

## Equivalence and value in processes of reciprocity and exchange among the Mapuche

Equivalence and value in processes of reciprocity and exchange between Mapuche people

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**Abstract:** Reciprocity and exchange are two issues of interest in anthropology stated in Marcel Mauss' essay about gifting. However, this topic has had limited attention among the Mapuche, especially within the area of social practices that people and domestic groups perform in rural communities. The objective of this article is the analysis of reciprocity and exchange from the perspective of exchangeability and associated processes in Mapuche communities, to later evaluate the principles involved, especially the ones related to the equivalence and value of reciprocity; postulating that based on the analysis the following can be understood: practices of social organization, economic relations, everyday social interactions between domestic groups, among other areas. The research was conducted with a qualitative strategy, and the ethnographic method was developed to process data collection in Mapuche communities of southern Chile.

**Key words:** reciprocity, exchange, equivalence, value, Mapuche people.

**Resumen:** La reciprocidad y el intercambio constituyen un tema de tratamiento en la antropología a partir del ensayo sobre los dones de Marcel Mauss; no obstante, esta temática ha tenido un escaso tratamiento entre los mapuches, especialmente desde la óptica de las prácticas sociales que personas y grupos domésticos realizan en las comunidades rurales. El objetivo del artículo es analizar la reciprocidad y el intercambio desde la perspectiva de la intercambiabilidad y procesos asociados en comunidades mapuches, para posteriormente dimensionar los principios involucrados, en particular los referidos a equivalencia y valor en la reciprocidad; postulando que a partir del análisis de estas prácticas se puede entender y comprender la organización social, la dinámica de relaciones económicas, las interrelaciones sociales cotidianas entre grupos domésticos, entre otros ámbitos. La investigación es de tipo cualitativa bajo el método etnográfico y se realizó en comunidades mapuches del sur de Chile.

**Palabras clave:** reciprocidad, intercambio, equivalencia, valor, mapuches.

## Introduction

The dynamic and process of gifting and/or interchanging are important aspects in the social, cultural and economic life of many groups; and in disciplines such as social anthropology, sociology and economics, it has had several and extensive discussions from Marcel Mauss' (1971) work, who describes a cycle of benefits that comprises three obligations: giving –receiving – giving back, whose main objective is to establish and maintain solidarity relationships between the groups comprised in a society (Bordieu, 2007; Kowalski, 2011).

A number of authors such as Sahlins (1977), Monaghan (1990 y 1996), Yan (1996), Tereucán (2003 and 2008), Good (2005), Ferraro, (2004), Teigen *et al.* (2005), Carrasco and Robichaux (2005), Khattri (2010), Peebles (2010), Venkatesan (2011), Mallard (2011), Højer (2012) have focused on the theoretical analysis of the topic, discussing Muass' premises and/or their study in various contexts.

Indeed, Yan (1996: 1) in his book, *The Flow of Gifts. Reciprocity and Social Networks in a Chinese Village*, summarizes one of the central ideas contained in the generality of studies as he points out that:

it is widely known that the gift is one of the most important ways of social exchange in human societies. The obligation of giving and receiving maintains, strengthens and creates various social bonds that can be cooperative, competitive or antagonistic, allowing understanding and interpreting the cultural roles and structure of social relations in a determinate society...

From a rather sociological standpoint, Komter (2005) reaffirms that very same idea and assigns the gift and/or exchanges an important function in the maintenance of solidarity relationships between the groups that compose a society. Complementing Yan and Komter, we should add the significant economic function fulfilled by exchanges, especially in groups that are traditionally classified as “poor” in the countries’ socioeconomic measurements, as it is the case of the Mapuche in Chile.

This way, the generation of exchanges are relevant for the subsistence of domestic groups in a wide sense, since the analysis must consider a set of factors such as social organization, ritualization of practices, spatial and territorial configurations, cultural prerogatives, among other aspects.

Because of this, the objective of the present work focuses, in the first place, on the analysis of reciprocity and exchange from the standpoint of exchangeability and the associated processes in the context of the empirical analysis to later dimension the principles involved in it, especially those referred to equivalence and value in the sphere of reciprocity and exchange.

The research was carried out in the Mapuche territory, or *kiñel mapu*, of Llamuco, which encompasses seven rural Mapuche communities. Llamuco belongs to the commune of Vilcún in Araucanía Region, a territory traditionally associated with Mapuche people in the south of Chile. The territorial extension is 1 088.03 hectares with a population of 1 094 people distributed in 298 domestic groups. Its inhabitants are *Mapudungun* (Mapuche language) and Spanish speakers; their main sources of incomes are small-scale agriculture and hiring in construction, trade and domestic service.

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### **Reciprocity and exchange: exchangeability, commodities and gifts**

In Griesler's (2006) words, exchange relationships become the functioning structure of society that modifies the people's spheres of life; this way, the gift becomes a total social fact, in Durkheim's terms, as it is coercive and compulsory. Moreover, it states that the gift can comprise at least three key theoretical elements: *a*) social distinction; *b*) norms of reciprocity; and, *c*) rituals and symbolisms.

Social distinctions would manifest through the interaction patterns between a giver and a receiver; this enables the inception of a structure of relationship and conditioning for both parts, being kinship and friendship two important factors in this configuration. The norm of reciprocity would manifest the set of rules and obligations that make room for a complex pattern of giving, receiving and giving back, furthermore enabling the understanding of the existing moral standard of social solidarity.

The final element in the study of gift are rituals and symbolisms; these rituals are defined as activities governed by rules of symbolical expression in which the gift is inculcated in the members of a group by means of a collective representation, whose end is to reinforce social relations, especially between relatives.

In the study's empirical context, such elements are closely linked, since the ways of social organization of the Mapuche in Llamuco define responsibilities and commitments each individual has with the others, mainly with patrilineal kinships; collective activities that involve the acting of the group of relatives; and the sort of territorial networks that are built from exchanges.

Logically, these interactions are integrated into norms, practices and rules of equivalence and value in the exchanges, which allow defining the minimum behavioral standards of people and domestic groups in various contexts. Particularly, these are embedded in culture, thereby we speak of ritual events (marriages, funeral rites, religious rites, etc.), or actions that follow a strict relationship protocol that allows giving formality and ritualization to the mechanisms of reciprocity and exchange.

This way, we can state that culture among the Mapuche acts as a powerful schema of social control that conditions and forces the families and groups to involve in this system of exchange networks that exists in the territory of Llamuco. Not being a part of it is a condition that cannot easily occur, for the economic restrictions, as in addition to the funding of many events in the life cycle, the social component and prestige of people and families should be taken into account. These two aspects are deemed highly among the families in Llamuco, especially in rituals with stressed “public” attendance, this is to say, they are subject to scrutiny and assessment by the assistants and participants.

Retaking the cycle of benefits involved in gifting, there are two elements that allow us to locate the analysis on the basis of empirical data among the Mapuche. A first aspect refers to the third obligation of the cycle of benefits, i.e., giving back and the compulsory nature of the norm that facilitates the permanent circulation of goods and services within the set of symmetrical functioning norms that regulate the transference movements. A second component is the equivalence and value contained in the mechanisms of reciprocity and exchange (Mauss, 1971; Graeber, 2001; Ferraro, 2004; Gudeman, 2001; Gregory, 2009; Peebles, 2010; Godbout, 1997).

For Mauss, 1971, human exchange begins with total benefits; this is to say, an affectation to the set of society at all levels, which leads to put forward gift as a total social fact. In this stage benefits are shared between groups and acquire a connotation classified in the non-economic order, as it is not self-benefit what motivates the exchange, but the group's wellbeing; hence, it is the moral norm that allows reproducing the cycle of giving – receiving – giving back.

Every transaction will create bonds beyond the individuals, this is why morality emerges from these bonds as a *sui generis* reality of informal social relationships (Mauss, 1971; Godbout, 1997; Mayer, 2002; Hollenbeck *et al.*, 2006; Davies *et al.*, 2010; Mallard, 2011; Kowalski, 2011).

A second stage in the development of benefits is the exchange of gifts between the individuals who represent groups, changing their original

objective, since the benefits from the exchange and the relationships would not necessarily reach all the members of the club (Godbout, 1997; Tereucán, 2008; Kowalski, 2011).

Finally, there is a third stage marked by the exchange of commodities in modern societies and in which the transaction is performed by independent individuals (Gudeman, 2001; Adloff and Mau, 2006). For Carrier (1991: 121), Mauss observed two types of exchanges: of gifts, associated with societies dominated by kinship; and of commodities, associated with industrial societies dominated by class division and labor.

Carrier's ideas and postulates have served as a reference to generate a varied discussion of their contents, norms that regulate their functioning, classification and typologies, relations with the organization of kinship, the character of the commodities and services that come into play, the exchange within mercantile and non-mercantile conceptions, the economic forms and processes that occur in determinate realities, the forms of capital contained in reciprocity, among others.

Certainly, the discussion focuses more intensely on contexts marked by the presence of indigenous population, because reciprocity and gifting are especially noticed in spaces where kinship is the prevailing sphere of relationships and markets do not have substantial presence in these populations' dynamics. Although it is difficult to state this for many indigenous realities nowadays, the idea of differencing between gift economies marked by moral and custom and market economies lead by commodity transactions is still under analysis and discussion.

According to Lapavitsas (2004: 33) and Gregory (2009), exchangeability is the concept taken to make distinctions between the categories of gift and commodities. The latter represent rationality, individualism, the strict calculation of material benefit, impersonal relationships and the relation of property united to the market. Conversely, the former represents power, moral obligation, collective interest, personal relations that survive and continue after the exchange, an imprecise benefit and often non-material, and a society based on open relationships whose characteristics are willingness and similitude.

In this sphere of analysis, a binary formulation on gift economy v commodity economy is put forward by Gregory on the basis of Marx's concept of commodities and Mauss' concept of gift. For Gregory, the exchange of commodities is one of alienable goods between counterparts who are in mutual independence; whereas, gift exchange is made with inalienable commodities whose participants are in mutual dependence.

The exchange of commodities will establish quantitative relations between the objects traded, while gift exchange establishes qualitative relations between the involved subjects (Gregory, 1980 and 2009). Apparently, exchangeability in commodities presents a more intrinsic, complete and precise relation than gift exchangeability, since the latter, theoretically, is not inherently exchangeable as it circumscribes to non-economic factors such as moral, religion and custom.

In like manner, even if the commodities and services involved in the gift return, there is not a quantitative equivalence between the parties as it enters the realm of social life which is not immediately touched by the market: giving order to establish a bond and expecting a reciprocal gesture is fundamental in the interpersonal relationship, relationships between families, friendships, labor relationships, etc.

However, if we believe that the establishment of the dichotomy between gift and commodities or mercantile or non-mercantile relationships does not necessarily have to be stated in terms of opposite poles, as in practice exchanges can combine market elements with forms and norms more applicable to reciprocity relationships. As pointed out by Smart (1983: 397), many of these fundaments need to be contested rather than taken as a part of the definitions of gifts or commodities.

If gifts are not always reciprocal and if the motivations involved in giving are varied, what is common to gifts as a sort of exchange can only be in the shape of gift, understood as the diverse ways of expressing.

This is demonstrated when analyzing various ethnographic contexts; for instance Carrier (1991: 132) points out that gifts and commodities do not represent exclusive categories, but poles of a continuum and that many transactions with a gift contain an element of alienation and individualism and that many transactions with commodities have mutual obligations.

Therefore, gifts and commodities are not so easily distinguishable in the case of the *Mongolian pawnshop* studied by Højer (2012: 35), a fundament that is also discussed in studies performed in Melanesia such as those by: Valeri (1994), Weiner (1985), Parry and Block (1996), Mosko (2000), Graeber (2001) and which remind us –at least analytically- of the idea of a continuum in the exchanges proposed by Sahlins (1977) in “Stone age economics” and the proposals later established by Lomnitz (2005) on negative reciprocity, one of the poles pinpointed by Sahlins.

A complementary vision is that the exchange of gifts fundamentally differs from the exchange of commodities, in terms of the roles that characterize relationships and in terms of the methods people use to increase

their incomes; in consequence, each form of exchange shall be analyzed on the basis of its essential principles and particularities and how the circulation of values influence the realm of commodities (Bell, 1991a and 1991b; Mayer, 2002; Ferraro, 2004; Teigen *et al.*, 2005; Addo and Besnier, 2008).

This stance offers an interesting methodological approximation to conceive gifts and commodities, as it allows understanding the processes of exchange in various contexts, by means of the practices set up by their participants, but without subtracting them from the existing interrelations, from the sociocultural ways these transactions adopt, from the norms and principles that regulate their reproduction, among other elements.

Taking these instances to the empirical data among the Mapuche in Llamuco, we consider that making distinctions between gifts and commodities is useful to analytically separate the various practices that families and communities perform; however, to understand the functioning of the studied structure, it is relevant to enquire on the social and cultural contexts in which exchanges take place and reproduce.

These specific contexts provide data to understand the rules followed by the participants, the sorts of goods that come into play, the exchange flows, the principles involved and the objectives these pursue.

Likewise, the elements of the social structure that fix the actuation frame should be considered and with this we fundamentally refer to variables of kinship, residence and social organization, as these three elements set up the contextual game that “forces” the creation of social networks and generates the imperatives of culture for the production and reproduction of the reciprocity and exchange mechanisms. In Llamuco, respondents associate commodities with the existence of money as the element that mediates the exchange; while other valuations and utilized means are part of the structure of gift.

In view of fixing the specific analysis of equivalence and the value of exchanges in the following sections, we consider it necessary to outline a general typology that allows marking the analytical differences and the existing juxtaposing points.

This way, we found that among the Mapuche in Llamuco there are exchanges more directly linked to reciprocity or gifting (rituals linked to the life cycle or the development cycle of domestic groups, for instance); others follow a more market-oriented conduct (various commercial transactions); and others present especial characteristics such as bartering, in which we notice a combination of these two actuations.

These forms are not necessarily opposed, but on the contrary, regularly sequential and functionally linked to one another. The larger flow market exchanges observed over previous years in the communities in Llamuco might suppose a primacy of individualism and self-interest in the relationships that are established; nevertheless, the observation of diverse practices in the communities allows us to verify the coexistence and permanent interrelation of the most conceptualized exchanges in the structure of gift or reciprocity with the market's, which makes us put forward that a larger flow of economic resources has potentiated the three aforementioned sorts of exchanges that take place among the domestic groups in Llamuco.

### **Equivalence and value in the notion of exchange and reciprocity**

Equivalence in the ways of exchange that involve reciprocity has become a mechanism that regulates and/or allows the continuity of a relationship, turning into the assessing element of the link existing between people or groups. The regularity described in studies on gifting or reciprocity is the tendency to maintain a balanced relationship regarding the commodities or services given and returned.

This way, Tereucán (2003: 189), in his study on reciprocity among the Nahua in Tlaxcala, Mexico, establishes that equivalent means giving back at least the same as that received in quality and quantity; the same rule that Firth (1974) finds among the Maori, as he points out that every gift shall be given back with a counter-gift at least of the same value.

Beals (1970: 234-239), in his studies with Zapotecs in Mexico, points out that exchanges are highly formalized and the equivalence in the exchange is a significant element when returning a gift already given. In their interpretation, objects are considered loans and if the return is not equivalent, it shall be compensated with money to reach the quantitative value.

A slightly different stance is proposed by Purkayastha (2004: 312-313), in an essay on the theory of reciprocal gifts, when he explains that there is obligation in giving back certain exchanges, but they do not have to be always equivalent, which generates an equation difficult to understand for the economists.

From the perspective of the exchange of commodities and strictly from the market logic, the postulate by Purkayastha is not complicated to understand, because the objective of every exchange is to obtain a gain, thereby, asymmetry is an always-sought condition.

It is different when exchanges are governed by the rule of equivalence, as not receiving at least the same as what was given is a bad deal, but here other relevant factors for the acting parts come into play: the specific context of the exchange, the existing social relationship between the participants, the particular economic circumstances that lead to the unfulfilling or the effort made in order to partly meet the expectations.

Well now, seeing it from a practical standpoint, it would be expected that returns would never be the same, as being the exchanges balanced the debt will cease existing. Researches in towns in the State of Tlaxcala, Mexico (Tereucán, 2003 and 2008; Carrasco and Robichaux, 2005) point out that the tendency in the exchanges that involve reciprocity is to return what was received and add an amount in order to keep the bonds through the debt. This same fact is also substantiated by Godbout (1997: 229-231) when explaining that a gift debt is never settled, it decreases or reverts by means of a gift greater than the debt, since equivalence is the death of the gift, it is a way to put an end to the chain of gifts.

Similarly, it is relevant what Ferraro (2004: 90) indicates: debt is a cultural category that is not necessarily decided only by individuals; and what Peebles (2010: 234) establishes in terms of not separating analytically in the credit or debt the economic effects of the benefit of its own moral components.

In many circumstances the valuation of the participation act can acquire a character superior to the valuation of the equivalence in reciprocated commodities, this is to say, what was given in terms of commodities and services is not received back, however there is indeed symmetry in terms of the reciprocity act. In strict economic terms, this does not make sense, for the investment would not match what is received; nevertheless, seen from the social sphere, we can speak of equivalence, because the commitment will be fulfilled as best as possible and this fact marks a value in exchange relationships, put into the respondents' words as "respect", "responsibility", "commitment of the parties".

A fact related with this and which would hardly ever occur is the denial of the gift, as all of the cases of exchanges analyzed in Llamuco indicate that the norm is: help is always received, reciprocity is always accepted, a request for help is always positively assessed and there is always an assessment in terms of mutual benefits to be obtained; hence, selfless behavior or pure gift in Mauss' terms is not a category present among the Mapuche, because every exchange action involves responsibility and commitment by those involved.

On this point we agree with Cardoso de Oliveira (2004), as he postulates that rejecting the exchange is lived by the interlocutor as an affirmation of

indifference or aggression (i.e., a moral insult) that is clearly expressed by the aggressor's attitudes or intentions, but also by their actions or behaviors.

From another viewpoint, when the equivalences in exchanges are more regulated by market rules, what is sought is always a transaction that meets the demands and carries benefits for both parties. If the condition is not fulfilled, the parties can intend to make the transaction with other people inside or outside the communities, however it does not necessarily imply a breach in relationships and in the continuity of help and cooperation at other levels, especially when there are factors such as kinship.

An instance are the agricultural sharecroppers in Llamuco, whose operation mechanism is summarized from the ethnographic story of the respondents.

When two people agree a harvest, one will contribute with the land and the other with supplies (seed, fertilizer, etc.) sharing labor force. The distribution percentages will usually be 50% for each party, unless there is a different agreement in function of economic contributions. These agreements are established beforehand, as it is a market-regulated exchange. However, in order to reach this "deal" there should be previous knowledge of the parties and the necessary confidence to ensure the "deal" will be respected. If the deal is not closed, the existing relationship is not expected to change, while bonds such as kinship or friendship remain unchanged; this way, both parties will try to decrease the level of the conflicts that may arise the most (Mapuche respondents from the communities of Juan Antinao Pircunche and José Llanca in the territory of Llamuco).

Other empirical instances to denote equivalence in market exchanges are the concepts from *Mapudungun* (Mapuche language), *aretun*, *kakunün* and *wülatun*. *Aretun* implies the action of obtaining (lend) something for another person, but there is no extra payment (interest) from the beneficiary, but they return the same. For instance, if someone borrows a sack of wheat, equivalence is returning the same, thus establishing the time for the return.

Even if there is a direct benefit for the one that "lends", there remains a "debt" that might materialize in similar conditions under the premise of the "returning hand". *Kakünun* involves the action of exchanging commodities of the same sort (seeds, animals, etc.) on the basis of a symmetrical equivalence calculation and in which the market price is the referent between the parties.

*Wülatun* adduces the sale of a commodity or service; properly, it is a market relation in which equivalence is defined by the product's quality and the fixed price. The term to buy, which is the transaction counterpart, is *gillan* and fixing the price is called *falin*. This agrees with Adloff and Mau

(2006: 102-103), who point out that the probability that social structures survive will be greater when they are connected to one another by means of exchange relationships.

This way, the system's interdependence is based on the reciprocity pattern and the norm can work as an efficient mechanism to start new relationships or strengthen the previous ones.

### **Value in the exchange system among the Mapuche in Llamuco**

The value involved in the exchanges is an aspect that intertwines all the norms and forms in which exchanges occur and at once it appears as an issue difficult to understand, because it is rooted in social and cultural arrangements defined by the parties in the establishment of the relationship.

For Narotzky (2004: 98-99) being able to ascertain the value of things is one of the crucial problems the exchange elicits. The commodities that are exchanged shall be comparable and the equivalence rate accepted by the parties; however, the measure of value should not be confused with the use value; the former is an exchange relationship, while the latter is an independent aspect.

An element that clarifies what occurs to the issue of value and the people's logic is that pinpointed by Mayer (1974 and 2002) in his study on Quechua in Peru: he states that each group knows which exchanges are generous, fair and which unfair; and on this basis they will model their behavior. There are circumstances in which it is advantageous to act with other people rather generously and/or fair, and on other occasions the proper interests make them act unfairly.

From this viewpoint, we may define the various groups comprised in a determinate place or society and the way they relate to one another studying the form, quality and direction of exchanges. This is an important methodological element in the analysis of exchanges as it allows identifying the dynamics established by people and groups, additionally enabling the configuration of individual interests, culturally prescribed situations, obligations beyond reciprocity, close trade links, et cetera.

In order to ascertain this value, Mayer (1974: 45) states that the host will always be able to calculate the value of the commodities they are giving; whereas, for Bell (1991b: 162) the value of a gift is measured by the value of the reciprocal answer. Certainly, there are exchanges in which it is easier to establish a value, and at the same time, keep a record of them; albeit for people in Llamuco this has always been an aspect difficult to establish, it is

concluded that a way to measure the value of exchanges is using the formula: resources v their usefulness in a particular context.

It seems as though, exchange value and use value are two elements that seem to differentiate when gifts and commodities are considered in dichotomous terms. Godbout (1997: 221-222), referring to the value in the exchange, mentions there is a tendency to quantify the word value and express it as a sum of money; this is what he calls the value of exchange and which we regularly oppose to use value.

The use value is closer to reality, but to the same extent it is unique and not representable by means of a sum. Not overlooking the importance of exchange value and use value, the author indicates that things acquire a number of values according to their capacity to express, convey and strengthen social bonds, and calls this binding value.

Therefore, this value is not established in comparison with other things, but in social relations with the people who participate in the exchange, being its objective to reinforce the bonds of cooperation and/or kinship, which will enable economic, social or cultural supports in the future. The binding value is the symbolical value related to a gift, linked to what circulates in the shape of a gift (Godbout, 1997: 223-224).

To this we add there are circumstances in which the retribution of a personal service can be made with commodities specified by "custom" and not necessarily by the devolution of the service. Certainly, there are exchanges in which it is easier to establish a value and at the same time to keep an exact record of these commodities; such as the "help" practices described by Monaghan (1990; 1996) among Oaxaca's Nuyooco, or the exchanges in town celebrations in Tlaxcala described by Carrasco and Robichaux (2005); but there are others which are not easy to establish at the moment of returning, as it is shown in the liquor exchanges in Otavalo, Ecuador, described by Barlett (1980), the vast matrimonial compensations explained by Good (2005) or the exchanges in meals between the Argentinian Mapuche and between the Jews pointed out by Kradolfer (2001) and Shuman (2000).

In practice, establishing the relationships goes through the review of conceptual elements that allow differencing various practices, as underscored by Bell (1991b): every exchange relationship experiences a value equivalence, defined somehow by the participants. It is necessary to deepen into these forms to comprehend the sorts of exchanges, the spheres it comprises and the factors that influence them.

An example of this is when in Llamuco the custom nullifies or delays the devolution of an exchange in reciprocity, mainly when the occasion involves

“participar con fuego”<sup>1</sup> [participating with fire] in a determinate ritual. This occurs when women have widowed or have small children or if they are single mothers who live with their children and their economic status prevents them from fulfilling the commitment.

The protocol requires that people communicate this event to their counterparts, which is taken as a token of respect and appreciation for the kinship or friendship; even though it does not necessarily mean the debt disappears, since some retribution is always expected. If in spite of their social and economic situation they decide to participate, the value of the fact takes an especial valuation by the receiver, regardless of the amount of goods (food and beverage) women take to the event. In cases like this, the value of the action is dramatically higher and strengthens the bonds (Godbout, 1997).

We have to add that these situations are not exceptions to the rule, but culturally established solutions to partially remediate the rigidity of the fulfillment of commitments between families, in particular those bound by patrilineal kinship.

It is also necessary to establish and restate that the equivalence of value is defined by the participants, as shown in the following examples: *a)* in the case of the decease of a member of the domestic group, it will receive support from everyone in a *kiñe eluwün*,<sup>2</sup> particularly those patrilineally kindred; *b)* the valuation of help is higher for those with whom there is a permanent cooperation process, but also because more relevant emotional, social or economic, support is also expected, being distinguishable the effort of the domestic groups to fulfil the commitments and their sense of responsibility; *c)* offering voluntary support is reckoned as the beginning of exchange ties, distinguishing the action of the people or domestic group rather than the amount of commodities involved in the help.

The examples denote the particularities of the relation between the value of the involved commodities, their usefulness for the giver and receiver, exchange value and value of the existing relationship; therefore, the analysis of value implies all or almost all these elements and by means of this, the equivalence in exchanges is established.

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1 Attending a ritual with liquor, sodas, beers and food to cook at the moment and later sharing them with the guests.

2 A support group composed of patrilineal relatives and non-relatives who have share the condition of being close residents in a community.

## Reciprocity exchanges and market exchanges in Llamuco

It is possible to associate some relevant characteristics related to exchanges referred to reciprocity and others to market exchange in Llamuco; this has as an objective to differentiate the game rules, since in practice many of the market exchanges cannot be analyzed ignoring the context of relationships in which the participants are involved. In Llamuco, equivalence in the exchanges that imply reciprocity do not always maintain symmetry, even if participants know well how much of a determinate good or service is appropriate to give and how much it is expected to receive back.

Albeit, in order to understand this behavior, it is necessary to consider the sociocultural context in which these exchanges take place, which is noticed in the following case: the entire domestic group is part of a *xokinche*, or patrilineally localized kinship. Belonging to it carries the responsibility of socially and economically support patrilineal relatives, mainly siblings, parents, uncles, aunts and children.

For the specific case of a wedding, a 60-year-old respondent explains this in terms of his commitments:

I have three male children, but one of my brothers has two boys and two girls and my other brother has three daughters. When my brothers' daughters get married, I have the responsibility to economically contribute to perform the *mafutün* (Mapuche marriage) of all of them, so I'll have to spend a lot. But as I only have sons the level of reciprocity won't be the same, because their fathers have to spend more money when daughters marry, but I know that's the way things are.

In this case there is no symmetrical equivalence in giving back the expense, however it is deemed correct because it is part of the "responsibility" of belonging to the same *xokinche*. Nevertheless, he indicates: "perhaps my brothers will be more 'generous' with me when I need their support in other situation..."

This same fact is replicable in the case of deaths. In Llamuco all patrilineal relatives are part of a *kiñe eluwiñ*, which conceptually implies the acting of a group in a ritual of death. In such a case, each member of the patrilineal group will support socially, emotionally and economically those who have suffered the loss of a relative along the entire funeral rite. By implication, here there is not a quantification of the number of times that someone has helped, since the relevant is group support. A rule that all the respondents declare is that when something is given, at least the same in amount and quality is expected back.

As a matter of fact, respondents explain they keep written records of those who have supported them, the commodities or services given, the amounts and how many times. Balanced or symmetrical equivalence seems to be the functioning norm, as asymmetry can imply a deterioration of the relationship or its breaking, even though in the observed cases people always indicated that the debt had to be maintained, thereby: either more in quantity was given or the quality of the commodities in the exchanges improved.

In this sense, we notice at least six considerations that reflect the contexts in which exchanges concur: *a*) when a young domestic group participates for the first time in a ritual (marriages, funeral or religious rites) it sets a reference of equivalence that is expected to be returned in the same conditions in the future; *b*) when help is returned, the ritual organizer expects equivalence as a token of reciprocity and assess the participation and their relation with the domestic group on the basis of the commodities that come into play; *c*) when a domestic group—due to diverse circumstances—cannot return in the same way (quantity and quality), it shall give the corresponding explanations. If this is the case, the effort people make to fulfill the commitment is considered and no harm to the existing relationship is done; *d*) when people are unable to return help, there should always be a reason that culturally justifies it, as it is the situation of women who have recently widowed and still have little children; *e*) when exchanges imply services (hours of days of work), the equivalence always arises as a compulsory condition to fulfill, either by the one who received the benefit or by another to act on their behalf, but there should always be a symmetrical response; and, *f*) in the case of exchanges that involve market rules, equivalences are not always symmetrical, as individual benefit underlays this transaction. However, such relationship is always mediated by an initial agreement that the parties have accepted.

Seen from the rules of equivalence, we have that in both transactions there should be a value balance defined in some manner by the participants and it may be thought that a fair or balanced exchange implies increasing the usefulness for each party equally, satisfying the rule of equivalence for general use.

However, the equivalence of value can have various interpretations and the ways in which a disagreement is settled can also pose different modalities; but if commodities are only seen as an economic phenomenon, the totality of the exchangeability perspective will not be understood, because commodities are also useful products and their usefulness interacts with the exchange value in the course of transactions made. These two components—equivalence and value—are relevant for the comprehension of exchange, reciprocity and participants' acting.

## Conclusions

Taking the authors' postulates and examining them with field data from Mapuche communities in Llamuco, we point at the need of making tacit separations between exchange forms that involve market rules and others in which reciprocity or gifting prevail, however we try not to be overly categorical in establishing the dichotomy, as frequently both ways are merged, at least in the rules that act to generate the relationship.

In the research's empirical context, people clearly distinguish the exchanges that entail reciprocity from other sorts of relationships. Terms such as "commitment" and "responsibility" indicate a relationship based on mutual help, in which kinship and friendship are essential components in the generated exchange, while equivalence as operating rule is implicit in the established agreements. Furthermore, for exchanges that involve "money", the concepts used are "deal" and "debt", and even though market rules in terms of economic benefits prevail, we also find important nuances in the norms that regulate relationships of reciprocal exchange in this sort of transactions.

This is directly related to the condition of the participants, because if the relationship occurs between people from the same community or inside the territory of Llamuco, these try not to obtain individual benefits at the expense of another, but else to establish a "fair" relation for both parties.

Caution is not exclusively based upon strict moral norms, but it is rather conditioned to the processes of permanent interaction that people and domestic groups have in Llamuco and the need of not damaging relationship networks that can be useful at various times; thereby, preventing conflicts from transactions that do not imply large individual benefits seems to be the appropriate behavior.

Funding certain events, for instance weddings, funeral rites or religious rituals, involves economic costs, which frequently a domestic group cannot afford on their own, and in order to do it, it needs the presence of others to help in its execution. However, these supports do not come from charity or disinterested solidarity but from being part of the networks that provide this level of security, and imply rather similar levels of reciprocity and equivalence in order to avoid conflicts with any of the participants.

This way, it should be considered that interchanges in Llamuco do not work as isolated mechanisms of relationship between people, but they integrate a set of relations based on kinship, residence and social organization; therefore, many of the mercantile exchanges are based on

previous reciprocity relationships and the necessary trust to establish mutually beneficial economic agreements.

There exist also other exchange modalities linked to the establishment of dyadic forms that can be located inside commercial relationships such as *aretun* (lend), *kakünun* (exchange), *wülatun* (sale) and *xaskintu* (barter). The particularity of them is that they can be analytically related to market exchange modalities, but the tacit limits between benefits and market are not always clearly visible.

Instead of differencing whether the exchange is made under the market rules or under the norms of reciprocity, it is important to identify and understand the context in which exchanges take place. In the analysis of reciprocity we found characteristics of the market such as the assignment of value and quality according to the prices of determinate products, and in mercantile exchanges we found that many “deals” or productive agreements occur framed in confidence, generated by reciprocity relationships.

Therefore, to understand exchange and reciprocity not only the construction of social relationships should be taken into account, but also economic relationships, since the economic is relevant in Llamuco to maintain and reproduce this sort of practices in the communities and support the very economic strategies of domestic groups.

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