Following *la Papa Nativa*:
A Visual Ethnography of a Food Commodity Chain in Peru

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

2019

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ABSTRACT

Peru has been the centre of origin and diversity of more than 3,000 varieties of native potato, although only a few varieties were typically consumed beyond the Andean region. Of little value outside the Andes, these tubers were long considered the food of the poor and the indigenous and thus intimately bounded to the Andean towns. However, since the Peruvian “Gastronomic Boom” took off in the mid-2000s, some native potato varieties together with other tubers like ocas, ollucos, and mashuas have started to be commercialised and became more widely consumed in the capital Lima.

This ethnographic work relies on fourteen months of fieldwork conducted across different urban and rural locations. It follows the activities of a Peruvian entrepreneur, Edilberto, and the creation of what I call the potato chain. Moving back and forth between restaurants in Lima, a farm in Condorccocha where potatoes were grown and collected, and Huamanga, the capital city of the region of Ayacucho which the potatoes must pass through, this thesis ethnographically attends to, and photographically reveals how different values are created and re-created in order to make new circuits available for the native potato. Accordingly, I looked at that the different ways in which native potatoes and the other tubers are 'made' and 'crafted' visible into valuable products along the chain, and across different paths of circulation and novel routes of consumption.

Through the five chapters of this thesis, I describe how my informants - farmers, precarious workers, chefs, entrepreneurs, and consumers - differently engage with the tubers. Therefore, this thesis sets off to unravel how potatoes acquire different values in relation to ethics, aesthetics, standards regulations, and the temporal coordination of the many parts and of the diverse rhythms of production peculiar to the potato chain. As with any capitalist enterprise, the potato chain is never smooth, and certainly not linear. I suggest that the formation and endurance of the potato chain are actually rendered possible by the conditions of the Gastronomic Boom, which must be understood within Peru’s unique political, economic, and cultural histories.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this thesis has been a long and unexpected journey. Many potato cycles have passed since I started the PhD and I am very grateful to many people who allowed me to grow during this journey. This thesis would not have been possible without the intellectual help and care of my two supervisors Penny Harvey and Andrew Irving, who were always supportive and provocative. For the photobook I got invaluable support from Alan Ward and Julian Baron.

My family in Mexico helped me in many different ways. The love I feel for them is incalculable. I cannot wait to see and hug them in person.

I greatly appreciate CONACyT (Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología) in Mexico, which funded the research.

In Peru I will be eternally thankful to Edilberto Soto, who allowed me to know the potato chain and spend more than a year hanging around with him wherever he went. He dedicates his work to his mother Mama Victoria, so I do too because she also received me at the farm with enormous care. Colfir and Maryober Yupari (also known as Pippo) were also deeply essential during my time in Peru, guiding me around the mountains and the country. Victor, Almaquio, and their families in Corazon de Ñaupas made me feel welcome in their house in the Andes. Abilio Soto and his family who rented me a room in their house in Huamanga were also crucial for my survival during the hardships of fieldwork. In Lima Fiorella, Claudia, Lorena, and Gustavo animated the grey sky of the capital for me. I am particularly thankful to Franco Kisic who allowed me entry to the IK restaurant, which keeps his twin brother Ivan alive for eternity. I also want to give thanks to the chefs and staff in Astrid and Gaston, Central, Tanta, and Las Canastas who gave the chance
to speak with and photograph them. Diego Muñoz and Emilio Macias also helped me understand why they care for the Andean tubers.

One of my favourite things about writing this thesis was receiving potato-based jokes from fellows and friends. I never thought that potatoes could make me laugh so much. In different ways and in different moments, they have helped me to survive the rhythms of the PhD and not forgetting to enjoy the essentials of life in Manchester: Letizia Bonanno, Jasmine Folz, Jeremy Gunson, Davide Merino, Paloma Yañez, Benjamin Llorens, Yorgos Chatzinakos, Federico Fattori, Lana Askari, Matt McMullen, Elvira Wepfner, Angelica Cabezas, Giusseppe Troccoli, Eugenio Giorgianni, Ahmad Moradi, Elahe Habibi, Rosa Sansone, Efrain Ceh, Alejandro Carballo, Kieran Hanson, Lee Gallagher, Mirco Polichetti, Claudia Comella, Diego Validivieso, John Foster, and those who I forget to mention here. Also thanks to Emma Topple for all her light and care and to Gareth Palmer for his Zen teachings.
INTRODUCTION

In 2012 I was working in Mexico in a programme for the conservation of native corn, which was domesticated in the country thousands of years ago but is not widely consumed across the nation. There are 64 varieties in Mexico, some of them are very colourful and quite attractive to the eye and to the tongue. However, these attractive varieties have little commercial value, are more difficult to grow, have less productivity per hectare and hence they are left aside. The few farmers who grow corn prefer to cultivate the so-called hybrid corn (*maiz hibrido* or *maiz blanco*), a modified variety that needs chemicals to thrive but that produces more per hectare. My boss at the time once told me that in Peru there was a similar case with native potatoes, also domesticated millennia ago and also colourful and delicious, that were struggling to survive but, unlike the corn in Mexico, the Peruvians were having better luck conserving their native crops. The native potatoes in Peru are displaced by what Peruvians call white potato (*papa blanca*), a variety whose productivity per hectare is far higher than that of the native potato. The white potato can also be cultivated on the coast, where the native potato would not grow, making the production of the white potato not only easier but also allowing for an expanded growing territory. I wondered: how is it that the native potato is surviving in this context?

The first time I saw a Peruvian native potato was on the Internet. As I was searching for them online I found that Edilberto Soto was making connections with chefs and trying to sell his produce beyond the production site in the Andes, where he has his farm. After contacting him through Facebook, I went to Peru to meet him for the first time in December 2014. Back in Manchester, I continued writing my research proposal based solely on native potatoes. Soon after I started my fieldwork in October 2015, I realised that Edilberto was trying to mobilise not only the native potatoes but also oca, ullucos, and
mashuas that grow together or in parallel with the potatoes. Similar to the native potatoes, these other tubers are not broadly known outside the Andes and exist in many varieties. Edilberto, who became my main informant, describes them as the “potato’s cousins” (primos de la papa). Sometimes he refers to them as the “other Andean tubers”. My research, therefore, could no longer look only at native potatoes and I started paying attention to the other Andean tubers as well. By looking at the work Edilberto does with and around the native potatoes, ocas, ollucos and mashuas, in this work I try to understand how it is that these tubers are starting to have a new life in contemporary Peru.

Edilberto's living room looks like a little museum of what he calls his "potato pilgrimage" (peregrinaje de la papa). Among conferences and fairs badges, pictures with chefs, entrepreneur awards and posters on the wall that relate with his work of promoting the tubers, there was one claiming danger of the current native potato's diversity situation. The poster had a picture of a native potato and the following text in both English and Spanish: "We are in danger... if we do not recognise and appreciate our native varieties, we are at risk of disappearing from the fields. Consume us so the farmers can still cultivate us." This poster resonates with other comments of Edilberto in relation to the relevance of his work for "conserving" (conservar) the native potatoes' diversity. It also echoes other claims of biodiversity loss in Latin America such as the Mexican native corn that inspired my research on native potatoes.

The increased areas of mono-cropping around the world that replace local, traditional and often diverse crops with uniform cultivars, using modern technology of agriculture as a response to feed the growing population, has affected the crop diversity and tropical forests. This process of displacement creates the conditions for "genetic erosion" (Brush 2004: 154), that is, different degrees of loss of a crop's diversity. Such are the cases where improved crop varieties affect local diversity like the winter wheat in
Lebanon, barley in Northern Africa, rice in Asia, maize in Mexico (Brush 2004) or the potato in Chile and Peru (Ochoa 2011).

The discussion about genetic erosion in the case of the native potato in Peru lies in the tension between the so-called “white” or “improved” potato and the native potatoes. The improved varieties are those who have been improved by scientific breeding methods to resist plagues and to increase and standardise productivity as part of diverse state development programmes (van der Ploeg 1993; de Haan et al. 2010). As I will show throughout this thesis, the native varieties are associated with ancestral or traditional ways of cultivation. Their breeding and genetic mutation are based on indigenous ways of managing the cultivars that privileges a system of mixed seed planting, which enhances the gene flow, genetic variation, and mutation among the species planted (de Haan et al. 2010; Brush et al. 1995). From this perspective, the "improved" potato (papas mejoradas) varieties also superpose a scientific agriculture logic that undermines the local way of farming in the Andes (van der Ploeg 1993).

Even though the introduction of improved or white potatoes has not created an official declaration that proves the genetic erosion of the native varieties, the poster that Edilberto has hanging in his living room speaks to the tension that the white potatoes pose to the native varieties. Relying on cases where crop biodiversity is maintained despite the introduction of improved varieties, Brush (2004) argues that modern varieties do not necessarily, but possibly, cause genetic erosion. He shows that despite the increasing of areas cultivating improved varieties in different parts of the world, farmers continue growing native crops, contesting the taken-for-granted notion that the introduction of the new varieties always create genetic erosion (Brush 1992). Similarly, De Haan et al (2010) found high levels of native potato diversity in cultivars in Central Peru, pointing out that the absence of some varieties can be explained as a result of the migration of farmers looking for jobs to the
city and as a result of the forced migration during the Peruvian Internal Conflict. Brush suggests however, that genetic erosion happens in the early stages of the adoption of the improved varieties, but that the “loss of diversity may be limited after an initial period” (Brush et al. 1995:1197) as the farmers continue growing native varieties for self-consumption and for the culinary features of the tubers (de Haan et al. 2010).

What it is important to point out is that Edilberto builds a narrative that highlights the status of native potatoes as in danger of disappearing. Such a danger relates to the warning about genetic erosion created by the displacement of native potatoes for white potatoes. Influenced by the idea of genetic erosion, Edilberto promotes the need to consume native potatoes as a strategy to keep them alive as well as to recompose the social fabric so that it creates benefit to Andean farmers.

The potato and the Tubers as Commodities

Peru was the centre of origin and diversity of more than 3,000 varieties of native potato but only a few varieties are typically consumed beyond the Andean towns. In the context of the Peruvian “Gastronomic Boom”, some native potato varieties are starting to be commercialised and are now more widely consumed in the capital Lima. How is that happening? Arjun Appadurai distinguishes the cultural biography from the social history of things (1986:34) but he also sees a relation between them. Following Igor Kopytoff, he defines the cultural biography of things as the way in which “specific things … move through different hands, contexts, and uses … accumulating a specific biography” (1986:34, italics in original). In relation to the social history of things, he refers to the “large-scale dynamics” that occur to classes of type of things, where it is important to “look at long-term shifts (often in demand)” (Kopytoff 1986:34). This approach helps me to differentiate the historical dynamics from the specific routes that the native potato is taking currently. The latter are the routes that I was interested in
following during my fieldwork. I was curious to know how is it that the native potato is taking such specific new routes that are clearly different from the historical tendency in the life of the native potatoes.

In contrast to the historical “large-scale dynamics”, Appadurai defines "diversions" as the different routes that a thing takes in relation to the historical paths of that same thing. In this sense, it is necessary to consider the historical dynamics of the native potatoes in Peru to then see the novel routes as “diversions”. One of Appadurai’s interests is exploring when a thing becomes a commodity; he posits that all things have potential to be commodities. In that sense “a commodity is not one kind of thing rather than another, but one phase in the life of some things” (Appadurai 1986:34). It is that temporal view on things as commodities what he calls "paths and diversions" (Appadurai 1986:17–18). That is, in his view the same thing or object can at some point be a commodity and at another point in its life not to be a commodity. According to Richard Wilk (2009:88), Appadurai (1986) and Kopytoff (1986) focus on the movement of things as they go back and forth from the commodity form to the gift form, missing the routes and transformation that a thing takes once it is a commodity within a commodity chain. In this light, my work is concerned less about whether the native potato is or is not a commodity and concentrates on how the potato and the other Andean tubers move and transform along the chain as commodities, that is, as objects produced to be exchanged for a monetary equivalence, making them a commodity in the Marxist sense (Appadurai 1986:6).

In this regard, the native potato has probably always been involved in mechanisms of exchange. John Murra argued that one of the peculiarities of in the Inca organisation was the absence of markets (Murra 1995) and other forms of trade and exchange based on the logic of what he called “vertical control”. Archaeologists found residue of potatoes in Casma, a place near the coast and near to Lima that showed that 4,000 years ago people were
consuming them. The potato face-like ceramics of the Moche and Chimú cultures that spread in the Peruvian coast before the rise of the Incas are further evidence of the early interchange of potatoes between the people in the Andes and the coast (Salaman, Burton, and Hawkes 1985). That potatoes were found at the coast, a place not originally a site for potatoes to thrive because it is too hot for them (Hawkes 1985), suggests that coastal people were exchanging fish for potatoes with Andean potato growers (Reader 2009). That is, it was a product exchangeable for another product with equivalent value and therefore a commodity in the "less purist" sense (Appadurai 1986:6).

Drawing on Simmel, Appadurai points out that “exchange is not a by-product of the mutual valuation of objects, but its source” (1986:4) and therefore he sets the analysis in “the conditions under which economic objects circulate different regimes of value in space and time” (1986:4). Where Appadurai focuses on exchange, rejecting the Marxian notion that value lies in production, Graeber disagrees with Appadurai. Graeber criticises Appadurai for his “rejection of Marx” in his definition of what a commodity is, for the “glorification of consumption as a creative self-expression” and for the attention given to individual strategies (Graeber 2001:32). Appadurai defines the commodity broadly so to include features of barter and gift but does not separate them. By doing so, he takes distance from the Marxist distinction between gifts, barter and commodity exchange: “in trying to understand what is distinctive about commodity exchange, it does not make sense to distinguish it sharply either from barter on the one hand, or from the exchange of gifts on the other” (Appadurai 1986:13). Despite this controversy, the influence of Appadurai’s work has allowed me to focus on the social life of things, where objects are understood to have specific biographies moving between “different cultural worlds” (Graeber 2001:33). During my fieldwork I paid attention to the production and the circulation of the tubers with the aim to connect and understand how the tubers accrue and/or transform value as they move across different “cultural worlds".
While Appadurai sees "the commodity potential of all things rather than searching fruitlessly for the magic distinction between commodities and other sorts of things" (1986:13), Anna Tsing (2013) suggests seeing what could be paradoxically called the gift potential of all commodities. That is, that on the way to acquire capitalist value, things rely on "tapping and transforming non-capitalist social relations" (Tsing 2013:13) such as the ones that are transferred through gifts. While for Appadurai (1986; 2013) and Kopytoff (1986) things can come in and out from the commodity form and "anything exchanged is a commodity" (Tsing 2013:22), for Tsing commodities come and go from the gift form. Tsing explains that the matsukake Mushroom "is a capitalist commodity that begins and ends its life as a gift" (Tsing 2013:37). While Tsing’s approach could look like an opposite perspective to Appadurai’s, it seems to me complementary. In fact, and similarly to Appadurai, Tsing is aware that the sharp distinction between gifts and commodities is no more than an analytical tool for anthropologists: "existing relations of exchange are, of course, mixed and messy. Not only do self-described gifts and commodities nestle beside each other, but they also incorporate each other's characteristics" (Tsing 2013:22). Such characteristics have been discussed for a long time in the anthropological tradition: "while commodity exchange is concerned with establishing equivalencies between the value of objects, gifts are primarily about relations between people" (Graeber 2001:32; also see Tsing 2013; Gregory 2015; Strathern 2001; Mauss 2015). In this line, from the theoretical separation of gift and commodities, comes the idea that gift and commodities "animate different systems of value: value in a commodity system is in things for use and exchange. Value in a gift system is in social obligations, connections, and gaps" (Tsing 2013:22). My ethnography of the circulation of the native potato and the other tubers suggests that the tubers as commodities are constantly in tension to be understood for their use value and at the same time also represent symbolic relations between people and the land. But the way the tubers recreate their
value does not stop there. In this light, I will also explore in the following chapters the ways in which values are constructed in relation to ethics, regulatory devices as documents and standards, and the aesthetic ways in which chefs use the tubers.

As I will expand upon throughout the thesis, one of the non-capitalist values helping to re-value the native potato is the historical background of the potato. The history of the potato as original to Peru and as a symbol of social obligations serves as an anchor to bring that history back to the present as something Peruvians take pride in. In other words, this history of having a pre-capitalist quality is crafted as a heritage to redeem the potato by making it visible in some specific and strategic ways. The native potato, in this sense, acquires value by making its history and origin visible, a strategy that of course involves human work. Those types of relations between capitalist and non-capitalist forms are what, for Tsing, makes capitalism work. At the same time it is what makes supply chains interesting to explore as they reveal these sorts of links through the circulation of a specific commodity. In this light, this research explores how the native tubers acquire value in the intersection of capitalist and non-capitalist relationships as they circulate. But at the same time, I pay attention to how and where the native tubers circulate once their value is transformed. This is not a straightforward task. Creating and maintaining the connections and interest between people and the tubers is labour intensive and includes looking for new opportunities to create and mobilise values that help move the tubers along the chain.

I agree with Appadurai that commodities exist in a "very wide variety of societies" with special intensity in capitalist societies (1986:6). By subscribing to this idea, I also agree with the understanding that labour in the production process is not the unique source of value in a commodity. It is precisely as Appadurai (1986) and Kopytoff (1986) suggest that by focusing in the circulation of a thing or in the thing in motion that it is possible to find
how value is created beyond the production stage. The story of how the native potatoes and the other Andean tubers are being re-valued in Peru aims to contribute to this theory. During my fieldwork I realised that some particular cultural histories of labour are made visible along the tubers' circulation in order to make the tubers valuable and enable them to move from the mountains to restaurants in Lima. That is, I refer here to some details that Edilberto uses as strategies to link the tubers with the mountains where they grow and with the people who farm them, including Edilberto himself. He does that with the aim to make the crops look specially produced and historically connected with the land. In this light it is interesting to pay attention to the stories he and other people try to make visible as well as the stories which are not promoted in the process of circulation. These stories help the circulation of the tubers but sometimes they also emerge in the circulation process itself. In this sense, following the tubers revealed that the strategies used to make them valuable are a matter of "making visible" (Strathern in Graeber 2001:47) certain qualities or facts of the process as well as its historical background, which is conceived as heritage. Looking at the biographies of the native potato and the other tubers reveals how some aspects of the tubers' lives are mobilised in order to make them valued in new social and economic contexts. This argument emerges from the way I carried out fieldwork as a visual anthropologist. As I will discuss later, the permanent presence of the photographic camera and the way it mediated my position and my activities as a researcher, made more evident what my informants wanted and allowed me to see. The act of photographing, my gaze, and what my informants were actively showing me revealed how the tubers and the labour of production, selection, distribution, and cooking is made visible and/or invisible at different stages along the chain.

My original curiosity about the native potatoes was about how the tubers manage to move from the Andes to Lima entering a new circuit of exchange. However, it is important to note here that the potato is a thing that has an
ephemeral life. That is, it is grown and ends up being eaten; it disappears in digestion. Nonetheless, its circulation contributes to the category of native potatoes in a more abstract and general way rather than in the thing itself. In this regard, following the potato is different than following the story of a specific thing such as an heirloom, a museum artefact, or an art piece, whose biography its unique in the sense that the object in itself accumulates the story of its own circulation rather than to a category of things of the same type such as a potato.

Appadurai explains “the diversion of commodities from specified paths is always a sign of creativity or crisis, whether aesthetic or economic” (1986: 26). Following the native potato suggests that the diversion of paths that the tubers are taking is at the same time a creative response to a crisis but it is important to notice that it is happening within a broader national context of neoliberalisation and the Peruvian Gastronomic Boom. In these contexts, products are pulled and pushed as commodities under the logic and hope that self-entrepreneurship can alleviate poverty and reconstruct the social fabric. As I will expand upon in Chapter One, just 20 years ago the native potato was not of interest in the capital Lima and the circulation of native potatoes, ocas, ollucos and mashuas was mostly bounded within the Andes. This thesis asks how and by what means are these tubers now making their way to Lima, to other cities and sometimes outside Peru. To respond to that question I followed the native potatoes and the other Andean tubers from the production site in the Andes to some of the restaurants in Lima.

Of course, the social history of the native potatoes and tubers in Peru is "not entirely [a] separate matter" from their current cultural biography which, in fact, "constrains the form [and] meaning" (Appadurai 1986:36) of the tubers but also gives shape to deviations. Appadurai suggests that the deviation of the cultural biography of things can lead to shifts in the social history of things, something that he states is “typically harder to document or predict”
(1986:36). From this point of view, having native potatoes in a high-end restaurant in Lima can be seen as a deviation and as I will discuss in the following chapters it may be modifying the social history of the native tubers in Peru. Nevertheless, from an historical perspective it is still a small diversion that could lead to a shift in the social history of the native potato and tubers. Indeed, my main informant Edilberto hopes that this new circulation of the tubers will help restore the social fabric of the country.

Appadurai’s theory about the social life of things has theoretical and methodological repercussions. In what follows, I will explore how this idea connects to the study of things and specifically of things along the commodity chain as well as how it relates to the way I carried on my ethnographic and photographic research. Before that, however, it is pertinent to see how the potato has been studied within research on the Andes.

**Food and Potato in the Andes**

Mary Weismentel argues from a structural and symbolic perspective that what we eat and how we eat, “defines us as social beings” (1988:7). She claims that a “bowl of boiled potatoes or a plate of white rice is at least three different kind of things: a sign, a symbol, and a product” (Weismantel 1988:7). In a similar vein, Sidney Mintz argued, "food choices and eating habits reveal distinctions of age, sex, status, culture and even occupation" (1985:3).

Some ethnographies of the Andes describe how potatoes and other foods are used for local purposes. For instance, Olivia Harris (1995) investigated the *Laymi* economy in Bolivia where potatoes are exchanged for money with urban consumers as one of the ways her informants get access to cash. This money in turn gives them access to markets to buy products that they need but do not produce. Moreover, the potatoes used for exchange for money in an economy with "little cash" needed, are planted differentially in that potatoes are planted either "for food" or "for money" (Harris 1995:306).
However, Harris’ focus is not on how to commercialise potatoes but, rather, on how to understand how money works within the Laymi economy. She only mentioned one variety of potatoes and did not clarify how the people prepared the potatoes whatsoever.

Potatoes can also be part of a system of “ethnic subordination” (De la Cadena 1995:340) whereby being more mestizo and less Indian is socially valuable in a country like Peru. Based on her fieldwork in Chitapampa, an Andean town close to Cuzco, Marisol de la Cadena (1995) argues that “women are more Indian”. She suggests that Andean women are less likely to move from their perception as Indian to mestizas. De la Cadena further argues that one way to get such ethnic mobility is by having work in the city because “the differences between Indian and mestizo are represented by perceived differences between country and city” (1995:342). However, the work that women get in the city, such as vendors, is not valued by the male view of work because it involves only “sitting down”. In her ethnographic accounts and in order to build her argument, De la Cadena notes that Indian women are perceived as only knowing how to cook boiled potatoes and make lahuas (a type Andean soup) in contrast with mestizo women who are also able to cook rice, stews, and cakes (De la Cadena 1995:342). That is, De la Cadena’s use of the potato shows the close cultural link between the tuber and Indian identity.

In trying to understand the social and symbolic differences between mestizos and Indians, Benjamin Orlove (1998) suggests that Indians have closer relationships with earthen objects like adobe bricks, clay pots or rural roads. Similarly to the work of De la Cadena, the potato appears in his ethnographic argument to clarify that if both mestizos and Indians use the potato they do it in different ways. De la Cadena and Orlove suggest that potato consumption both reflects and constitutes people’s racial identity. The variety of potato, the cooking method, the way of eating them, and the type of pan used to cook...
(clay or metal) contributes to the differentiation. Orlove (1993) has also pointed to the historical and political construction of the geography of Peru distinguishing the differences between colonial and post-colonial ways of understanding the territory. Peruvians divide their country into “three natural regions of the coast, the highlands and the jungle” (1993:332). Such a geographical division, he argues, has served to emphasize racial differences of the people living in each geographic area. In that logic, the native potato and the Andeans tubers have become part of displaying and constituting racial difference.

What this literature makes evident is that the potato is present and it is central to the lives of the people in the Andes. The potato has helped anthropologists to understand the coherence by which people live and understand their lives in the Andes: it has been historically closely related to the Andean culture. As I followed the native potato and the other tubers, I focused less in their local significance, which has already been well documented. My interest was instead in understanding how the potato and the other tubers are re-signified and re-valued to enter into another pattern of circulation. In this circulation they transform into objects of national significance because they represent the Andean mountains outside the Andes, the people who cultivate them and also, to some degree, Peruvian-ness itself. It is not a coincidence that many people in Lima are impressed when they first see the colourful range of potatoes that grow in the Andes. The fact they are not aware of their existence speaks to the isolation or separation between the coastal cities and the life in the mountains.

Weismentel suggests that "when foods become symbols, their meanings are not arbitrarily defined but derives from the roles they play in economic life" (1988:7). That is, that the economic value and the symbolism of food are intertwined or at least that is what I observed by following the potato and the other Andean tubers. In another context, Nancy Ries focuses on the potato to
show how “a material thing can be an integral and integrating vehicle of social consciousness as well as consciousness of society” (Ries 2009:184). She based her research on the ways in which food, in her particular case potatoes, bring memories and consciousness to the core of people’s lives. My focus, conversely, is on the tension between value and what the tubers mean for the people who are involved in the commodity chain.

More often than not, in the restaurants where the potato and tubers arrive in Lima, the potato and tubers are used to represent the Andean mountains and the people who grow and consume them, that is, the so-called indigenous people who live in the Andes. In a country where indigenous people have been seen as a problem "representing barbarism in contrast to the values of civilization" (Harris 2000:3), the potato seems to have carried traces of that representation. By following the tubers from their genesis in the Andes, this work explores the social and material relations that bring the potato into being in (and to) the city.

**The Tubers as Food Heritage**

The ways in which my informants were making the potato’s “nativeness” visible and brought into being as a quality by relating the tubers with Peruvian history, territory, and indigenous farmers relates my research to the anthropological literature about food heritage. Making food an object of heritage, or the “heritagisation of food” (Klein 2018; Grasseni 2014; West 2016), involves a process where diverse actors engage in claiming the “historical legacy” (Weiss 2016:244) of a specific local product. Scholars have discussed food heritage in relation to discourses around food for political, economic, or ideological goals (Brulotte and Di Giovine 2014), examining, for example, the capacity of food heritage practices benefit - or not - small-scale and local producers (Klein 2018; West 2016; Bowen 2010), or the significant role they play in the construction or re-construction of identity (Lu
Studies of food heritage have found fertile ground in relation to the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List, where food and ways of cooking are increasingly being institutionally recognised for their "historical legacy" (West 2016; Brulotte and Di Giovine 2014). National governments in different parts of the world are getting interested in including their gastronomic traditions or specific food and drink products into this list, with the aim of promoting tourism in their countries as well as protecting and commercialising specific ways of producing. This has been the case with both Mexico and France, whose foods - together with the Mediterranean diet from Spain, Greece, Italy, and Morocco - were included in the UNESCO’s list in 2010, thereby gaining them more national and international visibility in this area (Sammells 2014). Similarly, in 2007 the Peruvian government declared gastronomy as National Heritage. Following this, in 2012, they embarked on a process to include Peruvian Gastronomy into the UNESCO’s Intangible Heritage List using the slogan: “Peruvian Cuisine for the World” (Cocina peruana para el mundo), with the aim to foster tourism through food (Sammells 2014:142). Even though they have not yet succeeded in gaining UNESCO recognition, this institutional and active form of adding value to food for its historical legacy influences the ways in which the native potato is able to find new ways of circulating in Peru.

The role that governments play in the heritagisation of food is discussed by Jakob Klein (2018), who explores both how value is “captured” through making food an object of heritage, as well as who is able to participate in this process. He suggests that the capacity to benefit from projects of heritagisation of food is in dispute among industrial corporations, farmers, ethnic minorities, and rural localities, showing how the role of the state influences how the value of heritagisation is distributed. Similarly, Bowen
(2010), for instance, argues that the process of Geographic Indication of Origin of Mexican Tequila has failed in benefiting small-scale producers because the particular role of the state in designing and enforcing the legislation has mostly benefited large industries. In contrast, small-scale cheesemakers in France (West 2014), the Italian Alps (Grasseni 2014) or pork breeders in the United States of America (Weiss 2011) have been able to capture the value from the heritagisation of food. Drawing on these cases, Klein shows that small cheese producers in China are able to benefit from the heritagisation of cheese by both mimicking and differentiating from the marketing and productive practices of those who get more benefit with state support. As I will show in Chapter One, the Peruvian government is playing an active role in marketing and promoting Peruvian Gastronomy through highlighting the importance of agriculture and the revitalisation of the indigenous way of producing.

The increasing popularity of local or indigenous ingredients in new urban contexts is not an isolated case in Peru nor in Latin America. For instance, within the Peruvian Gastronomic Boom, chefs are using guinea pigs (cuy), in part for their symbolic relation to the Andes. Matta (2015) argues that the way chefs use indigenous foods like guinea pigs and native tubers in Peru “elevates” (Matta 2015) their value and helps to create new routes of circulation. Similarly, Mexican chefs use and “legitimate” (Castellanos and Bergstresser 2014) ingredients and cooking practices that carry an indigenous association, through using ingredients such as escamoles, chapulines, or huitlacoche and through utilising various indigenous ways of cooking corn.

In her research in the Ecuadorian Andes, Abbots (2014) suggests that food produced by indigenous farmers in the countryside tends to be seen as “healthier” and “more natural” than the products of the “modern food system” by people in the cities (Abbots 2014:47). As I will show throughout this thesis, these ideas are vivid in Peru and contribute in re-constructing the value of the
native tubers. This way in which chefs and the government in Peru are revaluing the native potatoes resonates with the debate about the revitalisation of local food in the sense that it is often promoted by the state or local elites (Klein 2018). In this process of re-invention, producers build claims for heritage, tradition or authenticity, with the aim of adding value to their local produce (Klein 2018; West 2016).

In the construction of the discourse of Mexican cuisine, Ayora-Díaz argues that cookbooks seek “to legitimize their claims of authenticity by locating their roots in indigenous cultures” (Ayora-Díaz 2012:62). Similarly, using certain ingredients and cooking methods and foregrounding their indigenous origins serves as a tool that chefs are using to legitimate their bonds with the Country. The increasing recognition of these products and ways of cooking, Castellanos and Bergstresser (2014) argue, shows the acceptance of the rhetoric of food as heritage and highlights the value of both ingredients and cooking practices them in the construction of the new Peruvian Cuisine. In these cases, chefs rely on indigenous ingredients that are perceived as and constructed as authentic for “the modes of connectivity” (Weiss 2012:623) that they evoke nowadays. This is true of potatoes and tubers, which as native foodstuffs evoke a connection to Peru’s history, a connection to the Andean land, and a connection to the rural and indigenous people who produce and consume them.

Similar to the way the UNESCO legitimates food, these cases reveal the politics and power dynamics whereby elites reproduce their influence by reasserting indigenous food. In this regard, more than being a tool to reconfigure the class, ethnic, power, and market dynamics within Peru, the heritagisation of food reproduces the existing structures. As my ethnography reveals, the question of who and by what means it is possible to benefit from processes of food heritagisation is informed by these power dynamics that are at play in different moments along the chain.
Making food an object of heritage also involves strategies of marketing (Weiss 2011; Besky 2014; Grasseni 2003; Paxson 2014) that are tied to processes of packing, branding, and certifying foodstuffs (Klein 2018; Brulotte and Di Giovine 2014) with the aim of commercialisation and making profit. Brad Weiss, for instance, argues that local pork is “an amalgam of animal husbandry, marketing strategies, and social networking” (Weiss 2011:452). Similar cases occur with tea in India (Besky 2014) and cheese in Italy (Grasseni 2003), where cultural histories of how the food is produced are part of the marketing strategies and “new skills” (Grasseni 2003) that producers have to learn and embrace to sell their produce and benefit from the heritagisation of food. My work about native potatoes relates to these debates by specifically paying attention to the strategies that my informants deploy to mobilise the tubers as a local food that carries a long history of a place. As I will show, my ethnography suggests that those who benefit from the heritagisation of the native potato are those who are best able to navigate the market, through adapting to certain standards and times.

**Food in Circulation**

The studies of commodity chains connect places and people by paying attention to the routes of a specific commodity. Sidney Mintz's work *Sweetness and Power* (1985) was a cornerstone in the “commodity-based” approach within food studies (Klein, Pottier, and West 2012). With his seminal investigation about sugar, he showed that it was possible to tell a story about power and global connections by focusing on the circulation of a foodstuff. By doing this, he also liberated the focus on food from solely symbolic and structural interpretation.

As I have started to show, one particularity of the case of the native potato and the Andean tubers is the symbolic and historic relevance they have in the Andean mountains and more broadly in Peru. That is, for instance, the
significance of being original for the country and what that can represent for consumers in and outside the Andes. As I will show later in the thesis, the historicity and symbolism that are currently attached to the potato are mobilised and then transformed as the tubers circulate. One of my interests is to explore how those ideas are crafted –through labour– to make them visible along the commodity chain and the power dynamics involved in that process. Other researchers that have followed Mintz’ approach (i.e. Freidberg 2004; Fischer and Benson 2006; Striffler and Moberg 2003; Sick 2008; Barndt 2008) look at the differences and power relations between consumers and producers. They show how producers are normally exploited and how their labour is not fairly valued. These dynamics are not absent from my ethnography. However, my focus lies on the efforts and strategies mobilised to make the potato move and be re-valued in Peru, a country where the same potatoes were invisible in the city not long ago. How are the Andean tubers starting to have a different biography, a different life story beyond the Andes?

With studies about commodity chains, scholars have contributed to globalisation studies arguing, for instance, that globalisation is not as organised as economists may think and that it is, rather, permanently under construction (Knowles 2014; Tsing 2015). Similarly, research about commodity chains have served to question the idea that “everything is ruled by a singular capitalist logic” to argue instead that capitalism depends on non-capitalist forms for its reproduction (Tsing 2015:65). Globalisation and capitalism, those studies show, are not either homogenous or uniform. Supply chains are good ethnographic cases to see how capitalism works as they can bring “questions of diversity within structures of power” while labour, nature and capital are mobilised through them (Tsing 2009:149). Inspired by those ideas, I navigate along with the Andean tubers to explore how value in a capitalist chain is re-created.
The notion of focusing on a thing in motion suggested by Appadurai (1986) and Kopytoff (1986) also inspired me to follow the native potato from the growing site to the restaurants in Lima. My aim was to understand how the tubers were being mobilised to new contexts in Peru's capital. In other words, I wanted to investigate how it came to be that the native potato was having a new social life, a new biography. In fact, anthropologists and cultural geographers (Benson and Fischer 2007; Barndt 2008; Freidberg 2004; Tsing 2015; Cook and Crang 1996; Jackson, Ward, and Russell 2006; Miller 1995) have studied food on the move in recent years by following the foodstuff to the different sites where it is mobilised. Following a thing in a commodity chain means to navigate within capitalist set of connections, including human and non-human relations. In this light, this research shows the fertility of the approach to explore social dynamics of power and colonialism (Freidberg 2004) in a globalised world (Fischer and Benson 2006; Knowles 2014), or how cultural difference (Tsing 2015), work and environmental exploitation (Barndt 2008) are required to make capitalism function. My research aims to contribute to that body of work but it is also different in that my ethnography revealed some of the strategies and social dynamics in the (re)creation of value of the “thing in motion”. Such strategies make the new life of the tubers possible at the same time that the tubers acquire value as they move into new routes. That process requires a lot of effort, labour, and coordination among different people, which is what I followed during my fieldwork. As such, my ethnographic approach of following the tubers along the chain tries "to complicate the apparently smooth surface of things (...) to attend to capitalism's simultaneity" (Appel 2015), that is, the ambiguity of being at the same time uneven, heterogeneous, and contested on one hand, and proliferative, powerful and systematic on the other (Appel 2015).

Research about commodity chains varies in the ways the authors name the so-called chain. Thus, the literature is mixed with different ways to name the abstract figure where things circulate: commodity chain (Hopkins and
Wallerstein 1986), global commodity chain (Gereffi and Korzeniewicz 1994), commodity network (Freidberg 2004), supply chain (Tsing 2009), supply chain capitalism (Tsing 2009, 2015), commodity trail (Barndt 2008; Knowles 2014), or commodity circuit (Cook and Crang 1996; West 2012). While those terms have in common the idea that a thing moves from one place to another(s), they differ in stressing the linearity or non-linearity of the movement as well as what happen along the route.

Deborah Barndt investigates the “tomato trail” but differently than Caroline Knowles (2014) in that she did not define exactly what she meant by “trail”. However, with the term she aims to clarify that her interest was not based on a “classical commodity chain analysis” (Barndt 2008:9) whereby the focus lies in understanding how the chain works in terms of mechanization, work, and economic flows. That is, the classical approach does not centre the attention on how people along the chain live, experience, and actively act in the chain and the focus rather tends to be on “the technical operations and economic consequences of the chain.” In this light, Barndt’s research problematizes more than taking for granted environmental and gender issues in the “twisty trail, a many-staged journey that no one understands in its entirety” (Barndt 2008:9–10).

Caroline Knowles refers to a "trail" in opposition to a commodity chain to emphasize that the routes that flip-flops constitutes part of their lives and that such routes illuminate the understanding of how globalisation works. Her focus allows her to be sensitive to “expose territories, lives and the connections between them”. For her, “trails are more than a chain; they are animated by the topographies they cross, by the feet, flesh and lives, living in particular, local, connected worlds” (2014:6). Her strategy of following flip-flops became a “chronicle of uncertain journeys” (2014:7) across different countries that point at the erratic quality of global connections that aims to
contest the image of a set of arrangements that work as a perfectly connected chain.

Susan Friedberg (2004) analysed two food commodity networks to ask how power relations shape the food trades that she investigated. She shows how the standards of food quality and safety for green beans in England and France have shaped their production in Zambia and Burkina Faso respectively. The configuration that the commodity networks take reproduces the power relations between the countries, emulating their shared colonial past. She focuses on the role of intermediaries, who “learned to operate in a network where quality norms were understood because of certain historical ties - between peasant producers and the urban business elite, between colony and colonizer” (Freidberg 2004:214). Her focus on standardisation is therefore a way to explore power relations. Standards in green bean production are a measure to protect French and British consumers, ensuring safe food. She shows that standardisation excludes some small holders from the supply chain because they are not able to accomplish the standards required. In addition, standardisation puts local knowledge at risk because it implies that the traditional ways of farming have to be changed (Freidberg 2004). Friedberg also pays attention to the role of media in expressing ideals that resonate for consumers. These ideals are about "more than eating" (Freidberg 2004) and have moral implications that resonate with the people that produce and consume food. For her this is also part of the power dynamics involved in the food chain.

In *Broccoli and Desire*, Benson and Fischer (2007:800) examine the “relations of desire and political economic power” by following a broccoli commodity chain from Guatemala to the United States of America. They argue that “hopes, desires and aspirations” are characteristics of current globalised commodity chains (2007:801) and suggest that desire is stimulated in both producers and consumers but from a different perspective. Desire,
defined as the “collective phenomenon shaped at the interface of individual intentions, local worlds, and global flows” (2007:802), is the main force that pushes farmers to grow broccoli in Guatemala and consumers to buy it in the United States. However, the shape that desire takes among Guatemalan farmers is associated with a wish “for something better” (Benson and Fischer 2007:801). This desire becomes a source of exploitation given the precarious conditions in which they live and which also keeps them working in the broccoli industry. On the other hand, consumers’ desire in the US takes form in relation to a wish for healthy food (2007:815). Despite claiming that “desire is ubiquitous across the commodity chain, although its meaning and force vary” (2007:816), Benson and Fischer focus their attention on producers and consumers, leaving little of their analysis to other actors that make the chain work, such as intermediaries. In addition to uncovering the exploitation along the broccoli commodity chain, their ethnography contributes to studies of globalisation by showing the ambiguity created in the global trade where "expectations and opportunities are mediated by geographies of class, capital, and individual subjectivities" (2007:802). For instance, they argue that neoliberal reforms create new forms of risk and inequality at the same time they strengthen some community values. Importantly, they show this not to defend neoliberal policies but to widen the spectrum of analysis.

Another important study, Tangled Routes by Deborah Barndt (2008), follows the tomato trail from production fields in Mexico to fast food restaurants in Canada. Barndt uncovers different power relations reinforced by the global connections brought about by the free trade market. She explores male domination of women and colonial relations of power over indigenous people through the tomato trail. Her ethnographic approach allows her to look at globalisation from “above” and from “below”; that is, she paid attention both to the corporate agendas that try to structure the forces of the trade and the way low wage woman workers deal with, resist, and interpret them. However,
she also acknowledges “signs of hope” through collective resistance and resilience of woman workers.

Barndt (2008) uncovers different forms of exploitation along the tomato trade routes and points out that participants along the chain have little knowledge or understanding about the whole system of production, distribution and consumption, that is, the chain. This is particularly interesting to me because during my fieldwork, as I will discuss later, one of the efforts that people make is to know where the produce comes from. This is of course, a different regime of production that has been explored in research about fair trade, local production and consumption, and organic production. Do these regimes of production and consumption close the gap of knowledge between producers and consumers? Such a consideration resonates with Appadurai’s notion of "politics of knowledge" whereby he argues that big gaps of knowledge about the market between producers and consumers "are usually conducive of high profit in trade" (1986:43). With the aim to challenge the abstraction created by such a gap in knowledge produced by the long distances that the global tomato chain entails, Barndt made use of photography to visualise and juxtapose the inequalities created by dynamics of globalisation (Barndt 2008). The long distances are not only physical in terms of the space that separates Mexico, the United States of America and Canada, but also in terms of the hierarchies and the information known among producers, intermediaries, and consumers. This is powerfully stated when she argues that tomatoes "are often treated better than workers" (Barndt 2008:82).

The distance between producers and consumers in the circulation has informed and inspired research about “alternative food networks” and “ethical consumption” (Carrier and Luetchford 2012; Guthman 2014; Jung, Klein, and Caldwell 2014; Neve 2008) whereby “desires for reconnection” with the land, people, food producers, or traditional flavours” (Klein and Watson 2016:17) have created space and reflection about the development -
and labelling- of artisanal, organic, fair trade, craft, or local foods. While Jung, Klein, and Caldwell (2014) have noticed that the majority of these studies tend to stress the problematic relationship between the ethical goals and the actual conditions of production, labour and “ethical consumption”, they suggest paying attention instead to how the practices of eating and sharing come to be ethical or unethical. That is, their suggestion is to trace how it is that food can “become entangled in ethical projects” (2014:6). This becomes interesting because it adds another layer to the previous debate about commodity and gift exchange. Klein, Jung, and Caldwell offer one way to understand what ethical food is as “those foods that symbolize and convey particular value systems that are often presented in terms of rightness and justness” (2014:7). In this sense, the anthropological inquiry would lie in exploring how a foodstuff such as the potato and the other tubers can symbolise “rightness and justness”. In this sense, the tubers as commodities “are not thought of as morally neutral or separable from the people who produce them” (Neve 2008:10). In this process, again, paying attention to strategies of making visible (or not) elements of production, distribution and consumption can help us better understand the dynamics.

Considering the nuances of the different abstract figures that can be of help in representing the system of circulation of things, the circulation of the native potatoes and the other tubers is embedded in what can be thought of as a supply chain, that is, a system of production and distribution that make them move and transform from their seed form in Ayacucho to the final plate in restaurants in Lima. Anna Tsing defines supply chain as a specific commodity chain that uses outsourcing and contracting in current capitalism. In supply chains “lead firms direct commodity traffic” (2015: 62) and also set the standards of the commodities. In this conceptualisation of the chain, "lead firms" have complete influence over the forms of production. What is also interesting to me from the way Tsing understands the chain is the perspective of a system that gathers and makes use of diversity to create profit within a
capitalist logic. By following the matsukake mushroom through the supply chain (2009, 2015) and analysing big companies like Nike and Wal-Mart (2009), Tsing argues that capitalism relies on non-capitalist forms to create profit. For instance, she argues that “raw materials” like coal and oil “came into existence long before capitalism” (2015:63). Following Tsing’s lead, I consider the native potato and the other Andean tubers, that were domesticated around 8,000 years ago, as an existing pre capitalist form that are now commercialised under a capitalist logic. The labour and knowledge that gave rise to the domestication of native potatoes is a non-capitalist form that is taken as an asset in capitalist terms to (try to) create wealth. The supply chain is a system by which the tubers get from the farm to the restaurants but also a process where the tubers and their value are being transformed: “supply chains are commodity chains that translate value to the benefit of dominant firms; translation between non-capitalist and capitalist value system is what they do” (Tsing 2015:63). In this sense, during my fieldwork I followed the native potatoes, ocas, ollucos, and mashuas, as they were coming in and out of the supply chain.

Following the native potato and the other Andean tubers revealed that much effort is put into making the tubers valuable according to specific parameters. As Tsing suggests, supply chains in capitalism make use of diversity, but how much diversity is needed? Following the Andean tubers also showed me that, in relation to bio diversity, the tubers have to be standardised and made uniform according to different requirements in order to be counted as valuable for different purposes and people.

**Rhythms and Labour for the Tubers**

My interest is to see how the dynamics that make the tubers valuable for a new market operate in relation to the native potato chain, that is, across production, distribution and consumption. Thus, I focus on how the work to mobilise the potato and the other tubers responds to capital dynamics and also
question the centrality of the coordination of different scattered timescapes, both human and non-human, along the chain. I follow Laura Bear's (2014a, 2014b, 2016) and the Gens Manifesto Group's (Bear et al. 2015a, 2015b) suggestion to see the act of work as mediation between "diverse temporal rhythms, representations, and technologies in an orchestration of human action towards their temporary reconciliation" (Bear 2014a:73). This approach comes from the attempt to accept but also go beyond David Harvey's (1989) idea of looking at how time and space are compressed and accelerated under current capitalism (Bear 2014a, 2014b). The emphasis is therefore that "there is no singular timespace in contemporary capitalism" (Bear et al. 2015b) and instead there are diverse and sometimes conflicting human and non-human timescapes that need to be articulated. The chain (and capitalism) works in part because it has the power—through labour—to align the diverse rhythms of living from different people and non-humans actors. The rhythm's diversity is another example of the immense diversity that it is at stake in the chain, which I have discussed in the previous section. The tubers' chain is a fertile ground to explore time and the rhythms of capitalism because the agricultural cycle has to be articulated with the requirements of the market and, as I witnessed with Edilberto, it involves a lot of physical, mental and affective work. From this perspective, the chain can be understood as a figure where human and non-human rhythms are assembled together to respond to commercial need. As I will show, people from different walks of life get connected, in one way or another, through the chain: from farmers in the Andes to famous chefs in Lima. In this regard, labour is a "particular manifestation of the power of capital" (Bear 2014a) to articulate different life projects. That is, that labour relations do not take the same shape all around the globe; rather, they manifest in different ways in relation to the forces of capital according to different cultural and political contexts (Harvey and Krohn-Hansen 2018).
Simultaneously, making the diverse rhythms plug together, gives value to the product that is able to move thanks to that human and non-human assemblage; that product is the tubers. This mediation, this labour, or work produces value from a Marxist point of view; it is an interaction with the material world where workers create and display knowledge and skills; and also “generates affective experiences and ethical reflections that profoundly shape the rhythms of capital circulation” (Bear 2014a:72). Looking at capitalist time and labour from this perspective shows how "uncertain the process of capital accumulation has become" (Bear 2014a:73). As my ethnographic work unfolds, I will show how the tubers' chain is fragile at many points and how some of that fragility depends on the capacity of diverse actors to make things work at the appropriate time and form at the intersection of the times of the agricultural cycle of the tubers and the market standards.

As I will expand on in the first chapter, it is important to emphasise that the new circulation of the tubers is happening in the middle of the Gastronomic Boom, a specific moment that Edilberto is aware of and he is therefore trying to make the most of it. His efforts in coordinating the chain are in this sense a response to a particular time where he is trying to insert the tubers. That was one of the reasons he became the central character of my research. Something that intrigued me and sometimes disturbed me during fieldwork was seeing that Edilberto was in a hurry most of the time. Maybe that was part of his personal and affective way of dealing with the anxiety of being able to make things work. He barely takes a break because he always feels that there is something else to do. “I have no time to get injured”, he once told me after falling from a ladder on the farm. One way to understand him is by looking at his work as it related to making things happen at the appropriate moment: making sure the tubers are sowed at the right time in relation to the rainy season, having the farmers working on his farm for a certain number of days to finish a specific task in a specific field, hoping the rain will pour at the right time for the tubers to thrive, hoping the freezing (*heladas*) will come at the
appropriate time to not ruin the harvest, making sure that the potatoes are clean and carefully selected to be delivered on time to the courier agency so they can arrive to Lima at the agreed day to the restaurant. The daily concerns of his work are about the everyday drama of coordinating human and non-human activities (Bear 2014a; Bear et al. 2015b), some of which exceed his capacity of coordination. It is also a way to understand “the affective force of precarity” (Harvey and Krohn-Hansen 2018:121–2) in relation to his efforts in coordinating the rhythms of the chain. In the second chapter I will focus on the specificity of labour and precarity in the chain and how it relates to the diverse and sometimes conflicting rhythms of the chain.

In a different way, I also experienced the tension of trying to coordinate my times in relation to Edilberto’s expectations about my collaboration with him and his needs. His demands are based on the native potatoes’ rhythms and needs. In Lima, one day I had just left my Airbnb room at night to go and meet a friend when Edilberto called me and asked me to be back to Ayacucho the next morning. He wanted my help to do some urgent paperwork for the organic certification but I was in Lima looking to get access to some of the restaurants that serve native potatoes. In two days, a film crew from the government and I were going to meet Virgilio Martinez, one of the most important chefs in Peru, who is buying tubers from Edilberto. In fact, he and his restaurant Central were awarded the fourth best restaurant in the world in 2016 and the fifth best in 2017 by The World’s 50 Best Restaurants. The film crew was going to film Virgilio cooking a dish made with fish and native potatoes as part of a national programme to promote fish and native potato consumption. To me, it was a good chance to meet Virgilio and to photograph him using the potatoes that Edilberto sells to him. I told Edilberto that it was impossible to meet him the next day as I needed at least some time to pack

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1 It has become a prestigious and media prize for restaurants in the world. It is organised and awarded by a William Reed Business Media based in the UK. See: www.theworlds50best.com (last accessed on 30/January/2019)
and buy my bus ticket; it was too late to attempt to travel that same night and I also wanted to meet my friend. I suggested that I could take the night bus the next day and be ready to help him despite missing the meeting with Virgilio. The urgency of the organic certification was getting dramatic because he needed to fit the times of the harvest with the completed process of the certification in order to be able to sell the produce with the organic certification label. Even though Edilberto wanted me to photograph how Virgilio uses the potatoes in Central for the purposes of my photographic project, it was obvious that the priority for him was centred on getting the organic certification as soon as possible.

What I want to stress here is how that night was one of the moments in which the sense of the overlapping time and rhythms was very poignant. I experienced this tension at different points during my fieldwork but, more importantly, it was a stronger experience for Edilberto and other people around him. For the purpose of my research it was very important to attend to that cooking session with Virgilio but at the same time it was relevant to see what was going on with the organic certification, as well as to faithfully respond to Edilberto’s urgent call. The two events had something in common that kept my attention throughout this thesis. They were both related to the labour required in creating ways to mobilise the potato and the other tubers. In both events there was a process of adding value to the tubers and I will discuss the organic certification in Chapter Four and the tubers in the restaurant stage in Chapter Three. Maybe because of the frustration of missing the chance to photograph Virgilio Martinez, that night the connected nature of the life of the tubers in the chain and the delicate way in which time had to be managed to make things happen at the right moment became more palpable to me. Both Edilberto's urgent request for my presence in Huamanga and his idea of not having time to get sick, reflect some of the experiences created by the intense work that is needed to co-ordinate the rhythms of the chain.
Edilberto's constant worries and urgency to act both against and with the clock, made me interested in exploring the intersection between labour and time. In fact, the potato chain seems to be a fertile place to do so in as much as Edilberto is the hinge that articulates production, distribution and consumption and therefore he has to be extremely aware of and pushing for things to happen at the right time. Some of these processes are of course under his partial control and others exceed the possibility of control.

**Ethno-Photo-Graphy: Fieldwork Strategies**

As I followed the native potatoes I also started following the ocas, ollucos, and mashuas. This research is multi-sited in the sense that following the tubers required ethnographic fieldwork in multiple places (Tsing 2013). But at the same time -and it is important to remark- I did not choose those places randomly; I followed instead a certain logic. On one hand all of the sites I visited proceed from Edilberto’s connections. In some way, this means that my ethnographic site was Edilberto's tubers. That is, my fieldwork was in tension between being literally in multiple sites (the mountains, restaurants, delivery agencies, and so on) and being about one site metaphorically speaking, which is the chain of Edilberto's tubers. In this light, as I was moving along the chain, my displacements were not fully random, even though at the moment of being there some of my movements could have felt arbitrary. Looking back, it is clear that all (of most) of them made sense in the light that I was following a specific route.

Having set the conceptual influences of my fieldwork, in this section I want to address how photography and some aspects of the multi-sited ethnography can be mobilised both as research methods and as ways of representation in written and image based form. Such overlapping points worked as complements in my research in terms of the juxtaposition of ethnographic encounters with ethnographic photographs as well as by bringing awareness of the photographic process at the different sites of the chain.
As I discuss in more detail in the Chapter Five, following the tubers to the different sites where they circulate made me think of my fieldwork as a multi-sited ethnography. In opposition to the single-sited ethnography, multi-sited ethnography requires observation and participation in multiple sites. This research approach is good “to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space” (Marcus 1995:96). George Marcus (1995) discusses how ethnography can be done in different places to understand certain phenomena from different perspectives and how that phenomenon relates to the world system. As I discussed earlier in this Introduction, the study of commodity chains also focuses on issues about globalisation, something that Marcus suggests is possible to do with the multi-sited method. While I consider some ideas of the multi-sited ethnography useful to think with, my focus is neither about globalisation nor the world system. The tubers I followed are not connected only because they are part of the world system. They are related also because the sites I visited and the people I engaged with are, in one way or another, connected with Edilberto. Following the tubers to different places helped me to understand the different views about the tubers and the efforts put in to transform their form and value as they circulate.

Anna Tsing suggests "following capitalist chains, often requires ethnography in multiple sites" (2013:39). This is in part because the chain does not exist as something that is possible to see simultaneously in one place. It is instead an abstraction of diverse social and material relationships that are "diffuse" in time and fragmented in space. During my fieldwork I followed those relationships ethnographically and documented them visually through photography. In order to understand how the native potatoes and the other tubers are now consumed in Lima, I paid attention to different parts of the chain. As a result, the invisible chain is represented in this written thesis and
in the companion photobook as a sequence of juxtapositions of my ethnographic experience.

Edilberto Soto, my main informant, mediated my engagement with the native potato supply chain and led my research to be about the circulation of the tubers from his perspective. During fieldwork I let myself to be directed by his network of contacts and driven by the work he is doing with the tubers. I found myself fascinated with the way he is trying to connect his produce with the high-end restaurants in Lima. His figure as a producer, middleman, businessman, and entrepreneur was enough to keep me following the routes of the tubers departing from his farm as well as the relations he builds. Through him I managed to get in touch with recognised Peruvian chefs, people from the government, and farmers. That is to say, that through him I accessed different points of the chain. At the same time, I realised that part of the hard work Edilberto does is the creation of new routes for the native potatoes, ocas, ollucos, and mashuas.

At the same time, the more I was engaging with him, the more he would ask for my help or company for diverse issues related with the tubers business. His strong and demanding character together with my tendency to say yes to all of his calls and my aim to get to know the chain drove me to spend a lot of time with him. Simultaneously, I had that feeling of being able to be reciprocal with him to some extent. If he was opening all the possible doors for my research project, the least I could do was to help him as much as I could. In this context, I would accompany him to meetings in Huamanga and Lima or he would ask me to take pictures of the tubers for a catalogue or some specific shots in the field. He also asked me to mediate between the Ministry of Production (Ministerio de la Producción) and some chefs in the creation of the catalogue to promote the consumption of fish and native potatoes. As I have narrated before, that position gave me the chance to meet some chefs that otherwise I would have not met. Edilberto also asked me to help him with
preparing the paperwork for the organic certification he started to pursue some weeks after I started my fieldwork. Some of those engagements are included in the forthcoming chapters.

Overall, I followed the tubers and the relationships that erupted from the specificity of Edilberto’s efforts in finding new routes to grow, transport, and commercialise the tubers. As I was getting access to those points in the chain, I was documenting them photographically; but also the photographic side of the project sometimes facilitated my access to other places. It is in this light that multi-sited ethnography helps me to “make connections… among distinctive discourses from site to site” (Marcus 1995:101), to better understand the “fractured, discontinuous” (Marcus 1995:102) knowledge that is along the chain. The fractured and discontinuous nature of the chain makes it complicated –if not impossible– for the people who take part of it, to know about the chain in its entirety, something that Deborah Barndt (2008) acknowledges in her research about tomatoes. Edilberto, whom I believed knew everything about the tubers, did not know, for instance, what happens with them in the restaurant stage, what sort of food they become, how they look or what they taste like. If no one knows the entirety of the chain and I was involved in the chain for 14 months following the tubers and Edilberto’s work, I assume that my knowledge about it is, of course, also partial. In addition to the given subjectivity and partiality of the ethnographic encounter as a method, the nature of the mobile fieldwork is another element that intrinsically made my knowledge of the chain fragmented and partial, as the chain itself.

Matei Candea (2013) points out that multi-sited ethnography tends to reduce the thickness of knowledge. While the ethnographer moves to different locations it is sensible to accept that the depth of the encounters would decrease while the different perspectives about the topic would enrich the research. That is to say that the depth in a multi-sited research, Candea
suggests, comes by juxtaposing the different encounters that occur across the sites. I felt this dilemma during my fieldwork in different situations. In many scenarios during my time in Peru I had to decide whether go to one place or to another. Edilberto was most of the time moving, going to places, talking to people and as I was with him, many possibilities of where to go were emerging but specifically this was more sensitive when I approached the restaurants. The intimacy I built with the people in the restaurants – to whom Edilberto had introduced me – always felt somewhat superficial. Yet the strength and justification of doing fieldwork in the restaurants came from the possibility to juxtapose the knowledge and images that emerged in that stage with what emerged on other points of the chain.

The idea of multi-sited ethnography as juxtapositions of different encounters along the chain allows me to think of photography as an alternative and complementary strategy to represent the chain as a photographic sequence. That is to say as a juxtaposition of images from the multiple sites, events, and encounters I visited and experienced during fieldwork. In this light, the photographic sequence and the ethnographic writing intersect in that the two are narrative strategies that lie on making connections in particular ways: “sequencing photographs not ‘only’ consist of establishing visual connections… it also means establishing connections between photographic facts” (Colberg 2017: 109). Making the sequence required an analytical process of selection and edition that was influenced and informed by my fieldwork experience, as well as for the writing process of this thesis.

This research brings together diverse ethnographic accounts from different moments, places, people, and situations along the chain with the aim to answer particular questions: how do the tubers move? What and who make the tubers move? Staying in only one place could not have given me the answers and I tried instead to be informed by different actors that are spread around the country. The juxtaposition of those ethnographic accounts takes
two forms that depart from one same process of ethnographic encounters: one takes the form of a written and analytical thesis and the other the one of a photographic sequence in the shape of a photobook. This work therefore presents the chain in two different yet complementary ways: as a “word-and-sentence-based” and as “image-and-sequence-based” (MacDougall 1999:292).

My way of doing ethnography day after day was intertwined with doing photography. Participant observation meant, to me, observing also with and through the camera, which had important implications. First, that my access to places and people was most of the time mediated by my presence and the act of photographing. For instance, such mediation revealed something of how Edilberto and the people in the restaurants try to make the tubers visible and therefore reflect on their attempts to revalue them. Making an effort to be aware of how people were reacting and caring (or not) about my presence and the results of the photographs, helped me to understand some of the efforts for and expectations about the tubers. Some other times, talking about the photographs or arranging a photographic session was a way "to create a bridge between (...) different experiences of reality” (Pink 2004:69) in relation to the tubers. My ‘way of seeing’ is influenced by what I consume in terms of image making. As Bourdieu (1984) argues, my own production of photographs responds to a certain convention or “visual cultures” (Pink 2004:27), which I associate with the tradition of documentary photography. However, as I was photographing I was also continuously negotiating with the informants about how to take pictures but also what to take pictures of. In this sense, I can frame my photographic practice at the intersection of collaborative photography (Pink 2004) and documentary photography. The camera served as a "way to engage" with my informants and as a way to create relationships (Pink 2004).

Deborah Barndt’s work with tomatoes is relevant to my research as she reflects about her role as photographer and researcher. She is mindful about
the power dynamics of being with the camera and what that revealed to her research about the tomato commodity chain. For instance, the simple fact that her work does not include photographs of the "corporate giants" such as MacDonald's or Del Monte that buy tomatoes, made her wonder about the interests they had about their public image in light of the rise in criticism about their business practices. She suggests that the difficulty of photographing in those places revealed both the power and the nervousness they had about the possibility of a critical documentation that could question their morality (Barndt 1997).

With her photography and with the use of juxtapositions of the different stories, advertisements, and people involved along the tomato chain, Barndt (1997; 2008) aims to create a visual dialogue to raise questions about globalisation by posing questions about truth in relation to how the big corporates promote their food on billboards. She argues that her way of using photography is a political act in that “what, where, when, and how we photograph reveal how power operates” (Barndt 2008:74). She also reflects on how it was easier for her to get access to the space of the "less powerful" than the powerful. For her, this reinforces the "easier exploitation of the poor" and in her case to the female, as her focus were women (Barndt 1997:13). As I was also aware of this, my presence in the field was a continuous negotiation of myself in relation to the workers and the camera. Unlike Barndt, however, my identity as a man did not make it easy to me to engage with women, particularly photographically.

Another implication of my use of the camera during fieldwork was that as I was observing I was thinking and seeing photographically as well as mentally juxtaposing and montaging (Irving 2013) in terms of possible photographic sequences. That is, that the role of photography and photographing in my research helped me to understand some aspects of the tuber's chain and also as a strategy to represent it visually. In this regard, I used photography to
research and represent a capitalist chain by exploring the expressive (Edwards 1997), the promiscuous (Pink 2004) and the speculative (Chio and Cox 2016) capacity of photographs and the narrative possibilities of a photographic sequence in combination with text (Cox and Wright 2012). These photographic-lead contributions are not separated from the written thesis. They are instead intertwined and inform each other.
CHAPTER 1
A REVOLUTION WITH NATIVE POTATOES?
THE PERUVIAN CONTEXT AND THE
GASTRONOMIC BOOM

If there was a time when youngsters from Ayacucho took the weapons to start a revolution, it is now your time to start but a pacific revolution from the same mountains but with no guns and with the native potatoes instead.

Gastón Acurio to Edilberto Soto

In this chapter my aim is to explain the conditions that create the possibility to think metaphorically about a "revolution with native potatoes". As I contextualise my research, I will focus on the Peruvian Gastronomic Boom to show how chefs in Peru have acquired a social status to become “heroes” and “martyrs” for the nation. I will refer to ethnographic accounts, interviews, and two video adverts released by the Peruvian government to explain the expectations created by the so-called “Gastronomic Boom”. The videos will help me to understand why the native potato as well as the ocas, ollucos, and mashuas are now getting the attention of people beyond the Andean communities, where they were domesticated and have been the staple food for thousands of years. The tubers, previously unknown to many people, are in the process of being “discovered” and used by chefs and consumed by dinner guests as well as acquiring new meanings in relation to the land and the nation. While I was doing my fieldwork in 2016, the Peruvian Agricultural Ministry (Ministerio de Agricultura) released a video trying to show the importance of farmers for the national gastronomy. This video however does not exist in a vacuum and it can be better understood by comparing it with another video produced in 2011 as part of the Nation Branding strategy called Marca Peru.
Gastronomic Boom and the Internal Armed Conflict

Peru is a multicultural and megadiverse country. People and culture are a complex historical mixture of pre-colonial cultures, Spanish-colonial heritage, African slaves brought during colonial times, and Chinese and Japanese migrants. In terms of biodiversity, the country is considered among the seventeen most biodiverse countries in the world\(^2\) thanks to its geographical position close to the tropics and its varied topography. It has a wide range of ecosystems and altitudes: desert, beaches, mountains in the Andes, and Amazonian forest. All this translates into a wide variety of plants and animals, some of them endemic, and cooking traditions of using those resources. This vast cultural and natural diversity that is now starting to be re-valued with regard to diverse ingredients and cooking traditions has historically been seen as a problem in the country. Benjamin Orlove (1993) describes how the geographical science has been influential in interpreting the Peruvian territory in ways that have facilitated the racial discourse and a rhetoric of isolation of the people living in the Andes. In the discourse of nation making after independence, the cultural and natural diversity has been seen as problematic: “The big obstacle in the middle of the picture was the mountains; the big obstacle in the middle of the narrative of progress was the Indians” (Orlove 1993:328). This discourse has given rise to different political projects of national and international integration through education (García 2004), roadbuilding (Orlove 1993; Harvey and Knox 2015) and nowadays through gastronomy (Lauer 2012; García 2013).

As a result of severe and deep fissures in Peruvian society which produced a lack of social and cultural integration (Drinot 2014), in the early 1980s two insurgent groups declared war on the State: El Partido Comunista del Perú – Sendero Luminoso (The Shining Path) in 1980 and four years later El

\(^2\) In 1997 Conservation International published a research indicating that 17 countries gather more than two-thirds of all life forms on earth calling them Megadiverse Countries.
**Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (MRTA)** (Dietrich 2015:14). The government responded with brutal military violence affecting in the first instance the indigenous people in the Andes, where the conflict started—precisely in Ayacucho. The ideological separation between the highlands and the city affected the perception that President Fernando Belaunde had at the beginning of the conflict after the first actions of the *Shining Pathway* in Cusco, Ayacucho. He thought "It was deemed unlikely that a movement originating in the highlands could have national repercussions" (Garcia 2005:41–42).

During wartime, people barely trusted in each other. From a military perspective, one could be suspicious of being supporting the rebels; from a rebel perspective one could be suspicious of not supporting them and be therefore on the military side. In either case, life was always in danger and neighbours could not trust each other. Edilberto was 11 years old during the 1980s, at the beginning of the conflict, when one day he was in the mountain in Condorcocha, Ayacucho, where his current farm is. He was breeding cattle with a friend when, suddenly, they saw people winding through the fields towards the highway. A police car was coming and then exploded. *Shining Path*'s members had strategically placed dynamite in the road. After a burst, some of the policemen died except for three who surrendered. *Shining Path*'s members took their uniforms. Policemen, partially naked, went to a restaurant near Edilberto’s farmhouse looking for food, something to drink, and help.

Edilberto and his friend saw everything. That night, his mother Victoria sent him by bus to Lima, where the guerrilla had not yet arrived. She feared the soldiers coming to ask about what had happened. This would have put her son's life in danger because from the militaries' perspective, Edilberto as a youngster and witness had the potential to join the guerrillas and therefore he would have been killed by the military. Edilberto reflects about this episode
saying that his mother saved his life by sending him to Lima. It was like she had given birth to him again. As a result of what happened, Edilberto argues that to honour his mother he keeps working in the farm with the native potatoes.

The Internal War Conflict lasted officially until the year 2000 with the deaths of 69,280 people according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It was the biggest conflict in Peru in terms of deaths, missing people, territories involved in the conflict, and economic and social consequences since the independence war which ended in 1821 (Peru 2004:17). During the two decades it lasted, the country fell into a deep social and economic crisis. In rural Peru and especially in Ayacucho, the violence disrupted the social fabric and the regional imaginary (Degregori 2010). During the second part of the conflict in 1992, Shining Path’s leader Abimael Guzman was captured but the country “was already close to being destroyed” (García 2005:48). The president, Alberto Fujimori, had already started a set of reforms called “neoliberal revolution” in which macroeconomic measures such as privatization, liberalization of trade, and hollowing out the state were the cornerstone of his policies (Drinot 2014:2). As the conflict was coming to an end and the reforms took shape, the economy started to grow. From the new millennium Peru experienced a constant growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the optimism about the country started to thrive. It is in this context where gastronomy started to take a particular role. Many scholars have studied and reflected upon the internal armed conflict (Agüero 2015; Gavilán Sánchez and Castro Neira 2012; Degregori 2010; Dietrich 2015). My thesis however does not claim to directly contribute to that body of work, however it is important to be aware of the conflict to better understand how this recent episode influenced people’s ideas about their country, specifically in relation to the so-called Gastronomic Boom.
The ‘Peruvian Gastronomic Boom’ is a national phenomenon in which Peruvian cuisine is being highly appreciated worldwide but also internally among Peruvians. Lima, the capital, is now recognised as a gastronomic centre in South America. Nowadays, Peruvian children do not only dream about being football players but also about being chefs; thousands of youngsters attend around eighty culinary schools nationwide. National identity is being shaped by the pride of being recognised as a culinary reference and national days are being created to celebrate local dishes (Matta 2012).

Raul Matta (2012) explains the Gastronomic Boom as a combination of factors such as the end of civil war in 2000, rapid economic growth, and the success of a few Peruvian chefs in world-gastronomic capitals like New York or Paris. For him, the Gastronomic Boom is the result of an elite social class that is able to combine the traditional and rich Peruvian gastronomy with chef’s knowledge. Even though this movement originates with the elite –not everyone can pay for a meal in the most recognised restaurants– the Gastronomic Boom is now being considered as a culinary and social movement that promises “inclusion, prosperity, and peace for a country fragment by colonialism, racism and war” (García 2013:506). In this light, the Boom is becoming a political project aiming to reconstruct the economy and the social fabric of the country and it has been included in public policies. Food, gastronomy, and the chefs are now part of the “nation branding” strategy where the government is developing the country as a brand under the name of *Marca Peru* (*Peru Brand*).

Gaston Acurio, the most famous Peruvian chef and the leader of the Gastronomic Boom, has been pushing to include indigenous peasants in the movement as a way to extend the benefits to them. He believes this is a means to recognise their work as producers of traditional crops, and as a way to
protect the country’s biodiversity.\(^3\) However, critics of the movement argue that indigenous people are still marginalised in Peruvian society (Matta 2012; Matta 2013; García 2013). Another critique points out that the “celebratory glow” around the Boom obscures the “marginalization and violence against indigenous and nonhuman bodies in Peru” (García 2013:507), whereby animals like guinea pigs and alpaca are introduced to new markets and slaughter in new industrial ways that sometimes disrupt local routines. To approach the subject critically, Garcia suggests to “slow down reason” (2013) to engage ethnographically with the human and non-human actors that take part of the new dynamics created by the Gastronomic Boom. In terms of my ethnographic approach, what the photographic method requires is precisely to slow down the process of seeing. Wait, wonder, and trying to see what others see as much as understanding what and why others do not allow you to see.

### Gastronomy, Internal Armed conflict, and Native Potatoes

A view of the Peruvian gastronomy as an opportunity vividly erupted during the time I spent with Edilberto. He told me -and I also heard him telling other people several times- that one day Gaston Acurio told him the phrase I used to open this chapter about starting a pacific revolution with native potatoes. This anecdote is very strong for Edilberto and it condenses much of the expectations of the Gastronomic Boom: creating a sense of unity through gastronomy and creating better life conditions for the impoverished. Edilberto takes this mission very seriously and, he says, it fuels his energy to keep on trying to make a living out of the native potatoes.

To Edilberto, Peru is in the midst of an era of distrust as a consequence of the internal armed conflict. From his perspective, Peruvian social fabric is

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decomposed. He thinks there is a feeling of distrust among people. As he experienced in war times, people could not trust in the police, neither the military nor the neighbours because they could put you in danger or even kill you. It was not easy to trust in the people around. In this regard, Edilberto told me that building a native potato network is a way to "rebuild the social fabric" through the peasant production. Such an idea confirms what Gaston Acurio once told him, became deeply rooted in his mind. The Gastronomic Boom generates his enthusiasm, however, both the “revolution” and the new social fabric are to be made, in their view, with native potatoes and the other tubers; the promise of integration is mediated by the native potatoes.

During an interview in Lima with chef and consultant Andres Ugaz explained to me how the idea of building a national identity had changed over the years but most importantly after the end of the internal armed conflict:

After the internal armed conflict we needed to feel as part of something and on this regard I think the cuisine took over more roles than the ones it was ready to accomplish. Thanks to cooking, we, the Peruvians, have understood each other in the diversity. We did know we were diverse, we knew we were different but thanks to the cuisine we have realised that those differences and that distinctiveness it is a value in the world. Thanks to cooking, we Peruvians have understood and also tolerated each other better. I also think we have managed to forgive us.\(^4\) Food has taken a role when we are looking for elements to continue being (seguir siendo) and it has been the best way to cast our eyes in the other. Everything I am saying cannot be measured, disgracefully.

\(^4\) Forgiving is an idea that came after the end of the Internal Conflict and that is part of the debate to overcome the aftermath and the broken social fabric. Jose Carlos Agüero (2015) wrote a compelling essay with poetic reflections coming from his own experience as a son of The Shining Pathway’s militants.
The explanation that Andres gave me together with Acurio’s words and Edilberto’s idea to rebuild the social fabric of the country, point to a similar direction, one that is related to the role of gastronomy and agriculture to improve the conditions of the country. It also points to the possibility of finding unity in a socially fragmented nation after the Internal Conflict. The peculiar force that gastronomy has in Peru helps us understand why the native potato is getting the attention of chefs and people outside the Andes. The native potato is becoming, in this context, one of the symbols of national pride, carrying as well the place where it is produced. The process in which the native potato is grown, mobilised, imagined, commercialised, and eaten is the ethnographic case I have followed and it is entangled with history, politics, economics, and relations with other species, which I will try to explain and understand in this work. By doing so, I want to comprehend the forces that make the native potato move and sometimes not to move. Acurio, Andres, and Edilberto all thought about the gastronomy as a medium to rebuild the nation. Most importantly the three of them mentioned or implied the turbulent past of the Internal Conflict. Andres went deeper to mention that food is having such a specific force that is helping people whose past was confronted during the Conflict, to forgive each other.

The idea of forgiveness is a current debate for civilians and academics (Agüero 2015) interested in the effects and possibilities of reconciliation among the different political factions during the internal armed conflict. Although I do not focus in the conflict itself, I do refer to the conflict as one of the elements that are present in people’s narratives and how those memories contribute to mobilise the native potato. I was, in fact, not interested in relating this research to the internal armed conflict but as I was doing fieldwork, people were talking about it in ways that became important to pay attention to. It was clear to me that the rooted psychological effects in society (Dietrich 2015) that such a conflict caused was one of the historical accounts that would help me understand the Gastronomic Boom and the reason why
the native potato is now getting attention outside the Andes. In other words, it was the affective force of the “lingering effects” (García 2005:36) of the very violent recent past.

Andres Ugaz’ words about cultural differences are also enlightening to think about how some episodes of the history are brought back to the present through the gastronomic discourse and ingredients. Andres reflected on how through gastronomy Peruvians have realised how cultural diversity “is a value in the world”. This is an important contrast in a country where indigenous and mestizo people have been historically blamed as a one of the main causes for underdevelopment (Drinot and Crabtree 2006). Thinking of cultural difference as a ‘value’, on the other hand, contrasts to the historical perception about those cultural differences as a problem for the country. However, this is more problematic than it may appear. Thinking on such a ‘value’ entails complex processes of commodification of culture and a thorny dynamics of including indigenous and mestizo people in the logics of the market. The native potato and the other tubers are among the native products that are embedded in that process. When they are mobilised or imagined by chefs, consumers or producers, they can also carry history and expectations.

**Video Propaganda I: Peru, Nebraska**

To better understand how that Gastronomic Boom can be generative of such great expectations, I will now analyse a couple of video adverts that the Peruvian government released as propaganda to promote the *Marca Peru (Peru Brand)* strategy. The seminal video entitled “Peru, Nebraska” 

5 broadcasted in 2011 has already been discussed by Peruvian anthropologists Raul Matta (2013) and Gisela Cánepa (2013). They engage critically with the nation branding campaign *Marca Peru* as part of what Cánepa calls

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5 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8joXlwKMkrk&t=529s (last accessed 20/january/2019)
“neoliberalism as a cultural regime” and by situating that video as part of its marketing strategy.

The video starts with a Peruvian committee taking their Peruvian-ness to a small town called Peru located in the state of Nebraska in the United States of America. As imagined, in Peru, Nebraska people are not familiar with South American Peruvian culture. The argument of the video is that because they are Peruvians they have the right to really be Peruvians: “Every Peruvian, only because of the fact of being Peruvian has the right to enjoy the wonder of being Peruvian (...) Peru, Nebraska has only one problem. They are Peruvians but they do not know what it means to be so”. To show what it means to be Peruvian, the committee brings food –native potatoes included–, Peruvian music, artificial waves to surf the amazing Peruvian Pacific Sea, Pisco to drink, and more. What they show to the homogenous town in the United States is based on a certain idea of what Peru is and what the Peruvians are proud of. I will focus on the representation of the gastronomic aspects of the video once it is clear that the committee tries to depict the best and more successful side of the country, however, they leave the Amazon region misrepresented (Matta 2013).

In this video there are two chefs, also called “ambassadors” like everyone in the Peruvian committee, who are important to follow regarding my research because they have directly influenced the work Edilberto does: Gaston Acurio and Ivan Kisić. The committee arrives in a red bus marked with only one word in form of a logo: “Peru”, probably as a way to say that the best features of the country are contained in there. Gaston Acurio drives the bus and this is not a coincidence; he is the leader of the Gastronomic Boom. The fact that he is the driver shows the relevance he and gastronomy have for the country and for the national identity discourse. The gastronomy is now in that privileged position thanks to the success of many chefs outside Peru –Gaston Acurio being the most notable and famous– and the Peruvian government has taken
their economic and social success to represent them as national heroes (Matta 2012). This video reinforces the idea that gastronomy is an “opportunity for the development, self-esteem and national pride” (Matta 2012:20) which is also what the second video I will discuss later tries to convey.

The ‘ambassadors’ in the video get off the bus with surprise because no one seems to be around in town or waiting for them. The other relevant character in the video to pay special attention to is Ivan Kisic. So, Ivan leaves the bus and steps in the frame carrying a red cooler box and, astonished, asks himself: “where did we arrive?” The convoy continues getting off the bus with enthusiasm while the musicians appear playing the Peruvian Box (Cajon Peruano), a typical percussion instrument of Afro Peruvian roots. After showing that no one is around, a voice over explains: “Our mission: to be our Country’s ambassadors and read them the rights they have as Peruvians”. Next, another chef takes a red portable megaphone to try to invite the locals to join them by saying: “You are from Peru; you have the right to eat tasty”. After a quick scene of someone bringing food to the square in front of the Council Building where all the committee is standing, Ivan Kisic appears again to reinforce the convincing effort of his colleague: “I repeat to you: you are from Peru”, and continues by listing some traditional dishes: “Anticucho, cebiche, papa rellena”. Suddenly, many local people are now in the square tasting Peruvian drinks and food; the food call worked! It is clear at this point to see the connection between food and Peruvian national identity that this advertisement is trying to convey. However, it is important to emphasise that the chefs are those bringing the food; they are represented as the authorities to say what “eat tasty” in Peruvian terms actually means.

The video continues and the visitors offer and share with the locals diverse food, music and entertainment. At some point in the last third of the video, a not very big group of people is gathering in what looks like someone’s back garden. They are all standing around a pile of soil called a pachamanca.
*Pachamanca* is a traditional Inca way of cooking meat, corn, and potatoes underground with wood and hot stones. An 'ambassador' speaks to greet the *pachamanca* naming Larry, probably the house's owner, the Godfather of it. A traditional song is playing in the background while the Peruvian ambassador offers his drink to the earth: “for the pachamama’s sake”. Next, children and adults get a portion of the meat, corn, and potatoes, which were supposed to be cooked underground. This scene is important, I suggest, because it shows the intentions of connecting the Peruvianess with the soil; with the land that makes crops grow. At the same time, the *pachamanca* is a traditional way of cooking underground that has its roots in Inca traditions. Therefore, the symbolic meaning of the pachamanca gathers history, knowledge, and connection with the land in order to evoke a sense of communal pride and national identity. However, it is also significant that there are not any peasant or indigenous people preparing it. This also shows, or at least can make the critical viewer think, about the disconnection between the *pachamanca’s* performance and the people who are traditionally associated with it.

The interplay between some cultural features and the way they are used to represent the Peruvianess become clear. Those elements coming from Peruvian traditions are easy to identify for a Peruvian audience, making the process of identification and empathy very easy. In the video, every element that the committee is showing to the people in the United States is supposed to condense a fragment of what Peru is, that is the metaphor the advert tries to convey: to bring the ‘real’ Peru to the other Peru in the United States. In other words, by bringing all those Peruvian samples they are commodifying culture. In this regard, and following Roland Barthes (1984), those cultural elements on display work as symbols of national identity. The committee performs a condensed Peruvianess in which culture -traditional food in this case- becomes a valued asset to 'conquer' the world, a small town in the United States in this instance. Peruvian culture, the Peruvianess, is then tasted.
and eaten, it suddenly became food. The degree to which the Peruvians from Nebraska are convinced about the good qualities of the ‘real’ Peruvianess depends upon their approval to what they taste. At this point, it is important to note that the making of food and taste as an object of national pride as the advert tries to convey, becomes one of the contextual forces that helps the native potato gain national interest.

Gisela Cánepa (2013) discusses this video for both its “representational value” and for its “performative and symbolic power”. The former relates to its truth as it is (or not) according to the reality of the country. The latter refers to what the video actually does as a marketing tool in relation to the production of memories, experiences, or behaviours. A critical analysis of the advertising allows us to see the tensions between reality and Peruvian national aspirations (Matta 2012). It is in those aspirations where advertisements can play a role in eliciting desires (Mazzarella 2003). Cánepa suggests that the nation branding as a ‘technology of power’ “allows governing through marketing languages and strategies” (Cánepa 2013:9). In this regard, Marca Peru creates the conditions to put together “commercial engineering, diplomacy, and public policies” (Cánepa 2013:8) to construct a national identity and national imaginaries (Matta 2012:51).

Looking at the process in which images operate in the mind can contribute to creating distance, or at least to critically engage, with ideas about the accurate representation of reality in the video adverts that I am presenting here. Mazzarella used the idea of the 'commodity image' "as a tool for theorizing advertising as public cultural commodity production" (2003:37) to understand how photographic advertising images work. His approach can be also useful to better understand the video I am discussing. As with photographs, the video is a record of reality and as such some of its power lies in the indexicality (Mazzarella 2003), the quality of making visual reference to the physical reality. In other words, the recorded image takes its
virtue from the process in which it is produced: "the camera can bestow authenticity upon any set of appearances, however false" (Berger and Mohr 1989:96–97). Such authenticity is one of the features that give video in a documentary style the strength to engage with people. At the same time it is the reason why Cánepa is worried about the video in terms of its relation with the social reality of Peru in terms of representation. The video, a mechanical record of people and places, helps to convince the audience that what they are seeing is real and therefore possible; it helps to anchor the message to the audience’s daily life by giving “authenticity”.

Roland Barthes discusses the mechanisms of the advert photography. Even though he alerts us that “film can no longer be seen as animated photographs” (1984:45), his analysis gives some clues to decipher how a video advert works. The image, he argues, is formed by an “architecture of signs” (Barthes 1984:45) that takes a range of idiolects as its main source. The ensemble of those signs that have a connotative role in the reading of the image is what creates the rhetoric of the image, which is the ideology behind it. This structural approach to reading images can be of help to think about the video advert as a set of scenes and what they do together in terms of transmitting certain ideology. In this sense as an advert or propaganda, it tries to influence perceptions and recruit converts. In this regard, what Cánepa discusses as the “representational value” of the advert in relation to how the video truly does or does not represent the country, can be now understood as an inner strategy of the advert. That is to say that we should not get trapped in analysing if the advert is or is not faithful to reality and focus instead on what those representations are doing as a rhetorical strategy.

In this regard, the ideology that this advert tries to transmit is about a sense of pride about some Peruvian cultural features, the food and the chefs being central. The fact that it is a video produced by the government gives a clue of its relevance and the role food and chefs are playing in the society. It also
speaks to their strategic position and alliances in the project of nation building and how culture is used to create a sense of unity among Peruvians. Edilberto, I suggest in this chapter, uses this platform as much as he is already part of it, to try to mobilise his native potato produce by trying to be part of the Boom. As I will describe later, Edilberto is trying to make alliances with recognised chefs -food authorities- to try to make the native potato more visible and thus adding value to it. The chefs, therefore, with their current privileged position of being 'ambassadors', have the virtue to call attention to specific products that they value as ingredients. In the next section I will introduce another video advert produced by the government to discuss how the peasants and their produce are starting to gain importance within the official discourse.

**Video Propaganda II: Farmer’s day**

To commemorate the Peruvian farmer’s day⁶, the Agricultural Ministry published a video through Facebook and YouTube⁷ in 2016. The video starts with an intimate shot of a couple in an elegant restaurant. They are finishing eating what seems to have been a great, delicious meal. Enthusiastically, the man asks the waiter to meet "the person who was responsible for the delicious food" they had just eaten. The waiter, dressed in a tuxedo, kindly agrees and takes him to the kitchen while the woman stays at the table. When the dinner guest is about to congratulate the chef, the waiter interrupts him and calls him to continue walking, showing him the way. After a shot of the dinner guest confused about what was happening, the waiter opens a door that takes them outside into the desert. The chef did not receive the food’s praise and the dinner guest is now astonished in a world to discover.

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⁶ The Peruvian Farmer’s day is on the 24th of June. The date was established as it is the beginning of the Inti Raymi nine days Inca Ritual to celebrate the harvest and the earth’s fertility. By 1930 it was nationally established as the ‘Indian Day’ but in 1969 the name changed to ‘Farmer’s Day’ in the context of the beginning of the President Velasco’s Agrarian Reform.

⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_ljiObinl4 (last seen on 12/December/2016)
The sun is tough but enthusiastically they walk over the sand dunes to visit the producer of the pisco he and his partner had previously drunk. After having a sip, the dinner guest exclaims: “this pisco has the ‘p’ for Peru and the ‘p’ for potatoes”, leading the actors to a potato field but passing through a spinach field on their way. In the quick passing by the spinach field, the scene shows a group of farmers harvesting the leaves as the waiter tells one of them: "Hello David! They are waiting for the spinach in the kitchen!" The farmer greets the waiter back and responds: "I am on my way now Martín", and he continues doing his task.

Now the protagonists are in the middle of a native potato harvest. The sun is painting the scene with its beautiful golden light, yellow and mellow. Farmers, both men and women, are dancing *huayno*\(^8\) and cooking a *huatia*\(^9\) as a way to celebrate the harvest. They are all well dressed in typical and very clean clothes with no sign of soil from having been working the land hard. The dinner guest congratulates one of the farmers telling him that he had never eaten a better potato than the one he ate with that *lomo* and that the quinoa risotto was also extremely tasty. The farmer says that his neighbour had produced that quinoa as two women come to dance with both the waiter and the dinner guest. After dancing, the walking tour continues to meet, one after the other, producers of quinoa, onion, cacao, and coffee. None of the producers show any problem about managing their cultivars in order to provide their produce to the restaurant; everything seems to flow smoothly. The closest to a problem that we see is when they arrive at the coffee producer’s, catching him in a hurry, as he is about to leave the field to send a coffee shipment to the Netherlands. The successful producer quickly says

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\(^8\) *Huayno* is a typical musical style in Andean towns.  
\(^9\) The *huatia* is a traditional way of cooking potatoes covering them with soil and heating stones. It is traditionally done for special occasions such as the harvest. In contrast to the pachamanca in which meat is also cooked, the huatia only contains potato.
good-bye and gets into his truck fully loaded with coffee sacks. It is important to point out the image of the farmer as exporter of his own produce.

The seven minute video builds a narrative of success and agricultural development driven by the gastronomy, the departing point is the restaurant and the principal actors are the peasants. The advert tries to 1) show and celebrate how important the producers are for national gastronomy and 2) how by taking part in the gastronomic chain, producers can achieve success in different forms. The first intention is made clear at the beginning when the waiter does not let the dinner guest congratulate the chef, taking him instead for a tour to visit different producers. This moment in the video is tense. As I have started to show, the chefs have been pointed to as the people in charge and as the "heroes" of the Peruvian Gastronomic Boom. Suggesting that the chef was not responsible for the food that the dinner guests ate, could have been therefore controversial. But it was not controversial or offensive precisely because the video is speaking of a new stage in which the gastronomy in Peru is trying to fuel the country's development by including and dignifying the farmers and what they produce.

When Edilberto and his friend Pippo enthusiastically asked me if I had seen the video I avoided giving my point of view by asking for theirs instead. They celebrated it and told me that it was a great piece and a great move from the Agricultural Ministry to produce such a video. After nine months of fieldwork alongside Edilberto and having seen the difficulties of his work, I felt that what I saw in that advert was an untruthful representation of reality; something closer to an idealised fiction, which is exactly what an advert is supposed to convey (Barthes 1984; Mazzarella 2003). On the other hand, Edilberto’s enthusiasm was probably based on the “performative and symbolic power” (Cánepa 2013) that such a video was able to elicit as it was reflecting and inspiring his wishes and desires for a possible better future in relation to the work he does as producer of the native potato. Again, the video
advert was making Edilberto feel that his dreams of success were possible to achieve as he was seeing the farmers in the advert doing what he wanted to do.

His wishes are also fed by the recent interest that some successful chefs are showing towards farmers and their produce. The chefs are trying to connect their national and international success (Matta 2012) with farmers’ work as essential for their creativity and production of dishes. The wide gamut of products that is possible to find in a biodiverse country like Peru, become a wide range of valuable ingredients for chefs driven in part by the logic of the Novoandino Cuisine (Cocina Novoandina), which Gaston Acurio has helped develop. Novoandino Cuisine is based on “the ‘beautiful fusion’ of indigenous Peruvian products” (García 2013:510). This fusion is inspired by a combination of the French high cuisine that Acurio learned while he studied in Paris with local products of his country. Appadurai notes that in many countries there is a clear tendency to make a difference between “high” and “low” cuisine, “between court food and peasant food” (1988:4). These high cuisines, he argues, have “their emphasis on spectacle, disguise and display [and] always seek to distance themselves from their local sources” (Appadurai 1988:4). In this sense, the Novoandino Cuisine is a mixture of this tradition for beauty and spectacle but with a conscious search for local ingredients that can help to add the sense of being Peruvian. Such a mixture with “historical and cultural idiosyncrasies” (Appadurai 1988:22) contributes to the emergence of new national cuisines.

The Novoandino Cuisine that has been the inspiration of the Gastronomic Boom, has an “inclusionary rhetoric” (García 2013:515) that translates into including ingredients and the people who produce them. The more ingredients the chefs discover, the more possibilities they have for their dishes. The biodiversity is valued for its potential to become an ingredient, sometimes with highly nutritious properties (Matta 2013) but also because of the
individual properties that they have such as colour, texture, taste, and origins that can contribute to building a sense of belonging. Simultaneously, the farmers represent the hands that know and grow the food. And this is exactly what the second video advert tries to show. In this line, Franco Kisic, Ivan Kisic’s twin brother (who appears in the first video as an ambassador), explained to me how he sees the tubers in the context of his Restaurant IK, located in Lima:

I came to know the ocas, native potatoes and the mashua around four years ago. They represent the sierra region, the inside of the country. They are humble products, very tasty and spectacularly nutritious that had not been in our food basket for many, many years. And the play they give you in the dishes is spectacular. Here in IK we do use them and we think about continuing researching and using them. We also give importance to corn, chonta, and yuca. They are all from the same family and are full of energy. They are very nutritious and humble products that should have not been conceptualised like that since the beginning.

What Franco was trying to say with “humble products” refers to the general perception about the native potatoes and the other Andean tubers (and also other products) have outside the Andes. In the city those products have been seen as food for the poor. People from the Andes and the other indigenous groups in Peru have been historically perceived as the poor and have been structurally discriminated against. This condition has its roots in colonial times, where the Spanish Empire forced the natives to change their customs, diminishing and despising the indigenous way of being as barbarian (Bartra 1996). The society in Lima and generally outside the rural areas in Peru inherited a Spanish-European way of trying-to-be, neglecting most of the pre-colonial features of people, like language, religion or food in what has been called “colonial legacies” (García 2013) or “internal colonialism” (Cotler 2009). The more one could look Europeanized and the less native one could look, the better for social inclusion. When Peru won its independence in 1821,
the new state tried to build a new identity based on a mixture of features called mestizaje, but the ideology tended to reproduce colonial relations of power and therefore discrimination towards the indigenous groups in the country have continued over the years.

When the Spanish colonisers first saw the potato they sent it to Spain because of its beautiful flowers as a decorative plant but the tuber was considered toxic (Perú. Ministerio de Agricultura 2008:7). The fact that it grows underground and it comes out full of soil was enough for the Spanish to despise it as a dirty product (Reader 2009), an association that remained in postcolonial Peru for the later racial relation between potatoes and indigenous people (Orlove 1998). It was later when Europeans discovered its nutritional value and its high productivity capacity and adaptability that they started eating it. Paradoxically, over time, it has become one of the most popular and important crops consumed worldwide. However, most potatoes consumed worldwide and in Peru are only a few varieties, some of them modified in labs to increase productivity.

The potato as a “humble product”, as Franco named it, carries this long history. The propaganda video and Franco’s interest to use and keep researching the native potato are manifestations of both the state’s and civilian’s intentions of re-building the Peruvian national identity by respecting indigenous produce and knowledge. The native potato, the ocas, olluco, mashua and other products also carry those ethical intentions and help them move into new directions and markets. However, Matta (2013) criticises the way some restaurants and chefs are using those native products. For Matta, they only value them because of their nutritional properties, leaving aside the local

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10 John Reader (2009) argues that the potato started to be consumed more in Europe with the development of the Industrial Revolution - to the point of being a key element fuelling it. The tuber, he says, was later established as a staple food during the nineteenth century.
knowledge that makes them exist. In addition, Matta criticises how the performance of native products is decontextualized from the local way of eating them, which is a sign of not entirely valuing the products and the people who grow them. In this line, Franco Kisić commented on how he embraces some of the products, native potatoes and tubers included, that he uses and promotes in *IK* restaurant:

Being aware that they are to the nature and the universe’s hands, and that at any given moment the state of the harvest can change, makes you connect differently when you have the product in your hands. When you make that connection, you get to know that this is not an empty product, that it has a story and a sentimental association towards how the product was originated. And when you start to understand the environment in which the product grew, you start feeling it and you try to express it in the dish to communicate it. It is about giving the dinner guests something beyond the good taste and to teach them. It is like educate and raise awareness through food.

As I tried to make evident, the difference between the two videos I have discussed above lies in the role of the chefs and the role of the producers. Whereas in the first video described the main protagonists are chefs and the peasants are left out, in the second one the peasants are at the core. Franco’s words about how he tries to use the products in his restaurant shows how the intention of making the producers the cornerstone of the Gastronomic Boom is being implemented. Conversely, the similarity between the videos is the performance of food to represent the country, or part of it.

In 2009, chefs and farmers officially started a project under the name of the *Cook – Peasant Alliance (Alianza Cocinero-Campesino)*. Its aim was to reduce the number of middlemen, pay fair prices straight to the producer, and dignify the work of the peasants to integrate them (as the second video shows) into the Gastronomic Boom. This is not a minor thing considering the discrimination the peasants have experienced since colonial times. The
process in which peasants can become suppliers is not a straightforward process as the Farmer’s Day video tries to show, and it is one of the topics I will discuss later. At his point however, it is good to situate Edilberto’s efforts. The reason he liked the video advert that emphasised the producers was because it showed a tale of success in which he can imagine himself selling tubers to restaurants but also getting the recognition for his work as farmer.

The historical context and the Boom’s propaganda, I suggest, are forces that make some people think about the native potato as a container of national identity and a tool for social change. This is therefore a process in which the tuber is getting a new value and new meanings. As Franco Kisic remarked, the native potato is not an "empty product" and it is being loaded with ideas and wishes about Peruvianness and the possibility of better life conditions for the farmers. Those attributes socially embedded on to the native potato are at the same time forces that help the potato move.

**Ivan Kisic, Marca Peru’s Ambassador**

One of the “ambassadors” I pointed out from the “Peru, Nebraska” video was the chef Ivan Kisic. In the context of the Cook-Peasant Alliance, Ivan and a group of chefs travelled to Ayacucho in 2012. Their idea was to get closer and know the work of farmers and the products they produce in order to include and experiment with “new” ingredients in the creative process of cooking. After the convoy had gone elsewhere the day before, it was Edilberto’s turn to lead the expedition. They left Huamanga early in the morning to visit the town of Quinua to meet some farmers Edilberto had contacted before to show to the chefs the colourful varieties of tuna (*prickly-pear cactus*), tumbo, and other products. The next day they were going to Edilberto’s farm in Condorccocha to immerse into the ocas, ollucos, mashuas, and native potatoes’ world.
On the way to the town of Quinua, Edilberto was leading the tour in his pickup truck as the other two cars were following him on the two-lane road. A lorry coming in the opposite direction lost control, passed Edilberto but tragically hit the car where Ivan Kisic was, causing his death and the death of the others with him: another two chefs Jason Nanka and Lorena Valdivia, and Maria Huamani. Maria was Edilberto’s friend from Ayacucho, also a cook and was starting to collaborate with him in the native potatoes business. Together with Acurio’s words about the revolution with native potatoes, Edilberto recounts this episode very often. He says his work with the native potatoes is fuelled by the “martyrs” who passed away while working towards the same goal of giving importance to farmers’ produce. The case was reported nationwide in the news[^11] in part because Ivan Kisic was a *Marca Peru* ambassador. In some of the newspapers[^12] Ivan was in fact labelled as a “martyr”. It seems logical that in a context where chefs are in a position of becoming heroes and ambassadors, the one who dies fighting for his food and therefore his country, becomes a martyr.

Ivan was about to open a restaurant in Lima when he passed away on that tragic day in November 2012 in Ayacucho. The trip he was making to discover new ingredients was part of his personal research to include them in his restaurant but was also a personal commitment with producers. That is, he was practicing what I have described above as *Novoandino Cuisine* and together with the social commitment of the new phase of the Gastronomic Boom. His brother Franco who was working in a prestigious restaurant in Spain as a general manager, came back to Peru and took the lead to open,

together with his father and family, Ivan’s restaurant project under the name of "IK", which stands for Ivan Kisić.

In November 2015 I was with Edilberto in Lima when he told me he was going to a mass to cheer the Kisić family in the commemoration to Ivan's death. Edilberto asked me to go with him and told me he had not seen the family for a long time, even though he thinks of them very often. Despite my personal beliefs and disagreement with things related with the Catholic Church, I agreed to go. That day we had just arrived to Lima from Huamanga on the night bus; we had been to a couple of meetings in Lima and we were tired. As we had already finished with the schedule for the day, we decided to take a bus to find the church and we arrived one hour and a half before the mass started. To kill time we went to a small modest coffee shop we found close by. While drinking the coffee and between the silences of our chat, Edilberto and I felt asleep on the sofa.

After the unexpected nap we walked back to the temple, an elegant, new Catholic church with a very high ceiling that helped to create a sensation of being a magnificent place. I did not know what to expect but there were not many people, it was in fact a very familiar gathering. Edilberto greeted some of them before the mass started while I remained sitting, uneasy, wondering why I had accepted the invitation to go. It was an uncomfortable feeling to be doing fieldwork in a church during a mass for the deceased. After the mass, I was more relaxed and together with Edilberto we greeted other family members and he introduced me to Ivan's father, Jorge, and the twin brother Franco Kisić. Franco told Edilberto to send him native potatoes to the restaurant and they talked about visiting each other soon. Edilberto invited Franco to spend some time in the farm in Condorccocha, and Franco invited him for a dinner in his restaurant in Lima. Since his brother Ivan passed away they lost touch and they did not even start buying Edilberto’s produce. That evening was the beginning of a new collaboration between IK and Edilberto.
The Cook-Peasant Alliance had a new start. The ambassador was dead but his intention kept alive.

**The Cook-Peasant Alliance**

With the videos discussed above I briefly introduced the *Cook-Peasant Alliance (Alianza Cocinero-Campesino)* within the Peruvian Gastronomic Boom. I have tried to show the official narrative through the video adverts and how it manages to influence individuals’ perceptions to act in a certain way. As a result of Acurio’s push to include indigenous farmers, in 2009 *APEGA* 13 (Asociacion Peruana de Gastronomia – Peruvian Society of Gastronomy) founded the *Cook-Peasant Alliance* with the aim of connecting peasant produce with chefs. Within the Alliance, the *Consortium of Andean Potatoes* from Peru started to produce native potatoes to sell to luxury restaurants in Lima. The Consortium gathered in that year 30 farmers cultivating 17 hectares of native potato. On the other hand, 30 restaurants and five hotels were brought into the scheme as an agreement from the Alliance, to buy and include those potatoes in their menus. Edilberto Soto leads the Consortium and its headquarters are in his farm in Condorcococha, a small town in the region of Ayacucho in the Andes, where I spent most of my 14 months of fieldwork.

Edilberto and his work with the tubers can be better explained by understanding why the Alliance emerged. Some months after I met Franco Kisic on the anniversary of his twin brother's death, he went to the farm with his friend Diego Muñoz, a recognised chef that worked for *Astrid&Gaston*, Gaston Acurio's flagship restaurant in Lima. That trip was one of the activities

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13 APEG was founded in 2007 and its mission was to “build bridges of harmony between our peoples by revaluing the role of the producer in the food chain. Apega is the place where chefs and peasants…are equal; we want to cook the same thing: Peru’s progress” (Apega website in Garcia 2013: 510).
that are happening with more frequency thanks to the Alliance, as it is a way to get the chefs and the farmers together. Edilberto, with his particular capacity of understanding both the logics of the farm and the logics of the chefs, is always eager to host chefs on the farm. The chefs, on the other hand, enjoy Edilberto’s explanations and tours around the tuber field and more often than not, they comment that the experience of visiting the farm connects them with the tubers. Some months after Franco and Diego visited the farm, I went to the *IK* restaurant to take some pictures and also to interview Franco. His words gave me a sense of the overall context and his perception about the alliance:

The Alliance was the cornerstone over which our gastronomy should have been built since the beginning. In one way or another, the big suppliers or middlemen used to make the consumption massive and distort that magic: that energy that is born from the producer. It was taking the added value away; it was making anti-natural processes and more than that. Over time, the lack of importance given to the farmers, to peasants, was going to make that magic vanish in time. Therefore, what we are doing now is avoiding this. In fact, not only avoiding it but also adding value to the products to give them the importance they need, which is extremely needed. The farmers are basically the ambassadors of our offer because they produce, control, and work the land that gives us what we offer in the restaurant.

The chefs and restaurants are turning their gaze to the immense variety of products in Peru. Franco’s words speak of a “magic” in those products, maybe as a result of romanticising them. However, this romantic view of farmers’ produce helps the native potato, the ocas, olluocos and mashuas to move from the farm and have a space in such luxurious restaurants at the same time that it obscures other aspects that I will explore in the next chapter. Edilberto is aware that by selling his produce to those "heroes" he will not make good money but he believes that through this connection they will gain exposure and therefore visibility. For him, the fact that they use his produce is a way to
promote it, even though this implies high efforts and monetary costs. Restaurants like IK buy very little quantity of tubers—around ten kilograms of native potato a week and ten of ocas, for instance. Getting a box of ten kilograms from the farm high in the mountains to Huamanga and from there to Lima is always a hassle in terms of logistics. As he explained to me several times, this hassle is worth more in a strategic way than in monetary logic.

On the other hand, another type of restaurant called Las Canastas started buying 1.2 tonnes of native potato from Edilberto every month since 2015. Las Canastas is a polleria restaurant chain with eleven stores in Lima. A polleria sells roasted chicken (pollo a la brasa), a very typical food in Peru. Normally the pollerias serve roasted chicken with fries on the side, but Las Canastas is innovating by offering a "healthy" option based on boiled and colourful native potatoes instead. They started including native potatoes in their menu, the general manager told me, because they saw that Gaston Acurio was using them in his most luxurious restaurant Astrid&Gaston. Thus, Las Canastas offers a menu with these options just as IK and other luxurious restaurants do. They are not actively involved in the Cook-Peasant Alliance but make an important economic contribution to the farmers’ pockets. It was by imitating the fact that Acurio was using the native potatoes that made Las Canastas get to know and to be interested in including them in their menu. Acurio’s image of a national hero and gastronomic authority, then, was essential to convince the managers of Las Canastas to experiment with a new product.

The business connection between Las Canastas and Edilberto and the way the relationship started, shows the way in which the national discourse about gastronomy and the "new ingredients" are having different and sometimes unexpected consequences. The connection was unexpected to Edilberto, but not an accident. He did not knock on Las Canastas door to offer his produce; they contacted him asking for native potatoes. It is important to point out that
by imitating what Gaston Acurio was doing, it is possible to see how the social status of chefs can add value to the products they use, the native potato in this case. As I have described before, the native potato is not a new crop and the processes through which people get interested in it, speak to the process in which the crop is embedded with different forms of value, making the native potato and the other tubers move.

As I have shown in this chapter, and as Franco told me, the native potato is not empty; indeed it has never been empty of meaning as Mary Weismentel and other anthropologists have noted with research within the Andes (as discussed in the Introduction). But now the native potato is being filled with new meaning outside the Andes. This significance, boosted by the elite chefs and the new wave of the Gastronomic Boom, looks to connect ideas of the nation with the earth and the potato. The native potato is not “innocent” (Reader 2009) as it is getting political by inspiring a “revolution”. It is not a neutral commodity as it is getting enmeshed in circuits of social obligations boosted by the Gastronomic Boom and the chefs, being a medium to think through social and cultural integration in a divided post-conflict country. Nor is it alone, as it is traveling with the other tubers: ocas, ollucos, and mashuas.

Chefs and people involved in the Gastronomic Boom may have good intentions. The risk, of the rhetoric of the video adverts and some other people involved, lies in obscuring the conditions under which the farmers are or will supply the restaurants with food in the chain they are starting to create. In the next chapter I will explore the conditions under which Edilberto is leading the production system to supply tubers to restaurants like IK and Las Canastas.
CHAPTER 2
"ARE THEY HAVING A BETTER LIFE?"
STRATEGIES AND LABOUR TO AVOID AND LIVE THE PRECARIOUS MARKET

In the previous chapter I showed how the native potato is getting a new meaning outside the Andes by representing a connection with the land and with the Nation. Such a connection is contributing to a revaluation of the tubers and it is happening within the specific momentum of the Gastronomic Boom whereby producers are trying to be included in the food chain. The Boom and the gastronomy offer the promise of inclusion and of improving the living conditions of producers. In this chapter I will start focusing on the work Edilberto is doing to create and keep the connections that allow different people to join the chain.

While in the previous chapter I set up the ideological context and promises of the Gastronomic Boom and how the propaganda and discursive mechanisms mobilise the tubers, in this chapter I will describe the context and the market within which Edilberto actually sets up the labour forces in the rural Andes. Creating a new circuit of circulation for the native potato involves confronting the tendency of the current market. By defining the market and the labour conditions as precarious, I will argue that trying to "rebuild the social Peruvian fabric" (as Edilberto wishes) and therefore avoiding a circuit of precarity, Edilberto and the people working with and for him get involved in another circuit of precarity.

The so-called white potato is the most widely produced and consumed variety in Peru. As I described in the Introduction, its productivity rate is considerably higher than the native potato. Conversely the native potato's productivity is lower and therefore its price has to be higher. In this sense the native potato requires more human labour and more hectares to produce the same quantity as the white potato. As a result the native potato price has to be higher.
Edilberto, however, struggles to establish a price for his produce, which he believes is special. Drawing on Terence Turner, David Graeber argues that the politics of values is not about the struggle to appropriate value but about "the struggle to establish what value is" (Graeber 2001: 88). Drawing into the Gastronomic Boom and chefs' media and discursive propaganda to mobilise where "value is", Edilberto tries to establish how much the price for his produce is. In this regard, the act of paying a higher price for the native potato—and the price itself—can be seen as charging for ethical actions whereby paying a higher price for native potatoes can represent an awareness about the need to support what the native potato represents. And it is starting to represent, as I have shown in the previous chapter, the possibility to unite Peru.

Now, I will show how the farmers, especially Edilberto, negotiate the price and explore what is valued about the tubers in the market. In Chapter Three I will explore in more detail the special material qualities of the native potatoes that contribute in the creation of value in as much as they are actually different from the white potato. For now, I will focus on how pricing—and the price in itself—sometimes becomes a point of encounter among different life projects of the Andean tubers at different stages along the native potato chain. Behind the price, I suggest, there are different ways of placing and understanding what the tubers are and what they do for the different people involved. The people I met during fieldwork have different expectations and ideas about what the potato and the tubers can do for them and for others. Sometimes these differences create tensions, sometimes arrangements.

By paying attention to what happen with the native potato and the other tubers along the chain—especially to how the chain is generated as an influence of the Gastronomic Boom—I draw on the studies of "Generating Capitalism" (Bear et al. 2015a) where the focus is centred on "how... social relations are generated out of divergent life projects" (Bear et al. 2015b). This is an
invitation to not take capitalism for granted regarding the creation of particular dynamics from an “already determined structure” (Bear et al. 2015b), but instead to “understand capitalism to be formed through the relational performance of productive powers that exceed formal economic models, practices, boundaries, and market devices” (Bear et al. 2015b).

I follow the approach of looking at capitalism not as a singular, coherent, nor totalizing logic, but as a diverse network of human and non-human relations (Bear et al. 2015a). To do so, it is necessary to pay attention at the “messiness and hard work involved in making, translating, suturing, converting, and linking diverse capitalist projects” (Bear et al. 2015b) that make capitalism look totalizing and coherent. Such a network can take the specific form of a supply chain, understood as a “system of links across difference” (Tsing 2009:149). This approach allows one to study and understand capitalism from an anthropological point of view where different forms of diversity are essential to explain why and how the native potato chain works.

Thinking through supply chains, Anna Tsing (2009) argues, offers the possibility to rethink the relationship between culture and economy as supply chains can only make profit thanks to that relationship. The particularities of “gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexuality, age, and citizenship status” play a role that is normally not considered to understand the mechanisms of a chain (Tsing 2009:158). Tsing (2012:40) suggests that global capitalism is formed by a “niche structure” which includes a “structure of exploitation” and a “structure of possibility”. By a structure of exploitation, Tsing suggests that in order to increase profit, supply chains are built with no care for the environment or for the humans that take part of it. For instance, wages are not good enough for workers. In this regard, arrangements with workers are not randomly done; instead, they are based on what she calls "niches" such as "gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, kin network, nationality, citizenship status, and other historically shifting status markers"
(Tsing 2012:40), which is the space where the anthropological gaze sees diversity. The “structure of possibility” is based on the “transformative alliances and coalitions” that can connect people and places. It is in this site where "we have little hope to survive" (Tsing 2012:43). Projects of "collaborative transformation" bring the chance to work towards "theories that show us how alliances and coalitions reshape political agendas. Of course, such transformations can work to the advantage of capital and Empire as well as their refusal" (Tsing 2012:46). In fact, that is the tension where I locate the work Edilberto is doing. As he navigates a "structure of possibility", trying to use and create alliances and coalitions, I wonder if he is reproducing capitalist relations of exploitation. Or is he helping in the creation of the new social fabric as he hopes? Is he generating better conditions to survive? Who benefits? Are the beneficiaries the chefs, Edilberto, the workers, or the native potatoes?

The particular characteristic of my ethnography is that, at the time of my fieldwork, the new values that contribute to the mobilisation of the tubers and the native potato chain that Edilberto tries to build were a work in progress. Therefore, I can analyse the strategies to set up the chain instead of solely focus about how the chain works. Accordingly, I use my ethnographic field notes and memories to trace “the processes through which complexity and contingency are often so effectively mustered into capitalist projects, as well as the accumulation, dispossession, and retrenchment of intersubjective difference that reliably accompany them” (Appel 2015). Looking at the potato chain in this way, capitalism is a “constant construction project” which is at the same time proliferative, powerful and uneven, contested and heterogeneous that can be traced through research (Appel 2015). In this vein, I will dig into the successful and not successful encounters along the chain to try to understand how and why different life and capitalist projects meet and what comes out of them.
Following Tsing’s idea about how the focus on supply chains makes it possible to analyse the relationship between economy and culture, I suggest that the price agreed upon for the tubers exists as a result of the negotiation within different life projects, some of them precarious. Looking at the price as a “conversion device” (Bear et al. 2015b), or as a point of agreement which stops the analyses with a formal economic view, would blind my analysis from those life projects that collide. In contrast, I want to analyse the processes and negotiations in which prices are arranged to avoid decontextualizing the social dynamics where humans and non-humans flow in and out of the chain.

The use of the concept of precarity in recent anthropological research has “two poles” (Han 2018:332). One relates the term specifically to define the relationship between living conditions and processes of transformation of labour and welfare state under global capitalism. The other refers to a general condition of all living beings of our current age (Han 2018). Within this scope, Tsing understands precarity as an “earth wide condition” to refer to the prevailing situations of the social and ecological world where life exists “without the promise of stability” (2015:2). On the other hand, Harvey (2018) and Millar (2014) suggest narrowing the scope of precarity as a relationship between the “fragile life conditions” (Harvey 2018: 121) and the insecurity and instability of labour.

Millar (2014) and Harvey (2018) point out that precarity in its relationship to labour conditions takes different forms according to the global context where it takes place. This is particularly important to bear in mind for the Peruvian context because the term could be seen as primarily specific to ideas and expectations of labour conditions in the so-called global north, whereas precarious work has been arguably always a condition in the global south (Millar 2014: 34). In the rural Andean context, in fact, I agree with Harvey when she points out that “few Andean farmers would see precarity,
vulnerability, or uncertainty as a specifically contemporary condition” (2018:120). In some regards, the Gastronomic Boom can be seen as a platform that promises to improve these —almost always-present— vulnerable conditions; it creates that illusion for some.

Looking at precarious work along the chain will help me to understand the specific forms that precarity can take in Peru. It would also allow me to see how people navigate and negotiate the conditions of work to make a living with the native potato and the other tubers. One way of looking at precarity is for how it is felt and seen; for its affective but also material forms. For the affective force, precarity generates “states of anxiety, desperation, unbelonging” (Millar 2014:34), which are affective consequences of the said vulnerability and instability that takes place through “attachments, tempos, materialities and states of being” (Stewart in Harvey 2018:121).

In this chapter I will look at how people negotiate with what it is available (Tsing 2005) along the different stages in the chain. First, I will look at two ethnographic cases in which prices are negotiated and influenced by the market. My main interlocutor, Edilberto, suggests that it is the erratic logic of the market that makes him look for alternative ways of making a living by producing and selling native potatoes. Next, I will delve into the motivations of the head managers from Las Canastas to make an agreement with Edilberto. I will suggest that the native potato becomes an instrument to mediate ethical actions whereby engaging in the chain by buying native potatoes generates and responds to the idea of actively taking part in the construction of a better country.

The Potato as the Dollar: The Erratic Market

It was mid-day and we were going to see how the potato fields were progressing. Colfir, an agronomist that Edilberto hires full time, was driving up into the mountains as the car was making us shake and the dry soil raised
by the car was coming inside. Edilberto was sitting in the front as co-pilot, and I was in the back. Other farmers who had sown sooner were starting to harvest but it was not Edilberto’s time to sow. At some point, we saw another pickup truck in front of us that played the claxon and stopped. The person driving got off to cheer Edilberto. It was a neighbour friend of his and they started talking about the white potato’s (papa blanca) price. He asked Edilberto if he knew how much the white potato’s price was that day in the Huamanga and the Lima’s wholesale market because he was about to harvest his field.

Edilberto and Colfir had a rough idea about the price in the last days, and they communicated them to the neighbour. However, the only thing they were sure about was that the price was unstable as always. As they were considering how different regions taking their produce to the market in Lima influence the price, the neighbour vividly suggested: "the potato price changes every day as the dollar does". They all laughed a little, accepting that the comparison was accurate.

The life of the potato is embedded in a net of uncertainties that are described by the precarious condition of neoliberal capitalism (Millar 2014; Stensrud 2017; Han 2018). One of these uncertainties is related with the market (Stensrud 2017). In this case, the farmers have to compete with other farmers producing and selling the same product, making the prices and the profits highly erratic. By saying that the "white potato’s price fluctuates as the dollar does", the neighbour was making a reference regarding how unstable the white potato can be once it has overcome the other uncertainties related with the growing process. He was clearly referring to the uncertainties of the market.

The so-called white potato (papa blanca) is the generic name that farmers give to the varieties that are “improved” (mejoradas) to resist plagues and
difficult weather conditions. These varieties have been improved in laboratories departing from native potatoes, and since their inception they have been thought of as ideal for commercial purposes (Interview with an engineer from the CIP – International Potato Centre). They need chemicals to thrive and reach rates of production per hectare that are considerably higher than the native potato’s productivity. Different varieties have different production rates, but generally speaking the white potato can produce 20 to 30 tons per hectare while the native varieties produce between 5 to 15 tons. The native potatoes need the special minerals available in the mountain soil up to 3,000 meters above sea level; the white potato can also thrive, with the help of chemicals, in the coast or at different altitudes. Another significant difference is that the white potato is easily sold in the wholesale markets but at uncertain prices that fluctuate "as the dollar does". That is to say, a farmer will always manage to sell his produce but never knowing at what price. It is also important to note that the white potato in the wholesale market passes for less strict process of selection, which according to Tsing (2013) is another source of adding capitalist value to commodities. In the next chapter I will discuss how the ecological conditions play an important role in the circulation of the native potatoes and in Chapter Four I will discuss how sorting also influences its mobilisation and adds value.

At the wholesale markets there are usually four or five native potato varieties available in addition to the white potato varieties. The native potatoes are sold at a higher price than the white potato but, like the white potatoes, the price of the native potatoes is also always subject to fluctuation. What Edilberto is aiming to do is to sell varieties that are not easily available in the wholesale markets — or not available at all. Using the native potato diversity as a capitalist asset recalls the initial discussion about how capitalism makes use of non-capitalist forms in the process of accumulation. In an effort to protect his produce from the always-changing prices, Edilberto is trying to build what
he calls "sustained commerce"\footnote{Edilberto refers with this term to the long-lasting commerce that could be economically sustained over time (sostenible in Spanish), not in to the ecological side of sustainability (sustentabilidad, in Spanish), which he is also interested in relation to the native potato.} (comercio sostenible) with the native potatoes. He explained to me that when he is negotiating with a potential buyer, he offers a “fixed price” (precio fijo) that would be around the average in relation with all those fluctuations the potato price is subject to. By doing this, he aspires to protect his own pocket from an abrupt decrease in the price. At the same time, the client is protected from a possible increase of the price. By signing an agreement of this type, they also accept that they would not have the benefit that an increase in the price would represent for Edilberto or what the low price would represent for the buyer. Trust, compromise and risk reduction seem to be at the hearth of the agreement. Edilberto managed to build this type of arrangement with Las Canastas, the roasted chicken chain that I introduced at the end of the previous chapter. I suggest therefore that, in an agreement of this kind, the value comes not only from what the native potato entails but also from the agreement in itself, where arranging a fixed price cuts the risks of the fluctuation of prices and makes the producer secure about selling the produce. From the client’s view, the agreement makes them sure that they will have the product at the time and under the conditions they need. I will explore the standard conditions that are part of the agreement in the next two chapters. However, it is important to mention now that those conditions include selecting specific size, quality of the potatoes, and a number of specific varieties related with their colour, apart from the delivering to Lima on time. For now, let me emphasise the idea that the agreement reduces the level of uncertainty that the market entails.

I suggest that by building these kinds of arrangements with a fixed price, Edilberto is responding creatively to precariousness. At the same time this agreement results from the generative force of the Gastronomic Boom.
Edilberto is not inventing a new commercial strategy but this arrangement has not happened before in the Andes in relation with the native potato. To make agreements, he needs to perform entrepreneurship and by doing so, other people (i.e. the workers he hires, the family members that help him) and himself, get involved and generate another circuit of precarity in the form of precarious jobs. In other words, in trying to escape from the precarious market and trying to build stable and convenient prices, Edilberto activates another circuit of precarity.

Now I will have a closer look at how and by which means he is able to set up the business. The idea of “niches” suggested by Tsing is helpful as it allows seeing different forms of diversity that appear and make connections possible. On the one hand Edilberto is making use of the Andean biodiversity to make a living, which is an effort to navigate the precarious context he lives in. People buying his produce are making a choice of buying a different type of potato, which is different from the so-called white potato. His creativity is directly linked to his capacity to see and capitalise on the potential value in his surroundings. Unlike other farmers, he is aware of and participates in the broader national context of the Gastronomic Boom. As part of his engagement, Edilberto is making alliances with some chefs that are “discovering” and helping to re-value some ingredients from the immense Peruvian biodiversity, the native potato included. Edilberto directs his efforts pointing at a better future and also activates hopes for a better future in the people working with him. He is convinced that there are possibilities for success with the native potato and the other tubers. In other words, he is making collaborations with humans and non-human resources accessible to him, depending very much on how other people can start valuing the tubers. If people and chefs do not value the native potato, Edilberto would not be able to sell them. He is convinced that, with hard work, at some point in time, people will get interested in the material and symbolic qualities the native potatoes and the other tubers have and represent. This will allow him and the other farmers the
possibility to succeed economically. And as I have shown, it is starting to happen.

I refer to the material qualities as very physical qualities. That is to say the colour, the texture, and the taste, which help differentiate the native potato from the so-called white potato. In the next chapter, I will explore how these qualities are valued by the chefs and performed in the restaurant, making the tubers able to differentiate from the white potato. In the previous chapter, I pointed out at how the Gastronomic Boom is contributing to the construction of a symbolic value of the tubers, especially the native potato. This tuber is starting to symbolise the Andes and Pruvianness as well as a possibility for a better future. The ways the native potatoes are produced together with the cultural histories that are made visible—and also the organic certification that I will discuss Chapter Four—add another element to the creation and negotiation of value that lies both in the symbolic and in the material qualities of the tubers.

The type of arrangement Edilberto is trying to build is not easy. On the one hand, the farmers with whom he works sometimes would not agree with that kind of fixed agreement. Every time we were speaking about the fixed price he is trying to create, he reminded me of an episode in relation to quinoa. As a result of an international interest in quinoa\(^{15}\), its price went very high and farmers were making good profit out of their produce. In this context, a client from Canada approached Edilberto to try to agree a fixed price to buy quinoa for the next years. The price for the agreement was lower than the price at the moment of the negotiation. However, Edilberto was confident that it was unlikely—if not impossible—that that price will remain high for a long time. He asked some farmers if they would like to make a deal with him but they

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\(^{15}\) For an analysis of the Quinoa Case in Peru see Emma McDonell (2015, 2017) or Bedoya-Perales et al. (2018).
did not agree. They wanted to make the best profit out of that outstanding price at the moment.

After a couple of months when the price of quinoa went down, even lower than the price Edilberto had agreed to with the Canadian buyer, the farmers called him: "do you still keep in touch with that buyer who wanted the quinoa at S/14.00 soles?" they asked him. "Of course not! We missed the chance, it had to be done at that very moment", he replied with frustration and anger to the other farmer. The deal could not progress without the involvement of the other farmers because the quantity of quinoa the buyer wanted was big and Edilberto could not produce all of it on his own, which is why he got in touch with the other farmers.

How are we to understand why Edilberto could not make the arrangement for quinoa? I think that there was a difference between the approaches Edilberto and his fellow farmers took about the offer. Edilberto had a clear capitalist project in mind, whereas the farmers had a different one and they could not merge in part because of their relation with the rhythms and times of the market. The episode suggests that the other farmers made a decision based on the immediate results of selling at a high price; that is to say, their project was apparently guided by the present tense or in instant results. Here, the impossibility of a mediation between "diverse temporal rhythms, representations" (Bear 2014a:73) and strategies of how to deal with the market became vivid. By not accepting the deal, the fellow farmers were accepting the uncertainties of the market, which in that particular moment were playing on their side – the quinoa’s price was high. They were, at the same time, solving their immediate problem of selling the produce that they had worked with for the last months.

Edilberto’s project, was pointing at the future; he was aiming to build a safe future. To do that, he has to be able to make those rhythms fit; it is an essential
part of his work. In his view it was clear that the high price was only an expression of the market's erratic flow: one day it is up; the next one it is down, just like the white potato and the dollar. It was clear for him that there was no point in playing with the market dynamics again, even if at that point the result was on their side in the form of high quinoa prices. By pushing for a fixed price agreement Edilberto was wishing to get some certainty for the future. A certainty that it is exactly opposite to the market’s logic, where the farmers are never sure about how their produce would be valued. Edilberto was looking for a certainty that by definition is absent in a precarious condition, where life exists with no promise of stability (Tsing 2015). However, by trying to build the conditions to get out of that precariousness—in his search for a promise of stability—he starts another circuit of precarious jobs with farmers working for him. In this new circuit or precarity he also navigates the uncertainties, risks, and gambles of running his own business.

In this regard, by not accepting the precarious conditions of the market, he became a self-employed entrepreneur. He focuses his efforts in finding his own market niches, hiring labour force, making alliances with chefs, and participating in trade fairs to promote the native potato, ocas, ollucos, and mashuas, and some other by-products like jam or nectars. In this way, he is involved in dynamics of self-exploitation as he works with no breaks; more than this he is involved in "super exploitation" (Tsing 2009; Stensrud 2017), in that he hires cheap and unstable labour from farmers. The different views between Edilberto and his fellow farmers speak to different life projects or different capitalist projects that in the quinoa episode could not merge. At the same time, it shows Edilberto’s capacity to understand the market and his efforts to navigate it in a creative way, trying to create connections between buyers and farmers. He was, however, unable to convince or translate his ideas to his fellow farmers, who were in pursuit of an immediate profit. Sometimes differences are impossible to reconcile.
This episode also shows the capacity of Edilberto to navigate and understand how to articulate the market with the production process, something like being a translator between different life projects. As I have narrated, he sometimes succeeds and sometimes fails. His position is in the middle: he can understand how the prices in the market are unstable and design strategies to live in the margins of the market. He can also understand what the chefs and the restaurants want, and try to convince other farmers to join him and produce under a specific agreement. He is at the same time a producer, a boss, and a native potato buyer and tries to synchronize the rhythms at different stages of the potato chain to make the potato move. He navigates different worlds relying, on the native potato’s capacity to enchant people. To do so, he is apparently aware that he needs to make the potato visible and introduce it to people who do not know it yet — this is the reason he makes alliances with the prestigious chefs. As a result, for instance, Las Canastas contacted him and they made a fixed price agreement. The potato has always been there, yes, but what the potato is becoming and doing now can only be explained as an outcome of different layers of relations and not as a precondition (Harvey and Knox 2014: 7) of the potato in itself. The potato’s physical qualities are starting to be valued in different ways and contexts, in combination with the symbolic value that is also taking new shapes. Edilberto is playing an important role in the results of that process.

Coming back to the price, in his role of being in the middle, Edilberto negotiates the price. As I already described, he struggles to build an arrangement, not only with buyers (finding a long term buyer is not an easy task), but also with the farmers who are sometimes used to immediate payment. One of his fellow farmers, Maider, who was involved with him producing native potatoes for the arrangement with Las Canastas, decided to stop collaborating with Edilberto. I was told that the reason he left was that his payment was coming late after some months of delivering the native
potatoes. It happens that Las Canastas takes time to pay Edilberto and consequently he cannot pay the farmers immediately. When I went to visit Maider in his town in Corazon de Ñaupas in Vinchos, I did not find him working in his field. He decided to work elsewhere as a building constructor. This allowed another farmer, Almaquio, to take over on Maider’s role and start growing specifically for Edilberto. In this sense, the rhythm of Edilberto's capitalist project becomes a problem not only in fixing the price, but also in making the farmers engage in the potato chain.

**Market Desires: the Mashua Case**

One evening four people in a brand new car came to the farm in Condorccocha. The farm work had finished for the day and we were in the kitchen waiting for the dinner to be ready, chatting, and having a break. The visitors were asking to buy black mashua. Colfir went to speak with them and, after about an hour, he came back to the kitchen with a bunch of bills asking Edilberto’s mother, Mama Victoria, to help him count the money. The negotiation with the visitors took so long for Colfir because he was trying to call Edilberto to get his authorization, but he was in a meeting in Lima and was not picking up the phone. The kitchen was silent and the peones and I were looking at Colfir and Mama Victoria counting the money. As they finished counting the s/9,000.00, Colfir told the visitors that there was s/100.00 missing. After less than a minute he corrected himself telling them the money was in fact complete. Mama Victoria took the money and put it in her pollera. The visitors put the two sacks with 100 kilograms of mashua in the back of their car, said goodbye, and left.

During a visit I had made with Colfir to Vinchos some days before, people were asking him about the black mashua and the high prices it was, surprisingly, reaching: s/200.00 for a single kilogram of seed. Colfir explained to me that the price was that high because it normally does not have a big market demand and it is mainly grown for self-consumption. An
emerging demand from some Chinese entrepreneurs buying black mashua was making the prices go unexpectedly high. Farmers were going crazy trying to find seeds of that variety so they can produce it and sell it for the next season. It was in this context where the buyers discussed above went to the farm to buy mashua seeds agreeing at s/90.00 per kilogram. Considering that farmers sell native potatoes for around s/1.20 per kilogram and white potatoes for around s/0.60 per kilogram, the mashua price was dream-like. However, Colfir and Edilberto were doubtful about whether or not all those enthusiastic farmers would find buyers and good prices next year to sell their produce to make a profit out of it.

The black mashua buyers came back to the farm the next day. There were three people in the same car: the mother, the father, and their son. I welcomed them at their arrival and as I was wondering why they were back, one of them told me they wanted to buy more of the black mashua and asked me to speak with Colfir. The mother sat on the grass to wait and three or four of the dogs, with curiosity, got close to her; she asked me to take them away. When Colfir came back from the toilet, the visitors complained to him that the mashua he had sold them was not the black mashua he had promised them. They argued that they asked only for black mashua, but in the bags there was a combination of different types of dark mashua. An engineer who was assessing the buyers told them that that mashua was not the right one to sell to the Chinese market, and advised them to come back to the farm to ask for their money back.

Colfir was not at all happy with their inquiry. The mother argued they were good Christians and consequently he could be sure they were not lying to him. Colfir, already angry, argued that he had shown them the seeds, and if they did not realise that they were not what they were looking for, it was in fact their problem. The visitors told him that Colfir showed them some black mashua seeds, but that inside the bags there was a mix of different dark varieties, not only the very black one they were asking for. They continued
arguing for some minutes while I looked on, without saying a word. In her effort to prove high moral values, the mother kept on repeating that they were not lying because they were good Christian. Colfir replied that he was too, that in fact everyone was, asking her that if by any chance they thought he was the devil’s son.

Giving up, Colfir went to the kitchen to ask Mama Victoria for the money back. She told him that she had paid the tractor driver and that there were s/100.00 missing. When hearing this, the Christian mother suggested that Colfir should borrow money from a neighbour to complete the s/9,000 from the yesterday’s transaction. Colfir immediately refused to do so, arguing that nobody would borrow money. The son told his mother that it was fine if they were keeping the s/100.00 for some soda drinks. With the mother apparently convinced, they weighed the mashua bags but they could not remember if the day before they had filled them with 100 o 103 kilograms. The mother argued again that they did not take anything from the sack because they were good Christians and they would never cheat.

Finally Colfir gave the money back but confirmed that there was s/100.00 missing. The son confirmed it was fine like that, but the mother was still not satisfied and asked Colfir to give them a kilogram of mashua seeds in return for the money missing. She said she was going to pray for everyone in exchange. After Colfir struggled finding a plastic bag, he put some dark or black mashua seeds in and gave them to the mother. Some of the seeds were falling to the ground. The Christian mother did her best to pick them all up, trying to put them in the small plastic bag that Colfir had given her a minute ago. Because the bag was full, the seeds were again falling back to the ground, but she kept insisting to take as much as she could. With one of her hands busy with seeds, she said goodbye to Colfir, shaking with her free hand. Then, she picked another mashua seed from the ground, tried to shake hands with me, but she could only partially shake it, so I only touched her fingers as her
hand was busy with the last seed she got from the ground. They finally left
and we came back to the kitchen with some sort of relief, anger, and
frustration.

With these ethnographic moments I want to reflect on some of the different
ways in which the market creates tensions, activate desires, and motivates
actions from the farmer's point of view. These ethnographic moments show
how prices are difficult to set and that they depend on forces beyond the one
to one encounter. The mashua requires less human work to grow and few
material resources to assist its thriving; it does not need fertilisers or a special
treatment to avoid plagues. The mashua plant naturally repels insects thanks
to the spiciness of its leaves. In addition, mashua's productivity per hectare is
higher than the native potato's. Conversely, native potatoes need more human
care and work: fertiliser and anti-plague treatment, and its productivity is
lower than the mashua's. The classic Marxist relation between labour and
price is therefore not enough to understand the difference in the prices
(Graeber 2001:31). It was clear, however, that the Chinese entrepreneurs
looking to buy black mashua were influencing that high price. They were
interested in the black mashua because it has anti carcinogenic properties.
Their business project was to make mashua powder to commercialise in
China as a medicinal remedy. These desires for health in combination with
the low rates of mashua's production were creating an exorbitant price for the
tuber and creating affective disruptions.

The desires for healthy products that the Chinese entrepreneurs were
displaying created illusions in people in the Andes. Such a desire pushed that
family to go to Edilberto's farm in search of black mashua without even
knowing what it looked like. However, this interest seems to be different from
the interest generated around the native potato. From the perspective of the
Chinese entrepreneurs, the value does not come from the mashua’s symbolic
attributes as an Andean product, nor from the people and the local knowledge
involved in its production. They were not interested in any aesthetic quality such as the taste, the colour or the texture — they were going to process the mashua in a form of powder or pills to consume as an alimentary and anti-carcinogenic complement. For the family who tried to buy black mashua from the farm, the motivation came from the money they would be able to make by producing and selling it to the Chinese entrepreneurs. The tuber's value was related to the possibility of money making, that is, for its exchange value. Similar to the native potato, however, the mashua was motivating peoples’ entrepreneurship, making them think that they can have a better life by engaging with its production. It seems that the tuber's instrumental value – for its properties and for its capacity to make money – was making it move.

Unlike the interest of the Chinese entrepreneurs, chefs value the native potato and also other tubers like the mashua for the Andean origin that they can attach to it and also for the physical, aesthetic, and tasting qualities. I will discuss the use and performance of these aesthetic qualities in the next chapter. But for now, I want to hold them visible to suggest that the aesthetic and symbolic qualities also contribute to create a higher price in the native potato under the logic of the Gastronomic Boom, but not at the levels the black mashua reached with the intervention of the Chinese desires. The expectations created by the two markets, however, are similar: they are related to the possibility of creating a better life. The market, as an abstract and sometimes unreadable entity, activates the imagination and people's desires. The imagination and desires triggered by both the native potato and the black mashua are qualities that things and commodities can elicit. This attribute, this value, is being socially constructed in different ways. Whereas the black mashua's is based in an external market force in the form of very high prices, the native potato's is based in a socio-political background.
**Everyday Work**

I was feeling that I was getting closer to the workers that were coming from Chuschi\(^{16}\) for the last week; they were telling jokes about me and among themselves while they were working. I thought it was good the way they were mixing the work with some kind of humour about the moment. That day however Edilberto was very angry with some of them. From his point of view they were only hanging around, making jokes but not working hard. Abruptly, he told them to stop working and asked them to leave, saying that some of them would not come back to the farm the next day. “If they were hardworking, I would have given them soda water as a reward, but look, they are not able to finish with this *chacra* (piece of land)”, Edilberto explained to me. No one visibly complained or argued with Edilberto’s decision, it was accepted. There was in fact little opportunity for the workers to negotiate their status with Edilberto. In that sense, they were vulnerable to Edilberto’s perception of the rhythm of their work and there was no contract or benefit to claim.

In the first section I suggested that Edilberto’s effort to find his own clients outside the logic of the wholesale market is creating another circuit of precarity. The paradox that I want to stress is that by trying to avoid one mode of precarity—the potato market where the labour of making the produce is rewarded erratically—he and other people get involved in another circuit of precarity. In this section, I will show how the low wages are essential to make the native potatoes and the other tubers grow and to be ready for the special niche markets that Edilberto struggles to find. Accordingly, I will ethnographically show and discuss how low wage farmers sometimes have the possibility to pick among different job opportunities, and how this creates more uncertainties to Edilberto.

\(^{16}\) Chuschi is a town in the Ayacucho Region where the first actions of the Shining Path took place. It is located around two hours drive from the farm in Condorccocho.
It was Saturday afternoon and it was time to go back to Huamanga as the work in the farm came to an end. Not because everything was finished – there is always something else to do – but because of the weekend. At around five PM we got into the car: Colfir, Edilberto, Paulino, Paulina, and I. In the weekly routine, the workers work from Monday to Saturday, when they get paid for the job they did during the week. When we arrived at Huamanga, Colfir parked on the side of the road, Paulina and Paulino got out of the car and Edilberto, through the window, gave both weekly payments to Paulino. We said goodbye and Edilberto reminded them to be ready next Monday early in the morning to go back to the farm. Both Paulino and Paulina nodded, and we left.

Next Monday, Colfir picked me up from my house in Huamanga to go to the farm. On our way, as they agreed, we picked Paulino but he was surprisingly alone. His wife Paulina decided not to join the work this week because she was attending the accountancy school and had to do some work for that. As usual, we stopped in Yanama, a town on the outskirts of Huamanga, where people gather in a plaza during the mornings waiting to be hired for a daily work journey. Yanama is on the way to the farm in Condorcocha, making it convenient to stop by in search of workers. For that week, Edilberto had told Colfir to pick more workers than usual to work during the entire week. Although Colfir had previously arranged a deal with three people to meet in Yanama, none of them showed up that morning. All the plans were falling through.

Colfir and Paulino tried to convince some other workers to join, but no one was satisfied with the offer. People in Yanama normally expect to come back at the end of the day, and therefore it is sometimes complicated to convince them to leave their houses and families for an entire week. From Edilberto’s perspective, however, it is more convenient to make agreements with workers
on a weekly-basis. From the workers’ point of view it is not, and sometimes they have the opportunity to decide where to work according to the season and daily possibilities. For Edilberto and Colfir it is in fact more complicated to bring the workers back to Yanama every day at the end of the workday. In addition, if they attempt to bring the workers back again at the end of the workday, Edilberto and Colfir would run the risk of not seeing the workers the next day, just as it had happened to Colfir that Monday with the people who did not show up. Edilberto is aware of this "lack of compromise" from the workers and it is one of the reasons why he prefers to have them in the farm for the full week. What Edilberto sees as a lack of compromise, is maybe a condition generated by the absence of a job contract. After some other futile efforts to convince people in Yanama to join, Colfir phoned call Edilberto and after his approval, he finally gave up looking for people. We left, and realised that nothing went as it had been planned two days ago.

When we arrived at the farm, the tractor driver was waiting for Colfir to start ploughing. There were already two other workers who had spent the weekend on the farm, and were ready to start work. Even though Colfir failed finding workers in Yanama to make faster progress, the work continued with the help of those available. The tractor driver went to the white potato field to plough, while two workers stayed on the farm selecting native potatoes to supply to Las Canastas.

The situation described above was commonplace during the time I did fieldwork. Finding farmers to work on the farm was generally a struggle for Edilberto and Colfir. Looking at the situation from the farmer’s point of view suggests that the non-contract relationship they have with employers gives them the possibility to choose among the options in front them. In this regard, it seems that working for the native potato was not generally their best option. In fact, they were at times telling me that they could find better wages with other employers. Edilberto pays $25 per day to women and $35 per day to
men, while some of them told me that at other places they would find the same type of job for S/. 35 per day for women and S/.45 per day for men respectively.

Having an overall look at labour in the chain, it may seem paradoxically that the lowest wages are paid to farmers. It is a paradox in the sense that the native potato is starting to be valued as a product of Andean history and current Andean labour. The indigeneity, the native-ness, is therefore a value, but only in symbolic terms as we can see that the labour involved is not valued with good wages. The farmer’s skill to work the land is differentially valued than other’s skills that intervene along the chain. Edilberto takes that skill for granted. As Anna Tsing (2009) suggests, farm workers receiving low wages are part of the conditions of what she calls "super-exploitation" that supply chains in capitalism need and use to exist. Following Tsing’s terminology, the farmers’ condition of being indigenous and poor can be considered as an "ethnic niche" that does not give them many other possibilities other than taking this job, even at a low wage. For them however, as the farmers from Chuschi once explained to me, working for Edilberto is a good option because there are not too many job opportunities in the area for farming. Another "niche" is gender related, and it serves as an analytical category to explain why women receive a lower wage. These low wages, however, allow the native potato to have a price point at which Edilberto can make money and keep the chain alive. The native potato and the other tubers need low wages and super exploitation to enter the food chain boosted by the Gastronomic Boom, a Boom that brings the promise of integration and better life conditions. These low wages, however, despite being the definition of precarity, are means for the farmers to survive.
“Are They Having a Better Life?” Native Potato’s Ethical Value

I was in Lima with Edilberto on one of these days of having multiple meetings to promote and sell the native potatoes. It was lunchtime, we were hungry, and because we were in Miraflores I suggested to Edilberto that we go to Las Canastas. He had not tried the native potatoes he sells them so he liked my suggestion and accepted enthusiastically: “let’s make quality control, manito17”, he told me in a sarcastic but also truthful tone. The restaurant was not full but not empty with people who apparently left their office to have a late lunch. We ordered two dishes of roasted chicken with native potatoes. The native potatoes in this restaurant are boiled, salted, and cut in half, so the colours are visible at first sight. Edilberto tried them with attention, analysed the presentation, the texture, and finally the taste. After a couple of potatoes and visibly feeling proud, he nodded and told me the potatoes had successfully passed the quality control.

While eating, Edilberto had the idea to call Santiago, who had contacted him months ago to provide Las Canastas with native potatoes. Santiago told Edilberto that he was close to the branch we were eating at and told him to wait. He would join us in about 20 or 30 minutes. When Santiago arrived, after an enthusiastic greeting, he called Federico, the owner of Las Canastas. Santiago explained to us that he was no longer working with his friend Federico because he had a good job opportunity selling chorizo somewhere else. When the owner Federico arrived, we moved to a bigger table to have more space. He kindly asked us if we had already eaten, he was hungry but we were already full. He ordered a portion of roasted chicken with salad and

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17 Edilberto and his friend Pippo nicknamed me "manito", which is a Mexican word for "mate" that Peruvians are familiar with.
French fries to share at the centre, and a round of *chilcanos*\(^\text{18}\) for everyone. I was surprised that he did not order native potatoes: it was in fact some sort of blasphemy to my eyes since *Las Canastas* is Edilberto’s main client. Why was he then involved in this chain if he prefers French fries over boiled native potatoes?

Santiago started telling us the story of how he convinced his former boss Federico to introduce native potatoes in the restaurant. He explained that he saw Gaston Acurio using and promoting native potatoes and he then tried to convince Federico to include them in the restaurant. Federico, however, was not convinced in the beginning because, traditionally in the *pollerias*, roasted chicken comes with French fries and people like it that way. But Santiago was looking for innovations and also to offer new and healthier options in the restaurant. If Gaston Acurio was promoting the native potatoes, it was an assurance of being a good choice, he thought. Santiago recalled that he had to wait for Federico’s wife’s approval; I did not understand if this was a macho joke or the way *Las Canastas* operates. In the end, of course, both the wife and the boss accepted, and they started offering the native potatoes in the eleven branches of the restaurant in Lima. Santiago was proud of his achievement as people are currently asking for the native potato option. As soon as he saw the moment and probably feeling supported by the new success of native potatoes in the restaurant, he took a chance to push Federico to buy the chorizo he is now selling in his new job.

Federico was not convinced about the chorizo option, but Santiago showed him the calculations to remind him that he would be saving money with this cheaper option while also having a better quality of chorizo. The problem for Federico was telling the current supplier to stop providing him with chorizo. At this point we were possibly sharing the third round of *chilcanos*, when

\(^{18}\) *Chilcanos* are a cocktail mixed with Pisco, which is one of the most traditional Peruvian alcoholic drinks.
Federico admitted that it was, in the end, a good decision to have native potatoes in the restaurant. He was concerned, however, about whether or not buying potatoes from Edilberto was making any difference to the Andean farmers who work with Edilberto: “Are they having a better life Edilberto? Are they having a better quality life?” he thoughtfully asked. Edilberto took one or two seconds and replied: “yes”.

This episode informed me about the motivations of the two heads of Las Canastas for getting involved with native potatoes. On one hand, Santiago’s idea to convince his boss to introduce the colourful tubers in the restaurant comes from the influence that the figure of Gaston Acurio imposes. As already described in the previous chapter, he represents an authoritative voice in food issues; he is able to legitimise products that are not widely known in the country, such as the native potato. In this sense, they are starting to get a new value. On the other hand, the owner Federico, after he accepted the suggestion from his former employee, was concerned about how his involvement in the chain was or was not helping the farmers to have a better life. Here, I argue, the moral value of the native potato emerges as a means to help others. Buying the native potatoes conveys “instrumental questions of value” (Paxson 2013:189) in the sense that it allows people to think that they can actively help the Andean farmers to have a better life; it becomes an ethical-oriented action with the goal of helping others. In this sense the native potato and the insistent question of Las Canastas’ owner helped me see the value of the ethical action (Lambek 2013) and its importance in opening up new routes of circulation. This is important because it adds another layer to understand the circulation of the potato as the value emerges also from actions (Graeber 2001). The insistence in asking Edilberto also shows that the owner was animated by the value of the potato in relation to the people who produce them, that is, that the potato was activating relation with people. That relation was not with the farmers, but his concern was about them and mediated by Edilberto, who with his answer probably obscured the real conditions of
production as well as his actual position in the chain. That process of obscuring the conditions of labour can also be seen as fetishisation of the native potato, even in a process where the project of the Gastronomic Boom is trying to create alternative routes to re-connect producers with consumers. Lambek (2013) suggests that an important difference between the market value and the ethical value is that the market value is commensurable while the ethical value is not. In this regard, what Edilberto did with his answer was measuring the ethical value of the owner and blurring the reality. But by doing that, he made the owner satisfied.

The willingness to help that the owner Federico expressed, seems to speak also to a niche of opportunity for Edilberto. The idea of niches of diversity introduced by Tsing (2009) to explore how supply chains operate in global capitalism was helpful to understand the farmers’ low wages. She argues that supply chains depend on “factors banished from the economic” (2009:158), meaning the cultural “vicissitudes of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexuality, age, and citizenship status”. I have shown how the farmers can be seen as an ethnic and gender niche where low wages can exist and also mean a good -if not the only- opportunity for them. To understand why the connection with Las Canastas is actively working, I suggest that the instrumental value of the native potato activates a desire to help, which is an ethical value that is in process of construction and attachment to the tubers. But, simultaneously, this desire and the possibility to fulfil it can only happen as the owner is in a particular position of economic power and class, another manifestation of diversity that makes the chain operate. All these ideas helped the owner to agree for a price that it is in fact higher than buying other type of potatoes somewhere else.

By making these kinds of arrangements, Edilberto is finding ways to mobilise the native potato, but this is working not only thanks to his efforts. He found a niche of people believing in Acurio’s opinions on one hand and, on the other
hand, people wanting to make ethical actions to help others. At the moment of Edilberto's answer, the point was not a matter of how much benefit they create by buying native potatoes, no matter how much better quality of life the farmers have or not. What was important was to maintain the ideas around the possibility of help. This was what made the owner feel content with his decision, and why he is probably willing to keep selling colourful native potatoes; even if he preferred to eat the French fries that day he invited us for some rounds of *chilcanos*.

At the beginning of the chapter I mentioned that rural Andean Peru could be thought of as having always been precarious. In this sense, what Edilberto means for "reconstructing the Peruvian social fabric" with the native potato chain can take different interpretations. In this chapter my aim has been to show another way in which value is generated making the potato circulate. It has been important to show the precarious context of the market where Edilberto is situated and how he has actively tried to avoid participating in by creating the native potato chain. As he tries to find alternative routes from the erratic market, I argued, he created another circuit of precarity by offering precarious jobs as well as finding himself vulnerable. At the same time, those precarious jobs are embedded within the risk of being obscured by the idea of getting involved in a circuit of ethical actions that generate value to the potato but also reproduce the vulnerable working conditions of farmers as well as Edilberto's own vulnerability as a coordinator of the chain.
CHAPTER 3
REDEEMING THE NATIVE POTATO:
A TASTE OF THE ANDES
PERFORMING HISTORY AND PLACE IN THE
PLATE

I made a reservation under my name and when I arrived with a friend, the
waiter took us to our table and double-checked that we were having what they
call the "Tasting Menu Experience". The interior of the restaurant has a design
that resembles a wooden box for vegetables and fruits. The owner, Franco,
thinks that what they offer in IK goes beyond food, as he had explained to me
some weeks before:

We are personal assistants and creators of moments. The restaurant is built with endless details to produce
something beyond a physiological satisfaction: it is an emotion, an experience. For me, it is a big
responsibility that human beings spend two or three hours of their lives on my hands when they come to
the restaurant. Therefore, I try to give them make them live such an intense experience so they can
remember us for their entire life by coming only once to IK. But this is not going to happen only for the
details they could have perceived, but for what those details produced in them: a feeling.

Lights were low and the music soft, making the atmosphere quite intimate. All the tables were circular with the intention of not having those uncomfortable moments deciding who sits on the extreme sides, the space where a table becomes a structure of power. At least that was how Franco explained the logic of the tables to me. There was also a personalised light coming from the ceiling to the centre of each table. The light made a play of shadows of different natural shapes which produced a drawing on the table's surface. The wooden table was decorated with some river stones. Ivan Kisić created the restaurant's architectural design and menu before he passed away.
He was Franco's twin brother, who tragically died when he was visiting the Andean fields with Edilberto and other chefs (as described in Chapter One). To honour and remember him, Franco and his family decided to name the restaurant *IK*. *IK* is located in Miraflores, one of the most exclusive areas of Lima. A candle is permanently lit in the restaurant to remember Ivan.

The idea of the Tasting Menu at *IK* is to take the dinner guest across Peru through the dishes, which feature ingredients from different Peruvian regions, ecological landscapes, and according to the seasons: fish, Amazonian roots and vegetables, barley, quinoa, mushrooms, and Andean tubers - native potatoes and ocas - provided by Edilberto. In each of the twelve dishes that come one after the other during the tasting menu, the waiter explains the ingredients, its origins, and how they are cooked. The chefs use the different ingredients and the way they are cooked and arranged on the plate to try to connect the plates before the dinner guest with different places in Peru. In this chapter I will connect the ideas around terroir that conceptually link taste with place in relation to the native potatoes and the ocas. I will consider the way restaurants use and value the tubers to argue that the place and the history of the tubers are sensually and craftily performed to bring into being the association between the tubers and the Andes on the plate. This association plays an important role in the revaluation of the potato as well as in the re-imagination of Andean towns and people.

The Tasting Menu at *IK* and the preparation of the potato and the ocas in the kitchen will help me discuss the concept of terroir and how it relates with the idea of the native. This resonates with the continual assertion Edilberto makes about the need for the native potatoes to grow high up in the Andes and his wish to get the “Protected Designation of Origin” (*Denominacion de origen*) relate historically and conceptually with the origins of terroir in France. Based on the “cultural belief” (Trubek, Guy, and Bowen 2010:140) that the geographical and historical conditions together with the process of creation
of wine determine its taste, different French actors and agencies pushed to institutionalize the terroir through the *System of Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée* (AOC) early in the 20th century (Trubek, Guy, and Bowen 2010:140). The legal resource to determine the ‘Designation of Origin’ operates now in different parts of the world, including Peru. Every nation has their own regulations but they have to be framed in terms of the Lisbon Agreement that was released in 1958, which Peru joined in 2005. The legislation serves as an instrument that recognises the association of the product to the land and does not allow growing the same product in a different geographical zone. Thus, I understand Edilberto’s argument for the native potatoes’ Designation of Origin as related to the concept of terroir. In this sense, the claim of the native is similar to terroir as both refer to place, history, methods of production and specific conditions of the land.

An underlying risk Edilberto foresees based in the recent history of agriculture in Peru is related with quinoa. Edilberto and Colfir explained to me that when the international interest for quinoa increased, the government started a program to expand its cultivation on the coast. The result was an excess of quinoa on offer and therefore a decrease in the price (McDonell 2017b). In addition, they told me that the quality of the quinoa cultivated on the coast is far inferior to the quinoa which is cultivated in the Andes, where it originated. Similarly, when the white potato was modified to grow on the coast the quantity of the produce on offer expanded, as did the ecological zone where they were able to be cultivated. Edilberto is well aware of the quinoa and white potato cases and these are some of the reasons why he claims the need of a “Protected Designation of Origin” for the native potatoes. In his view, such a designation would prevent any possibility of expanding the area of production of native potatoes and would keep it bounded to the Andean territory.
According to Edilberto there are around 500 types of yellow potato, a mesmerising variety. He remarks that each of them, depending on the place where they grow, have specific qualities of taste, texture, and colour – grades and intensities of yellow in this case. However, he always says that Runtus is the “queen of all the yellow potatoes” (*la reina de todas las papas amarillas*).

A similar claim relates to the broader term of native potatoes, where the classification of potatoes as native refers to the specificity of the place where they grow: the Andes. In fact, Edilberto told me several times that the colour, texture, and taste of native potatoes depend on the quality of the Andean soil and its nutrients, the extreme temperature, and the rain at the right moment. The native potatoes need a particular ecological environment to thrive. The minerals available in the soil at more than 3,000 meters above sea level are one of the most important requirements for the potatoes to develop the unique colours, the texture, and the taste. To find the best availability of nutrients, the land must be virgin or rested for about eight years. At the high altitude of the Andes, temperature is extreme: cold at night and sunny and hot during the day. The extreme weather is also essential for the potato to thrive.

In this sense, the concept of terroir is parallel to the use of the adjective ‘native’ that is used to distinguish the potatoes from the other white potatoes, in that it evokes and relates taste with origin, history, place, people, and methods of production. Similar to how the idea of the native is used in Peru, the concept of terroir “bestows uniqueness and authenticity onto a place’s product, prohibiting it from being replicated elsewhere in the world” (Brulotte and Di Giovine 2014:6). The specificity of the idea of the ‘native’ over terroir is that it makes reference to the indigenous population that have been long discriminated against in Peru. As I will show in this chapter, the way Edilberto and chefs use potatoes and other tubers as native from the Andes evokes a “specific notion of heritage” (Brulotte and Di Giovine 2014:6) that positions the tubers as being specific to a place and having a specific history of origin. In this regard, my ethnography contributes to the scholarly
intersection between heritage and terroir, which in Peru is taking shape through the claims of the nativeness of the potato.

**Terroir and the Senses**

The concept of terroir is based on the idea that the conditions of a place like soil, altitude, or weather as well as the people's knowledge and ways of production influence the qualities and the taste of food and drinks (Trubek 2008; Paxson 2010). The concept was first used in France to connect the qualities of wine with the land where the grapes are cultivated and the process through which the wine is produced. While the original definition of the French terroir was to claim hierarchies of taste or certain “culinary superiority” (Belasco 2014:39), scholars have pointed out how claims of terroir are now serving as an “instrument of local environmental, economic, and cultural regeneration” (Belasco 2014:39; also see Trubek 2008; Besky 2014; Paxson 2013). The claims being made, and the new sense of pride that comes through consuming potatoes that are “native”, resonates with Warren Belasco’s definition of terroir. Terroir for him is an ethical project that combines a “regard for one’s native landscape, reciprocity between food producers and consumers, and an overall sense of responsibility for the consequences of one’s own behaviour.” (Belasco 2014:44–45). However, some authors show that these ethical projects within the food system tend to re-fetishize producers and their produce (West 2012; Besky 2014) and fail to challenge the inequalities of life conditions (Guthman 2004).

Even though I never heard my informants using the concept, I often heard them associating the qualities of the Andean tubers, in particular the native potatoes, with the place where they are produced. It is with the intention to use the conceptual framework that connects the taste with the place, that I use this concept of terroir to understand my ethnography. In fact the naming of the potato as "native" and the tubers as "Andean" clearly resonates with an active effort to link the product of the earth with the specific location in the
world that is the Andes. As I have started to show, many of the ideas that the concept of terroir entails about connecting or claiming the relation of taste with a place was both very common and very vivid: the potatoes were always referred to as "native" (from the Andes) and the tubers as "Andean". In this light, the way the potatoes are used for their definition as native informs and can contribute ethnographically to what the concept of terroir explains.

What is generally associated with terroir is the taste, the people who grow and produce the food or drinks, the landscape where it is produced and the artisanal or non-industrial methods that separates the production from industrial production (Paxson 2010). In this regard “terroir offers a theory of how people and place, cultural tradition and landscape ecology, are mutually constituted over time” (Paxson 2010:444). In this sense, the concept of terroir goes beyond taste or flavour and includes the ecology of the land, history, and the human processes –including labour– involved in the production of the product at stake. Of course the association does not happen naturally; it is a personal, social, and political attribution that, in my study, is materialised in the potato and the tubers and the ways they are produced, valued, and consumed. With her research with cheese and drawing on the French tradition of terroir, Heather Paxson suggests that terroir can be a link to instrumental values in as much as it could be an opportunity to relate production and the market with land conservation, and rural economy vitality (2010:454). However, as De Neve (2008) has argued with alternative markets and I started suggesting in the previous chapter, Paxson observes dynamics of commodity fetishism whereby the conditions of production are obscured and the goals for land conservation and benefit for producers are undermined (Paxson 2010).

For now, my interest is to enquire into **how** the relationship between taste and place is created and performed at the restaurant stage in Lima. In addition to what I observed in the restaurants, I will consider how “first-person experiences” (Hedegaard 2018:74) with and in the land such as chefs' visits
to Edilberto's farm contribute to the formation of that association between
taste and place. It is in such a first-person perspective where the sensorial
qualities of the food and/or a place are experienced (Hedegaard 2018).
Considering my ethnographic accounts with the native potatoes and the
Andean tubers, my aim is to consider how sensory aspects such as vision and
touch play an important role in the association between food and place. More
specifically, I will pay attention to the colour and the texture of native
potatoes and ocas and the way they are brought to, cooked, and served in the
IK restaurant to evoke the Andes. In this chapter I will argue that the potato
and the tubers are used in some restaurants by staging and making visible
hidden or neglected history and origin as a way to redeem the tubers.

In the Western tradition of thought, vision and hearing have been privileged
as “higher senses” at the expenses of smell, taste, and touch, which have been
downgraded as “lower” senses (Korsmeyer 1999; Stoller 1989; Sutton 2010).
Paul Stoller (1989) explains that this happened as a consequence of the deep
influence of Kant’s “Critique of Judgment” in Western philosophy. Kant
prioritized the senses “relegating smell, taste, and touch to the level of brute
as opposed to aesthetic sensation” (Stoller 1989:8). In this regard, vision and
hearing were approached as the "intellectual" or "cognitive" senses in
opposition to the other senses that are more related with the body experience
(Korsmeyer 1999:3). Anthropological research has focused on the senses
taking that historical bias into account by paying ethnographic attention to
those other so called "lower" senses - touching, smelling and tasting - that are
meaningful for people to make sense of and live their lives. Food and eating
are in fact a fertile ground to explore the integration and interrelation of the
senses and go further in such a distinction to overcome that Kantian
hierarchical organization of the senses.

Paying attention to food and eating is also a productive ethnographic strategy
to explore the social and cultural implication of taste as a sensorial quality
that operates in daily life. In fact, through food and eating, it becomes clear that the senses do not operate separately and that such a hierarchy tends to obscure how humans’ senses interact with food. In the literature about food and the senses, attention has been focused on how the different senses come together to play into what is called synaesthesia or “the union of the senses” (Sutton 2010:217). More specifically, from this point of view “taste unfolds as a synthesis of multiple impressions where each sense contributes to a particular perspective” (Hedegaard 2018:71). Through this approach, the ethnographer is encouraged to consider not only the taste of the food, but also how it looks, how it is smells, and how it feels to touch and taste. However, the sound of food –its auditory cues– seems to be a more opaque sensorial quality to acknowledge. Notwithstanding, having a conversation with a friend and colleague he was remembering the sound of slicing bread called pane de forello in his hometown in Calabria, Italy. As we were sitting in the kitchen of my house in Manchester, he enthusiastically described vivid memories about his home and the taste of that bread, even before he took the first bite, emphasising the sound created by the friction of the knife with the crunchy crust. One day in Lima I was eating cancha (roasted corn) and I realised I could not stop taking the kernels into my mouth. As I was eating, I became aware that as well as appreciating the taste I was enjoying the sound of the crunchy texture of the cancha coming from within my mouth. My sensorial attention was both in the taste on my tongue and in the sound created by that texture at moment of chewing. Even though I never heard about someone talking about potatoes in relation to sound, these short accounts shed light on to the intermingled nature of the senses and spark further curiosity regarding the relationship between food, texture, and sound.19 Different to the pane de forello

19From a non-anthropological perspective, Elder and Mohr (2016) show a direct relation between the sound of food and consumption intake. Through consumption monitoring and statistical analysis they argue that the more awareness people have of the sound of what they eat, the less they consume. However, my rationality about the roasted corn and its crunchy sound contradicts that theory.
forello or the cancha, the potato is normally soft and does not produce sound when eating it or slicing it. In the restaurant, however, the sound of the mellow music in IK was helping to create an ambience of peace and tranquillity for the dinner guest while in the kitchen, for instance, the rhythm of the labour tends to be hectic. The turbulent efforts Edilberto has to work through to make the potato circulate from the Andes to IK have a quite different pace from that mellow music that tries to influence the dinner guests’ experience of eating.

Carolyn Korsmeyer (2011) reflects on the connection of taste with other senses acknowledging the importance of smell and touch but especially emphasising the role of vision. For her, a "full tasting experience" means a complete sensorial awareness of food through the different ways and moments in which the senses stimulate body experiences and collaborate in the final tasting. According to her, the contribution of sight is that of "anticipating" what is going to be brought into the mouth: "Tastes alone are often ambiguous and require identification of their objects in order to come into focus, and often it is sight that provides that identification.” (Korsmeyer and Sutton 2011:463). What happens before the foodstuff is in contact with the receptors in the tongue collaborates to the perception of taste or as Liselotte Hedegaard puts it, taste “is a synthesis of the preliminary sensory impressions, the actual components of taste in the mouth, and a final assessment” (2018:72). Conversely, Andrew Irving (2017, 2013) suggests that depending on the "sensory context", the perception of reality through the senses can also "oppose, destabilize, and juxtapose conflicting realities" (2017:163). In this light, and contrary to what Korsmeyer and Sutton suggest, more than "anticipate", sight or smell, for instance, can destabilize what is going to be eaten. Irving explains it clearly: a rotten bottle of milk could look drinkable but by smelling it one realizes it has already spoiled. What is important to stress here, is that the way I want to approach taste does not start but finishes in the tongue.
The approach Korsmeyer takes by calling the attention to the way the senses collaborate for a full tasting experience it is in fact another way to explain the synesthetic approach to the senses introduced above, and enlightens my understanding of the native potatoes. Therefore, instead of trying to separate the sensual qualities of the tubers I would like to consider them as elements to the assemblage of taste. In this view taste should not be limited to what the receptors of tongue perceive and it becomes necessary to consider what happens before the moment in which the tongue touches the potato.

In fact, during my fieldwork I was struggling and confused because my informants were commenting very little about the specific taste of potatoes. When friends and people outside Peru were curious about my research and asked me if the native potatoes in fact had a particular taste, I was always struggling to give them an answer. What I usually replied was that I was not sure about the taste but it was clear to me that colour and texture were distinctive qualities that my informants valued. Edilberto, for instance, usually says that there are more than 500 different types of yellow native potatoes, all of them "exquisite", but he never distinguished them based on taste. On the other hand, he has a clearer idea about the textures and colours of different varieties. Many people in Peru, including him, describe the range of native potato's texture from harinosa (flourish or sand-ish) to aguachenta (buttery or watery). The condition of the texture is related to the percentage of water that the potato is composed of, and it changes from variety to variety. The quality and condition of the texture and colour are also influenced by the quality of the soil where it is harvested. As I mentioned before, it relates to the minerals available in the high and rested (or virgin) Andean land. My ethnography with the native potatoes, ocas, ollucos, and mashuas has showed me that colour becomes an important category as well as a strategy to link taste with place, especially in the case of the native potatoes. As described in Chapter Two, a restaurant like Las Canastas, for instance, is interested in the colourful qualities of the native potatoes.
From this synesthetic approach to taste, I can now argue that thinking about terroir—the link between taste and place—entails considering colour and texture, which in the case of the native potatoes are the qualities that were most often mentioned during my fieldwork. That is to say that thanks to the native potato and the Andean tubers I now understand terroir as the association of food between place and the senses, not only taste.

Eating Colour

In this section I will focus on colour. As I discussed above, Korsmeyer and Sutton (2011) suggest that the relationship between vision and taste is that of "anticipating" while Irving (2017; 2013) suggests that the relationship is one of sensual disruption or dissonance of what will be eaten or what is experienced. In the case of the potatoes, sometimes the colour creates a dissonant sensorial effect. To the eyes of those who do not know the native potato, seeing a red or blue potato makes them doubt if what they have before their eyes is in fact a potato. In different fairs where Edilberto was exhibiting the tubers, people would stop to see and ask with curiosity about two specific red varieties of native potato called sangre de toro (bull’s blood) and yawar (blood in Quechua): “is this a beetroot? Is this a potato?” In such cases, people find the colour disconcerting. This possibility of the potato to disconcert, surprise, or amuse due to its colour, I suggest, is one of the sensorial qualities that are exploited by those who work with the native potatoes.

Michael Taussig (2009) offers a provocative reflection about the history of colour in the West, inviting the reader to consider what colour can do and what actually has been done as an “organizational force” (Beyes and De Cock 2017:72). With Indigo, he shows how the wish for the blue pigment in Britain led to a system of exploitation of workers in India during the 19th century. This example resonates with what Sidney Mintz (1985) revealed in his work by tracing the history of sugar, where the fervour for sweetness created a
system of exploitation of workers in the Caribbean to provide the refined sugar cane to consumers in England. Taussig with colour and Mintz with sweetness show how specific colonial desires created systems of exploitation. In other words, such systems of exploitation were created in order to satisfy sensorial experiences: for sight and for taste. Both sweetness and blue are now as common as the air we breathe and if it was not for the historical enquiry these authors have offered to us, we would probably be blind to the historical context. Taussig is conscious of the lack of recognition to that violent past and uses the history of blue jeans and its relationship with the indigo pigment to suggest how people are familiar with the blue colour and how unusual is to be aware of the history of ordinary objects such as blue jeans:

To slip into the blue of your blue jeans is to slip into history, not the history of this happened, then that happened—but rather what Nietzsche had in mind with his complaint that nobody had yet written the color of history. To slip into the blue of your blue jeans is to slip into a surprising and unexpected encounter with the past —old Cairo in your jeans’ bottom—but without your having the faintest idea of what you are slipping into. Where might such affinities reside? How might they be awakened and in that sense redeemed? (2009:156–7).

I wonder if the history of the native potato can be "awakened" or what would it mean to redeem the native potato or what would it mean to awake the history of the native potato. As I am trying to show in this chapter, colour is an essential feature of the native potatoes and contributes to associating the potatoes with the land where they are produced. It is in this regard that terroir as a concept to explore how people associate food with a place comes into play and the ethnographic case of the native potatoes is employed to argue that colour is integral in the process. But are consumers and chefs aware of what it takes farmers to grow, transport, and sell the potatoes? Is the colour of native potato a force creating a system of exploitation to produce them?
Are people involved in the native potato chain aware of the history of the native potato in Peru and why these potatoes have been unknown to the population outside the Andean mountains? In some ways, eating a blue or red potato can also entail an encounter with the past.

During the mid-eighties Enrique Mayer and Manuel Glave (1999) carried out research in the Peruvian Andes exploring whether or not farmers were making profits by selling potatoes. With a detailed study in two provinces they understood that peasants do not consider some costs of production and even though they do not make a profit in the strictest sense of economic accounts, they do get some "little something to earn" that keeps them growing potatoes. They noted that the introduction of "new varieties" create genetic erosion of the native varieties. They reported that even though native varieties are not profitable, farmers were still cultivating them on a small scale (1999:345). Some of the same native potatoes that Mayer and Glave referred to are now making their way to some restaurants in Lima, despite their historical and unprofitable burden.

The idea of the tasting menu at IK is to make the dinner guests travel around Peru; to evoke places through food. However, it seems that in the tasting menu the taste alone is not enough and therefore the chef's creativity expands to the visual aspects of the ingredients, the process and the technology by which they are cooked, and the way they are presented on the table. All these processes, Franco Kisić told me, are a staging (puesta en escena). Here, I suggest that it is the staging of an association of different actors in combination with the technological processes of cooking which are the means by which the chefs and Franco try to evoke the place. In this setting, the native potato becomes one of those actors. The material qualities of the potato, together with the techniques of cooking, contribute to the association of the native potato with the Andes as they are staged and dramatized in the plate.
A chef in IK explained to me in detail the process of how they cook the native potatoes for the tasting menu:

Chef: We prepare a salt and ash dough. With the potato the first thing we do is ash: we dehydrate it, next we put it in in the oven. We make the ashes that we mix with the dough. Once we have the dough, we stretch it out. Then, we take raw potatoes of different colours: native potatoes and we envelop them in the dough. Next, we throw them on the hot coal to roast and later we put them on the side until they finish cooking. It would take around 25 minutes or half an hour in the artisanal wooden oven.

Me: And how do the people react?

Chef: It is awesome. Some foreigners come and they do not normally see stuff like that. It is like if you travel to the mountains. In the past, people in the countryside used to use the soil to cook, isn’t it? They used firewood, threw the potatoes and covered them with soil and stones to cook.

Me: Is it kind of what you do here?

Chef: Exactly, it transports you to that. And what did they do? In the past they took huacatay cream and cheese, milk, and a batan; started mashing with the stone to make the cream. They would pour it into a bowl and took the potatoes from the ground. They cleaned the potatoes but did not slice them, and with the peel they would dip it in the cream and eat them. Well, but this is more or less the idea of showing people what this is, what is Peru: different varieties of potatoes. And well, we had a lot of varieties in the restaurant but they are finishing, so we need to ask Edilberto for more.

Whether or not the native potato as it is staged at IK actually "transports" people to the Andes is not something I am able to judge in this research. This is one of my ethnographic limits, since it was not possible for me to access the consumers’ world. My aim, then, has been to try to understand how it is that the owner and the chefs try to transport their clients, that is to say their
intention. In this regard the intention of transporting should not be thought only in terms of what the staff members suggest with words, but in relation to what the associations of actors and the cooking techniques can do. That is to say, that the way of presenting and elaborating the dish play an important role as part of a performance to bring the potato or the tubers into being the Andes on a plate.

In this regard the methods by which the potatoes are cooked and displayed are relevant in relation to what the technology can do to enchant people. Such a process is significant in terms of the staging as a way to dramatize the link between the potato and the Andes. Drawing on Alfred Gell's ideas about art and technology, Joy Adapon (2008) analyses food as art production in order to focus in "the communicative aspects of cooking and eating" (2008:31). This approach allows Adapon to "understand some of the meanings that foods carry" (2008: 32) in its social relationality, that is to say as the way in which food is understood socially "on action" (Adapon 2008:32). Instead of inquiring into the meaning of food in a semiotic form, her suggestion is to treat food as art in Gell's terms. In so doing, she tries to understand how it is that food preparation as art is able to communicate intentions and therefore "enchant" (Gell 1992) people in part thanks to the technological process in the kitchen: "The communicative aspects of cooking and eating lie in the meaning that actors (or agents both cooks and eaters) place in the food within their social context" (Adapon 2008:31). It is in this vein that I now want to focus on the role of the technology of food preparation as art in relation to the way the potato, as one of the actors, performs in the restaurant and the intentionality of the chefs in using the tuber.

Alfred Gell defines a work of art focusing on the technical labour involved in its creation, a definition that resonates with what cooked food becomes:

We recognise works of art, as a category, because they are the outcome of technical process, the sorts of
technical process in which artists are skilled. A major deficiency of the aesthetic approach is that art objects are not the only aesthetically valued objects around: there are beautiful horses, beautiful people, beautiful sunsets, and so on; but art objects are the only objects around which are beautifully made or made beautiful. (Gell 1992:46, italics in original)

The native and colourful potatoes are getting valued aesthetically as beautiful potatoes, just as Gell refers to beautiful horses, even before being modified by any technological process of cooking. Potatoes and horses are however different to a beautiful sunset because both potatoes and horses pass through processes of harvesting or breeding that requires technical labour, knowledge, and care. Despite that differentiation tends to "blur the border between art objects and utilitarian objects" (Lemonnier 2012:18), what Gell is pointing out is that the effort of making an object beautiful or aesthetically valued as art is mediated by a technical process and that such technology is essential to "enchant" the receptor: “The enchantment of technology is the power that technical processes have of casting a spell over us so that we see the real world in an enchanted form” (Gell 1992:44).

It is through the technology used in the kitchen that the chefs try to make the potato beautifully cooked and displayed on the plate, even though for some the potato is already beautiful. It is obvious to mention that when the tuber is harvested it is not ready to eat. It is therefore the cooking that makes it edible, but in the restaurant the chefs invest especial effort, care, and labour in making it look and taste beautiful for the dinner guest. What the chef in IK was explaining to me was the huatia, a way to cook potatoes with soil, firewood and stones that has its origins in the pre Inca times. In the video I described in the first chapter there is a scene where potato farmers are celebrating the harvest and dancing while they wait for the potatoes to be cooked in the huatia. What I am trying to say is that this way of cooking is related to indigenous people living in the Andes. The ethnography in the
kitchen suggests that the method of cooking the native potatoes is another element employed to try to evoke the place of origin in the restaurant.

In fact, the example I share was not the first time someone tried to replicate the *huatia* in a restaurant context. Chefs Diego Muñoz and Emilio Macias worked in Restaurant *Astrid&Gaston*, being the people behind the success of the restaurant and they designed the menu for some years. Emilio also visited Edilberto at the farm and proudly told us the story of how he was responsible of replicating the *huatia* for the tasting menu. Emilio found the way to cook the native potatoes inside a brick made of soil and *ichu*\(^\text{20}\) inside the oven to serve it on the table for dinner guests. Similar to the intentions at *IK*, what the chefs in *Astrid&Gaston* were trying to do is to evoke the Andes through a plate: to bring the place through the plate. The associations go beyond the potato to include the method of cooking and the appearance of the dish. The association that staff at *IK* try to create with the native potato and its colourful properties lies in the conditions and the place of production - the Andes. This is the reason, I suggest, why the native potato can be thought of in terms of what terroir does: associating place with taste. But in this case, it can also be said that we are observing an association of place with colour. Similar to wine where colour is one of the relevant sensorial qualities that are appreciated when judging the quality of the wine (Trubek 2008), colour in the native potato becomes a relevant category that helps distinguish it from other types of potatoes, such as the white potato. Such visible difference is one of the most important characteristics that are displayed in the dishes and associated with the place and history where they are produced. The association, however, is also performed in restaurants like *IK*.

\(^{20}\) *Ichu* is the grass that grows in fallow lands.
Performing the Native

One way to follow the native potato along the chain is by asking what changes and what remains in the potato and the ideas about it at different stages. Or, as Marilyn Strathern does, to wonder about changes and continuity in the definition and limits of epochs and nature: “... how much change has taken place? ... What should be conserved and what should be reformed?” (1992:1–2). What makes the native potato "native"? And, how much change can the potato afford to still be perceived as “native”? I want to suggest that chefs and staff in the IK restaurant stage the potatoes with the intention to make them perceptibly native and therefore evoke the Andes. It is in this sense that terroir — the association between place and sensorial qualities of food — is dramatized in what can be seen as a performance. It seems that the chefs are sometimes making the potatoes evoke the Andes to be sure they can be called "native". In a way, what would be different if instead of a native potato on the plate the chef placed a white potato?

Thinking about the native potato's performativity allows me to consider the structures of power where the potato is acting and how it relates to those structures. The inspiration comes from Alfred Gell's theory of art and the gender theories where the idea of performativity points at the subject's agency to consciously perform or act a gender identity role and the possibility to destabilize the norm with that act. Judith Butler explains that:

... through the practice of gender performativity, we not only see how the norms that govern reality are cited but grasp one of the mechanisms by which reality is reproduced and altered in the course of that reproduction. The point about drag is not simply to produce a pleasurable and subversive spectacle but to allegorize the spectacular and consequential ways in which reality is both reproduced and contested. (2004: 218).
In this regard, the performative refers to "a set of acts that produce the effect of appearance of a coherent substance" (Butler in Morris 1995: 572–3). This notion is based on the idea of the "performative as the act of enunciation that brings into the being the object it names" (Morris 1995:572). If gender is performed —that is brought into being— in and with the acts of the body, objects of art —food included— come into being through the enchantment of technology. That is to say, that the object of art "achieves its effect via the enchantment cast by its technical means, the manner of its coming into being" (Gell 1992:47).

If the nativeness is what identifies the native potato from others type of potato, it is in its performativity where the nativeness comes into being to make the potato distinct from others. That is to say, that in the restaurant the staff works towards a way in which the potato can be sensed clearly as "native" through the technology of the imitation of the huatia and by exposing its colour. At the same time, by placing the native potato on one of the plates of the tasting menu at IK, the native potato is transgressing spaces of class, not through irony but through enchantment. A tuber that has been discriminated against for its association to the poor, indigeneity and therefore low classes in Peru is finding a way to places where it used to be actively discriminated against. It is in such a way that the act of deciding to use it and its presence can be seen if not with some degree of transgression, with the aim of redeeming it. As Franco pointed out to me, the tasting menu is a "staging". In this regard, the anthropological theory of performativity inspires me in thinking about the potato in the restaurant as an actor performing its native identity. The potato is carefully dressed up in the preparation of the dish in the kitchen, where the chefs use specific technology to enchant the dinner guests. I am not suggesting that the presence and performativity of the native potato in the restaurant is a subversive act comparable with the irony created by drag, but I do suggest it is an intention to redeem it by transgressing spaces of class. In both scenarios, now it seems clear to me, both the native potato and drag come
into being with a specific intention of reproducing and contesting the structure of power and class. In the case of the tubers in the restaurant, place and history are brought into being by the performance of the plate.

**Taste of the Land**

Just as the concept of terroir links the land with the taste of products harvested from it, it is worthwhile to consider the social process of the land, to analyse how such a history is embedded in the social construction of the link between a product, the taste, the land, and its production. In this regard I agree with the idea that the "... environment is always the product of social historical processes" (Narotzky 1997:8). That is to say that the life history of the land is relevant and, more specifically, it is doing something for the native potato.

During the TecnoAgro, one of the fairs in Lima where Edilberto was exhibiting native potatoes, ocas, ollucos, mashuas, and other by-products like jams, and nectars, he was talking with a man who approached the stand to see and speak about the potatoes. Edilberto explained:

So, what happened? At the end [during the war], it was like that: bam, bam, bam! Every time when a transnational-brand's truck was passing by, they [the rebels] burned them. Then, for instance, Coca-Cola started saying: do you know what? This is bullshit, we are not going there anymore; let the people from Ayacucho die of thirst. Done! Problem solved. So it was like that. Now, tell me: is there any mining in Ayacucho? There is not! The miner who wanted to do some exploration was hanged; a bullet in him, and no one kept trying.

So, what happened? There was a time when Ayacucho suffered a lot because many people died, disappeared... but at the same time something was getting protected: the land hasn't been used. Why? Because its people, the peasants, have been killed: the army and the rebels disappeared them. And some of
the few who survived have already moved out to the city. This is called migration; they left their lands.

In my case, for instance, we were going at night to prepare the field, and we were hiding to sow. However, not too many people were doing this. The others have abandoned their lands. So, what happened? The lands are abandoned. Therefore there are many good lands, good soil. And there is enough. So, in this land is where all these beautiful things emerge. That's why you were right: if someone brings a seed to a virgin or long-rested land, it produces an amazing potato. This is what it is happening.

But like in Ayacucho, there are other sites (in the Andes) as well. Huancavelica also has beautiful lands high in the mountains. Happily, in the last years, the government is making new roads to everywhere, so now you can reach the mountain. I think also Huánuco should have good areas in the heights, faaaaar, far away. I should locate those ones...

The connection between taste, land and its history also leads to culinary tourism as a strategy to show and let the visitors discover the "quality and authenticity" of the produce. In fact, when the chefs visit Edilberto's farm what they are doing is testifying that the place is in fact the origin of the foodstuff they are "discovering" and getting interested in. The experience remains powerful to them and in some extreme situations also to others, as I showed in the Chapter One. Indeed, the Peruvian government is working on the creation of 'Gastronomic Routes' creating, for instance, "The Quinoa Route". Edilberto and his friend who is a tour guide, Pippo, are trying to develop the "Potato Route", including the farm in Condorccocho as a site to visit and eat at as part of the route. I will focus my attention on specific visits of chefs to the farm in Condorccocho but I wanted to mention that native potato-related tourism is also an emerging idea and that it also aims to relate the tubers with their place.
Bringing people to the farm in Condorccocha in the Andes to show them the native potato fields is a way in which Edilberto tries to emphasise the importance of the connection between the tubers and the specific condition of growing in the mountains. Edilberto has in fact developed an expertise in guiding visitors. From chefs, families, or TV hosts he knows what to say, where to take them and what to offer them to eat: boiled native potatoes are the star ingredients. Similar to what happens in the restaurant, he stages the visit to show the visitors the best features of his farm and make them experience a connection with the land, looking to re-affirm the connection between the native potatoes, the other Andean tubers and the place.

Some months before the day I went to eat the tasting menu in IK, Franco visited Edilberto's farm in Condorccocha with his family and Diego Muñoz, a friend of his who is an internationally recognised chef who used to be on charge of the kitchen in Astrid&Gaston, the finest restaurant of Gaston Acurio. After looking after a group of tourists and another group of chef students at the farm, we went to harvest tubers in the mountains. We got in Edilberto's truck and he drove us up to the hill. We parked at the end of the road and carried baskets, one or two small plastic containers, and lampas to harvest. Edilberto took us first to one of the native potato fields, next to the mashuas' and finally to the ocas'. They were all impressed, enjoying the journey, the landscape, and getting their hands into the soil in search of tubers. I was taking pictures and hanging around with them. When we arrived to the field of ocas and they started harvesting them, only very small ocas were coming out, a size that is not valued in the market. Edilberto explained to us that they did not grow properly because of the lack of rain, which he was attributing to climate change. Edilberto called them “baby ocas”. Franco was happily surprised with such a discovery and told Edilberto that those ones were a perfect size for IK, and asked him to send a box only with those “baby ocas”. It seems that the experience Franco had that day in addition with the previous and tragic death of his twin brother some years ago contributed to his sense
of what that place means for him. For him, the mountains in Ayacucho are more than a "point in the map" (Hedegaard 2018) and the tubers connect him with that experience, making him want them for his restaurant.

Edilberto describes the ocas, ollucos and mashuas as the "potato's cousins" and he is trying to sell them together with the native potatoes, but not everyone is interested in them in the city. This is the reason why he showed the chefs where the other tubers grow in addition to showing them the native potato fields. He told me several times that his aim is to include these other tubers in the wave of interest that the native potato is having in the country. He normally explains to people that the tubers have to grow together in synchronisation. As the native potato requires virgin or long-rested land to absorb the minerals from the soil, the ocas, ollucos, and mashuas are not as demanding with the land. Therefore, a field harvested with native potatoes in the first year will be ideal to grow ocas, ollucos or mashuas the next year. This is what he and other farmers call crop rotation (rotación de cultivos) and it is part of the logic of how Edilberto plans his farming, which includes a search for good long-rested or virgin land.

It was interesting to see how Edilberto was, on one hand, creatively naming those imperfect ocas that would have been otherwise unsellable. On the other hand, I was impressed when Franco showed his enthusiasm for the "baby ocas". A strange assemblage between an imperfect harvest as a consequence of climate change and the interest about the aesthetics of that imperfection for luxury consumption was happening before my eyes. Through his experience in the mountains Franco got to know the ocas and found them valuable for their size and variety of colours. Contrary to native potatoes, Edilberto mixes different varieties of ocas together at the moment of sowing. As a result, the harvest is a colour feast for the eyes as the gamut of colours of the oca's skin goes from dark red, to yellow, pink, orange, pale yellow and some of them mixed with yellow and red, or orange. I realised later that Franco did not taste
the ocas he was requesting for his restaurant and that it was actually the colour and the size that convinced him to buy them.

During that visit, I explained my research to Franco and some weeks later I had an appointment with him to photograph the cooking processes of the Andean tubers at IK’s kitchen. Asking him for the opportunity to take pictures and interview him was the only way I found to do some ethnographic immersion in the restaurant given that I was spending most of my time in Huamanga and Condorccocha. After some weeks and several emails of clarification and planning the logistics of my one-day-visit to the kitchen, I managed to schedule the visit. I later realised that the dynamics in my visit to IK was close to a staged visit. They had prepared what to show me and the food was half prepared.

Franco introduced me to Junior, the chef in charge of the kitchen and the one who was going to guide me. He asked him to show me how they cook the native potatoes and the ocas, being the two tubers they work with in the restaurant for the tasting menu. The box with baby ocas that Franco had asked Edilberto for that day on the farm was in the kitchen. I had brought it to IK per Edilberto’s last minute request an hour ago. Franco called some of the chefs and opened the box. He was enthusiastic with the product and talked with one of the chefs about how they would cook them. The idea was to follow the process by which they cook the other not-baby ocas. He showed some young chefs how good it was to eat the “baby ocas” just from the box, raw, and even with a little bit of soil.

The kitchen in IK has three different spaces. Downstairs is the main room, with stoves, a big stainless steel table, refrigerators to store food, and many specialised tools to cook. Outside, there is the artisanal oven and upstairs a room with a vacuum machine and other ovens. Junior introduced me to
another chef who started explaining to me how he was going to cook the "baby ocas" in the main kitchen room:

Chef: What we normally do is to *nixtamalizar* the oca, a technique using lime to extract all the liquid that also leaves a crust. Next, we cook it for two hours in a vacuum with syrup from arrayana. Later we cook a homemade ricotta: we dehydrate ricotta; we add tanned oca and oxalis’ flowers. But what we are going to do now is to play a little bit with what we have gotten today to see what taste and texture we can get.

Me: Yeah, that was what your colleagues were telling me, these are another size of ocas. You normally work with bigger ones, don’t you?

Chef: Yes. We normally work with the same ones from Ayacucho that Edilberto provides us, but these ones are marvellous, a very tiny size. I have seen them very rarely.

Me: And why do you want them so small?

Chef: In addition to the taste, that is very rich, I also think it is about the visual effect. It has a lot of impact, doesn’t it? Having them very, very small, it kind of makes them more beautiful regarding the visual effect.

Me: So, you do not know how they are going to taste because probably the size will affect the taste…

Chef: Yes. It could be that the size affects the taste: it could turn bitter or sweet because they are very small. However, I do not think it would change too much because, if they are organic, the plant grows naturally and therefore they can be small. Nature makes them like that. I do not think the taste would change much… and well, for every litre of water we add 15 grams of lime. We make sure it is well dissolved and let the ocas *nixtamalizar* for an hour…

The combination of vision, taste, texture, affection, and the possibility to link the tubers with their growing site in the Andes —the taste of the place— seem to be some of the most important ways in which the tubers and other
ingredients matter in the IK's kitchen. But vision, taste, and texture are not enough to convey the place on the plate. Indeed, the team at IK has to stage the plates. As Franco told me in an interview, in his role as manager he works to give the dinner guests an experience, not only food. To do so he understands the act of dinner as a puesta en escena (a staging). A performance where some of the actors are the ingredients and their origins playing in association with the way they are cooked, served, and explained by the waiter in the restaurant, which is set as a theatre.

The waiter at IK kindly brought us the first dish of the tasting menu and explained to us that it was "fake trout skin". After we ate it, he brought the second and described it as "barley's biscuit with germinated quinoa and mash mushrooms". I was wondering when the Andean tubers where going to appear when the third plate the waiter brought was a basket full of ocas, and he told to us:

This is a journey across Peru through the dishes. Here we have the Andean tubers: in this case the oca, cooked in a special procedure with lime and homemade ricotta cheese. It also has flowers and clovers from our organic garden located in Cieneguilla. In this case I would suggest you to eat with your hands.

My friend and I followed his suggestion and ate with our hands, leaving the tongs on the side. The "baby ocas" that Franco had asked Edilberto for that day in the farm in Condorccocha were in the basket, raw and as a decorative base for the other two not-baby-ocas that were cooked with lime and ricotta cheese. The taste was very good yet different to the one I was used to when eating boiled ocas in the farm. The waiter, however, did not mention anything about the raw "baby ocas".

The recognition of the place through the ingredients does not come naturally and has to be explained by the waiter (Trubek 2007:40). Other methods of
affecting the experience of the dinner guest include the way the tubers are cooked and presented on the table. In order to make an ordinary ingredient such as a potato into an extraordinary experience, the staff at IK have to build up a set of relations. That is, by using taste, colour, texture, and specific cooking techniques, the chefs try to bring the geography of the tubers to the plate. Terroir, then, does not end in the origin of the ingredient. To convey the idea of the ingredient representing the taste of a place, the ingredients have to be associated with other actors and actions. At this point, the potato in the restaurant is not only a potato. In its trajectory from the Andean soil to the restaurant, as I have tried to show so far, it has been loaded with ideas about the nation and the Peruvian farmers’ success. It has been seen, tasted and cooked to try to transport people to a place, and it has also been an actor in a staged scenario.

When we finished eating the two ocas, Franco came and brought us the native potatoes course. It was a clay plate filled with hot charcoal and two bright yellow potatoes sliced. Franco added two or three drops of a special liquid to the charcoal to produce a smoke and explained:

A moment of your attention please. We continue the tuber’s journey and we have the potato: more than 3,500 edible varieties. In this case we have the yellow potato. What we do is to cover it on salt and we put it into the artisanal clay oven to cook. On the plate it comes with an ocopa sauce made out of cheese, corn, and huacatay oil. The idea is to move the potato away and leave the salt-based crust, but some people get confused and eat it…

Visually, having a purple or red potato on a dish can be a source of amusement. When the amusement is linked to the resources of the country, a sense of pride may arise. For the way the potato is displayed in some luxury restaurants, as I have shown with the case of IK, the native potato and the other Andean tubers are used to evoke the Andes. The visual, tasting, and
cooking qualities of the native potato try to take the dinner guests to a place far up in the mountains, where the soil, the minerals, the weather, and the people make the native potatoes possible. The mountains, however, seem to be a distant place, but a place they can feel proud of.

**Colour of the Place**

While the effort of restaurants like *IK* does not make a big economic impact on the native potato chain, it helps to move “the political forces which encourage or limit new understandings” (Pickstone 1997:98) of the native potato and the other Andean tubers. This is by making visible the tubers. The story of tubers in *IK* is similar to what happens in other restaurants like *Astrid&Gaston*, where the manager from Las Canastas got the idea to start using them as a side dish for roasted chicken. The colour of the native potatoes, as I have shown, helps to associate them with the place where they are produced because it is a special material quality dependent on the ecological and human labour involved during the growing process. The agency of colour can be seen as the "capacity to cause affect" (Abbots 2017:33) or to "invoke (or provoke) an emotive reaction" (Harvey and Knox 2014:14). Because of that particularity in an ordinary foodstuff such as potatoes, this effect is linked to the place and people who produce them.

The perception of the Andean world in Lima was different to what it is now, even though the Andean region still has the aura of a dangerous area to some people because Ayacucho was the epicentre of the Internal Armed Conflict. For instance, tourist guides in Huamanga are just starting to bring Peruvian travellers to re-encounter with the Andes. The connections between the capital and the Andes were more complicated and slower twenty or thirty years ago than they are today, when new roads, buses, and flights interconnect the country. The perception and the feelings are historical but the native potato has always been there, at least since 8,000 years ago when, it is said, the native potatoes were domesticated from wild varieties of potatoes by
pre-Inca people. However, it has only been recently that the native potato stopped being ignored and despised and now makes its way to luxury restaurants to represent part of the Peruvian history and land.

The native potatoes, the ocas, ollucos, and mashuas are historically charged with the Inca, indigenous, and the War narratives. This is part of what also causes chefs and consumers to be attracted to them in the context of national pride and integration discourse brought about by the Peruvian Gastronomic Boom. What the concept of terroir seems to erase from the association between place and taste (in the broader synesthetic approach) is labour as a system of exploitation created to produce and transport, in this case, the colourful potatoes. The association of land with taste, despite the good initial intentions to revitalise the rural economy, tends to romanticise places and obscure the labour involved to produce the foodstuff. Following Taussig’s Indigo narrative (2009), I have explored how colour is the quality that is helping make the native potatoes visible and of broader interest while connecting the tuber with the Andes. At the same time, it is colour and the way it is performed that carry the risk of covering up a long history of social injustice and discrimination of the people that inhabit the place and produce the tubers.
I was with Edilberto in his house in Ayacucho getting some documents ready for one of the programs he was applying for to get funding from the government. His computer was on his desk with Excel open to fill some tables with names, addresses, and phone numbers of the people participating in the project. Another window with Word was also open to check all the documents he needed to compile. On the sofa next to the table with the computer there were three or four stacks of documents he had already arranged and they were ready to be delivered to the Ministry of Agriculture. On the floor in front the sofa there was a box with some other documents, where he was looking for one of the foundational certificates when something special caught his attention: “Manito”, he called out to me, “Look, this is the first invoice I did for Gaston [Acurio]; the first time I sold him native potatoes”, Edilberto exclaimed as he showed me a piece of paper from 2011. Understanding that it was important to him, I took a picture of the bill, or in other words, I documented the document, and gave it back to him. He then put it back inside the box he had taken it from, together with other old and important documents he was keeping. Edilberto then explained to me that one of the reasons the restaurant of Gaston started buying native potatoes from him was because he managed to give them an invoice, something that not all the native potato farmers are able to provide.

During the year I spent with Edilberto he got involved in different relationships with the government and private organisations where the production of the native potatoes, ocas, ollucos, and mashuas had to be documented. What all these efforts have in common is that they were all related with his efforts to mobilise the tubers: to access specific niche markets
or to get funding from different agencies. In other words, on the way from the farm to the restaurants or other markets, there is documentation to be done; otherwise the tubers would not move along the chain. In fact, the invoice he showed me that day is relevant to him because it was a requirement for the restaurant and in that sense it was the only way to make a deal with them. In this chapter I will explore the role of standards and documents to show that their implementation serves as a strategy to add value to the tubers in the process from production to distribution. The tubers are mobilised as far as they can meet standards; indeed, meeting standards is a condition for the native potatoes to leave the farm in search of new markets. But, what are the standards? Who defines them and under what logics? And, how is Edilberto responsible for making sure the potatoes meet those standards?

Understanding standards as "whether in the form of physical objects, reference materials, written codes or laws, or widespread practices [that] are the means by which we judge persons, process, and things to be superior, acceptable or unacceptable"(Busch 2011:3248), I will focus on the processes of selection and organic certification of the tubers. First, I will concentrate on the selection process of native potatoes and the construction of the standards that determine how the act of sorting potatoes has to be done to work efficiently to add value (Tsing 2013) to the tubers and make them suitable for the restaurants. Next, my focus will be on the organic certification process that Edilberto was pursing during the time of my fieldwork. While the standardisation of selecting tubers for the restaurant is under construction becoming a relatively “widespread practice" and it is not based on any document, the organic certification is a process that follows strict international norms. In this chapter I will argue that two types of standards serve as a form of governability to access the markets that Edilberto navigates to mobilise the native potato and the other tubers.
A Problem with Sizes

I was working in my room in Huamanga when Edilberto phoned me. He was busy doing paperwork at the bank and asked me to go to the shipment agency to help Almaquio deliver eleven 50 kilogram bags of native potato to send to Lima. Almaquio had just arrived from Vinchos bringing potatoes to Edilberto for the first time. Usually, it was his brother Victor or his colleague Maider who would get the potatoes ready in the sacks and personally bring them to Huamanga. But Maider had decided to stop sending his produce to Edilberto because he was late with the payment. Edilberto explained to me later that the restaurant, *Las Canastas*, normally takes time to pay him because the administrative process is slow. As a result Edilberto does not have the money to pay to his colleagues as fast as they wish. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, Maider got tired of waiting for his money and decided to step back the deal with Edilberto. It is in this context that Almaquio took over and started selling his produce to Edilberto. To make the most of his trip to the city, Almaquio also brought ollucos and extra native potatoes to sell on the wholesale market, as he usually does.

Almaquio is Victor’s brother and, along with Maider, they all live in Corazon de Ñaupas, a town about three hours by car from Huamanga. Edilberto started collaborating with them to increase his capacity to provide native potatoes all year long. In Corazon de Ñaupas, they normally grow native potatoes for self-consumption and sell ollucos and white potatoes to the wholesale market in Humanga. Unlike the land where Edilberto sows in Condorccocha, the topography and water access in Corazon de Ñaupas offers the possibility to water the fields. This is a particular benefit because it makes it possible to grow in counter season (*contra estación*), that is, not being dependant of the rainy season, and therefore to have a second yet smaller harvest in the year. The farmers call this second harvest small season (*campana chica*) as opposed to the big season (*campana grande*) that is structured around the rain. The agreement that Edilberto made with *Las Canastas* was to provide native
potatoes every two weeks during the twelve months of the year. Because the potatoes harvested during the big season cannot be stored long enough to be in good and fresh condition all year, Edilberto started an agreement with Victor and Maider. They would grow potatoes for the small season and be the providers for *Las Canastas*. This extension of the farmers’ network was one of the things that Edilberto was proud of since, with the native potatoes and the other tubers he wishes to “rebuild the social fabric of Peru”, as I described in Chapter One. Thus, this relationship with the other farmers was a step further in extending the benefits of finding new circuits of circulation for the tubers.

Extending the supply chain also means extending the ways of sowing and selecting the native potatoes to make them ready according to the client's requirements, in this case *Las Canastas*. In other words, to expand the chain also means to expand the standards by which these potatoes have to be sown and selected. This process does not happen automatically, rather it involves labour, training, discussions, and mistakes that can make the chain fragile. At the time I was doing fieldwork, the alliance between the farmers in Corazon de Ñaupas and Edilberto was being negotiated. One day, for instance, we went to give Victor and Maider native potato seeds of some varieties they did not have and that were what Edilberto was selling to *Las Canastas*. In this way, Victor and Maider started growing in counter season according to the restaurant's selection of potatoes that was based on having a colourful mix of potatoes. The agreement was that every two weeks they would send 550 kilograms of native potatoes to Huamanga and subsequently, Edilberto would send them to Lima. Once in Lima, a taxi driver that Edilberto hires collects the sacks at the courier agency to deliver to each of the eleven branches of the restaurant. Victor and Maider would take turns every second week, so in the end each of them would be responsible to send his potatoes according to the selection criteria once a month. As part of the agreement, Edilberto pays them
s/2.00 per kilogram of potatoes, a price that was fixed\textsuperscript{21} and higher than the price on the wholesale market. But after some months of taking part in the deal, Maider decided to step away from the agreement with Edilberto. The reason, Victor explained to me, was that Maider was not happy with the delay in the payment. As I described in Chapter Two, Edilberto argued that this was happening because \textit{Las Canastas} was taking time in paying him and therefore he had no money to pay Victor and Maider. While for Victor this was not a reason to leave the agreement, it was for Maider. As Maider stepped back, Victor's brother, Almaquio, took over his role and joined the chain. Now let me go back to the delivery agency, where I was with Almaquio trying to solve what to do with the native potato sacks.

Staff at the shipment agency were not allowing Almaquio to leave the native potato bags without paying the courier fare beforehand. Normally, when Victor brings his produce, he arrives to the shipment agency and he just leaves the bags in the agency. Next, Edilberto comes, pays, signs the forms, and the agency sends the bags. With this method, Edilberto does not need to arrange his schedule to meet with Victor and it makes the transaction easier as they do not need to synchronise their schedules. Under this arrangement, the agency works as a space that takes care of the bags and helps —at no extra cost— the connection between Victor's produce from Corazon de Ñaupas, Edilberto, and \textit{Las Canastas} in Lima. But this time something went wrong with Almaquio and people in the agency were claiming that they would not take responsibility for the sacks of potatoes. After some discussion, the person in charge allowed us to leave the potatoes only under my promise that Edilberto would come as soon as possible to pay the shipment fee and sign the forms. However, Almaquio and I had to wait for Colfir to come with the car to carry the other olluco bags that Almaquio had brought to sell in the wholesale market. At this point I was a bit desperate because the pick-up truck

\textsuperscript{21} This is part of the fixed price arrangement that I discussed in Chapter Two.
was in the repair shop and it was not clear if Colfir was going to be able to come and at what time.

So we waited but after some time I decided to phone Edilberto to ask him if it was a good idea to take a taxi to take the other sacks to the wholesale market but he refused, arguing that it was going to be expensive. He was worried and asked me how the sacks were arranged and if there was a specific bag ready to send to Arequipa with only blue potatoes (papas azules). I did not know how Almaquio had arranged the bags so I passed him the phone and they discussed that. A few minutes later Edilberto arrived wondering if Victor had explained clearly enough to Almaquio how to select potatoes according to the restaurant's standards. Edilberto started to verify the bags noticing that the bag of blue potatoes was not as it should be; the potatoes were bigger than the size required by the restaurant.

So, in the middle of the courier agency, we threw the potatoes on the floor and started to make a new selection with the sizes required by the restaurant in Arequipa, which were very similar to Las Canastas's standards. Edilberto was carefully explaining to Almaquio how important it is to keep the high quality standards (altos estandares de calidad) so the restaurants can get exactly what they want in order to keep them satisfied. Otherwise, Edilberto continued, they can just stop buying the native potatoes. The main problem with the sacks was the selection of the size – the selected potatoes were too big for what the restaurant wanted. Almaquio included many first-sized (primeras) potatoes which are the biggest and are the size that are normally eaten by farmers and their families, but the restaurants are requesting a smaller size which corresponds to the second-sized (segundas), that in the farmers’ logic is the size that is stored mainly as seeds.

Later that night I was at Edilberto’s house to help him prepare some other documents when Colfir called Victor to discuss what had happened with his
brother Almaquio. Colfir, visibly upset and worried, reminded Victor that it was his duty to make sure the bags that Almaquio had brought were arranged as they should be: carefully selected and according to the right size. Sending a wrong selection of potatoes, Colfir explained to Victor, put the commercial relationship in danger and everyone could be affected; they all have to be very careful. One of the differences between selling for the wholesale market and for the restaurants is that in the former it is not necessary to carefully select the potatoes, but as the requirements of the restaurants are new, it takes more time and more effort to make an appropriate selection.

What happened that day elucidates a tension created by standards between the restaurants’ requirements and the traditional understanding of edible potatoes from a farmers’ point of view. It illuminates different ways in which the chain operates, its rhythms, its fragilities, and how the tubers accrue value by the act of sorting out (Tsing 2013) in the right way to meet the standards agreed upon with the restaurants. Lawrence Busch (2011) noted that standards are so ubiquitous in our modern daily life that they are sometimes difficult to notice or, in other words, “ordinarily invisible” (Bowker and Star 1999:2). Busch also asserts that standards are taken for granted until they fail to work (2011a:2). In fact, recalling that day I could remember that Almaquio was also acting according to another set of standards that worked appropriately and made things work. For instance, he used specific plastic bags to transport the potatoes that were carefully weighed to hold 50 kilograms of tubers each. The bags were also closed with a particular plastic thread with a specific technique that guarantees that the bag will not open and let the potatoes scatter. The fact that I did not notice of all the other standards until I was writing this section, makes sense in as much as “standards have a peculiar character: once instituted, they tend to become taken-for-granted, unnoticed, natural” (Busch 2011b:3248). The problem with the apparent inappropriate size of potatoes was that Almaquio did not know how to select them according to the required standard because that standard had been just
recently instituted or constructed in the relationship between Edilberto and the restaurants. It was not the potato size as a standard in and of itself that was failing to work; it was that the standard was not being implemented because it was new to the farmers.

Taking the size as the focus for now, standards become interesting if we consider that “as standards are used, people and things are tested, and we determine what shall count” (Busch 2011a:12). Thinking of what counts and therefore of what does not count, becomes quite provocative because another question arises: what counts for whom? In this regard, standards “are associated with power” (Busch 2011:1) and also “inform social and moral order” (Bowker and Star 1999:5). Standards and standardisations are associated with modern life (Busch 2011; Lampland and Star 2009) and what the scene in the shipment agency shows is that they are linked to the market. As Busch argues, “in some instances they [the standards] must be followed in order to participate in a given market” (Busch 2011:26; see also Paxson 2016). Many of Edilberto’s efforts were focused on what he called "finding markets" (encontrar mercados). By trying to find markets he is also willing to adapt the production to certain requirements of clients. These requirements are becoming standards in the potato chain. What is peculiar in the case of the tubers is that these standards are being constructed while Edilberto finds new potential customers — the tubers’ new standards are under construction. But, at the same time, the standards (size and documentation) help him in the process of finding new customers.

In an interview with Franco Ksic, I asked him what the criteria is when they ask Edilberto for the kinds of potatoes they want and he replied:

First we look for the size, next for the texture; there are some that are thicker (mas espesa) and some others are moister (mas húmeda). We do consider these things a lot and now we are also playing with colours, so, what defines our needs are size, texture,
and colour. But we also make adjustments regarding what varieties Edilberto grows every year because you will always find wonders wherever you look … so you are not really are at risk and rather always have tools you can adapt to and make something magic.

As I also discussed in the previous chapter with the baby ocas, Franco prioritises small potato size, probably for it aesthetics on the plate. The small size also happened to be a requirement for Las Canastas and for the restaurant in Arequipa.

In the case of the invoice of the first transaction with Gaston Acurio, it was necessary for the restaurant to get a receipt to prove and document the transaction. Once Edilberto managed to adjust to that standard through the documentation, he also started finding other customers. I will go back to the documents later as they are also related with standardisation, but in order to come back to the scene in the shipping agency I also want to note that the standardisation of the potato size is not mediated by any document. It is instead a crucial spoken agreement between Edilberto and the people from the restaurants that has to be arranged in the selection process, which is scrutinized by Edilberto and Colfir and crafted by the workers. The condition of the potatoes is another standard they are careful about. In this sense, the native potato is standardised according to the requirements of the restaurants along the production cycle but specifically in the selection process. In this

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22 Although I did not ask during my fieldwork specifically why small potatoes, I could assume that the wish for small sizes is at the interplay of at least two situations. One is the influence of the high-cuisine of European influence that permeates the Novoandino Cuisine and that values small portions and small ingredients, a topic I introduced in Chapter One. Another possible explanation could be that the bigger size is closer to the Indian way of consuming potatoes in the Andes, or as Mary Weismentel (1988) would say "more Indian". In this light, by using a smaller size they could be trying to de-indianize the potato in some symbolic (and maybe unconscious) way. An argument of this sort would require further research. But, for now, during my fieldwork I did observe that smaller potatoes are preferred in the city.
regard, shaping the production to meet the requirements both with documents and by selecting the potatoes considering size, colour, variety, and condition are some of the ways in which the potatoes move from the Andes to the restaurants.

**Healthy Potatoes: the Selection Process**

In her project following the matsukake mushroom, Anna Tsing (2013) argues that the repetitive act of sorting out mushrooms is a measure of commensuration that is part of what enables the mushrooms to enter a capitalist chain. Similarly, by fitting standards through the selection process, the tubers are able to enter the capitalist chain. Indeed, the selection process is a way to assess that the potatoes accomplish the standards that can give them value to be consumed in the restaurants.

As I described above with the size, the selection has to be carefully done to maintain the connection between the client and Edilberto, but selection involves parameters in addition to size. The potatoes that go to clients are only what people in the Andes call “healthy” (las sanas). The healthy potatoes are the ones that that do not have any worms, fungus, or big cracks caused by the pickaxe (lampá) when they are harvested. According to the client’s request, the size may vary but normally the restaurants in the city ask for mid-sized native potatoes that the farmers call the seconds (segundas). It is relevant now to point out that thinking through standards, as Bowker and Star suggest (1999) also has an ethical agenda in the sense that standards “valorises some point of view and silences another” (Bowker and Star 1999:5), which, they suggest, is not necessarily bad, but it is "dangerous". Supplying this potato size, however, modifies the management of the harvest, as I will describe in what follows.

The selection process is one of the strategies by which the potatoes get standardised according to the client’s requirement: what is good for them. The
selection process is one of the moments in which the native potatoes are made good for the purposes of the supply chain, as Tsing would argue. By making them good they are also made good for the market and also good to be placed in restaurants. By accessing the market and the restaurants, the native potatoes are also going through another space of class: restaurants categorised as high-cuisine, a category they did not occupy until recently. What makes a potato good is, of course, a relative idea and as it is where the standards are made visible. Moreover, I argue that the categorization of potatoes via standards is also an ethical choice. In a provocative study about tomatoes, Frank Heuts and Annemarie Mol (2013) argue that a good tomato is defined as good only in relation to the context and in relation to specific groups of reference. That is to say, that the valuing of a tomato can prioritise differently ideals of taste, price, sensual appeal, or naturalness. The concern of what is good, they argue, is diverse and varies between experts (Heuts and Mol 2013:140). What is a good potato for the restaurants is what Edilberto is trying to stabilize as a standard with the restaurants and sort out accordingly throughout the careful selection process.

The selection process does not happen at only one point during the life of the potato on the farm; it is instead present at many stages but I will take the harvest as a starting point to describe it. A farmer goes (most of the time a man) all the way down the furrow, digging with his pickaxe (lampá) to take the potatoes out from the ground. Another farmer (sometimes a woman) comes behind him and starts differentiating the potatoes by size: the firsts (primeras), the seconds (segundas) and the thirds (terceras), the firsts being the biggest and the thirds the smallest. The farmer going behind the farmer with the pickaxe would normally put potatoes of one size, say the seconds, inside the bag he or she is carrying and leave aside the others, already separated by size. Some other worker would come next with two different bags to put in the firsts and the thirds, double-checking that the sizes correspond to their own standards of sizes. For me, however, it was
sometimes difficult to differentiate between sizes because I could easily confuse a small first with a second or a small second with a third. The speed at which the farmers judge the size category is very fast whereas sometimes I had to ask them to confirm in which bag I should put the potatoes.

The potatoes are also classified by variety; in fact the way the fields are organised is by varieties so they are not mixed, making the classification easier at the moment of the harvest. The potato sacks are transported to the potato warehouse in the lorry or in the pickup and they are stored according to variety. “Selecting potato” (seleccionar papa) is a very common activity in the everyday life of the farm. Every time there is an order from a client the potatoes need to be selected again and made ready. In the case of Las Canastas, for example, the delivery happens every two weeks, but some other clients call Edilberto to ask for smaller orders with no set schedule. However the selection criteria is the same with only some variations according to the season and the condition of the potatoes, that is, the standardising process is working for him, stabilizing what he can offer to clients. Normally Colfir or Edilberto call the workers to go to the warehouse to “select potatoes”, sometimes at night, sometimes during the day or sometimes in the evening after the official working hours which finish at five in the evening. When the selection is at night it becomes challenging because there is no electricity and the only source of light in the warehouse are torches or the lights of the pickup that Colfir places facing the entrance.

One day after the working day ended and we had finishing eating at around six in the evening, Colfir called us to come to the warehouse to arrange boxes with native potatoes. He had just received a text message from Edilberto asking him to prepare and bring to Ayacucho ten boxes of native potatoes. Some of the boxes had to be filled with only one variety but some others with five different native potato varieties (Runtus, Beso de novia, Wenjos, Wayro macho, and Wayro Negro). Colfir told us to put six to eight potatoes of each
variety in the box, so we could have more or less the same content in each box. Following Colfir’s guidance, Paulino selected six potatoes of one of the varieties, filling his hands. Sometimes when selecting the potatoes it is helpful to use the baskets that are in the warehouse, but this time the baskets were not there. We were in a hurry because the aim was to arrive to Huamanga before the shipment agency had closed, so we had no time to look for the baskets. It was getting too dark to see inside the warehouse, so I was helping by placing the torch in the right position to assist Paulino making sure the potatoes were the adequate size and did not have any cracks, worms, or fungus. My role was focusing on the potatoes from one bag to the other and getting the torch closer to support Paulino to determine whether or not a potato was healthy. Paulino was fast but carefully looking at the potatoes in search of any sign of a worm while also feeling each potato with his hands to know if the texture was indicating the presence of fungus or not. After some potatoes, his hands were the same colour as the potatoes, as they were covered with the same brown soil the potatoes have covering their skin. It was a good division of responsibilities because the operation had to be as fast as possible and it would have been slower if I had been selecting and Paulino lighting with the torch. Mama Victoria realised that Paulino was in a little trouble handling the potatoes with his hands and helped him offering her skirt (pollera) as a recipient, so Paulino put the selected potatoes in her skirt. He then carefully chose another six from that same variety; Mama Victoria made a division in her skirt so the small piles would not mix. Paulino and Mama Victoria did the same again, making the pollera into a three part container. Paulino took with his hands another batch of six selected potatoes and they went together towards the boxes putting in each of them one of the batches of potatoes. They repeated the operation with all of the varieties required until every box was full with ten kilograms of native potatoes. Colfir was thoroughly re-reading the text message again and again making sure he was following Edilberto’s

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23 The pollera is a traditional skirt that women wear in the Andean Region of Peru.
instructions about which varieties to include in the boxes. Every time Paulino and Mama Victoria were finishing with one variety Paulino would ask Colfir which was the next variety to select. Even though the commitment to carefully choose potatoes is present every time they select potatoes, Paulino wondered with Colfir if this shipment was for “someone big” guessing that this was the reason they had to select the “healthiest potatoes” (*las mas sanas*). As always, the not very healthy potatoes went to another bag to be eaten on the farm by us. We finished when the sun had completely set; Colfir was rushing to get back in time to the courier agency in Huamanga with the boxes. As soon as we finished filling the boxes, he closed them with tape and wrote on top the name of the varieties that were inside. We quickly carried them to the back of the pickup and he left for the city, hoping the traffic would not be too heavy to arrive on time to deliver them.

As the months pass and the potatoes have been stored in the warehouse they dehydrate, looking wrinkled and feeling soft to touch. These potatoes have to be taken out from the selection for clients. However, according to Edilberto and Colfir this is because people are “ignorant” and do not know that those potatoes are tastier and that in fact they recover the water they have lost when they are boiled. They explained to me that the taste changes because the starch/carbohydrates (*almidón*) and the sugars develop making the potato sweeter. Another thing that happens to potatoes as time passes is that the sprouts start thriving and they have to be taken out to make them look fresh and appealing to the restaurants in Lima. This is in fact a spoken requirement from the restaurants that is becoming a standard; they have told Edilberto they do not want them with sprouts. In Edilberto’s view this is another symptom of ignorance because the taste of the potato is better when the sprouts are taken off just before cooking them. These are some of the reasons why, he claims, "there is a need to educate the consumers".
Educating the consumers is a way in which Edilberto tries to contest that "silence" (Bowker and Star 1999:5) that is created with market-lead standards regarding what is a good potato. The “silence” that Bowker and Star (1999) suggest could also be "dangerous" as it is a matter of value. The potatoes that are not good enough for the market are “silenced” or erased for the world outside the Andes in the sense that they are not valued. Those potatoes that are not good enough for the market are good enough to be eaten by humans and we were eating them on the farm. As with the tomatoes that Frank Heuts and Ann Marie Mol (2013) studied, what is good is relational. In this logic, the selection process is also about making invisible or disappearing what is not valued by the market standards. The worst thing that can happen to a potato is to be rotten, a condition that is seen, smelled, and sensed by touch at the moment of selection. The rotten potatoes are not eaten by humans and are instead separated into another pile to be given to the pigs or the cows on the farm.

The potatoes that are not "healthy" enough for the restaurants are what we were normally eating for breakfast, lunch, and dinner on the farm. The potatoes that are not good enough for the market, are what can be understood as a “residual category” (Lampland and Star 2009:14). The selection process consists of selecting what is good according to the market and disregarding what is not. Thus, the selection process adds value that allows the tubers to enter the capitalist chain (Tsing 2013) so long as they are able to fit the standards that the clients are asking for. This section also showed all the effort, labour, and knowledge involved in scrutinizing every single potato before sending it to any client and how the possibility of failing in this process makes the continuity of the chain fragile. The standardisation as a process of sorting out according to the standards can fail and break the commercial relationship between Edilberto and the client, something that could have happened that day in the courier agency with the potatoes that Almaquio brought. Edilberto prevented it from happening that day, but months later he was not as fortunate.
Rodizio, a restaurant chain in Peru that specialises in meats, was interested in buying native potatoes from Edilberto. This would be significant for him because the amount of potatoes they wanted to buy was similar to what Las Canastas buys, which is one ton a month. Edilberto sent to them 20 bags with 50 kilograms of native potatoes each that were already in Lima and that were leftovers from a fair. It was around one ton of mixed varieties of seconds sized. Some days later I heard that the people from Rodizio was not happy and wanted to cancel the deal because they had found worms in some potatoes. Edilberto tried to calm them down giving a coherent explanation and apologising. The potatoes, Edilberto argued, had been stored for some time in Lima and because of the humid weather conditions in the capital they were not entirely fresh and also the worms had spread rapidly. The dry weather in the mountains helps the potatoes last longer, whereas the humidity of Lima does the opposite and facilitates the conditions where worms spread. After some days Edilberto sent another batch of potatoes as a replacement but the people in Rodizio did not agree to continue the deal. Months later, Edilberto was reflecting about what happened and concluded that it was a “logistics problem” (problema de logística) in the delivery of the potatoes, an issue that in his view is one of the weaknesses of his distribution system so far. The disagreement with Rodizio shows that the standardisation in the selection process is sometimes not enough to make deals with clients and makes “the dimension of time to become visible” (Bear 2014:7) in the chain. The “logistics problem” was in relation to the synchronization of times and rhythms with clients but also according to the tubers’ rhythms of life, an issue that became visible as they were rotten from spending too much time sitting in Lima.

So far I have shown how the requirements that the restaurants ask for are creating a potato size and a quality standard which, in turn, sometimes make new arrangements easier to agree upon, I have not shown how it is modifying
the production logic at the farm level. While Lampland and Star argue that “standardization is considered to be a necessary technique designed to facilitate other tasks” (2009:10), Bowker and Star warn that standardisation can also be “dangerous” (1999:5) in that it can silences a point of view. Restaurants prefer the medium sized potato, what the farmers call the seconds (segundas). As I have discussed, this size is becoming the common size that restaurants are asking for. But the seconds is the size that is traditionally selected as seed. That is to say the seed is selected in a process that is parallel to the selection of potatoes for the market. As such, the seed becomes seed first by selection, and secondly by the place where it is stored; potato’s seeds can only become seeds thanks to the manipulations they pass through. Once the bulk of seconds is first selected during the harvest, the ones that are going to be used as seed are put inside a specific type of plastic bag that allows the tuber an environment suitable for “breathing” (respirar). These sacks are stored in open-air conditions in what Edilberto calls the “nursery” (semillero). The seeds need air to breath and water from the rain to stay hydrated and to be able to reproduce their cells and sugar content that will be transformed into the energy needed for producing new potatoes. As time passes, the taste of the seeds gets bitter and the sprouts do not thrive from the "potato's eyes" (los ojos de la papa), conserving the energy to grow for when they sow. The name of the potato seed in Quechua, Edilberto once explained to a chef who visited the farm, means "mother". Once it is sown underground, the potato-seed gives all its energy to the new potatoes and it vanishes in the earth; it transforms into a jelly-like substance to bring to life new born potatoes. The firsts, thirds and the leftovers of the seconds would normally be the potatoes for consumption and are stored in a dark warehouse (almacén). The potatoes in the dark warehouse lose energy for being seeds as the sprouts thrive from the "potato's eyes". Or, as Edilberto evocatively explained to me: “when the potatoes are stored in the dark, they think they are underground and that is why the sprouts start to thrive".
Through the seed logic, the seconds become food only when they are not good enough to be seeds or if there is an excess of seeds. Conversely, now the seconds are becoming the most important size not only for their use as seeds but for selling to restaurants. Because it is a requirement for the market, this size is prioritised for commodity exchange rather than as a seed, diminishing the seed stock of seconds. The reason why the seconds are used as seeds is because their efficiency as seeds is the same as the larger firsts but being smaller, the seconds are easier to store and carry. In one bag of potatoes, for example, there would be more seconds than firsts simply because the seconds are smaller. Using the firsts as seed also involves more labour because it requires filling more sacks to get the amount of seeds needed to sow. On the other hand, it is more convenient to eat the firsts because they are bigger and they make more portions.

Edilberto told me that there are no bad long-term effects in using the seeds (the seconds) as the potatoes to sell to the restaurants. However, I want to observe that the seconds are the standards for seeds in the Andean logic of production and that the same size is being constructed as the standard for food in the restaurants outside the Andes. Whether there is a long term effect or not, what this shows is a “dangerous” power dynamic whereby the wish for small sizes —that may be influenced by the European aesthetics of *Novoandino Cousine*— is put ahead of the local logic of what is a good potato to eat; a local logic that values big portions instead of the aesthetics of the smaller potatoes. It also shows the penetration of the Gastronomic Boom into modes of selection and therefore the ubiquity of neoliberal practices of standardising or governing potatoes, which I will analyse further when I discuss the organic certification process in the next section.

**Organic Certification**

Edilberto called me on the phone at 5:45 in the morning to tell me that he and Colfir were on their way to pick me up to go to the farm in Condorcoco. I
hurried to finish getting my stuff ready and in less than ten minutes they were at my door. I got in the car and noticed they were very engaged in a heated conversation. Edilberto was quite disturbed and stressed talking in monologue to Colfir about the organic certification for that current season which was not yet sown. When Colfir finally managed to say something he suggested: "Edi, we have two options: to sow now as you always do, while we calmly get everything ready to make the certification next year or to rush and try to make the certification for this season".

A few days before in Lima we had visited Wolfgang and his food processor to discuss the process of bacteriological reduction of native potatoes, a requirement for food exportation. Wolfgang showed interest in the native potatoes and offered to ask one of his business associates about the required paperwork to export native potatoes to Germany. Later, Wolfgang sent Edilberto an email telling him that one of the conditions for exporting was to have the native potatoes under organic certification. Given the possibility of fixing this business with Wolfgang, Edilberto made it clear to Colfir that he wanted to pursue the organic certification for the current season. Colfir drove Edilberto back to his house in Huamanga and we both went to Condorccocha while Edilberto stayed in the city to figure out the procedure to get the organic certification for which there was a fee of USD$3,000 to pay to Kiwa\textsuperscript{24}, the certifier. On the way to the farm Colfir complained that the certifying entities are only interested in doing business. He also explained that one of the things they had to change regarding the production of native potatoes was the use of chicken droppings (\textit{gallinaza}) as fertiliser, which is not allowed according to the organic conditions because it comes from industrial and non-organic chicken farms. At that point, they did not know what they should use as an organic alternative. The sowing time was fast approaching and they had to

\textsuperscript{24} Kiwa BCS Peru was the certifier with which Edilberto agreed to certify the tubers: https://www.kiwa.com/lat/es/productos/certificacion-organica-peru/ (last accessed on 26/January/2019).
figure out what the organic production standard procedures were as soon as possible.

It was interesting to see Edilberto’s urge to opt for pursuing the certification for the current season when for Colfir it was more sensible to do it the next year so as to have more time to get all the information and plan a strategy. At the same time, it was revealing to see that it was a hope to make a deal for exporting that was creating this tension and the rush to get the certification as soon as possible. The force of the market was creating anxieties in terms of building expectations to reach new customers who probably cannot be reached later.

In the previous chapter I showed how the native potato catches the interest of chefs and restaurant managers through its colour, texture and through its nativeness in relation to how it is associated with the Andes as a place with a particular history. These ideas and the potato origin are dramatized in the IK restaurant when it is served to the dinner guest; through performing a version of the huatia they try to make visible the origin of the potato. Simultaneously, in the previous section of this chapter I showed the need to standardise the native potato produce to the requirements of the restaurants. However, while the native enchantment and the standardisation of the produce seem to be enough to mobilise the tubers within a new Peruvian market, it do not seem enough for exporting, which is the reason Edilberto decided to certify the potato and the other tubers as organic. In this section I want to suggest that there are different regimes of ethical consumption to which Edilberto is trying to engage at the same time with the same tubers. I will show that different sets of standards serve to reach different spheres of circulation. In order to do so, he started a race against time to make the tubers meet a new standard; a standard with broader significance that would serve as a device to allow the potato to circulate internationally. One of the key tasks to get the certification was to document the entire process of production of the potato and at the same
time deal with the institution in charge of approving whether or not the production process was meeting the standards. In this regard, the standards were not dictated by a person like a chef but by an institution with international prestige and regulated by certain norms that the potato had to fit.

The significance of being native seems to lose its force in an international context. As well, the local context in which the negotiations were done with the chefs and restaurants is also lost with international agreements. With the chefs in Lima there was a personal connection with Edilberto as a producer which was sometimes enhanced through a personal experience of visiting his farm. On the other hand, in Germany it was very likely that no one would know who was responsible for the production and the history of origin in relation to the Andes does not have the same weight (if any). In this regard, it seems clear that the organic certification entails the loss of connection between producer and consumer and between the tubers and their history of origin with the Andes and with the people, what I defined as the tubers’ terroir in the previous chapter. It is at this point where the organic certification label with its global standard would add value to the native potatoes, which is why it was the requirement that would help the potato move. Two things are important here: the role of standards and how they are certified through a process of documentation and auditing, and the role of the organic label as part of ethical consumption that seems to replace the personal connection with Edilberto and with the land, the people and history.

Lampland and Star (2009) have shown the ubiquity of standards in modern life and how they become invisible unless something stops working fluidly. “Food is not left behind in a world ruled by standards, in fact "the food network ... is governed by a plethora of public and private standards including those for productivity, food safety, food quality, packing, and nutritional value" (Busch 2011b:3247). In the previous section I described how Edilberto puts a lot of effort in meeting the requirements that chefs impose regarding
the size and the condition of the potatoes. Only by meeting those standards can the tubers move from the mountains to the restaurants. In the case of the organic certification, the potato was facing a barrier stopping its movement internationally, which is why Edilberto was convinced to pursue the certification. In this regard, it is also clear that Edilberto was using the organic certification as an "ontological device" (Busch 2011) to bring the potato into being an organic certified product by meeting the standards.

Lawrence Busch argues that standards "tell us what is relevant, what is valued, what is important; and by implication, tell us what is not important" (2011:3248). Looking at how Edilberto decided to pursue the organic certification informs the way in which he is trying to make the potato valued by meeting certain standards. In other words, Edilberto was using the standards of organic certification to make the native potatoes valued in a particular context. By making the potatoes fit into a specific standard, they would acquire value. Meeting standards implies a relation with certain authority and in this regard it is where relations of power can be analysed (Lengwiler 2009). Whereas the authority to standardise the tubers to make them circulate to the restaurants inside Peru were the chefs taste within the Gastronomic Boom, the organic certifier as the regulator for the organic certification can be seen as a form of neoliberal governance (Narotzky 2016:308).

The organic certification is a process by which a product can be identified as organic. The final result of the certification is a label that validates a process of production and a chemical composition free of dangerous substances for the body. Such a process of production has to be documented in papers and validated by a specific authority, which is often not the state but a “third party” in the context of the “neoliberal market environment” (Jung 2014:98). That was the role of Kiwa, the private and transnational company to which
Edilberto paid to be in charge of the certification of the native potatoes and other tubers.

The development and growth of organic certification all over the world together with the way the standards have been agreed upon have awakened critical voices around what Sally Eden (2011) called the "mainstream dilemma". Even though the organic label is still the best way to certify that a product is not (or does not contain) a Genetically Modified Organism (Guthman 2014), the organic certification is creating scepticism because of the way organic is being "defined, codified, and marketed" (Guthman 2014: xiv). The mainstream dilemma also questions the entry of big companies into the organic market that are transforming the organic production from what, at the beginning, was an alternative market based on small scale production into a mainstream way of industrial production. The turn to industrial production has also raised questions about the paradox of trying to pursue moral and ethical goals through the market (Luetchford 2012).

One of the aspects of this debate that interests me most is the process by which the organic movement went from being purely alternative and small scale to becoming another industrial production process. Julie Guthman (2014) describes the process thoroughly taking as her main example the organic industry in the US state of California. One of the issues she points out is the role of standards as a category that defined what organic is. In her work, it seems that the organic standards get obscured instead of being clear to the consumers, this being one of the reasons consumers distrust the labelling. In other words the involvement of multinational corporations has led consumers to question the integrity of organic production (Eden 2011a). But the involvement of multinationals was only possible thanks to the process and negotiation of standardisation, which has led to the central dilemma: "is it better to be purist, to implement the highest standards of production in environmental and social terms, but as a consequence to remain an expensive
niche, or is it better to modify the standards (some would say, *dilute or downgrade the standards*) and expand the mass market?” (Eden 2011a:181, emphasis is mine).

Guthman (2014), for instance, problematizes how in the standardisation process there was a discussion that lead to thinking about "degrees of organic" which in my perspective obscures whether something is organic or not, and it shows how standards "are at once technical, theoretical, political, economic, social, and ethical phenomena” (Busch 2011:3248):

In 2002, new organic rules started operated in the United States of America as the Congress in cooperation with USDA modify the original Organic Food Production Act: “Anything labelled ‘100 percent organic’ had to include all organic ingredients except for water and salt; products labelled ‘organic’ had to be made with at least 95 percent organic ingredients; and products labelled ‘made with organic ingredients’ had to include at least 70 percent organic ingredients. Products with less than 70 percent organic ingredients could not use the term organic anywhere on the ‘principal displayed panel’ but could refer to organic ingredients in the ‘information panel’ on the back or side of the package” (Guthman 2014:176).

What this discussions shows is that standards are not innocent and also that standardisation "incorporates two processes: consensual agreement (...) and the expression of power of an authority over its subjects” (Lengwiler 2009:202). The relation of power with an authority is ethnographically visible through the process of certification where the production is audited and documented according to the standards.

Following the work of Appadurai (1986), Sally Eden suggests, “without certification, modern consumers have little or no knowledge about many products that they buy, because they are distanced from production systems” (Eden 2011a:170). It is in this regard that labels aim to make the knowledge
of the commodity chains "traceable for consumers" (Eden 2011b:170). Let me now recall Edilberto's motivation to pursue the organic certification that would allow him to display the organic label, and to pay attention to when he decided to start the certification. It is clear that the distance between himself as producer and the potential consumers that exportation would entail was greater than the distance between himself and chefs or restaurant owners in Lima. This point can be made sharper by remembering that some chefs sometimes visit Edilberto's farm to see and experience in first person the place where the potatoes and the other tubers are cultivated. The organic labels, as Eden argues, try to substitute for the trust and nativeness that Edilberto builds with his Peruvian clients.

The literature about fair trade and organic products discuss issues of morality (Jung 2014) in terms of the possibility and desires to re-connect producers with consumers (Neve 2008; Moberg Mark 2016; Raynolds 2002). In this sense organics can also be discussed in terms of ethical consumption. Ethical consumption is a response to the disconnection between producers and consumers in the process of "commodity circulation" in the industrialised market (Jung 2014:97). In this sense, consumers look to "reconnect" through "caring and responsible behaviours" of buying (Jung 2014:97) by "taking into account the moral nature of objects when deciding whether or not to consume them" (Carrier 2012:1). The organic label that Edilberto was trying to obtain relates to this theoretical discussion insofar as he was trying to stamp an ethical marker on the potatoes as a sign of ethical production.

The label is meant to be a device to inform consumers about the process of production; it tries to fill the gap of knowledge —ethical knowledge about the production in this case— between producers and consumers (Neve 2008; Eden 2011b). It is pertinent to repeat that such a knowledge gap is smaller when Edilberto makes deals with chefs, in particular with Franco who was able to visit the farm. As I mentioned already, the label is acquired through a
process of certification, a process that has been criticised by political ecologists because of the "burden that they put on small producers" (Eden 2011a:181) and also because sometimes researchers and consumers are suspicious of certification that validates big business (Hull 2012; Eden 2011a; Eden 2011b; Guthman 2004). The critical stance towards certification makes sense when considering not only that the standardisation processes have political, economic, and ethical implications, but also when looking at how the certification is made: through documentation.

As Guthman (2004) shows, the certification process has increased the paper work and can be discouraging for growers to engage with. But this was not the case for Edilberto, to whom the advantage of being the first to certify his organic production of native potatoes and meet the requirement for exportation were good reasons to engage with the process. Anthropological scholarship about documents and bureaucracy shows that documents are neither innocent nor a faithful representation of reality. As any other form of representing reality, they are not neutral and are now being treated as "mediators that shape the significance of the signs inscribed on them and their relations with the objects they refer to" (Hull 2012: 253).

Documents have been studied for their representational quality but scholarship has also gone beyond the representation debate and focused on the affective and aesthetic qualities or as well as documents as signs (Hull 2012). It has also been pointed out that documents "index the state" (Hull 2012:260) and how, through documents, the state penetrates social life (Das and Poole 2004). In the case of how the organic certification is based on the documentation of the production process in relation to the role of the state, it hints of the neoliberal state as far as the control and regulation were led by a third party and not the Peruvian state. And, as Colfir was complained, in order to access the documentation Edilberto had to pay.
Insofar as documents are analysed for their capacity to represent reality, it becomes clear that they can also create realities. In this regard, documents have the capacity “to make things come into being” (Frohmann in Hull 2012:269). This is in fact what Edilberto was trying to do with the organic certification; he was trying to make the potato and the other tubers come into being as organic for the whole world. By making them visibly organic he was also making them visibly ethical regardless of personal relationships between him as a producer or with the potato’s terroir. In other words, through the assessed documentation of the production process to certify the tubers as organic, Edilberto was making the ethics of the potato legible to consumers all over the world.

One of the episodes I found more tense and interesting during the certification process was proving to the certifier that the land where the potatoes were sown was in fact virgin or at least rested. For the standards of the organic certification, Edilberto had to prove three years of “good practices” (buenas practicas) of the land, which means that no forbidden chemical had been used during that period. Proving that to the certifier became a problem despite the significant effort Edilberto takes looking for virgin or long rested soil. He continuously said to me and to other people that the native potatoes are very demanding and they only grow well when the soil is virgin or rested for five or eight years. This is because they need to absorb the minerals from the soil and those minerals would be scarce if the land does not have enough rest. Edilberto is committed to the production because he is also aware that he is offering "the best potatoes of the world" (las mejores papas del mundo), as he says, and he acts accordingly. For the certifier, however, this condition of the native potatoes was not enough and they asked for proof to certify that the land was long rested or virgin. Edilberto argued that using a document to prove the condition of the land was not needed because the potatoes would not even grow if they were not in virginal land. One way to prove the free-of-chemicals land was to show that the land in question was used organically for
a period of three years before the certification. But in the case of the potatoes it has to be strictly non-used land, that is, rested or virgin. Therefore there was no way to show that the land had been used according to the organic rules.

The certifiers were at this point at a crossroad that they needed to solve. After a couple of weeks in which they managed to consult with the central offices, they resolved that the problem would be solved with three official letters that would give faith that the land where the tubers were sowed was actually long rested or virgin land. Edilberto got three very similar documents from different agrarian public institutions from Ayacucho: two from the Regional government and one from the Chiara Municipality. These documents were substituting trust and at the same time displaying and connecting the power of the state with the neoliberal governance enacted by the certifier.

**Visibility through Documents and Beyond Documents**

One day I went with Colfir to visit some farmer friends of his and I was taking pictures of the fertiliser mix that he and his friends were making to sow white potato (*papa blanca*). In the middle of my wandering with the camera, Colfir, with a certain worried look, called me to tell me to not dare to publish those pictures on Facebook. I told him that I normally do not post them on Facebook but I also asked him for an explanation of his uncharacteristic worry. He explained that he thought that posting them would make people think that those chemicals were used to grow native potatoes and this would confuse them or make them think that the native production was not clean.

Another day, Edilberto asked me during the farming activities to take pictures of women working in the native potato fields. Women in the Andes usually dress with colourful skirts or *polleras*, and sometimes also colourful blouses

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25 One from the Economic Development Office and the other from Agrarian Agency of Huamanga - attached in appendix.
and with flowers in the hat. Their dressing code makes their appearance "more indigenous" as Mary Weismentel (1988) would say in relation to their cooking routines in the kitchen. Men, on the other hand, tend to dress with jeans or trousers and diverse types of shirts, sometimes of local or foreign football teams or political parties. Whether or not I would follow Edilberto's suggestion, he would take his mobile, take a picture of women working and upload it to Facebook.

The ethnography in this chapter suggests that in pursuing new markets for the native potato, the produce has to be mediated by documents (from invoices to certifications) but it is also mediated by standards arranged by personal communications (size and quality for the restaurants). Some of these requirements make the circulation along the chain fragile. The modes in which the potatoes are made ready to circulate in the chain are negotiated between Edilberto and the chefs on one hand, and determined by a certification like the organic certification on the other. These two processes of making the potatoes valuable enough both add value to the tubers and also are mechanisms of governmentality. In both cases it is possible to see an expression of power of an authority. In the case of the restaurants, the standardisation comes from the chef’s perspective, which is responding to the Gastronomic Boom, described in Chapter One, and can be seen as a neoliberal project. On the other hand, the organic certification responds to the rules of a private organisation that takes the role of giving international validation by paying; this relationship can also be understood as neoliberal governance. Additionally, these two strategies to make the potatoes circulate operate for different purposes. While the standards led by the chefs activate an internal-Peruvian circulation, the organic certification tries to activate an international market. Or, in terms of what the act of photographing revealed at the beginning of this last section, while the local circulation is based in constructing and showing a relationship with the land and the history of the
Andes and Peru, the international circulation is based on showing a clean production process.

Some months later after I left Peru, Edilberto told me that he does not see much enthusiasm from the Peruvian people to get organic potatoes but that, in contrast, in the exterior this was still a condition to make deals. This differentiation makes me wonder what is the native or what role is the nativeness playing in relation to the organic. Through this ethnography, I can argue that it is the value of the nativeness and the terroir that makes the potato move inside Peru within an ethical framework. Conversely, outside Peru the connection with the land, people and history loses meaning and therefore needs to be substituted with the ethical label of organic production. While in Peru Edilberto and the chefs contribute to making the terroir visible, for the external market the organic label is what makes the ethical conditions of production visible. Both, in the end, are strategies of pushing the value of the potato to make the native potato and the other tubers circulate on new paths.
CHAPTER 5
PRESUMPTION OF VERACITY
THE MAKING OF A PHOTOGRAPHIC ETHNOGRAPHY

In this chapter I will discuss my use and the implications of adopting photography as part of my ethnographic practice and as a tool to represent the native potato commodity chain that, by definition, is fragmented in space and overlapped in time. By taking into consideration the subjective nature of photography in relation to the previous discussion about documents, I will reflect upon what type of document a photobook might become as a device to display a photographic sequence. I argue that the qualities of participant observation, photography, and the photographic sequence in terms of juxtaposition and montage relate in productive ways to my ethnographic approach to the chain.

Photography as a Document to Represent Reality
In the previous chapter I discussed how the documentation of the production of native potatoes and the other tubers facilitates their movement to new clients. Specifically, I first considered that foundational invoice that Edilberto once proudly showed me; secondly, I discussed the organic certification process. It is pertinent to remember the emotive moment that was created when Edilberto accidentally saw the invoice, recalling what has been called as the affective quality of documents (Hull 2012). With the certification I considered, among other things, the notion that documents are not innocent but are a form of representing, shaping, governing, and creating reality – the organic production of tubers in that case. In fact, there is an interesting similarity between paper documents as artefacts that represent reality and the history and ideas about documentary photography that I want to explore in this section in order to reflect upon what type of document the photobook might become.
For many years photographs were thought to be the most faithful depiction of reality as they were a record of it. Over the years, it became clear that not even a photograph speaks truly or a hundred per cent objectively despite the "ethical reputation as Truth" (Berger and Dyer 2001: 289) that was attached to the medium during 19th century. To think about photography it is necessary to acknowledge the subjective elements as a re-presentation of reality because, for instance, the photographer has to select the frame and therefore let out of frame some other part of the reality he or she is seeing and documenting. The technical process of selecting the shutter speed and aperture are also the photographer's decisions, as well as the analogue or digital process of development, which influences the interpretation of the final document that is the photograph. Susan Sontag wisely frames this tension between objectivity and subjectivity: "A photograph is not only an image (as a painting is an image), an interpretation of the real; it is also a trace, something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or death mask" (Sontag in Berger and Dyer 2001:287). The debate about photography's veracity has taught us that photography is not as neutral as it was imagined to be when it was born in 1839.

In a similar yet different way to photographs, a document is a partial depiction of reality, where some aspects can be left out and others put in to make them visible. Analysing corruption and transparency in Peru, Penny Harvey and Hanna Knox point out that even under strict transparency measures in a road construction project there is always “the problem that the information mobilized… never simply maps a stable or singular external reality” (Harvey and Knox 2015:160). In my view, the description that Sontag offers about photography as having a “presumption of veracity” (2005:4) and therefore authority can be shared with what documents do. In this regard, both bureaucratic documents and photographs can be understood as mediators in the Latourian sense, that is, as things that "transform, translate, distort, and
modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry” (Latour in Hull 2012:212). By treating bureaucratic documents as mediators, Matthew Hull (2012) suggests, the analytical view is posed "at them", and not "through them", that is to say, that their existence and what they say should not be taken for granted. There is an intrinsic question about what they do and how do they act in social life, recognising that they are not neutral devices but "purveyors of discourse" (Hull 2012:253).

However, it is important to note that such a “presumption of veracity” is achieved by different means in documents or in photographs. As I described in Chapter Four, documents can perform such presumption of veracity as they are backed by the symbolic weight of signatures or labels that represent certain institutions with social credibility, as happened with the organic certification. On the other hand, a photograph achieves veracity as an intrinsic feature of the medium and it is not (always) institutional but based in the visual indexicality. That is, in its capacity to reproduce visually traces of reality. Such veracity comes in part as the viewer sees in the photograph a footprint of something that happened somewhere at some time. The representation of what is seen in a picture is assumed to have happened for the camera to be able to register it. In this light “photography offers an immediate presence to the world – a co-presence” (Barthes 2000:84). That co-presence, when possibly achieved by photographs, is a powerful tool to create emotions, sympathy, empathy, affect, or a reaction in the viewer.

Anthropologists have engaged with the use of photography by looking at its social life as a paper-based document. Scholars have been interested in how people use, value, and think about photographs as representations and for their capacity to elicit memories. In this sense, photographs can be of use for research in terms of the possibilities they offer to understand the life of others through what they can elicit as affective documents. This approach is understandable considering the notion that “photographs really are
experience captured, and the camera is the ideal arm of consciousness in its acquisitive mood” (Sontag 2005:2). In this view, using photography as an historic document that speaks for the lived experience of the informants becomes a tool of inquiry to explore people’s relationship to the past.

In this light, most of the recent anthropological publications are about the use of photography by local people or by anthropologists. Scholars have focused on how photographs are used, interpreted, and re-interpreted by local people (Cánepa and Kummels 2016), or how anthropologists like Bronislaw Malinowski or E. E. Evans Pritchard started using photography as a tool to claim “ethnographic authority” (Edwards 2001; Clifford 1983) or to demonstrate their anthropological assumptions like Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead did in their research about the Balinese Character (Edwards 2011). The main contribution of photography to anthropology, Elizabeth Edwards (2011) suggests, lies in the reflexions it allowed during the 1980’s in the so-called crisis of representation, when photographs helped to reveal the unbalanced power relations during anthropology in colonial times (Poole 1997; Edwards 1997). Another way in which anthropologists see a fertile ground for photography is photo elicitation (Collier 2003; Harper 2002). These approaches are fruitful as they help explain and explore how photography and photographs are socially used, interpreted, negotiated and also how they are used as a specific research tool to elicit memories. That is to say, photographs have for the most part been productive in the discipline as a research tool for providing information as visual documents and for the social life of the photographs themselves. What sparks my curiosity is that in the majority of those academic publications anthropologists base their analysis on someone else’s photographs and not in the production of a photographic narrative. The majority of these works rely on existing photographs instead of the production of visual ethnographies by the
researcher. There are, however, some stimulating exceptions which foreground the use of photography as ethnographic practice and as a tool of observation as well as a narrative device (Sutherland 2016a; Orrantia 2012; Graham 2016).

While visual anthropology had struggled to gain legitimacy within social anthropology as a “discipline of words” (Mead 1995), photography struggles to gain legitimacy within visual anthropology which prioritises the use of film. In this vein, it seems that the production of photography in anthropology has tended to undermine the narrative qualities of the medium as a tool to represent ethnographic work and has been used mainly as an illustrative – not narrative – device. It is an interesting paradox that overpasses the limits of this thesis, the fact that social anthropology has its foundations in a method that prioritises observation – participant observation— but that had long struggled to include the use of the mechanical reproduction of vision as a central tool of its practice. Within the visual anthropology regime, however, the space for photography has been limited. In fact, Elizabeth Edwards observes that “visual anthropology has concentrated largely on film” and that the production of still photography had been “relegated” (1999:53) to visual notebooks. Similarly, Aubrey Graham denounces a “denigrated position” of still photography within the discipline and argues for a creative engagement with the "inter subjective potential" of photography (Piault, Silverstein, and Graham 2015:176) by concentrating in the process of making portraits (Graham 2016), for instance.

In terms of publications there are some exciting exceptions as well. Cultural Anthropology has an online section for publishing works based on still photography entitled "Writing with Light" [https://culanth.org/photo_essays]. In a similar vein, The Visual Anthropological Review has recently launched a section called "The Page" with "the aim of supporting image-centered, design-based projects in anthropological scholarship" (Chio and Cox 2016).
In my view, one of the main challenges of visual anthropology has been to argue for and show how an image-based anthropology can do something different than text beyond using the images to illustrate something that had been previously articulated with words. The classic divide of the spectrum of visual anthropology has been to differentiate the study of images and video as a cultural production, appropriation, and circulation from the production and the process of production of images and/or video as a research method and outcome. As I have tried to describe here, the role of photography has been secondary to the production of ethnographies and its production as a main narrative device, marginalised. For the case of still images, scholars have privileged the analysis of photographs that already exist over the production of photographic ethnographies.

Edwards (1999) suggests that in order to “restore” the possibilities of photography contributing to the discipline it is necessary to “harness” the peculiar qualities of the medium. To achieve that goal she proposed to “look beyond the disciplinary edges and reposition its practice within a wider photographic discourse” (Edwards 1999:53). Along the same lines and drawing on Edwards, Juan Orrantia suggests using photography to look "for the intersecting space between the aesthetic expressive and the ethnographic documentary" (Orrantia 2012:55). By doing so, I consider how we can benefit from the photographic medium by exploring and experimenting with its capacity to tell stories and for its “potential to question, arouse curiosity” (Edwards 1999:54), “induce us, vaguely, to think” (Barthes 2000:38), and to create and disseminate meaning. Where Edwards sees the possibility of restoring, I see the need to redeem the production of photography within anthropology. In this regard, the photographic side of my research is an invitation and a personal experiment to see the photographic medium beyond its capacity to enlighten researches as a document of the past by exploring and experimenting with the possibilities photographs have to tell stories; in sum, for its narrative capacity.
I suggest that the format of the photobook as a device to display photographs offers a material support that allows experimenting and sequencing the photographic work produced in fieldwork in a creative way with text (Cox and Wright 2012), editing, and design (Chio and Cox 2016:101). By doing this, there is also a possibility to collaborate with artists and designers in the conceptualization and the making of the photobook. That is to say, that it also becomes an opportunity to look beyond the disciplinary edges as Edwards (1999) suggested and therefore requires being open to learning from those collaborations in terms of what they can contribute to the ways of representing and displaying anthropological work. In other words, I suggest that the creation of a photobook as a device to contain a photographic representation has the potential to inspire anthropologists in finding ways to explore the narrative potential of photography. In this way, a photobook becomes a document that contains a coherent work where “photographs (...) move beyond the role of illustrations or transmitters of evidence to claim an active role in generating an independent meaning grounded in the unique ontology of their visual form” (Di Bello, Wilson, and Zamir 2012:4).

Using the photobook as a material support (or document) was a way to visualise, through a visual strategy of juxtaposition and montage, the fragmented nature of the chain. As I have discussed, I acknowledge the partiality and the subjective nature of the photographic medium, just as I acknowledge the same when it comes to the textual form. My intention however has been to experiment and to create another way of representing my experience and what I learned in the field. The juxtaposition of images and text in the sequence, I suggest, offers visual vignettes of the chain which aim to offer the viewer a visual experience of my multisensory experience of fieldwork. It was crafted with the intention of letting the viewer see at once what I saw in a fragmented and overlapped way over a period of fourteen months. The photobook is a presumption of what the chain looks like.
Representing the Chain Photographically

All along this thesis I have been putting together ethnographic vignettes and my understandings about my experience following Edilberto during fourteen months. My primary idea during fieldwork was to follow the potato from the farm in Condorccocha to the restaurants in Lima and use photography to document what was happening with the potato and the people involved in its circulation. As I have discussed throughout the thesis, I ended up following the native potato and the other companion tubers from Edilberto’s point of view and, therefore, in permanent movement between the farm, Huamanga, and Lima. What lies behind the mobile purpose of my fieldwork is the idea that the knowledge in a commodity chain is fragmented and therefore the researcher requires moving with the object of circulation to understand the forces that pull, push, or stop their movement along the chain as well as the different meanings attached or constructed during its circulation. Appadurai inspired the anthropological focus on commodity chains claiming that it is “the thing in motion that illuminates their human and social context” and by suggesting we pay attention to the meaning inscribed in “their forms, their uses, and their trajectories” (Appadurai 1986:5). It is important to note that the chain where the tubers move does not exist as something that is possible to see as one event or in one place because it is overlapped in time and fragmented in space. In this light, my use of a photographic-lead narrative aims at visualise what otherwise is not possible to see at once but it is what I observed and documented throughout my ethnography by photographing, taking field notes, and recording conversations. In the studies of commodity chains the scattered nature of knowledge is acknowledged, as is the possibility of putting it together through text:

[If we accept that geographical knowledges through which commodity systems are imagined and acted upon from within are fragmentary, multiple, contradictory, inconsistent and, often, downright hypocritical, then the power of a text which deals with these knowledges comes not from smoothing them]
out, but through *juxtaposing* and *montaging* them...so that *audiences* can work their way through them and, along the way, inject and make their own critical knowledges out of them. (Cook and Crang 1996:41, my emphasis)

The quote would make perfect sense to me if I changed the word “text” for “images”, and therefore it might serve to position the photobook as a means to explore the fragmented knowledge of the chain. Cook and Crang suggest juxtaposing and montaging in writing as strategies to put together the different moments in the life of a commodity. Such strategies are also the resources deployed in the creation of a photographic sequence in the attempt to suggest a narrative meaning. There is in fact an interesting point of encounter among multi-sited ethnography as a methodological strategy to explore the life in motion of the native potato within a commodity chain, montage, juxtaposition and the creation of a photographic sequence that deals with time and space.

The creation of the photographic sequence made me realise that a linear representation of what happens around the life and movements of the tubers is not an accurate representation of what I experienced in fieldwork. I could have selected a group of images to make a linear narration of the life of the tubers as if it was a smooth movement from the land to the restaurant but that would not correspond to the way I came to understand how the chain works. That linear and smooth representation is depicted in the promotional video I discussed in Chapter One, where the relations between farmers, middleman, and chefs are apparently perfectly coordinated in time despite being separated in space. In other words, the video depicts the movement of the products, native potatoes included, making it appear as a straight line from point A to point B. The photographic sequence in the photobook aims to contest such visual representation.
My movements as a researcher and the engagement in different places as a response to follow the native tubers are what define the multi-sited quality of my ethnography. Being in different places gave me the possibility to “make connections… among distinctive discourses from site to site” (Marcus 1995:101). It also allowed me to make connections departing from seeing and photographing the different ways in which the potato and the tubers are used and managed in the different places I visited as well as the peculiar activities related to the tubers that occur in those places. In this regard, the idea of the multi-sited ethnography echoes and responds to Cook and Crang’s ideas about fragmented knowledge and addresses fragmentation as a research strategy but also as a mode of representation through the photographic project. Photography, a photographic sequence, and more specifically the photobook, use juxtaposition and montage as a narrative strategy.

It is precisely because of the fragmented nature of the commodity chain that the use of juxtaposition and montage is necessary to make the chain visible. Staying with Cook and Crang’s suggestion of textual representation would not allow anyone to see but only to read about the fragmented chain. My attempt to use photography to represent the life of the native potato and the companion tubers differs from the way I have written about it in that the purpose is to allow the viewer to interpret more openly the ethnographic material because the images and the photobook offer a different mode of engagement. At the same time it offers a sense of immediacy that is particular to the photographic medium. It also tries to offer an experience in a less descriptive and argumentative form compared to the written thesis. The images and the way they are juxtaposed and put in combination with text in the photobook let the knowledge emerge by acquaintance instead of by description (MacDougall 2006: 220) but knowledge is also gained in the disrupting and confronting forces through the use of montage. Writing the thesis had the aim of explaining and analysing whereas editing the photobook aims at showing. The two outcomes however share an analytical process of “crafting, slicing,
and juxtaposing material (...) where the anthropological knowledge inheres” (Dietrich 2018). Both the thesis and the photobook aim to be part of a "single ethnography" (Werbner 2011:209) where one element complements each other as part of the same process.

The use of juxtapositions and montage, at the same time, confirms the problems of trying to represent the chain as a line with intertwined elements one after the other. Even though on many occasions Edilberto made reference to being in the process of creating a “chain” with the native tubers, the idea of a chain is problematic as a visual metaphor to represent the life of the potato and the other tubers. The native potato is made in its movement, by its travels. It is also constituted as it moves and leaves traces of its presence. What happens in its exposure to new places leaves traces and also constitutes what it becomes. But this process is not fixed and does not have the shape of a straight, firm, solid and defined line from A to B. One of the paradoxes is that the narrative of a photobook is linear: the book starts with the cover and is followed by the first page, the second and so on until the last one to finally get to the back cover. It is precisely when the strategy of juxtaposing images to look for the effect of disruption of time and space can be of use to try to represent what I understood to be neither linear nor smooth.

**Photographic Practice**

During fieldwork I was observing, looking, and experiencing with my body at the same time I was observing and looking with and through the camera. In this regard, I believe that the act of photographing as a process can be anthropologically valuable, as it demands one of the most important skills of the ethnographer: observation. Indeed, John Berger claimed that "photography is the process of rendering observation self-conscious" (Berger and Dyer 2001:216). However, this assertion may be contested by arguing that taking fieldnotes is another way of making the “observation self-conscious”, but there seems to be a point where that representation of the
observation becomes something different, obviously: by taking written notes the observation becomes a textual representation. On the other hand, by taking a picture the self-conscious observation becomes a visual representation that can be observed again. That is, the observation becomes something possible to observe and it is at the same time a representation. By having this option, it becomes possible to share the experience through images and not only by text, leaving the act of thinking suspended by looking, as MacDougall suggests: “when we look, we are doing something more deliberate than seeing and yet more unguarded than thinking. We are putting ourselves in a sensory state that is at once one of vacancy and heightened awareness” (2006:7). That is, with an observation rendered in a photograph, the fieldwork experience of observing can be to a certain degree reproduced for the audience that will have to look.

The idea of montage as a lived experience or the “montage of the senses” as Andrew Irving (2013; 2017) calls it, can be of help as an analytical way to reflect upon and connect my experience doing fieldwork while I was following the routes of the native potatoes with the process of creating a sequence for the photobook. During fieldwork I was moving through different places, talking to different people, looking at different processes, tasting the potato and the tubers in different contexts and diverse ways of cooking. I smelt different kitchens, observed and participated of different types of work with farmers, with Edilberto, courier agents, chefs, and waiters. My own experiences were processed, sometimes more consciously than others, in a sort of “living montage” whereby I was creating “continuous juxtapositions of sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste” (Irving 2013:77) on two different levels. The first and more immediate was in the very moment I was being present in a situation and juxtaposing the perception of all my senses as the given activity, my movements or the conversation was developing. The second level was adding to that experience a juxtaposition of other experiences I have lived related to the native potato. Those were sometimes
disrupting, adding understanding, or generating questions about what I perceived at that moment. Irving (2017; 2013) discusses this phenomenon of the senses framing it as a living montage and it is of course not exclusive of my fieldwork experience. It is instead a particular understanding of how perception and experience can be explained as a mode of living montage by thinking metaphorically through a concept that comes from cinema. What is relevant to emphasise is that both cinematic and lived montage offer the ability to think about putting together images, sensations and experiences that are separate in time and space either on the screen or in one’s personal experience of the world at any given moment.

Sometimes the ‘montage of the senses’ and the experience of life can take a conscious form as if it was a cinematic montage. I believe this is a specific way to be aware of the senses but also that it may occur consciously to people who are close to cinema. It may occur as well in a parallel form for people who practice photography and what is sometimes called a photographic eye. Some photographers comment in a slightly romantic tone that one’s best picture is the one that he or she never made but only saw; a picture that remains stuck in the mind. The idea is that sometimes someone can see a picture but not necessarily capture it with the camera, or not make it in the appropriate way for the image to have an effective impact as a photograph. An interesting example of different views about this phenomenon is compiled by Will Steacy (2012) in *Photographs not Taken*. The book is a collection of small vignettes where photographers describe a situation they deliberately decided not to take a picture of because they were not in the best conditions to do so. What is remarkable from the book is the documentation of those moments where a picture was (and probably still is) in their minds. In such cases, the lived experience is transformed not only in memory but in a photographic memory. That is to say, that a specific moment in life was translated into a photographic form without any paper support.
Similar to being conscious about how the senses are creating a montage in real life, what *Photographs not taken* makes evident is the capacity to see and think photographically which, I suggest, echoes Irving's notion of a conscious lived montage. In other words, to juxtapose, compose, or translate what the eyes can see in three dimensions and the body can experience with all the senses into an image that is two dimensional and accessible only to one of the senses, vision. In *Photographs not taken*, the photographers narrate what they saw without the use of a camera but that they transformed into a photographic scene; they did not need a camera to create a juxtaposition of subjects and objects in their mind. Unlike the cinematic image that can show a given action happening together with sound, a photograph freezes and mutes the action in a frame transforming it into printed copy, a document. Freezing time also increases the duration the image can be looked at, offering the possibility to make the viewer wonder. My goal during fieldwork was to translate those living and mental montages and juxtapositions of my experience into images to later edit them in a form of a photobook and make the viewer wonder.

During fieldwork my attention was focused on the tubers. Wherever I moved I was looking at the activities around them. At the same time I was trying to look for moments that I thought were interesting or revealing to photograph. Sometimes I would be more conscious about how a particular moment could be part of a larger narrative and sometimes I was not. I was also paying attention to what I understood was important for my interlocutors in relation to the potatoes according to how they grow them, select them, pack them, transport them, cook them or eat them. In this regard the level of collaboration in the image making was subtle and not totally evident; it was inherent to my relationship with them and my openness to photograph what I understood as being important for them.

27 That digital photography has not always led to a printed copy but a digitalised representation is not my concern in this chapter.
The research and the role of photographer gave me access to different places where the tubers circulate. With the excuse of needing to photograph, I got access to the kitchens of four restaurants where Edilberto sells his produce and thus photography expanded my ethnographic stimulation. Paying attention to the ways people in different contexts engage with the tubers was the ethnographic material that allowed mental and visual juxtapositions about the life of the tubers. I realised I was in a privileged position to do so and that none of the people I met during fieldwork have had the opportunity to observe all the stages of the tubers as I did. As I discussed in the Introduction that does not mean that I got to know in deep detail what was happening in all the stages. Instead, I had the chance to learn something about various ways in which people engage with the tubers. In fact, my immersion to the restaurants was considerably mediated by a photographic practice. The way I got access to the kitchens was by asking to photograph the life of the native potatoes and any other tubers in the kitchen. Unlike the way I engaged with Edilberto and with the work in the farm, my engagement in the restaurants was relatively quick and heavily planned.

For instance, after I met Franco Kisic in Lima first and then at the farm in Condorcocha some weeks later, I asked him if I could visit the kitchen of his restaurant IK to see and photograph the ways they handle, cook, and serve the tubers they buy from Edilberto. Franco wanted to help me in that he thought that by helping me, he was supporting Edilberto, something that contributed to my understanding of their relationship in terms of the help he was offering to Edilberto as part as his ethical commitment to farmers. He asked me to email him to organise the session. After some days of emailing with him, the chef in charge of the kitchen and the chief brand officer of the restaurant, we agreed on a date and a time for the session. The appointment was in the morning, a time when the restaurant is still closed and the activities in the kitchen are focused on food preparation to have some of it almost ready for when customers arrive. The restaurant operates with a reservation system,
therefore the staff knows how many people to expect on a regular day and sometimes they also know if the dinner guests are going to have the tasting menu or not.

When I arrived, Franco introduced me to the chef in charge of the kitchen and briefly explained all the ways they use native potatoes, ocas, and mashuas at IK. Franco told me that they were going to show me how they cook them in all possible detail. Later, I realised they had organised a schedule to show me the different dishes they cook with tubers and that in fact it was all programmed to finish by the time the diners started to arrive. Therefore, what I was allowed to see was a staged scenario where the chefs were giving me the opportunity to photograph them and ask them all the questions I had. For the purposes of my research this was at the same time good and artificial as I was not able to see them actually at work. This method however gave me good insights into what they do and how do they engage with the tubers. The photographs I have from the restaurant are in this sense a reflection of what the chefs allowed me to see. My attention was in some regard constrained to what they wanted me to see. Being aware of their method, the next time I visited a kitchen I decided to photograph what they ‘staged’ for me but I also tried to stay after they had finished showing me what they had prepared for the session. I had to be more careful not to interrupt their activities during service because the speed of their activities in the kitchen changes dramatically. Indeed, the movements of the chefs in the kitchen speed up abruptly when they work under the pressure to have the food ready for the dinner guests. The strategy of setting up a time and making a little stage for me before they started serving clients was in the end beneficial for my purposes. Paying attention to the process of photographing also showed me how in the restaurant they are used to staging, an idea I discussed in Chapter Three to explain the particular way they engage with the tubers.
While I was with Edilberto the flow of the activities felt less programmed in relation to my purposes of taking pictures. As I was spending time with him, our sense of intimacy grew; he got used to my presence with the camera and did not set times for photographs. As long as I was with him, helping with whatever he needed assistance with, I could take the camera and photograph him or the activities happening around us. It was our silent arrangement. When I went to visit Victor for the first time in Corazon de Ñaupas, I noticed that Victor and some of his fellow farmers were very nicely dressed; Victor particularly decorated his hat with a flower. My first impression was of amusement about the elegant way they were dressed. After I came back to Victor’s house some weeks later, he told me that Edilberto had told him and his friends to dress ‘traditionally’ because I was going to take pictures of them farming. I was surprised to realise that Edilberto staged their dressing but I later understood that it was part of his effort to make the potato circulate as native, as I described in Chapter Four when he would tell me to photograph women farmers. In another visit I made to Victor's house, Edilberto called him to coordinate issues about a fair in Ayacucho where Victor and other family members were coming to sell his produce. Edilberto told him that all participants of the fair should dress with ‘traditional’ clothes. Victor then told me that he does not have those clothes any longer, so he was going to bring whatever he found. By sharing these exchanges my intention is not to discuss traditional clothes and how they have changed over time but to point out those moments where Edilberto was thinking of staging in ways that echoed the staging of the restaurants. In some situations, the staging was elicited by the presence of me with the camera. These cases also reveal a way in which Edilberto tries to use traditional features of clothing to highlight the nativeness of the potato. All these conditioned the way I was able to pay attention to the restaurant stage and the farm stage

The staging that people orchestrated in restaurants and Edilberto’s wish to project a certain traditional aesthetic collided with my intentions of document
the life of the potato in a documentary style which privileges capturing life as it occurs instead of posing or staging pictures. It comes from the classic documentary aesthetic established by Magnum co-founder Henri Cartier-Bresson (1952) who described the decisive moment whereby:

Photography implies the recognition of a rhythm in the world of real things. What the eye does is to find and focus on the particular subject within the mass of reality; what the camera does is simply to register upon film the decision made by the eye... In a photograph, composition is the result of a simultaneous coalition, the organic coordination of elements seen by the eye. (1952:6).

This definition of photography echoes the previously discussed idea about conscious lived montage, where the body is the place where the senses encounter and juxtapose. It also resonates with the idea of ways of seeing that John Berger (1972) introduced. In addition I also find a conceptual coincidence with how people look at things and how the modes of attention are culturally mediated (Csordas 1993). The ways of seeing photographically may be as diverse as the different aesthetic possibilities present in the photographic world, but what they all have in common is the obsessive search for composition that corresponds to a certain search for aesthetics. Composition is the act of arranging the elements in front of the camera’s viewfinder and, obviously, the composer is the person behind the viewfinder. Composition is, as Cartier-Bresson suggested, the way in which the photographic eye translates and orders the sensorial world in front of the camera. Berger suggested that “the photographer’s way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject” and alerts us “of the photographer selecting that sight from infinity of other possible sights” (Berger 1972:10). Some years before Berger, Cartier-Bresson wondered if it is not only about choosing a subject; that there is a form (a way or many ways) to arrange the subject in the frame. This echoes the idea of ‘sight’ and it is contained in the concept of composition, the craft of arranging the choices of subjects and objects:
The photographer's eye is perpetually evaluating. A photographer can bring coincidence of line simply by moving his head a fraction of a millimetre. He can modify perspectives by a slight bending of the knees. By placing the camera closer to or farther from the subject, he draws a detail – and it can be subordinated, or he can be tyrannized by it (Cartier-Bresson 1952:8).

That way of seeing that can occur with or without the camera — but provoked by thinking through it — where the choices of subject and composition merge, I propose, is what would be the photographic equivalent to the lived (cinematic) montage that Irving suggests. At the same time, Cartier-Bresson's words are very effective at describing how the subjectivity is produced by the photographer at the very moment of pressing the shutter to freeze a moment of the life passing through his or her sensory body.

The Photobook and the Narrative: the Making of a Visual Ethnography

Christian Suhr and Rane Willerslev (2012) wonder about the use of montage within anthropological filmmaking for its capacity to "show the invisible" in as much as it combines realistic images with disruptive and evocative juxtapositions of "multispatial and multitemporal viewing experiences" (Suhr and Willerslev 2012:288). In my work, the use of montage as the photographic sequence serves to show what is not visible at once precisely because it is multispatial and multitemporal: the chain. A photographic sequence naturally offers this possibility because the medium itself bases its magic in freezing what the eye sees or sometimes what it cannot see. A photograph stops the continuity of reality, being able to record appearances:

28 A pertinent clarification is to say that I am not referring to montage in photography to mean photomontage, a technique consisting of digitally or physically cutting and sticking one picture (or a fragment of it) over another. My reference is in relation to having multiple juxtapositions of events that occur in different places but that relate to the same thing and it is a strategic narrative.
"What the camera does (...) and what the eye in itself can never do, is to fix the appearance of that event. It removes its appearance from the flow of appearances and it preserves it" (Berger and Dyer 2001:288). Considering that the nature of the potato chain is overlapped in time and fragmented in space, a photographic sequence of images about the chain offers the possibility of showing what is otherwise invisible all at once. In this way, the photobook is a montage of appearances of events that I witnessed over fourteen months in different places. What the photographs require to show the "invisible", I suggest, is an evocative composition and the arrangement of a sequence that deliberately opens up interpretations rather than closing them. That is, to try to exploit “the fundamental ambiguity of photographs” (Sutherland 2016a:38) to make the viewer wonder.

The use of text in the photobook also tries to open up interpretations. I used a combination of a few ethnographic texts with some quotes from my informants and one from a book about the look of the potato. My intention was always to avoid “the often reductive relationship of explanatory text placed next to a photograph and its tendency to delimit images as illustrations” (Sutherland 2016a:38). That does not mean that all the images I include in the photobook have an evocative and ambiguous sense, but I decided to take the risk. The text therefore is not explanatory of the images, rather I used it to try to engage with the “audience’s imagination” (Sutherland 2016a:38). John Berger explained the tension between images and text in a very lucid way by making explicit that it is of supreme importance that the text and the image are not tautological, that is to avoid repeating what is seen with what is written because "the repetition of the same thing, once with words and another with an image, makes the work lose its vigour" (Berger and Dyer 2015:195, my translation). My aim was to find a narrative balance between a closed and open narrative, which is a warning in the structure of a photobook, something that Jörg Colberg explains:
...how much should the potential viewer be guided through the book? Err on the side of caution, and an overly prescriptive book will not allow the viewer to explore the work's breadth, essentially suffocating her or his imagination. Err on the side of looseness and the book will provide too little structure, leaving the viewer baffled as to what to make of the photography (2017: 57).

In this light, the creation of a visual ethnography aims to “create a sensuous sense of contact with what has been copied” (Cox, Irving, and Wright 2016:4) that is, with the photographic sequence in the case of my work. This process entails a certain “sensory perception, aesthetic appreciation and the operation of technology in describing cultural otherness” (Cox, Irving, and Wright 2016:4). This, on one hand, means a particular way of doing fieldwork with, through and in relation with the camera and the informants. On the other hand it demands the development of certain skills to create a photographic aesthetic able to make the most of “the magical power of the copy” (Taussig in Cox, Irving, and Wright 2016:4) to create, together with the montage, an evocative aesthetic with “excess of meaning” (Edwards 2011) able to keep the interpretation of the viewer open.

I found a good example of combining text and photographs in Juan Orrantia’s (2012) story of life in a village in Colombia in the aftermath of terror. After I first looked at the images, I engaged with some of them as I considered them aesthetically interesting and appealing. But after reading his text, which is both theoretical about the use of photography in anthropology and ethnographically descriptive and affective, and after looking at the pictures again, I gained another affective relationship with the characters in the images. The intensity of his narration made me see the eyes and the lives of the people photographed with a deeper understanding and with more empathy. I consider his essay a good example of how words and images can work together as a “single ethnography” (Werbner 2011:209) as each medium, text and photography, acted on me as a viewer and reader in a different but joint way.
After reading his text, looking at a picture became a wondering experience where thoughts, emotions, and reflections about the lives of the people were more vivid. It gave me a space to actively empathise with the “others”, making the anthropological enterprise of being curious about the life of others operate actively on me as a wonderer of the copy: it transported me there longer than the rhythm of the text would have done alone. His words were also resonating and multiplied as I was wondering through the pictures. In the experience I had, the time was set by me, something that is different to experiencing a text or a film.

Orrantia describes his work as an exploration of photography, sound, and writing as "poetic forms with documentary purposes" (Orrantia 2012:54). While I get inspiration from him, my work is different and with personal limits. For instance, I did not use sound and I do not find it possible to write in a poetic form. The text in the photobook is limited and tries to be evocative; it is a counter balance and a complement to this written thesis where the words abound. The aesthetic of the pictures in the photobook takes inspiration from documentary photography. I tried to privilege a theatrical and evocative look in combination with descriptive images. For evocative and theatrical forms I mean compositions where the subjects and objects of my choice, in combination with the light, could evoke feelings of “affective presence” (Cox, Irving, and Wright 2016:4) looking for the poetic form that Orrantia refers to. This idea echoes Edwards’s suggestion of exploring the potential of photography in anthropology through the expressive capacity of the medium, "not through the realist paradigm but through a lyrical expressiveness" (1999:58). However, in order to be able to include appearances from the most diverse events along the chain, I decided to sometimes sacrifice the expressive aesthetic over the content of the image. In this regard, I agree with Sutherland (2016b) when he reflects on an editing process driven both by the emotional and descriptive qualities of the images. In my practice and in the final edition
of the sequence I also included posed portraits of some of the workers both farmers and chefs that are involved in the life of the potatoes.

The portraits of farmers and chefs are posed and confrontational, that is, that they confronted me (and the audience) with their gaze. Both chefs and farmers were difficult to engage with as I spent little time with them. The portrait therefore became a strategy to build and capture a degree of intimacy with the intent to understand them: "The strength of a portrait is that in a split of a second, we understand a little of the life of the person photographed" (Salgado and Wenders 2014). In a portrait, the collaboration is subtle and sometimes evident. In this regard, Sebastiao Salgado (Salgado and Wenders 2014) commented that "when you do a portrait, it is not you alone who takes the picture; the person [photographed] offers a photo". Offering a photo, however, means a negotiation of the self that is appearing and looking at the camera. Roland Barthes reflected how he felt when he was consciously in front of a camera when someone was taking a portrait, posed or not, of him: “In front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use of the exhibit his art” (2000:13). In this light, I understand the portrait as a negotiation of selves that is brought about by the act of photographing. In this negotiation during fieldwork I sometimes got a straightforward rejection. My procedure was to engage with them and ask for a portrait at the end of the day after I had built a degree of empathy and then take the picture in the place where they were working, either the kitchen or the farm, to add a layer of context to the portrait. Sometimes, both chefs and farmers but more occasionally farmers, would deny me the portrait. These difficulties would happen more often with women. The intimacy with the people I portrayed was in the end mediated by the use of the camera and the result is a presumption of who they were and how they looked at the moment of pressing the shutter; it is a record of their appearance, a still within the flow of their lives.
The portrait as an historical genre to represent individuals brings questions of purpose and likeness. Marcia Pointon puts it clearly: "Why do we have portraits and what do they do? And does a portrait have to look like somebody in order to be a portrait?" (2013:13). During the Renaissance, for instance, portraiture painted with oil on canvas made for the nobles depicted their status through their clothing and the environment where they were placed in the image. At that time it was believed that the eyes of the sitter could reflect their soul (Pointon 2013). In this light, portraiture was trying to depict the identity of the sitter but also his or her status. At the same time, having a painted portrait was a status marker and likeness was relevant as it was important that the sitter looked like the person represented. The invention of photography many centuries later made portraiture cheaper and therefore more accessible to wider publics and not exclusive to the elite. Despite the mechanical capacity of the camera to record what is in front of the lens and therefore make likeness easily reachable, portraiture still poses questions of purpose and likeness. In this sense, likeness is not only about physiological verisimilitude but also represents the character of the person in the image (Woodall 1997).

The portraits I took are realistic in the sense that they try to make the characters look like they are (or were at the moment of the picture) through their faces, bodies and clothes. By deliberately including the place as part of the portrait, I try to make the likeness work more efficiently. What I think is clear from the portraits I took is that chefs look like chefs and farmers look like farmers. This may sound simplistic but the obvious may be productive by asking how is it that they look how they look.

In addition to portraits of my informants I took staged portraits of native potatoes and unlike the farmers and chefs, I tried to separate the potato representation from the idea of likeness, trying to give the potatoes
personality, voice, and elegance. To do so I staged the portraits as a parallel strategy of empathy to the way Edilberto and the restaurants stage the potato along the chain. I got aesthetic inspiration from Kevin Abosch's potato photograph sold that for 1 million Euros in 2015\textsuperscript{29}. Having around 3,000 different native potatoes in Peru and the farmers living in precarious conditions, I am also trying to challenge the fact that a potato photograph sold at such a high price. The potato portraits and the reference to Abosch's picture, I later came to understand, are part of my effort to take part in redeeming the potato, just as the chefs and Edilberto are trying to do. As I have described in the thesis, one way in which they strategically redeem the potato is by staging the potato, which is what I did to make the potato portraits.

The potato portraits are deliberately different from the leading documentary style of the ethnographic photographs that make up the sequence. I decided to use them to juxtapose the potato form with chefs and farmers’ portraits that I encountered during fieldwork. The idea of juxtaposing the shape and colours of objects with human bodies is present in Ricardo Cases' (2014) \textit{Paloma al aire}, Nicola Lo Calzo’s (Lo Calzo et al. 2015) \textit{OBIA}, Lorenzo Viturri’s (Vitturi and Iduma 2017) \textit{Money Must be Made}, and Yann Gross's (2016) \textit{The Jungle Book}. For me, such juxtaposition opens up interpretations about the intimate relation between person and the things juxtaposed. Gross, for instance, creates a sense of awe by juxtaposing a naked woman with a mask that resembles the shape of an owl's face on one page and an owl in the side page. Cases, in another inspiring example, put together a picture of a dove next to someone's ear. His work documents a traditional competition in Spain where old men paint male doves and let them free to chase a female dove.

\textsuperscript{29} https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/photography/businessman-buys-photograph-of-a-potato-for-1m-a6831681.html (last accessed on 29/January/2019)

https://petapixel.com/2016/01/21/this-photo-of-a-potato-sold-for-over-1000000/ (last accessed on 29/January/2019)
The juxtaposition is playful as the shape of the dove's neck has a similar curvilinear shape of the close-up ear. Having the two images together may say a thousand things or nothing but it is a strategy to make the viewer look, wonder, and do something "more unguarded than thinking" as MacDougall (2016) suggests.

Abosch commented on his million-dollar potato photograph:

> I see commonalities between humans and potatoes that speak to our relationship as individuals within a collective species (...) generally, the life of a harvested potato is violent and taken for granted. I use the potato as a proxy for the ontological study of the human experience.

During my year of fieldwork I did not see any violence to the potato. It was the opposite; the potatoes are threatened with care all along the process. It is true that before the Gastronomic Boom set up the conditions for the native potatoes to gain value in Lima, the tubers were violently despised. The violence, in such a case, lies in the precarious conditions of workers along the chain. However, it has been revealing how much following the life of the native potatoes has taught me about the conditions of a commodity chain. This research was based in not taking the potato for granted and by taking a close look at the potato. With the potato portraits, I took a close look at them with the camera.

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CONCLUSIONS

The journey started when I became curious about how was it possible that the native potatoes—tubers that I have never heard of or seen before I decided to do this research—were reaching new social contexts in Peru. As I started wondering what was making the tubers move, I have circulated with them seeing some clues about how they move. Through the chapters I have tried to explore the anthropological understanding of why the potato moves by enquiring into how the chain works. As a result, one of the important things to highlight is that the potato's value is not fixed and to understand why it is moving into new social contexts it is necessary too for the analysis itself to move beyond the economic equation of price, demand, and supply to see that the values of potatoes are plural and not static.

In this sense, what unifies the chapters is that they all show different ways in which people have made and crafted the native potatoes and the other tubers in order to find new routes of circulation. That is, in the thesis I have paid attention to those efforts that operate at different levels which contribute to making the native tubers valuable in different ways. It is worthwhile to remember that around twenty years ago, the same tubers were valued differently and they had a different ambit of circulation basically bounded to the Andean region where they were domesticated 8,000 years ago. In this regard, my work has been an ethnographic contribution to the anthropology of the Andean region that looks at the potato as a mechanism of social and economic interchange and meaning within the Andes. By following the tubers, I have travelled with them outside the Andes and observed the social, material, and economic relationships that made this circulation possible as well as the new relationships that are created as the tubers circulate.

In Chapter One I analysed two promotional videos released by the Peruvian government in order to situate the recent interest in the native potato and the
companion tubers within the Gastronomic Boom. Here I started focusing on how, through a visual means, the government promotes the Gastronomic Boom by analysing how this type of video works according to its purpose of promotion. In the first video a group of “Peruvian Ambassadors” bring Peruvianess to a small town in the United States called Peru. The Peruvianess is performed in different ways but I focussed particularly on the moments where chefs take a lead role as authorities in the expedition. The relevance of the second video is that its narrative is built to stress the key role that farmers have in the Gastronomic Boom; it is an effort to make visible the importance of their work in the gastronomic chain. As I described in the chapter, references to potatoes appeared in each of those videos making evident the presence of the tuber in the governmental discourse. Overall I showed how the Gastronomic Boom is part of the national neoliberal context that also contributes to moving the native potato by enhancing processes of commodification of culture. One of my interlocutors told me that the potato is not “an empty product”, so I tried to understand how it is filled and with what. Through the video adverts, the Gastronomic Boom gave clues that it is both the socio-political context and a “generative power” (Bear et al. 2015a).

Throughout the thesis and with the photobook I have tried to show that the chain is not as smooth as it is depicted in the video advert. However, the first chapter served to show the roles that the Gastronomic Boom and the Peruvian State are playing by creating the context in which the native potatoes are re-valued. This is an ethnographic opportunity to reflect upon the power dynamics of re-creation of value, that in this case do not depend only on the efforts of people —farmers and chefs and their articulation— but also in the generative power of the neoliberal project that the Peruvian government is advancing. Edilberto synchronises with this particular moment in time of Peruvian history and is taking on that opportunity at the right time by leading in the creation of the potato chain. Through the analysis of the videos I also started to implicitly show the importance of the performative acts to create
fantasies that re-frame the role of the farmers in the country and the promises of unity through agricultural work within the Gastronomic Boom. With these promises gastronomy becomes more than gastronomy. As an interlocutor told me, it tries to take up roles that overcome its capacity by being used for social and economic purposes that aspire to improve the life of the people by reconstructing a nation affected by the violent Internal Conflict.

In Chapter Two I started to more actively follow the native potato and it became clear that I also had to follow the other tubers along the chain. With the aim of understanding the circulation of the tubers “behind and beyond what the market itself reveals” (Harvey 1989:423), but without losing sight of the market and prices, I also paid attention to the forms, uses and trajectories (Appadurai 1986) that the tubers take in their journey from land(s) to mouth(s). This strategy allowed me to pay attention to the relationship between culture and economy (Tsing 2009) to understand how it is that the tubers’ chain is built across difference and how it is that it works, as well as what interrupts the flow of the chain. Following the work of Anna Tsing (2013), I noticed that the way the potato chain works is a manifestation of the way she describes the mechanisms of supply chains in capitalism. That is, that the chain is a commodity system that connects and exploits difference, both cultural and economic. Capitalism needs and uses difference to exist. In this light I realised that the value of the potato also emerges thanks to the possibility to make use of the low wages that can keep the finances of the chain healthy, reproducing the inequalities that the narrative of the Gastronomic Boom promises to dilute. At the same time I became aware that the mere existence of the native potato as a biodiverse crop that exists thanks to the unaccounted work of farmers in the past is what Tsing refers to as a non-capitalist formation. The potato as a non-capitalist formation, as a product of thousands of years of farming and domestication, is now mediated by the capitalist work that I have described throughout the thesis and, as it enters the capitalist chain, it is transformed. Following Tsing again, this
dynamic reveals that the potato chain works by connecting diversity of different sorts: capitalist forms with non-capitalist forms in this case. However, as I have also shown in the thesis, a lot of work has to be done and coordinated to make the potato move.

The efforts of coordination became more visible to me when Edilberto failed in building a new route in the chain. An interruption in the native potatoes’ flow made me aware of the importance of coordinating the rhythms of the chain as a condition to maintain and create the value of the potatoes and of the arrangements he makes with restaurants. While Laura Bear (2014a; 2014b) argued that work could be understood as an act of mediation between different rhythms, the chain became a good ethnographic case to see how the different temporal rhythms of humans and non-humans have to be coordinated to make the tubers move at the right times. From this perspective the potato and the tubers acquire value in as much as it becomes possible to coordinate the human on non-human rhythms. As I observed, Edilberto works hard making those rhythms align to the clients’ needs and this is part of what makes the tubers acquire a specific value that makes them flow to new contexts outside the Andes.

When looking at the chain as the coordination of the rhythms of capitalism in relation to the work of different humans in different places and in relation to the potato's ecological cycle, insects that affect them, and the weather conditions as well as the market, gives weight to the argument that the chain is neither smooth nor linear. Many things are happening simultaneously and it is a daily drama to coordinate the actions on time. In fact, one factor that allows Edilberto to orchestrate the chain is that he arranged a fixed price agreement with his clients to avoid the low and erratic prices of the market. As well, he must arrange with clients to deliver the tubers on time and in the right place. Edilberto is also aware of the specificity of the temporality of the Gastronomic Boom in which his work and the potato chain are immersed. He
knows that if there is a moment in his life where native potatoes are getting the attention of the broader public it is now. He experienced as a young boy the tragic years of the Internal Conflict and he is now seeing how the context is different and also trying to make it different for others.

The nativeness of the potato and the other tubers is staged in some high-end restaurants as I revealed in Chapter Three, where I discussed how the origins of the potato and its material and sensorial qualities are being performed and therefore valued. Here, my ethnographic approach with and through the photographic camera not only gave me access to the restaurants but also made me aware of the role of staging. What I noticed to be a staging for the camera was a broader way of acting in the restaurant. The process of staging occurs in relation to making visible the place where the tubers grow and the historical origins that are now performed through different cooking techniques that sometimes stress the relationship to the land and history making the tubers valuable in high-end restaurants. Linking taste with place made me relate the potato with ideas of terroir, a concept that is used as a strategy to recognise and value the origins and the sensorial qualities of food and drinks in relation to the taste obtained by producing in a specific place and by specific methods. By ethnographically paying attention to what happens in the restaurant, the sensorial value of the tubers became apparent: colour, texture, and taste. These qualities are performed in relation to the site of production —the Andes— suggesting that terroir as the native quality is brought into being through the performative act of cooking and staging the tubers in specific ways. This strategy, I suggested, is one way in which the tubers are valued and also made visible in the high-end restaurants.

In Chapter Four I analysed the role that documentation and standardisation play for the tubers. I realised that different mechanisms of standardisation have to come into play to transform the potato in particular ways to create certain uniformity that works differently for different purposes. I showed that
those mechanisms are regulatory devices that are ways of governing and therefore they illuminate relations of power between chefs as consumers and farmers as producers. What these mechanisms have in common is that, again, such forms of standardising the tubers add value that allows the tubers move. Documentation, specifically the possibility to issue invoices, serves as a condition to enter the restaurants. Without the invoice, restaurants would not be able to buy Edilberto's produce. In this light, the invoice makes the tubers count for the restaurants. I also showed how the process of selecting potatoes or any other tuber entails making visible and invisible what is a good or a bad tuber. The process of sorting out according to the restaurants’ requirements also adds value to the potato. Part of the fragility of the chain resides in the selection process; failing in sorting can break the chain. The selection is based on the standards of size and conditions that the chefs, as authorities, consider appropriate for their dishes according to the specific aesthetics of the type of cuisine they practice.

The organic certification process made more evident the ways in which Edilberto is trying to find new routes to sell native potatoes and how the possibility of finding these new routes depends on following standards. In this sense, meeting standards gives value to the tubers giving them to access specific markets. Whereas his aim was finding markets in and outside of Peru, the organic certification taught Edilberto and me that Peruvians are more interested in what make the tubers native (the connection between taste, colour, texture, land and history) whereas the idea of the native gets lost in an international context, where the organic certification together with the material qualities (colour, texture, and taste) of the potatoes replaces the native value. Here, the ethics that represent the native and the organic mobilise the potato through different routes.

In Chapter Five I included some specific ethnographic examples of how my position as ethnographer with a camera helped me understand how the potato
and the tubers are made visible and valuable as a native or organic product. The creation of a photobook as a way to represent the chain, I argued, also helped me to understand the chain as a non-linear system that is overlapped in time and fragmented in space. With the photographic practice and the reflections about it, I stressed the role of observation in social anthropology to wonder about the possibility of redeeming the use photography within visual anthropology. The photobook is also a personal way to try to redeem the potato by doing what my informants were doing: staging the potato. My use of the photobook as a narrative device is an alternative and complementary product to this written thesis. I make use of the "expressive" (Edwards 1999) quality of photography in combination with text to represent in a more evocative form the native potato chain. My goal is making the viewer observe what I observed. My intention was to wonder through the fragments of the chain in one single piece of work. As I discussed, this is a visual document, a presumption of what the chain is; in real life it is not possible to see the chain at once. With this chapter I also proposed the creation of a photographic narrative as a way to use the values of juxtaposition and montage as an alternative for the study and representation of commodity chains.

Value, the native tubers have revealed, takes different forms by different ways and strategies; it is not static, and it is sometimes fragile. There is value in the production process depending on how the tubers are produced, but that process has to be visible for the consumer. The potatoes are also valuable for their historical origin; that is for their capacity to accumulate history not as an object that moves from place to place but as an abstract entity, given that the tubers are naturally consumed and the individual tuber disappears. The history of the potato is also a source of its construction as a symbol of the Peruvian Andes. In the high-end restaurants it is used to represent the mountains where it originated historically and has been physically cultivated.
The value of history and its association of taste with the land, terroir, is also performed and made visible.

As Michael Taussig (2009) invites us to redeem blue indigo every time one puts on blue jeans, I have to admit that my way of eating potatoes has changed dramatically. Every time I eat a potato I recall my fieldwork and the hard work of Edilberto, farmers, and the chefs to try to make a living with the tubers. In a sense my fieldwork generated in me empathy with their work and the potato's long history. I thus can assume I redeem the potato every time I eat or think of potatoes, ocas, ollucos, or mashuas. However, I believe that one of the main tasks of anthropology is to extend what has been my personal experience into a broader experience so more people can redeem the potato. That is one the reasons I believe in the capacity of visual anthropology and why I put effort in the creation of a photobook. Following and photographing the native potato and the other tubers reveal that the way they are produced influences –but does not determine– how they are valued. The values (with the emphasis in the plurality) of the potato are also made, performed, and accrued in its circulation.
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