The Inca Berry and *los Uvilleros*

The struggles around the production of a new global superfood in Ecuador's Northern Andes.

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Though hope can be an act of defiance, defiance isn't enough reason to hope.

-Rebecca Solnit, 2016

Cover picture: Uvilla farmers jostling around a barrel of organic fertilizer that was handed out at a promotional workshop for the usage of the products of Organicom – a brand for organic agricultural products. At a plot in the community with most Uvilla farmers in the region, 18-04-2016

Abstract

This thesis dives into the dynamics around the production of the Inca Berry, a fruit that is part of the so-called *Superfoods* trend: a trend thriving on the anti-globalist sentiments behind moral consumption. This berry becomes a vehicle for globalization processes in Ecuador's Northern Andes, where it is produced by small scale farmers. The focus of the thesis is on the friction between the global neoliberal market and local farmers' agency. It shows the negotiation processes that these farmers apply to shape their engagements with global forces in their own ways – to create hybrids. The agency and non-agency they have in shaping these hybrids is explored. Two struggles are central for Inca Berry farmers. First, a financial struggle is created by the exploitative production structure, making it possible for payments by the main exporting company to arrive very late, leaving farmers severely indebted and eventually excluding them from the market. Second, Inca Berry farmers do not have enough experience and assets to comply with the mandatory organic standards that come with producing the berry for exports. It turns out that the rollback of the state that comes with neoliberal rescaling processes deepens inequalities of capital and knowledge, limiting their agency and thus their capacity to negotiate, making farmers unable to give their wished shape to the hybrid local-global engagements they become part of.

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Contents

Introduction

> *These Uvilla plants are not just plants, you know? They are a source of work, a way for people to maintain themselves. Not just for me, but for my workers too. And they hear us, did you know that? I talk to them, I sing to them and they listen. And I speak with God and I ask him to let them grow well and have beautiful fruits.* - interview Veronica, March 18, 2016

Uvilla is the Ecuadorian term for a fruit known on the global market as the Inca Berry. It is a round orange berry in a lantern shaped shell which has a strong sweet-sour taste, mainly sold as a 'Superfood' in dried form, for the foodies in the 'global North' to put in their morning cereal. Because it contains many antioxidants it is considered 'superhealthy'. Very healthy foods are currently trendy for 'moral consumers' (Ulver-Sneistrup et al 2011). These consumers this way feel like they are acting out againt the Macdonaldization (Ritzer 2001) that is perceived to come with globalization. The 'Inca' part of the berry also attracts moral consumers; consuming 'real Andean heritage' by eating a berry gives them feelings of authenticity, perceived to be countering the homogenizing forces of globalization. The Superfoods trend in the Global North thrives upon the anti-globalist sentiments consumers like these and has grown quickly during the past years, coming with a soaring demand for Inca Berries. Veronica is one of more than a thousand small scale farmers who have started growing Uvilla in Ecuador's Andes region in the past years to provide for this demand. Between 2009 and 2015, Uvilla export from Ecuador has grown with 86%[1].

About three years ago, in 2013, Veronica needed a new source of income. She owned a workshop where she made and sold traditional indigenous hats, but the sales had gone down a lot. Her brother had just started growing Uvilla and selling it for exports. He was getting a nice income out of the crop, so Veronica decided to give it a try too. She rented a small piece of land in her home village and took a loan with the local bank to buy materials. Within a few years she managed to let the farm grow to 2200 plants, becoming one of the largest farms in the region. These years had not been without struggles. A tiny green louse had recently almost finished her whole lot, forcing her to change to a non-organic export company that did let her use chemicals to combat the plague. In addition to that, the previous company she produced for was very late with its payments. Having to pay her workers without being paid herself and having to invest in pesticides to combat the plague had made her debts grow explosively.

> "*You know, yes I have cried a lot. I have invested ten thousand dollars and nothing has come out. Nothing, I tell you. But now I am on the right path with the new company. I know it is going to be all right. I hope that my sweet God will bless me and grant me great success with these*

[1] Data retrieved from CobusGroup, May 2016

plants. Do you see those mountains over there? When you come back here in two years they will be covered with my Uvillas!"

Veronica is not the only Uvilla farmer who is struggling with the new crop. The Inca Berry is a non-traditional export crop to producers in the region. Engaging with the global market through cultivating the berry promises livelihood diversification: it promises to be a new and steady income possibility. This provides the farmers with hope. Though when entering the field with an explorative stance, it immediately became clear that dissatisfaction, disappointment and frustration were common sentiments among *Uvilleros*. These sentiments were leading to farmers' efforts to negotiate the negative consequences of their involvement in Uvilla trade. An example of this is what Veronica did: becoming part of a new farmers' group and joining another company together, that promised better working conditions. I decided to focus the research on these negotiation dynamics, engaging with- and becoming part of farmers' struggles to be able to understand them from the inside. Two main realms of struggle turned out to be at play. First, the main exporting company had created an organizational system in which market fluctuations and the companies' financial problems landed on the shoulders of farmers, leading to a painful financial struggle. Second, to be able to sell the fruit for export purposes, it had to be organic: no chemicals could be used in its production process. The combination of the farmers' lack of experience with organic production with the susceptibility of the Uvilla plant to plagues and diseases often proved problematic, leading to a technical agricultural struggle.

The two struggles described above are deeply intertwined with the exclusionary dynamics of the global neoliberal market. The neoliberal market has become seen as a universal magic tool for development. To facilitate for the free reigning of the neoliberal market, processes of rescaling take place, taking away responsibilities from the state and replacing them with local private parties or global institutions, processes which Swyngedouw (2004) terms *glocalization*. This rescaling allows for free trade policies policed by global institutions to map the world on the basis of comparative advantage, leading to 'optimal efficiency' and thus 'widespread benefits' (Weis 2004). In neoliberalist discourse a single narrative is created in which poverty and inequality are made to seem natural and inevitable upshots of evolutionary processes, rather than the conscious and planned outcomes of a very deliberate set of human interventions (Lyon-Callo & Hyatt 2003: 177). This narrative presents a very oversimplified story; a story that argues that when people fail to be part of the global market, they are simply insufficiently entrepreneurial (Taylor 2015), the losers of globalization (De Sousa Santos 2006). The universal hegemony of this neoliberalist discourse, making it seem inevitable and necessary, is created through local-global friction and the silencing of contingencies: the silencing of the friction that facilitates its processes (Tsing 2011). This thesis aims to demonstrate this process of friction, showing its contingencies and how they are silenced. This is

done by taking an ethnographic look at a globalization process created by the neoliberal market, analysing struggles where the local meets the global, where the Uvilla meets the Inca Berry.

In theorizing on globalization processes like these it is important to not consider globalization as homogenization or as domination, but to take into account hybridization: the heterogeneous combining and mixing of practices of the 'local' and the 'global', generating new structures, objects and practices (García Canclini et al 2005). These hybrids are created through a constant negotiation (Woods 2007) on the local level with the different strands of globalization that people are confronted with (Beck 2000). This constant negotiation makes the forms of hybrids to be fluid and continuously changing. When using the hybridity perspective, it is important not to lose sight of questions of power (Nederveen Pieterse 2001). One can easily contribute to the silencing of contingencies by overcelebrating the negotiation that takes place in hybridization processes and overstating the extent to which true local-global relations are actually co-constituted. There is a need for more research considering the actual capacity of rural localities to engage with- and shape globalization processes (Woods 2007). This thesis answers to this call by not only focusing on the fact that relationships are hybrid, but also on the negotiation processes that take place in forming them, especially taking into account the effectiveness and consequences of actions aimed at negotiation (Mannon 2005). Here the issue of agency comes to the fore. By considering agency as having the power to act (Giddens 1984), exploring local-global negotiations and their effects on hybrids that are formed can also demonstrate non-agency (van der Ploeg 2003), the inability to act. This bares the exclusionary inequality that is ingrained in the relations between the different parties at play in the realm of local-global friction (Heron 2008, Tsing 2011).

The struggles that Uvilla farmers experience in the realms of financial assets and technical capabilities often lead to their exclusion from the market. The dynamics of the production process force them to quit cultivating. Now, putting on neoliberalist goggles, it would be easy to describe them as insufficiently entrepreneurial and thus losers of the global system (De Sousa Santos 2006, Taylor 2015). Though in the field the opposite proved to be true: Uvilla farmers actively and creatively engage with the new global flows in all ways available to them, they are as entrepreneurial as they can be. The problem lies with the limitations to the possibilities for negotiation available to them. Relations with global export companies do not seem to be co-constituted to a large extent (Woods 2007). The agency of Uvilleros is numbed and turned into non-agency by the inequalities of capital and knowledge that the local-global relations between the farmers and the Uvilla export companies are ingrained with. This thesis explores these inequalities and their effects on the agency of farmers, demonstrating the exclusionary effects of the global neoliberal market with the following research question: *How do small scale farmers producing Uvilla as a non-traditional export crop in Ecuador's Northern Andes engage with- and shape the new global relations they become part of?*

The above question has been explored in a three month research in Ecuador from March to May 2016, of which two months were spent doing full time fieldwork. This fieldwork was performed in Ecuador's Northern Andes region, living in an indigenous community and taking part in local life. The methods used for the research were of anthropologic nature: participant observation and semi-structured interviews were the main techniques used. The results of these efforts are person-centred and ethnographic; they show the lived experiences of local-global friction. The ethnographic data is triangulated throughout the thesis, using earlier scientific works. Different kinds of informants were selected with an aim to fathom the local-global relationships within the production process: farmers, exporting companies and the shackles in between, *centros de acopio*, were visited and interviewed to understand the dynamics in the field from different perspectives.

After a presentation of the conceptual framework and the methods used, the results of the research are presented in the following sequence of chapters, aimed at first sketching out the history and context at hand and then going deeper into farmers' struggles and negotiations. Chapter 1 takes a look at the side of Inca Berry consumers. It describes how 'moral consumption' can serve to act against the negative impacts of globalization for consumers (Ulver-Sneistrup et al 2011). Consumers choose products that they feel to be countering the consequences of globalization, like traditional products countering homogenization and organic products countering environmental deterioration. Global trends grow and thrive on these anti-globalist sentiments, paradoxically creating new global interconnections, like the Inca Berry does. The Inca Berry is presented and thus consumed as a mythological and historical product with ancient ties to the region, a healthy and organic Superfood.

Chapter 2 treats the way in which Uvilla as a non-traditional export crop has grown in the region. Its cultivation for exports was introduced in the 1980s after it being (considered) a wild plant to the region for hundreds of years. In the past five years its production for exports has explosively grown, to provide for the Superfoods trend in mainly Europe, Australia and the United States. This growth is made possible by Ecuador's extensively neoliberal outward- and export- oriented approach to development. The future of Uvilla as an export crop in Ecuador is insecure: the prospects are negative due to the Superfoods trend already declining and a severe economic crisis hitting the country as we speak (as I write – in 2016).

Chapter 3 shows who the Uvilla farmers are. They are peasants, living in indigenous communities in a rural region which is increasingly involved in different kinds of local-global relationships. This is hybridizing rural culture and livelihoods. A clear focus is laid on the younger generation's development in terms of education, necessitating more family income and thus livelihood diversification. The most common agricultural livelihood activities in the region are cattle raising and cultivating traditional crops like potatoes, abas and maize. These are combined with non-agricultural livelihood activities like construction labour and selling artisanal products. Income from these activities is quite insecure, leading to livelihoods being vulnerable. In a search for a more

steady income, many people end up working for the most common employer in the region: the fresh cut flowers sector. This sector necessitates migration and requires long working hours, causing cultural disruption through pulling apart community life (Breilh 2001). Switching to Uvilla is attractive because it provides farmers with the promise of more livelihood security through a stable income, and it can be cultivated within the community itself, repairing community life – a form of re-embedding (Eriksen 2007).

Chapter 4 demonstrates the farmers' financial struggle. It shows that the hopes of more livelihood security through cultivating Uvilla are idle. Firsty, starting with Uvilla cultivation requires large investments of time and money to acquire materials and experience, often driving farmers deeper into debt. Company A, the largest Uvilla export company in Ecuador employing over a thousand farmers in the region, has created an exploitative production structure. They have placed a farmers' association between them and the farmers, combined with a *centro de acopio* where the fruit is gathered. This association makes it possible for the companies to rid itself of all responsibility. An exploitative structure is created in which large discounts for fruit defects leave farmers with very low payments. The company also lets their financial problems land upon the shoulders of farmers, delaying their payments for months. This leaves farmers even further indebted and forces many of them to quit production. Here the effects of neoliberalist rescaling (Swyngedouw 2004) become clearly visible: the state does not help these farmers because they do not meddle in the 'business of business'. The financial inequalities between the farmers and the company, between the 'local' and the 'global' partners in this relationship, are exacerbated.

Chapter 5 engages with the farmers' technical struggle. It shows how 'moral consumption' creates global structures that exclude small scale farmers. Organic agriculture has become a universal category (Tsing 2011) through its intertwinement with neoliberal globalization. It has moved from being a localized alternative movement to being an instrument of global standardization (Vogl et al 2005). Most Uvilla export companies oblige their producers to produce according to these global organic standards. Organic agriculture is an attractive option, providing hope for farmers in the region upon whom a history and present of extensive pesticide use in agriculture, especially in the fresh cut flowers sector, has detrimental health effects (Breilh 2001). Though the methods of organic agriculture are complicated and expensive to attain. Extensive training and support for farmers is needed. In this case again the effects of rescaling are visible: the farmers have to fend for themselves, nor the state nor the companies offer (sufficient) trainings. This process deepens the inequality of knowledge (Shepherd 2005) between the 'local' farmers and the 'global' company.

Chapter 6 completes the story of the *Uvilleros* by exploring the ways in which they aim to negotiate their positions in the relationships with companies. They apply different forms of agency in this effort, ranging from switching companies, to forming farmers' groups, to varying individual forms of creativity and inventions. Though these efforts often do not have the wished-for effect of

negotiating their position. They often serve for no more than a slight strengthening of livelihoods or a shared sense of hope, but regularly even have contradictory effects, increasing farmers' risk of exclusion and redundancy (Mannon 2005, Bryceson 2000). The financial inequality and the inequality of knowledge, created and deepened by neoliberal structures, weigh down on Uvilla farmers in such a way that their agency is numbed and turned into non-agency. They are have no power to change their situation, no true co-constitution takes place in forming this local-global relationship (Giddens 1984, van der Ploeg 2003). The only form of farmers' agency that seems to actually put a dent in the companies' position is through using the *machete*, cutting down their Uvilla plants and their hopes and investments with it.

Picture 1 Freshly harvested Uvillas at Veronica's farm, 18-03-2016

Picture 2 Uvilla berries after the sorting and peeling process at Company B, 05-04-2016

Conceptual Framework

Non-human entities – both natural and manufactured – have frequently acted as the agents of globalization. Historically, the exposure of rural regions to global influences often came in the form of a seed, plant, foodstuff or livestock introduced as a means of capturing rural spaces for global commodity networks (Woods 2007: 498).

Uvilla is a new non-traditional export crop to the research region. The Inca Berry this way becomes an agent of globalization in the Ecuadorian Northern Andes, involving its producers in networks of global engagement. This chapter discusses the struggles that come into play when small scale farmers become involved in networks like these and (have to?) engage with global dynamics. This will be done by starting with the 'friction' perspective on globalization (Tsing 2011) and a discussion of how hybridization takes place through local-global entanglements with the different strands of globalization (Woods 2007, Beck 2000) in the first paragraph. A closer look is taken at the negotiation processes that take place in shaping these hybrid forms. It explores how agency is applied in these negotiation processes and at how power inequalities can limit this agency, consequently limiting negotiation and the capability of 'locals' to shape their own hybrids (Lyon-Callo & Hyatt 2003). The second paragraph goes into the central role of neoliberal ideology in the current processes of globalization that are taking place, with a focus on its interrelation with the rescaling of regulatory processes (Swyngedouw 2004). It then looks into how neoliberal policies lead to a deepening of inequalities and how criticisms on this process have led to a renewed form of 'inclusive neoliberalization (Klak et al 2011). The last two paragraphs review literature on the impacts of neoliberal globalization processes on rural areas. The third paragraph focuses on the influence of 'inclusive' neoliberal globalization processes on rural livelihoods. It describes how neoliberal restructuring and local-global hybridization takes place in rural areas (Woods 2007). Then it goes into the role of small scale farmers in this whole, and how non-traditional exports can serve to include these farmers (Hamilton & Fischer 2005). It also discusses the risks that come with engaging with non-traditional exports. The last paragraph describes how small scale farmers' coping mechanisms to deal with these risks can lead to their further exclusion (Mannon 2005). It shows how peasants' negotiation processes can become blocked through structural factors weighing down on their agency.

Globalization: friction, hybridity and negotiation

Globalization stands for increasing global interconnection: technical advancements make it possible for localities to be increasingly enrolled in networks of interconnectivity organized at a global scale. This facilitates global flows of commodities, capital, people, ideas and representations (Steger 2003,

Brown 2008). Many authors in the past few decades have contributed to delineating the processes and effects of globalization, analysing the processes and consequences of how the spaces of the globe are becoming more and more intertwined, leading to growing worldwide interdependency through the intensification of social relations. Local events influence what happens on the other side of the world and vice versa (Giddens 1990, Harvey 1990, Robertson 1992). In theorizing one easily falls into the trap of treating globalization as a process that simply 'happens to us all', an unavoidable complete global integration. This leaves human agency to be something purely reactionary and denies it to be a shaping force (Peck & Tickel 2002, Cohen 2005, Brown 2008). A perspective that helps to acknowledge human agency in the formation of globalization processes is that of Tsing (2011). Tsing considers the processes considered phenomena of 'all-encompassing' globalization to be caused by friction at so-called local-global encounters. In these types of contingent, haphazard encounters the agendas of both parties are often different, causing friction. Universal categories, often evolving into 'global forces', are born out of this friction and a silencing of the contingency of these encounters. This way heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power (Tsing 2011:5).

A useful tool for understanding how friction works is to analyse the hybridization that takes place at local-global encounters. Hybridization is a sociocultural process in which discrete structures of practices, previously existing in separate form, are combined and mixed to generate new structures, objects and practices (García Canclini et al 2005). Woods (2007) emphasizes the interaction that takes place between the global and the local, negotiation and configuration being central to a process of co-constitution involving local and global actors. He argues that reasoning in terms of hybridization works emancipating, not reducing globalization to domination or subordination, recognizing the agency, the power to negotiate, of those living their lives 'on the local level'. To take the perspective of Woods on hybridization is to use the approach of Foucault (2003) to power relations: seeing them as being shaped by their contestation. The process of hybridization often happens through processes of disembedding en re-embedding (Eriksen 2007). Disembedding stands for the disconnection between social relationships and place that globalizing forces can cause, the 'local' losing its localness through engagement with the global. Re-embedding is a very common reaction to these forces, a conscious move back to 'the local' through an emphasis local customs, beliefs, products and events.

The views of Beck (2000) form an addition to the above hybridization perspective. He argues to look at globalization as multi-stranded: rather than as one linear and homogenising process, multiple and different phenomena of globalization are taking place through different sets of social relations, with different effects. An interplay of dimensions of globalization takes place: rural localities experience globalization as a hybrid of economic, social, cultural and political processes. There are tensions between these different dimensions, partly because they favour different livelihood and landscape

outcomes. The choices and differential engagements that people make considering the different strands of globalization experienced, lead to specific local constellations. Rasch and Köhne (2016: 480) use the term *localized hybrid global practices* to these constellations. Because each locality has its unique context and engages with globalization in its own way, the outcomes of globalization processes are always different. Varying forms of local negotiation with global flows have varying outcomes.

De Sousa Santos (2006) sees hybridization as the discourse of the 'winners' of globalization, of those who profit from the increasing connectivity described. There is another side to these increasing interconnections, that of the 'losers', the locals whose lives are forcedly changed by globalization and for whom it brings exclusion, misery, loss of food sovereignty, ecological destruction and poverty. Massey (2005) also points at the growing global inequalities coming with globalization processes and at the need to be reflective of our interconstitutive connections in these. The most important shortcoming of reasoning in terms of hybridity is that it can easily overlook questions of power and equality (Nederveen Pieterse 2001, Shepherd 2005, Long 2007). Araeen (2000:15) even sees the hybridization discourse as a triumph of neoliberal multiculturalism; a form of cultural relativism towards inequalities and struggles of different groups in society. To prevent overlooking of such issues, not just the form but especially the formation of hybrids needs to be taken into account. This can be done by exploring the negotiation processes that give shape to the above described localized hybrid global practices.

In these explorations, tracing agency serves well to bare power constellations. Agency is, very simply put, the capability of people to do things, implying power (Giddens 1984:9). When tracing agency in negotiation processes, one must also take into account the factors that limit or even numb agency. An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability to 'make a difference', that is, to exercise some sort of power (Giddens 1984: 15). As Long (2007:74) frames it, underpinning the possibilities for certain types of action, are particular institutional, cultural and material components that compose the field of action. We also need to talk about non-agency, in the sense that alongside the capability to make a difference, the opposite, incapability, also frequently occurs (van der Ploeg 2003:16). Neoliberal globalization processes have the effect of severely limiting agency: they compromise grassroots efforts at structural change (Lyon-Callo & Hyatt 2003), lowering the extent to which true co-constitution takes place in shaping hybrids (Woods 2007). The next paragraph focuses on an important dynamic underlying globalization processes that cause non-agency: *glocalization*, the rescaling of responsibilities that comes with neoliberalism (Swyngedouw 2004).

Glocalization: neoliberalism and the rescaling of responsibilities

Glocalization entails that the scales on which regulatory processes take place are shifting, due to a scalar transformation of the networks of economic organization. The regulation of some processes which used to take place at state level is 'upscaled' to the global level, but simultaneously others are 'downscaled' to the local level (Swyngedouw 2004). This happens intertwined with the implementation of neoliberalist policies. Neoliberalism as an ideology emphasizes a 'growth first' strategy as development, sees (international) competition as positive and trade as the engine of growth. Its policies facilitate a freer movement of goods, resources and enterprises across national boundaries, ultimately seeking resources to maximize profit and efficiency (Heron 2008: 89). Neoliberalism came up in the 1980s after the breaking up of the global blocks after the cold war, aimed at 'true global integration' (Glin 2014). The core term to the ideology is comparative advantage (Weis 2004, Vogl et al 2005): regions should only produce what they are best fit to produce. This should define global production patterns, arbitrated by an integrated and seemingly neutral market, which will optimize the efficiency of the system as a whole, bringing widespread benefits in the form of cheaper and more sustainable supplies of goods. Weis also calls this 'market fundamentalism'(2004: 462). It is seen as the fullest expression of modern democracy, with self-correcting market dynamics producing optimal results for the largest number of individuals (Dello Buono 2010: 3). The idea of freedom is central within the ideology, with a free global market seen as a cure for economic and social deficiencies (Farmer 2004).

This form of 'freedom' can only be reached through rescaling: a rollback of the state is needed because state interference in economic matters is seen as distorting to market forces (Kay 2008). The role of the state has become limited to facilitating market competition and capitalism (Sen 1999, Sandbrook 2000, Harvey 2005). State enterprises have been privatized and public services have been downsized. Protective tariff barriers have been lifted and economies have been opened up to the world market (Kay 2008).[2] Transnational corporations have come to work using a footloose strategy, relocating production to places with the most favourable economic conditions (Woods 2007), making trade into a force that maps the world. New supranational bodies like the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund have been created to promote and police global trade and penalize perceived anti-competitive behaviour (Woods 2011: 250). This has left many countries, especially in the Global South, without a choice – 'export or perish' is the message which compels these countries to participate in the global market, often as suppliers of primary products in global agro-food complexes (Murray 2001).

[2] More about the history of neoliberalism in Latin America and Ecuador can be read in Chapter 2.

Swyngedouw indicates a deep worry about *glocalization* because of the power disparity it creates, moving capital and power to the global elite and taking it away from those living their lives purely 'on the local level'. Mertz et al (2005: 210) share this worry, describing globalization to come with weakened state power, which can lead to more local autonomy but also leads to more 'threats from the outside' in the form of uncontrolled exploitation. The responsibility for peoples' livelihoods and wellbeing has ceased to be a public matter, taken away from the state and placed within private hands; often not the most careful hands. The unhampered entrance of transnational companies displaces local commercial interests and transform economies of host communities (Woods 2007). Kay (2008: 917, 918) describes the implementation of neoliberalist policy in Latin American countries since the 1980s to have come with macroeconomic stability but with a high social cost: a rise of inequality.

The current neoliberalist globalization with its focus on competition and profit maximization is made into a universal, is made to seem to only possible course of events (Tsing 2011). A single narrative is created in which poverty and inequality are made to seem natural and inevitable upshots of evolutionary processes, rather than the conscious and planned outcomes of a very deliberate set of human interventions (Lyon-Callo & Hyatt 2003: 177). Farmer (2004) points at an important flaw in neoliberalist ideology: the guarantee of freedom only accounts for a very limited group, the powerful. The liberal political agenda has rarely included the truly disadvantaged. The neoliberalist model has become hegemonic and universal in global political economy in the past decades through a silencing of many contingencies and dislocations (Giddens 1984, Weis 2004, Long 2007, Tsing 2011,).

The negative effects of neoliberal policy have not gone completely unnoticed or unprotested. During the '80s and '90s global neoliberalist policies were commented for being too top-down, this way excluding and hurting the poor. As an answer to that, the World Bank and IMF presented the approach of 'inclusive neoliberalism', coming with new policies meant to prevent social exclusion (Klak et al 2011). Central to this approach were the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, introduced in 1999: national development plans to be created by countries themselves (though based on global frameworks), directed at inclusive growth, involving the poor in 'growth' (Craig & Porter 2003, IMF 2016). The approach of inclusive neoliberalism has in turn been commented to be an active way of silencing contingencies by calling growth inclusive and directed at the 'poor', involving 'local voices', while in reality it simply seems to increase the reach of global neoliberalist policies into local lives and strengthen processes of rescaling by taking away more power from the state – most policies are directed at supporting private and non-state initiatives (Klak et al 2011, Craig & Porter 2006). One of the effects of these policies is the lifting of even more trade barriers, involving the poor in 'growth' through involving them in the global market. This process is very visible in rural areas, where the lion's share of production for the global market takes place.

Neoliberal agrarian restructuring, peasants and non-traditional exports

This thesis explores new local-global engagements from a rural perspective. Rural areas are integrated into the global neoliberal system with a primary producers' function. Akram-Lodhi & Kay (2010) term this process *neoliberal agrarian restructuring*. Production is no longer (just) for local or national consumption, farmers now produce for a worldwide market – for international demand (Gudynas 2008). Bonanno and Constance (2008:37) sum up the four main changes in the agro-food system that have come with this neoliberal restructuring. First, large corporations exercise greater control at the level of production. Second, current conditions weaken resistance at the level of production, through a combination of less solidarity and cooperation, and corporate hypermobility, coming with the constantly present risk of redundancy (Bryceson 2000). Third, the importance of consumption is heightened, both as dominance and as emancipation. Lastly the retreat of the state as regulator leads to deregulation of the public sphere and new regulation in the private sphere. This restructuring also has extensive effects on rural labour and thus livelihoods. Much tenant labour is replaced by wage labour, there is a growth of temporary and seasonal wage labour, rural wage labour is increasingly feminized, and rural workers become more urbanized; related with a growing importance of non-farm employment and income and thus migration (Gwynne & Kay 2004). One can say that global entanglements bring tremendous changes for rural regions and livelihoods.

There is a large body of careful postcolonial work that would see the above presentation of events as too one-sided, as neglecting farmers' agency. In many of these academic works[3] it is emphasized that globalization of the rural should not be considered as a top-down process or a pure form of domination. According to these authors, posing corporate, globalized industrial agriculture across from peasant farming would imply that all farmers are disempowered, their agency being replaced by corporate power (Cheshire & Woods 2013). Instead reconstitution of rural place happens though negotiation, manipulation and hybridization, conducted through but not contained by local micro-politics (Woods 2007: 486). Farmers can engage with global flows in their ways by applying their agency and becoming more entrepreneurial (Tucker 2010). This way they can negotiate their own pathways through shifting landscapes of transnational business opportunities (Woods 2011:232). This thesis aims to criticize the views of these authors as an overcelebration of hybridization. This is done through presenting a case experienced by an underrepresented group whose struggles are too much silenced and taken for granted in this type of hybridization discourse: peasants.

Peasants, also labelled small scale farmers or family farmers, are a very large and heterogeneous group. The IFAD (IFAD 2008) defines them as farmers with under 2 hectares of land. In 2009 there

[3] i.a.Bebbington 2001, Massey 2005 Woods 2007, Long 2007, van der Ploeg 2008, Paredes 2010, Woods 2011, Cheshire & Woods 2013, Walsh Dilley 2013.

were 450 million of these farms worldwide, supporting an estimated 2,2 billion people (Singh 2009, cited in Murphy 2012). They are most represented in developing countries. Common features of peasants are that they often use their own- and family labour and rent or own one or multiple pieces of land. Cultivation of crops is regularly in part for family consumption. Other parts of these crops can be swapped or commercialized on national or international markets (Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010). Peasant livelihoods are often constructed from a plethora of fragmentary and insecure sources (Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010: 179). The severe insecurity of their lives leads to depeasantization, a process occurring worldwide, industrial large-scale agriculture taking over and peasants becoming excluded from the global market (Clark 2015). When production for exports is done by small scale farmers like the Inca Berry is, this seems like it could be an opportunity for their inclusion into this market. Peasants can at times maintain their production methods, lands and livelihoods through engaging with global capitalism (Johnson 2004). This way peasants can use their lands and labour in ways that preserve community and reinforce key elements of their cultural heritage (Hamilton & Fischer 2005: 84). Non-traditional agricultural exports[4] like the Inca Berry, introduced by transnational companies, can this way come to serve peasants in making a living and making it meaningful (Bebbington 2000). For agro-industrial firms, smallholders possess certain advantages over larger growers in terms of production costs: they have access to relatively 'cheap' family labour and their labor is self- supervising (Key & Runsten 1999: 397). These firms often present producing non-traditional export crops for the global market as a poverty reduction strategy for peasants, offering an opportunity for a new source of much needed income (Hamilton & Fischer 2005).

This opportunity is not without risks. A first common problem that peasants encounter is limited credit availability. Diversifying production involves a period of significant capital investment before potential benefits emerge (Watson & Achinelli 2008). It is difficult to obtain a loan to invest in materials for the production of new crops. If it is possible to obtain a loan, often interests are high and debts rise quickly (van der Ploeg 2008). Another complication is that strict market standards come with producing for exports – often specific production methods are needed to produce a crop that is conform to export quality standards and requirements (Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010). Another common risk is market fluctuation – demand constantly changes due to quickly shifting consumer preferences. This also comes with fluctuating prices and forces small scale farmers to respond by changing crops regularly (Mannon 2005). Other common struggles for these peasants are a large risk of harvest failure due to a lack of experience with non- traditional crops and health problems

[4] Non-traditional export products are products that are not traditionally produced in a region, but introduced by transnational companies which see comparative advantage for its production (Killick 2001, Weis 2004, Vogl et al 2005).

due to use of chemicals (Taylor 2015). The next paragraph presents the different ways in which small scale farmers can- and cannot cope with these different types of risks, through assessing their agency and non-agency in shaping local-global export engagements.

Peasant (non-)agency, inequality and exclusion

The fundamental question is whether smallholders can take advantage of the opportunities presented by globalization while surviving its threats (Naranayan & Gulati 2008: 135). The answer to that question depends on the agency that small scale farmers have in the negotiation processes that take place in the formation of new global relations; in the shaping of 'their' hybrids. This differs for each locality and relationship, though there are also similarities between farmers' struggles, which this chapter will delineate, based on literature. A very important point that needs to be made here is that peasants are most definitely not passive victims of the situations in which they find themselves, imposed from the outside (Woods 2011). They constantly negotiate the different livelihood options they have. Often households aim to diversify their livelihoods as much as possible to be less vulnerable or prone to shocks. Whenever specific livelihood activities do not work out they 'reassemble and repattern' their lives, flexibly and entrepreneurially creating new connections, networks and options. Cash crops can serve as tools in a diverse and flexible strategy for generating income, both for the national and the global market (Massey 2005, Mertz et al 2005, Woods 2007, Naranayan & Gulati 2008, van der Ploeg 2008). Now an optimist and celebrational turn could be taken, arguing that peasants create hybrids and thus have agency, period. Though that is not the turn this thesis takes.

Following the work of Mannon (2005), I want to point at the necessity to look at both the causes and the effects of the negotiating behaviour described above. Being flexible and creative is often the only way for these farmers to not have to leave the agricultural sector altogether – it is in that sense a survival strategy for peasants, a form of coping. Next to that it is not even said that the effects of this behaviour are positive for all peasants. In the cases of small scale farmers engaging with non-traditional exports in Kenya and Costa Rica that Mannon analyses and compares, their negotiations lead to their further exclusion. The farmers in these cases looked for alternative markets when they disagreed with the working terms and conditions of export companies. In the end this led to the export companies they worked for leaving them altogether, looking for steadier supply with larger producers. These producers became excluded through their aim to be more justly included. Here peasants' agency is numbed. Peasant agency becomes numbed through structural factors weighing down on them. Non-agency is created this way: they become incapable to change their situation, they cannot exert power (Giddens 1984, van der Ploeg 2003). As Long (2007:86) argues, we must ask what kinds of agency and political space farmers actually command within the agro-food system, and what leverage they have over policies and politics of agricultural change.

Even though local actors are active agents in processes of negotiation, they are always embedded in the politics of globalization (Massey 2005). Neoliberal policy environments reduce human beings to live a life of insecurity and tension, resorting to survivalist strategies (Heron 2008: 93). In analysing the constraining factors to agency in farmers' negotiations, the process of neoliberalist rescaling, of *glocalization*, becomes visible (Swyngedouw 2004). Human agency is diminished where inequality exists (Heron 2008: 92). The constraining factors to peasants' agency come down to two realms of inequality created and constantly reinforced by neoliberal policy: an unequal division of knowledge (Shepherd 2005) and an unequal division of capital (Murphy 1999, Kay 2008). Firstly, all over the world, the whole of agriculture is moving away from farmers knowledge, due to international standardization, globalization and social change (Vogl et al 2005: 23). For small scale farmers it is complicated, if not impossible, to attain new knowledge on methods of 'global agriculture' without state assistance and interventions (Challies & Murray 2011) – which is no longer the responsibility of the neoliberal state. Knowledge of markets and market access is also lacking with these farmers, making it hard to negotiate their positions (Murphy 2012).

Secondly, the 'market failure' that has always been present in agriculture is that producers outnumber buyers, often by thousands to one (Murphy 1999). This gives buyers the advantage and powerful position of setting prices and comes with the constant threat of redundancy for farmers (Bryceson 2000). Public (state) policy has traditionally been directed at countervailing this failure and protecting farmers from exploitation. Though international neoliberal rules have made many of the tools that were used in this process illegal (Murphy 1999:185). This leads to a severe deepening of financial inequalities through uncontrolled exploitation (Mertz et al 2005) – employers easily being able to avoid minimum wage legislation, if it even exists (Kay 2008). The above processes often leave small scale farmers without leverage to negotiate the form of their involvement in global relations, to negotiate 'their' hybrids. These farmers lack the financial and informational means to claim political space. The structural factors weighing down on these peasants are too strong, causing exclusion and marginalization and severely numbing agency, turning it into non-agency, the inability to make a difference (Giddens 1984, van der Ploeg 2003).

There is a tendency among ethnographers to not portray suffering. Green (1999:58) calls this common phenomenon in anthropology the *diverted gaze of anthropology*; choosing to focus on other processes and leaving out the unpleasant cruelties that are taking place. Solely focusing on the specific forms of agency and hybridization that do take place in the case of the Inca Berry farmers would be a diversion of the gaze . Through only focusing on hybridization and agency in a celebratory way, one contributes to the silencing of the contingencies of neoliberalist policies and thus to the reinforcement of its processes. The negative consequences of the prevailing system are ignored. As an ethnographer one can offer insight into the lived realities of local-global friction and show how

new arrangements of culture and power are created and reinforced (Tsing 2011). This thesis does this through showing the agency ánd non-agency that Inca Berry farmers have in the negotiation of their involvement in the global market, not diverting the gaze from the way they are increasingly exploited and excluded by the neoliberal system. This thesis actively gives voices to those hurt by the neoliberalism, actively aiming to show the contingencies of its unequal encounters that are silenced. In this effort the field of friction in which the local-global engagement between the 'local' Uvilla farmers and the 'global' Inca Berry is made will be fully mapped, analysing its hybrid engagements without leaving blank spots in the realms of power. The next chapter describes the methods of fieldwork that were applied to reach this goal.

Methodology

This chapter presents how the research was performed. It engages with where then research took place, how I found my informants and who they were, the methods used for data collection, the activist role I took in the field and the way in which my identity has shaped my position in the field and consequently my data.

The when and where of the research

The ethnographic fieldwork for this study took place from March to May 2016. I spent three months in total in Ecuador of which I performed two months of full time data gathering through fieldwork, living in a community in the research region. The fieldwork area was located on the frontier of Imbabura and Pichincha provinces, located in the Andes mountain range to the north of Ecuador's capital Quito. I visited Uvilla producers in five different communities in this area. Because of the small size of the communities and anonymity of the research informants, the names of these specific communities will not be mentioned in this thesis. Names of all informants and businesses involved in the research are also anonymized.

Figure 1 Political map of northern Ecuador. Source: mapsofworld 2016

The research population

The research population consisted mainly of those who grow Uvilla in the communities (not) mentioned above. Gathering of informants was done using a form of inductive sampling: the so-called *snowball method*, finding new suitable informants through the networks of other informants (Guest 2015, Morgan 2008). The snowball analogy stands for a snowball growing as it rolls downhill – the pool of informants grows over time. This allowed for the flexibility to do true explorative research: following leads that were presented to me and taking advantage of new information during the collecting process (Guest 2015: 222). I used two important networks for the start of the snowball.

The first was that of NGO X, an organization that works with small-scale producers in several communities, among which some grow Uvilla. A link could be made between my goals and theirs – they were planning to start a project to strengthen Uvilla farmers. A part of this cooperation became providing the NGO with an advice for this project. The second important network is that of company B, an export company that several farmers were shifting to and were visiting when I visited on 08-03-2016. These farmers were very willing to share their ideas and frustrations that led to the company shift and were open for further contact. These all became key informants and contact was kept throughout the research. The contacts made through Company B and NGO X were enough to get the snowball rolling and gather sufficient data for analysis with a large amount of informants spread over different communities.

An important criteria for the study sample of informants was it that should be diverse. It had to contain farmers with very small plots and farmers with larger plots, farmers for whom business was going well and farmers who were worse off, female and male *Uvilleros/Uvilleras*, farmers who produced conventional Uvilla and farmers who produced organic Uvilla, current Uvilla farmers ánd farmers who had stopped cultivating. All this diversity was needed to get a picture as complete as possible of all the different struggles and sides of the Uvilla story. Informants other than farmers (or additional to being farmers) belonging to the research sample were the managers and employees of two export companies, the leader of a famers' cooperative, an employee of a *Centro de Acopio* (gathering center) and several local people who were not producers themselves but did have knowledge about Uvilla cultivation in their- and other communities, for example members of the host family where I stayed. To analyse these struggles I took the approach of person-centred ethnography, enabling me to understand peoples' subjective experiences of events (Hollan 2001). I aimed to understand the lives, histories, motivations and viewpoints of my informants. The table below presents the stories of my main informants in short.

Farmers	
Eva & Martin Chillos	Eva and Martin are 'married for ages' share their house with their son Julian and dog Tito. They have a large piece of land, inherited from Eva's mother. Here they grow all kinds of organic vegetables and fruits, meant for home consumption and the local farmers' market. They were pioneers in the region to start cultivating Uvilla and have had the crop for over 10 years. Martin has what you could call a true passion for organic agriculture and likes to experiment, also with the Uvilla plants. They currently have a plot with around 800 Uvilla plants.
Nico Inlago	Nico lives with his wife, children and one of his grandchildren at a school in one of the communities. He is the concierge and attends to the

	building and terrain. He studied agronomy for a few years in the past but had to stop because of family financial constraints. Though he has been actively involved in (experimental and often organic) agriculture ever since, of which Uvilla has become a part. '*Playing with the plants is what I enjoy most*', he explained. He has a few plots with different kinds of crops for consumption at the school and in his household, and also has a small plot with about 300 Uvilla plants to gain some extra income.
Veronica Quicocha	Veronica is a very entrepreneurial lady. She lives with her husband and children in the city of Cayambe where she used to run a workshop, making and selling traditional indigenous hats. When sales went down she decided to start growing Uvilla on land in her family's community and is now one of the largest growers in the region, with around 2200 plants. She employs three workers who help her on the land. She is very devoted to the catholic religion too and volunteers in the local church.
Carlos Inuca	Carlos is an important figure in the region. He is the founder and head of an organization that defends indigenous rights and has a leading role in his community. He is very passionate about indigenous values and the connection to nature that people have in the region. He started cultivating Uvilla around 5 years ago and now has multiple lots in his community, with a total of around 1500 plants, and employs 3 workers.
Miranda Cancha	Miranda is a busy young woman with three children. She was studying in Quito when she got pregnant and decided to stop to take care of her family and work in and around her community. She now has a combination of different jobs, mostly centred around Uvilla. She manages about 600 plants of her own with her family, works at an Uvilla gathering centre for one day a week and helps make and sell fertilizer at an agricultural support store in her community.
Tamara Cachi	Tamara has a large family and shares her house in her community with her children, their spouses and her grandchildren – her husband died recently. All family members bring in some income; mostly through working in the fresh cut flowers sector. Tamara herself has a few plots with maize, potatoes and beans for autoconsumption, and a small plot with around 200 Uvilla plants. Her daughter in law and grandson often help her with harvesting and peeling.
Rodrigo Mojanda	Rodrigo is the leader of an Uvilla farmers' cooperative and gathering centre.He is a visionary man who has united entrepreneurial (and

	unsatisfied) Uvilla farmers, together trying to find solutions for the problems they experience in cultivating Uvilla. He as a cultivo of his own too, with around 600 plants, which he manages with his family.
Juanita Bautista	Juanita is a bright elderly lady who used to be the president of her community. She lives together with her very elderly mother in a traditional clay house. Her children have moved to Quito and her husband recently died. She has a plot with maize and used to have a plot of Uvilla and a plot of pasture with a few cows. When I met her she was in a difficult position because her Uvilla plants died of a disease, and her son had sold the plot with cows which he inherited from her husband.
Others	
Victoria Gonzalez	Victoria was my closest colleague at NGO X, the organization's agricultural engineer. She has a lot of knowledge on techniques for managing plants and pasture – also organically. For her work she often goes out into the communities to assist the women's groups NGO X works with in their agricultural projects and activities. She lives with her parents, brothers and sisters and her young daughter. She is thinking of starting with growing Uvilla herself for more family income, and of starting her own farmers' group.
Alberto Sanchez	Alberto, economist, is the one of the founders of Company A, the largest Uvilla export company in Ecuador, and the company that made the Uvilla into the 'Inca Berry' through their marketing techniques. They also export from Colombia. Alberto is now the manager of the Ecuadorian factory where not only Uvilla is processed but also other products like dried mango, pineapple and honey. He manages the factory and its import- and export relationships. He lives in Quito with his family and travels a lot for work.
Daniel Lares	Daniel, agricultural engineer, is fellow manager of a large farm and processing company for Uvillas. The company mainly focuses on the national and international sales of fresh Uvilla. Lares has developed his own variety of the plant, which carries an 'extra sweet' berry. Recently the activities of the company have expanded to also include externally producing small scale farmers – among which Eva and Martin Chillos, Veronica Quichocha and Carlos Inuca.

Johan de Vries	Johan is the product manager of the superfoods sector of a large Dutch import firm for fruits, supplying many supermarkets and retailers in the whole of northern Europa with their superfoods. He is mainly occupied with logistics and supply. In the preparation of my research I did a telephone interview with him, mainly about the development of the Superfoods trend.

Methods for data gathering

The methods used for data gathering are all qualitative research methods stemming from cultural anthropology/sociology – my educational background. The most important methods were participant observation, semi-structured interviews, informal interviews and focus groups. Firstly, distinguishing for anthropological research, participant observation was a crucial method used for the research. This is a method in which an observer takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of the people being studied (Musante & Dewalt 2010: 261). The difference between 'just' participating and participant observation is that the researcher carefully applies behavioural analysis and notes down (analytical) observations. Participant observation, as Musante (2015) explains based on Polanyi's work (1966), helps create a *tacit* understanding, *feeling* the point of view of the other, understanding culture from the inside by experiencing it.

For me participant observation created a deeper insight into both the technical and the social aspects of the Uvilla sector. It made me understand peoples' behaviours and power relations and the daily reality of being a farmer, spending days with the burning sun in your neck, working against the clock to be able to finish the harvest in time. Much time was spent visiting Uvilla producers and their plots, often spending a whole day joining all their activities: helping them with agricultural activities as harvesting, fertilizing and peeling the fruits, having lunch together with them and their families and sharing stories and experiences. Regularly I offered to help farmers with their harvests in exchange for an interview – to not just extract information but contribute something too, a form of reciprocity. This offer often turned out to be welcome, producers' time is scarce and it turned out they could always use extra help. Other times when participant observation was helpful was when visiting export companies, cooperatives and farmers' groups, taking part in workshops, tours and meetings. During these types of 'observing' visits it is possible to have some small talk with all different kinds of people present to understand the situation at hand, also called informal interviews – leading us to the next subject: interview techniques.

Three important interview techniques were used for the research. The most used was informal interviewing. Many conversational- style informal interviews were held during moments of

participant observation with informants and also for example with taxi drivers, neighbours on the bus, members of the community I lived in, colleagues at the NGO and my host family. Often when living in the research region, conversations get sparked automatically in different social contexts about the work you are performing as a researcher or about other topics related to the research goals. These conversations often provide crucial information (Musante & Dewalt 2010). At the end of every research day I noted down possibly important information from the informal interviews performed. The second important interview technique used were semi-structured interviews. These are formal interviews – an official interview appointment is made with the informant. An interview guide is followed: a specific topic- and question list is used during the interview. The conversation is free-flowing and can deviate from the list and the order of topics, as long as all topics and questions on the list are treated and answered (Cohen & Crabtree 2006). This leaves space for new insights and subjects be treated. A total of twelve formal semi-structured interviews were held. The interviews were recorded with permission and transcribed afterwards. For each interview the topic list differed, based on the informants and information needs at that point in time.

Thirdly, three focus group interviews were performed. In a focus group interview a group of informants is brought together to discuss certain topics devised beforehand by the researcher. The researcher is present to observe the discussion and steer it when needed. The advantages of this method above individual interviews are that interactions within the group can be observed, realities and events can be understood through how they are defined in a group context and group dynamics can bring forth discussions subjects that you as a researcher would not have thought of beforehand (Frey & Fontana 1991). Two focus groups were pre-arranged; it were Uvilla farmers' meetings in specific communities, organized and chaired by me and NGO colleague Victoria. The goal of these focus groups was to analyse the common problems in Uvilla farming and its potentialities, to contribute to the NGO's Uvilla project and my research objectives. They were both attended by six Uvilla farmers. The third focus group was a coincidental one for me. I had an interview scheduled with the president of an Uvilla farmers' cooperative about the cooperatives' work and it turned out a large part of the cooperative - around 20 people - were present and open to engage in the conversation. A side-note that has to be made is that all interviews were conducted in Spanish, so the quotes in the thesis are not literal but translated.

My position in the field

The data I have gathered through the above collection methods have undoubtedly been influenced by my subjective experiences and selfhood during the fieldwork. As an anthropologist/ethnographer participating in peoples' lives as a social being, you yourself are the 'research instrument', an instrument with its own identity and subjective experiences (Musante & Dewalt 2010). *The ethnographers' multiple social identities and his or her dynamic self may be liabilities but also research*

assets. Anthropologists may use their gender, sexual orientation, skin color, physical skills, nationality, age, marital status, parenthood, and self to obtain data that are unavailable to those with different personal assets (Robben 2007: 63). There were both positive and negative sides to my position in the field, between which a constant balance had to be found.

I think being a woman helped a lot in getting access to peoples' lives and homes. *Machista* culture is quite strong in rural Ecuador (Duffy et al 2012) and as a woman you are not seen as a threat to family life. Also most of my informants I spent much time with were also women, making way for a friendship-type form of relation, inter-identification and easy conversation when taking part in household tasks like cooking or cleaning and harvesting together. Other women were often very interested in my life path and life dreams/plans –"*why do you not have babies yet? When are you planning to have them?*"- which made it easy for me to ask about theirs and gain a deeper understanding of their lives. I also experienced the complicated side of being a woman in a *Machista* field, for example when a certain important male informant suddenly asked me to come on a drive to Colombia together, where he needed to change his truck tires. He thought I would be good company for in the car. I kindly rejected the offer, which led to offense – "*why not!?*" - on his side. He refused my later requests for a follow-up interview.

For access, being white and a giant helped too – it was obvious that I was not a local and many informants found it very interesting to have me at their families' lunch tables to analyse the colour of my eyes or ask me if I had been to places that you see in the movies. A factor about being white/European ánd working for a local NGO that can have skewed the results it that I noticed that informants tended to emphasize their poverty when talking to me. It can be that they have represented their (financial) struggles more gravely than they truly are in the hope of assistance, consequently changing the research results. *"Look at my house! Don't you think it is small and dirty? I am really poor don't you think? You must have a very big where you come from, with multiple floors."* I usually reacted with that I thought having all this fertile ground was riches and that I have only one room and not even a balcony to put an Uvilla plant on.

The most important factor about my subjective identity that I had to negotiate in the field was my tendency to want to 'make a change'. I am an emotional person and get very moved by witnessing things I see as injustice. Also being very critical, I have a hard time only observing situations that I would like to change. After a short while in the field, noticing these strong tendencies, I decided to embrace them and become engaged (Scheper-Hughes 1995). As a white European, part of the 'consumer side' of the Inca Berry story, I was in a powerful position compared to the Uvilleros considering the company they worked for and struggled with. This created a possibility for some small form of advocacy – defending and making known subjects' rights against violation (Speed 2006: 67). From the start multiple informants actively asked me to confront Company A and ask

them to please pay their producers in time or to send technical help when they were experiencing problems with their plants. After careful consideration I indeed confronted the company with these problems and even became further engaged, leading us to the next paragraph.

Activist anthropology – engaging with struggles

Cultural or moral relativism is no longer appropriate to the world in which we live and anthropology, if it is to be worth anything at all, must be ethically grounded (Schepher-Hughes 1992:21).

Right from the start of the explorative research, power imbalances were obvious in the field. Farmers were experiencing intense struggles with the requirements and conditions of Uvilla production and trade – they were practically being exploited. Literally none of the producers I spoke to were satisfied with their situation. As Scheper-Hughes (1995) argues, engaging with how humans behave towards each other implies direct engagement with issues of power and ethics. Scheper-Hughes promotes an engaged form of anthropology – allowing yourself to engage with forms of resistance in the field and demonstrating power imbalances and its consequences in your work. In the field I soon realized that my role as a researcher would be very much engaged: It turned into activist research. I soon overtly committed myself to an engagement with my research subjects that was directed towards their shared political goal (Speed 2006: 71): better working conditions. This way I became part of the efforts for social change going on in the field. Two important contacts facilitated this engagement.

Firstly, the first contacts I managed to make in the field were all actively engaged in this power struggle. These contacts were Company B's managers and producers. Company B is a 'social company' exporting Uvilla that actively supports its producers' livelihoods and needs. Company B's producers are producers for whom the struggle with working conditions had risen to such a point that they had made a very bold move and switched companies. These negotiating producers were very willing to share their stories and lives and became my key informants. The second group of contacts that made me even more engaged, was NGO X. NGO X is an Ecuadorian grass roots organization defending the needs of local small-scale farmers. They offered me access to the farmers they worked with, if I applied my research to create a project proposal for a project supporting Uvilla farmers. Already having aligned myself with the power struggle of Company B's farmers, I decided to indeed officially 'pick sides' and actively contribute to the Uvilleros' cause. This provided me with access to farmers in four different communities where the NGO worked, Victoria as a great research colleague and the possibility to organize focus groups.

The above forms of activist engagement obviously have had consequences for the research results. The results have become very oriented at the farmers' struggles, which I have come to understand from the inside by joining them. The side of Company A might have become underexposed or too negatively exposed through this alignment. I also noticed some hostility and defensiveness on the

side of the company when I posed myself as 'advocating' for the farmers during interviews – this can have led to skewed information from the company's side and thus in results. Next to having an influence on the research results it is important to realize that my presence and this form of subjectivity has had direct effects on those in the field (Speed 2006). "*You could export our Uvillas to your country right? We could set up an export business with you!*" was a type of question much asked from the start. I soon noticed that my presence and my commitment to Uvilleros' causes was leading to hopes I could not live up to. To prevent misunderstandings I constantly engaged in critical dialogue and was very transparent in an effort to develop a close collaborative relationship with my informants (Lyon-Callo & Hyatt 2003).

I explained that I was in the field to understand their situation and lives for my research and to fathom what type of help they could use so the NGO could possibly set up a project with this information. I asked informants for advice on further shaping the research and the advice to the NGO. In the end the most important advice to the NGO was to focus their efforts on technical capacity building for organic cultivation, and to help farmers navigate the market – making them conscious of the existence of multiple companies they could sell their fruits to. The NGO is now exploring possibilities of cooperation with Company B. If this project is actually realised, I will have been an import factor in these changes in the field. If it is not realised, I will have possibly and unfortunately created some false hope on the side of farmers. This leads to another factor about my presence and activist involvement with a large influence on the results, namely the duration of my stay – just a few months was enough to understand the current struggles farmers are going through, but in the sense of activism and bringing about a change I did not come much further than some advocacy with the company and a project advice for the NGO. I would have liked to share more time with the farmers to 1. Be able to document their struggles over time in different phases and 2. Be able to develop the activist side and support project further. The results I did manage to produce in the time spent with the farmers are presented in the chapters that follow, combined with external data.

1. The consumer side of the story: moral consumption, Superfoods and the Inca Berry

Now that the neoliberal market maps the world almost unhampered, enabling transnational businesses to produce whatever and wherever they see to be most profitable (Woods 2007, Kay 2008), consumer behaviour and preferences have come to directly influence the lives of producers. Because of that, to understand production dynamics of the global interconnections made around Inca Berry production, it is also crucial to understand its consumption dynamics. This chapter firstly treats why people often consume products like these: products that provide them with feelings of authenticity and a connection to nature. In this sense consumption choices can serve consumers as a form of perceived agency, acting out against the consequences of neoliberal globalization: detachment, homogenization and damage to the environment, giving them a sense of emancipation (Bonanno & Constance 2008). This is a phenomenon that can be seen as 'moral consumption' (Ulver-Sneistrup et al 2011), further elaborated upon in the first paragraph. The second paragraph shows how the specific food trend which the Inca Berry is part of was 'born' through moral consumption: the Superfoods. It describes what the term Superfoods entails and what other products are part of this category, an how the trend has risen quickly but in turn is already crumbling. The third paragraph is about the Inca Berry itself: it gives a short history of the fruit in terms of production and consumption and describes the properties that make it a 'moral' item of consumption.

1.1 Moral consumption: the 'agency of consumers'

> *"Pure" "Local" "Organic" "Artisan" "Authentic" "Original" "A 100 percent natural". Taking a casual observant walk through the 'local' supermarket in Utrecht, the Netherlands, you are bombarded with these kinds of terms. "Juice r ight from the local grower". "Milk from a meadow full of cows, birds and butterflies". "Mint tea made by original Moroccan recipe, used for friendship rituals". A Mustachioed famer with a basket of beans in his hands is smiling at you from a coffee pack, accompanied by the caption "coffee is our life".* [5]

On the Dutch food market, just as in other Northern-European countries and the United States, in food consumption a certain phenomenon can be observed that has grown over the past decade. This phenomenon entails a move to the natural and unprocessed. The pure, the unprocessed, the authentic, the natural, the local. This is what Goodman (2003) terms a *quality turn* in food consumption. People are turning away from the 'industrial' with its mass production and towards the 'domestic', working with- an/or claiming to work with small scale, differentiated production channels based

[5] Super market stroll, Utrecht, February 12, 2016

on locality, authenticity. trust, reference points and stability (Goodman 2003, Bryla 2015). Large iconic brands come to be associated with negative food attributes like high sugar and fat content and processed, artificial ingredients; what Ritzer (2011) terms 'Macdonaldization', damaging consumers' health. These brands are also perceived to damage the environment (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli 2007). Smart retailers and marketeers are filling the void left by consumers turning away from these brand productswith enhanced produce offerings and alternative brandings like pure/natural/organic private label items and 'locally sourced goods' (Mushkin 2015: 8). Cronin et al (2014: 6) sum up several consumption trends that have come up through this interplay of consumers, smart retailers and marketeers: 'slow food' (Miele 2006), gourmet (James 1996), 'natural health microculture' (Thompson & Troester 2002) and organic food (Thompson & Coskuner – Balli 2007). The fair trade movement belongs with these trends too (Shreck 2005).

What is happening here can be seen as a form of consumer agency – or at least by consumers it is perceived as such: they make specific choices to act out against the consequences of neoliberal globalization and its accessory 'Macdonalization' (Ritzer 2011): detachment, homogenization and damage to the environment and peoples' health. Ulver-Sneistrup et al (2011) term this phenomenon 'moral consumption', consumers making moral considerations in the choices of products they consume. They distinguish 'good' from 'bad' brands. The bad brands associated with the globalized capitalist marketplace and the good brands as produced in ways that are perceived as anti-capitalist and anti-globalist. Interesting here is that, in an aim protest against global neoliberalism, these consumers in turn use and thus strengthen the core system of what they are protesting against: the neoliberal market. Here local-global friction and its creation of universal categories becomes visible again (Tsing 2011). These moral food trends become universas, perceived as intrinsically 'good' consumption, silencing the contingencies of how the trends are created (through the market they are supposed to counter) and of their effects on producers. More on the producers is to be read in chapter 3-6. We now first turn to the specifics of the 'moral' trend to which the Inca Berry belongs: Superfoods.

1.2 The rise and fall of Superfoods

'The term Superfoods, when applied to a product, means that the product contains an amount of nutrients far above average, making it 'extremely healthy'. The term has no scientific meaning and can be freely applied – it is basically a marketing invention (Voedingscentrum 2015, Lunn 2006). 'Superfoods' is the marketing term for functional foods: foods with extra health-boosting ingredients. The first appearance of the term Superfoods was in 2003 with the publication of the book "Superfoods Rx: Fourteen foods that will change your life" (Pratt & Matthews 2003). Quinoa was one of these fourteen magical foods. Then an international boost was given to the hype by a health guru

named Dr. Oz appearing on Oprah Winfrey's television show in 2008, praising Acai berries from Ethiopia – a traditional nutrient for local tribes - to have such a high level of antioxidants that they are able to slow aging in women (Kimball 2015). The superfoods trend then started to surge – not only Acai berries but also Mulberries, Goji Berries and Inca Berries became popular for their health benefiting functions.

The trend started in the United States but quickly spread to Europe. Johan de Vries, product manager of a large Dutch import company that currently focuses on superfoods, described the development of superfoods in the Netherlands. Around 2010-2011, the consumption of these products rose in the more alternative echelons of society. Then around 2012-2013, drug stores nationally took up superfoods into their product ranges. In 2014 the trend became main stream and large supermarket chains started superfoods product lines, creating a proliferation of many kinds of functional foods on the market: algae, wheat grass, hemp seed, Chia seed, bee pollen, raw cacao, coco products, lecithin and many more. Supermarkets often have a special section for all the functional foodies, displaying all these products. Though, as de Vries described, currently the trend is already crumbling. Consumers' attention is slowly shifting towards specific products that are organically sourced; bio foods will most probably be the new overriding trend. The amount of Superfoods imports is already starting to decrease. This makes one wonder what will happen to the Inca Berry.

1.3 A mythical superfood: the Inca Berry

"*Sweet, healthy, fascinating, nutritious, exquisite, unique.... This exotic fruit from South America captivates us with its unparalleled bittersweet taste and excellent nutritional qualities. […] It provides consumers with significant improvements in our health and wellbeing"*. These glorifying words form the introduction to a promotional video about Company A's Inca Berry. The rest of the video shows the production process from field to factory to transport, with smiling farmers and employees proudly showing their techniques and activities. A constant emphasis lays on the organicness of the product "*resulting in a 100% natural product*". An appeal to moral consumers (Ulver-Sneistrup et al 2011) is made here in several ways. The intrinsic health properties of the fruit are extensively promoted, making it a 'Superfood'. Next to that its local and grounded origin in South America is emphasized, creating a picture of the 'embeddedness' of the fruit in the region, a picture of authenticity. The fruits (of company A) being organic forms another appealing factor; naturalizing and de-Macdonaldizing (Ritzer 2011) the product. Now let's move from its promotional properties to some facts about the fruit.

The scientific term for the Inca Berry is *Physalis Peruviana* Linnaeus. It is a small round orange fruit enclosed by a calyx: a lantern shaped paper-like shell. It has a specific sweet-sour taste and is consumed fresh, dried, as sauces and glazes and as marmalade. The specific form in which it is

consumed as a superfood is the dehydrated version. The berry is considered a Superfood because of its supposed health benefits due to high levels of Vitamin A and C, Phytosterols and Carotenoids, making it anti-microbial, anti-inflammatory and an aid in cancer prevention. It is cultivated between 1000 and 3500 meters above sea level and grows best in tropic and subtropic regions, between 8 and 20 degrees Celsius. It is native as a wild fruit type to the Andes region[6]. Where exactly in the Andes region it came from is a point of discussion, but the most current estimates indicate it to have originated in Ecuador and Perú in pre-Incan times. Its cultivation is said to be popularized and spread over the entire Andes region, including Colombia, Bolivia and Chile, by the Incas. The Spanish then encountered it when conquering these areas and brought it to South Africa. From there its cultivation spread through the centuries to Kenya, Zimbabwe, India, Australia, New Zealand and in small amounts to other countries (Fischer et al 2014, El Commercio 2011, Puente et al 2010). It is still produced in certain amounts in all these regions, though the dried berries presented as the Inca Berry Superfood are mostly from Colombia and Ecuador[7].

Throughout the thesis, in writing I use the term 'Inca Berry', which is the term used for the fruit on the Dutch market, and mostly 'Uvilla', the term locally used in Ecuador. Many other terms are used internationally to describe the fruit, like Picchuberry, Goldenberry, Cape Goose Berry, Aguaymanto (Peru) and Uchuva (Colombia). The term 'Inca is used in Europe and the United States as a reference to the fruit's origin in the Andes and its popularity with the Incas who are said to be its first cultivators (El Comercio, 2011), clearly fitting within the consumers' yearning for authenticity expressed by 'consuming heritage' (Bryla 2015). This origin is actively used for promotion of the Superfood to give it a mystical and original vibe. One pack encountered on the Utrecht supermarket stroll even said 'reviving the Inca's lost crop', probably based on the report named *Lost Crops of the Incas: Little-Known Plants of the Andes with Promise for Worldwide Cultivation* (National Research Council, 1989) . Interestingly, hardly any reference to the Incas was made by the cultivators of the fruit - see chapter 2 - indicating the reference to possibly be no more than an 'authentic' marketing tool. Boulianne (2011) interestingly mentions how for marketing purposes, regional tradition can be invented. To this the perspective of Bryla (2015) can be added: that the (true or invented) heritage of a region may become a factor of rural development through its consumption. The region can come to experience new flows of capital and employment. The next chapters will engage with the developmental effects on the Ecuadorian 'Inca' region that the commercialization of the 'berry' has.

1.4 Concluding remarks

All in all one could argue that global neoliberalism thrives through consumers' perceived resistance

[6] Though its exact origins are somewhat unclear – this is discussed in Chapter 2
[7] Information retrieved in interview with Company B's manager Alberto Sanchez, April 7, 2016

against it – power finds grip through friction (Tsing 2011). Buying the 100% natural berry produced by smiling 'Inca' farmers in the lush Andes mountains makes consumers feel like they are engaging in 'moral' consumption. While they are actually reinforcing the system they aim to resist. Ulver-Sneistrup et al describe this as *resisting an irresistible market, from which there is no escape* (2011: 219). Foods fashions that quickly come to thrive (and wither) like the Superfoods, come with a rapid expansion of production and consequent life changes for producers. This thesis demonstrates how one of the 'Superfoods' does not only 'change the lives' of its consumers (Pratt & Matthews 2003), but also impacts those of its producers. The thesis shows how the livelihoods the small scale farmers change through engaging with Inca Berry production. It is demonstrated how local-global friction on the side of consumers causes other forms of this friction on the side of producers.

2. *La historia de la Uvilla*: the Inca Berry in Ecuador

This chapter describes the process of how the 'local' fruit Uvilla has become hybridized and turned into the 'global' Inca Berry. It engages with different stories and interpretations of the history of the plant in Ecuador. Then the Ecuadorian economic context is presented, describing Ecuador's neoliberal development policy that rescales the responsibilities in the country and enables non-traditional export crops like Uvilla to grow without boundaries. It then moves to how and why *Uvilla* was turned into a non-traditional export crop to the region by Company A and adopted by many producers. The last paragraph shows the actual growth of the crop's export in the last years, and a prediction of its export decline in the years that are to come.

2.1 The lost crop of the Incas?

The exact history of the Uvilla fruit in Ecuador is slightly unclear. As the name Inca Berry indicates, it is said by some to be a 'lost crop' of the Incas. The plant grows wild in many parts of the Andes, but whether these are wild ancestral plants or cultivated plants run wild is not known (National Research Council 1989: 250). Fischer et al (2014) add to this mystery that there are indications that the fruit came from Brazil instead of the Andes, and then acclimated to the altiplanos of Peru and Ecuador. The connection of the berry to the Incas was not widely known among informants, the question if they knew of it often even caused some hilarity. "*What do they call it? Inca Berry? Haahahaha. Like we are Incas*!? H*ahaa*"[8], was how Juanita reacted. Even Company B's manager Alberto Sanchez had no idea why the connection is made, while his company sells the fruit under the Inca Berry name. "*It is the English name I guess*?"[9] None of the farmers interviewed knew of any relation between the Incas and the fruit or were even aware that it is called that way on the market.

Only Daniel Lares, manager of Company B, knew of a story on this connection. *"Yes, it is a name meant for commerce. But the Uvilla actually was a very exclusive product for the Incas! You know, in Inca times, we had a mail system.. Messages that were delivered by persons. There was no internet, you know. So they had to run through vast mountain ranges to get messages delivered in time. So the story is that those messengers ate three things: coca leafs, Charki – which is dried llama meat, and Uvillas. Are you imagining it? Now the runners and sporters use those gels, you know, when you make a long bike ride to take that kind of supergel. But they just took Uvillas. Superuvillas!"* [10]Now it might not be known if the Incas grew Uvillas as a crop, but if it indeed was one of their three very important foods they most probably did, making Uvilla cultivation a historical activity in the region. It is clear, though, that

[8] Interview Juanita, March 16, 2016
[9] Interview Alberto, April 7, 2016
[10]Interview Daniel, March 8, 2016

the link with the Incas is actively made for the consumers' feelings of authenticity – for their moral consumption and 'agency', and mainly for an increase in sales for the parties in between.

What ís sure about the history of Uvilla, is that it is remembered as long one, ingrained in the memories of Ecuadorian people. "*You know, all Ecuadorians have always known Uvillas. They just grow like that in the garden. You see the plant over there by the toilet?"* Victoria Gonzalez, the agronomist at the NGO I worked for with whom I regularly go into the field, points at the little wooden shack that provides the roof for Juanita's toilet, next to her traditional Indigenous clay house. "*That plant has been there for as long as I can remember, way before I started growing Uvilla myself!"*, Juanita says. Victoria tells us that Uvillas bring back memories of visiting her grandma as a kid. *"She had four big Uvilla plants in her garden. Afternoons at her place with my cousins always ended with a belly full of fruit and sticky fingers!*"[11] The thing is, multiple informants explained to me, the wild Uvilla plant is native to the region. There has never been a need to sow, it simply grows as a weed. As Lopez (1978) mentions, there have even been attempts to eradicate the plant because it was growing in the way of other crops. *"That is why I don't have success selling Uvillas here in Ecuador! Did you hear the saying 'nadie es una profeta en su propria tierra?' It is a popular saying. Why don't people buy Uvillas here in Ecuador? Because they have their own plant at home, just growing there!"*[12], according to Daniel Lares, owner of Company B, an Uvilla farm and export company located South of Quito. Concluding, Uvilla is not new to the region but its cultivation is – at least in the last centuries.

2.2 Ecuador's neoliberal approach to development

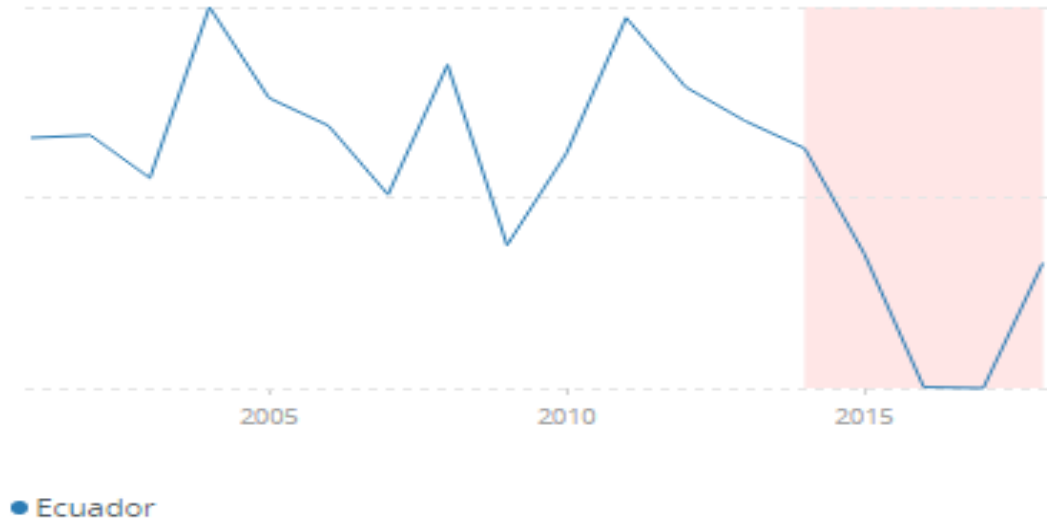
The quick growth of Uvilla as an export crop is made possible by the openness of the Ecuadorian market, coming with its neoliberal policies. Like most Latin American countries, in the 1980s Ecuador experienced a severe economic crisis (Buitelaar & Hofman 1994). These crises led to wide-raging economic reforms throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, as part of structural adjustment policies imposed by transnational financial institutions the IMF and the World Bank. These reforms included mass privatization of state assets, reduced public spending, liberalization of trade, lifting of all restrictions on foreign investment, and full property rights for foreign investors (Dello Buono 2010: 3), rescaling Latin American countries' economies (Swyngdouw 2004). These reforms made Latin American countries to be among the most open economies in the developing world (Alam & Rajapatirana 1993:1). In Ecuador an outward-looking development approach has been pervasive ever since. Changes in trade policies to open up the economy have included export promotion laws, reductions in import restrictions, a tariff reform, the simplification of trade procedures and the modernization of trade institutions (Ludena & Wong 2006). Policy approaches

[11] Interview Juanita, March 16, 2016
[12] Interview Daniel March 8, 2016

aimed at diversifying the export base with the goal of improving the stability of economic growth have a long-standing tradition (Buitelaar & Hofman 1994:150). This diversification has never been of a scale large enough to prevent petroleum dependency, though. The country's oil resources have accounted for more than half of the country's export earnings in recent years. Other important export products are bananas, cut flowers, shrimps, cacao, coffee, wood and fish (CIA 2016).

The current Ecuadorian development paradigm of *Buen Vivir* has raised dust on the neoliberal development approach that has formed the countries' economy since the 1980s. Clark (2015:195) even speaks of a 'return of the state' that is visible in the plans of Correa's current government. *Buen Vivir* forms the basis of the National Development Plan and is recorded in the Ecuadorian national constitution in 2008, *Buen Vivir* means 'living well' and it presents an alternative, humanistic approach to development. It applies indigenous values to understanding and shaping society, with improving individual quality of life as a goal. Equity, democracy, participation, protection of bio-diversity and natural resources, and respect for ethnic-cultural diversity are key elements to the framework. (Walsh 2010, Gudynas 2011, Villalba 2013, National Secretariat of Planning and development 2013). It can be seen as the Ecuadorian policy version of inclusive neoliberalism, aiming to include 'the poor' in growth, listening to 'local voices' (Klak et al 2011). The approach has a promising and revolutionary sound to it, but up until now has had no such results. Socially exclusionary and environmentally damaging neoliberalist structures still have the upper hand.

Figure 2 Annual GDP growth in %. Source: World Bank Data 2016.



The countries' current President Correa has actually taken some actions since the introduction of *Buen Vivir* that contrast quite strikingly with the promises made in the National Development Plan, especially with regard to the aspect of respecting- and living together with nature. Multiple new policies have been created for prolonging and increasing large scale extractive projects in mining, water, oil and agriculture. The projects undertaken until now to promote B*uen Vivir* values and

practices have also paradoxically been funded with money from these extractive industries (Villalba 2013). For now, it seems like *Buen Vivir* is no more than a discursive tool, a cover under which extractive neoliberal practices can be continued and the reach of globalization processes into local lives can be deepened (Walsh 2010, Klak et al 2011). Very recently it has become clear that dependency on extractive exports has not gone down one bit. 2016 is a year of severe crisis for the country due to plummeting oil prices in 2015, followed by a devastating earthquake in April 2016. This is illustrated by figure 2. This also has an impact on Uvilla trade; according to the manager of Company A. '*Nobody is paying anybody right now in Ecuador. Everyone is suffering from the crisis.*' [13]

2.3 Turning Uvilla into an export crop

The emergence and growth of Uvilla as a non-traditional export crop in Ecuador has happened parallel – and in relation – to the above mentioned opening up of its market. The commercialization of fresh Uvilla in Ecuador started in the 1980s on a small scale. It was mainly produced for export to Europe, where it was used as decoration for meals and desserts. Next to that it became a standard fruit in Ecuador to be sold in small quantities on local markets (Brito 2002, Altamirano Caicedo 2010). Interestingly, in a report from 1989 it is mentioned as still being a minor crop everywhere it is cultivated, but with 'commercial promise for many regions', due to its 'eyecatching appearance' and 'pleasing taste' (National Research Council 1989: 241). It seems that, supported by the countries' open 'glocalized' economy (Swyngedouw 2004) and in a market context of moral consumption (Ulver-Sneistrup et al 2011), the quality turn in food (Goodman 2003) and the Superfoods trend (Kimball 2015), the Inca Berry has been able to reach this commercial promise.

Alberto Sanchez, manager of Company A, explained how they made the Inca Berry to become a trendy food. Company A is not the only Uvilla export company in Ecuador, but it ís the largest, it is the most (in)famous and it was the first. They were pioneers in exporting dried Uvilla, manager Sanchez explained. The company started in 2005, about 10 years ago. Some of his friends were studying and working abroad and noticed that dried/dehydrated fruits under the umbrella of Superfoods were becoming very popular on the market in the USA and Europe. They came back to Ecuador with that idea in their minds and started experimenting with drying techniques on fruits that were yet unknown to the Superfoods market. It turned out the Uvilla, a native fruit to their home country, lent itself very well for drying. They tested the product on the European market and it worked. So they came together and started the business. Company A set up local factories to dry the fruit and started selling plants and stimulating local Andean farmers to grow Uvilla, both in Ecuador and in Colombia, locations with a clear comparative advantage found in the local climate and abundant cheap labour (Weis 2004, Vogl et al 2005).

[13] Interview Alberto, April 27, 2016

"*Listen, Renée, Uvilla in this country, before Company A came, was considered a weed! But we made it into a crop and now it is all over the place, here and abroad!"*[14], Sanchez told me. When Company A introduced the fruit as a crop in the region, it was adopted quickly by many peasants. Both Company A's manager Sanchez and Company B's manager Lares explained an important cause for this quick adoption to be the character of the crop's production. The big advantage of growing Uvilla instead of other traditional regional crops like potatoes or maize is that Uvilla can be harvested every week, just like bananas, the most popular crop in the warmer coastal and jungle areas in Ecuador. Bananas do not grow in the Andes climate, but Uvillas do very well. *"Imagine that you grow potatoes and it takes you half a year to harvest, and then when you harvest the market price is low! And they give you only like 200 dollars for half a year's work! With Uvilla you have weekly harvest, a stable price and payment every two weeks",* Sanchez explained.[15] Another reason for the quick growth of production is that in general sources of income are scarce in the region. "*Everybody here is always looking for work*!", Uvilla farmer Veronica told me. "*Anywhere you come with a new company, people come asking for a job. When I started with my Uvillas I had a whole team of workers within a few days, I did not even have to ask!*" [16]The need for livelihood diversification in the region makes for quick and easy adoption of new crops. The results in terms of growth of Uvilla exports are made visible in the next paragraph.

2.4 Export growth & future predictions

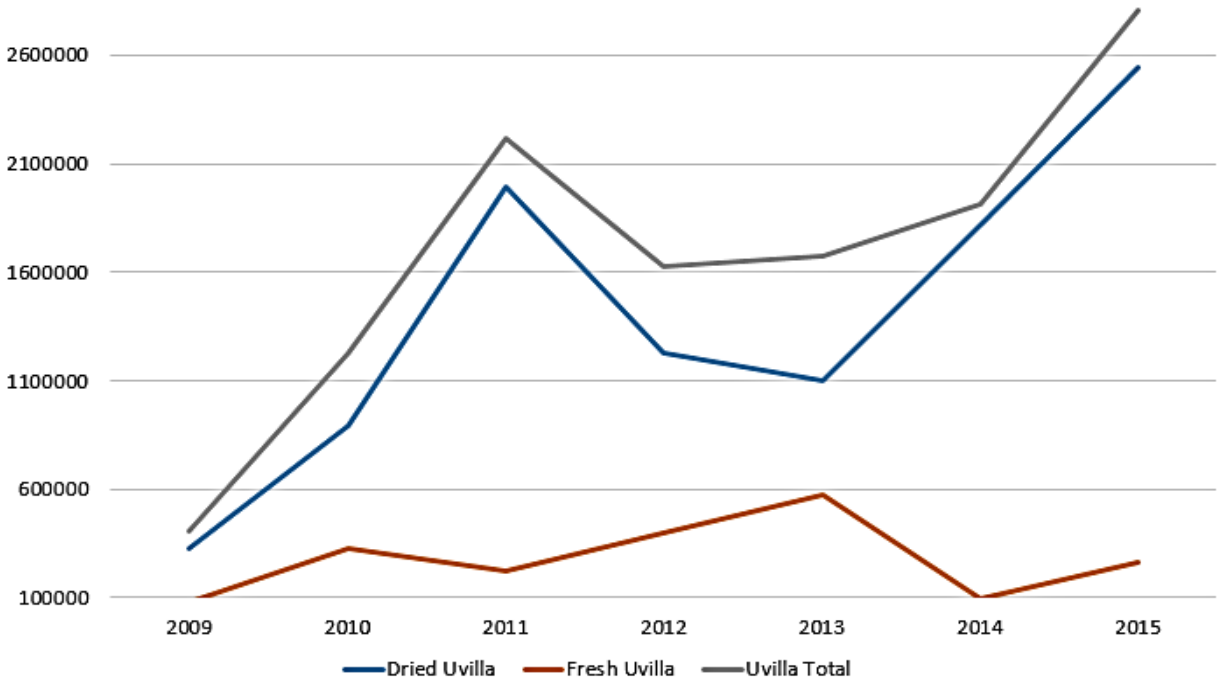
Figure 3 presents the quick growth of Uvilla exports in the past years. Especially the exports of dried Uvilla, belonging with the *Superfoods* trend, have grown. From around 300.000 US$ in 2009 they have grown to almost 2.600.000 US$ in 2015. This is a growth of more than 90%. The countries most importing dried *Superfood* Uvilla in order of representation are the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France and Germany. For fresh Uvilla these are Germany, the United Arab Emirates, the Netherlands, Spain and France (Cobusgroup 2016). This quick growth of exports has been accompanied with explosive production growth in the region. The impact of these new and quickly grown global engagements on rural livelihoods in the region is explained in the next few chapters.

The future of Uvilla as an export crop in Ecuador is quite insecure. The market changes quickly due to consumer preferences, which are volatile and ever-changing, following the latest consumption trends. As described in the previous chapter, Dutch import manager Johan De Vries worryingly made clear that the market for superfoods and thus Inca Berries is already declining. Several farmers also told me that Company A's delayed payments[17] were caused by a shrinkage of sales – or at least that

[14] Interview Alberto, April 6, 2016
[15] In reality there are quite some discontinuities in those payments, more about this can be read in chapter 4.
[16] Interview Veronica, March 18, 2016
[17] See chapter 4.

the company presented that to them as the reason. Company A's manager Alberto Sanchez denied that sales were declining when I asked him and said that the market was just fine, and that the current crisis was the cause of late payments. Company B's Daniel Lares indicated that the market for dried Uvillas indeed seems to be saturated and has possibly indeed passed a tipping point already. He does still see the potential of fresh Uvillas on the world market, especially in the US who are currently opening up to more exotic fruit imports. He sees that as a possibility for Uvilla production to keep expanding in Ecuador. Altamirano Caicedo (2010) expresses that when demand for the berry lowers, the producer is the one who has to lower his prices, leading to income insecurity. This was observable in the field, which can be read in chapter 4.

Figure 3 Uvilla exported from Ecuador 2009-2015 in $ Data: CobusGroup 2016



2.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter has shown how a plant which is centuries old has become new to the region: How Uvilla has become the Inca Berry. This has happened through a process of hybridization, a blending of the 'old' with the 'new' and the 'local' with the 'global' through locally producing a traditional wild fruit in new ways, for a new and global goal (García Canclini et al 2005, Murray 2006, Nederveen Pieterse 1994). This is all made possible by Ecuador's neoliberal development approach, with a clear export focus. Problematic is that the export dependency of the crop (and of the Ecuadorian economy for that matter) makes it volatile, sensitive to market changes and crisis. Which in turn makes its cultivation an insecure livelihood activity. This is made visible in the chapters that follow.

3. Los *Uvilleros*

The Inca Berry is not the first non-human entity (Woods 2007) enrolling the Ecuadorian Northern Andes region into global commodity networks. It has been entangled in rapidly developing webs of global relationships for decades and actually centuries. Hybridization is nothing new, though has taken place in a significantly higher pace since the implementation of neoliberal policies in the 1980s, opening up the region to national and transnational businesses seeking to find comparative advantage (Weis 2004, Vogl et al 2005). This chapter aims to give insight in what hybrid rural livelihoods in the region are composed of, in why these compositions are necessary to them and in how the Inca Berry finds its place within these compositions. It starts out with in the first paragraph sketching the features of culturally hybridized community life in the research area. The second paragraph demonstrates of what elements livelihoods are regularly composed and how global entanglements play a role in these compositions. Then a shift is made to reasons why people choose to add Uvilla to this composition and thus become *Uvilleros*. The third paragraph presents that to most it is a very welcome extra source of income; a manner to diversify their livelihoods. The fourth paragraph adds that to others it also serves as an alternative for working in the flower sector, forming a re-embedding move to community life. The last paragraph presents how people started cultivating Uvilla: who or what inspired them; through what kinds of networks have they become involved?

3.1 Hybrid 'local' culture

Nearly all farmers who start growing Uvilla in Ecuador are peasants living in indigenous communities in the Andes region, in the provinces indicated on the map in figure 4. The provinces marked orange are those where Uvilla production is highest. As said the research took place in communities on the border of Pichincha and Imbabura province. Indigenous people in the Ecuadorian Andes are often grouped under the global category of *Quichua,* or *Kichwa,* which refers to the indigenous language that is originally spoken by these groups, derived from the more well-known Andean *Quechua* (Clark & Becker 2007). All communities visited for the research identify as K*ayambis*: one of the many different Quichua groups who populate communities around the town of Cayambe. Very specific for Kayambis' cultural expressions is the typical way of dressing, especially for women. The women wear a hat, an artfully embroidered white blouse, a colourful pleated skirt and sandals. The men also have traditional dress – embroidered blouses, loose pants and sandals, but only wear these at festivities. Many women always wear their traditional clothing when leaving the community, representing their ethnic identity outside. Other important features of this group

Figure 4 Provinces where Uvilla is produced in Ecuador. Source: Altamirano Caicedo 2010

are for example the importance of Indigenous celebrations like Inti Raymi[18] at which specific traditional dances are performed, the dynamics and festivities around engagements and marriages (including enormous dowries), execution of customary law[19] and traditional healing practices performed by '*medicos caseros*', home doctors. An interesting story that Uvilla farmer Veronica Quichocha told me about these traditional medics is the following.

> *"You are coughing! Do you know what helps for your lungs? Cats! I once had lung problems, a very bad pneumonia. Then a medico casero came to visit me and prepared me a cat. I had to eat its meat and put the skin on my back for seven days. It wasn't very comfortable and it got a bit smelly after a while. But after a week I was as new! All my problems were gone!"* Somewhat shocked I asked her if she used her own cat for this. *"No no, we had a very beautiful cat which*

[18] Inti Raymi is an indigenous celebration in Andean countries in June, in honor of the sun god Inti, with respect to Pachamama (mother earth) and the harvest season (Mars, 2010).
[19] Indigenous law, for works see for example Van Cott 2000, Handy 2004, Chirayath et al 2006

I wanted to keep. So I bought the neighbours' cat!"

- interview Veronica, March 18, 2016

The cultural expressions described above are typical for the lives of the research informants, who all lived in autonomous peasant communities, the 'indigenous administrative units' in Ecuador (Clark & Becker 2007). The communities visited for the research were small, with around 400-1000 inhabitants. They were located along the *Panamericana* highway that comes from the South, crosses through Quito and leads one up to the Colombian border. Small rocky roads lead from the highway into the communities themselves. Basic self-built concrete houses lay between a patchwork of fields with mostly corn, potatoes and pasture. Most communities have a few small stores where basics like rice and oil and the less basic Coca Cola and potatoe chips are sold from behind a window in peoples' houses. Often there are one or more '*internets*', family houses offering a room with a few computers and reasonably functioning internet, where the local youth can do their homework (and use Facebook) in the evenings and weekends – providing a constant stream of 'global' images, leading to dreams and imaginings surpassing the community and even the countries' borders (Appadurai 1996).

Soccer and Ecuavolley[20] are a popular way to spend free time in weekends, for which the communities often have their own *cancha*, a field or stadium. Household task divisions are usually quite gendered. Women work the family land in the community, do groceries in nearby towns and take care of laundry and food. Men often migrate for work. The *Quichua* language has withered away over the years. Due to the Ecuadorian government's focus on Spanish in education and communication the language is threatened to go extinct, despite recent efforts by Indigenous movements to revitalize it (King 2001). In the communities visited, only the elderly are still able put the language to full functional use. Culture in these communities is clearly hybridized. Peoples' daily lives are composed of many activities and elements, combined and mixed into new structures, objects and practices. This hybridization makes the categories of 'the urban' and 'the rural' and 'the local' and 'the global' fade into each other (García Canclini et al 2005). The next paragraph describes how next to- and interconnected with culture, livelihoods in the region are also hybridized.

3.2 Composing local (-global) livelihoods

Uvilleros Eva and Martin Chillos have a son, Julian. Julian studies computer science in Ibarra, for which he has to travel for hours every day. He also needs books, a laptop and a smartphone, internet and has a comfortable room for studying. His parents own an organic farm of which many products are for the local market in a nearby town and for their own consumption.

[20] The Ecuadorian version of volleyball, played with a higher placed net and played only by men, see Vilanova & Soler 2008.

Planting Uvillas for exports provides them with a stream of income that helps pay for Julian's study costs. Though recently a hailstorm destroyed a large part of their plants. Because the yields have gone down and because the export companies' payments are arriving late, Eva has started selling coffee to the workers of the rose plantation next door, forcing her to get up each morning at 04:00 before working the land the rest of the day. Eva and Martin also breed and sell guinea pigs, a traditional local delicacy. – interview Eva and Martin, April 2, 2016

As personal accounts like these make clear, rural livelihoods in the region are indeed constructed from a plethora of fragmentary and insecure sources (Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010: 179). The compositions of livelihoods in the region reflect the hybrid interplay of- and the conflict between the different dimensions of globalization (Beck 2000). For example Eva and Martin are very keen on sending Julian to school, for him to live a life that is more socially and culturally 'globalized'. He will be able to work with computers and speak English, possibly even in an international environment. To be able to engage with these dimensions of globalization more income is needed, which can only be reached by engaging with economic global flows, in this case through producing Uvilla as a non-traditional export crop. When income from Uvilla unexpectedly goes down, they engage with another transnational business entangled in the region – the flower business, even though they dislike the flowers for their negative environmental effects.

Having to spend time on producing export crops to obtain an income, selling coffee to the plantation workers and breeding guinea pigs leaves Eva and Martin less time for growing crops for their own consumption, becoming less self-sufficient, while they indicated self-sufficiency with only organic foods to be their ideal. They become once again more dependent on the market and its often global products. They are increasingly enrolled in networks of interconnectivity organized at a global scale, subordinated further to forces out of their control (Steger 2003, Brown 2008, Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010). Eva and Martin's story is not an isolated one. In general noticeable in the field was that the focus in families lays very much upon the younger generation's development and needs. Almost all young people from the villages have finished primary- and high school and often have attended or are attending university or a form of applied studies too. In contrast with their parents who regularly have not even finished or attended primary school Paying for the young generation's tuition fees, books, computers, phones, internet café use and transportation to the cities is an important reason why families need (an increase in) income.

Distinctive for the Northern Andes is that this part has the most fertile and productive land, with valleys, a broad sub-andean belt and vast high-altitude Paramo grasslands (Clark & Becker 2007). The most common crops cultivated are potatoes, maize and abas, a traditional type of beans. These crops are grown for households' autoconsumption and to sell at local markets and to neighbours in the community. Strawberries are also a relatively popular crop grown in the region, mainly produced

for the Ecuadorian national market. The most common agricultural activity is dairy cattle raising. Most families own a few cows, ranging from 1 to 6 cows each family. They are milked by hand twice a day and the milk is brought to *centros de acopio*, gathering centres from which it is transported, processed and sold on the Ecuadorian market by dairy companies. This can provide families with a steady income, though lots of land and good quality pasture is needed for a decent level of production. This implies the need for large investments and the turning of much fertile land into pasture instead of other crops that could serve for autoconsumption, involving dairy farmers not only further into the market as producers but also as consumers. This livelihood activity has been around for in the region since the end of the 1990s. It has in many cases replaced crop-based agriculture (Jampel 2016). Veronica thinks this is a shame.

> "*People used to grow everything they needed themselves and now they only have cows. Cows, cows, cows. It makes people lazy because you only have to work a few hours each day, you only have to get the milk twice a day and change the fences and that's it. And because people have grown so lazy they think the Uvilla is too much work! It ís a lot of work. Not hard work but does take all day. And people don't want that anymor*e. *But there is so much more you can do with all that land!*" - interview Veronica, March 18, 2016

Jampel (2016: 85) explains the shift to cattle raising by smallholders as caused by changes in climate, market conditions and rural outmigration. It is one of the few options to maintain a viable rural livelihood and not have to migrate. Cows can be held on fields close to home, often in the community itself, maintaining community life. Uvilla and cattle raising are often combined.

Another common source of income in the region has extensively involved the region in neoliberal global trade relations and which ís accompanied by migration is the flower business. Fresh cut flowers as a non-traditional export crop experienced a boom parallel to trade liberalization by the end of the 1980s (Sawers 2005). Cut flowers made up almost 3% of the countries' total exports with a value of 757 million US$ in 2014 (OEC 2016). The region where the research took place is the main producing region for cut flowers. Tabacundo, one of the larger towns in the region is called '*el capital*

Picture 3 The Cayambe valley full of flower greenhouses

de las rosas', the rose capital. All the previously lush green valleys in the area are stained with white plastic greenhouses, hundreds of plantations employ a huge amount people. The flower business is the largest employer in the region, restructuring livelihoods on a massive scale through the introduction of temporary wage labour, the feminization of labour and migration (Gwynne & Kay 2004).

> "*You know, it is too easy, that is why everybody works there*", my host family mother told me. "*You just go to the plantation, show your passport and they let you work. You don't need to do anything else. But it is bad, there are many young people who choose the easy way and go work in the flowers instead of studying. I tell my sons all the time: Do NOT do that, study hard and you will get somewhere. You will get a better life than your* parents, *you have to*."
>
> –interview Maria, March 16, 2016

My host mother's negative sentiments about rural life were common. Most informants expressed that life as a peasant is rough and does not provide enough income for a sustainable livelihood. Many indicated to want a different life for their children, like Martin and Eva want for Julian, and work hard to reach that. The general discourse, you could say, was one pointing at depeasantization (Clark 2015). The general livelihood choices were too: almost all families had very diversified livelihoods, often increasingly moving away from self-sustaining peasant activities and rural activities and towards involvement in the neoliberal market and more urbanized lifestyles. The different diversifications were divided over family members. My host father, like many other fathers and young men from indigenous communities in the region, migrated to Quito daily to work in construction. Many women gain some income by making and selling artisanal products, especially the traditional Kayambis clothing items. They mostly sell these to other women in their communities, but sometimes also a new strand of globalization is engaged with for this purpose – tourism. Uvilla offers a new additional opportunity for livelihood diversification. The next paragraphs describe why and how people decide to engage with this non-traditional export crop.

3.3 Uvilla as a source of income

> *"Market knowledge and access is problematic for us here, we are far from everything and we just don't know! It can be so hard to sell your products, the market is problematic for all crops here. If you sell your products on the local market you just sell a little, and prices are very low. If a company comes in and says: we have a market for this and that product, we will sell it and always pay you a steady price of 1,35 per kilo then everybody wants it. 'Vamos! We'll do it!' They say. Just like me. I heard about the market that Company A had in Europe and that they were paying 1,35 to the people from the community, so I contacted the engineer and asked him to sell*

me the plants. Are you sure?, he said. If you really pay me the 1,35 for each kilo, then yes! I said".

- interview Nico, April 14, 2016

For farmers like Nico, Uvilla forms an opportunity for their inclusion in the global market. A market they cannot access themselves due to a lack of knowledge (Murphy 2012) and means ; export companies who do possess these keys to access the market form their only gateways. The main reason why people choose to cultivate Uvilla is that it provides them with an additional source of income to diversify their livelihoods, in an aim to make them more secure (Naranayan & Gulati 2008). Company A's manager Alberto Sanchez presented producing Uvilla as a poverty reduction strategy (Hamilton & Fischer 2005). He is very proud of the flow of income they have brought into the region by introducing Uvilla as a crop, offering market access to local farmers. He told me that for example many people still had outside latrines and that, because they have a steady income now, they were able to construe actual toilets and showers. He emphasized that they stimulate local development and strengthen peoples' livelihoods, also of the people that work in their fruit factory (around 200 persons).[21]

Now the question is if Uvilla indeed serves the purpose of development and poverty reduction in the region. To the question if Uvilla is more profitable than other crops, most *Uvilleros* said yes, in principle yes. This is because of the stabile price per kilo that is paid – like explained by Sanchez in paragraph 2.3. Rodrigo Mojanda, leader of an Uvilla farmers' cooperative, expressed that stability helps because you can predict how much you earn and plan ahead. That is the advantage of growing Uvilla. "*Though they don't really pay in time at the moment. But they pay*". According to Miranda[22], with 350 plants you can already gain more than the minimum monthly wage in Ecuador (around 350 dollars) – if managed well of course. *"From 350 plants you get around 50 to 80 kilos each week. And if you fertilize the plants really well you could get up to 120 kilos. And that.. Would be 480 kilos each month, multiplying that by 1,20 gets us at 576. 576 Dollar each month! That is better than working in the flowers!"* Uvilla has the potential to stabilize livelihoods, but does not live up to it, further explained in the next chapters.

3.4 Re-embedding through Uvilla: an alternative for flowers

Another important reason to start growing Uvilla is that it can serve as an alternative to working in the flower business: a business that has engaged the whole region in large scale global export producing industry, leading to intense neoliberal agrarian restructuring (Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010), making people move from small scale agriculture to employment in large scale industrial agriculture. Nearly all of my informants had worked in flowers at some point in their lives and many of them

[21] Interview Alberto April 7, 2016
[22] Interview Miranda, March 29, 2016

made the direct switch from flowers to Uvilla. The flowers are not a loved sector to work in for two reasons. Firstly, working conditions are not pleasant. According to several informants people have to work long hours, have to work six or seven day weeks, cannot get days off, can only take one short break a day and have to work with a dangerous amount of chemicals and insufficient protection[23]. Agronomist Victoria, for example, told me about her unpleasant experience with working in a *floricola* as a manager for a while.

> "*There were around fifteen people working there. thirteen women and two men: the guard and the man who worked with chemicals. I did everything together with them: letting the plants grow, harvesting, and the postharvest in a very cold room. And it is hard work! I sweated and sweated, I ended up completely soaked sometimes! And do you know, the women ate during work to not waste time, hidden under the flower beds. So I told them: I don't want you to eat like that! I don't want you to eat your food hidden away with chemicals on your hands. I give you permission to leave, take 10 minutes, wash your hands, rest and eat and after that you can continue working! Like this it is very unhealthy! I had to get used to working there but then I got along really well with the workers, we put on music, we talked.. But I was fired after 4 months, because I argued with the owner. She was paying the workers badly. She always paid late or paid less than she had to. She came to the plantation and said: 'It's dirty here! Nobody cleans! These women don't work! I'm not going to pay them.' And I told her 'No! They do work, I have seen it! And it is very hard work!' She told me I had to be more strict with the ladies. That I always needed to have a stick in my hand and hit them if they didn't work hard enough. And I told her : 'No! I have studied to learn and to work, not to abuse people!' And then she fired me."*
>
> - interview Victoria, March 23, 2016

The second reason why people want to get out of the flower business is that it has a disembedding effect (Eriksen 2007); it leads to a disconnection from community life, global forces pulling people away from local practices. This happens because for working in the flower greenhouses people have to migrate. They have to leave their communities early in the morning to get back in the late evening. This leaves them with little time with their families and no time to work the land – while land and family are central pillars in Indigenous community life. Breilh (2001) terms this effect of flowers on community life 'cultural disruption' (2001: 3). Switching to Uvilla be seen as an act of re-embedding (Eriksen 2007), re-peasantization as a form of agency, countering the consequences of globalization (van der Ploeg 2008: 7). A move back to local life can be made because Uvilla can be grown on family land within the community. It does not make people -especially women- leave their families behind. "*The Uvilla is a 'cultivo familiar', it is grown, maintained and harvested with the whole family. It brings*

[23] More about the theme of chemical use in local agriculture is presented in Chapter 5.

people together,"[24] Company B's manager Daniel Lares said. The crop facilitates the reinforcement of elements of cultural heritage and this way contributes to the ability of local farmers to make a living in meaningful ways (Bebbington 2000, Hamilton & Fischer 2005). Uvilla farmer Nico Inlago had very clear ideas about migration breaking down family life, with a somewhat gendered orientation. He was convinced that the fact that marriage problems and divorce are currently so common in Indigenous communities in the region is caused by women working in the flowers, migrating and having an income themselves.

> "*That way they do not need their husbands as breadwinners anymore, they become too independent and divorcing suddenly becomes possible. They don't stay at home and take care of the children, there is no more clear division of tasks. That way husbands and wives don't need each other anymore and everything falls apart, the community falls apart. My wife used to work in the flowers, she abandoned the kids, she left them behind with their grandparents. It was horrible. Now luckily she works with the Uvillas and could stop working in the flowers. She is with the kids, she can watch the kids while working. She can make them happy and make sure they go to school. So Uvilla even has an educational return!"* - interview Nico, April 14, 2016

3.5 Inspiration to start: micropolitics through networks

What interested me when entering the field was how people got involved in the local-global networks of Uvilla trade: how and by whom were they convinced or inspired to start cultivating Uvilla? Did the companies actively approach people, entering the communities to sell the plants? What was the vehicle for these global engagements? Local micropolitics (Woods 2007, Rasch & Köhne 2016) turned out to have played a crucial part in the spread of the crop's cultivation. Hardly any promoting needed to be done by the companies. They made use of a few leading figures and of the fact that people in the region have extensive and strong local networks. Combined with ever-increasing market dependency through growing enrolment in global relations in the region, Uvilla cultivation spread like wildfire. When asked, *Uvilleros* often have a very pragmatic story as to how they began cultivating the berries.

The majority of growers got familiar with the crop through neighbours and family members, who were in turn inspired by others. A few pioneers started with growing, for which they were approached by people of Company A. After they started and others saw their success, people suddenly having a steady source of income, the crop quickly spread – people went to the Company A factory themselves to buy plants. One of the pioneers was Carlos Inuca. Carlos was known as a leading figure: he was the head of an important indigenous organization and was always very involved with politics and decision making in his own community. Company A approached him

[24] Interview Daniel, March 8, 2016

about five years ago. He was the first in his community to start growing. Now he has multiple lots, around 1500 plants and three employees to help him work the land. He inspired many - his community is now the largest Uvilla-producing community in the region with 108 families producing Uvillas. In turn *Uvilleros* from this community inspired people from other communities to become Uvilleros too. For example Tamara Cachi, *Uvillera* with a small plot of around 300 plants in a community close to Carlos', told the following story about how she started. "*Here above on the mountain my husband's brother and some other boys started. They had talked to people from Carlos' community and they told them that it is good business. So they started and told us that it went well, they were very positive. So we started sowing it too."*[25] Stories like Tamara's show us that next to micropolitics, family- and neighbour networks within communities are influential in the spread of engagement with the new global crop.

3.6 Concluding remarks

It can be noted that local life in rural communities in the region is becoming more and more hybridized. Increasing involvement with the specific strands of globalization inevitably leads to interconnection with other strands too, the different strands being hybridized and connected (Beck 2000). With the young generation diving head first in many social and cultural global connections and aspirations, their parents are forced to engage with economic global strands like non-traditional exports to provide for their children's diving behaviour. These growing global interconnections lead to disembedding, a disconnection from local life as people know it, especially through migration that is necessary for working in sectors like the flower business. Uvilla as a non-traditional crop, introduced through local networks and micropolitics, provides people with a new income opportunity, strengthening and diversifying their livelihoods through becoming involved in the global market (Johnson 2004). It also serves as an instrument for re-embedding (Eriksen 2007) because it makes migration unnecessary. This way Uvilleros manipulate and negotiate global forces through making a move back to community life and small scale farming. Though Uvilla also further subjects its farmers to the violent processes of neoliberal rescaling, the consequences of which are presented in the next two chapters.

[25] Interview Tamara, April 3, 2016

4. From seed to fruit to factory: The process and structure of a violent marriage

This chapter demonstrates the dynamics around one of the two large struggles in which Uvilla farmers become involved through engaging with Uvilla export production for the global market: their financial struggle. To provide an understanding of how this struggle comes into life the chapter will start by delineating the process and organization structure of the fruit's production in the first two paragraphs, including the investments and the restructuring that is necessary to take part in its production. The third paragraph of the chapter engages with the organizational structure between farm and factory, with the *centro de acopio* as an in-between shackle, that creates a distance between farmer and company and facilitates the companies to rid themselves of almost all responsibility, strengthening the process of rescaling (Swyngedouw 2004). The last two paragraphs treat the consequence of this organization structure: the companies' financial problems land on the shoulders of farmers. When visiting the research area, Company A had not paid its farmers in months. Paragraph 4.4 shows farmers' experiences with this problem, an 4.5 shows the companies' viewpoints. The chapter demonstrates that in this new local-global relation made through the global market, the rescaling effects of neoliberalist policies lead to deepening financial inequality between these small scale farmers and the 'global' transnational company they work for.

4.1 The starting process : necessary investments

This paragraph demonstrates how Uvilla cultivation works technically and what capital investments are needed to provide for its production (Watson & Achinelli 2008). The average Uvilla farm is small-scale and family-run. The amount of plants manageable by a family lies between 300 and 600, which is therefore the average amount of plants cultivated. Before planting, the soil needs to be prepared through weeding and fertilizing. Plants are can be bought from the different export companies – they often have their own varieties and raise the young plants in greenhouses. Producers usually buy the plants when they are around two months old and a few centimetres high. At this height they are planted. Uvillas are planted in rows. Between each plant in the row there is about 1 metre and between the rows there is a space of 2 metres. This way, when the plants are producing the farmers can pass between the plants to harvest the fruits. The plant stems are soft and vulnerable. Because of this, for maximum sun exposure and growth, when the plants start growing they have to be kept up straight. This is done by tying them with rope, *piola,* to overhanging metal wire. This metal wire in turn is tied to wooden poles. Compared to traditional local crops like potatoes and maize, Uvilla needs lots of materials and preparation for its cultivation.

To start growing, large financial investments are needed, for which loans are often necessary. The plants themselves need to be bought and many materials are needed to be able to cultivate the plants and keep the soil fertile. Wood for poles, many meters of metal wire and *piola* (thread), (ingredients for) fertilizers et cetera. *"Do you see this cultivo?," Carlos said, pointing at the field which we stood next to. "We try to keep the use of piola down, some people use a lot but we only use a medium amount. Because it is expensive, it costs 6 dollars for a roll of 2000 metres. This field needs four times that! So 4 times 6 is 24 dollars! Just for the thread. It's ridiculously expensive*."[26] Agricultural materials are indeed, compared to the prices paid by buyers of the produce, relatively expensive on the Ecuadorian market. Irrigation is often problematic (absent) too, especially in the dry season, needing investments in irrigation systems – which often are simply too expensive, causing the plants to dry out. Then new plants have to be bought in the hope that those do flourish. Debts are a common problem among farmers in the area, physically visible in the local towns, where the only large and shiny buildings are the farmers' credit banks. As can be read in the introduction *Uvillera* Veronica told me that she currently has a debt of 10.000 dollars due to all the investments she and her husband had to make to create and maintain their *cultivo* of 2200 plants. She has not been able to pay anything but interests back yet. "*But I hope that God will bless me and that I will have lots of success with these plants*."[27]

4.2 Becoming a técnico: restructuring of agricultural practices

Next to financial investments, starting with cultivating a crop that is completely new and needs to comply with export standards also costs a lot of time. Engaging with globalization in this way comes with a restructuring of agricultural practices and changes in farmers' daily lives. Learning how to manage a new crop is a process of trial and error. One needs to actively obtain knowledge and practical experience to manage the Uvilla plants. In general Uvilla as a crop takes a lot more time than managing traditional crops like potatoes or maize, or raising cattle. "*You have to be an active grower. You have to dedicate yourself to the cultivo and really be there all the time*[28]*",* was a much heard type of statement. "*Uvilla es muy trabajoso! It is lots of work!*"[29], multiple informants expressed. During a focus group discussion with a part of the farmers' group working at the *centro de acopio* managed by Rodrigo Mojanda, we talked about the way in which life changes when becoming an *Uvillero/Uvillera*. Rodrigo concluded the discussion as follows.

> "*There is definitely a big change that comes with growing Uvilla. Because of the fact that people here have known forever how to grow potatoes, maíz, avas (local type of beans) and all that.*

[26] Interview Carlos, March 16, 2016
[27] Interview Veronica, March 18, 2016
[28] Focus group at Rodrigo's cooperative, April 21, 2016
[29] Focus group in an NGO X community, April 18, 2016

People know how to sow and the whole process. With Uvilla you need to know how to put the poles up, the piolas, how the plants should grow...It needs a different type of treatment. You need to know the diseases well.. Crops like maize you just put in the ground and you're done! You just leave it there and then you can harvest. When growing Uvilla the farmer needs to be an engineer almost, a técnico! You have to be know well how to grow it else it does not work. So yes, to become an Uvilla técnico the person needs to change." - Focus group, Rodrigo, April 21, 2016

The processes of harvesting and maintenance are indeed quite elaborate. "Plants start producing when they are about 10 months old. If managed well, they keep producing for 1,5 to 2 years. Harvesting needs to be done every week. The berries have to be harvested when the shell of the fruit is yellow – then the berry inside the shell has turned from green to bright orange and from sour to sweet. For each plant the ripe fruits have to be carefully selected and the green fruits are left alone for a future harvest. The fruits are clipped off the plant with a scissor or pliers, cutting the little stem of each berry, with caution to not damage the fruit. Harvesting takes one or two days, depending on the amount of plants. With an amount between 300 and 600 plants and a few peoples' hands it can be done in one day. Most export companies want the berries to be handed in without the shell. Because of that, most producers have to peel the fruits after harvesting – a process that often takes

Picture 4 One of Carlos' Uvilla *cultivos* with young plants - around 6 months old, 16-03-2016

nearly as long as the harvest. Care has to be taken when removing the shell. If you damage the fruit it cannot be handed in anymore. Berries do regularly get damaged during the growing, the harvest or the peeling process. Most families keep these berries for home-use, to make juices or to feed to the pigs.

Other important activities to maintain Uvilla plants are regular application of (organic) fertilizers and pesticides, maintaining the soil, irrigation activities and supporting the plants' new branches with new *piola. Uvilleros* must learn to recognize symptoms of drought and different diseases and learn how to combat these problems. Farmers need new knowledge to 'globalize'. You could say that agriculturalists themselves hybridize to engage with global trade, mixing their familiar practices with new ones, this way adapting their daily lives. Here the question of agency again comes in again – to what extent do they have control over shaping these hybrids? They participate or they do not, and if they participate they have to adapt. Not much agency seems to be involved with these processes of restructuring. Though the farmers do try to negotiate these forces, further elaborated upon in Chapter 6. The next paragraph shows the dynamics around the shackle in the Uvilla chain that comes after production and before the processing factor; the intermediate *centro de acopio*.

4.3 Company A's organization structure: evading responsibilities

> *"So you're on your way to school?" "Yes, my mom has to work in the flowers on Tuesdays so she always sends me to hand in the Uvillas before school. But they're late today, I'm afraid to miss my class!" the boy in the black and white college uniform tells us. The boy, Victoria and me take shelter for the rain and wait for the centre to open in the open storage space next to it. The centro de acopio is a simple concrete building on the church square of the village. Around 12:35 a white car arrives. A lady with a fair amount of makeup, a black baseball hat and a jacket with cheetah print and an older man with a moustache and an army hat step out and get two big crates of the bright orange berries from the back of the car. They quickly open the metal shutters in front of the windows of the centro and open the door for the college boy we talked to and another man carrying a small blue bucket only half full of Uvilla. We follow them to take a look inside. The room is simple, large and empty, except for a desk, a few chairs and a scale. When you speak your voice resonates. On the back wall are two laminated pieces of paper with 'Uvilla orgánica' and 'Uvilla transición', under which big yellow crates will be piled up later. The lady hands us over two white plastic chairs to wait while sitting down. The college boy carefully poors the Uvillas from his grey crate in a yellow plastic crate belonging to the centro which is put on the digital scale. The lady quickly writes down the amount of kilos and the name of the boys mom- the leader of the families' cultivo, in a somewhat battered notebook at the end of a very full page, and writes him a manual check on pink backed paper.*

He quickly puts his autograph on there, thanks her, wishes us all a good day and runs off to be in time for school. Next is the other man, a small man with a blue hat in a blue training suit, with the small blue bucket. The amount is only 7 kilos. When administrating the lady asks him for his autograph. He indicates that he cannot write. The lady colours his thumb with a big black marker and he pushes it down on the pink backed paper. Gracias! Buen dia! And he too walks out of the door. "Now, ladies, tell me what you are here for."

- Interview Miranda, March 29, 2016

It turned out the woman on the other side of the table was named Miranda. Miranda works for the *centro de acopio,* 'gathering centre', as a volunteer. She is an Uvilla farmer herself too and enjoys doing something extra to keep the centre running. The centre is open once a week to gather the Uvillas harvested by around 85 producers in the region. The *centro* does some sorting in the different kinds of Uvillas people bring in and they check for damaged or diseased fruits. When all is gathered and sorted a large truck takes all the Uvillas to the largest exporter in the region, Company A. Company A works with a total of around a 1000 producers in the region, divided over 7 different *centros de acopio* in different villages. Company A then processes the fruit in their factory, where it is cleaned, dehydrated in big ovens until they are raisin-like, and then packed. From the factory the big packages are sent to the airport in Quito and the port in Guayaquil to find their way over the globe. Figure 5 gives a schematic overview of this organization structure.

Currently company A processes 30 tons of Uvillas each week[30]. Company A pays 1 dollar 35 per kilo of Uvillas to the *centro the acopio*, which keeps 10-30 cents per kilo for itself (depends on which centre) and pays the farmers once in a set amount of time for the fruit they have handed in. If fruit is handed in damaged or diseased, the price paid is lowered by company A, leading to a discount on payments for all farmers in the group. This is often experienced as problematic by farmers because it happens very regularly. In a focus group with Uvilleras in one of the communities I visited, a participant told me the following. "*Imagine, we have to go hand in the fruits by bus, I have to take two buses to get to the centro. And then some careless person in the group hands in their fruit dirty! So they discount and we only receive a dollar per kilo. I only harvest 4 kilos right now because my plants are at their end. So I earn 2 dollars! Dos dolares no mas! For all the harvesting and peeling and traveling I do. I might just switch to potatoes again"*[31]. Figure 4 shows the way in which Company A's organization is structured. Most Uvilla export companies in Ecuador work this way, with a gathering centre as a shackle in between and the company owning the processing factory itself. Altamirano Caicedo (2010:70) found the growing amount of companies doing the processing themselves a worrying development, because working without a third processing party in between gives the export

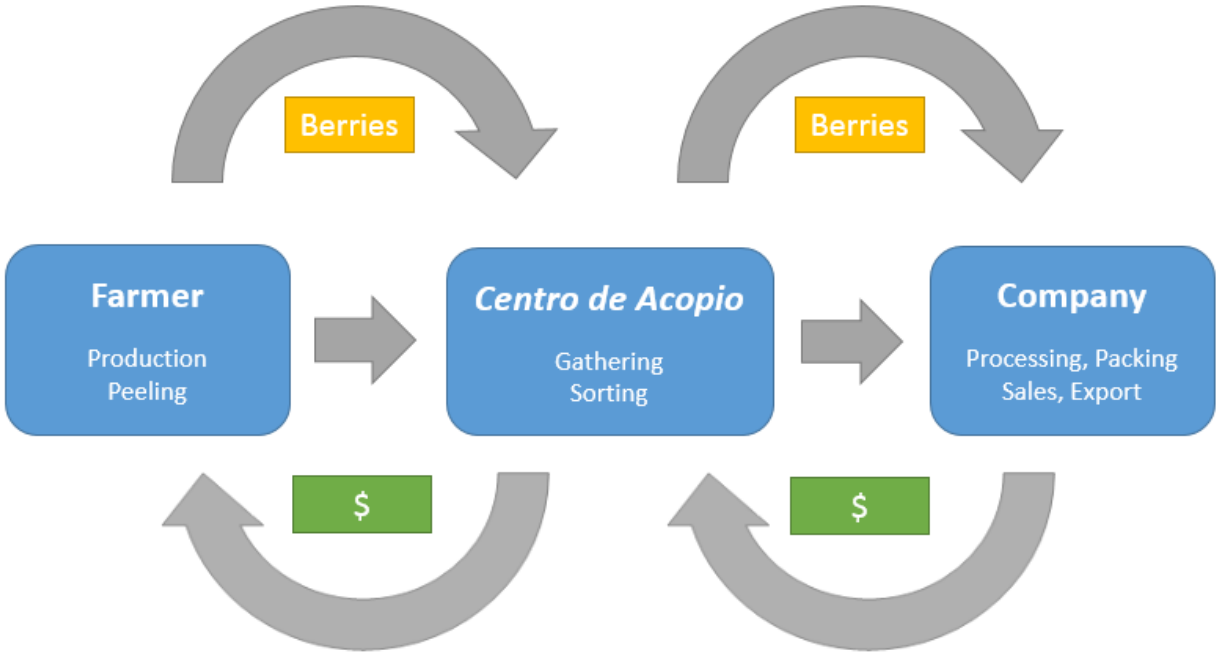
[30] Interview Alberto, April 7, 2016.

[31] Focus Group in an NGO X Community, April 25, 2016

company a lot of power and diminishes the negotiation space for farmers, driving down prices paid to the producing party.

Company B has a different structure, working directly together with farmers as a 'social company', without a shackle in between. Its manager Daniel Lares had a very clear opinion on the role of the *Centro de Acopio* within the common organization structure in Uvilla production and trade. *The farmers' cooperative belongs to the producers. So when there is a problem it is not Company A's, it's the cooperatives'! If they would buy from the producers as individuals the problem would be the exporters'. That way the company protects themselves from any form of harm! They rid themselves of all responsibility*!"[32] A structure is actively created that allows for a complete rescaling of responsibilities: a structure that serves for the exploitation of its farmers. The company that creates the structure can take a distance from problems and leave them for farmers to deal with, and due to the rollback of the state there is no policing of this type of structures, the state does not meddle in the business of businesses (Woods 2007). The problems Lares speaks of, which are evaded by the company through creating this structure, are of two natures in the case of Inca Berry farmers: technical and financial. The problems of technical nature can be read about in Chapter 5. Those of financial nature are explained in the next two paragraphs.

Figure 5 Organization of Uvilla production, based on field data



[32] Interview Daniel, March 8, 2016

4.4 *Los pagos no vienen*: farmers' points of view on delayed payments

Victoria and me sit down in the grass in front of the centro de acopio. We were there already about three hours ago – around one at noon. It is four thirty now. We wanted to talk to the lady behind the desk but when we came the first time today it was too busy. Now it is even busier, the whole square is full of people. We see many farmers arriving with baskets and buckets of Uvillas in their hands and on their backs. They walk inside the centro, hand in their berries and then sit down in the grass, on a bench or a on little wall in the overcrowded park. We see people that were there already 3 hours ago, looking tired and bored. Three women next to us are embroidering colourful patterns for new Kayambis blouses. I decide to walk over to them and ask what is going on. "Today is payday". "Everybody is waiting for their money". One of the women calls out to a little girl standing inside the building. "Hija! Daughter! Are they paying yet??" The girl comes out of the centre with a tired look on her face. "No, todavía no, they still aren't." I ask them if they have been waiting for a long time already. "Cada día de pago es la misma cuenta - every payday it's the same story. Los pagos no vienen; the payments don't come."

visit centro de acopio, March 24, 2016

Picture 5 Carlos fertilizing the Uvilla plants on one of his plots, 16-03-2016

Carlos passes through the walkways between his rows of plants, putting a handful of fertilizer – red and white grains from a large white bucket- on the ground around each plant. I walk with him and we speak about what made him switch from company A to company B. "The problem with Company A is that.. They don't pay. Just recently they were paying for the first time since December 15th! Just count the months! December, January, February, we are in March already! That is not how you do business. You go to the market, you sell a product and you get paid directly. That is business! I have to pay my workers, I have to buy fertilizer. If they don't pay me I cannot! I lost two plots. And then I said: up to here with Company A!

- interview Carlos, March 16, 2016

"This last year they haven't been paying us. They have postponed many payments. And they don't give us any explication, not why, not how, not what happened to them, nothing!" Eva, Martin and me sit down on the white plastic buckets they use for harvesting, on the edge of their Uvilla plot, under a plastic tarp to take shelter from the rain. Eva buries her face in her hands. Martin pets their little bearded grey dog Tito that is sitting next to him. "In the centro de Acopio they just say that they don't have the money. They say the company isn't paying. That is the only thing that they say.. Every time we go and ask.. They say 'the company isn't paying! If you want to know more you go and call the ingeniero and ask why there is no money! I don't know!' That is what they say every single time." Eva lifts her head and looks at me. "You know, agriculture is hard! 'Chuta..', damn, I have said that to the ingeniero. I went to talk to him after the information meeting last week. I told him to come and work at my cultivo for a day. A whole day when fertilizing with the Asadon. And see if he is tired at the end of the day, to see how he feels. It is really tiring, it is a hard life! And you know ingeniero, I said, we are only claiming the money that we need to buy food, so we can eat! After that he was quiet, he didn't dare to answer me anymore."

- interview Eva and Martin, April 25, 2016

Company A, the largest Uvilla exporter employing most of the farmers, has recently been taking a long time to pay its producers. This turned out not to only be a recent phenomenon- multiple informants indicated that there had been phases before in which they did not pay for a long time. But never this long. The postponing of payments has in part been made possible by the above described violent structure that the company has created, leaving the responsibility for payments with the *centro de acopio*. The centro de acopio, itself consisting of farmers, is addressed for this by farmers, while they themselves do not comprehend why there is no money. This intermediate system also limits the possibilities for farmers' protest against the exploitative practices of the company: if they act against the *centro de acopio* – their form of contact with the company - they act against themselves. The ministry of agriculture will not be of any help either because their hands are tied by

the countries' 'inclusive' neoliberalist policies (Klak et al 2011). Exploitation goes uncontrolled (Mertz et al 2005).

Many farmers indicated to be severely struggling to make ends meet due to the delay in payments. They are dependent on the income from Uvilla for their daily subsistence. They do not have large, if any, reserve assets to apply in periods of low income. As can be read in the previous chapter they have often specifically switched to cultivating Uvilla because it could give them a steady income. This makes it very frustrating when the income does not turn out to be steady at all. It makes it impossible to keep farming in the same way. For example the Uvilla *cultivo* of Eva and Martin used to be a lot larger. They had thousands of plants, multiple plots, several employees and could harvest every day. When payments stopped coming in on time, after a while they were forced to fire all their employees because they could not pay their salaries. This made them have to cut down the amount of plants to just one plot that they could manage with the two of them. Most *Uvilleros* have a smaller farm than Eva and Martin and have to take even more rigorous decisions. Many informants told me that lots of people are "*haciendo la machete a la Uvilla*", cutting it all down. Eva told me that in the nearest town literally all who were cultivating Uvilla had stopped.[33] She used to be part of a farmers' group with eight other farmers. She now is the only person left. Here the violent effects of rescaling become visible. The machete does not only cut down the farmers' plants, but also their investments and their hopes and chances of a secure livelihood. They are driven deeper into debt, further numbing the agency to give shape to their own lives.

4.5 *Es como un matrimonio*: company's points of view on delayed payments

According to several farmers, Company A was slightly panicking around the time of the research. I was told by multiple *Uvilleros* that Company A had very recently organized a meeting with farmers in which they requested to please keep producing for them and to produce more. Too many farmers were stopping production and the company was running out of fruits. At the meeting it was explained that they cannot always pay in time because the market is currently low, "*that the other countries aren't buying Uvilla*"[34], Tamara explained. That the farmers would have to be more patient for a bit longer but that payments would start flowing again as soon as possible. According to multiple informants the payment delays were not a new phenomenon with Company A. Eva's brother was visiting her farm one day when I was harvesting, and came to have a chat with me. "*You know, I had Uvillas too, about five years ago",* he said when I told him about my research. '*But that*

[33] Interview Eva and Martin, March 8, 2016
[34] Interview Tamara, March 30, 2016

company had delays all the time. At a certain moment they had not paid us for months and we just decided to stop." [35]

To get a more complete picture of the situation, Alberto Sanchez, one of company A's managers, was interviewed. After having spent time with so many farmers who were suffering due to the late payments, and having been asked by multiple farmers if I could not 'do something about it' or 'talk to the *ingeniero*', I decided to confront him during the interview. If I wanted to take on an activist and engaged role and not be a moral or cultural relativist considering the practices I was witnessing (Scheper-Hughes 1992) this would be the moment. This was my opportunity to contribute something through some 'advocacy' (Speed 2006) or at least to let Sanchez know about what their farmers were going through, to see if he was aware of this and to ask for his side of the story. I asked about the reasons for the delays in payments and emphasized that farmers were struggling and cannot get by if they do not get payed. He defended the companies' position with a very neoliberal perspective, explaining that the company is growing and needs to invest in its competitive position.

> *I have to admit that my knees were shaking somewhat when I confronted the manager of the company, within company walls, with my observations and experiences in the field. It provoked a tense atmosphere and a quite defensive attitude on Sanchez' side. "The company is growing you know? And what do you need when you are growing? Plata. Money. You know, since 2010 it have been years of lots of investment. The company has invested a lot in Uvilla here in the country, but especially abroad. We had to make the product known in foreign countries, lots of promotion was needed. About 6 months ago we have invested around 15 million dollars in promotion in Europe! And the companies' money is like a that of a family. All the incomes are put together. From that you have to pay the light, the rent for the house, the food, gasoline et cetera" Sanchez denied that the market is declining when I told him that this is what the producers see as the cause of late payments. "No, no. Luckily the market is fine. Just the problem is that we are in crisis, the country is in crisis. The crisis is a burden that we all have to support. We all have to endure. You know, working together is 'como un matrimonio', like a marriage. If one of the partners is suffering, the other partner suffers too. But you also support each other. That is what it is like. When we are in crisis, our producers are too."*
>
> - Interview Alberto, April 7, 2016

Sanchez spoke like a thoroughbred market fundamentalist (Weis 2004), using the neoliberal universal narrative in which poverty and inequality are natural by-products of success (Lyon-Callo & Hyatt 2003). Sanchez added to his explanation that the most difficult part of the running the company is managing the producers.

[35] Conversation with Eva's brother, April 25, 2016

> *"I visit a producers' reunion and I explain everything to them, why the payments come in late, that we are in crisis, how that all works. And nobody says anything, nobody asks anything when I ask if they have questions. And then I leave and the next day people call me again to complain that the payments are late! If you do not understand then you should have asked yesterday, I tell them!"*

A possible explanation for the somewhat unclear description ('crisis') of the company's financial problem was given by Eva[36]. "*They used to only write down what we handed in in a notebook. But they didn't make invoices for the producers. In a meeting we were told that they are in trouble now, they have to pay 22 million dollars to the SRI![37] And they started making invoices too*." I am quite sure that this can be described with the terms tax and evasion, being policed stricter now that the country is in crisis. The company apparently has a financial problem they caused themselves, which they move on to the weakest link in the global Uvilla value chain, the producers, for them do deal with it. Which, as explained, they often cannot. The global engagement of the farmers with Uvilla has led to the marriage that Sanchez describes, which seems to be one between unequal partners. There is a clear power imbalance between this large global player and the small scale farmers at the local level that it works with, impeding the farmers' agency and making their livelihoods more insecure than they already were, in the end often leading to their further exclusion instead of their wished inclusion into the global market (Johnson 2004). The 'marriage', the hybrid that comes out of this local-global engagement, looks nothing like the one the farmers had hoped for.

4.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter has demonstrated the consequences of placing agriculture within market governance, the state rolling back from issues like labour relations, exploitation and human rights (Woods 2007). Through neoliberal policy, responsibilities are rescaled to 'the global economy' and the individual local farmer in a clear process of *glocalization* (Swyngedouw 2004). This has allowed for Company A to create an organization structures which rids them of all responsibility, possible problems with a declining market and the current economic crisis and even the company's self-caused problems with tax evasion landing fully on the shoulders of farmers. There is no government interference in this process, farmers are left to fend for themselves. Uncontrolled exploitation is the result: this global engagement gets the farmers involved in a violent marriage which deepens capital inequalities between the 'local' farmers and the 'global' company and this way numbs farmers' agency. For the farmers this violence can often only be ended by the use of their *machetes*, cutting down all their hopes and investments.

[36] Interview Eva and Martin, April 25, 2016
[37] Servicio de Rentas Internas del Ecuador: the Ecuadorian tax service.

5. Organic cultivation: Consumers' agency and farmers' survival

"Are you sure it is all organic? Will we really be allowed to use it?" One of the workshop participants asks the instructor. "I guarantee you it is 100% organic! Do not worry about that. And it will make your plants produce like they never have before!", he answers. A group of around 30 Uvilleros has gathered on this Saturday morning to learn about the application of Organicom[38]'s product. The workshop is given in Carlos' community. The first demonstration takes place on his plot. The instructor, a large man with a charismatic face and a beige armless jacket with the company's name on the chest pocket, asks for a big branch or a pole. A group of men quickly manage to undo a pole by the edge of the field of the barbed wire which it was supporting. "Ok now pay attention, this is how you mix the products." He pours fluids from bottles with different labels into a big rusty barrel that was already half full of water. He starts stirring with the big pole. "You have to carefully follow the recipe to get the right mix of nutrients for the plants. What I am putting in now contains omega 6 and 9. The plants have to eat, just like we do." An approving murmur can be heard among the farmers. All are closely watching the instructors' every move, some are taking notes. Children who were playing among the plants climb up the in the trees adjacent to the field to see what the instructor is doing. The instructor shows another bottle. "This will make an end to anything worm-like!"[39]

Picture 7 The workshop given by Organicom at Carlos' cultivo, 18-04-2016

[38] Company name is feigned

Company A and most other companies exporting Uvilla from Ecuador work with organic certification. They strictly forbid their farmers the use of chemicals. Converting to organic agriculture does not come without struggles; these struggles are presented in this chapter. As the fragment of the workshop above shows, farmers are very eager to learn more about organic cultivation – knowledge and skills are lacking. The first paragraph takes a small step back to contextual matters, presenting how the intertwinement of organic agriculture with the global neoliberal market has become a paradoxical process, exacerbating local-global inequality of knowledge (Shepherd 2005, Vogl et al 2005). This is done with an aim to create understanding for the problems that this process creates for its producers. Then the chapter goes back to the Uvilleros to demonstrate how engaging in organic production for the global market works out for them. The second paragraph shows that he use of harmful chemicals is very common in the region, especially in the flowers sector, leading to severe health problems (Breilh 2001, Paz-y-Miño et al 2002). People are aware of this causal relation and see Uvilla cultivation as a possible alternative. Though cultivating Uvilla without chemicals is complicated; the plant is very sensitive to diseases and harvests regularly fail, this is further explained in the third paragraph. The fourth paragraph presents the organic remedies that are allowed to be used to combat the diseases and the complications that come with these remedies. The fifth paragraph discusses the matter of organic management skills: what types of skill building is needed and whose responsibility it should be to provide that.

5.1 Organic agriculture vs. the global neoliberal market

> *"People do not see that an organic product can never function in a normal market economy, it is for an alternative economy." I asked Daniel how he could be so sure. "Te doy mi cabeza – I'm very sure. Do you know why? How much do you think an organic Uvilla plant produces? 4 kilos. Do you know how much we produce, with produccion inoquia, considering food safety but producing conventionally? 15 kilos! What happens is that the consumer might understand what organic production entails. The producers understand too. But the intermediaries do not – the supermarket, the other parts of the chain, the importer. Do you know how much importers of organic Physalis pay? 30 percent more. You produce four times less. Tell me how that is sustainable!? That is not sustainable! It is a lie and it makes a profit of both producer and consumer! It is a shame that a great initiative like organic agriculture is destroyed in this way."*
>
> - Interview Daniel, March 8, 2016

Daniel Lares, manager of Company B, a company that buys and sells non-organic Uvilla, had very pronounced ideas about the convergence of organic agriculture and globalization. According to him, production is much too expensive for what can be yielded. The cause of this lays with the products

of organic agriculture having become part of the 'normal' neoliberal market. Organic agriculture is 'a holistic production management system which promotes and enhances agro-ecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity, as defined by the FAO and WHO (Wright & Middendorf 2010). The philosophy of organic agriculture has come up parallel to increasing globalization, as an independent alternative to global large scale production. Instead it was practiced on a small scale, on a regional basis and with a focus on developing natural land management skills. Though currently, in a context of neoliberal globalization, it has become a big business (Vogl et al 2005). A business that has become big through the perceived 'agency of consumers', through consumers aiming to counter the detrimental environmental effects of the widespread capitalism coming with neoliberal globalization with moral consumption (Ulver-Sneistrup et al 2011).

The popularity of organic products on the market has taken it out of its alternative roots and has made organic agriculture itself an instrument of neoliberal globalization. International standards have been developed, prescribing very specific rules. Global rules that are supposed to be applied in all local settings, no matter their diversity. Rules drafted far away from the daily lives of organic farmers by people working for transnational certification organs (Vogl et al 2005:17). Here moral consumption which works as emancipation for consumers, works as dominance for producers (Bonanno & Constance 2008). Through friction, the 'Organic' is made into a universal category (Tsing 2011). The paradox here is in the process of an alternative being made into something conventional, inevitably leading to struggles which mainly take place at the level of production. These effects were pronouncedly visible in the field. 'The Organic' was causing extensive struggles in the lives of Inca Berry farmers through deepening inequalities of knowledge (Shepherd 2005, Vogl et al 2005).

5.1 Chemicals in the region

> *You know, the people now are not like the personas antiguas, the people of before. We are full of chemicals. We are going down completely. There are still some people from the old times, they haven't consumed or worked with chemicals and reach a 95 or 100 years. Instead we will not even reach 50!"*
>
> -Interview Eva, March 8, 2016

Having to produce organically is a novelty for most *Uvilla* farmers. In general in Ecuador there are hardly any agricultural regulations in the region for the amounts and types of chemicals that are allowed to be used. Chemicals which are prohibited in many other countries are freely applied in agriculture, even some which are classified as extremely toxic by the World Health Organization. Preventive methods in production like personal protective equipment are not enforced. Risk of excessive exposure for farmers and farm workers is very high due to common usage of backpack pesticide sprayers. (Crissman et al 1994, Paz-y-Miño et al 2002). There is a high level of chemical use

on most crops that are meant for home consumption and for the national market, '*atomic bombs of chemicals*' as Company A's Sanchez termed it. Strawberries, potatoes, maize, all gets sprayed with lots of pesticides and often consumed without proper cleaning. In contrary, for exports regulations are strict and the demand for organically certified products is growing. Company B's Daniel Lares finds the global division of chemical use very upsetting. "*The Europeans sell us chemicals and then they only want to buy products without chemicals, only organic! That is what the world is like. It has been like that for a long time.*"[40] It seems like the health of those on the consuming side of agricultural exports does matter and that of those on the producing side does not. This violence is in ingrained in structures of neoliberal global trade.

A sector in which a problematic and violently large amount of chemicals are used is the fresh-cut flowers. "*The valley here used to be beautiful! I remember that it was all green, always full of flowers. And butterflies were everywhere! Since the plantaciones came that all went away, nature was poisoned*. *Look outside now, do you see butterflies? There are no butterflies anymore, and hardly any birds. Chuta…, just the greenhouses.*"[41], according to my host mother Maria. Breilh describes the consequences of the Ecuadorian cut flower sector as a complex situation of serious human and environmental harm (2001: 8), with ecologically irresponsible and unhealthy conditions (2001: 9). The environmental effects consist of severe chemical pollution, soil quality degradation and monoculture. There are a few chemicals commonly used in the sector, aldicarb and fenamiphos, which are proven to have carcinogenic effects and increase the risks of malignancies (Paz-y-Miño et al 2002). *"There is poison in everything! From the water to the air. And you are locked up in plastic, working in the greenhouses, breathing the venom! There are so much chemicals in the flowers that if a spine of a rose pierces your skin, it feels like you get stung by a bee!"* As Maria told me about her experience with working in the roses.

At the Organicom workshop described at the start of this chapter, I had a conversation with Alexis. Alexis was the cousin of the instructor and worked for his uncle's company as a workshop assistant and developer of new organic fertilizers. I told him about my findings that many local people were trying to find alternative jobs to working in the flowers because of all the chemicals. He grew very quiet. I asked him if he was okay. "*People get sick you know, from working in the flowers. They get cancer. My mother has it now. She is in the process of treatment and will get chemotherapy soon. They already took away her breast. That is one of the reasons I want to work with organic agriculture*."[42] Uvilla farmer Nico was also very conscious of the usefulness of organic agriculture. He was growing all his crops organic, including those for the national market *"Six women in our community have died*

[40] Interview Daniel, March 8, 2016
[41] Interview Maria, March 16, 2016
[42] Interview Alexis, April 18, 2016

of cancer this year! Six! It's because we are used to simply consuming whatever they give us. People have forgotten how to grow organically like our ancestors did. But these crops which I am growing, like Uvilla, all organic, will be better for the people!"[43] Globalization has gotten the region involved in chemicals, and now seems to offer a way to get out of it. People do not only use organic management techniques because the guidelines for engaging with export trade oblige them to, but also because they see the benefits of it themselves.

Picture 8 Uvilla fruit affected by the *pulgon* plague, Veronicas farm 18-03-2016

5.2 Growing organic Uvilla: vulnerabilities

Growing organic Uvilla in a way serves as a form of negotiation with global forces (Woods 2007): farmers actively apply their agency in actively choosing to leave the flower sector for Uvillas. This offers the opportunity to work without chemicals and in the open air instead of greenhouses – negotiating the consequences of globalization that are harmful to their environment and health. The product that results is free of toxins and can be used for home consumption without any worries. It forms a safe and healthy alternative. Though its production is not without worries – organic production is complicated and forms a struggle for many (new) Uvilla growers. The plants that produce the golden berry are not easy to cultivate. Lots of water is needed to keep them producing many fruits, which is problematic in the dry season in which, according to several informants,

[43] Interview Nico, April 14, 2016

sometimes it does not rain for almost half a year. Most communities in the region have no decent irrigation systems and their instalment is costly. However when too much rain falls in the rainy season, different kinds of plagues feast on the fruit and plants. In the time of the research, which were rainy times, many *Uvilleros* had plants who were suffering from several plagues. Many plants were eaten at the roots by white *gusanos*, worms. A very common little green aphid, a *pulgon*, likes to live within the lantern shaped shells of the Uvilla berries, strongly befouling and often damaging the fruits, visible on picture 8.

Small spiders, *arañas*, are another common plague – they drink the plants' fluid form its leaves and leave it weak. There is a *gusano minador*, a 'mining worm' that enters young plants through the stem and eats itself all the way through, coming out on top, leaving it hollow. "*That kind of worm can finish your plants within a night. And they don't leave us alone!",* Uvillera Miranda told me and Victoria when we visited her *centro de acopio*. Diseases like the potatoe-related *lancha*, causing rottng spots on the inside of leafs and fruits and *phoma*, a disease stimulated by high humidity and low temperatures that causes copper coloured stains on the whole plant, eventually leading to its death, are also common. *Ongos*, fungus, regularly attacks the plants too, which penetrates the roots and blocks the intake of nutrients. It is important to check the ground and young plants for fungus before planting (Fischer et al 2014).

> *After asking a few people in the village for her whereabouts, we find Juanita in front of her house, sitting next to her old mother, both on tree trunks in the sun. We shake hands and Victoria explains that we are here to talk about: Juanita's Uvilla cultivo. Juanita walks inside and comes back with two blankets, covering up two more tree trunks for us to sit on. "Ya no lo tengo", she says. "I don't have it anymore". We ask her what happened. "'Se enfermo, there was a very bad disease". She looks at the ground, which is full of old dry Uvilla shells. This clearly was the spot where she used to peel the fruit. She picks a shell off the ground and fidgets around with it in her hands. "Did you see the old Uvillas when you were coming up the mountain, around the corner down there?" She points in the direction where we came from. "You could see it right, all the plants are dry and dead. It started with some of the shells suddenly becoming brown like they were old already, and they just fell on the ground like they were very ripe. But the fruit was still green! And I couldn't control it. Someone came by and told me to put this and that to make the plants better, I don't even remember what I had to put on them. But it did not work, I could not control it."*
>
> - Interview Juanita, March 16, 2016

> *One by one the focus group participants came in, four women and one man, all politely excusing themselves for being late because they came in after milking the cows and it was raining. They sit down on the wooden benches lining the walls of the meeting room in the community house,*

which is also the gathering centre for the milk produced in the community. It is dark outside already and a damp cold hangs in the room; everyone is tightly wrapped in their shawls. After formal introductions and a short explanation of why we are there, we start discussing the subject of diseases and pests in Uvillas. Elina Charci, a somewhat shy participant but always present at every meeting and workshop that has to do with Uvillas, scrapes the floor with her muddy rainboot, takes a deep breath and starts talking. "I don't even have the plants anymore. I sowed 300 or 400 of them. And these worms were in the ground, these big white worms. They go into the plants and the eat them from the inside. I only got to harvest once, and the fruits were beautiful, nice and big and juicy. But then the worms came and they ruined everything, this plague killed my plants. They all started rotting away and the only thing I could do was to just take the plants down again. But the worms come with the rain. When all this rain is over I could try again, maybe." Another lady in the group reacted. "My plants are also dying, just now with all this rain.. I also have these worms because an because I am not applying anything to stop them, I do not know if there will be new fruits, if I will harvest again. I am just waiting and hoping that there will be new branches with new Uvillas." – Focus group April 18, 2016

I heard many stories like the above in the field. They demonstrate the fragility of rural livelihoods. Being dependent for your daily subsistence on how other organisms grow is a stressful business, especially when the global export business in which you are involved forbids you to apply anything rigorous to save your plants when sick or infested with plagues. There are organic remedies against these problems, but these come with many complications. The next paragraph elaborates on this.

5.3 Growing organic Uvilla: remedies

Organic certification standards allow for a limited range of remedies that can be applied to counter the plagues and diseases that the plant suffers from. The *Uvilleros* that run into problems with plagues or diseases often consult company A's agronomists for advice on what to apply to the plants. Then what usually happens is that they receive a recipe for an organic pesticide or cure to make at home. These recipes consist of ingredients like pepper, sugar, garlic and tobacco – ingredients that are especially meant to counter pests. This approach proves problematic for farmers in several ways. First, farmers receive the recipes in written form and not all of them can read well. Second, the dosages of the different ingredients are very specific. The recipes are often not prepared with much detail. "*If you overdose certain ingredients, you burn the plant. And then you can use the machete on all your plants*"[44], Nico explained. This happens quite regularly. A third problem is that the purchase of ingredients for the recipes is quite an investment for the regular Uvilla farmer, which works in a demotivating way. For example during Organicom's workshop, attending farmers were constantly

[44] Interview Nico, April 14, 2016

asking about the prices of the products being promoted, expressing that all solutions offered to them are always so expensive.

> *"Engineer, if I have 300 plants, how much is it going to cost me?" Someone asks. "If you have 300 plants that is just 39 dollars for soil and pest treatment!" Protest rose among the group. "If you don't have the money, just say: Oye vecino! neighbour, lend me 39!", the instructor says. An angry mumbling can be heard. "At the end of this workshop you can take home a bit of the mixture for free and see the miraculous effect for yourself! Then you will want to invest!" The instructor reacts, calming the group down a little. At the end of the day, after having done another demonstration on a plot in the centre of the community, he announces that people can now take home what was left of the product in the big blue plastic barrel in the middle of the field. All attendants came running with little buckets and empty plastic bottles, jostling around the barrel to get their hands on some of the costly fluid (*visible on the front page picture of this thesis*). The workshop instructor looks at his assistant Alexis and chuckles "Look, they're fighting over it again!"* - Workshop April 18, 2016

Uvillera Tamara Cachi also struggled with the price of organic agricultural materials. She had plants displaying signs of several diseases and pests when I visited her *cultivo*. I asked her if she had tried to do anything about it. "*We did ask Company A and they recommended us some kind of remedy, a home recipe. But it was expensive to make and other Uvilleros told us that for them it did not even work. So we decided not to buy it."*[45] This brings us to the fourth common problem with these homemade remedies – they often are not strong enough to combat serious plagues and diseases. "*It is impossible to produce Uvilla in this ecosystem without chemicals tools"*, Company B's Daniel Lares explained. He has grown Uvilla himself for 15 years. "*The plant has fungus, insects and bacteria that you cannot combat with only pepper water or tobacco or by planting nettles. That way the plants cannot survive"*[46]*.* Many people decide to stop cultivating Uvilla because they cannot control the diseases and plagues. "*Cultivating organic does work to stimulate production, but not to control the pests and diseases,"*[47] Veronica explained. Her plants were suffering from the *pulgon*, visible on picture 8.

Many *Uvilleros* expressed the wish to be able to use some chemicals to be able to combat the diseases and plagues. For example the pastor of the church on the square where Miranda's centro the acopio is located, had tried to cultivate Uvilla on the church grounds to be able to have some extra funds. Though the white *gusanos* found his plants to be tasty. "*We tried to combat them in organic ways, but the bugs stayed. You know if you use chemicals all the bugs die at once. But it is forbidden. So we lost*

[45] Interview Tamara, March 30, 2016
[46] Interview March 8, 2016
[47] Interview Veronica March 18, 2016

the plants."[48] The organic regulations are unbending – if only a trace of chemical product is found on the fruits a farmer hands in, company A (or any other company producing organically) fires the farmer and will never buy his or her fruit again. A few stories are known of this happening to farmers who had tried to save their plants using chemical products. This makes *Uvilleros* very careful not to use them.

"*Ah you are doing a good study*! *Maybe you can help the farmers understand what organic is!*" the guard at Company A's gate told me, when I was waiting for my interview in the guest room next to the gate. "*You know, what we do here is pure, everything is purely organic. And we check the fruit when they hand it in, and sometimes it is contaminated with chemicals! And we say: what is this!? You clearly do not understand what organic is. And then they cannot produce for us anymore ánd we have to discount the product. There is a lack of knowledge, falta conocimiento."*[49] The farmers understand very well what organic is, but the practice of it is a more complicated story. Engaging with a non-traditional export crop got them caught within standards that they cannot live up to. A universal is created where the local meets the global on the side of consumers in their moral consumption practices (Ulver-Sneistrup et al 2011). This universal is that organic agriculture is seen as intrinsically good for the planet and for the farmers. Though the contingencies of organic agriculture being very complicated and expensive to attain are left out, they are silenced (Tsing 2011). 'The Organic' is an incomplete discourse, leaving out the human aspects aside from their health. Especially small scale farmers with their limited assets cannot attain to these methods, at least not without any help. They need assistance to build up their skills: *capacitacion*.

5.4 *Capacitacion*

The most successful organic *Uvilleros* encountered in the field were those who had previous experience in organic agriculture with a history of trainings. For example Nico Inlago had studied to be an agricultural engineer for a while. He was very proud of his organic crops.

> "*You see, I have experience and knowledge of how to grow the plants in an organic way. My compañeros from the community come and ask me how I do it. And I try to teach them. I tell them: use this, and this, and this. But they can't get the dosage right. So they stopped. All of them stopped. They were disappointed, they said: I can't do it, I will stop. But so as a producer and a campesino.. for us what we have to invest is money. For example in 300 plants you invest 800 or a 1000 dollars. Imagine losing that..*" - Interview Nico, April 14, 2016

Other experienced growers were Eva and Martin Chillos. They have had their organic farm with different kinds of crops for more than 20 years. They have received weekly trainings on organic

[48] Conversation with the local pastor, April 29, 2016
[49] Visit Company A April 7, 2016

agriculture for years, offered to them by the organic market in nearby town Tabacundo which they produce for. They have developed extensive knowledge on organic management. Eva and Martin started producing organic Uvilla as an experiment around 10 years ago, even before Company A started exporting the product.

> "*I have two brothers who by that time were working in the South of Colombia*," *Martin explained. "In Colombia people consumed a lot of Uchuva* (Uvilla)*, it was becoming more and more popular. My brothers knew I liked to experiment and they brought me a box of the fruits. I took out the seeds and selected them and we started growing Uvilla here, organically. It went very well and we had so much fruits we did not even know where to sell them, it was too much for the farmers market. But then Company A started and we could produce for them, they had a market in Europe. We even became their example farm, they took all kinds of people from other countries here to show how well we managed our plants organically! You know, a man once got a heart attack from seeing how beautiful our plants were. There were so many, the fruits were so big. He came here with a group and he was so amazed by our plants that he got a heart attack and he died the same night!"* - Interview Eva & Martin, March 24, 2016

The above stories prove that it is not completely impossible to manage Uvilla organically, but it is difficult and extensive knowledge and experience is needed. A clear need expressed by the farmers was a need for trainings: *capacitacion*. Training on how to prepare the soil before planting, training on how to manage the young plants (they often die before even producing), training on recognition of diseases and plagues and on how to combat them successfully. Training that would make them into 'globalized' farmers, able to live up to the standards of global trade. Martin gave an example of a training he received. He dug a hole in the ground under a plant and pointed at the root.

> "*Do you see it is nice and white? These small roots absorb the nutrients in the soil. That is what the ingeniero taught me. He taught me to liquefy bananas and kidney beans and tomatoes. Those ingredients have lots of potassium, nitrogen, phosphor, calcium and proteins.. You liquefy all those together with microorganisms and you put it in a barrel, you cover it and let it mature for a month. No air should come in. That way you create the biol. You put that on the ground under the plants. Do you see that the ground between the roots is all soft? That is because I used the viol! Else it would be rock hard!"* - Interview Martin, March 23, 2016

An example of a lack of knowledge is that a group of neighbouring farmers in one of the communities discovered something very important together, that nobody warned them for. It turned out that almost all Uvilla plants that were planted on plots where farmers had grown potatoes before, got sick. The same seemed to be happening with Uvilla *cultivos* next to plots of potato plants. Apparently

Picture 9 Martin showing his fertile soil and the roots of his plants, 23-03-2016

Uvilla plants are extremely sensitive to the *lancha* disease, very common in potatoes (Fischer et al 2014).. "*So you shouldn't put your plants on those plots! But nobody told us that and many plants died!"*[50] one of the participants in a focus group told me and Victoria.

The question is who should offer this type of trainings. Should it be the export companies; the farmers' employer? One would say it is, seen that it is the company that obligates the farmers to produce this way. Company A does have a few engineers who make home visits, give trainings and give advice in the form of recipes. Problematic is that there are only four engineers with very busy schedules on more than a 1000 producers spread over a large geographical area. Multiple informants indicated that they had reached out to the company for help many times and were promised that someone would come by for help, but nobody showed up. And if they did, regularly the results were not as wished for, as Nico's daughter Dora told me. "*The ingeniero came and he gave people fertilizer and advice.. And their plants burned, they were ruined! I've heard that from many farmers in our village! Tenian que usar la machete, todos!"*[51] The company does organize trainings that are to be given at the *centros de acopio*, officially each month, Miranda who works at the *centro de acopio* told me. "*Though they have missed a few. Actually the last one was four months ago, if I think about it now*."[52] Eva Chillos, who has lots of experience cultivating organic Uvilla, once went to one of these trainings. *"It was very funny, at the meeting they just told us to buy 25 bananas and 3 papayas and mix those together to make the Uvilla grow. And that does not even work for Uvilla! The lady who told us was an ingeniera but I don't think she has experience with Uvilla."*[53]

[50] Focus group, April 18, 2016
[51] Interview Dora, April 20, 2016
[52] Interview Miranda, March 29, 2016
[53] Interview Eva & Martin, April 25, 3016

Thus what would be another option for technical support? The Ministry of Agriculture would be an appropriate party to provide trainings and support. Challies & Murray (2011) in their work on small-scale raspberry producers in Chile conclude that the role of the state is crucial in sustaining the viability of small scale producers. For small scale producers it is very complicated to attain the specific production methods that are needed to produce a crop which is conform to export quality standards and requirements. State assistance is needed to help them conform to these standards. The same counts for Ecuadorian *Uvilla* farmers. Unfortunately experiences with the MAGAP[54] are not too positive. Organicom's Alexis explained:

> *"The ministry of agriculture here is pésimo, terrible. The solutions they offer are bad, they do not care about the producers, it doesn't interest them how they are coping. They just say: put some garlic, pepper or milk on the plants.. And the plants burn! Many people have lost their cultivos because of them."* - Interview Alexis, April 18, 2016

The MAGAP seems to be focused on large scale industrial agriculture, support for small scale farmers is weak (Clark 2015). Clark concludes that in the end the 'return of the state' seems a false promise in Ecuadorian agriculture, their new policies leading to further depeasantization. Here the violent consequences of neoliberal rescaling (Swyngedouw 2004) again become visible. The responsibility for the farmers' skills is taken away from state level, the state no longer gets to meddle in the business of business. It is taken up by nobody but the farmers themselves, who do not have sufficient assets to organize trainings in a sufficiently functional way – even though they do try very hard, using the agency they have to negotiate, which can be read about in the next chapter.

5.5 Concluding remarks

What for consumers is a matter of choice, for producers is a matter of survival. Producers must meet the demands of their partners to gain access to capital and markets, Melo & Hollander conclude in their work on the development potential of alternative food networks, among which organic agriculture (2013: 251). For consumers, the consumption of organic products is an act of agency against perceived all-encompassing globalization and its consequences. For producers switching to the organic Inca Berry, it is a literal matter of survival in two ways. First, it serves to escape from the, you could say deadly, flower business. Second, the only way to add income from Inca Berry cultivation to one's livelihood in an aim to make that livelihood sustainable is though producing organically. Unfortunately organic certification here works as an exclusionary mechanism; farmers who cannot 'adopt a sufficiently entrepreneurial orientation' (Taylor 2015) cannot successfully partake in the system. Farmers clearly need to support for the building of knowledge and skills to

[54] Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería, Acuacultura y Pesca.

comply with the organic standards imposed by the export companies. This support is not offered sufficiently, nor by the company nor by the state, the neoliberal process of rescaling (Swyngedouw 2004) has placed the responsibility for complying with 'global' standards entirely in 'local' hands. What we witness here is the paradoxical process of an alternative movement being made into 'the Organic' as a universal category through friction, exacerbating the inequality of knowledge between local farmers and the global neoliberal market (Shepherd 2005, Vogl et al 2005, Woods 2007 Tsing 2011).

6. The negotiations of the *Uvilleros*: Numbing agency.

The past chapters have painted a picture of how the Uvilla production process works and what problems Uvilleros encounter. This chapter shows how Uvilleros deal with these problems. Their agency within the struggles of production is traced. This is done through looking at the actions that Uvilleros take to negotiate the negative sides of their Inca Berry engagements, to try and make them into positive ones – to try and mold the production process to their needs; to co-constitute the hybrid local-global relation they have become part of (Woods 2007). Not only the forms of the different kinds of negotiative action within these struggles are considered, but also their effectiveness in reaching their wished goals, also showing how their actions are blocked or made futile. This serves to demonstrate the agency and non-agency that 'local' farmers have and thus the extent to which they truly co-constitute the relationship with 'global' companies (van der Ploeg 2003, Mannon 2005). The first paragraph takes a look at the first aim for negotiation I encountered in the field: farmers switching companies. The second paragraph discusses the formation of different types of farmers' groups serving as negotiative action. The third paragraph goes into the different forms of creativity farmers use to avert the insecurity of their livelihoods and make Uvilla cultivation more viable for themselves. The last paragraph discusses the farmers' last resort for action, making an end to the negotiation process: using the *machete* to cut down their Uvillas.

6.1 Switching companies

An action that some farmers take when they do not agree with the working conditions of their current company is to switch to another company. In my first week in the field, while visiting Company B for an interview with its manager Daniel Lares, I met a group of *Uvilleros* who were in the process of making a switch from Company A to Company B. This group consisted of Eva and Martin Chillos, Carlos Inuca and Veronica Quicocha. They were all dissatisfied with the late payments of Company A and with the difficulties of organic cultivation and hoped that Company B would provide better conditions. Carlos had already switched from company A to company B earlier that year. He had become the leader of a group of around 15 people from different communities (but mainly his) who have made this switch. He now had his own *centro de acopio* at his house where he sold utilities for growing and also gathered the Uvillas of his group. He personally hired a truck every week on monday and brought the fruit of these 15 people to Company B, a 3.5 hour drive to a village South of Quito. An important advantage of company B for Uvilleros is that they are allowed to use (a limited amount of) chemicals in production, not inhibiting the capacity of farmers to save their investments, like Company A does through forbidding chemicals. Veronica told me that she was already considering using the *machete* on her plants when she heard about Company B from Carlos.

Picture 10 Veronica weighing off dosages of chemicals in the shed on her cultivo, 18-03-2016

> *I told the Company A ingenieros that they should not treat me like they did, all careless and like I didn't know anything, not helping me and just letting my plants die like that! I told them: You'd better not treat me like that or I will go to the media and tell them how you are behaving! And they told me: If you do that you can't work for us anymore. And I said: Fine! I'm off! And I went to work with Company B. And they were not happy with that because I was one of their largest producers!"* - Interview Veronica, March 18, 2016

The new company allowed Veronica to control the pest that her plants were suffering with the use of chemicals. She proudly gave me a demonstration of the mix of chemicals she made for the plants, visible on picture 9. Even though Veronica is still severely indebted, working with Company B does provide her with hope. With her plants doing better and the new companies' payments (hopefully) arriving in time, she now sees a chance to finally have success.*" With the new company I am on the right path. Do you see those mountains over there? When you come back here in two years they will be covered with my Uvillas!"*

Company B has their own large farm and started out with only cultivating their own plants with the goal of developing a strong variety that could be exported fresh. After a long process they have now developed this variety and have opened up to working with external small-scale producers too. The

goal is that these farmers shift to producing solely their plant variety. Company A does not produce its own Uvillas, they only process and export fruit produced by external farmers. An important advantage of Company B is that Uvilleros do not have to peel the Uvillas before handing them in – a time-consuming process. Though this does entail that the price paid to *Uvilleros* per kg of fruit is lower- 1 dollar as opposed to 1 dollar 35. There are some other complicated sides to the switch, for example the need to switch to Company B's plant variety which is more expensive, and the extra costs that come with the transport. The table in figure 6 summarizes the important differences between Company A and B that play a role in informants' considerations. This case study focuses specifically on Company A and Company B, but there are more emergent fruit exporting companies in the region. An impeding factor for agency that was noticeable among farmers was a lack of knowledge of the market (Murphy 2012) – many were not aware of other options than working organically and working for Company A. Company A had a clear monopoly in the region.

Figure 6 differences company A and B

Company A	**Company B**
Organic – BSI Certification	Conventional – GlobalGap certification
Plants $0,10	Plants $1,00
Plants sold at 1-2 months	Plants sold at 4-5 months
Fruits handed in peeled - $1,35/kg	Fruits handed in with shell - $1/kg
Located in area where most farmers operate	Located South of Quito, 3.5h drive
Limited/no trainings	Possibility trainings & internships
+/- 1000 producers, no own production	+/- 20 producers, 70 ha own plants

When farmers are aware of the existence of multiple companies they can take action to negotiate their position and conditions. Active aims at negotiation were a growing phenomenon among Uvilleros, partly due to farmers groups stimulating the consciousness of different market options – explained in the next paragraph. Though these aims can become limited. It is good to have switching opportunities, but it can also be a risky process. For example Company A's Alberto Sanchez was not happy with the negotiating behaviour of 'his' producers and was not afraid to hurt their livelihoods as a form of retaliation.

> "*The producers here just change for who offers the highest price, if it is 10 cents worth of difference they change already! That is prostitution of trade! If they want to leave, I say: go, leave! But if they then want to come back I give them a difficult time. There was a company close to here for a while, at the end of this street. They offered 10 cents more than we did and then a whole bunch of farmers switched when I did not want to pay them more. But then that company went bankrupt and the farmers came back to me with a pile of crates. The other*

company paid them 9 dollars for each crate. I said: I will pay you 2,50 for each. Do you want to sell them or not? Else you can take them home and make lots of juice for your family. So I made some profit there."

- Interview Alberto, April 7, 2016

It does not seem like much negotiating is at play when the farmers switch companies; it comes with tensions and conflict but does not (yet) serve as leverage for conditions to improve. *Uvillero* Nico Inlago indicated that he was conscious of the possibility to switch to Company B, but stayed with Company A anyway. He explained that to him it all seemed the same, making him feel powerless and redundant.

"I heard from some people that Company B had paid them late too! And my daughter told me that she heard that someone bought plants from Company B and they all died because they were bad quality! I am not switching, they all treat you the same anyway."

- Interview Nico, April 14, 2016

There were more farmers like Nico who did not dare to make the switch because of comparable reasons, or out of fear of not being able to produce for Company A again if the switch would fail. Martin and Eva were still not able to buy the plants. This was currently causing tension in their cooperation with Company B. Rodrigo said the following about possibly changing to Company B.

"You know, I did the calculations. Comparing what they pay you and the time you spend peeling and harvesting, and what you need to pay for transport if you make the switch, and the discounting that they undoubtedly will do because the fruit's capuchon easily gets damaged.. You end up with the same income. Or even less! Then why do all the effort to make the switch, which will only cost more investments? And yes they pay late here but who says the other company will pay in time? At least here we are close to the company so we can go there and tell the ingenieros they need to pay us. When would I have time to go all the way to Company B!?

- Focus group, Rodrigo, April 21, 2016

Rodrigo, like Nico, expresses the feeling that switching companies would not make much difference for the way that farmers are treated. It would not contribute to stabilizing their livelihoods and possibly even make them more insecure. This seemed to be happening to Martin and Eva. For many farmers an important reason for not switching to Company B was the cost of Company B's plant variety – 1 dollar for each plant is an investment that is too high for many of these peasants. Martin and Eva were in a complicated position due to this problem. They were in a situation of livelihood crisis when they made the company switch, and to 'save' them, Company B agreed to temporarily accept fruits from the Company A plants that Martin and Eva still had on their field, under the condition that they would replant the Company B variety later in the process. At the time of my

fieldwork, Company B was starting to pressure them to make the switch, leading to much stress. Martin had come up with a creative 'solution' for this problem, which is further elaborated upon in the next paragraph.

What can be observed about the switching process is that it does not seem to change the position of Uvilleros. First, often knowledge of the existence multiple possible companies to work with is lacking with farmers. Second, when this knowledge is present, switching does not necessarily come with better working conditions. An advantage of switching to Company B is that working with chemicals is not prohibited so farmers can save their plants. But working with chemicals in turn is what farmers want to take a distance from because of health reasons. Other than that, the switch is often problematic when made, because of the investments needed – for which farmers do not have the funds, making them wind up in new cycles of indebtedness and unhonoured agreements. Switching can also come with the risk of failure, which in turn can lead to worse conditions when returning or trying to return with the previous company. All these complications lead most Uvilleros to simply stay with Company A and not even try to negotiate. Non-agency is created: action is blocked and the actions that are taken become largely futile; they do not truly reshape their relationships. In the power relationship between farmers and companies, the companies keep having the upper hand because they possess the capital and knowledge that farmers lack.

6.2 Forming farmers' groups

Another common action that is taken for negotiation purposes is the formation of farmers' groups, and/or the application of existing farmers' groups for alternative goals. This can work to bundle individual agency, making it into a possibly effective form with more power to negotiate. Two kinds of groups were used for negotiation purposes: small independent groups and cooperatives. The small independent groups were called into life for the specific purpose of the negotiation of the processes of Uvilla production. Contrastingly, The cooperations already existed, called into life by Company A itself in the creation of the production process as it is. Uvilleros are now starting to apply these groups for other goals than they were meant for, now aiming to negotiate instead of facilitate the exploitative production process.

One example of a small independent group is that of Carlos, a groups with producers from different communities, formed with the specific goal of switching companies together, discussed in the previous paragraph. different small independent groups within communities were formed. Another example is the group Maria set up 5 years ago, which ceased to exist. This group consisted of Uvilleros living in the same community and served to share experiences and information and to be able to voice complaints towards the export company together. The group thus served both practical livelihood goals they could not see to individually and was an instrument meant for negotiation.

Though the leverage they had was not big enough- as described in chapter 4 all farmers except for Maria stopped cultivating due to a lack of organic skills and financial resources.

Another small independent farmers' group is that of Nico. He is the initiator and leader of a womens' group in his own community, consisting of 15 women and himself. His wife is one of the women in the group. "*Yes I know I am not a woman but I have some agricultural knowledge you know, entonces me dejen meter la cabeza, they allow me to meddle in their business and support them,"* [55] Nico explained. The group plants not only Uvilla but also other crops that can be sold like *cedron* for tea, and quinoa. All is planted organic and Nico gives the women trainings. The goal is to make the women more skilled at organic agriculture, more independent as growers and to create some extra income which is shared among the group. This provides them with some more livelihood security, but does not serve to change the local-global power relationship they are part of. It does serve to involve them further into the neoliberal market through the other crops they produce.

All Uvilleros are part of a cooperative, connected to a *centro de acopio*, the working of which is also described in paragraph 4.3 . All members of the group hand in their fruits in one place and payment is done to- and divided among the whole group. There are a total of 7 cooperatives that produce for Company A, of which two were visited: the *centro* where Miranda works and the one that Rodrigo manages, both working with around 80 farmers and both located in the same village. Miranda's farmers group has existed for around three years and Rodrigo's was formed about half a year before the time of the research. Rodrigo's centre was added when the amount of producing farmers had grown too large for just one *centro de acopio* in that locality. The organizational practicalities of the *acopio* might be the company's goals behind creating the groups, but it does not necessarily only have the wished-for effects. Often the associations start serving other goals too. For example, the farmers can and do now unite their voices in speaking out against the company's late payments, this often happens in the form of meetings with the companies' *ingenieros*. Another example of a new function is that farmers from Miranda's *centro de acopio* are producing organic fertilizer together and selling it among themselves for low prices.

Especially the cooperative led by Rodrigo Mojanda was very actively looking for opportunities for their farmers. The group was reaching out to other parties than Company A to explore these opportunities. Rodrigo indicated to have been in touch with Company B and another company to discuss their working conditions and options of cooperation. A while ago Rodrigo had even tried to obtain a dehydration oven for the cooperation, to see if they could own the production process themselves "*Then more money would go to us, we would not need the factory anymore!*"[56], Rodrigo explained. For this goal they had been in contact with several parties for funding, including NGO X,

[55] Interview Nico, April 14, 2016
[56] Focus Group, Rodrigo's cooperative, April 21, 2016

but these efforts had not been fruitful. The plan did still exist and Rodrigo even asked me if I couldn't become their exporting party. I unfortunately had to disappoint him. Rodrigo's cooperative, created by Company A, was in starting to serve the strengthening of the agency of its 80 farmers by exploring alternative markets than that of Company A.

Rodrigo's also association actively works on the skills of its farmers, actively looking for any kind of workshops or trainings that could benefit their *Uvilleros*. Together with Nico I joined one of their workshops, attended by *Uvilleros* from the cooperative and meant for them to learn make Uvilla marmalade at home to sell at the local market. The workshop was part of a series of workshops in which the Uvilleros also learnt how to make Uvilla wine and Uvilla juice. For this the cooperative had sought contact with the university in Ibarra, which has a culinary department that offers training programmes run by its interns. Organizing their own *capacitacion* in this case aims to make them more independent from the company and increase their agency this way. Though the participants did not yet have a clear market to sell their product, the workshop did stir their hopes and enthusiasm, which can be noted in the fragment below.

> *The workshop takes place in the kitchen of the local school, where normally the kids' lunches are prepared. The room contains a low and simple stove connected to a large gas barrel, a metal countertop with some working space and a sink to do the dishes. The walls have been painted bright sky blue a long time ago, the paint is now flaking off. Flies buzz around the old light bulb on the ceiling. Two students of a university in Ibarra are here to teach the class. They are tall and young and wear professional white kitchen gear. The girl instructor takes her white face mask off and starts explaining how to prepare the product if you make it at home. "So, it is very important to work hygienically. You have to clean every surface in the space you are working in." She looks at the little window above the sink which is covered in dirt and spider webs and lets out a little sigh. "Right here we do not really have that opportunity. But please do bear hygiene in mind. You should not wear any earrings or clothes you wear outside. You have to tie your hair, put on a facemask and put on gloves." The group, consisting of around 20 people, mostly women, talk excitedly among themselves, tie their hair and put on the protective clothes they brought from home. Two young women laugh loudly when putting on each other's gloves. All participants hand in small plastic bags with Uvillas that they took with them from their own plots. "Okay now please gather round us and pay close attention to what we are doing. Write down the amounts of ingredients we use." The two instructors start measuring off the sugar, Uvillas and a few more ingredients on a professional scale. Then they start boiling the ingredients with water in a large pan. The workshop participants enthusiastically help with stirring, washing and measuring.. Nico very eagerly asks questions at every step of the process. "What is the ratio between those ingredients?" "How much does a scale like that cost?" "Where*

can you buy pectine?"When the marmalade is done every participant gets a small plastic container with some of the product to take home. We all come together outside the kitchen on the school yard with the workshop's organizer Anita to pay her one dollar each for the ingredients she had to buy. She is very content with the results of the afternoon. "You know, now the people from the group can also use the fruits that they cannot hand in at the company, the damaged ones and such, and gain some money with those too". One of the young women next to her picks up our conversation and smiles. "Yes, this way we can learn and we can sell Uvilla ourselves!" - Uvilla marmalade workshop, April 15, 2016

Picture 11 Uvilla Marmalade workshop organized by Rodrigo's cooperative, 15-04-2016

The Marmalade workshop made its participants hopeful and enthusiastic, but did not see to the true need for *capacitacion* as expressed in chapter 5: technical trainings to increase agricultural knowledge, especially about organic farming techniques. This need is not seen to because of a lack of financial capacity to hire these trainers, according to Rodrigo.

We have a compañero in the cooperative who is an agronomist and who tries to help out a bit, voluntarily. But he cannot do that the full 100%. So what we do now is helping each other out, interchanging knowledge and experiences. But yes, the best thing would be if help and support could come from somewhere else. - Focus group, Rodrigo, April 21, 2016

It cannot be said that no agency is exercised by farmers' groups. They very clearly act to negotiate the negative consequences of farmers' involvement of Uvilla trade. But again, this agency is limited. Farmers' groups can be appropriated for negotiation purposes ranging from uniting voices in addressing the company for late payments, exploring new markets and production options, to giving trainings. Though to all these functions there are limitations, the bundling of agency still does not yield much power. Voices are united, but the payments situation hardly changes. New markets are explored, but as Mannon (2005) argues and as the earlier quote from Sanchez in paragraph 6.1 indicates, exploring new markets can be a risky process, with the possibility of farmers becoming excluded when the new market that is engaged with turns out not to function well. Workshops are given as a form of self-capacitating, but do not provide the knowledge that farmers need most, due to a lack of financial resources. All these limitations again make visible how inequality of knowledge and capital can numb agency.

6.3 Creativity in production

A common, more individual way in which Uvilleros aim to negotiate their position is through different forms of creativity – applying agency in inventive ways. Creativity becomes an emancipatory vehicle for them, serving to defend livelihood needs. Most creativity is to be found in peoples' production methods. *"Yes you know, some farmers do use chemicals, but just a little bit, júst enough to protect the plants, combined with organic methods, and they wash the fruit very well so they don't find it during controls"*[57], Nico's daughter Dora told me. Farmers also often look for the cheapest ways to cultivate Uvilla, to avoid large loans and debts. Several informants had found ways in which to combine poles, *piola* and wire that need less materials. For example Veronica puzzled out a construction that needed only a small amount of poles - expensive and complicated to transport - which were practically kept up by crossing wires. "*I've come up with that myself. It is a lot cheaper this way!!*" She proudly told me. Nico was doing his own kind of experiment. He was trying if he could use the wild Uvilla fruits to create his own variety. "*And it works! I grew a few plants from the seeds of a plant I found in the wild. I just have not had time to produce enough seeds to start a whole plot with them."*[58]

Martin and Eva did something similar as Nico. As described in the first paragraph of this chapter, they were struggling with the financial side of the shift to Company B. They would have to replace all the plants they had by Company B's variety, which would cost them one dollar for each plant while they had large debts already. To be able to keep working for Company B, Martin applied his experience with organic plant breeding to grow his own 'Company B variety' plants. He explained

[57] Interview Dora, April 20, 2016
[58] Interview Nico, April 14, 2016

and showed me how he did this. He bought a bucket of fruit from Carlos – who has the Company B plants – and took the seeds out. He selected them and planted the most potent seeds in a pile of earth with lots of the *biol* fertilizer he showed me before. Them from the small plants he selects the best ones, which he then places in their own little plastic coffee cup – recycled from the morning coffees that Eva sells to the neighbouring flower plantation workers. When the plants are around two months old they can be planted on the plot. "*And then we have thousands of those plants! For free! Or well, I paid Carlos a few dollars for his Uvillas*."[59] I asked him if Company B knew of this. "*No they do not! And they should not either!"* But Company B will recognize their own fruit variety when you hand them in right? How will you account for that? "*I might just buy a few of their plants and just tell them they are doing very well."* It seems like the creative agency that Martin is applying could get him and Eva into trouble – jeopardizing their cooperation with Company B, which is already vulnerable.

Picture 12 Martin showing one of his self-bred Company B variety plants, 04-01-2016

Another form of individual creative agency could be observed in sales. Some farmers choose to sell a part of their production at the local food market instead of to the company. This can offer a more steady income when the companies don not pay. It could even be a way to avoid the restriction on chemicals. Though the market is not large nor secure. In one of the focus groups a participating *Uvillera* said that her mother used to go out and sell her Uvillas on the market in the town of Otavalo, but that it was not of use anymore because "*everybody is growing Uvilla now and everybody is selling*

[59] Interview Martin, April 1, 2016

it there"[60]*.* That form of creativity had become a bit too common for it to work. The creativity in production methods is also functional to a limited extent. Being inventive gives individual farmers a sense of pride through creatively contributing to their own livelihoods and gives them a sense of hope for the future. Though this sense of hope might be misplaced: most of these forms of creativity are forms of 'cheating' on company rules. This comes with the threat of the companies breaking the cooperation with these farmers: the threat of exclusion from the global market (Mannon 2005). Creativity in sales is hampered because individual farmers do not have access to the global market without the export companies as intermediates and the national market is quickly saturated.

6.4 *Hacer la machete*

Many Uvilleros applied different forms of agency to try and negotiate their relationship with the companies and the effects it had on their livelihoods. Though often their agency is blocked and their actions made futile, turning their agency into non-agency, the inability to exercise power and change the relationship with the companies (Foucault et al 2003, van der Ploeg 2003, Giddens 1984). When non-agency is created, farmers come to feel powerless and frustrated – much observed sentiments in the field. The only resort to action that they have left to change their situation is to break the relationship they have with the company they work for themselves: to quit. To use the machete and cut their Uvillas down. This entails an end to their struggles with Uvilla cultivation, but also a loss of their investments in the form of time and money. In a way here they are made to be the 'losers' of globalization – not being 'sufficiently entrepreneurial' to engage with global trade (De Sousa Santos 2006, Tucker 2010, Taylor 2015). Though they were not sore losers- they kept on diversifying their livelihoods in other ways.

A common switch they made, one which allows them to maintain their plots within the community and does not make them migrate again, is to other fruits like *mora* and *fresa*, blackberries and strawberries. These berries also grow well in the local climate and are currently popular on the regional and national market and thus forms a somewhat sustainable livelihood alternative. People also switch to plant potatoes, maize, *melloco* (a small potato-like vegetable), *avas* (*beans*) or other traditional crops on the same plots again: familiar crops with which they have experience and can be grown using chemicals. For blackberry and strawberry cultivation in the region lots of pesticides are used too. Thus the alternative crops to Uvilla bring farmers back to square one in the chemicals game. Another switch that is made is that regularly cows are simply put back onto the plots for dairy production. The disadvantage of the older crops and dairy is that they have very insecure and saturated markets. An ultimate last resort for *Uvilleros* who quit is to go back to working in flowers, implicating going back to migration and unhealthy working conditions.

[60] Focus group, April 25, 2016

Picture 13 A cow on a deserted Uvilla plot in Carlos' community, 16-03-2016

Interesting about cutting down their Uvillas as a form of farmer agency is that it was actually the only kind of farmer action that seemed to reach the goal of negotiation, which the other actions did not reach. Company A was becoming nervous, as can be read in paragraph 4.5. They were running out of fruit to export, caused by too many farmers quitting production. By the time of the research Company A was sending representatives to cooperative meetings to explain why payments have been late and to stimulate farmers to please keep producing and not quit, instead to try and increase production, promising to make sure to pay in time from now on. Clearly, the amount of producers quitting Uvilla (and a few switching companies) has made an actual dent in Company A's (market) position. Using the machete might not have helped the individual *Uvilleros* who quit, but it does seem to have helped Uvilla farmers as a group. When paradoxically the only form of agency that works to negotiate power relations is expressing the desperation of non-agency, this action itself hurting and excluding farmers and driving them deeper into debt, it becomes clear that power relations are severely skewed.

6.5 Concluding remarks

This exploration of the negotiations of Uvilleros demonstrates how their agency becomes numbed and turned into non-agency (van der Ploeg 2003). Switching companies does not put much grist to the mill in aims for negotiation. An (unhealthy) advantage of switching to Company A was being allowed to use chemicals in production. A large disadvantage was that the switch from Company A to Company B came with new financial struggles. Switching companies also increases the threat of

exclusion an redundancy (Bryceson 2000). The possible complications with switching and a lack of knowledge of possible companies to switch to, led to most farmers not taking this step. Uniting themselves in groups to bundle their agency is a more popular form of agency. This seems to mainly provide support among themselves and hope of future improvement of their livelihoods, but no larger goals are reached in seeing to the larger scale technical and financial support they need. The actions that individual farmers are mainly survivalist strategies (Heron 2008: 93) in the form of creativity that serves their direct livelihood needs. These strategies often even worsen instead of improve their position in the relationship with the company. The only way in which farmers can change power relations is through the use of their *machetes*, not only hurting the company but also themselves. Their efforts for negotiation are futile: they do not entail agency - the power to make a change (Giddens 1984). The negotiative agency of farmers is made into non-agency. Their actions do not serve to change their hybrid local-global relationships with the company much – no true co-constitution takes place (Woods 2007).

Conclusion

Uvilla as a new export crop provides small-scale farmers in the region with hope. Hope of being included in a global export network, providing them with a steady income that strengthens their livelihoods and makes them able to provide for their children's education. Hope of a re-embedding of cultural life through working on community lands, joined by their family. Hope of practicing healthy organic agriculture in the open Andean air instead of in flower greenhouses full of posion. Though this hope unfortunately often proves to be idle. Uvilla trade should be counteracting depeasantization (Clark 2015) through including small-scale farmers in the global agricultural system and strengthening their livelihoods, but instead its globalization processes are exclusionary. Globalization processes like these become exclusionary through the universal categories that are created at points of local-global friction (Tsing 2011). Here truths are created that do not contain the realities of all people involved, but these contingencies are silenced.

Two important universal 'truths' play an exclusionary role in the research case of Uvilla production. The first is neoliberal ideology; competition and the free market being made into necessary evolutionary forces, facilitated by the state not meddling in the business of business, their responsibilities rescaled to private local land institutional global levels (Swyngedouw 2004). This process is seen to be naturally and inevitably accompanied by poverty and inequality, the losers of globalization not being sufficiently entrepreneurial to partake in the global economy (Lyon-Callo & Hyatt 2003, De Sousa Santos 2006, Taylor 2015). The second is organic agriculture. What started out as an alternative movement to the effects of globalization has become an instrument of globalization through its uptake by the neoliberal market. 'The Organic' has become a body of global certificates and standards, forcing farmers in many localities with differing contexts to follow the same set of rules (Vogl et al 2005). Organic products have become a moral choice for consumers who consider it as intrinsically good through countering the detrimental effects of globalization on the environment (Ulver-Sneistrup et al 2011). The human aspects of production are left out of this story.

Neoliberalism as an ideology underlying policies is extraordinarily strong in Ecuador, one of the most open and export oriented (and dependent) economies in Latin America (Ludena & Wong 2006). This has led to the state no longer interfering with agriculture and trade, leaving Uvilla farmers unprotected from exploitative forces. Export companies working on a footloose strategy and looking for the most profitable location for production easily find their way to these farmers (Woods 2007). They create exploitative structures like the cooperative system that Company A has created, ridding themselves of all responsibility for the wellbeing of their farmers, without any policing done by the state. The organization of Uvilla production is structured in such a way that the financial problems that the company has, land on the shoulders of farmers. This causes payments to arrive with such a

delay that farmers end up severely indebted, making their livelihoods ever more insecure. What happens here is uncontrolled exploitation (Mertz et al 2005), deepening the financial inequality between the 'local' Uvilla farmers and the 'global' export company.

The Inca Berry produced in Ecuador's Northern Andes for Company A, contracting more than a thousand *Uvilleros* in the region, has to be organic. No chemicals can be used in its production. There is a violent history (and present) of chemicals use in the fresh cut flowers sector, a sector that has engaged the region in global trade since decades ago. This sector has severe consequences for the health of local people and their physical environment (Breilh 2001). Growing organic Uvilla offers hopeful chance of healthier working conditions, making people eagerly engage with its production. Though the organic standards system works exclusionary for these farmers. Uvilla plants are very prone to diseases and pests and local small scale farmers have no experience working without chemicals. They get no sufficient trainings to build up knowledge on organic cultivation, neither from the export company, nor from the Ministry of Agriculture. Organic solutions to pests and diseases that the company and ministry recommend in their very limited forms of assistance, consisting of no more than handing out a recipe, are expensive and often turn out to be dysfunctional. Sometimes they even worsen the problems. The organic restrictions form a straitjacket for farmers. This leads to an exacerbation of the inequality of knowledge (Shepherd 2005) between the Uvilleros and the company.

Agency is diminished where inequality exists (Heron 2008: 92). The inequalities described above, created, maintained and deepened by the production of universal categories and the silencing of contingencies through local-global friction (Tsing 2011), severely limit farmers' agency. Farmers have insufficient and decreasing funds and knowledge to gain access to the global market themselves – they are entirely and increasingly dependent on export companies for this. Uvilleros are absolutely no passive victims of their situation (Woods 2011), nor are they 'not sufficiently entrepreneurial' (Taylor 2015). They undertake all kinds of action in an aim negotiate the form of their hybrid relationship with the export company. They try to switch companies, they form farmers' groups and apply all kinds of creativity to secure their livelihoods. The problem is that they do not succeed to change the inequalities the relationship is ingrained with. They do not have the assets to create enough political space to have leverage in their negotiation process. Their agency is numbed and turned into non-agency (van der Ploeg 2003) by the way in which the neoliberal market glocalizes their world. No true co-constitution takes place in the shaping of their localized hybrid global practice (Woods 2007, Rasch & Köhne 2016).

Recommendations

I realize that this has not been the most optimistic piece of reading. But the unpleasant facts at hand are necessary to present for further theorizing and action-taking, because agency is not only a reactionary but also a shaping force in processes of globalization (Peck & Tickell 2002).

First, let's take a look at the consumer side of the story. What can does this thesis demonstrate us about the role of consumers in global entanglements like these? Consumers apply agency through consumption of products that they consider to express resistance to the consequences of globalization, like homogenization and environmental degradation. Though this thesis shows that these categories become universals that silence many contingencies, only reinforcing the global structures and forces they aim to be resisting. What could be options for consumers to actually resist the global forces they aim to resist? If fashionous food trends are followed, production trends and thus rushed life changes for producers are inevitable, making their livelihoods insecure. Looking at the Uvilleros; they will have to suddenly adapt again when consumers follow the food guru's who claim Superfoods are not cool anymore. Maybe 'sustainable' consumption should attain a new meaning, more in the sense of steady consumption. Making food choices and staying with these. Academics could contribute to this through longitudinal research that follows food trends on both the consuming and the producing side, showing the effects of fleeting consumption. For this thesis to be a contribution to this needed body of work I also recommend follow-up research to demonstrate what the consequences of the Inca Berry food trend are on the long term. Another important contribution could be more work that demonstrates the incompleteness of discourses of moral consumption, and aims to find ways to make these systems more inclusive (Vogl et al 2005).

Now shifting to the side of production. Here the impeding factors for Inca Berry farmers are financial and technical. Financially they have a lack of assets and the production structures they are part of are exploitative, leading to increasing debts and insecurity. Technically they have a lack of skills to comply with organic production standards. It is clear that farmers themselves cannot 'just become a bit more entrepreneurial and solve their own problems'- as neoliberal discourse would present the solution. Being dependent for your livelihood on other organisms makes these small scale farmers vulnerable. If complete depeasantization is to be prevented, they need help. Help that has been taken away by processes of rescaling. As Challies & Murray (2011) propose, the only way sustainably integrate small scale producers in the export production chain is through developing holistic support programmes directed and peasant households, directed at everyone having the right to a sustainable livelihood. Not only involving the peasants themselves, but all involved in global engagements. The state needs to be re-involved in this process too, developing authentically inclusive policies (Klak et al 2011). Applied academic work directed at puzzling out these types of solutions is needed.

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