

## RECIPROCITY IN THE ECONOMY OF THE AGE OF SILICON

### ECONOMY SYSTEMS TO EARLY EXPERIENCES CURRENT SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

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#### ABSTRACT<sup>1</sup>

Reciprocity is an integrating principle of supportive economy activities. In non-capitalist societies, it has been realized through the participation of certain institutional arrangements that favored the stability of exchange relations. Progress towards capitalist societies and deepening them, dissolved many of these institutional supports, while economy relations separated from other social relations in which it was first inserted. In addition, the selfish individual was become an active participant in the economy life of society. With the construction of market economies and state regulation, reciprocal relationships were being reduced to a lower field activities. Under these circumstances, they should investigate how reciprocity is manifested today, the institutional arrangements that are suitable to give stability and unity to cooperative behavior and the dynamics of their relationship to the context of the market and the state.

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<sup>1</sup> This articule is based on a paper presented on the Graduate Program in Social Anthropology from the Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty, National University of Misiones.

**KEYWORDS:** Economy Systems; Principles of Integration; Reciprocity; Social Economy.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The economy system of a society is built from a set of organizing productive activities, in order to achieve the satisfaction of the needs of the whole, in terms of available resources. The features that assume the system will be hampered by various elements, such as are the geographic-climate, soil, etc.-, Social -group activity, etc.-, Moral -psychological habits, religion, etc.- Institutional and others (Lajugie, 1985). Throughout history, different economies have adopted various types according to the structuring assumed from its constituent elements. In particular, the economy doctrine recognizes the existence of three dominant-economy systems at different times in human history, namely: the family system or patriarchal, feudal manor system and the capitalist system or markets (Lajugie, 1985; Polanyi, 1976). The set of activities of a population reaches stability and consistency through its institutionalization and the existence of certain institutional arrangements. In each of these three economy systems mentioned, the unit acquired activities from the preeminence of one of the following inclusive principles: reciprocity, redistribution and exchange. In any economy system three integrator principles coexist, but it is one which takes precedence, keeping in marginal conditions, dependent or subordinate to the other two. In family economies, the integrating principle is reciprocity, while feudal and capitalist economies are integrated from the principles of redistribution and exchange, respectively (Polanyi, 1976).

In today's modern economies, the dominant principle of the exchange is to be the market. However, both the principle of reciprocity as the redistribution is still valid in the current economy realities. Therefore, it is interesting to ask them: how they operate on the principle of reciprocity economies? Achieve this principle give a definite sense, unity and stability to the

activities that materialize with a reciprocal logic? What institutions have emerged and how they reinforce and consolidate the activities based on reciprocity?

In these conditions, this paper attempts to provide elements for reflection on the characteristics that the principle of reciprocity in primitive economies -or so called collective- and capitalist economies, also called market economies. In particular, advances in the study of the conditions that should be observed if they are to recover social relevance spaces in principle of modern economies.

To do this, first one defines in general terms the principle of reciprocity. Then one advances in the study of the operation of the principle of reciprocity in family or tribal economies, those that Sahlins (1974) called the economies of the Stone Age. In this sense, it is in the nature of mutual exchanges in primitive economies where the main interest lies. From these analyzes one advances to study certain behaviors seen in today's economies, i.e. capitalists, which we recognize as being in a period of time we call in this paper the Silicio age, trying to characterize in this period the current reality reciprocal exchanges and actual or potential conditions that favor the emergence of an alternative economy that self-sustain from its integrating principle. In this direction, it presents the main results first highlighted by theoretical studies and controlled experiments to advance later in the analysis of concrete experiences observed in the province of Misiones in the early twenty-first century. In the latter, are taken as case studies drawn reflections based on experiences developed by entrepreneurs involved in certain economy activities that provide regular performance space to reciprocity.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

### **Reciprocity principle and moral behavior standard**

Reciprocity is a general conduct behavior rule that imports the following conduct: respond positively to positive action and negative to other negative action (Ostrom, 1998). In

Rabin (1993) this behavior is defined as the desire (taste) of an individual to help those who have helped and hurt those who have hurt you. This behavior has involved three successive actions: delivering an object, or value, of receiving it and the consideration (Mauss, 2009).

Distinguishing features of the act of reciprocal exchange may include: a. transfer the exchange above, b. interaction implies a long-term relationship; c. equivalence is not addressed in the short term and not necessarily to the same group of people (Bruni and Zamagni, 2007).

### **Reciprocity in primitive economies**

In pre-capitalist economies economy relations were embedded in social relations<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the reciprocity involved an exchange of economy goods and services, but also of symbolic goods, prestige, power and others. These exchanges were done under the cover of an institutional framework defined by the pattern of symmetry (Polanyi, 1976). In these contexts integrated and structured societies performed major studies of reciprocity. The main authors analyzed the behavior of this principle in pre-capitalist economies who are Malinowski (1922), Mauss (1926), Sahlins (1974) and Polanyi (1976).

In his studies of trade in Kiriwina Island, Malinowski (1922) defines at least two tribal practices of interest: Mapula and kula. While the first is related by the author with a pure gift -cigar in later writings departs from this idea-, the second is a complex system of gift and counter-gift of property (Weiner, 1980). The observed kula exchange system involving a whole network of exchanges between two goods (shells and necklaces) that were put into circulation in opposite directions (one from left to right and others from right to left). From this explanation Malinowski enters circulation through reciprocity. Sahlins (1974), in turn, deepens that the start of sorting reciprocity in terms of closeness of kinship. Generalized reciprocity, made between close relatives, is the most comprehensive and flexible, without establishing precise equivalence between the goods exchanged or terms defined between the service and the consideration.

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<sup>2</sup> What Polanyi (2001) calls embeddedness.

Balanced reciprocity, to be linked to lower proximity relations distinguished in transfers, the social relations of materials with greater precision. Thus, these latter are stated and defined in time.

Finally, negative reciprocity "is the most impersonal exchange" [Sahlins, M., 1974, p. 213] <sup>(1)</sup>; relations are guided by the pursuit of material gain, facing participants interests and trying to get the most individual. They are made in contexts of social distance and may include unilateral decisions. According to Sahlins expresses, "the terms used in ethnography to indicate this mode are «bargain», «exchange», «game», «subterfuge», «theft» and other variants" [Sahlins, M., 1974, p. 213]<sup>(2)</sup>. Polanyi (1974) finally exposes the system of reciprocity from the viewpoint of institutional structures that operate ensuring continuity of benefits.

Further analysis of these authors extend the concept of reciprocity variants for inclusion in the scope of production (Narovzky, 2004), or to overcome the effects of dual models through the analysis of exchange rate Trials (Lebra, 1975).

Summarizing, in the analysis of economy anthropology schools can be highlighted the following salient features:

- Reciprocity relations are established by customary law, heavily influenced by the social structure. In this sense, Polanyi states that reciprocity "denotes movements between correlative points of symmetrical groupings" [Polanyi, K., 1976, p.162]<sup>(3)</sup>, who requires the existence of symmetric kinship structures among communities, to encourage reciprocal circulation.
- Exchanges exceed the strictly economy sphere, both in its material and in its significance (involving issues related to honor, prestige, power, and others).
- Individual actions are strongly conditioned by social structures (Gouldner, 1960).
- Institutionalized practices are static and are considered given (Gouldner, 1960), there being scope for institutional change or the emergence of new institutional designs.

## **Reciprocity and individualistic societies**

In the field of studies of modern economies of production and exchange, reciprocity is defined as one that:

"Emerges from numerous experiments, social norm that systematically determines the behavior of many people and as a rule able to promote partnerships, with a consequent increase of collective welfare especially in situations where it is unthinkable or impossible to resource a contractual relationship "[Crivelli, L., 2003, p. 32]<sup>(4)</sup>

From this point of view, reciprocity emerges as an interpersonal exchange relationship. Regular contact between people also new institutions emerge that crystallize and continue those relationships. Among the studies that have addressed the problem from a individualistic context viewpoint, highlighting the schools conducted by behavioral and rational choice and within these, the contributions made by Homans, Blau and Coleman. Furthermore, from an approach that attempts to address the issues topping the analysis of rational choice theories, are studies that highlight the limits of rational individual behavior, advancing in incorporating models, community logic rules and social norms and other explanatory factors. In this line of research are authors like Ostrom, Elster and Fehr. Both George Homans and Peter Blau are based on the following consideration: individual choice is the result of the confrontation between the benefits and costs involved in a decision. Thus, these authors are among the analyzes claiming that individuals "act and not on the basis of tradition, unconscious maneuvers, or some kind of structural imperative, but on the basis of rational considerations" [Appelrouth, S., Edles, L., 2011, p. 121] <sup>(5)</sup>. While similar in their starting points, while Homans remains almost entirely in the micro economy analysis of interpersonal relationships, Blau goes into the study of relationships at aggregated levels (relationships between structures).

In the analytical line developed by Homans, the question made by individuals becomes: "How much should I expect to incur in costs due to a number of benefits expected to be received?" [Appelrouth, S., Edles, L., 2011, p. 125]<sup>(6)</sup>. From this perspective, studies approaching almost indistinguishable in studies of choice of neoclassical economies. In its analysis, institutions are created under the same rules of psychological individuals, creating

the conditions in which the individual acts (system of rewards and punishments) but without affecting individual decisions psychological level configuration of the election.

Blau, meanwhile, with Homans also shares the importance of face-to-face exchanges, but it does this in the study of how interactions produce effects on institutions and context. In this direction, Appelrouth and Edles (2011) note that Blau "was interested in building a bridge linking theoretical sociological studies of daily interactions between individuals and studies examining different structural dimensions or collectivist society" [Appelrouth, S., Edles, L., 2011, p. 138]<sup>(7)</sup>. Power relations and inequities arising from asymmetrical or unbalanced relationships are an important part of their main studies. In this line of analysis, moral standards emerge as sources of stabilizing relations, incorporating a factor of non rational-analytic structure analysis. Despite this, Blau does not depart from a rational consideration of the election from the costs and benefits. However, the imbalance introduced by the power relations must be weighed from some mechanism to ensure the continuity of the relationship.

Such a mechanism is given by the principle of reciprocity. Appelrouth and Edles express it in terms of "strain toward balance not as much as towards reciprocity in social relations" [in Appelrouth, S., Edles, L., 2011, p. 151.]<sup>(8)</sup>. Also, the durability of the connection is sustained more by the intrinsic characteristics of the components (trust, reciprocity) than by purely impersonal ties instrumental exchange (Zafirovski, 2005).

Finally, framed in rational choice approaches, James Coleman deepened the analysis concerning the dynamics of the relationship between the institutions that emerge from the interactions before and after the institutionalization of practices. In their analysis, the study has particularly relevant rules, defining them as the informal rules that are socially recognized to control the actions of others (Appelrouth and Edles, 2011). In Coleman's approach rules can only be the result of interpersonal interactions.

To summarize the analyzes described, it may be noted regarding behavioral theories of rational choice and the following:

- Incorporate intrinsic considerations -such as confidence- continuity conditions of exchange relations.
- Except Homans, the rules are the emergent result of the interactions.
- Reciprocity is a relevant standard for the purpose of providing stability to interactions.

The main criticism that is made comes from the analysis outlined studies of bounded rationality and behavior guided by moral norms. In these studies, the limits of rationality are presented as the inability of the models to explain the behavior of the agents. Thus, the explanation is developed from the incorporation of other variables: values, social norms or logic community (Ostrom, 1998). Following similar studies hypothesis authors like Fehr (2001), Fehr and Klaus (2001) and Fehr and Gächter (2000). From this perspective, reciprocity is recognized as a moral norm which can stimulate and sustain trade relations between individuals. This will need to research not only on their intrinsic determinants, but also in the contextual constraints.

### **From the Stone Age to the Silicon one: reciprocity principle capable of providing a system unit**

The current social conditions in which individual contracts are imposed on the tradition, institutional patterns that gave stability and unity to the system governed by reciprocity have disappeared and economy relations are de-castrated social relations (Polanyi, 2001), still have some questions without definitive answers in the field of reciprocal behavior, among which are:

- What is it that leads a person to return a benefit received? (Mauss, 1995)
- What social or economy conditions produce the propensity to reciprocate? (Fehr, Gächter, 2000)
- What institutions provide an important place reciprocal social behavior? (Fehr, Gächter, 2000)

Other questions of interest may be:



- How do the economy incentives affect reciprocal behavior? (Fehr, Gächter, 2000)
- How does the reciprocal restrict the egoistic behavior? (Fehr, Gächter, 2000)
- How do the two observed individual types emerge? (Ostrom, 2000)
- What institutions would strengthen cooperation? (Ostrom, 2000)

The reflections that are produced from the questions presented from the analysis of three different sources: theoretical investigations, controlled experiments and empirical cases (Ostrom, 2000).

From the analysis done, one can highlight among the most significant differences in relation to studies of reciprocity in pre-capitalist economies, to the following:

- The propensity to reciprocate is presented as an individual disposition
- The institutions arise from interaction between people reiterative

Numerous experiments are based on the consideration of economies in which individuals interact with provisions to cooperate and selfish provisions, i.e. the selfish on one hand and on the other those with propensities towards reciprocity (Fehr and Gächter, 2000; Ostrom, 1997; Bruni and Zamagi, 1997). Also, many of the cases considered experiments and analyze situations in which contracts are incomplete (Fehr and Falk, 1997) or social dilemmas<sup>3</sup> (Ostrom, 1998; Ostrom, 2000; Fehr and Gächter, 2000). The variables of interest are presented: the diverse social composition between cooperation distributed selfish -or market relationship and interaction- the interaction between them and operant conditioning context. Outcomes related to reciprocal behaviors and contextual constraints may see the following:

- The reciprocal relationship is more difficult to sustain in the higher the market (Kranton, 1996).
- When goods are less substitutable, the higher the market exchanges (Kranton, 1996).
- Reciprocity is reinforced in the networks (Kranton, 1996).

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<sup>3</sup> Ostrom (1998) defined as a social dilemma situation one in which self-interested individuals face interdependence situations, from which it arise that individual maximization of short-term outcomes are worse for all participants than any other alternative.

- The system of punishment can induce reciprocal behavior of the selfish (Fehr and Gächter, 2000).
- The institutional characteristics are relevant to the effects of the dominance of a reciprocal or selfish behavior (Fehr and Gächter, 2000).
- Communicating face-to-face increased cooperation between individuals (Ostrom, 1998).

### **Solidarity Economy and reciprocity in present day economy**

The capitalist economy, underpinned by the principle of individual maximization through market exchange, has faced since its inception, to its logical backlash and materialization. The emergence of the cooperative -in 1844, with the creation of the Cooperative Rochdale Equitable Pioneers- can only be understood as opposition to the regime of private property and sovereignty of capital. This movement, born in interest in mutual aid, solidarity and appreciation of man in the production system, add the mutualism movement, the civil society associations and movements of many producers and consumers self-managed, among other experiences cooperation. All these actors share some general principles that give rise to a new economy sector, the civil economy, social or solidarity<sup>4</sup>. These principles include: priority of people over capital, democratic control and realization of the principle of solidarity (Monzón, 2001). These activities differ, and both of those carried out by private sector actors and the State and have, as a feature, interest in the implementation of the principle of reciprocity (Bruni and Zamagni, 2007).

Therefore, it is from this context of socio-productive activities that are intended to meet the sustainability of the social economy as a subsystem, and the role played by the principle of reciprocity. In this direction, the questions raised by both theoretical investigations as controlled experiments make sense: how reciprocity designs and builds modern economy

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<sup>4</sup> The name given to the group of activities is varied. They are found together with those mentioned, the following: civil economy, third sector and non-profit sector. For an introduction of their name, one can look up, e.g. Chaves (2001), Defourny (2003) and Chaves (2003).

relations? Is it that this principle can provide stability and unity to the social economy system? What are the institutions that emerge? How do they interact with the market and the state?

### **Experience in Misiones Province in early XXI Century**

The associative and solidarity enterprises have increased participation in the economy after the 2001 crisis. This was due both to a spontaneous response of the families, as the stimuli generated as a result of certain public policies implemented in the Sector. Among the most representative experiences may occur: a. unemployed worker cooperatives, b. producers' fairs, and c. recovered factories, d. the self-managed enterprises. On latter endeavors one will focus the analysis herein below.

### **Reciprocity, interaction and institutions in economy solidarity of self-managed enterprises**

Many of the enterprises involved in activities considered within the sector have been technically and financially assisted by plans and programs of the National Government. In this sense, the National Plan for Local Development and Social Economy Manual Labor<sup>5</sup> funded in the country over sixty-five thousand enterprise products during the period 2004-2006 (Hintze, 2007)<sup>6</sup>. In the Province of Misiones, this was Manual Labor Plan has been implemented since 2004. During the period 2004-2006 the financing lines were focused on: a. Enterprise-person and family b. Enterprise trade associations. Among the requirements for both groups were: age 18 and over, Argentine, naturalized or resident alien possessing Argentine ID, earning less than half a basic or two food rations, depending on whether it was or line of credit or subsidy<sup>7</sup>. Beginning in 2006, they strengthened the financing of productive chains and factories. In the

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<sup>5</sup> MDS Resolution 1.375/04.

<sup>6</sup> The author presents two sources. In this case we take the source Ministry of Social Development of the Nation presented as information source A for the work to which they refer.

<sup>7</sup> Operative Manual for the Local and Social Labor Economy, National Social Empowerment, Ministry of Social Development of the Nation.

latter cases, the focus was on the stimulus to generate scale economies through joint ventures and entrepreneurs.

Since 2008, a group of entrepreneurs, led by the Ministry of Social Development, Women and Youths in the Province of Misiones, had a Misiones Entrepreneurs Network of Social Economy. In this network there have signed up to date over a thousand entrepreneurs across the province, with the widest product range, in areas such as textiles, food, general carpentry and crafts. These members carry on self-management of their enterprises. Since its inception, the entrepreneurs enrolled in this have participated in various activities, some of which are driven mainly by the government (e.g., participation in fairs) and college (training).

From this set of experiences, one highlights certain observations outlined under the technical support to members<sup>8</sup> in joint sales fairs and trainings. In particular, activities involving mostly analyzed urban entrepreneurs, gathered around activities of an individual, family or business associations (with less than five people).

In these ways, regarding the observance of the principle of reciprocity and the existence or emergence of institutional arrangements that can contain and reinforce noted the following:

- The provision for reciprocity, cooperation and mutual aid seems to be promoted by regular contact between entrepreneurs - face to face- and the recognition of group membership. This increases trade and gives more stability to relationships. Some examples highlight some situations observed:

- At a camaraderie meeting, an entrepreneur explained, as follows, the situation of another known honey producer:

"I met the other day with C., I asked him why he did not come over to meetings and told me he had gone to live in Garupá<sup>9</sup> because urbanization of the neighborhood in Posadas chased away the bees. I said, but BC did not tell me how, did you forget that I have the title art and I can help with these issues? And I'm not going to charge you

<sup>8</sup> The referred technical support was registered under various schemes and programs of which the author participated either as coordinator, director or member extension, at the provincial government and at the university level and is carried out by a technical group relatively stable since 2005.

<sup>9</sup> The Municipality of Garupá limits with the City of Posadas. However, its urban growth is such, that both cities are practically joined.

anything, because I do not forget that you let me do my work practices in your farm, without charging me anything "[interview done on 20/12/2011] <sup>(9)</sup>

- In a day or sales in a Fair (in prepare tent for the group), A., toy maker, noted that he was selling a lot of their products (he was responsible for selling the products of other entrepreneurs, made of wood). So he decided to raise the prices of their products to those offered by other producers so as to sell (Simes et al, 2011).
- In a meeting or technical support of Posadas Node, during a discussion about the formation of a cooperative association, L. intervened, he was a food producer, "we have to work together, we are like a ball with apologies to the lady -in allusion to a production of plastic balls- who was present, a single group" [note field intervention of an entrepreneur, 19/11/2011] <sup>(10)</sup>. In the same direction is another entrepreneur said, referring to the care that should be provided in joint sales fairs: "if you do not serve people well in the tent, they say, in the tent Made in Misiones they do not attend to me well serve me well. It is not Pablito, Carmelo Antonio. We are not individuals, we are a whole" [Simes, H., et al, 2011, p. 5] <sup>(11)</sup>. Or, finally, in the words of another producer:

"Our objective is to help each other, just like a large family. We have no problem to put our products on the same stand. In the Forestry fair, we paid the same attention to each other's products. In our stands we sold everyone's products." (Simes, H. et al, 2011, p. 5) <sup>(12)</sup>

Even when the examples presented can multiply based on the experiences, they do not cease to be special cases of a more general behavior indicating opportunistic and selfish behavior, both inward group and to thirds unknown, that may well be other producers, suppliers or customers. With this, it seems confirmed that building cooperative ties is strongly linked to stable face-to-face relationships. Therefore, and given the high variability of consumption and mobility, relationships with clients are conducted primarily through the exchange itself in impersonal market relationships<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Singer (2007) destaca la contraposición entre el comportamiento cooperativo hacia adentro del grupo y el comportamiento egoísta hacia terceros extraños.

- The institutional arrangements that emerge are varied: from the known figure of cooperative production, to the system of joint participation in fairs and events. In many cases, the institutional offer comes from third actors, even if the need to organize institutionally has been perceived by entrepreneurs. For producers both the conformation of this as the new processes initiated the establishment of a cooperative were the result of initiatives promoted by others. In these cases, one highlights the important role played by other institutional actors, stimulating cooperative behavior, as in the case of government or university technicians (Simes, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

In today's economies, capitalist or silicon age, as we call them in this work, reciprocity is presented initially as a provision, or as a single effective behavior. From the result of interpersonal interaction stems emergency reaffirmation or reciprocal behaviors (Ostrom, 2000). These, in turn, are stability and continuity in certain institutions that reinforce it. The analysis of the experiences results closer to many of the conclusions drawn from the present experiments and theoretical investigations made, among which can mention:

- Network meeting favoring reciprocity. This is because it brings in one space entrepreneurs, encouraging contact face-to-face and setting common goals.
- Group size of entrepreneurs and diversity and small-scale production -small in relation to all economic relations they face daily-, inducing interactions with the market and the incentives of this are received with such relevance, that lead entrepreneurs to consider solidarity activities as a secondary.
- Current institutional patterns fail to provide comprehensive circuit production and sale of entrepreneurs self-managed (all fairs not achieved insert reciprocal logic in sales and
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purchases of supplies and materials, which are made without any cooperative or solidarity organization).

The role of external actors (with their interests to promote interactions) is still relevant when they have to face joint projects. In their absence, entrepreneurs disperse and lose contacts.

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