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Bolivian women in politics and organizational life - A MINOR FIELD STUDY

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Abstract: This thesis investigates women's political and organizational participation in the changing process and new political context in Bolivia. Different levels of women's positioning are examined through interviews with actors in Cochabamba, complete with observations, literature and local text-documents. The discourse of women's participation versus the actual practice of women's decision making is taken under account. The struggle of Bolivian feminists indicates challenges of dominant patriarchal ideologies and has been named 'postcolonial feminism'. Struggles are directed against the postcolonial state as well as against the western interests that contributes to its postcolonial status. Women's experienced participation is shown to be very diverse, depending on their identities of class and ethnicity as well as their different location in the rural areas and in the city of the department of Cochabamba. There have been important advances achieved by women's movements and organizations in order to stress equality between men and women, but much of the advances are still rhetorical, yet not facing legitimate implementation. There is a lack of implementation of gender issues in the government and institutions. Social movements and critics from civil society are therefore crucial in its attempt to visualize and stress the plurality of social conditions. The challenge of different women's organizations is to create and build consensus from the recognition of this diversity. In the process towards welfare and harmony in Bolivia the women and their strength constitutes a fundamental part. They have introduced new human qualities in the public sphere, raising the values associated to 'motherhood' as central for shaping the wider order of political community.

Key Words: Bolivia, Cochabamba, de-patriarchalization, equality, indigenous, social organizations, women

Mujeres Bolivianas en la política y vida organizacional - un estudio de campo

Jenny Larsson

Extracto: Esta tesis de maestría investiga la participación política y la organización de las mujeres en el proceso de cambio y el nuevo contexto político en Bolivia. Diferentes niveles de posicionamiento de las mujeres se examinan a través de entrevistas con los actores en Cochabamba, observaciones de campo, literatura y documentos locales de texto. El discurso de la participación de la mujer frente a la práctica real en la toma de decisiones de las mujeres es tomada en cuenta. La lucha de las feministas de Bolivia es un reto para la dominante ideología patriarcal y ha sido denominado "feminismo postcolonial". Las luchas se dirigen contra el Estado poscolonial, así como contra los intereses occidentales que contribuyen a su condición poscolonial. La participación con experiencia de las mujeres se demuestra que es muy diversa, en función de su identidad de clase y etnia, así como su ubicación en las zonas rurales y en la ciudad del departamento de Cochabamba. Ha habido avances importantes logrados por los movimientos de mujeres y organizaciones con el fin de hacer hincapié en la igualdad entre hombres y mujeres, pero gran parte de los avances todavía son retóricas, ya no se enfrentan a la aplicación legítima. Hay una falta de aplicación de las cuestiones de género en el gobierno y las instituciones. Los movimientos sociales y los críticos de la sociedad civil son cruciales en su intento de visualizar y destacar la pluralidad de las condiciones sociales. El reto de distintas organizaciones de mujeres es el de crear y construir consenso a partir del reconocimiento de esta diversidad. En el proceso hacia el bienestar y la armonía en Bolivia, las mujeres y su fuerza constituyen una parte fundamental. Se han introducido nuevas cualidades humanas en la esfera pública, elevando los valores asociados a la "maternidad" como un elemento central para dar forma al orden más amplio de la comunidad política.

Palabras clave: Bolivia, Cochabamba, de-patriarcalización, igualdad, indígenas, mujeres, organizaciones sociales

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Introduction

“We have to work for a graduating process of our utopia, and realize that our utopia isn't far away, but close. 6 months before this process began, nobody had imagined what was about to come. And when the history gives you a surprise this important, it is possible to think that this change will be very big. This is not when we are going to halt. I have the faith in this, that for once, the old mentalities will disappear” (Manager of the bicentennial program in Cochabamba)

Bolivia has begun to face a new stage in its history. This quote of a citizen in Cochabamba shows an expectation and optimism for the process that the people are living. It is a historical event because the country never earlier accepted the indigenous as a political category able to take full administration of the society and its institutions along with other social sectors.

The President Evo Morales and his political party MAS (Movement for Socialism) won the national elections in Bolivia in 2005 and got re-elected in 2009. Morales is of indigenous Aymara descent and also the titular president of the peasants coca-growers union with its base in Chaparé, a province belonging to Cochabamba. In January 2009 the people voted for a new State Constitution which came into force one month later, setting out the rights for the indigenous majority, granting more regional and local autonomy and enshrining state control over key resources. The changes on the political and institutional level are much a result of popular action through local participation and social movements.

Cochabamba is the fourth largest city in Bolivia and has a large indigenous population where political forces are strong, as well as the support of MAS. Cochabamba has experienced many mobilizations and social revolts driven by the citizens, for the purpose of accomplish social justice. Women's participation has been strong and often seen in the frontline of the struggles. The new State Constitution indicates that 50% of the public authorities shall be women, and 50% men, as to stress equality between men and women. This is an important advance because it's the women, mothers, daughters and wives from the original indigenous population who have suffered the most from consequences of socio-economic policy's that deepens the poverty. Many other countries are idealizing this changing process in Bolivia. I wanted to find out, from the inside, what the guidelines for female participation in reality means for Bolivian women. This resulted in a field research in Cochabamba, which now is going to be presented.

Purpose and questions

I've studied principally three different levels of position of women in Cochabamba; women in social organizations or social movements, women working in public authorities and representatives of NGOs working with women's rights. The women have in common either political participation or organizational participation. I wanted to find out how women were organized before the new government and politics in the country and how they are organized at this very present, including what impact the constitution which took effect in 2009 has on women's position and participation in the Bolivian society. I have focused on what can be seen as discourse of women's participation versus the actual practice of

women's decision making. The purpose of this is to find out if women experience that they have a real exercise of power and participation in shaping public authorities. My intention is also to find out whether the women or the organizational ideologies agree with the policies of Evo Morales party MAS, since this is something important for the continuation of the changing process. The Bolivian population is very different in terms of class and ethnicity; therefore I found it important only not to focus on one positioned group of women. Their different location in the rural areas and in the city of the department of Cochabamba is also relevant for the research. Further, my intention is to get to know the different interests of these women, their different purpose of organization and participation. Do the different interests affect the possibility to participate in democratic and equitable forms?

The following questions constitute the guidelines for my field work;

What do the changing process and guidelines for equality in reality mean for Bolivian women?

How does the different positioning of the women, in terms of class, ethnicity and location, effect their social and political participation?

In what way does the participation of women change when social movements are implemented in the political system?

Background knowledge

The emergence of the multinational State of Bolivia

The Bolivian State has during the history been transformed, and gone through very diverse shapes. I will start this historical review looking at the more recent transformations, beginning with the neoliberal period that lasted between 1986 and 2000. This is because it has a direct connection to the emergence of the multinational State in Bolivia. The neoliberal rule signified that foreign capital constituted the dominant power block in the country. Foreign sectors dominated the areas of hydrocarbons, telecommunications and also big parts of the agro-industry. Further the local business sector was connected to external markets, for example the mining industry. Big international companies such as the World Bank, IMF and Inter-American Development Bank defined the public policies in Bolivia. These financial companies created enormous expectations concerning the modernization of the economy i.e. that the capitalism would generate progress and develop labor opportunities. In reality the economic situation worsened and basic needs weren't satisfied. This frustration led to formations of local collective mobilizations of social protests (García Linera, 2008b).

In Bolivia the initial State crisis and the transformation of the State started in year 2000. At this time human groups led mainly by peasant and indigenous social movements began to coordinate actions and initiating social conflicts in the country that challenged the State. During 2003 two political power blocs were confronted which resulted in an overthrow of the actual president Sánchez de Lozada and a need for a new government. The vice president took over the government but the ongoing crisis continued, causing his resignation in June 2004 and, finally, the advancement of general elections in December 2005 thanks to a comprehensive political agreement. The victory of MAS (Movement for

Socialism) in 2005 with Evo Morales as the president became the main driver of a new political discourse according to the ongoing circumstances (Maydana, 2009). The government management of MAS is congruent with nationalism, populist movements and the indigenous population. It appears through 1) “a policy of nationalization of natural resources rethinking the relationship between state and foreign firms in response to neoliberalism and, 2) a constitutional reform that has been summarized in a ‘multinational’ state model that emphasizes the collective rights of indigenous peoples and peasant communities. Regarding the nationalization of hydrocarbons, there were no disagreements or opposition. However, serious differences over the ongoing state reform resulted in a discord over the constitutional process” (Mayorga, 2009:41).

Going back to the years 2000-2003, this period meant the beginning of an époque of common sense. The civil society emerged with other ideas different from recent privatization and globalization caused by the neoliberals. They began to challenge dominant ideas, leading to potentially substitute a new system of beliefs and legitimacy (García Linera, 2008b). The city of Cochabamba has come to represent the possibilities and challenges facing the Bolivian people and the democratic participation of its organizations. In year 2000 a series of protest and mobilizations took place, the so called “water war” aimed at showing resistance and dissatisfaction against the privatization of the municipal water supply. The protests were driven by people from diverse constituent networks that had shared experiences of disadvantages, such as shrinking public funds. The transnational’s made an attempt to turn the vital resource – water, into a business. The right to water is tied to traditional beliefs for rural people in Bolivia; the water belongs to the community and is not for sale. The people in Cochabamba has for a long time suffered from a shortage of water, which is something that have been used in political and economic interests for the purpose of manipulating the population. Right before the water war the ‘Law 2029’ was passed on by the neoliberals, which eliminated any guarantee of water distribution to rural areas and only half of Cochabamba’s population was connected to the central water system. The law also required the people to ask for permission for the superintendent of water to collect rainwater. These regulations, and more besides, resulted in the gathering of social sectors from the city and the country side. Men, women, old and young people united around the defence of their autonomy of state control and foreign management. Thanks to mobilizations, blockades and confrontations, local and state-wide meetings in the towns and the assemblies, the privatization of water did not succeed (Olivera, 2004). In the entire history of Bolivia, there hasn’t been a more long and hard blockade. Since year 2000, the social movements began to replace parliamentary agreements in decision making, and constitute a social block of alternative power.

Welfare and the process of decentralization

In Bolivia, currently a vision of a multicultural progress has been introduced in the constitutions. This vision refers to the base of communities and the Andean worldview and the searching for an establishment of the relations between man and nature and society. These are proposals that are geared to the inclusion of indigenous peoples in the vision of the multicultural state (Pozo, 2009). The concept ‘vivir bien’ which in English means ‘welfare’ refers to this progress. The governance advocates an interrelation between the authorities, the politicians and the civil society. The quality of life will improve when the encounter between actors form logic strategies of action to influence decisions (Fuente and Ramirez,

2009).

The process of decentralization in Bolivia was initiated with the law of popular participation (LPP) in 1994. This meant a new normative of actors in public policy referring to earlier excluded social groups. Since the implementation of the LPP the indigenous unions and the indigenous people have been able to participate in the elections of local authorities. The law also granted power and recognition of Organizations with Territorial Base (OTB) such as neighborhood councils, peasant communities, indigenous peoples and agricultural unions. Emphasis was also placed on the equal participation of men and women. Other consequences of the LPP were the construction of committees of social control, aiming at making the popular demands more transparent for the state. Another purpose was to counteract the neoliberal policy's that had influenced the country since the 80's. Indeed the regulations raised by LPP allowed the peasants organizations in the provinces of Cochabamba to improve and develop the organizations as well as turning its members into powerful partners urging the municipal authorities. The process was also facilitated by support from NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations), holding classes including literacy, capacitating of promoters and formation of leaders. Further classes of capacitating in managing and administrating local production were realized with the intention of achieving comprehensive development zones. Many of these training programs in capacitating were focused on women's organizations. Financial support was primarily given by foreign development funds, which also helped creating new educative and health facilities, especially focused on those who lived in remote areas of small towns (Fuente and Ramirez, 2009). As part of my field study I had the opportunity to participate in some of these reunions, this will be described later on.

In 2005 a new political situation was formed as a result of the admission of Evo Morales party MAS who had won great confidence in the municipal elections in 2004. The peasants and indigenous in many of the rural zones became authorities for the first time, and replaced many of the traditional party's members in the municipals. The peasants could also strengthen their organizations participating in agencies of planning, regulated by the LPP or in forums created by themselves. Fuente and Ramirez (2009) make the conclusion in their investigation that the new model of governance, introduced by LPP has permitted a greater participation of the citizen in the municipals, and especially of those citizens who earlier were excluded. Although the results of the progress in different areas much depend on different logics and power relations, including the access of resources and empowerment training given by specific actors. In the City of Cochabamba the planted regulations of LPP were applied differently. The comprehensive development plan simply served as a political mantle of the municipal governments. The support was not translated into any concrete funding projects, which contributed to frustration among the population as it created invalidation of future projects in this perspective. Concerning the women's political participation as counselors in the rural areas in Cochabamba, the process has been slower and varies a lot between the different municipals. Yet there have been a lack of information and training in capacitating and formation, which is necessary for the accomplishment of an inclusion and full exercise of the citizen, as well as the accomplishment of welfare.

The State Constitution

The new State Constitution of Bolivia came into force the 26th of January 2009. In Chapter 1, Paragraph 2, it says: “Given the pre-colonial existence of the peasants originally indigenous peoples and nations and their ancestral domination over their territories, we ensure self-determination within the framework of the unity of the state, which means their right to autonomy, self-government, culture, recognition of their institutions and the consolidation of its territorial units, under this Constitution and the law” (Constitución Política Del Estado, 2009).

The vice president Álvaro García Linera writes in “Journal of speeches and presentations” (2008a) Why did the indigenous peasant workers popular movement plant a new State Constitution? – Because earlier, in other Constitutions, the peasants, indigenous, workers or neighbours were never taken into account, not even being part of the political discourse. This Constitution gives an opportunity for the recognition of a people that have been forgotten, and it is a Constitution that will last another 40 – 50 years, which is the normal duration of a State Constitution. This implicates a historical change for the indigenous peasant’s movement assuming leadership, with the assistance from the labour workers, the neighbours and the middle class. The possibility to recover the natural resources and the nationalization is a progress that benefits all popular movements in the country.

The fight for this Constitution has caused a lot of difficult confrontations, because the constitution was to remove the privileges of a few so that all will have equal opportunities and rights. In the city of Sucre they suggested that all laws having to do with the judiciary should be treated in Sucre, though this was dismissed by the interagency committee. In the process of finishing the work of the Constituent Assembly, constituents of MAS and also other party’s were persecuted and threatened, even houses were burned down. The leader of ‘Podemos’, a right wing party, stated that they never would allow this new Constitution. Leaders from the opposition, civic sectors and some prefects didn’t expect the high amount of votes for Evo Morales, because this meant a terrible defeat for the right wing party’s. The big support of MAS all over the country weakened them to the point that they disappeared territorially (García Linera, 2008a).

The City Coup took place in august 2008, when the so-called National Council for Democracy made the decision to ignore the authorities and initiated roadblocks. They attacked politicians and blocked the arrival of the President. Seventy State Institutions were looted, burned and destroyed, military posts were also attacked by the opposition. Pipelines were blown up to close the valves so that no gas or gasoline could arrive in the west. These actors against the MAS politics took the decision to kill peasants and many indigenous leaders to give them a warning not to rise. At this time, the terrible slaughter of the peasants and indigenous companions in the department of Pando, took action. The Indigenous Peasants Federation did a great mobilization against the coup to defend the democracy and their brothers. This was the largest mobilization in the history of the Peasants Federation. The government decided to adopt a state of siege. Even this time they were greeted with bullets, though from this moment the withdrawal of the Right begun. The government together with social movements had opted to isolate four regions in the country and seek international assistance until the UN troops arrived. This strategy allowed the coup to be defeated, and it is the most unanimous international support for President Evo Morales in the union of South American Nations. The Right later lost their territorial control as well as their

political and military control. Without the massive mobilization of social sectors in defense of democracy there would not have been conditions for the approval of the new Constitution (García Linera, 2008a).

Women and Indigenous women's participation in social movements

Social movements in Bolivia have meant a new way of social inclusion with a capacity to change relation of gender, race and ethnicity. Arnold and Spedding (2005) define social movements as “a group or union that shares a mobilized position or a special interest, for example, reversing the previous exclusion of gender, race and ethnicity” (p. 15). These movements often have duration over time. The different peasant's organizations, agricultural unions or neighborhood councils are therefore good examples. In Bolivia the term “social movement” also refers to “popular organizations”. The demands of the organizations aren't static, but constantly changing as new political situation emerges. Concerning the demands of the women's social movements one have to see further than to the main social actors opinions, since their claims often are intertwined with the interests of a number of other institutions. Therefore one has to see to the bases of the organizations. Further, there is no such a thing as a common demand of the women's social movements. In this context it is important to problematize the distinct notions of citizenship. For example, the women in Bolivia didn't formally become citizens until the revolution of 1952. Because of the fact that the country has such a diverse population referred to class and ethnicity the women's rights in practice don't necessarily address to all women. (Arnold and Spedding, 2005). As Gledhill (2000) writes; we can identify class and regional cultures in one society which may be central to political processes. The demands of women's organization address to different areas, which are effects of the different position that women hold in relation to status and citizenship.

The revolution in 1952-1964 created a space for indigenous women to organize. The Bolivian National Revolution was led by the political party MNR (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario) who carried out a sweeping land reform, promoted rural education, and, in 1952, nationalized the country's largest tin mines. The State attempted to incorporate into national life the Aymara and Quechua peasants that together constituted no less than 65 percent of the total population. Although the policies pursued by the MNR were largely corporatist and assimilating, it marked a significant turning point in Bolivia's contested history of indigenous-state relations (Solón, 1999). The participation of indigenous women has since then been present. The military repressions in the time of the revolution made it possible for the peasants to participate in the social and political life and part of it was the active presence of women. This experience of responsibility in the struggle of the demands of the peasantry is something that has become visible during recent years, for example in the water war in 2000. In these processes the women led and paved the way for the demonstrations. They held the people together and served them with food and drinks. The strength in these indigenous women from the lowland or belonging to Aymara-Quechua was shown in their decision to leave their domestic spheres and challenge the State (an almost forbidden area) as represents of their people, raising their demands and defending them (Paco and Mamani, 2009).

'Bartolina Sisa' and the Constituent Assembly

On January 10, 1980, the peasant women of La Paz and Oruro started a new organization called the National Federation of Peasant Women of Bolivia

"Bartolina Sisa", which is affiliated with the organization of men to fight for better living conditions and overcome situations of injustice and discrimination. The 'Bartolinas' have become the symbol of the mothers of the changing process. They appear as the emblem of the struggle since centuries. Within some women's sectors, though, this has been seen as controversial, and will be problematized in this thesis.

A consequence of the strategies of proclaiming collective demands against the State was the conformation of the Constituent Assembly, which presented and discussed guidelines defining new concrete political-ideological proposals. This meant intensification and strengthening of the democracy in practice, a radicalization of a process of transformation of power relations into relations of shared authority (Paco and Mamani, 2009).

The Constituent Assembly is a constituent instrument of power, where social movements and social power is represented. This type of Assembly occurs in processes of emergencies and political transformations, such as the economic crisis generated by the neoliberal model (Prada Alcoreza, 2006). This political instrument became the ground for new actors in the political sphere and which at this very present is something important and fundamentally crucial for the construction of the new State of Bolivia. The way that the women would be elected into the assembly was something that created discussion among the FNMCIQB-BS (Bartolina Sisa). It was of great importance that the persons finally elected represented the organization as well as taking into account their level of legitimacy and representation within their community. For them, the Assembly members thus meant more than just the presence of women. They demanded 50% political participation of women as to stress de equality between men and women. A strategy of gaining more representation was to establish alliances with some political parties and civic groups. The efforts of FNMCIQB-BS and the application of the political instrument later lead them to occupy space in the Constituent Assembly, as in the municipal governments, in the parliament and even as ministers and vice ministers. The intention was specifically to fulfill the mandate of their bases and inform the bases about their work. "Nobody imagined this important advance of the peasant and indigenous sector searching for options to the neoliberal policy's ending up reaching the power of the government and the political spheres" (Paco and Mamani: 2009:192).

Other indigenous women were elected from their provinces and according to the rotational shift of authority. The social organizations also nominated their representatives who received support for their careers and their work within their communities and organizations. "leadership capacity means knowing how to express what their bases say, to be capable of decision making and respect resolutions of their bases and not be manipulated by other foreign interests and to assert the demands of their organizations. So women are examples of this dynamic in the negotiations with the government and the most legible in the positions of the peasant sector" (Paco and Mamani: 2009:195). Though, critics of non-legitimate elections of leaders, including representatives from the peasants' women's sector will later be discussed in the part presenting results from the conducted interviews.

Discrimination of indigenous women

During a large period of the history the indigenous population has been denied the

access to the economic, political and social life and they have struggled with claiming their acceptance of their cultural identity, difference and diversity. Much of this exclusion is a result of a denial or lack of knowledge of the forms of discrimination existing in Bolivia in its proper dimension, manifested in everyday social class interrelationships between urban and rural spheres. “This situation resulted in the indigenous populations reconstruction of its own ideology in which indigenous women are actively participating, especially in the transmission of this ideology to their children and their families ... it’s the women, mothers, daughters and wife’s from the original indigenous population who suffers the most from the consequences of the socio-economic policy’s that deepens the poverty” (Paco and Mamani, 2009:185). It is the triple discrimination of being a woman, being indigenous and being poor.

Women’s management of the water

A sector where the role of women are strong are the various cooperation’s of water in Cochabamba. Their responsibilities have come to embrace everything related to water. Women are involved in the problems concerning basic services, since they are the ones caring for the house, the food and the children. The majority of the active members in these cooperation’s are women, and amongst them are some leaders. Unfortunately in the higher level of decision making there are men representing them, but it is women that are mobilizing, managing double work.

In an interview with the coordinator of the Gandhi foundation (working with the water cooperation’s in Cochabamba) I was told the following: The water issue in Cochabamba is particularly interesting, not only is it a vital livelihood for the people, but the water has also become an own social and political identity for the people in Cochabamba. Practically in the entire southern part of the city the population doesn’t have access to water subsidized by the state. This marginalized part of the city is most exposed to poverty and 55 percent of the population lives in here. The neighbours have developed strategies to be able to access the issues of water, socially, politically and economically, and some have realized committee’s cooperatives or associations of water. Despite some financial assistance from the government, the committees have retained their character as autonomous, self managing and independence from the state. In general the participation of women is central in the issue of water. In practical terms, it’s the women that have charge of the distribution, the use and consume of the water. In domestic terms the women are the ones waiting for the external cars arriving with the water. They carry the water to the house and they measure the exact amount of water that is going to be used for different occasions etc. Women have charge of the administration and management of the water and they refer to the water as a social issue;

“When women use the water they are constantly thinking about ‘us’, it isn’t something individual, it’s a mark of social understanding. The water is not for anybody, any specific, the water is for everyone, and more important; the way I use the water can affect someone else” (Coordinator of the Gandhi foundation)

How is the relation of gender related to water issues visible in the politics in public areas?

In the assembly of a water committee women are present, but it is men who are speaking, since in public scenarios the leadership structure is very vertical and

patriarchal. The idealistic political subject within the assembly is an adult male that knows how the state works, and who speaks Castellano.

“It is the man that knows about the logic functions of the state, the party mediation, the client’s logic and the logic of bureaucracy. The woman is confronting the state in a distinct way, sometimes in the commerce, in the educational resistance against the teachers, against the police, etc, which is a more brutal form of interaction ... Normally women are bearers of tradition ... They speak more in native languages, which isn’t the language of the assembly, so there are various elements that also have to be considered in relation to the subaltern position of the woman” (Coordinator of the Gandhi foundation)

“If you review the men, they tend to manage the water because they are elected as presidents of the water committees, even though they are not involved in the water issues, but still they are presidents. They are steering the water committee in a direction that makes the committee appear to have interest in political party’s policies or external groups put pressure on them. They are using a vital necessity like the water for political purposes, personal purposes or for the reason to strengthen their self image” (Coordinator of the Gandhi foundation)

Today there are water committees managed by women, one of the biggest is directed by a woman, who is from the nearby neighbourhood. This committee is one of the most transparent, but still the most complex in its administration. This has made it possible to have more direct connection to the domestic rationalisation and management of the water in the public sphere. The committees of water are political forces and the first political mobilizations were accomplished by the party of the water committees, which explains why they are exposed to political manipulations and external stakeholders including NGOs.

The leader of the ‘Coordinadora del agua’ (the Water Coordination for the defence of the water) during the water war in Cochabamba told me in the interview that the first participants in the Assembly were the women. These were meetings consisting of 30 up to 3000 participants. It was obvious that the women were the most interested in coordination, dissemination and in the leadership of the water issues. It was women who argued the most in the Assemblies for the issues of water but not simply the water. The testimonies of the women were largely based on their daily life which reflected the triple role of the women; the role as worker, as mother or wife and finally the role as an administrator of domestic chores. All this could have given the women a very strong voice.

“If you look at photos or videos, the woman is always in front of the police, and not just to defend herself but also to confront the police ... The paradoxical was that in the moment of speaking, in expressing and to make visible the content of the struggles in the Assembly, the demands and the decisions of the people weren’t voices of women, but men ” (Leader of the Water Coordination)

I asked the informant if he thinks that the experiences of the women during the water war still are visible in their actions and participation.

“In general I think that the experiences from the water war and the major participation and incorporation of the women are a continuing process. It continues in the fights but also deep down in the perspective of the women’s

decision making” (Leader of the Water Coordination)

Summary, I have described different parts of Bolivia's history including specific events in Cochabamba, which together hopefully has helped the understanding of the changing process that the country is undergoing. In the next section I will focus on more general theories applicable on the Bolivian context, which are crucial for comprehension of development in post-colonial countries.

Theory and research -women in post-colonial society's

Radical democracy

A radical democratic vision stresses the numerous social relations where situations of domination are visible and must be challenged if the principles of liberty and equality are to apply. A perspective for understanding how changed formations of national state power are associated with the development of other kinds of social structures such as social movements is the need to study agents, organizations and logistics as well as discourses and symbolic constructions (Gledhill, 2000).

Nash (2005) argues that the water war in Cochabamba was a regional citizen's revolt; it is an example of a specific issue which gathered people from different networks. She rejects the assumption that "popular" should be equated with any particular political identity, cultural content or specific community. Instead it is a plural identity constituted through different common channels shared by the distinct networks of participating social sectors, which should be specified in order to avoid the mystifying and uncritical definition of 'the people' as a unitary collective subject. Gledhill (2000) has a similar argument; the whole notion that political life develops on the basis of the 'representation of class interests are questionable', the working class is as much a product of political representation as the reverse, and working people do not necessarily identify with the parties which claim to represent them. Van Cott (2009) has studied indigenous people and democracy in Latin America, and chooses to use the term radical democracy when referring to public decision making, rather than an association with Marxist revolution. The differences are the following: radical democracy focuses on values and culture and on deepening democracy by making institutions more participatory and deliberative. This gives citizens a direct role in public decision making. Marxist revolution focuses on redistribution and class relations, Van Cott criticizes it for failing to promote important democratic values, such as responsibility, equality and autonomy.

Actually these arguments are similar to the ones referring to the mystification of "women" as a unitary collective subject (which I will come back to later). Referring to "the people" and "women" as homogenous groups will colonialize and naturalize their plurality as placing these groups within a framework of social and ethnical belonging, which in the end will deprive their historical and political actions. The essence in these arguments therefore stresses that "it isn't the centre that defines the periphery, hence the periphery that, in its infinity decides what is the centre" (Mohanty, 2002:209).

Post-colonialism and feminism

Gledhill (2000) refers to the indigenous right movement as one of the most

potentially “mould-breaking” developments in Latin American political history. It adds a distinctive ‘post-colonial’ dimension to ‘democratization’ in Latin America. It offers a rethinking of political marginalization in multi-ethnic states that seek democratic futures. Post-colonialism supports a transformational politics from below, dedicated to the removal of inequalities which are consequences of a fundamentally subaltern position initiated by the west. It is problematic to produce a general theory of social movements, since the movements are very heterogeneous, including women’s movement in the same country. What do for example middle-class feminism have in common with the struggles of poor women from rural areas? Nevertheless, Gledhill stresses the importance of theoretical comparisons between social movements between different countries as to avoid reproduction of old dichotomies between ‘the west’ as the source of modernity and its backward colonial ‘others’. A contradiction between the different sights concerns the European vision which self-reflective historical perspective is only possible in fully modernized and developed late capitalist societies. In fact colonialism puts colonized peoples into the process of objectifying their traditions, which in many cases gives them a greater reflection on their historical identities and the meanings of their history.

Young (2003) argues that there are different versions of modernity, which have been developed in different ways. Even though modernity as well as feminism was introduced in western countries, its development over the past two centuries within non-western worlds has transformed and nuanced its assumptions. Women are positioned in relation to the specificities of their own cultures, their own histories and their own struggles against for instance western colonial power, therefore there is no such thing as unitary modernity, feminism or social movement. As Mohanty (2002) points out, western feministic research in later years have produced a homogenization and systematization of the oppression of women in developing countries. Therefore this research has to get analyzed and understood as a part of the existing power relations – between different world systems. She stresses the importance of establishing international relations that visualizes different political feminist struggles in diverse countries. Because political consequences of the western research hegemony which fail to recognize women’s actual conditions in other parts of the world, tends to aggravate the conditions of the women. The typical definition of the female subject as a gender identity, bypasses the social class attribution and ethnic identity.

Young (2003) argues that “postcolonial politics often have more in common with women’s than men’s struggles of the colonial era, with a policy of egalitarianism that supports diversity rather than the cultural uniformity demanded for nationalism” (p. 99). Independence from the colonial rule and national sovereignty for women still means a continued struggle, this time against the patriarchal hierarchy. Post-colonial feminist activism means fighting for women’s rights in a whole range of ways, for example; denial of the division between public and private space transgressed in the masculine political authority of the colonial regime. Many of the differences between men and women remained suppressed while working together for the common aims of the anti-colonial movements. Thus feminists continue to appropriate elements of modernity and cultural revival for their own political goals. Women are often taken to represent the base of the cultural identity of the nation, where the home and the domestic sphere is the best guardian of the traditional values, culture and identity. This implicates that women and modernity came to be regarded as contradictory

entities. Therefore the goal of national liberty involved a betrayal of all prospect of progressive change for women. The colonial government's interventions contributed to the oppression of women, which has been described as 'colonial feminism' (Young, 2003). Colonial feminism becomes 'postcolonial feminism' when women in developing countries challenges dominant patriarchal ideologies, where politics are framed by the active legacies of colonialism. Struggles are directed against the postcolonial state as well as against the western interests that contributes to its postcolonial status. It is a philosophy that seeks to change the basis of the state itself and attempts to empower the poor and the disadvantaged for tolerance of diversity and strengthen minority's rights, women's rights and cultural rights. An important development for political change in Latin American countries is for example the way in which national NGOs of various kinds, including indigenous rights organizations, have received increasing moral, media and logistical support from foreign NGOs and US agencies. Yet some of the foreign sponsors that offer founding to Latin American groups in the name of 'strengthening civil society and democracy' are also committed to neoliberal free market economics and cuts in public spending (Gledhill, 2000). Well meaning interventions by western feminists, human right groups and NGOs can sometimes end up by making life more complicated for local feminists, since they plant western ideas which might collide with the local. It might as well contribute to gaps between women and other parts of the ideological society, as well as between women committed to different women's movement or organizations (Young, 2003). I will later discuss these issues, being visible as well in the field research in Cochabamba, as a contributing explanation of the separated positioning of the women.

Feminism and sustainable local ecology

In Bolivian history social movement including women's movements often emphasized conservation of natural resources. Resistance by peasants and natives began in the colonial period when natural resources were exploited for military and industrial purposes. As the water movement and water management in Cochabamba earlier showed, there is a significant gender division connected to the sustainability of local ecology. The women have direct connection to the domestic rationalisation and management of the water in the public sphere, and thus, in comparison with men, are not seduced by short-term advantages of political or market related interference. The women are driven by the objective of a supportive, self-renewing system that preserved water resources. Although, obviously it hasn't yet reached penetrative power or recognition in the universal discourse nor practise, since the men are the numerous in public representation of the water management. Political struggles by peasants or indigenous movements in many of the developing countries have implicated the women being in the forefront, which has been describes as 'feminist sustainable development framework'. Even though they appear very different in diverse contexts their campaigns are motivated by a similar demand for the right and need of subaltern peoples who seek an ending of inequality and injustice (Young, 2003). The original cultures of Quechua and Aymara have been strong in defending their struggles against the colonial rule as well as against the principles of nineteenth-century liberalism. For example the coca grower's movement, where the women's participation in the region of Chaparé is strong, has gained a strong identity because of this. Many of these women are protagonists and their original values have been central in the struggles of gaining space through their social and political organizations. Therefore as I will present in the results of the field work

this have meant that the peasants and indigenous women's principle demand is to get stronger as organizations.

Political Motherhood

Political motherhood can be described as; a move into the public domain which challenges the detention of women to domesticity. It changes the social order but doesn't undermine it. Motherist movement stresses defence of integrity of the family and the autonomy of persons within its sphere of responsibility. It advocates values associated to motherhood as central for shaping the wider order of political community. Their approach takes a more unitary form as it speaks for the women as key actors in the family, and therefore usually doesn't act according to selfish matters. This imagery can also claim the women's superior moral qualities as of being more compassionate, analyzing, supportive etc. This advocacy on difference between men and women can be based on notions of gender complementarity. This was stressed by evangelical women's movement in nineteenth-century England and America, and has later on been transformed by more radical feminists into a move away from political motherhood rather seeing the qualities of women as essential for the political community which includes men (Werbner, 2005).

The principles of complementarity as well have its origin in the Andean world-view, and have been stressed in the new State Constitution in Bolivia as an approach to 'equality of opportunities'. As I will show later, this has contributed to certain critics within some women's organizations. Nevertheless the strength of political motherhood as an evolving social movement, including in Latin American countries, has been the introduction of new human qualities into the public sphere, and their definition as equally foundational in the legitimating of the political community. Thus the point is that all the qualities whether they are female or masculine, embody and objectify the ideal of citizenship. Not only feminism, but socialism and multiculturalism have introduced new human qualities of for example tolerance or the right to cultural recognition. Still feminism, has forced certain issues, such as familial power imbalances into the public sphere. Moreover in the face of poverty and severe abuses of human rights present in developing countries, women have, despite their suffering of oppressions, transcended their narrow interests as women and work for wider and more complex causes. They have created alliances by drawing upon their multiple identities: as mothers, wives, peasants, natives, workers, patriots, democrats, as well as women united in a 'global sisterhood'. In the postcolonial world, women have often had to struggle alongside men for fundamental national, democratic and economic rights, and against them on issues of family violence and economic exploitation. Political motherhood in postcolonial nation-states has to be understood as a process of discovery rather than a specific feminist movement or intellectual approach (Werbner, 2005).

METHOD

Material and selection

The collected material in this qualitative field research consists of 26 interviews of which two are group interviews. Three of the 26 interviews are informal, performed as conversations. I made in total four observations during women's reunions. I got a lot of written material from different organizations and institutions, which serves as an important complement. Finally there is a recording

of a women's congress held on the Bolivian Women's day on which I participated. I also participated on a national congress of sociology where the Vice president Álvaro García Linera held a speech. The used research methodology is triangulation. The important aspect of triangulation is the attempt of relating different kinds of data to strengthen the validity for each of them, in testing hypotheses and measure variables. The triangulation also offers other perspectives than the researcher's (Berg, 2004). The qualitative research seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these setting. The specific used qualitative approach is ethnography, which Creswell (2003) summarizes as "in which the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily, observational data. The research process is flexible and typically evolves contextually in response to the lived realities encountered in the field setting" (p. 14).

I chose my informants according to my three categories of audiences. The three categories are 1) women in social organizations or social movements, 2) women working in public authorities and 3) representatives of NGOs, working with women's rights. These three main groups were defined during the process. I grew aware of that they together created a more comprehensive picture of the women's situations in Cochabamba. The interviewed women possess different positions in each one of the categories. For example among the public authorities I interviewed the Municipal council president, the ex Vice minister of gender in the government of MAS, the Director of economics faculty at the University. I had the privilege to get to know a man who helped me contact and introduce me to several of these persons. This person works with, and also is the founder of the Organization INCCA. This, including other things, has given him a large social network. Some of the informants I found on my own or I got a tip on a name from somebody I met. I got to meet some of the informants on women's meetings in the provinces of Cochabamba. The contacts I made at the local University, including my supervisor, were also of great help in the orientation of relevant informants.

The wide selection of informants was both intentional and random; as new opportunities were mapped out along the road I chose to have an open mind in relation to informants. For example I occasionally met an informant on a women's congress. She told me that she was a miner and had experienced a long period of struggle for the purpose to improve the rights of the miners. She agreed on participating in an interview the day after. My intention was to get the perception of different women in different positions, ranging from the most excluded social and political to the ones at the top of the hierarchy. This has opened up many perspectives. Though, it also creates some difficulties in order to make common conclusions. The majority of the interviews are with women, since the research addresses women's participation- from their perspective. The smaller amount of male informants can be seen as a limitation. For sure their point of view serves as an important resource. My actual intention was to interview more men, but since I had a limitation of time and since I didn't prioritize male informants from the beginning this was a consequence.

I conducted my field study in Cochabamba, during a period of 10 weeks. I concentrated my informants to the department of Cochabamba, meaning: the city and the provinces. Although one of the interviews was conducted in Bio Recuaté, a small jungle village in the tropical region of Chapare, a province of

Cochabamba. The interviews took place in different locations, most of them were held in the women's offices or at their work places. One interview took place in the informants' house, another in a café, and one in a small room on a mattress in the association building of the 'cocaleros' (the coca-growers union from the tropics). The length of the interviews varied quite much, the individual interviews with the women from social organizations, in the rural areas of Cochabamba, were in general the shortest, which had to do with language barriers and time constraints. Some of the interviews lasted up to over an hour. In general the length was about 40-50 minutes.

I used audio recorder during all interviews. I got in contact with a women through my supervisor in the field who transcribed by half the amount of the interviews. The interviews in Quechua were transcribed by a friend who dictated the content in Spanish at the same time as I was writing it down. The remaining interviews I transcribed myself. With the informal interviews I took notes. Elaborating with three different languages (Spanish, English and Swedish) creates some problems and limitations. When quoting parts of the transcribed interviews in Spanish into English it is necessary to reshape the sentences to the extent that they will be understandable and consistent. Unlike in English, Spanish nouns and entities are male or female. To mention one example; "las compañeras" means female "companions" or "partners". In English one have to settle with the un-specific termination. Since my study much focus on gender differences the language barriers have limited my way of expression and the accurate reproduction of the informants' responses.

The interviewing process

I mainly did semi-structured interviews and a few informal interviews. Many of the questions were designed during the process as I grew more aware of the purpose of my research. And also in consideration of the answers I had got in earlier interviews. Further, I used specific questions that related to the informant's organizational position or the position as public authority. The purpose of that was to get more detailed information and to broaden the picture. As Ryen (2004) writes, in using qualitative research, an interview guide can be used in different ways, even if you involve the same themes as in an earlier interview, the approaches often comes out differently. The purpose is to meet the individual respondent/informant and not to compare her with someone else. Open questions give the informant the possibility to influence the agenda and lift important subject contributing to wider perspectives. "All humans residing in and among social groups are the product of those social groups. This means that various values, moral attitudes, and beliefs orient people in a particular manner" (Berg, 2001:140). Especially in ethnological field research the "neutral" position of the researcher has to be considered. Ethnography is a term seemingly used in different ways amongst researchers; but it suits to the conduction of a field research, since the essential meaning aims to understand another way of life from the native point of view. As a way of dealing with the "neutral" position of the researcher during the interviews I chose the strategy of listen and less talking, which also personally seemed natural. Berg (2001) terms this strategy as a feminist orientation, the focus on listening humanize the research process and "insist that the ethnographic researcher become both involved with his or her subjects, and reflexive about his or her own thoughts" (p. 140).

The group interviews took place during two different women's meetings (with

Bartolina Sisa) in provinces belonging to Cochabamba. I asked questions in Spanish and one representative from an NGO who held the meeting translated the questions for the women in Quechua, which is their native language. It was a unique opportunity for me to do this type of group interview because I could get many people's opinions and views at one time. It was also a moment of interaction since they asked me questions in return, including questions about the women's participation in Sweden. An advantage of doing interviews during the informants' natural activities is that the given information can provide another perspective, compared to the more artificial interview situation. The natural environment and the human interactions also make the qualitative field research more idealistic. In conducting group interviews one has to be aware of the risk that the informants might be influenced by the collective and thus give a different answer than in an individual interview (Ryan, 2004). Since I also did individual interviews with women in these reunions, and the responses were similar I find the data being stable.

The communication during interviews tends to be influenced of the structure in the interview (instrument effect) as the involved person's properties (interviewer effect) and the process of interaction (context effect) (Ryan, 2004). A challenge for me making interviews with the women from rural areas was to formulate proper questions that would give me relevant answers. At first I used quite general questions, which I later learned to avoid, since it didn't result in relevant answers. This could be due to either: the difficulty for the woman to relate to these kinds of subjects, a consequence of the interaction between me and the informant, i.e. originating from different contexts, or simply misunderstanding of the questions. I think this was an important insight and experience because it tells about the differences between my interaction with the women in the city and these women from rural areas. As Ryan (2004) writes, the purpose of the semi-structured interview is to try to understand the situation from the perspective of the informant, the academic perspective of the researcher thus is secondary. During my interviews with urban women or women with a longer experience of organizational life I seldom was confronted with these difficulties. At several times I and the informant had agreed on a time limit for the interview, but in the majority of these, we exceeded the time. I experienced this as a respect towards me, and also as an interest and appreciation from their part. Another indication of this was that many of the informants gave me brochures, literature or other written facts about their organization or work. Sometimes I even got presents or invitations to upcoming meetings and events. Many of the women whom I choose to interview were women in quite high positions, being very busy. The outcome of this, in many cases, was that they had quite a hard time to set aside time for an interview. I often had to adapt myself to their agenda which also made it difficult to plan my time. For example many times the interviews got postponed. Their stressful job situation was also many times proved by mobile phones repeatedly ringing. However, my experience of meeting authorities in these contexts was positive and in general I experienced that they had an egalitarian attitude in terms of status towards me.

Observations and interaction

I did four participant observations while attending to different women's meetings. All of them were meetings with Bartolina Sisas with members from different provinces and with different organizational positions. The first meeting was held in the city of Cochabamba. Both men and women attended. The other three

meetings were held in the provinces of Cochabamba and only women were present. Before I attended to the meetings I had expected the interruption of my presence to be a bit uncomfortable. First of all the persons participating in these meetings are all Bolivians, additionally farmers or indigenous, second; I am a young Swedish girl and the reason for my presence at their meeting were initially unknown for them, third: the meetings are held in Quechua (except some written information in Castellano) which I so far haven't learned to speak. Despite of all this I felt welcome, some women asked me from what country I come from, others gave me smiles, some shook hands and saluted. Someone was interested to know if the Swedish farmers also organize themselves. My interaction with the women was facilitated by lunch breaks which gave time for internal communication. Moreover I was introduced to some women by employees in the Organization INCCA, who organized the meetings. The number of women who participated in these meetings was between 40-90. Some of the participants had also brought their young children. It was pretty crowded in the rooms with people sitting on the floor since there was short of chairs and benches. This created a relaxed and humane atmosphere. Element of humor and children's presence, even in some cases breast-feeding, contributed to a feeling of informality. In some occasions coca-leaves were handed out during the meetings, which are used traditionally by farmers and indigenous in Bolivia, and gives energy when chewing them. The picture shows women participating in a workshop of productive initiatives in the peasant central of Lope Mendoza, Municipal of Pocona, Province Carrasco, 23/9 2010



Question of interpretation

My intention in this section is to analyse the interpretation of the collected material and the significance of the researcher in the process of data collection. "This means that the researcher must use her own experiences, her imagination and her intellect in a diverse and unpredictable way in order to achieve its goal of a qualitative approach" (Ryan, 2004:66).

Something I found important during my process in the field was to devote time for

the comprehension of ordinary life of the people in Cochabamba. Especially during the first period it was important for me to understand circumstances in their social, cultural and political context. Therefore I made sure to contact people with whom I could discuss these kinds of issues, for the purpose to grow more sensible and aware of their conditions. I also found it important to establish a friendship with persons in the field, when it was accurate. I definitely think this helped me in the later interaction with the different informants, although with some of them easier than others. Even though making big efforts in getting to know a new field, the researcher's socio-cultural interpretation have an impact on the understanding and the analysis. This is related to intimacy and distance which is important to be aware of. The distance can also give an analytic interval that will be necessary in the role as a researcher. In the process of analysis the understanding of a sentence construction might also change. The interpretation during for example the interview and reading the transcriptions afterwards can provoke a different content (Ryan, 2004). Because of the complex composition of mechanisms that arises during an interview situation, such as; body language, facial expressions, the location itself, various interruptions or disturbances, nervousness, etc. the interpretation of the informant's words will also be affected by all this. In a later context when the words have been put into paper the content can come out clearer, or reverse, as more complicated. While interpreting the transcriptions it is therefore important to keep in mind all these mechanisms which arose during the interview, to avoid creating an entirely new interpretation.

When dealing with ethnographic data the researcher's mission is to compress the collected material. The result and analysis can possibly demonstrate the credibility of a hypothesis, but it cannot actually prove its validity. There are according to Berg (2001) two effective ways of analyzing ethnographic research: inductive content analysis and ethnographic narrative accounts. The second of the two is the predominated in this study and indicate that the researcher must rely on the patterns that emerges from the collected data are more or less clear in itself, to convince the readers of its accuracy. I have sorted the material through different categories, indentifying similar phrases and their commonalities, as well as identifying pattern and relationships. The majority of times I've choose to quote such statements that were frequently occurring in the collected data as to approach the reliability of the contents. This can be explained as 'content analysis' which are techniques for making interference by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages (Berg, 2001). In some cases I've needed to compromise the content to highlight the essence in the quotes, and to make it understandable when translated from Spanish to English. It is important though, as long as it is possible, retain the exact wording used in the statements.

Ethical considerations

This thesis has followed the ethical recommendations of the Humanistic- and Social Sciences research and SIDA's ethical guidelines for service abroad. Before beginning an interview I presented myself and explained the purpose of the study. The way I got in contact with the informants were either through phone calls, meetings, through someone that introduced me to them or by email. I earlier mentioned that I found it important to establish friendship, for the purpose to grow more sensible and aware of circumstances in their social, cultural and political context. This helped me to get sensible for the interpretation of cultural codes and it's limitations as well as opportunities. I tried not to intrude in the informant's

personal sphere, for example, as long as it was possible, not make phone calls to their houses, rather to their office's. I always let the informant decide the location of the interview; since the location can influence the interviewing process it is important that the informant feels comfortable with the surroundings (Berg, 2001).

Before starting with the questions I made sure that their participation was voluntarily and that they weren't obligated to answer the questions if they preferred not to. In some occasions we overviewed the questions - to disclose the contents. I also asked all informants before the interview if it was ok to use an audio recorder and explained that it was for my own purpose, to better remember and understand the content. Nobody seemed to be bothered by this. Something that occurred to me very clear during my field study was that the formality in the Bolivian culture is different from my own. Many of the informants seemed to prefer, or being more used to conversations, rather than structured interviews. In many occasions I was welcome to do the interview the same day, or close in time, even though the interviews often got postponed because of work related issues. After having conducted several interviews I started to notice a trend of behavior in the process of an interview. The interview often began with a more objective narrative response and then turned into a more personal reflective one. This is important to be aware of, because the answers and reflections in the later stage of an interview might be more sensible for the person, hence less suitable for publication. The researcher need to consider the protection of privacy of the participants or informants during the data collection, and to convey this protection to all individuals involved in a study. This becomes especially essential when the thematic concerns vulnerable information that could harm the informant (Creswell, 2003). As Beck (2001) writes; in the end, researchers must define for themselves what is ethical in research. They need to balance how voluntary subjects' participation will be against their perceptions of personal integrity; their responsibility to themselves, their profession and their discipline, as well as the ultimate effects for their informants.

Something that I learned about doing interviews with women from rural areas was the importance of being presented by someone that the women already had knowledge of or that they worked with. This is linked to the importance of confidence in the relationship between the interviewer and the informant. Confidence often requires time, which is problematic while conducting a field study within a certain amount of time; therefore the researcher has to be observant in order to create confidence in the best possible way (Ryan, 2004). At the same time it is necessary to refrain from interaction in a situation of uncertainty.

In the presentation of the material I have chosen to name the informants type of organizational/institutional role. In some cases I've chosen to use "an informant", "a representative" or "a companion of a base organization" and the location of the base organization. In this way the personal integrity is observed.

Presentation of data collection – views on women's political and social participation

"The study of local political processes can contribute to an understanding of how processes at the local level not only reflect larger political processes and national-

level conflicts, but may contribute to them. Although there are dangers in failing to see the larger wood for the local trees; the state has limited reach at the local level in rural areas, and there are also weak horizontal linkages between local communities” (Gledhill, 2000:128). The study of local-level politics should therefore be embedded within wider perspectives on the structures of class domination and other forms of elite power. This part will present the results carried out during the field research in Cochabamba, it has also been complemented by other research and theories reflecting trans-local discourses of women’s representation in organizational and public spheres in Bolivia.

Cochabamba is 74,4% indigenous, the majority of the population are Quechua and Aymara migrants from the highland of Cochabamba. Migrating kinship groups and neighbors formed self-governing organizations in the 70’s and 80’s, called ‘sindicatos’ or ‘unions’ with the purpose to gain legal title to land and to demand access to basic and agricultural services. The base-level sindicatos form municipal-level ‘centrals’ and province-level federations. The members have a strong collective identity, an ethic of shared accountability and strict norms of conformity to the community’s will. Male and female organizations on different levels both meet jointly and separate. Women are particularly active in promoting health and education projects, as well as small-scale family-based economic development (Van Cott, 2008).

The material I now will present has much focus on recent development of these women’s organizations, representing different provinces in Cochabamba. Their view together with other women’s sectors and public authorities active in the city will map out and problematize the social and political participation of women in the changing process especially in the region of Cochabamba.

Patriarchal barriers for women’s social organization

In Bolivia historically the construction of a family is built upon that the man is the domestic provider whilst the woman is the housekeeper. The recent social and economical changes have made it possible for women to work outside the domestic sphere, which in many cases has complicated the family relations such as increased domestic violence. This kind of feminine leadership from a man’s point of view can be considered as provocative (Arnold and Spedding, 2005). The women organized in the provinces of Cochabamba that I interviewed told me about the difficulties that they faced when they initially participated in organizations. Their husbands didn’t allow them to go to meetings, often because of jealousy and fear that they would meet other men, this is also a continuing problem.

“When I went to the first meeting of the central Pocona, the men didn’t let me speak, and they asked me what kinds of things I wanted to claim or say, and why I wasn’t cooking for my children, not even a word they allowed me to speak” she continues: “Therefore, companions, now we have to go and speak our words, we must be present, and it is still very hard work, it’s a difficult path” (Companion from the base organization in Lope Mendoza, Pocona)

“In relation to women I think that we are still far from the process, yes they have accomplished some things, but I remember a phrase that a companion said; for the indigenous it’s been 500 years, for the women it’s been millions of years of patriarchy, here existed a patriarchy before the Spanish arrived” (Representative

of an NGO)

An informant working in an NGO explained that the long history of racist attitudes have contributed to the idea that the women should dedicate herself to her tasks as a mother, as a wife and if she dedicates herself to political participation this means being a bad woman because then she is neglecting what she should prioritize. These are prejudices and attitudes generally derived from the sector of society of women that are independent from class association. Within the social organizations involved in political matters, there is a lack of stressing these issues. They don't plant in the debate that the women shouldn't perform double work, it's something very obvious but nobody says anything.

“If you go to a reunion where they make big assemblies in the tropics, the coca farmers are the most numerous. When the 6 federations decides to make a reunion you see that there are much people, and the women are with their children, and moreover they are tired, they are cooking big quantities of food immense because there are so much people. After the men says; but they don't participate! - Of course how could the women be able to participate? Well some of them manage because they have one child, but others got four children or more, and they have other things to do in the house or else they might not be permitted to go. Then for the men it appears like they are not interested in the politics, - can you imagine!?”
(Representative of an NGO)

The way that Paco and Mamani (2009) write about the machismo being visible in the social organizations is congruent with the experiences I was told by the women. The men pretend to know 'better' than the women and they are better prepared. Further they have more experience of speaking in public, in negotiating and they have domination in the language Castellano. These are mentalities originating from the colonial domination that is still existing and visible in the organizational life. Though, this form of discrimination related to gender is a gradual process that the women more and more are confronting.

“Still the men don't realise the importance of the women sector, and therefore our demands realizes bit by bit” (Leader of the base organization in Tiraque)

“The problem is that we are too afraid to speak and to plant forward our ideas, therefore, companions, what we have to do first is to overcome this fear because despite that we don't speak well, we are living our reality which is what we have to tell about. Even though we don't yet speak Castellano we have to speak in our proper language, even though it is in Ayamara, they have to try to understand our words” (Companion of the base organization in Tiraque)

“We have to overcome our shyness, it's the only way to make them respect our words, we have to speak even though we make mistakes and we have to think about what we do and what is going to happen to us and not only about what happens today ... and we are not going to remain bowed!” (Other companion of the base organization in Tiraque)

The ex. Vice minister of gender in the MAS government argued that the very deeply rooted patriarchy and machismo in the culture and society obviously have a price. But today these roots of patriarchy are being moved, and therefore it is important to emphasize everything that indicates reflection and implementation of

public policies.

The political instrument in the hands of social organizations

The political instrument was legally constructed by various social organizations including FNMCIQB-BS (Bartolina Sisa) in 1995. The political instrument serves as a superior instance of social organizations and is based on the ideology, economics, politics and cultures of the original indigenous communities. The purpose is to accomplish a more humane society and equal rights between men and women. Although some conflicts between different organizations have occurred, the political instrument has implicated new actors in the politics that are nominated and elected from the base organizations. Amongst other things the increased participation of indigenous women in politics was accomplished through the instrument (Paco and Mani, 2009).

“Before we couldn’t meet in women’s organization because we didn’t understand, and we weren’t interested in the problems existing in the country. Now it’s different because we care about what happens in Bolivia” (Companion of the base organization in Tiraque)

“The political instrument makes a difference because it’s ours, now even though we are suppliants, we are participating in the municipal councils and in other positions of the government” (Old leader of the base organization in Tiraque)
(A suppliant is a person, who possesses the second authoritarian position, which means being subordinate the titular, often appointed to men)

“Earlier, women weren’t organized. We didn’t know what kind of demands we could make, what kind of things we could ask for. Since this Evo, the new government we know that we have spaces with rights to occupy. Now we know that it exists laws that give us these rights, because of this, in our ‘ampleados’ (big reunions of leaders) we have to strengthen ourselves and learn about these rights” (Ex. leader and companion of the base organization in Tiraque)

The manager of the organization INCCA later told me that the women now know that the reunions of the women’s organizations are the best opportunity for realizing their demands and also for making their proper decisions. This is important because it’s a collective decision, a common demand, which is different from the demands of the organizations in the city which normally are groups with few participants or participants from the elite. For example the civic committee, which should represent everybody, but in reality they are only about 15 persons. This implicates that within these social organizations there is a democracy in a participating sense, unlike in the city where it exist a formal democracy.

In an interview the differences of participation between women in the city and the countryside were stressed. The informant suggested that the city is a more complicated and complex space which might be a consequence of the lower participation of women, in its real sense. The roles that the women are assuming in the countryside are more direct and concrete. These women often have the role of strict logistic support which is an important strength that is visible in the organizations. Even though it has a less direct political connection of decision making than the men’s organization, it is participative and constitutes a common objective, unlike the women’s organizations in general in the city. It is important though to point out that these arguments are assumptions.

Representation of women's social organizations in the politics

Many of the women's sectors haven't historically had any opportunities of access to the state, nor possibility to understand its functions. Several of these sectors have recently started to approach the state. They have also started to occupy important spaces in the state functions. For different social organizations from rural areas, constituted by peasants and indigenous the process of change and the MAS party has really meant an advance concerning their recognition and organizational participation.

"Since we today elect our representatives, the government has to approve laws and decrees that favour the peasants and not like before when rich men in power didn't pay attention to our demands" (Ex. leader and companion of the base organization in Tiraque)

"Earlier, a peasant women like me didn't reach a position in the departmental governance, before they called us counsellors, but not anymore, everybody from the field is now called Assembly members and there are representatives from all the provinces. The Departmental Federation elected me for my work, all the years of struggle ... I want to continue the capacitating work, and inform my companions who also are more encouraged for continuing organizing themselves" (Leader of the province Tiraque)

"Now we have our own law and female representatives as legislators. Today we are therefore proud of the multicultural state. Different organizations that earlier were discriminated and never taken into account, are now participating. This is why we realized that more than ever, we are united for the defence of the changing process" (Executive secretary of the 6 women's federations in the tropics, coca grower)

Discrimination

The legislation in Bolivia continues to relate to social and ethnic status of individuals. The construction of gender identity is crucial to the quality and access to rights and personal fulfillment. The principle of equality and social justice is constantly violated in the domestic arena and gets socialized in different spheres of public life. The distinction between "citizens of first and second class citizens" according to the identity and characteristic of colonial and patriarchal rule is still visible (Penaranda, 2006). Even though some women at this present are experiencing less discrimination in the organizational life, there is discrimination visible in other kinds of structures. One example is the discrimination between urban women and indigenous. An indigenous leader who also is a council member in Tiquipaya in Cochabamba exemplified this;

"For me, personally, being an authority hasn't been easy. It's different when you speak among companions in the field, compared to when you are inside an office. They don't give you much importance; especially if you have a lack of knowledge of the laws. They look at you like you are of less value than the rest" (Indigenous leader and council member in Tiquipaya)

Women with 'pollera' (a traditional indigenous skirt) have been forced to confront different types of discrimination. Many representatives of social organizations in for example the Assemblies have had difficulties in expressing their political position, as a consequence of lacking knowledge about laws and regulations

(Poco, Mani, 2009). Therefore, for many of these women it's been and still is a tough assignment to be in a public charge. According to some of these women's testimonies their presence in these public spheres though has become less problematic. A reason could be that they are more numerous.

“Earlier there was more discrimination. A woman with ‘pollera’ was not allowed to enter the offices, whereas now we can speak and we can enforce our approaches ... now we work together (men and women) but still do small groups of men exists that don't accept working this way. But these are small groups” (Ex. leader and companion of the base organization in Tiraque)

“Now for the first time in history we have an indigenous president. Women and indigenous are occupying space, and this have created rabidity against many women like the ex minister of justice who was part of the union of domestic workers ... so for many people its really been an offence, that a woman that works with house cleaning could occupy a charge like this” (Representative of a NGO)

An informant from a NGO tells about the reverse situation of discrimination as an unfortunate effect of resent development of participation. From her experience the indigenous, the people from rural areas are discriminating the people in the city. Which is a consequence of that they feel empowered. The majority of the people from the median class, professionals, including her, have supported the government because they thought that it would make the situation better, and that the people from rural areas would gain more inclusion. And more important, that there would be a greater respect among all citizens irrespective of their origin or status, instead she argues that there is a larger gap between the people from the city and those from the countryside.

Organizations – its motivation, and a second chance of education

“The main importance for the unity of the organization of women is to stay intact and not being divided, as happens many times in the organization of our peers (the men in the union). When we're together we can achieve our goals” (Companion of the base organization in Lope Mendoza)

During my observations on different women's reunions in provinces of Cochabamba, it became clear to me that the focus of the meetings are about capacitating and empowering the women. The women's and men's meetings are mostly held separately and contain different subjects and approaches. In the introduction of one meeting of women it was explained that the purpose was to open a joint effort between the peasant women, the City Hall and the NGO “INCCA”. The aim was to develop local production capacities to achieve a comprehensive development zone. The purpose of INCCA is to help with community development based on the people's initiative and support the organizational capacities. For example they arrange classes about capacitating in managing and administrating local production, such as potatoes in the highlands, wheat in the middle areas, milk and vegetables in the lowland valleys.

One of the meetings I participated in was in ‘Lope Mendoza’ which is a sub-central of women. They are the best organized in the central and municipal of Pocona. The principal demand of the women is to strengthen their organization further even though they already are well organized. In ‘Yurak Molino’, which was the first organized sub-central in the municipal of Pocona, the attitude of the

women was much weaker and less motivated. I was told that this is a typical phenomenon when the organization is accustomed of getting support by NGO's which tends to take over the women's own initiative taking. Earlier, when NGOs were active in Yurak Molino, this was the strongest organization in the central Pocona. The leader in this sub-central later became Minister of Justice in the MAS government. The difference is that in Lope Mendoza the women have re-organized themselves, without much help from external organizations and thus become stronger. This is interesting because it tells about the influence that NGOs can bring to the organizations, they have an important role in the empowerment of the women especially in the initial phase of the organizations, but there is a danger in too much involvement since it might increase the passivity of women's own participation. Though, the outcome may vary much between different provinces and its organizations, in Cochabamba and in the whole country.

Further, the reunions are important in the sense that the participants later informs and shares the experiences and information received in the reunions to their companions in the field. Still there are a lot of woman in the field that of different reasons aren't able to participate in reunions, but likewise need to be informed. Many times they also get false information from other sources, therefore the communication with their companions is crucial. The educational approaches in the reunions are also highly relevant for the women's development.

“Personally during these four years I have learned a lot. Earlier I didn't know how to speak, nor to ask questions, I didn't even know how to write my autograph. It has cost me a lot of crying and suffering to accomplish this, it hasn't been easy. But I tell my companions that they have to learn ... we are asking for our rights, and it has to come from ourselves” (Leader of the sub-central Yurak Molino)

“For us this organization has been like a university, a college, a school, in this way we have formed the organization. Because none of us have been professionals, nor graduates or university students – for the lack of economy. The women are always more numerous than men, concerning the opportunity to accomplish or complete studies. But with the multicultural State we have the opportunity” (Executive secretary of the 6 women's federations in the tropics, coca grower)

“We are organizing ourselves to support, to back up our president, because the existing opposition are searching for ways to make our president fall, they accuse him for everything. And whatever happens, like for example a City coup we will mobilize. Not only men are going to be involved in the struggles, the women too. Recently we are organizing ourselves for this reason, here nearby, also in the city the people are moving when there is a mobilization at the national level” She continues: “We are supporting our president because he needs it; it is always like a fundamental pillar, like it was a building and its pillars. We are the cement, the organizations, and if these goes down, so will the president, and the opposition will bury him” (Leader of the province Tiraque)

The picture shows a workshop for women in the peasant sub-central of Yurak Molino in Municipal of Pocona, Province Carrasco 24/9 2010



From farmer to minister

The leader of the sub-central Yurak Molino that later became Minister of Justice in the MAS government was born in a community, Chilijchi, the third district of Pocona in the province of Carrasco. I here choose to call her Evy. Her family was very poor, for example she couldn't go to school in her youth, to become a professional. Evy's father was a clerk in the community. In the community they formed a women's organization, where Evy was elected as a promoter. After that she became a clerk of an organization in a sub-central of women that extended over 20 communities. Soon a provincial central of women were conformed and Evy became a secretary of the women's organizations. The rights of women at that

time were very limited. Based on existing conditions the organization was going well and it made visible that women could make the organization grow. Within this field of communication the members of the organizations started to get to know what the real necessities of the community Yurak Molino were.

After a while Evy and her family started to work with another institution, which concerned relations on the national level. Here they spoke a lot about participation of the peasants, and about local power of men and women. In 1995's elections Evy and her family were thinking how they could participate, because to be elected as mayor or councilman you had to be in a political party or affiliated with one. They were lent an acronym for the "United Left". In this election they managed to get 49 council members and about 5 mayors nationwide. Their colleagues were legitimately elected mayors, and the joy they felt were enormous. The national elections got closer when they were about to choose elected representatives and a president. In 1997 four of their elected representatives entered charges, one of them were the current president Evo Morales. The story now continues with the own words of Evy:

"We were told to go to La Paz to the office of our peasant's deputies, we never imagined this to happen! There were 99 municipal elections and we were given an acronym that is now "Movement for Socialism" MAS, we managed to get a sovereign political instrument for the people. We had never thought that we would become mayors, councilors, ministers, senators. I was elected as departmental counselor in 2000, for the province Carrasco during two periods: 2000 and 2004. From that moment, in 2004 I was convinced that this changing process was not going to halt. In the struggle for this, much blood has flowed, people have died, women have been discriminated – this is not going to be erased from the history. The 20th of January 2007 I received a phone call from our brother President. He told me that I had to go to La Paz. I didn't get it, what I had understood was that there was going to be a reunion, but I didn't know about what, neither that Evo called me for the reason of being part of the cabinet. I never earlier had the possibility to visit the ministers, nor offices in La Paz. This was really a surprise. The media were all over me asking about all responsibilities, people were trying to confront us. A companion told me to get out of there. A gentleman then said to me "I am your chauffeur" I answered that I didn't want any chauffeur and told him to leave. After that a policeman came to me "Miss Minister, from now on I'm your security guard". Similarly I told him to please leave me alone. Really I wasn't comfortable with it. I didn't imagine being three years in the minister position, one year I thought would be enough, because for a woman it's very serious, because I had to abandon my children, leave them in the care of my husband in Cochabamba"

Evy worked as minister of justice in the MAS government until 2009. She told me that she wished for a transformation of the juridical instances so that there would be justice for the poor, to reach social justice. This was her main work. For her, the charge in itself wasn't very important, but to defend the process of change. Today her assignments are about supporting governmental campaigns. She is helping in the municipalities under the title as Departmental Secretary of Integral Human Development, in Cochabamba.

The most difficult thing of being a minister, except from being apart from her children, was the discrimination she was confronted to, the one referring to her as

a 'chola' because of her traditional indigenous clothes. This is something that the power elite according to her have hard to accept. Anyhow, this story isn't an isolated phenomenon in the country and I chose to visualize it because it is in many aspects a beautiful story, but it also provokes some questions, which are considered within the various sections of this presentation of data collection.

Equal exercise of power – a discourse or a reality?

A perception among representatives of NGOs and public authorities is that the 50% of women's participation in politics is more like a symbolic rule, and it is not pursued real participation by women. According to some of them the women in authoritarian positions, within the MAS party, are limited in their decision making. As politically involved it is problematic to oppose the party or the stance of the policy and they first have to respect the decisions of higher positioned colleges.

"In general what's been going on is that women who have been elected must respond to certain forms of decision. These women are not autonomous in their decision making. They must accept being governed by the party's and government's form of structure. Despite that the MAS has claimed to be a political instrument, there are actors within MAS who have stopped adapting this form of structure. For the women involved I think that it has complicated things even more, so yes, the women are present but I don't think they have the same power of decision" (Representative of a NGO)

"If we look at the Assembly members the women obviously reach the 50 -50 as numbers, but in quantity not in quality. Because in reality the majority of the women are suppliants, showing that there still are patriarchal structures that manage the political organizations in the changing process" (Manager of the bicentennial program in Cochabamba)

"The most important changes that the women have accomplished have not been through negotiations between parties or with the government. Indeed if such a possibility would make the women possess more legitimate representation, but there are many limitations on the theme of oppression of women which isn't a subject of debate in the party nor in the government" (Representative of a NGO)

Something that became very clear during the interviews was that women from the city and women from the field related very differently to the women's real exercise of power. A common view is though that the application of the new constitution is under process, and yet the results aren't accomplished. Women in social organizations; the Bartolinas and the "Cocaleras" experience political participation. These are also women's movements that have been "institutionalized" in the state functions in the MAS government, which explains their recognition. Their organizations are supporting the president and argue that he has completed what he promised in the campaign. Women from the city in general argue that the government handles the discourse well but the real participation of women is far from reached.

Which are then, the different references to gender issues in the city versus the field? Obviously the changing process has come to have a larger impact on the women in the countryside since they earlier barely possessed any rights. Now many of them have political influence and strong organizations. Middle-class

women, professionals and public authorities in the city have another point of reference to gender subordination, possibly more related to feminist discourses, as well as a more individualistic approach. This can explain why women in the city have higher expectations on the women's participation proclaimed in the State Constitution.

Obstacles for participation

The first difficulty for a woman in an important charge is according to the President of the city council in Cochabamba, that women are seen as less confrontational and more harmful. Women are in a predetermined position in which they can not complete a role of high importance. The other difficulty is the women's own, because by nature they are more conservative. They try to find solutions of the conflicts. Women are planning their actions before the confrontations and prefer tolerance over confrontations.

"It's a reality that this year the government placed 50 percent females in the ministries, but every time in less complicated ministries. Why not a female government minister, why not a female defence minister? - No, because, of course the women belongs in the areas of human development, within micro companies and these types of ministries" (President of the city council in Cochabamba)

"I really feel used as a woman, the women have entered the municipal councils, but they are starting to get corrupt within the municipals, and why? - Because they haven't got training in leadership, nothing. We, the miners haven't taken any classes either, but the struggles of our companions - with our husbands and unions next to us - we have learned by our experiences. In change, since the Bartolina's haven't got these experiences, they don't know anything. They are easily conquered by other leaders, and they turn to whatever other party in purpose of getting support. Therefore this also contributes to a negative image of the woman, it shouldn't be this way. But who encourage this? - The president, he knows a lot of things, but says nothing, this is the first aspect. Second, when the women are candidates, he should give them classes in capacitating, leadership, policy formation, but there is nothing." (Mine worker)

"What we have to realize as women is that we are not enough women, we are not enough leaders. We are entering positions or charges without experience. I tell you that it's for the reason to fill the application form or the spaces that exists. This is because we are obligated, but I think that we have to change this, as women. And as women we need to be good examples and work for the representation of ourselves and for participation. Not like those who are participating because of obligation, but of experience with a purpose, like 'I will reach this, I will do this'. With this intention I will leave this position, and not because of obligation" (Indigenous leader and council member in Tiquipaya)

An informant tells about the prejudice that the men are professionally better in some areas, for example in the military. On the other hand it is also an assumption within the universities, and the structures of society. All technical directors are men, those who design roads and make the major infrastructure are men. The women are teachers, sociologists, psychologists, which imply another type of work, so there are many dimensions that are not only political but also social.

I was told about an example where a NGO realized a project with some women in

the south part of Cochabamba, based on the idea of economic independency of the women and stressing the idea that the women could construct their own business. When NGOs with a more existentialistic view are meddling in social organizations, there is a risk that they with or without intention, are contributing to the strengthening of the traditional role of the woman. The intention in this case was to encourage the autonomy of women but in reality they were doubling the work of the woman because the woman didn't quit her daily activities. Therefore she had to work in the domestic sphere as well as outside. Another effect is that women delegate domestic tasks to their daughters, or to the grandparents, with the consequence that they become mothers again, taking care of their grandchildren too. Therefore when economic autonomy isn't accompanied with a discourse, a political sense of questioning the patriarchal family and the gender roles inside the house, or at least plant a democracy of gender roles inside the house and let the men take responsibility too, they end up worsening criteria's of exploitation of the women.

Social movements: Autonomy versus Institutionalization

Social movements in general stands in opposition with the actual policy's of the State. In Bolivia, with a government that partly represents and supports social movements, some of these movements have been institutionalized. One example is "Las Bartolinas" which now is able to use a more formalized political instrument to achieve their demands. In the last decades the indigenous movements have expanded in large scale. This is much due to international financing and assistance and actors that supports and are part of the indigenous movements; academic intellectuals, politically traditional represents, NGOs and political parties that proclaims indigenous tendencies (Arnold and Spedding, 2005). Nevertheless a very central theme of the social movements in Bolivia is weather institutionalization or autonomy is the most profitable in the purpose of strengthening local organizations and rights of including peasants and indigenous as well as women.

"I think that the benefaction of this constitution is the establishment of alternatives spaces. Then the women will be able to participate in these spaces which the actual constitution permits. I think that the women have been barriers of the creation of autonomous spaces outside any kind of state or institutional subordination, traditional or economical. I think this is something very good! ... The women are obviously not prepared for this institutionalization that is fundamentally created for men and has a macho perspective, being vertical, authoritarian and corrupt. Because I think the women have another perception of the exercise in decision making" (Leader of the Water Coordination)

"The actual strategy of the government, which is that the participating women don't need to do anything for assuming a charge or a position in the state, is contra productive ... the primal condition for electing a women into a public charge is that she doesn't speak, doesn't criticize, doesn't question, doesn't make any initiatives, from my experience this is what it is like. For example I could not be part of the government, they removed me, just because, I don't fall, I am very critical and these kinds of people are not suitable for the government" (Leader of the Water Coordination)

Benello (1992) writes that the organizational structures in the complex industrial society, is one of the largest sources for limiting peoples action, it's all embedded

in the economic-technical structures which in many ways holds an inhibitory function. He writes “change must strike at the heart of this, and for this to happen, it is not enough to agitate and lecture. People must experience the implications of a different ideology. Thus rather than seeking to tinker with existing organizations, since it is the structure and ideology which must be changed, it is better to build from scratch” (p. 22). Here it’s necessary to present a personal reflection. It needs to be considered that women entering political charges might actually also change the patriarchal structures, even though it’s a long process with minimal results. If women continue to be excluded from these areas, how then will it ever get better? Although it is possible that the way the MAS government handles the issues isn’t idealistic. In the Bolivian context, maybe institutionalization and autonomy works best together – as compliments to one another. Another informant expressed the importance of autonomy like this:

“I think the only way to guarantee these big processes of change, are the social movements; groups of debate, when they are independent from the government. It’s the same as the relations between men and women, if we don’t have independence, how can we speak about thoughts, feelings and wishes. It can be compared with, as if some social movements, no, all of them, had been married to the government. How can you question the superior leader of the ‘Cocaleros’!? Well, that is our situation! It has got a great impact on the situation that the people from the social movements now are in the government. There are not so many marches, not so many mobilizations as before. It is more complicated; it’s like when you get married, you start to idealize your husband and then you don’t know if you are sleeping with the enemy” (Representative of a NGO)

The approach of ‘equality of opportunities’ in the State Constitution

According to an informant who is councillor in the city council of Cochabamba, the State Constitution has advanced much concerning equality of opportunities. The theme of equality for the women and their demands has been introduced in the whole Constitution, i.e. there is no specific chapter about the issue and it’s rather transversal in every way. There are for example elements that allow demands of public instances to visualize the women and allow more projects related to them. Although this is written within the Constitution and the application of the same still face many obstacles. There are also many feminist Bolivian women that still question the Constitution. The ex. Vice minister of gender in the MAS government argues that there haven’t been any initiatives in gender-related institutions in the country. There has to be legislation, but it also requires an operational state that follows up the implementation of this normative framework of these policies. She means that it is possible to construct a framework within the concept of de-patriarchalisation, which indicated inclusion and restructuring of power relations that oppress and exclude women. Now there are vice ministry named ‘equality of opportunities’ instead of a vice ministry of women or a vice ministry of gender. The argument by the government is that it is not required only that the vice ministry work on gender in public policy, hence it is required that the entire state, the entire cabinet work on these issues. The cabinet therefore consists of equally half men, half women, but according to the ex. Vice minister of gender there is no guarantee that this cabinet and the presence of these women in the cabinet possess the sensibility and capacity to implement equality of gender in public policies.

Complementarity – vice ministry of de-colonialization

The old Andean worldview is based on a notion of symmetrical duality; the principle of which man and woman form a whole, each incomplete without the other. As industrialization and modernization took part in the Andes, the principle of duality was lost. As rural communities became more connected to the urban system it meant a male dominated Spanish society which displaced the Andean order. Further it has been argued that the Spanish and later the ‘mestizos’ (people of mixed origin: native Bolivian and Spanish origin) introduced violence and perverted the traditional customs of respect between Andean husband and wife (Barrig, 2006).

In the new State Constitution in Bolivia this Andean world view have re-gained attention and the ambition is to go back to these principles. The councillor in the city council in Cochabamba told me that since the process of change, there is a certain critic within some instances of women’s organization that concerns the gender issue, referring to it as being external. The vision of complementarity, which herein from the Andean couple hasn’t improved the process of equality and equity. Though, it means a different cultural context, where the old traditional customs of the ‘cachawarmi’ are being acclaimed. The approach to welfare and harmony between men and women isn’t improved since the customs’ of the native people weren’t equal either. The accomplishment of welfare means reinstalling and restoring harmony, but as long as women form a second category this is not possible.

“I say it’s interesting the complementarity, but I questioned this a lot because we also speak of the complementarity in unequal conditions, i.e. in a relationship of subordination. According to me, if the merits of this complementarity are not questioned, it is a concept that doesn’t reach the bottom. The bottom is the relationship of subordination between men and women regardless of what culture is. There are just varying levels of subjugation and submission and the relationship between them have their own characteristics depending on the culture” (Ex. Vice minister of gender)

The same is also stressed by Harris (in; Barrig, 2006) The ‘couple’ is the unit of analysis that identifies the roles of husband and wife and also a normative and organizational element of the community life. But the actual relations between men and women as distinct social groups fail to get problematized because of the focus on the couple.

“I think that the problem is something more profound. We have a colonial mentality, I know that this is an obstacle for advancing. We have a patriarchal mentality, it is embodied in all public spheres, even in the ‘Bartolinas’ and with the women in the city” (Manager of the bicentennial program of Cochabamba)

Within the new vice ministry of de-colonialization there is a unit of de-patriarchalisation, these instances within the Ministry of Culture, has to identify elements helping the political participation of women not only in elections, but also at the formation of units in the government and in the municipalities. According to the ex. Vice minister of gender it’s not the same concept of de-patriarchalisation that feminist’s movement and intellectuals in the global world have constructed, working with the relations of subordination between men and women. An informant from a NGO and who also work with the concept “female

community” exemplified a consequence of the complementarity approach:

“Today this complementarity is a vertical hierarchy, the men on the top and the women at the bottom, for example in some communities the supreme authority is the ‘Jilacata’ which is equal to president, but not president in the way that we imagine. The Jilacata who is the supreme authority of a community is a person elected rotational ... it is not allowed to choose who ever person, it has to be someone exemplary. The problem is that when the Jilacata is elected, his wife becomes the ‘Mamatalla’ who is the female authority. She is not elected, but she is the authority because she is the wife of the Jilacata” (Representative of a NGO)

The idea of the ‘feminist community’ is that the representation of authorities in the community doesn’t necessarily need to be a couple. The significance of a ‘community’ here refers to every kind of community in the society: urban, rural, cultural, political etc. The ‘Mamatalla’ could also be a lesbian or the ‘Jilacata’ a gay, it doesn’t matter, what is important is that they get elected legitimate and represents the people of the distinct community. If you don’t have a husband it’s not possible to be elected, therefore within this concept is the normative obligation of heterosexuality. The complementarity needs to be horizontal and recognize the realities and needs of the men and women in their proper community.

Stigmatization of Feminism

The representative of the NGO “IFFI” told me that an important thing for women is to participate in decision-making positions. There are many decision making women within MAS that aren’t sensible for the issues of women. Merely they are accomplishing tasks directed by the party. She therefore stresses the importance of working in parallel with women from different sectors and create intercultural dialogues; It can be the areas of capacitating on one hand, and on the other, working with the theme feminism according to their own experiences. The problem is that the women from rural areas don’t want to relate to the concept feminism since they are afraid of the discrimination that yet exists in the society, even though they are doing feminist actions and they are women defending women’s rights. It is therefore important to clarify in what way these woman are going to work with these themes. It has to be within their culture, within their own context, and with their own reflections of gender.

Werbner (2005) writes that ‘third world women’ sometimes reject the label ‘feminism’ because it opens them up to the accusation of being sell-outs. Resistance may herein in the fear that feminism actually demands a transformation of the social order, which also means a resistance against men. Another reason for the resistance of the feminist discourse could be that it has been more opportunistic and methodological that it really is.

“I think that women in general don’t verbally express the term feminism, but their claims are feministic. They take action against violence, they claim their rights to decide how many children they want to have. They claim equal salary for equal jobs, they claim their right to be recognized in their home sphere, in their community, in the street and in their political participation. These are flags that have been raised for feminism for over 100 years. But clearly, since the feminism has been divided politically as a political discourse in the west, the discourse amongst indigenous has meant a denial of these values. But the claims of the

women are as valid as the claims of democracy of the men. There are different forms of expressions” (Manager of the Juridical Office for the Defence of Women)

Critics of elected authorities and their legitimacy

There are some serious concerns about recent “democratic” election of public authorities in Bolivia. Various informants confirmed the lack of respect of votes in elections, contributing to the violation of people’s rights. There have been authorities, elected by popular votes that later on have been dismissed. There is a lack of transparency, which is very serious. Therefore there are women, according to an informant, earlier supporting the changing process, who are opposing these violations and have lost confidence in the governmental policies.

The way of being elected to a political charge as a woman is sometimes controversial. Another informant told about a situation when a leader from a women’s organization was about to be elected to a departmental charge in Cochabamba. It concerned a union of domestic workers, which is a sector that always has been excluded from political influence. Since the policies of the new government came into action people from social movements have been assigned into different charges of public authority. This is sometimes problematic because there is difference of the logic of hierarchy within the unions and the government. The story tells that a companion from the union of domestic workers approached a leader from MAS who had the responsibility to choose a represent of the organization. He simply said to the woman “you will present yourself as a candidate” he convinced her and she accepted. He also offered her money for presenting herself as a candidate. This caused some troubles for the other companions because they didn’t get the opportunity to be part of the process and they never choose her as a candidate. Therefore they didn’t accept her neither the financial support that she brought for the organization. This example shows the importance of democratic courses of action within these social organizations. It is not accepted that a woman that is going to represent them is elected by the society or other institutions.

The informant also stressed the problem with corruption amongst public authorities, which is linked to the merits of which people are elected. Manipulation of female authorities is a consequence of lacking leadership training and education amongst these authorities. The representatives need to be elected on the basis of personal qualities and not on the basis of ethnicity.

“According to me there has to be a more profound reflection that recognizes that there might exist indigenous people that can commit corruption. And not only the indigenous heritage will change everything, and not because who ever woman takes the presidential charge, the women are going to be free, for me this reflection is missing” (Representative of a NGO)

“The mining women have always been protagonists of this country. They have been protagonists of the changing process with the intention to overthrow the capitalists and neoliberals. The women have played an important role, always in the frontline. Currently this really make me sad, it makes me very sad for many other companions who the government haven’t taken into account. They don’t know who really were the ones fighting for democracy in this country and for the process of change.”(Mine worker)

“Our lives have been very tough, and it is necessary to learn how to defend ourselves, to learn how to fight. We have always been doing this ever since the Spanish, and even before. But the Bartolinas are those who will be named and I think that bringing forward their names is an offence ... because many of the Bartolinas in high positions are egoistic, they want to be the superiors, in charge, but it shouldn't be like this, the task for the organization Bartolina Sisa is to fight for everybody ... for the sake of women we need to have this conviction that the fight is for all of us” (Mine worker)

The price of dedication

In order for women to participate in politics and organizational life it often means sacrifices of different kinds. The priority of organizational involvement might for example result in a lower priority of the family.

“I should be resting at home, without going out, but it is not possible. When a person has a conviction and has been aware of class related issues, there is no going back. For this reason I have an urge to go out on the street and do whatever, one has to do something, because if we don't, we will die of hunger. More than anything it is for our children, yet we don't know what kind of life that is waiting for them. But at least, as long as it is possible, we have to do something” (Mine worker)

“I dedicate myself exclusively to the organization, there is no time for my personal matters, really I have abandoned my family totally, I live by myself ... sometimes I regret being a long time in the organization. If I had children and a husband I would probably only coordinate within the family” (Indigenous leader and council member in Tiquipaya)

“Personally I have taken a lot of responsibility for my organization. Until this moment I don't have any children. I respect very much my organization and it includes a lot of work. But I hope that I one day will have the opportunity to have a family. We all have the right to have a family, but it is a personal matter, it's up to you. It really makes me sad though to see leaders with their children that suffer. We bring them as mothers, as fathers, we are their prior responsibility. We can not neglect the children, because they are always in a need of affection. Maybe one day when I have completed my mission I'm thinking on having a child” (Executive secretary of the 6 federations in the tropics, coca grower)

Visions and demands for the future

Even though there now are social organizations, and advances within them, the first thing the members demand is the strengthening of the organizations and a better recognition of their rights. This is an influence from 'La Central Obrera Boliviana' which historically is the strongest organization of workers in the country. The most important affiliate were the mine workers union, more recently it brings together workers from various branches of industry and public services as well as consultation with many peasants' and indigenous leaders.

The Manager of the bicentennial program in Cochabamba, explains that the value of the Bolivian woman connected to the 'Chauvinism' (similar to patriotism) has a special meaning. An explanation could be that the original cultures of Quechua and Aymara have been very strong in defending their struggles against the colonial rule. It is likely that these values now follow by multiplying itself in everything

that is connected to the process of change. The women are continuing their struggle of gaining space through their social and political organizations. They are continuing the search for a unity of the different groups of women that are struggling for a change. She argues that the indigenous and the urban women are from now on seeking common points and a balance, where no one will overlap the other. Their struggle is about better conditions. The ex. Vice minister of gender has a similar approach:

“There is a growing movement rooted in the social organizations. They are now in a process that I say is interesting because initially there has been a fracture, a gap, between what is the women’s movement of the middle class, intellectuals, and indigenous women’s movement originally peasants. However the alliance can be constructed. I think there is an approach that is starting. There is an interesting dialogue. For that dialogue the academic women contribution is fundamentally important” (Ex. Vice minister of gender)

Another important general purpose of organizing is to create stability for coming generations. There are also more concrete demands such as reducing illiteracy, and demands of support directed to the women in the organizations.

“I hope that the support of this changing process will last and continue 15 or 20 years more ... The young people that are working will see the whole change and enjoy it, because we will be old, not able to work much politically nor organizational, but there are many people that are preparing themselves” (Leader of the province Tiraque)

“What we are doing/accomplishing is not for ourselves, nor for the parents, nor for the egoism, it’s for our children, it’s to construct the future” (Companion of the base organization in Lope Mendoza)

“I think that the advances will accelerate, anyhow I always say that the indigenous in this country, and the women, they are not going back to the house. They will remain in public management, because from the knowledge of public management access it will be difficult for them to return to the house, even though if there will be a change of government, the situation of the woman will be the same” (Ex. Vice minister of gender)

“I think that within the next 10 years there will be a female president in the country. And I think that we are all preparing ourselves for this. From now on what we have to do is to speak with the young people. There is no reason for speaking with the voters who are 25 years and over, they already have a way of thinking. We need to be in the schools ... this is the century of the women, no question about it. For sure it will take more time to reach the high positions of power, but it is the century of the woman ... In Latin America the seeds are planted and the harvest has begun” (President of the city council in Cochabamba)

Demands of different women’s sectors in civil society

The 11th of October is the Bolivian women’s day. At this day, for the first time, year 2010, the City council in Cochabamba arranged a congress with a wide range of representatives from different women’s organizations and institutions from the civil society. The President of the city council made the following statement:

“This session is a tribute to the woman that has fought in Cochabamba, to everybody that is present, all of you representing an institution. It’s for the honour of what you have accomplished until this day, but also the strong commitment to continue these principles, the principles of life, of a woman that not only listen but also hear, that not only watch but also observes. This woman that every day intends to arrive to her home with a smile on her face, even though behind her is a whole graveyard of sadness. Because this is the value, this is the strength of which we know her, this strength that doesn’t fall, this strength of the woman ‘cochabambina’, the valuable woman cochabambina.”(President of the city council)

This initiative opened up for an encounter between the civil society and elected authorities, an opportunity for different women’s sectors to stress their demands. It shows the attempt to work for a community oriented to equality and equity of gender. It is an indication of that the theme of gender equality isn’t a marginal issue in Cochabamba, where the different situations of women also must be part in the construction of the equal society. It is a challenge that involves working together, and to have a political will, it is especially essential within the two instances that make the municipal government, the executive and the legislative. In order to approach equal participation it is crucial to visualize the benefications that the civil society receives from the municipal government. Almost all demands of the different women’s sectors pointed at the importance of clarification of budgets and its more fair distribution. A general fear is that the promises otherwise only stays rhetorical. The director of the NGO IFFI stressed the importance of defining the oration of that charter (to meet the framework of the autonomic process in the country) to guarantee a presence of every representatives of various women's organizations in Cochabamba - for the insurance that the organic content of the letter responds according to constitutional principles. These principals have also been the result of the struggle of women, and they can guide a municipal management that serves the equity and gender equality. In order to advance effectively in these challenges it is essential to work in a coordinated way as well as forming concrete agendas.

In general the demands coming from feminists organizations, including NGOs, and public institutions were oriented at gender focused issues, considering equality in the areas of for example advertising and media, domestic work, areas of social control and health, work against violence and discrimination and approval of international human rights. The demands of the social organizations were in general more directed at specific demands stressing better conditions of women in different areas, such as; construction of markets, consider effects of the environment and transportation, visualization of mine workers and women from peri-urban areas, economic development and revaluation of the domestic workers.

Notable was that many of the invited representatives of social organizations are women still excluded from any kind of public intervention. The council members responsible for this event were, not very surprisingly, women. This shows their awareness of the social complexity that the women in Cochabamba constitute. Many of the women also showed a gratitude for being invited. I noticed that there weren’t any representatives of the ‘cocaleras’ or “bartolina sisa”. One reason could be that they already are empowered and active in politics and the government, or they weren’t considered because their base organizations mostly appears outside the city of Cochabamba, i.e. the provinces and in the region of

Chapare. Since this was something that I noticed first in a later stage, I have not had the opportunity to investigate the issue any further. Although a conclusion of my own is that it might be an indication of the distance between the different women's sectors, a distance that they, themselves, are trying hard to diminish – between the women's movement of the middle and lower class, intellectuals, and indigenous women's movement originally peasants.

So, what will come out of this initiative? As one of the participants formulated it: *“let's hope that our demands won't get tied up in a black plastic bag and thrown in the garbage”* The realisation of the demands indeed requires coordination and communication between the authorities of the municipal government and the different sectors of the civil society. This congress on the Bolivian women's day has opened up a dialogue which definitely must be seen as a step in the right direction towards equal participation of men and women.

Summary; the changing process in the perspective of gender has a different meaning for different social actors in Bolivia. For some women, especially indigenous and peasants, it has meant and means a big change in relation to their recognition in public spheres and organizational life. There have been important advances achieved by women's movements and women's organizations during the 90's, expressed in the new State Constitution in accordance with regulations and social policies. But there are also a lot of women that don't experience any advances, which much has to do with the governments focus on strengthening the social and political situation of indigenous and peasants. There is also a lack of implementation of gender issues in the government and institutions which I will discuss in the analysis. The structures of domination and inequalities of gender persist in the social, political and economical spheres in the country. Logics of patriarchy are deeply rooted in the society ever since the colonialization of the country, and even before that, visions of equality were controversial. Therefore the struggle of Bolivian feminists seems to be in accordance with the 'postcolonial feminism' indicating challenges of dominant patriarchal ideologies. Struggles are directed against the postcolonial state as well as against the western interests that contributes to its postcolonial status. The context gets further complicated since there is a gap between different female actors in the society concerning working with feminist strategies, and whether to agree with the policies of MAS or not. The gap is especially visible between women in the city and women from rural areas. The female actors appear as differentiated islands formulating their demands based on their diverse socio-political context and experiences. This is also why female authorities in public spheres don't represent women in general, rather representing their own companions in which they have been formed.

Analysis

Regarding the long term colonial exploitation of Bolivian society, is an urgent rise of equal participation of women and men in politics possible, when the women recently have started to gain recognition in the patriarchal postcolonial society? Or is the actual attempt of re-establishment of harmony and welfare in the country primarily focused on acceptance of indigenous cultural practise and national autonomy, similar to the pre-colonial society, not profoundly taking into account gender divisions? Is it possible to achieve these values without the accordance to over half of the population, i.e. the women?

Could it be that women's separated positioning and continuing disagreement or

oppression against each other also prevent the feminist prosperity? Maybe some personal convictions need to become a lower priority, in the attempt to answer the question; how can women gather collectively in order to fight against their common subordinated position in the patriarchal dominated society?

In this section of analysis I will discuss these questions with the help of some articles of social science raising these issues in the country. The articles were published in a book in June 2010.

The importance of de-patriarchalisation

As Uriona Gamarra (2010) concludes; it is possible to affirm that there has been significant progress in the formulation and recognition of women as political, economic, social and cultural actors. However, this process has not recognized the principle of de-patriarchalisation as a pillar of the transformation process. From the political focus this could give an opportunity of effective advance of the life of women and the transformation of power-relations and subordination. There is a necessity of an implementation of the de-patriarchalisation in the constitutive part of the political process that Bolivia is undergoing. Women claim the fact that it isn't possible to face de-colonialization without simultaneous advance in de-patriarchalisation. Because if it doesn't, it risks a reconfiguration of new notions of power and redistribution of the governed norms in both public and private spheres, which exclude women. In the presentation of data collection of my field work I stressed some informant's arguments about the doubtful legitimacy of some female indigenous leaders in public spheres. Because of their inexperience and patriarchal oppression that they are exposed to, it's hard for them to advance in decision making as well as becoming fully accepted authorities. Even though the transformations within the state and its institutions permit new opportunities of leadership, these examples show a reproduction of women's subordination which has created new complications. In some occasions it even has worsened the production of 'the woman' as inappropriate for these positions of power.

The reasoning about facing the debate of de-patriarchalisation needs to consider the notions and constructions concerning the individual and collective. It is necessary to find answers from the collective, - its rules and procedures (Uriona Gamarra, 2010). For the articulation of the needs of women it is crucial that women in public authorities and women from rural areas are deliberating and creating alliances with their organizations. The merit on which a woman of social organizations is occupying a position of power is not individual, rather collective, representing her own companions from the movement. For the sustainability of the processes of change it is therefore important to work on the empowerment of women within the organizations. As the ex. Vice minister of gender in the government of MAS pointed out, one have to consider the individual and the collective empowerment of the women, because there is a gap between what is individual and collective in the vice ministry of 'equality of opportunities'. When the rights of women are damaged collectively, the individual rights are still preserved, therefore in the construction of policies women's individual rights should be subordinate the collective rights. This bias that she stresses is important because it's a step towards a more united struggle for women's recognition, hence it makes the woman less vulnerable and exposed to individual oppression. As I pointed out earlier, though, the relation to collective rights versus individual rights has different characteristics depending on women's different contexts. Urban women's closer relation to feminist discourse possibly gives them a more

individualistic approach. While indigenous and peasant's social organizations are forming collective strategies to strengthen their organization as well as their community. More individualistic approaches concern for example the right to sexual choice or fighting against media's reproduction of femininity. These are issues that go beyond political frameworks in the country, nevertheless it acquires attention.

To face the missing legitimization of gender perspectives, an agenda should be addressed in agreement with the various manifestations of civil society. The agenda should identify a plan of proposals of a deconstruction of the patriarchal order forced in the country (Uriona Gamarra, 2010). In this way, different women's organizations, possibly could create and build consensus from the recognition of diversity and plurality. This would allow the formation of a difficult but fruitful framework. The agenda of the women's organizations and movements that Uriona Gamarra presents, have so far planted two central perspectives; 1) to generate proposals for the inclusion of the gender approach and women's rights established across central laws, 2) the generation of specific legislative proposals to ensure the validation of exercise of the rights of women. Moreover, they have constituted an unavoidable challenge that this issue is addressed as a responsibility of society as a whole, and not an issue exclusively addressed to women and their organizations or movements. These are examples of the force that the women's social movements have constituted in the process of institutionalization, within this process of change.

Alternative structures

The force of social organizations in the institutionalization process has been discussed by Hasenfeld (1992). He argues that a commitment to Collectivist governance in the organization established on a base of local support has a tendency to better hold together the organization existing in a threatening environment. Though, it can make the growth and expansion difficult, since it familiarizes actors. That is why heterogeneity is an important aspect if the organization wants to serve a diverse community population. Serious treatment of social movement organizations may help to piece together the puzzle of creating truly revolutionary social change that address basic needs. The heterogeneity of social organizations and movements in Bolivia together stresses different issues and demands reflecting the diverse population in the country. This is also why social movement's are so important, which has also been confirmed with the creation of the political party MAS. But as we have seen, MAS also has a tendency to familiarize actors. Again, that is why there is a social need of movements that continues to visualize and stress the plurality of social conditions. This is also the strength that Bolivian women possess. Despite all the weights on their shoulders, they continue to rise – pushing forward a sustainable development. They have introduced new human qualities in the public sphere, raising the values associated to motherhood as central for shaping the wider order of political community. Women are struggling for the unitary conviction in the defence of their children, family and society.

The leader of the Water Coordination argued in the interview, that the political and organizational independence of the social movements was the strength of the changing process. The autonomous and conscious role in the practice has failed to deliver its strength and decision making in the institutionalization process. Instead the women go back to be governed in this new government. In view of this, it is

important to make reflections about what the autonomy means for women as well as address the characteristics of their social movements. As earlier stressed, within the social organizations, principally in rural areas, there is democracy in a participating sense, unlike in institutions more frequent in the city where a formal democracy is prevalent. The participatory democracy within social organizations can be argued as being a result of the support coming from the government, including NGOs with the focus on empowerment and capacitating of the women and their organizations. This might in turn explain the big support of MAS within these organizations. On the other hand, involvement of principles and ideologies of NGOs as well as state-policies might also set back the women's own progresses within their organizations.

As I emphasized earlier in the theoretic framework, "popular" shouldn't be equated with any particular political identity, cultural content or specific community. Instead it is a plural identity constituted through different common channels shared by the networks of participating social sectors. This means a need for a sensible approach when formulating arguments about autonomy and its impact on social organizations, especially in Bolivia including other Latin American countries, where the diversity of the population is enormously big. What also needs to be highlighted is that the demands of the women and their view on participation, including in what social and political spheres they are participating is fundamentally different in the eyes of a rural woman and a woman from middle class or a professional academic.

Towards a common agenda

Much of what has been produced by feminist movements is revealed in the line of confrontations where at least three characteristics are visible; 1) the institutionalized feminism, which for example refers to new social actors within public spheres, such as Bartolina Sisa, 2) the more radical feminism, searching for a new social order, and 3) the autonomous feminism, which are groups autonomous from politics, for example NGOs or groups not yet recognized within politics. Many of these visions have been formed within diverse spaces. As Mokrani (2010) argues "I think it's important to open this internal and wide debate among those who are willing to really consider the struggle for the various demands of women as a political task of the process" (Mokrani, in Wanderley 2010:13). Indeed in practice it is difficult to build a common agenda with women who come from different political ideologically trajectories and in a climate of confrontation. Mokrani argues that the difficulties of this common agenda often have less to do with these ideological distances and more to do with different party loyalties. What she means, according to my interpretation is that the ideologies of feminism, although there are different degrees of feminism, in reality address to all women. When feminism get's associated to party politics it tends to steer the ideologies in a certain direction, as for example has happened with the MAS governments' vision of complementarity. A woman that sympathizes with the government possibly also emphasizes with the complementarity, or she might be persuaded to do so. This is where the different groups collide – for example the institutionalized feminism and the autonomous feminism. There are many limitations on the theme of oppression of women which isn't a subject of debate neither in the party nor in the government.

For the ability of finding common points of reference amongst the diverse women in the country, despite their difference of class and ethnicity, it is indeed necessary

to visualize and articulate this diversity of women. It is important to make the distinctions because it helps to understand the complexity and stress women's demand according to this division. The great challenge is to make the effort to articulate and achieve intercultural understanding. At the same time all of the different agendas have been constructed out of different needs, demands, and from its own dynamics which certainly has made the process of inclusion slower.

In accordance with the argument of Escobar (in Wanderley, 2010) the advance of articulation needs to identify some common points of reference that are convenient for everyone. It is also necessary with instances that are institutionalized to make the citizenship a reality in relation with norms and laws in the legislation that in fact constitute important advances. Nevertheless, the discourse of achieving inclusion goes beyond the existing structures of power, which means questioning these power-relations. But it shouldn't be accepted with a monopolistic voice that defines the process of change, since it undermines other perspectives driven from civil society. Critic should always be present for the process to follow the direction of the actors and the citizens, where it also is important for women to regain space or a more authoritative voice in this process. A combination of institutionalization and spaces of autonomy thus seems to be idealistic, as long as the State is sensible for demands and transformation raised within the society. The government also needs to present a clearer political positioning on how to deal with the issues of gender and then move the debate on where to put the theme in this institutional structure.

Beyond politics

The problems related to gender are not only a matter of politics, but a matter of social, cultural and economic development. The feminist struggle many times goes beyond politics, for example the sectors of education and health which are almost invisible within party politics. An informant argued that the traditional mentality about the mother being associated with the ethnical is still visible, where the 'Pachamamá' (mother earth) is the woman and also the symbol of fertility that give us life. This logic has emerged from the Church which doesn't easily allow visualization of contradictions. One of the most controversial subjects in Bolivia is abortion, which is prohibited. The choice of sexuality is an issue of struggle within some un-political feminist organizations, and it appears invisible within the State constitution. There are quite a lot of feminist organizations in Bolivia that are non partisan, which haven't faced any recognition in the process of change. It makes their position problematic, since their claims don't receive legitimate response.

Another serious issue that the women are confronting is the violence. The conditions of women need to be visualized in a concrete manner, especially when it comes to the violence against them. They are exposed to physical and mental violation in the domestic sphere, in their workplace and in the state institutions. The incorporation of women in the state apparatus or in the institutions is certainly not enough, because it doesn't succeed to confront the violence that women are exposed to. What are the opportunities in purpose to challenge these problematic? In order to work with the stigmatization of domestic work and women as traditional bearers of the culture I argue that it is crucial to work with the men's references. This was also stressed by some informants during the interviews. There are plenty of women's organizations working with the empowerment of women, but where does the men enter the picture? It's a bit like

working with integration; if we want the immigrants to get integrated we also need to work with the already integrated peoples attitudes and references. Although like one of the informants told me, “When we try to initiate the men in capacitating in cooking, the men only laugh at us”. The same is also current concerning the women’s work spheres, such as in the markets, where the women are exclusively active. The men don’t want to enter these areas because they find it humiliating. This tells us about a society of work tasks that are extremely divided between genders. But does it confirm that it needs to be static?

As I was told by another informant, the nuclear family in especially some areas of Cochabamba is transforming. This is a consequence of large emigration of poor women from southern areas of the city to other countries in the search for better conditions. Many of their husbands are therefore left to take over the domestic work, which implicate “the roles of the woman”. Are these men simply going to accept being stigmatized and possibly humiliated? They are already disadvantaged as being poor and perhaps peasant. With all the consequences entailed, this transformation of the nuclear family might be a light in the tunnel for the women’s ‘pre-determined’ position towards a change of the men’s disparaging view on ‘women’s work’. This is a relevant issue for further investigation in the light of gender roles, though, not intended to get analysed further at this very point.

Another important task, stressed by some informants, is to communicate with the young people. Many times the youngsters don’t possess firm opinions and amongst them it is possible to achieve change. Many of the Bartolina’s are striving for constructions of the organizations so that coming generations will be able to take over and develop the organizational work. The State needs to consider establishment of programs effective for different generations, where the population get opportunities to develop their potentials. The women should also be able to bring or leave their children within these spaces. The lack of security agencies or social relief agencies is still a problem existing in Bolivia, as in many other post-colonial countries.

Multicultural incorporation in politics

How far do the multicultural policies of the Bolivian State have capacity to reach? Eastern women, or women from other indigenous communities like Ayllus, Yuracares, or the Yuquis, haven’t yet become recognized in the changing process. Nevertheless they play an important role in the striving for welfare and recognition of the different ethnic groups in the country. I got the opportunity to make an interview with a woman belonging to the Yuquis community. She told me that in their community they never have received any support from the State. Their life conditions are extremely difficult. They don’t have access to medicine or health care which results in high mortality. Women are violated and discriminated and are not able to take care of their children neither their houses. The conditions of which these people live their life visualize an extremity of what the Bolivian plurality contains. Moreover, there are also more widespread groups of women in the country that haven’t reached space in the politics. Such as the miners, who have fought for democracy in the country since the Spanish arrival. I believe it is important to bear this in mind, and not allow these groups to become invisible in the discourse of multicultural recognition. Especially since arguments coming from external countries tends to idealize the multi-inclusion and development of the changing process in Bolivia.

Author's conclusion

The purpose of my field study was to find out what the new, more generous political guidelines for female participation in the country actually mean for Bolivian women - socially, organizational and political. I wanted to find out how women were organized before the new government and politics in the country and how they are organized at this very present. I focused on what can be seen as discourse of women's participation versus the actual practice of women's decision making. My intention was also to find out whether the women or the organizational ideologies agreed with the policies of Evo Morales party MAS. In order to meet the multicultural population in terms of class and ethnicity I studied various groups of women on different levels and locations for the purpose of getting to know their different interests, their different purpose of organization and participation. In the presentation of the data collection I have presented the different informants views on the issues structured mainly after the different topics of questions.

In the analyzing part I have moved to the focus and questions on how the gender politics in the state constitution and politics can approach the patriarchal structures dominant in the country. I have also discussed how to work with the gender approach in other aspects of social life. The effects of urbanization and migration allow new formations of the family, challenging traditional life and gender roles. This also needs to be highlighted and considered within the identification of gender development; hence it is a future area of research.

There have been important changes and advances for a lot of women in their organizational and political participation, but much of the advances are still rhetorical, yet not facing legitimate implementation. The women's different expectations and references to the state policies implementation make the compound picture difficult. The fact that some gender issues are not taken into account within politics is also contributing to the delay of equal participation. The challenge of creating a common agenda reflecting the diversity amongst women is difficult but necessary in order to diminish women's confrontation and oppression against each other. Instead it allows them to unite around and struggle against what is really contributing to their oppression; the structures of power influenced by colonialism and patriarchy.

Critic should always be present for the process to follow the direction stressed by the citizens. There is a need for social movements that continues to visualize and stress the plurality of social conditions in the country. This is also the strength that Bolivian women possess, they continue to rise, they are in the frontline and they are pushing forward a sustainable development. The strength of Bolivian women is a fundamental part in the process towards welfare and harmony. As the vice president García Linéra (2008a) writes: "The new constitution isn't only for the labor workers or the peasants, or the middle class, it is for whole Bolivia" (p. 15). There is still much work to do in order to live the utopia of the changing process. Structural changes won't happen over a night, but the Bolivian women have planted the seeds and the harvest has begun.

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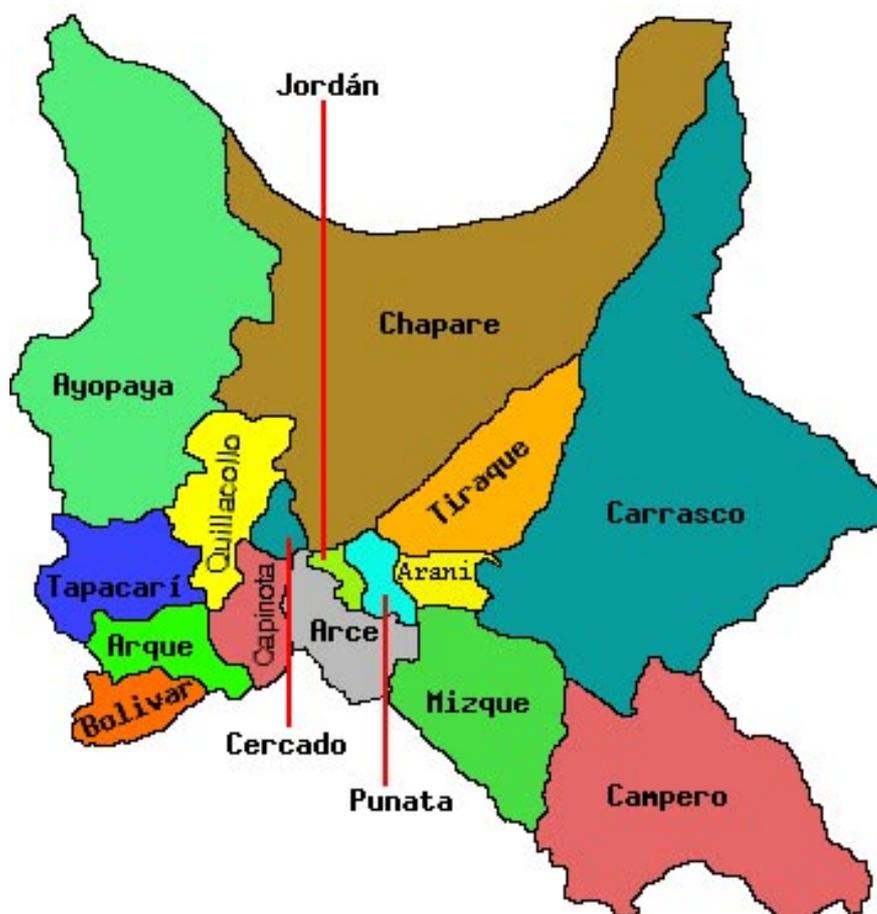
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Attachments

Map of Bolivia



Map of the Provinces in Cochabamba



Interview persons in Cochabamba

Coordinator of the Swedish Cooperative Centre - Cochabamba, 2010-08-20

Member in the indigenous community Yuquis - Bia Recuaté, Chapare, 2010-08-22

Manager of the Juridical Office for the Defence of Women - Cochabamba, 2010-09-09

Leader of the province Tiraque - Peasant women's Federation in Cochabamba, Bartolina Sisa, Cochabamba 2010-09-11

Women's Coordinator at Democracy Centre - Cochabamba, 2010-09-22

Group interview, Bartolina Sisas, women from sub-centrals and unions - Lope Mendoza, Province of Carrasco, Municipal Pocona, Cochabamba, 2010-09-23

Leader of sub-central Lope Mendoza, Bartolina Sisa - Province of Carrasco, Municipal Pocona, Cochabamba, 2010-09-23

Leader of sub-central Yurak Molino, Bartolina Sisa - Province of Carrasco, Municipal Pocona, Cochabamba, 2010-09-24

General physician, Technical secretary of IFFI “Feminine Institute of comprehensive training” - Cochabamba 2010-09-27

Ex Vice minister of gender in the government of MAS, Currently Coordinator of the Development Found of the United Nations Women in Bolivia - Cochabamba, 2010-09-28

Executive secretary of the Peasant women’s central in the Province of Quillacollo, Bartolina Sisas and Councillor in the City Council in Tiquipaya - Province of Quillacollo, Cochabamba 2010-09-30

Group interview, Bartolina Sisas, leaders and companions of the base organization of women’s central in Province of Tiraque (women from sub-centrals and unions) - Tiraque, Cochabamba, 2010-10-01

Leader of the Regional base organization, Bartolina Sisa - Tiraque, Cochabamba, 2010-10-01

Ex. Leader of the Provincial central, secretary, representative of the regional central of Koari. Currently: Companion of the base organization, Bartolina sisa - Tiraque, 2010-10-01

Historian, Music artist, Sociologist, Manager of the Bicentennial program of Cochabamba - Departmental government in Cochabamba, Cochabamba 2010-10-04

Minister of the Departmental government in Cochabamba, earlier Minister of justice in the MAS government - Departmental secretary of human integral development, Cochabamba, 2010-10-05

Architect, Councillor - City Council, Cochabamba 2010-10-05

Coordinator of the Gandhi Foundation - Democracy centre, Cochabamba, 2010-10-08

Mine worker - Cochabamba, 2010-10-12

Master in economics, Manager of CEPLAG - Universidad Mayor de San Simón, Cochabamba, 2010-10-12

Industrial technician, Leader of manufacturing, Leader of the water coordination, President of the April Foundation - Cochabamba, 2010-10-13

President of the City Council in Cochabamba - City Council, Cochabamba, 2010-10-15

Executive secretary of the 6 federations of women in the Tropics, Coca grower - Cochabamba, 2010-10-15

Conversations/ informal interview persons

Pedagogue, Sociologist, Founder and Manager of INCCA - Cochabamba

Coordinator of Red Tinku - Cochabamba

Teatre artist, Member of MAS - Cochabamba

Interview questions

Questions for NGO representatives

How many years of experience do you have in this organization?

Are you collaborating with other organizations / institutions?

- Regional, national, international

Who are the donors and are they able to influence the agenda?

In short term, what is the ideology of the organization?

- Autonomy, political participation, the discourse

Currently, what is the main objective of the organization in order to improve the situation of women?

What are the strategies for achieving the goals?

What is your relationship or representation in the current government?

How is your work affected by the change of constitution? What positive changes have been achieved?

Do you think that the greater representation of women in politics have helped to stress the interests of women in society?

What is your opinion about the ability for women to influence in the political and social agenda?

Do you think that the new constitution helps to create a more democratic and participatory development in the country?

What are the possibilities for criticism and advice to the government? How do you claim for the fulfillment of certain demands?

Is there a discrepancy between the voices on the national and civil level of society concerning women's issues?

What is your experience in working with women's organizations in the Provinces?

Do you have experience of working with peasants on the subject of feminism?

Is there something else you want to tell me about your organization / the process of change?

Questions for representatives of municipalities or public authorities

What is your experience in the political and organizational context?

How is your work affected by the changing process?

What do you think of the participation of women in the definition and implementation of public policies for gender equality?

Do you think that the greater representation of women in politics have helped to stress the interests of women?

Which are the spaces within politics to promote women's issues?

Do you think there is a real exercise of power and decision making of women in the government?

What are the obstacles for the real participation?

Currently, within which political level, do you think that women have the most influence?

How important are ethnicity and class difference for women?

What is the most important accomplishment of social movements for making the women enter in the political sphere?

What strategies do you have to strengthen the political instrument?

Do you think there is a clear division of powers and functions in politics - in the instances?

What are the possibilities for criticism and advice to the government?

What is your opinion about machismo / patriarchy? – has in been reduced?

What is missing for women to have a real participation in shaping public authorities?

Have you felt the need to reduce your claims in relation to what the political structure allows?

Today there exists positive discrimination in order to elect women for Minister positions?

Which is the process from local proposals of social movements to its implementation in the changing process?

Do you cooperate with NGOs?

What is the importance of feminism according to you?

Do you have children?

Which have been your personal obstacles to participate in politics?

What do you wish to change for the future?

Do you think it will be possible to finally accomplish real and total equality for men and women?

Is there anything else that we haven't talked about concerning women and their actual situation?

Questions for leaders and companions in social organizations

How are women organized in your Province? Do you have your own organization or are you collaborating with the men?

Since when are women organized?

What were the principal problems for women to organize?

What is the main objective of the organization?

What is the current struggle of women in this process of change?

What strategies do you have to achievement your goals? - how do women meet?

Which are your criticism and various demands?

What is your relationship or representation in the current government?

In what way is the political instrument meaningful to you as an organization?

How is your work and organization affected by the process of change?

Which are your capacities to influence in the political and social agenda?

What are the positive or negative changes since the new constitution?

Which are the spaces within politics to promote women's issues?

From your perspective, what is the most important accomplishment of social movements in order to strengthening women?

What is your opinion about machismo / patriarchy? – has it been reduced?

What do you wish to change for the future?

Is there anything more that you want to tell me?

Abbreviations and explanations

The Union Organization

The union organizations consist of different *Unions* which is the most basic level of the organization. Different unions then form *Sub-centrals*. The sub-centrals in turn form *Centrals*, and the central form *Federations*. The federations form the highest level of the organization, which is the *Confederation*.

Castillano – the name of the language in Latin America, very similar to Spanish

FNMCIQB-BS - National Federation of Peasant Women of Bolivia – Bartolina Sisa

IFFI - Feminine Institute of comprehensive training - a Non Profit Organization that for 25 years has focused on working with women in popular urban areas of the nearby municipality and department of Cochabamba.

INCCA – Peasant Training Institute – a Non Profit Organization

Law 2029 – promulgated in October 1999 by neoliberal politics, prohibited traditional water practice

LPP – Law of Popular Participation

MAS – Movement of Socialism, political party in the government

MNR – National Revolutionary Movement, Political Party in Bolivia

OTB - Organizations with Territorial Base

PODEMOS – the name of a right-of-centre, pro-business Bolivian political party, standing for Social and Democratic Power: “We can”

Pando – one of 9 departments of Bolivia

The Bicentennial program of Cochabamba – the main activities in the program is serenades of national and international festivals, traditional parades of dance, sports events, departmental festivities etc.

The Gandhi foundation - a United Kingdom-based voluntary organisation, in Cochabamba working with the water cooperation's.