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“Half women, half men”

**A field study on gender complementarity and its impact on
female participation in community politics in rural Bolivia**

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Abstract

Gender complementarity is an indigenous model of gender relations that values the female position and her tasks by tradition the same way as that of the man. The idea is that the man and woman complement each other as opposite parts of the cosmos. In Bolivia, with 65% of its population and the president being indigenous, the concept is widely used.

This thesis will investigate the impact the gender complementarity concept has on female participation on local level in rural Bolivia. Based on participatory observations and 23 interviews with indigenous women and men in the two rural areas of Pojo and Kyuoj Qocha, in combination with a postcolonial feminist theoretical framework, I find that the answer to my research question is twofold: Firstly, there is the division of everything as male-female, entering both private and public spheres, limiting the indigenous women from actual political power and decision-making in their local communities. Secondly, there is the conflicting ontologies of the equality concept between the current government, indigenous groups and Bolivian feminist movements. The complementarity concept is supposed to possess an inherent harmony and duality between the man and the woman and thus a form of gender equality – but according to my analysis, local implementation of the concept in Pojo and Kyuoj Qocha rather shows a negative impact on the female participation in creating strong patriarchal structures, discriminating the rural indigenous women.

Keywords: Bolivia, gender complementarity, indigenous groups, peasant unions, postcolonial feminism, Bartolina Sisa, Mujeres Creando, Evo Morales, decolonisation, machismo, community politics.

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1. Introduction

Bolivia, a country located in the heart of Latin America, has a population that to around 65%¹ consists of indigenous people. Of the 36 recognized indigenous groups, the two largest are the *Aymara* and the *Quechua*, two groups that both base their *cosmovisions*, world views, on the concept of *gender complementarity*: The idea of the man-woman unity, an indigenous model of gender relations. As opposed to western notions of the emancipation of the woman, this view of gender relations values the female position and her tasks by tradition the same way as that of the man; they complement each other; femininity is valorised on equal terms with masculinity (McLean, 2013; Harris, 1978; Blumritt, 2013; Kaijser, 2011).

In December 2005, Evo Morales was chosen as Bolivia's first indigenous president with 54% of the votes. With an ambition to re-define the Bolivian state and identity from an indigenous epistemology, the Morales government has created politics based on the ideology of gender complementarity. The use of the complementarity concept on national level is a communitarian perspective rather than a focus on the individual, and the Bolivian Vice-Minister of Decolonisation, Felix Cárdenas, invoked the ideal of gender complementarity at an indigenous ceremony in 2011:

“We are instituting a new model of the family, which is neither patriarchal nor matriarchal, but will be a model of complementarity between a man and a woman”
(quoted in INFOBAE, 2011).

The use of the concept on the national level has created a clash between the government, the indigenous movement and feminist groups in Bolivia, arguing whether the concept is working in favour of the indigenous woman or not. The Morales government and the indigenous groups claim that this is a perfect harmony and equality between the man and the woman that should be applied on society as a whole, while feminists argue that the use of the complementarity concept will leave the indigenous women to subordinated positions by tradition (Cardenas et. al., 2013; Burman, 2011).

Numbers on female participation in the current Bolivian government are among the highest in the

¹ Arturo Escobar writes: “Census data show that 62% of the population is of indigenous descent, although some aymara intellectuals have estimated it as being as high as 75%” (Escobar, 2010: 26)

world with half of the current ministers being women.^{2 3} This is thanks to the adaption of gender complementarity, argues Evo Morales - while Bolivian middle class feminists argue that this is only to recruit female votes and that the president is no more than a typical “machista” (Burman, 2011; Feministiskt Perspektiv, 2014).

1.1 Problem formulation

The perceptions of gender complementarity are in other words very different in Bolivia. More than a debate on national level between different ideologies and groups, however, I am interested in the impact the concept has in practice in the rural areas. Undoubtedly there are high numbers of women on governmental level, but it is not clear how the implementation of gender complementarity by indigenous groups impacts female participation on local level in non-urban areas in the countryside. According to the indigenous cosmovision, this concept should create a harmony and equality in all areas - also in smaller communities in rural Bolivia.

The aim of this thesis is therefore to investigate the impact the concept has on female participation on community politics and decision making on the local level in rural Bolivia. My research question is:

How does the concept of gender complementarity impact female participation in community politics on the local level in rural Bolivia?

According to the discourse of the current government and these indigenous groups themselves, real harmony and equality is to be found in the nature of their traditions. Scholars on similar topics, however, have argued that there is a misleading view of indigenous cultures in Bolivia as “intrinsically democratic”, while women's oppression in the same groups is seen as originated in the colonial era with European world views brought to the Americas (Pape, 2008: 42-43; Burman, 2011; MacLean, 2013). I argue that while assuming an inherent harmony in the use of gender complementarity, the variations within the group can easily be overlooked. My argument is that the discourse on and use of the gender complementarity on both national and local level is creating a contradiction between the rights of the indigenous population as a whole, and the indigenous

2 See Inter-Parliamentary Union (2015) where Bolivia as of November 2015 is second on the list.

3 ”One of my dreams has come true: half the cabinet seats are held by women', said the Bolivian president.” (Mercopress, 2010). See also MacLean (2013).

woman as an individual.

The theoretical foundation to this investigation is a postcolonial feminist framework. With an anti-colonial discourse by the current Bolivian government and a clash between different perceptions on equality and women's issues in the country, the use of a postcolonial feminist theory is appropriate, identifying various factors affecting the participation of indigenous women.

1.2 The field study

This thesis is the result of a field study taking place during February, March and April 2015 in rural Bolivia. The two areas of investigation are the municipality of Pojo and the sub-central Kyuoj Qocha. The concept of gender complementarity is used also in other indigenous communities in South America, but due to the concept's current presence in political discourse on national level, however, I chose to conduct my study in the two Bolivian areas of Pojo and Kyuoj Qocha, where the members are all indigenous of the Quechua tradition and culture.

The areas are both located in the Cochabamba region in central Bolivia - Pojo is located around 5 hours drive east from the city of Cochabamba, the third biggest city in Bolivia, while Kyuoj Qocha is located only 30 minutes away. With help from ProAgro⁴, a program with focus on sustainable development funded by Germany and Sweden, I gained access to these two areas. Pojo and Kyuoj Qocha are similar in the sense of the structure of their communities and local organisations, but differ in their local norms and regulations of participation, as will be further discussed in the method and analysis chapter.

I will investigate the concept of gender complementarity based on the participatory observations and 23 semi-structured interviews I conducted in the two rural areas, with both peasant and municipal workers on the local level. My arguments and conclusions on the concept of gender complementarity are based on the statements of the indigenous women and men I interviewed for this thesis, while much of the discussion made regarding the national level is based on written material.

4 See GIZ (2014)

1.3 Disposition

The first chapter of the thesis will present the background to the gender complementarity concept on both the local and the national level in Bolivia. My investigation is focused on the impact on female participation in rural areas in Bolivia, but as a ground stone for the whole indigenous worldview and the base for a governmental working method, there is a need to discuss the concept also on national level.

In the second chapter, my theoretical framework will be presented. Here, I will explain the use of postcolonial feminism, and also discuss my argument in this thesis: That the use of the gender complementarity on both national and local level is creating a contradiction between the rights of the indigenous population as a whole, and the indigenous woman as an individual.

After this, the method chapter will present my field study in detail, discussing my election of methods, the 23 interviews that create the base for my analysis, and also some research limitations while in the field.

The analysis chapter will thereafter be structured into three parts: The national level including political discourse of the current government and a discussion of different perceptions of equality; the private sphere with the impact of the complementarity on the daily life in the rural areas; and finally a discussion about the impact on local norms and the public space in the communities will be made.

Lastly, I will conduct a final discussion of the findings in my analysis, before presenting the conclusions of my investigation.

2. Background

This chapter will create a contextualization and understanding of the gender complementarity concept on both the local and the national level in Bolivia. As perhaps the reader might not be familiar with the concept, this part is an important ground for further analysis. In addition to an explanation of the concept with origin in indigenous cultures in Latin America, the use of it on the national level is also explained. This is important since the man-woman duality seems to permeate all levels in indigenous Bolivia, from the most private space to national and political level, which creates an impact of the concept in all spheres of life. To answer the question of the concept's impact on female participation on the local level, it is therefore important to create an understanding of the existence of the complementarity *cosmovision* on all levels in this country.

This chapter starts out with an explanation of the complementarity concept with origin in the indigenous culture, in both its spiritual and physical form. After this, the use of the concept on national level and in political discourse by the current government will be presented. Finally, this chapter will present the different perceptions of the complementarity concept from different women's movements in the country.

2.1 The concept of gender complementarity

Gender complementarity is a concept used in many indigenous cultures in Latin America. This model of gender relations in its essential form acknowledges the man and woman as different but equal - it describes the complementarity in both biological, spiritual and physical form between the man and the woman. In Bolivia, the two main indigenous cultures, Aymara and Quechua, both have a heritage of the concept: In the Aymara language it is called *chachawarmi*; in the Quechua language, it is called *khariwarmi*⁵. In both languages, it directly translates man-woman. (Burman, 2011; MacLean, 2013, Farah and Sánchez, 2008)

As an Andean cosmovision, the gender complementarity has its strongest expressions in the Andean parts of South America, a territory that spreads over many countries. Bolivia and Ecuador have both created decolonising alternatives for development articulated by these indigenous *cosmovisions*, and the concept of gender complementarity as a tool towards equality and decolonisation has also been endorsed in Peru (MacLean, 2013; Paulson, 2015). The concept's impact on national politics,

⁵ The use of the word *chachawarmi* has more impact in the Bolivian society than the use of *khariwarmi*, although they have the exact same translation. Man-woman, chacha/khari-warmi. See Burman, 2011; MacLean, 2013; Pape, 2008.

however, is most visible in Bolivia.

In this indigenous cosmovision the world is divided into gendered pairs: Without one the other would not exist, the units complement each other. The woman symbolises the moon and the night, the man symbolises the sun and the day (Burman, 2011; Cardenas, 2013; Pape, 2008). The base for everything is nature, mother earth, and the man-woman unity stands for the “principle in which men and women are regarded as different, but equally important for the harmony of the community, reflecting the harmony of the *pacha*, or the universe” (Kaijser, 2014: 80).

In the indigenous groups of both Aymara and Quechua exists the complementarity of the married heterosexual couple, working *chachawarmi/khariwarmi*, man-woman, in practice highly visible in the household and agricultural work. The notion of this complementarity can be observed in “all aspects of life in rural communities; it seems to emanate from the tension between the biological and social differences between the two sexes, on the one hand, and their unity in the household as a productive and reproductive unit, on the other” (Pape, 2008:46). One can understand the concept further than its spiritual content– more than the woman being the sun, the day, she has a physical role in her place on earth, her responsibilities by tradition. As an interviewee in the field study put it, himself of Quechuan origin: “They (the habitants of Pojo) might not know of the concept, they just live in this culture. This is their experience.”⁶

The culture of the complementarity is seen in the daily work, in the celebrations, the cultivation, music – the role of the woman, the role of the man, complementing each other (Harris, 1978). Burman writes: “the notion of gender complementarity: Of the married, heterosexual couple as the fundamental social subject in society, and of female and male forces as the opposing but complementary constituents of the cosmos” (2011: 67). Many writers have put an emphasis on the married couple and the matrimony in their work regarding the themes of complementarity in indigenous parts of South America (Burman, 2011; Pope, 2008; Gavilán, 2005). With this, the concept of gender complementarity could indeed seem similar to other religious, heteronormative cultures and traditions of man-woman units, but the concept in this context takes the respective roles further, up to the spiritual level: Parts of the body as male and female, the supposed roles strongly defined and equally important (MacLean, 2013: 80).

⁶ Interview with a male municipal worker in Pojo, March 19, 2015.

2.2 The complementarity on national level

More than the existence of the concept in the relation between the man and the woman, it is also an important form of living and cooperating for the indigenous culture of Bolivia as a whole. The notion of complementarity is by the indigenous groups “an expression of coexistence between similar, or different, parts that have a common purpose” which then transcends from the male-female unit all the way to a “complementary relation without asymmetry”, affecting all relations in a society, living in harmony and balance (Farah and Sánchez, 2008: 89).

The concept thus permeates all levels of the indigenous Bolivian community. More than 65% of the country's population, and also their president, are of indigenous heritage, and their cosmovision of complementarity affect both local and national level. On the national level and in the political discourse, the complementarity concept is a symbol for society as a whole; a communitarian form of cooperating and co-living (Burman, 2011; Cardenas et. al., 2013).

Evo Morales was elected as the world's first indigenous president in 2005 with 54% of the national votes (Linton, 2006; Day, 2008). With parents from both Quechua and Aymara heritage he was a candidate the indigenous population of Bolivia long had been waiting for. Angela Day writes: “He came to power on a progressive platform that promised the decolonisation of Bolivia through (...) the development of a new constitution to incorporate the voices of the Quechua, the Aymara and Guarani people” (Day, 2008). In the Bolivian constitution of 2008 the president writes that “we left behind the colonial, republican and neoliberal state”, and that he aims to “create a communitarian state at the service of excluded majorities” (Escobar, 2010: 26). Indigenous groups in Bolivia had “for centuries been banished to the margins of society and did not enjoy full voting rights until 1952”, writes BBC (2009).

The election of an indigenous president thus brought with it an “ethnic awakening”, according to Linton (2006). Many indigenous groups argued that the “neoliberalism” of the former governments wanted the country to become “egoists, radical individualists” (ibid). The person interviewed by Linton further argued that the politics of the earlier governments was “the way of the Western world, not ours. Our tradition builds on reciprocity, solidarity and a belief that people not necessarily need to compete, but instead *complement* each other” (Linton, 2006: 61, author's translation from Swedish).

These anti-neoliberal thoughts of both the Bolivian government and many indigenous groups, are more than a turndown of the ideology itself, writes Boussa de Sousa Santos – it's the very *cosmovision*, worldview, fundamental to the complementarity concept: “The re-assertion of indigenous world views hence goes beyond a rejection of neoliberalism, to embrace a distinct ontology in which 'beings are communities of beings before they are individuals'” (de Sousa Santos in MacLean, 2013: 76).

In other words, the gender complementarity concept goes beyond the man-woman distinction, creating the fundament to the whole *cosmovision* of these indigenous groups – and today, also the political platform of the country. In 2010, when presenting his new government where 50% of the ministers were women, Evo Morales referred to the *chachawarmi*, the gender complementarity concept - “or as the *mestizos*⁷ say, gender equality” (La Jornada, 2010).

Felix Cardenas, the minister of decolonisation in Bolivia, discusses the concept in the country in his publication “Despatriarcalización y Chachawarmi” (Cardenas et al., 2013). He argues that the gender complementarity is the main organisational factor of “everything that exists” and that life has to be in pairs: male-female, day-night, life-death – one cannot exist without the other. He further argues that “the individualism of the modernity, led by a euro-centric vision, has eliminated the communitarianism, visualised in the loss of family values that are the fundament of society” (ibid: 7). This lack of complementarity, according to the minister of decolonisation, results in a colonial and patriarchal state and government. This is the reason why the world today is “masculinised” to the extreme, while the “feminine” universe is invisible, occulted by the socially constructed privatisation of society, resulting in the domination of patriarchy, he argues (ibid: 10).

2.3 Gender complementarity and gender relations

In the notion of gender complementarity on the national level is also the discussion of its impact on gender relations by different groups in Bolivia: There is the perception of the indigenous woman as subordinated due to the nature of her indigenous traditions, as argued by the feminist movement. On the other hand, there is the view of the man-woman harmony as a perfect gender equality, as seen in the speeches and contemporary politics of the current government and indigenous women's organisations.

⁷ Mestizo: A person of mixed parentage, esp the offspring of a Spanish American and an American Indian” (The Free Dictionary)

An important factor for the gender complementarity concept on both the local and the national level in Bolivia is the existence of the national women's organisation *La Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas de Bolivia Bartolina Sisa* – in English, the National Federation of Peasant Women of Bolivia Bartolina Sisa, hereafter called “the Bartolinas”. Named after Bartolina Sisa, the wife of the Aymara hero Tupac Katari who led the indigenous uprisings against the colonisers in the 1700s, the national women's federation has become a strong tool for the rights of the indigenous women in Bolivia. The organisation, founded 10th of January 1980, is the largest women’s organisation in Bolivia⁸ and an essential part of national politics on many levels of society (GLOOBAL, 2011).

The complementarity concept is fundamental to the Bartolinas, evidence by their mission statement:

“(…) recovering the territorial- and food sovereignty and dignity of peasant, indigenous and native women of Bolivia, to achieve equal participation of women in the political, social and economic areas, *as a part of chachawarmi as equitable gender concept.*” (CNMCIOB-BS, author's translation from Spanish)

The base for their movement and their form of gender relations is thus gender complementarity, in the Aymara language called *chachawarmi*. Their aim for female participation is clear with a view to their mission statement above, to “achieve equal participation of women in the political, social and economic areas”. The Bartolinas have also become a strong tool for the Morales government. In his campaigns of reelection, the Bartolinas were officially supporting the president, arguing that “in the administration of president Evo Morales, the rights of the workers, the peasants and the indigenous groups have been acknowledged (...) it its necessary to maintain this change and development of our country” (La Razón, 2013).

The use of the gender complementarity concept by both the Bartolinas and the government's national decolonisation discourse has, despite their popularity, also been highly criticised. The clashes between the Bartolinas and feminist movements, the biggest in Bolivia being *Mujeres Creando*⁹, have been many.

Mujeres Creando is “an anarcha-feminist movement in La Paz (which) argues that the government mirrors a chauvinist society, and that women's equality cannot be realized within the state system”,

8 Interview with Zenobia Quiruchi and Jimy Navarro Scott from the ProAgro Programme, 8 December 2014, La Paz.

9 Translated, “Creating Women”

writes Angela Day (2008). They were founded in 1992 as a critique on the state as “inherently patriarchal”, organising themselves with respect of gender, cultural and sexual diversity, and are not of indigenous origin (ibid).

The Mujeres Creando argues that gender complementarity is no more than a “reclaiming of tradition” (Burman, 2011: 66-67). They argue that the concept maintain patriarchal structures within indigenous cultures, and is not in any way emancipatory for the Bolivian, indigenous woman. Maria Galindo, one of the founders of Mujeres Creando, argues that the initiatives of creating equality based on the complementarity concept in the country is a “slogan without content” and that the speeches of the president are filled with “cynical machismo”. She argues that instead of representing women as a group in society, the president only aims to recruit more female votes (Feministiskt Perspektiv, 2014).

The clash between the indigenous women's group and the feminist movements in Bolivia will be further discussed in the theory chapter and in the first part of the analysis chapter in this thesis.

3. Theoretical Framework

The third chapter will present the theoretical foundation to this investigation. With an anti-colonial discourse by the current Bolivian government, and a clash between different perceptions on equality and how to work with women's issues in the country, the use of a postcolonial feminist theory is appropriate, identifying various factors affecting the participation of indigenous women.

This chapter is structured as follows:

First, the use of postcolonialism in general is briefly discussed. After this, a longer discussion on postcolonial feminism and its origin in a “White, western” feminist critique is presented. Thereafter, the application of postcolonial feminist theory on this study is discussed. Lastly, my argument of the focus on collective rights often ignoring variations of individuals within the group is discussed, presenting some different perceptions of this in the Bolivian case.

3.1 The use of postcolonialism

Cheryl McEwan, a scholar within postcolonial feminism and development, writes that postcolonialism is a difficult term, “not least because it is far from clear that colonialism has been relegated to the past” (McEwan, 2001: 9). Indeed, the term “postcolonial” signals a shift from colonialism to after-colonialism, when it should rather “refer to ways of criticizing the material and discursive legacies of colonialism” (ibid). McEwan, together with other scholars (Radcliffe, 1984; Ashcroft, 1995) argue that instead we can understand the term postcolonial as *anti-colonial*. This argument is appropriate in the Bolivian case, with a view to the anti-colonial speeches and projects of the current government – using concepts with origin in the indigenous ideologies as an anti-West discourse.

McEwan further writes: “Postcolonialism has prompted questions about whether such indigenous systems of equity, reciprocity and communalism are more advantageous to peoples of the South than the pursuit of capitalism, with its emphasis on individual wealth and incorporation into the global economy (McEwan, 2001: 95). This quote is applicable in this thesis since my investigation indeed discusses these very questions – about indigenous systems as more advantageous than “Western” models of development, as argued by president Morales.

3.2 Postcolonial feminism

“Until the 1980s, there was a tendency to assume a commonality in the forms of women’s oppression and activism worldwide”, writes McEwan (2001: 96). Western feminism, she argues, have had a universal agenda, overseeing contextual differences, and is thus being criticised from a postcolonial lens. McEwan writes further: “Encounters with different feminisms and different gender relations have raised issues about what exactly it means to be feminist and have ensured that a western-centric political vision is no longer acceptable” (ibid).

Paulina de los Reyes (2011) is also questioning the Eurocentric view of the world, the construction of the “universal” based on white norms and androcentric assumptions. She writes that postcolonial feminism is a critical project which in dialogue with contemporary political conflicts has created a discursive space for new knowledge subjects. This, she argues, gives space for moving beyond essentialist perceptions and for formulating a power critique that challenges both global hegemonic perceptions of the world and the western dominance that was established in the colonial project (de los Reyes, 2011: 12).

Furthermore, the discourse on *women within development* and the use of the concept of “women’s empowerment” is often discussed in excluding, neo-colonial ways, universalising “third world women”, says Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2004). Radcliffe (2004) writes accordingly that “mainstream Western approaches” to gender and development often “deploy the category ‘woman’ uncritically without accounting for culture, nation, and race” (Radcliffe et. al. 2004: 390). In line with this, scholars like Cornwall (1997), Yuval-Davis (2006) and Cockburn (2000) argue that a westernised view on gender relations within development practices can turn out counterproductive when avoiding contextual and individual differences, ignoring the different social divisions involved. Radcliffe adds that “development interventions are largely – if contradictorily and incompletely – premised on North-South postcolonial relations and that white/Western feminists do not speak from a position of neutrality or innocence in these debates” (Radcliffe et. al., 2004: 389)

Despite a postcolonial critique of western feminism, this essay is not aiming to ignore the importance of feminism in the world. It rather aims to present a plurality of feminisms. As McEwan writes; “There are many incidents of precolonial women's movements around the world and various forms of feminisms have existed and continue to exist across cultures” (McEwan, 2001: 97). The problem with this universal feminism, as argued by above-mentioned scholars, is rather that “white feminists” fail to understand that they are in a power relation with women from other cultures and

colours, writes McEwan. She gives an example:

“Many black and 'Third World' activists object to western feminism that depicts men as the primary source of oppression; gender oppression is inextricably bound up with 'race' and class (...) These debates have generated theories that attempt to explain the interrelationship of multiple forms of oppression, such as race, class, imperialism and gender, without arguing that all oppression derives ultimately from men's oppression of women” (ibid: 98)

The analysis of factors such as class and imperialism as “the primary source of oppression” rather than that of men's oppression of women is indeed appropriate in my study seeing to the theme of this thesis. Next section will discuss precisely this: The use of a postcolonial feminist theory in this case study, and the clash between indigenous women and the feminist movement in Bolivia.

3.3 The use of postcolonial feminism in the Bolivian context

Section 2.2 and 2.3 of this thesis briefly discussed the different views of gender complementarity on national level in Bolivia, with indigenous women as the frontrunners, and the more “traditional”, middle-class feminist view on how to work with gender relations. Anders Burman writes:

“While female indigenous activists tend to relate the subordination of women to colonialism and to see an emancipatory potential in the current process of decolonisation, there are middle-class advocates for gender equality and feminist activists who seem to fear that the “decolonising politics” of the Evo Morales administration would abandon indigenous women to their 'traditional' silenced subordination within male-dominated structures.” (Burman, 2011: 65)

In this quote, it is clear that the indigenous women's groups link the subordinating structure of their society to colonialism and sees the way to emancipation through a decolonisation process. “The middle-class advocates for gender equality and feminist activists”, on the other hand, fear that this decolonisation process would maintain strong patriarchal structures found in the indigenous cultures, with women forced to a “silenced, subordinated” position (ibid).

Pape writes about women's issues in the Bolivian indigenous communities: “Indigenous organisations and communities are often viewed as intrinsically democratic, while Hispanic culture is presented as *machista* and the main source of women's oppression” (Pape, 2008: 43), thus relating the female subordination back to colonialism. From the indigenous women's view of

working against a patriarchal society, the female subordination is then more closely linked to a colonial project than the patriarchal structure of society – a view that seem to be the most common within Western feminist projects. Burman writes: “This quest (of gender complementarity) also seems to move beyond Western liberal notions of gender equality – moreover, in some aspects it seems to collide with these notions” (Burman, 2011: 75).

This very collusion creates a space for the use of postcolonial feminist theory: According to the Bartolinas, they aim to “restore vision, wisdom and knowledge of the original indigenous nations (...) that the mental barriers of discrimination in all classes will be overcome to achieve a more just and equitable world, from the construction of cultural identity from the roots” (CNMCIOB-BS, author's translation from Spanish). The factors of oppression are hence identified as plural: The anti-colonial discourse is combined with a class critique in this quote. Furthermore:

“The 'double discrimination' we suffered for being women and for being peasant and indigenous both in our families, communities, organizations and society as a whole, have led us to the fight against the violation of our fundamental rights and the defence of our participation fully and equally in decision-making” (ibid)

This statement identifies a “double discrimination” and thus identifies various sources to the indigenous women's discrimination, in the family, community AND society as a whole. This is interesting since the harmony of the man-woman unit is highlighted throughout their work, while oppression in various levels of society is mentioned here, implying discrimination also in their household. The aim for an “equal participation” also seem of importance for the Bartolinas – in their mission statement, they mention the “defence of our participation fully and equally in decision-making” and “to achieve equal participation of women in the political, social and economic areas” (ibid). The need to participate in decision-making on both national and local level here seem of essential importance to the indigenous women.

The aim for gender complementarity, valuing the role of the woman by tradition rather than trying to liberate her from her traditional roles, can indeed be seen as different from a western feminist perspective. The Mujeres Creando, discussed in section 2.3 in this thesis, are highly criticising the gender complementarity and the decolonisation discourse, and is above all directing their critique on president Morales. Maria Galindo, a founder of this feminist organisation, says that “indigenous women are like the proletariat of the proletariat” and that they possess an “internalized discrimination” (Day, 2008). The Mujeres Creando also argue that “the habits and customs of the

indigenous people are part of instruments of oppression” (Burman, 2011:14).

According to Burman (2011) there is thus a fear from these Bolivian middle class feminists that the decolonisation project of the indigenous women's groups will leave them abandoned to their “traditional, subordinated positions”, something we indeed understand from the section above. Paulina de los Reyes argued, in the earlier part of this chapter, that postcolonial feminism “gives space for moving beyond essentialist perceptions” (de los Reyes, 2011: 12). This “moving beyond essentialist perceptions” can be useful while analysing this feminist movement's work towards emancipation for the Bolivian woman – it could indeed be argued that they make “essentialist perceptions”, arguing that the indigenous culture inherits a patriarchal nature by tradition.

3.4 Collective rights vs. women's rights

In addition to the clash of feminist movements with indigenous women in Bolivia and the use of postcolonial feminism in this thesis, is my argument that the use of the gender complementarity on both national and local level is creating a contradiction between the rights of the indigenous population as a whole, and the indigenous woman as an individual.

Section 2.2 in this thesis presents the current government's discourse as based on the ideology of the indigenous groups in Bolivia; “a progressive platform that promised the decolonisation of Bolivia through (...) the development of a new constitution to incorporate the voices of the *Quechua*, the *Aymara* and *Guarani* people” (Day, 2008). This “ethnic awakening” and current politics thus aim for the elevation of indigenous rights, which in turn “entails the recognition of group rights, the recognition of social organisation and customary law” (Stavenhagen, 1996 in Pape, 2008: 43).

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, scholar in postcolonial feminist theory, discusses how several scholars in the sector of gender within development often emphasises ‘women’ as a coherent, homogenous group, failing to see variations within them (Mohanty, 2004: 30). This is, interestingly, a critique that is also used by scholars on the work with indigenous rights. I. S. R. Pape, conducting a similar type of field study in Bolivia in 2000 and 2001, argues that the fight for indigenous rights sometimes gives the outcome of ignoring the rights of the variations within the group. She argues that there is universally a romanticised view of the indigenous communities as a coherent and homogenous group, which in turn favours the rights of the group at the expense of the individual.

She writes: “there is the issue of the fulfilment of women's (individual, human) rights in the context of indigenous (collective) rights” and that there is a view of indigenous cultures as “intrinsically democratic” (Pape, 2008: 42-43). The colonial era is clearly argued as the main source of women's oppression by both the current government and the indigenous women's organisation in Bolivia, who argues that the colonisers brought a *machista*, Euro-Western culture to Bolivia – and that real harmony and equality is to be found in the nature of the indigenous groups.

There is thus a view of indigenous groups as inheriting a harmony by tradition – seemingly by both these groups themselves and from a “romanticising” perspective of their culture - but also the opposed view of group rights often disregarding the rights of the variations of individuals within it. My argument is the latter – something that will be discussed throughout the analysis chapter.

4. Method

The fourth chapter will present the method in this thesis. The base for this investigation is a field study conducted in Bolivia during February, March and April 2015 and the material to be analysed and used in this thesis consists of 23 interviews, participatory observations and written material. For this reason, the method chapter consists of various components, and is structured as follows:

Firstly, the case study and its appropriate form of method in this investigation is discussed. Secondly, the two areas where this field study was conducted are presented, briefly discussing their similarities and differences. Thirdly, the use of field work as a method is discussed. Thereafter, the use of semi-structured interviews and the 23 interviews conducted will be presented. After this, the different types of material, both interviews and written material, is presented and lastly, there is a brief discussion of the language used in the conduction of the field work.

4.1 The case study

This thesis investigates in the concept of gender complementarity in the Bolivian context. In particular, it aims to understand the impact of the concept on female participation in local community politics in rural Bolivia. The high participation of women in the government is evident, but what impact does the concept have on local female participation in community politics in the rural areas? This, I aim to find out with the material collected in my case study.

Since the whole foundation to this investigation is the gender complementarity, a concept with many components and expressions, I would argue that a case study in the field is an appropriate choice of method. Rather than a solely theoretical approach, this thesis aims to investigate the concept's impact in practice; on the actual lives of women in these communities, and with their stories and experiences as a basis for the investigation. I argue that the best evidence to answer my research question is then to be gathered through interviews with the actual women and men in rural parts of Bolivia. Because of this, I have conducted my field study in two different rural areas in the Bolivian countryside.

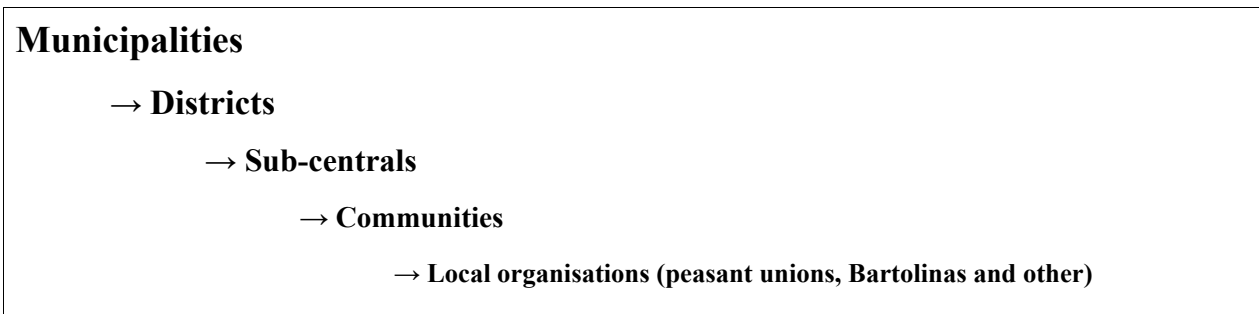
As mentioned earlier, the concept of complementarity has strong effects on many levels in Bolivia, and above all in current political discourse. Despite this somewhat unique context, the concept can be found in other parts of indigenous groups in Latin America, for example in its neighbouring

countries Peru and Ecuador (Paulson, 2015; MacLean, 2013). Adding to this, the “complementarism” of the male and female is a concept found in many world religions, and strong patriarchal structures are to be found in most parts of the world. Halperin and Heath (2012) writes: “Good case studies (...) address theory or issues that have wider intellectual relevance, use concepts that are applicable to other contexts, and may even seek to make inferences that apply to countries beyond the original case” (Halperin and Heath, 2012: 204). The use of postcolonial feminism as theoretical framework can similarly “contribute to new ways of thinking about women in similar contexts across the world, in different geographical spaces” writes McEwan (2008). Based on these notions, the use of theory and method in combination with the gender complementarity concept aim to reach conclusions applicable also outside of this specific context, such as in other places where the complementarity concept exists, such as Peru and Ecuador mentioned above. My study could also contribute to a discussion of different perceptions and ontologies of the *gender equality* concept. What my study contributes with the most, however, is the local investigation on the concept of gender complementarity, rather than a solely national level discussion.

4.2 The two areas of investigation

The formation of communities and municipalities in Bolivia have many components. A municipality is divided into districts, which further is divided into sub-centrals and the sub-centrals into communities. In most cases, each sub-central, consisting of a number of communities, hold monthly meetings where all organisms of society meet; the peasant unions, the Bartolinas (the women's organisation) and other social organisations. Each of the communities has at least one type of peasant union in its traditional form, and some of them specific for, for example, fruit cultivation or irrigation. The existence of worker and peasant unions is a strong feature of the Bolivian rural society, existing since 1905 in the country (CEPROMIN, 2012).

Fig.3 Explanation of the structure of the community in the rural areas



The use of the concept of gender complementarity exist in other indigenous communities in South America. With a view to the concept's current presence in political discourse on national level, however, I chose to investigate in the two Bolivian areas of Pojo and Kyuoj Qocha¹⁰, where the members are all indigenous of the quechua tradition and culture. Here, ISR Pape's explanation of the participants in her own study can be applied, despite her study taking place in different areas of Bolivia. She writes that the members of the areas “can be identified as indigenous in terms of language, culture and collective identity. The similarities between them are especially evident at the community level of organisation and the basic social rules that govern it” (Pape, 2008: 44).

The distance to the bigger city is a difference between the two areas, consequently giving their inhabitants different types of access to what the urban area provides: Pojo is located approximately 5 hours car ride outside of Cochabamba, the third biggest city of Bolivia, and Kuyoj Qocha is located 30 minutes outside of the same city. Due to Kyuoj Qocha's location close to Cochabamba, unlike in Pojo, many of the younger people leave to work in the city or study instead of the more traditional agricultural work, resulting in a high middle age of the members in the community. The location close to the city also gives another type of access to both commercialisations of products and education to the habitants of Kyuoj Qocha. Pojo, however, is more prone to limited access to for example the weekly markets in the bigger cities due to many protests, road blocks and general problems caused by weather due to their location many hours into the rural areas.

Both differences and similarities in the structure of their local organisations was an important factor for selecting the two areas: Pojo and Kyuoj Qocha are similar in the sense of the formation of their communities, but differ in their local norms and regulations of participation. The structure of the peasant unions in the two areas is similar. There are regular monthly meetings, and occasional reunions when certain issues needs to be discussed and decided upon. In general there seem to be few written guidelines, rules or statues for the communal meetings, resulting in few *formal* barriers to the participation. What seemingly exists, however, are local *informal* regulations and norms limiting the participation. The third part of the analysis chapter will discuss this in detail.

With help from ProAgro¹¹, a program with focus on sustainable development funded by Germany and Sweden, I gained access to these two areas. Since this program for many years has managed initiatives here, I asked if I could join them in their weekly trips to the two areas to conduct my own

10 See map in the beginning of the thesis for the two areas' location in Bolivia

11 See GIZ (2014)

field study alongside their work on agricultural projects.

4.3 Field work

According to Halperin and Heath, the terminology ethnography/ participatory observation/ field work can be used interchangeably (2012: 288). As have been seen in this essay, the use of the formulation “field work” is used more than the other examples. This should not, however, be seen as a way to exclude the other formulations, but rather for simplifying the text.

Defining this field work, one could understand it as a multi-method approach; in my specific case, for example, combining the participatory observations made with individual interviews and group discussions. One could understand it as a

“research based on the close-up, on-the-ground observation of people and institutions in real time and space, in which the investigator embeds herself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do” (Wacquant, 2003: 5)

The combination of participatory observation and interview has been of essential importance in this thesis. Indeed, one could argue that semi-structured interviews would give enough information, but with a view to the sensible topics touched upon, such as subordination, strong patriarchal structures and sometimes even miserable situations for the informants, it has been crucial to combine the interviews with participatory observations. In my participatory observations I, more than conducted interviews, attended meetings, both on municipal and community level, with both men and women, separately and mixed. I also visited households, I interviewed women working in strawberry fields and I went to local Bartolinas meetings. Here, I had the opportunity to observe what people actually say or do – instead of depending on *what they say they do* (Halperin and Heath, 2012: 289). The participatory observations have therefore given more dimension and depth to the field study. It does indeed create another side of the coin, a different perspective on conversations made, and creates processes of thoughts that were not obvious at the start.

Writing and conducting ethnography, with a focus on the writer's experience, is discussed by Ruth Behar in her “The Vulnerable Observer” (1996). She writes about the subjectivity of the researcher and how one never can never fully detach oneself in one's ethnography – hence writing vulnerably – and that objectivity is unreachable. Similarly, Robben (2012) writes that fieldwork cannot be a

detached activity by an objective observer and that the subjective experience of the investigator is an important part of the research process. He argues that the identity of the researcher is “as much an asset as a liability, being able to use certain aspects of the self as tools to obtain certain kinds of data” (ibid: 89). These authors and their ideas of bringing the self into one's ethnography were indeed present while conducting my field study. They made me reflect on my own position in the field, and the subjectivity I bring to my own investigation by sharing, eating and having conversations with my interviewees, participating in their daily lives.

4.4 Interviews

The interviews were in the majority of the cases individual interviews, but group interviews were also conducted.

During the field work, it was often clear that a mixed group of both men and women in most cases resulted in men taking the lead and speaking up, while women kept quiet. In the groups consisting of only women, however, the women rarely were silent. To have deeper conversations, touching upon subjects of sensible nature such as *machismo* and subordination, it was crucial to conduct individual interviews with the informants. To make all voices heard, it was therefore crucial to conduct more interviews with only women than mixed, and more individual than group interviews.

As Halperin and Heath writes, the conduction of interviews is also an adaptable form of investigation (2012: 254) – an element that was crucial to this field study due to its often quick and unstructured conduction, depending on everything from transportation to weather and blocked roads.

4.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

As opposed to structured interviews with closed questions with standardised coding, something that due to its defined quality would not give much space for elaborations or deeper conversations, the use of the semi-structured type of interview with open-ended questions has been used this field study.

The combination of structured and unstructured questions has been helpful. Interview guides were brought and during the initiation of the interviews the same type of questions were often asked, but

depending on the forth-going of the conversation the questions were modified. Depending on the nature of the interview, the informant, gender, language and/or other factors, the questions were altered, and therefore the semi-structured form was of great advantage in the conduction of the field study. Indeed the means of this study is the investigation in the experience and thoughts of my informants, and this type of interviewing “can give greater insight into the meanings of a subject's experiences and hence provide more valid data” (Halperin and Heath, 2012: 254).

The coding of the transcribed interviews is thus of a bit complicated, irregular nature with an unstructured type of material. The written material based on the transcribed interviews have therefore been organised into different themes and categories that create and identify patterns, with quotes and discussions divided under different topics. While identifying the female participation in the peasant unions, for example, all quotes regarding this theme was marked in a colour in the transcribed interviews. They were then collected in a page or under a title with only these specific quotes, that later created a greater image creating the themes and base for the analysis part of this essay.

4.4.2 The 23 interviews

23 interviews were conducted for this study. More than half of the total number of interviews have been conducted with peasant women, an intentional choice since this thesis aim to investigate in precisely these women's participation on local level community politics. With mainly peasant women as informants, it was interesting to add their male counterparts and also municipal level workers' view on the gender complementarity concept and its impact on local participation. The interviews were of a semi-structured nature with open-ended questions; prepared questions were brought but adjusted to the nature of each interview and interviewee.

Fig.4 Summary of informants in both areas.

Group Interviews	Peasant workers	Municipal workers
Women	3	
Men	1	
Mixed	1	1

Individual Interviews	Peasant worker	Municipal worker
Woman	8	2
Man	4	3

4.5 Material

The material used in this thesis is a combination of written material such as academic articles, transcriptions from the interviews and also field notes from the participatory observations made while in the field.

For an understanding of the concept of gender complementarity on the national level, such as its existence in national political discourse, written material such as newspaper articles are used. To create a discussion between the different views on gender relations, such as the opposite ones from the contrasting types of women's movements in Bolivia, different blogs and articles have been used, together with academic texts.

To permeate the more local level, and to investigate the impact the concept of gender complementarity in the two chosen rural areas in Bolivia, however, the interviews and participatory observations have been crucial. The body of material on the impact on local level is not extensive and due to the lack of written documents and material, the information used and presented regarding the two locations of investigation is throughout this essay almost solely based on the interviews made in the chosen areas, and from field notes written while visiting these places.

4.6 Language

The interviews were conducted by myself, in Spanish. What should be mentioned is that while many of my interviewees were bilingual, some did not speak any Spanish at all and were monolingual in the Quechua language. The Quechua community's native language is called Quechua, and parts of the inhabitants have never received education in the Spanish language, while the majority of the younger population manage the two languages fluently. For this reason, a colleague, on a few occasions, interpreted between the interviewee and myself on site.

5. Analysis

This part of the essay will present the findings in my conducted field work, and in combination with written material and the application of my theoretical framework I aim to reach an answer to my research question:

How does the concept of gender complementarity impact female participation in community politics on the local level in rural Bolivia?

My argument is that the use of gender complementarity as a concept is creating a contradiction between the rights of the indigenous population as a homogenous collective, and the indigenous woman as an individual. In earlier studies on indigenous groups in rural Bolivia, it has been argued that the fight for indigenous rights sometimes gives the outcome of ignoring the rights of the individuals within the group. With the view of indigenous cultures inheriting a harmony by tradition – seemingly the perception by both indigenous groups themselves and from a “romanticising” perspective of their culture – I argue that the variations of individuals within the group and their rights can easily be overlooked.

To reach an answer to the research question and to test my argument, the analysis is divided into three parts:

The first part will treat the complementarity concept on the national level in Bolivia. This part will discuss the perception of gender equality and women's issues from the perspective of the gender complementarity *cosmovision*, and also its critique from feminist groups in Bolivia. The concept of machismo, often brought up in the context of women's rights and gender issues in Latin America, will also be discussed, seeing to the concept's divided perception and debated origin in Bolivia.

The analysis' second part will discuss the private sphere and the impact of the complementarity on the daily life in the two areas. It will present the tasks and responsibilities in the rural areas as divided into male-female categories. With this I hope to create an understanding of the concept of gender complementarity *in practice* and the impact it has on the daily life in the two chosen areas.

The final and third part of the analysis chapter will discuss the impact of gender complementarity on the public sphere. The local norms and perceptions of the participation in the two communities will be analysed, and also the notion of the public sphere seemingly in itself being divided into male and female spaces.

5.1 Part I: The perception of gender equality

The concept of gender complementarity has in section 2.2, 2.3 and in chapter 3 in this essay been presented as not only the man-woman composition of creating the cosmos and a perfect unity, but also as a cooperative duality making up the society as a whole, often as a reaction to a “euro-centric”, individualistic worldview according to many indigenous groups in Bolivia. The way of this complementarity, according to many, is the way towards gender equality: Evo Morales referred, when presenting his new government with an equal participation of both men and women, to the gender complementarity, the *chachawarmi*, man-woman: “or as the *mestizos* say, gender equality” (La Jornada, 2010).

5.1.1 The discussion of equality on the national level

Section 2.3 in this thesis introduced the National Federation of Peasant Women of Bolivia Bartolina Sisa, the Bartolinas. The Bartolinas are the largest women's organisation in Bolivia and an important factor in both the complementarity concept and the government's gender work as a whole, with branches from national to rural level. They state that they work “to achieve equal participation of women (...) as a part of *chachawarmi* as equitable gender concept” (CNMCIQB-BS, author's translation from Spanish). They consist of everything from female ministers in the current Morales government, to small community groups in the rural areas (Radcliffe, 2004).

The use of the gender complementarity concept by both the Bartolinas and the government has, although praised by many groups, been highly criticised by others. The biggest feminist organisation in Bolivia, Mujeres Creando, argues that gender complementarity is no more than a “reclaiming of tradition” (Burman, 2011: 66-67). Maria Galindo, one of the frontal figures of this organisation, says that the government's anti-neoliberal agenda and the implementation of gender complementarity indeed has created a greater female participation in the cabinet and minister posts, but that this is more of a symbolical act by the president. She argues that instead of representing

women as a group in society, the president only aims to recruit more female votes (Feministiskt Perspektiv, 2014). Angela Day writes similarly that “although women make up one half of the constitutional assembly, however, they rarely hold higher positions of power in Bolivia. The president, vice president and all eight candidates for upper-house president in the Republic are men” (Day, 2008). Galindo further argues that:

“Today in Bolivia both indigenism and leftism repeat themselves and join neoliberalism in the same phallic and patriarchal posture (...) The gaze at cultures that are ‘supposedly’ original is not the mechanism that will allow us to decolonize our society or to make it fuller, more livable and freer. The recovery of ‘the original’ as the pure, as the culture that builds the nation, the power project and then nationalism, drives us towards a patriarchal and colonial renewal of power, where power simply exercises power with a mere change of actors.” (Galindo, 2006: 327-328)

Anders Burman, discussing the same clash between Bolivian feminist movements and the gender complementarity from this indigenous *cosmovision*, writes that this confrontation has arisen

“(...) due to the fact that certain non-indigenous middle-class sectors of Bolivian society seem to be concerned that the 'decolonising' politics of the Evo Morales administration would do to indigenous women what liberal Western multiculturalist politics supposedly do to immigrant women, abandoning them to their 'traditional' silenced subordination within male dominated structures through an act of recognition of and respect for cultural difference. Commenting on the difficult situation of indigenous women on rural municipal executive boards, a female middle-class advocate for gender equality told me during an interview; 'There is a bad use of habits and customs and there are bad customs that should be changed and eradicated'” (Burman, 2011: 69).

Burman writes further that according to the more radical feminist movements in Bolivia, “Andean patriarchy’ is concealed by indigenous notions of a non-hierarchic complementarity between men and women, *chachawarmi*” (ibid), the very gender complementarity this essay investigate in.

With a view to this strong clash between values, one can indeed find great indifferences between the feminism as the West knows it, and the gender complementarity-discourse implemented in Bolivian contemporary politics. Observing this strong critique of the Bolivian feminist movement on the gender complementarity and the Bartolinas, one can argue that the two sides possess

completely different ontologies of the *gender equality* concept: The feminist movement's critique and their aim to “save” the rural indigenous women from their “silenced subordination” seem to be based in their belief in western feminist nature to liberate the woman and a confidence in their universal version of women's rights, strongly clashing with the indigenous cosmovision of the complementarity of the man and woman in both spiritual and practical terms. The Bartolinas have criticised more feminist views of the liberation of the woman, “asserting that the questioning of *cosmovision* leads to family conflict, separation and divorce” (Bastian Duarte, 2012: 162).

The core issue between these feminist beliefs and the gender complementarity cosmovision can arguably be the belief in the man-woman duality as stronger than the empowerment of the woman herself, with completely different perceptions of the equality concept. A president of the Bartolinas argues that they “have not been involved in the issue of women” (MacLean, 2013: 78). The view of the Bartolinas as a women's organisation supposedly not being “involved in the issue of women” is indeed interesting, if not strange, with a view on their fight for gender equality from a feminist lens. From the perspective of this indigenous worldview, however, it is a strong symbol of the unity between the male and female, valuing the cosmovision of duality more than the individualistic view of empowering the woman that they argue the Western, universal feminism have created. With the use of postcolonial feminism, we can understand that despite their recognition of oppressing structures, it is not argued that their discrimination is an “issue of women” but rather as a collective of indigenous people, being oppressed since the colonial era by Euro-Western culture.

5.1.2 Machismo and decolonisation

Machismo, a common concept discussing women's issues and gender equality in a Latin American context, describes a sexist world order or society, a *machista* being a sexist, dominating, strongly patriarchal figure. Pape writes that while indigenous communities in Bolivia often are “viewed as intrinsically democratic while Hispanic culture is presented *machista* and the main source of women's oppression” (Pape, 2008: 43).

In this way, the complementarity concept is by present governmental discourse in Bolivia put in opposition to the colonial, patriarchal state and world order originating from the “individualist West and euro-centric models” (Burman, 2011: MacLean, 2013). The *machismo* as originating from colonial times is indeed a common perception in indigenous groups in Bolivia, arguing that the pre-colonial times consisted of a world where there was always complementarity of the man and

woman, where their voices were equally respected (Burman, 2011: 73). As opposed to the feminist critique on Evo Morales and his politics as filled with “cynical machismo” (Feministiskt Perspektiv, 2014), the indigenous ideology of duality argues that male domination and world patriarchy originated from the Spanish colonisers. This cosmivision and the discourse of the current government argue that women's subordinated position in community meetings and the public sphere is due not to traditions of 'the silent Andean woman' or traditional female tasks within their indigenous groups, but to male dominance originating from the colonising era (Burman, 2011: 73). The government's project of decolonisation is hence seen as a tool to eradicate *machismo*, “but not from the basic models copied from the anglo-eurocentric world, but from the indigenous identity, the identity with *Pachamama*, mother nature, as a base” says minister of decolonisation Felix Cardenas (Cardenas et al., 2013: 49).

The discourse on indigenous equals complementarity equals decolonisation was symbolised strongly in practice in 2013, when a monument called “Chachawarmi”, the Aymaran word for gender complementarity, was raised by the Ministry of Decolonisation in the region of La Paz, Bolivia, celebrating the indigenous couple that led the anti-colonial uprising in the 1700s (Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, 2013). In earlier years, monuments of the male Tupac Katari was common, but ones of female Bartolina Sisa was not often seen, writes the Bolivian newspaper La Razón. The fact that they now stand together in monuments answers to the logic of “chachawarmi”, complementarity, and this shows the anti-patriarchal focus of the Ministry of Decolonisation, an essential part of the decolonisation process, writes the same newspaper (La Razón, 2014).

We can then understand the initiatives of decolonisation of the current Morales government as a quest beyond the elimination of the colonial heritage, all the way to the eradication of male domination in society, as Burman writes (2011: 75). The view of patriarchy originating in the colonial heritage and not in any way related to a patriarchal nature in the indigenous traditions and *cosmovision* creates a quest to eradicate the male domination of society and colonialism as part of the same package. This seems to create a new perception of gender equality - perhaps colliding with Western notions of the concept - creating the male-female duality that society, according to many indigenous groups, consisted of before the colonisation of the continent (ibid). With the help of the indigenous women's organisation, the Bartolinas, the government has created a strong anti-colonial profile, battling both colonial heritage and patriarchy. Says a woman of the Bartolinas: “For a long time, we women have been excluded - it was one of the dark legacies of the colonial model. (...) There used to be a lot of racism and machismo. There is still some, but now that structure is

changing thanks to brother Evo Morales” (BBC, 2010).

My argument of the gender complementarity concept creating a contradiction between the rights of the woman and the rights of the group, can then be seen also in the contradiction between the individual and the indigenous population that the discourse on national level implies. The “Western individualism” as the main enemy is present in speeches by Morales, in written publications by the minister of decolonisation and by the women's organisation, the Bartolinas (De Sousa Santos, 2010: 33; Cardenas et. al., 2013). Throughout this thesis we have seen the discourse of gender complementarity being used and used again by the current government as the base for their decolonisation projects, arguing patriarchy having its roots in the colonisation of the Americas, bringing with them an “Eurocentric worldview” (Cardenas et al., 2013). The complementarity is hence used on national level as the main argument to juxtapose the rights of the individual and the rights of the indigenous people as a group, assuming a homogenous collective aiming for the same goals, “intrinsically democratic” (Pape, 2008: 42-23). The quote by de Sousa Santos in section 2.2 could then be repeated. She writes: “The re-assertion of indigenous world views hence goes beyond a rejection of neoliberalism, to embrace a distinct ontology in which 'beings are communities of beings before they are individuals” (de Sousa Santos in MacLean, 2013: 76). This is applicable in my argument, with a view to the contradiction between the rights of the collective and the individual.

5.2 Part II: The division of life as male-female

Moving from a discussion of gender complementarity and its impact on national level in Bolivia, I will now discuss the concept on local level in the two areas of investigation. This part presents the existence of the concept related to the division of labor and responsibilities in these communities, where many parts of life are distinguished as male-female.

5.2.1 ... in the agriculture

More than the biological differences of the female and male body as such, the gender complementarity is just as visible in “the definition of masculinity and femininity in terms of activities” (MacLean, 2013: 80). The division between masculine and feminine tasks – male ones being those of for example agricultural work, while the female type of task is more of a

reproductive nature and taking care of animals – is just as important for the symbolism of the gender complementarity, the man-woman unity, writes Choque Quispe (2007). This division is summed up in a group interview in Kyuoj Qocha, where the topic was discussed:

We as women, we cook, we're more responsible, we know what to cook and what is missing to prepare it... the man doesn't see that, but he knows more about agriculture, what is needed there.

Group interview, mixed, Kyuoj Qocha, 16 March 2015

In the rural areas where this field work was conducted, the agricultural work is the main occupation for both men and women. The tasks within the agricultural work, however, can to some extent be categorised as male-female, with men ploughing and women often doing work such as cultivating fruit and taking care of animals (MacLean, 2013: 80). Present here is the traditional view of the woman as the representative of the earth, the *Pachamama*, Mother Earth, female identity being synonymously with maternity (Coordinadora de la Mujer, 2009: 36). The view of gender and the man-woman duality is not only due to their sexual differences; there are “feminine” and “masculine” seasons, spaces, places, activities and rituals (ibid: 41).

In an interview with the local president of the women's organisation Bartolina Sisa in Pojo, the topic of the different types of agricultural tasks came up.

Q: What work do the women focus on?

A: *We work with fruit mostly, and vegetables.*

Q: Men focus on other type of cultivation?

A: *Yes, potatoes for example, because we cannot do that, it's so heavy you know. It's better for me to work with the strawberries, it's not heavy to carry. In general we work similarly, the women work a lot in the agriculture too, you know, even though the men have more knowledge about it.*

Interview with a female peasant worker, Pojo, 24 February 2015

The division of agricultural tasks is also shown in a workshop made by the NGO with which this field work was conducted. In the workshop with both men and women discussing their fruit projects, the division of labour was discussed. Here, it was overwhelmingly agreed upon that there were mainly men realising activities such as deciding what fruit to plant, the buying and the participating in meetings regarding the projects. The women, on the other hand, dominated the harvesting, the classification of plants and the general commercialisation. The plantation of the fruits were done together, as much by the women as by the men. The reason for the women taking

care of the harvest were related to the female nature of “being more careful than the man” (PROAGRO, 2013).

The discourse of the woman being less strong than the man is indeed one found also outside of these indigenous communities, and not something characterising only this specific context. During the field work, however, I found that the discourse of dividing tasks as female and male seem to sometimes be used to distinguish the roles of the man and woman more than actually describe the reality. The perception by many of the interviewees is that the woman carries the heavier workload, and is being assigned almost all responsibilities regarding the family and the household. In an interview with a man in Pojo that together with his mother manage a small apple farm, the topic of the division of work between men and women came up:

Q: What work does the women focus on?

A: Apple production... Much more than half of the people working with fruit cultivation around here are women. The harvest, the irrigation... The women are the leaders of that type of job. They work a lot in almost all type of lighter work.

Q: So where are the men in the agriculture?

A: They are in the meetings, the peasant unions. Of the whole year I would say that the men spend half of their time in meetings.

Q: So the women work and the men go to meetings?

A: Yes, I guess that's how it is (laughter)

Interview with a male peasant worker, Pojo, 19 March 2015

In a group interview another man shared his view:

The woman does everything she has to do, she cooks, cleans, everything.. But more than that, she also has to help her man work in the agriculture... I have seen that it is heavier for the woman than the man. But in the agriculture the woman has to do only the lighter work, because she does not have much strength.

Group interview, mixed, Kyuoj Qocha, 16 March 2015

These quotes strengthen the argument that the division of tasks as male-female seem to be more of a discourse to distinguish the roles as a man and a woman than describing the actual reality, where women seem to often carry the heavier workload.

Observing the discourse of the woman as weaker than the man and the distribution of tasks as male-female can indeed be seen as a very heteronormative and dated division of society from a feminist perspective. According to my analysis, however, it seems that this division of tasks in this specific

area, the agriculture, is generally accepted and both men and women appear to be satisfied with it - it seems that the limitation of women is more of an issue in other areas.

5.2.2 ... in the household

MacLean argues that there is an understanding of the household “as a co-operative work unit” (2013: 83) in indigenous groups in Bolivia. One can understand the complementarity not only as the man-woman unit but as a co-operative unit as opposed to the individualist, “assumed Western norm” (ibid: 82). This can be exemplified with for example the sharing of land and territory when entering marriage – but also the female and male tasks in the household, complementing each other; a unity of opposites (ibid: 76). A female peasant worker in Kyuoj Qocha shares:

The workplace, that's the man's speciality, right... But in the house, he cannot decide, because in that case the woman has more knowledge; you could say that's the woman's speciality. That's how we balance, that's how we complement each other.

Interview with a female peasant worker, Kyuoj Qocha, 23 March 2015

Similarly, MacLean writes that one of her interviewees shared that men and women might work together in the land “but it is the woman who comes in and has to take care of the dinner” (MacLean, 2013: 84). These roles, however established by tradition, are not always seen upon with positive eyes. Interviewing a female municipal worker in Pojo, she criticises the male role in the household:

The man has to go to the land to work, and the woman has to cook, send the kids to school, and also she has to work at the land. She supports her husband by working there, and she brings food for him there too. That's how they complement each other. But... the woman supports the man, but the man NEVER supports the woman. He goes to the land to work, he comes home late, he lies down. But the woman, she comes home from the land and she still has to cook, feed everyone... The men, they say “you're not doing anything”, but we are the ones that work! We feed everyone, take care of the kids... And the man only wakes up and leave the house.

Interview with a female municipal worker, Pojo, 23 February 2015

The above example of the view of the male role in the household was a common factor that was expressed by the majority of the interviewed women in this study. The discourse of this “gendered distinction between remunerated and unremunerated labour” (MacLean, 2013: 84-85) is indeed

common within development practices focused on women around the world. The perception of this “unfair division” of household labor is something other academic work regarding gender complementarity in Bolivia also have found while interviewing women in indigenous groups. MacLean talks to a woman that shares: “We're exploited by our husbands. They just boss us around and we can't do things on our own behalf. We have the right to rest” (ibid).

We have earlier discussed the agricultural tasks in the areas of Pojo and Kyuoj Qocha and their division depending on male or female – something that seemed accepted by most and a division that was generally agreed upon. Discussing the division of labor in the household, however, the majority of the interviewed women seemed dissatisfied with their situations, arguing that the whole workload here was carried out by the woman. Says a male agricultural worker in Kyuoj Qocha:

The women.... in the morning they make breakfast, prepare all the meals, I arrive late and the dinner's ready, after eating I sit down by the television, I sleep... and the poor woman. In my case I help out with cooking, cleaning, I try to help. Many men never does – they go to the chicheria¹², sometimes they stay there for days. They have time to sit there and gossip but they never participate in the union meetings, much less help out in the household.

Group interview, mixed, Kyuoj Qocha, 16 March 2015

Relating this division of labor in the household to the traditions of the gender complementarity with the male responsibilities and the access to “the power of language” (Harris, 1980) and the female as the *Pachamama*, the mother earth, and her biological responsibilities in the household by nature, one can indeed question the concept's supposed way towards gender equality. MacLean writes about a feminist critique to the concept: “The woman cooks and the man eats – what a lovely complementarity” (MacLean, 2013: 80).

While participating in a meeting with the local Bartolinas in Palca, a small community in the Pojo municipality, I asked if they wanted their husbands to take more responsibilities in the house. The response was a laugh in recognition; *How are they supposed to do that?* The women did not seem to believe that this is something they could ever manage. The women seem so identified with their role that despite their dissatisfied situation with a heavy workload in the house, they are strongly identified with this tradition. When I ask if they would like to change these roles, they say that yes, maybe – but the men will not. One of the woman says that

¹² The place where the *chicha*, traditional alcoholic beverage, is served

... maybe not our generation, but I hope that with our children there will be a change.

Group interview, women, Pojo, April 1 2015

I ask another of the participating women in the meeting,

Q: In your household, who makes the decisions?

A: It should always be both, husband and wife, not only the man. That's what marriage is for, right? You talk and each one put their ideas to the table, and from there you make decision. But yes, the man will always be the head of the house.

Group interview, women, Pojo, April 1 2015

According to national discourse, the aim of the complementarity concept is indeed to “celebrate these distinct but equally valued roles” (MacLean, 2013:76). With a view to my argument of the discourse on complementarity concealing the rights of the woman, however, one can perhaps argue that there are uneven traditions within this indigenous cosmovision to begin with when applied to the statements shared by the interviewed women, as they feel discriminated by the existing structures in their local communities. The issue of an apparent discrimination in the household seem to come down to the distinguished roles to begin with; perhaps they are not so valued on the local level after all. The discourse on the rights of indigenous groups as a homogenous collective concealing discriminating structures is confirmed by Pape in the following quote: “There is a widespread tendency to present indigenous culture as a monadic entity in which basic conflicts of interest have no real repercussions in terms of oppression and exclusion” (2008: 42).

5.2.3 ... in the marriage

In many indigenous cultures in Bolivia, the man and woman do not officially reach adulthood until married, completing a unit that is the base for the economic, social and political practices necessary for a future life together. Not until creating this man-woman unit, the man and woman become active members of the community with all the responsibilities that it brings. With marriage in these cultures, in other words, the man and woman acquire their separate roles and responsibilities (Coordinadora de la Mujer, 2009: 67). Consequently, marriage is “the most important phase of transition (...) for individuals to become real persons” in the quechua-andean cultures (Gavilán, 2005: 11). In the context where this field work was conducted, the man-woman unit as a relationship was sometimes mentioned:

A man, a woman, khariwarmi, that's how we live. The woman doesn't live alone, she always lives with the man.

Interview with a female peasant worker, Pojo, 20 March 2015

With a view to this background, it was somewhat surprising to realise that there was in general little talk about the importance of marriage during the field work – surely it is of importance, but not something often mentioned when speaking about the masculine and feminine role. According to the section above, many Bolivian communities require marriage as an entrance to adulthood and to being accepted into the community. Interesting in this case study was a finding contrary to this statement: The unmarried women I came to speak with were, instead of being unaccepted, rather the most powerful women of their communities – powerful in the sense of being able to speak, and being listened to, in their respective communities. Actually, two of the unmarried women I came to speak with, were respectively presidents of their local women's organisation, the Bartolinas. Speaking with one of them, she shared:

A: I'm unmarried, I have always been. But you know, I can go to any place and they don't tell me anything, I can do whatever I want. For the married women I think it's more difficult, especially to participate in the local meetings... Because they tell you that instead you have to take care of the house, or the men are jealous that you meet other men there. They say “why are you out this late, you should stay home, you have to take care of the kids”.

Q: So the fact that you are unmarried has not created problems for you?

A: Well, yes... But I'm strong. I know some other unmarried women, we work in the agriculture... And I have to work twice as hard because I have to take care of my kids and my house alone. I went abroad to work as well, to be able to put my son in school. Now I'm planting apples, I work and maintain the house, it's hard but you just do it. You do it because there is no one to help you.

Interview with a female peasant worker, Pojo, 18 March 2015

The impression of “working twice as hard” shows clearly the understanding of gender as an activity, as mentioned in the beginning of this part of the analysis chapter - the complementing opposites of the man and the woman, her doing the tasks of both female and male nature: Both agricultural work and taking care of the family. The importance of marriage in these areas, Pojo and Kyouj Qocha, seem to vary as opposed to the body of academic material discussing gender complementarity Bolivia which argues it to be an essential ceremony to enter adulthood and society in general (Burman, 2011; Pope, 2008; Gavilán, 2005). One could perhaps see this due to Pojo and Kyoj Qocha being outside of the Andean parts of Bolivia where the *Aymaran* groups possess a more spiritual use of the gender complementarity, with rituals and binaries such as the man as the

sun and the woman as the moon (MacLean, 2013; Burman, 2011). One could on the other hand argue that unmarried, single women outside of the unity of man-woman here feel more liberated to move beyond the traditionally distinguished roles. The above quote shows an example of this - the woman feeling more liberated in the community as opposed to a married woman, here said to have a more difficult time participating in the local meetings.

5.3 Part III: The division of the public sphere

5.3.1 Local norms and participation in Pojo and Kyuoj Qocha

In both Pojo and Kyuoj Qocha, the peasant union is where the decision-making and the discussion of topics of political nature take place. To have the right to vote at the monthly communal meetings you have to be an *afiliado*, an affiliate – and for being an affiliate, you have to be a landowner. The amount or size of land, if any, depends on what the family has inherited from earlier generations. It doesn't seem very common for the families to buy new pieces of land.

In the majority of the cases the family only has one bit of land and the man is the representative of the family in the peasant union. The woman is usually only registered if the family happen to have two pieces of land – she then gets the second piece and can affiliate herself in the union. Apart from the woman participating as an affiliate, she can in some areas participate on behalf of the family in the monthly sub-central meeting - this without being registered, but as a substitute for her husband.

The women in the social organisations of Pojo are according to themselves highly discriminated. They are normally accepted in the communal meetings if they are affiliated in the sub-central of the syndicate – they will then have “the same rights and obligations as 'the rest'”¹³. Speaking with a female peasant worker in the Palca community, a small village in the municipality of Pojo, she shows great dissatisfaction regarding the female participation in the local community politics. The amount of women here are 3 out of 115 members; extremely low numbers demonstrating symbolically the actual situation of the female participation here. As an actual affiliate in the peasant union, she has the right to participate since she is registered – that is the norm of the community. The fact that she is a woman, however, makes her situation different from the other members:

13 Interview with a municipal worker, Pojo, 23 feb 2015

Q: Are there many women participating in the monthly meetings?

A: *No, there are not many. You know, they don't value women here. They (referring to the men) discriminate us... We can speak but only a little, they say that "women don't know anything" when we speak. I don't know why, the men are more developed... We've got tired of this now. We're going to the workshops, we go everywhere, but they don't let us participate.*

Q: How do you mean that they don't let you?

A: *Like when there were elections at the municipality, to elect the candidates... They didn't even let us enter, they closed the door on us. That's why I feel... All the men had already entered, you know. We did complain afterwards though, it's our right to participate.*

Interview with a female peasant worker, Pojo, 24 February 2015

Says another woman of the same community:

They sometimes listen to us women if we are afiliadas, if not.... they don't even register our names on the attendees list.

Group interview, women, Pojo, 1 April 2015

The view of the reality, however, seems subjective depending on the interviewee. A male peasant worker, also active at municipal level, argues that there is no type of discrimination against the women:

In the organisational part of the community we have no problem what so ever. Within the organisation, we have gender equality, there is no marginalisation of women. In some neighbouring communities, I know there exists much discrimination of women. But here – no.

Mentioning the fact that they don't allow "substitute participation" in the sub-central Palca, with women participating on behalf of their husbands, the same man argues that:

If the woman is not affiliated and attend the meeting anyway, we say why is your husband working and sends you instead?

Interview with a male municipal worker, Pojo, 23 February 2015

In Kyuoj Qocha, the "substitute participation" of women on behalf of their husbands is accepted, and to some extents even seen as welcomed. The participation of the woman on behalf of the family even though not registered is accepted. While participating in a few of the monthly meetings here, I noticed many women speaking up, taking on active roles, and there were at several occasions a larger participation of women than men. During one of these meetings, I asked:

Q: When the women come here, is there space for them to talk?

A: *Yes, here they listen to us, even if we come on behalf of our husbands. We can also make decisions.*

Q: And why doesn't the men attend themselves?

A: They're working.

Interview with a female peasant worker, Kyuoj Qocha, 25 March 2015

When discussing the female participation in local meetings in Kyuoj Qocha, the same woman tells me that women are usually never registered in the unions, but attend on behalf of their husbands. She also says that the role of the woman in her community is to take care of the house, while the man's role is to work and be financially responsible for the family. It could thus be argued that the roles of the man and the woman are as strongly established here as in Pojo. The fact that many of the men migrate to work in the urban area, however, seem to open up a space for the woman in the peasant union – but it is still not her own place, she's merely filling the role of her husband. According to the field work, this more open structure to female participation thus seem to partly originate in its location close to the bigger city. With mostly men and the younger population migrating to study or take urban jobs, a space for women in the decision-making thus seem to open up.

The perception of this analysis and field work is thus that there is a strong patriarchal, male dominating spirit in both areas of investigation. The female participation in the peasant unions in Kyuoj Qocha and Pojo, however affiliated and registered as a land owner, or “substitute participating” on behalf of her husband, is in this field study found to be low. The view by most of the interviewees in Kyuoj Qocha is that there is a limited female participation, but the substitute participation is often accepted, while many parts of the municipality of Pojo seem to refuse this. The discriminative view on women is most overtly expressed while interviewing a male peasant worker in Pojo. When I ask him why there is so much discrimination in the communities, he says:

In the peasant union the women only come to listen, they never speak, they don't plant any ideas... They just come to chat in their little groups. I think they need to become a little more mature before they can start to participate.

Q: But the women here say that they feel discriminated?

A: We don't discriminate, it just that they never speak... We don't marginalize them. The roles are established, we're not going to change them, that should be clear.

Interview with a male peasant worker, Pojo, 1 April 2015

In Pojo in general, the situation of the subordination of women seem to be worse than in Kyuoj Qocha. More than this being because of the migration of many from Kyuoj Qocha to the close big city, creating a space for different views of organising the society, this could also be due to Pojos limited access to everything that the city offers: Education, news, the exchange with a larger

amount of people, leading to the traditions being more strongly maintained deeper into the countryside. When interviewing a woman in Kyuoj Qocha, I ask:

Q: Do you think the distance to the city has an effect your community?

A: *Of course. Communication... Communities in the countryside doesn't have televisions... But also it's the whole awareness, consciousness.*

Interview with a female peasant worker, Kyuoj Qocha, 16 March 2015

It could thus, according to my investigation, be argued that the migration of many of the habitants of Kyuoj Qocha to the close city creates a space for different ways of organising the society – and even finding new ways for the concept of gender complementarity, resulting in a more accepted female (substitute) participation in the peasant unions. Women participating on behalf of themselves and not for their husbands, however, is something rarely seen in both of the areas.

In conclusion, the marginalisation of women seem to be related and somewhat justified with the use of these local norms and regulations of participation in the meetings; norms with their origin in the traditions of each community. The limited female participation seem to originate in a combination of the discrimination of women in society in general, and the local norms regulating the participation in the local meetings and peasant unions where the most important decisions of the community take place.

5.3.2 The division of the public sphere as male-female

Something that was the case for both Pojo and Kuyoj Qocha was the common use of the separation of the peasant unions and the Bartolinas. More than once the terminology of *organizaciones de hombres*, the male organisations was used instead of the peasant unions, and the *organizaciones de mujeres*, the female organisations, for the Bartolinas. A member of the Bartolinas in Kyuoj Qocha, a female peasant worker, shares her view:

So there is the central (referring to the local body of social organisations) of women and the central of men... That's how we are, men and women. The organisations of the community are for men, you know.

Interview with a female peasant worker, Kyuoj Qocha, 15 March 2015

While interviewing a woman of Pojo that usually participate on behalf of her husband in local union meetings, I ask:

Q: How is it for you to participate in the union?

A: *I only listen. I just say "Present!". I don't get involved in the discussions, I only listen, I don't speak. Women don't speak in the meetings, and if we do, they don't listen anyway. That's why I don't speak.*

Q: But are there any woman speaking up?

A: *No...They participate in the women's group instead. It's hard for women here.*

Q: And why are there so much discrimination?

A: *I don't know... When we try to discuss, they just say "Get out of here!"*

Interview with a female peasant worker, Pojo, 20 March 2015

The local perception then seem to be that women constitute themselves in the Bartolina Sisa women's organisations, while men organise in the local peasant unions. According to the last quote, the local peasant women seem to organise themselves in groups of only women because of the extreme discrimination of them in the unions. The women's organisation appears to be a free zone, and when participating in a few of their meetings there was a very talkative atmosphere, as opposed to the meetings with mixed male and female participants. Says the president of the Bartolinas in Kyuoj Qocha:

When a woman doesn't attend our meetings, she only stays home, she doesn't learn anything. When her husband hits her... She doesn't know her rights, and she just suffers there, in her house. Here, we discuss, we demand, we know our rights! We know, we discuss, we know where to find justice if we need it. So if a woman doesn't come here, she doesn't learn, she doesn't know. If she gets hit by her husband... where is she supposed to learn that that isn't right? Here we don't even have a television to learn.

Interview with a female peasant worker, Kyuoj Qocha, 24 February 2015

Although the thesis find that the women often organise in the Bartolinas because of discrimination in the "male" peasant union, this is not the only reason - the Bartolinas do posses power about matters concerning the community. For example, the Bartolinas in Kyuoj Qocha recently received governmental finance for a big project on dairy cattle for an amount of 1 million Bolivianos (around 150,000 USD or 1,3 million SEK)¹⁴. Many Bartolina groups are in other words managing projects with great financial value, but the impact these have on local decision-making and politics have not been visible in this field work – they seem to stay within the agricultural sector and are not reaching levels of political importance such as that of the peasant unions and organisations in the community, where the assistance is almost solely consisting of men.

This creates an arguably dangerous division, breaking the public sphere into parts where the

¹⁴ Interview with a female peasant worker, Kyuoj Qocha, 23 March 2015

“official” power stays in the union which then is “male”, while women stay in their women's organisation that do manage projects of financial value, but are without access to decision-making and political influence. Based on this, we can then understand the gender complementarity in the theme of community politics as a division of the public space in male-female categories that together creates a complementarity, a harmony – or one that segregates the community, the public sphere, into sectors with or without political influence and power. According to this analysis, the latter seems to be more present: The gender complementarity functioning as factor dividing the community, limiting most women from political influence.

One could simplify the analysis by arguing that the man according to this tradition is the one supposed to be participating in the public sphere and that the gender complementarity therefore limits the woman. While this could be partly applicable and true, it is also a way too simplistic version, with a view to more current views of the gender complementarity where many, instead of returning and reclaiming these old traditions, seem to bring this duality into practice: The use of the gender complementarity concept in the chosen areas is most overtly shown when interviewing a female president of the Bartolinas, the woman's organisation, in Kuyoj Qocha. She shares that the woman's organisation here consist of 103 members – and some of them men.

Q: Shouldn't it be only women?

A: No, we work together, we are colleagues. Our cashier is male, for example. Half women, half men, in the Bartolinas everyone should be allowed to enter.

Q: Why is it important to include also the men?

A: I mean, it's not that important but the women want to include the men too, it works well, we help each other. It's good to listen to the men, some of the women are afraid of them and listen to them helps, they don't necessarily speak less because of the presence of men... we are equal.

Interview with a female peasant worker, Kuyoj Qocha, 23 March 2015

In conclusion, this part of the analysis find that the belief in the male-female complementarity results in a division of the public communities in male-female categories, limiting the women from local decision making and politics. However, one could also see to the rejection of more feminist ideas of female emancipation as a western view of gender relations, and that this makes up a perfect example of gender complementarity: One permeating all spaces, from the biological differences of the body to gendered activities and spaces, according to this indigenous cosmovision – one arguing for a male participation even in the women's organisations.

6. Final discussion

My argument in this investigation has been that the discourse on and use of the gender complementarity on both the national and the local level is creating a contradiction between the rights of the indigenous population as a whole, and the indigenous woman as an individual. This argument has throughout this thesis brought us back to the contradiction between the complementarity and the individual. The discourse of gender complementarity being used by the current government as the base for their anti-colonial projects has been evident, arguing patriarchy having its roots in the colonisation of the Americas, bringing with them an “eurocentric, individualistic worldview”. The duality of the male-female is applied to the society as a whole, used as a tool to argue for the way of a united community instead of a “Western individualism”.

My research question throughout this thesis is: *How does the concept of gender complementarity impact female participation in community politics on the local level in rural Bolivia?* The answer to my question has been identified as two-fold:

Firstly, when discussing the man-woman duality as the base of society as a whole, we consequently arrive to the discussion on the division of the community as divided in male-female categories. This analysis has found that the peasant union, the most important local organisation where decision-making takes place, is seen as “the male organisation” and the Bartolinas is seen as “the female organisation”. In interviews, the terminology is often “the male and the female organisations”, referring to this division. This is problematic, limiting the female participation in the peasant unions, where the most important local decision making lies, with meetings and decisions concerning the whole community.

One answer to my research question is then that through national discourse and local application of the concept of gender complementarity, the society in both private and public sphere divide itself into male and female categories. According to my analysis, the gender complementarity has an impact on female participation in limiting the interviewed women from participating in the peasant union where the local community politics take place. The division of tasks according to the complementarity concept in the two areas seem to work and be of satisfaction in for example the sector of agriculture, but in the household and local meetings, it seems to work more to discriminate and marginalise the women participating in my field study. Women sharing their narrative tells

stories of not even being allowed to enter the meeting halls, and being ridiculed while trying to speak; they share their heavy workload in their house, arguing that they do complement their men, but the reverse situation is never the case. Similarly to my own findings, Farah and Sánchez write that the notion of gender complementarity in their own studies have been known to “function” in the level of productive responsibility, but not so much in social and political representation. They argue that the concept instead should be seen as an image to which gender relations could arrive, not based in a system that so clearly has divided the domestic world as strictly feminine, and the productive world as strictly male (Farah and Sanchez, 2008: 90).

Secondly, the discussion seem to come down to a question of the perception and understanding of the concept of *equality*. The two sides – being on the one hand the Morales government and the Bartolinas, and on the other the Bolivian feminist movement - possess completely different ontologies of the equality concept. There is the view of the Bartolinas not even being “involved in the issue of women”, arguing for a harmony between the woman and the man through the complementarity concept, while middle class feminists in the country seem to be very provoked by these statements, arguing that the indigenous cultures consists of an inherent strong patriarchy. The indigenous women, however, seem to value the cosmovision of duality more than the individualistic view of empowering the woman that they argue the Western, universal feminism have created. With the use of postcolonial feminism, one can understand that despite their recognition of oppressing structures, it is not argued that their discrimination is an “issue of women” but rather as a collective of indigenous people, being oppressed since the colonial era by Euro-Western culture – with *machismo* and patriarchy being brought by the colonisers to the Americas.

It is thus clear that the perception of what gender equality *actually is*, is an important factor for discussing women's issues and rights in Bolivia, since the discussion then is based on the different parts possessing completely different ontologies of the concept. What this investigation has shown, however, is that this harmony and duality in the indigenous culture not always is the case – at least not for the indigenous women participating in my study, sharing stories of discrimination in both the private and the public sphere. My argument of the collective rights concealing and even clashing with the rights of the indigenous peasant woman could then be applied in concluding this analysis: With a view to the “ethnic awakening” as mentioned by Linton (2006), the aim for the collective rights of the indigenous communities seem to sometimes fail the indigenous women in rural areas of Bolivia. Using the concept of gender complementarity as the highest cosmovision, it could be

argued that this, on political level, aims for an anti-colonial discourse more than working with actual equality. Naming everything complementarity - “all is one and one is all” (Burman, 2011:66) – there seem to be something missing when applying the concept in practice in the rural communities where this field study was conducted: The female participation on community level is limited, the indigenous women in these areas are marginalised, and the complementarity here does not seem to create the “harmony” that national level advocates argue for.

Despite stories of discrimination in my own investigation, the future for indigenous women is seen upon with bright eyes by others. With the anti-colonial politics by the Morales government, the Bartolinas aim to recuperate the complementarity concept to reconstruct the way gender is perceived and to realize actions to put an end to discrimination, writes Farah and Sánchez (2008: 91). They mention factors such as reframing the gender complementarity from the perspective of women, and to distinguish between the complementary union as a notion and a reality for a future use of the concept.

When speaking to a woman active in the Bartolinas group in Pojo, I ask:

Q: How do you think we can elevate the female participation in Pojo?

A: It's hard... I think we have to create new laws and statues. Plant the woman's view from congressional level. Create more knowledge on women's rights... I know some but I'm starting to forget...

Q: What would the ideal of equality be for you?

A: The ideal would be to “vivir bien”, live in harmony in our family. And to respect the rights of the man and the woman.

Interview with a female peasant worker, Pojo, 19 March 2015

7. Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the impact the gender complementarity has on female participation on community politics and decision making on local level in rural Bolivia. My research question is:

How does the concept of gender complementarity impact female participation in community politics on the local level in rural Bolivia?

Based on participatory observations and 23 interviews with indigenous women and men in the two areas, both peasant and municipal workers, I have investigated in my research question. I find that in some parts the use of the gender complementarity is almost unanimously accepted, such as in the agricultural sector where the division of tasks seem to be of satisfaction for most. In the local organisations on community level, however, the women tells stories of discrimination and of not being allowed to enter the peasant union meetings. The aim for female participation is expressed by the indigenous women themselves, by the participants in my study and as stated by the women's organisation, the Bartolinas.

My field study, in combination with a postcolonial feminist theoretical framework, find that the answer to my research question is twofold: Firstly, there is the division of everything as male-female, entering both private and public spheres, limiting the indigenous women from actual political power and decision-making in their local communities. Secondly, there are conflicting ontologies of the *equality* concept between the current government, indigenous groups and Bolivian feminist movements. According to my analysis, the complementarity concept is supposed to possess an inherent harmony and duality between the man and the woman and thus a form of gender equality - but local implementation of the concept in Pojo and Kyuoj Qocha rather shows a negative impact on the female participation in creating strong patriarchal structures, discriminating the rural indigenous woman.

My argument in this investigation has been that the discourse of gender complementarity is creating a contradiction between the rights of the indigenous population as a whole, and the indigenous woman as an individual. I have argued that while assuming an inherent harmony in the use of gender complementarity, the variations within the group can easily be overlooked. With a view to

the ethnic awakening that was brought about by the Morales government it could, according to my analysis, be argued that the aim for the collective rights of the indigenous communities has been so elevated that they seem to forget the variations within these same communities. The elevation of indigenous collective rights seem to result in overlooking the rights of indigenous women in rural areas of Bolivia, despite the harmony of the complementarity concept as is advocated for. The female participation on community level is, according to my thesis, limited, the indigenous women in Pojo and Kyuoj Qocha are discriminated, and the complementarity here does not seem to create the “harmony” between the man and the woman that advocates on national level argue for. While the female participation in Pojo is more limited than in Kyuoj Qocha, where the closer location to the city seem to create a more open “substitute participation” for the local women, the women still participate on behalf of their husbands and not for themselves, and the traditional roles based on the complementarity concept are still the base for the structure of the communities.

The fact that the numbers of women on governmental level in Bolivia are among the highest in the world does, in other words, not seem to spread down to the rural areas and female participation in local community politics – the use of the concept does not seem to have the same outcome and impact here as on national level. The separation of everything as male-female here seem to instead separate the communities into spaces with and without political power, structuring the local organisations in favour of the man. As the last section of my final discussion presents, the Bartolinas aim to reframe the gender complementarity from the perspective of women, and to distinguish between the complementary union as a notion and a reality for a future use of the concept. This would indeed be a positive reformulation of the concept in favour of many rural indigenous women, now feeling that they do complement the men, but that the men never complement the women.

A few participants in my study, however, share a different perception of gender complementarity than the one of discrimination and marginalisation as expressed by the absolute majority. They do share a harmony, an aim for an equal participation in all types of organisations. This was expressed by the female president of the Bartolinas in Kyuoj Qocha, who argued that men indeed should be included also in the women's organisation:

Half women, half men – in the Bartolinas there should be space for everyone.

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Figures

Figure 1: Ethnolinguistic map of Bolivia. Retrieved from:
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Figure 2: Geographic map of Bolivia. Retrieved from: www.worldpress.org/maps/maps/bolivia.gif
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