died, said Don Luis Condori in our first conversation at *Coimbra*. When I asked him about the reasons that led him and his family to Brazil, the Condori patriarch said that nothing short of a cataclysm was responsible for unleashing the different and overlapping migratory routes that first drove his children, and then himself and his wife, to leave their rural community in the Bolivian Andes. For Don Luis, the death of the sun had a specific starting date, but its effects were still ongoing as he left for São Paulo, in Brazil, in the year 2000. With the death of the sun, successive frosts and lasting droughts laid his lands barren. But the full extent of the event included a period when social, political and economic transformations taking place at national, regional and global scales ultimately resulted in the decisions of his and other families in Bolivia to migrate.

Although their trajectories varied, most people I met at *Kantuta*, *Coimbra* and *La 16* began their process of mobility around the same period. As global climate change began to show the first signs of its ravaging power over the Andean highlands, Bolivia was also experiencing the effects of changes in the global political and economic environments. The debt crisis of the 1980s and increasing political instability, followed by the implementation of structural adjustment policies informed by neoliberal maxims,

prompted new waves of migration in the country. Engendered by the search for better living conditions, urbanisation peaked and so did emigration. These flows followed new directions and temporalities, which built on existing socio-spatial ties connecting rural and urban spheres, leading to the expansion and transformation of indigenous Andean practices and forms of sociability.

Spatial mobility brought along new opportunities for migrants' livelihoods, but their aspirations for social mobility were met with other challenges. Once arriving at the cities – in Bolivia or abroad – rural indigenous individuals and families came up against deteriorated labour conditions, racism and staggering inequality. Migration also conveyed ambiguous senses of rupture and belonging. On the one hand, it could disrupt ties to one's rural communities, just as it brought one closer to urban ideals of citizenship. On the other hand, socioeconomic exclusion often meant that, once in the city, many migrants were at best second-class citizens – that is, when migrating abroad did not strip them of citizenship rights altogether. Not fully incorporated into the body of the nation, nor completely severed from the rural community, migrants' narratives are often marked by wide-ranging ambivalences.

In this chapter, I discuss general patterns of rural-urban migration in Bolivia from the 1950s to the present. I start by highlighting how reforms attempting to modernise rural areas led to new processes of social and spatial mobility across the Bolivian Andes. After that, I indicate how the effects of climate change and neoliberal reforms have transformed the intensity, temporalities and directions of migratory flows within Bolivia, as well as from the latter to other countries. Then, I highlight key aspects of contemporary Bolivian migration to Brazil, in particular their association with the garment industry. I then focus on two contradictory yet related socio-spatial outcomes of these migratory processes, interweaving the discussion with the migratory narratives

of market vendors. First, I highlight how processes of spatial mobility have not necessarily implied a rupture of one's ties with one's rural community of origin. These processes have, rather, in several cases relied on and expanded networks and practices that connect migrants to their indigenous rural backgrounds. Second, I discuss how in other narratives, conversely, stripping oneself from 'traditional' ties can be constitutive of migratory trajectories. I underscore that the racialisation both of migrant women in urban Bolivia and of Bolivian migrants in Brazil can be seen as alienating their agency in the processes of social and spatial mobility, obscuring the connections and ruptures induced by these processes.

2. CONTEXTUALISING MOBILITIES

2.1. General migratory patterns before the 1980s

For most of the 20th century, Bolivia was a predominantly rural country. Existing cities were small, dedicated to administrative and commercial activities, resting on the precepts of the mining-based economy, and thus concentrated in the western portion of the territory – where the bulk of the country's population also lived (Ledo 2009: 7). In the rural areas, enduring *ayllu* structures sustained the mobility of indigenous peasants between complementing agroecological zones, which guaranteed communities with access to various products (Zoomers 2012: 126). Rural migration to the cities, or for temporary work in mines, remained informed by an underlying colonial pattern long after the birth of Bolivia as an independent country in 1825.

The 1952 National Revolution constituted a watershed moment in the configuration of migratory patterns in Bolivia. In that context, the new revolutionary government – supported by a broad social coalition and captained by the Revolutionary

Nationalist Movement (*Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario*, MNR) –¹ aimed at modernising the country (Webber 2011: 68). Or, better said, they hoped to forge a new, modern, Bolivian nation-state. To this end, a series of reforms were implemented, amongst which were the nationalisation of the mines, the expansion of formal education, the universalisation of suffrage, incentives to industrialisation, and the abolition of the *hacienda* system, which officially terminated servile relations in Bolivia (Balderrama *et al.* 2011: 8; Rivera 2003: 140).

The reforms had important effects over internal mobility. Domestic migration was, to an extent, *directly* induced by the state, through official policies targeted at increasing the state's reach over its territory, as well as at fomenting industrialisation and modern agricultural enterprises (Balderrama *et al.* 2011: 9). In particular, the Agrarian Reform enacted in 1953 had substantive, if contradictory, effects over the rural areas in the country, subsequently impacting the directions, temporalities and intensities of domestic migratory flows. In the highlands, the reform led to the parcelling of land and its distribution amongst family-owned smallholdings, whose production was destined for the internal market and, more significantly, for subsistence (Dunkerley 1984). In the eastern, lower areas of the country, however, the reform led not to a greater distribution of land, but to its further concentration in latifundia, focusing on the promotion of an export-oriented agribusiness sector (Albó 2009).

This uneven process created different pull and push factors for internal migration. On the one hand, the MNR government explicitly promoted the relocation of highland peasants towards the valleys and tropical areas, in a clear effort to 'colonise' hitherto sparsely populated areas (Balderrama *et al.* 2011: 9). Doña Marta, who worked both at

¹ The support for the MNR included 'militant miners and other sectors of the working class, the indigenous peasantry and reformist and conservative nationalists from the middle class' (Webber 2011: 66).

Coimbra and *Kantuta*, was born in the lowland city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, but she was not a *camba*, she said, referring to the name commonly used for those born in the Santa Cruz department. She was *colla* and proud, nodding to the Andean origins of her parents who came from the highland rural areas of the departments of La Paz and Oruro to Santa Cruz, where they met in the late 1960s.²

In the highlands, on the other hand, the end of the *hacienda* pushed for two related migratory flows to the cities. The first was a relatively privileged group that navigated towards the professional and bureaucratic occupations in the cities, adjusting to the social and cultural modes of an aspiring, urban middle class (Albó 1997: 119-20). In the words of Albó (1997: 119):

patrones [*hacienda* owners], labour bosses, and people with other jobs linked to the *hacienda* system ... whose livelihood depended to a great extent upon of the prevailing socioeconomic order. Many of these people left the provinces because of concerns about agitation taking place in many agricultural areas, or simply because they were no longer constrained by the ancient regime.

The second group arriving to the urban centres largely comprised former *colonos* (*hacienda* workers) and their families. In the highlands, in many cases the reform disrupted the vertical strategies of the *ayllu*, as the parcelling of land often led to unproductive plots for the peasants, thus preventing the continuity of the relations of ecological and social complementarity (Balderrama *et al.* 2011: 8; Lazar 2002: 23). While this contributed to engender an outward-migration from rural communities, the growth of the cities also led to an increasing demand for services – such as transport, artisanal activities, construction, and commerce – which contributed to the attractive pull of urban centres (Balderrama *et al.* 2011: 9-10).

² The term *colla* derives from *Qullasuyu*, the name of the portion of the Inca empire which now stands mostly in Bolivia (Fabricant 2009). The term is particularly used in the lowlands to denote a person's origins in the highland, with clearly racialised connotations (see also Assies 2006).

Relations in the countryside were also affected by the expansion of education and the universalisation of suffrage. These had a great impact on the large, mostly rural, indigenous population, who had remained thus far broadly disfranchised in political and social terms. The growing presence of schools in rural areas brought new possibilities of social mobility, increasingly associated with labour and further educational opportunities in the city. With political citizenship rights in turn came the possibility of effectively belonging to a reborn and modern Bolivian nation.

As will be discussed with further detail later in this chapter, for indigenous individuals, however, ‘belonging’ came with added caveats. On the one hand, in the newly devised *mestizo* national identity, indigeneity belonged to the past, whereas the cultural, social and political horizon was increasingly *white* (Canessa 2000: 144). On the other hand, colonial term *indio* – seen as derogatory and antimodern – was erased from the official record and swapped for the class-term *campesino* (peasant) (see Rivera 2003). In an increasingly urban and development-thirsty idea of a Bolivian nation, belonging meant leaving the rural indigenous behind and embracing urban *mestizaje*.

In short, the disruption of previous forms of social organisation produced a combination of push and pull factors – directed colonisation of the eastern areas, constrained means for subsistence in the highlands, and demand for services in the urban economy – which contributed to lead migrants out of the Bolivian rural Andes and into the cities. At the same time, a newly devised form of citizenship imbued these spatial mobilities with new meanings and possibilities. The social and spatial mobilities springing from the changes promoted by the 1952 state were not necessarily permanent or unidirectional. Previously existing forms of seasonal migration continued between rural Andean communities, and to these vertical migrations were superimposed

increased fluxes to the cities and to more productive agricultural areas to the east. These mid-century processes would not cease with the changes lurking in the last decades of the 20th century. They were, rather, further affected by the processes hinted at in the introduction of this chapter, which had a substantive impact on mobilities not only within Bolivia, but also from this country to others.

2.2. General migratory patterns after the 1980s

In 1982/83, an abnormally severe El Niño caused prolonged droughts in the Andean highlands, presaging the intensification of localised effects of global climate change on the region (Balderrama *et al.* 2011: 10). As noted in the introduction to this chapter, for Don Luis Condori and many others living in the area, the effects of what he referred to as the ‘death of the sun’ were strongly felt throughout the following two decades, prompting the diversification of economic strategies through various forms of socio-spatial connections and mobilities. For families like the Condoris, who relied on a delicate environmental balance for their subsistence, extreme weather conditions led to few alternatives other than to seek further income sources for their survival. For many, it meant sending at least one family member to work in the cities, contributing to swell the migratory flows directed to urban centres in the country (Arbona and Kohl 2004: 258).

However, for the – mostly indigenous – pauperised highland peasants arriving in the urban areas in that context, the possibilities of making a living were also bleak. By the end of the 1970s, Bolivia’s enclave economy was in disarray, with plunging commodity prices and increasing external debt (Kohl and Farthing 2007: 102). At the same time, the military regimes that had followed the state of 1952 were in crisis, with elections and coups succeeding one another at an unbelievable rate, before the first

elected government in decades could finally take office in 1982.³ Bolivia's re-democratisation process coincided with galloping inflation and a substantive reduction of gross domestic product (GDP), with increasing internal and international pressure for economic 'order' to be re-established (Kohl and Farthing 2007: 104-05). In 1985, 'order' was re-established through the enactment of the Supreme Decree 21,060, which oversaw the implementation of neoliberal policies in Bolivia.

The measures of the NEP had great success in controlling inflation, but at the cost of a substantial deterioration in living standards. By 1986, 75 per cent of the 30,000 workers of state mines had lost their jobs, as had some 10,000 civil servants and 25,000 teachers in rural education (Dunkerley 1990: 33; Kohl and Farthing 2007: 125). In the one year that succeeded the implementation of the NEP, employment in the formal urban economy fell by over 62,000 jobs (a 14 per cent drop), while over 116,000 people joined the informal sector in the same year (Pradhan and Van Soest 1995: 277). Real wages also declined to a third of what they had been in the previous year, while a substantive portion of Bolivia population fell under the poverty and extreme poverty lines (Kohl and Farthing 2007: 125).

Former miners and impoverished peasants migrated en masse to the area of the Chapare, in the department of Cochabamba, where the growing coca industry outlined the possibility of them increasing their income (Cortes 2000: 119). At the same time, '[s]tate-promises of "relocation," understood incorrectly by many miners as guaranteed jobs,' heightened migratory flows to the cities of the Bolivian central axis (Cochabamba, La Paz/El Alto and Santa Cruz) (Webber 2011: 119). While

³ The words of James Dunkerley give a stark illustration of the period preceding redemocratisation. Between July 1978 and 1980, 'Bolivia plunged into political chaos ... two further general elections were staged [after the one held in July 1978], five presidents held office (none of them as a result of victory at the polls), and the cluster of coups under almost constant preparation four were essayed in practice, one failing and three successful' (Dunkerley 1984: 249).

urbanisation soared, Bolivian maintained unemployment rates at around 20 per cent throughout the second half of the decade and underemployment – particularly in the informal economy – reached 60 per cent (Dunkerley 1990: 34; ILO 2015).

Many people I met at the markets initiated their migratory trajectories in the context described above. Doña Helga, who worked in *La 16*, arrived in La Paz as a child in the early 1980s; not much later, Doña Barbara, whom I met at *Kantuta*, also left her rural community in her late teens to try a new life in the same city. In the 1990s, the Condoris sent their youngest children to live with their godparents in El Alto, while the older sons travelled the same distance to try and find work. The personal stories leading to the city varied, but these processes were all somehow propelled by the search for better living conditions, against the backdrop of a rapidly deteriorating socioeconomic scenario.⁴ Often, the employed strategies relied on a combination of ‘traditional’ forms of productive diversification and the use of extended family and kinship ties, now applied for making the best use of the few opportunities for social mobility that were available. These strategies, however, were also informed by higher labour precariousness and a general lack of control over one’s choices, repeatedly requiring migrants to adapt and flexibilise their strategies and practices, often to breaking point.

Through the same processes driving domestic flows of people in Bolivia, many decided to migrate abroad. Since the 1980s, emigration increased considerably, outlining an increasingly urban-directed South-South migratory pattern (Baldivia 2002: 102; Bastia 2011: 1515). From approximately 160,000 in 1980s, Ledo (2009: 84)

⁴ According to household surveys data, the proportion of internal migrants in Bolivia (i.e. the share of individuals who were not born in the place they lived at the time of the survey) has fluctuated substantially since the late 1990s. The share of migrants rose from 31.7 per cent in 1997 to 40.7 per cent in 2001, and then declined sharply until 2012 (the last year for which there are data available), when it reached 24.4 per cent (CEDLAS and The World Bank, 2018).

estimated that between two and three million Bolivians were living abroad by the end of the 2000s, mainly in the United States, Argentina, Chile, Spain and in Brazil. This is a considerable proportion of the country's population, given that it had approximately ten million inhabitants according to the 2012 census.⁵

Seasonal migration from Bolivia to neighbouring countries – mainly Argentina – is not a new phenomenon. However, patterns of emigration have recently changed alongside other transformation in global migratory trends, 'such as a move from peripheral areas towards the capital city [of destination countries], increasing feminisation of migration, and an increased tendency towards illegal forms of migration' (Bastia 2007: 658). These new patterns and flows have been marked by an international context of market-liberalisation, with increasing mobility of capital and labour (Robinson 2008). Although the migrant workforce has been an indispensable element in the development of capitalism, it is needless to say that the migrants themselves are not necessarily welcomed. The new waves of Bolivians arriving in the 1980s in the US, Argentina and Brazil; in the 1990s in Chile; and since the 2000s in Spain, often had to face precarious working conditions while enduring prejudice and racism (see also Grimson 2005). Many live without documents and work for low wages, lacking access to health and social security services, as well as to labour and other basic citizenship rights (for the cases of Argentina, Spain and Chile, see, respectively, Bastia 2015; Parella 2013; Ryburn 2016).

That being said, the income generated by the migrants' labour insertion abroad has a substantive impact on the livelihoods of family members who stay. According to

⁵ Official data from the 2012 Bolivian census present a much lower figure, totalling 489,559 Bolivians abroad. According to the same source, Brazil ranks third with around 65,675 Bolivian nations, behind Argentina (187,254) and Spain (116,732) and followed by Chile (29,081) and the US (20,610) (INE, 2018).

date from the World Bank (2018), international remittances from Bolivians living abroad soared in the 2000s, growing from less than 160 million US dollars per year until 2003 to around 1 billion US dollars per year from 2006 until 2017, the last year for which data are available. Although a similar trend is observed during the period throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, remittances constitute a much bigger share of Bolivia's GDP when compared to other countries in the region (World Bank 2018).⁶ Based on data from 2008, it was estimated that, without international remittances, the household income of those who receive it would be reduced by around 43 per cent, and 160,000 people would fall below the poverty line in Bolivia (Exeni 2010: 35).

2.3. Migration to Brazil

Bolivian migration to Brazil is conventionally said to have started in the 1950s,⁷ but the 1980s saw a profound transformation in the profile and numbers of Bolivians arriving in the country. Previous flows were dispersed throughout Brazilian cities, and were largely constituted by urban men, both professionals and higher-education students (Silva 2006: 159; Xavier 2010: 44-45). This new wave of post-1980s migration has little formal education, but its members are more balanced in terms of gender (Souchaud 2012: 4), in line with the growing feminisation of international

⁶ To put this in perspective, between 2012 and 2017 this has corresponded to a share of between 3.5 per cent (in 2017) and 4.1 per cent (in 2012) of the country's GDP, as opposed to between 1.5 and 1.0 per cent of GDP for Latin America and the Caribbean over the same years (World Bank 2018).

⁷ Convention has led most authors to present Bolivia-Brazil migration as having started in the 1950s, with the establishment of state-sponsored exchange programmes between the two countries for students and professionals (Rizek 2010:114). That being said, seasonal migration from Bolivia to border areas in Brazil – in particularly around the city of Corumbá – has been documented since the 19th century, and continues to take place today (Peres 2012; Xavier 2012:114)

migration.⁸ In Brazil, most of these migrants are employed by the garment industry in the city of São Paulo and its metropolitan area (Cymbalista and Xavier 2007: 123).

Although the general direction of the migratory flow from Bolivia to Brazil is well known, there is a remarkable lack of consensus on the numbers of Bolivian-born individuals living in Brazil. The most conservative figures estimate that they total about 10,000 (Brazilian Ministry of Work and Employment, cited in Buechler 2014: 184), but other sources suggest that the number might be around 200,000 (Brazilian Public Defensory, cited in Cymbalista and Xavier 2007: 123). It is hard to find a middle ground on such discrepant information – a pattern that repeats itself with many other data regarding the Bolivian presence in Brazil. It is agreed, however, that numbers oscillate depending on the economic conditions of both countries. But, most importantly, Bolivians tend to be grossly underrepresented in official surveys. In spite of the existence of an agreement between the two countries which allows residency for Bolivians,⁹ many stay in the country without any formal documentation (Buechler 2014: 22; Pereira Morató and International Organization for Migration 2011: 39). As a result, many are apprehensive about the possible outcomes of disclosing their personal information.

Most of those arriving in São Paulo since the 1980s were born in Andean rural areas of Bolivia, most notably in the department of La Paz (Silva 2012: 21). Before heading to Brazil, the majority had first migrated to a city in Bolivia and some had already initiated a process of international mobility in a different country, usually

⁸ This phenomenon is particularly accentuated in the case of Bolivian migration to Spain, where most women work in domestic services and care provision (see Cortes 2000; Parella 2013)

⁹ Following the promulgation of the decree 6,975 (2009) ratifying a 2002 agreement between members of Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay), Bolivia and Chile, which grants considerably accessible parameters for immigrants to request permanent residency amongst members of signing countries.

Argentina (Buechler 2014: 185). As was the case with domestic migrations in Bolivia, most left the country motivated by economic reasons. In the 1980s and, particularly in the following decade – when Bolivian migration to Brazil peaked – most Bolivians found a job in an *oficina de costura* owned by Koreans. Since the 2000s, however, many of the Korean *oficina*-owners changed focus, concentrating their activities in the design phases of production, and more established Bolivian migrants who had been able to amass some savings began to invest in their own *oficinas* (Freitas 2012: 160). Nowadays, many of the *oficinas* are owned by Bolivians, many of whom started their lives in Brazil as *oficina*-workers themselves (Buechler 2014: 163).

Garment manufacturing constitutes one of the most established industries in the city of São Paulo. From early on, the sector served as an inlet for international migrants, having historically employed numerous members of the Jewish, Syrian and Lebanese communities, before Koreans and, finally, Bolivians (Leite, Silva and Guimarães 2017: 54). Since the 1980s, but more strongly since the 1990s, the increasing liberalisation of trade at the global scale raised competition in the Brazilian market, often leading to bankruptcies and a race to the bottom in labour conditions, of which the garment industry offers a prime example.¹⁰ Since the last decade of the 20th century, the deterioration of working conditions within this industry in São Paulo has been marked by the outsourcing of production, lowering wages and intermittent contracts (Buechler 2014: 180; Rizek 2010: 117). Simone Buechler (2014: 181) notes that

[b]oth large and small firms [in the garment industry], but particularly the larger clothing firms, outsourced most the production to smaller unregistered firms and to homeworkers. Some of the larger ones ceased to operate on paper but in fact reopened as several unregistered small workshops. [...] The garment factory owners, as well as many other

¹⁰ Although the garment sector remained one of the biggest employers in the city of São Paulo, the number of registered workers was reduced to a third in the twenty years between 1981 and 2000 (Rizek 2010:119).

industrialists, argued that they could not compete with imports, especially cheap Asian ones, if they paid all of the legally required benefits.

Saving money on workers' wages and taxes is thus a common strategy amongst *oficina* owners. Workers are seldom formally registered, lacking any form of pension and maternity- or sick-leave, all of which are granted by Brazilian labour law. Although conditions in workshops are usually considered a form of modern slavery which, as it will be discussed below, is a point commonly emphasised in association with Bolivian migration, Bolivians are not the only ones working in precarious conditions in the garment industry.¹¹ Homeworkers have constituted a large proportion of workers in the sector, and historically these have been impoverished women, who are mostly internal (Brazilian) migrants, lacking any access to social security and receiving low and irregular wages (see Buechler 2014).¹²

Similarly, most Bolivians usually work on a piece-work basis, which can come up to seventeen hours a day during weekdays, and half a day on Saturdays. Previously, Korean migrants had also been subjected to similar conditions when they entered the garment manufacturing sector in São Paulo, in the 1970s and early 1980s (Chi 2016: 95-96). Then, Korean undocumented migrants – often described during these decades as an isolated and invisibilised community, characteristics later echoed by descriptions of Bolivian migrants in Brazil – constituted a large portion of those working under precarious conditions at *oficinas* (Freitas 2014: 332). By the late 1980s, many Koreans

¹¹ In Brazilian law, 'slave labour' is based on the definition of 'forced labour' of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), although it adds the notion of degrading working conditions to the coercion element emphasised by the international framework (Costa 2009:16). According to the Brazilian Criminal Code (Section 149), to reduce workers to 'conditions analogous [*análoga*] to slavery' entails subjecting them to 'forced labour or exhaustive working hours [*jornada*], to degrading working conditions, or to restricted movement [*locomoção*] due to contracted debt to the employer or responsible agents.'

¹² According to Iara Xavier (2010:93), Bolivians constituted but a small proportion of garment workers in São Paulo in 2000 (around 4,650 workers, or 2.6 per cent of the total of workers in the sector). However, these numbers are likely to be affected by the same type of underestimation as the data on the numbers of Bolivians currently living in Brazil.

were already an important reference as *oficina*-owners and, after an initial period during which they almost exclusively employed their co-nationals, they began to recruit growing numbers of Bolivians arriving in Brazil from the 1980s onwards (Souchaud 2012: 83).

Many Bolivians not only work but also live in the space of *oficinas*. Concentrated in the central areas of São Paulo, most *oficinas* are built in the somewhat improvised space of rented houses. Communal areas are turned into the actual workshop, while bedrooms are used as shared accommodation for the live-in (*cama adentro*) workers. Living and working conditions are often described as insalubrious. The workspace is usually crammed with machines and material, and the houses often lack proper ventilation. In spite of the dire conditions, many argue they prefer to live in the *oficinas* to save money that would otherwise be spent with renting houses on their own.

Every Bolivian I met at *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* had their trajectories marked by the world of the infamous *oficinas de costura*. In this vein, Patrícia Freitas (2014: 136) has argued that Bolivian migratory trajectories to Brazil are actually constituted around their labour insertion in the clothing industry, which she calls a ‘sewing project’ (*projeto costura*). Although work in manufacturing is an important element of their migratory trajectories, I argue that this is the *background* against which migrants fasten expectations of *better living conditions*, rather than a vision or project of *strictly economic improvements* – a point similarly raised by Cecilie Ødegaard (2010: 8) in her work about market women in Peru.

Doña Barbara, who sold *awayus* at *Kantuta*, and the Condori eldest sons, who had many stands at *Coimbra*, were fleeing poverty in urban Bolivia and seeking means to provide for the families they ‘left behind.’ Doña Luciana, who also sold *awayus* and other Bolivian arts-and-crafts at *Kantuta* wanted to have ‘an experience’ with friends

and save some money. Doña Ofelia, who sold drinks at *Coimbra*, needed to pay debts in Bolivia, and knew she could make more and in less time in Brazil than she could in La Paz. Doña Marta came to Brazil as soon as she knew that husbands working at *oficinas* in Brazil, like hers, found themselves a new wife in São Paulo. These stories, some of which will be described in further detail below, reflect contradictions that characterise present-day global capitalism, as well the ambiguities that mobility impart to their sense of belonging and social practices. In the following sections, I will explore two central aspects of mobility, both of which have important effects on how market women present their own identities and that of others.

3. SUSTAINED CONNECTIONS

One of the key issues emerging from rural-urban migration in the Andes refers to the disruptive effects of mobility on rural indigenous practices and identities. Although mobility and hence the presence of indigenous subjects in urban centres has increased in the past decades (Canessa 2006b; Horn 2018: 484), ‘being indigenous’ does not necessarily travel easily through space, nor does it accord with individual expectations and strategies for upwards socioeconomic mobility through migration. For one, politically articulated discourses around indigeneity have often highlighted the centrality of the land and the community in the constitution of indigenous subjectivities. Furthermore, research on Andean indigenous communities has also shown that rural-urban mobility is perceived as promoting the acculturation of migrants, as the urban sphere is conflated with the spaces of dominating *q'ara* (white) or *mestizo* forms of sociability.

That being said, examples from the literature emphasise how different forms of ‘multi-local’ connections and practices account for the reproduction of various rural

indigenous practices in the urban context (see, for instance, Antequera 2011; Buechler and Buechler 1996; Ødegaard 2011; Tassi 2010). Considering the migratory processes described in the previous sections, there is a considerable effort to underscore how such mobilities do not necessarily result either in the rupture of community-based ties or in the complete acculturation of indigeneity (see also Clifford 2001: 469). On the contrary, these studies show that, in a context of mobility, people extend and further reproduce these practices beyond a certain understanding of a confined ‘rurality.’ According to Cristina Cielo and Nelson Antequera (2012: 18), that migrants maintain socio-spatial ties to their community once in the urban sphere means that migration does not entail a definitive process, but rather one that continuously reproduces the multi-locality of both rural and urban spaces. This sense of multi-locality bears continuities with territorial management practices that are pre-Columbian in their origins, thus transporting, reinstating and adapting rural indigenous practices to the urban context. As such, mobility blurs real and imagined boundaries separating the rural and urban spheres, which, at times, include borders between nation-states.

In this section, I discuss two practices that are extended from the rural to urban areas through migratory processes, namely the activation of godparenting relations (*compadrazgo*) for sending children off to the city, and the inclusion of the urban sphere within multi-tier productive strategies through dual residency (*doble residencia*). As will be shown, rather than the continuation of local, ‘pure,’ and ‘traditional’ practices, these are constantly reinvented and reappropriated for various ends within a context of mobility. Furthermore, I indicate that in spite of their local specificities, these strategies also share similarities with those employed by transnational migrants elsewhere.

3.1. 'Selling the *wawas*:' extended kinship ties

This journey once again begins with the Condori, in the first half of the 1990s, when the youngest children were sent away from their rural dwelling in the highland areas of the department of La Paz. More than a decade after the El Niño hit their land, the family was still struggling to cope. For Don Luis and Doña María, who by this time had seven children – the eldest was not even eighteen and the youngest still a toddler – conditions were pressing. Even with the extra working hands of the oldest children, there was not enough to feed all. Don Luis Condori had a contrite face when he said what came next: they 'sold the *wawas*' (babies).

I had already had many conversations with Esther Condori – the youngest daughter of the family – and knew that she had not been raised by her parents. Esther told me she had lived with her godmother (*madrina*) in the city of El Alto from the age of five to fifteen, when she went to São Paulo. By her retelling of the story, I also knew she had virtually lost contact with her blood-relatives during the period, and she resented the treatment she received from her foster family. But until that conversation with Don Luis, I had not known what had brought Esther to live in El Alto in the first place.

The act of 'selling' or 'renting' children to their godparents (*padrinos*) or relatives is a known Andean practice. '*Utawawa*,' explain Hans and Judith-Maria Buechler (1996: 194), is the Aymara 'term used for an adopted child who was usually a close relative, but it can also refer to landless families (not necessarily related) living with those with land [and who receive] plots in return for labor.' On a related note, Marisol de la Cadena (1995: 339) argues that, until the early 20th century, indigenous women and children were 'frequently sold or rented to mestizo godparents as payment for past or future favors.' In the case of Esther, she was sent from the *provincia* to ease

the circumstances for the family, but also to escape hunger herself. She was to be raised and educated in the city while her parents kept some cattle for her *madrina* in the *provincia*.

Although Esther was dismissive when asked for further details, the use of godparenting relations, or *compadrazgo*, in her migratory trajectory tells of other relations between rural and urban socio-spatialities. In fact, it also reveals a long story of appropriations and transformations of colonial and indigenous practices alike. In spite of its Catholic origins, *compadrazgo* has been constantly re-signified in the Andes as form of establishing ritual kinship ties. As other imposed colonial institutions, it has been historically used to exploit indigenous labour, but it has also been employed by indigenous subjects as a means to enable social and spatial mobilities, as well as to guarantee future economic and political favours (Canessa 2012a; Cortes 2000; Harris 1995). Thierry Saignes (1995: 188) noted that, already in the 17th century, *compadrazgo* ties were used by mobile indigenous individuals, being ‘very successful at compensating for the loss of networks of mutual aid’ resulting from migration. Fast forward some three hundred years, and Cecilie Ødegaard (2010: 114) also finds that, similarly, in 21st century Peru, ‘people living in poor and marginalized circumstances seem to have sought to overcome aspects of their marginality through relations of *compadrazgo*.’ For the Condoris, mobilising Esther’s *madrina* could be seen as a strategy to guarantee her insertion into the urban context, which they could not otherwise have done (see also Cortes 2002).¹³

Differently from their younger siblings, however, the eldest Condori sons left the *provincia* with the explicit intent of finding work in the city and, as far as I am aware,

¹³ The mobilisation of *compadrazgo* ties is not used exclusively in the context of rural-urban migration in Bolivia. The importance of extended kinship ties is also observed in international contexts with similar purposes (Baby-Collin et al. 2010:63; Cortes 2000; Xavier 2010:192).

without the perhaps welcome support of their own godparents. Following a neoliberal promise of '[incorporation] into the "modern" economy and place of the city' through the sweat of their brows (Lawson 2000: 180), the three young men left the *provincia* in the mid-1990s. In El Alto/La Paz, they were met with a deteriorating labour market that had limited opportunities for young, indigenous men with little formal education. Upon their arrival, the Condori boys swelled the ranks of informality, taking up occasional jobs as carpenters, builders and mechanics, before finding the economic niche that later took them to Brazil – working behind sewing-machines.

3.2. Dual residencies and the mutual rural-urban presence

The oldest Condori sons left the Andes for Brazil around the last years of the 1990s. In São Paulo, it did not take long until all of them were employed by the same Korean *oficina*. Soon enough, the quality of their work became known to the world of the garment workshops, and high-end retailers began to seek out their abilities. In the year 2000, they had saved enough money to bring their parents straight from the *provincia* to São Paulo. Five years later, the youngest siblings were also reunited with the rest of the family. Esther, who had not seen her parents for most of a decade, said she was at first confused and could barely communicate with her mother. She had forgotten all of her Aymara and Doña María spoke little Spanish. After being apart for so long, Esther needed to rapidly adapt to the constant presence of her siblings, with whom she shared a room in the same *oficina* where her brothers also worked. She went to school during the day and helped with the cleaning and cooking when she was at home. Sewing should not be her destiny or that of her younger brothers, all of whom were at the time of my research enrolled in higher education – she was studying to become a nurse and the two young men were studying accountancy.

However, if the combined investments made by the Condoris were directed at guaranteeing their siblings' future success in the Brazilian (or even Bolivian) urban labour market, other signs of the Condoris' social mobility actually brought them closer to their rural origins. Even though the entire family relocated from the Bolivian *provincia* to the biggest city of South America, the Condoris had the paramount objective of buying themselves a rural smallholding (*sítio*), which they later concretised through a property in the outskirts of the nearby city of Itu. According to Esther, her mother simply could not do without her animals and plants. Indeed, the herbs and the eventual cheese the Condori sold at *Coimbra* were produced in this *sítio*. In the period of ten years, the Condori family had acquired the smallholding and the *oficina* where the brothers worked and lived. The family was known to everyone at the market, who attributed their success to their Baptist faith and hard work. The family – which grew with marriages and the birth of grandchildren – divided their time between their home in the city and in the rural area, often meeting on Saturdays for the market and on Sundays either for church or for prayers at the *sítio*. Beyond these two dwellings, however, the Condoris also kept the family plot in the *provincia* whence they came. Like many rural migrants from Bolivia, the Condoris returned periodically to take part in celebrations, to tend to their land, and to keep up with their communal obligations.

Figure 8: Chilis, *quilquiña* and other herbs



The herbs' stand of the Condori family offering a wide range of fresh herbs at *Coimbra*. São Paulo, Brazil, 2015.

Source: The author.

The maintenance of ties between the *provincia* and the city can quite literally mean that people divide their lives between rural and urban areas. Although in Brazil the Condori family constituted an exceptional case amongst the market vendors, in Andean Bolivia this practice is relatively common. In spite of the lack of accurate data, there is a considerable proportion of El Alto's inhabitants who actually keep dual residency (*doble residencia* or *doble domicilio*) in the city and in the *provincia* (Albó 2006: 334). In the literature, *doble residencia* is described as a practice rooted in the management of multiple ecological tiers within the *ayllu* system, and, in its current form, the city constitutes yet another ecological *and* economic tier (Cielo and Antequera 2012: 18; Platt 1982: 35). As such, the extra income deriving from migrants'

remittances complements and is complemented by the agricultural production from the communities (Albó 2006: 334; Rivera 2003: 39).

Keeping ties with the rural community of origin constitutes an important economic strategy, but it can also work as a means to overcome the ruptures that mobility causes. In Bolivia, most of the women I met at *La 16* were very keen to emphasise that they *too* had their *provincia*, in spite of being also proudly urban. Doña Carlota, who sold assorted vegetables – mostly lettuce and maize, which she did not produce herself – at *La 16*, arrived from the countryside as a teenager and has worked in the market ever since, first with her mother and now on her own. In El Alto, Doña Carlota shared a house with her brother, child, and mother, who also lived, she noted, in the *provincia*, at the margins of Lake Titicaca. Family members constantly travelled from the house in El Alto to the *provincia* and the other way around. Doña Carlota was actively engaged with urban civic and market organisations in the city of El Alto, but the *provincia* remained an important reference to her.

The notion of ‘multilocality’ highlights that, in the present context of increased mobility, migration disrupts the forms of socio-spatial segregation that present indigenous peoples as solely confined to the rural areas. As climate change jeopardises the possibilities of subsistence farming in the Andes, migration consists, for many, in the only available option to keep the forms of sociability in the *provincia*. Rather than a ‘failure to adapt’ to climatic extremes, mobility is described as a form of diversification strategy for rural indigenous dwellers (Zoomers 2012: 126). Or as Geneviève Cortes (2000) beautifully declared, they left, so they could stay.

‘Having a *provincia*’ can thus be seen to perpetuate a sense of belonging, of abidance to the responsibilities vis-à-vis one’s community of origin. Not all of the people I met at the markets who said they had a *provincia* owned a second dwelling or

a plot of land in a rural area. Yet, they dutifully returned for a series of occasions, such as to participate in harvesting, in *fiestas*, or even to take a leadership position (see also Canessa 2012a: 164). Migration becomes increasingly incorporated into existing logics of living, ‘contributing to an enlargement of the “socio-spatial sphere of life” of peasants’ (Cortes 2000: 317). As such, the continued ‘presence of the actual geographic site in the life of many [urban] residents (in contrast to the imagined place) is a central characteristic of a widened space governed by mobility’ (Blumtritt 2012: 7). And as mobilities become increasingly transnational, these ties are further (re)produced across ever more distant localities.

The use of *compadrazgo* and dual residency as a means to facilitate entry into the urban labour market has been recently highlighted in the works of Nico Tassi and others focusing on the rise of a ‘popular economy’ in Bolivia (Arbona *et al.* 2015; Tassi 2012; 2017). These studies have underscored how ‘traditional practices’ have been instrumental for the economic rise of Aymara traders in Bolivia, who have expanded their commercial ties beyond the usual rural-urban routes and local markets, encompassing an ever-expanding range of transnational connections and networks that cross the border to Chile, Peru, Argentina, Brazil and even China. The success of Aymara entrepreneurs as described in these works can be seen as the skilful navigation of a globalised economy, also building on the experience of the tiered organisation of the *ayllu*. Their prosperity lies closely on the maintenance of indigenous forms of sociability, making use of extended kinship ties (even through freshly established *compadrazgo* relations with Chinese families), well-versed cross-cultural communication, and the construction of trans-scalar networks.

These growing transnational ties shed light on how strategies of spatial mobility – both rural-urban migration in Bolivia and to other countries – can rely on sustained

connections to rural indigenous practices rooted in the community of origin. From an Andean perspective, this can be seen as constituting yet another complementary niche in a multi-tier organisation of production. Furthermore, these continued relations can be seen as avoiding the ruptures that can emerge as a result of mobility. In this sense, migrating to the cities in Bolivia or abroad does not cause the complete obliteration of rural indigenous practices. Rather, mobility can be used to reproduce, expand and strengthen, in the urban context, indigenous practices, forms of sociability and kinship networks, which constitute life in the rural community. In spite of such continuities, the strategies and trajectories that expand rural indigenous socio-spatialities also produce cultural, social and political transformations on both those who move and those who surrounded them before and after leaving.

That being said, not all migrants experience such meteoric trajectories of socioeconomic ascent. In fact, even studies that emphasise the increasing success of indigenous migrants in urban contexts recognise that not all them are successful at or have the means to trade at multiple economic tiers (Arbona *et al.* 2015: 131). In various cases, the intensification of migration and their precarious insertion into the labour market did not provide economic stability or social inclusion. Even the experience of the Condoris, who have been able to amass considerable capital to promote the reunification of the entire family and to keep multiple dwellings, constitutes more of an exception than the rule – at least amongst the market vendors I have met in Brazil – and cannot be solely read from the perspective of *continuity* with rural indigenous practices. In fact, for many, instead of strengthening their ties with the community of origin, other forms of consolidating their foothold in the city have obtained.

4. BECOMING 'MORE INDIAN,' BECOMING 'MORE OF A CITIZEN': MOBILITY, LABOUR AND THE RACIALISATION OF MIGRANTS

In the previous section, I have highlighted how migrants often go to great lengths – sometimes quite literally – to keep ties with their rural communities. In spite of the sense of identitary rupture imparted by processes of spatial mobility, many of those who arrive in the cities coming from the *provincia* are often over-racialised in the urban context. In Bolivia, this is particularly strong amongst women, whose garments and activities in the urban context often present them as 'more Indian' than their male counterparts (see de la Cadena 1995). In Brazil, on the other hand, the 'othering' of the Bolivian migrant community includes their general depiction as being '*índios*' (Vidal 2012). In contexts where 'being indian means being "traditional" and rural, and [...] rural lifestyles are seen as folkloric or miserably backward' (Canessa 2012a: 214), a sense of identitary rupture might also be seen as a requirement for fulfilling expectations of social mobility, as well as a means to be incorporated into the urban citizenry.

In the present section I discuss how mobility can be related to an active effort of distancing oneself from indigeneity. Although further implications of these processes with regards to migrants' use of these categories as applied to themselves and others will be discussed in chapter five, in this section I outline how the first 'inclusive' citizenship model in Bolivia was built upon racialised ideals of an aspired urbanite *mestizo* modernity. While indigeneity was disbarred from the 'imagined community' of the nation, mobility – both social and spatial – could bring one closer to 'being a citizen' of the state. The effects of mobility, however, have not been equivalent for indigenous men and women, as their insertion into the labour market reinforced social constructs that were both racialised and gendered in the first place. Although this notion

of citizenship emerged in the 1950s, increased mobility in the 1980s, in a context of a liberalising economy and against the backdrop of reduced economic and social rights of citizenship, exacerbated the discrepancies between access to civic and political rights.

Further on, I highlight how international mobility also has ambiguous racialising effects. In Brazil, Bolivians are homogenised into an inclusive label of ‘Bolivianness.’ But instead of *mestizos*, this group is largely perceived as indigenous. Their insertion into the Brazilian labour market, although less determined by gender, reinforces social constructs that are also racialised, depicting Bolivian migrants as simultaneously ‘*índios*’ and ‘slaves.’ Their culture is reified in a manner that confirms their ‘traditional ways’ – as opposed to ‘modern’ forms of sociability – and which aggravates their working and living conditions in Brazil, thus distancing them from obtaining the rights of full citizenship.

I start this account with Doña Julia, who sells assorted products in the markets of *Coimbra* and *Kantuta*, in São Paulo. She was born in a rural area of the department of Cochabamba and, in the late 1990s, she decided to leave the community. Instead of following her sisters to the capital city of the department, she made up her mind to go to Argentina, where a consolidated Bolivian migrant community and the peso-dollar parity promised a guaranteed income. Before going on the long trip that would ultimately take her to a Korean-owned *oficina* in Buenos Aires, she was advised to abandon the garments she wore in the *provincia*. One cannot cross the border in a *pollera*, she said adamantly, referencing the multi-layered skirts associated with urban *cholas* and rural indigenous women in Bolivia. Doña Julia was told she needed to wear trousers, if she were to be taken in by Argentinian border officers. When I asked her why, she said there was too much prejudice against people from the *provincias* in Argentina. Wearing a *pollera*, she argued, was a clear sign of one’s rural origins, and

thus not welcomed in the neighbouring country. When I asked her whether a *pollera* and ‘rural origins’ implied indigeneity, and hence a resistance to the latter which could be taken as a sign of underlying racism, she frowned. It had nothing to do with indigeneity – she was not, after all, indigenous.

4.1. Indigeneity, citizenship, migration, gender

Although Doña Julia vehemently rejected the association between indigeneity and rurality, these two have been historically conflated in social and political discourse in Bolivia. As indicated in previous chapters, there are colonial underpinnings to the socio-spatial dualities in which the indigenous, the uncivilised/traditional and the rural are presented as antagonistic and subordinated to the Spanish-criollo, the civilised/modern and the urban. So, when the 1952 National Revolution proposed to devise a new, modern sense of ‘Bolivianness,’ they needed to bring together a profoundly unequal society, in which indigenous groups constituted a numeric majority largely disfranchised in social, economic, and political terms (see also Dunkerley: 1984: chapter one).

The expansion and intensification of state-space in Bolivia, in the context of 1952, was accompanied by the consolidation of popular support through a more inclusive citizenship regime, which was built under the culturally and racially homogeneous category of the *mestizo*. Indigenous culture and forms of sociability were portrayed under a folkloristic aura, whereas the cultural, political, and social horizon of the *mestizo* was increasingly urban, whitened, industrial, and modern. The purported inclusivity of *mestizaje* secured the consolidation of the nation-state in two fronts: it assimilated ethnic differences into the national corpus, while not actually addressing the economic and social marginality of those groups whose labour was required for the

reproduction of the economic and political elites (Rivera 2003: 78; Rivera and Aillón 2015: 14). Silvia Rivera (2010b: 97) persuasively argues that this new sense of *mestizo* ‘Bolivianness’ was *inclusive by means of exclusion* (see also Stutzman 1981). The clear message was that incorporation into the citizenry was conditioned on the erasure of indigenous forms of sociability. As with Doña Julia, it meant undressing oneself from what makes one indigenous and embracing the values of the modern *mestizo* citizen.

Education and suffrage were crucial means to make ‘Bolivian citizens’ out of ‘*indios*,’ but there were other venues for incorporation into the national citizenry. In the post-1952 scenario, a growing state apparatus conferred new opportunities of waged labour for indigenous *men* outside of the rural communities – particularly in state-owned mines and the army (Canessa 2012a: 220).¹⁴ Men had historically preponderated in temporary migration – for instance, during harvesting periods – and constituted a cheap labour reserve in times of economic expansion (Canessa 2012a: 228). However, work in state-owned enterprises, and particularly in the military service, constituted an important path for integrating highland indigenous men into an imagined community other than their rural one: the nation-state.

Lesley Gill (1997: 539) writes that, upon returning to their community, young male recruits were greeted as ‘new citizens’ (*machaq ciudadano*), quoting an interviewee: ‘I am also a man, I’m also *gente* [someone]. What difference is there between someone who goes to the barracks and one who does not? [...] I’d heard about

¹⁴ According to Lesley Gill (1997), although military service has been mandatory for men in Bolivia since 1904, the central role of the military service in the state of 1952 was curtailed right after the Revolution, with the army being initially replaced by civil militias. However, the same MNR that tried to neutralise the armed forces in the aftermath of the revolution began to rebuild the Bolivian Army still in the 1950s, allowing for a more diverse composition of its higher ranks and thus becoming a venue for upward mobility for poor indigenous and *mestizo* young men.

new citizens, and for the pride [of being a new citizen], I enlisted.’ These *new citizens* were, also, *men*, whose masculinity was forged along with their sense of belonging to the *mestizo* body of the nation. Migration – even if temporary – played an important role in giving access to citizenship, which also indicates that the new sense of belonging was largely relational. As Canessa underscores (2012a: 230), while their time in the barracks might have provided indigenous men with little leverage over white-*mestizo* middle-class men in the city, once they were back to the rural community they were perceived as ‘closer to the white urban ideal.’ Spatial mobility contributed to bringing rural, indigenous men closer to the ideal of *mestizaje*, thus also engendering a process of social mobility, reinforcing existing hierarchies within the rural community.

Women, who were not given the same venues for mobility, had less of a ‘claim’ to citizenship as compared to men (Canessa 2012a: 230). By staying in the rural community, women were seen, as famously argued by Marisol de la Cadena (1995), as ‘more Indian’ than their male counterparts. For de la Cadena, the over-racialisation of rural women was the result of two related processes. Firstly, women were more likely to remain in the rural community than the men, and they would thus have less contact with the urban sectors. Secondly, even when women went to the city, the activities with which they engaged – mostly domestic labour and street vending – were not perceived to bring them closer to the urban *mestizo* ideal. In a patriarchal society, argues de la Cadena (1995: 341), women’s work is devalued and thus less likely to engender the kind of social mobility that urban activities generate amongst men. In other words, not only did women move less, but in moving they became less *mestizo* than men.

The arguments by Canessa and de la Cadena complement one another with regards to the whitening effects of migration over men, as well as the over-racialisation

of women, from the perspective of the rural indigenous community. Although mobility is not a strictly masculine feature, these works emphasise how *permanence* is perceived as a (non-)action that denotes a (rural) world simultaneously feminised and indigenised. In de la Cadena's work, the urban appears as a masculine sphere, while the community becomes feminised. Canessa (2012a: 222) notices how the time in the army rendered men *whiter* and more *masculine*, but also made '*indians more female*.' The relational character of mobility is emphasised in the sense the both its causes and its effects are simultaneously gendered, sexualised and racialised. While men's mobility allowed them a relative inclusion into the dominating *mestizo* paradigm of the nation, women's relative immobility reinforced the stigma that indigenous peoples are backwards, as well as spatially and culturally incarcerated. This stigma, however, is not embodied only by the women who *stay*.

If a certain 'gender selectivity' favoured men's involvement in short-term and seasonal migration, women constituted the majority of permanent and long-term forms of mobility from the rural *provincias* to the urban centres in Bolivia in the post-1980s (Ledo 2009: 32).¹⁵ In some cases, migratory choices bringing women to the city were not their taken by themselves, as many left the rural areas along with other family members (Parella 2013: 318). However, while previously mentioned conditions contributed to increase rural-urban migration in general, other dynamics favoured the migration of women in particular. Skewed patterns of inheritance, abandonment and intra-marital violence have also been amongst the various reasons leading women out

¹⁵ Data from 2012 (INE, 2012) indicate that 25.9 per cent of Bolivia's urban population were not born in the city they currently lived, with 24.9 per cent having migrated from another region in the country and 1.0 per cent from abroad. Of this migrant population in urban areas, 53.0 per cent were women, and 47.0 per cent were men. According to Carmen Ledo's (2009:32) study of Bolivian migratory flows using the 2001 census, migration towards cities was more feminised (89 migrant men to every 100 women in urban centres), whereas rural-rural migration was more masculine (105 men to 100 women). The exception were the highland areas, where women constituted the majority of internal migrants regardless of the degree of urbanisation of the destination.

of their rural communities (see also Bastia 2011: 1521; Gill 1993: 77; Seligmann 1989: 704).

Once at the city, street markets and domestic service constituted the most likely options for migrant indigenous women to access the labour market, offering a socially acceptable and effective way of making some money. And, in these contexts, adopting a *pollera* and a *chola* identity constituted a leeway into accessing these labour opportunities (see also Gill 1993; Paulson 2002; Radcliffe 1990; Ødegaard 2010). Doña Isabel arrived in La Paz/El Alto as a child, in the late 1970s, accompanying her mother. Her father, she said, was a foreigner, a lighter-skinned Peruvian man. She had no contact with him because, she told me, he did not stay in the community where she was born for very long. He was an ‘educated man’ and her mother, she said, had too dark a complexion. He left for La Paz – where he still lives and has a family of his own, she noted – before Doña Isabel and her mother also had to make the same move themselves. Once arriving there, Doña Isabel’s young mother met her future husband and a trade: selling coca leaves in the popular commercial area of the *Gran Poder*. In her mothers’ new husband, Doña Isabel found the one she always called ‘father’ and the profession that she continues to practice with much love: she is also a coca retailer at *La 16*.

Doña Helga, who sold second-hand *cholita* clothes and accessories at *La 16*, also arrived in La Paz as a child, in the early 1980s. Doña Helga – who proudly presents herself as a *cholita* – was only nine years old and an orphan when she left the *provincia*. She told me she arrived in the city on her own, but quickly found a job as a domestic worker. In the beginning, she worked and lived in the house of a Chilean woman in *Zona Sur* – the southern, richest area of La Paz. Her boss was not too bad of a person, but the food was unbearable, she said, so at some point she decided to ‘flee’ from this

household as well. Not much later, she was working in a Peruvian family house where the food was more agreeable to her taste. She worked there until she left to live with her husband, aged seventeen. At that moment, her life as a domestic worker was over and, together with her now ex-husband, they began a career in transportation and commerce.

Both Doña Helga and Doña Isabel introduce themselves as *cholitas* and this is an important element of their presentation as market vendors. If within the rural sphere women are seen as more Indian because of the reasons discussed above, they are also more racialised in the urban context although, I argue, for reasons other than those mentioned by de la Cadena. If the *chola* garment contribute to make women *look* more ‘traditional,’ domestic services and street trade share an important continuity with indigenous women’s historical occupations in the Andean urban contexts since colonial times, and one that is strongly associated with the figure of the *chola*. These patterns of migration and insertion into the informal labour market share little resemblance to the ones that brought men closer to the ideal of citizenship symbolised by the army. Not only that, but these forms of integration into the urban labour market also differ considerably from the activities performed by *mestizo-criollo* women (Loayza 1997: 148). In fact, domestic services and street trade have been not only gendered, but also racialised from early on, contributing to make the *chola* ‘more Indian’ than migrant men and urban women.

Most of the market women I met at *Kantuta*, *Coimbra* and *La 16* initiated their migratory processes during the neoliberal period. Against the background of institutional democratisation, the full benefits of citizenship were still evasive to many migrant indigenous women in the cities. In the context of a liberalising economy and multiculturalism, indigeneity remained marginalised in the urban setting. Deteriorating

living conditions were particularly felt amongst indigenous sectors whose participation in the informal economy, as noted earlier, led to uncertain material and social gains. The increased participation of women in the labour market was also conditioned by previously existing patterns of employment, in which intersecting inequalities along racial, gender, and class dimensions strongly affected poor, indigenous, migrant women (Rivera 1996b: 164).

This is not to say that women were excluded from the possibility of being incorporated to this new model of neoliberal citizenship. Rather, with citizenship rights restrained in their economic dimensions, social mobility meant more than an aspiration for material gains. It actually served as a strategy for social inclusion, for guaranteeing that future generations will not be exposed to the social insecurity and exclusion they have had to endure during their lifetimes. In fact, many wish their children will not continue in the same occupation as them, but will rather study and move further into ‘professional’ occupations (see also Loayza 1997: 133-34; Ødegaard 2010: 129). These processes, however, held their own contradictions in terms of their identity and personal autonomy. As Silvia Rivera (1996b: 279) argues,

[migrant indigenous women] spend their lives aiming at contradictory aspirations, seeking to become citizens in a world that only see them as ‘*cholas*’ [...]. In order to survive these increasingly harsh conditions, they employ resources and knowledges of their rural culture of origin but are also victims of the dissolution of these cultural references [*pautas*] in the urban environment and will project this process on their own offspring. At the end of the day, the dilemma faced by these families consist in that they have to abandon their communitarian cultural references, searching for the eluding citizenship that is granted by the prevailing economic and political economic system.

The industriousness of the *chola* market woman can make her the idealised neoliberal citizen that can individually overcome her personal hurdles, atomising an experience shared by thousands of others and characterised by the very absence of actual economic and social citizenship rights to begin with (see also Chant 2016). In a

context where indigenous women are still associated with immobility and backwardness, engendering a rupture with previous practices and forms of sociability can be seen as a means to guarantee and validate migrant women's aspirations for social mobility (Rivera 2010b: 129). This is not necessarily a unidirectional move. As *cholitas*, Doña Helga and Doña Isabel are ambiguously positioned within urban hierarchies of gender, race, and class. Their occupation as market vendors contributes to racialise them and their *pollera* might make them look traditional, but these are statements of the dynamic economic prowess of urban indigenous women. Their often-precarious insertion into the informal labour economy, however, means that the outcomes continue to be uncertain. Part of how they consolidate their presence in the urban context also has to do with firmly establishing this distinction between their urban selves and their rural counterparts.

4.2. 'Slavery' in garment manufacture and aspirations of social mobility

After spending some years in Buenos Aires, Doña Julia was on the move again. The Argentinian economy was entering a sharp recession in the early 2000s, and her boss, with whom she got along really well, had already left the country for Brazil. After a short period in Bolivia, Doña Julia decided to join her former boss in an *oficina* in São Paulo. The Korean woman was a good employer, noted Doña Julia, before telling me that she used to drive all Bolivian workers to *Kantuta* on Sundays. Furthermore, living in São Paulo, Doña Julia felt less of the prejudice that bothered her so much in Buenos Aires. There, Bolivians are called names, like '*bolita*,' she said, and everyone

ends up living in a *favela* (slum, or *villa miseria* as they are known in Argentina).¹⁶ In São Paulo, she felt like she could earn money with more dignity.

Not all people I met in the markets in Brazil described their migratory processes as dignifying. Contrasting with Doña Julia's narrative, Doña Barbara's experience sounded much gloomier. Doña Barbara, who works in *Kantuta*, was born and raised in a small community by the shores of Lake Titicaca, from where she left as a teenager to perform domestic services in La Paz. She married young, but not much later became a widow and, in her mid-twenties and with three children to raise on her own, she decided to go to Brazil. Her older sister had already been living in São Paulo, where she owned an *oficina*. Together, they both arranged the terms for Doña Barbara's departure, who brought along her then youngest daughter and left the older ones in Bolivia with other relatives. When she arrived in São Paulo, in the early 1990s, Doña Barbara realised that she had acquired a considerable debt related to the travel and the boarding at her sister's business. All of her wages were redirected to the repayment of this initial debt – it took her months, she said, before she first saw a real bill (the Brazilian currency). Her eyes brimmed when she said her sister even refused to feed Doña Barbara's daughter, who was still a toddler at the time. Her own sister had made her a *slave*, she said, and that was beyond words.

Doña Barbara was not the only one to tell me about precarious living and working conditions at *oficinas* in São Paulo and to associate that with slavery. In fact, the use of 'Bolivian slave work' in the *oficinas* has received increased attention in the Brazilian media in the past decade.¹⁷ This association became somewhat of a consolidated

¹⁶ '*Bolita*' (little Bolivian) is a pejorative term used by Argentinians to ridicule Bolivians for the prolific use of diminutive in their speech (Grimson 1997: 2).

¹⁷ Some selected examples include: *BBC Brasil* (Schreiber, 2015), "Life in Brazil is not normal, It is all about work," says Bolivian woman formerly enslaved in São Paulo; *Exame* (2013) 'Brazil is thought to employ 100 thousand Bolivians as slaves;' and others whose reference to Bolivian presence is not in the

stereotype, to the point that someone found it ‘pertinent’ to use the theme in a Brazilian comedy film.¹⁸ Journalistic approaches address the issue as no laughing matter, but generally rely on similar stereotypes to build their story, as it can be seen in the following excerpt of an article published in the Brazilian newspaper *O Globo*, in 2011.

In the central region of São Paulo, during high business hours, hundreds of houses and shops have their gates and windows closed from dawn to dusk in order to muffle the rattle of sewing machines. Behind locked doors, thousands of Bolivian migrants live and work in agglomerates where [...], the [work] regime is akin to slavery. [...] But for the battalion of workers that cross the border to live the ‘Brazilian dream,’ garment workshops represent the chance of a better life. [...] However, integration is still distant. The indigenous features, the language barrier and cultural retraction [*retração*], contribute to propagate discrimination. For those who escaped the misery of the rural or urban peripheries in their country, the workshops offer protection through the collective reclusiveness and a recipe [*fórmula*] for making money, since the payment is, in general, per piece-work (Suwwan 2011)

Compared to the article discussed in the previous chapter – in which the author highlighted the excesses of the migrant community at the market at Padre Bento Square (see Chaim 2001) – Bolivians are not represented as clandestine migrants, but as victims of labour exploitation (see also Silva 2005: 30). Bolivian garment workers, who are otherwise invisible behind locked doors, appear to the public eyes as *slaves*. To be more precise, as *Bolivian, indian slaves*. Their invisibility is described as favoured by their own cultural predispositions, which are, conversely, to blame for the prejudice they endure once *seen*.

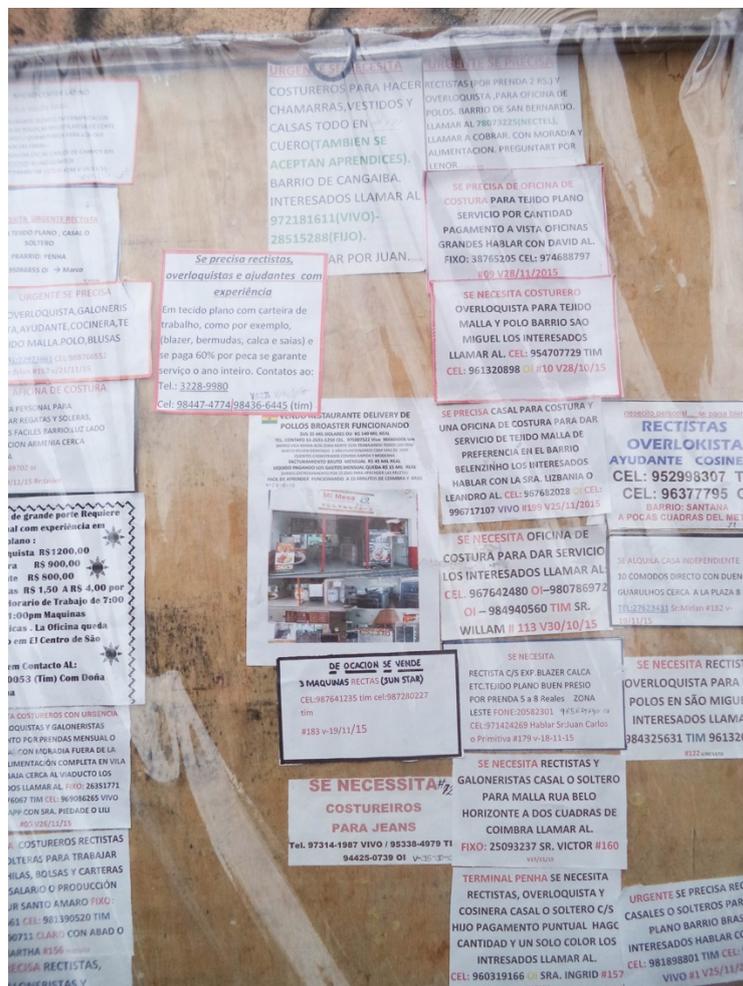
From market vendors, I heard stories of twenty-hours shifts, debt bondage and *oficina* owners who hid the documents of workers and kept them from leaving the workshop until orders were complete. The conditions described by market women were

headlines but figure prominently in the article, such as in *Marie Claire* (Neves 2017), ‘Slave work in fashion.’ For an analysis of how the media approaches the Bolivian presence in Brazil, see Manetta (2012).

¹⁸ *Crô* (2013, Dir: Bruno Barreto) is a 2013 film, in which the villain exploits the labour of ‘Bolivian slaves’ for her fashion brand. In spite of poor reviews from the critics, it was one of the ten most watched Brazilian films in the cinemas that year.

not gender-specific. Although garment manufacturing amongst Brazilians generally employs almost only women, both Bolivian men and women work in the *oficinas* in Brazil (Buechler 2014; Freitas 2014). That being said, women are usually the ones responsible for cleaning and cooking for fellow *oficina* workers, thus increasing their workload (Silva 2005: 21). Women with children, like Doña Barbara when she arrived in Brazil, also need to balance their time between child rearing and sewing, or to do both simultaneously.

Figure 9: Job advertisements at Coimbra



A board hanging at Coimbra offers jobs for married couples or single women/men. Requirements include ability to work with different materials (knitwear, jeans, leather) and machinery, but there are also positions for cooks. In one of the adverts, the offer states that Bolivians would be paid R\$ 2 a piece – approximately £0.40. São Paulo, Brazil, 2015.

Source: The author.

Although market vendors recognised that conditions at *oficinas* could be dire, they were also aware of the stigma that being seen as ‘slaves’ brought in Brazilian society. Historically, slavery was a racialised process in the Brazilian context, and Bolivian migrants were quick to avoid associating their current self with labour exploitation at the *oficinas*. Some, like Doña Barbara, said they had been slaves in the past or that they knew that some Bolivians were ‘still slaves.’ Others, like Doña Marta, who sold dried goods in *Coimbra* and *Kantuta*, reckoned that Bolivians were exploited in São Paulo, but not as much as the ‘poor black people.’ However, they were aware that the connection between ‘modern slavery’ and ‘Bolivian work’ in Brazil was strong. For example, when I asked Doña Luciana, who also sold *awayus* at *Kantuta*, if she had another job during weekdays, her immediate response was to tell me she was not a slave. She then told me she had a formal job contract as a seamstress for a popular Brazilian department store. When I asked her why she had mentioned ‘slavery’ in the first place, she said that it was a problem of the garment industry in São Paulo. However, it was particularly bad for Bolivians from the *provincia*, who were the ones most likely to be exploited.

The working and living conditions of many Bolivians in Brazil are said to be worsened by the fact that many arrive in the country without formal documentation. Many go to Brazil on a tourist visa and overstay their period, when their situation becomes irregular (Xavier 2010: 138). The Brazilian immigration law of the 1980s was constantly subjected to criticism by social movements,¹⁹ but in the meantime the Brazilian government has promoted periodical amnesty programmes in which migrants could apply for 2-year temporary visas before applying for permanent residency

¹⁹ During my fieldwork period, Brazilian immigration law (No. 6,815/80) was still the one produced during the military dictatorship in the country (1964-1985). A new immigration statute was introduced in Brazil in 2017.

(Buechler 2014: 184; Xavier 2010: 71). Although the numbers of Bolivians seeking amnesty reached the thousands,²⁰ not all opted for regularising their condition – many of whom argued that the fees, albeit small, were too much to regularise all family members (Buechler 2014: 184; Cymbalista and Xavier 2007: 128). That being said, many migrants aimed at regularising their situation in the country, not only as a means to guarantee their permanence in Brazil, but to facilitate their movement between this country and Bolivia (Xavier 2010: 138).

It is also worth highlighting that most of the people I met at the markets were *also* born in the *provincias* – Doña Luciana included. This information was carefully kept from me in the early stages of my research – a month in, I asked myself in my fieldnotes how could it be possible that all market vendors were, as they said, born in the *city* of La Paz.²¹ However, as noted in the previous section, the connection between the *provincia* and indigeneity is an association that market women were trying to avoid – that is, the double link that all Bolivians in Brazil are indigenous, and that all indigenous Bolivians working in Brazil are slaves, trafficked and exploited.

The concealment and ambiguities market vendors presented in their descriptions of working conditions in the *oficinas* reveal much about the othering of the Bolivian community in Brazil. Dominique Vidal's (2012: 98) analysis highlights how Bolivian migrants are seen in Brazil 'as constituting a distinct group defined by three main characteristics: being an "indian" population [*população de "índios"*], having a "different culture" and working as "slaves."' Vidal (2012: 99) notes that the construction of this Bolivian 'Other' is anchored by discourses that shape São Paulo as

²⁰ In 2009, around 17,000 Bolivians (out of a total of over 41,000 applications) applied for the 2009 amnesty (Souchaud 2012).

²¹ A similar concealment of rural origins is also observed by Sidney da Silva (1997:89). In chapter five, I discuss market vendors' ambiguous relations with their rural origins and that of others.

the ‘locomotive of Brazilian development,’ a city that pulled the modernisation of Brazil with the aid of the work of *European* migrants. Bolivians constitute a whole different type of migration, which is somewhat emphasised by the colourful descriptions of their traditional festivities in Brazil (see, for instance, in Silva 2005). In the process of emphasising market vendors’ ‘Bolivianness,’ it is not to that particular *mestizo* citizenship that Brazilians are referring. The homogenising element is rather their putative *indigeneity*, made visible not only through folkloric celebrations, but also through the phenotypical attributes of migrants. This supposed indigeneity is thus also different from the new and socially mobile one hailed by Evo Morales. The traditional appeal of their culture and their social retraction, finally, is partly used here to justify their working conditions in the *oficinas*.

These discourses present Bolivians as constituting a homogenised community, which is racialised, folklorised and anti-modern (Simai and Baeninger 2012, 2015; Vidal 2012). The paradox is that, although they effectively become *Bolivianos* to the eyes of Brazilians, in this context, they continue to be othered and to lack fundamental citizenship rights that were also denied to ‘*indios*’ in Bolivia. In chapter five I discuss how market vendors use identity markers to differentiate themselves from such an alienating categorisation. But, for the point in hand, it is important to highlight now that these discourses work as mutually reinforcing ‘aggravators’ of the ‘position of inferiority of the migrant group’ (Simai and Baeninger 2015: 218). Similar forms of these discourses are constantly reproduced by market vendors themselves when they are talking about other Bolivian migrants. Slavery and indigeneity are not just two separate attributes given to the Bolivian community in Brazil, they are presented as being one and the same.

Slavery is a hard word. It ties present-day forms of labour exploitation to previous forms of slave work in Brazil in dehumanising tones (Vidal 2012). However, it also creates some ambiguities, coalescing the coercive element of the internationally accepted notion of forced labour with non-coercive forms of labour exploitation (Costa 2009: 10). The blurring of these lines is particularly relevant for the case of Bolivians, who tend to describe their working situation as exploitative while highlighting their own agency in the process. If they are slaves, they cannot have had any voice in ending up that way – after all, who would *choose* to be a slave?

Amongst market vendors, I find that resistance towards the ‘slave’ category comes alongside a strong emphasis on processes of social mobility (see also, Buechler 2014: 187). They were all very much aware that they worked hard – perhaps too much – for what they had achieved, and they did not see themselves victims of circumstances, but rather as the agents of their own lives. The discussion over just how much agency is there in a context of increasingly precarious living conditions, which stands behind their migratory trajectories, *is* pertinent – borrowing Alessandra Mezzadri’s (2015: n.p.) words, it is crucial to ask how much of a choice is there when one is ‘free to stitch, or starve.’ However, the emphasis on ‘slavery’ also reifies the experiences of Bolivians in Brazil and obscures how garment manufacturing becomes part of broader strategies of mobility.

Indeed, social mobility, real and aspired, was the underlying motif of many of our conversations. Most market vendors I met in Brazil were more consolidated migrants who no longer worked for third-party *oficinas* in São Paulo. Some had managed to become *oficina*-owners themselves. This is not to say their lives were less structured around the burdensome demands of fast-fashion in Brazil. Once I arrived at *Coimbra* to find Doña Julia hollow-eyed and worried. She – who now works from

home in a small *oficina* she owns with other family members – had accepted an order so large before Christmas that she had not slept properly for the whole week. And they had not yet finished. That being said, stories like hers were presented as the proof of the possibilities and successes of their migration to Brazil – buying a house, becoming an *oficina* owner, seeing their children through higher education, or escaping misery in their rural communities.

Market vending is also part of these processes of social mobility. Although most women I met at the markets in Brazil had not worked with commerce before going to Brazil, *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* were seen as spaces where women could complement their income. It is interesting to observe that, although men and women worked together in the garment industry, market vending still was an activity predominantly carried out by women in the context of the Bolivian markets in Brazil. As indicated above, this gendered character of trade is associated with the labour insertion of indigenous women in the Bolivian urban context, one which is repeated and reproduced in this international context.

5. FINAL REMARKS

In this chapter I discussed the main patterns of migration in Bolivia since the mid-1950s and highlighted how processes happening at global, regional and national scales affected local livelihoods and forms of sociability, prompting an increase in migration. I have underscored that, for those leaving the rural areas of Bolivia in the 1980s and 1990s, their insertion into the urban labour market in Bolivia and abroad has been precarious. Nonetheless, spatial and social mobilities have been interwoven and combined processes throughout the experience of market vendors.

With this background in mind, I have discussed two related outcomes of mobility. On the one hand, I have highlighted how migrants go to great lengths in order to keep their ties with the rural community of origin. This relies on the expansion of kinship and ritual ties between those who stay in the rural areas and those who leave, which might include sustained exchanges between the urban and rural spheres, with local and transnational dimensions. These networks might help migrants' insertion into the urban labour market, and they might also work as a safety net when economic gains in the city are squeezed. I have also noted that mobility can be seen to guarantee the continuity of indigenous forms of socio-spatiality. On the one hand, by keeping dual or even multiple residencies, migrants can perpetuate their sense of belonging, a sense which is often fractured through processes of mobility. On the other hand, the economic import of migrants' remittances can also help guarantee the continuity of practices within the rural environment.

I then noted that, in spite of the possibilities for continuity, mobility might also require some form of rupture with migrants' rural backgrounds. I have highlighted that successive forms of socio-spatial segregation in the Andes have resulted in a conception of indigeneity as backwards, rural, poor and feminised, as well as excluded from the body of the nation. While changes in the citizenship regime meant that mobility could engender migrants' inclusion into idealised concepts of the citizen, these were opportunities mostly available for men and generally inducing a rupture with indigenous practices and identification. Rural-urban migration, which has been mostly carried out by women, did not necessarily lead to the same results. Migrant women who joined the informal economy as street vendors or domestic workers – which have historically been racialised occupations for women – are more racialised and marginalised from the ideal citizen of nation. However racialised, their labour

insertion might provide them and their children with the possibilities of social mobility, a crucial step for inclusion in a context of neoliberal citizenship. *This inclusion, however, is riddled with ambiguities, as it also requires breaking with their rural practices in order to consolidate uncertain gains in the urban context.*

Finally, I have discussed how Bolivian migrants' insertion into the labour market in Brazil presents similar ambivalences. I discussed how the widespread associations between the migrant community and exploitative labour conditions in the garment industry in São Paulo emphasise and conflate 'indigeneity,' 'slavery' and 'Bolivianness.' If rural-urban migration within Bolivia brings migrants, men in particular, closer to the ideal of citizenship, migration to Brazil renders both men and women them full *Bolivianos*. The consolidation of this ideal of 'Bolivianness' comes with its own caveats. Paradoxically, access to the citizenship in terms of belonging to an 'imagined community' comes with the loss of actual citizenship rights, which is a particularly acute phenomenon amongst those who are undocumented in Brazil. Furthermore, being Bolivian *in Brazil* brings along other stereotypes derived from their physical appearance and the activities they perform in São Paulo. Although market vendors are aware of and recognise the existence of 'slave-like' work in the *oficinas*, they also reject the label, which they consider to alienate their agency in the migratory processes. While discussing the exploitative working conditions, market vendors also highlighted their real and aspired process of mobility engendered through their labour.

The processes of social and spatial mobility of the people I met at the markets were interwoven with political definitions of citizenship and indigeneity, even when they were not explicit in the interactions. Also emerging from our conversations, these processes were inflected along hierarchies of race and gender, which inform their strategies and affect their outcomes. The narratives of migration of the people I met at

the markets reflect continuities and ruptures brought about by mobility, but also the simultaneity of various state discourses, local forms of sociability, and global economic transformations. As will be discussed in the following chapters, the emphasis on social mobility is deeply related to how market women see their work and their identity. While these narratives emphasise their autonomy and agency, they also reinforce intersecting inequalities along gender, origins, race, and class lines, which do not always benefit market vendors themselves.

***Four.* Market vending and women's work**

1. INTRODUCTION

Doña Saturnina holds a small post at a busy avenue of *La 16* from where she sells *refrescos*, bottled water and countless types of sweets – a very different business than the sea of car accessories and sound systems which dominated that part of the market. On a visit, I asked her how she described the importance of her work at the market for her family and household. She promptly told me that she *did not work*. Doña Saturnina said she needed to take care of her children – all of whom happened to be aged over 16 – and, occasionally, her grandchildren as well, leaving her with no time for work. Furthermore, it was also not her business to provide for the family. That was, after all, the role of men. Women should stay at home, taking care of family members and the house itself. When I asked her if she did not think she was also ‘providing for her family’ with the income from market sales, she shrugged. For her, this was not ‘work’ but a market post her father had passed on to her.

Doña Saturnina was not the only one to present market vending as ‘non-work;’ in fact, a certain ambiguity permeated the women’s descriptions of their work and income as market vendors, if it was seen as work at all. This uncertainty around the status of market vending is not a feature shared exclusively by the women I met at *La 16*, *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*. Cecilie Ødegaard (2010: 131) also observes that many

women she met in Peru presented themselves as unemployed, when they actually worked as traders and *contrabandistas* (smugglers). The more I talked to Doña Saturnina and other women about their work at the markets, the less clear their understanding of ‘work’ appeared to me.

Feminist research has underscored and criticised constructs around the definition of work, seen to be based on a Eurocentric sexual division of labour founded upon the separation between the ‘home’ and the ‘work’ spheres (England and Lawson 2015: 25). This body of research has for long claimed that the divide does not actually describe the situations of millions of women around the globe. This constructed divide, furthermore, contributes to undervaluing the work done by women, who are presented as only able to perform certain types of jobs (Davis 2000; England and Lawson 2015). In this sense, women’s activities at the market could seem, at first, to be easily cast aside as some form of ‘woman’s work,’ as it could be seen as in continuity with domestic duties that consistently fall upon women in Bolivia, in Brazil and, in fact, in many other places in the world.

The understandings that the women I met at the markets had of their own labour seemed to be informed by, as well as to contradict different gendered divisions of labour. On the one hand, even when market vending was generally belittled as a form of *work* by the vendors themselves, market women also placed a great importance on the income this activity generated. In some cases, these led women to become the actual ‘breadwinners’ of their household. On the other hand, most of the women were also required to meet their as housewives and mothers. While in some cases men and women worked together at the markets, many market women often revealed to be overworked and overwhelmed by domestic and professional duties. This was true not only in Andean Bolivia, but also amongst the women I met in Brazil, where many

worked beside their male relatives at *oficinas de costura*. In Brazil and in Bolivia, market vending was, for most women, an extra source of income as well as an opportunity to exert and expand their autonomy inside and in relation to the household. At the same time, balancing their lives between that activity, other jobs and continued domestic responsibilities seemed to exhaust much of this acquired autonomy, not rarely reverting exiguous economic profits into unstable social and gender gains.

Underneath market women's understanding of labour were competing yet mutually enforcing ideas of how gender(ed) relations are reproduced and transformed. This is also a result of the trajectories bringing these women to work at *La 16*, *Kantuta* or *Coimbra*, which involved much more than just crossing physical and geopolitical borders through their processes of domestic and international migration. Spatial mobility contributes to the dissolution of borders that are portrayed as integral to someone's worldviews, revealing that divides once thought to be fundamental give way to forms that are neither completely reducible to their origins nor easily distinguishable amongst themselves (Blumtritt 2012: 3). This means that whilst on the move, these women were subjected to new constraints and possibilities to exercise their capacities and fulfil their aspirations – or not. Mobility, through space and social hierarchies, is part of the processes through which these women question, consolidate, or jeopardise intersecting power hierarchies.

In order to address this process, I use the following quote by Andrew Canessa as an initial instigation. According to the author, gender differences in the *rural* Andes 'are less based on what men and women are and more based on what they do' (Canessa 2006a: 107). While Canessa presents this in contrast to a form of gendering based on ascriptive features that unfold into a sexual division of labour, *I argue this is also the case in the context of these urban street markets and of the Andean women who work*

in them. This is not so much a case of the predominance of rural notions of complementarity over urban forms of compartmentation between productive and reproductive activities, which are gendered (masculine/feminine) and spatialised (public/private). Both complementarity and compartmentation are present, simultaneously reinforcing and contradicting one another, in the constitution of how social roles are gendered and expected to be fulfilled – at times to the benefit of market women, but usually not so much.

This chapter is organised as follows. After this introduction, I discuss how agricultural labour serves as a benchmark, both for defining ‘proper personhood’ in the context of Andean rural communities and for an urban division of labour that is as gendered as it is gendering. I then discuss the presence of men in the urban street markets, in order to highlight the presence of overlapping understandings of a gender division of labour. In this vein, I problematise the assumption of complementarity by highlighting unbalances that unfold from women’s accumulative attributions, which combine the expectation of complying with ideals of being a housewife and the need for them to provide for the household financially. Next, I discuss that this double burden simultaneously connects and disrupts the socio-spatial division between domestic-public and reproductive-productive labour. This breach is present not only in the public marketplace, but also within these women’s homes, as the domestic environment is also a space of production. Finally, I highlight that the economic gains obtained from the market do not necessarily revert into personal autonomy, doing so through a discussion of gendered relations within the household and the general appraisal of women’s capacity to ‘make ends meet.’

2. LABOUR MAKES A PERSON

The in-betweenness of markets is present not only in the identity of market vendors and in their intermediary role, positioned as they are between producers and consumers. It also manifests itself in the women's understandings of their work as market vendors and how this activity and its outcomes relates to gendered roles within the household, as well as to their trajectories and aspirations of spatial and social mobility. As mentioned above, there was a widespread perception that market vending constituted a form of 'non-work.' As a first step into unveiling why this perception comes about, I start this section by discussing a form of labour that was, on the contrary, consistently classified as work: agriculture.

'Working the land,' whether for subsistence or for market-vending, was overwhelmingly cast as work amongst market vendors. In the rural Andes, agricultural labour constitutes an important part of the exchanges between indigenous communities and the animate landscape, in which 'humans feed the mountain through agricultural labor and ritual, and the land feeds them crop' (Bold 2017: 120). In this sense, notes Ødegaard (2008: 256, 242), the ethos of work is 'connected to Andean notions of fertility of work, community and social person in rural areas,' where fertility is 'seen as created and maintained through a logic of reciprocity, circulation and exchange.' 'To make the earth bear fruit' – to borrow the words of Olivia Harris (2000) – is, furthermore, a responsibility equally shared by men and women, who are required to participate in seeding, harvesting, and husbandry. Although specific activities within these larger processes *are* gendered, it is generally accepted that this is done on the basis of equally valuable roles for the community (Harris 2000; Ødegaard 2010).

Accordingly, the gendered division of tasks in the rural Andes is underlined by a notion of complementarity and unity which broadly constitutes the social, political, and

economic relationships in the region (Harris 2000: 70). This is also reflected in the centrality of the conjugal pairing, known as *chachawarmi* – a composition of the Aymara words *chacha* (meaning man or husband) and *warmi* (meaning woman or wife). The marital couple is the essential threshold to achieving full personhood (*jaqi*), as well as the symbolic representation of the overarching Andean notion of complementarity (Canessa 2012a; Maclean 2014: 139). As such, agricultural labour is a core element of what makes one a *proper person* (*jaqi*), but the specific tasks performed are also central for constituting one as a man or as a woman (Canessa 2006a:107).

Other tasks within the household and the community are also differently allocated amongst women and men, but, similar to the case of agriculture, they are both seen to mutually complement each another as they are considered as equally valuable activities. Some examples are husbandry, which is done by men and women depending on the type of cattle owned and reared; weaving, which is also carried out by men and women, but with different techniques and styles; and political deliberation – a man’s task – and the control of the domestic consumption – chiefly done by women (Harris 2000). Bearing in mind that processes of migration contribute to incorporate rural understandings of labour to the urban sphere, two points deserve further consideration in the context of the markets. Firstly, the separation between work and non-work constitutes the basis of ‘proper’ personhood. As such, it serves as a normative guideline for assessing certain activities in relation to others. Secondly, rural forms of gender complementarity also affect how urban labour is gendered, as well as how gender is produced through labour in the urban context.

The role of agriculture in the definition and assessment of labour can be seen through the conflicted relationship between Doña Rocío and her neighbours at *La 16*, Doña Ramona and Doña Carmen. The latter took almost every opportunity to downplay

Doña Rocío on account of her rural origins. However, the same rural origins were cast under a different light when the topic was ‘work.’ Doña Ramona and Doña Carmen showed a great respect for Doña Rocío when talking about her labour outside of the market. She kept a small plot of land which provided enough for herself and her husband, with additional cash flowing in from vending citruses – which she bought from a wholesaler when she arrived at the market – and from her husband’s inconsistent income. Even if her lack of urban credentials subjected her to criticism from her colleagues, Doña Rocío, who bore the unquestionable markers of a hard-working peasant in her body, was admired on the basis that she *did work*.

Market vending was never presented as work by any of these three women, but it was not the sole activity figuring in their ‘non-work’ category. These other activities, nonetheless, shared a common denominator, made evident during a seemingly unrelated conversation about me. After all, I was not the only person curious about other people’s lives. The three neighbours constantly asked me details about my life in Brazil and in the UK, and they also asked me to comment on the general opinion Brazilians held of Bolivians. Frequently, they asked me to illustrate these stories with pictures of where I lived and studied and from my friends and relatives. As I showed them a picture of my parents they were surprised that they did not look as *viejitos* (old) as they expected: what do these persons do for a living? When I said they were engineers they unanimously agreed that my parents did not work – as I, a researcher, also did not. Research and office work, undoubtedly middle-class activities, were distant from the physicality of labour as they agreed upon, made visible not only through the callouses on Doña Rocío’s hands, but also through the materiality of the products she got from the land – even though these were not the same produce she sold at the market.

Figure 10: Doña Rocío's citrusces

Doña Rocío arrives early at El Alto to buy the citrusces she sells at *La 16*. Sitting on the ground, her post is right beside Doña Ramona's. The hat – a 'men's hat,' I was told – was mine, and she asked for it as a gift to her husband. El Alto, Bolivia, 2016.

Source: The author.

If labour – by that meaning agricultural labour – is an essential part of what makes one a *jaqi*, by opposition the exploitation of this labour is also part of what defines their Other: the *q'ara*. The word '*q'ara*,' used in reference to the non-indigenous, urban dwelling populations, literally means 'bare' or 'peeled,' and portrays white people as stripped of moral and cultural content (Canessa 2012a: 250). The term, however, also is also used to portray *q'aras* as parasites, who feed on the fruits of indian labour (Iamamoto 2015). The construction of the *q'ara* as the *jaqi*'s alterity bears an important message in terms of *what* defines labour and *who* performs labour. '*Q'aras* are despicable,' writes Sue Iamamoto (2015: 89), 'because they were unable to produce food and, therefore, were dependent on peasant workforce for all their activities.' Being simultaneously dependent on and exploitative of actual labour, *q'aras* do not need to work. As the division between the spaces of production and consumption ideally

superposes that between rural and urban socio-spatialities, work is consequently defined, from the perspective of the *jaqi*, along these same divides.

That being said, the type of activities my parents and I do could clearly classify as *q'ara*, middle-class and urbanite, but the same is not easily extensible to market vending. All the market vendors I met at *Kantuta*, *Coimbra* and *La 16* were either first- or second-generation rural migrants, and none of them could be regarded as *q'ara* – not even those who presented themselves as *mestizas*. Market vending is not so much of a *q'ara* activity as an activity largely carried out by migrant rural indigenous and mixed-race *women* in the urban context. However, particularly in the case of vendors who were not selling their own produce at the markets, breaking the ties with the land could contribute to advance the idea that they were not *labouring* while working at the markets.

3. WOMEN AND MEN BEHIND THE STANDS

If this was the case amongst women, what were the role of men at the markets? Women did constitute the majority of market vendors but men also participated in the everyday life of these marketplaces. In many cases, men and women worked side by side. In these situations, it was possible to observe how certain activities within the market were also distributed along gender lines. While there is a case to be made for complementarity here, it also happens that, at least in the context of the markets, it was possible to observe some forms of gender imbalances that fall into a sexual division of labour. In this section, I analyse how work at the market is gendered.

At the markets in Brazil, where I had more contact with men working behind market stands, I could follow many occasions of men and women working side by side more closely. For instance, Doña Ofelia's husband, Don Nelson, was frequently present

in their busy stand at *Coimbra*. Although he would frequently help her tending to the customers' demands, Ofelia was the one who prepared the *refrescos* at home and who pressed most of the rapidly selling orange juice, while also having to clean the used glasses and deal with the money. Also at *Coimbra*, the men of the Condori family were always present at the Saturday market. They drove the vans bringing the products, the stands, and the family to *Coimbra*. Once there, they would busy themselves with assembling the structures of the stands. They were, however, utterly unfamiliar with how the products should be laid out and their prices. Any customer's query mistakenly directed at them was rapidly passed on to the nearest woman. During market hours, they would often rest under the tables, while the women of the family dealt with selling-related activities, also keeping a close eye at the children. Knowing that the family was noted for their hard work, I assume that those few hours of rest might have been needed. But also knowing that both the men and the women in the family worked every day of the week – apart from Sundays, which they tried as best as they could to reserve for religious observance and family time – I also pondered why they did not share more of the activities at the market.

Men's presence in the markets was informed by a pattern of gendered division of labour which, albeit flexible, followed the lines of the type of activity performed, the scale of the commerce and the nature of the products, as already indicated in chapter two. While the Andean marketplace is overwhelmingly a space made for and by women, men are obviously also present as stand-owners and employees, shoppers, state officials, security officers, passers-by, tourists and guides, porters and lorry drivers, amongst others. That being said, regarding the work behind the stands, in *La 16* men were largely represented in the car parts' business, domestic appliances, electronics

and the stands selling DVDs and computer games, while women were the absolute majority of traders in food, produce and livestock, cosmetics, and clothes.

In *La 16*, many men worked on their own or by other men – such as Braian, who was an employee at a stand selling kitchen appliances (wholesale and retail) beside a younger male co-worker. Many others shared a stand with a woman. At *Kantuta* and at *Coimbra*, most Bolivian men were in the business of selling DVDs and meals – never as cooks but as *voceros* inviting the customers to come in – as well as being the absolute majority of the hairdressers. I had little interaction with men working as vendors in Bolivia, but in Brazil I interacted with some men who worked either on their own or with other male employees. For instance, Don Felipe also sold freshly pressed orange juice at *Coimbra* from a small stand not so far from Doña Ofelia's, and Roberto sold *chicha* at *Kantuta*. Ramón was in the business of selling dried food imported from Bolivia at *Kantuta*, where he shared the stand with an older man whom he employed to work there when Ramón went on his trade trips.

A form of division of labour along gender lines at the markets has been also underscored in the literature. In Peru, Florence Babb (1989: 91-92) notes that the presence of men in the marketplace is usually concentrated in the sale of manufactured goods, while women are the overwhelming majority in agricultural produce and food. Linda Seligmann (2004) also refers to labour segmentation along gender lines in the markets of Cuzco, Peru, noting how men are most frequently associated with long-distance trade, wholesale trade and transportation services – as porters, as well as lorry and bus drivers. For Bolivia, Nico Tassi's (2017) work provides a wide range of examples of long-distance, large-scale trade, also in its majority performed by men. For the specific case of *La 16*, Simon Yampara, Saúl Mamani and Norah Calancha (2011: 78) underscore that men and children undertake maintenance work, such as

cleaning and cargo loading, while their wives and mothers are responsible for the actual sales.

The historical association between market vending and indigenous, migrant women in the cities has been described as deriving from the division of labour within the rural community. There, women's management of the domestic purse and household consumption has been taken to provide them with a greater leverage for bartering and vending food produce (Harris 2000: 173; Ødegaard 2018: 187). Women were thus 'prepared' to perform tasks that turned out handy for urban trading – such as handling food – and had the advantage to be more relatable to customers who, in turn, largely comprised women. Furthermore, skewed patterns of land inheritance within rural communities disfavoured women's ownership of land, contributing to pushing them towards the cities (Seligmann 1989: 704). While these women faced stereotypes and hardships once in the city, market vending and domestic service were viable (and socially acceptable) options for these women to make a living (Gill 1993).

More than providing women with the background for entering the markets, rural divisions of labour also had a bearing on how women's labour in the urban context was perceived. In her already-mentioned study of a peasant community near Cuzco, Marisol de la Cadena (1995) noted how land tenure and family structures were relevant to how members of this rural community understood the work performed by rural women in the city. De la Cadena points to two central practices underlying these assumptions. She underscores, on the one hand, how using the plough was a considerable marker of 'work' in the rural context. On the other hand, she notes that the valorisation of urban activities and the skills thereby acquired created new layer of signification of 'work' amongst those who migrated to the cities.

For de la Cadena, both practices contribute to undervalue indigenous women's work in relation to that of men. In the rural communities, women were prevented from using the plough – a traditionally masculine activity, as also noted by Olivia Harris (2000) – because it was seen as detrimental to their reproductive functions. On the other hand, women's activities in the city – i.e. market vending – did not provide them with any of the political and economic accolades that activities performed by men were able to offer (de la Cadena 1995). As a result, market-vending activities were devalued for two reasons. First, selling agricultural produce was seen as but a derivation of the masculine, physically straining work with the plough. Secondly, market vending was described as failing to imbue women with the urban skills and economic means required to effect their passage from *indias* to *urban mestizas* (de la Cadena 1995: 341-2). Following this argument, women's work at the markets was considered 'non-work,' based on the idea that it was no more than the re-application of women's domestic abilities and that it did not provide economic rewards, since incomes were usually reverted into the satisfaction of primary needs almost instantly.

The idea, explored by de la Cadena, that labour performed by women constitutes a form of non-work, relies not so much on Andean notions of complementarity as it does on a sexual division of labour that is part and parcel of the development of capitalism – one between reproductive and productive activities, respectively assigned to women and to men. 'This separation [was] bound up with the rise of a domestic ideology,' according to which "'work" became socially constructed as waged activity in the "public" sphere of capitalist production and "non-work" as the activities in the feminized "private" household sphere (like providing a comforting refuge for waged workers)' (England and Lawson 2005: 78). Through this process, it became acceptable and expected of women to stay within the domestic domain, where labour remains

unpaid and private, whereas the public sphere was the domain of productive, waged labour performed by men (Federici 2014: 75).

The devaluation of women's labour at the marketplace could be seen, therefore, as resulting from the intermeshing of rural and urban forms of defining work which, combined, *did not favour women*. In spite of *chachawarmi*, the continuation of a division of labour based on community-assigned gender roles did not mean the establishment of equality between genders once in the urban context. Rather, it contributed to consolidate a pattern of devaluation of women's labour based on a capitalist socio-spatial division of labour along gender lines. As such, while women's entry in the markets was facilitated by their chores in the rural community, their subsequent work as vendors reinforced a pattern of labour relations that saw domestic activities not as an equally valuable role, but as second-nature to women.

Examples from the literature on the Andes seem, at first, to substantiate the argument that market work *can be seen as* a continuation of domestic activities. In many cases, market vending is an activity not only compatible with, but also frequently concomitant to the continuation of domestic responsibilities (Peredo 2001: 53; Babb 1989: 53).¹ At *La 16*, it was common to see market women who bring along their *wawas* to the market, a point highlighted by Lynn Sikkink (2001) in her analysis of market women selling traditional medicine in Bolivia. None of the women I met in Bolivia had children small enough to require constant looking after, but some of the vendors would recall taking their suckling babies wrapped in an *awayu* to their back when travelling around the country to buy goods intended for sale at the markets, or bringing their children along with them to the stand on market days.

¹ See the volume edited by Linda Seligmann (2001b) for other examples beyond the Andes.

At *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*, children often accompanied their mothers to the markets. Doña Luciana's youngest daughter would almost always be with her mother at *Kantuta* on Sundays. She and other children would play together around the big inflatable bouncer located at Kantuta Square on market days, while Doña Luciana – like other mothers – would proceed with the vending without much worry. Doña Julia, who brought her four-year-old occasionally to *Kantuta* (but never to *Coimbra*), kept a closer eye on her daughter, who would often be taking a nap or playing underneath the stand's table. At *Coimbra*, Doña Marta usually brought her younger son, in whom she tried (largely in vain) to instil some interest in market vending. Amongst the members of the Condori family, half of the siblings had young children. While one of the sisters-in-law, Christina, found the market environment inappropriate for her daughter, the other, Linda, always brought her two children along. They happily helped their mum organise the stand and knew most – if not all – products' prices by heart. The Condori's eldest daughter, Doña Simona – who had an awkward relation with some of the members of the family – also brought her three-year-old son to *Coimbra*. They two of them were there even on non-market days, for Simona was one of the few vendors who kept a stand at Coimbra street during the week. On these days, he could be seen playing freely, laying on the ground and walking about unaccompanied.

Figure 11: Myriad: Doña Julia's Stand

One of the many stands at *Kantuta*, selling myriad products from safety pins, to phone cards, to souvenirs, to candy. São Paulo, Brazil, 2016

Source: The author.

However, as noted in the introduction, the analysis of market vending through the divide between productive and reproductive labour can lead to reinforcing the supposition that women's work is exclusively reproductive and thus second-nature, rather than to questioning the validity of the divide in the first place. Criticising de la Cadena's take on the issue, Ødegaard (2010: 131) attributes this assumption to the long-held association between market vending, on the one hand, and the satisfaction of primary needs and the selling of foodstuff, on the other. In my research, however, as well as in Ødegaard's, women were involved in myriad sectors of activity, applying skills and knowledges that are not necessarily an extension of those required within the household (see also Maclean 2013; Müller 2017). The validity of the claims by de la Cadena also seem to hit a wall when considering the importance of women's economic contributions to the household beyond supplementing subsistence items (see also Ødegaard 2010: 131; Weismantel 2001: 142-5). De la Cadena's (1995) chapter provides crucial elements for the debate about the feminisation of the rural indigenous

community, as well as for the indianisation of rural women in the urban sphere. However, it can also lead to essentialising women's roles within the household and beyond it. The casting of market vending as 'non-work' is nestled in mutually reinforcing systems for the division of labour, but the end-result is not that women are engaged exclusively in activities considered to be *reproductive*. Rather, at the markets – and also at home – these women blur the boundaries that mark this divide, simultaneously reproducing and questioning it through their labour.

4. A WOMAN'S BURDEN

When I returned to Bolivia for a second round of fieldwork, I re-encountered Doña Saturnina at her stand. Being over two hours late, she said she had no time to talk on that day, so perhaps I should leave. I offered to help her, which she did not accept. She did, however, change her mind about sending me away and told me to have a sit on a small bench she had for her customers. She wanted to talk and sat beside me. She was tired, she said, tired of having so much to do on her own. Particularly on Thursdays – and that day was a Thursday – Doña Saturnina felt lonely at the market. Her children would only come along to help her with sales on Sundays. She felt her activities were too burdensome and that saddened her. She was overwhelmed with her responsibilities at home as well, and even there her husband would never give her a hand. She had to take the grandchildren to day-care, keep the house tidy, do the laundry, cook, and, as though that were not enough, she also had the market. That and, of course, the shop she kept on the ground floor of her house – something she had never mentioned before when she said she did not work. She wanted to sell her post at *La 16* so she could spend more time with her children and grandchildren, but she could not afford to lose the

income it provided. Even though she did not consider that to be *work*, she knew, after all, that she *worked hard*.

The validity of the model according to which women are assigned to the domestic environment – where they should fulfil the role of full-time housewives – while men are expected go to the public sphere – to provide for the home as the main breadwinners – must be taken with a pinch of salt. While certain gender ideologies might contribute to reservations against the participation of women in the paid labour market, it is also the case that economic needs might impose themselves over the satisfaction of a given social ethos. This is not only true for the case of Latin American women, as it is also a defining feature of capitalism in the ‘West’ from its genesis. As Marxist feminists have already underscored, women’s participation in the capitalist economy as workers meant that they were, from the onset, ‘as dispossessed as men but ... [with] almost no access to wages, thus being forced into a condition of chronic poverty, economic dependence and invisibility as workers’ (Federici 2014: 75). Women’s labour, even when performing equally as men, is ‘laden with cultural determinations’ which lead them to earn but a fraction of what men make for the same categories, or to become pigeonholed into ‘female occupations,’ such as domestic service and care-related activities (Davis 2000: 164). This form of sexual division of labour, weighted by socio-historic specificities, contributes to the devaluation of the work of women both at home and outside it.

There was more behind the women’s downplaying of their labour than just the association between market vending and activities perceived as being almost ‘*second nature*’ to women. Rather, there is a widespread assumption that women’s work is *secondary* regardless of its economic import. As such, the domestic division of labour between men and women might contribute to a general depreciation of the work women

undertake as market vendors. Nevertheless, these types of ‘women’s work’ – more flexible, informal activities – provide those who perform it some leverage in times when formal labour becomes restricted. As men are more affected by shortages in the formal labour market, women come to play a crucial role in alleviating dire economic conditions within the household. In many cases, women become not the ‘secondary provider,’ but the actual ‘breadwinners’ of the family.

Market vending thus offers women the possibility both of keeping with their domestic responsibilities and of providing financially for themselves and their family. This is done in ways which promote a break with – rather than confirm – the socio-spatial division between the domestic-reproductive and the public-productive spheres, in which women are ascribed the role of providing *care* while men have to perform the role of the sole *income* provider for the household (see also Babb 1989: 53; Scarborough 2010: 242). And there lies the possibility of market vending to allow women more personal autonomy, on the one hand, and to provide care and income for their families, on the other (Seligmann 2001a: 5). Lynn Sikkink (2001) illustrates well how the intermingling between the spheres of the domestic and the public and of the reproductive and the productive are constitutive to the marketplace, in particular, and to the lives of these women, more broadly. According to her,

due to both difficult economic conditions and the *porosity* of the marketplace as a workplace, the two ‘sites’ [‘house’ and ‘marketplace’] *overlap*: household activities and forms of exchange can be found in the marketplace, and the business and ideas from the house are transported into the marketplace [...]. In the marketplace, vendors reveal this intersection in the way they hold family and business together by intermingling the two (Sikkink 2001: 2, my emphasis).

The intermingling of activities that takes place at the markets allows for more than an overlapping of spaces, extending to the ‘[creation of] new spaces of action as well as new languages and modes of expression’ (Ødegaard 2010: 131). This becomes

particularly visible when analysing the identities of market vendors – as will be discussed with further detail in chapter five – or even the emergence of the markets as a space ‘in-between,’ as noted in chapter two. Street markets offer a unique vantage point for analysing the emergence of these new forms. But they are not, however, the only spaces where the validity of superposing dualities between productive-public-masculine and reproductive-private-feminine are challenged.

The ‘porosity’ described by Sikkink in the quote above is also constitutive of the domestic environment of most women I met at the markets. Most of the market vendors I met in Brazil and in Bolivia had other occupations beyond the markets and, amongst them, many worked from home – or lived at their workplace. The domestic sphere *is*, in most cases, *also a productive sphere* for many of the women I met at the markets. Amongst the women I met in Brazil, this was exactly the case for those working at the *oficinas de costura* in São Paulo. It is worth highlighting here that although I did not visit their dwellings, the descriptions provided by them – and, under a very critical light, presented in the media – emphasised this very sense of permeable borders, as the home encompassed both productive and reproductive relations. In the *oficinas*, bedrooms became the space of family living – shared by workers of the same family, friends or even strangers – while in the common areas meals were served and garments were sewn.

Doña Ofelia and Don Nelson, for instance, were living at the *oficina* where they also worked. As Doña Ofelia often underscored, having a room at an *oficina* was the best way to save some money while living in Brazil. Doña Julia and her husband also lived and worked at the same place. In their case, however, they rented a house that was an *oficina* and doubled as a home for themselves, for his sister and brother-in-law, and for the children of the two couples. The Condori family owned two houses, the

country house in the outskirts of Itu – a city about 100 kilometres west of São Paulo – and their urban dwelling in the *favela* São Remo, in the western area of São Paulo. The entire family divided their time between the countryside and the city (see chapter three). Their house in São Paulo was where most of the garment production was concentrated, but both houses were equipped with the required machinery in case they had to fulfil a bigger order. Furthermore, the agricultural products they sold at the herbs' stand in *Coimbra* were exclusively produced by them in Itu.

In Bolivia, many women similarly worked from home. Doña Isabel, the combative coca retailer from *La 16*, also tailored *polleras* and shawls – ‘upon request, only’ as written in her business card – from home. She would frequently bring some knitting needles and wool to the market and I would sometimes find her having a nap after lunch with some half-made piece sitting on her lap. These knitted pieces were also intended for sale and, although she worked on them when the coca sales at the market were on the lower side, she never sold her clothes from *La 16*. At another end of the market, Doña Ramona and Doña Carmen also worked as seamstresses, from home, and produced the fleece garments they, conversely, sold at the market.

The work performed by these women both at the space of the home and at the market space supports the assertion that market women constantly engage with a variety of activities which transgress spatial and gendered divides. More than a confirmation of the status of women as responsible exclusively for care and reproductive tasks, market women are constantly involved with productive activities as well. As made visible through the conflict experienced by Doña Saturnina, market vending can be compatible with, but not reducible to reproductive labour, and it can even conflict with the roles ‘expected’ for a woman to perform within the household.

This is further complicated by the fact that the domestic space is not exclusively the realm of feminine, reproductive labour.

Figure 12: Doña Ramona's fleece garments



At *La 16*, Doña Ramona sells the fleece garment she produces at home. El Alto, Bolivia, 2016.
Source: The author.

Another part of the dilemma expressed by Doña Saturnina, however, reveals that the conflicts with this sexual division of labour are also expressed through a double burden on women, who are expected to provide financially, but also provide care for their families. While she would like to relinquish her post at the market, she could not afford to do so. If the status of market vending as work is ambiguous, the importance of their incomes from the market is not: for Doña Saturnina and other women I met at the markets, the contribution of market sales was presented as indispensable for the

women and their families. Women thus experienced a clash of positions within their household, having to fulfil their obligations as housewives and their roles as actual ‘breadwinners,’ blurring the boundaries between what constituted a woman’s duty in the house and outside of it. As noted, market revenues could even render women the biggest earners in their household.

A combination of factors contributes to define gendered roles. On the one hand, there is the understanding that men and women complement one another as a couple, fulfilling different – yet equally valued – roles and responsibilities in relation to the household and the community. On the other hand, men and women are expected to fulfil different positions within the household, providing care or income to the family. These different takes on how roles become gendered within the household are not necessarily compatible, but neither are they mutually exclusive. As seen above, this combination leads to a system of mutually reinforcing tendencies that do not favour women, particularly the poorest ones. Having to comply with expectations of care and money, the lives of market women are marked by a porosity of the domestic and public spheres, as well as of productive and reproductive labour, which is felt at the markets and at homes. As discussed below, market women reveal tense dynamics themselves and with the men in their lives, highlighting how gender unbalances are felt in the domestic sphere.

5. FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS, HUSBANDS AND WIVES

For many of the women I met at the markets, working away from home could be seen not just as a burden, as described by Doña Saturnina, but also as a possibility of escaping a harmful domestic environment. Repeatedly, relations between market women and the men in their lives – fathers, brothers, children, and especially partners

– were permeated by violence (physical, emotional, and economic) and abandonment. Cases of continued domestic violence and abuse are widely recorded in the literature about market women in the Andes (see, for instance, Babb 1989:138; Ødegaard 2010: 136-9; Peredo 2001: 125-33; Seligmann 2004: Chapter 3). These analyses punctuate, on the one hand, the opposing yet complementary depictions of the suffering woman – akin to the *mater dolorosa* of *marianismo* – and the aggressive behaviour of men – the underlying definition of *machismo*.² On the other hand, they also underscore how there simultaneously is a conflict and a mutual reinforcement between rural Andean notions of gender complementarity and the urban, middle-class expectations of womanhood.

For some, personal experiences of domestic violence traced back to childhood, enmeshed with memories of their lives in a rural community. Doña Julia and Esther, whom I met at *Coimbra*, shared similar narratives of their fathers spanning over their whole childhood. Both men, I was told, had been community leaders at the *provincia*. From my own experience, meetings of indigenous communities' and labour unions' leaderships are often lengthy, with coca helping to keep members awake – and they are mostly men – and alcohol – beer or straight, pure alcohol – keeping them merrier. Both products also have important ritual significance, and libations to the Pachamama are poured on the ground during the meetings, as well as prior to, during, and after events of political relevance. For Esther and Doña Julia, these meetings were to blame for their fathers' *borrachera* (drunkenness), which was, in turn, responsible for the abuses inflicted to themselves, their siblings and mothers.

² *Marianismo* is also discussed in chapter one. See also Evelyn Stevens (1973), and for a critical take on her work, see Marisa Navarro (2012). For *machismo*, see below.

Discussions about the nature of domestic violence in the Latin American context invariably refer to *machismo* as the aggressive, exaggerated form of masculinity. The term, while extensively used in common parlance by men and women alike across the region, has also raised red flags in academia, highlighting how the term can be racially charged, filled with stereotypes about Latin American men's behaviour (see Melhuus and Stølen 2002; Navarro 2012). In particular, studies emphasising the nuances of masculinity across the region, and, conversely, the prejudice-laden attribution of the term to rural, black, and/or indigenous men, contribute to provide strong criticism to the term (Wade 2009: 229). While the experiences narrated above might unintentionally corroborate with the stereotype, as noted, it must be highlighted how practical understandings of *machismo* are woven into the fabric of these women's domestic relations. *Machismo*, rather than a privilege of over-confident or economically and sexually frustrated Latin American men imposed on women and other men, is read here as how sexism is commonly understood and experienced in the area.

Regarding the Andes, the debate around *machismo* in academia, as well as within feminist and indigenous social movements, has then focused on its origins, either as a colonial imposition or as a native phenomenon (see Burman 2011; Maclean 2014; Paulson 2002). Beyond the need to *decolonise* Western ideologies around, or to *deconstruct* indigenous forms of gender relations, the literature has noted two coexistent forms of gender dynamics. On the one hand, it has highlighted how gendered relations in the rural community can be unfavourable to women in spite of *chachawarmi*. On the other hand, it has indicated how *machismo* relates to particular urban, middle-class dynamics in the domestic sexual division of labour, as discussed above (Bastia 2011: 1520; Ødegaard 2010: 146).

Ødegaard (2010: 142), for instance, highlights how, in a context of spatial and social mobility, *machismo* is reproduced through the interplay between notions of Andean complementarity and middle-class ideas about gender. For the author, these processes are ambiguous, simultaneously contradicting and mutually reinforcing one another. She notes that, while some studies attribute to domestic violence and abuse the consolidation of hierarchy inside the kin group, her research points elsewhere. For Ødegaard (2010: 137-8), precarious labour conditions contribute to building up frustration amongst men who fail to fulfil the role of the breadwinner. This, she adds, is more strongly felt amongst families aspiring to live up to middle-class expectations than amongst those more closely tied to the structuring bonds of the rural community. As such, broader labour dynamics seem to impact domestic gender dynamics more than the maintenance of rural-urban ties across and within kin.

These ambiguous dynamics of gender relations were particularly present in the stories of abandonment. When I asked Doña Isabel if she was married, she smiled and glanced at me from above her spectacles and asked me what I thought, and I immediately knew the answer before she could say it herself. She said she could not care less about his whereabouts and was better off alone – and I believed her. Similarly, Doña Helga made her objection towards men a continuous starting point for puns and gags. Countless times she repeated that I should *never* get married, for men would just use women and then exchange them for someone younger, while the women were left behind with children but neither money nor help from the men. She suggested men were to have fun with, not to share a life. She constantly poured scorn on her husband, who had left her some years prior and with whom she had a ‘complicated’ relationship.

The narratives presented by both women underscored their independence in relation to the men that had left them. Whilst not framing it in terms of *machismo*, their

attitude was, conversely, nonchalant about how they reacted to the type of behaviour one could expect from men. In *La 16*, women were much more upfront about their reservations towards men (both in general and in particular), even if this was not imbued with a straightforward rejection of heterosexual relations with them – a point raised by Weismantel (2001). More broadly, the attitude of Doña Helga and Doña Isabel towards their former partners can be seen as illustrating the stereotype of a *cholita* as challenging the norms of ‘proper’ women’s behaviour as it usually illustrated by the pious *marianista* woman of Stevens.

Other interactions would, in fact, show me a very different understanding of what *cholita*’s independence from men was exercised at the marketplace. Talking to Doña Helga at *La 16* as she tried to sell me a ring – ‘buy it!’ – I noticed a small tattoo on her left hand. In Bolivia, I had never seen a woman with a tattoo on that very spot before. There, I had come across many men (especially indigenous men) who displayed a similar print on their left hand. It comes as a legacy of their time in the army, generally indicating the barracks where they were stationed – a minute, yet virile token of patriotism stamped to their bodies. Laughing loudly, Doña Helga told me she had this tattoo for a simple reason – she is a *machista* woman.

Andrew Canessa (personal communication) suggested that Doña Helga’s *machismo* could be read as a conflation between this term and the Aymara word *urquchi*, meaning a ‘manly woman,’ who has the ‘physical strength and ability to perform male tasks’ (Canessa, 2012a:226). As Florence Babb (1989: 134) underscores, market women are required to have physical strength and also strength of character, traits usually presented as masculine. For Cecilie Ødegaard (2010: 142), who also came across market women presenting themselves as *machistas*, this could be seen as ‘an interpretation of behaviours as well as qualities related to responsibility and

independence, work and income, but also to drinking habits, jealousy and particularly outgoing, dominating or aggressive modes of behaviour.’

The aggressiveness of their vending tactics, the fact that they work on the streets, their speech, clothing and even their sexual behaviour, draws *cholitas* closer to the other side of the gender binary, making them not only ‘less of a woman’ but also ‘more of a man.’ In my time with her, I was sure that Doña Helga’s *machismo* did not make her a male chauvinistic type of person. However, by describing herself as *machista*, she is also emphasising her capacity to provide and to fend for herself in ways that allow her a space of action beyond the expectations of womanhood tied to the domestic environment. More than that, the marketplace also constitutes a space where market vendors can build solidarity *amongst women*. According to Mary Weismantel (2001), the market is constructed as a place where women can feel free to discuss and criticise the basis that constitutes domestic life and, moreover, to transform it. Particularly amongst the *cholitas* I met in Bolivia, it seemed to be the case that the market was such a space where women not only could earn their own income, but also strengthen themselves and live their independent lives, building a network of mutual support through the *asociaciones* and shared everyday experiences.

Figure 13: ‘Buy it!’

Doña Helga's second-hand *cholita* clothes and accessories on display at *La 16*, El Alto, Bolivia. 2016. Source: The author.

While the markets do provide a space for sorority amongst women, a similar discourse of personal autonomy was not as strongly felt amongst all of the women I met in *La 16*, and in the markets in Brazil it was even less so. As detailed below, social status – a point already indicated above – as well as religion played an important role in women's narratives of their relationship with men. Differently from their *cholita* peers, market vendors in Brazil defended their aspired or acquired social mobility in terms of abiding to more middle-class representations and expectations of womanhood, and that included reaffirming a position as housewives. In Brazil, not being married was much more frowned upon than amongst the market women I met in Bolivia, to the

point that it was a source of anxiety and an object of scrutiny amongst market vendors. As a comparison, while questions about my civil status were expected, in Brazil they became a point of constant inquiry, particularly amongst the men. With regards to women, their interest in my personal life was more a natural part of our conversations both in Bolivia and in Brazil, although in the latter this was a more delicate topic to address when regarding market women's lives.

At *Coimbra*, Doña Marta told me her husband used to beat her in the past – although not any more. A self-professed *colla* from Santa Cruz, she migrated to Brazil to reunite with him, after being told that many men who went abroad ended up with a second family in the host country. Now long reunited, they no longer shared a room since she could no longer stand being too close to him, and she also felt that she needed to protect her youngest child and only daughter, with whom she then shared a room. At *Kantuta*, both Doña Clara and Doña Luciana told me that there were 'no daddies' to their children. Doña Clara, who was employed by a (male) stand owner selling arts and crafts from Bolivia for a short time after my arrival in the field, presented her single-parenthood on a positive note. The father was all but gone, but he gave her two presents in his stead: her child and, through her, Doña Clara's leave to stay in Brazil.

Doña Luciana, who owned two stands to the right of the one where Doña Clara used to work, was more elusive in her answer. One day, feeling overwhelmed by the fact that her teenage daughter had recently given birth to her first grandchild, Doña Luciana told me she missed her husband's support. She and the father of her children shared a happy life together and had managed to accumulate a considerable wealth in Brazil, where they had also met. As a couple, they owned the two stands at *Kantuta*, from where Doña Luciana worked, as well as a considerably large *oficina*, where they

hired around twenty employees and also worked during the week. Her husband, however, fell ill and needed to undergo an invasive surgery which required a long rest and care afterwards. Since someone should keep the business running, they hired a woman – who came from Bolivia – to nurse him to health. The two fell in love and he no longer wanted to be with his former wife, Doña Luciana, and their children. When they separated, he kept the *oficina* while she kept the stands at the market. This was why she needed to take up a job as a seamstress – this time, not at an *oficina*, but as a formal worker for a popular Brazilian clothing-retail company – whose wages, along with the sales at the market, constituted the whole income of the family of five. However, the money was barely enough to keep herself, her three children (two of them already in legal working age, but unemployed) and her newly-born grandchild. She was currently not receiving any pension or news from her former husband, from whom herself and the children had become estranged. While the experience itself was distressing to say the least, for Doña Luciana it was also a source of embarrassment, rather than a proud assertion that she could make do without any men, let alone her ex-husband – as was constantly underscored by Doña Helga back in *La 16*.

It is worth highlighting that, if the importance of the marital couple for defining personhood could be traced back to the rural origins of most of the women I met in Bolivia and in Brazil, in the latter case religion must also be taken into consideration. Almost all of the women had converted to Evangelical, mostly Pentecostal creeds, once in Brazil. These religions are known for professing stricter positions about the sacredness of the marital couple, as well as more conservative assignments of gender roles. Some of the members of the Condori family, for instance, had begun their transition to the Baptist church in Bolivia, but in Brazil they had come to occupy an important role within this religious community. At the moment of my fieldwork, family

relations with the church were strained, but they were still widely known for their firm adherence to the church precepts, to which members of the family and other people at *Coimbra* largely attributed the success of the family business. For the Condoris, the sacredness of marriage and the importance of god's sign of approval to it through the religious ritual was persistently emphasised in our conversations.

Most of the women, however, placed little emphasis on the institutional details of their religion. While some highlighted that the change in religion had to be accompanied by a change in behaviour – in particular, abandoning alcohol – most women were not observant and preferred to read the Bible at home than to go to church. More present in their discourses was an implied relation between their marital status and their real and/or aspired social position. In Bolivia, market vendors are faced with the negative stereotypes associated with the *cholas*, including the wickedness and disregard for (bourgeois) social mores that assign women certain spaces and social roles (see chapter five). In Brazil, Bolivian market women might not be subjected to the same type of stereotypes as their *chola* counterparts, which might favour their aspirations for consolidating a middle-class status. However, while this might buy their way into social mobility, it also means there is less room for the 'daring' attitudes of *cholitas* regarding their relations with men, under risk of jeopardising this aspired social position – a similar point that has also raised by other researchers such as Tanja Bastia (2011), Cecilie Ødegaard (2010; 2017; 2018) and Miriam Shakow (2014). In fact, to be a woman who can afford to be a *housewife* – who endures the difficulties of married life, takes care of children and the household – is also a constitutive element of an aspired middle-class ethos.

Vending at street markets can be seen as destabilising certain hierarchies of gender (Quiroz-Becerra 2013: 22).³ For some market women, such as Doña Isabel and Doña Helga, this was not only a result of their financial independence. They felt confident to express their disregard towards their former partners and present themselves as ‘better off alone.’⁴ Neither the complementarity ideal nor a sexual division of labour can fully account for the assertions of these women with regards to their capacity of taking care of themselves and their homes. Autonomy, rather than dependency, is presented as a marker of the type of woman represented by the *cholita*.

Nonetheless, by reinforcing certain expectations of womanhood, some of the women also ‘perpetuate the very systems that disadvantage them’ (Seligmann 2001a: 5-6). As noted in the previous sections, most women had a double, or even triple journey, often taking up market vending *and* another form of paid labour, as well as being the main carers within the household. In many cases, the income obtained from vending allowed for an ambivalent autonomy, as some form of gender gains in terms of financial independence can be used to further institutionalise ‘unequal gender relations’ (Bastia 2011: 1527). For Doña Luciana, at pains with consolidating her middle-class status in Brazil both financially and socially, her husband’s departure from the household complicated her struggle for social mobility – she needed to work twice as much if she wanted to keep her family and herself going.

³ See also the work by B. Lynne Milgram (2011) on street markets in the Philippines.

⁴ A similar point is raised by Bhowmik (2010c) when analysing the work of Kyoko Kusabe for the case of market women in Cambodia. There, ‘street vendors who are widowed or divorced are not interested in finding husbands because they feel that they are independent and do not need the support of males’ (Bhowmik 2010c: 39).

6. MAKING MONEY AND ENDS MEET

In spite of the noticeable difficulties experienced by market women to make ends meet, their capacity to juggle between mounting responsibilities has been the source of much praise. Weaving through spaces of formal and informal economies, market vending has been described, on the one hand, as satisfying the demands for labour within the neoliberal context. As contingent, mobile, flexible, and autonomous private entrepreneurs in a global economy, market vendors – and other informal workers – have been described as contributing to alleviate poverty and inequality with the sweat of their brows (see also de Soto 1989). On a different note, market women could also be seen as comprising what has been referred to as the ‘popular economy,’ ‘operating at the margins of capitalism’ and fostering a sense of solidarity and mutual support amongst the participants (Müller and Colloredo-Mansfeld 2018: 6).

The risks of romanticising the ability of market women to make ends meet might hide, in fact, a systematic exploitation of the work of women, as ‘the informal worker who has worked the cultural and material flows of globalisation to her own benefit may [also] be marginalised’ (Maclean 2013: 970, see also Chant 2016; Maclean 2018). Even so, market vending can hardly be said to be a marginal source of revenue within the Bolivian economy – as noted in chapter two, in El Alto and La Paz, about a fifth of the cities’ population is works in informal commerce (see also Hummel 2017). Furthermore, markets are focus points of the political, social and cultural lives not only in the case of *La 16*, but also in Brazil. Furthermore, the assumed marginality of market women can be also confronted by the increasing economic success of some vendors, who have been able to expand their networks across international boundaries (Müller 2017; Tassi 2017).

Some of the women I met at the markets made considerable profits out of their trading activities. Doña Ross,⁵ the self-professed former ‘queen of quinoa’ from *La 16*, recounted her experience as a wholesaler of cereals during the time of the boom of the grain. She had already built herself a steady business selling cereals at the market and became known for her trading skills amongst both producers and consumers, gaining a great advantage on prices over her colleagues. As the prices of, and the demand for quinoa soared in the international market, so did her profits from the grain. At some point, even Peruvian market vendors – both wholesalers and retailers – would cross the border to buy quinoa from her for reselling it to local consumers or shipping it abroad. Her title did not last for long, as her cross-borders buyers quickly learned to overpass their former middle-woman in order to fetch better deals for themselves as the international price of this commodity fell. Yet, Doña Ross was one of the few women who used the income from the markets to invest in her individual endeavours, having begun and concluded her law degree after the age of 40.

In Brazil, Doña Rosa, who claimed to be one of the first vendors at *Kantuta*, in São Paulo, was also able to consolidate her business of importing food and produce from Bolivia. The scale of her trade was much smaller than Doña Ross’s, as she was directly involved with most stages of processes of taking goods to São Paulo. She used to make constant trips to Bolivia, buying the products from different producers before packing them back on a bus, in which she returned to Brazil. At some point, Doña Rosa and her husband, Don Juan, opened a shop and a restaurant near *Kantuta*. Doña Rosa presented herself as a self-made entrepreneur. She asserted that the idea was hers to start a Bolivian market in Brazil, after having lived for some years in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where the market *La Salada* congregates the Bolivian migrant population.

⁵ Doña Ross explicitly asked for me to use her real name in my thesis.

Both the restaurant and the shop are now closed – she argued that most Bolivians no longer lived in the surroundings of *Kantuta*, considerably reducing her turnover and her will to hold a steady shop in the area. Even if age had made it difficult for her to carry out all the tasks on her own, Doña Rosa still went on trips to Bolivia and back, each time bringing a new batch of products with her.

Doña Rosa's navigation of international borders to create profitable trade opportunities is an example of how, increasingly, the links expressed through the products sold and the networks employed by market vendors extend beyond locally established trade routes, with a larger promise of profits (Maclean 2013; Müller 2017; Ødegaard 2017; Tassi 2017). Nico Tassi's (2017) ethnography in La Paz and El Alto describes, for example, the successes of Aymara entrepreneurs who skilfully navigate a globalised economy thriving in commercial niches left aside by the 'traditional' business elites in Bolivia. His work brings interesting examples of a kind of 'globalisation from below,' promoted by members of an otherwise marginalised group who realise their opportunities to rise socially and economically without compromising their cultural backbone. That being said, the apparently generalised success of the traders in his analysis seems to have no link to their gender, as if success were so widespread an outcome that its importance to gendered relations in Bolivia did not matter much. In fact, most of the examples Tassi (2017) brings to illustrate the rise of an Aymara elite refer to *men*.⁶

The entrepreneurial possibilities which are open for women in the context of the markets should be problematised against the question of how this inclusion into global

⁶ Kate Maclean (2018) on the other hand, highlight how the rise of an Aymara bourgeoisie is often symbolised by a woman dressed in *pollera* skirts. This does not, however, invalidate the point raised here and already indicated in previous moments in this thesis, that *men* constitute the majority of those trading in more profitable products and more active in transnational trade networks.

flows of capital allows for their actual empowerment (Nagar *et al.* 2002). It was generally the case amongst the women I met in the markets that the income they obtained with sales was not translated into further investments to expand their business. Market women often translated their financial gains at the markets into keeping themselves and their family out of debt, and sometimes into guaranteeing that the next generation would not *have to* continue in the same line of business that they traded. In fact, women's work at the markets – and in the informal economy in general – does not necessarily free them from male domination, and, moreover, it might not actually fulfil their prospects of upward social mobility (Rivera 1996b: 178; Seligmann 1989: 705). Even when the money they acquire is solely administrated by them, market women are not always able to accumulate capital for themselves or for the sake of more financially advantageous business ventures (see also Seligmann 1989: 705).

In *La 16*, Doña Helga noted that her sales were her means for paying back her multi-thousand-dollar debts. Doña Saturnina noted that she could not leave the market for economic reasons, even though she wanted more time for herself and her children. Although not all market women were just 'getting by,' it was frequently the case that they had to juggle between aspirations of social mobility and the tenuous income/expenses balances. Doña Julia, who worked at both *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*, also had high hopes for the income she generated at the market. At *Coimbra*, she worked at 'a friend's stand,' although she never described that as being an employee. But at *Kantuta*, she juggled between another stand of this unnamed friend and her own. Her stand, located at a less busy part of the market, was not always as profitable as she wished, so she would only assemble it when the market was full. Only in these occasions would her husband come along to the market, and then work at the bigger stand of their friend. When I asked her why her husband would not come more

frequently to help her, she gave me her usual shrug, noting that women just have to do more.

On a particularly overcast Saturday in December, Doña Ofelia looked especially worried about the slow pace of sales: with a sigh, she told me she was, once again, in debt. Her husband had been sick and treatment costs had taken their toll on the family budget. Plus, she had no money to buy Christmas gifts for her children, who were in Bolivia. She was singularly upset for not being able to buy her daughter a ring for her graduation – a gift her daughter had been longing for, but which Ofelia could not afford either in Brazil or in Bolivia, where it would come cheaper. She was going to Bolivia in a few days, so that she could celebrate the festivities beside her children, but also because her husband was going to be operated there. The tickets had been paid for by her brother – who had returned to Bolivia some years before after spending over a decade in Brazil – but they were one-way, only. She was expecting to be able to go back to São Paulo after her husband had recovered from the operation – ‘we will be here for Alasitas,’⁷ she told me, hopefully.

Doña Ofelia did not, after all, return to Brazil for Alasitas. In fact, she stayed in Bolivia for another four months before being able to go back, only to find her post in *Coimbra* taken by someone else, and once again returned to Bolivia after spending a month in Brazil. When we met for lunch in La Paz, she once again recalled the reasons why she had migrated to Brazil in the first place: debts. She felt accomplished by what she had achieved in Brazil during her time there: she had been able to repay her debts, gather enough money to become an established vendor at *Coimbra*, and support her

⁷ A La Paz festivity celebrated in honour to the patron saint of the city, Our Lady of La Paz on January 24th. Also largely associated with Andean rituals of abundance traced back to pre-colonial times, the festival has been granted the recognition of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 2017.

children's education, first in Brazil and then in Bolivia. Plus, she really liked the dynamicity of working at the market, as well as the money it provided. In La Paz, Doña Ofelia felt like the prospects were less interesting: she had no contacts that could facilitate her entry at *La 16* or at other markets; working as a pedlar selling orange juice also involved an amount of money and networks which she lacked; and she felt useless at home, since her children were very independent. For her, being in Brazil could afford her family better opportunities through her hard work, rather than staying at home to be a fulltime mother of grown-up children. Her husband, who had resumed his previous life as a driver, told her it was all right for her to rest, but Doña Ofelia wanted *her* life back.

Doña Ofelia was conflicted between her new status as a housewife as opposed to that of a working woman, who could – together with her husband – provide their children with better prospects for the future. She wanted her children to pursue higher education and, as it turns out, she and her husband could not afford to pay for her daughter to go to the police academy, as they dreamed. While Doña Ofelia had her own entrepreneurial ambitions, she was confronted with her current sense of lack of opportunities, on the one hand, and the desire to uplift the social stand of their family, on the other.

Doña Ofelia's narrative brings together numerous points raised by this chapter. Her joining the market was pushed by the aggravated financial situation of her family, in light of mounting debts and the lack of labour options for her husband in Bolivia. Doña Ofelia was also moved by the possibilities that came with a newly acquired social and economic position. Her children would be able to access better education than herself and Nelson. This was actually not about presenting oneself as an idealised version of a middle-class family, but rather seeking guarantees that her children would

be less likely to suffer the dire economic situation that Doña Ofelia and her husband had had to overcome more than once in their lives.

Ofelia and Nelson, when working at the market or at the *oficinas*, seemingly shared most of the tasks. If the burden was not equally distributed, Doña Ofelia nevertheless understood them both to be equally involved in a common endeavour. However, once returning to Bolivia, she found herself suddenly lacking a job. Seeing her prospects of social mobility – and even stability – diminish, she felt without the agency she could exercise while working in Brazil. Her husband, now back to his role as the breadwinner, felt comfortable to offer her the possibility to ‘rest’ at home fulltime.

The contradictory character of the prospect of social mobility lies in the fact that the same processes that allow for socioeconomic ascent might also jeopardise one’s class status. That is, if the social and economic gains obtained by market vending allow these women to ascend to a ‘middle-class’ position, this might be at odds with a bourgeois representation of womanhood that associates the latter solely with the domestic environment and care. In this sense, the activities of the market constitute market women as transgressing expectations of womanhood, but they might also lead to a reinforcement of these same expectations. In the case of Doña Ofelia, working at the markets offered her the opportunity to be more independent from household activities, but also helped her family climb the social ladder. Back to Doña Saturnina, similar prospects gave her a sense of not giving her family the attention they deserved. Starting from different points, Ofelia and Saturnina faced the difficult balance between domestic work, market work, and their respective work at the *oficina* and the shop. The division of labour is not only gendered, but also gendering – the activities one does

define one as a man or a woman, and, in the words of Doña Julia, women just have to *more*.

7. FINAL REMARKS

There are several reasons why women join the ranks of market vending that go beyond the traditional role of women in the rural environment and within the household. Working at the markets is an acceptable route for women who require income, but might lack formal education to access higher-paying jobs. Such capacity of ‘making ends meet’ from whichever resources available has led market women to be seen as the ideal-typical neoliberal workers, able not only to do their share in the division of labour, but also single-handedly overcome the externally imposed hardships to their lives, fighting poverty and inequality. If women become market vendors for myriad reasons, the outcomes of that labour are not univocal either. The means for personal and economic autonomy, which many women are at such pains to achieve through their labour, might also be reinvested in the perpetuation of practices that are not advantageous to them.

In this chapter, I have discussed other instances of markets’ in-betweenness, this time through women’s complicated and often conflicting understandings of their work and the expected outcomes of market vending. Market vending’s ambiguous status as work relies on both rural and urban divisions of labour, simultaneously reinforcing and contesting the validity of the hierarchies they bring about through a sexual and gendering division of labour. Although I subscribe to the argument that women in the market achieve some degree of autonomy – by creating their own network of relations beyond the family, by acquiring important skills, and because of their economic

achievements – it is also the case that market work continues to have gendered imbalances that disfavour women.

The narratives of the market women presented in this chapter do not portray them as victims of broader processes, being carried against their will along capitalist flows, but neither are these women riding the waves of social ascension through their work in the markets. Balancing their idealised and real social position with their numerous roles at the markets and at home is demanding, while the possibility for greater social and economic gains is far from certain.

Five. Market women

1. INTRODUCTION

My last visit to the markets of *Coimbra* and *Kantuta* coincided with the commemoration of the Bolivian *Día de la Patria* (Fatherland's Day) – marking the Independence from Spain officialised on the 6th of August 1825. In São Paulo, Bolivian migrants in Brazil prepared numerous celebrations to be held at the markets and at the Latin American Memorial complex in the city centre. While the latter congregated numerous dancing fraternities and *asociaciones* from garment workers and *oficina* owners, the celebrations at the markets were a bit more low-key. At both *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*, market vendors and their families participated in a parade in the market streets, before congregating to pay homage to Bolivia at the centre of these markets.

On Saturday, celebrations at *Coimbra* followed the main event at the Memorial. Having been to the earlier celebration, I arrived at the market while vendors were finishing the last arrangements for the parade – which would include a brass band and numerous red-yellow-and-green banners following the three-coloured Bolivian national flag. Esther Condori had chosen to 'dress smart' for the solemn occasion and was wearing a chic pencil skirt and high heels – which she recognised was not the cleverest choice for running errands on the irregular pavement of Coimbra street. Minutes before the beginning of the ceremony, her mother, Doña María, rushed behind the herbs stand where Esther and I prepared packs of *quilquiña* for sale. She opened an

awayu from which she unpacked a long, voluminous, yellow *pollera* and a small derby hat. As we held the *awayu* up to cover her, she changed herself right there, redid her plaits and balanced the small hat on the top of her head. For this important celebration, Doña María brought to *Coimbra* a central character of the Andean marketplace who is otherwise barely seen in the everyday of the Bolivian street markets in Brazil: the *cholita*.

Figure 14: Celebrating the *Día de la Patria*



Vendors parade celebrating Bolivia's Independence Day (August 6) at *Coimbra*. São Paulo, Brazil, 2016. Source: The author.

Globally travelling images of Bolivia often feature a woman in the multi-layered *pollera*. On the one hand, this woman figures prominently in romanticised depictions of the Andes in travel brochures and postcards, rivalling (or even better, siding with) llamas to build a quaint scenario protected from the modern urban chaos. On the other hand, she is also seen to represent an emerging political and economic indigenous elite in Bolivia. Although the women I met at the markets were distant from these idealised

representations, the *cholita* still constitutes the most ubiquitous incarnation of the market vendor throughout the Andes. At *La 16*, *cholitas* are ever-present.

Although not all market women in *La 16* are *cholitas*, the virtual absence of this quintessential Andean character from the everyday life of these ‘spaces of Bolivianness’ (Grimson, 1997) in Brazil is worthy of notice. Doña Julia had already hinted, in a conversation in *Kantuta*, that one cannot cross the border in a *pollera* (chapter three). Putting on or taking off the *pollera*, in the Andean context, emerges as an important marker of difference, as certain women’s identities are conflated with the type of clothes they wear. However, as will be discussed in this chapter, the meanings associated with a change of wardrobe are not univocal either. Rather, difference is ascribed through a complex system of mutually enforcing forms of exclusion and inclusion, (re)produced within and through the intersection of gender, race, and class. If the *pollera* did not cross the border, the meanings and practices associated with this system of categorisations *did*, and were further reproduced and transformed in how Bolivian market women in Brazil described themselves and others around them.

I started this thesis by questioning the reasons behind the absence of *cholita* market vendors in *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*; in the present chapter, this initial enquiry will serve as the background to discuss how gender, class and race are articulated through the narratives and identities of market women both in Brazil and in Bolivia. This chapter will be organised as follows. After this introduction, the first section will address the differences between women in *polleras* and women who don Western clothing, arguing this duality is deeply embedded in colonial structures. These structures have been reproduced, furthermore, through different discourses and expectations of womanhood. I note how the *chola* has emerged as the image of a socially ascending urban indigenous woman, and how this identity has been

strategically used by those hoping to achieve social mobility. I then underscore that, despite this, the *pollera* has also been adopted by rural indigenous women, contributing to further racialise the garment and those who wear it. I explore different dimensions of this process in the context of *La 16*, as well as in *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*, noting how in the latter two markets the urban references of the *chola* seem less relevant than a rural representation of women in *pollera*. I then highlight that, against this background and given the connotations of slavery and indigeneity that ‘Bolivianness’ has in Brazil, market women in this country’s context present their difference vis-à-vis other Bolivian women with an emphasis on social mobility. I conclude by highlighting that the absence of *polleras* in Brazil indicates that, although the garment itself might not cross the border without becoming further racialised, intersecting forms of identity and exclusion that articulate dimensions of gender, race and class are brought to Brazil and further reproduced by market vendors in this country.

2. THE CLOTHES MAKE THE WOMAN. OR DO THEY?

Walking through the streets of *Coimbra* and *Kantuta* on an average day, the *pollera* is a rare sight. The apparition of a woman in a full, voluminous *pollera* always made heads turn. If it is rehearsal day in *Kantuta*, the bright-coloured mini-*polleras* of the *caporales* dancers gathered at the football pitch. The full *pollera* appeared on Bolivian civic dates and religious celebrations, such as with Doña María in the *Día de la Patria*. Otherwise, most women in these markets, visitors and vendors alike, wore a pair of tight jeans. This is not to say that all elements of the *cholitas*’ flair were completely gone from these markets. Every Saturday, Doña Ofelia greeted me with her gold-framed teeth while offering me a glass of deliciously fresh orange juice in *Coimbra*. Doña Barbara wore an apron, even though it was not really a requirement for

selling *awayus* and clothes at *Kantuta*. But the jeans were pervasive, come rain or (a lot of) shine in São Paulo. When I asked Doña Julia why she had not returned to the *polleras* she wore in the *provincia* in Cochabamba, her reason was straightforward: it was much more comfortable to work in jeans.

Walking through the streets of *La 16*, the women varied in their choice of wearing *polleras* or jeans. And for those who happened to be looking for a job, opportunities seemed to be open for all, regardless of the garment. All over the market, advertisements hanging on shop fronts and from the market stands stated: ‘looking for a *cholita* or *señorita* for [insert job position here].’ Although common, these posters never ceased to call my attention. Whenever I asked market vendors to explain to me the difference between these two categories, they always began with the same general description. A *cholita*, they said, equals being a *mujer de pollera* – that is, a woman in the multi-layered *pollera* skirt – that wears the full ‘traditional’ attire, including a shawl, *ballerinas*, and the derby hat. To be a *señorita* – the Spanish word for ‘miss’ or a young woman – is to be a *mujer de vestido* (a woman in a dress), meaning by that to don Western-style clothes. However, the presence of these two terms in the casual advertisements found in many places in Bolivia always served as a reminder that something more than the clothes separated these two ‘types’ of women.

I was resolved to get a more detailed answer from market women themselves and, after some insistence, Doña Helga arrived at a conclusion about the underlying difference between these two categories. ‘The *cholitas*,’ she said grinning, ‘we are more *malditas* (wicked) and *atrevidas* (daring) than the *señoritas*.’ Her choice of words deserves to be examined with a bit of detail, because they are revealing of a long trajectory of oppression and struggle, enmeshed in the ambiguous reputation of *cholitas* (see also Weismantel 2001). This ambiguity is both acknowledged and reproduced in

the words of Doña Helga, herself a *cholita*. In fact, she is not the first, and probably neither the last person to say that *cholitas* are *atrevidas*. For Marisol de la Cadena (2002: 167) the ‘alleged “moral defects” [of market women], their insolence or *atrevimiento* (which means insolence but also boldness) were (and still are) expressions of courage with which they defended their rights as members of the working class and as *mujeres del pueblo*,’ that is, vulgar. For de la Cadena (2000; 2002), *atrevimiento*, or the quality of being *atrevida*, reflects market women’s defiance of social expectations and their demand for being respected. To be *atrevida* is to dare to push boundaries, to arrive uninvited at places that are made to exclude them.

The term ‘*maldita*,’ although perhaps not unheard of, is somewhat trickier. It derives from a verb meaning ‘to curse at someone’ (*maldecir*) and, indeed, *cholitas* have often been called ‘disordered,’ ‘dirty,’ ‘promiscuous’ and ‘loud,’ not rarely to their faces (see de la Cadena 2000; Soruco 2011; Stephenson 1999; Weismantel 2001). *Maldita*, however, also contains the term ‘evil’ (*mal*), and the verb *maldecir* can also mean ‘to cast a curse on someone.’ Thus, *maldita* can also convey an idea of being wretched, damned, or the term I chose here, *wicked*. Like other women deemed to be wicked, *cholitas* have been associated with abnormal sexual behaviour, their actions deemed subversive to the prevailing order, their bodies and clothes subjected to regulation by public authorities and to censure by social mores (Stephenson, 1999).¹ In this sense, *cholitas* are *malditas* not only because they are object of scorn, but also because they carry stigmas which, as if by a curse, can corrupt their surroundings.

Doña Helga’s description of *cholitas*, given to me with an ironic grin, makes it clear that she is very much aware of how they are perceived. It also paves the way for

¹ See also Silvia Federici (2014) on the issue of witch hunts and the exploitation of women in the context of the transition to capitalism in Europe and in the Americas.

discussing what it means to be a *señorita* or a *cholita* – or other ‘types’ of women – beyond these being mere variations on the same gender. More than that, these terms reflect how gendered categories are necessarily intersected by race and class.

2.1. Adopting the *pollera* (I)

The genesis of the *cholo*, as well as of other mixed-groups in the Andes and in the Americas, reflects how colonial domination has been achieved by capturing the lands, minds and bodies of the native population, at times quite literally. In the Andes, these new subject categories that emerged in the colonial period tell a story of how European ‘men took indian wives as part of the spoils of conquest but also as a tool for conquest’ (Canessa 2012a: 245). These encounters – some of which arguably were consensual, but whose vast majority constituted acts of violence forced upon indigenous women – created previously inexistent subjectivities which, in a context where purity mattered, were invariably ambiguous and regarded with certain mistrust (Paiva 2015; Wade 2009).

More than threats to ‘purity of blood,’ *cholos* and other miscegenated groups have been perceived, since the colonial period, as ‘undermining the protection of economic and cultural privilege’ (Seligmann 1989: 697). In this vein, continual sexual – and hence racial – mixture challenged the feasibility of a dual order composed of irreconcilable poles, but did so to a large extent through other forms of spatial and social mobility, which disrupted and corrupted the tenets of ‘purity’ which underlined the model of socio-spatial segregation in the Andes. As already noted in chapter two, indigenous and mixed-race subjects have continuously appropriated colonial forms to escape colonial impositions. These practices underscore the agency of indigenous individuals in ways that, if they did not necessarily dismantle the prevailing system of

exploitation to which they were subjected, nevertheless subverted a segregated socio-spatial order. At the same time, while not necessarily indicative of the abandonment of indigenous practices and community ties, these processes of social and spatial mobility were enacted through the abandonment of the 'indian' as a subject category, thus reinforcing the same idea of socio-spatial separation.

As previously noted, different tactics were employed by indigenous and mixed-race individuals to not be seen as indian, but rather *pass* as another category within the *casta* system (see Seligmann 1989; Wade 2009). Focusing on the context of La Paz, Rossana Barragán (1992: 98) argued that adopting the garments used by members of a different group was one such strategy of social mobility, and this played an instrumental role in the development of the emblematic presentation of the *chola* as a visually distinct Andean subjectivity. Already in the 18th century, the gradual incorporation of the *pollera* – then a *criollo* fashion – by indigenous and mixed-race women living in urban centres was described by Barragán (1992: 108-109) as indicating

a clear desire for differentiation, but fundamentally in relation to the indigenous society ... [which] could possibly reduce their access to the urban world, and, furthermore engendering their social "ascension". This is, let it not be forgotten, a strongly hierarchical colonial society, with an ideology which sustained not only a socio-economic differentiation, but also a cultural one, attributing positive values to some [groups] (the dominant and Western, in general) and negative to others.

A woman in a *pollera*, previously a *criolla*, became increasingly associated with the urban indigenous and mixed-race sectors: in particular, with the *chola*. For indigenous women migrating from rural areas towards the cities, in turn, adopting the trades and the dress of the *chola* also became a form of achieving a more autonomous insertion into the urban labour market (Soruco 2011: 107). The implications of this change are very racialised. On the one hand, it helped the migrants convey a distinction

from the indigenous women, seen as still bound to land and work in the highland *haciendas*.² On the other hand, the *pollera* became associated with non-white women in the urban context, who, differently from the *criollas*, had access to the paid labour market (until the 20th century, *criollas* rarely worked outside of the home or at all). As a result, the *pollera* also became a marker of urban, working-class, *chola* and *mestiza* women, who made a living as domestic workers, artisans, and, of course, market vendors (Rivera 1996b). In the words of Silvia Rivera (2010b: 194-95):

The origins of the working classes in the Andean countries lie in this conflictive process of subordinate incorporation [*acoplamiento*] to the dominant society through the participation [of these subordinate groups] in occupations disdained by the conquistadors, who abandoned all type of manual labour to ascend to the position of an idle class that lives from the labour of others. It is also clear that the process of mestizaje in the Andes is marked by a gamble done by women [*apuesta femenina*], both as a mechanism for survival ... or as a resource to evade the harsh ethnic oppression that fell on indigenous communities and *ayllus*.

In time, the *pollera* disappeared from wardrobes of *criollas* but remained associated with working-class *cholitas*, becoming a marker of this particular urban identity. Because being *chola* was simultaneously understood as both a racial and a cultural mixture, as well as the result of a process of social and spatial mobility of indigenous women, this subject category sustained an ambiguous relation to indigeneity (see also Peredo 2001). Although distinguishing themselves from rural indigenous women, as Barragán noted, *cholitas* were also poorly regarded by the dominant sectors of society. In the eyes of the elites, the ambiguity of *cholitas* highlighted their underlying ‘impurity,’ and, particularly for those who worked in public areas, their behaviour was seen as a rejection of the decorum expected from women (Soruco 2011: 107). Located somewhere between urban *criollo* ideals of

² It is worth noting that, at the same time, many other indigenous women working as domestic servants in *criollo* households were likely to be forced into wearing the *polleras* (Barragán 1992).

progress and civilisation, on the one hand, and the imagery of rural indian backwardness, on the other, the *cholas* were perceived by the elites as tending towards the latter. The *cholitas*' supposed roguery and immorality thus did not necessarily lie in their attitudes or in the activities they performed. It much rather lied in their very existence as urban, socially and spatially mobile, indigenous women, who did not accept their 'proper place' in a *criollo*-dominated society.

2.2. On 'proper womanhood:' *señoras* and *cholas*

But what is their 'proper place,' and what does it mean? Addressing these questions requires going back to the difference between the *cholita* and the *señorita*. As hinted above, the meanings behind these two categories cast a light on how constructions of gender – in this case, of womanhood – are not just a derivative of certain bodily markers perceived to be gendered (see also Butler 2002), but are rather embodied in and through race and class. In the colonial Andes, the subject character of the *cholita* and the *señorita* have emerged *in relation* to one another, through a domestic feminine dyad: the *criolla* master of the house, or the *señora*, and her servant, usually an indigenous woman or *chola* (Kuznesof 1989: 20-21). The racialisation of these roles – both of which, in Europe, would then usually be performed by white women – dates to colonial times, the imposition of which was underpinned by the patriarchal organisation of Spanish society and by the system of exploitation of indigenous labour in the colonies (Kuznesof 1989; see also Wade 2009). Building on these colonial foundations, this dyad has been re-enacted and reinforced with the incorporation, by the 19th century elites, of liberal-bourgeois ideas which reinforced an association between femininity and domesticity, and between masculinity and the public sphere. Already in early 20th century Bolivia, these representations were

reproduced and glorified by nationalist literature and political discourse, which depicted 'the home' as the realm 'where stasis, nostalgia and security troped [*sic*] in the figure of the criolla mother' (Stephenson 1999: 59).

As Lesley Gill (1993: 74) further describes, amongst upper- and middle-class circles in early 20th century La Paz, the *señora* was considered the 'peak of civility.' That is, as a quasi-asexual, pious, subservient, and family-oriented being, the *señora* was the representation of what a 'proper woman' stood for in the eyes of the elite (i.e. men). And their 'proper place' was the home. The echoes of *marianismo* (see Stevens 1973) in this description beg to recognise that the ideal of the *señora*, more than a reflection of the lived reality of elite *criollas* it supposedly glorifies, actually constituted an unrealistic expectation of womanhood (see also Navarro 2002). Accordingly,

the dominant ideology of womanhood constituted the primary matrix of relations whereby white women or criollas of the upper classes negotiated their own position with respect to the patriarchy, at the same time the dominant ideology of womanhood also constituted the framework whereby these women consolidated their socially privileged position over mestizas, *cholas* and indigenous women. Thus, the prevailing ideology of womanhood reconstructed hierarchies based not only on gender but also on economic and racial differences, *thereby establishing the parameters that determined who were 'women' and who were 'not women'* (Stephenson 1999: 11, my emphasis).

According to Lesley Gill (1993), the supremacy of such *marianista* values imploded in Bolivia alongside the hegemony of the *criollo* elite in the events leading to, and in the aftermath of the 1952 National Revolution. For Gill (1993: 75), 'the growth of a new "middling" group [and the broadening of] the domestic market for a number of consumer goods' prompted the greater participation of middle- and upper-class women in the paid labour market. In a context of growing urbanisation and of opportunities for *criollas*, *cholas*, *indias* and *mestizas* in the labour market, 'new forms of competition over the symbols and meaning of femininity' emerged (Gill 1993: 75).

However, old discourses and practices were not completely obliterated by the reforms and changes since 1952.

The inclusion of middle- and upper-class women into the paid labour market, in the post-1953 agrarian reform context, was not equivalent to that of the newly-arrived migrant women. Education, class, and racial barriers still led most rural migrants towards the informal economy. And, for these indigenous women, domestic work and market vending continued to be the main activities. As in other Latin American contexts, in fact, the growing autonomy that allowed middle- and upper-class women to work and receive their own income was coupled to, or actually relied on the further incorporation of working-class women into their households (see also Chant 2003; Kuznesof 1989). Domestic workers occupied a deeply ambiguous position, literally *inside* their employers' house – where many live – but still cast as *outsiders* (Radcliffe 1990: 384). In this context, the relations between worker and employer were both intimate and antagonistic, simultaneously marked by race, gender and class through the very different hierarchical positions of these women in the household.³ The fact that job adverts for domestic workers often highlight, even today, a preference for *cholitas*, show how the garment can be used to reproduce, in the domestic context, the difference between the *señoras/señoritas* and the *cholas/cholitas*, reinforcing a position subservience of the latter with regards the former (Peñaranda, Flores and Arandia 2006).

At the same time, for these migrant indigenous women arriving in the cities, there was the possibility of obtaining some personal autonomy, particularly when compared to their female employers. As young women making their own money and living away

³ Detailing the relation between the *chola* domestic worker and their *criolla-mestiza* employers any further is beyond the scope of the present thesis. For more on this, Katrina Peñaranda, Ximena Flores and Alvaro Arandia (2006) provide interesting insights for the present state of these relations in Bolivia, based on interviews to both employers and employees in the city of Sucre.

from their home, domestic workers were able to enjoy relative economic and sexual freedom (Gill 1993: 81). Yet, it is of common knowledge that many domestic workers were – and are likely to still be – consistently subjected to sexual abuse by their male employers. In the Andes, notes Andrew Canessa (2012a: 248), many middle-class men ‘have a strong emotional attachment to the “cholita” who raised them and with whom, as well, they had their first sexual encounters.’ Borrowing the words of Mary Weismantel (2001: 62),

[e]lite men imagine the chola as sexually available; domestic servants fulfil these expectations, even if under duress. The notion that male employers have sexual access to female domestic workers is found everywhere [in the Andes], from novels to the jokes that circulate among professional men. When they escape these settings, women redefine themselves in the elite male vocabulary from the ‘delectable’ chola of fantasy to the ‘grosería’ [rudeness] of a street hawker.

The ‘rudeness’ of the *chola* market vendor described by Weismantel was also echoed in Doña Helga’s description of *cholitas* – herself amongst them. While market vendors might be less susceptible to sexual advances by white men, their aggressive attitude is part of what guarantees a successful business and an effective defence. Working, on their own, and out in the open, market women also breach the idea that women have to be both *domesticated* and *domestic*. Revisiting Doña Helga’s ‘*machismo*’ (see chapter four) with this idea in mind, it is possible to see the ambiguity of the gender representation of the *cholita*. Even the *pollera*, notes Mary Weismantel (2001: 130-32), reveals itself as ‘unquestionably a skirt, the quintessential emblem of a woman,’ but at the same time ‘its opposite: a pair of trousers. Market women, too, are unmistakably female – but also rather masculine.’ The disjuncture described by Weismantel reveals that the *chola* as an identity built into a body that is sexed *female* does not necessarily *perform* gender as a woman (see also Butler 2002).

As such, this definition of the *señora*, albeit unattainable, still relied on the *chola* as her *Other*. While piety and chastity were expected of women, the same did not apply for men, so Other women should be sexually available for them (see more below). While women were expected to stay at home, there was still feminised work that, however, should be done by anOther woman. The contrast here, once again returning to de la Cadena's (1995) work, is that, by performing these '(indigenous) women's work' in the urban context, *cholitas* were not only rendered 'more Indian,' but also 'less of a woman' (see also chapters three and four). In that context, importantly, womanhood was also defined in terms of race and class, in ways that being 'a proper woman –' that is, a *señorita* – necessarily entailed 'being *criolla*' and part of the elites (see also Crenshaw 1989).

2.3. Adopting the *pollera* (II)

The ambiguity of *cholitas* was not restricted to issues of gender or to their adherence to the proper norms of women's behaviour (or lack thereof). In fact, a certain *grosería*, as noted Weismantel, and *atrevimiento*, as noted by de la Cadena and Doña Helga, can come out handy for their businesses. In fact, the notably ambiguous racial and cultural affiliation of the *chola* is also said to give them leverage in trade. Bilingual and street-savvy, the *chola* simultaneously embodies and transposes the inherent contradictions emerging from the supposedly fixed duality of Andean socio-spatiality. In this sense, *cholitas* have been described as 'brokers' between antagonistic worlds, a position that entails more than their role as commercial middle-women.

Because *cholitas* are located at 'the crucial intersection between rural and urban sociospatial environments,' they are seen as more physically and culturally mobile, as able to intermediate between these two spheres (Seligmann 1989: 695). According to

Linda Seligmann (1989; 2004), the *cholita*'s role as cultural and economic brokers is a key element of their economic success. As a result, the *pollera* remains a material and symbolic statement of real and aspired social mobility amongst indigenous women in the urban context. As the informal economy still constitutes an important inlet for indigenous women trying to make a living in the Andean cities, this association is continuously reiterated in present times.

I first met Doña Ross at the at the doorstep of one of the buildings of the *prefectura* (departmental government) of La Paz. My interview with her was to take place over lunchtime and the many courses that comprised the *almuerzo* were punctuated by episodes of her life. From a pedlar to the 'queen of quinoa' of *La 16*, from someone who left school in her early teens to politics and a Law degree. Doña Ross now keeps her time between her administrative position at the departmental government, where she works for most of the week, and her stand at *La 16*. Doña Ross highly values her experience and identity as a market vendor and wears her *pollera* through the corridors of the departmental government as a sign of her indigenous pride and acquired political power.

Doña Ross, however, was not always a *mujer de pollera*. As she began her life in trade selling snacks in the proximity of construction sites in the city of La Paz, where she was born, Doña Ross was a *mujer de vestido*. Her change into a *pollera* accompanied her process of becoming a more established vendor. In time, Doña Ross climbed the ladder of market-vending, from rambling through the streets with her snacks to the tremendous *La 16*, where she sells cereals – amongst which, the quinoa that made her famous.

Taking the *pollera* as the *sine qua non* of market vending is not unheard of. In her autobiography – compiled by Hans and Judith-Maria Buechler (1996) – market-

vendor Sofía Velásquez narrates her transition from being a *mujer de vestido* to being a *mujer de pollera* as part of her consolidation as a market vendor in an urban context. ‘Even the customers don’t buy as readily from a [*mujer*] *de vestido*’ – notes Sofía, before adding that changing to *polleras* would do her well in business (Buechler and Buechler 1996: 173). Other authors equally highlight how women seeking to work with commerce might occasionally adopt the *pollera* before interacting with suppliers, customers and, importantly, other vendors at the market (Bold 2017: 122; Burman 2011: 55; Paulson 2002:140).

However, the fact that Doña Ross is able to walk around the corridors of power in a *pollera* is more of a novelty. Rising in the 1990s, the *chola* Remedios Loza became the leader and presidential candidate of the populist party *Conciencia de Patria* (Conscience of the Fatherland, CONDEPA) in 1997, standing ‘as a powerful testament to and precursor of the assertive presence of indigenous priorities on the national political scene throughout the 2000s’ (Albro 2010b: 80). As women in *polleras* took the streets of Bolivia during the social and political turmoil of the early 2000s in the Water and Gas Wars, they have also emerged as symbols of the alliance between rural and urban grassroots movements in the struggle against the neoliberal state in Bolivia (Albro 2005: 443; Scarborough 2010: 91). This association has been perpetuated by the ever-stronger presence of *cholitas* in the state apparatus under the governments of Evo Morales (a member of the MAS party, in power since 2006). It was a woman in a *pollera*, Silvia Lazarte, who presided – under constant verbal and even physical attacks from other deputies – over the Constitutional Assembly (2006-2009) that ‘re-founded’ Bolivia as a Plurinational State (see also Schavelzon 2012). And even though Doña Ross opposes Evo Morales in the political arena, it is undeniable that her participation

in politics is much more acceptable in the present environment than some thirty years ago.

The rising power of *cholitas* is represented not only in national politics. Recently, the *mujer de pollera* has gained new popularity as the representative of an emerging urban indigenous economic elite in Bolivia (Exeni 2010; Maclean 2018). More specifically, represented by the *dama* or *chola paceña* (lady or *chola* of La Paz), the wealth of this sector is also materialised in the exorbitant costs involved in being a *chola* in her full sartorial flair – exuberant jewellery, expensive Borsalino hat, vicuña shawls, and carefully chosen fabrics (as well as many, many metres of it) for the numerous *polleras*. The ostentatious *damas paceñas* are not exclusively a product of the latest rise of an ‘Aymara bourgeoisie’ in the Andes,⁴ but have become a well-known face of a cosmopolitan Andean indigeneity emerging from the involvement of this sector in present-day global capital flows (see also Tassi 2017). Their economic affluence is a source of power, which helps them transgress hierarchies of race and gender, in the best *cholita* style (see Maclean 2018). As Kate Maclean (2018: 713) put it, in the present context a wealthy *cholita*

is both villainised and heralded, either as exemplifying the benefits and ‘corrupt’ gains that have accrued to Bolivia’s indigenous population under Morales, or as representing a triumphant re-assertion of indigenous culture and power over criollo spaces in the city. The controversy which this character attracts demonstrates that she is transgressing ideas of propriety, belonging and status in La Paz. She is also transgressing received ideas about how urban development is gendered, classed and racialized, in both mainstream and critical work on the subject, which remains predicated on the modernizing categories of public/private, productive/reproductive, and risk/care.

Beyond a reflection of their transgressive character, the exuberance of the *dama paceña* also works as a form of distinction with regards to other women who, on a daily

⁴ For historical examples see Antonio Paredes-Candia (1992).

basis, also adopt the *pollera* (Gill 1993: 79). The notion of the transgression of, and of the inadequacy to notions of ‘propriety,’ is reflected in the attitude of *cholitas* to class divisions and in how they are interpellated as class subjects. Nevertheless, being a woman in a *pollera* does not necessarily form the basis for cross-class alliances (Salazar 2015: 280). And, for those who happen not to be surfing on the economic rise brought by Morales’s Pink-Tide government, reinforcing their difference in relation to those located ‘below’ them might be a key strategy to assert their position against the ambiguity represented by the *chola*.

3. A POLLERA COMES OUT EXPENSIVE

On a sunny Sunday morning I was helping Doña Luciana assemble the products at her stand in *Kantuta*. There were Andean flutes, flags, key rings, pens decorated with llamas, *awayus*, leather whips (*kimsacharani*), and sandals made from tire rubber (*abarcas*), amongst others. In short, the best souvenirs of Bolivia for both the Bolivian and the Brazilian customer. She explained to me that the (‘overpriced,’ said a customer) sandals were ‘what people wore in the *provincia*’ and that the whip had to be used only once on your child and it would be effective forever. She also told me that the three-coloured flag was the Bolivian flag and that the multicoloured check flag (*wiphala*) was ‘Evo’s flag.’ Finally, she got hold of a doll garbed in a small black hat, big golden earrings and a long shawl over a draped skirt. Staring at the doll, she confessed that her dream was to be a *cholita* once she became older and retired. When I asked her, why not earlier, her reason was straightforward: *cholita* clothes are too costly.

Figure 15: Souvenirs of Bolivia

Doña Luciana's stand at Kantuta with cholita dolls and other souvenirs from Bolivia, such as *awayus* and national flags. São Paulo, Brazil, 2016.
Source: the author.

3.1. Rural polleras in La 16

Countless times I heard the same expression from market vendors in Brazil and in Bolivia alike: 'being a *cholita* comes out expensive.' Indeed, the expensiveness of the full *cholita* attire is a point also raised in many ethnographies of the Andes, and it is easily verifiable with a walk in the shopping areas of El Alto. Although there are more accessible versions of the garment, high-end products can come up to hundreds, if not a few thousand pounds. Market vendors were awed by a fully-clad *dama paceña* because they know how expensive it was to be dressed like that. In *La 16*, a glimpse of a lushly dressed *cholita* would kindle the hopes of vendors that she would buy something, while eyeballs meticulously checked the hats for signs of Borsalino authenticity, the quality of the *polleras*, the glow of their multiple rings. At *Coimbra*, young Esther Condori sighed when she saw one and declared that *damas paceñas* were

rarely seen in São Paulo, but always admired. The wonder caused by an ostensibly rich *mujer de pollera* contrasted sharply with the type of appraisal given to women whose *polleras* and other visual cues did not point to an ascending middle class, but to a more humble, rural setting.

In *La 16*, Doña Ramona always showed a subtle disdain for one of her neighbours at the market, Doña Rocío. Doña Ramona insinuated that Doña Rocío was less of a good market vendor than herself, or that Doña Rocío was incapable of collaborating with my research other than by teaching me some terms in Aymara – a language that Doña Ramona also spoke fluently. All these arguments were always interwoven with an emphasis on Doña Rocío's rurality. Apart from their neighbouring stands at the market, both women were dressed in a similar fashion. However, Doña Rocío wore no headgear, while Doña Ramona donned a derby hat. And, more importantly, while the one lived in the countryside and worked her own patch of land, the other worked from her home in El Alto, where she sewed the fleece garments she sold at the market.

The majority of the women I met at *La 16* were born in the rural areas of Bolivia – the *provincias* – and some had spent a considerable portion of their childhood and youth there before moving to La Paz/El Alto. Furthermore, as already noted in chapter three, the importance of having a *provincia* and sustained ties with rural, indigenous communities and practices was strongly emphasised by many vendors at *La 16*. That being said, rural origins carry ambiguous connotations in the urban context. It can highlight a sense of 'rootedness, access to land and a wide network of crucial connections' (Buechler and Buechler 1996). But it is also seen as part of 'mutually implicating dyads that contrast urban, Western-oriented modern culture with a rural, anachronistic, indian one' (Canessa 2012a: 219). Rurality and indigeneity are thus also conflated. And *chola* market women were very eager to stress that they were not the

hermanas campesinas (peasant sisters) – as market women often referred to the women who lived in the rural areas – who looked like them.

The ruralisation of *polleras* is a relatively recent phenomenon, associated to the construction of an idealised view of ‘traditional’ Andean culture that carries conflicting implications for those who wear the garment. Today, many women living in rural areas – particularly elderly women – don the draped *pollera* skirts (Bold 2017: 122; Maclean 2013: 975), but prior to the 1952 Revolution, notes Canessa (2012a: 47), *polleras* were not actually worn in the rural communities. However, this particularly rural image of the *mujer de pollera* is very much an idealisation of ‘tradition’ untainted by modernity (see also Canessa 2006b; Haynes 2013). The link between rural indigeneity and the *polleras* conveys a certain ‘authenticity’ to those who wear it, which has been explored in various directions, from politics to tourism. Amongst indigenous and peasant social movements, the *polleras* can indicate political affiliation and power amongst women – much like the *ponchos*, for men (see, for instance, Iamamoto 2015: 10). The woman in a *pollera* is also part of a folklorised representation of ‘authentic traditional Andean indigenous culture’ that has also become a favourite of tourist attractions (Haynes 2013: 437). From Machu Picchu to the wrestling rinks of El Alto – in which women otherwise dressed in *vestidos* incarnate a *cholita* wrestling character (see Haynes 2013) – the woman in a *pollera* can reproduce the image of the *cholita* as an exotic Other to a foreign gaze, or even embody the strength of a very well-known local character.

The ruralisation of the *polleras* comes with a price for market women at *La 16*, however. The market is not necessarily a tourist attraction and, although the *pollera* might do well for business, market women were not necessarily hoping to look ‘authentically indigenous’ to make a sale. In fact, the *cholitas* I met at *La 16* seemed worried about being versed in indigenous practices, but also, and more importantly,

they strove to be ‘legitimately’ urban. In this vein, taking up a *pollera* is not a univocal marker of urban social ascension, as it can also be ‘a marker of subaltern indigenous ethnicity’ (Rivera 2005: 15). Realising the general conflation between the identities of all women in *polleras*, market women were of course aware of the stereotypes associated with indigeneity in the urban context – and hence of the possibility of being thus stigmatised by wearing a *pollera*.

In order to distinguish themselves as urban, upwards-mobile *cholitas* – as opposed to their rural, purportedly backwards counterparts – *pollera*-wearing market women employed a series of other markers and practices. Which is to say, difference, in this context, is embodied not only through a woman’s choice of clothes, but through speech, bodily signs (such as callouses), the length of urban residence, education *and economic success* (see also Buechler and Buechler 1996: 180). Many times, I observed how similar codes were used by market vendors to categorise their customers. Doña Helga, for example, would simply refuse to negotiate with women she thought had no money to buy – or were in no position to wear – the luxury second-hand *cholita* clothes and accessories she sold. By frequently reiterating Doña Rocío’s rurality, Doña Ramona reproduced the hierarchies that mark what she assumes to be the superiority of an *urban cholita* like herself vis-à-vis the *rural peasant* she saw in her neighbour.

3.2. Ruralisation of *polleras* in *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*

Amongst market women in *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*, a *mujer de pollera* was less likely to be approached as a sagacious business woman than as an unsophisticated woman from the countryside. A certain ruralisation of the *pollera* was also accompanied by other prejudices directed at people from the *provincias*. As noted in chapter three, market women have many times indicated that Bolivians coming from

the countryside were more prone to being overexploited by the *oficina* owners and their co-workers. The reason, they said, was because people from the *provincias* were more ‘naive’ or plainly ‘ignorant.’ Contrasting with this assessment of the rural environment and of those born there, most people I met at the markets were also born in the *provincias* – an information that was usually withdrawn from me in our earlier interactions.

In December, Don Luis and Doña María Condori travelled to Bolivia to tend to their land and attend a *fiesta* in their community of origin. Esther Condori, who had herself just returned from a short trip to El Alto, was now fully in charge of the herbs stand while her parents were away. On a Saturday afternoon, a woman with braided hair, dressed in a long, but relatively deflated *pollera*, came to talk to us with a very specific request in mind. In an Aymara-inflected Spanish, the woman asked for a specific herb, but Esther was unfamiliar with the plant. The woman left, and Esther explained to me that she was a *cholita* and that the *provincias* were full with them.

Esther, who had lived most of her life in the urban context, had learned about the traditional practices of the rural Andes from her mother – knowledge she was always keen to share with me. Showing me a small stone, whose name she had forgotten, she explained that it had been used by her mother to cure *susto*.⁵ Doña María had even used it with her daughter-in-law, Doña Linda, who had been involved in a car accident some weeks prior and was refusing to leave the house. Esther said she was a bit sceptical about the procedure and she was unsure if it was permitted by her religion, but that it

⁵ *Susto*, loosely translated as ‘fear’ or ‘shock,’ usually afflicts children, but it can also happen with adults under stressful, unexpected situations. The ‘shock’ causes the partial loss of a person’s soul (*ánimo*) or spirit, leading to different bodily and mental illnesses in the affected person (see Muñoz 2011).

had worked anyways. As a result of the procedure, Doña Linda was since then working in *Coimbra* as well.

Before we could continue our conversation, the woman in a *pollera* returned. This time, she came with a friend – who was dressed in jeans. A confusing conversation unfolded, with Aymara and Spanish being interchangeably used by the three women. Finally, Esther understood that the woman wanted something to make her ‘blood’ come. Believing she was pregnant and seeking an abortive, Esther quickly reprehended the request, telling the woman to go see a doctor instead. The customers looked discomposed and told Esther that it was the opposite. She wanted to become pregnant, but with no menstruation it was impossible to predict her cycle. Furthermore, she said, she had already gone to all sorts of doctors in Brazil *and* in Bolivia to no avail, and she was adamant that the herb would work.

After a frustrating interaction, the women left barehanded and somewhat offended. Esther shook her head – she was still not fully convinced that herbs could offer a solution to the woman’s problem. Esther also felt powerless, as the ‘humble’ women from the *provincias* could ‘not know any better’ or be convinced by her instructions in the first place. By that point, the herb was still a mystery for both Esther and me – a gap in communication likely enlarged by the fact that herbs’ names and their uses might vary from one location to the next. My presence was probably an inconvenience. But the lack of common ground for understanding was not hindered by Esther’s skills in Aymara, which she spoke with some fluency. However, her technical knowledge from the nursing school, her religious beliefs, and the patronising attitude towards the customers – seen as humble and rather ignorant – stood in the way of communication. It was clear that the women in that conversation were not standing on the same ground. The customer had perceived this from the onset, bringing along a

friend who was, like Esther and I, wearing trousers. Although the woman used different strategies to make her request understandable and, most importantly, heard, Esther was set that it was the customer who needed to understand *her* explanations.

It is noteworthy how Esther's reaction to these customers simultaneously contrasts with and reflects her relationship with her own mother. Although she admires Doña María, the latter's religious syncretism, her poor skills in Spanish, and her *pollera* were rationalised by Esther as associated with the general backwards attitude she expected from other people from the *provincia*. Esther perceived herself as being, and actually was, different. Esther was enrolled in higher education, she was fluent in both Spanish and Portuguese, and she was a very observant Baptist. She did not engage with the type of 'rituals' that her parents used to perform back in the *provincia* – her father would even deal with llama fetuses (*sullu*) back then, she said, a practice which both her and Don Luis Condori now deemed reproachable. Her mother was more recalcitrant, although Esther guaranteed she was a good Christian as well. But for Esther, Doña María was too simple – and this was a quality, as well as a bit of a hindrance.

Esther presented the *pollera* as the garment her mother wore in the *provincia*. Although it is very unlikely that Doña María constitutes her only representation of a woman in *pollera* – Esther lived, after all, from age five to fifteen in the city of El Alto – it was *rurality* that she emphasised when she saw other women wearing that garment. On an everyday basis, Doña María Condori would be dressed in a long, flat skirt, keeping her yellow *pollera* – the one I saw on the celebration of the *Día de la Patria* – for special occasions only. I had seen that *pollera* before, in a picture shown to me by Esther on her phone taken during the celebration of the wedding anniversary of Doña María and Don Luis, in the early months of 2015. Standing beside her mother, the Condoris' youngest daughter was also dressed in a *pollera*. Esther confessed that

this was a concession to her mother – that was the way in the *provincia*, she said. Esther also told me that they had to sew the skirts themselves because, although they attempted to buy them on a trip to Bolivia, prices were prohibitive. In a humorous tone, she gave me the well-known argument once again, but this time with an addition. It is expensive to be a *cholita*, so you have got to be a ‘*chota barata*’ (cheap *chota*) instead.

3.3. *Chotas baratas* and rich, white women

I first heard the expression ‘*chota barata*’ in *La 16*, when Doña Helga suggested she would dress me as a *cholita* for a party she ended up never really inviting me to. When she said that ‘all men love *cholitas*,’ I asked her if I would actually be able to convince any of them that I was indeed a *cholita*. Raising her voice loud enough to make me the laughing stock of that section of the market, Doña Helga said that the best I could ever hope for was to be a ‘cheap *chota*.’ Although her sarcastic tone was enough of an indication of the derogatory content of the word, I must concede that I was previously unfamiliar with the term. As I went back home in the middle-class neighbourhood of Sopocachi, in La Paz, I asked my friends what it meant. They put on a sympathetic face and said that the *chota* is the ‘daughter of a *cholita*’ who wears trousers instead of *polleras*.

Once again, I was not completely convinced that the trousers made the *chota*. But it is true that while the full *cholita* attire is costly, for many working-class, urban indigenous women the alternative might be to wear inexpensive, mass-produced, imported, second-hand, Western-style clothes (Gill 1993: 79; Maclean 2013: 965). Monetary considerations notwithstanding, wearing Western-style clothes might also be a choice or a conscious strategy for young and for older urban indigenous women alike. It can be seen as a reflection of the desire to emulate upper- and middle-class status, to

facilitate their entry to the labour market and to consolidate their footing in the urban context, or simply an expression of their right to wear whatever they please (Bold 2017: 123; Radcliffe 1990: 384).

However, what I heard from both my middle-class friends in La Paz and from Doña Helga in El Alto indicated that *chota* is more of an insult than a claimed subject category.⁶ I could find very few references to the *chota*, with the term usually presented in passing as yet another pejorative (de)qualifier of a ‘*mestiza*’ or a ‘*chola*’ (see, for instance Albro 2000; Maclean 2013; Rivera 1996a). In all cases, though, there is the idea of an indigenous looking woman who, in a seemingly unfitting manner, wears Western clothes. Lacking money to assemble a garment deemed acceptable for a *cholita*, the *chota* is also too indigenous to legitimately claim the status of a *señorita*, and too urban to be indigenous.

The *chotas* are not the only women to be mocked by and amongst market vendors: hiding behind extra-large sunglasses and baseball caps, women from the richest areas of La Paz, the *Zona Sur* (Southern Sector of La Paz), can be seen walking around the *La 16*, looking for bargain prices on designer fashion hidden amidst the piles of imported, second-hand clothes in some areas of the market (see Maclean 2013). Kate Maclean (2013: 973) also notes their presence and highlights how these women are a constant source of amusement amongst market women. Indeed, they look absurdly out of place, with their discomfort almost palpable by the way they tightly hold their purses and backpacks against their bodies. By emphasising the alien character of their presence at this popular but stigmatised market, upper- and middle-class women from the *Zona Sur* are dressed to become individually unrecognisable,

⁶ That being said, Sofia Velasquez presented herself as a *chota-chola* during a period of her life, which Buechler and Buechler (1996: 220-21) describe as ‘an attempt to seek refuge in a relatively neutral, or unmarked category; one that neither emulated the wealthier *cholitas* nor the elite and professionals.’

but at the same time visibly distinct from the ‘regular’ visitors of *La 16*. ‘Regular’ visitors of *La 16*, on the other hand, are much more similar to the general description of a *chota*: urban, indigenous-looking, working-class and wearing ‘Western-style’ clothing.

The demeaning attitude directed at both *chotas* and the wealthy women from *Zona Sur* reflects how class prejudices are not necessarily unidirectional. More so in the case of the *chota*, the category highlights how intersecting forms of exclusion are reproduced through the discourses of market women in somewhat contradictory ways, which reverberate in the prejudices they themselves endure. The *de-vestido* market women I met in Bolivia and in Brazil also have to contend with the possibility of being cast as *chotas*. They are, after all, also indigenous-looking women, born in the *provincia* and fluent in Aymara or Quechua, who have, for various reasons, shunned the *pollera*. And in these cases, reinforcing a narrative of upwards social mobility becomes a very important strategy of distinction.

4. AMBIGUOUS IDENTITIES AMONGST MARKET WOMEN IN BRAZIL

When I first arrived to carry out fieldwork in Brazil, I had high expectations of the conversations I would have about racial and ethnic affiliations with the participants. My confidence was inflated by my previous research experience. For my Masters’ research – during which I had studied the politicisation of indigeneity in Bolivia – all my interviewees were very upfront about their racial and ethnic claims. But, then again, my interviewees were members of social movements, intellectuals, politicians, or members of the Morales administration, chosen precisely because of their political position with regards to indigeneity in Bolivia. In hindsight, my ‘naivety’ looks also rather unfounded because the motivation for my PhD research was, all along, to learn

more about what people made of their identities beyond the rank and file of organised politics.

Once at the markets, vendors in Brazil usually frowned upon straightforward conversations on racial and ethnic affiliations. In general, they avoided references that could even imply indigeneity, such as rural origins or knowledge of Aymara or Quechua. The only time I ever heard the term '*indígena*' mentioned spontaneously in the markets in Brazil was in a conversation with Don Luis Condori. While he recounted important political events in the history of Bolivia, he said that once the Spanish arrived in the Andes, they enslaved the native population – a situation with which Brazilians were unfamiliar and could not fully grasp, he argued. Even after Bolivia became an independent country, Don Luis added, 'we, people of indigenous race' ('*nosotros de raza indígena*') continued to be enslaved by the *patrones*, who benefited from indigenous labour. His eldest daughter, sitting beside us, nodded in agreement. That Don Luis used the words '*raza indígena*' instead of any other term – such as *indios*, Aymara, or even *jaqi*, a term usually employed in the context of the rural communities (Canessa 2006a; 2012a) – was perhaps chosen to facilitate my comprehension of his story, but it also suggested a certain politicisation of Don Luis's discourse. As Canessa argues (2006b: 243), claiming 'indigenous status is ... a claim to authenticity and a claim for justice,' and I was keen to know more about Don Luis's experiences. However, he preferred not to comment any further on his life in the *provincia*, beyond the unfitness of his horticultural practices to the much-warmer Brazilian weather.

Later that day, I decided to ask Esther if her father had participated in community politics at any point in his life, mentioning our conversation to her. Esther seemed perplexed. She told me he had indeed been a community leader in the past. He even had a title – which she had aptly forgotten. But these days were gone, along with the

alcohol, the belief in ‘various gods’ and rituals to the Pachamama. Esther noted that back then they were Catholics, but now, as Baptists, they know that those practices were wrong. She then paused and looked at me sternly. She was not surprised by my power of deduction; rather, she asked me if he had *really* said he was *indígena*. When I confirmed, I returned her the question if she too thought she was *indígena*. She gave it some thought and concluded, not without some hesitation, that she must be. After all, it runs in the blood, she said.

In *Kantuta*, Doña Barbara also presented a similar narrative to that of Don Luis to claim her own heritage, but she arrived at a different conclusion. She often invited me to join her behind her stand so that she could tell me stories of her childhood. Having grown up by the Lake Titicaca, many of her stories revolved around its waters: from reflections of mysterious unidentified flying objects to visits to hidden Inca constructions on its shores. Once, Doña Barbara recalled exploring a semi-submerged temple, packed with little Inca figurines. She told me that the temple had been built in that specific location with the explicit purpose of concealing that sacred place from the Spanish colonisers. Doña Barbara regretted that the Spanish had, however, been successful in erasing much of the Inca culture by looting temples, plundering villages and raping indigenous women. Underlining the latter point and as a conclusion to her story, she said that was the reason why everyone in Bolivia was *mestizo*, just like herself.

Both stories present a similar underlying colonial narrative, but the political content of Doña Barbara’s claim of a *mestizo* identity is considerably different to Don Luis’s identification as *indígena*. In both stories, they side with indigenous peoples in their outrage at the colonial enterprise. And, in these two stories, blood is ultimately what is responsible for determining their racial identities. Their identities were,

however, determined not only through the sexual mixture between the Spanish and the indigenous, but also through the violence and exploitation that sought to exclude the latter from a society dominated by the former. The enduring coloniality represented by this opposition between the Spanish and the indigenous makes its way through the narratives of Don Luis and Doña Barbara, who then claim not only the sides they take (in both cases of the indigenous), but also how they perceive themselves to be today: in one case *indígena*, and, in the other, *mestiza*.

It is hard to completely argue against Doña Barbara when she says that ‘everyone in Bolivia is *mestizo* like herself,’ because, as indicated before, colonial *mestizaje* can be seen as the result of more than genetic mixture. It was also a product of cultural mixture and of spatial and social mobility, processes which have been present from the early days of the colony and continue to take place today – for example, at the markets. However, in the more sexual and sexualised aspect of *mestizaje*, if the intercourse between white (men) and non-white (women) was the genesis of the *chola* racial ambiguity, it was also the cradle of an idea of the nation based on a much less ambiguous *idealised* collective, represented by the *mestizo* (Wade 2017: 204-05). Doña Barbara’s claim to *mestizaje* is one that clearly acknowledges the violence of these earlier sexual encounters, and she clearly sides with the position of the dominated. Her claim is also, however, imbued with political meanings, deeply embedded in nationalist discourses, and in this – more contemporary – narrative she claims a hegemonic identity: the *mestizo*.

4.1. Another *mestiço* nation

Looking at the identitary claims of Bolivian migrants in Brazil, Caroline Freitas (2016) has argued that Bolivians superimpose their own racial discourses, say around

mestizaje, to a the Brazilian ‘system of races.’ In order to address this claim in relation to Doña Barbara conclusion about her own *mestizaje*, it is useful, then, to take a short look on how *mestiçagem* has been discussed in the Brazilian context. Here, the prevailing idea around miscegenation is usually traced back to Gilberto Freyre’s *The Masters and the Slaves* (1975[1933]). Freyre’s book presented the cradle of Brazil as comprising three major racial groups: indigenous, Portuguese, and African, ‘described by their cultural contributions to the unique Brazilian character’ (Silva and Paixão 2014: 178). As already hinted by its title, Freyre’s book also reflects the underlying *antagonism* in the colonial context between the white masters and, as their Other, black slaves –rather than the indian.

Moreover, the title in Portuguese – which can be loosely translated to ‘Masters’ House and Slaves’ Hut’ (*Casa Grande e Senzala*) – also underscores the *intimate* relations between these groups, which took place within these two domestic environments (see, for example, Freyre 1975 [1933]: 306). Indeed, the origins of *mestiçagem* in this context are as intimate as they are clearly sexualised. Its representations often rely on the labour and sexual exploitation of black and mixed-race women – in particular, the *mulata*, the preferred character of sexual adulation in Brazilian imagery (Telles 2014: 20; Wade 2017: 205).⁷

Related, but also extrapolating, its sexualised (and violent) underpinnings, *mestiçagem* also emerges under a cheerful light in Freyre’s analysis. Celebrations of the Brazilian melting pot often highlight the ‘cultural contributions’ of ‘other races’ to

⁷ Freyre (1975 [1933]: 10) notes: ‘It is possible to affirm that the *morena* [an euphemism for mixed-race woman] has been preferred by Portuguese men when it comes to love, or at least for physical love. [...] In Brazil, so goes the saying: ‘The white woman is to be married, the *mulata* [black-white mixed-race woman] is to be f... , the black woman is to work.’ This popular proverb [*ditado*] indicates, more than mere social conventionality of the superiority of the white woman and the inferiority of the black woman, the sexual preference for the *mulata*. Actually, our love lyricism does not reveal any other tendency if not the glorification for the *mulata*, the *cabocla* [indian-white mixed-race woman], of the *morena* ... [who are preferred] to the ‘pale virgins’ and the ‘blond damsels.’

an underlying European (Portuguese) bedrock (see, for instance, Ribeiro 1995). Brazil's national identity was thus based on this idea that the encounter between various races, violent as it was, had led to the consolidation of a racial democracy, in which 'spectacles of samba, futebol, and carnival ... would showcase Brazil's African origins' (Telles 2014: 20).

In this sense, and going back to Sidney Silva's (2005; 2006; 2012) analyses of Bolivian migration to Brazil, it is possible to see that he too relies on a similar idea of incorporation via cultural contributions of the migrant community to the Brazilian melting pot. According to Silva (1999; 2006), the culturally rich Bolivians, through their celebrations and rituals, built a positive sense of 'Bolivianness' that could overcome the general prejudice targeting them. As noted in a quote by Silva (2012: 25) reproduced in chapter two, the celebrations invite Brazilians to look at the migrant community '*con otros ojos*,' that is, from a different perspective that emphasises the benefits brought by their culturally rich heritage.

However, relying on this celebratory rendering of Brazilian *mestiçagem* carries its own contradictions for it can obscure the violence embedded in processes of exclusion, assimilation and elimination of difference. In fact, in Brazil, *mestiçagem* has also been used with the clear political intent of bleaching the nonwhite components from Freyre's melting pot. By the end of the 19th century, the country finally abolished slavery (1888), but the elites were then faced with the fact that blacks arguably constituted the majority of population. In a context of scientifically endorsed racism, this led to an open debate about how to address Brazil's 'racial inferiority,' leading to a policy of fostering European immigration with the clear intent of whitening the population (Silva and Paixão 2014: 178). Waves of European migrants were welcomed with the expectations that the 'black element' would be washed away with the blood

of whites, heralding progress and a more ‘civilised’ nation (see Loveman 2014: 229). When Freyre published his book in 1933, the desired effect of European immigration had not been concretised in Brazil, but ideals of whitening remained strong – and it is fair to say they still do – in the imagination (and aspirations) of many Brazilians (da Costa 2016: 498; see also Mitchell 2017).⁸

Actually, there is a persistent idea that, in Brazil, racism is secondary to racial exclusion based on class. Because after the abolition of slavery this country never experienced a form of state-endorsed racial segregation along the lines of the South of the US or South Africa, racism has often been downplayed in favour of a more convivial discourse around racial difference (Wade 2010: 59). In fact, it was not until the last decade of the 20th century that racism was recognised by the Brazilian state as real issue in the country and, although many would still not recognise racism as a pervasive problem, incidents of racial discrimination are common (Kent and Wade 2015: 821). In this sense, while the idea of *mestiçagem* is a real experience in terms of a shared culture in the country, socioeconomic differences between these groups remain strong, including violence and discrimination (Silva 2016: 797).

Accordingly, one of the implications of exclusively emphasising the cultural side of *mestiçagem*, while not paying due to attention to further socioeconomic spheres, is precisely that other pervasive forms of inequality and other manifestations of racism, which do not necessarily dissipate, are obfuscated. It can also contribute to constructing a reified representation of a collective ‘Bolivianness’ (Vidal 2012), in which very lively

⁸ A recent and dreadful reminder of the persistence of these ideologies has been highlighted in an interview to candidate to then Vice-President General Hamilton Mourão to the Brazilian news portal *GI* (see *Candidato à vice de Bolsonaro ...* 2008). Amidst other outrageous statements, General Mourão praised his grandson, saying: ‘He is a handsome fellow, have you seen him? [That is the product of the] Whitening of the race.’ By the time I was finishing this thesis, General Mourão was running for the Executive power under Presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro for Brazilian National elections in 2018, from which they came out victorious.

cultural manifestations might emerge to Brazilian eyes solely ‘as folklore rather than contemporary culture’ (Canessa 2006b: 245). And, as already highlighted in chapter three, while this contributes to reinforce amongst Brazilians a stereotypical representation of Bolivians as *índios*, it does not necessarily have the same effects amongst Bolivians.

Figure 16: Caporales



Young women rehearsing *caporales* routine before the Carnival at *Kantuta*. São Paulo, Brazil, 2016.
Source: the author.

As such, while I agree with Freitas’ (2016) argument above, it is important to emphasise that the meanings associated with categories such as *mestizo/mestiço* are not necessarily the same in different context. For instance, the distancing of market women from their rural backgrounds does not necessarily translate as a significant departure from indigeneity in the eyes of Brazilians, for whom cultural and labour practices, as well as phenotypic traits mutually reinforce one another in the othering of Bolivians.

Accordingly, Doña Barbara was likely not referring to the Brazilian ‘racial democracy’ when she said she was *mestiza*. That being said, I do reckon that she bore in mind that Brazilians usually perceive Bolivians as constituting a homogeneous community, marked by their indigeneity and enslavement in the garment industry (Alves 2012; Simai and Baeninger 2012; Vidal 2012). By underscoring that she was *mestiza*, Doña Barbara also claimed that she was not ‘that kind’ of Bolivian, even though she might have been so when she arrived in São Paulo. But there is a lot separating the woman that arrived in Brazil more than two decades ago and the Doña Barbara of today.

4.2. Refining oneself

When I highlighted that Doña Barbara’s claim to a *mestizo* identity refers to it as a hegemonic identity, I was mainly pointing to how it relates to the discourses of *mestizaje* associated with the state of 1952. However, following Barragán (2006), it is important to take this claim with a pinch of salt. In a study on the identity of market women in the city of La Paz, Barragán argued that analyses of contemporary claims of *mestizaje* should avoid the trap of associating the process exclusively to the project enacted by the National Revolution. Barragán notes that, being *mestiza* and Aymara, rather than mutually exclusively racial categories, were actually co-existing forms of self-identification amongst market women. Her study highlights with great interest how intersecting hierarchies along class, origins, occupation and race create a complex matrix of self-identification which is fraught with contradictions and ambiguities. She concludes that, beyond an idea of national homogeneity and racial amalgamation conveyed by the notion of *mestizaje* expressed by the state of 1952, being *mestiza* entailed the claim for a real or aspired middle-class position (Barragán 2006: 127).

In an ethnography carried out in a provincial town in the department of Cochabamba, Miriam Shakow (2014) describes the emergence of a new middle-class in Bolivia which is ‘experienced as racially – as well as economically, morally, and culturally – intermediate’ (Shakow 2014: 27). Although not constituting what could be called a conventional middle-class, this group is defined as such because they

had achieved some of their aspirations for upward mobility, because many elements of their experience were similar to experiences of self-identified middle classes elsewhere in Bolivia and the Third World, and because their self-presentations, preoccupations, and aspirations differed from the explicitly campesino-indigenous rhetoric of political leaders (Shakow 2014: 25).

This new middle-class described by Shakow is located between their rural indigenous background – from which they wish to distinguish themselves – and a more consolidated middle class – to which they aspire, but about which they have mixed feelings. The result of their mobility – both spatial and social – is often manifested through a feeling of moral superiority towards those who are ‘left behind,’ both in terms of class and spatially, that is the rural areas. As such, while I second Barragán’s (2006) argument that specific ethnic claims are not necessarily opposed to a *mestizo* subjectivity (see also Wade 2005), it is also possible to see that middle-class claims she associates with *mestizaje* are not that different from those fostered by the National Revolution. The *mestizo* was, at the heart of this project, a blueprint for heaving the Bolivian indigenous population from their hapless rural backwardness into modernity. Participating in the latter involved, after all, expectations of social and spatial mobility which would ideally lead to the inclusion into a shared middle-ground, in a middle-class urban environment, one in which indigeneity was *part of the past*. In this sense, the following quote by Silvia Rivera (1996b: 48) is elucidating when she notes that the political processes of *mestizaje*,

far from constituting a space for homogenisation and universalisation of a citizenship model, [...] it reproduces the oppositions, and internalises them. As such, symbols of ascending social mobility end up generating new borders that cross the group categories and reproduce a system of exclusions that is as ubiquitous as it is invisible, because it is anchored in the subjectivity of each person and in their own process of cultural self-valorisation.

When talking to Doña Barbara, the antagonism between indigenous peoples and colonisers emerges clearly, but, while she acknowledges and values her indigenous heritage, it is now part of the past. She has progressed to something else. Although Doña Barbara did not use the word *progress*, she similarly referred to an idea of ‘moving forward’ which, as Cecilie Ødegaard (2010: 16) highlights, ‘often involves an attempt to redefine [a person’s] position in society, of re-conceptualizing self and identity in the attempt to become somebody different from who they were before.’ This became very evident through another conversation I had with her. Amidst her fascinating childhood memories, Doña Barbara recommended I should visit the village where she grew up and meet two of her sisters. Like Doña Barbara, her two sisters were also traders, she told me. But, they were ‘still’ in *polleras*. When I asked her if she too wore *polleras* in the *provincia*, she shrugged off my question, dispersing the Brazilian summer heat from her face with a fan. Lowering her voice, her reason was straightforward: she had ‘refined herself’ (*me he refinado*).

Like other Bolivian migrants in São Paulo, Doña Barbara brought to Brazil expectations of social mobility. She is happy to remark that she has successfully worked her way into a more established social standing in São Paulo. This is a position she still sustains through the continued earnings from her sales at the market and with the help of her daughters – one of whom chose to work beside her mother at *Kantuta*, in spite of some resistance from Doña Barbara. But Doña Barbara also sustains her upwards social mobility by establishing a threshold between her previous and her

current selves. I cannot say if Doña Barbara ever thought of herself as anything other than *mestiza*, but the general idea she conveys with her narrative is that *she has moved on*. On the contrary, her sisters had *not changed* – *they were still what they were in the past*. And, although she might share her origins and an occupation with her sisters, Doña Barbara’s processes of social and spatial mobility have also engendered a broader sense of superiority with regards to them. She has, after all, refined herself.

The idea of ‘refining oneself’ is commonly used, not without some irony, in reference to indigenous women who have adopted *vestidos* and a more middle-class ethos (see also Gill 1993; Peredo 2001). The difference between a *refinada* and a *chota* – although they refer to a similar underlying idea – is precisely a sense that the former denies her ‘true’ origins while mimicking the ‘properness’ of the middle- and upper-classes, conveyed by the idea of *refinement*. This is well illustrated by the following combined excerpts from interviews to *cholita* domestic workers, expressing their opinions about women they refer to as *refinadas*:

They want to become *señoritas*. They wish to be at the same level as the *señoras* but they fail. They put make-up on [*se pintan*], they put trousers on, [they do this] because they want to become *señoritas*, so they say “I don’t come from this place, I come from that place” [...]. They feel as though they are more of a person than we are [*se sienten más personas*], you see? But in spite of that, they belong to the same class of people as us, they are humble. Their parents, most of them are in the countryside. They act as though they were *refined* because they do not accept what they are and because they feel as if they were something they are not. In other words, [they act as if they were] somebody else, somebody they will never be (in Peñaranda, Flores and Arandia 2006: 64-65, my emphases).

These extracts highlight a certain resentment of women in *polleras* towards these so-called *refinadas*. For the interviewed *cholitas*, as ‘refined’ as these other women might be, underneath the polish they are not much different from the *cholitas* themselves. Regardless of the real or aspired social mobility of these women, refining oneself does not necessarily make one less indigenous in the eyes of the others.

Perceiving their own indigeneity as inferior, by ‘refining oneself’ these women can state their superiority in relation to those who they consider to *still* be ‘more indigenous’ than them. According to Elizabeth Peredo (2001: 31), this sense of ‘self-denial’ springs from the ‘discriminatory connotations’ of being indigenous or *cholo*.

Consequently, ‘refining oneself’ entails coming closer to the position of the oppressor in order to avoid being yourself the subject of prejudice and public humiliation (Peredo 2001: 106). However, in denying their origins or acting ‘as if’ they were middle-class, these women do not necessarily effect their passage to the categories of the *señoras*. In fact, by trying to avoid discrimination against themselves, they end up reproducing it.

The market women from *Kantuta* and *Coimbra* were not part of a ‘conventional’ middle-class. They were, in general, more established migrants, who had the documentation and capital to afford the costs and the paperwork required to hold business at these markets. Beyond *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*, some of them had become owners of *oficinas* or had their own machinery to work from home. Although these are clear enough signs of their social mobility, it does not necessarily make Bolivians less *indios* to Brazilian eyes. In fact, it does not necessarily make them less indigenous to their own eyes either.

5. FINAL REMARKS

Market women in Brazil and in Bolivia represent a group of socially and spatially mobile women, whose identities are marked by contradictions and ambiguities. Their identities constantly change as these women navigate different hierarchies of class, race, and origin. I have highlighted how these processes of mobility are related to different

positions within these hierarchies, which are transformed and reproduced in the context of the markets.

Although most market women I met during this research have rural backgrounds, they were keen to emphasise their difference from and rupture with what they described as a general backwardness of rurality – as well as, importantly, of indigeneity. By doing so, these women seek to legitimise and confirm the results of their processes of mobility. Both in Brazil and in Bolivia, the choice of garments is associated with an acquired or aspired social status, but these associations are not free from their own contradictions. In Bolivia, the *cholita* is simultaneously indigenous and urban, without being entirely either of the two. Also in this context, the *pollera* became deeply associated both with rural indigenous poverty and with urban, indigenous political and economic power. For those standing somewhere in between these two poles, establishing and sustaining difference with relation to those who are perceived to be below them is an important marker of distinction.

In Brazil, the absence of the *polleras* does not preclude ambiguities. In this context, the *pollera* emerges as a marker of ‘Bolivianness’ and, as such, associated with indigeneity, rurality and slave work in São Paulo. Market women in Brazil shun these reified representations of Bolivian migration and highlight their agency in their processes of mobility. They are eager to distance themselves from such representations, and to claim a middle-class, *mestizo* position can be seen as a means to achieve this goal. However, while doing so, they also cast rural indigeneity as inferior, further reproducing the same prejudices that affected them in the first place.

The observed associations between the *pollera* and rurality, on the one hand, and – given the use of the garment in celebrations and festivities – between the *pollera* and *tradition*, on the other, underscore an understanding of indigeneity which relegates it

to the past – either one’s own indigeneity or that of the collective body of the Bolivian nation. This sense of ‘progress’ is similarly re-enacted by the abandonment of the *pollera* in the process of crossing the border, in the case of Doña Julia, or by ‘refining oneself,’ as highlighted by Doña Barbara. However, if the abandonment of the garment in Brazil highlights a sense of ‘personal evolution’ through processes of social and spatial mobility, it does not necessarily enact a univocal change of status, as these women might have indicated. In fact, the categories described here – the *chota*, *chola*, *india*, *señorita*, etc. – are not built in a continuum in which, by abandoning one slot, the person would automatically be transported to the next. They are not continuous because they are built on mutually reinforcing, convoluted and contradictory understandings of race, gender and class positioning.

While market vendors’ identities in these two scenarios are ambiguous, their claim to social and spatial mobility certainly is not. However, given the intermediate position that many of the occupy between the indigenous and the nonindigenous, asserting difference constitutes an important strategy in the process of consolidating their position in the urban context.

***Six.* Conclusions**

I began this thesis with my first visit to the *Coimbra* market, but the narratives of market vendors have taken me on a much longer journey. Market women's hopes and fears, their migratory trajectories, dreams for a better life, complaints about everyday problems, and insecurities about the future are in constant movement. Yet this movement does not take place in a void. I followed these narratives to explore how market women's real and aspired processes of social and spatial mobility articulate different identities in the intersections of gender, race, and class. Through the narratives of these market women, it was possible to see how these intersections have been transformed through time, creating different spaces of exclusion and inclusion, forms of domination and potentials for struggle.

Following the narratives of market women, I revisited the underlying coloniality which underpins market women's identities. The colonial encounter, which produced Indians out of the diverse peoples who inhabited the American continent, also produced, through sexualised discourses and practices, other forms of mingling subjectivities between the white colonisers and their Other. For Doña Barbara it is the blood spilt and the blood exchanged between the white men and the Indian women that gave birth to herself and the whole of the Bolivian nation as *mestizas*. Her narrative recovers how sexuality has been an important 'glue' which interweaves various intersecting vectors of power. However, *mestizaje* is more than a process of exchanging genetic heritage: it also involves processes of social and spatial mobility which allow for the creation of

new cultural forms, not only in between the opposing poles of colonisers and colonised, but also transforming each of the sides in this encounter.

Bearing this in mind, I have made the case in this thesis *that processes of mobility too must be seen as articulated through, while also themselves articulating dimensions of gender, race, and class*. Market women's fight against everyday forms of racism and sexism, and their efforts for economic ascension, simultaneously reflect, reproduce and transform these intersections with ambiguous results. Mobility does not imply a univocal 'moving forward,' and the way market women navigate the different categories they use to describe themselves and others reflects how *sameness* and *difference, continuity* and *change* are understood and emphasised in their identity processes.

As discussed in this thesis, there are a series of practices connecting the urban spaces to indigenous rural socio-spatialities. These are made visible in the celebrations that take place at the markets, or by those who keep dual residency in order to participate in the celebrations that take place in their *provincia*. Others have used their extended kinship ties or activated territorial practices that recycle and reimagine the multi-tier organisation of the *ayllu* to guarantee the success of their migratory processes and/or business ventures.

All of these practices indicate *continuities*, but also the *transformation* of what indigeneity entails beyond the rural community, as well changes to the practices that constitute the urban. Rather than remaining pure and isolated, these supposed polarities – the urban and the rural – are in constant interaction, simultaneously contradicting and co-habiting the same subjectivities and practices. Something that remains unclear is why certain practices 'authenticate' indigeneity more than others. In fact, for many market vendors, to be 'urban indigenous' seems to still constitute a conundrum: in order

to be urban, one can no longer be indigenous, and, conversely, to be indigenous means to be nonurban. The more recent rise of an economic and political elite, symbolised by president Evo Morales, by the colourful *cholets* in El Alto and the mighty *cholas paceñas*, indicates that adopting or divesting oneself of *chola* or *indigenous* identities are not necessarily mutually exclusive processes. But, then again, the spectacular successes of these icons are very distant to the experiences of the market women I have met both in Bolivia and in Brazil.

As these market women move through space – from rural to urban areas; from Bolivia to Brazil; from home to the space of the markets – they are faced with different forms of exclusion and new potentials for autonomy. While Doña Ross puts on a *pollera* and moves on to climb new opportunities, Doña Julia removes her *pollera* to do the same abroad. In this thesis, I have argued that women in *pollera* are multiple in the Andes, and that the meanings associated with putting on the garment, despite its racialised and ruralised connotations, reveals strategies for social ascension. However, because these meanings are not univocal, I have argued that market women in *pollera* are always anxious about highlighting how they *are not all the same*.

Hence, as discussed in this thesis, *chola* identity is constituted in both *sameness* and *difference*: indigenous but urban, women but quite masculine, poor but socially ascending. These contradictions in terms are rooted in state-invested forms of socio-spatial segregation, enacted through the colonial dualities between indian and Spaniard, and re-enacted by the peasantification of indigeneity in the 1952 context. However, as I have shown, these conundrums are also reproduced through the discourses of the market vendors themselves. I have also highlighted how market women like Doña Ramona constantly reminded me that she and Doña Rocío might be dressed similarly,

but that they were not the same. Doña Ramona explains to me that she is an urban *chola*, while her neighbour is an *hermana campesina*.

These forms of distinction between market women often underscore that there is a multiplicity of meanings associated with the *pollera*, as there are also multiple forms of being a woman. These forms are built through different intersections of gender, race, and class, producing the complex hierarchy of categories that market women use to identify themselves and classify others. Amongst the markers used to differentiate between these working-class women of indigenous backgrounds are traces such as bodily features, the length of urban residence, speech patterns and the style and wear of the *pollera*. In any case, these markers of distinction are used to highlight the superiority of urban credentials, doing so through processes of social and spatial mobility in relation to the backwardness associated with rural dwelling. And this is sustained even though Doña Ramona and Doña Rocío, who work side by side at *La 16*.

The *pollera* is much less ambiguous beyond Bolivia, however. Doña Julia had already highlighted that when she told me she could not cross the border in the *pollera*, adopting the more practical trousers instead. For her, it was the prejudice against people ‘from the *provincia*’ that mattered. Rurality, often conflated with indigeneity, allowed her to express the racism she knew she would face without calling it by its name. However, the same associations between rurality and indigeneity in Brazil are not meaningful codes for the categorisation of Bolivians in that country. The folkloric imagery of Bolivia that travels around the world includes, as key icons if not stereotypes, the representation of the *pollera* and the women who wear it as receptacles of tradition, alongside characterisations of the physiognomy of Bolivian people as broadly indigenous. The result is that the country’s migrant community is pigeonholed for Brazilian eyes as a homogeneous collective marked by their indigeneity. In this

context, the *pollera* is not a sign of acquisition of urban savoir-faire or social mobility; if anything, the *pollera* would render market vendors *more* indian to Brazilian eyes.

On that note, I have argued that the racialisation of market women is deeply entrenched in their insertion into the urban informal labour market. Differently from de la Cadena's point (1995), I have proposed that market women are '*more indian*' not necessarily because they do 'women's work' whenever in the cities, but *because the activities with which they engage in the urban context have been racialised (and gendered) to begin with*. In Bolivia, as discussed, street trade and domestic services have been, from colonial times, activities associated with the indigenous sectors of society and, in particular, indigenous women. In the more recent context of heightened inequalities and increasingly precarious labour conditions, the informal economy continues to be one of the main sources of work and revenue for women in the Andean context. And, in the latter, inequalities based on race and gender help to keep these women in a position that provides them with substantially less income than men or nonindigenous women in both the formal and informal economies.

However, if this precarious labour insertion is the result of processes of mobility – initiated by indigenous individuals and groups, as well as by the force of the colonisers, climate change, and economic and social reform – *the uncertain gains obtained through their work have also allowed some room for manoeuvre*. Amongst those who live and work in the cities, social and spatial mobility have been expressed through a change in categories, through a process that has been going on since colonial times and is reflected in the emergence of *cholo* and *mestizo* sectors. Although the 1952 revolution has imbued the *mestizo* with a new political relevance, this identity also meant some form of mobility towards a point in the middle, particularly in terms of class and race. *However, these gains are uncertain*, and changing from one category to

the other is not necessarily a one-way process or indicative of an overall change in status. *As market women seek to consolidate their hard-worked social mobility, they often reproduce racial and gendered ideologies that see women's work as less valuable, and indians as necessarily poor.*

The intersections between class, race and gender become particularly salient when analysing the differences between the *cholita* and the *señorita*. Doña Helga has crucially described herself and other *cholitas* as *malditas*, *atrevidas* and even *machistas*. All these terms reflect that expectations of 'proper womanhood' are not only built on unrealistic bases of women's behaviour, but also against the experience of nonwhite, working-class women. The ambiguously gendered performance of *cholitas* combines a drastically feminine attire with less-than-feminine behaviour – they are *misfits* (see also Weismantel 2001). However, the commonly referred distinction between *cholitas* and *señoritas* in terms of the garment they wear – and, hence, what these clothes mean in terms of cultural practice and racial background – becomes more complicated when the *chota* category makes an appearance. I have argued that the *chota* is marked by an unescapable sense of *unfitness*: the *chota* is cheap, so she lacks the money to become a *cholita*; however, she is too indian to be a *señora*, and too urban to be indigenous. Importantly, market women's contempt for the *chota* reproduces forms of exclusion that affect the market women themselves, both those in *pollera* and, importantly, those who – like the *chota* – are *de vestido*.

Amongst some of these women in Brazil and in Bolivia, I have observed a continued attempt to reinforce a certain middle-class ethos. This was represented through certain expectations of their role as women in relation to their families, through the downplaying or straightforward denial of rural origins, and through a narrative of progressive refinement. Beginning with the last point, I have argued that the idea of

'refining oneself,' as did Doña Barbara, involves the construction of a forward-moving trajectory of change, the *acquisition of an urban savoir-fair which those who are 'left behind' lack.* Implied in this construction, indigeneity is, by opposition, portrayed as being locked in space and time. This type of discourse, consistently used to justify the tutelage of dominant groups over indigenous subjects, shares similarities with the discourses used to other the Bolivian migrant community in Brazil.

Market women in São Paulo are well aware of what comes along with the connotations of indigeneity for Bolivians in Brazil. Many Bolivians went to this country in search of better living conditions, and most found work in the *oficinas* of the garment industry in São Paulo. Part of the othering of Bolivians in Brazil associates their attributed indigeneity with the precarious working conditions faced in the garment industry. In this context, their working conditions are seen as collateral 'aggravators' of the 'position of inferiority of the migrant group,' in a view reproduced not only by Brazilians, but also by migrant Bolivians (see also Simai and Baeninger 2015: 218). However, more than just parallel processes, *these forms of othering mutually reinforce one another, working together to represent Bolivians as victims of the circumstances, lacking the means to evade the exploitation to which they are subjected.*

Claiming their agency in their processes of mobility, market women recognise both indigeneity and 'slave' working conditions in their personal narratives. But these are all relegated to their *past*: to the historical past in the stories of Doña Barbara, to their parents' generation as presented by Esther, or even to other side of the border as highlighted by Doña Julia. Some of these women have also faced exploitative working conditions in their lifetime, but this is history – they have worked themselves up to a better social standing. In this view, there are, of course, other members of the Bolivian

community who are still slaves, and they are mostly those of rural origins, recognised as such because they are still likely to be seen as indigenous by these women.

Market women in Brazil welcome a sense of shared community with fellow *Bolivianos* and celebrate this shared ‘Bolivianness’ at the spaces of the markets. They are, however, also very keen to distinguish themselves from *other* Bolivians. The market women I met in Brazil are, in general, more established migrants who have acquired the economic means and the paperwork necessary to work at or own a stand at *Kantuta* and *Coimbra*. Although market women in Brazil and in Bolivia are generally ambiguous about the status of their market vending as ‘work,’ they all agree that they work hard now, and have worked hard to achieve what they have got. Many market women describe their earnings at the market as vital resources for the household, which are, however, not very often reinvested in their individual endeavours, but rather on the payment of debts and on better education for their children. In fact, market women invest not only their money, but also their time in the family. They are both providers of economic resources and care for their families, and often describe that the work load is unevenly distributed between men and women in the household. This is not to romanticise their ability, or their need, to uphold their social standing: women just have to work harder, I was told, and in this case, they actually did.

Finally, the adoption of a middle-class ethos was reproduced not only through the achievement of economic stability. In fact, with economic gains obtained from the informal economy being so uncertain, market women reinforce their middle-class ethos by compounding prejudices built at the intersections of gender, race and class. In doing so, these women incorporate, appropriate and reject forms of exclusion to which they are often subjected. These processes are fraught with ambivalent appraisals of their work, of their rural-indigenous backgrounds, and of the results of their desired and/or

acquired economic prosperity. These processes are necessarily ambiguous and so are the identities and categories these women claim for themselves and attribute to others.

Although the reflections presented here begin with a very specific question revolving around a very Andean identity, the conclusions in this thesis speak to dynamics that are much more general. The ambivalences highlighted by market women underscore how a persistent coloniality pervades and is reinforced, even if transformed, in the present context of heightened mobilities, flows and inequalities. In fact, through these very processes of mobility I have been able to observe how gender, race and class mutually construct one another in ways that can be oppressive, while also allowing for transformation and change. These potentials, however, are simultaneous and provide but ambiguous prospects for these women. Furthermore, individual advances in one dimension of inequality might be bought at the expense of compounding another, either for the woman experiencing upwards social mobility or for larger groups of which she is, was or is deemed to be a part. Facing racism and sexism, and ambitioning to consolidate their standing and that of their children, the narratives of these Bolivian market vendors and the broad terrain of their struggles are shared by many others around the world.

Annex One. Glossary

This is a list of the foreign terms used in this thesis. It was elaborated based on personal notes, with the aid of other bibliographic sources, in particular the glossaries provided by Fernández (1995) and Albro (2010b), and in the book edited by Larson, Harris and Tandeter (1995). This list does not claim to be either exhaustive or definitive, but to work as a guide for the reader. The terms in parentheses indicate the origin of the word, as follows:

(AY) Aymara (PT) Portuguese (QU) Quechua (SP) Spanish

---A---

Abarca (SP): sandals made from tire rubber and usually worn in the *provincia*.

Almuerzo (SP): lunch.

Almuerzo familiar (SP): lit. family lunch; typical Bolivian style menu lunch.

Altiplano (SP): lit. high plateau, used in reference to the Andean highlands in Bolivia.

Ambulante (PT/SP): pedlar.

Api (QU): drink prepared with purple corn.

Asociación, pl. *asociaciones* (SP): association of market vendors.

Atrevida(o) (SP): daring, insolent, bold.

Atrevimiento (SP): daring attitude, insolence, boldness.

Awayu (AY): Andean multi-coloured cloth used for various purposes.

Ayllu (AY/QU): non-contiguous and territorially dispersed socio-spatial units based on real and/or fictive kin and productive complementarity.

---B---

Barrio (SP): neighbourhood.

Bolita (SP): derogatory term used in Argentina in reference to Bolivians, which ridicule the prolific use of diminutive in their speech.

Boliviana(o) (PT/SP): Bolivian person.

Borrachera (SP): drunkenness, the act of getting drunk.

---C---

- Cacique* (CARIB): term borrowed from the Carib used in reference to the indigenous leaderships, also *mallku* or *kuraka*.
- Cama adentro* (SP): lit. bed inside; relating to live-in jobs where work and accommodation take place in the same space.
- Camba* (SP): used in reference to the people from Bolivia's lowland departments, in contrast with *colla*.
- Campesina(o)* (SP): peasant.
- Caporales* (SP): popular Bolivian dance of multiple cultural references usually performed on religious occasions and during Carnival. From the term caporal, used in reference to a *mestizo* slave overseer.
- Casta* (SP): lit. caste, meaning 'pure.' Used in reference to the mixed-race population and to those who were classified as such.
- Ceja* (SP): lit. brow.
- Ch'ixi* (AY): flecked grey.
- Chachawarmi* (AY): the couple, composed by the terms; *chacha* (man or husband) and *warmi* (woman or wife).
- Chicha* (?): fermented maize drink.
- Chicharrón de chancho* (SP): fried pork
- Chola(o)*; also *cholita* (AY/QU/SP): mixed race person; urban indigenous woman, market woman, see also *mujer de pollera*.
- Cholet* (SP): a portmanteau between *cholo* and *chalet* referring to buildings in the neo-Andean style, which are becoming increasingly present in the cities of La Paz and El Alto. These
- Cholificación* (SP): transformation of indigenous cultures and forms of sociability into *cholo* ones.
- Choripan* (SP): a portmanteau between *chorizo* (sausage) and *pan* (bread); sausage sandwich.
- Chota* (?): a derogative term used to refer to an indigenous-looking woman, usually of lower social-class, dressed in Western-style clothes, also *chota barata* meaning cheap *chota*. See also *refinada*.
- Chuño* (AY): small and dark dehydrated potatoes.
- Colla* (AY/QU): used in reference to people from Bolivia's Andean highlands, in contrast with *camba*.
- Colono* (SP): *hacienda* worker, serf, tenant farmer.
- Compadrazgo* (SP): god-parenting, used in relation to a system of co-parenting and the establishment of fictive kinship ties.
- Compañera(o)* (SP): comrade.
- Contrabandista* (PT/SP): smuggler, involved in contraband.
- Criolla(o)* (SP): American-born person of Spanish decent, white.

---D---

- Dama Paceña*, also *Chola Paceña* (SP): lit. Lady or *Chola* from La Paz, used in reference to the conspicuously wealthy *cholas* who wear the distinctive garments of La Paz, which include the bowler hat, shawl and the long *pollera*.
- Día de la Patria* (SP): lit. Fatherland's Day, in this case the date of the celebration of Bolivia's independence from Spain officialised on the 6th of August 1825.

Doble residencia or *doble domicilio* (SP): dual residency.

---F---

Favela (PT): slum (also *villa miseria* (SP) in Argentina).

Feria (SP); *Feira* (PT): street market, periodic market, fair.

Fiesta (SP): ritual celebrations, patronal festivities

Forastero (SP): lit. foreigner, stranger. Used in reference to indians living away from their village of origin.

Fricasé (SP): pork stew.

Futebol (PT): football.

---G---

Gente (SP): lit. person/people, someone.

Grosería (SP): rudeness.

---H---

Hacienda (SP): private landed state, latifundia.

Hermana campesina (SP): lit. peasant sisters, a term used by market vendors in reference to women from the *provincia*.

---I---

Indígena (PT/SP): indigenous person.

Indigenismo (PT/SP): political orientation emerging in the first half of the 20th century which proposed the inclusion of indigenous populations in the national *corpus*, mostly by celebrating their cultural contributions.

India(o) (PT); *India(o)* (SP): (American) indian

Indianismo (SP): political orientation emerging in the second half of the 20th century which proposed reclaiming the term *indio*, indigenous history, and their agency against the persistent colonial domination by the state.

Indio alzado (SP): rebelled indian.

Indio permitido (SP): authorised indian, concept by Charles Hale.

---J---

Jaqi (AY): lit. proper person, full personhood. Used in reference to indigenous individuals living in rural communities, also *runa* (QU).

---K---

Kantuta (AY): bot. *Cantua buxifolia* and *Cantua hibrida*, a native flower from the Andean high-valleys.

Khatera (also *Qhatera*) (AY): market woman.

Kimsacharani (AY): leather whip.

Kuraka (QU): Indigenous leader.

---L---

Lechón (SP): lit. suckling pig, pork roast.

---M---

Machaq Ciudadano (AY): new citizens.

Machista, *Machismo* (SP/PT): male chauvinist, male chauvinism.

Madrina (SP): godmother.

Maestrerio (SP): guild-type association of market vendors.

Mal (SP): evil.

Maldecir (SP): to curse at someone, to cast a curse on someone.

Maldita(o) (SP): wicked, wretched, damned.

Mallku (AY): Indigenous leader. *Marianismo* (SP): concept presented by Evelyin Stevens to describe middle-class feminine behaviour in Latin America.

Mercado (SP): indoor market.

Mestiça(o) (PT); *Mestiza(o)* (SP): mixed-race person.

Mestizaje/Mestiçagem (PT/SP): lit. miscegenation, process of cultural and racial mixture; condition of being *mestiza(o)*.

Mita (AY/QU): rotative, short-term compulsory labour.

Morena (PT): in Brazil, mixed-race, dark-skinned woman, usually used as an euphemism.

Mujer de pollera (SP): lit. woman in a *pollera*, a *chola*, in contrast with a *mujer de vestido*.

Mujer de vestido (SP): lit. woman in a dress, a *señorita* or a woman who wears Western-style clothing, in contrast with a *mujer de pollera*.

Mujer del pueblo (SP): lit. woman of the people or, more likely, woman from the village or even from indigenous community, meant as a vulgar or ordinary woman who lacks 'properness.'

Mulata (PT): in Brazil, a black-white mixed-race woman, a highly-sexualised term.

---O---

Obraje (SP): textile workshop.

Oficina de costura (PT/SP): garment workshop.

Originario (SP): indian living with his original kin group or place of birth.

---P---

Pachamama (AY): mother earth.

Padrino(s) (SP): godfather; godparents.

Patrón, pl. *patrones* (SP): boss, masters, *hacienda* owners.

Pastel (SP): small, rectangular crust-pie filled with cheese and deep-fried in vegetable oil. Usually eaten along with a glass of *apí*.

Pollera (SP): multi-layered, pleated skirts.

Prefectura (SP): in Bolivia, departmental government.

Prefeitura (PT): in Brazil, city government.

Provincia (SP): rural areas of the Bolivian departments.

---Q---

Q'ara (QU): lit. peeled or bare, an indigenous term used to refer to white and *mestizo* people.

Qhatu (AY): produce market.

Quilquiña (QU): bot. *Porophyllum ruderale*, Bolivian cilantro, a herb that tastes and smells like cumin and is used for garnishing.

---R---

Rapa (PT): city tax inspectors.

Reducción, pl. *reducciones* (SP): villages where the indian population was congregated by the Spanish Crown.

Refinada (SP): lit. refined, a woman, generally a *chola* or indigenous-looking woman, who follows Western-fashion, mimics a middle-class attitude, and denies her rural-indigenous backgrounds. See also *chota*.

Refresco (SP): a sugary drink made with boiled dehydrated fruits or cereals.

---S---

Salteña (SP): a type of Bolivian pastry.

Señora (SP): married woman, mistress of the house, see also *mujer de vestido*.

Señorita (SP): miss, young woman, see also *mujer de vestido*.

Sítio (PT): rural smallholding.

Sorojchi (QU): altitude sickness

Subprefeitura (PT): district councils within a city.

Sullu (AY): llama foetus.

Susto (SP): lit. 'fear' or 'shock,' which causes the partial loss of a person's soul (*ánimo*) or spirit, leading to different bodily and mental illnesses in the affected person.

---T---

Tambo (QU): posting houses, inn.

Tinku (QU): traditional ritualistic form of combat, also used in reference to a dance form.

Tunta (AY): dehydrated potatoes that look similar to white pebbles.

---U---

Urquichi (AY): manly woman, who has the capacity to perform male tasks.

Utawawa (AY): term used in reference a foster child, maybe a relative or godchild, or to woman or family who is cared for/receives a plot of land in exchange for labour or in payment for past/future favours.

---V---

Vestido (SP): dress.

Vida orgánica, also *tradición orgánica* (SP): lit. organic life or tradition, used in reference to the participation in civic, cultural and political associations.

Viejito (SP): from *viejo*, meaning old.

Vocero (SP): lit. spokesman, a person who invites costumers to a shop or restaurant.

---W---

Wawa (AY): baby.

Wiphala (QE): multi-coloured flag representing the indigenous peoples of the *altiplano*; one of the two national flags of Bolivia.

---Y---

Yanacona (QU): indian dependent, service indian miner, or agricultural labourer no longer attached to an *ayllu*, but usually bound to a Spanish master.

Yatiri (AY): lit. 'the one who knows'; fortune-teller/ritual-medicine person; healer.

---Z---

Zona Sur (SP): Southern Sector, used in reference to the south-most and richest area of La Paz, Bolivia.

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