Working for Home

Seasonal Migration and Social Capital as coping strategies of Cabécar coffee harvesters in Los Santos, Costa Rica

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Bachelor thesis Cultural Anthropology

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June, 2009

"A saying in the Bible says:
Poverty is richness in the face of God.
But we are just poor"
Don Antonio

Contents

PREFACE 6

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 7

MAPS 9

Map 1. Costa Rica with indication of the Indigenous territories and the region of Los Santos 9
Map 2. Region of Los Santos 10
Map 3. Indigenous Reserve of Chirripó or Duchi 11

INTRODUCTION 12

PART I. 15

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 15

CHAPTER 1 THEORY 16

1.1 POVERTY 17
1.1.1 *The core dimensions of poverty: Capabilities* 18
1.1.2 *Resources and Assets* 19
1.2 COPING STRATEGIES 20
1.2.1 *Seasonal migration as a coping strategy* 22
1.3 SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL NETWORKS 22
1.4 PATRON-PEÓN RELATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA AND COSTA RICA 24
1.5 GENDER AND MATRILINE 25

CHAPTER 2 CONTEXT OF COSTA RICA 27

2.1 COFFEE AS THE MAIN EXPORT PRODUCT 28
2.1.1 *Los Santos* 29
2.2 INDÍGENA RELATION WITH THE STATE, STATUS AND DISCRIMINATION 30
2.3 THE INDIGENOUS AND THEIR TERRITORY 31
2.3.1 *The Cabécares and their home territory* 31
2.3.2 *Chirripó* 33

PART II. 34

EMPIRICAL DATA 34

CHAPTER 3 LIFE IN CHIRRIPÓ AND GRANO DE ORO 35

3.1 GRANO DE ORO, CHIRRIPÓ AND THE MORALES FAMILY 36
3.1.1 *Trust, reciprocity, and help* 40
3.2 GENDER 42
3.3 SOCIAL RELATIONS IN THE VILLAGE 44
3.3.1 *Influence of church and religion* 45
3.4 POVERTY AND DECISION FOR SEASONAL MIGRATION 46
3.4.1 *Concept of home and migration patterns* 48

CHAPTER 4 MIGRATION AS A HOUSEHOLD STRATEGY 49

4.1 POSSIBILITIES FOR WORK 50
4.2 MIGRATION HISTORY TOWARDS LEÓN CORTÉS 51

4.2.1 *The journey itself* ____ *54*

CHAPTER 5 LIFE IN SANTA CRUZ DE LEON CORTES ____ **55**

5.1 Work in coffee ____ 56
5.2 Different household strategies and use of social networks ____ 58
5.3 Relation with *patrón* ____ 59
5.4 Colleagues ____ 60
5.5 Social relations among the Cabécar ____ 61
5.5.1 *Other social relations with 'outsiders'* (e.g. *locals, other migrants)* ____ *62*

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS ____ **63**

BIBLIOGRAPHY ____ **66**

APPENDIX ____ **69**

Appendix 1 Resumen en español ____ 69
Appendix 2 Reflection ____ 72

Preface

I remember those first days well. After just one day of having arrived to Costa Rica, I saw myself standing in a small corrugated shack, in a late –already darkening– afternoon, were I was being presented to a group of indigenous seasonal coffee harvesters and asking them if they would allow me to do my bachelor research with them. Permission was granted, and after that many moments were spent and shared together.

And now, at the end of a long journey, that I am already able to smell the green, tasty grass, but not yet able to grasp it, is the moment when I may reflect on the process of the investigation. The subject of my research came into being in the course of a rather fluid process. A process into which I stepped excitedly, fed by a passionate interest in understanding the resilience of human beings, and which led me to do my study with these families of the indigenous Cabécar community.

When I was exploring the possibilities of conducting a research with a social relevance, I was connected with a cultural anthropologist, Rocío Loría Bolaños, working at the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica. She offered me a research possibility in the project (ProSIT) she coordinates.

This bachelor research is conducted both for Universiteit Utrecht (UU), to which I attend, and for the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (UNA). At the UNA I joined in a research project of the *Instituto Regional de Estudios en Sustancias Tóxicas (IRET)*. The research project, ProSIT[1], is concerned with the public health matters and working conditions of the mostly Nicaraguan and Ngöbe Panamanian seasonal coffee harvesters who travel to the region of Los Santos every year during the months of yield. ProSIT takes on a holistic view of the concept of *health*, incorporating economic, social, cultural, security, and labour-concerned factors. Researchers of this institute have conducted research in the coffee sector of Los Santos since 2003, localising problems that were occurring. Working with different actors involved at the regional, national, and bi-national level (Costa Rica-Pamana and Costa Rica-Nicaragua), such as the Ministry of Health, the coffee cooperatives, coffee farmers and the seasonal harvesters, ProSIT has been developing various

[1] SALUD DE INMIGRANTES LABORALES TEMPORALES NICARAGÜENSES Y NGÖBE PANAMEÑOS RECOLECTORES DE CAFÉ EN LOS SANTOS, in short ProSIT.

action plans to improve the working and living conditions of the seasonal population of the area[2].

The majority of seasonal harvesters is Nicaraguan and Panamanian. Due to the large scale of the ProSIT-research, they could not extensively include the ethnic minorities working seasonally in Los Santos too. With my study of the social networks of a small minority of the seasonal harvesters, I hope to add up to their knowledge, by shedding some light on the social situation of a minority group.

Acknowledgements

After a modest twenty-three years of living, I can sincerely say that I could not do a thing without other people; one can simply not do without the help, support, and faith of others. In definite, a research can never be done alone, and certainly not in social sciences: without people, no research.

First of all I want to express my utmost and profound gratitude towards the families, to whom I lovingly refer as *my families*, who received me with the patience necessary for a persistent newcomer. They kept their doors open to me throughout my entire research period, and were prepared to let our mutual trust relation grow over this time (for some even into a friendship). I am utterly indebted to their openness and the possible sacrifices they had to make for having me around so much. These families did not make this research possible, they *are* this research. Unfortunately I cannot thank them by name here, to protect their privacy, but I hope they will understand how important they have been to me.

Then, I would like to thank my tutor on the UU, Marike van Gijsel, for her guidance, continuous critical notes, endless patience, and faith in my abilities (even when I had lost it myself). In Costa Rica the researchers of the IRET have offered me a great deal of support. I would like to give a special mention to Rocío Loría Bolaños, who was my tutor during the time I was in Costa Rica. She moved mountains for me, before and during my stay in the country, to make it possible for me to do my investigation there. I also express my deep thanks to Rebeca Alvarado of the UNA, primarily for offering me a *home* in Heredia, and for her encouraging words,

[2] For more information on IRET and ProSIT see site: http://www.saltra.info/index.php?module=Pagesetter&func=viewpub&tid=2&pid=1 (last visited: 23 June 2009).

when she knew I needed them. Thanks also goes to Benjamin Alvarez for being such a good fieldtrip-partner, and for sharing the necessary moments of rejoicing.

A deeply felt love goes to Marisol Ballestero, for being the best (guest)mother I could have wished for, and for offering the support I needed, the right moment I needed it. I cherish the many moments we spent conversing with each other. And to my sweet *Tico* brother, Dani, who could make me forget about the more difficult moments in my investigation, simply by being there. They really became my family.

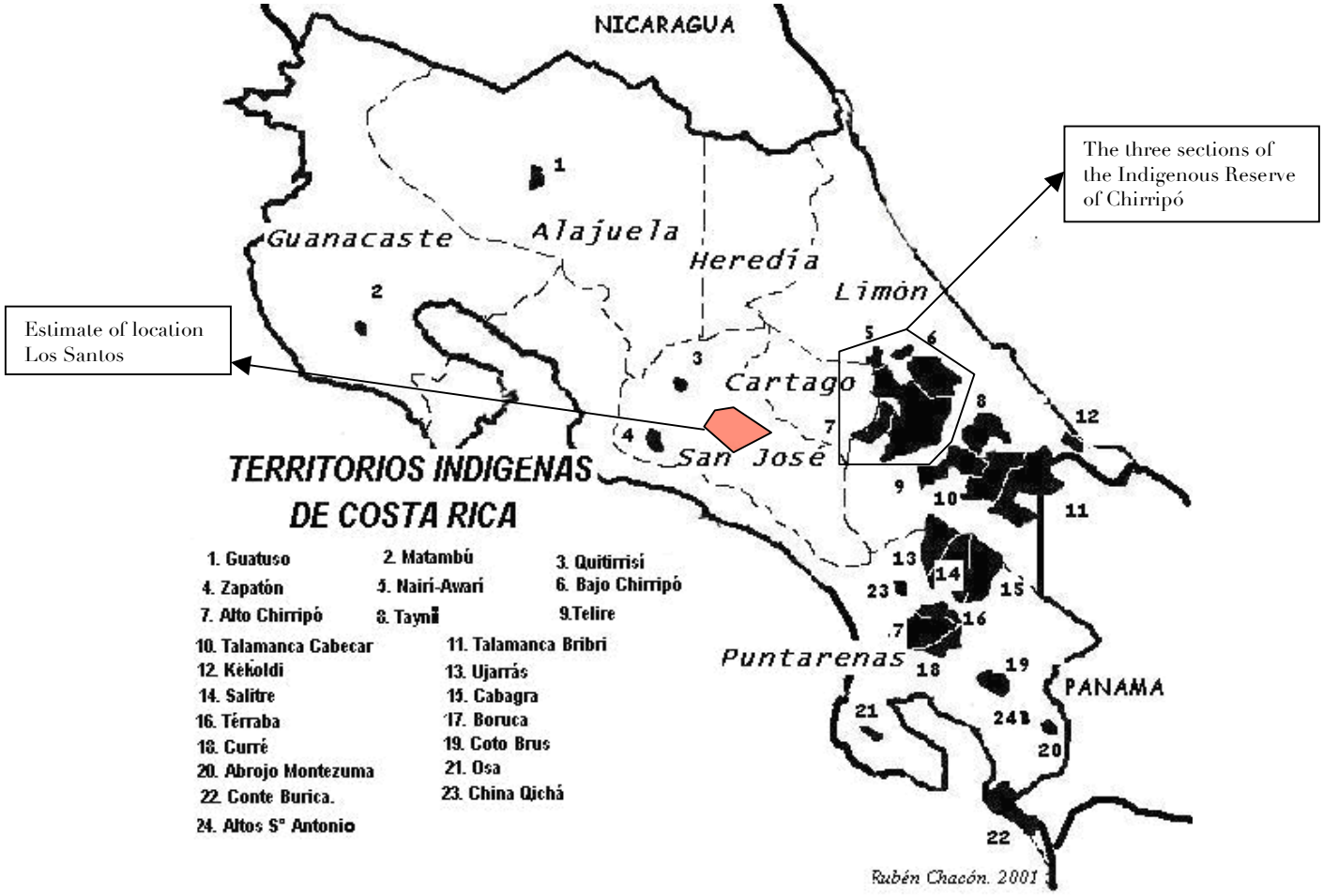
I am very grateful to my friend Pamela Monestel for being herself: such an incredibly caring person. Her moral support helped me through many difficult moments. I also thank my family, I owe so much to them, that it might not be possible to express it in words. My mother Olga, for her eternal faith in me, and for her 'slaps in my face' to keep me strong and self-conscious. My sister, Sylvia, for sharing the sisterhood, and moments of study on a very critical moment for both of us, but most of all, for knowing me so well that words are not needed. My father, Maarten, for reading my drafts over and over again, no matter the hour of the day (or night) and al the invaluable comments, I do not have a clue what I would have done without you. Then, I am grateful to my dear friend Elaine, who fought with me, and *for* me, until the last drop, without you I might have retired prematurely…

I would like to end my acknowledgements with the person with whom it all started, my friend Laura Hernández; she is the one who made this all possible in the first place.

Maps

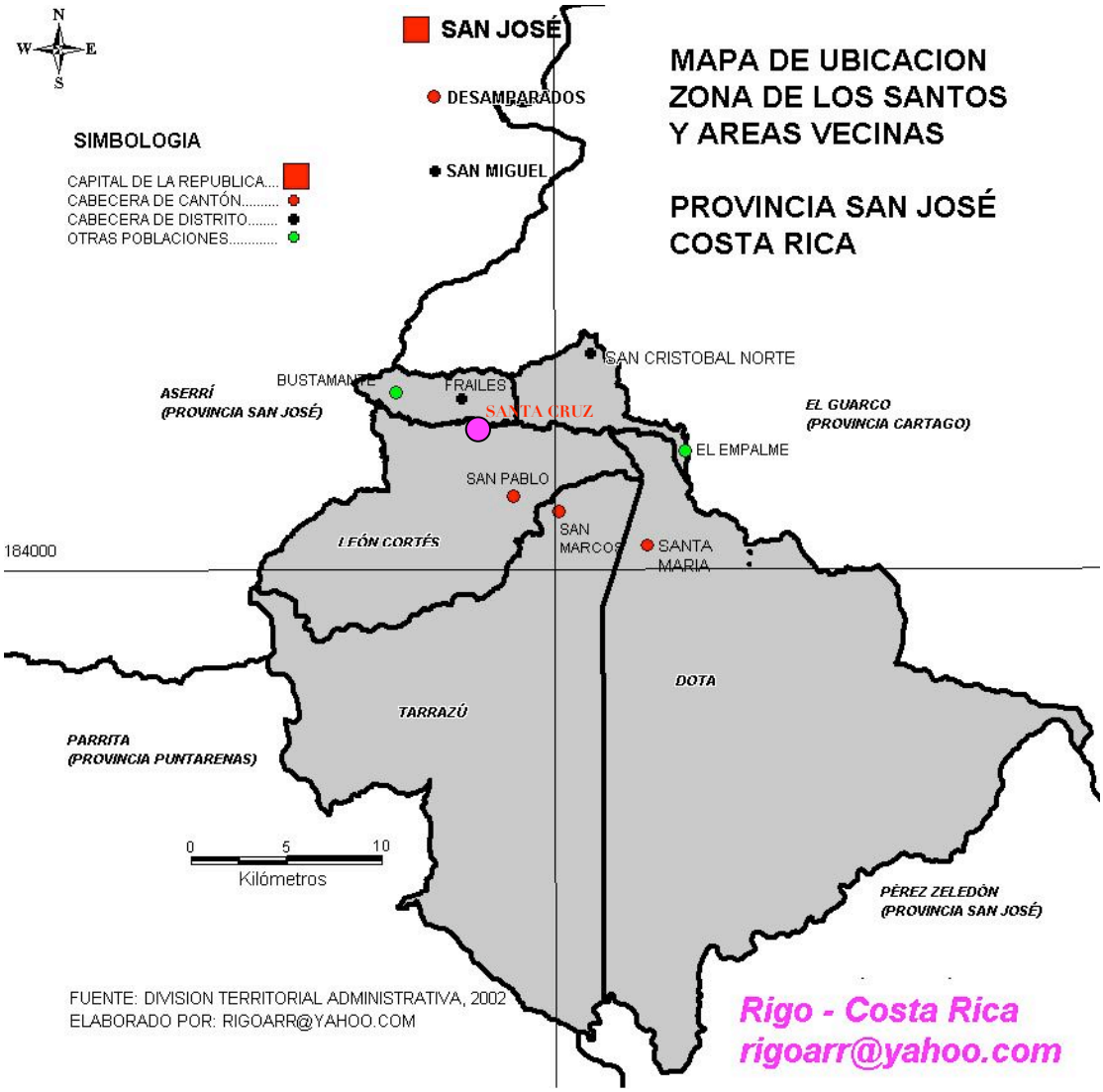
Map 1. Costa Rica with indication of the Indigenous territories

and the region of Los Santos



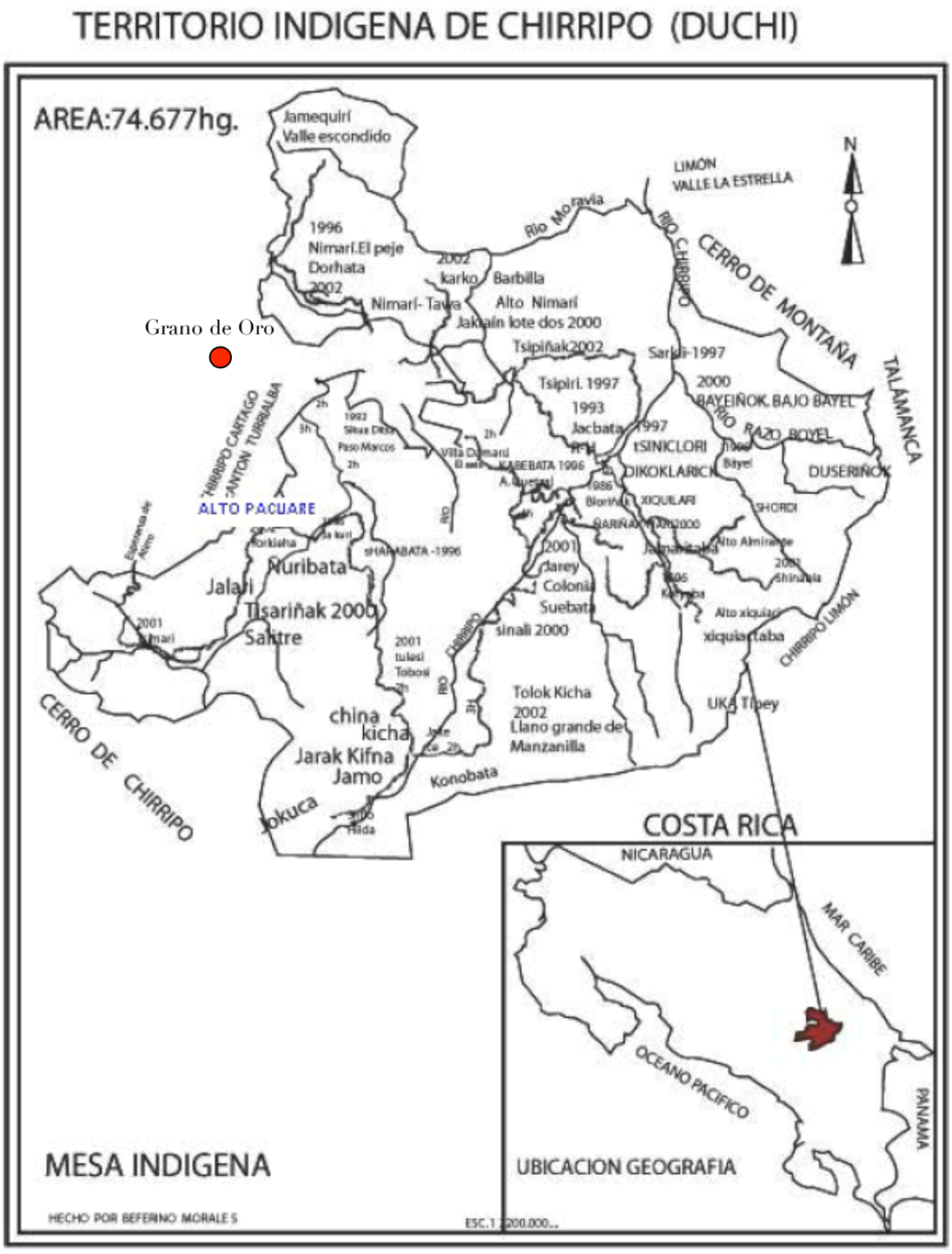
Source: Mesa Nacional Indígena de Costa Rica 2007

Map 2. Region of Los Santos



Source: http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=731074 (last visited: 26-05-2009)

Map 3. Indigenous Reserve of Chirripó or Duchi



Tomado de: Meda indígena. Las cifras que parecen no tienen relación con la investigación.

Introduction

Living in poverty is difficult. It is, however, astonishing to see how people in spite of living in poverty create ways to cope in life day in day out as members of a family and as members of a community. The resilience of people to fight until the last drop and to maintain their dignity fascinates me. The tactics and strategies people develop in order to make a living are many. One of the most important of these is based on people's membership of a social network (González de la Rocha & Grispun 2001; Woolcock & Narayan 2000; Narayan *et al* 1999). In the discourse of recent years the social networks and ties people have and on which they can rely in times of hazard, have been called social capital, after Putnam's definition (cited in Narayan & Cassidy 2001). It is important to note, however, that social capital and social networks of people as a means of coping have their limits. When the shock is too great or the period of risk lasts for too long, social safety nets cannot be uphold (Dercon 2002).

The authors on the subject of social networks and social capital agree on the fact that extensive research, both quantitative and qualitative, is needed on the workings of these networks around the world, in order to get a better grip on the importance of them. Two other important reasons for further research are to locate the local differences and similarities between different places in the world, and to be able to track the way these networks change over the years (González de la Rocha & Grispun 2001; Woolcock & Narayan 2000). The inclusion or exclusion in a society depends heavily on the connections a community has with others outside the community (bridging social capital). Indigenous communities in Latin America commonly have strong inner community ties (strong bonding social capital), on which they can rely in difficult periods, but weak connections with the dominant culture (Ibid). In Costa Rica various indigenous communities work in the seasonal harvesting of coffee, for which they have to temporarily migrate (Loría Bolaños & Partanen 2008). Seasonal migration is a coping strategy that is mostly planned as a family or household strategy and not an individual one (Haberfeld *et al* 1999), in order to make some savings to build up a cushion for worse economic periods. As this seasonal migration brings them outside their own familiar environment and brings them into contact with other communities it is interesting to investigate the

social relations embedded in the process of seasonal migration, work and return to the home region.

The relevance of this research consists in acquiring more insight into the way societies/communities with a seemingly fragile economic condition, such as those of the indigenous communities working seasonally in Los Santos, one of the coffee producing regions of Costa Rica, are able to cope in life, making use of the facilities or assets they have. With the present research I want to elucidate the way the social relations and networks of these communities can help them to cope, despite their formally precarious economic circumstances. By a better understanding of the extent of bonding and bridging social networks, and of the balance between these two, among these communities and how these work or fail to work for supporting their livelihood, we may be able to find more effective ways of combating poverty in developing countries. In order to contribute to a better understanding of the role social capital has for the coping strategies of migrant ethnic minorities I have formulated the following central question: *In what way does the social capital of indigenous Cabécar families contribute to the coping strategy of seasonal migration?*

In order to be able to give a well argumented and comprehensive answer to this question I have firstly focussed on the way inner-group social ties, or bonding social capital, are perceived and given form. Then, I have looked at the way bridging social networks were established and further developed. In short, I look at the way these migrants interact both among themselves (within nuclear and extended family as well as with fellow Cabécares) and with outsiders (colleague coffee harvesters of other ethnic origins, *patrones*, local villagers, etc.). Special attention thereby is given to the function of these social interactions in contributing to individual and household wellbeing.

I have conducted my research in Costa Rica in the period between 29 January and 19 April 2009. I have spent these three months in the village of Santa Cruz de León Cortés (in the region of Los Santos), with a group of Cabécar families from Chirripó, who work there during the harvest season.

In my research I made use of the three important methods cultural anthropology provides: participant observation, informal conversations and open interviews. I went to visit the families in the temporary camp in which they lived various days a week and spend almost an entire day together at those times. I chose, however, explicitly *not* to visit them on a daily basis, as I noticed in the beginning that it was an

overload for them, and consequently also for me. We would all feel more comfortable, when seeing each other in a more 'scattered pattern'. On several occasions I joined the families in the recollection of coffee seeds, I would go grocery shopping with them, or simply 'hang around' with them, in and around their houses. With one family I undertook the journey back to their home region, visiting their house and family there.

My research has been a highly qualitative study, in which I spent most of my time working together with mainly three families and various other (extended) family members of them who I met and got to know to a more or less deeper personal level and who also contributed to my understanding of their lives. I say explicitly *together* because in an anthropological study like this one, the roles of investigator and respondent become rather fluid, and the building up of information happens within a process of sharing, getting to know each other [better] and much conversation. The information, to put it in other words, is constructed in cooperation; it is built up, discussed, revised, broken off, and rebuilt. And, meanwhile, all information has been subject, both consciously and unconsciously, to my interpretation of it.

This thesis consists of two parts, a theoretical framework, and the empirical data[3]. The theoretical framework includes two chapters: the first chapter recounts the theories and literature that lie at the basis of my research; chapter two describes the context of Costa Rica, and both the regions that are related to my research, Chirripó and Los Santos. The second, empirical part of the thesis contains three chapters and the conclusion. In the first empirical chapter (chapter 3), apart from introducing the families and their individual members, I elaborate on the social setting in their home region. Then, in chapter 4, I recount the migration experience, including the process of decision taking. In the fifth and last (empirical) chapter I describe the social situation and relations in their temporary working and living environment of Santa Cruz, in the region of Los Santos. In the concluding chapter I answer my research question linking my empirical data to the theories used. In short, this thesis narrates the migration story, and more precisely the social relations embedded in it, of a couple of Cabécar families.

[3] All the photos in this document are made by the author.

Part I.

Theoretical Framework

Chapter 1 Theory

The overarching themes of my research are poverty, (seasonal) migration and social capital. The conceptualisation of these three concepts together forms the theoretical framework of my investigation and in my fieldwork I have specified on the livelihood of seasonal migrant coffee harvesters, and within this field, on the aspect of survival or coping strategies, more precisely the household (coping) strategy of seasonal migration, and the role of social capital within this strategy.

In order to place the themes of my research in the greater context and to explain the relevance of them, in this theoretical chapter I will elaborate on the scholarly writings on the subject and place my research subject and themes within that context. Herein the relevance of my research focus will be explained, and the items discussed in each paragraph will be introduced.

In this theoretical chapter I will discuss the important concepts at the basis of my theoretical account. Firstly I focus on poverty as a multidimensional concept (including the perspectives of the poor). Within this modern notion of poverty, I consider the capabilities and assets of the poor. Secondly I discuss the coping or survival strategies people develop in order to cope with risks. In this section I also explain in what way seasonal migration in itself is an important coping strategy. In the next section I clarify the concepts of social capital and social networks and the way they can both be important assets and coping strategies. Finally I shed some light on the role/influence of certain power relations, such as the influence of gender aspects and *patrón-peón* relations.

1.1 Poverty

Poverty is a term everyone knows, a term every person who is an active member of a society, no matter where in the world, is familiar with and has an image of. Poverty is inextricably related to humanity, as it has always existed in every society and will probably always do. At first it seems a simple term, but when trying to explain it, one comes across the many layers poverty involves. Everyone will agree that a person is poor when he[4] cannot feed himself and his family enough, or when he cannot send his children to school, in other words when he is deprived of his basic needs. However, a person who is secured in all his basic needs and has some savings on the bank, but cannot afford to go on holiday, can also be considered poor. This example demonstrates an important distinction in dimensions of poverty, between absolute-objective poverty ('tangible' deprivation of basic needs) and relative-subjective poverty (poverty in comparison with others in the same country)[5] (McPherson & Silburn 1998). Poverty is thus a complex phenomenon that is difficult to capture in one simple definition. There is consensus on the knowledge that poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon and that it is both cause and outcome of social processes and therefore variable (World Bank 2000; Narayan *et. al.* 1999; OECD/DAC 2001).

The World Bank (2000) introduces the first simple definition: "poverty means deprivation in well-being". For many decades poverty was perceived in purely economic terms, as lack of material well-being: not being able to meet your basic needs, such as food, shelter, clothing and income. While food security and employment are indeed still fundamental determinants of poverty, our understanding of the concept has since broadened to including people's vulnerability, voicelessness and powerlessness, and the sense of humiliation involved (World Bank 2000). People's vulnerability and resilience refer to the degree to which they are capable of getting out of a harsh economic period. A very important aspect in our 'modern' notion of poverty is that also economic institutions, such as the World Bank, are

[4] When using the term 'he' in the text, I refer to both men and women.

[5] The four terms; objective, subjective and absolute, relative can be put in a matrix, showing a layered scale of poverty from absolute-objective (under the poverty line of 2$ a day and deprivation of basic needs), through absolute-subjective (adding perceived vulnerability and despair) and relative-objective (social minimum in a welfare state) to relative subjective (adding the element of perceived subordination and exclusion from society) (McPherson & Silburn 1998).

beginning to listen to the voice and definitions of the poor themselves[6] (Narayan *et. al*. 1999; World Bank 2000).

As Narayan *et al* (1999) bring out in the first large scale participatory research project on this subject, poverty affects differently and is perceived in different ways in every country, region, or community in the world, as well as by every family and individual affected by it. There are, however, important similarities observed across the world. The first indicator of poverty remains the lack of what people need for material well-being, in other words lack of assets, but it is deeply intertwined with psychological and social aspects of poverty. An important social or psychological aspect is the degree to which people have *agency*: the degree to which they have the possibility of choice in their own lives; and are able to live their lives in dignity according to their own standards. Two other important aspects of poverty or well-being are, according to Narayan *et al*, political participation: the degree to which people can claim their civil rights; and (sense of) security or safety, with regard to, for example, climatic conditions, or violence (Narayan *et al* 1999).

In the two subparagraphs below I go into two important features of human and social life that are studied, in order to better understand the workings of poverty: the *capabilities* and *assets* people can have. The capabilities and assets concern in great part the same, or very similar aspects of human life, but have a slightly different starting point. The capabilities are divided into five main categories, aspects of social life to which people should be entitled, of which poor people are often deprived. Assets refer to the means or resources people can use, in order to make a living or to improve their situation. In short, the capabilities thus consist on *what people can do*, while the assets are the *means* people have at their disposal.

1.1.1 *The core dimensions of poverty: Capabilities*

The deprivation of poor people encompasses all aspects of human life. In order to operationalise the concept of deprivation, a distinction is made into five core dimensions: the lack of economic, human, political, socio-cultural and protective capabilities. These categories are internally related to each other and the outcome of

[6] As studied by a global research effort conducted for the *World Development Report 2000/2001*, entitled *Consultations with the Poor*. This large-scale comparative and participatory research Project was initiated and coordinated by Deepa Narayan, Principal Social Development Specialist of the World Bank's Poverty Group.

one can influence another. All categories are also linked to the aspects of gender and environmental sustainability (OECD/DAC 2001: 38).

Economic capabilities refer to the ability to earn an income and to have assets that can secure people's basic needs, food security, and material well-being, but also their social status. They also involve having access to productive financial and physical resources, such as land, utensils to work the land, livestock and water. Human capabilities include the physical and health condition of people; the level of education, access to healthcare and clean water and shelter. The political capabilities involve human rights and the degree to which people have a voice and are able to influence public policies. Socio-cultural capabilities constitute the capacity of people to be respected as a member of their community and to participate in the community's traditions, the ability to live their life in dignity. The last core dimension is that of the protective capabilities. These refer to the extent to which people are capable of withstanding or coping with economic and external shocks, and are important for preventing poverty (OECD/DAC 2001: 38). It is on these last capabilities that I will focus mostly in my fieldwork.

1.1.2 *Resources and Assets*

Narayan *et al* (1999: 39) show that poor people rarely speak about income; rather they refer to the *assets* that are important to them. Assets consist of the resources that are available and, more important, accessible to people. The extent to which people are able to access potential resources, transforming these into assets makes them less vulnerable (González de la Rocha & Grispun 2001), and depends in great part on the power relations among individuals and groups in a certain region (Narayan *et al* 1999). Those with more power will have more access to resources, and will have the power to exclude others. The assets available to people can be put into four main categories: physical, human, environmental and social capital (Narayan *et al* 1999: 44).

Physical capital includes the land that is owned by people, and people's material belongings. Human capital concerns the physical and mental conditions of a person, such as health, labour force, skills, training and education. The third category, environmental capital, refers to the natural resources available in the (near) surroundings, like water, forest, trees, and non-timber products, which are influenced by geographical, environmental and climatic conditions. The last asset is so-

cial capital, which Narayan *et al* broadly define as '(...) the benefits of membership within a social network' (1999: 44). The coping strategies people develop to protect their livelihood, are in great part channelled through and/or aimed at spreading or enlarging the assets they have (Narayan *et al* 1999). Before discussing the concepts of social capital and social networks in the last section, I will examine different forms of and reasons for developing coping strategies in the next section.

1.2 Coping strategies

Households living in poverty are vulnerable, which means that the balance in which they live is fragile. Changing economic situations, climatic risks, or sudden personal problems can have an enormous impact on people's lives (Dercon 2002). Dercon (2002) distinguishes two types of risks to which people in developing countries are vulnerable: common risks, which affect a community as a whole; and idiosyncratic risks, that affect an individual or a household.

According to the different levels of well-being that exist, different levels of coping with one's livelihood become visible. Coping, in short, refers to the way people are able to act (for) themselves, within the limits of their capabilities, in order to lessen their vulnerability. Coping thus refers to the degree of agency poor people *do* have. One can only speak of a coping or survival *strategy*, when there is still a choice (González de la Rocha & Grispun 2001). At the deepest bottom of poverty, people are the most vulnerable and no long-term plans can be made, which means people and households can only deploy strategies for survival on a day-to-day basis. The more people are able to mobilise their resources into assets, the better they can anticipate risks, and the wider is the range of coping strategies that become available to them (Dercon 2002).

At the different levels of well-being, households may deploy different forms of coping strategies, to protect, and, where possible, improve their livelihood. Within these household strategies, a principal distinction can be made between strategies taken up within a household and those within a community (Dercon 2002). González de la Rocha and Grispun (2001) distinguish three main strategies: the first involves the increasing of income (through increased labour supply), the second consists of the restriction/minimising of household expenses and the third is the increased reliance on networks of families and neighbours. Dercon (2002), though in

fact using a slightly different terminology, adds one more 'overarching' strategy, that I deem important, which he calls *self-insurance* through precautionary savings. In this strategy people build up assets during good years, to have a cushion to overcome the bad.

Within each family, labour plays an important role as a household or livelihood strategy, and many of the activities deployed involve the intensification and spread of labour among the family members. The resource of labour, such as the resource of land, however, is only a useful asset when enough of it is available, and/or when the (climatic) conditions are good enough to use it. Evidently, if there is lack of labour, neither intensification nor spread of labour will enhance family income. Temporary or seasonal migration for additional income can therefore be counted as one of these strategies[7] (Haberfeld *et al* 1999: 477). During periods of crisis, the restrictive strategies and informal networks or safety-nets are effective for a longer time than the income spreading activities, although these also have their limits. Here, reciprocity is important: when families that (temporarily) do 'better' help out other families in problems, it is likely that they, when faced with problems, will be helped out in return (Dercon 2002).

At the community level, in times of hazard, people can increase their reliance on their social networks. As Dercon explains, however, informal group-based risk-sharing systems are never completely shared, but rather partly. Another limitation is that these systems only help to cover idiosyncratic risks, because common risks affect the vulnerability of the entire community at once, making it more difficult to keep helping each other. These reciprocal social networks are, nevertheless, crucial to the coping strategies of many poor households. As González de la Rocha and Grispun (2001: 122) emphasise, 'social bonds and social networks based on the principles of trust, reciprocity, and mutual help are one of the most important ways in which the poor, in coping with poverty, rely on each other every day'. However, when poverty increases at the community level, the need for support from other community members also increases, while ability to support each other decreases. This might endanger the reciprocity in social networks. I will elaborate these social networks in more detail in the next section.

[7] I will elaborate on this strategy in more detail in the sub-paragraph below, because my research population makes use of this strategy.

1.2.1 *Seasonal migration as a coping strategy*

As I mention above, temporary or seasonal migration for some extra income, can be an important coping strategy (Dercon 2002; Haberfeld *et al* 1999). Haberfeld et al (1999) argue that seasonal migration might serve both to increase the household's income as to minimise the household's risks. Another important issue Haberfeld brings up in the study of seasonal migration is that it should be analysed as a household strategy, rather than an individual one, because the decision to send one or more family members away to work is mostly taken collectively. With the (extra) income individuals and households gain through the migrant labour, savings can be made to improve the family's position in the home region or country. Seasonal migration thus has a positive impact of the economic well-being of households. This is shown both from Haberfeld's case study of inter-regional seasonal migration in rural India (Haberfeld 1999), and from a study in the Costa Rican region of Los Santos[8] (UNA 2008). Seasonal migration, as I will study it, is both a coping strategy as the context in which people's daily lives continue and within which again (more detailed) coping strategies and social networks are at stake.

1.3 Social capital and social networks

Social capital is, as I explain before, considered to be one of the four main categories of assets people have in order to add up to a decent life, and as a coping strategy. It is, however, important to note that social capital is a concept that has derived from a discourse, and is thus a subject of interpretation (Lourenço-Lindell 2002: 27). Social networks on the other hand are a part of the daily reality of people, and can thus be investigated as such in the field. Social capital, as Putnam (1993) considers it, is more and more 'seen as an important theoretical perspective to understand and predict the norms and social relations embedded in the social structures of societies' (cited in Narayan & Cassidy 2001: 59). Lourenço-Lindell[9] argues that the vision of social capital does not give enough attention to the (socio-) political structures in which social relations are embedded and on the power-

[8] In this study interviews were done with seasonal Panamenian indigenous Ngöbe coffee harvesters (UNA 2008).

[9] Ilda Lourenço-Lidell (2002: 27-28) argues that the studies about social capital done by the World Bank, in which social capital 'fills at least two purposes', namely 1) as 'playing a positive role in poverty alleviation', and 2) as being 'crucial components of market efficiency', are 'being used to legitimise its policies'.

relations contained in them. I therefore want to use the concept of social capital, taking into account that political and power structures are involved and incorporated in it.

Woolcock and Narayan[10] (2000) indeed consider social capital as 'providing opportunities for mobilizing other growth-enhancing resources', but they do acknowledge that it is influenced by politics, and that it can also work in an excluding spiral. On the institutional level, it is relatively simple to define the concept of social capital, as Portes (1998) puts it: 'social capital is the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of memberships in social networks or other social structures' (cited in Narayan & Cassidy 2001: 59). In short, social capital exists when means and goods are shared. On the operational or practical level, social capital is more difficult to define. The importance of social ties and networks extends beyond the pooling of resources and material sharing, as it is also deeply based on the voluntary exchange of services, such as taking care of each other's children, or helping each other on the field (González de la Rocha & Grispun 2001).

Social capital is an important asset of all human beings, having or lacking it is crucial to people's inclusion or exclusion of a society (Woolcock & Narayan 2000). Woolcock and Narayan use the distinction made by Gittell and Vidal (1998, cited in Woolcock & Narayan: 230) between two types of social capital: bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital refers to the, mostly horizontal, ties and reciprocal social networks linking individuals and families within a community, giving them a sense of identity and common purpose. This form of social capital can function as a safety-net, as one can fall back on help from the family or community in times of hazard. There are norms and expectations embedded in these networks, as one, for example, is expected to help the other, in reciprocity. Bridging social capital are those (vertical) connections made between members from a community and actors outside the community; these cross ethnic boundaries. These bridging networks may connect a community to the 'economic mainstream', and may thus create development (Gittell & Vidal 1998, cited in Woolcock & Narayan 2001: 230).

[10] Deepa Narayan and Michael Woolcock are, respectively, the lead social development specialist in the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Group, and a social scientist of the World Bank's Development Research Group (Woolcock & Narayan 2000: 243). Narayan is also working in the Economic Management Network of the World Bank.

The efficacy of social capital depends in great part on the balance between these two forms (Woolcock & Narayan 2001). Too strong a bonding social capital may cut the community from links with the outside world, while too much focus on bridging social networks may damage the internal social cohesion related to bonding social capital, making the safety-net crumble. Another disadvantage of the strong focus on reciprocity within the community is that it can have a mandatory character, which can impede individuals within a community to follow the development path of their own choice. A further danger is that social networks reach their limits in times of extreme shock or hazards (Narayan *et al* 1999; Dercon 2002), which 'could result in increasing social isolation' (González de la Rocha & Grispun 2001: 124). Indigenous communities in Latin America commonly have strong inner community ties (strong bonding social capital), on which they can rely in difficult periods, but weak connections with the dominant culture (Ibid).

In spite of the disadvantages and limits of social capital and social networks, it is a very important 'mechanism of support among the poor' (González de la Rocha & Grispun 2001: 122). The different authors agree on the fact that in understanding poverty and in developing approaches to support the poor, it is important to study the agency poor people have through their social capital and social networks, using these as a coping strategy.

1.4 Patron-peón relations in Latin America and Costa Rica

The patron-client relation has been an extensively studied social phenomenon in cultural anthropology. These types of power relations have their basis in traditional agricultural societies in many places in the world (Foster 1963; Fél & Hofer 1973; Michie 1981). At the basis of patron-client-, or patron-*peón*[11] relations, often lies the vulnerability of poor peasants who were traditionally under the hood of a wealthier landlord (Michie 1981), for whom they worked, or who sought the protection of a more prosperous farmer (Fél & Hofer 1973). For a poor peasant the relationship with a 'protecting' patron could thus be a first form of bridging social capital.

Three elements are characteristic of patron-cliency relations: asymmetry, affectivity, and reciprocity (Carney 1989: 44). The patron-client system vertically connects individuals and groups of different social status, class and wealth to each

[11] *Peónes* are in Spanish the workers. In Costa Rica the employees are referred to as *peónes*.

other (Michie 1981: 21). It is a dependency relation between a more powerful patron and much poorer clients. The patron distributes favours to his clients, and in turn the number of clients amounts to the power, wealth and respectability of the patron (Carney 1989). Important is therefore a certain level of reciprocity in the relation between the patron and the *peón*, both give and take in the relationship, even if the amounts and goods interchanged differ. The element of affinity towards a patron is very important, it is not simply an 'agreement', in which goods are exchanged, but the client and the patron feel a certain loyalty towards each other. A last important element is that a patron-client relation, as Carney (1989: 47) illustrated, is that it has an 'exit-option': when patron and client no longer need each other the relationship can simply end.

1.5 Gender and matriline

When studying matters of the human condition and social life, gender issues inherently play an important role. In my research project, although not directly focussed on gender relations, the relationships between men and women are an important aspect of social life. The way gender roles are perceived in a certain society or community have an important basis in their familial descent system (Stone 2006). As the Cabécar community has a matrilineal parentage system, I will here shortly elaborate on (the study of) gender and the way gender relations can be addressed in different matrilineal societies.

It is firstly important to distinguish the difference between the terms *sex* and *gender*. Where sex-differences purely refer to the biological differences between men and women, the concept of gender refers to the socially and culturally constructed differences (Unger 1979).

For a long time the study of gender focussed primarily on 'the status' of women in different cultures and societies. It was mostly studied from the idea that women had a sub-ordinate position in society and that they were often treated as second-class citizens (Stone 2006). As Linda Stone (2006: 1), however, indicates, does "gender refer to people's understandings of the categories 'male' and 'female'." Modern-day gender studies therefore focus on the relation between men and women, and their (different) interests and strategies within these (di Leonardo 1991, cited in Stone 2006: 3). Important in the study of gender is that not only the

relation between men and women is studied, but also the intersections or the ways in which gender issues are interwoven with with other aspects of social and cultural life' (Stone 2006: 1).

Family and kinship relations are important in every society in the world. Stone (2006) emphasises the importance of the relation between the way gender differences are perceived in a society and the society's kinship system. Although most kinship systems are much more fluid and variable in reality than in anthropological terminology and symbology, the anthropological study of it can shed light on the importance of familial relations (and gender relations within these). In most societies in the world, membership of a family is passed on through the fathers' family-line, this is called a patrilineage[12]. Some fifteen percent of cultures has a matrilineal descent system (Aberle 1961, cited in Stone 2006). It is on the gender aspect of matrilineal descent systems that I will focus here, as my research group is organised by matriline.

Stone (2006) expresses that there is much variation in the way matrilineal societies over the world give form to their social organisation and in the way they perceive gender matters. The organisation of matters such as (patri- or matrilocal) place of residence, inheritance of property, authority within and outside of marriage (or household), is achieved differently in the various matrilineal cultures. In some matrilineal societies there is female ownership and inheritance of property, while in others property is owned by men. This is also the case for the inheritance of a household's social status. In some matrilineal societies the women thus play an important role in the families' wealth, social status and identity, while in others this is much less the case. It is thus difficult to say something about the relationship between men and women in more generalising or overarching terms. Contemporary research on the subject, however, suggests that "the status or power of women would tend to be higher in matrilineal societies than in most patrilineal ones, especially if the societies were also matrilocal."

[12] Cited from Stone (2006: 72): "David Aberle (1961) once calculated that 44 percent of a representative sample of cultures in the world is patrilineal (with 36 percent bilateral or cognatic, 15 percent matrilineal, and 5 percent bilateral)."

Chapter 2 Context of Costa Rica

The Central American country of Costa Rica is situated between Nicaragua in the north and Panama in the south. The political centre of the country has been located in the Central Valley since the colonial era. It is also where San José, the capital, and other important cities, such as the former capital of Cartago and Heredia are located. An important aspect distinguishing Costa Rica from the surrounding, and the majority of other Latin American countries, is its relative 'whiteness' (Mitchell & Pentzer 2008). An estimated six percent of Costa Ricans consider themselves to be of Afro-Caribbean, Chinese, or indigenous descent, which leaves a 94 percent to be 'white' or *mestizo*[13]. Throughout Costa Rican history, this part of the country's population took pride of its European ancestry, neglecting, and often even denying, the country's minorities and mixed origin (Mitchell & Pentzer 2008[14]).

Another important feature of modern Costa Rican history and of the people's sense of identity is the long-standing 'tradition' of democracy. From the moment of independence as a country in 1828[15], subsequent leaders and governments were slowly working towards a democracy. Violent interruptions have been scarce, the last one occurring in 1948 in the form of a short civil war. During the sixty-year period following this civil war, many important institutions were established and reinforced in order to protect the country's citizens. Investments were done in creating free public education and accessible healthcare systems in both urban and rural areas, and in the creation of institutions successfully providing electricity and clean water to great parts of the population. Various universities were founded and in 1997 primary education was made compulsory until the age of eleven (Mitchell & Pentzer 2008).

[13] A *mestizo* is a person of mixed indigenous and Spanish ancestry (Meléndez Obando 2001).
[14] Most of the information in this paragraph is taken from Mitchell & Pentzer 2008).
[15] Independence from Spain was in 1821 in a joint declaration with the surrounding states, after which Costa Rica firstly was a province of the Mexican Empire and then of the Federal Republic of Central America, before gaining its independence as a country (Guevara Berger 2000; Mitchell & Pentzer 2008).

One of the important institutions established was the social security system called the Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social[16] (CCSS or Caja), which provides health insurance for the great majority of the population. In the 1990s another important improvement was made in healthcare by generating a system of local clinics at the community level. These were called Basic Health Attention Teams (EBAIS)[17] and were set up initially in the rural regions where accessibility had been the lowest. In 2001 already 70% of the population had access to these clinics (Mitchell & Pentzer 2008).

During the second half of the twentieth century extensive urbanisation took place, as was the case in many other parts of the world. Most of the migrants from the rural areas towards the cities were able to find work in the newly developing governmental and non-governmental institutions. Nicaraguan immigrants have been arriving off and on during the twentieth century, taking on the low-paying jobs many Costa Ricans no longer wanted, such as in the domestic service, working in the construction, or harvesting coffee (Mitchell & Pentzer 2008).

2.1 Coffee as the main export product

During the colonial period, Costa Rica did not have a significant export product. After independence the importance of export products such as bananas[18] on the Caribbean coast, beef on the Pacific coast and coffee in the Central region started to grow. Coffee was the first and most important of these export products (Guevara Berger 2000). Coffee production and export began in the 1830s, just after independence, and the most important coffee producing region is the Central Valley, where the coffee production took over almost the entire agricultural industry (Mitchell & Pentzer 2008). In contrast to many other Latin American Countries, in Costa Rica coffee is in great part produced by small scale coffee farmers, because the rising coffee elite preferred to focus on the processing, export and credit elements of the coffee market (Sick 1996: 256). These small-scale producers have had relatively strong government support since 1948. During the second half of the

[16] This system had been introduced by the government of Rafael Ángel Calderon in the 1940s. Calderón was the predecessor of José Figueres, whose party came to power after the 1948 war.

[17] These local clinics were, as one might guess from the name, only very basically equipped. At a minimum there was a doctor, a nurse and a technician for an average population of between 1,500 and 4,000 people (Mitchell & Pentzer 2008: 181).

[18] Stimulated by the North American United Fruits Company (Mitchell & Pentzer 2008).

twentieth century more and more migrants from Nicaragua and Panama, but also local indigenous people, started to work as employees in the coffee-industry, as many middle-class Costa Ricans did not want such jobs any longer.

The production of coffee started late 18th century in the three provinces (Heredia, San José and Alajuela) of the central valley (ICAFÉ 2009[19]). From here bit by bit the production was brought to the other seven coffee producing regions of Costa Rica: Brunca (Coto Brus and Perez Zeledón), Orosi (province of Cartago), Tarrazú[20] (referring to the entire region of Los Santos), Tres Ríos (close to the central Valley, small and good quality), Turrialba, the Occidental Valley and in the province of Guanacaste (spread over several smaller coffee producing zones). As my research was conducted in the coffee region of Los Santos in Costa Rica I will shortly explain the history and dynamics of this region as a coffee producing region.

2.1.1 *Los Santos*

The coffee-producing region where I have conducted my research is Los Santos, in the south-western zone of the province of San José. This region consists of three cantons: Tarrazú, Dota and León Cortes, which all together in 2000 counted with a resident population of 32,375 people (Loría Bolaños & Partanen 2008a). There are no official statistics known on the history of migration towards Los Santos to work seasonally in the harvesting of coffee. However, from the knowledge obtained at the Universidad Nacional (UNA) through some five years of research and work with the coffee producers and their *peónes* in the region, I have been able to get a good and reliable impression of the history of migration towards the region. During the harvest season, from October until March, about 11,100 seasonal migrants come to Los Santos to work as coffee harvesters, which has a significant impact on the population, because it increases by approximately 34 percent (UNA 2008). More than half of these immigrants are indigenous Ngöbe Panamanians. Approximately 20 percent is non-indigenous Nicaraguan and 20 percent non-indigenous Costa Rican (SALTRA 2004-2005; Loría Bolaños & Partanen 2008). The last small percent-

[19] See: http://www.icafe.go.cr/nuestro_cafe/regiones_cafetaleras/valle_central.html# last checked: 26 May 2009.

[20] The region name Tarrazú is used by the Instituto del Café de Costa Rica (ICAFÉ), when referred to the entire coffee region of Los Santos, consisting of its three cantons: Dota, Tarrazú and León Cortés. These three regions have their own cooperatives.

age of migrant harvesters consists of both Costa Rican and Panamanian indigenous Bribrí and Cabécar communities. It is on the Costa Rican Cabécar community that I have focused in my research.

In the following paragraphs I will briefly illustrate the situation of the indigenous communities in Costa Rica and after that specify on the Cabécar community and their home region of Chirripó.

2.2 Indígena relation with the state, status and discrimination

While the country's Afro-Caribbean and Chinese minorities were acknowledged as inclusive citizens with the introduction of the constitution in 1949, the indigenous had to wait until 1991 for their right to vote and until 1993 for their official recognition as Costa Rican inhabitants (Guevara Berger 2000: 22; Mitchell & Pentzer 2008). As Marcos Guevara Berger (2000: 11) points out, these communities have had a history of socio-cultural oppression and economic exploitation since the moment of colonisation. Never, in Costa Rican history, an attempt was made to include the indigenous heritage into the national image. Even after finally obtaining their status, they have faced social exclusion and discrimination (Guevara Berger 2000; Mitchell & Pentzer 2008). The indigenous communities accordingly are still among the poorest in the country, as they are often still excluded from or incapable of making use of the country's institutions.

Even before the recognition of the indigenous as citizens, during the twentieth century, various, not very fruitful, attempts had been made by the state to 'develop'[21] the indigenous population. The first was in 1939, when the state pronounced the first decree declaring that the indigenous population had the right of property of the territories they inhabited. Various commissions were set up through the years to deal with indigenous affairs, especially on the question of land property. However, many of the plans and efforts made to increase the rights of the indigenous population failed to include their own visions and perspectives (Guevara Berger 2000). Rather, these plans focussed on the *assimilation* of the indigenous communities into the dominant culture, imposing a 'modern' educa-

[21] In the state's wish to 'develop' the indigenous population, the state took on a view called *indigenismo integracionista*, which can be translated as 'integrationist indigenousness'. This view was aimed at the *assimilation* of the indigenous people into the dominant culture, this way losing much of their own traditions, language and culture (Guevara Berger 2000: 18-25).

tional, healthcare and economic system on the indigenous communities. Also the rights of protection of the appointed indigenous territories were insufficiently decisive, as these were not able to return many of these lands back to the righteous owners. At the same time these rights could not prevent many farmers from taking the lands for their own use, this way disturbing the natural habitat and resources the indigenous used and needed for their subsistence. As it is in practice, the indigenous people in the south, as well as in the north, own less than 50% of the legally recognised indigenous lands (Guevara Berger 2000).

In 1973 the government formed the National Commission for Indigenous Affairs (CONAI, Comisión Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas) as a replacement of the former commissions, in order to better address questions of indigenous identity and inclusion in society. By their order the eight different ethnic groups were recognised and 23 Indigenous Reserves were established (Mitchell & Pentzer 2008). However, but for this positive element, the CONAI was not able to liberate itself from the idea of *indigenismo integracionista*, which aimed at assimilation. In short, the policies and institutions established for the promotion of indigenous rights, with their disregard of indigenous culture and ineffectiveness, created more problems for the indigenous communities than solutions (Mitchell & Pentzer 2008).

2.3 The indigenous and their territory

In Costa Rica there are eight different ethnic indigenous populations, the Cabécar, Bribrí, Ngöbe, Térraba, Boruca or Brunka, Huetar, Maleku and Chorotega communities (Guevara Berger 2000). During the colonial period, many indigenous people fled from the central valley and from the areas on both the Pacific and Caribbean coasts to the north and to the far south (Mitchell & Pentzer 2008). In the south many gathered round the Talamanca Mountains and the region of Chirripó, forming the biggest indigenous territory in the country. Some of these ethnic communities have lost their language and use of their traditions, while others have been able to preserve much of their cultural heritage.

2.3.1 *The Cabécares and their home territory*

As my research focuses on the Cabécar community, I will briefly introduce them and their home territory. The Cabécar community shares its ancestry with that of

the Bribrí. Both communities have a family structure based on matrilineal clans (Guevara Berger 2000; Monestel Zúñiga 2008). The community is, however, clearly distinct, with its own language called Cabécar (Borge & Castillo 1997). Most of the Costa Rican Cabécar live in the Talamanca Mountains and in the district of Turrialba in the indigenous reserve of Chirripó or Duchi (Borge Carvajal 1999: 2). The district of Talamanca is divided into a Cabécar and a Bribrí canton. The regions of Talamanca and Chirripó together form the most extensive indigenous territory of the country (Borge & Castillo 1997; Monestel Zúñinga 2008). This can be seen on the included map.

2.3.2 *Chirripó*

The region of Chirripó is a national park and consists of two parts: a National Park, protecting nature, and an Indigenous Reserve. The Indigenous Reserve of Chirripó was established in 1976 and the territory was doubled in 1984, when it was also divided into two independent sections: Reserva Indígena Cabécar de Chirripó, in the province of Cartago, and the Reserva Indígena Cabécar de Chirripó Bajo, in the province of Limón (Borge Carvajal 1999: 2). In 1993 a third division was created called Reserva Indígena Nairi-Awari. The Cabécares of Chirripó live dispersed over three cantons: Turrialba, Siquirres and Matina (Borge Carvajal 1999).

The Cabécares of Chirripó live highly dispersed from each other, as 70% of their land is forest. The preliminary study of Borge Carvajal (1999: 3) states that there is very few social infrastructure in the region, and that the limited amount of schools and health posts have not become centres of social relations/gathering. The *criollo* or *mestizo* type of village, with a linear structure and/or a nuclear base, does not exist; the people live more scattered. The Cabécar communities of Chirripó have, unlike the Cabécares and Bribrís of Talamanca, not been much subject to anthropological investigation. Chirripó is the least developed and thus most vulnerable region of the country (Borge Carvajal 1999).

The Indigenous Reserve of Chirripó Bajo can be reached through a couple of routes, but the most important one in the context of my research is the road that goes from the province capital Turrialba to the village of Grano de Oro, passing through the villages of La Suiza and Platanillo. Grano de Oro is, on the western side, the last village before entering the Indigenous Reserve (Borge Carvajal 1999: 4-5). The houses in the village are relatively scattered and the village is cut into parts because of the river that passes through it, but it does have a *mestizo* Costa Rican infrastructure, with a village centre, a community centre and various *pulperías*, or (small) grocery shops. Many indigenous people live in a segment of neighbourhood of the village more up in the woods called the *Seis de Grano de Oro* (the Six of Grano de Oro). Grano de Oro is a village with mixed indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants, in which contacts between the two ethnic groups have had a standing history of intensive relationship with each other. The Cabécares living deeper into the Reserve of Chirripó would come to the village to sell their products and to buy other products at least since the 1960s (Borge Carvajal 1999).

Part II.

Empirical Data

Chapter 3 Life in Chirripó and Grano de Oro

In order to better understand the life and circumstances of these Cabécar families, it is important to first provide some insight into the circumstances of life in their home region, which result in their need or wish to migrate (temporarily) for work. The families' seasonal migration to the region of Los Santos is, in itself, an important coping strategy in their lives. This chapter provides both the introduction to the most important families and individuals involved in my research, within the context of their home region, and the background to which the decision to migrate for labour is taken as a household strategy. The information is mostly derived from the way they perceived their life in Chirripó and Grano de Oro from a distance, and then explained it to me[22].

Due to the small size of my research group, it is difficult, maybe even impossible, to generalise the acquired information. I deem it, therefore, essential to provide a good and detailed account of 'the roots' of the members of my *research group*, and the situation in which they live and decide to migrate. At the same time it is indispensable to guard the privacy of the people involved in my study. In this chapter I will thus introduce the families and most important individuals who were involved in my research, using pseudonyms to protect their identities.

First I introduce the three nuclear families, including age and gender composition, and explain their internal relationships and backgrounds on individual and family levels. I will do this in the context of their work and daily activities in the village. Subsequently, I focus what their most important trust relations are and how they think about and act on reciprocity. I, then, pay attention to the relations and gender issues within the households, as they explained and I observed them. I will proceed to say something about the social relations in the village (whites, indigenous, *gringo*) and give some special attention to the role of the evAngélical church, which is quite important in their lives and (positive) bridging social capital, it being the first contact with whites in which they felt fully appreciated. Finally, I consider

[22] At one point in my research I was able to join one family on their journey back to Grano de Oro/ to visit one family in the village of Grano de Oro for two days and was I thus able to get a very short view on their life in the village. The observations of this short visit are probably not representative in themselves, but they do add up to the information given to me by my respondents.

the concept of poverty as they perceive it and show how this leads to their aspiration to migrate seasonally for labour.

3.1 Grano de Oro, Chirripó and the Morales Family

Grano de Oro is the last village before entering the Indigenous Reserve of Chirripó Bajo, when travelling eastwards from the city of Turrialba. It is also the last village that can be accessed by bus (once a day). As the land in Grano de Oro is not restricted to one or the other ethnic group, the inhabitants of the village are highly mixed: indigenous, and non-indigenous. The village of Grano de Oro and the Indigenous Reserve of Chirripó Bajo are connected to each other in important ways, because this village is one of the few access-ways into the reserve and the indigenous from inside often sell their products here and buy other products for use inside.

[23]

Family structure Morales family in short

Don Carlos, married to two women:
First wife doña Sofía
Second wife doña Cristina
He migrated to Santa Cruz with his youngest daughter Lidia (also daughter of doña Cristina)

Household doña Michaela & don Antonio (in their forties)
Michaela is the oldest daughter of don Carlos and doña Sofía
Daughter Regina (18), first with Panamenian Ngöbe partner, later alone
Regina's two young boys:
Daniel (5) & Juan (2)

Independent son: Guillermo (16)
Travelling with uncle:
Armando (17)

Household Sandra (18) & Tomás (23) (son of don Carlos, brother of Michaela)
Babyboy: Samuel (1)
In Santa Cruz they lived in the same hut as Michaela and her family.

Household Angélica (29) & Pedro (37)
She is daughter of doña Cristina, father died, don Carlos is stepfather
Two sons:
Jason (14) & Jonatan (10)

[23] See genealogical tree pp. 46.

Figure 1 Morales Family structure

Don Carlos Morales, who was the senior man of the group of families staying in Los Santos, lives (most of the time) in the *Seis* of Grano de Oro with his second wife, Cristina[24]. They live close to the evAngélical church in which one of his sons is priest, and to which (almost) all family members attend. His house is also close to the path leading into the forest of Chirripó. The houses of many other family members, sons and daughters of one or both of them, are spread around this area too. Some family members live (most of their time) in Chirripó, some live more in Grano de Oro and only go into the reserve for temporary visits, or to (help family members) take care of some livestock or harvest. Most of these families thus live their life partly in Chirripó and partly in the village, combining both lifestyles, as I will make clear in this paragraph. Don Carlos' first wife, Sofia, and several of their (adult) children, for example, live deeper into the forest, but have regular contact with and travel to family members in the village[25].

The people living more permanently in the village of Grano de Oro are more influenced by the 'white' or *mestizo* culture in their daily activities, since in practice they share a village life and are in daily contact with each other. It is evident that they are more used to each other, and each other's language and habits. An interesting thing I noticed was that the people who lived their daily lives in Grano de Oro were more talkative with (and open to) me from the beginning[26]. An important respondent, Angélica, daughter of Cristina, said to me: "at first I was afraid to speak Spanish, but now that I live here, I'm a bit more used to it and more confident[27]". Another respondent, Sandra, explained to me that some people do not like living in Grano de Oro. They prefer to live in Chirripó, where they can live the life of their choice, further away from the non-indigenous, only encountering them when they need to[28].

[24] Conversation with Angélica on 9 March.
[25] Conversations with don Carlos (5 February), Angélica (29 March), and Sandra who lives with him when she is in Grano de Oro (10 April).
[26] Observations both in Los Santos and in Grano de Oro. Conversation with Sandra on 2 April.
[27] Conversation with Angélica on 1 February.
[28] Ibid.

Michaela, the oldest daughter of don Carlos, lives such a life with her husband Antonio, their (eighteen-year-old) daughter Regina and two small grandchildren. This family has a house both in Grano de Oro, on the same property as two of her sisters, and a house in Chirripó, on a six-hour walking distance from the village. They spend most of their time in Chirripó, working on their land and taking care of their cattle. Antonio explained to me that they only come up to the village of Grano de Oro once every fifteen days[29]. During certain periods of the year, when there is not much work in the cultivation of goods, such as *frijoles*, corn, coffee and bananas, they, or some of them, can come and work in paid employment in the village for some months[30].

Angélica and her husband Pedro live in Grano de Oro. She told me that she formerly had a house in Chirripó too, but that she had sold it. Life for her was easier in Grano de Oro, so she preferred life there. It is closer to the 'civilised' or modern world, which meant that the houses were better equipped: strong wooden houses with electricity and running water. Other village facilities like shops and *pulperías* close by, were also seen as important[31].

[29] Conversation with Antonio, while visiting in Grano de Oro on 20 March.
[30] Conversations with Pedro (17 February), Sandra (18 February), don Carlos (31 January), don Antonio (17 March).
[31] Conversations with Angélica on 8,12 February and 10 March.

Morales Family Tree

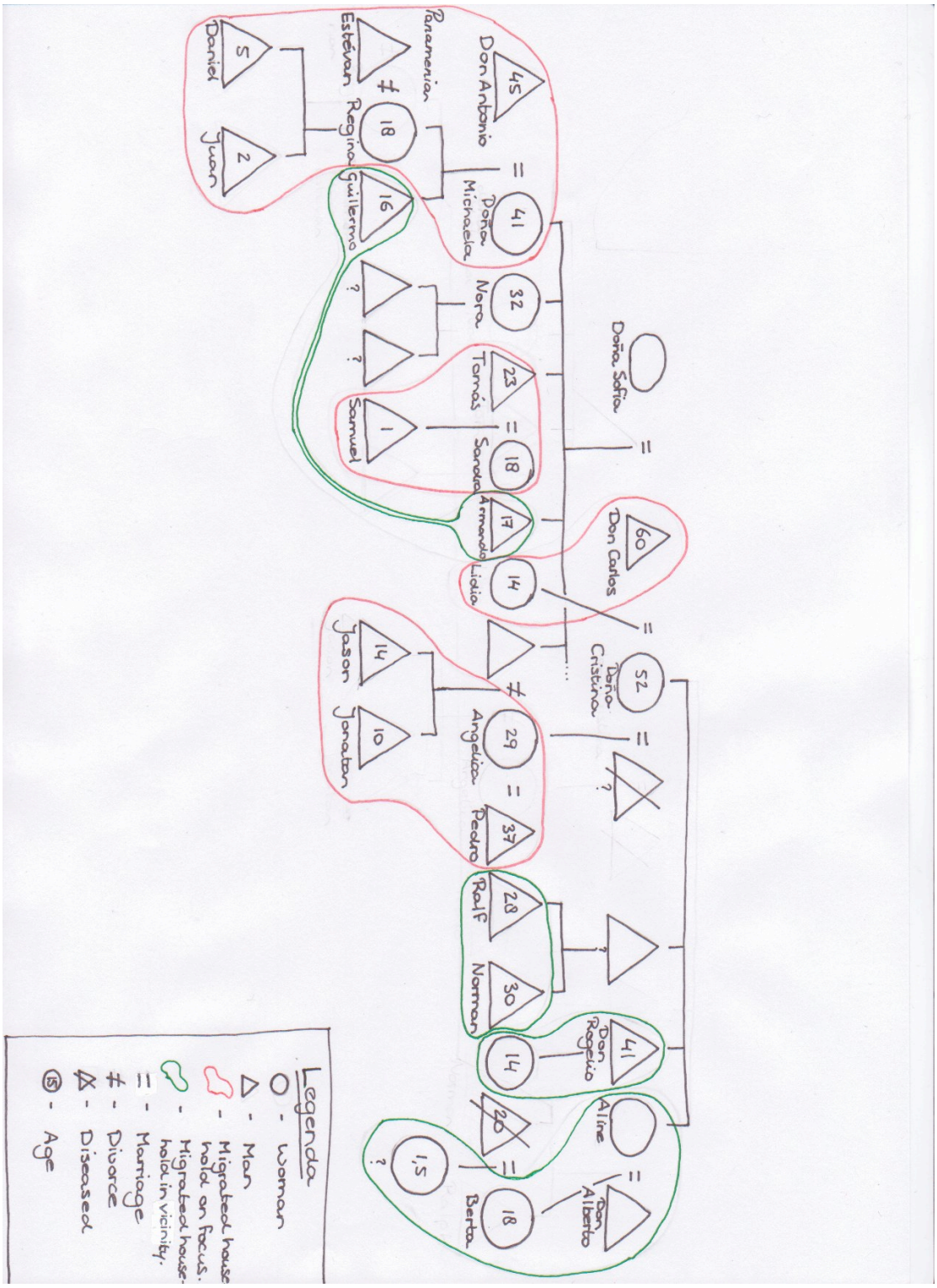


Figure 2 Family Tree

3.1.1 *Trust, reciprocity, and help*

The trust relations are mainly based on the household level. I observed that, within the household, individual family members work together and support each other. Problems and situations would, in the first place, attempted to be solved within the nuclear family. Angélica, for example, mentioned: "When I fall sick, my husband and my oldest son help me. They wash the clothes, and Pedro cooks. [...] My other son not, he's young[32]."

The closeness and degree of mutual trust of relations between different Cabécar families depended heavily on the individual's affiliations with each other. Some families had good relationships with each other, meaning that they would, for example, spend free time together, and help each other more willingly with each other's crops or looking after each other's children[33]. Befriended families would also be relatively well aware of each other's whereabouts. The relationships between siblings, and between cousins of the matriline, were usually quite strong[34]. I saw this, for example, between Michaela and some of her siblings. Her house in Grano de Oro is built on the same property as that of two of her sisters, and in Santa Cruz this year she shared a *bache* with her brother Tomás[35]. Angélica too, has a close relation with several of her cousins.

Individuals and households in more need could definitely count on help from others in the community. Here, the difference between idiosyncratic risks and common risks, as explained by Dercon (2002), is important. Idiosyncratic risks affect a particular household, while common risks touch upon a community as a whole. Households that were 'weaker' than others, like single mothers, would receive more help from other (extended) family members. Regina, who is a young single mother, still lived under her parents' roof and counted on their full support. Other single mothers or closely valued family members could also count on assistance, like help in the sowing or harvesting of the lands, or by receiving some pre-

[32] Interview with Sandra on 29 March.
[33] Conversation with Angélica(30 March), and interview with Sandra (3 April).
[34] Due to their traditional matriline relationships, mixed with patriliniality of the dominant Costa Rican culture, the Cabécares sometimes referred to their cousins as brothers and sisters, and sometimes as cousins. I say more on the subject in the gender paragraph below. From many observations and conversations, mostly with Angélica, among which: 1,2 February, 13 March.
[35] Observations in Santa Cruz from 29 January until 8 March; and in Grano de Oro on 20,21 March.

sents or money. A mother could also take care of the other mother's children when necessary.

Hard working and reciprocity were seen as important qualities within the process of lending each other help. This is one of the characteristics of bonding social capital, as considered by Gittell and Vidal (1998, cited in Woolcock & Narayan 2000: 230). Sandra explained to me that she and her husband would gladly help Elena, a sister of Michaela, in the harvest or with some money, 'because she works hard, and has to take care of her two children alone'[36]. Family members who were seen as being lazy, or did not help others often, could much less count on their help.

From one family to another, although they were extended family members, they could be mistrustful of each other, or even reproach the other's habits and customs, (the way the other families handled certain matters). The critiques I heard, mostly expressed in the private sphere of the different nuclear families, were mostly about members of other families being lazy, or not being reciprocal enough[37].

De la Rocha and Grispun (2001) suggested in their article that many indigenous communities in Latin America have relatively strong inner-group social affiliations, in other words, strong bonding social capital. This would have important mutual protective advantages, but at the same time cut individual community members off from establishing bridging social networks, that could connect them to external resources. The strong inner-group ties connecting members of a community to each other that are associated with bonding social capital, as expressed by Woolcock and Narayan (2000), were, from what I experienced, not quite so visible among the Cabécares living seasonally in Santa Cruz. It is important to note, however, that the families I spent my research with, were all migrant families, living in an unfamiliar environment at the moment of study.

[36] Conversation with Sandra on 2 April.
[37] Conversations with Sandra (8,9 February), Angélica (12 February), Pedro (14 March).

3.2 Gender

The matters of gender are always influential when considering and studying the human state and behaviour. Every household among the Cabécar consists, or ought to consist, of a man and a woman, with their children. And the relation between the two is affected by their ideas and norms on gender relations. As I observed, the influence of the notion of gender issues of the dominant Costa Rican culture is mingling with their conceptions on gender patterns, and it was thus difficult for me to set these two apart from another[38].

The first important thing to mention is, as I stated in the context chapter, that the Cabécares are organised on a matrilineal and matrilocal base (Borge & Castillo 1997; Guevara Berger 2000; Borge Carvajal 1999). Among the Cabécares I encountered in my study, various young couples lived on their own, or were at least independent in their choice to migrate[39]. They would, however, live close to other family members. Linda Stone (2006) confirms that this is found more often in matrilineal societies, where residence is organised on a nuclear family basis, but in a matrilineal clan. This is mostly what I saw among the Cabécar families I met[40]. I have, however, seen exceptions of this pattern. Sandra, for example, left her parents in Chirripó and lives for the great part of the time with don Carlos' (her father in law) family in Grano de Oro[41].

The familial organisation focussed on the mother's descent does not necessarily give women a (much) stronger position than in the tradition of many patrilineal cultures (Stone 2006: 119-128). I have seen among these Cabécar families that it does, however, give the women more protection, because women tend to live closer to their own parents, who will often look after them, if the husband does not treat her rightfully. Angélica told me that she had been married to a son of her stepfather don Carlos, and that he used to hit her: "I didn't eat any longer, I was so thin"[42]. Her mother and stepfather told her to leave him, 'because a husband like that was no good'. Don Carlos said to Angélica: "I don't hit my wife, why should my son do that?" Angélica then left him, although she had two small boys, and later

[38] This switches could, for example, be seen in the fax
[39] Obervations from various young copules during entire research period.
[40] Observations and conversations with Angélica & Pedro, Michaela & Antonio, Aline & Alberto and their daughter, during the entire research period.
[41] Interview with Sandra on 2 April.
[42] Conversation with Angélica on 9 March.

she found a kind and caring husband in Pedro, who is also concerned about her sons as if they were his own.

Sandra too, was able to stand up for herself, even under the circumstances of living somewhat further away from her parents. As I observed it, she was, with her eighteen years, still quite young and relatively passive and quiet in her relation with her husband Tomás[43]. In their relation I could see the pattern of men and women that is often seen as 'traditional': of the woman cooking, washing, cleaning, serving the man and taking care of the children. Their baby boy was still under the age of one, and, therefore, she still had to stay home, taking care of him, while Tomás was out working. She would cook and serve his dinner when he came home. She, however, was able to influence her power over him, when he had not treated her well, by leaving him temporarily and threatening to do that again[44].

The two older couples had a more egalitarian relationship with each other, in which the husband and the wife would make their decisions by mutual consent. Both Pedro and Antonio were willing to help with certain domestic jobs, such as cooking and washing clothes (Pedro)[45], or dressing and taking care of the children (Antonio)[46]. This was more obvious in the private sphere (in an around the house), where both parties felt comfortable. In the more public sphere, in their contact with others, the women were much more aloof. In no occasion did I see any of the women involved in my research do grocery shopping completely on their own, without their husband nearby. Angélica one day said to me that she had been waiting for me to come in the morning so I could join her to the bank, but as I had not arrived until the afternoon, she went with Pedro when he arrived home early[47]. However, when joining Michaela and Antonio, and Pedro and Angélica, on different occasions, in their grocery shopping, I did see that both Michaela and Angélica were the ones telling their husbands what to buy[48].

[43] Observations in household of Tomás and Sandra during the entire research period.
[44] Conversation with Sandra on 2 April.
[45] Conversation with Pedro on 21 March; conversation with Angélica on 30 March.
[46] Observation of family situation on various ocasions, including 7 February.
[47] Conversation with Angélica on 7 April.
[48] Observations with Michaela and Antonio in Grano de Oro on 20 March; observations with Angélica and Pedro on 29 March in Santa Cruz.

Another interesting fact is that women marry men from a different ethnic group relatively easily, as Angélica explained to me[49]. In Grano de Oro a relatively high number of people is thus of mixed Cabécar-*mestizo* origins (Borge Carvajal 1999)[50]. This probably also relates to the matrilineal familial organisation, as the inheritance of land and possessions goes through the mother's line and the Cabécar men are not able to directly inherit the right for a piece of land in Chirripó if they do not marry a Cabécar woman[51]. Regina, the daughter of Michaela, had a Panamanian Ngöbe partner for a year, who she had met in Santa Cruz during the last harvest season. After the yields he came to live with her in Chirripó, while his family returned to Panama[52].

3.3 Social relations in the village

Grano de Oro is a small village, in which (almost) every one knows each other, and contacts between the two ethnic groups are quite normal, as I have both experienced and various indigenous and non-indigenous people have told me. Paco, a *mestizo* man I spoke to in Grano de Oro, described various social relations in the village to me[53]. While we were walking through the village and later driving out of it he was continually greeting people he knew. Although he was originally from Platanillo, further away, he said he knew everyone in the village, explaining that that was normal, whether people were indigenous or '*Ticos*[54]'. He (also) said that there were some indigenous Bruncas living in the village too, but that they were fully integrated, and also spoke Cabécar. Relations between the whites and the indigenous are quite normal. Also relations of marriage and sex between white men and Cabécar women are relative common. Paco, for example had mixed indigenous descent, because his grandmother, whom he had never met, had been an indigenous woman. He, himself, had grown up in a *mestizo* family. Sandra too, told me 'matter-of-factly' about her mixed blood, her grandmother being a *mestizo*, but she

[49] Conversation with Angélica on 30 March.
[50] Also from conversations with Pedro (10,22 March), Antonio (20 March), and Paco (21 March).
[51] Conversation with befriend anthropologist Pamela Monestel, who did research among the Cabécares of Chirripó (on 23 April).
[52] Conversation with Regina on 10 March; conversation with Michaela on 18 March.
[53] Conversation during my visit to the village of Grano de Oro on 21 March.
[54] *Tico* is the term with which the (*mestizo*) Costa Ricans refers to themselves.

had completely grown up in an indigenous environment in Chirripó *dentro* (the inner grounds of Chirripó)[55].

In Grano de Oro contact with other ethnic groups is part of daily life for the (Cabécar) families. Even living inside Chirripó some contacts with non-indigenous people are required, as most families there do not only grow food only for their own subsistence, but also sell part of the products they cultivate. Having good contacts with (white) people in the village or even in the (relatively) nearby city of Turrialba is thus an important asset. As Sandra explained to me, her father living in Chirripó has friends in Turrialba who come with their car up to the village of Quetzal (which is further into Chirripó then Grano de Oro) to pick up the goods they are buying, this way sparing the family the difficulty of transporting them further[56].

3.3.1 *Influence of church and religion*

All the Cabécar people I met were active members of the evAngélical church. They are proud to be Cabécares and evAngélicals at the same time. The evAngélical church was first established in the village of Grano de Oro by an American, who also came to live there with his family. The members of the families I did my research with, speak with great respect and admiration about him. Important for them was, as don Antonio explained to me, that 'he was the first white to have a genuine interest in them'. Before that *los blancos* the 'whites' would often fake interest to trick the Cabécar into selling their products to them under the fair price, or to illegally cut the wood in the forest.

The evAngélical church did not only bring religion, in which the Cabécares felt appreciated, but also tried to 'develop' the region, building bridges over rivers and giving the Cabécar the opportunity to marry through the church for free. The church spread rapidly through the entire region, and now there are already various churches in different communities of the region. There are also some Costa Rican and indigenous priests now.

The fast development of this church also caused some controversy, as a Costa Rican anthropologist, who had done research in Chirripó, told me[57]. The church,

[55] Conversation with Sandra on 3 April.
[56] Interview with Sandra on 3 April.
[57] Conversation with Pamela Monestel on 12 March.

namely, undermined some of the old traditions and beliefs the Cabécar still had. This had its most serious effect on the traditional medicinal system of the Cabécares, in which a medicinal curer called *Jawá*, used ancient knowledge of their natural environment, and rituals to cure diseases. The *Jawá* traditionally has a distinguished and very well respected role in Cabécar society, and he also has important knowledge about the history and ancestry of the Cabécares (Monestel Zúñiga 2008). Some families nowadays refuse to send their children to the traditional doctors, because their religion rejects it. However, there are families, like the ones involved in my study, that combine their new religion with their old beliefs, still going to the traditional doctors (and additionally using modern medicine, when necessary).

The contact the Cabécar people had with the priests (and their families), provided them for the first time with a different form of bridging social capital, one based on more horizontal networks and equal treatment of all people. The evAngélical church, in spite of the forcefulness with which it is established, proposes all humans as equal in the face of God. Angélica, for example, expressed that going to the church and being valued as 'just another Christian', and being able to share and give as equals, and feel appreciated, was very important for her[58]. Communitarian or voluntary work for the church is, in that sense, very important, because it can give the indigenous people confidence in themselves. For Angélica it was very important that she could help out the church so much and be friends with the priests.

3.4 Poverty and decision for seasonal migration

In (the focus of) my research, seasonal migration is inextricably linked with poverty, as the Cabécares say they migrate for temporary or seasonal work because they live in poor conditions in their home region. Don Carlos explained to me already on the evening we met each other: "We are poor, and therefore we need to come and work here, because here there is work for us[59]". Almost all the people I spoke with during my research would give this explanation to their reason for migration, that

[58] Various conversations with Angélica, but especially on 30 April.
[59] "Nosotros somos pobres y tenemos que trabajar en lo que haya. Así viajamos aquí para trabajar", conversation with don Carlos and all other family members on the first evening of fieldwork, 29 February.

not enough work was available in their home region, or this work would not pay enough[60].

The available work in Chirripó is husbandry and agriculture, which is mostly for subsistence, and the parts of the production that are sold are not enough to make the Cabécares of Chirripó part of the country's economy. It is, to a certain extent, however, enough for their own survival; their livelihood does not improve, nor deteriorate significantly. This means that their life situation is, in fact, relatively stable. The Cabécares are used to this life-style, and live it in dignity, since it is the way they have always done it. They are generally able to make ends meet, combining their own husbandry with temporary paid employment[61]. The Cabécares of Chirripó are unquestionably poor, and their region is the most underdeveloped part of the country (Monestel Zúñiga 2008). Marisol Ballestero of the ministry of health (working in the region of Los Santos) expressed: "it's more than poverty in which these families live, they cannot even fulfil their basic needs". However, when I consider the five main capabilities of the OECD/DAC (2001): the economic, human, political, socio-cultural and protective capabilities, the Cabécar families with whom I worked, do considerably well. These families' access to the economic and human capabilities is alright, as they have housing, land they can cultivate, livestock, and access to basic healthcare and education[62]. All the Cabécares I met had at least had a couple of years of education and were able to get access to both their traditional and modern Costa Rican healthcare[63]. Day to day survival is more or less secured, and in a way they thus *are* able to accomplish their basic needs. However, from what don Antonio expressed to me, they are barely able to make decent living from the very few earnings they have in Chirripó and Grano de Oro[64]. Dercon (2002) expresses that when not enough work is available in the home region, and intensification of work is thus not possible, searching for work with better payment elsewhere, is an important coping strategy.

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[60] Conversations and interviews with don Antonio (5 March), Pedro and Angélica (25,26 March).
[61] Ibid. Also from observations during entire period of study.
[62] With the Costa Rican education and healthcare system focussed on having all the country's population connected to, at least, primary education and the basic healthcare, there are also *EBAIS* posts and schools in Grano de Oro and even inside Chirripó.
[63] Observations and onversations with
[64] Interview with don Antonio 5 March.

Various respondents explained to me that (extra) money is needed to pay for the children's schoolbooks[65], and for utensils that facilitate the people's lives in the forest, like clothes, rubber boots, pocket lights, working and cooking utensils, some preserved foods etc[66]. The money for these items has to come, in the greatest part, from paid employment for a *patrón*. This search for work starts in the near surroundings, but can take them further away, when looking for better working conditions or more income.

3.4.1 *Concept of home and migration patterns*

Migratory flows, in the broad view, are not unusual among the Cabécar, as the territory they live on is very extended and the lands they work on can fluctuate from year to year (Borge Carvajal 1999). In their life in the forest of Chirripó, the Cabécares make extensive use of the natural resources around them, and therefore they need an extended home range. The houses of different families are built well apart from each other, approximately 200 metres, although houses of family members might be built closer to one another. Migration could (almost) be seen as part of their daily lives. These migrations can vary considerably in time and space. It can be a journey of one or a couple of days to the village, or migration for several months in other regions. Their attachment to a certain place or house is thus different from ours. The Cabécares are relatively used to be further away from 'home' and of their family and loved ones[67].

[65] Education is available and for free, as I explain in the context chapter, but schoolbooks must be paid.
[66] Conversations with Angélica (29 March), and Michaela (17 March).
[67] Conversations with anthropologist Pamela Monestel on 31 January, 1,2 February, and after that on various ocasions through the telephone, or with an occasional visit.

Chapter 4 Migration as a household strategy

> Angélica puts wood in the barrel, lits the fire, and puts the water to boil on the fire for the coffee. I join her. As the wood is humid, the fire smokes a lot. The gust of wind that pours this day, enters through the openings in the wall at the corner of the sink, and blows the smoke through the entire house. It fills my eyes with tears and my nose with mucus. "A lot of smoke, isn't it?", Angélica says, "in Grano de Oro we have a separate kitchen." [...] I ask her if she likes living in Chirripó or here. She says Chirripó is beautiful, "but there is no work". "Sometimes I have no money", she explains, "here there is work.[68]"

There is a seasonal migration flow for labour of Cabécares from Chirripó and Grano de Oro towards, at least, the districts of Frailes and Santa Cruz, of the cantón of León Cortés (in the region of Los Santos). In the previous chapter I describe the social relations and work situation in the home region of the group of Cabécares with whom I conducted my research in Los Santos. In that chapter I shed light on the situation in which these Cabécar families feel the urge or need to migrate temporarily for extra income.

It is an extended group of families that travel to work in the *cantón* of León Cortés, but in what way is the seasonal migration organised? It is important to better understand the social and practical aspects of the migration in which the families get involved. Therefore, in the forthcoming chapter, I will elaborate on the question(s) of the migration in itself. I want to elucidate the way decisions are taken, the way social networks are used to find new work places, and the labour-options these families have in other regions than their own. In this context I will consider the migration strategy of these families as a household strategy.

I will first discuss the various possibilities the families of Chirripó Bajo have for paid employment and the choices that emerge from that. I will then give an impression on how the choices are made and on the way the different family members are involved in these. After that I will show the use of the family- and other (extended) networks leading to work in Los Santos. Finally I will elaborate on the practical aspects of the migration, such as the appointments made, the choices of which

[68] Conversation and observations on 3 February.

items to take with them and which not to bring along and who takes care of these items.

4.1 Possibilities for work

Borge Carvajal (1999) explains that in Chirripó the months of most intensive work of sowing and harvesting are between August and November. During the months of March and April there are some food producing activities, as well as enough moments of rest in which the Cabécares can perform reparations on their houses before entering the rainy season. In December (as well as in January and February) there is very little work to be done, which means that they can dedicate their time to the recollection of coffee and other income earning activities (Borge Carvajal 1999). That is also what several of my respondents told me: 'right now there is no work for us in Chirripó, and we have no income[69]'.

During the months of December until February or March the Cabécares thus have some spare time to make some extra money in paid employment, outside the Reserve. Los Santos is not the only region in the country where the Cabécares can find employment. Work is also available in the closer surroundings of Chirripó, on the *fincas* of *mestizo* landowners of villages such as Grano de Oro, Platanillo and La Suiza, and also in the wood-industry of Grano de Oro. Other possibilities for employed work, as layed out by various members of the Morales family, are in the coffee sector in (the surroundings of) Turrialba and in the wood-industry in the surroundings of the port town of Limón[70].

Working in Los Santos is these families' primary choice, because they find the working and living conditions there better than in other places. Angélica, for example, explained to me that brothers of hers work in the province of Limón sowing pine trees, but that they are employed by a concern that is '*asegurado*[71]', in other words, in which the workers are not free to leave whenever they want to[72]. She said

[69] Conversations with: don Carlos (1 February); don Antonio (3 March); and Pedro and Angélica (5,6 Febrary).
[70] Conversations and interviews with: Pedro (25,29 March); Angélica (9 March); Antonio (5 March); Sandra (3 April).
[71] By *asegurado* Angélica meant that the employees of these concerns were stuck to their concern, and thus not free to leave. The *patrones* in Santa Cruz World let them leave when they wanted or needed to, as long as enough people stayed to be able to handle the work.
[72] Interview with Angélica on 9 March.

that certain jobs in Grano de Oro and its vicinity were also *asegurados*. Working in Turrialba was also considered less desirable, because of the hot weather, said Antonio, who had worked there previously with his family[73]. The climate in León Cortés[74] is more similar to that in Chirripó and Grano de Oro. Tomás and Sandra had worked in the surroundings of Limón, chopping wood, but after Tomás had an accident[75], they decided that the working conditions here were too dangerous[76]. Although the working conditions in the coffee *fincas* of Los Santos, and more specifically León Cortés, are not ideal either, all these families were reasonably satisfied here.

4.2 Migration history towards León Cortés

According to don Antonio, the first contact that was established between (indigenous) people of their village and *caficultores* coffee cultivators of León Cortés, was about fifteen years ago[77]. A plantation owner from the village of Frailes came to Grano de Oro in search for *peónes* to help him with the coffee harvests. A couple of Cabécar families went to work for him. Don Antonio said that this *caficultor* was satisfied, 'because they were fast coffee pickers and were careful with the plants'. For that reason he returned the next year to look for more indigenous harvesters. This way the first networks between workers from Chirripó and *patrones* from the village and district of Frailes were established[78].

Over years of coming to work in the same place, more and more contacts were established with local people in León Cortés. This was mainly with other *peónes* and *patrones*, through whom other possible working places, and possibilities became available. This way, from the starting point of Frailes, the Cabécar families

[73] Interview with Antonio on 5 March.
[74] The forest of Chirripó has the climate of a misty forest, while the surroundings in the provinces of Cartago and Limón have a warmer tropical climate. The *cantón* of León Cortés lies relatively high in the mountains, and has thus a similarly cooler and rainy climate.
[75] In a conversation with Sandra on 3 April she said that she and Tomás went to work for a wood-concern in Limón the previous year, after the harvests in Los Santos were over. Sandra had just given birth to their baby, which means that it was only Tomás who worked. There were few safety measures taken, and various accidents happened during the couple of months Tomás was working there. Tomás had an accident himself, hitting his foot with a machete, and he had to be taken to the hospital. After that the manager of the *finca* died from another accident. After that most of the employees decided to quit.
[76] Interview with Sandra on 3 April.
[77] Interview with Antonio on 9 March.
[78] Ibid.

began to spread their networks to other villages in the surroudings, such as Santa Cruz, San Cristóbal Sur and some even to the main village of San Pablo de León Cortés. More and more family members would join in the journey and work in Los Santos. As the families coming got to know more and more people, they were able to improve their situation, choosing for other *patrones* with better working or living conditions. However, the freedom of choice between preferred or less desirable *patrones* would also strongly depend on whether a family would succeed in arriving timely.

Extended family members of the families involved in my study have been coming to work in the coffee harvests in León Cortés for at least twelve years. Doña Aline and don Rogelio[79], for example, have worked for the same *patrón* in Santa Cruz for these twelve years in a row. This coffee farmer, don Manolo, was this year *patrón* to all the families involved in my research. The contact with this plantation owner was initiated by these (extended) family members, and further developed through family networks.

Although most contacts are established and further developed through networks, the actual decision-making and contacting of *caficultores* take place on a household basis. The questions on whether or not to migrate, where to go, what people come along, who stay(s) behind, when the journey should begin and when to return home, are thus addressed at the household level. The options the families have for a place to work also depend on the degree of mobility they have. Families with very small children, elderly or sick people can decide to stay put for work in Grano de Oro, or in its immediate surroundings[80]. It hence also depends on the household in what way decisions are taken. While I saw the older households tend to take decisions concerning migration with mutual consent between the husband and the wife, the women in the younger households would tend to keep themselves more to

[79] These extended family members were doña Aline, a sister of doña Cristina (Angélica's mother), with her husband don Alberto and several of their children, nephews and cousins, who lived together in another better equipped camp. Also don Rogelio with his son and daughter, who lived in the same camp as the families involved in my study. These two families were working in the region too while I was doing my fieldwork, but they were less involved in it.

[80] Conversation with Angélica about sick family members (among who her mother) staying behind, on 13 March.

the background[81]. The couple in their forties, Michaela and Antonio[82], would deliberate on most decisions they took, while in the much younger couple of Tomás and Sandra, he had taken the decision to come and she was forced to come along[83]. Once a nuclear family has worked for, or established contacts with, a *patrón*, the head of the family, mostly the man, obtains his telephone number, and agrees to phone the *patrón* the next year to make a more defined appointment. This way every family has a variety of contacts. In case a family should decide to want to work the coming season, they call the *patrón* a month or two in advance to get information on how the crop is growing and when the first harvest is due.

The families I have conducted my research with do not live more than six to eight hours into the Reserve of Bajo Chirripó. It is possible that families living even deeper into the forest do not choose to leave their home region to work elsewhere. From what some of my respondents, like Michaela and Antonio told me, and what I have heard from the accounts of other cultural anthropologists who have worked in Chirripó, there is also a good part of the population that does not migrate far for labour.

Most of the people deciding to do seasonal work in Santa Cruz were relatively young couples with their children, or young men who were not yet married. These young men, from the age of seventeen onwards, would have family members working and (temporarily) living relatively nearby, but they migrated and sought contact with *patrones* independently. An example is Michaela and Antonio's son, who had come with an uncle of his own age, and worked with him for another *patrón*. Both also lived somewhere else in the village of Santa Cruz.

As the families come to Santa Cruz only for short periods, they leave their houses behind. Taking into account the temporary character of the families' stay in Los Santos and the complexity of the journey to get there, the amount of material

[81] I also touch upon this aspect in the gender paragraph of the previous chapter.
[82] Observations and conversations during the week before the trip and on the trip itself (16-21 March).
[83] Conversation with Sandra on 2 April.

and belongings taken with them is not so big[84]. Most families also leave some livestock behind, that they leave in the care of a (close and) trusted family member, such as a brother, father, or father-in-law. Some households even left for Santa Cruz with their lands sown, always in the faith that family was keeping an eye out for their land and yield[85]. These families would have to return earlier than other families.

4.2.1 *The journey itself*

Grano de Oro and Santa Cruz de León Cortés are, as the crow flies, not very far from each other. The journey from one village to the other can take, however, an entire day, because the bus connections are rather complicated. There is only one bus connection a day that can reach the village of Grano de Oro and one directly passing through Santa Cruz. From Chirripó to Grano de Oro there can be a good six to eight hour walk, which means that the journey for the families coming from inside the reserve can even take them two days, with a night of rest in the village. They have to take three buses: one from Grano de Oro to Turrialba, then from there to the province capital Cartago, and from there the bus going to the region of Los Santos, getting out at the intersection to Santa Cruz. From there they have to walk the last part to the *bache*.

On the trip back with Michaela and Antonio, their *patrón* of the second period, don Valenciano, brought us with his car to the first bus stop. Angelina said to me that a former *patrón*, for whom she had worked in Frailes, would pick all the luggage up in Grano de Oro at the start of the harvest season, and bring it all back again upon their return[86]. One of the men would travel with him, to help with the baggage and the rest would travel by bus, which is considerably easier without the big bags.

The households that decide to work in Santa Cruz usually travel with their entire family unit at once[87]. Michaela and Antonio, Angélica and Pedro, Sandra and

[84] Conversations and interviews with Sandra (2 April) and Angélica (3 April).
[85] An example was the family of don Rogelio, who therefore had to leave earlier, from a conversation with don Rogelio on 5 February.
[86] Conversation with Angélica on 22 March.
[87] I experienced this voyage once with the nuclear family unit of Antonio and Michaela, with their daughter Regina and her two young sons (on 19,20,21 March). Also I have been told in

Tomás, and several other families traveled this way. On this trip I noticed that the women, mother and daughter, would stand on the background during the entire journey. They would let the father do all the necessary talking, almost all the carrying of bags and all the loading of bags. This happened until we arrived in Grano de Oro, where each family member took an almost equal amount of sacks to walk the last forty minutes. On the way some utensils were bought, which was done by mother and father together.

Both Angélica and Sandra explained to me that they try to bring as few belongings with them as possible, to make the journey as 'light' as possible. They mostly bring some work clothing and 'casual' clothing, cooking utensils, rubber boots and *canastos* hampers for in the *cafetales*, and, if they have it, foam for the beds[88]. Before returning the working clothes, and all other materials that have become useless, are burnt and on the way, in the bigger cities, new tools are bought[89].

All in all the journey is a *nuclear family thing* in which every member has his task, and decisions are taken deliberately.

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conversations with Angélica and Pedro (15 February, 12 April), and with Sandra (on 2 April).

[88] Conversations with Sandra 15 (April), and Angelica (7 March).

[89] Observations during journey on 20 March.

Chapter 5 Life in Santa Cruz de León Cortés

When I travel from the capital San José to San Marcos, the main village of Los Santos, and decide to take the Frailes[90]-bus that goes through the meandering road I pass through the village of Santa Cruz where, if I look very closely, I can see four small corrugated houses in a row next to the mountain road, disguised behind a row of trees and bushes. This camp of corrugated houses is temporarily home to a couple of Cabécar families who come to this region during the months of coffee harvest to work as seasonal harvesters[91].

In this chapter I pretend to study in depth the life of the Morales family, during their temporary or seasonal residence in the region of Los Santos, to be more precisely, in the village (and district) of Santa Cruz de León Cortés. Although I spent practically my entire research period with these Cabécar families in the social environment of Santa Cruz, some aspects of their social cohesion (as I learned these from them in Santa Cruz) are discussed in Chapter three, because these were important in introducing the families. Therefore, in this chapter I will focus less on these subjects than in Chapter three.

I first provide an outline of the Cabécares' lives as seasonal harvesters, and as residents of an unfamiliar village. Then I will elaborate on the social relations these families develop and maintain in the village and its surroundings. Namely, the internal or bonding relations among each other, and the external or bridging relations with their direct colleagues, the *patrones* and the managers, but also those with grocery owners and employees.

[90] Frailes is one of the villages bordering the region of Los Santos.
[91] The exact dates/or months of the harvests vary every year. The coffee harvest season in the region of Los Santos usually last for more or less three months, and can range from October until March.

5.1 Work in coffee

> The families get up around four o'clock in the morning, drink some coffee, maybe have some breakfast, and prepare to be ready at six o'clock, to either walk to a nearby *finca*, or to be picked up by the *patrón's* four-wheel-drive, and work until around two. Then they go home, rest a little, eat something (perhaps do some grocery shopping in the nearby *pulpería* but only after showering and changing to clean clothes) and go to bed tired around six o'clock in the evening.
> *Fragment of my field diary, 17 February*

Upon entering the field all the families involved in my study were working for the same *patrón* and living in the same camp of corrugated houses. The Morales family worked for don Manolo, an elderly, rich and respected *caficultor* in the surroundings of León Cortés. For this *patrón* they usually had to work five days a week, from Monday to Friday, but towards the last phase of the harvest, the *repela*, they would often have work on the Saturdays too[92]. Don Manolo had many *fincas* or *cafetales* scattered in the surroundings of Santa Cruz and other places in León Cortés. This meant that the sites where the *peónes* were required to work varied quite a lot from week to week, because the recollection of coffee had to be more or less equalised between the different *cafetales*. Due to his 86 years don Manolo no longer worked in the *cafetales* himself, but he had a manager who coordinated all the work in the *fincas* for him[93]. The manager don Rodrigo was retired himself, but did this work during the months of harvest[94].

For the *cafetales* in the surroundings of León Cortés don Manolo had some thirty *peónes* available. He only had Costa Ricans working for him: *mestizo* or white *'Tico'*, and Costa Rican indigenous (thus Cabécar) harvesters, because of his own preference for them[95]. Don Manolo explained in a short telephone interview with me that he thought it was more rewarding to work with local *peónes* than with for-

[92] Observations and conversations with don Carlos (31 January, 1,2 February) and Pedro (5 February).
[93] The information in this paragraph is constructed over information obtained during my entire research period, with conversations, observations and interviews with both the Cabécar harvesters and the *patrón* and manager of the *fincas*. Among these are conversations with don Rodrigo (30 January), Pedro (25 March) and don Manolo (29 March).
[94] Short interview with don Rodrigo on 30 January.
[95] Short telephone interview with *patrón* don Manolo on 8 March, and with manager don Rodrigo on 30 January.

eigners. He would teach them how he wanted the work to be done, they would listen to it, and then they would return to work for him satisfyingly in subsequent years. He was a bit mistrustful of foreign workers, because he did not know them, or how they worked[96].

The most visited *cafetales* of don Manolo, when I was in Santa Cruz, were located in the relatively far off village of *La Cuesta*. These *cafetales* had to be reached by four-wheel-drive. Every morning don Rodrigo would pick up the families, and the other (*Tico*) workers, around six o'clock in the morning by four-wheel-drive with an open trunk, in which the *peónes* were transported.

In the *cafetales* the 'coffee streets[97]' were appointed and worked on a household basis. This came down to every member of the household the husband, wife and children as of around ten years gathering coffee seeds at his or her own speed, collecting them together in big bags that were counted together, and assembled with those of the other workers at the end of the journey. The payment happened once a week, on Saturdays, per family unit, and was according to the amount of bags harvested that week. This way Pedro, Angélica and their two sons did the recollection together, and so did also Michaela, Antonio and their eighteen-year-old daughter Regina. Tomás and Sandra[98] also worked as an independent unit, although they shared the house with Tomás' sister Michaela[99].

5.2 Different household strategies and use of social networks

All the families I met decided individually when to come, how long to stay and when to leave, but nonetheless were working for don Manolo when I arrived. Don Carlos, for example, left with his youngest daughter even before the harvest was finished, because he had business to do. The other three households decided to

[96] Ibid.
[97] In the *cafetales* the coffee bushes are planted in rows that are called streets, and each harvester is assigned one street for which he or she is responsible. This way all the workers can do their task individually and the manager does not have to check the entire *finca* for remaining coffee beans.
[98] For them, at this moment, it meant that Tomás was the only working person in their household, as Sandra was still taking care of their baby son.
[99] Observations during the recollection of coffee in the *cafetales*, 1,18 February on the *finca* of don Manolo, and 10-13 March on the *finca* of don Juan. Also conversations with Michaela, Antonio, Tomás, Angélica, Pedro and the managers working for both the *patrones*.

stay put for more work after all don Manolo's *cafetales* had been finished. Don Antonio explained that the crops had been so bad this year that they were barely able to make some savings, and that they wanted to stay as much as possible to save some extra money. All three families made use of their own connections they had established in previous years.

Pedro, Angélica and her two children decided this year to stay in Santa Cruz throughout the entire year. They wanted to earn and save some extra money to be able to improve their livelihood in Grano de Oro on their return. Pedro was thinking of doing some reconstructions on the house and maybe even painting it and making glass windows. They made contact with another *patrón*, don Juan, a grandson of don Manolo – the *patrón* for whom they had worked this year during the first three months of harvest –, and he offered them some work and better housing for the year. The children were subscribed to and started attending school, and a more local-oriented way of life began.

Pedro explained to me that they changed to don Juan, the younger *patrón*, because he was younger and more modern in his ideas and treatment of his *peónes*[100]. Angélica and Pedro had a very friendly relationship with him and his family. Angélica told me that she would visit don Juan's family and that they would bring each other some presents[101].

5.3 Relation with *patrón*

One of the first things the families told me, already on the first evening we met, was that the relation between a worker – a *peón* –, and his *patrón* is of giving and taking. "We work for him", they told me, "and he has to take care of us". Antonio said to me that they, the *peónes*, would work hard for the *patrón*, under difficult circumstances, and the *patrones* would live a calm and easy life, in a nice house, while sometimes providing bad housing for their workers[102]. One *patrón* for whom he had worked years ago 'stuffed' various families in a very small *bache*, and Antonio refused to work for him another year.

[100] Conversation with Pedro on 7 April.
[101] Conversation with Angélica on 10 April.
[102] Interview 5 March.

Sometimes the people from my research group would tell me to be relatively satisfied with their patron, don Manolo, but sometimes they would express certain complaints about their working and living circumstances with him. If I directly asked them how they felt about him, they said he was alright. All the respondents with whom I talked about the subject of work for don Manolo in Santa Cruz mentioned the same things: They had had worse conditions than they had with him, but there were also *patrones* who gave better treatment and working conditions[103].

Towards the second half of my fieldwork, when the families were working for other *patrones*, it became clear that the three families felt more loyalty towards the other *patrones* (don Juan for Pedro and Angélica and don Vicente for Antonio and Michaela, and for Tomás and Sandra). This preference was not expressed directly, but rather more implicitly. Both families would refer to this *patrón* as 'their *patrón*', and would speak about him with somewhat more awe or respect. Michaela was happy with don Vicente, as she considered he provided better working and living circumstances[104]. This year, however, the families had not been able to arrive on time in Santa Cruz, due to responsibilities they had in their home region concerning the harvest of their own crops, and the working posts with these two *patrones* had already been taken.

In spite of the situation of this year's late arrival, all three households studied thus seemed to be able to use their social networks in León Cortés to such an extent that they could adjust their choice of *patrón*, and thereby influence their life conditions, to their own specific wishes at any specific time.

5.4 Colleagues

The work in the *cafetales* can be, and mostly is, done on an individual basis. The *fincas* are widespread, the coffee bushes are high, and people work at relatively long distances from each other. Although the work is done per nuclear family, it is common to only see each other at lunch and at the counting of the seeds. During

[103] Conversations with don Antonio (5 March), Pedro (23,29 March), don Carlos (1,2 Februari), and Angélica (9 March).
[104] Conversación with Micaela on 17 March.

the work, there is, consequently, not much opportunity to have contact between colleagues[105].

Even though the work is done on an individual basis, colleagues do know each other and express a certain loyalty or partnership towards each other. I saw this allegiance also between members of different ethnic groups. It was expressed in subtle ways, however. Thus, I saw, for example, both Ngöbe and Costa Rican colleagues (on different occasions) help don Antonio with counting his family's coffee beans, when they saw he was alone. No 'words' were used in the process: they simply saw he needed help, and offered it[106]. Also Pedro had friendly relations with several of his Costa Rican and Ngöbe working partners.

In general I found that the relations of the Cabécares with both their Tico and Panamanian colleagues were sufficiently cordial to allow mutual assistance at work when needed. At least in several occasions the men also maintained even closer friendships with colleagues outside the Cabécar community.

5.5 Social relations among the Cabécar

Although these families lived together in the same camp during most of their residence in Santa Cruz, they did not share a well-established or organised social life together. They had relatively good relationships with each other, but every family lived in their own house, and did the cooking, cleaning, and grocery shopping for themselves. They could come across each other outside their houses, converse and share some moments, but they were not very well aware of, nor very interested in, each other's whereabouts[107]. This unawareness became stronger the moment the different families all took a different path, after the work for don Manolo.

I tentatively deduce from my observations that, while staying in Los Santos, the Cabécar households in my study did not maintain clearly closer relations among themselves than with their colleague harvesters, in spite of them being extended relatives of each other.

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[105] Observations during the recollection of coffee in the *cafetales*, 1,18 February on the *finca* of don Manolo, and 10-13 March on the *finca* of don Juan.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Observations during entire research period.

5.5.1 *Other social relations with 'outsiders' (*e.g. *locals, other migrants)*

As all the members of the Morales family have been coming to the district of Santa Cruz for a number of years, they have had some time to make and improve contacts, learning how to interrelate best in a formerly unfamiliar environment. Still, most family members do not have many acquaintances in the village. They mostly have contact with the owners of grocery shops and owners of bars. The contacts with these locals have, however, become relatively good and strong relations. Every family had developed its own preference for one or another grocery shop, and would return there every year to do its grocery shopping. In return, the shop owners would take an interest and know about their client's wishes[108].

I saw that the element of gender relations was reasonably important in establishing relations with members of other communities. The men were much more outgoing. Both Pedro and Tomás established friendship relations with some members of the Ngöbe community they had been getting to know over the years of coming. They would sometimes play football in the afternoon or in the weekends or go to the bar in the evenings[109]. The women, at least in the public sphere, in the *cafetales* or in the village, would not have contact with 'outsiders'. Sandra said to me on the subject: "I'm married, why would I talk to other men? That would be no good.[110]" However, in the private circle, of the house and its surroundings, contacts between Cabécar women and both women and men of other ethnic groups would occur. As I have already explained in Chapter 3, Cabécar women, due to this reluctance to interrelate publicly with outsiders, did not easily go out shopping on their own. Generally, they had their husbands accompany them, making them interact with the grocers but, nonetheless, deciding themselves what to buy.

Stable relations between essential locals such as shop and bar owners and seasonal migrant Cabécares were maintained throughout many years, thus allowing mutual trust, confidence and awareness of each other's needs and preferences to have developed.

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[108] Conversations with three different shop owners.
[109] Conversations with Pedro and Tomás.
[110] conversation with Sandra on 2 March.

Chapter 6 Conclusions

From what I have seen during my research the Cabécar families, that use seasonal migration to Santa Cruz as a coping strategy, are doing relatively well. Although they define themselves explicitly as 'being poor', which, of course, they certainly are, they do generally seem able to make ends meet, provide for their children's education and, at least in good harvest years, even manage to save some money. According to the World Bank's most strict definition of poverty, "deprivation in well-being" (2000), the Cabécares could not be distinguished as being extremely poor. Especially not, as Costa Rica has provided basic health care and education in the region of Chirripó. However, acknowledging the dimensions of poverty McPherson & Silburn (1998) present, when I add the elements of perceived vulnerability and despair of the *absolute-subjective*-category, the Cabécares can considered to be notably poor.

It is important to note that, traditionally, the Cabécares have always been accustomed to travel widely in order to make a living. Circumstances in their home region have always forced them to keep 'on the move' regularly in search of sustainment, thereby rendering their perception of 'home' rather diffuse. Against this traditional, somewhat 'nomadic' background, the relative ease with which several families have come to apply seasonal migration towards the coffee region of Los Santos as just another coping strategy for improving life conditions fits rather well into their originalcultural framework. It is just one more step in a pattern that was already part of their perception of their world.

More than anything these Cabécar families are simply trying to make a decent living, therefore using the means they have at their disposal. In order to secure their livelihood, these Cabécar families have, consciously and unconsciously, used a number of coping strategies, such as searching for paid employment in the home region, putting or having more family members to work, and some conscious or unconscious use of their social networks.

Within the region of Chirripó and Grano de Oro the Cabécares make good use of their social networks, both bonding and bridging. Between Cabécar families with amical relations, people help each other, when there is the need to do so, and re-

ciprocity is considered an important quality. Also relevant bridging social relations exist between the Cabécares and merchants who would buy goods from the Cabécares. However, these relations would not yet connect the Cabécares to the 'economic mainstream' (Gittell & Vidal 1998, cited in Woolcock & Narayan 2001: 230).

One of the most important coping strategies the Cabécares have thus developed is seasonal migration (among others to the region of Los Santos). The asset of social capital is vital in the process and strategy of seasonal migration. The balance between bonding and bridging social capital is of great importance and influence to the functionality of the strategy.

The most important base of help and trust among these migrating Cabécares is the nuclear family. Important is to note that migration is a *household* strategy, meaning that the decision making, the practice of migrating, and the further developing of opportunities to keep working in Los Santos and keep improving their livelihood, is organised within the domestic circle. This is also what Haberfeld *et al* (1999) emphasise in their paper on internal seasonal migration in India. However, social networks, both familial- or bonding networks as bridging social networks, are inherently interwoven in this process.

Through family networks in the first place, the families were introduced to *patrones* in the village of Santa Cruz, which provided a secure basis. From there, the individual families were able to keep spreading their bridging social networks and thus enlarge their bridging social capital, each in their own way. At the same time they have the certainty to have family members relatively close by, which, although they are not always very well aware of each other's whereabouts, can give a sense of confidence. It is thus the balance between both bonding and bridging social capital that enhances its efficacy, as also Woolcock & Narayan (2001) made clear.

One presumption I had made in advance, was that, as literature suggested, indigenous communities would have very strong bonding social ties, and thus weaker bridging social relations with the dominant culture (González de la Rocha & Grispun 2001; Woolcock & Narayan 2000). This, supposedly, would confirm and reestablish their relatively weaker position in the society in which they lived. In the case of the Cabécar, as I studied it, I did not see that the inner-group social ties were much stronger than those they maintained with the dominant culture. Differ-

ent Cabécar families did have contact with each other, but did not depend on others with respect to personal household decisions.

Bonding social networks were indeed also used, but not to the extent to which I had presumed. People would help one another, from time to time and whenever someone was in need. People would help each other with the harvest, or taking care of children, a house or animals. I did, however, not observe an organised flow of services and goods.

In both the home region and the receiving region, bridging social networks were established by the individual households. These contacts with 'others' were often fruitful. In Grano de Oro contacts were made with merchants buying their goods and in Santa Cruz with *patrones* with better working conditions, and *pulperos* who could give them discounts. This way the Cabécares are, in a certain way, able to make/create a fruitful balance between their bonding and bridging social networks (not improving, nor deteriorating their livelihood).

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Appendix

Appendix 1 Resumen en español

Esta investigación nació de mi interés en la fuerza y el aguante que existe en el ser humano y que hace que personas, aunque vivan en una situación de pobreza, encuentren maneras de sobrevivir. Personas viviendo en pobreza buscan y establecen varios tipos de estratégias para sobrevivir y, en cuanto posible, mejorar sus condiciones de vida. Muchas de estas estratégias son basadas en la intensificación y ampliación de la *cantidad* de labor, efectuada en la economía del hogar. En el caso que no haya suficiente empleo en la propia región, una de las estratégias utilizadas puede consistir en la migración temporal a regiones o países dónde haya más trabajo o mayores ingresos. Cualquier estratégia de sobrevivencia se basa, entre otras cosas, en un concepto que se llama *capital social*, que en realidad consiste del conjunto de todos los contactos sociales de la comunidad en cuestión, tanto los "contactos internos" (bonding social capital) como los "externos" (bridging social capital). Según las teorías son tanto la cantidad y calidad de esos dos tipos de capital social como el balance entre los dos factores más importantes en las posibilidades que tiene la gente en procurarse mejoras de sus condiciones de vida.

En la temporada de cosecha de café en la región cafetalera de Los Santos (Costa Rica) hay una gran oferta de trabajo temporal que brinda oportunidades de empleo a miles de migrantes estacionales. La mayoría de estos migrantes provienen de Nicaragua y Panamá, aunque una pequeña minoría es indígena costarricense de la región de Chirripó. Desde el 2003 La Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (UNA) ha establecido proyectos de investigación e implementación en colaboración con varios actores locales, nacionales y bi-nacionales, para mejorar las condiciones sociales y laborales en la región de trabajo. El proyecto, llamado, ProSIT, está coordinado por Rocío Loría Bolaños de la UNA.

En mi investigación, en parte efectuada para el projecto de la UNA, me centro en una de las comunidades minoritarias que viajan cada año a Santa Cruz de León Cortés (en la región de Los Santos), para trabajar en la recolección de café: los indígenas Cabécares de la región costarricense de Chirripó. Para entender mejor la migración temporal laboral, he estudiado la migración estacional y laboral como

estratégia de sobrevivencia, y el rol y la importancia de las redes sociales en este proceso, entre miembros de la comunidad Cabécar en Los Santos.

He realizado mi investigación etnográfica entre el 29 de enero y el 19 de abril del 2009 en el cantón de León Cortés en Los Santos, durante la cosecha del año 2008-2009. Para la recolección de datos he hecho uso de los métodos etnográficos, de la *participación observativa*, la conversación informal, y la entrevista abierta. El grupo de foco en mi investigación consiste sobre todo de tres familias nucleares, y algunos miembros de la familia extendida; todos migrantes temporales.

La razon más importante que nombran los miembros de las familias Cabécares incluidas em mi estudio para buscar trabajo estacional en otra región del país, es la *pobreza* que experiencian en su propia región. Las oportunidades de encontrar trabajo con suficiente salario en los alrededores de Chirripó no son sufiecientes para sus necesidades. La idea de estas familias es siempre volver a Chirripó. La migración estacional/temporal es, consiguientemente, una estrategia de sobrevivencia elaborada para mantener o mejorar las condiciones de vida en la region de procedencia.

Próximamente he encontrado que la estrategia de migración estacional a la region de Los Santos es una *estrategia de hogar*. En otras palabras la toma de decisiones si o no migrar, cuando marchar, qué familiares viajan, etc. está organizada al nivel de la familia nuclear. Sin embargo, las *redes sociales* son esenciales para el proceso de la migración. Es por estas redes familiares primariamente que las familias nucleares saben del trabajo, y pueden establecer los primeros contactos en la region 'desconocida'. De aquí en adelante las familias nucleares siguen desarrollando y extendiendo sus redes sociales, en gran parte a nivel de hogar.

Durante la estancia en Los Santos no vi que las relaciones sociales internas de las familias Cabécares fuesen excepcionalmente fuertes. Las familias se llevavan relativamente bien entre ellas aúnque tenían relativamente poco trato entre si. Si se podían ayudar entre familias, y en eso la reciprocidad era importante.

Las familias me relataron sobre posibilidades de trabajo en otras partes de Costa Rica; en Turrialba, Limón, y los alrededores directos de Chirripó, pero que las condiciones de trabajo les atraían menos en estas regiones. Esto podía depender de las condiciones climatológicas, del peligro del trabajo, o de menor nivel de libertad. La variedad de posibilidades, aunque igual 'peores' que la de Los Santos, les brin-

da bastante independencia y libertad, lo cual podría significar que la posición de los migrantes Cabécares es relativemente estable.

Concluyendo puedo decir que el equilibrio entre relaciones internas y externas ha probado ser importante para el nivel de bienestar de las familias, tanto en Chirripó (y el pueblo de Grano de Oro) como en Santa Cruz de León Cortés, donde permanecen durante los meses de cosecha de café.

Appendix 2 Reflection

> Imagine someone calling on your door, telling you that he is doing an anthropological research about the social situation of people like you, and that he therefore needs to come and visit you daily, and would like to spend as much time as possible with you, then asking you for permission [to do this]. What would the response be?

From the first moment I arrived in the field, the above mentioned quote, played an important role in my experience of conducting an anthropological research. I both enjoyed and rejected the fieldwork experience enormously. Enjoyed, because of my thriving desire to truly understand and get to know these families; and rejected, because I found it truly difficult to set aside the ethical concerns. For that last reason, I want to dedicate a part of my reflection to certain ethical concerns:

Every form of conducting a research has its implications and difficulties. A first important difficulty in social research, and especially in cultural anthropological research, is the question of ethics. In anthropological research the ethical question is so important and outspoken that it is, or ought to be, inherently part of the methodological concerns. The situation described in the box above, is the reverse of what I saw myself forced to do in my fieldwork. In psychological research, the respondents involved give their voluntary approval of their involvement in the research. In cultural anthropological research, however, matters are more complicated. Cultural anthropology works with the term *informed consent*, in which the people involved in the research are made aware of the aims of the researcher and, knowing the implications, give their permission or consent to the researcher to take the information with him.

Before arriving on the field myself, Rocío Loría from the UNA had already sought contact with the Cabécar families I conducted my research with. She had not known these families in advance either, they had 'just crossed each others paths'. She, then, asked them for a first consent to let me do my research among them. This was granted. After my arrival in Costa Rica, Rocío took me to meet the families, who lived together in the same camp of slums (or *baches*). We had contacted them in advance for an appointment, and we gathered all family members.

On that evening Rocío introduced me as a foreign student taking part in a project of the UNA that investigates and works in the region of Los Santos in the improvement of the working and living conditions of the seasonal coffee harvesters. I also shortly introduced myself and explained my primary aims, and what I wanted or needed from them, asking them for permission to keep visiting them on a regular basis and spend a fair amount of time with them. This permission was finally given to me by the two most elderly men in the group, who had also done most of the talking with us.

The question, however, remains: how well aware were the people involved in my research of the exact aims and, maybe even more importanly, the *implications* of my three-month presence among them, on the moment they gave me their permission to keep visiting them? And, what is more: how voluntary was their decision to allow me to conduct my research with them, when it was probably rude for them to give such an answer? These concerns were continually on my thought, on entering the field and have deeply influenced my fieldwork and study.

Another important ethical concern is that of the rights of/over the obtained knowledge and information. In a an official interview it is clear what information the researcher is looking for, and a respondent can 'make a selection' of the information he is willing to share. An essential part of participant observation in cultural anthropology is, however, to also find the implicit aspects of people's culture that lie within people's behaviour and within the things they tell us on an informal (or even friendship) basis. These are the moments when our 'respondents' have forgotten that we were researchers trying to discover things about their lifes, they might deem private. What gives an anthropologist the right to search for the most private parts of a human being, sometimes in a disguised way, and after that take it away from the rightfull owner of that information, and make it public?
Not during the months of fieldwork, nor in the months of writing my thesis did I find a satisfactory anwer to these questions. Of course not, how would I, after so many renowned anthropologists were not able to do that either.

On the other hand am I indeed happy for having had the opportunity to do such a wonderful thing. I was lucky and I learned a lot.