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TENSE COLLABORATIONS AND EXCHANGE INTERRUPTED:  
GENDERED PARTICIPATION IN ECOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE PROJECTS IN  
POST-NEOLIBERAL(?) BOLIVIA

by

Jenny Cockburn

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through Sociology with Specialization in Social Justice  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the  
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

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## ABSTRACT

A Bolivian development NGO's effort to increase the scope and value of ecological agriculture, agrobiodiversity and food sovereignty in its work with marginalized farming communities in Norte de Potosí, shares these concerns with the Bolivian State. Yet tensions run high between applying neoliberal frameworks to 'empower' farmers and resisting neoliberal approaches to strengthen Bolivia's sovereignty vis-à-vis the global North. Despite a significant backlash, neoliberalism continues to complicate sustainable development, participatory ideals and local/scientific knowledges, by both facilitating and challenging efforts toward collaboration. This becomes most clear when examined through the lens of gender. To analyze this process, the conceptual framework casts a wide theoretical net, drawing on critical development theory literature. The farmers participating in the NGO's projects also participate in a dynamic where they are positioned as lacking knowledge. Ironically, the agronomists -- in relative position of power -- who credit scientific *and* local knowledge with what they themselves know, play the role of holders of both types of knowledge, while the farmers often find themselves playing a role as holders of neither. A closer examination of the participation of women farmers with the NGO and governmental organization urges questions of what counts as 'participation,' and what purpose it serves. Yet power imbalances infringe on the possibilities for candid discussions among the farmers and the organizations, as well as between these Bolivian organizations and international funders. Further tension exists in the discrepancy between the Western ideal of gender 'equality' and the Andean cosmovision, with its ideal of gender 'complementarity.' The perceived need to showcase success in increasing gender equality in the NGO's work interferes with transparency between them and their Canadian partner, highlighting persistent power inequalities. These types of inequalities -- and importantly, those between agronomists and farmers -- are masked through development buzzwords, (e.g. 'participation,' 'partnership,' 'empowerment,' etc.). Two additional concepts come to light in this dissertation: 'leadership,' and 'exchange' (i.e. 'farmer experience exchange'), which gloss over tensions, legitimate development work, and impinge upon the degree to which collaborations of knowledge might transcend (gendered) power imbalances, even as they are used with sincerity and the best of intentions.

For my mother, Kitty,  
who had one grandchild when this endeavor began,  
but four when it finished, and to whom we owe so much!

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to my own perseverance on the road towards, during, and after field research and in the long creative and rewarding, but sometimes arduous, writing of a dissertation, I owe a great deal of gratitude to many people for their important roles in facilitating this process.

### *Bolivian Individuals and Organizations:*

I am indebted to the farm families of Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi and other individuals who agreed to participate in my research, took me into their homes, taught me important lessons and had patience for my nascent skills in everything from farming to language. I am also grateful for the friendship of the women whom I have named doña Ignacia, doña Donata and especially doña Claudia (among others). Many individuals were in my heart and mind (as well as the breath-taking beauty of the Bolivian Andes) while I wrote this dissertation. I look forward to visiting them again.

The Bolivian NGO, 'ODEP' graciously agreed to allow a Canadian researcher into its midst, and the director addressed the people of Tomacoyo and requested that they welcome me and allow me to participate. Shortly thereafter 'Rocío' took me to Q'ayarumi and introduced me during a community meeting. A few key individuals, especially Adriano, Rocío and Rodolfo allowed me to tag along with them, ask endless questions and were generally very accommodating. But my debt of gratitude also extends to them as an outsider who was initially met with some suspicion by some locals. Finding a room to rent, as well as learning the actual cost, or the only mildly inflated 'gringo' price for a variety of necessary items (anything from blankets to propane) was all facilitated through Rocío and Adriano. As well, the director and other staff in the office and during the workshops were very accommodating.

I also want to thank the individuals from 'PIAB' and PASA-FAO, as well as various other agronomists and development workers who participated in my research. Their perspectives and experiences broadened the picture of ecological agriculture development in Bolivia and enriched this dissertation.

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### *Canadian Individuals and Organizations:*

The Canadian NGO, which I have called 'CANGO', met with me on a few occasions to discuss the options for my research. Originally intending to conduct fieldwork in another

Latin American country, when unforeseen problems rerouted my plans, the director enthusiastically encouraged me to redirect my focus to Bolivia. CANGO introduced me to its Bolivian partner NGO 'ODEP' and facilitated that relationship. I have also enjoyed and greatly benefited from the company and conversations with various individuals from CANGO on the two annual field visits in which I participated.

I would like to thank the members of my doctoral committee at the University of Windsor. Dr. Lynne Phillips could not have been a more supportive supervisor. Her guidance with my many questions, rough drafts of chapters and generosity with her time contribute greatly to making this endeavor such a positive experience. I also greatly appreciate the support and detailed recommendations on the first draft of this dissertation by Dr. Tanya Basok, as well as the insightful comments and suggestions of my department readers Dr. Jane Ku and Dr. Glynis George, my external department reader, Dr. Jamey Essex and my external examiner, Dr. Cecelia Rocha.

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Last but not least, my extremely supportive family has played an integral part in this process. During my field research my partner, Patrick, arrived with the impeccable timing to help me settle into my temporary home and field site, following weeks in urban centres dealing with immigration and honing language skills. His knowledge of Spanish (albeit limited) and agriculture complemented my language development and research questions. Not long after he left, my mother, Kitty came for a visit and brief adventure, bringing my six-year-old daughter Tiki to me as well as much appreciated supplies and treats from Canada. On my own again, now with two children, Tiki helped with her brother but importantly also provided an extra set of eyes for observation, had a great memory for names, and opened doors to areas I had not accessed yet through her sociability and enthusiasm to learn the language and the lifestyle. My stepson, Zubin, came with Patrick on his second visit and rescued Tiki from homesickness, and together the children had their own experience of the adventure. Zubin did a great job teaching and caring for his baby brother, Milo, and allowed me to go to the field with either just Tiki or alone. After Patrick took the older children back to Canada, my father, Bruce, visited for a week and got to experience community life at planting time, breaking up a final three month stretch once again alone with the baby. Additionally my friend Roberta passed through on her own adventure with the fortunate timing to assist me in my role as '*madrina de torta*' (Godmother of the Cake) for 'Claudia' and 'Guillermo's' wedding – adding another set of hands and some much needed comic relief to what seemed like a demanding responsibility of getting wedding cakes from Llallagua to a field in Tomacoyo. All the people who visited me asked questions or made observations that enhanced my insight in the field, helped with the children at times, and most of all gave me something to look forward to when I was feeling so very far from home. Finally special mention and thanks goes to my son, Milo (just a baby at the time) who was my

companion from arrival to departure, who was adored by seemingly all and who I joked was my ‘key’ to the communities and farm families. There is a special place in my heart for having watched my son learn to walk and talk (words from three languages and a rather accurate sheep impression) in the mountains and farmers’ fields of Bolivia. The experience would simply not have been the same without him.

Since returning to Canada, there is an additional family member, Marz, who deserves mention as the bulk of this dissertation was written through his first 15 months. Once again, I am grateful to the extraordinary support of my mother for playing such a central role in the caretaking of the baby, as well as to Patrick for the essential role he has played with the children and in the household overall, as well as providing several insightful comments regarding my research and analysis throughout the writing process. It is that love and support that has made this dissertation possible.



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## Chapter I:

### Introduction: Farmer-NGO Participation and the (Gendered) Friction of Knowledge Exchange

#### 1. Purpose of the Study

This dissertation examines the tensions that arise in efforts toward exchange and collaboration of agricultural knowledges in participatory development, through a gendered lens. It documents how agricultural knowledge may be differently understood and circulated within governmental and non-governmental efforts in sustainable agricultural development, and how these assumptions and practices shape farmer efforts to secure sufficient resources for their households and communities. Focusing on participatory ecological agriculture development between a Bolivian NGO, ‘ODEP,’<sup>1</sup> and several participating households from two farming communities in the Chayanta province of Norte de Potosí (or Northern Potosí), this study theorizes relationships between farmer knowledge and strategies, State policies and international aid in Bolivia. It asks: who is understood to have ‘agricultural knowledge,’ and how does this perception influence knowledge exchange? Answering these questions uncovers power imbalances in local, national and international relations, as well as along lines of gender and class, that remain barriers to knowledge exchange and collaboration, even as efforts are made to transcend traditional power relations and improve participatory approaches. The tensions that arise along these lines of power are reinforced by neoliberalism as it informs sustainable development practices while conflicting with the Bolivian government’s ideological

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<sup>1</sup> A pseudonym

position as a ‘twenty-first-century socialist’ republic. Yet there are also ways in which exchanges of knowledge are facilitated in these processes, moments where efforts succeed. What emerges in this study is that neoliberalism – understood to have evolved in multifaceted ways from its earlier narrower version (see chapter II) -- continues to complicate sustainable development, participatory ideals and local and scientific knowledges, by both facilitating and complicating efforts toward collaboration. This becomes most clear when examined through the lens of gender. For example, the case study examined here demonstrates that pre-existing notions of gender undermine efforts toward gender equality in participation and knowledge exchange in ecological agriculture efforts, in part by maintaining double standards in expectations of gender roles. Meanwhile neoliberal approaches to development may implement weak or thin gender equity schemes that fall short of their intended goals. A key implication for the collaboration of knowledge is that the positioning of farmers as lacking knowledge is exacerbated when addressing women’s agricultural knowledge. While local knowledge is valued in the discourse of professionals with scientific knowledge working in ecological agriculture, methods in practice work to undermine the value of present-day local knowledge. Efforts to fortify local knowledge are undermined by class-based and gendered assumptions about knowledge, as participatory schemes emphasize training over knowledge exchange.

The conceptual framework for this dissertation, which developed in the twists and turns of ethnographic research itself (see chapter III) and in the ensuing analysis, involves the intersection of three different literatures, much of which can be incorporated within the scope of critical development studies theory: 1) critiques of development and

neoliberalism along with questions of inclusion and participation of marginalized (indigenous) groups (e.g. Andolina, Laurie and Radcliffe 2009; Hale 2002, Molyneux 2008). 2) Critical development literature that takes a gender focus (e.g. Cornwall, Crewe and Harrison 1998; Kothari 2005; Parpart, Rai and Staudt 2002). And 3) the literature that examines when and how knowledge exchange can happen. This point meets both the literature focused on participation (e.g. Kothari 2001; Mosse 2001), and collaboration (Tsing 2005).

My ethnographic data speak to the literature that highlights tensions arising in relations between nongovernmental organizations from the global South and North (e.g. Harrison 2002; Lewis 1998, 2010), between the State and NGOs (e.g. Bebbington and Farrington 1993) and between local development NGOs and rural communities (e.g. Harrison 2002). Mosse (2005:11, 24) argues that ethnography points to the need to recognize contradiction and the potential for unilateralism and hidden biases in the agendas of institutions and countries providing aid, as the various logics and contingent practices of national politicians, international experts, NGO workers and others are translated into neoliberal 'global' policy. Calls for more ethnographic research by anthropologists and sociologists in (agricultural) development (e.g. Arce and Long 2000; Cernea 2006; Escobar 1995; Sheppard 2008) highlight the unique and valuable position of social scientists to conduct ethnographic work with rural producers and NGOs in a way that can shed light on the degree to which they have been, and continue to be, constricted in their capacity to challenge existing power relations at various levels.

In light of various points highlighted in Hobart's (1993) widely-acknowledged critique of development, this study recognizes that significant challenges, such as power



relations being upheld by both ‘developers’ and their supposed beneficiaries, are challenges that persist two decades later, despite concerted efforts to overcome them. However, Crewe and Harrison (1998) object to approaches, such as that of Hobart (1993) and Escobar (1995), that place developers at the centre of analysis, while other peoples’ actions are read merely as responses to the fixed centre. In line with Crewe and Harrison, this study aims for a more nuanced understanding of people’s actions as formed and influenced by a range of circumstances, including an analysis of gender relations as an integral aspect of understanding development issues.

Anna Tsing’s (2005) notion of *friction* informs my examination of knowledge, as it travels and transforms through interfaces with other ways of knowing. For professionals in ecological agriculture and small farmers to come to some kind of common understanding of (agricultural) knowledge involves friction, as “knowledge claims emerge in relation to concrete problems and possibilities for dialogue” (p.10). Tsing calls for grounding analysis of global connection in “concrete engagements” (p.267). In doing so, my ethnographic study also emphasizes something absent from Tsing’s (2005) analysis, that keeping gender central makes this friction clearer.

This study also takes up the debate in the literature regarding the (potential) benefits and shortcomings of participatory development (e.g. Cooke and Kothari 2001; Hickey and Mohan 2004). Within this debate I return to Hailey’s (2001) question of whether efforts to be participatory in ways that allow for easier accountability and transparency to international funding agencies, may overshadow other methods of collaboration such as those which are harder to generalize, but build on strong foundations of rapport between technicians and farmers. Similar to Mosse (2001), my

concern focuses on the production of knowledge and how the *understanding* of ‘local knowledge’ is shaped within the context of the encounter between developers and ‘beneficiaries.’ However, my ethnographic research finds that professionals who work in ecological agriculture make efforts to align their brand of sustainable agriculture and, in the case of the NGO, make sincere efforts to respect local knowledge and address barriers to participation especially along gender lines. Yet class divisions, and the status that scientific knowledge enjoys over farmers’ local knowledge, are stubbornly maintained. By defining local knowledge (in practice) in the narrow terms of ancient Andean knowledge, imagined as almost lost, the modern-day farmers are positioned as ‘lacking’ by the organizations that intervene in their communities. The farmers participate in this dynamic for multifaceted reasons, many describing themselves as having ‘known nothing’ prior the intervention of agricultural development organizations. Ironically, the agronomists, who credit scientific knowledge *and* local knowledge with what they themselves know, play the role of holders of both types of knowledge, while the farmers (who, of course, *have* local knowledge, whether or not it is recognized) play a role in which they are holders of neither.

While my stance in the debate over whether participatory development can actually transcend uneven power relations remains open to its potential, I raise the concern that the same problems in participatory development, addressed over a decade ago, continue to plague efforts to employ participatory approaches in development. One of the reasons for this relates to power dynamics between local NGOs and their international partners. The reliance on funding from these partners can result in local NGOs (consciously, or unconsciously) glossing over persistent inequalities and

downplaying problems that arise. This become most evident when examined through the lens of gender. The perceived need of the local NGO to showcase success in increasing gender equality in its work may interfere with transparency and candidness in dialogue between these partners. Sillitoe and Marzano (2009:20) draw attention to the potential for indigenous (or local) knowledge research to address these challenges and “work towards re-addressing the imbalance of power, to release pressure on NGOs to conform to mainstream development agendas, so they are free to communicate local views.”

These types of inequalities are masked through development buzzwords, such as ‘partnership’, ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment,’ among others (see Cornwall and Brock 2005; Cornwall and Eade [eds] 2010). From the case study considered in this dissertation, two additional terms come to light: ‘leadership,’ and ‘exchange’ (as in ‘farmer experience exchange’). The frequency of and enthusiasm in the use of these terms by (local and international) development workers in the area of study, posed questions about their significance for those who were expected to ‘exchange’ experience and knowledge and those who were expected to become ‘leaders’, or at least enhance their ‘leadership’ skills. These terms join the ranks of many positive words in development-speak that are used by a variety of actors, sometimes appropriately, sometimes not. They have the power to gloss over tensions, legitimate development work, and impinge upon the degree to which collaborations of knowledge can transcend (gendered) power imbalances, even as they are used with sincerity and the best of intentions.

Specific to the Bolivian context, but with implication at a global level, are tensions that arise between local NGOs working in ecological agriculture development

and the government initiating ecological agriculture research. In contrast to the types of collaborations that appear to be on the rise between Bolivian *non*-governmental organizations and between these organizations and various international actors, the *government* at the time of this research was wary of entering into such relationships. Evo Morales' government reflects a shift occurring in various countries of the global South that have gained power in reaction to previous administrations enamored by neoliberalism. Though it is increasingly evident that anti-neoliberal *discourse* does not always equal anti-neoliberal *practice* in Bolivia (Haarstard and Andersson 2009; Kennemore and Weeks 2011; Webber 2008), the government is cautious in entering into relationships with organizations that might be under the influence of global neoliberalism. Nonetheless it does, and thus experiences pressure from certain key international funding agencies *and* from various key Bolivian institutions to collaborate with these same NGOs (or to play a hierarchical role in which it audits the work of the latter).

Hence, my ethnographic data contributes to the debate over the role of neoliberalism in the twenty-first century and to what degree it remains entrenched in the lives of Bolivians. This is not an easy question in a country where conscious and pointed efforts have been made to counter neoliberalism as an ideology and in practice. This study finds the State in a difficult position between international pressure to conform to neoliberal approaches to development and a desire to fortify indigenous cultural traditions of complementarity and the Andean perspective of 'living well' (*buen vivir*), on the one hand, and, on the other, economic policies that improve (or maintain) the

livelihoods and security on various levels of Bolivians. The government skates a fine line between socialist and neoliberal-capitalist approaches.

Here tensions arise in international-national, national-local, and governmental-non-governmental relations. Although aspects of these tensions relate to a particular colonial Bolivian history, the outcome of this examination has broader application. Lines are blurred between State, for-profit, and non-profit actors as States increasingly enter into “arrangements for joint governance of issues and places” with other organizations, particularly NGOs, at an increasingly global level (Holmes 2011:4). This dissertation endeavors to contribute to social justice by delving into complications beneath the veneer of knowledge ‘exchange’ or ‘gender equality.’ Gender equality in international development is widely understood to involve woman and girls having the same rights, access to resources, opportunities and protections as men and boys. The emphasis on gender equality is grounded in a rights-based discourse while also emphasizing economic development. The case study in this dissertation illustrates how the efforts to meet these goals by local ecological agriculture projects, funded by international organizations, may apply ‘thinner’ or ‘thicker’ criteria to show success in gender equality. The Bolivian context complicates this endeavor where the Andean tradition of gender complementarity provides another way of understanding gender equality and at the same time is used as a justification when gender inequality (e.g. in terms of participation or access to resources) persists.

To the extent that this dissertation addresses an NGO’s effort to prioritize agrobiodiversity in its ‘sustainable’ ecological agriculture, it contributes to filling a gap in the literature, identified by anthropologists Veteto and Skarbø (2009). They call for more

research into the challenges of incorporating agrobiodiversity into emergent sustainable or alternative systems and argue that the study of agrobiodiversity needs to be undertaken within a broader and more holistic framework. The examination of agrobiodiversity speaks to academic and activist conservation efforts, with implications at the local and global levels. Among those at the local level are issues of local knowledge, as well as food sovereignty, defined here as the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and the right to define their own food and agriculture systems.<sup>2</sup> At the global level, the implications of agrobiodiversity include the adaptation to climate change, as well as its potential to counteract the harmful effects of the global agri-business.

While the issues addressed here speak to international development work more broadly, a more specific purpose is to address the efforts seeking alternatives to mainstream methods of achieving food security. At the global scale ecological agriculture presents real possibilities for positive change in the face of neoliberal versions of food ‘security.’ Altieri and Toledo (2011:593), speaking generally of Latin America, describe a scenario which resonates with the Bolivian context:

There is a specialized, competitive export-oriented agricultural sector which makes a significant contribution to the national economies, while bringing a variety of economic, environmental and social problems, including negative impacts on public health, ecosystem integrity, and food quality, and in many cases disrupting traditional rural livelihoods [...]. The growing push toward industrialization and globalization with its emphasis on export crops such as transgenic soybeans for cattle feed for countries such as China, Europe, the USA and others, and the rapidly increasing demand for biofuel crops [...] are increasingly reshaping the region’s agriculture and food supply, with yet unknown economic, social and ecological impacts and risks (Pengue 2009).

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<sup>2</sup> Since the term was coined by the international peasant organization, La Via Campesina, food sovereignty has been interpreted in broader ways, as various organizations and governments have adopted it -- addressed in chapter four of this dissertation.

Given this backdrop, the ecological agriculture effort has implications beyond the health and food security of local peoples. This thesis aims to contextualize these efforts in relation to the farmers with whom they work and in relation to global forces. The ‘yet unknown’ impacts and risks, anticipated in Altieri and Toledo’s statement above, convey the timeliness of the arguments here. Examining the tensions between different actors in ecological agriculture that interfere and uphold power differentials is crucial to the potential for overcoming such barriers and finding true social justice alternatives and real collaborations.

## 2. Area of Study

### i. *A note on pseudonyms*

In this study, people, and most of the places<sup>3</sup> and organization names, have been provided pseudonyms. It is not my wish to criticize specific organizations or individuals, but to address issues of how power dynamics limit open lines of communication and the potential for collaborations of knowledge. The issues here, I would argue, are not restricted to these particular institutions or places, but can be found in international development and interfaces of knowledge more generally. The tensions between understandings of who holds agricultural knowledge (in practice) have broader application for ‘sustainable’ agriculture development. Likewise, the tensions along gender lines, or the complex influence of neoliberalism (even in a location which may have moved away from electing neoliberal governments) are issues that transcend

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<sup>3</sup> Names for places smaller than the province (i.e. municipality, town, district and communities) have been given names that are an amalgamation of place names within the region of Norte de Potosí. Any likeness these names bear to an actual place name would be purely incidental.

specific development organizations. Thus, becoming caught up in the specifics of which organizations and which exact locations would detract from the overall argument. On the other hand, the use of pseudonyms also avoids immortalizing the problems addressed here. The primary NGO in question continues to strive to improve on its methods. While changes that may have occurred since the end of my research period are beyond the purview of this dissertation, I recognize that the NGO, and the farmers who choose to participate with it, are engaged in a work in progress.

ii. *The place*

This study focuses on two communities within the Chayanta province of the southwestern department of Potosí (one of nine departments in Bolivia). The northern region of the department is distinguished by the name ‘*Norte de Potosí*,’ high in the central Bolivian Andes. It is known throughout Bolivia for its rugged, comparatively cold climate and isolation, as well as for distinctive cultural symbols and rituals of various Quechua and Aymara-speaking ethnic groups. Home to almost 800, 000 of Bolivia’s ten million people, the department of Potosí contends with a relatively high poverty rate, with the most severe region being Norte de Potosí, with an extreme poverty rate above 90 percent.<sup>4</sup>

Narrow dirt, switchback roads ribbon through the mountains, connecting the region to cities to the south and other departments. The small city in the region, Llallagua, is one of several mining hubs and home to a university. Chayanta province is composed of four municipalities. I have called the municipality in my study

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<sup>4</sup>[http://www.udape.gob.bo/portales\\_html/ODM/Documentos/Boletines/Bol\\_2010\\_05\\_En\\_g.pdf](http://www.udape.gob.bo/portales_html/ODM/Documentos/Boletines/Bol_2010_05_En_g.pdf) (accessed March 22, 2013)



Pocomachurí. Within this municipality are several districts, structured by two types of political systems: agrarian unions called '*sindicatos*' and the indigenous political-communal *ayllu* system. Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi are the two communities within a *sindicato* district called Urku Valle, where most of the research for this dissertation was conducted. ODEP, like the State, distinguishes between *comunidades indígenas (ayllu)* and *comunidades campesinas (sindicato)* along these lines.

A brief historical context provides insight into the significance of this system. Following the revolution in 1952, the land reform policies the next year, along with changes to the political structure and, later, improved access to education, changed how rural indigenous peoples were conceptualized within Bolivia: from 'Indians', marginalized and seen as politically passive, to *campesinos* or peasants, partially integrated into the political structure (Gustafson 2002). Significantly, agrarian unions known as *sindicatos* were formed at this time in an effort to politically integrate the rural indigenous population. This system arose as a local alternative to the long-standing precolonial *ayllu* system of organization (Harris [1982] 2000) -- kin-based community governance, including communal ownership of land.

The high mountain valley where these two communities are situated is home to farmers who rely heavily on their corn production for both household consumption and as a source of income. This contrasts with their neighbours at higher altitudes where numerous varieties of potatoes and tubers, such as *oca*, prosper, but little else is cultivated. The valley has a rising number of peach and apple trees as agricultural development NGOs have supplied participating families with saplings. As the little trees grow, families plant potatoes between the trees. Higher up the mountain, but still within

these communities, households often grow cactus that produce cactus pears or ‘*tuna*’ in green, orange and red.

The face of the mountain above the valley river is lush and green in summer, while the winter gives it the qualities of a desert, with strong winds that create sudden sand storms that sweep up from the seasonally dry riverbed and whirl across the fields. On any given afternoon herds of sheep dot the rolling hills, shepherded by a lone woman spinning brightly coloured wool on a spool, or by small children. At this altitude, llamas are not a common sight, though one does not have to travel far to see them in abundance. They reside at the higher altitudes, where there is less ability to farm, and therefore more space to graze. Llamas are indigenous to the Andes, grazing from the top of plants without ripping out the roots. Sheep – a colonial introduction – are destructive, ripping the plants up by their roots. During the harvest season, the communities empty early each Saturday morning as farmers load large bags of corn and other crops on to large trucks and take it to market in Llallagua a few hours away.

During the winter nights it drops below freezing allowing for the ingenious production of *chuño* – the freeze-dried potato that is a staple of rural Andean diet year round. It is a highly valued local food, not only because it is a resourceful way to ensure food supply, but it is also recognized for its nutritional value and taste (with many people reporting that it is a local favorite food). The winter days heat up by mid-morning as the hot sun moves across the sky. It is cold by Bolivians’ standards, and Bolivians are taken aback by visiting Canadians’ desires to remove some of the many layers needed to be warm enough just hours earlier. By late afternoon the sun is descending behind the mountains, casting great shadows. The temperature drops fast.

The two communities are comprised of spread-out adobe homes, across the wide slopes of the mountain as it descends into the valley. As the mountain ridge rises, deep and wide caverns drive jagged wedges along the mountain face, where the earth falls away as the shale-like soil collapses over time. From the abandoned schoolhouse in the centre of Tomacoyo to the school in Q'ayarumi is perhaps a kilometre, and yet there are some notable differences worth highlighting. Most of Q'ayarumi is at a slightly higher elevation (approximately 3600 metres above sea level) than most of Tomacoyo. The fields in the upper part of the community are rocky and the wind whips across the open fields. While both communities have trees, most of Tomacoyo is more protected by its tree lines or the farms are more sheltered in the valley. In February 2010, when the hail came (hitting hardest on the first day of *Carnival*), the broad bean stocks were irreparably damaged in the higher elevated community, while most households in Tomacoyo lost little. Yet visible markers of relative wealth in Q'ayarumi tell a different story historically, as there were a few houses made from bricks (which cost more to build than the hand-made adobe bricks) and even the occasional second story, or garage. Tomacoyo is the smaller of the two communities with forty households, while Q'ayarumi had approximately seventy. However, accounts on this varied, in part because some homes rest on the borders of another community, and membership may be flexible.

Residents of these two communities enjoy the benefits of living in relatively close proximity to the municipal town of Llaqta<sup>5</sup> (approximately an hour walk, or a two-boliviano (\$0.35CAN) hitchhike if one is lucky enough to catch a ride. Q'ayarumi has a primary school, and Tomacoyo sends its young children to the school in the neighbouring

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<sup>5</sup> A pseudonym, *Llaqta* is a Quechua word meaning town or city

community down the mountain, along the river. High school children, in their uniforms, walk to town or catch the inconsistent school buses. Their close proximity to a town means they are also more likely to speak Spanish than those from further away communities. It is not uncommon for rural men to be familiar with Spanish, but it varies a great deal for women. Older women, elderly men, and children under six are unlikely to speak Spanish.

Days start early, and go long. Women get up and put water on to get *mote* (boiled corn, or broad beans) cooking and whatever will be served to husbands who are probably already working. Children get ready for school between chores before leaving. Typically each household grows corn, broad beans and perhaps squash in the same fields. Everyone grows a few different types of potatoes, as well as grains: wheat, perhaps barley, perhaps quinoa. Women tend to vegetable gardens of red onions, carrots and cabbage. They may also grow Swiss chard, beets, or coriander. Additionally, the day will involve animal care. Chickens need corn kernels (“*tooká, tooká, tooká*” will bring the chickens round in excited anticipation). If there are eggs, they must be collected; the pig needs the potato peels and other leavings; the oxen need dried stocks of corn (not the cobs). Sheep will graze for hours.

Perhaps a sheep will be slaughtered. A husband and wife will work together fast, removing parts, hanging the wool and various parts on what might be mistaken for a clothesline. The liver will be cooked right away and other cuts of meat will be preserved with salt. There will be lots of cooking and rushing to feed expected and unexpected visitors. There will be hours of work; drying grains, removing kernels from dozens of dried multi-coloured corncobs, sorting potatoes to take out the small ones for *chuño*. By

the end of the day, in the homes with electricity (in existence for a decade in Q'ayarumi, but installed for the first time in Tomacoyo homes on my first day of fieldwork), families may settle down to watch television. A mother may cook more food on a portable propane stove in the family's shared room, or knit for a while.

iii. *The farm families in Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi*

There is an iconic image of Andean Quechua women with bowler hats, long braids, thick shawls and crocheted or hand knit sweaters, wide pleated, knee-length skirts called *polleras*, and bare legs with sandals. When they carry goods or children, they wrap them in a colourful blanket called an *aguayo*, and swing them onto their backs. In Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi most women maintain this style. In these communities women tend to favour shades of purple (like violet, or plum) for skirts and sweaters. Women tell me that this is the *modern* look of 'tradition.' They point to the women from communities on the other side of the mountain ridge, who pass through Q'ayarumi on their way to and from the municipal town (perhaps a six hour walk), and tell me that those women, with black, thinner skirts adorned with brightly coloured patterns, wear 'traditional' clothes.

Likewise the men passing through wear vests or jackets of bright pink, red or turquoise, embroidered with condors, or other animals, and the woven pointed toques associated with Andean men's style. By contrast, most men in the district of Urku Valle display few vestiges of their past style, preferring baseball caps, long sleeve shirts, jackets, and slacks or track pants. Young men may also have running shoes. Few adults men own backpacks; they too tie *aguayos* on their backs to transport smaller items.

Young unmarried women often wear sweatpants and tie their hair back in one braid, in a style common among Bolivian women in general. At school girls are expected to maintain this look, as the *pollera* (worn by rural and market women) is discouraged -- and by some students' accounts, forbidden -- in the town schools. During special occasions girls dress in the embellished version of traditional clothes. Mothers, accustomed to seeing their daughters in sweatpants, glow with pride and ask me to take pictures (and give them copies) of their '*cholitas*.' Most girls will adopt the *pollera* as their daily style when they are finished school and establishing themselves as young adult women. If they go on to university they will likely wear tracksuits into adulthood, whether married or not. In fact tracksuits (and usually baseball caps) are really the look of professionals in towns throughout Norte de Potosí, whether municipal government officials, lawyers, restaurant owners, or development workers.

The majority of families identify as Catholic in the two communities of Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi. Most do not regularly attend the services held in a smaller version of a massive, dilapidated colonial church that can be seen from miles around, but participate in key rituals (e.g. baptisms, first communions, etc). A minority in the area distinguish themselves as "Christians" or "Evangelicals" (or brothers/sisters). There are two small evangelical churches in the area. To my knowledge, there were no evangelical Christians residing in the community of Tomacoyo, but in Q'ayarumi there were several households.

One of the implications of this religious diversity is that several people in Q'ayarumi do not drink (and usually don't make and sell) the popular corn liquor, *chicha*. The fermented corn drink is a work-intensive staple of the many calendar festivities and

weddings. While *chicha* is recognized to be intoxicating, for the majority, it is distinguished from alcohol because *chicha* is “natural” and “just made from corn.” In a place where Saints’ days and other Catholic festivals make for regular celebration (usually in the town), where dancing, singing and binge-drinking are a regular occurrence, the evangelical Christians are a quiet, but marked contrast.

Another key difference is the understanding of *Pachamama* (“Mother Earth”). While Catholics appear to seamlessly integrate Catholicism and Andean religious ritual and rites, Evangelicals reject many of these traditions, and downgrade the spirituality implicit in “Pachamama” to simply a name for the earth that the Christian god made. There is no need to provide the Earth with offerings, thus they disapprove of both the Catholic parade of cross-draggers and the men fighting in the streets of town, spilling blood as an offering to *Pachamama* that she will provide during harvest during the “*Tres de Mayo/Festival de Cruces*” (referred to as “the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May” or “the Festival of the Crosses”).

The 1970s and 1980s, in Bolivia, saw the mobilization of indigenous social movements, which brought about attention to ethnicity and heightened alliances along language lines, so that ethnicity was understood mostly in terms of language groups, such as Aymara, Quechua, Guaraní, etc. (Barragán 2006). These lines continue to be prominent, though more recently they exist alongside more specified categories of ethnicity in terms of geographic locations and cultural distinctions, with Bolivia’s designation as a plurinational republic (Andolina, Laurie, Radcliffe 2009). Zoomers (2006) describes the significance of the historical shifts in identity (from ‘indians’ to ‘campesinos’ to ‘the poor’, to ‘indigenous’) in relation to participation in Bolivian civil

society and in terms of Andean development schemes. She highlights that the youngest generation -- born as '*indigenas*', are now "experiencing how indigenous movements can succeed in transforming mainstream policy, especially since the election of Evo Morales" (p. 1029). The degree to which individuals within a given generation experience these categories may vary depending on other factors such as location, or gender (see de la Cadena 1995). Nonetheless, Zoomers' point is apt in examining participation of farm families in Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi, because it highlights differences in identity formation, even within households, and how younger or older people see themselves (or not) as citizens, and what political participation means to them, if anything.

iv. *ODEP, the Bolivian NGO*

The non-governmental organization which I have called ODEP stands for "*Organización de Desarrollo Ecológico de Potosí*," or in English; "Ecological Development Organization of Potosí," has more than a decade of experience working with farming communities and associations in several districts in Norte de Potosí. In general, two agronomists are assigned to each district and spend approximately twenty days working in the communities each month. At the time of my research, ODEP had been working in Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi for approximately three years and about a year and a half in the other communities in the same district. Initially there had been six households interested in participating with the NGO, but this number had since increased to approximately 20 households in Tomacoyo and 23 in Q'ayarumi (with two households joining and two leaving during the course of my research).



For most of my fieldwork, a male and female agronomist came and went from the district, with others, such as a civil engineer participating in irrigation projects. The male agronomist assigned to Urku Valle, Adriano, worked 20 days per month spreading his time between six communities. The female agronomist, Rocío (later replaced by Teresa), spent ten days in Urku Valle and the other ten days in another district closer to her husband and young children. They worked on themes of organic production and adaptation to climate change, composting, agrobiodiversity and soil conservation, and micro-irrigation, among others. Their work was practical, generally working in the fields or hands-on with projects, while they also had theoretical components in monthly workshops, where they gave demonstrations and had planning sessions for future work or events such as ODEP's second annual agrobiodiversity fair in the district.

Within ODEP the staff consisted primarily of agronomists; there was also a civil engineer and a program director and various other administrative positions, filled mostly by people with an agricultural background. The work history and political involvement of the staff varied from no political involvement and recent graduates of the university, to agronomists working in development for over a decade and a couple of agronomists with more extensive political involvement.

v. CANGO

ODEP's Canadian partner, CANGO, is a non-profit development NGO, focused on food and livelihood security in smallholder farming communities within various countries of the global South. It strives to reach the most marginal farming communities, both in terms of geographically isolated locations and conditions. CANGO has been

working with ODEP for several years and arranges a visit once per year (over the course of approximately ten days) to hold meetings and field visits to see the projects it supports and talk to the participating farmers. This Canadian NGO is peripheral in this dissertation, examined mostly in ways that contextualize ODEP's dual concerns of accountability to both farmers and CANGO.<sup>6</sup>

The partnership between ODEP and CANGO is mutually beneficial. In order for ODEP to fulfill its goals it relies on funding from various organizations. To partner with an international NGO like CANGO gives the Bolivian NGO various advantages. The literature highlights the power imbalances that can arise between NGOs of the global South and their partners from the global North, but it is also recognized that efforts toward partnership involved a corrective to previous development methodologies.

Lewis (1998) illustrates how many Northern NGOs have shifted from carrying out their own development work in other countries (often employing expatriate workers), to taking on the roles of funders and providing organizational support for local Southern NGOs. CANGO has always worked directly with farmers in different parts of the world, but it recognizes the value of working with local-level NGOs that, to some extent, share its methodologies and approaches and can be effective at the local level. Beyond providing financial support, CANGO is particularly concerned with facilitating knowledge sharing among farmers and NGOs from different Southern locations; included in this aim is the concern with increasing the influences of local women's knowledge in the projects CANGO supports.

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<sup>6</sup> Once ODEP's only international partner, in 2010 CANGO's financial support amounted to approximately a third of ODEP's budget. The other two-thirds came from various European non-governmental and governmental sources.

From CANGO's perspective programs that are inclusive of the needs, priorities and knowledge of whole communities is more likely to be sustainable. Inline with international development thinking more broadly, CANGO argues that food security and economic growth depend on the acknowledgement and support of women's "leadership" in all aspects of food production, since women farmers are central to seed and biodiversity conservation.

vi. PIAB, PASA-FAO and Governmental Ecological Research

The governmental organization featured in this dissertation, entered the municipality several months into fieldwork, to establish a pilot project on ecological agriculture research. A research institute with a broader purview than I was witness to, I refer to it throughout the text as PIAB, *Programa de Investigación Agrícola de Bolivia* (the Agricultural Research Program of Bolivia).

When my fieldwork commenced, "Law 3525," addressing anything to do with ecological production and certification, as well as rights to food sovereignty, had already existed in Bolivia for a few years. However, it was slower to be implemented in Norte de Potosí, and had changed the lives of small farmers in this region very little. Five or six months later this appeared to be changing. PIAB was now going to take its pilot project into three different municipalities across Bolivia, with Pocomachurí being chosen in Potosí. Two ODEP employees left the NGO to work for PIAB. Workshops were held in the town and farmers from all around were invited to learn about the importance of organic farming and the broader implications of Law 3525, and were given a proposal to

participate. A tense relationship of unofficial collaboration, under official barriers unveiled larger issues of international development and neoliberal expectations.

Another voice that receives attention in the chapters that follow, is that of an agronomist with the Bolivian ‘Support Program for Food Security,’ funded by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, known as PASA-FAO. In this case the individual’s name has been changed and details omitted to respect his anonymity, but PASA-FAO – not scrutinized here – is the real name of the organization.

### 3. Plan of the Dissertation

This dissertation is laid out in ten chapters, including this introduction. Having presented the purpose of the study, chapter II delves into the literature touched upon above, and develops the conceptual framework for the dissertation. Key concepts that underpin the framework are elaborated in light of the literature, such as development discourses and power, participation, neoliberalism, questions of gender equality and Andean gender complementarity, as well as interfacing knowledges and production. This is followed by a discussion in chapter III, of the methodological approach taken during research.

Chapter IV explores the role of ODEP and the State, within *and* in reaction to neoliberalism. Bolivia’s governmental and non-governmental efforts toward developing an organic market and certifying farmers, as well as related concerns for food sovereignty and agrobiodiversity are examined in a context of Bolivia’s uncomfortable and contested relationship with neoliberalism. This includes the neoliberalization of nature (Holmes 2011), and how it informs conservation efforts. The endeavor to transcend neoliberalism

and find sustainability in organic agriculture and agrobiodiversity conservation is both informed by, and reacts to, this dominating development approach. Chapter IV provides a necessary overview in which to contextualize participation between farmers and ODEP, farmers and PIAB, as well as the reluctant collaboration between the two organizations addressed in chapter VII.

Chapter V makes central a theme that runs throughout: gender and inequality. It looks closer at the effort to incorporate women and enhance their voices. It examines the barriers to women's participation, and how farmers and the Bolivian and Canadian NGOs interpret these barriers. It recognizes the complex position of ODEP to balance the Andean tradition of gender complementarity with liberal-based notions of human rights and social justice, which call for 'gender equality.'

Chapter VI -- the first of three chapters that focus analysis on participation -- explores what it means to participate with ODEP (what the farmers and technicians refer to as 'working with' the NGO), from the (sometimes divergent) perspectives of the farmers and ODEP's agronomists. It examines why some households choose not to participate with the NGO, or choose to stop, and how this is interpreted. Within this discussion is found a contrast in ODEP's work at the household level, with CANGO's emphasis on communal level development.

The following chapter, VII, centres the analysis on ODEP's training program for farmers -- the EICPAL workshops, and the role of the participatory methodologies that ODEP (like many NGOs) employs as tools, with the stated aim of empowering rural small-scale producers. With the insights into gendered power dynamics laid out in chapter V, this chapter addresses gendered participation in this context. As well, PIAB's

concern with the quantifiable participation of women is examined, in contrast to ODEP's approaches. The tensions that arise between the two organizations surrounding official and unofficial efforts to collaborate highlight how neoliberalism complicates the participatory development relationships.

Chapter VIII continues the analysis of participation, focusing on ODEP's emphasis on a particular aspect of the NGO's goals for training; the production of farmer-leaders. This concern has both technical and political components, and can be examined in light of Hickey and Mohan's (2004) argument for the *transformative* potential of participation rooted in a broad and political interpretation of citizenship. ODEP's efforts to transcend technical capacity-building to promote a political agenda hold promise for building collaborations between the organization and farmers; for supporting a more political project of social justice. However, 'leadership' training masks power imbalances that disadvantage women, and tends to operate in neoliberal ways.

Chapter IX turns its attention to another theme running throughout the dissertation: the interface of knowledges. The way that farmers' local agriculture knowledge is interpreted by the NGO and by the farmers themselves is examined, bringing in issues of what expert knowledge is considered to be. It raises the question of how the design of "exchange" between farmers -- despite sincere efforts to facilitate it -- might be framed in a way that does not necessarily achieve its goal. Moreover, it focuses on efforts to develop collaborative knowledge through ecological agriculture, and how these efforts ultimately maintain traditional imbalances of power.

Chapter X, the conclusion, draws the main arguments of the dissertation together, examining how gender clarifies tensions and contradictions that arise with efforts to

participate and collaborate. It explores the potential for twenty-first century socialism in Bolivia and addresses the context of food security and global social justice within which the ecological agriculture is promoted. Finally, it suggests possibilities for future research.

**Chapter II:**  
**Framing the Discussion:**  
**Participation, Neoliberalism, Gender and Knowledge**

1. Critical Development Theory through a Gendered Lens

The ethnographic research on which this dissertation is based commenced with a broad critical development orientation that encompassed theoretical debates about local knowledge and scientific knowledge, agricultural development work and neoliberal governance. As my research focus shifted with the move from theory to the reality of the ethnographic setting, two important points emerged. First, participatory development, for all the academic attention it received in late 1990s and early 2000s, still needed to be theorized. For example, there are still gaps in our understanding of how efforts toward collaboration might be undermined with the increased scope of participatory methodologies, and how neoliberalism in its current forms might complicate or facilitate the goals of participation in development. For example, ‘Twenty-first Century Socialist’ nationalist discourses in Bolivia clash with neoliberal discourses, incurring strained relations between governmental and non-governmental organizations. Just as indigenous agronomists may embody the tensions of interfacing local and scientific agricultural knowledges (see chapter IX), the Bolivian men and women in this study embody the interface of resilient Andean worldviews (such as complementarity), the nations’ colonial and post-colonial history, and hegemonic development ideals.

Neoliberal approaches to development that prescribe increasing the individual responsibility and accountability of development recipients, coupled with the pervasive discourse equating non-participation with the ‘laziness’ of (rural) individuals, continues



to inform participatory development. Moreover, neoliberal approaches to development reinforce the discourse of gender equity (though it is practiced in “weak” ways), at the same time that the history of neoliberalism in Bolivia is met with a backlash that seeks alternative, *culturally appropriate* approaches to development and gender equality.

A second and crucial point for my shifting research questions was that theory must employ a gendered focus. This focus is necessary to draw out issues that otherwise remain as a backdrop; I found that a number of issues became striking when examined through the lens of gender. To examine the tensions and interruptions that arise in efforts toward exchange and collaboration of agricultural knowledges in participatory development, a gendered lens highlights how notions of gender inform knowledge production and exchange. The power imbalances commonly present in development relations, for example, between agronomists and farmers, are exacerbated by prior assumptions of gender differences that undermine efforts toward exchange.

In efforts to fortify ecological agriculture practices and food sovereignty, the construction of men and women farmers as lacking knowledge undermines this aim and reproduces a narrative of participation for the sake of training the *lacking* farmers. Where leadership training is more politically motivated it shows potential for participation that, in theory, is more transformative (cf. Hickey and Mohan 2004). However, in practice, skill and leadership training reveals contradictions in the expectations placed on participating men and women in farm households and communities.

In this chapter I address the theoretical debates in the literature pertinent to the arguments in this thesis. After a brief introduction to my conceptual framework, I move

to a discussion of the concept of participation, examining it from the perspective of how development NGOs have been positioned in their shifting roles in decentralization processes. The concept of neoliberalism is then unpacked, with an emphasis on the more recent turns within the neoliberal model, and reactions to it. The literature on gender and development and differing understandings of equality is then discussed with a focus on how the Andean notion of how gender complementarity troubles the liberal-based ideal of gender equality. Finally the theoretical debates over knowledge production and their implications for collaborations of knowledge between local (agricultural) knowledge and professional/scientific knowledge are examined.

The critical development literature that seeks alternatives to top-down development thinking in the past has looked for ways to approach development from a 'bottom-up' approach, focusing on 'grassroots participation', with a shift from professional 'experts' to project 'facilitators' that support local knowledge through participatory approaches (Chambers 1997, Munck 1999). Parpart and Veltmeyer (2004) argue that critical alternative development (a form of alternative development that draws on post-development thinking) "pays particular attention to the power of discourse to shape and define the way people think, and the possibility that development discourse can make certain ideas/discourses unthinkable" (p.52). For Veltmeyer (2011) critical development theory's strength is its attention to systematic social narratives/ideologies that function to uphold uneven power relations between social actors. Despite this, Parpart and Veltmeyer acknowledge that critical alternative development has been criticized for the same lack of attention to power structures, particularly those based on the State and transnational corporations. Moreover, like the critique leveled at the anti-

development literature (such as Escobar 1995), critical alternative development theory has risked romanticizing the local. Here ethnographic insights, such as Camaroff and Camaroff's (2001) attention to how neoliberal ideals and the market are deepened in social life at the local level, are helpful in recognizing the complexity of neoliberal governance.

Underpinning neoliberal governance, as Phillips and Ilcan (2004:397) describe it, is what they call the "knowledge economy of capacity-building," which draws attention to the current emphasis in development on training programs and knowledge-generation. Drawing on Hilderbrand (2002), they highlight that within a global neoliberal approach, a new relationship between knowledge and responsibility emerges that places "onus on individuals and organizations to become self-regulating, responsible, and market-knowledgeable" (ibid.). Citizenship becomes about integration of individuals into the market, while previously acquired rights, in particular labour rights, are progressively eroded (Dagnino 2010).

Andolina, Laurie and Radcliffe (2009) construct a theoretical framework that draws on both Tsing's (2005) notion of friction and Hale's (2002) multicultural neoliberalism to locate development reasoning and practice in a transnational social field. They identify the emergence of what they call 'social neoliberalism' which sees "cultural difference, environmental protection, gender equity, and popular participation as necessary ingredients in development and accordant with capitalist markets or self-help agency" (2009:9). This form of neoliberalism is critical of the older narrower versions. Social neoliberalism, they argue, redefines various cultural contexts under the guise of

social capital, and then envisages them as a basis for participation in markets and governance. In this way culture is redefined as an asset to development (p.11).

One of the ways that this process occurs is through the use of terms that often have emerged from alternative development theories, but come to take on broader and more vague meanings, while the practices they represent may become, or remain, opaque as these ideas enjoy more mainstream use. To use ‘participation’ as an example, Leal (2010:89) shows how the philosophical and ideological meanings underpinning this concept have been eroded over time as participation has been “reduced to a series of methodological packages and techniques.” More generally, Lewis (2010) shows how the notion of ‘good governance’ has contributed to the depoliticization of development ideas through an ongoing process of managerial operating principles and standardization. Moreover, as Cornwall and Brock (2005) astutely highlight, development buzzwords -- such as ‘participation,’ ‘partnership,’ ‘empowerment,’ ‘sustainability,’ ‘accountability,’ ‘ownership,’ and many others – used in development policies “do more than provide a sense of direction: they lend the legitimacy that development actors need to justify their interventions” (p. 1044). Examining the terms, then, sheds light on the normative project that is development (ibid.). The critical literature on development discourse, including the use of buzzwords (e.g. Cornwall and Brock 2005; Harrison 2002; Leal 2010; Lewis 1998), is an important component in building the conceptual framework for this dissertation.

One aspect of this literature encompasses another key development term; ‘good governance.’ Lewis (2010:335) describes a process that can arguably be understood as neoliberal governance: “The normative prescriptive element of the development policy

agenda – framed as ‘good governance’ by donors – continues the more familiar themes of aid conditionality, economic liberalization, public sector reform and managerial efficiency,” but now coupled with human rights discourse, social justice and participation. Aspects of governmentality theory, which provides a critique of the ‘good governance’ orientation (e.g. Ilcan and Phillips 2008; Postero 2007; Williams 2004), are to be found in the discussion of participatory development and neoliberalism throughout this dissertation. However I have found that the lens of governmentality is not necessarily the most appropriate to capture the agency of the individuals within farm households participating with ODEP who are discussed in this thesis. My analysis is positioned closer to the critical development theories of David Mosse (2001, 2005), Cleaver (2001, 2004), or Crewe and Harrison (1998) that consider the *dialectic* of power and agency. On the one hand, Foucault’s analysis of knowledge and power influences my analysis, as it does of several of the theorists discussed in this chapter (e.g. Hale 2002; Kothari 2001; Parpart et al 2002). For example in exploring concerns of knowledge and power, Uma Kothari (2001) draws on Foucault to critique participatory methodologies’ use of a framework of dichotomies that set the micro against the macro, imagining power to sit at the centre or macro-level and gloss over power dynamics at the micro-level. She argues, that the valorization of ‘local knowledge’ and the continued belief in the empowerment of ‘local’ people through participation are perpetuated by these underpinning assumptions (p.140). Parpart et al. (2002), highlighting the fluid, capillary, and relational nature of power useful in thinking about power and empowerment. They also draw attention to a Foucauldian understanding of resistance as an experience that constructs and reconstructs the identity of subjects. On the other hand,

like Parpart et al. (2002), I find shortcomings in Foucault's analysis, particularly in terms of how little analytical space there is for understanding how agency may impact larger political and economic structures. They particularly highlight the need for a more feminist and global analysis to fully understand the relationship between power and empowerment.

The conceptual framework for this dissertation is situated at the intersection of these diverse literatures and theoretical debates. While much of this wide-ranging literature can be positioned within critical development theory (particularly in terms of participatory development and critiques of neoliberalism), the conceptual framework for this dissertation also draws on literatures outside of this theoretical grouping that sheds light on the tensions examined in the power dynamics of development relationships between farmers and the NGO, as well as between the NGO and the State. For example, Harris' (2000) and others' attention to gender in the Andean context, and Tsing's examination of collaboration and the friction of knowledge encounters help to develop a framework for analyzing my ethnographic data from two Bolivian farming communities engaged in participatory development centred on ecological agriculture.

## 2. Neoliberalism's Turn toward 'Capacity Building' and Social Inclusion

The above section indicates that it is necessary to dissect *neoliberalism* not only so that we have a clearer, nuanced picture of how, in practice, the concept shifts across time and space, but also to better understand the positioning of nation-states, such as Bolivia, within processes of globalization and development. Although privatization and monopolization of foreign transnational companies over natural resources and

agricultural inputs and outputs remained entrenched until the Morales government came to power -- and arguably remains strong in agriculture – it is important to avoid treating neoliberalism as a singular project with automatic effects (Haargard and Andersson 2009; Phillips 1998).

Neoliberal economic policies have been commonly identified as undermining nation-states and social programs, at the same time that it has been assumed that a wide range of social, economic and environmental problems can be solved by market solutions such as trade liberalization and privatization schemes. Like liberalism before it, neoliberalism places primary emphasis on the individual as the source of rational action and the individualized logic of the market as the guarantor of social good (Hale 2002).

Yet these two economic models diverge markedly in their approaches to governance.

Hale (2002:495) describes this divergence:

Under classic liberalism, state interventions ostensibly are intended to ‘free’ the individual; in effect, they produce forms of consciousness that lead citizen-subjects to govern themselves in the name of freedoms won and responsibilities acquired. The neoliberal model, in contrast, puts forth a critique of this state intervention, and the social welfare state that it eventually spawned; its proponents argue for a reactivation of individual initiative, responsibility and ethical rectitude through other means.

Importantly for his construction of what he calls multicultural neoliberalism, Hale identifies how the neoliberal discourse takes the elevation of the individual further than its predecessor; “explicitly constructivist, predicated on the need to recreate or recapture the individualist essence, in danger of being lost” (ibid.:496).

The complicated relationship between neoliberalism and the State, as well as between neoliberalism and social movements and even marginalized communities, continues to receive attention in the sociological and anthropological literature (e.g. Andolina et al. 2009; Gustafson 2009, 2002; Molyneux 2008; Phillips 1998). While the

effects of neoliberalism in the terms described above continue to receive attention, including how new spaces open up for social movements and civil society. Phillips and Ilcan (2004) and others are drawing attention to the potential for new modes of neoliberal governance to go unnoticed. They point to gaps in attention to “ways in which people and their communities may be governed by the new rationalities of choice, flexibility, and autonomy” (p. 396).

Postero (2007) explains neoliberalism as a philosophy about the relationship between the state, the market and individuals. It diverges from its predecessor, liberalism, in that this earlier philosophy viewed “some state interventions as necessary to facilitate citizens’ freedoms” (ibid.:15), but this does not suggest that the processes of neoliberalism are uniform, or become static. Molyneux (2008:776) finds it effective to approach neoliberalism as a process that is “sequenced, variable, fragmented and political.” Haargard and Andersson’s (2009:5) perspective complements this view; neoliberalism should be seen as “loosely composed of different reforms that unfold temporally and spatially, and partly in relation to popular mobilization.” With this in mind, we can examine the neoliberalism of the 1990s as a second phase – both in Bolivia and Latin America more generally - which involved revisions that partially rehabilitated the state in development policy and planning with its efficiency enhanced through ‘good governance’ reforms. As well, social policy was returned to the regional agenda with poverty relief a central component (Molyneux 2008:780). It was during this period that significant changes were made to increase the participation of indigenous peoples in Bolivia, affecting identity politics and developing notions of citizenship within a neoliberal logic.



Norman Long (2008:73) shows how the World Bank and various neoliberal international development aid organizations have embraced concepts of social capital, sustainable livelihoods, and community development. The result, he argues, is that neoliberalism “has acquired a degree of public respectability and now plays a major role in generating consent, negotiated settlement, and the re-affirmation of taken-for-granted values and habits among various sectors of society.” Complicating matters, Molyneux (2008:786) illustrates how many of the concepts that have come to be associated with neoliberalism, such as decentralization, ‘good governance,’ accountability, participation, etc, rose to popularity in Latin America in the name of democracy, emerging out of reactions to oppressive dictatorships. Hence, it is naïve to assume that indigenous struggles and neoliberal ideologies are fundamentally opposed to one another (Hale 2002). For example, multiculturalism as a neoliberal doctrine emerges in response to demands for rights by culturally oppressed and excluded groups, which Hale (2002) calls neoliberal multiculturalism. Similarly, and in the Bolivian context, decentralization reforms encouraged indigenous peoples to organize, but only in ways that reflected a neoliberal logic of transparency, efficiency and rational participation (Postero 2007). In other words, as Hale argues, it both opens new “political space and ‘disciplines’ those who occupy that space” (Hale 2002:490).

Building on Hale’s argument, Andolina et al. (2009) shed light on this process in their discussion of a new neoliberal paradigm in Latin America. In an effort to overcome the shortcomings of earlier, or narrower neoliberal approaches, this paradigm expands notions of development’s potential by placing terms like “*diversity, inclusion, sustainability, and stakeholders* alongside terms such as *efficiency, self-management,*

*productivity and capacity*” (p.10, emphasis in original). For the purposes of this dissertation, I find Andolina et al.’s notion of *social* neoliberalism helpful for conceptualizing the sequenced transformations that neoliberalism has undertaken, as the analytical term recognizes the shift from earlier narrow versions of neoliberalism that focused primarily on privatization, down-sizing the State and trade liberalization (see also Hale 2002 and Molyneux 2008). The arguments put forth above indicate the need for a multifaceted understanding of neoliberalism as a philosophy of relationships between state and civil society, as well as a relationship to knowledge (Ong 2006). While neoliberalism is recognized to involve trade liberalization, privatization and the reduction of government to enable certain modes of economic development, the sometimes subtle workings of social neoliberalism to which this dissertation draws attention, involves a philosophy of the relationship between the state, the market and the individual, with the onus for governance placed on the individual. From this perspective, participation in development is understood to be rational and responsible, making local communities and individuals “partners” in the development process.

In Bolivia, the discursive change that came with this phase of neoliberal reform emphasized the development of human resources (such as human ‘capital’ and ‘capacity building’) through social inclusion and alleviation of rural poverty, as an imperative for sustainable economic growth (Haargard and Andersson 2009). Analysis of Bolivian policies and practice suggests that Bolivia has not fully transitioned to a ‘post-neoliberal’ State. Bolivia today contends with a fragmented and hybrid neoliberalism, highlighting the multiple mutations neoliberalism can take in different contexts and as applied by varying actors. These shifts in neoliberal approaches to development shed light on the

role of participation in NGOs as a means to build capacity, as well as the effort to find and develop ‘leaders’ in communities for the sake of developing sustainable agricultural practices, food sovereignty and a larger national organic market. Notably, these shifts also highlight the complex relationships of the state and development NGOs to neoliberalism and how these relationships create tension around efforts to collaborate between governmental and non-governmental organizations.

### 3. Development NGOs as Interlocutors.

In Bolivia, like other Latin American countries, NGOs grew in number and diversified in responsibilities as the State was rolled back during the structural adjustments of the 1980s (Hippert 2011a). Later, during the 1990s, NGOs working in rural communities took on new roles with the decentralization process (in Bolivia, associated with the Law of Popular Participation in 1994), as rural people engaged with increased development bureaucracy. They were assumed to be able to promote “the kind of local participation that is not only the basis of liberal notions of democracy, but also is seen as likely to promote project sustainability” (Richards 2000 in Postero 2007:169).

In the Latin American context, Petras and Veltmeyer (2003:52) describe the shift away from earlier distributive land reform efforts with the onset of neoliberal reforms in the 1980s and 1990s toward the modernization and capitalist development of agriculture. To this end, governments in Latin America enlisted support of NGOs to encourage peasant organizations and communities to make greater use of the ‘market mechanism’ (land titles, land banks, etc) and, in their politics, to eschew direct action and utilize

instead ‘the electoral mechanism’ (to adopt peaceful/legalistic forms of struggle in pursuit of their interests (i.e., sustainable livelihoods).

From a neoliberal perspective, the proliferation of nongovernmental organizations has suggested “the evolution of civil society to be able to self-regulate and self-manage its own interests” (Kamat 2004:158). The ideal that local NGOs were more connected to the people they attempted to serve gave them the image of being more accountable and trustworthy and more efficient than governments. This thinking has had appeal to both the political right and left in imagining the spread of NGOs as representative of widespread opposition to the State and multilateral agencies (Crewe and Harrison 1998), as well as functioning as watchdogs of human rights vis-à-vis the State (Ong 2006). However, by the late 1990s questions surrounding performance and accountability, and therefore overall ‘effectiveness’ of NGOs, were growing (Lewis 2010). In practice, Ong argues, both local and transnational NGOs have had to engage the nation-state in a variety of practical ways. She questions whether NGOs can operate independently of relationships to the nation-state and to the market. NGOs, then, have been part of a process that shifts power away from the State while still forming a type of governance (Sassen 2007). Drawing on Ferguson and Gupta (2002), Postero (2007:167) discusses the transnational governance that transfers sovereignty away from the State as international agencies set political and economic policies as conditions for loans, while international NGOs sponsor programs and interventions. Within this framework, neoliberal notions of development privilege local initiatives in the form of ‘community-driven development,’ in which local communities and individuals become assets and partners in the development process (ibid.) At the same time, NGOs do not simply take

direction in a top-down manner; Ebrahim (2003) centres his analysis, in part, on how NGOs also influence the larger global development agenda. Voices of dissent from within the mainstream development project contribute in their own important way, by their ability to translate issues into language that can be understood by a wider global audience that can also exert pressure and challenge existing power relations. NGOs have played an important role in putting pressure on powerful neoliberal institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, leading to the eventual recognition on a global level that early neoliberalism with its structural adjustment programs, etc, was not working.

Yet, NGOs, as primary interlocutors of development assistance, have been criticized for “setting aside monies for targeted populations, and in so doing, set the stage for defining suitable development actors, goals, and strategies” (Hippert 2011a:96; Gill 2000). The targeting of development assistance for specific groups – especially along lines of cultural constructions of ethnic and other identities (Mosse 2005) – which creates uneven access to the process of development, is not unique to Bolivia. Others have identified it as an aspect of the global neoliberal economy (cf. Crewe and Harrison 1998; Paulson and Calla 2000). In the Bolivian context, the decentralization scheme led to funding being increasingly directed through the municipalities. NGOs experienced loss of direct funds as well as increased competition for limited funds (Postero 2007). In some cases NGOs turned to serving as consultants to municipal governments and other organizations. The consequences of this shift includes NGOs changing their mission to accommodate their new positioning vis-à-vis communities and the government, as well as

usurping the political space that once belonged to grassroots organizations (Andolina, et al. 2009).

Practitioners of neoliberal approaches to small farmers and the ‘nature’ in which they live have engaged in a reconstruction project to meet a development agenda. For people in rural communities, the emphasis on implementing programs that decentralize state control by turning over local development to communities is one way in which neoliberalism has been experienced by rural people (also see Nightingale 2005). Hale (2002:496) describes this process:

Organisations of civil society acquire new importance as primary vehicles of this modification; the neoliberal state unloads onto its neoliberal citizen-subjects the responsibility to resolve the problems – whether daily or epochal – in which they are immersed. As individuals and their voluntary organisations of choice assume this responsibility, they are especially susceptible to efforts from above to shape and delimit the ends which this ... ‘participation’ will serve.

In Bolivia this process has received ongoing attention from researchers (e.g. Gustafson 2002; Hippert 2011a&b; McNeish 2002; Pape 2008; Postero 2007) with emphasis placed on a pivotal point in Bolivian history: the 1994, ‘Law of Popular Participation’ to decentralize the government, creating most of the current municipalities (discussed in the following chapter). Nancy Postero (2007) shows how the meaning of citizenship has been subject to radical changes in recent Bolivian history. While, from a theoretical perspective, citizenship has often been associated with “its liberal incarnation referring to the legal rights and responsibilities conferred by the state,” alternative and popularist approaches have envisioned citizenship “in active terms initially related to decision-making at the community level, but later engaging with citizenship in multiple political communities including the state” (Hickey and Mohan 2004a:12). It is in this

expanded understanding of citizenship that Hickey and Mohan see the potential for participatory governance that is truly transformative.

While a shift has occurred in addressing Andean culture and examining its potential to inform sustainable development (Zoomers 2006), this is happening at the same time that rights-based discourses are taking precedent in NGO development work. This argument is examined in light of certain goals of ODEP's participatory methodologies in chapter VIII. Mark Goodale's (2009) ethnography focusing on the interface of notions of modernity and liberalism in Norte de Potosí examines how the current social and political changes that appear to be a rejection of liberal strategies may in fact be a renewal of the values of liberalism. One of the implications of this relates to gender and voice (discussed in depth in chapter V). With liberalism as the dominant theory of citizenship, individual rights and individual political participation are emphasized, which underpins why silence and voice need to be understood in relations of power (Burman 2011).

The relationships between governmental and non-governmental organizations have long been recognized to contend with socio-political tensions (e.g. Bebbington and Farrington 1993). Advocacy for collaboration between NGOs and government comes from different points along the ideological spectrum, resulting in different perspectives on goals and how responsibilities should be divided. Given these differences, in focusing on whatever functional complementarities may exist between institutions, Bebbington and Farrington (1993) argue that political tensions must be addressed in shaping the administrative reforms intended to achieve closer governmental-NGO relations in agricultural development (p. 204; also see Bebbington 1991). While collaborations may

not be impossible or undesirable, they caution against overestimating the degree to which NGOs are participatory and representative of the rural poor.

This is particularly a problem with the more recent ‘technocratic’ NGOs, but is equally a characteristic of the more radical types. NGOs are self-appointed, rather than elected bodies, and control institutional resources from within [...] [T]heir socio-cultural origins often lie more in the dominant rather than the dominated groups in society.

(Bebbington and Farrington 1993: 205)

These authors suggest that the collaborations between government and NGOs may be better seen as a move toward organizational pluralism, which itself may be a step towards democracy in both direct and indirect ways. But the argument requires ethnographic attention, as this thesis aims to do.

#### 4. Participation: Empowerment or Tyranny?

The role of participation in development is interesting because it has not been underpinned by a linear political agenda. With radical and left-leaning roots (e.g. Freire 1970), it has been adopted in various ways since the 1970s and began to be integrated into mainstream development by both states and NGOs in the 1990s. Participation has become so integrated with poverty reduction and notions of empowerment in mainstream development practice that the framing of the problem and the solution have become inextricably linked (Cornwall and Brock 2005). As Leal (2010:95) and others have argued, the emphasis on the *techniques* of participation, rather than on *meaning* of the participation, creates a situation in which empowerment is “presented as a de facto conclusion to the initiation of a participatory process.” Hence, universalizing models of development, such as the Millennium Development Goals for example, “encode the declared consensus in linear logic; poverty reduction, participation and empowerment are invoked in defining both means and ends” (ibid.). Within the current period of neoliberal



thinking, exclusion has come to be seen as both impoverishing and unjust in itself, as it denies full participation in the community and obstructs access to income-generating activities, while signifying lost opportunities for success in development projects and policies (Andolina, et al. 2009).

As an approach, participation has received much attention from development professionals, activists and academics alike. Although many have faithfully accepted participation as both efficient and empowering, shortcomings have been recognized and wide-ranging discussion arisen to address these. By the early twenty-first century, critical discussions were questioning whether the project of continually adjusting the methods of participation was a worthy endeavor, or whether in fact it lent further validation to an approach that should be recognized as having been unable to accomplish its goals (e.g. Cooke and Kothari 2001).

Increasing the participation of people who have been socially and economically marginalized, so that they may have more control or voice within processes that affect them, has appealed to NGOs concerned with how policy should pay greater attention to grassroots issues (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Molyneux 2008; Williams 2004). Thus participatory development methodologies, as well as the organizations that employ them (whether local non-governmental, state, or international in scale), are legitimized by the assumption that the beneficiaries of the development work have been involved in the shape the work has taken, as well as its outcome. Molyneux (2008:782) explains:

[Participation] combines an ethical (democratic) principle with efficiency arguments, and is considered to be superior in both respects to bureaucratic centralism which is neither democratic nor (usually) efficient. The efficiency argument links ideas of sustainability (people invest more in making their 'own' projects work) with ideas of efficiency (local knowledge is essential to make the project work).

Cooke and Kothari (2001) have shown that participatory development, despite its rhetoric of empowerment, has the potential to be tyrannical. They raise the important concern that repeated methodological revisionism that seeks to improve the techniques and tools employed in participatory development “may serve to legitimize the participation project rather than present it with a real challenge” (p.7). The problem, they argue, is that the tyrannical potential is systemic – it lies in the ‘politics of discourse,’ which facilitate illegitimate or unjust exercises of power. In other words, tyranny. Discussing ‘participation’ as a development buzzword which has been largely emptied of its original meaning, Leal (2010:96) shows how the original connotations of power and empowerment within the notion of participation is shifted in institutional understandings “to contain the concept within the bounds of the existing order.” He argues that these new interpretations see power as something that can be *given* by the powerful to the powerless (ibid.)

Cooke and Kothari clarify that participation involving sharing knowledge, negotiating power relations, and political activism may challenge oppression and injustices within a society. However, these concepts may be drawn upon in describing participation in ways that actually result in concealing and reinforcing oppressive power relations and injustices in their various manifestations (2001:13). Harrison’s (2002) ethnographic focus on the relationship between participatory agendas and development partnerships in Ethiopia, exhibits how the widespread use of the language of participation glosses over a series of linked complexities. Importantly, she argues that the political context within which ideals of participation and partnership are developed has often been

neglected, and thus, obscures comprehension of the relationship between policy and implementation of participation and partnership. As Cleaver (2001:44) explains,

[T]he mere setting up of formal organizations and the specification of their membership does not necessarily overcome exclusion, subordination or vulnerability. It does not do so because the wider structural factors that shape such conditions and relations are often left untouched. Codifying the rights of the vulnerable must surely involve far more wide-reaching measures than the requirement that they sit on committees, or individually speak at meetings.

Despite this evidence emerging in the research of Cleaver (2001), Cornwall (2004), Kothari (2001; 2005) and others, a decade later these issues have not been resolved in development work, as will be apparent in the discussion of ODEP and PIAB in subsequent chapters. The idea that participation is intrinsically good for all those involved, and that success is dependent on honing the techniques of participation is reinforced with a general attitude that “considerations of power and politics on the whole should be avoided as divisive and obstructive” (Cleaver 2001:36). Thus participation in development has been depoliticized, and participatory approaches have all too often had a depoliticizing effect. Though several critics of participatory development have agreed on this point (e.g. Cooke and Kothari 2001; Gonzales et al. 2010; Mohan and Hickey 2004), Leal (2010) argues that rather than see participation that fails to address and work against power relations as depoliticized, it should be recognized that participation is always a political project – one that often *works to uphold neoliberalism*:

The ‘depoliticised’ versions of participatory action, ... ‘liberated’ from their transformative elements, are still, in fact, political, since they inevitably serve to justify, legitimise, and perpetuate current neo-liberal hegemony. As such, by having been detached from its radical nature, participatory action was consequently re-politicised in the service of the conservative neo-liberal agenda. (p.95)

Whether participation as a neoliberal project is seen as depoliticizing or whether it is recognized to be politicized in a different direction than its early and ongoing left-

leaning conceptions, this discussion suggests that the mainstreaming of participation involves a process that falls short of being transformative. What it takes for participation to truly be transformative is a question the debate has taken up, and if there is that potential, what ingredients are needed to ensure that situation. Hickey and Mohan (2004) and the contributors to their volume, *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?*, do not completely refute the tyranny critique, agreeing that most mainstream participatory development interventions will not transform existing patterns of power relations. However, they do offer responses to this critique, addressing its limitations, and arguing that participation can be transformative (rather than tyrannical) if it meets certain requirements rooted in a broad and political interpretation of citizenship, a point taken up in chapter VIII. They aim to broaden thinking about participation away from a focus on projects and techniques, toward a wider political project of social justice (Hickey and Mohan 2004; Cleaver 2004).

Additionally, an argument that raises critical questions is that participatory development has limitations in practice, which are often masked by the faith placed in the participatory formulas themselves (Hailey 2001). The use of these formulas represents the use of tools; it does not guarantee success, the latter depending much more on the actors involved. Drawing on his ethnographic research, Hailey builds an argument that is applicable to the case considered in this thesis: ODEP's efforts to apply participatory models to their work. For Hailey, the "current emphasis on formulaic participative technologies has meant that we have possibly overlooked the significance of such highly personal criteria as respect, trust and even friendship in determining the success of many development projects" (2001:88). Importantly, participation remains a symbolic

representation of appropriate and sustainable development, necessary to provide legitimacy to NGOs and their accountability to their donors. Looking directly at ‘participation’ as practiced tells a different story of inclusion and exclusion of beneficiaries, yet it is not simply a matter of failing to apply participation well enough. Rather, conscious choices with farmers in mind may restrict the use of participatory approaches. In subsequent chapters, these issues come to light as ODEP’s participatory methodologies are put into (inconsistent and gendered) practice, while also functioning as symbolic representation.

My research engages with the theoretical debate in the literature on participatory development, knowledge and neoliberalism, by providing an ethnographically grounded discussion of the limitations of participation, associated as it is with tensions in power relations between organizations and farmers (as well as among organizations themselves, as discussed in the following chapter). Conventional power relations, especially along gender lines, between agronomists and farmers tend to inform how participation is understood in practice (by both parties), even as efforts are made not only to improve techniques and increase participation, but to nurture a political element that has the potential to make the work sustainable and empower *some* individuals. Efforts to increase participation of development beneficiaries may be strategically politicized in some ways, while participatory approaches are displayed to funding agencies and partner NGOs to exhibit the legitimacy, accountability and success (Mosse 2005) of the development projects. Hence the experience of the men and women participating in development work can vary such that one organization’s actions can be either empowering or tyrannical for the participating individual. As this dissertation will

demonstrate, the experience of farmers working with ODEP may lean in either direction depending on gendered motivations to participate on the part of farmers, as well as gendered notions of leadership qualities by both the NGO and farmers.

The analysis in this dissertation deals with the concept of participation in development broadly for two key reasons. First, the theoretical debate within critical development studies previously experienced a narrowed focus emphasizing specific forms of participation such as Participatory Rural Appraisal or Participatory Action Research (Chambers 1997). The contributors to Hickey and Mohan's (2004) volume seek to broaden the analysis of participatory development in efforts to examine the potential for participation to truly be transformative. As that debate is picked up here, it is appropriate to maintain a more inclusive definition of participation. As Hickey and Mohan (2004:3) understand it, "participation concerns the exercise of popular agency in relation to development."

The second reason to maintain a focus on the concept of participation and the various ways in which it can be understood is because it reveals the different uses of the term by ODEP, the NGO in question, as well as the Bolivian State. As we will see, ODEP used the term to describe households working with the NGO generally, or as they engaged in specific projects; to describe specific methods of working with farmers (e.g. participatory planning); and to describe methods employed as teaching tools for farmer training. While this dissertation makes clear that this third aspect of participation received the most attention and fine-tuning in ODEP's work, it is precisely the fact that participation can be understood so broadly that uneven power relations can remain obscured. This is further exemplified by the Bolivian State's desire to avoid 'top-down'

techniques with little articulation of what participation involved beyond methodologies for improving training – the latter framed as a necessity for successful projects and assumed to be intrinsically empowering.

## 5. Gender Complementarity and Development

It is widely acknowledged among academics, NGOs and local activists that Andean cosmology includes a clear sense of gender complementarity. Referred to as *q'ariwarmi* in Quechua ((*q'ari*: man/husband, *warmi*: woman/wife), this Andean concept is represented by the united, heterosexual man and woman, but more broadly can be understood as two ontologically distinct but inseparable elements (Goodale 2009). As Goodale describes it, these two elements represented by man and woman, “ideally should coexist in balance or harmony; and their complementary presence symbolizes, or even expresses directly, a complementarity among pairs of structural opposites through the wider universe” (ibid.:87).

Although some authors have found this ideal to be highly influential in creating egalitarian relations between men and women (e.g. Hamilton 1998), several researchers have noted the difference between ideologies of gender relations and “social practices of gender” (Goodale 2009:88; Barrig 2006; Burman 2011; de la Cadena 1995; Harris 2000; Mayor 2002; Pape 2008; Paulson 2003). Pape questions the validity of the assumption that men and women make community-rooted decisions together, when many of those women are not in attendance at political meetings and are not given prior notice of the agenda to be covered. Yet Pape’s analysis risks dismissing decision-making that occurs outside the boundaries of official public spaces. Cleaver (2004) calls into question the

assumption that most decision-making (and what Cleaver views as ‘citizenship-shaping’) takes place transparently and in public spaces. In her commentary on Hickey and Mohan’s (2004) volume, Cleaver raises relevant points for the present discussion. She argues that “many negotiations about resource allocations, sharing, compromise, conflict resolution and appropriate representation” take place at the “intersections between private and public livelihood activity,” such as during managing resources, or in the market place (2004:275). With this in mind, Cleaver argues that participation, citizenship, or collective action is not manifest through any one channel (ibid.).

Considering participation only in terms of percentages of men and women present in development projects stifles questions such as *how* men and women participate, whose voices are heard, and what types of knowledge and experience are valued. Simply ensuring that there are equal numbers of women to men in attendance at a meeting does not ensure that women will be given a voice, or have decision-making power (Cornwall 2004). Moreover, their (silent) presence on a decision-making committee can have the effect of validating men’s decisions that are not necessarily beneficial to women (Barrig 2006; Kothari 2005).

In the context of Bolivia more specifically, Pape (2008) has examined women’s political participation in rural municipalities, following the 1994 Law of Popular Participation, which decentralized the government by creating municipalities across the country. She argues that the popular notion of ‘gender complementarity’ in indigenous communities effectively masks gender inequalities. She found that women were discouraged by other, mostly male, community members from actively participating in decision-making in meetings (for similar discussion see Barrig 2006; Canessa 2006; and



Hippert 2011b). This was especially the case when the topics diverged from what might be considered the realm of women's issues.

Importantly, the women in Pape's (2008) study were fully aware of the constraints on their political participation; they could identify the mechanisms in place to perpetuate the obstacles in their way, and they wished to be more active. Women's awareness of their own positioning within their communities and municipalities, as Pape encountered, is a critical counterpoint to the common portrayal of women as passively trapped in patriarchal traditions, and passive recipients of development aid, or even 'empowerment' (Parpart 1995, Smyth 2010). It can also be applied as an ethnographic contribution to the examination of Hickey and Mohan's (2004) argument that true participation is possible when accompanied with (radical) forms of citizenship. In this case, as we will see, the inclusion of women in decision-making meetings does not go far enough to have women's voices sufficiently heard.

Earlier ethnographies in the Bolivian context address women's silence in public meetings and point to ways in which women's voices are expressed instead in culturally/socially powerful ways, such as through singing (Harris 1980), or through weaving (Arnold 1997). However, in 2010 in Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi, like most of Bolivia (Burman 2011), women do not regularly sing, with the exception of *cholitas* during festivities, nor do they weave gendered clothing, or much of anything for that matter, beyond *aguayos* (even those are often purchased; cheaply made from synthetic material, rather than wool). Despite this counter argument, it is helpful to keep in mind Arnold's critique that it is a Western bias that leads to overestimating the importance of public rhetoric and to interpreting silence in communal meetings as discriminatory

against women. Burman shows how this Western bias stems from the dominant place of Western liberalism, which emphasizes individual rights and individual political participation, in theories of citizenship.

In her research in rural Aymara-speaking, Laymi communities in Norte de Potosí, Olivia Harris ([1978] 2000) found that gender complementarity as a concept and as practice coincided well within the context of the household, yet disappeared from view and was replaced by marked inequalities within the larger social sphere. Mayor (2002) agrees, pointing out that, ironically, *chachawarmi* (or *q'ariwarmi*) is frequently invoked as a symbol in the public sphere despite its absence in practice. Harris recognizes a structural contradiction between the egalitarian representation of the male-female couple and the hierarchical relations between men and women in other social spaces. In her book of previously published essays on her early ethnographic work, Harris (2000) discusses various ways in which conflict (including violence) arises from the tension between the gendered practices of the private and public realms. Burman (2011) suggests that her emphasis on conflict as a characteristic of relations between men and women allows us to understand complementarity as “a dynamics of power, contestation and the continuous re-creation of unity,” rather than a permanent state of harmony (p.75).

The concept of gender as an ordering principle for social and political action developed in Bolivia in the early 1990s during neoliberal regimes (Goodale 2009). In keeping with Morales' ‘decolonization’ process, the government has strived to implement the Andean tradition of gender complementarity. The idea is to transform the customs and traditions of gender complementarity into law. Supporters of this transformation argue that it will ensure women's rights, while valuing long-standing indigenous

practices (see Burman 2011). However, the emancipatory potential for indigenous women of a notion that places the “married, heterosexual couple as the fundamental social subject in society, and of female and male forces as the opposing but complementary constituents of the cosmos” has also been questioned (Burman 2011:67, see also Pape 2008). Burman describes another key concern in a growing debate in Bolivia over the interface of feminism and multiculturalism, drawing attention to a concern that equality for indigenous women will slip through the cracks in the ‘decolonizing politics’ of the Morales administration, in exchange “for recognition and respect for cultural difference” (p.69). The Western liberal tradition of gender equality – particularly as it is expressed through human rights and development initiatives in Bolivia – insists upon the “essential sameness” of women and men (Goodale 2009).

To examine more closely how the liberal project of gender equality diverges from the Andean notion of complementarity it is helpful to draw on Goodale’s (2009) discussion of the shift toward modern liberalism and human rights discourse in Bolivia generally, and in Norte de Potosí specifically. At a conceptual level, complementarity depends on the assumption that men and women are fundamentally different, though both necessary and interdependent. By contrast, the rational individualist assumptions that underpin the modern liberal notion of gender equality builds itself on the foundation that men and woman are fundamentally the same. Moreover, Goodale explains:

[M]en and women are not conceived in a necessary relation to anything, whether each other or the wider universe; and because men and women do not play different but integral roles w/in the framework of modern liberalism, conflict between men and women ... [does] not necessarily affect the wider structure in which their relations are embedded. (p.89)

He builds the argument that the “social ontology that forms the foundation of transnational human rights work in rural Bolivia redefines the social being in ways that carry profound, if subtle, implications for the structure of male-female relations” (p.88). This is important to keep in mind since, as we shall see, local organizations, like ODEP, strive for gender equality in ways that suit the interests of Northern development and aid organizations like CANGO.

International development has entered a phase that is no longer clearly defined by Stage One neoliberalism. However, whether or not international development is underpinned by “social neoliberalism” (Andolina et al. 2009), or has reached a “post-neoliberal” stage in Bolivia (Kennemore and Weeks 2011), concern for human - and specifically women’s - rights, as well as for conservation and other environmental issues (Holmes 2011; Levine 2002) remains integral to development discourse today.

i. *Gender bias as a legacy of colonialism*

At the same time that gender complementarity is understood to be an ancient Andean tradition that is still practiced today, it is widely acknowledged that a bias towards males and *machismo* exists (addressed in interviews with a range of ‘professionals’, Burman 2011; Roberts and Kulkarni 2011). At the state level, efforts to correct this bias often blame colonialism for introducing and encouraging gender inequality (Burman 2011). Academic literature has also addressed the influences of colonial market structures and values that have disrupted relations of complementarity between men and women (de la Cadena 1995, Barrig 2006). Thus from the perspective

of the current Morales administration, and the effort to ‘decolonize the concept of gender’ more broadly, a critique is leveled against ‘*machismo indigenista*’ (Burman 2011).

While this critique had not infiltrated ODEP’s work or political discourse, to my knowledge, at the time of my research the critique was evidently on the minds of a few people in terms of how it might be incorporated into workshops like the EICPAL *Promotores*. Ong (2006) cautions that while the effort to find a universal solution to the plight of women across the world may be tempting, we must question “how these messages will be received in places that have emerged from Western colonial domination and are just now forging their own post-colonial identities and ethical-political future” (p.32). With Bolivia’s strong indigenous social movements and current administration, Ong’s critique that international feminist discourse frames women as the “dual victims of age-old cultural traditions and post-colonial nationalism” comes to the fore (ibid.). The significance of this discussion for international and local NGOs is that tensions, which may arise between understandings of gender based in liberal human rights discourse and those based in Andean cosmology, may come into sharper relief as customs are made law, and as notions of *machismo* are framed as a Western influence. On the other hand, if Goodale (2009) is correct in arguing that current social and political changes in Bolivia, which appear to be a rejection of liberal strategies may in fact be a renewal of the values of liberalism, less clear distinctions may be emerging between the two worldviews.

The tensions between local cultures and the Western liberal notions of human rights come into relief with the recognition that the local knowledge(s) of men and women in rural communities in Norte de Potosí is informed by gender complementarity as an organizing principle. Thus the extent to which men or women’s decisions to

participate in a development project, to what degree, or not at all, cannot be detached from both the *ideal* and the *social practices* of gender. Because the ideal and practice do not always align themselves, incorporating gender equality into sustainable agriculture development cannot be addressed only in terms of a technical fix. Despite more than two decades of feminist critique of development theory, it still needs to be stated that simply adding women to a project does not ensure that their voices will be heard, or that their knowledge will be valued.

#### 6. Knowledge(s): Debates in the Literature

Prevalent within the current debate around global efforts toward ‘sustainable agriculture’ is the issue of who is perceived to hold agricultural knowledge, as well as how that knowledge is acquired. Within this debate is an important discussion of the power dynamics between development projects employing scientific knowledge and those that employ the local knowledge(s) of rural peoples (e.g. Altieri 2009; Altieri and Toledo 2011; Gonzales et al. 2010; Hobart 1993; Walsh 2010). Sustainable development and agrobiodiversity conservation, as practiced by ODEP, can be understood within the context of the growing agroecological movement. A debate in recent literature addresses the roots of knowledge underpinning this approach. On the one hand, Altieri and Toledo (2011) optimistically argue that the approach that privileges the local, and is implicated in food sovereignty, is developed by farmer knowledge and experimentation, and is not ‘top-down.’ On the other hand, concerned with the tendency to conflate agroecological farming with indigenous knowledge, Gonzales et al. (2010) provide a thorough breakdown of three distinct approaches to agriculture: indigenous, conventional and agroecological. Although there is

much overlap between agroecology and “Andean indigenous knowledge”, they argue that it is important not to confuse the two:

These two ways of doing agriculture are closer to each other on a number of key aspects than to conventional agriculture. However, one is embedded within the realm of holistic Western science while the other is not. In other words there are fundamental epistemological, ontological and cosmological/spiritual differences.” (p.169)

For Gonzales et al., the agroecological approach cannot be extricated from a Eurocentric tradition, or way of knowing. The power relations imbued in encounters between these two (similar) agricultural knowledges implies that the agroecological approach can certainly be *top-down* and even within this approach, “indigenous farmers around the globe are being forced to a process of adoption of productivist science-based approaches, as the solution to pressing issues (famine, chronic hunger, food insecurity)” (2010:176).

We should be cautious in accepting too readily the claims of agroecological farming that it is based in local knowledge without looking for ways in which it directs farmers toward methods that detract from their actually lived experience and generated knowledge. It is important here to keep in mind Tsing’s astute observation that even where collaboration between different knowledges happens, collaboration is not a simple sharing of information: it creates new interests and identities that will inevitably not benefit everyone. Gaps are created where truths that are incompatible are suppressed (2005:13). So globally circulating knowledge – in this case in terms of sustainable agriculture and development - creates new gaps even as it grows through the frictions of encounter (ibid.). Moreover, such global knowledge, tied to international development, travels through networks that facilitate the movement of knowledge, while aiming to manage people’s conduct and the objects of development (Ilcan and Phillips 2008) – a

process of governmentality. This discussion also draws attention to the positioning of agroecological agriculture, as an approach emerging in *response* to the power of commercial agriculture, with its inherent problems, as well as the neoliberalization of nature. One aspect of [this] that emerges in this dissertation is how the definition of food sovereignty may be adapted by the State to support a national sovereignty.

A rich literature exists on local and indigenous knowledge (e.g. Sillitoe's 2007 and Sillitoe, Bicker and Pottier 2002), including a long running debate regarding the most appropriate terms to use for such knowledges (e.g. B. Kothari 2002; Sillitoe and Marzano 2009) and the degree to which these terms can be seen as oppositional to Western scientific knowledge. These debates can only receive brief attention here, but it should be recognized that each of the various terms for knowledge has certain connotations for how we conceptualize the people who are imagined to be keepers of such knowledge (B. Kothari 2002). The term local knowledge may be misleading in that it does not necessarily take into account the way knowledge travels and transforms (Tsing 2005). However, it has wider and more appropriate utility than some of the alternatives (of which many have been suggested). One of the benefits of using the term 'local knowledge' is that it emphasizes *situatedness*, implying the context-specificity of knowledge.

There are a number of definitions of local knowledge in the literature. For example, Barrios and Trejo (2003:217) define local knowledge as "indigenous skills, knowledge and technology accumulated by local people derived from their direct interaction with the environment." However, Siebert, Lutz and Dosch (2008:226) caution against too narrowly defining knowledge by certain attributes so that "it becomes a fixed,



material thing, and the knowledge dynamic is disregarded.” Rather, they call attention to knowledge as a collective resource, “in the form of patterns of experiences stored by organisations, institutions or networks.” Nonetheless, a contrast can be drawn between the tendency of scientific knowledge to be decontextualized, specialized and standardized and the tendency of local knowledge to be highly variable and non-universal, its exchange being informal and based on trust, and embedded in local networks (ibid.).

In the context of my field site, the choice to use the term ‘local knowledge’ relates to the use of the term in Spanish ‘*saberes locales*.’ While all the rural people in the municipality are ‘*originarios*,’ – “the original people” or native to the region -- the communities are designated as either ‘*indígena*,’ or ‘*campesina*’ based on their political structure. Hence the term local knowledge can potentially be used with less confusion in this context. Moreover, my use of the term local knowledge is informed by B. Kothari’s (2002) emphasis on farmers’ agency and the argument that the social construction of knowledge is inseparable from the larger social, political, economic and ecological context. Thus, farmers and their ‘local’ knowledge do not exist in marked contrast to professional and scientific knowledge. Yet we can explore their (inter)subjectivity as it is impacted by external influences.

While the ‘expert versus lay’ knowledge framework has been criticized for treating knowledge as “an individual competence rather than a socio-cultural achievement” (Tovey 2008:195), variations do exist. Knowledge is not homogenous, but varies along lines of gender, class and age, among other factors (Sillitoe and Marzano 2009). Tsing (2005) identifies one of the dangers with these terms in how it is easy to imagine local knowledge in remote places as though it is part of a lost world, timeless

and removed from all else. This notion of static and isolated knowledge and the associated romanticism has come from both the left and right in development (Cochrane 2007; Swartley 2002).

The power relations imbued in the rift between scientific knowledge and local knowledge are exacerbated when gender is brought to light (Acosta-Belén and Bose 1995; Parpart 1995; Sachs 1996). The patriarchal relations of global development, together with the patriarchal relations at the national, community and household levels generally devalue and suppress women's knowledge. Sachs (1996) argues that women living in rural areas with close relationships to the agricultural world may provide unique insights into human interactions with the environment and into feminist theorizing and political action. However, Cochrane (2007) cautions against the danger of romanticizing and homogenizing rural women's local knowledge. She raises concerns over the romanticism and homogenization of 'rural people' (and especially rural women), whose knowledge is imagined to be intricately connected to nature (also see Crewe and Harrison 1998). Moreover, this construction fails to recognize larger historical, political or ecological differences.

The scientific approach to nature contrasts with the various local models, which tend not to construct rigid dichotomies between society and nature (Escobar 2001). Siebert, Lutz and Dosch (2008: 227) discuss the scientific construction of 'biodiversity' and argue that traditionally conservation efforts have constituted "external, top-down intervention based on scientific knowledge," with local knowledge and practices treated as complementary, at best. To study local knowledge of biodiversity, Tsing (2005:182) has found it necessary "to trace its histories of travel and

trade.” Likewise, Nazarea (2006:323) identifies a danger in losing sight of both human actors and the environment, thereby negating agency, by “conceptually stripping local knowledge of its adaptiveness and reducing it to little more than political currency and intellectual fodder.” For Nazarea this is one of the implications of global science (among other essentialisms). Tovey’s (2008) argument aligns, but sees a shift occurring. She points out that while scientific conceptions of sustainable development have emerged within a global environmental discourse and seek to formulate universalistic understandings, “the earlier imperative of ‘maintaining the global resource base for future generations’ is now supplemented by a focus on the conditions for maintaining biological and socio-cultural diversity” (p.190).

It is important, then, to recognize knowledge (both local and scientific) as a process; a process in which different knowledges combine with different practices (Arce and Fischer 2007), and may more appropriately be called hybrid knowledges (Dove et al. 2007). Moreover, it is understood that farmers carry out experiments embedded in the daily practice of the craft of farming (e.g. Bentley 2006; Rhoades and Bebbington 1995; Richards 1993). In what Richards (1993) refers to as agricultural adaptive performance, the design may shift during the course of the experiment, depending on what is occurring and what the farmer perceives as his or her best option to make it successful. Thus, the scientific researcher might not recognize that an experiment has been conducted at all (Richards 1993). Cleveland and Soleri (2007) examine how agronomic knowledge becomes part of farmers’ creative action. By integrating contingencies and experience into local knowledge they dissolve rigid boundaries (Sillitoe 2007). However, they differ from Dove et al., in that they maintain that there is analytic value in distinguishing

between farmer/local knowledge and scientific knowledge. For Tovey (2008:195) as well, the expert–lay distinction remains valuable in drawing attention to the asymmetrical power relationships that exist between the truth claims made by those who are ‘accredited experts’ and those who are not. In the debate over the power dynamics of participatory research between scientists and farmers (e.g. Bentley 1994; Dove et al. 2007; Ingram 2008), it becomes evident that knowledge travels and transforms, that these forms of knowledge are not timeless, but develop and change.

In this thesis I wish to highlight the implication of these ‘asymmetrical power relationships,’ which extends beyond placing more value on one type of knowledge over another. It also positions the relatively powerful to define and (re)contextualize other knowledge(s) in ways that serve the purposes of those with dominant knowledge. Local knowledges were traditionally ignored or appropriated without thought of recognition of the holders of such knowledge in early development schemes (Hobart 1993; Tsing 2005). Some sociological discussions emphasize the increasing heterogeneity of knowledge production (Tovey 2008) -- characterized by complexity and boundary-crossing -- as leading to the continuous re-evaluation and redefinition of expertise, competence and skills (e.g. Gibbons et al. 1994 in Tovey 2008). However, we should be wary of imagining the interface of knowledges as leveling power relations, even as such endeavors strive to be participatory. Ishizawa (2010:208) addresses this point within participatory research:

[D]espite the growing recognition of the importance of the communities’ traditional knowledge, the approach of professionals remains one of applying a technical protocol to validate traditional knowledge according to the criteria of modern science and technology. The whole spectrum of initiatives, from the indigenous technical knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge movements to the disciplines prefixed by ethno-, inherits the double bind of participatory research. The outside technical agent sets not

only the agenda for the intervention (if not, why the need for participation?) but also the approach to be used. The result is that local knowledge is subsumed into techno-science, and local approaches are ignored.

Though less critical of participatory research, Walsh (2010) raises similar concerns to Ishizawa, arguing that the humanitarian development assistance delivered through international and Bolivian NGOs -- though largely welcomed and achieving some of the stated goals -- “has been eroding the inherent strengths of the indigenous communities” in Norte de Potosí (p.242). The NGOs failed to “take seriously the very different worldviews and knowledge systems of their indigenous ‘beneficiaries’” in part due to the failure to reconcile inherent power imbalances that privileged the Western knowledge (ibid.). This account reminds us of Hobart’s (1993) critique of the role Western scientific knowledge plays in constructing underdevelopment as a concept and then defining its solutions. He suggests that as systematic knowledge grows so does the possibility for ignorance. He argues that the shift to scientific knowledge requires the homogenization and quantifiability of what is potentially qualitatively different.

Nazarea (2006) sheds light on part of the problem of trying to incorporate local knowledge into global science, as though it were merely information to be tested: it ignores important aspects of the experiential nature of local knowledge. She draws attention to the “the sensory embodiment” and “attendant emotion and memory that is its power” (p.323). Sillitoe and Marzano (2009) also address this problem, outlining some of the complications that arise in efforts to incorporate local knowledge and values into the development process. To do so meaningfully within an arena “dominated by foreign ideas and hierarchy requires substantial time, effort and resources” (p.16). Among the difficulties in making sense of local knowledge (as an outsider), they highlight:

Knowledge is diffuse and communicated piecemeal in everyday life. It is equally ‘skill as knowledge’ as people transfer much through practical experience, and are often unfamiliar with, or do not need to, express all that they know in words. They may also carry knowledge, and pass it between generations, using unfamiliar idioms featuring symbols, myths, rites and so on. (Ibid.)

For Sillitoe and Marzano, then, it is not surprising that development workers may “misuse the participatory ideology, citing the relevant buzzwords without following in sound practices” (ibid.).

Within the context of efforts to avoid ‘top-down’ approaches the power relations between experts and local communities need to be further scrutinized. In participatory development, one of the implications of not contextualizing local knowledge within broader power relations, or failing to recognize the hybrid nature of knowledge, is that it may give the appearance of incorporating that knowledge in ways that do little more than legitimize development projects and experts. Mosse (2001) argues convincingly that participatory planning involves the acquisition and manipulation of a new ‘planning knowledge’ so that rather than determining the planning processes and outcomes, local knowledge may be *structured* by them. Perhaps, as Bruges and Smith (2007) argue, there is a conflict of interest in the way that participatory development is approached. The participation of ‘beneficiaries,’ which has come to be treated as a given, encounters a problematic contradiction: Such approaches are based on an ideal that the research be guided by the needs of the participants, *as they identify them*, while increasingly, “participatory approaches are being designed and implemented specifically to help achieve policy goals, especially in complex, uncertain, and contested environments where more conventional research methods have been ineffective” (Bruges and Smith 2007:14). Sillitoe and Marzano (2009) identify a growing concern within mainstream development

that NGOs based in developing countries facilitate ‘inclusion,’ and even *represent* local knowledge in devising culturally compatible development projects. Yet by “assigning the NGO sector such a special place in the development arena and encouraging the formation of ‘partnerships’ between the state, private sector and NGOs, western donors are in fact increasing their power to intervene and direct what is going on through the work of NGOs” (p. 20). These theoretical issues are pertinent to the ethnographic situation explored in this thesis. As is evident in various ways in subsequent chapters, local knowledge cannot be severed from the context of its historical relationship to the state and its burgeoning relationships to local and international development NGOs.

**Chapter III:**  
**Methodological Approach: Ethnographic Research in**  
**Norte de Potosí**

The majority of the data for this dissertation was collected over the course of seven months in Norte de Potosí, through participant-observation and semi-structured qualitative interviews. Additional data were gathered through collecting and reviewing ODEP's pamphlets and booklets, as well as pertinent legal documents such as the legislation regarding ecological agriculture.

It is not uncommon for the focus of ethnographic research to shift once in the field. The case study on which this dissertation was based was no exception. I planned to explore collaborative knowledge production based on a certain participatory-research model that ODEP was conducting with various farm families in several communities in the region (the CIAL method). Instead, I found myself in a district in which none of these research projects were being performed. I had been warned that the particular methodology was not working well, but I arrived under the impression that agronomist-farmer experimentation would be observable in some form and would make up at least an element of my focus nonetheless.

I came to understand that I had been directed to these two communities in part because of the significantly high percentage of women farmers participating with ODEP in other activities, relative to other communities in which the NGO worked. Since global North-South partnerships tend to be ones of funding flowing from the North to the South, and since gender equity has become a ubiquitous consideration upon which this funding is contingent, it became apparent that I, as a researcher introduced by CANGO to ODEP,



could not avoid being perceived as someone who would report back to CANGO on the successes or failures of participation (especially among women).

Additionally, I had planned to take a cross-generational approach, with an emphasis on youth. However, I found for various reasons (one being my positioning as a woman and mother) that my research among women would be more fruitful than what I could accomplish with local youth. I maintained a cross-generational data collection where possible, but it took a less central role in my analysis. These factors encouraged a shift in data collection and augmented attention to gender compared to the limited gendered component of my original research plan. The literature reviewed in preparation for this research project remained largely applicable, but emphasis shifted so that the ethnographic studies of Olivia Harris (2000) and others who highlighted gender and household dynamics became more central to my analysis of the interfaces of different types of knowledge once in the field.

#### 1. Lessons in Kitchens, Fields and Courses: the Irreplaceable Role of Participant Observation

Through the course of my fieldwork I conducted participant-observation, integrating myself in a variety of ways into the communities, finding ways to be helpful and later in NGO workshops and other events. I began to establish the versatile role I would play as a researcher on the first day of fieldwork – a warm autumn day in April when Adriano, an ODEP agronomist, led me into Tomacoyo and left me with Claudia – when I pulled out my knife and picked up a vegetable to peel, to assist women in preparing food for farmers harvesting potatoes. The range of activities I undertook included cooking and food preparation; harvesting crops and later sowing seeds; helping

with preparations for, and participating in, community events like weddings, or an agrobiodiversity event; participating in NGO workshops as well as community, NGO, and municipal meetings; animal and childcare; taking pictures for one of the facilitators; and anything else that came up.

Participant observation served some invaluable purposes; sometimes it put me ‘in the right place at the right time’ to learn about things no one thought I would care to study. It opened up questions within all sorts of ‘business as usual’ settings, sometimes revealing pertinent information and allowing the research to unfold. Further, it built rapport and gave me first hand experience with what people described, and insight into activities people had trouble describing. The activity itself, as well as the social conversation that accompanied it, often inspired questions that I could not have anticipated, and provided more general insight into the history and worldview of the residents of these two communities. It was also a time to record a great deal of descriptive information in the form of fieldnotes, including supplemental quantitative observations (de Walt and de Walt 2002; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995) such as counting people, animals, or crops, or female to male ratios in a given location or activity. This methodology also gave me the opportunity to answer others’ questions about me, my ‘people,’ what we produce, etc. It created a more reciprocal relationship.

Sustained participant observation situates the research questions within the context of the broader cultural surroundings. As much as this research looks at ecological development agronomists engaging with farmers and vice-versa, participant-observation with farm households meant that I spent far more time alone with rural people than I did with the NGO. So that, as I addressed the work that ODEP did, it was

through the lens of the farmers' experience of that work. To accomplish this involves more than asking the right questions. Bhavnani (2007:642) argues that "to tease out the relationship between production and reproduction, to ensure that the agency of people is captured, and to see the tangle of the interconnected configurations axes of inequality requires that we conduct our empirical research by interrogating the actual lived experience of people."

Certain sites of regular participant-observation facilitated the integration of interviewing into my research. For example, I spent many mornings in the kitchen of the Q'ayarumi school with the women working there that day, peeling the vegetables each child had contributed that morning. The three-classroom schoolhouse had additional rooms for the daycare and a kitchen. In addition to one regularly employed cook and one daycare worker, additional mothers assisted on a schedule designed on the basis of how many children they had attending the school. This provided an excellent environment in which I could be helpful and become more acquainted with women (and their families) during the day, without detracting from their workload. It also facilitated rapport with women who did not participate with ODEP. I later conducted several interviews in this kitchen while we peeled potatoes, onions and carrots for children's lunches.

The following brief scenarios are adapted from my fieldnotes to convey the broader context in which I, as a researcher, could look beyond development relationships and language that frames farmers as "lacking" and in need of support – that seeks to 'empower' them and help them 'build their capacity,' change their attitudes, or develop their 'leadership' skills. Participant observation helped me to avoid the risk of perceiving farmers only narrowly through the lens of their participation with ODEP:

Participant-observation situates me to be present for festivals that the agronomists purposely avoid. During the ‘Festival of the Crosses,’ packs of teenage girls run through the streets singing breathlessly, while teenage boys playing *charangos* run behind them. Old men walk with pan flutes from one makeshift bar to another, playing the same melodic tune intermittently from sunrise well into the middle of the night. Fireworks boom. *Tinqu* (literally ‘encounter’) fights erupt in the street, perpetuating, sometimes multigenerational, feuds. Blood spills as offerings for *Pachamama*, that she will be generous in the harvest. Older women in town look on from storefront doorways, disapprovingly, using long sticks to whack at the happy staggering drunks and fighters if they get too close. Everyone else appears to be having a very good time. “Be very careful of flying rocks!” I am warned. They are not allowed to fight with rocks and sling shots anymore, a few police have been sent to the area, equipped with whips, to make sure the crowd obeys. There are no other *gringos* here. I am in the habit of getting back to my room before it is very dark during the long stretches of fieldwork where my partner is not with me, but I know people here. Claudia (with sleeping baby on back) and others, bring me (also with sleeping baby on back) where I otherwise would not dare to go.

Participant-observation also provides insight into the contrast between discourse and practice. The following is one of many examples:

In certain interviews, ODEP and the governmental organization’s ecological agriculture research department are collaborating. Later, in other interviews with ODEP and PIAB, they are not. What occurs in the middle between these diverging versions is uncovered through participant-observation. I attend several workshops and witness workers on the ground *collaborating* in practical and strategic ways, unbeknownst to key figures in upper management with aspirations to *avoid* collaboration.

i. *Observing and Participating in Workshops and Meetings*

On May 17, 2010, a little over a month into fieldwork, I walked to Q’ayarumi with the two ODEP agronomists working in the district. Their backpacks looked bigger than usual and they carried big rolls of paper. In addition to notebooks and markers, they had enough pasta to feed a large group, powdered juice, and coca leaves to distribute to each participant (in keeping with tradition of sharing and chewing coca at meetings).

At the school we were met by a handful of women that grew to about a dozen within minutes of our arrival; as they talked, a few men arrived. They were not all from this community, but from Tomacoyo as well.

This meeting was going to be a strategic planning workshop, part of what the agronomists explained to me was the five year plan between ODEP and CANGO. In this case they would address the plans for the coming year. “You might be interested in this, but this meeting is in Quechua,” they told me. Despite the language barrier, there was a great deal I could understand. Plans were written on large sheets of paper in Spanish; the Quechua discourse was sprinkled with Spanish words, allowing me to at least understand the themes. Lasting almost five hours, with a break for lunch, the meeting covered a great deal: which households would make green compost; which would build terraced fields; who would participate in a participatory-research team; how many saplings would be brought to the community; micro-irrigation projects; and assigning two women each month to prepare lunch for the group, rather than participate. This was the first of several more monthly workshops (the second annual Farmer Training School – community version).

The import of these themes for me as a researcher was obvious, as was the way my attendance reinforced budding research relationships. “Why haven’t you come to my house yet?” someone asked, explaining how to find her home tucked up into the hills. But it was toward the end of the meeting that I understood that these workshops could become the new focal point for my research, filling the gap left by learning that the participatory research method I had expected to study was not actually being realized. The group was divided into two, by community, and asked to draw a picture of the

problems with the community and what they would like to see as improvements. Upon first blush I saw the potential for collaborations of knowledge. I wanted to know more about the motivations to do this exercise and how the information might (or might not) be used.

Each month after that first meeting I attended these community workshops, and secured a spot for myself at the ‘EICPAL *Promotores*’ workshop when it was announced: designed to build on the themes of the community workshops with select farmers who would become ecological agricultural ‘leaders’ or ‘promoters’ in their communities. The district agronomists were unsure why I would subject myself to three full days per month of farmer-training workshops in Quechua. However, ODEP’s director, proud of what the organization had developed, was clearer about my interests and supported the idea that I focus on this aspect of the ODEP’s work.

Throughout the course of my fieldwork I attended four EICPAL communal workshops; three EICPAL *Promotores* workshops (which brought a few farmers from each district together in a nearby city); and attended a farmer experience exchange with the farmers from the latter workshops. I also attended three PIAB workshops; a municipal development meeting of government and NGO officials; and monthly community business meetings in both Tomacoyo and Q’ayarumi. Additionally, I participated in two annual meetings and field visits between CANGO and ODEP.

The farmers and the NGO permitted me to morph from ‘assisting’ farmers, to ‘assisting’ agronomists, to participating in workshops in the capacity of a student-farmer. My negligible farming experience and Quechua language skills helped to counter power imbalances that often placed me in a position of privilege, as I was challenged to

comprehend the instructions for what I was supposed to be doing as a participant ‘student’ with farmers who could understand concepts linguistically and practically. But the role allowed me to participate as fully as possible, being asked to be the group’s writer when such a need arose, or being asked by farmers to participate in the evaluation of the workshop.

Since I was not fluent in Quechua, my attention to visual cues in meetings or workshops was heightened. I would notice when different themes generated different levels of interest, as well as enthusiasm, tension, anxiety or amusement, among other emotional reactions. I would notice who was coming and going, who paid attention, who talked most (and whether those people also listened to others), or who fell asleep, who was eager to participate and who tried to avoid participating and when.

I asked a lot of questions when it was an appropriate time (over meals, or walking/riding with farmers and NGO staff to and from the workshops). I also brought segments of recordings to two Quechua speaking women outside of the communities, to listen with me and clarify what was being said in the recording.

## ii. Partial Participant-Observation in my Living Situation

For a variety of pragmatic reasons, I settled into a rented room in the municipal town (which I have named “Llaqta” throughout the dissertation), from which I could walk, hitch a ride with teachers or a school bus, or catch the occasional ride with ODEP’s civil engineer, or later on Adriano’s motorbike (an ODEP purchase while I was there). The room, with two single straw beds, was located in one of the only houses with an

outhouse with a flushing toilet that sometimes worked and a (frighteningly badly wired) shower that usually did not.

I bought a propane tank and two-burner portable stove and made a little kitchen area in the corner of my room. I slept in a single straw-mattress bed with my toddler, Milo, and cooked on the floor and hand-washed our clothes, always thick with red dust from the dry desert-like winter. When I did not require my backpack, I carried Milo in an *aguayo* on my back and bought a popular plastic woven handbag women use for shopping. On the other hand, I was not required to cook with the intensity of local women; I could easily afford to purchase dinner at the one restaurant (later a second restaurant opened during my stay). I also had two brief visits by my partner who helped with childcare and did much of the cooking. While greatly appreciated, both of these issues made my judgment appear questionable (as a woman, allowing a man to do this work) and suggested to some that I was lazy.

On visits to Oruro and Sucre<sup>7</sup> I also acquired items that were not easily found (or relatively much more expensive) in the town. Forks, for example, could not be purchased in town, while disposable diapers could only be bought individually (the use of which for my toddler, also set me apart from local mothers). On trips to Llallagua I stocked up on coffee (for a stove-top espresso maker my partner brought to me), dried and canned goods, vegetables and fruit not available in the tiny market in town, as well as tokens of appreciation for interviewees in my study: much coveted cans of sardines in tomato sauce and coca leaves, among other things. The cold nights allowed for temporary refrigeration of perishables on my windowsill.

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<sup>7</sup> Two major cities in departments on either side of Potosí



iii. *A Note on Taking Children (and other family) to the Field*

One of the successes I had in building rapport was due to the presence of my young son, Milo (10 months old when we arrived in Bolivia). The general enjoyment of children was coupled with the intrigue of such a pale, blond child. Importantly, women who could be extremely shy, were often more comfortable talking to me casually since we had motherhood in common. Girls in their early teens also took every opportunity to play with him, which gave me the openings to talk to them and their parents. I joked that Milo was my key to the communities. He also aided my Quechua language acquisition, as people spoke to him using simple words repetitively.

My six-year-old daughter, Tiki, was also with me for three months. She was helpful in opening up more areas for participant-observation. For example, women spend four to five hours per day pasturing sheep. Until my daughter expressed an interest in learning to pasture sheep, I had never been invited to participate in this work. Her eagerness to learn was well received by certain women who took a particular interest in this. She also asked questions or made insightful observations, as well as attended to her brother during interviews. Creating her own social life, she quickly added colloquialisms to her limited Spanish that I had taken much longer to catch; her eagerness to learn Quechua resulted in much enthusiasm among residents to showcase the *gringita* who ‘could speak Quechua,’

Family (and a Canadian friend passing through) that came to visit me during the course of my fieldwork presented opportunities that would not otherwise arise; they included social events to which I might not otherwise have been invited, conversations

around questions I might not have thought to ask, and contextualized *me* for the farm families in my study.

## 2. Interviews with Farm Families in Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi

I interviewed members of 30 households in the two communities, 23 of which participated with ODEP. Most were nuclear family units, composed of two parents and between one and eight children. Several households included an elderly parent of one of the household heads, and a few others consisted of just one adult, or more than three.

Within these households I conducted interviews with 32 adult female farmers, 23 of which self-identified as participating with ODEP. I interviewed 16 adult male farmers, 14 of which self-identified as participating with ODEP. In twelve of the households (ten with the NGO), I interviewed 20 youth (most of whom were still living at home, but in a few cases had moved to town or a city for school). Fourteen were female youth between the ages of 12 and 21 (three were mothers themselves). Six were male youth between the ages of 12 and 17.

I spent the evenings rereading my fieldnotes regularly, looking for patterns and maintaining familiarity with my data. I also listened to interviews I had conducted to develop follow-up questions and interviews as well as to identify patterns and contradictions in the responses of different participants. In addition to the many opportunities I had for specific follow-up questions thanks to on-going participant-observation, I conducted full follow-up interviews with 15 participants (ten women, two men, and two female youth), as well a third and fourth interview with one woman (Claudia).

All interviews were conducted in Spanish. With one elderly man and two women in their late fifties, I conducted the interview with a younger family member present to translate between Spanish and Quechua. In many of the interviews with women and a few with men there were moments in which a younger family member would clarify my question in Quechua to the man or woman I was interviewing. Once in a while the person being interviewed switched to Quechua to expand on an idea.

Due to the participant-observation method, I had ample opportunity to ask follow-up questions, or discuss certain themes with individuals and groups. At the workshops in the city there were a few women and men who I spoke to regularly and who answered my questions for the purposes of my research. These farmers came from various communities in the region, including a woman from a neighbouring community in the same district as Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi.

i. *A Note on Households as a Unit of Analysis*

To examine relationships between farming households and a Bolivian NGO requires scrutinizing the potential underlying assumptions of the household as a unit of analysis. The household in the Andean context has long been accepted as an appropriate unit of analysis because it is recognized as a deep-rooted adaptation to the demands of the physical and social environment (Mayer 2002). However, ethnographic research and feminist critiques of the household as an economic unit of analysis make evident that there is no such thing as 'the household.' Thus the validity of such a unit of analysis has been debated in the literature (e.g. Collins 1986).

Hamilton (1998) highlights the bias in assuming that one individual necessarily heads a household. Building on Harris' ([1978] 2000) discussion of gender complementarity in Andean indigenous households, she argues that from colonialism to the present era of economic globalization a patriarchal ideology has been imposed on Andean cultures, which has encouraged gender inequalities to take hold within households. Her argument draws attention to the potential for change in intra-household relations and their interconnectedness with larger socio-economic and socio-political changes.

However, one of the dangers in using households as a unit of analysis is in missing the importance of the "various forms of cooperation and collectivity in domestic work between households" (Harris 1981:150, cited in Collins 1986). It is important to recognize that households are not individual autonomous units; family and kin networks are not confined to those members of a household (Mayer 2002, Van Vleet 2008).

Nonetheless there is an argument to be made for continuing to use this unit of analysis. Drawing on Moore (1988:55), Kabeer (1994) argues that households are important for feminist analysis because they organize a large part of women's domestic and reproductive labour. As a result, both the composition and the organization of households have a direct impact on women's lives and on their ability to gain access to resources, to labour and to income (Ibid.:114-115).

## ii. Interviews with professionals and others

Among the staff at ODEP, I interviewed seven people (five men and two women), four of whom currently, or previously, worked in my research location. I conducted

second interviews with the two main technician/facilitators in my research site, Adriano and Rocío. The structure of my research allowed me to ask follow-up questions to those whom I had interviewed, as well as countless other opportunities to ask questions of several other staff persons at ODEP

I conducted interviews with four PIAB employees in the ecological agriculture wing (two previously with ODEP), as well as a man from a Bolivian food security program supported by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (PASA-FAO). I also conducted brief interviews, or recorded conversations (with permission) with teachers, agronomists from other local NGOs, people who had previously worked in development, and a few individuals in town who were versed in the regional history, or were willing and able to shed light on a range of socio-cultural, historical, economic and political topics, such as the agro-festive annual cycle, which included the *Tinquus* (ritual fighting).

Typically, I asked members of farm households about daily life and work (including decision-making) in and around their home, fields and community. I asked about their participation with ODEP (and other non-governmental and governmental organizations), including: what he or she perceived ODEP to be doing for the community and why ODEP had come to this particular place; why they had chosen to work with ODEP; what if anything had improved; what still needed to be done and whether that could be accomplished in the time left before the NGO anticipated leaving. I also asked about key words used by ODEP, such as leadership, biodiversity, climate change, or sustainability.

I asked about perceived changes over time (within the community and within the household), focusing on social life, gender dynamics as well as environmental changes, but keeping the questions as open as possible. And I asked about knowledge (local, scientific, etc.). I asked about how the woman, man or youth had learned to farm, weave, cook, read, etc. I inquired into who was concerned to be knowledgeable and why; who had medicinal plant knowledge; who had formal education; if there was a difference between local and scientific agricultural knowledge and, if so, what that difference might be.

I allowed interviews to flow in whatever way the interviewee wanted to take it. Most people were fairly shy and answered my questions with as few words as possible. They seemed reassured being asked questions about daily life, as they could speak with authority. People who were more talkative tended to get the interview rolling from there, often turning it into more of a dialogue with questions about how my 'people,' lifestyle and environment/agriculture compared. There were patterns among the less talkative; women responded to most questions with "I don't know," men and boys to the same questions with "I don't remember" and girls with embarrassed giggles (efforts to push through induced more giggles). Hence, the time it took to conduct an interview could be twenty minutes, or it could turn into a two-hour conversation.

When I knew that a woman had very little time, and was not particularly interested in giving me work to do, I narrowed the focus to an interview that could obtain the most important questions in twenty minutes. If she was amenable to going on after that, I asked more questions. Chasing after an interview that seemed like it might never happen with Edelmira (an active participant with ODEP, and one of the most confident

and vocal women in Q'ayarumi) helped me adapt this approach. The interviews with men also tended to be shorter than with women, since I rarely worked side-by-side with men. In several cases they answered my questions when they returned home from the fields for a meal, where I was conducting interviews with wives or youth, while peeling potatoes, or removing kernels of corn from dried cobs, or just sharing a meal.

On occasion opportunities arose for informal focus-group interviews, such as when a group of people was partaking in a common activity and a few women or men and women engaged with my line of questioning. However, my intention to conduct formal focus-group interviews was revised once in the field and I came to see such an endeavor as inappropriate, given the demands placed on these busy farm households to attend various workshops with ODEP and other organizations in the area.

All interviews commenced with the interviewee's oral consent to participate and that he or she understood her rights (youth [age 12 and up] interviewed also had permission from their parents). I had rehearsed my script until it could be recited as comfortably as possible from memory. Importantly, I took opportunities to cover some of the participants' rights in my study prior to interviewing. This not only covered participant-observation, but ensured that when I went over these issues at the time of the interview it would be more likely to be understood. Participating community members and farmers at the EICPAL *Promotores* workshops were informed that any reports I gave to ODEP (or CANGO) about my research would exclude names, and the closest identifying information would be the possible use of the name of the community.<sup>8</sup> I gave

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<sup>8</sup> For example, I reported to ODEP that Q'ayarumi residents were less satisfied with the NGO, because there were several families concerned with improving irrigation that felt ODEP was doing little that year in their community. Providing the NGO with this

ODEP employees the same assurance that their names would be confidential, but explicitly reminded them that they may be identifiable to others at ODEP and CANGO.

iii. Knowledge and Power

The reality of seven months of fieldwork in an unfamiliar place with unfamiliar languages is that it opens up more questions than it answers. Fieldnotes from the early months strongly reflect this, especially as it pertains to ‘local knowledge,’ which does not always lend itself well to narration, and is very easy to miss and misunderstand as an outsider. Yet the arguments developed in this dissertation arise from my unique position as a qualitative researcher (and outsider). These included social dynamics that enabled and constrained participation, as well as collaborations of knowledge, especially along lines of class and gender. Some of these barriers persisted despite genuine attempts to overcome them. Kabeer (1994:134) draws attention to the utility of qualitative methods in studying power:

There are significant dimensions of the human experience that do not lend themselves to enumeration. One such dimension [...] is that of power. Quantitative approaches may be able to measure ‘statistically important’ areas of decision-making power for women and men, but the elusiveness of power lies precisely in its resistance to ‘objective’ observation.

Efforts toward increased (gendered) participation between farmers and ODEP, or PIAB and others, as well as efforts toward collaboration, unveil ways in which they are enabled and constrained. Power imbalances emerge in the relationships between people within households, communities, or farmer-NGO relations. Moreover, they are found in global North-South NGO partnerships, as well as in my position as a *gringa* researcher to

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information was also an important way to be of use to the farmers, taking the time to talk to me.



the farmers, or the implications of being introduced to ODEP by CANGO. The arguments in this dissertation are shaped not only by listening to what people told me in interviews, but by what they did in practice and my first hand experience and positioning in their interconnected relationships.

## **Chapter IV:**

### **Neoliberal Underpinnings of Agricultural Development in Bolivia: Food Sovereignty, Organic Certification and Burgeoning Collaborations**

#### 1. Neoliberalism and Development

Neoliberal policies of the 1980s and 1990s in Bolivia privatized state companies and natural resources, resulting in increased foreign economic power and sharply rising prices of basic resources, including water. The International Monetary Fund, World Bank and WTO-backed policies also reduced government spending and labour protection, while raising taxes to pay foreign debt, resulting in sweeping losses of tens of thousands of jobs (Draper and Shultz 2008; Greene 2006; Healy 2001; Nash 1994). The implications for agriculture were that the economic viability of small and family farmers and coop/collective agriculture was undermined by trade liberalization, flooding markets with cheap food imports. Bolivian neoliberalism fortified the agro-industrial dominance of the eastern lowlands department of Santa Cruz, orienting and narrowing agricultural production toward exports for external markets (mainly soy), and solidifying power in the hands of a few transnational corporations (Rosset 2006; Webber 2008). Draper and Shultz (2008), Rosset (2006) and others have shown how these economic transformations have, in turn, had cultural and political impacts that encourage small farmers to increasingly abandon agriculture. At the same time urban and rural indigenous social movements have emerged and responded to ongoing injustices, which can arguably be understood as a continuation of 500 years of exploitation of the nation's silver, tin and other natural resources.

The underlying neoliberal logic of the era during which the 1994 Law of Popular Participation was enacted in Bolivia sought to pass along responsibilities for governing to citizens exercising their rights and obligations at the local level. Postero shows how the Law of Popular Participation both opened up spaces for indigenous people to make demands on the State, and simultaneously shaped and limited that participation (p.166). This approach to citizenship through participation reflects a concern raised broadly by Cooke and Kothari (2001), and specifically by Hickey and Mohan (2004), that participatory approaches to policy-making can serve to undermine representative democracy. Using Bolivia's Law of Popular Participation as an example, they argue that "formal participation may force out more legitimate approaches to securing the agency of marginal groups," in this case certain organizations were empowered at the expense of those that have historically represented the interests of the poorest (p.20). Hippert (2011a), McNeish (2002) and Postero (2007:167) all describe processes in which indigenous groups have had to organize their communities, make diagnoses of their needs, attend meetings where budgets were discussed, and make claims backed by rational arguments using bureaucratic jargon defined by the new law. As a result, both the state and municipalities came to rely heavily on NGOs, often funded by international organizations, to carry out the widespread training necessary to 'educate' citizens about how to access their new rights (Postero 2007:167-168). This process was part of a larger shift in Latin America, in which NGOs represented an important space for economic and political agency within and against authoritarian regimes within which development projects, along with more democratization and neoliberal economic policies, were the focus (Alvarez 1998; Molyneux 2008; Postero 2007).

The Law of Popular Participation in Bolivia was established with the notion that it would provide more space for local customs and traditions, yet in practice Hippert (2011a) finds that, within a structure of President Morales' 'decolonization' project, having appropriate '*usos y costumbres*' in relation to the pool of beneficiaries competing for scarce resources gives communities and organizations an edge. Culture as capital, over poverty in itself, becomes an important means of legitimizing need for support. Popular participation requires people to strategically translate (cf. Nauta 2006) "various constructions of identity as part of development proposals in order to target their communities or organizations for specific types of development attention" (Hippert 2011a:98).

Postero (2007) shows how the meaning of citizenship has been subject to radical changes in recent Bolivian history. She argues that the legacy of racism in Bolivia was simply recontextualized, rather than erased by the reforms of the 1990s, reforms which aimed to make access to political institutions much more inclusive for all Bolivians. Postero, like Gustafson (2002; 2009), shows how Bolivia's multiculturalism of the 1990s and early twenty-first century was unable to be sufficiently transformative due to its relationship to neoliberalism. "Where neoliberalism is the key organizing principle of government, it acts to define citizen participation in accordance with its logic" (2007:15). Within this neoliberal logic, citizenship "should be an active exercise of responsibilities, including economic self-reliance and political participation (Postero quoting Schild [1998:94] p.166).

The first five years of the twenty-first century saw a great deal of political instability and popular protest to these policies (e.g. Greene 2006), leading up to the election of the *Movimiento al Socialismo* Party (Movement Toward Socialism). The MAS party, led by the nation's first indigenous president and leader of the coca growers' union, Evo Morales Ayma, came to power in 2006 following unprecedented indigenous voter turnout. Bolivia's new administration took a strong stand against privatization, re-nationalizing the oil and gas industries. It also created a new constitution which included clearer and greater rights for indigenous peoples and women, as well as for nature and the earth itself, taking a stand in support of environmental protection and social justice, including specifying the right of Bolivians to *food sovereignty*. The anti-neoliberal statements made by the President, and the Party's initial actions to undo neoliberal policies - some of which had been in place since 1985 - showed much promise for change. However, there were obvious challenges to integrating these ideas within a context of ongoing social and political unrest and the strong opposing force of the Bolivian elite. Moreover, the strong stance against international funding institutions like the IMF, as well as the United States' foreign policies, had to be balanced with some dependence on international institutions to maintain economic stability (Greene 2006; Kennemore and Weeks 2011).

Understanding the efforts to develop a strong national market for organic production with an overarching goal of food sovereignty is necessary to examining the continuity in goals between ODEP and PIAB. Yet, even in the face of increasing internal and external pressure for intra-organizational collaboration, PIAB was resistant to such

collaboration. To contextualize this tension the Bolivian government's positioning as a 'twenty-first century socialist' state contending with neoliberalism must be unpacked.

i. *Neoliberal Sustainability and Conservation*

To examine efforts toward sustainable agriculture and agrobiodiversity in the Bolivian context is intriguing because the government's official discourse has referenced *Pachamama* and an ideal of an ancient, but enduring, Andean worldview that emphasizes reciprocity and complementarity – a general interconnectedness between all things as well as the living earth *herself*. The government self-consciously presents a counter-discourse to neoliberalism's perception of nature as something to be owned and turned into a global market commodity (Holmes 2011), and yet, as this chapter demonstrates, the MAS government in Bolivia finds itself balancing its endeavor to move away from neoliberalism with neoliberal economic policies. Although the Bolivian state has aligned its philosophy with idealized Andean values and traditions, some neoliberal values remain entrenched – within not only the government, among its right-wing dissenters, but the resilient NGO private sector, receiving aid from global development donors still largely governed by neoliberal frameworks.

One of the complications for reconciling such opposing worldviews as the Andean cosmovision and neoliberalism relates to the latter's perception of environmental protection. Holmes (2011) argues that the concept of nature has undergone a hegemonic "neoliberalization" process in which *the way* conservation is currently understood, is treated as indisputably good and unproblematic. Despite debates concerning "whether community-based, or fortress-type protected areas are most effective," Holmes points out

that the assumptions that “protected areas are the best way to preserve biodiversity” and that “NGOs are the most capable actors to do so” are never challenged (2011:17). He argues that this amounts to the hegemony of neoliberal conservation, which suppresses different visions “that might challenge this seemingly natural way of doing things.” Likewise, Saad (2009:91) argues that conservation becomes about more than protecting nature, directing “how certain guises and uses of nature can be prioritized and secured.” Drawing on the example of a Bolivian foundation’s *in situ* conservation effort, she addresses a process of governance that (re)enforces the foundation’s conservation discourse, while suppressing the potential for farmers’ (counter) discourses. Importantly, this participatory, community-based conservation effort upholds the familiar power relations while shaping the local knowledge it involves, just as Mosse (2001) and Gonzales et al. (2010) (see chapter IX).

ii. *Neoliberal Undermining of Local Markets and Agrobiodiversity*

The depoliticizing effect of the neoliberal argument that social, environmental, or resource depletion problems are issues that are most appropriately addressed by market-oriented forces has been well documented (e.g. Courville and Patel 2006; Lockie 2009). For example, Courville and Patel’s (2006:7) discussion of agrarian reform points to the measure of success that the neoliberal reframing of policy has had, in that even scholars and policymakers who argue for redistribution of land, find the space for their arguments in economic terms, such as, say, increased gross domestic product, rather than “in terms of justice, food sovereignty, equity, or rural transformation.” Courville and Patel argue that while marginalized peoples are increasingly allowed to make demands and to

organize within civil society, the reconfigured neoliberal state functions as “an organizational tool for market expansion, and less a vehicle for representative democracy or resource distribution” (2006:8; see also Petras and Veltmeyer 2003). Focusing on efforts toward agrarian reform, they show how people are ‘empowered’ by neoliberal populism, to *act*, yet without any actual mechanism to help movements realize their goals. Thus, any current demand for agrarian reform can only be heard when framed “within the parameters of a depoliticized (market-oriented) project” (ibid.). Similarly, Lockie (2009:407) shows how the loss of agricultural biodiversity becomes conceptualized within this framework as “an outcome of market failure best addressed through various types of market reform.” Yet, this approach ignores the point that the loss of biodiversity has been directly related to environmentally and culturally destructive neoliberal development schemes (Desmarais 2007).

While a shift in perspective is occurring with the increasing international promotion of sustainable agriculture through organic production, and even food sovereignty,<sup>9</sup> mainstream development rhetoric has long claimed that large industrial farms are more efficient. Resulting strategies, implemented to deal with problems of hunger and food supply, have flooded the market with cheap produce that undercuts local farmers (Edelman 1999; Escobar 1995; Long 2008; McAfee 2006; McMichael 2006). In Bolivia neoliberal reforms engaged the country with the global economy in ways that undermined local and national markets. For example, Healy (2001:52) argues that

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<sup>9</sup> For example, the FAO recently agreed to begin discussing food ‘sovereignty’ rather than (the currently dominant term) ‘security’ after several social movements presented a consensus declaration, developed during the Third Special Conference for Food Sovereignty, claiming food sovereignty to be a real solutions to food, climate and fundamental human rights crises. (<http://lapress.org/articles.asp?art=6630> accessed January 23, 2012).



decades of discriminatory agricultural policies positioned Bolivia's small farmers to be "ill prepared to compete with the flood of foreign, often subsidized agricultural produce into local and regional market places." Furthermore, agrobiodiversity has often been jeopardized with the pressure for farmers to produce cash crops and conform to agricultural markets. Though the degree to which neoliberalism threatens biodiversity is debated in the literature, food sovereignty has been proposed as a way to protect agrobiodiversity (Isakson 2009; Wittman 2009). In the Bolivian context the complication, as this chapter demonstrates, relates to how food sovereignty is conceptualized and for what end, by State and NGO actors in agricultural development. The broadened definition applied by the state raises questions over whether food sovereignty will function more as a buzzword than as something that can truly protect agrobiodiversity.

## 2. Evo Morales and the Movement towards Socialism

Perhaps what was initially so striking about Evo Morales and MAS's discourse was the way it did *not* try to conform to the neoliberal framing of social, environmental, or resource depletion problems as issues to be solved by market forces. This is not to say that the government's approach rejected all ideals of developing stronger markets, but its perspective was, and continues to be, underscored by a strong anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist standpoint that emphasizes the need to strengthen indigenous rights, food sovereignty, and unions (for example). This has had implications for how communities draw on images of indigeneity and guardianship of *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) to lay claims for government funds. However, the divergence in discourse from previous

neoliberal governments should not be mistaken for the same degree of divergence in policies. Taking a strong discursive stance against U.S. economic domination and neoliberalism affords the Bolivian government some autonomy while maintaining certain ties. It has positioned itself to redefine its relationships with international funding agencies in ways that strengthen Bolivia as a nation state.

The MAS administration has sharply moved away from the ideological aspects of neoliberalism that see the state as inefficient and encumbering market forces, while at the same time it has not completely moved away from some of the tenets that liberalism and neoliberalism share (Goodale 2009; Kennemore and Weeks 2011, Webber 2008).

Kennemore and Weeks (2011) examine post-neoliberal development in Bolivia within the framework of what has been called Twenty-first Century Socialism. Twenty-first Century Socialism seeks to increase state regulation and power, but in a democratic manner that allocates resources more efficiently and does not stifle innovation or personal choice. From this perspective, collectivism is not the goal, rather the economic model aims to give individuals – particularly the poor – freedom within a socialist system to assert themselves politically and economically (Harnecker 2010 in Kennemore and Weeks 2011). In this way, it claims to build on the mistakes of both neoliberalism and the socialism of the twentieth-century (ibid.: 267-268). Thus, the market is understood to be contestable and new alternatives developed as necessary. Importantly for the discussion that follows in this chapter, twenty-first-century socialism does not completely reject capitalism:

[I]nstead, this new model rejects market policies imposed by any foreign source, seeking instead to incorporate capitalism within a humanitarian rubric. To that end, the state also assumes control over critical natural resources, and redistributes the revenue.

(Kennemore and Weeks 2011: 268)

However, despite Evo Morales' successful development of a new constitution that aims to "encompass the interests of all sectors of society," Kennemore and Weeks argue that in practice "the reform process has often succumbed to traditional paradigms of the past, preventing any enduring transformations from taking place" (ibid.). Even while closely following the twenty-first-century socialism model, Morales' "economic reforms have not signaled a dramatic shift towards socialism but rather a pragmatic way for a centre-left government to better capture the capitalist surplus necessary for state spending (2011:271). Thus, Bolivia's economic policy might more accurately be called 'Andean capitalism,' as Vice-President, Álvaro Garcia Linera has suggested. He explained this as "transferring a part of the surplus of the nationalised hydrocarbons (oil and gas) in order to encourage the setting up of forms of self-organisation, of self-management and of commercial development that is really Andean and Amazonian" (ibid.). Haargard and Andersson (2009) argue that the common narrative of a Bolivian backlash against neoliberalism, then, should be reconsidered in light of the continuities and mutual constraints between popular mobilization and neoliberal policy reforms. Thus, despite the high standards for indigenous rights, land redistribution and environmental protection set by the new constitution, the government has often failed to uphold these basic principles in favour of policies that foster immediate political and economic gains (Kennemore and Weeks 2011: 272). Kennemore and Weeks draw on the example of granting indigenous supporters in the highlands with land titles in the lowlands:

[This practice] has not only violated the constitutional land titles of lowland communities, but has also made significant incursions into biologically protected areas and national parks. One explanation for the selective implementation of such policies is the composition of social movement leaders in government ministries that, following

decades of mobilisation around regional demands, are rarely in a political position to act outside a narrow set of interests (Kohl, 2010: 116).

It is noteworthy that indigenous social movements that found themselves both enabled and constrained by decentralization processes, such as the 1994 Law of Popular Participation during Bolivia's clear neoliberal era, now find themselves constrained by their implication within the political and bureaucratic structures of the Bolivian government.

The MAS administration has been cautious in engaging with both local and international NGOs, developing relationships with some while severing or restricting relationships with others. It maintains several international ties, particularly with United Nations' organizations, but Morales has also clearly aligned himself with other leftist/socialist leaders such as Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro, building ties outside mainstream models of international development. Bolivian NGOs that may be seen to promote neoliberal values that are not shared by the government, or even potentially to be spies for American organizations such as USAID, are used as examples for why the government should limit their involvement.<sup>10</sup>

Evo Morales and the MAS government have expressed disdain for certain aspects of the NGO phenomenon in Bolivia, seeing them as representative of, and (re)enforcing, neoliberal values. However, there are many visible examples of collaborations and active relationships across these lines. In Norte de Potosí, for example, local and international NGOs meet regularly with municipal government officials. Posters advertising fairs, activities, projects, etc. involve alliances to varying degrees among (federal) government,

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<sup>10</sup> ([http://www.lostiempos.com/diario/actualidad/nacional/20100128/morales-dice-que-algunas-ong-son-quinta-rueda-de-espionaje-del\\_55548\\_98938.html](http://www.lostiempos.com/diario/actualidad/nacional/20100128/morales-dice-que-algunas-ong-son-quinta-rueda-de-espionaje-del_55548_98938.html) accessed Nov. 20, 2012)

local NGOs and various international donors. Despite quotidian development planning and special events involving collaborative work across government–NGO lines, in 2010 Morales reinforced his guarded stance toward NGOs, arguing that only unions can speak for civil society. NGOs and foundations, he argued, are a weaker (European) model than unions. He also reiterated his 2009 statement that some NGOs serve as instruments of capitalism and imperialism.<sup>11</sup>

i. *Perceptions of the Government and NGOs in Q'ayarumi and Tomacoyo*

In little towns and villages throughout Norte de Potosí (as with other parts of Bolivia), the facades of buildings have the names and logos of different political parties; contemporary fresh paint and worn and faded stencils of previous political parties share space on the buildings around town squares and along main roads. Along the often treacherous, winding, mostly dirt road that cuts across Norte de Potosí between the cities of Oruro in the west and Sucre in the east, one passes little adobe buildings with one blue wall, or a painted blue rock-face on the mountains into which the road is chiseled, with the white letters 'EVO' or 'MAS' written on them. In places with street lamps, blue and white pennant strings are hung across roads. In storefronts and homes of seemingly everyone there are posters of Evo Morales with a calendar at the bottom. Sometimes there is more than one, along with posters of recent and upcoming fairs, or promoting the work of one NGO or another, all with handy calendars along the bottom.

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<sup>11</sup> ([http://www.lostiempos.com/diario/actualidad/nacional/20100128/morales-dice-que-algunas-ong-son-quinta-rueda-de-espionaje-del\\_55548\\_98938.html](http://www.lostiempos.com/diario/actualidad/nacional/20100128/morales-dice-que-algunas-ong-son-quinta-rueda-de-espionaje-del_55548_98938.html) accessed Nov. 20, 2012)

The indigenous population – both rural and urban – has shown strong support for Morales, as he was reelected in December 2009 with 64 percent majority and another record-breaking indigenous voter turnout. Yet the impression of unified political support for MAS from the countryside upon first blush is far more ambiguous with time spent in the communities and listening to the concerns, praise and critiques of more and less politically involved locals.

In Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi people expressed ambivalence. For example, Evita and Claudia both confirmed that many people in the countryside supported Morales, but they diverged in their explanation of what he had done to gain this support. Evita pointed to various examples of support for rural farm families, while Claudia highlighted promises he had made, primarily in terms of support for children, which she perceived had not been followed through. Although he is recognized as Bolivia's first indigenous president that did not necessarily make him 'one of them'. "I met him once," Guillermo, the *subcalde* for the 2010 calendar year, had told me.

"What did you think of him?"

"He's quite fat. [...] He's not one of us – he's a politician."

Although the reasons differed, overall I encountered a mistrust of Evo Morales and the MAS administration by farmers and ODEP staff alike. Among other concerns, NGO workers were acutely aware of rumours of corruption in the government, as ongoing struggles for power occurred between the formerly powerful right-wing elite and the MAS government.

Often farmers were skeptical that government promises, even those directed at their municipality, would result in much follow-through. One of the most revealing

comments in terms of the communities in Pocomachurí vis-à-vis the state came from doña Luisa. Regarding local changes since the new administration, she told me, “we [community members] never talked about the government before Evo, but now we do!”

As for the perceived differences between governmental and nongovernmental organizations, people speculated amongst themselves over whether the government might have more money for community projects than ODEP and other NGOs, but remained unconvinced that the government would follow through on its plans. This suggested that ODEP was perceived as being more accountable to the farmers than the State would be, but both were recognized to be temporary and contingent on external funding sources. The way an NGO or the government is perceived by local farm families will also have an impact on how participatory approaches are understood. In line with the argument of the tyranny of participatory development, Hailey (2001:93) and others have pointed out that the history and the reality of governmental and non-governmental intervention indicates that either might (legitimately) be seen as a means of imposing external control.

### 3. Food Sovereignty and Agrobiodiversity: Shared Concerns

Bolivia is home to substantial biodiversity. For example, thousands of native varieties of domesticated and wild tuber plants can be found in the highlands. Like elsewhere, modern agricultural practices, and the prioritizing of a limited variety of ‘cash’ crops over others to meet market demands, have had a deleterious effect. The arrival of the ‘Green Revolution’ to Bolivia, which transformed farming systems to necessitate the use of agro-chemicals and monocropping practices, resulted in the loss of agrobiodiversity. Both ODEP and the government have been concerned with ameliorating agrobiodiversity. This orientation includes two anticipated ends: adaptation

to climate changes and food sovereignty. The logic underpinning food sovereignty involves the right to produce, distribute and consume nutritious, culturally appropriate food in a way that is ecologically sustainable. Agrobiodiversity conservation is recognized as an important way to achieve this right.

Both the NGO and the state have focused attention on organic agriculture and strengthening Bolivia's internal markets as key to food sovereignty. However they differ in focus. The state's need to maintain the stability and profitability of the current agribusiness for exportation leads to emphasizing independence and *ownership*, an emphasis that, at times, takes precedence over sustainability in food sovereignty. Angel from PIAB stressed the importance of agrobiodiversity conservation:

“Food sovereignty is like the biggest umbrella for [the government] - to have food on our tables, to nourish us, and then to protect biodiversity and keep our native species. We want to value and rescue them *and* do what we find suitable for us! We don't want to be managed by international institutions! We want to define how we want to take care of and conserve our genetic and natural resources!”

At the same time, he explained the importance of this notion to all branches of PIAB – even those areas that worked with conventional farming research involving agrochemical pesticide use and scientific farming methods including monocropping. The vision for food sovereignty, he insisted, was an issue of national security not simply something for the (still marginal) organic agriculture production.

While ODEP and PIAB, as well as other governmental and non-governmental organizations in Bolivia, refer to sustainable agriculture, it is important to recognize that while sustainable agriculture and organic agriculture are terms that are sometimes used interchangeably, the latter is not actually always sustainable. Nor do organic farming practices necessarily challenge established global power relations (Altieri and Toledo



2011). While certification of organic producers holds promise for marginalized farmers, it brings with it complications. The literature has shown that despite high hopes, certification has not necessarily provided farmers with a market advantage (Higgins, Dibden and Conklin 2008). Altieri and Toledo (2011:588) convincingly shed light on this with their argument that:

Organic farming systems that do not challenge the monoculture nature of plantations and rely on external inputs as well as on foreign and expensive certification seals, or fair trade systems destined only for agro-export, offer little to small farmers who in turn become dependent on external inputs and foreign and volatile markets. Keeping farmers dependent on an input substitution approach, organic agriculture's fine-tuning of input use does little to move farmers toward the productive redesign of agricultural ecosystems that would move them away from dependence on external inputs. Niche (organic and/or fair trade) markets for the rich in the North exhibit the same problems of any agro-export scheme that does not prioritize food sovereignty [...] often perpetuating dependence and at times hunger (Altieri 2009).

Raul (one of the two agronomists who had left ODEP to work at PIAB) and other professionals in development NGOs reported that, prior to the MAS government, the few existing conservation laws had rarely been applied in practice (at least in Norte de Potosí). Raul recalled discourses on issues of food sovereignty, climate change and biodiversity conservation in the past, but it was only very recently that the government had addressed the role it would take in implementing such ideas. Juan Luis, the director of ODEP, expressed concern that these ideas had been examined, debated and put in writing at the federal level – namely through “Law 3525” – but that no one from the government had spoken to ODEP, or other NGOs, to his knowledge, to ask how the government could facilitate the efforts that were *already in place* toward these goals. According to him, the government was paying lip service to a concept, taking little if any action to implement it. This suggested that when and if the government did take action, it might do so without communicating with these same, already active, NGOs.

As part of the new constitution, the MAS government passed a seven-part law regarding the ‘Regulation and Promotion of Ecological Agricultural and Non-timber Forest Production,’ known as ‘Law 3525,’ which is designed to regulate, promote and strengthen ecological production, fight hunger and ensure that healthy food is accessible to all Bolivians. It states the right to food sovereignty and outlines a certification system that would include fully organic farmers as well as farmers making the transition to organic production, and establishes two types of certification: one that meets international standards and one that meets standards established within Bolivia. The law established a national council of organic production, CNAPE<sup>12</sup>, to oversee this branch of the economy. It also outlined some of the roles of public and private entities under the Council, such as that “municipal governments prioritize the support and co-financing for implementation and development of ecological projects supported and funded by NGOs, foundations and/or international cooperation” (Article 25:II). While it was not necessarily obvious what the government was doing to implement this plan in Pocomachurí in early 2010, by September of that year the pilot project discussed in chapter VII (see page 198), was being developed in three municipalities in Bolivia through the Bolivian Program for Agricultural Research (PIAB).

Concerned with re-nationalizing privatized industries and restricting foreign control over resources (especially from the United States), it is not surprising that the MAS government framed the solutions to problems of hunger, malnutrition and loss of biodiversity in terms of national security – or *sovereignty* (Rosset 2006). Since the notion of food security falls short of defining what foods are appropriate and where they

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<sup>12</sup> *El Consejo Nacional de Producción Ecológica*

should be produced, it makes room for arguments such as importing cheap food from the United States is better than producing it, at the same time as it supports the position that a country in which food security is dependent on the vagaries of the global economy is not secure, neither in terms of food or national security (Rosset 2006:305).

The agronomist I interviewed from the Program to Support Food Security (*Programa de apoyo a la Seguridad Alimentaria*) supported by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, PASA-FAO, described the importance of food sovereignty for Bolivia, though the FAO had not yet officially recognized the need to shift discourse away from food security toward sovereignty:

[MARIO]: We need to look at the difference between food security and food sovereignty. The first one has to do with the issue of survival. Whereas food sovereignty has to do with how *we can decide* what we are able and unable to eat!

For example quinoa is a part of our food sovereignty. It's a part of our culture, our heritage. But nowadays the owners of the quinoa are not us; they are the United States! They are the ones who have patented many varieties of quinoa, they are the owners of the germplasm. The United States has done a lot of research in quinoa and they appropriated the quinoa. But it's even worse than that [...] What the United States has done is monopolize the product and on top of that made money, instead of the Andean philosophy of mankind which believes in possessing it and *sharing* it.

We are producing a lot of organic [quinoa], which we sell to Europe and it is a high quality product, that contains a lot of minerals, because they don't have food with a lot of minerals over there, but *we* are *not* consuming that production in Bolivia!

He continued by explaining the differences in protein and vitamins between eating a hamburger from a large global food supplier, for instance, which he equated with lacking nutrition, and eating quinoa, with all its known health benefits. "That is part of food sovereignty! Don't eat food that has been subsidized by the United States – for example, flour. Or not eating food that they dump for free – this is food sovereignty!"

In ODEP's workshops, food sovereignty was often referred to within the context of "food security *with* food sovereignty." This combination was explained to me as a simple way for the producers to understand the idea, since food security was a more familiar term; 'sovereignty' would be more memorable in conjunction with the idea of food security. At the time of my interviews, farmers responded uneasily about the meaning of these terms, as they did with terms like 'agrobiodiversity.' It was very rare for a farmer to feel confident explaining these terms to me (though they recognized them as commonly used by ODEP in the workshops). Occasionally someone confidently, but erroneously, said that it had to do with using chemical inputs when farming. This did not mean that the ideas behind the terms were not meaningful to the farmers. When I asked if growing different varieties of the same crop was important, the answers were almost unanimously affirmative. Doña Hilaria was the only person to make the connection between my two questions aloud; "yes of course different varieties are important! Is *that* biodiversity?"

In the case of food sovereignty, most of the women I interviewed seemed to have given it little thought. They took pride in their locally grown foods, but enjoyed access to outside items. Men and women alike described life in the country as constant work, but at least one could always expect to *eat*, which was different than the city, where one did not have to work as hard, but also could not live without money. "Here, in the countryside we just *live*," Edelmira pointed out to me in contrast to city living.

#### 4. Government-Non-Government Collaboration: Promising Changes and Conflicts of Interest

To achieve the goals of developing organic production in Bolivia, particularly

among small farmers, a national association of ecological producers, AOPEB (*Asociación de Organizaciones de Productores Ecológicos de Bolivia*), was developed in 1991. Functioning as a not-for-profit umbrella for organizations of organic producers, and other bodies concerned with organic production such as ecological companies, a handful of NGOs and two universities, it pushed for policy changes in support of rural and indigenous communities. With the election of the MAS, the organic movement in Bolivia experienced a new phase of the government taking a more central role in the development of the organic sector. Importantly for the discussion at hand, AOPEB has been developing a ‘Participatory Guarantee System’ - an approach to certification of organic farmers based on a locally focused quality assurance built on direct personal market relationships between consumers and producers, that is accessible to small farmers.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the Participatory Guarantee System does not rely on expensive third-party certification, because it is designed so that groups of farmers monitor each group member’s compliance with the national standard. PGS-certified products must meet national standards, which meet less stringent requirements than international standards. Hence these products are intended for local, regional, and national markets (Keys 2009). An in-depth discussion of certification is beyond the scope of this dissertation, particularly because the concept was still only being introduced by ODEP at its workshops, and later by PIAB. However, it is important to touch on to the extent to which these approaches aim to be affordable for farmers and enhance Bolivia’s national markets, rather than enhancing exports. It is also important to contextualize the position of the government, as it becomes one of the actors in this process, among other longer-

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<sup>13</sup> [www.aopeb.org](http://www.aopeb.org) (accessed January 23, 2013)

established actors. Although at first the policy changes that recognized food sovereignty and the importance of organic farming amounted to little more than discourse, this appeared to be changing during the course of my fieldwork.

The Bolivian agronomist with PASA-FAO, Mario, mapped out for me the various organizations at different levels working in collaboration toward mutual goals of developing organic agriculture, food security and sovereignty. He named four from the state, AOPEB, as well as a few NGOs.

[MARIO]: PASA belongs to the government, but the United Nations give us the money and the logistics but *they want to know where the money goes*, so we work together (UN people and Bolivians). It's a bureaucracy.

[...] Almost all the institutions are under the umbrella of CENAPE [the National Council of Organic Production] – all the social forces of Bolivia are under this umbrella. We started to work with it six months ago and we have accomplished important things, because before that everyone was working separately.

[...] I imagine that the UN is supporting these programs because the people want organic agriculture – they are asking for a change. FAO is very well known because they started the green revolution and now the people are asking them to change!

The change to which Mario refers is sustainable agriculture practices through organic agriculture and the preservation of agrobiodiversity. Like the discourse of the agronomists in ODEP, the PASA-FAO agronomist identified the Green Revolution as marking a turn for the worse for rural and indigenous communities – not immediately, but in the long term – as well as the beginning of powerful global agri-business corporations' indoctrination of farming knowledge for its own purposes.

[JENNY]: Are there changes in the way FAO works on their projects in Bolivia since the MAS government?

[MARIO]: In the last six months there have been more changes than in the last 20 years! We all know that FAO has worked with developing countries all over the world like in Africa and Latin America, but the only thing we have done is to become beggars! We

have opened our hands and they have given us something – they have given *us the fish, but they haven't taught us how to fish!*<sup>14</sup>

I don't know a lot about global policies, but subsidies have done a lot of damage to Bolivia. No more gifts – we need support, but as micro-credit [*creditos*]! [...] Before we didn't keep the money because the things we produced were all for export and foreign profit. We want to keep the money in our coffers! Organic agriculture is part of the solution: it's not just trendy; it's a lifestyle! It's not something that comes and goes, it's something that comes and we should keep!

Striking in these statements is the use of both popular neoliberal notions of self-sufficiency with more politicized, protectionist statements. On the one hand, Mario blames handouts from foreign aid - “they have given us the fish...” – for creating dependency. He finds the solution to this situation in micro-credit schemes and aid in the form of knowledge and skills training - to be ‘taught to fish’ – popular neoliberal approaches to development. On the other hand, he draws on state protectionist ideals that support Bolivians rather than benefiting foreign markets and companies. He is also critical of the FAO, but praises the organization for the good work it is doing now, having listened to Bolivians who demanded change and relief from the problems associated with that very organization.

A key aspect of this conversation was the interconnectedness of the many local and international organizations and governmental institutions now working together that was allowing real progress in organic production to be made. Mario credited Evo Morales and MAS with implementing food sovereignty and making strides toward sustainable agriculture through organic production. However, the emphasis he placed on how much PASA-FAO had accomplished in six months (compared to the FAO's work over two decades) suggests that such accomplishments only occurred when the

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<sup>14</sup> Here he is referencing the famous adage “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.”

organization had joined the National Council of Organic Production, CENAPE, and begun to collaborate with organizations across governmental and non-governmental lines. Several ODEP employees highlighted important alliances with other organizations, necessary to realize their projects. They confirmed that such alliances were growing and explained a growing shared value among many organizations to strive to overcome intra-organization ‘jealousy.’ However, these efforts toward intra-organizational collaborate to achieve similar goals face complications, particularly across governmental - non-governmental lines. The positioning of local development NGOs in Bolivia in relation to neoliberal ideals (as well as funding) and the way the Bolivian government has positioned itself in reaction to neoliberalism seriously complicate the possibilities for collaboration. Focus returns to this discussion in chapter VII. The ties created between ODEP and PIAB, with their shared goals of agrobiodiversity conservation and the aspiration of food sovereignty, as well as the emerging tensions between the two organizations, provide an excellent case for examining the potential for collaboration and the ways in which neoliberalism may disturb these relationships.

##### 5. Discussion: Collaboration in Neoliberal Times

To make sense of the disparity between discourse and practice in Evo Morales and the MAS administration’s approach to neoliberalism, it is helpful to recall Ong’s (2006) argument (addressed in the introduction of the dissertation) that it is best to conceptualize neoliberalism as a new relationship between government, civil society and knowledge. Viewed in this way, the current Bolivian government can reject aspects of neoliberalism as a “market ideology that seeks to limit the scope and activity of



governing,” while adopting other aspects of neoliberalism that reconceptualize governing activities as “non-political and non-ideological problems that need technical solutions” (ibid: 3). This argument can also be applied to the ambivalent position of Bolivian NGOs in relation to both their own government and to international organizations and financial institutions. The complication when it is applied to the government – and part of what makes Bolivia such an interesting country to study in light of these issues – is that many of the concerns that might be accepted as simply technical are political issues.

Examining the issue of food sovereignty sheds light on this situation: while the ideal of food sovereignty resists corporate control of agriculture, the MAS government is concerned with maintaining the degree of economic security enjoyed by the genetically modified soy agribusiness, for example. At the same time, government professionals make strong statements against foreign control of Bolivian foods. Thus the way the term is understood by the state maintains politicized aspects of its roots in La Via Campesina’s original definition in the presentation of an alternative to hegemonic neoliberal international agri-business systems and notions of food security. Yet, by positioning food sovereignty as an umbrella for all agricultural development in Bolivia (including conventional agriculture and genetically modified crop production), the term is modified to support all production at the national level. Conceptualized this way, it risks undermining actual local production of small farmers.

ODEP, by contrast, uses the term more technically; it is not unpacked, not gendered, and not linked to its international peasant organization roots. Rather it is simply a mechanism toward food security – an aspect of ecological agriculture.

However, importantly, it maintains its original meaning of food produced through sustainable, ecological methods.

Gendered discourse of food sovereignty was absent within both ODEP and PIAB (and seemingly PASA-FAO) at the time of my case study. CANGO on the other hand, while not explicitly gendering food sovereignty, uses the term in various contexts and stresses the importance of women's farming knowledge and techniques in selecting and saving seeds. Increasingly the concept of food sovereignty is critically incorporating gender in both academic and activist work (e.g. Vivas 2012; Wittman, Desmarais and Weibe [eds.] 2010). La Via Campesina for example has taken a feminist stance and identifies patriarchal values and *machismo* as barriers to food sovereignty (Masioli and Nicholson 2010). Given Bolivia's current rights-based discourse explicitly tied to Andean notions of complementarity (in relationships between living things and the Earth itself, and in terms of gender complementarity), there is some potential for 'gendering' food sovereignty to a greater degree.

The next chapter examines the issue of gender and inequality in Bolivia, focusing on efforts to incorporate women and enhance their voices. It scrutinizes barriers to women's participation, and how farmers and the Bolivian and Canadian NGOs interpret these barriers, portraying the complex position of ODEP to balance the Andean tradition of gender complementarity with liberal-based notions of human rights and social justice that call for gender equality.

## Chapter V:

### Gender: Complementarity, Inequality and Voice

#### 1. Increasing Women's Political Participation in Bolivia

The year 2010 was a pivotal one for efforts, at various levels of government in Bolivia, to increase women's political participation. Evo Morales, following his presidential reelection, assigned ten of the country's twenty cabinet positions to women (including three '*de polleras*' – indigenous women dressed in the 'traditional' Aymara and Quechua women's style). Women held thirty percent of the seats in the legislative branch, and for the first time, a woman presided over the senate.<sup>15</sup>

At the municipal level, a law from 1997 that required all political parties to have at least 25 percent female candidates for senate and one-third for all other political offices has been updated and now mandates 50 percent female candidates in both cases. Despite that, women have continued to report experiencing pressure within their political parties to withdraw their nominations.<sup>16</sup> As the literature indicates, long standing established gender hierarchies are not easily disrupted, even as high levels of women participate in politics (Parpart 2009).

The dynamics of women's participation in sustainable agriculture development must be examined both within the context of local gendered customs and practices and within the wider socio-political climate in Bolivia. This chapter engages with the

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<sup>15</sup> <http://genderindex.org/country/bolivia> (retrieved October 1, 2012)

<sup>16</sup> <http://genderindex.org/country/bolivia> (retrieved October 1, 2012)

literature on Andean gender relations and examines gendered aspects of life in the communities of Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi.

ODEP's position becomes one of cultural broker as the Bolivian NGO navigates the gender conscious requirements of its Northern NGO partner(s), and the effort to respect, as well as explain and sometimes justify, local customs and practices. In this way, the issues raised in chapter II, regarding gender complementarity and gender equality are addressed specifically in the two communities as well as in relation to implications for increasing the participation of women in ODEP. I explore contrasts in these two, sometimes conflicting, concepts of gender equality as they relate to internationally funded development projects within rural communities, and the explicit objective for increased participation of women. Examining the 'symbolic gendering of Andean space' (Paulson 2003) as seen in various gendered practices within local contexts, sheds light on the tensions that may arise in efforts to increase participation, as well as to collaborate across differing forms of knowledge. Gender complementarity as a notion is addressed in key ways that can both justify ODEP's actions and create problems of legibility for the NGO when it becomes necessary to interpret the gendered actions of community members.

## 2. Tensions between Gender 'Complementarity' and 'Equality'

Many studies on Andean gender relations in rural communities have focused on women's work, or on the role of gender in the cosmology of rural communities (e.g. de la Cadena 1995; Harris 2000b; Harris 2000c; Platt 1986). More recent studies have examined these relations as they interface with participation in a changing political

landscape (Goodale 2009; Pape 2008; Paulson 2003; also see Burman 2011 for an urban context). In line with Paulson (2003), the ethnographic findings in this and subsequent chapters aim to locate changing gendered practices and relations of farming within regional and global processes.

The liberal ideals of gender equality espoused in the discourse of ODEP's Northern partner, CANGO, aims to ensure equal access to projects and resources for men and women. The importance CANGO places on the participation of local women in ODEP's activities is typical of the expectations of Northern NGOs of their Southern partners. Ebrahim (2003), Barrig (2006), and others, have shown how Southern NGOs are generally required to incorporate gender issues into their projects by Northern funders who may also be well intentioned, but who may not have considered the implications of larger existing global power relations. When considered along the lines of how men and women see themselves as partners -- working together and making decisions together -- the Andean notion of gender complementarity does not conflict with these ideals of equality. Yet efforts to engage more women can also be a source of tension as women are called upon to participate in ways that overstep traditional gender roles, such as being more vocal in their opinions and ideas on the one hand, and physical work activities on the other.

These tensions are not restricted to rural, indigenous settings. Gender equality sits uncomfortably as women increasingly enter male dominated vocations and attitudes shift and adjust to new scenarios. An excerpt from my fieldnotes addresses this tension in a professional urban setting:

[...] I stagger to keep up with the briskly walking lawyer through the hilly streets of the highest city in the world, lugging a toddler and experiencing fever and nausea from

altitude sickness and contaminated food [...]. The lawyer I hired to help move my temporary residency application forward (after it ran into ‘bureaucratic’ problems), points out a man with whom we had dealt in organizing papers.

“That man works for the notary,” he says, “the notary is a woman, and he works for her!”

“Yes?” I respond queasily.

“I don’t like that – a man working for a woman”

“Oh, that happens sometimes in my country,” I say casually and am quietly amused by how this man, who has said very little to me, feels that this is something that is worth stopping and expressing.

“No, no. I don’t like it!” he says and we move on to the next office: another place plastered with calendars of scantily clad women advertising something – sometimes even the highly sexualized indigeneity of a location in Bolivia itself, using an image of a woman covered only by bits of cloth or perhaps a bikini, with a woven pattern referencing a traditional style of dress.

*(Fieldnotes April 6, 2010)*

As a Bolivian organization, ODEP has been committed to hiring a growing number of women in their office. By 2010, its sole female employee (a secretary) had been joined by three women in administrative positions, two women agronomists (and a third during my field research) as well as several female university students doing apprenticeships. The difficulty of finding female agronomists willing to spend approximately twenty days per month in remote communities in this area should not be underestimated, especially if they have children. This presents a real challenge for the Bolivian NGO, but adopting gender equitable hiring practices does not present ODEP with the dilemmas, discussed below, to reconcile certain contrasting practices of gender ‘complementarity’ and ‘equality.’ ODEP’s actions displayed their dedication to gender equality by applying the concept to the organization itself, and not simply to the participants in their development work. CANGO openly praised ODEP for the marked increase in employing women, seeing it as crucial to the project of gender equality.

i. Gender Equity as Equal Numbers vs. Equal Participation

Western liberal ideals of gender equity were incorporated into the design of the government's ecological research project under the *Programa de Investigación Agrícola de Bolivia* (PIAB). Their funding from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) required at least 50 percent of the participants to be women. Accountable for this, Rocío needed to have signatures from the participants (not something that everyone, especially older women, can provide). The early stages of PIAB's ecological agriculture research in the municipality did not ask men and women to shift any gendered practices of work. It did not even require that women should speak in their workshops. Thus, increasing the number of women present at the workshop could be done without building up tension; it could be simply represented as the criteria of an external institution, required to bring *funding* and the perceived improvements to the municipality. By 2010 most communities in the municipality of Pocomachurí had had at least a couple years (if not decades) of encountering development work through local organizations and international NGOs (e.g. UNICEF or World Vision), promoting gender equity, as it was understood in the global North. Thus it would have been a surprise to few that women were being encouraged to attend the workshops and sign their names.

Beyond the level of what was explicitly required by the FAO, Rocío's personal interest in participatory methodologies encouraged her to look for ways to incorporate everyone in the workshops into activities. This practice impressed her employers, but was not a structural element to the workshops as they envisioned them. Rather it was a bonus that might facilitate learning, but equal *numbers* of men and women were sufficient to meet the requirements for funding.

There was a financial incentive for participants to show up for workshops because the small sum provided by PIAB (15 Bs equivalent to a little over \$2.00 CAN) for travel expenses was saved by those who could walk to the meeting. By the third workshop, held on a Sunday, many households within an hour walk from the town brought both man and woman, and since it was not a school day, a teenage daughter if they could. Thus the first meeting had only a handful of (mostly silent) women, while the third had a majority of women, though mostly from the district where Rocío had worked with ODEP; from the other districts in the municipality, men greatly outnumbered women (if there were any women at all).

Mario, the Bolivian agronomist working for the FAO-funded “Support for Food Security Program,” (PASA-FAO), shed light on the interest in improving the participation of women in organic farming projects. As we sat in a park in the city of Cochabamba one spring afternoon, he described what the program has been doing and where it needs to go from here:

[MARIO]: [...] we want to focus on gender. In our nation there is a lot of *machismo* but now among people [Bolivians] we have 50 percent women participating in the *sindicatos*. In government women’s cooperation is very strong; now there are ministers and legislators. That’s what we want for women in organic agriculture; *that* level of participation from women!

His view of the role of women in organic agriculture did not stop there however. It extended into the realm of work that might be perceived as “men’s work” within the complementary gendered division of farming labour. At the same time, his vision of the role of women maintained narrowly defined characteristics of femininity. Twice in the interview he emphasized the role of women in organic agriculture, as he saw it, as grounded in an ideal of women’s innate nurturing: “This type of agriculture is really *for*



women because it is more delicate work. [...] Women could be the best organic farmers!”

Bringing the feminization of organic agriculture into the picture with PIAB’s aims for gender equity, it remains to be seen if the research initiative would develop broader participatory methods and an understanding of gender equality as time went on. For the time being, however, simply adding women to the project met the parameters of the gender equity requirements of the FAO at that time.

By contrast, CANGO did not blindly accept numbers as the only indicator of participation. At both annual meetings that I attended, staff posed more challenging questions about barriers to women’s participation and repeatedly asked questions of women themselves, directly whenever possible, during both one-on-one and group encounters. Recognizing that women farmers often have greater restrictions on their time, extra efforts are made to listen to women as they share their experience of working with ODEP, the Bolivian NGO (*personal conversation with CANGO staff, March 25, 2010*).

In accompanying the two NGOs on several of their field visits throughout the province of Chayanta, the obstacles I heard women voice varied greatly from one district to another. The demands on women’s time in terms of responsibilities such as childcare, cooking and herding animals were expressed universally, but otherwise women in different communities expressed markedly different access to projects. In certain communities, it was obvious that the women had not even expected to participate in the meeting with the NGOs at all. The first two districts we visited (both of them *ayllus*) the men and women were both quite visible and while the women tended to be more quiet,

both genders spoke about their experiences with ODEP's projects as well as what they hoped to see in the future. The third (also *ayllu*) district (many hours further away from an urban centre) stood in stark contrast. There, during the field visit meeting, the CANGO scientist requested that the only four visible women, who were nearby preparing food for the meeting, *join* the room full of men and older boys (with the exception of myself and my infant son). The women gathered up into their aprons the pile of potatoes they were rapidly peeling and settled themselves on the floor in the corner near the entrance. After several men had spoken, the man from CANGO asked if we could hear from a woman. After much encouragement from ODEP's director, Juan Luis, one of the young women stood. She spoke shyly and paused as her Quechua words were translated into Spanish by Juan Luis, and then into English by the scientist's hired translator.<sup>17</sup> The words that came through to us were striking:

"I work with ODEP, I have *bocashi*, I grow herbs to make tea [for sale], I get [vegetable] seeds from them....but some of the projects I can't participate in very much. The [farmer-agronomist experiments] that the men do, I don't do. The books are in Spanish, - they work in Spanish. I don't speak Spanish, I can only read a little. But that doesn't mean I don't *know* anything. I don't need to work on that project, I know how to farm! Just because I don't speak Spanish doesn't mean I don't know anything. I *know* how to live here!"

The women in the district of Urku Valle, in which Q'ayarumi and Tomacoyo are located, never expressed such barriers to participation. The farmer-agronomist research projects had not really gotten underway, but even if there had been such a project, it probably would have been more accessible to women due to the higher rate of

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<sup>17</sup> It is exceptional for someone to go on a field visit who is not fluent in the country's official language, but as an expert on climate change, this scientist is occasionally sent to evaluate. In this case the two women from CANGO had been unable to attend the visits in the most remote project locations.

bilingualism in this area. In fact, this district had the highest level of participation of women with ODEP (addressed in chapter VI).

Despite the NGO's efforts to achieve similar goals in many of the communities in which it works, the length of time they had worked in a given place had an impact of what projects they were doing and how involved people were. The different personalities and comfort levels with participatory methodologies, as well as the overall enthusiasm or goals of community members, made for subtle (or occasionally more profound) differences in the projects.

Rodolfo, the civil engineer at ODEP, drew attention to this type of participatory planning in describing how working for ODEP differed from his work experiences in three other rural development NGOs:

With other institutions we [the engineers and technicians] know what we have to do – everything is already packaged, but with ODEP we work directly with the producers and we do participatory planning. But with other institutions, policies are addressed already; there are no changes, less flexibility.

Participatory planning may result in variations in projects between districts, or even communities. However, it also suggests that in a community in which the women are more silent, or where their presence may simply legitimate the opinions of men, ODEP's projects may risk being less inclusive of women, or coercing them to participate.

Within the gender complementarity paradigm, women and men can equally participate, without *both* attending meetings, or both having equally-heard voices in meetings. One person can represent a household, while males and females can participate in seemingly equal ways that reflect the traditional gendered division of labour. For example, terrace building and projects related to staple crops would fall into the realm of male labour, while ODEP's work that relates to vegetable gardens would be

within the realm of female work, while at the same time farm men and women seeing themselves as all working together (Paulson 2003). Some aspects of gender equity then would fit into a complementarity scheme, through the NGO's work in both realms, while others – such as urging women to *vocalize* their opinions and ideas in a strategic planning meeting -- would push against norms of male dominated public spaces. In order to contextualize these variations, it is helpful to locate them in the context of larger gendered public relations.

### 3. Lived Inequalities in Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi

“It's better to have sons, isn't it?” Claudia said to me as we sat in her dark little kitchen early one winter morning, drinking sweetened *muña* tea and talking about child rearing, each of us with our daughter and son.

“Why is that?”

“Because sons stay with you, but daughters leave.”

\* \* \*

Six months later, after scolding her son repeatedly for being too rambunctious, Claudia turned to me and sighed, “I like girls, I don't like boys - they are too bad – too much work!”

There were several ways in which gender complementarity did not imply equality and balance in daily life. The preference for sons, combined with the gendered division of labour meant that they had fewer responsibilities than girls and had benefits that girls did not as they got older. In some families (though definitely not all) sons got more food and better cuts of meat than their sisters. As my toddler son grew bigger, women were apt to serve him bowls of food larger than they gave to my six year-old daughter. When I would object that it was too much, they would tell me “he's a boy, he needs his food!”

Where there were chairs, men always sat in them; when there were a smaller number of spoons than people eating, men used the spoons. I asked Claudia about this practice one day. Rather prosaically she replied, “men are afraid to eat with their hands.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know, they just are afraid”

“But women eat with their hands all the time, are women not afraid?”

“No,” she laughed, “women *know* how to eat with our hands.”

The women and men of Tomacoyo and Q’ayarumi work together in complementary ways (such as men plowing, while women sow the seeds) and ideally make decisions together. They recognize the complementarity of men and women, as well as of all beings within the cosmos. This does not infer an absence of conflict – certainly the level of (mostly male) violence, ritualized and not, in the Andean cultures of Norte de Potosí allows for conflict to be central at times within the cosmology. Nor does this complementarity imply equality in all aspects because women are understood to have different strengths and weaknesses than men. While there are various examples that could be drawn on to paint a picture that shows how attitudes and underlying socio-economic and socio-political structure work together to undermine women’s equality, it is worthwhile to examine property rights and access to inheritance in the communities.

i. *“The wealth we have is in the land!”*

Evita and I sat talking one rainy afternoon about our experience of being an only-child in our respective households (and the history of our mother’s lives that had led to

this situation). Feeling compassion for her aging parents she has told me that she sometime leaves her son with them so they can have company and a little help.

[EVITA]: we have to do everything for our parents – siblings can collaborate [but] sometimes between siblings they don't talk to each other – they don't even say hi – most of them they fight and here it's over the land.

[JENNY]: In terms of inheritance – now it's not just for men, it's women too, right?

[EVITA]: Yes that's the way it is now [in Bolivia], but not here yet. In a few cases people say that, but it's rare – it has to be someone who thinks that women and men are equal – in that case women receive a part of the land.

[JENNY]: I know that the law is quite new, right?

[EVITA]: Yes, the law is something else though. The law has changed, but even now generally women don't get the land, maybe their family will give them a cow or other animals, but not usually the land. The land is for the sons.

[JENNY]: Why is that?

[EVITA]: Because the sons are going to have a family, they are going to have grandchildren and they will become grandfathers so they need to have the land. The girls when they get married they will have their husband's land.

[JENNY]: Do you think boys are more valued in the communities?

[EVITA]: Yes, we give boys more value

[JENNY]: Why is that?

[EVITA]: Um, because they are men [she laughs]

Evita's mother, having entered the room during the conversation, interjected with a comment in Quechua.

[EVITA]: *Ari* [yes]...my mom says that *other* families benefit from the girls. There are some people who are talking about and following the law now, but it is more rare. [...] It is like this in terms of attitudes about school even that boys have to know how to read and write but girls don't. So they spend money on their sons, but not on their daughters, because they believe that girls have to herd the sheep and help in the house [...]. There is a lot of *machismo* here. In the city people are becoming aware, but here in the countryside there is still a lot of preference for men.

[JENNY]: What do you think, is it changing here? You have a daughter too; will it change for her, as she gets older?

[EVITA]: I think that anything we have we need to split in half for boys and girls. Daughters need the same as sons. That's why sometimes there are fights between siblings, or they don't talk to each other because of the way the fields have been distributed, because one may ask, 'why is your field bigger than mine?' or they get upset with their parents. That's why the *father* is the one who has to divide the field but while he's *alive* – before he dies. Otherwise the uncles (his brothers) will have some rights to the fields and it gets more complicated for the children.

In my family there are many uncles and just one aunt and she got a *tiny* field [she laughs]. But my aunt sold her field! This isn't good – one shouldn't sell the fields because these fields are our heritage – they come from our grandparent's grandparents – *it's what we have!*

[JENNY]: So you won't sell your fields?

[EVITA]: No. Because when you sell something it feels like you are going to get more, but the wealth we have is in the land. If we sell the field it should be to relatives, but even that isn't good. Parents say to their kids, 'when I die don't sell your fields – it's for your grandchildren – don't sell it because money doesn't last'.

It is possible that some people I interviewed were aware of the discrepancy between law and practice on this issue. They have been vague about local practice, saying that some families do distribute land evenly between daughters and sons, while other families do not. However, it is also likely that some respondents did not see the law applying to their situation. Goodale (2009) describes the structural restrictions to property for women that arise from patrilocality even when women are entitled to land. Consistent with reports that it depended on the family, Zoomers (2006) found that in the 17 villages surveyed, some had a tradition of giving the land to both their children, while others had the tradition of only passing it on to their sons.

In Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi, accounts were sometimes complicated by women referring to a field as their own (as opposed to their 'husbands' or 'theirs'). In some cases these fields were passed down from the woman's mother or father, while in other cases it

was not hers, but a field for which she was responsible belonging to a brother, living in an urban centre. The following cases illustrate some of the points raised by Evita in the interview above in the contention around property rights.

ii. *Don Abel's Disputed Property*

The oldest man in Tomacoyo, Abel, who claimed to be 110 years old (but was likely closer to 90),<sup>18</sup> had only had daughters and had distributed his land amongst them already. Having gone blind two years prior, it had been time to redistribute his land. Two of the daughters lived in the houses on their land with their husbands. The house in which Abel lived was also occupied by his grandson, Guillermo and his wife Claudia and their two children, as well as Guillermo's 13 year-old sister, who went back and forth between this house and her parents'. Guillermo and his mother, Saturnina, had had a disagreement over him taking possession of the house (much larger and with a tin roof, compared with her and her husband's house with a grass roof). Guillermo had successfully taken the house, which Saturnina believed was rightfully hers. The mother and son had stopped speaking to each other, despite their close proximity. Estranged from her son, she wept regularly when talking to me and blamed his wife for being the manipulative force behind Guillermo's actions, an argument that further convinced him not to speak to his mother.

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<sup>18</sup> Abel's oldest daughter was unsure of the exact year of her birth but knew she was either 67 or 68. Abel's account of his life history gave no indication that he had had children relatively late in life.



iii. *Don Hector's land: cross-generational differences in expectations*

Hector, a father of ten, with his three grown children having moved away, one of which is in university, described the future of the community as “just sad.”

“They don't want to live here! They want to go to Cochabamba, La Paz, Santa Cruz [...] they want to sell everything when we die.”

Hector has six fields, which will have to be divided somehow between ten children. Of his children old enough to be thinking about their future in any serious way, one daughter intends to stay in Tomacoyo. She may change her mind, but at the time of interview, 14 year-old Beatriz, was adamant that she had no intention of leaving. She is of course exceptional among her siblings and friends, who almost all want to move to Cochabamba. Beatriz explained to me that rather than seeing the exodus of youth as problematic, I should recognize that others leaving is a positive thing for those who stay. She knew that even if the fields belonged to her siblings, if she were there to work them, she would gain the most from these fields (also see Goodale 2009). Beatriz and her older sisters also know that they are entitled to the same percentage of land as their brothers in their father's inheritance. Two of Hector's older daughters, aged 16 and 17, told me confidently they would inherit some of their father's land. Often girls and young women were more vague, stating that female inheritance of land depended on each family. With the exception of families with only daughters, girls often could not, or perhaps would not, tell me if they would receive land from their fathers.

When I asked Hector if he had enough land for all his children, he confirmed that he did, saying that though it is only a humble amount, he need only divide it by five. He explained this while drawing a rectangle in the dirt with a stick and then sectioning it off

into five even parts. “*Mira*” (‘*look*’) he said pointing to sketch in the sandy dirt, “each of my sons will receive one, more or less equal, part. My daughters will marry so they will have their husbands’ land of course.”

While some families were following the law, and may have already planned to divide land between their sons and daughters evenly, many others felt that this law, in essence, gave their land to the daughter’s husband’s family. From this perspective, the law, designed to protect individual rights of women, represents an unfair loss to the family. With this in mind, it is helpful to draw on Cleaver’s (2004) discussion of agency within decision-making processes. She argues that rights are embedded in social relations in ways that may either enable or constrain the exercise of agency. “Decision-making processes and the exercise of agency within them...may be contradictory in their social effects; respectful attitudes, conflict avoidance and consensus decision-making can all serve to reinforce inequality despite securing functional outcomes” (p.272). Drawing on examples of women’s rights to land in Africa and India, she argues that whether women choose to exercise their rights to land, or not, may be dependent on their positioning and relationships within marriages and kin groups. “The costs of asserting such rights to their conjugal and family relations, to their status in the community, to their livelihood outcomes may mean that they prefer to secure (inequitable) access through social institutions” (Cleaver 2004:273).

#### 4. Participation and Silence

The women in Q’ayarumi and Tomacoyo could not be described as ‘silent’ in many of their interactions with ODEP. In this district, women represented the vast

majority in attendance at the monthly workshops. Several women talked comfortably about what they thought of ODEP's work. If they did not like the quality, or quantity of broad bean seeds they have received, ODEP heard about it. When Adriano repeatedly shortened one woman's name to a nickname, women rolled their eyes and shook their heads. Laughing, a woman loudly corrected him, emphasizing the syllable he had repeatedly omitted.

But silence too can be strategic. Silence among women and in their relations with ODEP was observable in two different contexts: 1) when there were several men around and 2) when women were cautiously assessing something or someone (such as when Teresa, the agronomist, was hired to replace Rocío at ODEP). I also witnessed older women in a range of contexts strategically employ a third kind of silence. Below I examine each of these.

i. *“Women don't speak – they are afraid”*

Many of the community women, as well as some women attending the EICPAL workshops, framed their fear of speaking in terms of a natural attribute of women. Some women might learn to overcome this fear, but it was natural and acceptable that they had this fear in the first place. By contrast there were some women who were not 'afraid to speak,' and they attributed it to their nature; they could not tell me what difference there might be between these women and a woman who is "afraid".

I observed that women were not particularly silent within the household, or in the fields, nor were they silent in the overwhelmingly female-dominated community EICPAL workshops (apparently unique, in this regard, to the two communities in my

study). However, in meetings in which men equaled, or out-numbered them, it was very common for women to be quiet, or avoid participating in certain activities. The (lack of) participation of women in the EICPAL *Promotores* workshops, discussed in chapter VII, are a good example of this.

Evident in some women's stated motives to participate with ODEP, or another NGO, was to gain the confidence to speak. For example, this was the primary reason Claudia's told me she had wanted to work with ODEP. They wanted to overcome their shyness, or "fear", but unlike the women in Pape's (2008) study, they did not articulate an awareness of their positioning in relation to men. I encountered few women who expressed anything about their lives as subordinate to male domination. Rather, women expressed the unity and partnerships they had with their husbands; hence it was of no great surprise that they did not frame their fear of speaking in relation to men. Men were not mentioned as having anything to do with women's fear of speaking.

I noted that several older women were comfortable speaking. In some cases these women reported having been shyer as young women to speak in meetings with men, while others had "always" been outspoken. Doña Luisa simply chalked up her comfort in speaking to being her 'nature' not to be afraid to speak. Doña Berta explained that being orphaned and essentially raised by the schoolteachers (nuns at that time), she had learned to read and write and speak in front of people. She pointed out that often the most 'afraid' were women who had married into the community (a common occurrence since they practice patrilocality). This appeared to be the case in public assemblies with the exception of perhaps the most vocal woman, Edelmira, who had moved to Q'ayarumi

only two years before to be closer to her aging father-in-law, and who, from my vantage point, could not be characterized as ‘afraid’ of anything.

The ability to speak well in front of a group had other implications as well, being associated with leadership qualities (when I asked people to describe what makes a good leader), as well as knowledge and wisdom. During a second interview with Benancio’s mother doña Ignacia, she dismissed all the women in her community as lacking wisdom because none, in her opinion, were good public speakers. Her fourteen year-old granddaughter, Angelica, translated her Quechua words:

[JENNY]: Are there people in the community that you consider to be very wise?

[IGNACIA]: *Arí*, a few

[JENNY]: Who are they?

[IGNACIA]: Usually ones who speak well in the community meetings. [She names a few men, including the current *alcalde comunal* of Q’ayarumi].

[JENNY]: What about women – are there wise women here?

[IGNACIA]: *Mana* [she twists her hand back and forth to signify no]

[JENNY]: There are no women that impress you here?

[IGNACIA]: *Mana*

[JENNY]: Why not?

[IGNACIA]: There are no women who speak well here.

[JENNY]: Why is that?

[IGNACIA]: *Because they are women.*

Ignacia’s tone was matter-of-fact, like perhaps I was missing the obvious. I did not need help translating this idea, but as the young Angelica repeated her grandmother’s words in Spanish, she giggled at this point, suggesting that she was not accepting this

argument at face value. Angelica and I met weekly for a Quechua-English language exchange which had resulted in a growing comfort level talking to me about her opinions, but on this point she reserved judgment, taking the typical cautious stance of teenagers with me, to say she was not sure what she thought of her grandmother's assessment of women. I continued the line of questioning:

[JENNY]: Oh. Are women the same everywhere?

[IGNACIA]: No in other places there are women who are good speakers.

[JENNY]: What's the difference between the women here and women elsewhere, then?

[IGNACIA]: I don't know.

[JENNY]: Why can't women speak *here*, but some *other* women elsewhere can?

[IGNACIA]: Maybe women *are* the same everywhere, but none of the women here are wise!

Local teenaged girls, along with some professional women outside the communities, explained that it was a *lack of education* that made women afraid to speak in meetings. They said that overall it was easier for their generation of young women to speak, but that many of them were shy to speak in groups because they were young and inexperienced. Those who did not consider themselves shy said they had no problem speaking in class, for example, when called upon. There were several extremely shy girls in Tomacoyo, as well as some very outspoken girls. Though there may have been clues in some of their upbringings that would lead them to be more one way or another, it was also easy to see within larger families that there could be one very shy girl among several sisters.

Even those women who were more critical of gender inequalities often stopped short of articulating power imbalances. Evita pointed out that girls were still more likely to be kept home from school to do chores, resulting in less regular attendance than boys and a higher drop out rate. This was clearly observable in Q'ayarumi even among parents who said their dreams for *all* their children were for them to pursue their educations and become 'professionals.' The local teachers did not describe it in gendered ways, but expressed great frustration with what they considered to be parents inhibiting their children's education by not creating an environment at home conducive with achieving academic goals.

Though some young women saw a generational difference in the level of fear of public speaking, I also observed several girls who seemed to mimic their mothers perfectly in group settings in which they did not expect to fully participate. An excerpt from my fieldnotes describes one such scenario:

The *profesora* seemingly forgot that the other two teachers would be at a conference in Llallagua today. I had arrived there at 7:15 on the inconsistent school bus [headed out to the countryside to gather the high school students]. The *profesora* had kindly once again agreed to translate a speech from Quechua to Spanish, this time from the Agrobiodiversity fair. [...] Now she was asking for my help [...] She split the students in half, giving me the younger children and sending me to one of the old school rooms armed with chalk to teach English [...] I taught them to count to five; we sang the alphabet song so that we could perform it for the teacher later; and practiced introducing ourselves, "Hello my name is \_\_\_," [...] My status quickly shifted from "*La gringa*" or "*Gringita*" to "*profesora*" [...] With the exception of a few children who refused to listen to any instruction, I managed fairly well to have most of the boys and several of the girls pay attention and participate [although a few boys repeatedly got into fights, as well as one pair of girls] and eventually we went out to learn 'ring around the rosy' and play *basket* [basketball]. One of the interesting observations I had today was that I noticed the majority of little girls sitting to one side, several with miniature versions of the bags that all the rural women use, from which they pulled out yarn and busily began crocheting. How very like their mothers they seemed as they sat, *not* participating in what I was doing with the other children. Paying a minimal amount of attention to me, mostly looking at their crochet work and talking quietly amongst themselves. They had clearly recognized that what I was requesting of them was not mandatory and they had better

things to do. This is how the women seem at times in ODEP workshops, and certainly at the *Promotores* workshops in Llalagua (though there they don't have their spinning with them). [...] They continued to remind me of the women in the workshops even as I encouraged them to participate in what we were doing and was met with blank expressions and continued crocheting.

(*Fieldnotes*, Sept. 8, 2010)

ii. *Silence as Strategy*

The significance of women's silence for ODEP (or another organization) making use of participatory methods, is that it makes it difficult to assess why, or why not, women participate. The issue with how to address women's lack of participation becomes, in part, about how to make women *talk*. Women's silence is complicated by the observation that it is not always a *fear* of participating, but can also at times signal a desire not to participate. This may represent a resistance based on lack of interest or skepticism, or it may represent a strategy to limit the increased time and energy that increasing participation often demands. Vincent (2004) warns that it can be tempting to read a lack of participation as "grand resistance," while it might simply indicate "cynicism about the possibility of achieving their own goals, or a feeling that other activities are more pressing" (p.113). While the reasons may be subtle and difficult to decipher, discovering the reasons for a lack of enthusiasm is crucial for understanding the shortcomings of participatory development (Vincent 2004). To accomplish this, Vincent argues, requires going beyond the *local* to explore both historical processes and a broad range of contemporary contexts.

At the end of my research period, two separate events took place that caused some women in the two communities to react to ODEP in a way that I had not previously witnessed. The first event was the introduction of Teresa, the new agronomist at ODEP,



hired to replace Rocío in both of the districts she had worked in for the last three years. Teresa was freshly out of university. She was shy and formal. When she conducted questionnaires, she lacked interactive social skills that tell respondents that the interviewer is interested. Teresa had ‘big shoes’ to fill, replacing Rocío, who everyone in the communities seemed to like very much. The women responded to this personnel change with cynicism about ODEP overall. While men tended to say that ODEP’s projects would remain more or less the same regardless of staff changes, the women were less sure. Those who spoke more candidly with me said firmly that ODEP would not be the same without Rocío. As another EICPAL *comunal* workshop was planned for the 12<sup>th</sup> of the month, women said they did ‘not have time’ to attend. Importantly, this example highlights how participation is a highly political project.

The second event happened around the same time, as doña Dominga and doña Magdalena (the ‘*promotoras*’ from each community) were being sent to the EICPAL *Promotores* workshops in a nearby city, for a three-day weekend each month. The women talked amongst themselves about the fact that two women would have fully paid trips to go to Cochabamba (for a farmer experience exchange); food and lodging would be paid as well. It was no secret that they were attending, and in fact several others had been encouraged to participate when the workshops were starting up for the second annual session earlier in July. These women had been either unable, or uninterested in participating. Nor was it the first time ODEP had sent people from the community to an experience exchange. Yet many of the women felt the arrangement was unfair. On my last morning in Tomacoyo I sat peeling potatoes with four women, preparing food for the

meal during that day's *minka*.<sup>19</sup> One of the women expressed her disapproval of what she perceived as favoritism. Another wanted to know what I knew of this issue. All the people who attended the *Promotores* workshops for the six modules were expected to go to Cochabamba, I explained. It was these individual women who had been able to commit to going to all the *Promotores* workshops who had this opportunity. I believed there would be other opportunities for other women, I told them. But my words seemed to do little to appease those who felt it was unfair. I speculated that Rocío would have been more capable of explaining the way it worked to them than Adriano and others in ODEP. Since I had heard nothing to this effect when community members had been sent to 'exchanges' previously, I wondered if the women's discomfort with Teresa had compounded with the perceived favoritism, creating more conflict than usual.

"I am going to the exchange too, that's why I won't be here tomorrow when ODEP holds its 'course' at the old school," I told them.

"There's a course tomorrow?" A woman asked, who I had witnessed talking to Teresa just a couple days before about it.

"Yes," I told her.

"I'm not going." She said firmly.

"Me neither," agreed another woman.

"Why not?" I asked.

"I have no time of course!"

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<sup>19</sup> The name for communal work projects; in this case sowing corn and broad bean seeds. Though the work is done on property belonging to a particular household or family, work parties are organized that extend beyond familial lines.

I asked the others, who were quickly and quietly peeling with their dull, cheap knives, but their responses were exactly the same, with the same slight whine in their tones, “*no tengo tiempo pues!*”

As I had to leave the next day I was unable to see if these women actually followed through with their plan to be absent from the community EICPAL workshop -- mandatory unless advance notice was given, and even then it was expected that someone else (even a teenager) from the household would be sent in lieu of the participant. While their absence may have been interpreted as lack of interest, clearly their non-participation has other dimensions.

Extended qualitative fieldwork affords one many related (and unrelated) observations to the research subject. Over time I noticed in various contexts that older women were adept at completely ignoring the requests or commands of others, as a method of having their way. An excerpt from my fieldnotes sheds light on another way in which older women use silence:

Again today on the *trufi* [the Quechua word for the mini-buses that go between Llallagua and the smaller towns] there was an elderly woman who chose to sit in a seat other than the one she had been assigned. As usual, the *trufi* wouldn't leave until each of the 16 seats were filled and we were squeezed into the narrow vehicle like sardines. The seat the woman had occupied belonged to a middle-aged man. The ticket she had bought was for a seat in the back row, where four people are routinely squeezed in. Recognizing the difficulty to get in and out of that spot and the discomfort of riding for over two hours, she settled into a seat that had sold earlier. Just as I have seen so many times, the owner of the ticket for that seat began to explain she was in the wrong spot, “*Mami, Mami*” her grown daughter traveling with her said, following it with loud, repetitive words in Quechua, getting ever more flustered as she explained that the seat the old woman had chosen was not meant for her. The man went into the office and returned with the woman with the clipboard and the seating plan. All three tried in vain to engage with the elderly woman. Instead she sat, facing forward, giving no indication that she could hear her daughter, the *trufi* office employee, or the man assigned to the seat. It was as though she really could not hear (or see them) except that her mouth got tighter and her expression more stern and determined as they persisted. Eventually the two women implored the man to take the seat in the back. He persisted a little more, but as with so

many packed buses, the other passengers already squished and not looking forward to the long, hot dusty ride, began to shout in frustration for the issue to be resolved by the man taking the uncomfortable seat in the back.

I don't know how many times I've witnessed older women employ this strategy of doing what they want and then ignoring anyone that protests. Occasionally, they will engage with a few words, though rarely more than shaking their hand [in the symbolic way that means 'no'] and saying "*mana*" ("no"), before stopping altogether and completely ignoring their opponent. I have yet to see an older woman not get her way.

(*Fieldnotes* September 23, 2010)

These moments of seeing how older women held their own silently (sometimes in ways that seemed unfair for others) stood in stark contrast to countless observations of younger women who were often given orders by men which they were expected to follow, and usually did. They worked tirelessly around their homes and in the fields, and were given few breaks from the burdens of childcare. Women did not expect help from men when lugging children and goods, even when their male partners had nothing to carry<sup>20</sup> (also see Goodale 2009). When younger women were silent, the issues and circumstances suggested that their voices were muted in subordination to men's power (Bourque and Warren 1981). As women grew older this silence appeared to be imbued with more power, namely the power to ignore. Younger men and women might complain about this situation, but it was acceptable to the extent that eventually they would comply with the wishes of elderly women.

### iii. *Handling Decisions in the Q'ariwarmi Framework*

An important aspect of gender complementarity is that the heterosexual couple is understood to make decisions as a unit. This value was so strongly held by community

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<sup>20</sup> In another part of Chayanta, with a different Quechua-speaking ethnic group, Walsh (2003) found men to be much more involved with childcare than I found. Men in Urku Valle were affectionate with children, but closer to the strict gendered division of labour described by Goodale (2009).

members that even in the face of glaring deviations, men and women insisted they made decisions together. Adult men and women stressed the uniformity of their thinking, diverting questions that looked for conflict. Teenagers, by contrast, often highlighted the gendered division of labour in their responses: mothers made decisions about the household, while fathers made decisions about many aspects of farm work. Youth often answered questions about decision-making with examples that were practical, rather than ideal. Though there were some cases where children also saw their parents (or the adults in a household) making decisions together, they were less clear on the specifics of these decisions. That teens saw their mothers as the primary decision-makers in the household is in keeping with the suggestion that within the *domestic sphere* women are not subordinate to men (as Harris [1988; 2000] and Hamilton [1998] have both argued). The responses of teenagers also allude to the workload of women in the household, especially in child rearing and decision making about consumption and nutrition. Mayor (2002) points out that Harris' analysis does not seem to recognize the asymmetrical workload, which burdens women much more than men.

In the communities of Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi, like other Andean communities (e.g. Goodale 2009; Pape 2008), there are regular community meetings to discuss business relevant to all community members. One person from each household is required to attend. In keeping with the gendered division of labour, it is usually the man of the household who is its representative. If the man is unable to attend, then the woman of the house goes. This system recognizes the busy lives and diverse tasks of both men and women in the communities. In general it is the male head of the household who attends the meetings, unless he cannot, in which case the female head of the household

attends. Given the approach that households have devised in order to attend to their many daily tasks, of course it would be logical to send one person – the one who has more time, or will be more directly implicated in the work proposed – to the meeting. But participation in the meetings is not evenly distributed across gender lines. More men raise points and ask questions than women do. Canessa (2006), Pape (2008) and others, have noted that while a woman representing the household is acceptable, she is not expected to participate to the same extent as her male counterpart. It has been debated in the literature whether sending one representative from a household contradicts the imagined unity of couples' decisions (Pape 2008; compared with examples in Walsh 2003). Yet these two ideas were never presented (or accepted) as contradictory among my respondents. If both the man and the woman were not “bad” people, then they could be trusted to make decisions that related to their realm, and when it came to making a decision that the couple perceived as affecting both of them, they made the decision together. My attempts to suggest examples in which a man had made a decision that his wife was unhappy about, but had no opportunity to change (such as a woman I encountered from another community who was crying helplessly because her husband had sold their house), were met with explanations that the individual man was “bad” and that was not how life was (supposed to be) in the countryside.

Yet it was obvious, through participant-observation, that the households of the two communities could not be treated as homogenous in this regard. Certain couples clearly made decisions together. Others appeared to have less of a balance of power between them, yet in the guise of the ideal of gender complementarity, this inequality was sometimes masked. Specifically in terms of participation with ODEP, men and women's

different, but complementary roles, obscured the variations between the men who have been sent to a meeting with ODEP to speak on behalf of themselves *and* their wives, compared to the men who made solo decisions (perhaps informing their wives later).

For example, one of the young men who dismissively told me, in an interview with him and his unilingual Quechua-speaking wife, that I should stop bothering to address any of the questions to her because “she doesn’t know anything,” may have been the kind of man who was less concerned with his wife’s input before making a decision than some others. This discrepancy between what is said and what is actually done in practice is by no means specific to this cultural context, but what is interesting to highlight here is that the notion that men are at meetings to represent their household means that it is illogical, from that perspective, for both men and women to attend. Unlike defined gender roles, which exclude women from men’s roles directly, women here are more subtly excluded - or exclude themselves – from these roles.

Officially both men and women can be in positions of authority, but that it is a woman rather than a man happens more rarely. At the levels of community and district, new mayors are elected every year. Women insist that it can be either a man or a woman in the position of community mayor. I was told that four years prior to my arrival there had been a woman *sub alcalde* (district mayor). As a one-year term, in 2010 Claudia’s husband Guillermo from Tomacoyo, held the position. The following year when I returned to visit, doña Isabela from Q’ayarumi (previously employed in the school daycare) had taken over the post. Though both men and women are now expected to fill these positions, those who are eligible must be from the communities. Since many local women move away due to patrilocality, and women who move to the community are not

eligible as outsiders (Goodale 2009), far fewer women than men will take a turn as mayor of the community.

While both Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi were located within easy walking distance of each other, and both are in a *sindicato* (union) district (as opposed to the older *ayllu* system, it was remarkable to see the contrast between the two neighbouring communities in terms of women's public participation. The meetings I attended in Tomacoyo, were held in the field by the old school house. When the meeting commenced few women were in attendance. As they showed up they sat with, and often behind, each other silently, further out from the speakers and therefore not explicitly participating. Two exceptions were older (not shy) women who were both, for all intents and purposes, single heads of their households, doña Luisa<sup>21</sup> and the ODEP *promotora*, doña Magdalena.

Q'ayarumi's community meetings, by contrast, were more formal and organized, with a written agenda, and people addressing the communal mayor, acting as chairperson, by asking for "*la palabra*" and being acknowledged before speaking. The women still sat to one side, or on the floor while the men took up most of the space by sitting on the chairs or standing. These women still spoke far less than their male counterparts, but they were markedly vocal compared to the women in Tomacoyo. They were also more physically present in the meeting due to the closed space; as latecomers arrived they settled into the group rather than sitting further and further away.

How can we understand these differences? Although there are likely factors that affect women's public voice or silence (including a few outgoing personalities), there

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<sup>21</sup> Luisa's husband was receiving extended medical treatment in Cochabamba, keeping him away from the community for months at a time.



was one difference that likely played a key role: the presence of the teachers in Q'ayarumi's monthly meeting. On the first of each month, the community held a meeting in one of the schoolrooms. It began at seven o'clock in the morning and for the first hour and a half to two hours, at least one of the teachers would be in attendance. This was because it was also standard to have a meeting between the school and the parents on a monthly basis. The teachers tended to have the third spot on the agenda (which was written on the chalk board), during which time there were sometimes heated discussions about the role that parents should play in ensuring that their children received the best possible education. At this time, the women might be very vocal, as issues to do with children fall under the realm of "women's issues" and therefore vocal women would be acceptable in this context (also see Pape 2003). The parents of Tomacoyo children would also attend a monthly meeting with the teachers of their local school, but because the school was located in the community further down the valley, by the river, the two meetings could not be combined.

It was also common for one of the teachers in Q'ayarumi to stay and take minutes even as the meeting progressed. If she felt that the meeting could be conducted more efficiently she would offer her suggestions. The influence of the teachers was evident in the consistent agenda written on the board, but the teachers were also attributed with being influential in another important way. Doña Alba credited them with bringing information about women's rights to the community. Although others referred to different sources such as radio programming by governmental and non-governmental institutions, a few women pointed to the teachers as carriers of this knowledge. As Alba

put it, “they said ‘now women should speak. Don’t be silent anymore, don’t be afraid; you have the right to speak!’”

While women were more involved in the community meetings I attended in Q’ayarumi compared with Tomacoyo, there was another side to the formality of this meeting. I was surprised to find that the male teacher/director of the school spoke almost entirely in Spanish during the meetings, despite being fluent in Quechua. Barrig (2006) argues that it is common for male leaders to speak in Spanish in communal assemblies when talking about ‘important’ issues, reserving Quechua for private, or domestic issues. This practice perpetuates asymmetries along gender lines in community meetings as fewer women than men speak Spanish.

There was a second difference between the communities of Tomacoyo and Q’ayarumi that may have had an impact on women’s silent or vocal participation in communal meetings; the presence of a woman’s association in Q’ayarumi. Several women had previously participated in a women’s association that had dissolved in the last few years. While I was conducting research in the community, a women’s association started again. I observed that the women in positions of responsibility (such as president, vice president, secretary and treasurer) were voted in by show of hands by both women and men at the September community meeting. The same month a community to the other side of Tomacoyo also started a women’s association. A woman who participated with ODEP’s *Promotores* workshops told me enthusiastically that she had joined it in that community. She did not know what a women’s association did, but she anticipated vaguely that it would be “good for women and allow them to advance”. Tomacoyo, on

the other hand, had never had a women's association, nor had there been any recent talk of one according to Claudia and Luisa.

Though examining gender issues and finding ways to incorporate women further into ODEP's work was sometimes an uncomfortable or contentious issue, some of ODEP's work fit well with gendered patterns of agriculture in Andean communities. For example, ODEP's emphasis on 'green' composts was directed primarily at use for vegetable gardens, which were generally attended to by women. Yet two issues arose around a micro-irrigation project in Tomacoyo during my research, which addressed both the gender complementarity of who attends meetings and makes decisions on behalf of the household, and the gendered patterns of work in this region. The following two subsections examine these issues.

iv. *The gendered timing of meetings*

One winter morning Adriano and Rodolfo held a meeting about the ongoing micro-irrigation project high up the mountain above Tomacoyo. We drove up to one of the higher farms overlooking the hamlet. The scattered little adobe homes had smoke coming from each kitchen chimney, as women and children started the fires in little adobe stoves. It was quiet at this time in the morning and, being winter break, there was even the absence of the slow movement of older children in blue and white uniforms making their way to town for high school.

A few men were already waiting for the men from ODEP. Others were slowly arriving on foot, likely having left their homes when they saw the jeep on the road below. Bundled up in coats and hats, but with feet covered just by sandals on the frosty ground

(which would soon thaw, as it did each day, in the hot sun), they gathered around and began a discussion, led by Rodolfo. An elderly woman arrived, walking slowly. “*Buen día, buen día tía*” the men greeted her respectfully. She placed an *aguayo* on a rock, wrapped herself tightly in her *manta* (a woven shawl, thick enough to protect against wind and rain), and settled down on the rock to observe. Occasionally nodding, she said nothing. This meeting of men was in marked contrast to the community EICPAL meetings I had attended in these two communities in which there were consistently far more women than men. This meeting was also not a workshop, it was not designed to include training; it was a meeting to assess the progress of the project, what was still left to be done, and what commitment was still required by each household.

Later Rodolfo explained that they could not expect many women to attend at this time of day when they were getting their cooking started (which occupies a few hours of local women’s mornings), and at most times of the year, they are also attending to children who are getting ready for school. To enable women to participate in the planning, it would be helpful to hold the meeting later in the day, but with this project it was also imperative that the men attend the meeting who would not be available again until much later in the day. In an interview I asked Rodolfo to elaborate on this:

The problem with the meetings is that men make the decisions – they don’t allow women to decide. They say women don’t need to be in the meeting, they say that the women *want* their husbands to go to the meeting and that they [the men] can say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ [on behalf of both of them].

In his explanation, the civil engineer has addressed both the notion of *machismo* and gender inequality and the cultural approach to gender complementarity, the strong belief that couples make unified decisions. His comment expresses a frustration with what he perceives to be the reality of the situation: that the problem is in men holding

power over decision-making, while simultaneously the men present an image of them being sent by their wives -- a justification of their presence that the NGO workers cannot easily argue against.

v. Restrictions on Women's Participation, or Women's Resistance to Working too Much?

The notion of *machismo* as a barrier to participation was occasionally voiced by ODEP staff, as they sought ways to incorporate more women to move forward community projects. During the lunch break from a massive *chicha*-making operation in preparation for a wedding, the civil engineer and the male technician arrived in time to sit down with the many men and women. When the men were mostly finished (the women were still eating because all the men had been served first), and were passing around a bag of coca and relaxing before returning to the laborious task of the day, the two ODEP employees pitched their idea. They began talking about the project and then encouraged some of the women to come over. Being standard practice that the men and women sit in separate groups, near each other, but far enough away to carry on separate conversations, several women had to be called over to listen to what ODEP had in mind. Rodolfo explained that there was an important role for women in this project, to make it go faster and because it was a huge job with only six or seven dedicated men working hard all day. Thus, ODEP hoped to get the commitment from some women to do some of the work – nothing too heavy; there was work for women to be done too, he told them. However, the male and female community members in attendance sounded skeptical. They shook their heads and joked with the engineers, but the atmosphere was a little tenser than the usual interactions between community participants and ODEP.

Rodolfo described the resistance they had been met with in pitching their idea:

The problem is that there is some *machismo* and when there are jobs that are very hard they prefer that women work half of the day rather than the whole day. Women could go to fill in the ditch with soil and the men could do the excavation – this way they could work together on complementary tasks! But the community doesn't accept this – they only want men working.

This project had to be accomplished during the dry winter season so that it did not conflict with busier times of the year in terms of planting and harvesting, as well as to avoid rain. It was labour intensive and in an area that could only be reached by extremely narrow footpaths on the edge of a steep crumbling mountainside. Yet ODEP also had to contend with it being the time of year to hold weddings. Weddings were happening almost every weekend in communities in July and August (three in Tomacoyo, one in Q'ayarumi and several others within walking distance). This meant a great deal of time-consuming, inter-household work in preparing *chicha* and food, followed by at least three days of festivities, which might drag out into another day or so. Those festivities were coupled with several other national holidays and special occasions and it was a time of year in which many of the men (not to mention some of the women) spent a great deal of time quite drunk. It was not hard to see why ODEP had tried to find a way to make its work with the community move faster, yet it was hard to imagine that anyone – especially women – would be interested in such a plan, no matter how couched in 'gender complementarity' it was. Women's daily workload was seemingly endless until they went to sleep at night. They spent hours cooking, working in the fields (including physically hard work especially during the harvest period), tending to children, herding sheep, cooking more, and often finished their night by weaving, knitting, or mending worn out clothing or grain sacs. Though it might have been possible for some to hand

over these responsibilities to older children on weekends, this idea would not be popular and would still be limited in terms of which women were actually capable of performing the work ODEP's civil engineer envisioned.

The reality that more participation requires more work on the part of local women is not specific to participating with ODEP. This has been well documented in other contexts with similar types of projects between farmers and agronomists (e.g. Classen 2008). Because gender equality is incorporated into the NGO projects and participation is encouraged or imposed on local people, the projects influence gender relations within the work with the NGO. Gendered relations in the context of the household and within the communities may also shift (as examples in subsequent chapters suggest), but the pace is likely to be different and may include more conflict. Hence, a great challenge in participatory development work is how to avoid the irony of ensuring gender equality in the projects while creating a situation in which women are given more tasks in the context of their overall life, while men are not – thus, in effect, increasing the inequality in workload between women and men.

The NGOs do not wish to disrupt cultural customs and practices. Moreover, the discourse of both ODEP and CANGO emphasizes the value of local culture in relation to knowledge and sustainable livelihoods. When it comes to the tensions which arise between the Andean notion of gender complementarity informing farm families' lives and the liberal, human-rights based notion of gender equity that inform development practices and funding agencies from the global North, the Bolivian NGO is positioned as cultural broker between the two different conceptions of how equality between men and women is valued and sought.

## 5. Discussion: Inequality and ODEP's Intermediary Role

“Sometimes when I have questions about whether women are participating enough, they [ODEP staff] always talk about gender complementarity in the Andean culture, but I can't help thinking that Canadians in the 1950s would have seen the roles of men and women in the same way.”

*(Personal conversation with one of the program directors at CANGO)*

Drawing attention to a lack of equality between men and women among Canadian couples of that era, this Canadian NGO-based woman expressed her uneasiness with the impermeable argument that ODEP was respecting local cultures and highlighting another ontology. In this way ODEP maintains a position of being the intermediary between the values underpinning the local communities' expectations and the values underpinning the expectations of the NGO's Northern funders, like CANGO. ODEP walks a fine line in which it must prove its dedication to women's participation, while recognizing customs and traditions that clearly define gender roles in ways that are sometimes exclusionary.

From CANGO's perspective programs that are inclusive of the needs, priorities and knowledge of whole communities are more likely to be sustainable. In line with international development thinking more broadly, CANGO argues that food security and economic growth depend on the acknowledgement and support of women's "leadership" in all aspects of food production, since women farmers are central to seed and biodiversity conservation. The Canadian NGO is also concerned with increasing the influences of women's knowledge.

As the Canadian NGO questions perceived gender inequalities, ODEP meets these queries by drawing attention to local culture and traditions, which, as Lister (2003:183) has shown, can be a very effective way to essentialize and romanticize 'the local' and "to treat anything described as 'local' as being beyond criticism and having an



almost ‘holy’ inviolability.” I return to this theme in the conclusion (chapter X) to explore how this issue might be addressed, particularly within the context of the EICPAL workshops.

Indigenous scholars and activists have described the Andean cosmology along the lines that it values women “in all life-oriented activities, raising the young, education, and cultural revitalization” (Cunningham 2011). However, not only are these ideals not always upheld in practice, they also define women’s role in a way that does not necessarily allow them to be valued in other activities, such as knowledge production, or any realm that pushes the norms of traditional gender roles. Certainly the conversation must move past idealized notions to examine the distinction between formal or ideological prohibitions and practice (Goodale 2009) within the context of local practices.

Cleaver (2001:44) argues that codifying the rights of the vulnerable must involve “far more wide-reaching measures than the requirement that they sit on committees, or individually speak at meetings.” Certainly some of these measures would be beyond the scope of ODEP’s mission, but this point is an appropriate consideration for the NGO to the extent that the NGO does address gender both in discourse and practice within its workshops, and interpersonal relations. Discourse that promotes the notion of gender complementarity, alone, will also not level power imbalances, and arguably runs the risk of taking on the status of yet another buzzword, (the way ‘empowerment’ has, or ‘food sovereignty’ in Bolivia), in which gendered indigenous identity is paid lip service within a neoliberal framework. The notion of gender complementarity risks remaining a vague reference that stops short of painting a clear picture of how *machismo* can infringe on women’s rights within the construct of gender complementarity.

An interesting moment occurred over dinner on the last night of the ‘farmer experience exchange’ in Cochabamba in conversation with a female facilitator and a male *ayllu* authority from another municipality working with ODEP. The facilitator was explaining that women were not used to public speaking, and especially because they lacked education, they tended to be afraid to speak and participate. The *ayllu* authority who had been one of those men whose style of ‘encouraging’ women to participate appeared to be more scolding them for not participating, raised a point that no one had suggested yet, but that has been addressed in the literature (e.g. Canessa 2006; Hippert 2011b). “Well it’s also true that sometimes *men* don’t want to listen to women. They won’t listen, or they tell the women to be quiet – especially in public assemblies. Then the women are afraid to speak.”

“Hmm, yes that’s true, that’s true,” the facilitator agreed.

Whether or not colonialism is entirely responsible for creating imbalance among Andean cultures, it did restructure all areas of life (social, economic, religious, political, etc) in profoundly gendered ways. Gender complementarity in its ideal state coexists with lived structural inequalities, even as these are changing. In the context of ODEP and its EICPAL workshops, the question of whether *chachawarmi* (*q’ariwarmi*) is a notion “that conceals mechanisms of women’s subordination or a notion that opens up possibilities for indigenous women to reclaim rights by denouncing the breach between discourse and practice” Burman’s (2011:85) is still open for debate. It is reasonable to suggest from the analysis of ODEP’s discourse and practice thus far that measures will have to be taken, informed, for example, by more radical (Bolivian) feminism, in order to avoid perpetuating weaker forms of gender equity.

Encouraging women to participate, in part, relates to encouraging those who are shy to find their voice and gain confidence speaking, and importantly, according to ODEP's rhetoric, to integrate more knowledge through participation rather than simply listening, or watching can afford (examined further in chapter VII). While my observations that most women were not accustomed to, or were shy about, speaking in public assemblies such as meetings and NGO workshops are consistent with those of several researchers (e.g. Hippert 2011b, Pape 2008, Walsh 2003), this point is not restricted to women alone. I also observed many quiet, and sometimes very shy, men, as well as youth of both sexes. For ODEP, it means encouraging verbal participation related to farmers gaining confidence in a context where both men and women are silenced by power imbalances along class and ethnicity lines. ODEP staff pointed out to me how so many men and women needed extra encouragement to speak. While they spoke in gendered terms: women were "afraid" to speak more categorically than men, they drew attention to continuity between men and women related to a lack of confidence. The importance placed on *gender* by CANGO and other international funders was superimposed on broader issues of *farmers* lacking confidence and losing knowledge.

In some ways, ODEP's projects fit naturally into gendered patterns of work that could include both men and women easily. In light of the broader picture, discussed above -- of the silencing of women in public decision-making processes, less access to political power and control over land -- the NGO pushed gently against the boundaries of women's roles. It did, however, strive to be inclusive in discourse as well as practice, such as vigilantly specifying "*productores* and *productoras*." Questions arise for the implication of integrating women into ecological agriculture projects with organizations

like ODEP and PIAB around the gendered ideals raised by Mario (see chapter IV). The notion that women, with their nurturing and delicate sensibilities, could be the best organic farmers, fits well with a neoliberal development framework which sees women as the ideal target of development, while also appealing to a perspective that highlights distinctions between men and women. At the time of this research ODEP was not addressing ecological agriculture from such an angle.

Like the image of a time when farmers' ancestors held rich local knowledge -- talked about by certain ODEP staff (such as Rocío) and the participating *ayllu* leaders in the *Promotores* workshops -- the indigenous feminists in Burman's study described an idealized past when women's voices that were heard and respected. The women in Pape's study also articulated the structural inequalities which silenced them. My findings diverge from these understandings of women's own positions in relation to men and in relation to overarching political organization (at the level of the community, municipality, or the state). The vast majority of men and women (including outspoken, "fearless" women) treated women's public silence as stemming from a fear that might be naturally occurring, and stopped short of relating it to men's reactions and power. It must be recognized that as attitudes change and people's understandings of themselves in relation to the surroundings change, it may be the case that women in the communities of Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi would express different understandings if asked today, or next year, about their social or political positions in relation to men.

The following chapters move into more discussion of farm households' participation with ODEP, and to a lesser extent PIAB. With the gendered power dynamics addressed in this chapter as a foundation, each chapter includes a gender focus

that sheds light on tensions within participation and the various ways in which power imbalances along the lines of gender and class are often maintained, despite efforts to overcome them.

## Chapter VI:

### Participation and Its Entanglements

#### 1. Participation, Empowerment or Tyranny?

The importance placed on the participation of beneficiaries within development discourse has been treated as a given for some time. Initially accepted as the corrective to the failings of previously ‘top-down’ development initiatives – by being inclusive, efficient, empowering, ensuring accountability, etc. – participation came to be recognized (at least by some) as far from a panacea. As a result, much energy has been directed into ‘getting participation right.’ This has been a theme underlying ODEP’s work, as they aim to develop more effective strategies.

In this chapter I explore some of the factors affecting the perceptions and outcomes of ODEP’s work within communities, including when and why participatory approaches were chosen or not, and how the personal relations between NGO technicians and farm families traveled along, or transcended, lines of power. The previous two chapters have provided an overview of the current political climate in Bolivia as it influences efforts toward food sovereignty and agrobiodiversity conservation, as well as the examination of different notions of gender equality as aspects of the Andean cosmovision interface with liberal notions of gender equality and human rights discourse. This chapter moves into a focus on the farm households in Tomacoyo and Q’ayarumi participating with ODEP. It is the first of three chapters focused on participation. Here the emphasis is on the participatory development relationships. This discussion can be contextualized in light of the theoretical debates (see chapter II) over whether

participatory approaches can actually help to empower participants, and if so, how, or whether they in fact amount to what has been called the tyranny of development (cf. Cooke and Kothari 2001).

i. *Perceptions of Institutional Interventions in the Communities*

The number of organizations (non-governmental, governmental and international) and type of involvement varies greatly from community to community, but by 2010 there were no communities in the district without some outside intervention from at least two organizations. Jealousy was sometimes expressed over why an organization worked nearby, but neglected Tomacoyo or Q'ayarumi. Disapproval of certain NGO workers might be expressed, or suspicion that an institution was holding out on the community and short-changing them compared to the funding. Nonetheless almost everyone was very positive about the role of institutions in their communities, whether referring to an international Christian organization with its child-sponsoring program, a European development organization, or local NGOs and municipal government work. When I asked what life was like in the community before there were any institutions intervening, some people, such as Claudia, described it as "just sad." Various women and men painted a picture of a time "before institutions came" of constant struggle, a lack of knowledge (see chapter IX), or even hopelessness (*desesperanza*). Those who expressed this sentiment were middle-aged farmers and their children. Few elderly people drew this comparison, though they also might suggest that life was improved through the interventions of NGOs. Rather, elderly people described a time before anyone had, or expected to have, any money - a time in which they were very isolated from the rest of

Bolivia. If a man wanted to get a job in the mines in Llallagua, for example, it would require three days of traveling through the mountains by donkey.

## 2. Farm Household Participation with ODEP

Though ODEP talks about “participatory methodologies,” it is commonly said (by both farmers and agronomists) that farmers “work with” (*trabajar con*) the NGO, rather than “participate.” The notion of ‘working *with*’ in this case is usually synonymous with *participation*, but implies collaboration (i.e. the farmers are not working *for* the NGO) as well as action by both parties (the NGO is not working *for* the farmers).

My interviews with residents of the neighbouring communities of Tomacoyo and Q’ayarumi revealed differences along communal lines regarding the most common responses for what people hoped to gain by ‘working with’ ODEP. Most households in Q’ayarumi highlighted forms of irrigation and improved water supplies such as wells, cement ponds, or pumps as what they hoped to gain. In Tomacoyo, by contrast – though not unrelated – improving vegetable production was highlighted by most. They were concerned with increased access to water as well, but ODEP had worked, and was continuing to actively work, on improving irrigation in a more obvious way in Tomacoyo than in Q’ayarumi. Though I was told the situation was being assessed in the latter community, during the time I was there the focus remained on building terraces and teaching people to make green fertilizers, like *bocashi* compost.

In the Sunday market in the nearby municipal town of Llaqta, I noted that among the women regularly selling vegetables, many of them came from Q’ayarumi, while very few came from Tomacoyo. I asked one of the two exceptional Tomacoyo women about



why this was the case. “Well, there’s so much more water for the gardens [in Q’ayarumi], of course” doña Hilaria insisted. “It’s hard to grow enough to sell in Tomacoyo.” This woman’s household enjoyed some of the best benefits of working with ODEP. She and her husband, don Segundino, had an artificial pond at the top of the hillside above a terraced field with sprinklers. Everyone, it seemed, was impressed with (and in some cases jealous of) the couple’s system. One of the first households to agree to participate with ODEP, this particular farm had inspired others to join the NGO. Some, like don Benancio, had seen that he and his family might also receive such assistance and he and several of his family members (in three different households) had become active participants.

Others lined up to receive free seeds and asked for “help,” but were rarely prepared to do any work themselves. Where individuals and households lay on this spectrum became more evident over the months, but various community members also addressed this issue with me. Often others were dismissively brushed off as simply ‘lazy.’ Evita, a country schoolteacher in her thirties whose parents, don Narciso and doña Dominga, worked with the NGO, explained the choice to participate in economic terms: Some people want to work with ODEP, but others just want to take and take. Some people say they don’t want to get; they would rather just buy [seeds or even chemical fertilizers]. People who want to be with the institution, they just want to have stuff for free they don’t want to spend money.

ODEP’s technician/facilitators had different ideas about why people chose to participate. Teodoro, a recently hired agronomist stationed in the Urku Valle district when I arrived, but transferred a month later to another district, suggested that curiosity played a large part in why the initial six households in the two communities had accepted ODEP. However, growing interest in the communities, he believed, had to do with

shifting attitudes and knowledge about food, the environment and sustainability. He argued that people were not used to growing, cooking or eating certain vegetables and therefore were not particularly interested in this aspect of ODEP's work, but he saw this as changing. Fieldnotes from a morning of following Teodoro around Tomacoyo elaborate this point. As we walked past a farm up in the hills where an older couple was outside working, Teodoro stopped to point something out to me:

“Look. They have better conditions than most for growing a variety of crops, but they just grow corn, potatoes, wheat. Those trees protect their field from wind and hail. They could grow more vegetables but they are not accustomed to it.”

“*Buen día, buen día, imaynalla,*”<sup>22</sup> Teodoro raised his voice across the field to address the couple, introducing himself. The man waved, but kept stirring something in a large cauldron; probably making *chicha*. The woman approached us and she and the facilitator conversed for a few minutes in Quechua, explaining what he was doing in the community.

“Don Macario works with ODEP,” Teodoro told her, providing an example of one of the most active participants. “His vegetables have been big this year –and his yields are good [...] onions, carrots, cabbages, lettuce, cucumber, beets...”

“Cucumber?” she interrupted, sounding more interested now than she had in their conversation so far.

“Yes,” he confirmed.

“Cucumber, really? Don Macario grows cucumber?”

“Yes – because he works with ODEP he knows better methods for growing vegetables. He has a big garden – it's very good.”

It is striking to me that someone in a farming community of 40 households could be unaware of what her neighbour is growing. Teodoro went on to explain that the NGO would be holding a meeting the following week at the old school house and he encouraged her to attend so she can learn for herself. In order to work with the organization all she had to do initially was show up at this meeting.

(*Fieldnotes*, April 21, 2010)

Adriano, who had more experience as an agronomist and with ODEP in this district than Teodoro, but much less interest (it seemed) in cultural aspects of the communities, dismissed Teodoro's suggestion that community members' participation

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<sup>22</sup> When there is more than one person ‘good morning’ is said at least twice, *imaynalla* is a Quechua greeting similar to “How are you?”

with ODEP had to do with cultural habits surrounding cooking and eating preferences. He explained firmly that it was simply that people who are not interested in working with ODEP have a different source of income – usually those with larger herds of sheep who had less time and interest in working with ODEP. On the one hand, Teodoro emphasized (some people’s) concern with knowledge acquisition of food, health and nutrition, and shifting cultural practices as people incorporated this knowledge into their cultural habits. He later described his role in this process in the next district to which he was assigned; there he claimed to teach improved methods not only of planting, but also of cooking the vegetables he introduced. Adriano, on the other hand, emphasized pragmatic economic choices. The training and resources that the NGO had to offer had to be worth the farmers’ time. If they could support their households by other means, they were less likely to be interested in engaging with ODEP.

The farmers themselves told both sides of this story. Women -- responsible for vegetable gardens and cooking – often expressed similar ideas to Teodoro: they wanted to successfully grow vegetables that they would otherwise have to buy, and they wanted to have more information about nutrition and the health benefits of avoiding chemical fertilizers and pesticides. It was also observable that households with larger herds did not tend to work with ODEP, though there were exceptions. However, when farmers were willing to expand on the most common explanation – “some people *just don’t want to*” – they drew attention to another economic motive behind the choice not to work with the NGO. In Q’ayarumi particularly, ODEP’s projects were small in scale, and so some households, I was told, did not see engaging with ODEP as worth their time.

There were marked differences in the way men and women described their motivations to work with ODEP. The majority of women in both communities stated a personal desire to *learn* in explaining their interest in ODEP. For some of these women who had dreamed of continuing their formal education, the NGO offered an opportunity for more formal training and increasing their knowledge. In most cases they identified their children, or other familial obligations, as the primary reason this vision for their future had not been realized. Several of these women made it clear that the appeal in participating with ODEP was the expectation of (more or less) formalized training that would allow them to produce more for their families, increase their knowledge of nutrition, and in a couple cases be more comfortable speaking in front of people. Women commonly placed knowledge and a desire to learn (especially about how to better care for the families) above any other reason for working with ODEP, followed by the desire to have help, and the desire to gain confidence. By contrast, almost every man I asked explained the primary role of ODEP, or their desire to participate, as having to do with *advancing* the community, through increased training and knowledge on the one hand and micro-irrigation projects on the other. The primary concern of a minority was also to receive “help” from the NGO.

While women were more likely to talk about “help” than men, it was common to describe ODEP’s role in the communities in this light, and to emphasize that these communities needed all the help they could get. This chapter returns to the issue of help later, as the particular *help* many participating families want is specific, but a certain amount of training is obligatory in order to receive this help and thus families work within the structure ODEP has developed in the hopes of obtaining their needs.

### 3. Opting to Stop Participating with ODEP

One day when Adriano was pointing out the growing number of households now participating in ODEP's projects, I asked how many people or households working with ODEP had chosen to stop. He looks surprised. "No one has left ODEP!" Perhaps I looked skeptical, as he continued, "Just people who moved away or left for work."

At the time I asked Adriano this question I had already met three women in Q'ayarumi who had worked with ODEP and now did not. I recognized that Adriano did not know all the participants, their names, or their backgrounds as well as the female agronomist, Rocío, who had first arrived in these two communities to facilitate ODEP's projects. She had worked there longer, and it was possible that some people had left prior to his station in the district. By the time I left, I knew some of the less prominently participating women better than he did, so it is quite possible that he was being sincere in his statement.

On the other hand, Adriano also displayed a concern for what would be said to CANGO. For example, he expressed a desire to be careful in his answers during his first interview for this reason and, as one of the employees with the least Quechua, he encouraged me to report his improved language acquisition to CANGO. Thus, his denial that anyone had stopped participating with ODEP may have been a vain attempt to lead me off the track of talking to people who might speak more negatively about the NGO.

In reality the most candid critiques of ODEP came from active members, while the people who had chosen not to work with ODEP any longer described constraints on their time as the main reason why working with the NGO was difficult. A woman with whom I crossed paths early in my fieldwork in Q'ayarumi, as I wandered the narrow

trails of the upper part of the community, stopped to ask what institution I worked for and what I was doing there.

“I worked with ODEP for a year” she told me, as we walked through the fields together. “It was good, but my husband went to work in the city and my children finished high school and left, so now I am alone.” Her comment suggested both that she was now too busy to attend and that ODEP was of less use to her without a household to feed and care for.

In another case, an older widow who was the primary caretaker of her daughter’s two sons while the young woman went to university to become a nurse, stopped working with ODEP during my research period. Her daughter explained to me that her mother found it too difficult to attend workshops with the small children who were not yet school age. However, there were various other women who attended with their small children in tow, suggesting that this woman may have had another reason as well to stop working with ODEP.

Doña Alfonso, a widow with two children in primary school, had moved from Q’ayarumi to the city of Cochabamba in 2002, but after five years away, she described having felt obliged to return. “When my father died, there was no one to sow the fields so I returned to take care of that because I have no siblings – well I have siblings, but they are very far away. I live here with my mother and my two little kids.”

Upon returning she had agreed to participate with both ODEP and a municipal governmental organization, but had found that constraints on her time limited her ability to attend workshops in both organizations. She was vague about how she had arrived at a

decision to choose the other organization over ODEP, but she offered a clearer explanation of the pressure she felt to restrict her participation to one organization.

[ALFONSA]: Before, I worked with ODEP – for almost two years. I liked working with ODEP [...] I grew vegetables with their help; they sent me to an experience exchange in Cochabamba. ODEP is good [...] but I can't go to the 'courses;' I'm single so I do the work of a man. I worked with both organizations for some time, but after a while it really bothered my mother that I was always in a meeting. I have to take care of her and my children; I don't have time to work with more than one institution.

Doña Saturnina, the mother of one of the first active ODEP participants in Tomacoyo, Guillermo, was the most candid about her lack of interest in participating with the NGO. She felt that ODEP did good work in the community and that the communal water irrigation projects were beneficial to all. She suggested that the difference between people who want to work with ODEP and those who do not is that the latter are simply "lazy." Yet in her case, she explained, she had specific reasons not to want to participate:

[SATURNINA]: There's no problem with ODEP, it does good work, but I don't want to work with them because I don't want to – what's it called? – I don't want to go to *school*, you know – they have courses – that's not for me!

Another woman, doña Miranda, explained her lack of participation with the NGO in terms of constraints placed upon her by her husband. "I worked with ODEP for a little while. I liked the courses, but my husband doesn't like it when I go. I would like to work with ODEP, but he doesn't let me attend the courses." The mother of four described her difficult home life with an angry man who tended to drink too much and become aggressive ("*Malo – malo es, pero*",<sup>23</sup> she had described him). Later, I carefully asked

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<sup>23</sup> This phrase, "Bad – bad (he) is, but!" was typical of the Spanish sentence formation of Quechua farmers in Chayanta. It was common to summarize someone's bad behaviour as a reflection of how they were simply bad. As well it was common to end sentences with 'but.'

Rocío if Miranda and her husband work with ODEP. She paused before replying, “sometimes.” After awhile she confided that Miranda’s husband tends to drink a lot. Spousal violence against women is well documented in Bolivia, especially related to men’s alcohol consumption (e.g. Goodale 2009; Walsh 2003; Harris 2000). It was also alluded to by ODEP staff on occasion. For instance, after witnessing an uncomfortable scene between a young couple who participated with ODEP (in which the drunken man was ordering his nervous wife to return to their house with him), Rodolfo, ODEP’s civil engineer, had turned to me shaking his head, “When men drink, they fight their wives!” Rocío drew my attention to another household that participated with ODEP as a similar case to Miranda’s household. The man of the house was unreliable and inconsistent in participating with ODEP, which Rocío attributed to his intermittent binge drinking.

At a later date, when ODEP was distributing vegetable seeds among those households who were considered to work with ODEP, Miranda was present, collecting her share. Rocío had taken into account that her home-life made it difficult for her to attend the workshops, or to socialize too much with ODEP’s staff. Thus, she was personally concerned with seeing Miranda and her husband counted among those who participated, in contrast to those she perceived as just willing to do the bare minimum to gain assistance.

In the spring when the state’s agricultural research program, PIAB, arrived to hold workshops on organic agriculture production, Miranda was permitted to attend. The workshops paid 15 *bolivianos* compensation for people traveling to the meeting - not a lot, but easy money for those who could walk to and from the town. When I asked her



why her husband did not mind her attending these, she shrugged, “I don’t know, he just said ‘go’.”

While most people were positive about ODEP’s actions in their communities (even among those who said they had no time to work with the NGO), some Q’ayarumi residents described the community as ‘waiting and observing’ to see what the NGO would actually do for them. For example, I asked doña Josefina, a single evangelical Christian woman who had participated with the NGO for two years, about ODEP’s work in Q’ayarumi. She described the technicians making cement wells for other households and teaching about diversity and the hazards of using agro-chemicals. Her starting point was that the farmers were “learning a lot.” However as the interview continued, and I asked more specific questions about her personal reasons and the possible benefits of working with the NGO, her tone changed:

[JOSEFINA]: Now it is being promoted, it is only recent here.... we are looking, we are seeing, we are watching, no? We are watching to see what it is going to do and what it is going to leave behind. We are watching what [ODEP] does and does not do! We are watching whether it will fulfill its objectives or not, of course.

She had no complaints about the way the NGO worked in the community, but she was clear that they had not done much yet beyond promoting their ideas, after over a year and a half of ODEP working in Q’ayarumi. This comment sheds light on other aspects of how (gendered) participation in workshops is assigned meaning. Women sent from the household to participate in mandatory workshops may be understood as fulfilling a commitment with the NGO in order for their household to benefit from the assistance ODEP provides, while the *content* of the workshops may be seen as less important for the household as a whole. Furthermore, in a community where the training workshops are largely seen as the domain of women’s participation with the NGO, it may be of little

interest to community men (as discussed in chapter V). Thus, Josefina's comment would likely be disappointing to ODEP's hardworking agronomist/facilitators, but sheds light on how the work they do – and what *counts* as such work - is perceived by the farmers.

That some people may not assign much significance to their own participation in the training that ODEP provides should also be understood in light of important points raised in the theoretical debate over participatory development as tyrannical or transformative. Cleaver (2001) argues that, commonly, understandings of the motivations to participate imagine participation as rational, and a lack of participation as irresponsible. Simplistic and vague assumptions “fail to recognize how the different, changing and multiple identities of individuals impact upon their choices about whether and how to participate, and overlook the potential links between inclusion in participatory processes and subordination” (Cooke and Kothari 2001:9; Cleaver 2001).

In Pocomachurí, the statement that certain families, communities, or rural people more generally are ‘lazy’ fits within this approach. The idea that some people's laziness is to blame, or more generally that failed development projects are the fault of locals, may not be the politically correct response to challenges, but it certainly reflects a frustration sometimes vented by ODEP employees and by the occasional technician from other institutions.

Calling other people lazy was a common occurrence within the communities and in the municipal town. Women who did not cook enough (though I never observed one) were “lazy,” drunks were “lazy,” sometimes people who did not wish to work with an intervening NGO were “lazy.” Town people sometimes characterized rural people as “lazy.” “The real problem,” the owner of the house where I lived confided to me after six

months, “is that *los campesinos* are lazy! Look at all the space they have – often with three room houses – yet they all sleep together in one. The women don’t know how to clean, or take good care of their children, so their children are always sick.”

People who were currently, or had worked, in development also sometimes expressed their frustration with the laziness of participants. Catching a ride one morning with a man who had switched careers after many years of agricultural development work with international and local NGOs (including ODEP), explained part of his reason for leaving development was due to his feeling discouraged after so many projects were not maintained by the communities after the NGOs implemented them. Sometimes this was because of the poor planning on the part of the NGO, he explained, but it was also due to the “lazy people” in the communities. From his perspective, jealousy between farm households and laziness made it difficult to motivate people who, he argued, felt entitled to handouts. ODEP broached the subject more cautiously. In only one interview did someone explain ODEP’s challenges in terms of contending with lazy people who do not want to do the work. However, in several more casual moments, ODEP staff working in the communities voiced this sentiment (for example, during an effort to increase the participation of men for the physically demanding irrigation project up the mountain above Tomacoyo).

The temptation to understand a lack of participation as laziness and irresponsibility is not specific to particular geographies or organizations (e.g. Harrison 2002; Vincent 2004). The consequence of this naïve understanding of participation may be that facilitators (as well as the organizations involved) do not take time to learn what the participants take away from their experience, such as what they see as the most

important aspects of workshops, or in the case of the households that ODEP purports to work with, how participation is understood and perhaps valued differently along gender (and other) lines.

#### 4. Further Entanglements: “If the child does not cry...”

Evita’s father, Narciso, had first introduced me to himself as we crossed paths on the main road into Q’ayarumi. “Go visit my wife!” he encouraged, in the hopes, it turned out, that I could help them get a well from ODEP. He and his wife made little effort to mask their disappointment that I was of far less use to them, but he came to accept me as, what he called, a ‘*trabajadora*’ (worker), even as we laughed that I was probably about as helpful as a local child most of the time (I had lots of willingness to work, but little experience and less physical strength than most local women). I asked him about his motivation to work with ODEP:

[NARCISO]: For what they give us - materials for water. Without water we’re not going to do anything. – irrigation systems – pump, well, pond. [...] We need water to grow carrots, lettuces, beets.

When I asked about changes that might have occurred since working with ODEP, his response was on point and an interesting contrast to some of the responses that sometimes devalued local farmer knowledge:

We *know* how to fertilize – me, I use animal fertilizers - and we *know* how to grow, but we need water and we really need an irrigation system! We need the water to get to the land faster. Right now it passes over the land but little comes over here.

[EVITA]: yes that’s the most important thing.

[NARCISO]: that’s what we are asking for.

[EVITA]: if we want to grow vegetables we need water.

[NARCISO]: When there's water corn is cheaper to produce also of course.

The emphasis on improved access to water was a recurring theme especially among my Q'ayarumi interviews. By the time I had a chance to interview Benancio, I had already interviewed other members of his household as well as many of his family members in the community. He took a break from his work to eat lunch and talk to me while his children played with Milo in the yard, amusing themselves by styling the baby's hair with a comb and water to be slicked back as boys and men did for special occasions, or when they wanted posed family pictures. We sat in the dark little kitchen eating heavily-salted, fresh fried eggs on *mote* (boiled large kernels of white corn) that his wife, Donata, had prepared. She sat listening, and stirring a pot on the fire, occasionally shooing away a hungry kitten.

[BENANCIO]: So what do you want to talk to me about?

[JENNY]: The same type of questions I've asked the others: I'd like to ask you about life here in Q'ayarumi and changes in the community over time; about your work with ODEP, and about what you want to do in your future. Stuff like that.

[BENANCIO]: For my future I want to continue to work with ODEP because *water is life*, right? In the first place, this is fundamental. *Because* it has been said so much to ODEP - to the [agricultural] engineer Rocío, or to the engineer Adriano -- they have made wells. Others working with ODEP are taking advantage of the opportunity, right? Like doña Edelmira for example, she has a water pump [made by ODEP]. Someone else has a new well. ODEP is making them with cement.

Knowing that they had a small old pond, hand-made many years ago using rock rather than cement, I asked, "This is something that you need?"

"This is something that I need of course! Look," he explained, slowing his speech to be sure I was catching his mix of Spanish and Quechua and colloquialisms, "the child cries for love, it is said, right? For the breast. If the child does not cry, no love!" (*El wawa llora por ama, se dice, no ve? Por pecho. Si el wawa no llora no ama!*)

I had heard a version of this expression not long before, as I crossed the river to get back to Llaqta one afternoon. A group of people sat listening to a local man from town whom I knew to be working with a German organization. In the context of a meeting about redirecting the narrow stream of river water - a project I observed only peripherally as I crossed the river daily – he was saying to his audience of men and women from the municipal government and other interest groups, “the baby cries for milk, and the mother gives, but if the baby does not cry, the mother does not give! We are like babies crying to Mother Earth.”

These statements reference the Spanish expression ‘*El bebe que no llora, no mama*’ or ‘*El que no llora, no ama.*’<sup>24</sup> As Benancio used this expression it could easily translate as “the squeaky wheel gets the grease.” He is stressing to me the importance of hammering home the point of improved access to water with ODEP in order to receive their assistance in that area. Yet the language used implies power relations between the farmers and the NGO that place the farmers in a position of complaining – or even crying like babies - until they get the attention they seek. Recognizing that he is referencing a known expression, I do not wish to read more into the child-parent relationship of the phrase than I should. Yet it warrants some attention because even to translate it as the more innocuous English equivalent of “the squeaky wheel” suggests a dynamic between the farmers and organizations like ODEP that strays from the idea of collaboration and participation highlighted in the development discourse. At the same time, it also flips the perspective from what the NGOs and organizations say they are doing differently from previous ‘top-down’ approaches, shifting to more ‘participatory’ approaches. Working

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<sup>24</sup> Literally in English, ‘The baby that does not cry, gets no mama’ and ‘he who does not cry gets no love’

with ODEP, attending their workshops, and learning what they are expected to learn from the NGO can be understood as part of the strategy employed by individuals, or households, who see this as the way to improve their livelihoods.

## 5. Variations in Strategies and Goals

### i. Gathering (non-Participatory) Data

Cornwall and Brock (2005:1045) point out that the “published policies of development agencies may be products of successful discourse coalitions, but may neither represent nor even resonate with the perspectives of those charged with their implementation.” There may be times when a less participatory methodology is consciously favoured. In ODEP’s text<sup>25</sup> describing the farmer training workshops, participatory development is envisioned as providing a necessary corrective to previous top-down development. The latter is criticized for extracting information – often in the form of questionnaires, it points out – which is then used in decision-making in which the farmers and communities do not take part. The development worker ‘technician’ is associated with top-down methods, while the ‘facilitator’ is associated with a shift toward participatory methods, and a shift in the professional’s attitudes away from directing, toward facilitating others whose knowledge and experience is equally valued. (This dichotomy receives further discussion in chapter IX).

ODEP has focused on developing several aspects of participatory methodology in their approach, yet when they wanted to gather a large amount of information, they used a half-hour questionnaire. Adriano told me the baseline survey was created to gather information requested by CANGO. The director of ODEP, Juan Luis, confirmed this

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<sup>25</sup> Because ODEP is a pseudonym, a reference for this text cannot be supplied.

claim, though he put more emphasis on its usefulness for ODEP. However, when the information was presented to CANGO at their annual meeting at the ODEP office, the staff from CANGO were taken aback by the amount of information gathered and said that they had asked for much less. The director of CANGO raised the concern that there are more participatory ways to gather this data, and questioned ODEP on the use of this method of data collection. But members of ODEP argued that a survey such as this *did not obstruct the respondent from carrying on with daily activities*, allowing a given farmer to answer questions during a lunch break in the field where he was working; while she was watching her sheep graze on a hillside; during a half hour period of the EICPAL *promotores* workshop; or at one's home while food was prepared, or washing done. Just as the agronomists sometimes chose to take up less of the farmers' time in the community EICPAL workshops, the ideals of engaging the community through participatory approaches were, in reality, not always preferable.

The baseline survey asked several interesting questions, some of which dovetailed with my qualitative inquiries, others that were quite different. In light of my ethnographic work, my critique of the survey is threefold. First, the suggested responses offered led the respondents to answer in a way that did not necessarily reflect their thoughts and experience. It was an exception for someone to add an answer that was not a given option. A second, related issue is that some questions were limited in a way that did not necessarily shed light on the reality of the situation. For example, I was present for the survey conducted with Claudia. She was asked what she did to combat climate change since working with ODEP. Several answers were suggested including whether she had an environmentally friendly wood-burning stove. However, her affirmative



answer did not reflect the fact that this stove functioned as a shelf, while she continued to use her preferred old adobe stove. A relevant side note to this point is that Rocío would have known this as someone who entered the kitchens of homes, while Adriano and other male staff had no idea this was the case.

Finally, I question the method of selection for respondents, as it seemed that only those most active with ODEP were surveyed, which did not necessarily paint a clear picture of the community as a whole, or even of the majority of farm households working with ODEP. A broader survey might have been helpful to see the difference in levels of integration of knowledge. It also might have shed light on resistance to working with ODEP and other pertinent information about less active families, beyond the popular rhetoric of laziness. Yet the choice to gather data from the most active participants also served to showcase ODEP's success in the communities in addressing biodiversity, climate change and in improving livelihoods. The importance of demonstrating this success returns to the issues of power relations and accountability not only with CANGO, but with any other donor source. The survey, then, could simultaneously collect data that served to improve ODEP's knowledge of their work environments, while legitimizing its position nationally and internationally. This outcome would arguably be more appealing to an organization than gathering data from households that participate only to the extent necessary in order to obtain favours such as free seeds.

ii. *CANGO and ODEP's differing goals for participation*

CANGO's objectives in Bolivia and elsewhere were to reach and support whole communities, not simply individual households or families. The Canadian NGO

highlights this point in its website, stating that emphasis is placed by the organization on going beyond the family or household unit to “community based economic development.”<sup>26</sup> CANGO staff expressed this objective on both annual visits to the region in which I had the opportunity to participate. In each year, different staff members were encouraged by visits to communities in which seemingly everyone came to meet with the Canadians and participated in the activities. This suggested to them that the communal dedication to ODEP was stronger in these communities.

The ODEP agronomists, on the other hand, said that each year they see a similar pattern: a community that has never, or rarely, had outside visitors becomes very involved organizing the first visit, but excitement wanes the following year. Perhaps curiosity and enthusiasm for visits from foreigners is enough to motivate communities to put more energy into hosting a visit. However, the lack of enthusiasm the following year may relate to a feeling of unmet expectations about what benefits the visitors will bestow upon their hosts. It is not coincidental that participating households in Q’ayarumi -- the community in which various people had felt they were waiting the longest for any substantial help from ODEP -- “did not have time” to visit with CANGO in 2011.

ODEP worked on projects at both the household and the community levels in this region. At the first EICPAL communal workshop for the two communities, the strategic planning for the year had included a plan to have a community agricultural research committee (a CIAL), a communal *in situ* seed bank, and various other projects that would involve the whole community. They also had ongoing irrigation projects that would improve access to water for whole, or large parts of, communities. Simultaneously, they

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<sup>26</sup> As CANGO is a pseudonym, a website address cannot be provided.

focused on their work with certain households, particularly as it became evident which farmers were serious about participating and which were most interested in participating just enough to receive basic assistance, such as free seeds. When I returned for a visit in March 2011, Adriano, one of the agronomists working in the district, told me that in the coming year they would be abandoning the hopes of more communal projects in Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi. The NGO had learned, he contended, that this approach was far less effective in gaining the participation of community members than addressing the needs of specific households. He explained that this was not the case everywhere; even in the neighbouring communities in the same district they had had more success, yet they would be directing their attention to the household level uniformly across the district. It is my impression that this was not the case for ODEP's work in all districts and it is likely that communal projects continued in *ayllu*-organized communities, which often still have communal land.

In my interviews I asked women, men and youth about work done collectively compared to work done at the household level. Some adult men and women expressed a strong desire to see more communal work as a way to improve livelihoods generally while strengthening social ties within their community. In a few rare cases more politically oriented farmers also recognized the importance of this for obtaining resources from the municipal government. These examples, gave me the initial impression that these concerns might reflect many others' within the communities, but instead I found many more respondents seemed genuinely indifferent to the idea of more communal participation. Others took the time to highlight how in the past communities had been more collective, but that more problems related to greed, theft and corruption came of

this than work done among family members (beyond the level of the household, but restricted to a few households along sibling lines). For these respondents, collective work projects were best reserved for time-sensitive projects such as planting seeds.

Efforts to execute communal projects struggled under conditions in which community members felt a lack of trust in their fellow community members, as well ODEP's experience in this regard. This situation aligns with what one man described to me about his community, Q'ayarumi, ejecting another NGO, and that they had overall approved of ODEP because it did not require full-community participation, leaving the decision to households to choose to join. While there was little consensus on whether the shift toward individualism was positive or negative, that a shift had occurred was generally acknowledged. The ways in which collectivism has been undermined since the agrarian reform of the 1950s and the fostering of individualism through neoliberalism in Bolivia has not been a uniform process, but it has impacts on identity and shifting understandings of citizenship, as well as how rural households relate to market forces. What is important in this chapter, vis-à-vis ODEP's participatory development and the potential for participation to be transformative, rather than tyrannical, involves whether ODEP is able to address this issue in its training and 'capacity building' efforts. Deborah Eade (2010:217) draws attention to how the idea of capacity building has shifted from its leftist intellectual and political roots to a notion that is commonly used to support a neoliberal "'pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps' kind of economic and political agenda." She cautions that "if NGOs are not aware of these competing agendas, their role in capacity building will be at best insignificant, at worst damaging" (ibid.).

## 6. Discussion: Participation as Representation

This chapter has demonstrated that the motivations behind participating with ODEP are gendered and multifaceted. While people always talked to me about the potential gains for their futures, some of the enthusiasm related to enjoyment of the participation itself; for example, women communicated more freely in this context than in other public gatherings, or found the workshops fun, and were provided access to outside information that they could not easily access otherwise. For others who did not wish to attend the workshops, there was still value placed on ODEP's work or interest expressed in gaining resources. They simply did not want to take the time to attend (what some, like doña Josefina, may have chalked up to time spent listening to ODEP *promoting* itself). Yet household decisions to participate with ODEP in these particular communities did not just send women to the workshops for training; they sent women to fulfill a requirement to obtain assistance and favours from ODEP – to obtain what they 'really need' (e.g. improved irrigation, rather than knowledge). The implications for these two communities – with the highest participation of women, at the time, of any place ODEP worked – for how the workshops are perceived is elaborated in subsequent chapters, particularly in chapters VII and IX where women's public voice and knowledge is addressed. What the cases of Benancio and Narciso, above, remind us is that people can *strategically* comply with requirements for participation – they do not necessarily place much value on the training aspect of ODEP's package.

In his critique of the participation as *tyranny* argument, Williams (2004), drawing on a Foucauldian interpretation of power, raises two practical, but often overlooked points. First, to take "the 'incorporation' of participatory events at face value, is to ignore

people's ability for feigned compliance and tactical (and self-interested) engagement" (p.93). Secondly, participatory development may play a relatively small part in the participant's life overall, despite often being seen as more important, even "all-consuming" to practitioners and academics evaluating such projects (ibid.) In the case of many of the households in Q'ayarumi, as well as Tomacoyo, this would arguably be an accurate description of how much (or little) importance they placed on their work with ODEP. In the context of the theoretical debate however, I would argue that it is this same point that supports Cleaver's (2004) concern that the agency of individuals (or lack of agency) may be portrayed in ways that maintain the power status quo.

Another theme that comes to light in this chapter is that, while expanding and improving participatory methodologies is a stated goal, in practice they are applied unevenly and inconsistently. At times this appears to be related to differences in facilitators' comfort levels with shifting their approach away from the top-down training they receive in university and perhaps other organizations prior to working for ODEP. At other times, however, an individual or the organization itself chooses a less participatory approach with "the farmers' interests" in mind. One of the reasons for inconsistencies in the application of participatory approaches in practice relates to Mosse's (2001) argument that participatory ideals are constrained by formal and informal bureaucratic goals within the institutional context, yet participation remains important as part of a project as a 'system of representations.' These representations may be less reflective of local practice, yet essential in negotiating relationships with donors, and in underpinning positions within development policy debates (Mosse 2001).

Returning to the question of the potential for participation to be tyrannical or transformative, the farmers' accounts above suggest that it is experienced as either, depending, in part, on their personal motivations to participate. In order to clarify this situation a key aspect of the participation debate must be brought in – that is, the potential for participation to move beyond a focus on projects and techniques, toward a wider political project of social justice (Hickey and Mohan 2004a). Chapter VIII turns to that discussion again, but first it is valuable to look more directly at ODEP's techniques of participation – the methodologies it aims to employ.

Chapter VII focuses on ODEP's training workshops. In the course of that examination, the chapter turns its attention to ODEP's efforts to increase the scope and importance placed on ecological agriculture, agrobiodiversity conservation and food sovereignty in Bolivia; a shared concern with various other organizations and the government itself. Yet tensions run high between applying neoliberal frameworks to 'empower' farmers and resisting neoliberal approaches to strengthen Bolivia's sovereignty vis-à-vis the global North, and particularly the United States. Moreover, gender dynamics become complicated by these agendas and have implications for potential collaborations.

## Chapter VII:

### **EICPAL and ODEP Interrupted: Participation and Collaboration in Practice**

#### 1. Participation in Practice

ODEP's literature, as well as interviews with staff, highlights the NGO's commitment to participatory methodologies. It was quickly evident that the emphasis on such methodologies had more to do with agronomists finding effective teaching methods and farmers effectively learning, than with participation as a form of collaboration between farmers and agronomists, implicit in some of the NGO's discourse on these approaches (such as 'Farmer-to-Farmer,' 'Participatory Follow-up and Evaluation,' or 'Local Agricultural Research Committees'). Participatory learning methodologies were employed (albeit unevenly) to facilitate teaching new concepts, or methods to farmers. How this relates to participation for the sake of generating knowledge and the complications that arise in terms of power and voice are discussed further in subsequent chapters. First, it is necessary to scrutinize some of the participatory approaches themselves and their goals of empowering subjects through training, which is at times technical, while at other times, more political. Centering on ODEP's training program for farmers, this chapter examines the role of the participatory methodologies that the NGO employs as tools with the stated aim of empowering rural small-scale producers.

Cornwall (2004) shows that ethnographic research on participation as practiced can shed light on dynamics of power in development interventions and the ways in which exclusion, or inclusion are furthered in the spaces in which participation occurs (cited in Bebbington 2004:281). My research contributes to such an endeavor, as it examines how



participatory approaches are applied (and not) to various spaces within the work of the NGO with farm families, and situates this participation within intersecting power relations at local, national and international levels. The potential of participation to be transformative, and the ways in which this is complicated by gender, is explored in light of Hickey and Mohan's suggestion that participation be redeemed beyond a project that upholds conventional power relations. What comes to light in the discussion below is the complicated positioning of the Bolivian NGO as it strives to increase participation, especially of women, in its work. Moments of politicized discourse intersect with predominantly technical participatory training, providing a nuanced and gendered understanding of sustainable agricultural development, underscored by contradictions and tensions, even as it shows the promise of collaboration toward common environmental and social justice goals. Incorporated into this discussion are issues of the role of NGOs and states both within, and in reaction to, neoliberalism.

## 2. Participation in ODEP's Farmer Training School

### i. *Bringing Participatory Methods Together*

In the time I spent following Rocío, a female agronomist at ODEP, around Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi we assisted farmers with harvesting assorted crops, preparing food, and making one environmentally friendly stove. Each day this work afforded her opportunities for various one-on-one conversations with farmers about organic production and other concerns. As one of the few female technician/facilitators at ODEP she divided her time between Urku Valle and another district. Despite the limited time in the communities, her approach successfully built on mutual trust and respect between her and the farm households. Nonetheless, while the flow of information and knowledge was

less unidirectional than some of her co-workers, her relationships with farmers were structured by her imparting what she believed to be crucial agricultural and environmental knowledge.

When I first asked Rocío about participatory approaches in ODEP, without hesitation she exclaimed, “ODEP is full of participatory methodologies – that’s how it works!” She went on to list various approaches, such as ‘*Campesino á Campesino*’ and ‘*El SEP*’ (*Siguimiento y evaluación participativo*, or Participatory Follow-up and Evaluation). I had of course seen the large hand-made charts and posters in the office outlining these methodologies as the framework for ODEP’s practices, but it was less clear how these approaches were put into practice on a daily basis. Rocío was quick to provide an example when I asked how and when these approaches are actually used, pointing to ODEP’s farmer training program, the ‘Intercultural Training School for Leadership in Agriculture Production’, commonly referred to as “EICPAL” (*Escuela Intercultural de Capacitación en Production Agrícola y Liderazgo*).

Through collaborations with other organizations, ODEP has adopted various participatory methodologies that allow farmers to exchange experiences, offer opportunities for personal growth, and give farmers training in natural resource management and business management, among other things. The ODEP staff behind the creation of EICPAL complained to me that these different approaches had been disconnected and would be much more effective if they were integrated into one overarching structure. Thus the idea of a training school was born.

ODEP describes EICPAL as “a methodology that aims to help develop capacity in producers with a comprehensive development vision.”<sup>27</sup> The organization’s literature on the subject states that the general objective is to build capacities of small farmers and to promote sustainable agriculture. More specifically, the workshops aim to: 1) restore the confidence of small farmers, and build capacity in knowledge, attitudes and skills for social participation and control of resources; 2) promote and encourage active participation and competitive management oriented toward sustainable productive economic ventures; and 3) develop knowledge and sustainable agricultural practices based on conservation of agrobiodiversity.

César, the program coordinator at ODEP, explained to me that, through various collaborations between Bolivian and European organizations, they have adopted different participatory methodologies.

EICPAL works on three levels: in the community, with the ‘promoters’, and with youth. [...] We are working on topics like empowerment, business management and ‘Campesino á Campesino’ – for sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty. This structure that we are creating would allow us to have a logic in the institutional work, allowing us to have our own focus, or *personality*. We are going to work not in separate areas but with a whole process. The whole structure allows for an interlinked process to be created – they [the participatory methods] are the gears in a machine.

César’s comment is a product of a great deal of thought and collaboration among key staff members of ODEP who are dedicated to the continuity of both the projects and the methods they employ to carry them out. Whether sustainable agriculture development is the overarching structure, or whether it is the structure of the workshops themselves, César makes clear that the development/training ‘machine’ will not function without the participatory methodologies. The farmers must participate, they must

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<sup>27</sup> ODEP is a pseudonym and thus a text reference cannot be provided.

exchange ideas, they must work together and, a point touched on above, they must work on themselves (through improving communication, management and marketing skills as well as attitudes and self-esteem).

At the time that the research for this dissertation was collected, the EICPAL workshop was held for three distinct audiences: rural communities; a select group of men, women and youth from the communities who are expected to be promoters of ODEP's sustainable agriculture methods; and agronomy students in their final year. Identity and citizenship issues emerge in the discussion of ODEP's participatory approach to development in its integration of the idea of *interculturalism* (the 'I' in EICPAL). At a basic level this term alludes to the idea of different cultures interacting with mutual respect for customs and practices. It suggests leveled power relations between people of different backgrounds. In the context of an EICPAL workshop, men and women from several different communities and different cultural background (though all Quechua-speaking) come together with common socioeconomic challenges, while the differences between them are ideally also appreciated.

A second, related and noteworthy point in César's description above, is the notion of the organization establishing a 'personality.' This idea brings a coherence to the NGO's approaches, tying diverse ideas together, but importantly it also lends a degree of legitimacy to the NGO by making their practices more legible to funding agencies and other organizations while also setting them apart from other local development organizations. This 'personality,' expressed through participatory methods, also reflects local experience; while not a grassroots organization, ODEP can further strengthen its legitimacy as a 'local' NGO.

The most practically based workshop, EICPAL *comunal*, is held six times in the year, ideally one day per month for a six-month period in the communities. Because Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi are so close in proximity, one meeting is held for both communities, alternating in location between one and the other. One member of each household must attend, and in these particular two communities it is usually the woman, with a few exceptions in which both husband and wife attend, or a participating man is single. At times when the meeting falls on a weekend day some couples send a teenage daughter in lieu of them. I came to understand that the predominantly female attendance of the workshops in these communities was unique, even compared to the community EICPAL meetings in the other communities in the same district. I attribute this to the fact that the sole ODEP technician in this area was a woman for over a year before another male technician joined her. Through that time she worked only in Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi. It was not until much later that they extended their work to four other communities in the district. Rocío agreed that it was her presence that had encouraged the participation of so many women, explaining, "When the facilitator is a woman, women participate. When it's a man, the men participate. So of course, the best situation would be to have one male and one female facilitator in each district."

The second level in which farmers can participate in the farmer training school is called 'EICPAL *Promotores*.' In this case a few individuals from each district are invited to attend a three-day workshop in Llalagua. The objective is that various members of each community will return with techniques in sustainable, ecological agriculture and implement them. Then it is expected that they teach others to take the same approach, thereby spreading the knowledge and experience these individuals have learned. Five

modules cover a range of topics and a sixth consists of a fieldtrip to Cochabamba to have a ‘farmer experience exchange’. Each module has theoretical and practical components.

The first module introduces the subject matter for the whole series of workshops. It introduces concepts such as agrobiodiversity, sustainable agriculture as tied to food security and food sovereignty, as well as entrepreneurialism. Discussion and dynamic games centre on socialization and personal growth. The second module addresses small business and organizations, as well as soil conservation. Interestingly, it also focuses on the ‘restoration of confidence’ and self esteem of small producers. The notion of restoring confidence is noteworthy because it implies that the farmers once had a sense of confidence and self esteem that they now lack. This allows the NGO to approach farmers from a supportive role of facilitating the return of something lost through colonialism and centuries of discrimination, while it also permits them to link these qualities with market success.

The theme of module three is group work, covering communication skills and conflict resolution, as well as emphasizing organic production and administrative skills. The theme of the fourth module is leadership, as well as covering basic accounting and the developing process of certifying organic producers. Finally, the fifth module is titled “the life project” which focuses on developing goals and future plans, with an emphasis on marketing as well as (agro)biodiversity. In the reports to (potential) donors, ODEP talks about agrobiodiversity in terms of natural resource management, appealing to ideals of environmental sustainability, while reinforcing ideals of ownership and responsible management. It is noteworthy that the coupling of these ideas positions conservation within a neoliberal framework. As Lockie (2009) discusses, the neoliberal

understandings of agrobiodiversity emphasize the human benefit in terms of the economic use of, and intellectual property rights over, genetic resources (also see Escobar 1998).

In addition to the five modules, the *Promotores* workshops include a fieldtrip to a “farmer experience exchange.” In 2010, during the second annual EICPAL workshops, this event took place over the course of a few days in the city of Cochabamba and involved traveling to large farms, as well as to the university’s agriculture sciences campus to learn about various environmentally sustainable agricultural practices. Though the experience was dynamic and arguably very important, it seemed inappropriately named an “exchange” beyond the opportunity for farmers to ask questions of their various teachers in these environments. As such events relate to the potential to generate new knowledges, the farmer experience exchange is returned to and explored in greater detail in chapter IX.

While the EICPAL *Comunal* and EICPAL *Promotores* workshops were in their second year during my research period, for the first time ODEP had forged its way into a university in the region, offering a version of its EICPAL workshops to final-year agronomy students. This was motivated by an effort to promote ecological agriculture among students still being trained almost entirely in conventional agricultural practices. ODEP’s aim was to encourage young agronomists to move away from conventional agriculture, with its use of agro-chemicals and ongoing monocropping, toward more sustainable, ecological practices. In contrast to the two levels described above, the EICPAL *Jovenes* (Youth) workshops were conducted in Spanish and delved deeper into the theories underpinning organic production and agrobiodiversity. Through these

workshops, ODEP has been given the opportunity to recruit the most promising agronomy students to work for them. Although the department consists of predominantly male students, there are increasing numbers of females, a few of whom were doing internships with ODEP while I was in the field.

ii. *El SEP: Feedback and Record Keeping*

Each EICPAL module, like each community workshop, wraps up with an evaluation of the workshop by the farmers, as part of a participatory methodology called “el SEP” (“Participatory Follow-up and Evaluation”). Ideally (though not consistently) the facilitator(s) leaves the room, and the farmers in attendance, led by one or more people in charge of organizing the group, evaluate various aspects of the workshop, or give their overall impression. Each participant puts a check mark next to a ‘happy face’ signifying ‘good,’ a face with a straight mouth signifying ‘average,’ or a frowning face signifying ‘bad.’ This assessment is followed by two columns: ‘Why?’ and ‘How can we improve?’ In general participants seemed comfortable stating that they had had an “average” experience, but were less clear about why their experience was average in the communal workshops than in the *promotores* workshops, where people sometimes complained about the food or lodging, or expressed concern over the lack of participation of the whole group. ODEP took the evaluation process seriously and tried to address the points raised by farmers, and get more feedback where comments on the chart were too vague.

The SEP methodology was developed by ODEP in collaboration with another Bolivian foundation working with farmers. Intended to be a participatory planning tool,



ODEP described its purpose in a report to CANGO as encouraging producers to take ownership of a project by evaluating each of the activities. Moreover, taking stock of the farmers' perception(s) "helps field staff listen and see how they can better support the actions of the project." Though this participatory methodology was not restricted to the evaluation of ODEP's workshop, it tended to be understood in these narrow terms. For example, during one of the modules we learned about 'SEP' methodology and discussed in smaller groups and as a whole what it meant to evaluate and follow the progress of one's crops, soils, irrigation, etc. Yet when I asked Adriano about 'el SEP' he did not associate these practices with the NGO's participatory methodology.

[JENNY]: El SEP – the follow up and participatory evaluation – when is that used other than in the workshops? Do you discuss it in the communities, or is it just discussed in the *promotores* workshops?

[ADRIANO]: It is the part at the end where the producers evaluate our teaching method – that's all SEP is.

[JENNY]: Really? But when I was at the *promotores* workshop there was a whole section on it and they contrasted the farmer who watches and watches his land and then produces well, with the farmer who does little to follow up after planting and whose plants do not grow well – they called that 'el SEP' too.

[ADRIANO]: Hmm.

[JENNY]: Is there a follow-up and evaluation of the land too with the farmers, or only in the workshops about ODEP's teaching?

[ADRIANO]: Oh yes, there is. You saw Guillermo gave me those drawings the other day? He did an evaluation.

Having participated in the EICPAL *Promotores* module that had focused on el SEP as a subject, I asked ODEP's director about the rationale behind teaching this approach:

[JENNY]: Why is it necessary to teach el SEP? Did the farmers really not have this approach themselves before?

[JUAN LUIS]: The topic of follow-up is not new, but the point is that in the communities it is *oral* evaluation and follow-up; it's verbal, it's not documented. That's the reason we want to apply this methodology, SEP, so we teach *documentation*. No of course it's not new, but we are encouraging documentation – the process could be written and signed - for the sake of historical record keeping.

To approach this from a critical development perspective, we might highlighted how this 'participatory methodology,' also serves to train the farmers to be more 'accountable.' In line with one strand of ODEP's discourse that aims to change individual attitudes, build capacity, and train farmers to be more economically productive (also see chapter VIII), encouraging accountability as a form of neoliberal governance comes to light here. However, there is another issue that is noteworthy (receiving more attention in chapter IX) which is that ODEP's work in ecological agriculture strives to find ways to strengthen that approach, marginalized both in Bolivia (despite notable recent changes at the state level – see chapter IV) and globally, in relation to conventional agriculture. It is an important insight within this dissertation that efforts toward ecological agriculture may employ neoliberal approaches, despite ideals of being more grassroots oriented. However, it should be recognized that the desire to produce and maintain historical records is part of an effort to construct a counter-practice and discourse, fortifying organic production against 'green revolution' approaches and conventional agriculture.

### iii. *Agronomists as Teachers, Farmers as Students*

Though my observations showed that ODEP's application of participatory methodologies was inconsistent between activities and depending on which technician/facilitator was involved, it was clear that ODEP as an organization strove to

find ways to increase farmer participation in a way that would integrate the knowledge that ODEP wished to share with the farmers on various levels. The use of participatory methodologies were also unevenly employed depending on whether they were in the larger, more organized workshops in the city, or in the communities, and depending on the agronomist leading the workshop, or giving a particular presentation. For example, I observed Rodolfo, who had a knack for moving around the room as he presented, standing near shyer farmers and engaging them in the discussion in a friendly and non-intimidating way. Importantly, he would also respectfully ask the more outspoken and enthusiastic participant to allow others to speak.

Within the NGO, individual agronomists took different approaches. ODEP's first female agronomist in Urku Valle, Rocío, led the "EICPAL *comunal*" workshops in Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi, and had a strong sense of her role in the community to educate farmers on ecological agriculture, but she also wished to avoid the types of power relations that seemed to naturally come up in the social world of Bolivians, where people are often addressed by their title ("Good morning Doctor", "Good afternoon Teacher", "Good evening Engineer"). Participatory learning tools were always more integrated into workshops when she led them compared to her male counterpart, Adriano. His objective centred more on saving time (a valid concern for farmers with limited free time). He was more demonstrative in his teaching approach and less likely to include the farmers in an activity.

There were differences along gender lines as to how men and women responded to lessons from ODEP. Both men and women would participate if called upon individually, but most women were generally very shy and would speak almost inaudibly

in the male-dominated *Promotores* workshops. However, this was not the case in the female-dominated community workshops, in which everyone was at least acquainted, if not friends and family. The greater comfort level with women speaking was highlighted as one of the reasons women enjoyed attending the community workshops.

Another key difference was that many men took notes, while women did not. Toward the end of my fieldwork, an older woman, doña Berta, who joined ODEP, was also in the habit of taking notes during demonstrations. I learned from her that she had been orphaned at a young age and essentially raised by the schoolteachers. She had a deep-seated belief in formal education and had been afforded study skills that the majority of other women had not. (Interestingly, this woman attributed the lack of note taking by the other women to *laziness* rather than a lack of formal education).

#### iv. Women's Participation

In the EICPAL workshops, the emphasis on participation was reinforced not just in theory, but also in practice, on a constant and varied basis. Women, especially younger ones, presented real challenges to equal participation. It is interesting to examine how ODEP faced these challenges, because they are by no means limited to the spaces of these workshops, or even specific to participatory development in Bolivia. One of the strategies ODEP attempted was to level differences in active gendered participation was to encourage women to be the first presenters in group-work. Workshop facilitators informed groups that they would have to choose a woman (or two) to present their work to the rest of the workshop attendees. This could then be followed by other group members – invariably the most out-spoken men. The facilitators had to practice

vigilance to enforce this, or the out-spoken men would take over and the quieter group members would sit back, sometimes clearly relieved that they were escaping centre stage.

The benefit of having women as the presenters for their groups was that they were more inclined to pay attention to what the group was doing. It also seemed that women participated more when the activity involved something designated as women's work. For example, in the third module one exercise included creating a marketplace, making vegetables out of construction paper and setting them out on *aguayos* (the blankets used to carry goods and children). The participants had to pretend to purchase the supplies needed from one workshop leader, and then sell the constructed organic vegetables in a pretend market to the ODEP staff and interns – bringing some of the lessons of organic farming, small business and accounting discussions together. In activities involving the marketing aspects of farming, both men and women actively participated. In the actual markets, women are the vast majority of merchants.

With group work, involving formulating ideas to put on paper, it was harder to observe the degree to which women were participating. Because I was given the status of a participant, or someone on my way to becoming a *promotora*, I was always randomly assigned to a group like the farmers. I did not walk around the groups while they were working, observing. In some cases a woman might be the one to write the words on the large sheets of paper that would be used to present ideas, but more often it was a man; then ideally, a different person presented. In the groups in which I participated, women were generally quiet, though there were a few who could be counted upon to speak up regularly (including all three women from the Urku Valle district). The challenge for

women with small children was that our attention was usually split between wandering or disruptive toddlers and the group discussion.

It was clearer to see that, during the group work done outside, most women paid less attention. Teenage girls would often hang back, laughing and talking in groups with each other, or with the teenaged boys, when they were not actively participating themselves. During a terrace-building activity, the female facilitator and one of the men actively called for the women to get up and participate, to no avail. Those moments made it evident that it would take more than just asking the women to join in to get them to participate. From my outsider perspective, it seemed plausible that it was simply a division of labour that made women less likely to take part in some of the activities. If they did not foresee doing the work, why would they put as much energy into learning how to do it? Interestingly, however, the women I asked about this insisted it was because the women were 'afraid' (*tiene(n) miedo*) to stand up and be the centre of attention. Moreover, they pointed out that men and women work together on their farms so that terraces and the making of various types of fertilizers were all projects that women would need to know. Compost, since it was used predominantly for vegetable gardens, would be the most obvious example of women's work, but even then, men and women could be seen to work together in the larger gardens. It was easy to see that men and women worked together in their fields, but a division of labour was still evident. For example, men plowed the fields, while women and children sowed the seeds (also see chapter V).

In another example of ODEP exploring ways to ensure women's participation each group was given a different experiment to do and then demonstrate to the rest of the

group. The group I was in was given a list of items to gather: two classroom chairs with desk tops attached, two towels, and two glasses of water. The experiment involved pouring the water through a flat towel and then through one that had been layered to show how water washes downhill (taking top soil with it), whereas the layered towel – to be reminiscent of a terraced hillside -- holds the water more evenly in each layer. This was the groupwork led by Adriano during his workshop on soil conservation, during which Juan Luis informed us that each group must begin its presentation with an explanation of their work by one or more woman in the group.

What I observed was that the men immediately took charge of getting the supplies and setting up the chairs on a staircase so that the desktops would slope. The women stood back and talked to each other, or watched children. But when Juan Luis announced that they would be the first to present for their groups, the women and the men began to communicate about what they were doing. This appeared to be a very effective way of getting the women to participate, though only to the degree that the men told them what was happening and what they were to say when they stood up in front of everyone. It did not level the playing field, but it did give women and young, or very shy men a chance to have everyone listen to them and to get experience speaking in front of a group. I commented to Adriano later that I had noticed how the women had been forced to pay attention after that point, but he dismissed this as a technique that Juan Luis had imposed and not something he liked because the women were not genuinely involving themselves.

After attending the first three modules of the EICPAL workshop, I remarked on an observation I had made to the director of ODEP: there had been more participation of women during the second module than in either the first, or the third. It seemed that the

approaches of workshop's facilitators (two women, as well as various presentations or group work led by other members of the ODEP staff) in the second module had been effective and I wondered why the third seemed to have employed less of those methods. I had been referring to the quality of participation, rather than the quantity of women, which he misunderstood, but his answer sheds light on the challenges women face in participating and the challenges ODEP has to find ways to remain accessible to women. Juan Luis explained to me that during the second workshop there were more people, especially women and youth, because the extra individuals were fulfilling a requirement to complete a previously missed workshop during the first version of the EICPAL *Promotores*, the previous year. I had noted that in the first and third workshop the percentage of women farmers was about 25 percent. In the second workshop there were several more men as well, hence the ratio of men to women was not placed in significantly greater balance, but I did note an increase to approximately 35 percent.

[JUAN LUIS:] Look, we are supposed to have 50 percent women and 50 percent men, but there are always fewer women than men. The concern of youth 'promoters' – like Marta for example – is that their parents may say to them one month, 'we need you to work at home, you can't go.'

For a lot of women they can't leave their place – they have responsibilities at their place – they can't leave for three, four, or in the case of those who have to travel [a long way] five days– this is a limitation, so the most participation of women tends to be in their own community. At the moment, for example, all the women in Tomacoyo attend the workshops there, right? And the majority in Q'ayarumi. For women to come to the workshop in Llallagua means they may worry about their responsibilities at home – especially their children.

His comments were supported by women's accounts in the communities. There were a few women who I recognized would probably genuinely enjoy the *Promotores*



workshop, but who could not share the burden of their responsibilities and therefore could not attend. In other cases, women found ways around these restrictions.

In the case of Urku Valle, there were five ‘promoters’ attending. One was a woman from Tomacoyo, one from Q’ayarumi and three others from other communities: a pregnant woman who would not be able to complete the course before giving birth (but could return next session with her baby to complete the training and receive a certificate), and two men. The men were both present for the three modules and the ‘exchange’ I attended (though I later learned that one of the men had to drop out for reasons unknown to me), but the women all had other obligations that interfered with full attendance. One woman consistently missed Fridays; the pregnant woman had “a problem with her husband” (Juan Luis had told me when I inquired about her whereabouts) and was granted permission to leave for half of the second module. The third woman, Dominga, had been reluctant to tell her husband Narciso, that the workshop involved three days in Llallagua every month. On the morning of the day we would go to Cochabamba for the ‘farmer experience exchange’, she and I sat on my step waiting for a ride to Llallagua. She told me her husband had been upset that she was going to the ‘exchange’ because it would involve being away longer than normal.

“He told me I had to stay home and cook.”

I joked that he would be hungry when she returned four days later. “Who will cook for him?” I inquired.

“Well, he has to learn,” she replied. “I told him it is important that I go for capacity-building [*mas capacitación*]. And that I have to do all six modules to get the certificate.”

“Did he understand after you explained this?”

“Oh yes.”

This type of dilemma is not uncommon for women who participate with the NGO. The negotiation of gendered duties for the household must be balanced with the (anticipated) gains for the household that women and men bring by participating in the NGO’s projects and training workshops. In reality, whether or not Dominga’s husband ‘learned to cook’ through her time away each month, they had a grown daughter that could be counted on to stay close and provide support. However, Dominga’s many sheep had to graze each day during hours that her daughter would be teaching. Crossing typical gender lines, she paid a young man to do this – not normally men’s work, but as very temporary paid labour it became acceptable. Another point that stands out from this fragment of our conversation is how Dominga’s communication with her husband is a good example of a decision made not in unison, but in negotiation. It is likely that in an interview, her response would have pointed to the unity in decision-making between her and her husband.

Knowing that increasing participation of women was important to both ODEP’s director and at least some of the staff, as well as CANGO, I focused on this issue in my reports and presentations to the two NGOs. In a presentation I did at the CANGO-ODEP meeting following my fieldwork, I suggested that a challenge for women was their ability to pay attention in the workshops while attending to small children. The director of CANGO suggested that perhaps a daycare would be possible during the workshops. The ODEP staff looked skeptical and ODEP’s director explained that the women had never asked for such a thing. CANGO’s director then replied that she thought it unlikely the

women *would* ask for such a thing, for until it was provided it might not occur to them that they *could* ask for childcare assistance during the workshops. “It’s something to think about,” she finished.

It was clear that ODEP was trying to improve the *quality* of participation of women and, by extension their training, even if the ratio of women to men was unequal. But my observations (presented to both NGOs) complicated ODEP’s presentation of actively participating women, by highlighting barriers to women’s full participation, even when the women were technically present for each workshop. The suggestion opened opportunities for dialogue beyond ODEP showcasing the minority of very actively participating (and vocal) women, while describing challenges related to women’s domestic responsibilities and the problem of ‘machismo’ in the field. It opened dialogue to address what ODEP might actually be able to do (such as provide childcare during a workshop) and how they might encourage women who wanted to participate, but who could not do so easily – an ongoing concern for ODEP.

### 3. Participating with State Research: ODEP Interrupted

Toward the end of my field research, ODEP found itself reorganizing some of its EICPAL *comunal* workshops to accommodate the State’s agricultural research program. The workshops of the *Programa de Investigación Agrícola de Bolivia*, or PIAB (the government’s Bolivian Agricultural Research Program) involve similar themes and many of the same farmers. That story is told in the following chapter, as the State’s presence in the municipality engendered tensions, heated discussions, as well as quiet collaborations that underscore tensions between the Bolivian government and ODEP (and non-

governmental organizations more generally). For the moment, examining PIAB's ideal of participation is helpful to contrast with ODEP's.

PIAB had a goal of participation for large sections of the municipalities in which they were working. The project of developing a regional or national market for organic agriculture would not enjoy success unless farmers were on board. In line with ODEP's literature on the subject, one of the leading agronomists in PIAB's ecological agriculture branch, Angel, explained to me that previous efforts at the national level had taken a top-down approach to agricultural research. Historically, research had been largely carried out by *professionals* within government institutions (including this one) and findings had been "extracted" from the land and its local people. Little consideration had gone into how to include the farmers. One of the results of this methodological shortcoming, Angel explained, was that it created a feeling of animosity among the farmers toward the professionals. Projects of this nature were destined to fail, he argued. As he talked of this, he described a time when Bolivia was at a standstill in terms of research and development, but through a series of events they had now reached a place in which (at least certain branches in) PIAB now strived to be participatory. That this was the necessary corrective to failed development research was treated as a given. The agronomist stressed the importance of this work: "Participatory research means that we go to the communities, and we are going to listen to them to see what the problems are that they have, and we will aim to restore them, then we start prioritizing what is the most important thing at the national level."

Among the emergent themes identified in Cooke and Kothari's (2001) volume is the tendency for proponents of participatory development to be naïve about the

complexities of power relations, not only between facilitators and beneficiaries, but also among participants themselves. In making the argument that the tyranny critique has centred on too narrow a definition of participation, Hickey and Mohan (2004) suggest that participation is no longer treated as automatically leveling the playing field, and yet the quote above, from a lengthy interview on PIAB's project in the municipality and elsewhere in Bolivia, reveals such a naïve treatment. Furthermore, it employs the discourse of 'restoring,' which can be extended to work against what previous governments either neglected or extracted from rural peoples in Bolivia. As the following chapter demonstrates, the damage done by previous governments is not only imagined to be due to paternalistic and exploitative practices, but thought to reflect a neoliberal orientation, a framework from which PIAB is concerned to distance itself.

Angel, the government agronomist, treated participatory methodologies as a means to an end where it still seemed as though the information flowed significantly more in one direction than the other:

[ANGEL:] Ecological production needs a different process based on different rules that the rural peasants/ farmers don't know. Then when they know the ecological rules we can start doing the research but with their participation. We are going to employ this method directly on their land, teaching them how to research.

#### *i. PIAB and Quantifying Participation*

Having come from ODEP with its clearly identified and labeled 'participatory methodologies,' Rocío expressed a markedly different view of participation in the government organization than her department superior had. In an interview with Rocío shortly after she took her new job with PIAB, she explained that while PIAB had not integrated participatory methodologies into their framework for the organic farming

project, her familiarity with these methodologies had been interesting to her prospective employers and had given her a competitive edge.

In PIAB, participation was understood in terms of the percentage of women in attendance, as part of the funding conditions from the Food and Agriculture Organization. Rocío explained to me that she was required to show that each workshop she held had at least 50 percent women in attendance. During the first meeting, men had far outnumbered women, but by the second and third the numbers had grown so that women outnumbered men. However, it was clear that the women had come from the closest communities to the town of Llaqta, whereas those who had traveled from further spots in the municipality were almost entirely men. The women in attendance were also primarily women who participated with ODEP, which suggested that the rapport Rocío had already established with them had been part of what had drawn these women to the workshop.

As the PIAB workshops I attended were part of an initial investigatory stage as to whether the municipality of Pocomachurí was the right location, or whether a neighbouring municipality would be better, the initial interest lay in how many women farmers would attend the workshops themselves. In reality there were barriers to the full participation of the women in the room, such as childcare responsibilities – exacerbated by the location of the first meeting and first half of the second meeting which took place in an upstairs room of the *alcaldia* (the municipal mayor's office) near a balcony with large gaps between the rails. Those of us with mobile young children had to keep vigilant watch on them for fear that they would fall. The second and more significant (but not unrelated) barrier arose during the third workshop, when the two agronomists

from La Paz led the workshop – neither of which spoke Quechua. Despite the fact that most of the farmers in attendance that I knew spoke Spanish sufficiently to understand, women – who tend in any case to speak less Spanish than their male counterparts and attend to children – were at a particular disadvantage to keep up with the discussion.

While the government organization seemed comfortable with a top-down approach in practice, PIAB was open to participatory methods as teaching tools. During a workshop, the farmers were divided into groups according to their communities and asked to draw a group picture of how they saw their agriculture today and what they wanted for the future. The monolingual Spanish-speaking agronomists from the government were pleased with the farmer participation, but did not necessarily recognize the implications for farmer knowledge being transmitted. On the other hand, following Cooke's (2004) warnings, perhaps they did recognize the potential of this method for extracting information from the farmers. Drawing pictures of crops, fields and/or climatic circumstances in the communities was a common participatory practice in ODEP, and with Rocío in PIAB, it would be there as well. However, Cooke's (2004) contribution to the *transformation* argument is skeptical and reserved, warning that while drawing exercises are an effective way of working with an illiterate group of people, they may also be used to co-opt information.

#### 4. Reluctant Collaborations: PIAB's Participatory Research and ODEP

The arrival of the governmental organization the 'Agricultural Research Program of Bolivia' or 'PIAB'<sup>28</sup> in Pocomachurí toward the end of my field research, underscored

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<sup>28</sup> *Programa de Investigación Agrícola de Bolivia*

important historical and ongoing tensions. It raised competing notions of legitimacy over who can claim to represent farmers' interests, and who 'the experts' are. Moreover, sustainable agriculture as a political project with which ODEP was engaged, came into focus more vividly.

Rocío received the news that she got the job with PIAB on the day of ODEP's Agrobiodiversity Fair. Although she said little about the sudden change in plans that was to send her to Llallagua instead of staying for her usual schedule, the timing had in fact allowed her to quietly inform the community members that she would be leaving ODEP but would be back with a different organization.

Approximately two weeks later, I learned that Rocío was holding a meeting with farmers from the nearby communities at the *alcaldia* (city hall) in town, which Adriano would be attending rather than going out to the communities. Confirming with Rocío that I was permitted to attend, I arrived at the *alcaldia* to find a hand-written sign taped to the front door saying "*taller agricultura ecológica*" [ecological agriculture workshop]. Rocío had been on a local radio program to inform the whole municipality of the meeting, but (not surprisingly) mostly men from nearby communities, already working with ODEP, attended the workshop.

When I arrived, Rocío and Raul (well known to community members for his role in municipal politics before working in ODEP) were leading a discussion about the national government's recent law for organic agriculture production and certification and food sovereignty. Two other members of ODEP's staff had arrived for the workshop as well. Though Raul and Rocío explained that they now represented a governmental organization called PIAB, ODEP's presence was strong.



Another meeting was planned for two weeks later, which would fall on the same week that ODEP would normally hold its EICPAL communal meeting. Adriano and another staff member explained that they would merge their meeting with PIAB's because the content was so similar. Adriano prepared a PowerPoint presentation on soil conservation to give at the next workshop. In another district in the municipality, Teodoro also merged his EFLEPI *comunal* workshop with Raul and Rocío's PIAB workshop.

When Adriano and Teresa (the agronomist hired to replace Rocío) arrived at Tomacoyo's monthly community meeting to distribute vegetable seeds to its participants, Adriano announced that the EFLEPI meeting would be held during the PIAB workshop:

[ADRIANO]: On Thursday the 23<sup>rd</sup> there will be a workshop in town, with PIAB right? Don't forget! Everyone will be paid. There will be lunch. ODEP and PIAB are united. The two institutions are united. This workshop is held by the government – it is for everyone in the community – not just for people from ODEP, so everyone go! PIAB will pay 15 *bolivianos* for transportation costs for each participant. For those of you who work with ODEP, there will be no workshop in the community this month – you must go to the workshop on the 23<sup>rd</sup> [of September] at the alcaldia. Attendance is obligatory for people with ODEP!

Taking this supposed unity at face value, I asked ODEP's director, Juan Luis, for his opinion of the government's inaction in relation to its own sustainable agriculture policy had changed in light of the PIAB's proposed project. He appeared to answer cautiously, saying that it seemed more promising. But my effort to gather information about how the collaboration of these two institutions came to be was met with vague and uneasy responses from the director of the NGO. He explained that PIAB had allowed them to present some of the content of their regular EICPAL workshops, because the work and knowledge the two workshops aimed to transmit complemented and even overlapped each other, and rather than ask many of the same farmers who would attend

PIAB's workshop to also take a day during the busy planting season to go to a local workshop, PIAB had allowed them to share some of the time.

[JENNY]: Is it obligatory that the farmers who participate with ODEP attend the workshop on the 23<sup>rd</sup>?”

[JUAN LUIS]: No, no, of course it's not obligatory! We encourage people to attend because we too are working toward certification, but no, it's not obligatory.

Less than two weeks after the second workshop, Rocío held the third and final workshop of this initial stage. No ODEP personnel were present. This time two agronomists from La Paz accompanied Rocío who were overseeing the project here and in a few other municipalities in other regions of Bolivia. During the workshop it became apparent that some of the farmers were not clear which organization was leading the meeting. One of the men, Angel, who enthusiastically led a long presentation on 'Law 3525' appeared quite irate when he asked the audience of farmers to recall the name of his organization and someone said "ODEP".

"No! No! We're not ODEP – We're PIAB – not ODEP: PIAB! – The Agricultural Research Program of Bolivia – PIAB! Everyone together – say it with me," shouted Angel to the reluctant-looking crowd, "PIAB!" Some farmers chimed in. "Again, PIAB, PIAB!" Amused and slightly embarrassed teenagers smiled as they shouted back the response. A few farmers looked tired and annoyed, and a few elders looked bewildered, but the rant did command attention and the presentation continued. The emphasis placed on the great need to pay attention to detail in order to clean up contaminants and maintain the integrity of land and organic produce during and after it has been harvested (in other words – more work than what the farmers already did), was offset by an impassioned account of the great personal rewards of organic production.

Some effort was made to draw on cultural references of humans' relationships to Pachamama, but people did not nod in agreement as they often did when a local authority or even one of ODEP's staff talked about similar ideas.

That night as Rocío and I chatted about the project and how the day had gone, she became very concerned to know exactly what I had said when I spoke to the PIAB men from La Paz. "Did you tell them that ODEP has been in the workshops? They don't know! Because we do the same type of work, we are collaborating at the local level, but building this relationship takes time. They cannot find out that ODEP was presenting stuff – they aren't ready to work together yet, so we have to go very slowly."

I had not directly revealed ODEP's participation in the PIAB workshops. However, having been led to believe the governmental and non-governmental organizations were collaborating, I had inadvertently said too much in explaining my presence. We agreed on a strategy for how we would both broach the subject if it were to arise with her superiors, which, to my knowledge, was never needed. The issue never arose in my subsequent interviews with PIAB agronomists.

Such scenarios draw attention to the relationship between researcher and organization, and the desire to control the flow of information, that is not uncommon in fieldwork (e.g. Murphy 2011). Related to this situation, and important for examining power relations across NGOs, my unavoidable association with CANGO likely influenced how much information ODEP wanted me to have. The alliance they appeared to have built with PIAB was developing in practice, unbeknownst to those higher up.

Meanwhile PIAB was also receiving pressure from the associations to which it belonged, and external funding agencies.

The interview with the head agronomist on PIAB's organic agriculture research shed a great deal of light on the tension between the government and the NGO and positioned both organizations historically in ways that drew on dichotomies between neoliberal approaches and the current governments' perspective. Although Angel was clear that top-down methodologies were to blame for failed projects (see the previous chapter), he also pointed to issues of privatization during neoliberal regimes as another culprit in failed research and development schemes.

[ANGEL]: The consequence of the lack of government in these locations has meant that NGOs have come to the communities with their own interests. They haven't listened to the farmers and they haven't given them all the resources that they receive from the international agencies. [...] So there has been an erosion of professionals going into the communities, from institution after institution. That means that when people see professionals in the countryside, people say "they [the professionals] don't *know!*" The producers have lost confidence in them.

When [PIAB has gone] to the countryside we have tried to search for the people with the best qualities to work as professionals with the farmers. I have been engaged with the whole process of hiring these professionals, trying to choose the ones that really know. We are not looking for *friends*; we are not looking for people who only earn a salary. We need people who are really invested and committed to the locality.

Angel painted a highly idealistic picture of trust and mutual respect that could seemingly develop automatically through collaboration between small-scale farmers and agronomists. Moreover, it would have the effect of repairing past tensions:

[ANGEL]: That's why we're putting someone on the ground there to do participatory research; trying to fix the failures that other institutions made in the past. When you decide to work with participatory research you are covering the failures that other institutions have made in social areas. [...] When you go into a community as a researcher with participatory methods, you create a bond of friendship with the community and the farmer is going to develop confidence in you. If the technician lives in the community they are going to develop a clear perception of that community, and that's why PIAB technicians can talk with authority: what [community members] want, what

they don't want, in that way the technicians are working with the community and in the end they are going to defend the interests of the municipality.

The explanation above sheds light on the rationale underpinning the governments approach to organic production, not consulting with Bolivian organizations, such as ODEP, when developing its plans. Angel is clear in his conviction that the governmental organization can speak with (more) authority because of their attention to rapport and downward accountability. Nonetheless, PIAB *was* entering communities where Bolivian and international NGOs were already established – not just where projects had ‘failed’ - with several working on similar issues. The agronomist heading the ecological agricultural research from the government recognized recent increases in collaborations across organizations, but he was wary of collaborations with the same ‘professionals’ he had described above, that could result in building alliances with the NGOs already working in the three municipalities in PIAB’s project. The damaged relations between professionals and farmers that he anticipated his project could repair, was not only about fixing the problems of ‘the past’, but importantly about changing the relations, and shifting power and resources away from the internationally funded private sector NGOs, toward the government.

[ANGEL]: Last year CENAPE strongly encouraged us to collaborate with other organizations, and this year they pushed for us to join with ODEP. I said to them I don't need to work with an NGO yet! What we need to do first is fortify PIAB, then, maybe we can work with ODEP.

I had a very heated conversation with ODEP, and I said to them that I know that the president [Morales] doesn't see NGOs in a good light. I gave them the example of USAID: the president kicked them out!<sup>29</sup> So the primary mandate is not to get very involved with NGOs. I told them that we are not going to work with them yet, probably

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<sup>29</sup> In fact the role of the American organization was significantly restricted and was threatened with expulsion, particularly by the departmental government of Beni. Ultimately USAID was not completely ‘kicked out’ until 2013.

later. They said ODEP has a lot of experience, but I said ‘that may be true, but we also have a lot of experience!’ I am the general consultant in ecological production and I have been in touch with organizations from Europe, the United States, and I know every ‘corner’ of Bolivia.

The concern for collaboration extends beyond a desire to pool resources or for more efficiency. As Ong would argue, various pragmatic aspects of ODEP’s work cannot be easily realized without collaboration with the State. César, ODEP’s program coordinator, was clearest about ODEP’s desire to collaborate with PIAB:

[JENNY:] Do you think in the future ODEP will work with PIAB?

[CÉSAR:] Yes, definitely, because it’s a State institution and they are the ones in charge of certification. So we have to.

#### i. International Pressure to Collaborate

When I returned to this region in March of 2011, the government project had come to a halt during a period of what ODEP employees and Rocío (still with PIAB) referred to as a “period of inactivity,” but which was officially - and more diplomatically - referred to as “a period of transition.” A new director in charge of the project and a shift in primary funding from the FAO to the World Bank was providing less security for the future of the organic farming/sustainable agriculture project and raised questions of job security for many of the agronomists at PIAB.

[ANGEL]: In June we are going to work with the World Bank and they are going to give us a big financial injection. [...] But the World Bank funding comes with restrictions and conditions. [...] I have been attending some of the meetings with the Bank, but what they said is that this funding is not to hire people. We are to spend the money on vehicles and gas, and to work with organizations that are already established with a specific objective, like PROINPA<sup>30</sup> with potatoes. This is the difficulty because *we have to have technicians* – we can’t work without people! So we are supposed to work with already established organizations by overseeing projects and supervising them.

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<sup>30</sup> A well-established foundation for the promotion and investigation of Andean produce.

Given the tensions between the government and NGOs generally, this type of directive from an international funding institution is perhaps a naïve attempt at efficiency. It may also be understood as encouraging alliances between a somewhat uncooperative government and more accommodating/technical NGOs, in this sense aiming to shift power (back) to the private sector. It is arguably easier to maintain the neoliberal framing of food security issues as solvable by market forces through the support of technical NGOs than through the government.

The effort to develop a national market for organic production approaches the issue of food sovereignty from a market-based perspective. Such an approach can find support in international funding agencies without ‘rocking’ the neoliberal ‘boat.’ Angel’s account of the role of the World Bank in funding PIAB’s organic agricultural research raises questions around whether the Bolivian government and the Bank can reconcile divergent goals. To the extent that the government is looking for market solutions to questions of food security, its framework and markers for success may align with ODEP and other NGOs, which describe their goals to empowering farmers through increased participation in (regional) markets, ownership and responsibility over resources and enhanced individual skills such as leadership (discussed in more depth in the following chapter). However, the determination of the government to implicate itself more fully in agricultural research and development in marginalized locations in Bolivia underscores tensions between governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and in particular, the efforts of the MAS to exert more control over processes previously dominated by international neoliberal approaches to development. This creates a conflict of interest for the government, even as collaboration may be more efficient. As

Angel points out, the first concern is to strengthen the State in this area before collaboration can be effective. The issue is not simply a pooling of resources and division of tasks among organizations; it is also a matter of sharing power (Bebbington and Farrington 1993).

##### 5. Discussion: Legitimacy and Conflict

As we have seen, questions of knowledge and power that arise in classroom dynamics are amplified where gender lines are crossed. For our purposes in this chapter, ODEP's efforts to be inclusive of the range of people in a workshop is worth examining, as the challenges that arise are not static, and uniformity does not exist in all the facilitators' approaches, nor in the actions and reactions of women farmer participants. It is in these spaces that ethnographic work sheds light on theoretical discussions of 'capacity building' and 'training,' or more broadly, the nexus of gender, knowledge and power, as it emerges through participatory approaches to development. ODEP's EICPAL workshops – particularly those based in the communities – serve to legitimize the organization's actions. The regularity of these encounters with community members, and importantly, the listed participatory methodologies supposedly incorporated into the structure, can give the impression that it is always receiving input from the farmers. So a communal workshop may involve (mostly women) farmers in dialogue with the facilitators, or it may involve (women) farmers sitting and listening quietly. In both cases, while participatory planning may be valued, emphasis will be on participation for the sake of improving the retention of information. The ideals of participation and numbers of those in attendances (especially numbers of women) may obscure how much knowledge travels in either direction (Mosse 2001).



For all of ODEP's efforts to follow clear categories of participatory methodologies, in the end what is apparent is that success depends greatly on the personality and rapport built between agronomist and community members. Certainly this relates to the practices that the NGO has espoused, such as the length of time in the field, and the work done side-by-side with farmers. But none of these practices work without agronomists willing to challenge the relative position of authority they enjoy as 'experts.' So that ultimately the most respected agronomist, Rocío, who inspired the most participation among women, was only onsite half the time of her colleagues, and did not always employ the methodologies that she believed in. Key to her *version* of participation was that she participated in the activities of farmers – in kitchens and in fields – one-on-one time, building rapport and introducing her ideas in dialogue. John Hailey's (2001) argument that research into NGO-beneficiary relations should not overlook the importance of such personal interactions in shaping the development agenda at a community level is particularly constructive for looking at ODEP in Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi, as well as the participatory spaces of the NGO's EICPAL workshops.

Both ODEP and PIAB pride themselves on their downward accountability, employing agronomists who spend a great deal of time in – and may even be from – the communities in which they work. The NGO ODEP, working in a particular region for several years now, is better positioned to make this claim than the government, but both organizations argued this point nonetheless. The government's claim to better represent the farmers' needs is based on claims of expert knowledge, but it is also based on its own background. MAS is a political party which arose out of an indigenous and class-based social movement, giving it grounds to argue that it is in touch with rural indigenous

people and communities and in a better position to meet the needs of civil society, as represented by unions (or *sindicatos*) rather than NGOs. Yet, in examining the government's critique of NGOs as responsible for lack of rapport between farmers and 'experts' it may be apt to recall Hobart's (1993) assessment that even theories which themselves critique the global development project may still fit within its overarching paradigm. Moreover, Hobart argues that even when developers have sufficient command of the language to speak and listen, the relationship of developers and developed is usually regarded as hierarchical by both parties. So "communication easily becomes the giving of information or instructions by those with expert knowledge." (pp. 11-12).

Evo Morales' position on NGOs not only reflects a rivalry between the State and NGOs to position themselves as experts/authorities, it also reflects the elected party's peasant social movement roots. Desmarais (2007: 26) in her discussion of the peasant movement *La Via Campesina*, addresses this reluctance to build affiliations with NGOs that have often made alliances with international funding institutions, such as the World Bank, which had diluted the strength of 'mobilisation networks' and increased the relative power of technical NGOs. Others (e.g. Escobar 1995; Veltmeyer 2007) have recognized few exceptions to what they see as the role of NGOs in the development process to be the "unwitting agents" of imperialism (Veltmeyer 2007). Evo Morales has maintained this stance. In 2009 when he stated that NGOs in Bolivia had become big business, he was critiquing the level of professionalization of NGOs and questioning how representative and accountable they are to the people they claim to assist. While local NGOs are perceived as more accountable to the people they serve than international NGOs and centralized governments, their dependence on external funding may also

require participation in an economic regime that has been a major contributor to a culture of professionalization and depoliticization of NGOs (Kamat 2004:168; also see Postero 2007).

Given the shared goals of PIAB and ODEP, of developing a market for organic production that is easily accessible to small farmers, as well as working towards agrobiodiversity conservation and food sovereignty, what options does the NGO have as it is met with reluctance? At the time, Raul described ODEP as disseminating knowledge not only to farmers, but to the Bolivian agricultural system more generally through training agronomists who would then work in other places. The goal of such an endeavor should not be read as simply idealistic; positioning professionals and farmers strategically to reinforce the value of organic farming builds support for ODEP's work. The two members of ODEP that left to work at PIAB paved the way for collaborations between the government and the NGO, even as it could only function at the time below the radar. But the placement of influential people can also be accomplished by encouraging certain amenable farmers into leadership positions within their communities, local and municipal governments, creating collaborative relationships across farmer-professional-government lines. The following chapter addresses this issue -- critically examining the notion of leadership training and the potential for more politicized participation to be transformative of, rather than reinforcing, the status quo.

## Chapter VIII:

### Leadership Training: Toward Politicized Participation?

#### 1. Participation in Leadership Training

This chapter continues the analysis of ODEP's EICPAL workshops, focusing on a particular participatory objective: leadership. Enhancing leadership skills is understood by ODEP to be a central component of working with farmers in this region. An examination of this objective sheds light on ODEP's underlying political agenda which has the potential to take participation beyond the commonly discussed more technical aspects of capacity-building. Here ODEP's work holds promise for building collaborations between the organization and farmers, for supporting a more political project of social justice participation that is not just about technical training. However, 'leadership' – a very popular development term in Bolivia – as it is demonstrated here, tends to operate in neoliberal and technical ways, to the disadvantage of women and poorer farmers. The *buzzword* nature of the term 'leadership', evident in the pervasive use of the term among a cross-section of development actors, raises questions of how it is used and what may be glossed over in the use of the term, just as we have seen with other buzzwords such as 'participation', 'partnership' or 'empowerment'.

The contributors to Hickey and Mohan's (2004) volume seek to broaden the analysis of participatory development in efforts to examine the potential for participation to truly be transformative. This is imagined to be possible through a radical politicized participation and expanded citizenship. In addition to the theoretical debates over participation, this chapter builds on the literature in chapters two and four that addresses

citizenship and neoliberalism, and the complex ways in which indigenous social movements and neoliberal governance have intertwined (e.g. Andolina et al. 2009; Hale 2002). While cultural assumptions have always underpinned development, Andolina et al. (2009:2) demonstrate how a significant shift is occurring in the relationship between development and culture with “the intentional incorporation of ethnicity as an object of policy.” Thus, the interest in “interculturalism.”

Through an understanding of this process as *social neoliberalism* (see chapter II), insight may be gained in identifying *how* ODEP fosters leadership, and with what implications. We see in this chapter that efforts to politicize leadership training for the sake of fortifying the profile of ecological agriculture skate a fine line between broadening participation beyond the level of the project, or even at the level of community-NGO, to what potentially is a radical politicized participation – particularly in relation to the global power behind conventional agriculture. Yet, the neoliberal approach to interculturalism and to enhancing leadership skills paints a picture that places attention elsewhere: on enhancing the integration of *indigenous individuals* into the logic of the market.

ODEP strives to maintain a focus on appreciating local culture and valuing the *interaction* between cultures and ways to integrate them, “establishing a relationship based on respect for diversity and mutual enrichment.” Beyond the ideals of mutual respect and strengthening unity, the NGO articulates a particular motivation to incorporate interculturalism with neoliberal appeal. While strengthening and restoring cultural values that are “the basis of society and beyond for indigenous peoples,” and more specifically, restoring “strategies of Andean reciprocity,” ODEP’s literature states

that “producers should be taught to use the customs as a basis for good governance” and they “should be taught to be productive (economically active).”

Within the context of the literature discussed in chapter II on participation and citizenship, ODEP’s efforts toward sustainable development by heightening the cultural relevance of these projects can be understood as part of an ongoing process of integrating the discourses of indigenous social movements in Bolivia. In an interview with ODEP’s program coordinator and one of the creators of EICPAL, César explained what challenges the NGO faced in implementing the various components of the workshops:

[CÉSAR]: We asked ourselves the question – and, really, we almost ‘broke our heads’ trying to answer the question: “where is the intercultural component here?” And we answered: we are respecting their organizational structures. But that’s not enough – it’s not enough!

By respecting the farmers’ “organizational structures,” César refers to being culturally sensitive and acting appropriately with communities, which are organized by *ayllus*, compared with those organized by *sindicatos*, as well as respecting customs and practices such as gender complementarity (discussed in chapter V). But for César and others in ODEP, this was not enough, even if it would prevent fewer challenges than addressing interculturalism directly and in light of present day discussion at the level of the state: talk had turned toward ‘decolonization,’ which had the potential to raise tensions as more politicized discussion would arouse diverging political perspectives (e.g. pro-MAS vs. anti-MAS from both the political right and left). Yet, the concept of interculturalism is not new in Bolivia. It was invoked by previous neoliberal governments, to “suggest that market-led growth was compatible with the recognition of Bolivia’s mostly indigenous poor as bearers of distinct cultural traditions” (Gustafson 2009:7).

In the EICPAL *Promotores* workshop, a few of the farmers in attendance also held political-leader positions as *ayllu* Authorities (three men and one woman, during the session I attended). They raised thought-provoking ideas about the history of colonialism and globalization within discussions of self-esteem and the negative impacts of statements about the poverty in the region that focused on what the farmers lacked as opposed to what they *have* – whether that was in the form of knowledge, a strong sense of culture, or in terms of nutritious indigenous crops. Such discussions validate indigenous farmers’ knowledge and offer a potential position from which a more transformative politics might be developed. Instead EICPAL appears to be turning to an emphasis on “indigenous rights”:

[CÉSAR]: We are thinking seriously about incorporating indigenous rights. So this is a challenge. [...] What is really important now is to work with indigenous rights – especially now that we have a new constitution/charter of rights where indigenous rights are contained. Because there are many rules and laws that people do not know, that’s why we want to incorporate them [...] [by going] deeper into the *intercultural* aspect.

ODEP’s plan to increase its rights-based discourse would politicize the workshops, aiming to increase citizenship participation as well as continue its technical training. The workshops, at both the community and the ‘*promotores*’ levels, addressed the recent law, “Law 3525,” which makes provisions for agrobiodiversity, organic farming and food sovereignty (see chapter IV) and mentions future plans for certification of organic producers. With this law, ODEP would be able to address inequalities without dissent toward the State, because it would be helping to create more informed citizens of the new<sup>31</sup> Plurinational State of Bolivia. However, this rights-based discourse must also be examined in light of the stated goals in ODEP’s literature. It portrays interculturalism

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<sup>31</sup> In 2009 the new constitution changed the name of the country from “The Republic of Bolivia” to “The Plurinational State of Bolivia”

as Gustafson describes it in its pre-MAS State above, that is, within a neoliberal framework. However, César's argument for familiarizing rural producers with their rights, speaks to citizen-shaping practices. His emphasis on rights, in the context of making small farmers more economically productive, supports a shift away from the discourse of transformative social change (touched on in the discourse of the *ayllu* indigenous authorities, for example) toward the notion of legal rights (and liberal citizenship).

In addition to the generational shifts in understandings of identity through social movements and changes at the State level, the discourse of development NGOs reinforces popular terminology. NGOs, such as ODEP have a role to play in shaping what the notion of *being indigenous* means to the farmers of Pocomachurí. This aspect of training in the EICPAL workshops, and developing the rights-based discourse, can be understood as playing a supporting role to one of the central objectives of the EICPAL workshops: leadership training.

## 2. Leadership: "We Empower People *For* Something!"

Leadership training is a key concept in EICPAL, evident in the acronym itself, and occupying the overall theme of the fourth module in the EICPAL *Promotores* workshops. In the EICPAL *comunal* meetings that I attended, leadership was less of a focal point, but arose intermittently within other themes in discussions led by the technician. The most obvious example involved finding community members willing to attend the *Promotores* workshops, though emphasis was placed on people learning skills with which they could return to the communities, rather than highlighting who was more



of a ‘natural’ leader than others, a point they discussed more openly with me. But the idea behind finding and labeling ‘leaders’ among farmers in a given community or district extended beyond ODEP’s vision. Living in the town with the municipal mayor’s office – where NGOs and municipal governmental organizations congregated regularly, and where I was sometimes able to attend community economic development meetings, as well as community meetings in the two nearby communities – quickly revealed ‘leadership’ to be a local development buzzword. The word ‘leader’ showed up on posters in stores and in the local restaurant, and on clothing: a farmer from a nearby community wore a vest from another Bolivian NGO ‘*Líder 2009*’.

Development sociologist Kevin Healy (2001) also found the creation of local promoters of development work to be common in his case studies in Bolivia. In his thorough investigation of several grassroots development projects, he argues that those projects with the greatest success integrate several actions of popular participation which includes training of local people, as well as selecting certain people to receive more directed training – not just as local ‘promoters’ but also to become professionals.

ODEP staff pointed out that the EICPAL *Promotores* meetings centered on training a few select farmers so that these farmers could, in turn, transmit the skills to their communities through their actions. For example, as the farmers built terraces on their steep hillside fields, or created types of organic fertilizers not commonly used in their communities, they would (theoretically) become leaders in ODEP’s sustainable agriculture practices, encouraging other community members to follow suit as they saw for themselves the benefits of these practices. Specific leaders were named to me and proudly displayed to CANGO representatives when they came to visit. CANGO’s

community visits served to fortify this work as well, in that these most active participants with ODEP would present what they had done so far on their farms and what benefits they had seen, while the community (or several communities) gathered round.

César described the underpinnings of the term ‘leadership’ in this way:

The idea of leadership comes from the logic of the community, because we have seen in the communities there is always a leader and the leader is a person whose abilities are innate. And what we would like to see is the natural leaders obtain the teachings from the organization [ODEP].

Each community has a leader referred to as an ‘*autoridad*,’ or an ‘*alcalde comunal*’ [an ‘authority’ or communal mayor] (which rotates annually), each district (comprised of several communities) also has a ‘*sub alcalde*’, and the municipality as a whole has a mayor. Though changes have occurred over the years regarding lengths of terms and other growing pains that may come with new governing systems, this system has basically functioned in this way since 1994, when the Law of Popular Participation created the municipalities. Prior to that there had been community leaders, but since 1994 their roles and responsibilities had been elaborated in relation to the State. Clearly community members talked of leaders in the community in terms of the local political ‘*autoridades*’, but it was less obvious that they –and particularly women -- would choose such a label for people with particularly honed skills in agriculture, or particular knowledge in one area or another.

There were a few men in both communities who highlighted the importance of having leadership qualities, but in my countless conversations with women and many interviews, the word *lider* never came up unless I asked about it. When I did, I asked about the word’s use in the community; for examples of leadership qualities; whom in the community they considered to have these qualities; and whether and how the term was

used by community members *themselves*, or by ODEP and other local organizations. I also asked ODEP staff about the thought-process behind developing and supporting local ‘leaders’.

Community members focused on *líderes* as political authorities, and when asked about leadership qualities, repeatedly emphasized good communication skills. Beyond this, however, they attributed the “institutions” (e.g., ODEP) with the use of the term. By contrast, the NGO staff clearly saw this term as arising from the ‘logic of the community’ in which they recognized political leaders of the community and therefore this had been a reasonable term to adopt for labeling someone who has been trained in ecological agriculture and encouraging them to spread this knowledge within their community. The technicians were to find ‘natural’ leaders within the community and encourage them to attend the *Promotores* workshops. (In practice however, other demands had to be met in terms of representation of women and different age groups.)

The governmental organization PASA-FAO carrying out ecological agriculture in other parts of Bolivia, also recognized the need to create promoters or leaders at the local level. Mario described leadership in terms of sustainability:

[MARIO]: The way we work with producers is that we live with them [...] we are supposed to adapt to their rhythms to their schedules - their lifestyle – from sunrise to sunset they are working [they’re workday doesn’t end] – it’s different than the city logic. We are creating promoters – leaders - because we are temporary people. Our job is to ‘plant the seed’ in the communities.

[JENNY]: What is involved in being a leader?

[MARIO]: A leader is someone who is doing what they are meant to do. In general a leader is someone implicated in politics, but for us a leader is more than that – a leader is someone who is engaged with the social, with the community and also with politics – so all the social sphere – not only politics. [...] To be a leader – you don’t need to have studied at the best universities. What you need to be a leader is to have *life experience*, like Evo Morales has had. He’s a natural leader, like Nelson Mandela or Lula de Silva.

You don't have to have a doctorate – a leader is born from experiences from one's own philosophy and from one's will. What we look for is the experiences of the communities, the experiences of the technicians – this is something more holistic, more integrated, more horizontal, rather than conventional agriculture that is more vertical – from top-down.

In my talks with don Adelmo, he had been clear that, for him, advancing the community through good leadership is a priority. He is exceptional as a man who describes the *importance* of ODEP's communal workshops to me (attended by very few men, and about which most men say they know nothing, because their wife attends). I had never seen him at one of the workshops, but he explained that this year since he had a job in the *alcaldia* in Llaqta, he could not attend and instead sent his wife. For him the quality of leadership was the key difference between life in the community before and after development NGO intervention.

[JENNY]: You told me there were no leaders here before. Why not?

[ADELMO]: Well there were leaders – but they were bad. They did not cooperate. So we want a good leader, right? We want to cooperate so we can move forward together. We are not just asleep; we want to go forward, not back, that is why we go with ODEP.

[JENNY]: What qualities are necessary to be a good leader?

[ADELMO]: Well, camaraderie of course! But also [someone who] is *active* in the issues. If [he/she] is not active – no! Being active is necessary! [...] For me I want more training about the environment. A good leader needs training.

i. *Promotoras and Warmi Líderes (Women Leaders)*

[JENNY]: I have a question about leadership. I hear a lot about this topic from various organizations, but I don't hear much about it in the communities. Do you know whether the idea of leadership comes out of development, or whether it is more an idea coming from the communities?

[ADRIANO]: No. They [the producers] *know* about leadership! As you have seen the women are in the workshops – they participate more. We want women to participate because they have been so quiet because here *machismo* has been predominant. Now

with institutions that are coming in we have empowered women and what we want is for men and women to be equal. This is the idea behind how to handle leadership.

[A] The previous promoters are leaders in the community - just Ramona has left. For example the projects that we are working on with these leaders are already in place. They already know what to do – to make bocashi, with plants, there is infestation but they know how to avoid it. They teach too, they teach.

This subsection examines examples of women -- Edelmira, Magdalena and Ramona (and her very shy sister Laura), who were considered to be leaders and promoters, or to have that such potential. It demonstrates the contrast in experiences they had with this title, both with ODEP and in relation to their community.

*a) Doña Edelmira*

A woman who was attributed with having natural leadership qualities was Edelmira. She had received more training than most and could lead a workshop on bocashi with Rocío facilitating. Others in Q'ayarumi recognized her leadership qualities as well. When a women's association was reestablished in the community, various women were nominated to be president, including the very active and outspoken doña Berta who had been in the previous association before it fell apart a few years prior. Voting for positions in the association was done by show of hands at the community meeting by all those present (women and men). Edelmira received several more votes than any of the other candidates. Outside the next community meeting I ask her about this. She said the women had all been too busy to get together so she could not tell me what they would do as an association. When I asked why she thought she had received so many more votes than the other nominees, she shrugged, but a man overhearing us nearby, piped up: She's a true leader!"

From her perspective being positioned to be able to promote certain techniques paled in comparison to the projects she felt ODEP should be undertaking. Despite the work she has done with ODEP and her general positive attitude toward their projects, she was critical of the NGO's expansion into other communities in the district.

[JENNY]: "ODEP plans to leave here in about five years, is five more years sufficient?"

[EDELMIIRA]: "No, no. What are we going to improve in five years? We are not going to improve in five years"

[JENNY]: why not? What can't be done in five years?

[EDELMIIRA]: Just a little, just little projects. This year we've improved almost nothing.

[JENNY]: why is that?

[EDELMIIRA]: Because ODEP works in *so* many communities. There's no time. There aren't enough technicians!

Doña Edelmira is an interesting case as she is clearly a good choice as someone to be positioned as a *promotora* in the community because of interest in the work and ability to retain the information and teach others, as well as for the respect she already enjoys in the community. But she is also an interesting example of participation as *representation*, discussed in chapter VI. Edelmira certainly exhibited leadership qualities, but it seemed likely that living in a city for almost three decades had given her an edge (in terms of communication and business skills) over many of the local women. She had moved herself and her children to Q'ayarumi to take over the workload for her aging father-in-law two years ago. Her husband returned from the city during periods of intense farm labour.

In a field report by a visiting CANGO employee the year before my fieldwork, Edelmira (and others) was described erroneously as having lived in the community all her

life and could now finally grow vegetables thanks to the training and the well she had received from ODEP. Reading the unfamiliar accounts of very familiar people it occurred to me that the CANGO staff member might have created composite characters – consciously or unconsciously (she would have taken in a lot of information about a lot of people in a few-hour visit). But having witnessed two years of community visits, I also noticed that certain women were strategically positioned. Ramona, the teenage ‘promotora’ gave a positive impression of a *female youth* who wanted a future in agronomy and cared to continue participating with the NGO. But this picture is in sharp contrast to the account of her and her sister, described later in this subsection. In another example, doña Berta of Q’ayarumi gave a presentation to the CANGO visitors during a visit to another cluster of communities in Urku Valle. As she lived in the same district, the information she presented would have reflected similar experiences in her community (in terms of both environment and specific ODEP facilitators), but Adriano and Teresa’s choice to bring her in suggested that they might not have a woman to showcase in the location of the visit.

It may be that women like Edelmira have been guided by ODEP to describe themselves in certain terms for the visiting Northerners as it suggests success, which will secure funding. Or in the case of Edelmira (and others) it may be that she simply misled the Canadian NGO visitor, as she was not invested in the relationship. Early fieldwork included several moments in which people told me something that I came to realize did not reflect their situation – typically it had to do with the great improvements that had come with ODEP, for example “we had to buy all our vegetables before ODEP came and taught us how to grow,” later to find out that the same person had grown all the same

vegetables all their lives, with the difference being that climate change meant possibilities for certain crops that had not grown there before such as tomatoes. Not vested in a relationship with me, or perhaps telling me what they thought I wanted to hear, it took sustained fieldwork to sift through, build rapport and gain clarity.

*b) Doña Magdalena*

One morning in the month between the second and third EICPAL module, I asked doña Magdalena, the *promotora* from Tomacoyo, about this theme:

“What is the significance of the word ‘Leader’ for you?”

“Um, like the community mayor?” she responded

“Sure. But are there other examples of leaders?”

“Yes”, she said uneasily, “there are sub-mayors [of each district within the municipality], then, the mayor of Pocomachurí, of course.”

“Yes of course” I agreed, “but I hear the institutions talk about leadership too, like ODEP, right? What do they mean when they talk about leaders in the community?”

She thought about this and shrugged. I pressed on, with a recent situation in mind in which Magdalena, herself, had dismissively responded to representatives from other organizations, using this very word. I reminded her of the moment, which had been quite striking for me as I became increasingly aware of the popularity of this word with development organizations in the area. The event, just two days prior, involved two representatives of a joint health project between a municipal governmental organization and an international NGO, looking for “leaders” in the community to promote their project. “We need one man and one woman.” With little effort they had found a man



willing to participate, but the women stayed quiet. “We need a “*warmi lider*” they persisted “women, women, we are looking for a woman leader! What about you?”, they asked doña Luisa, the only woman who had been openly talking and asking questions throughout the community meeting. “I don’t have time of course” [“*no tengo tiempo pues*”] - a common response that by this point I understood could be either taken at face value, or could express a lack of interest (deciphering between the two was the challenge). Moving on to the future *promotora* the man from the international NGO asked “What about you, señora? Can we sign you up to be a leader on this project?” “No”, Magdalena replied firmly, “I’m already a *leader* for ODEP.”

With this in mind I attempted to develop the idea further: what does it mean to be a “leader for ODEP”? But Magdalena sounded uneasy in her response; listing the ways she participated with the NGO. She had taken an opportunity to use the label to excuse herself from being incorporated into another community development project, but she would not readily engage in deconstructing this label with me. I pressed further, asking if the EICPAL *Promotores* workshop was supposed to make her into some kind of leader once she graduates and becomes a ‘promoter’.

“I don’t know,” she said. This single, middle-aged woman was quiet for a moment and then laughed, “Well, I’m the leader of my own house!”

I visited with Magdalena during my return trip to Bolivia a few months following the completion of the EICPAL workshops. She told me she could not remember much of what she had learned.

“What about leadership, do you feel you learned something about being a leader?”

“Yes, yes I do! But the women here don’t want to hear about what I know.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t know, they say they have no time, they have to take care of their animals, pasture their sheep. They aren’t interested.” She sounded discouraged.

*c) Ramona and Laura*

Don Macario was one of the first people to work with ODEP when it arrived in Tomacoyo. He remained one of two men who regularly attended ODEP’s EICPAL workshops in the community, though his wife also attended. He and his wife, doña Faustina were considered to be very active participants. One of their older daughters, Ramona, had attended the first session of EICPAL *promotores*, finishing up when I first arrived in the field. During CANGO’s visit, and in various posters and pamphlets, she became a ‘poster girl’ for ODEP’s representation of participation and success. CANGO staff were impressed with her apparent enthusiasm and desire, she told them, to go on to university to be an agronomist. Two months after the Canadians’ visit, she went on the ‘farmer experience exchange’ in Cochabamba, but once there, like so many youth, had not returned. Her parents had accepted this, but were not pleased.

For the second session, Rocío and Adriano asked Macario and Faustina if they would allow their 15-year-old daughter, Laura (perhaps the only teen in the community who did not attend high school), to attend the workshops. There were teenage girls in the district who were outgoing and displayed characteristics that I would associate with strong leadership qualities, but this girl, who looked forlorn when her parents agreed, and as she nodded timidly in agreement, was not one of these girls. When she did not show

up for the first module, she exempted herself from participating, although she later admitted to me that she had been interested in the free trip to Cochabamba, to join her sister. The facilitators accepted this, but one later told me he had noticed that she was “really lazy,” although I might have used different language I had observed a similar aspect of her character. However, interviews with her sisters raised questions about options for not participating if one is too young (and not in school) to say, “I have no time [to participate], of course.”

Her oldest sister, Elsa, who lived with her boyfriend in Tomacoyo part time and part time in a mining town near Llallagua stressed to me when I asked about her family’s involvement in ODEP that it was *only her father* who worked with the NGO. As their household was one of the most actively involved in the community I was surprised by her correction that I should not consider her mother and sister, the would-be *promotora* in the city, to work with ODEP. As sometimes happened in interviews, especially with youth, my direct interest in this subject seemed to make her nervous and she would give little explanation, but did say that her father liked participating with ODEP and so other family members also participated when he told them to. When her *promotora* sister, Ramona, returned months later, she told me that she had no interest in participating further with the NGO. She reported having enjoyed some aspects; she liked Rocío a lot and had liked the other young women she had met at the *promotores* workshops (three of them had conspired to remain in Cochabamba, she admitted), but it was because her father had told her she had to participate that she had done it. With these statements in mind, Laura’s ‘laziness’ appeared more strategic to avoid participating in something based on her father’s interest, rather than her own.

## ii. *Politicizing Leadership*

Generally speaking, ODEP sat on the technical, rather than the political, end of the spectrum of NGOs. Staffed by agronomists and other engineers working on micro-irrigation projects and on various approaches within ecological agriculture, the institution addressed problems of poverty and marginality in terms of problems of topography – poor soil, geographical isolation, climate change. A key component in the NGO’s methodology was to find ways to further integrate farmers into regional and national markets. In these ways participation was still presented within the status quo of development schemes. ODEP did not raise questions about the validity of these approaches or problematize the underlying neoliberal logic of looking for market solutions to environmental problems. Yet, my interviews with the director, Juan Luis, and César, the program coordinator of ODEP, revealed a more political agenda for supporting ‘leadership’ in the communities. Both men, in positions that involved overseeing and developing projects (such as EICPAL), envisioned ODEP’s role as facilitating certain farmers’ political involvement at the municipal level of government. As the director described it, this effort was integral to making ecological agriculture “truly sustainable” in these places.

[JUAN LUIS]: Some of the leaders that they formed are already showing what they have learned to the communities. Nestor ---- is also now working with ODEP and we are supporting the leaders to engage with the municipality. The objective is that these leaders go back to the communities they spread their knowledge and implement what they have learned in the communities. What we are looking for with the best of them is that they continue improving themselves -- building capacity. That’s why we would like to send them to Cochabamba for example [for an experience exchange], and at some point they could become political leaders in the municipality. This way we can guarantee promote sustainable agriculture with more commitment and more knowledge.

With the question of leadership then, agricultural promoters or leaders within the communities might be men who were too shy to talk in the workshop, while the politically out-spoken participants would serve to carry the message of the importance of organic agriculture into political arenas, building support and acquiring resources for these endeavors.

Like Juan Luis, César's description of the importance of leadership in sustainable agriculture transcends the technical work of the organization to the question of how to increase the political participation of rural people. His response highlights the 1994 'Law of Popular Participation,' which created the municipal system and created a space for increased political participation of farmers:

We promote participation, we empower [people who are "natural"] leaders and we want these leaders working with the community, but also we have the idea that they can work with the municipality – so they start small but they may go farther.

César mentioned Guillermo, the Urku Valle district mayor (one of the municipal '*subalcaldes*') with whom I was well acquainted. Pointing out how he had been so shy and quiet beforehand (something his wife, Claudia, and others confirmed), but after being encouraged to step up to the position of *subalcalde* he had learned to be more confident in public speaking – even giving a presentation about the conditions and challenges faced by his district in front of agronomy students and CANGO, at the event ODEP had organized for CANGO's visit in 2010. Beyond confidence and communication skills, César underlined how this local farmer has been able to secure resources for his community and his district (something I witnessed over the course of my fieldwork, beginning with him securing electricity for his community).

Now he uses resources, he makes decisions. He does business/negotiates with us [ODEP], with the municipality, with [a European development organization], other

institutions – so this is the idea behind leadership – we empower them for *something* – that supports the farmers!

César's statement demonstrates that ODEP is concerned with clarifying *how* (certain) farmers can become 'empowered' – rather than using the term, emptied of any significance. He also addresses the potential for empowerment through increased political participation. Yet the language he uses to describe how Guillermo has been empowered depicts a neoliberal approach to leadership; as the shy farmer is transformed into an actor who takes ownership, conducts business and 'uses resources.'

The benefit of having farmers who work with ODEP in positions of relative power within the region's municipal governments is evident. It works towards ecological agriculture being 'truly sustainable' by raising its profile in municipal government discussions, while ODEP assists in positioning potential allies for collaborations and funding for projects, and indirectly involving themselves in municipal government through farmers who work with the organization. In 2010 inroads with the municipal government had clearly been made by ODEP, thanks at least in part, to its relationship with the *subalcalde*. For example, the small community-specific agrobiodiversity fair that ODEP had organized the previous year was scaled up in 2010, with support of the municipality, to include the other communities in the Urku Valle district. The competitions were more varied, the prizes greater in quantity and quality, and ties between ODEP and the municipal government officials reinforced.

### 3. Discussion: Neoliberal Participation and Leadership

Although César's (and Adriano's) description of *the NGO empowering the farmers* might be interpreted along the lines of Leal's (2010) critique that neoliberal

empowerment has come to be seen as something that those with more power can *give* to those with less (see page 43) – César’s point also speaks to Hickey and Mohan’s

(2004b:66) discussion of broadening ‘participation’ within the analysis of citizenship:

Relocating ‘participation’ within citizenship analysis situates it in a broader range of sociopolitical practices, or expressions of agency, through which people extend their status and rights as members of particular political communities, thereby increasing their control over socioeconomic resources. The question for participatory interventions becomes how they can enhance the ‘competency’ of participants to project their agency beyond specific interventions into broader arenas, thereby progressively altering [...] processes of inclusion and exclusion.

One of the implications of this statement then is that the kind of State in which this ‘relocation’ of participation is to occur becomes an important question. As discussed in chapter IV, Bolivia holds promise as a State that will challenge the neoliberal characteristics of development and power relations, but falls short in practice, upholding neoliberal economic policies. Neoliberal assumptions are contested in relation to food security versus food sovereignty, and related issues of supporting regional and national markets over free-market export approaches. Yet other neoliberal assumptions about rational (indigenous) producers being trained to be responsible citizens remain in tact as rights-based discourse overrides discourses of social change within the national context. (Yet social change remains an acceptable topic vis-à-vis international relations.)

Arguably, César’s view complements what Hickey and Mohan (2004) describe as necessary components of participation, if it is to be transformative. However, unlike César’s view, Hickey and Mohan’s theory extends the discussion to address problems that distinctions (such as ‘public’ and ‘private’) raise for inclusiveness, especially along gender lines. César’s discussion suggests empowerment for *certain individuals*, while glossing over the community as a coherent entity. Moreover, his suggestion that the

concern for developing leadership is derived directly from the ‘logic of the community’ not only masks the individualistic ways in which leadership is being rewarded in practice but leaves intact the problematic gender dynamics of participation. Though women are encouraged to participate in ODEP’s projects (and do in the two communities in focus), they are integrated in different and more limited ways than their male counterparts. And though ODEP’s approach to creating leaders can be understood as enhancing ‘the competency of participants to project their agency into broader arenas’ (e.g. by fostering the movement of certain farmers into local government), *which* individuals are recognized as having this kind of ‘natural’ leadership is constrained by conventional power relations. Indeed it is an approach that reinforces these power relations, certainly along gender lines, but also by economic consideration, so that most *promotores* and other active members with ODEP will be unlikely to ‘project their agency beyond specific interventions.’

Though both ODEP staff and individuals within the community highlighted outspokenness and clear communication skills as important leadership qualities, ODEP technician/facilitators were inconsistent along gender lines. They credited the most outspoken women with leadership qualities in organic farming, etc., while with men this was only sometimes the case. It was pointed out to me how the most outspoken men were sometimes just the most politically minded, or men of status – accustomed to speaking in front of their community or in more public forums. It was also pointed out that the most political men, for all their talk, were not likely to actually go back to their land and implement the technical knowledge they had learned in the workshops such as building terraces on the steep mountainside fields, or making compost for the vegetable



gardens. Indeed, in talking about participation in the workshops, the director of ODEP was quick to note that some of the quieter farmers were the ones who had done the most in their communities following the workshops (e.g. making bocashi, strategically planting trees and brush to protect soil erosion, etc.). In other words, they were some of the best promoters or leaders, while their vocal counterparts had in some cases done nothing (yet).

The NGO also emphasized improving and “restoring” self-confidence in small-scale producers, recognizing that shyness in certain contexts (especially public assemblies), did not mean that someone would not be instrumental in adapting their farming practices in ways that would influence those around them in their communities. Yet in daily practice, technicians sometimes interpreted the most timid people as lazy, supported by the argument that there were other examples of very shy people who also participated a great deal with ODEP.

The example above, of Ramona and Laura, sheds light on questions of power and agency in participation with the NGO and gendered power dynamics *within* households. As Cleaver (2004:272) argues, decision-making processes and the exercise of agency within them “may be contradictory in their social effects; respectful attitudes, conflict avoidance and consensus decision-making can all serve to reinforce inequality despite securing functional outcomes.” The findings in this chapter support the argument that even politicized citizenship is not necessarily sufficient to allow participation to be transformative. The effort to heighten the political nature of participation may be transformative in some ways, such as toward the promotion of organic agriculture, which addresses power dynamics on a local-global level, particularly in relation to conventional agriculture and global agribusiness. Yet heightened political participation may still leave

silent power dynamics in other realms- particularly in terms of gender, which are intrinsic in the lived experience of farm families.

When the agency of individuals is taken into account in this context, participation in ODEP's work on leadership has the potential to be tyrannical for some and transformative for others. While the position taken here leans toward the arguments of Hickey and Mohan (2004), that participation has been understood too narrowly and that there is potential for participation to be empowering, ODEP's efforts cannot be neatly placed on one side or the other of this debate. The NGO's 'participatory methodologies' are vague enough to blur the lines of differing motivations for the participation, so that participation as a means to a more politically radical end are conflated with participation for the sake of integrating training. Arguably this makes sense from the NGO's point of view. Even when training is primarily technical, it can build self-confidence and, when it draws on a bigger picture of long-term sustainability (implicating the NGO in strengthening notions of culture and ethnicity), it can encourage some people to become more political. ODEP positions itself as a technical NGO, subtler in its political approach, a position which is the least problematic for Northern funding partners and changing national governments, as well as locally – given the possibility of changing municipal governments. Moreover, it allows for the daily work of the NGO to be carried out – even by workers, such as Adriano, who do not appear to concern themselves, and are even suspicious of, more political motivations. In this sense all of ODEP's participatory methodologies fall within this same spectrum: moments of politicized discourse intersect with predominantly technical participatory training, revealing a complex orientation toward sustainable agricultural development that is underscored by (gendered and other)

contradictions and tensions, even as it shows the promise of collaboration toward common environmental and social justice goals.

Leadership as a development buzzword conceals potentially vast variations in what being a leader means and whether one has access to such a position. Like buzzwords such as ‘participation,’ or ‘empowerment’ it glosses over tensions, legitimates development work, and impinges upon the degree to which collaborations of knowledge can transcend (gendered and other) power imbalances. ODEP holds potential to foster a politicized development, in which participants take part in shaping a more radical version of citizenship through such participation, but the neoliberal framing of leadership undermines this potential, and suggests that participatory methodologies fall short of anything but teaching tools, modeling producers into an ideal within status quo power dynamics. This argument is unambiguously confirmed when viewed through the lens of gender, as described in this and the previous chapter.

Silence and voice has been a theme running throughout the focus on participation in this thesis. It has been highlighted above that increasing participation and balancing asymmetries between women and men implies, in part, making women *talk*. People who are not afraid to talk are observably participating, and therefore are more likely to gain confidence and translate ODEP’s training into practical knowledge. But the question of *knowledge* complicates this scenario. The notions of confidence and participation also allude to issues such as how farmers and agronomists understand and value (or devalue) their own knowledges (local and scientific), who is considered to have agricultural knowledge and the degree to which participation is recognized as a tool for simply teaching ‘correct’ agricultural knowledge or as a basis for knowledge *exchange* between

equal 'partners.' If local knowledge is truly valued and collaboration paid more than lip service, then women's verbal participation has the potential to be treated as a valuable (and transformative) contribution to knowledge production. But this argument requires a critical analysis of the discourses and practices around knowledge, including an examination of which types of agricultural knowledge are recognized and valued, and which are not. It is to this subject that the next chapter turns.

## Chapter IX:

### Agricultural Knowledge: Exchange Interrupted?

#### 1. Valuing Andean ‘Local’ Knowledge

Interviews and participant observation with ODEP technician/facilitators and government-employed agronomists reveal a paradox in understandings of local knowledge. Everyone working with farmers talked about the value of local knowledge and about supporting farmers’ activities, yet they unanimously emphasized their roles as teachers and the importance of transmitting the knowledge they held as experts. Were the agronomists simply paying lip service to another development ‘buzzword’ notion -- “local knowledge” – while positioning themselves as experts? Or was there another way to explain how someone could describe farmers as *lacking* knowledge and, in the same conversation, say they themselves had learned so much from “local knowledge”?

In addressing these questions, this chapter explores the contradiction between discourse and practice that uncovers how local agricultural knowledge is valued (or devalued), and who is recognized as holding such knowledge. This examination reveals contradictions in how farmers see their own knowledge as well – sometimes lacking, sometimes sufficient, and occasionally superior to agronomists. Here the tensions addressed throughout previous chapters are approached in relation to the interface of different types of knowledge and the emerging friction in these encounters, in which neoliberalism both complicates and facilitates the potential for collaboration. Which knowledges are given precedence over others in practice -- including what counts as ‘expert’ knowledge -- contributes to the barriers to developing collaborative agricultural

knowledge between farmers and ODEP. Inadvertently masking these power imbalances between various actors, in the same way that a word like ‘partnership’ can in development efforts, is the notion of farmer ‘exchange.’

Before delving into the contradictions, barriers, as well as potential for collaborations of knowledge, it is necessary to unpack the notion of ‘local knowledge’ and to examine to what degree it is positioned in contrast to, or incorporated by scientific knowledge. With the turn in neoliberal development toward increasing participation of local beneficiaries, *local knowledge*, as a necessity for both project efficiency and sustainability, has been incorporated into the neoliberal development agenda. However the assumed distinction between local and professional knowledge, often manifests in the emphasis on teaching rural people proper, scientific management (Nightingale 2005). The decentralized neoliberal development approach emphasizes expert knowledge as part of the growing legitimacy and professionalization of NGOs. However, the dichotomy between local and ‘expert’ scientific knowledge may be deceptive when the ‘experts’ are local, but trained in such a Western knowledge tradition (see Escobar 1995; Hobart 1993). They may even be university-trained agronomists from indigenous farming communities, as several are in ODEP. While this is likely to still have the effect of marginalizing local knowledge, the combination of placing value on local knowledge in a way that is defined by the dominant knowledge, with the ideals imbued in words like ‘partnership’, ‘participation’, ‘collaboration,’ ‘exchange,’ or ‘empowerment,’ masks familiar power relations. ODEP’s concern with demonstrating successful and culturally appropriate participatory development to CANGO, conspires with the reality that employees often fall short in practice of the NGO’s stated values and goals in leveling

power imbalances. Hence, in Urku Valle, ideals to respect local knowledge fall short of their potential for real collaborations of knowledge, just as sincere efforts in participatory development fall short of the type of substantial transformation suggested by Hickey and Mohan (2004).

i. *Transcending Neoliberalism in Organic Farming and Agrobiodiversity?*

Who is perceived to hold agricultural knowledge, as well as how that knowledge is acquired, within the current debate around global efforts toward ‘sustainable agriculture,’ was addressed in chapter II (see page 57). Key to this debate are questions of the power dynamics between development projects employing scientific knowledge and those that employ the local knowledge(s) of rural peoples (e.g. Altieri 2009; Altieri and Toledo 2011; Gonzales et al. 2010; Hobart 1993; Walsh 2010). Sustainable development and agrobiodiversity conservation, as practiced by ODEP, can be understood within the context of the growing agroecological movement. While Altieri and Toledo (2011) and others highlight the important implications for food sovereignty and an approach guided by farmers’ local knowledge, some, like Gonzales et al. (2010) are concerned with the tendency to conflate agroecological farming with indigenous (local) knowledge. Although agroecology and “Andean indigenous knowledge” share important approaches in contrast to conventional agriculture, Gonzales et al. (2010:169) highlight the embeddedness of the former in Western science, and thus the “epistemological, ontological and cosmological/spiritual differences” (also see chapter II).

The power relations imbued in encounters between these two (similar) agricultural knowledges imply that the agroecological approach can certainly be *top-*

*down*. Moreover, such global knowledge, tied to international development, travels through networks that facilitate the movement of knowledge, while aiming to manage people's conduct and the objects of development (Ilcan and Phillips 2008). We should be cautious in accepting too readily the claims of agroecological farming that it is based in local knowledge without looking for ways in which it directs farmers toward methods that detract from their actually lived experience and generated knowledge. We are reminded of Tsing's astute observation that collaboration between different knowledges creates new interests and identities that will inevitably not benefit everyone. Gaps are created where truths that are incompatible are suppressed (2005:13). So globally circulating knowledge – in this case in terms of sustainable agriculture and development - creates new gaps even as it grows through the frictions of encounter (ibid.).

This discussion also draws attention to the positioning of agroecological agriculture, as an approach emerging in *response* to the power of commercial agriculture, with its inherent problems, as well as the neoliberalization of nature. When we examine the relationship it has to the dominant scientific agriculture of the global North, light is shed on the paradox addressed in the beginning of this chapter – how agronomists and others could simultaneously credit “local knowledge” for teaching them, while disregarding or dismiss local knowledge in practice. This chapter returns to this issue after exploring attitudes, efforts and contradictions among farmers ODEP workers and state-employed agronomists that both facilitate and hinder efforts to collaborate.



## 2. Persistent Barriers to ‘Local-Professional’ Collaboration

### i. Technicians or Facilitators

One of ODEP’s texts provides an explanation of its approach and the philosophy underpinning its many participatory methodologies as employed in the EICPAL workshops. With regard to encounters of different types of knowledge, this document portrays ODEP’s ideals in participatory planning, research and development with farming communities. It provides a plan for how the agronomist transitions from ‘technician’ – associated with ‘top-down’ development – to that of ‘facilitator’ (reminiscent of Chambers 1997). On the one hand, the imagined technician uses top-down methods, maintaining the attitude that people must learn from “him”; he monopolizes the floor (“*la palabra*”), poses “closed questions, or suggests answers” and generally upholds the power relations that give him status. By contrast, the facilitator is imagined to (among other things) “consider all knowledge valuable and to work along side peasants supporting them with respect.”<sup>32</sup>

Adriano explained ODEP’s role to me in a similar way, positioning farmers as holders of agricultural knowledge, whose knowledge can be strengthened with agronomy techniques:

We are just there to orient them. Nothing else. We are just teaching them the *technologies*, but they know what to do. We are not working with the ‘green revolution,’ or chemical use; what we are doing is implementing organic agriculture. The methodologies we use are because we want them to learn, to see how to improve the production and we strengthen basic knowledge.

By positioning ‘organic’ farming as existing since the beginning of agriculture, Adriano draws attention to how they play a supportive role to farmers, rather than imposing foreign (harmful) tools that have eroded local knowledge (Altieri 2009; Walsh

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<sup>32</sup> Because ODEP is a pseudonym, a reference cannot be provided for the text in question.

2010). Officially Adriano is referred to as a facilitator, but on a practical day-to-day level he is always referred to (and calls himself) a *tecnico*. The distinction provided in the text places the two titles in sharp relief in order to create a framework for understanding the NGO's ideals. They are discussed here, not with the expectation that most people should be expected to fulfill the ideal role all of the time, but rather to shed light on what the NGO is striving to achieve. In contrast to the ideals laid out to transcend barriers along lines of gender and class, lived experiences portray challenges, given that 'facilitators' are still products of their own culture, with all its biases that privilege the educated, lighter skinned, male voice (also see Ishizawa 2010).

ODEP's text constructs the facilitator as someone who is socially and culturally sensitive – someone who respects protocols and the etiquette of rural people, and is able to recognize the changing moods of participants (e.g. bored, fatigued, anxious), and adapt accordingly. Involving everyone, especially women, he or she creates “an atmosphere of trust for everyone to express themselves.” Where the technician is dismissive of alternatives, the facilitator remembers “that everyone has something to say.” Where the technician “extracts quantitative data, without trusting that people can act, analyze and understand,” the facilitator strives for collaboration and feedback. Importantly for the discussion at hand, the facilitator is also imagined as someone who “believes that learning is a mutual process” and sees himself or herself as someone who has much to learn and who puts aside issues of status and positions of prestige.

#### ii. Local Knowledge through the Eyes of 'Experts': Contradictions Uncovered

The language of ODEP – like the language of development more generally (e.g. see Cornwall and Eade 2010) -- officially and in its literature conjures images of

collaboration, participation, and local knowledge. However, for the most part individuals within ODEP talked about their roles in training, or teaching farmers, in other words, passing knowledge on to them. They talked to me about the role of local knowledge only when I asked about how it might fit within their projects, which otherwise emphasized training, and participation for the sake of learning, rather than for the sake of a collaboration of knowledge. The interviews with professionals were characterized by contradictions in which they might credit local knowledge with a great sense of pride for teaching them what they really needed to know, while using examples of seemingly misguided approaches, or highlighting the lack of knowledge to express why training was so important.

I asked ODEP's civil engineer, Rodolfo, who was overseeing the current micro-irrigation project if local knowledge could be applied to the issue of 'harvesting' water (*cosecha de agua*):

[RODOLFO]: Over the years when [the community members] didn't have water, they would go up to the top of the mountain and sacrifice a sheep for *Pachamama* in the hopes that she would give them more water. Irrigation is defined by what they saw from their grandparents, now their parents have continued with these methods of irrigation, but it's not optimal. The irrigation only happened monthly, so in between the plants were very dry. That's not a good situation, that's why we need to change it with training.

During the demonstration and discussion for CANGO of an artificial pond built by ODEP, one of the facilitators had explained that the location was chosen because the community had already had an old one in this location. I recalled the Canadians responding positively to the notion that 'local knowledge' had been utilized to find an appropriate place for the pond. With this in mind, I pressed on, "Can ODEP use *any* of the local knowledge in projects here?"

[RODOLFO]: If they have a tradition of irrigation which means they already know how to handle water, then what we do is *reinforce* local knowledge on a technical level. The peasant knowledge and the technical knowledge are meshed.

Taken together, these statements suggest that the purpose is to improve on local knowledge more than it is to collaborate with it. In a particularly candid statement, Mario, the agronomist from PASA-FAO<sup>33</sup> shared his perspective on his work in ecological agriculture within various municipalities, mostly around Cochabamba but including at least one in Norte de Potosí:

[MARIO]: What I have seen in exchanges of experience is that [the farmers'] abilities are very limited – I had imagined that the people would have more knowledge. We need to keep working on that track – giving them knowledge. Knowledge is the biggest wealth, like in Cuba – for them the most valuable thing is knowledge – that's why when a Cuban leaves his country he is going to succeed. The farmers don't have scientific knowledge, but that's our role to give them that. We don't need laboratories in the traditional sense, the field can be a laboratory, so I'm going to teach on the land.

[He elaborates with an example of measuring the Ph level of the soil.] This is the kind of knowledge that we can give them and we can create basic conventional techniques. [...] We look for technology and what we do is to adapt it to our reality -- to the idiosyncrasies of each location. What we don't want is for the producers to just replicate things, we want them to know what they are doing and why. They could also then improve on that technology.

This last point identifies a theoretical possibility for local knowledge to improve on expert knowledge – in this way there is the potential for collaborative knowledge -- but the rest of this statement shows a vertical flow of information from the organization to the farmers. After listening to this explanation of the lack of knowledge and importance of PASA *giving* them knowledge, I asked, “is there *local knowledge* that can be utilized in these project?” Interestingly, he enthusiastically changed tone completely

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<sup>33</sup> The Bolivian “Support Program for Food Security,” supported by the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization.

from the expert with something to teach farmers, to someone who owes his expertise to the farmers:

[MARIO]: Yes! Most of the knowledge that I have I obtained from the producers' ancestral knowledge! At university I learned the conventional and scientific agriculture, but the conventional didn't help us much with organic agriculture. I owe my training to the peasants and producers – they are my teachers! The ancestral knowledge is very valuable. For example, the biodynamic approach<sup>34</sup> is another topic that is trendy nowadays and it helps to know how to solve problems and how to live well in the communities, but for example we have lost the agricultural cycle dependant on the moon cycle. That is the kind of knowledge we would like to rescue, through natural markers like animals, plants – for example if it's going to rain – if the rain is delayed or if it's raining – many signs that can be read from nature.

We are recovering these kinds of things – for example energy – we work with energy – we do that with the “*coa*” [a purification ritual using incense and smoke]. Before they start the sowing period they ‘*coa*’ to bring equilibrium between the soil of *la Pachamama* and mankind. Before they start they have this ritual to bring this equilibrium to help us to work well. This knowledge we have been losing – for example some people don't know why they do these activities. [...] Some of the rituals have also been proved scientifically. It is known that energy has a big influence on our lives. We need to return to working with this.

In the course of a matter of minutes within the same interview, I had received vastly contrasting images of people who lack knowledge with that of people with a profound knowledge. I pressed the issue throughout the interview and later more was revealed. Key to Mario's concern and what he saw as his role (similar to way in which Rocío had described hers) was to be a person who can spread knowledge about organic agriculture in the face of a strong force of propaganda from those with power over the media, heavily supported and influenced by the global food companies and American corporations.

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<sup>34</sup> Biodynamic agriculture is a method of organic farming that emphasizes the holistic development and interrelationships between soil, plants and animals as a self-sustaining system. It uses an astrological planting calendar (e.g. see Kirchmann H, et al. 2008. “Fundamentals of Organic Agriculture: Past and Present.” *In*: Kirchmann H and Bergström L (Eds.). *Organic Crop Production: Ambitions and Limitations*. Dordrecht: Springer pp. 13-38.)

[JENNY]: So today what would you say are the main obstacles for small farmers?

[MARIO]: First of all the lack of training, the lack of knowledge and I wouldn't say the lack of culture because they have more culture than us, but they need knowledge. The problem is that they get knowledge from the media, which is also a way to be *misinformed*. Because those who control the media [...] provide information that is convenient for them. For example, they simply talk about transgenic seeds because they own the companies that sell these products. They are not going say this is bad; they just keep quiet. They have created dependency. That's what has happened in Chile, Paraguay and Argentina, and this has happened in other parts of the world [...] They have created a dependence. They have displaced many people, they have created disaster. It's a suicidal method. At the beginning it is very profitable, there are high yields, but then the income slows down and they become indebted to the banks and the big companies. As you know, this is what conventional agriculture does. We know this, but the producer doesn't know this, so we are here to show them what others have experienced in order to learn from those mistakes.

Mario sees his role as presenting a crucial counter discourse and practice to the dominance of the global agro-industry, yet his assessment of the farmers' ignorance of this stands in contrast to his assessment that the FAO has changed its approach because Bolivians themselves have pushed for these changes (see chapter IV). Implicit in this idea is that it is not the farmers but other (more educated, professional) Bolivians who are calling for food sovereignty and organic production. Agronomists like Rocío and Adriano also describe their work as part of a larger effort to resist powerful companies like Monsanto, but ODEP's approach has been to legitimize its role as representing farmers, highlighting concerns about climate change, loss of biodiversity, a desire for leadership, etc. ODEP argues that the farmers, themselves, express these concerns. However, just as there are contradictions in how ODEP technician/facilitators interpret farmers' reasons to participate with the NGO, so to do they hold different opinions on farmers' environmental knowledge.

One day, as I followed Teodoro along the paths to one of the more remote households in Tomacoyo, he shared an observation he claimed to have noted repeatedly

since childhood: rural people in the region place little value on trees, as vital protection for crop fields from the wind. As he pointed to the rows of towering eucalyptus trees that lined the road and the community along one of the many dry riverbeds, I could not help but notice that these trees seemed to have been placed to serve the purpose he claimed locals did not appreciate. In support of his claim, I recorded several observations through the course of my fieldwork in which bushes (used for firewood) and some trees were cleared from steep mountainsides (sometimes above main roads), increasing the risk of falling rock and avalanches – a regularly occurring problem during the rainy season especially. Locals also highlighted a change in the amount of wood needed for cooking with the introduction of propane tanks to fuel one or two burner portable stoves. So it is possible that Teodoro’s opinion of local knowledge about the environmental benefits of trees was coloured by experiences from another time when people were more dependent on firewood or perhaps it was more peculiar to the district in which he was raised. However, eucalyptus is highly valued as firewood, especially when there are large-scale cooking activities. During the preparation for a wedding, which would include producing large quantities of *chicha* and enough food for all the guests, it was common for the household to purchase a eucalyptus tree that would be delivered by flatbed truck. Had the local trees not been recognized as serving other (protective) purposes, it seems probable they would have been used.

Rocío was dismissive of Teodoro’s perspective; “Of course farmers value trees. They want forestation!” My interviews and participant observation suggest that forestation was low on the list of priorities of many (though not all) of the farm families in my study. However, at the EICPAL *Promotores* workshops I encountered farmers

from other districts who identified forestation as one of their key priorities for contending with climate change and conserving topsoil on the steep mountain fields.

César, the program coordinator at ODEP, explained to me the NGO's plans for 700 hundred trees to be brought during the rainy season to the district. He reflected on the participatory planning of the forestation project and farmers' attitudes towards the issue. "The people in the countryside always want eucalyptus, eucalyptus, eucalyptus! But that tree wants so much water! It's difficult to change the farmers' perceptions about what trees are best. We are going to supply pine trees and others, but not eucalyptus."

Don Hector, one of the farmers who received several small peach trees from ODEP three years earlier, told me he was hopeful about the new trees intended for the community in the coming rainy season. "We told ODEP that we want eucalyptus trees."

"What about other types of trees, are they also of interest?" I asked.

"Yes others are good too. Others, and eucalyptus!" Hector replied firmly.

The fast growing Eucalyptus is not native to Latin America, but the tree's immediate usefulness may overshadow the associated problems of heightened levels of soil acidity that leads to top-soil erosion. For ODEP the introduction of this tree is like the introduction of chemical fertilizers – shortsighted, external unsustainable 'solutions' to local problems. Changing farmers' minds on this issue for the purposes of agroforestry, is a similar to the concern expressed by Mario (chapter IV) to provide farmers with counter-knowledge in the face of propaganda for conventional agriculture.

Mosse (2001) reflects on a similar divergence between NGO project facilitators and community members in participatory planning. While many trees and their uses were identified, the actual variety of trees participants were interested in having was



much more limited, with eucalyptus as the primary interest. This example within participatory approaches to planning displays the uneven nature of this participation, The trees preferred by development workers and by community members do not match; yet the NGO is the provider of new saplings and would assist with the planting of these trees. Hence the emphasis must shift from collaborations of knowledge about the uses of the trees to that of teaching locals why they should place greater value on the trees the NGO prefers.

Rodolfo had several years of experience working in farming communities in Norte de Potosí. As he reflected on local knowledge, he highlighted how this knowledge could not be severed from superstitions and beliefs that dreams are prophetic. As I examined these themes with people in the communities, I wondered how often NGO workers, with their university training, had outright dismissed these ideas. Many of the agronomists at ODEP grew up on farms themselves. Their earliest knowledge of agriculture was couched in ‘local’ knowledge, yet the Western-style training they received in university overwhelmed it.

In pursuing this line of questioning, I found a community in transition in their beliefs about dreams and superstitions. Some men and women in their forties and fifties told me they themselves did not believe that certain things brought good or bad luck, though a few recounted their own prophetic dreams. Many felt their own dreams revealed little, if anything, about the future, though they wholeheartedly believed that there were particular members of the community who could trust their dreams to provide insight into the near future. Generally the *curanderos* – natural healers – were assumed to have these skills. My teenaged informants accepted the idea that dreams had been

meaningful for their grandparents, though few could tell me whether they believed it or not. Their responses were not dismissive; they were open-minded to the idea, but without what they saw as evidence in their own lives. I asked Claudia about this theme. She was certain her dreams were not prophetic, though she thought certain other people definitely had this ability. As for superstitions, her answer reflected a need for first-hand experiential knowledge:

[JENNY]: Do *you* believe that seeing a black snake is bad luck?"

[CLAUDIA]: I don't know, I've never seen one.

Rodolfo raises an important and often muted aspect of what local knowledge entails. Knowledge about how to seek guidance from dreams and notions of luck refuses to fit neatly into scientific understandings. It may be valued as part of "culture," but it may be dismissed in encounters between different types of agricultural knowledge, contributing to defining knowledge in narrower terms.

### iii. *Agronomists as Teachers, Farmers as Students Revisited*

While the farmers' ancestors were imagined to hold important '*saberes locales*' – local knowledge – the discourse of development workers and farmers alike centred on the idea that farmers *now* lacked knowledge. In the EICPAL *Promotores* workshops, I heard a few of the more confident and outspoken men express their frustration with being viewed as coming from a place that was notorious for *lack* – lacking sufficient food, lacking knowledge, lacking 'civilization' – as Norte de Potosí is imagined by many Bolivians as a very cold and barbaric place (Goodale 2010) intensified by the infamy of its ritualistic fighting.

For ODEP, however, training was not only about knowledge transfer. The NGO's director was clear with me that it also involved building on the experiences as well as values that farmers already held. Juan Luis explained the need for training as something that addressed more than knowledge:

[...] The training process means developing abilities. When we say developed abilities it has four components. The first is to change attitudes; the second is to generate knowledge; the third is capacity building; and the fourth: working with values and principles. [...] Training for each of these is very important - not just the development of knowledge, but also development of a little more value, changed attitudes and better abilities.

One of the approaches taken by ODEP is to address the lack of confidence in rural people. They focus on self-esteem and confidence building in the EICPAL workshops, so that those who have been identified as natural leaders can ruminate on these ideas. Interestingly, in the time I was there this discussion of confidence and self-esteem was not brought to the communal EICPAL workshops in Urku Valle. This may be that the three-day workshop allowed for more discussion on theoretical issues than the community workshops, but it also seems that some of those who are considered 'natural' leaders are also not the ones who most need to have their confidence built up.

Although participatory development is treated as the proper approach to take compared to previous top-down versions, the technicians at ODEP are trained to understand the value of participatory methodologies primarily as teaching tools. Not surprisingly some people have taken to employing these methods with more ease than others. Insofar as these methods represented teaching tools, the EICPAL *Promotores* workshops that I attended in the city were consistently more successful in their use of these methods than their community counterparts. However, when it came to successfully facilitating collaborations of knowledge, the question of success is less clear.

ODEP's text for facilitators conducting EICPAL meetings provides multiple examples of games, anecdotes and experiments and reinforces the idea that being shown how to do something and participating in that process is far more effective than simply seeing or hearing about something. However, new agronomists with ODEP who were recent graduates of university had been trained to be 'expert' technicians, rather than facilitators of participatory projects. Moreover, the learning curve could be steep in terms of absorbing and applying ODEP's many methodologies for participatory development. Teodoro, who was in Pocomachurí when I arrived, but was relocated to another district early in my fieldwork, would talk to me in terms of the knowledge he and ODEP had to transmit. He never responded to my questions in terms of there being an exchange between the farmer and the agronomist, though he did recognize the value of the practical knowledge he had gained by working in the fields, as opposed to the theoretical knowledge he had gained in university. He tended to describe himself in heroic terms as he talked about teaching farmers. He was, however, also the most competitive with other men and flirtatious with women (young farm women, town women and foreign researchers alike), and was described by some as 'macho' in character. There was a competitiveness when he talked to me about his approach that implied he was better than some of his colleagues. "It's because *I* am fluent in Quechua that I can really teach the classes," knowing that the other male agronomist in the district was still working on improving his language skills. I suspect some of his style was for my benefit -- saying the right thing to the potential 'CANGO informer,' as though positioning himself as 'expert' would give him more legitimacy in my eyes, and in what I might report to CANGO.

The text provided to staff by ODEP highlights that the criteria used to mark success is based on how successfully the student learns, rather than how much the teacher teaches. There was no doubt in my mind that this was part of their goal, but my observations showed that women especially had a hard time retaining information as it was framed, and were quick to state that they as individuals were lacking the ability to remember what they learned from ODEP. Only certain people were credited with innate 'leadership' qualities (see chapter VIII), so it was not necessarily expected that most would retain the information.

I asked the facilitators what they found easiest and most difficult to teach to the farmers. Rocío who really enjoyed promoting organic agriculture, described the interest and ease with which most farmers understood why chemicals were a problem (though she recognized with her new job at PIAB that certain potato growing communities in the municipality, heavily reliant on chemical fertilizers, would be hard to convince to move away from such an approach). On the other hand, teaching farmers basic accounting for the entrepreneurial component of the workshops was very difficult, and she felt she had rarely succeeded in effectively teaching these skills. Teodoro responded to this question by stressing that everything was hard to teach farmers. An idea or a technique had to be taught over and over and perhaps on the third time around, the farmers would begin to understand. He felt his ability to teach was aided by holding workshops in which men, women and youth attended so that rather than one member of the household being responsible to retain the new knowledge and share it with her or his family, at least two, and ideally more, household members were participating.

iv. Local Knowledge and the notion of Lacking Knowledge

“We didn’t know anything before the institution[s] came.” This very common response to a range of questions regarding local knowledge, and knowledge transfer across generations, displays a narrow conception of what knowledge is (at least when talking to a formally educated outsider such as myself). This narrow conception emerges from uneven power relations in that what *counts* as knowledge is that which is acquired through formal channels such as *training* by professionals and experts. Mothers and fathers, typically with only a few years of primary school behind them, compared themselves to their children, who, thanks to easy access to high school, now “know things” in contrast to the perceived lack of knowledge of their parents. This knowledge through formal education opens doors for their children to go to university and become ‘professionals’ – the dream for their child’s future of almost every parent asked. Young people also sometimes responded along similar lines: when I asked thirteen-year-old Alcira, what she had learned from her mother, Saturnina, she replied, “My mom? She doesn’t *know* anything!”

As demonstrated in chapter VI, the majority of women farmers interviewed placed knowledge acquisition (especially about how to better care for the families) above any other reason for participating with ODEP, followed by a desire to have help and a desire to gain confidence. By contrast, most men explained the primary role of ODEP, or their desire to participate in it, as having to do with *advancing* the community through increased training, on the one hand, and micro-irrigation projects on the other. Among the women who expressed their personal desire to *learn* in explaining their interest in ODEP, many had dreamed of continuing their formal education. Hence, the NGO

offered an opportunity for more formal training and increasing their knowledge. Having expected to study participatory research in these two communities, I had come to understand that with the absence of participatory research was also the absence of the collaborations of knowledge between the farmers and the NGO that I had hoped to investigate. Rather, I was observing another rural development approach to *teaching* farmers. However, the women brought to my attention that ODEP represented an opportunity to meet some of their educational aspirations (albeit in a restricted way) that had been thwarted by familial responsibilities.

Often the notion of *knowing nothing* in my interviews arose with the opportunity to contrast life before the NGOs entered the communities, or before improved access to high school and university. By marked contrast, in the same interviews people could also very confidently tell me that they had taught their children everything they would ever need to know about farming, so that after the likely move to the city, they would be able to return without difficulty to rural life. So it seemed that they were confident that they knew what they were doing on the land and confident in what they could pass on to their children, yet in a conversation about knowledge in which the NGO was implicated in the discussion (either directly, or indirectly) local knowledge was denigrated.

A marked contradiction with the idea of knowing nothing – and with the idea of needing training – was the idea that everyone in the community had a similar level of farming knowledge and already knew what they needed to know to be successful farmers. On occasion someone pointed out that some people didn't do as much as others, but this was because they were “lazy” rather than lacking knowledge. The same individuals who

expressed a desire to get training from the NGO could rarely think of times in which they had needed to ask anyone a question about their agricultural work.

One notable exception was one of my key informants, Claudia, who told me about going to work as a domestic in the large urban centre of Santa Cruz at age eleven. She had returned with what she considered to be insufficient farming knowledge and credited her husband with teaching her what she needed to know to work on the land. She didn't hesitate when I asked why she wanted to work with the NGO – “I want to know how to speak” – expressing both a desire to be more confident speaking in front of people because she would feel more knowledgeable, as well as wanting to feel more confident speaking Spanish. Like almost all the other women, she told me she had trouble retaining information, and yet she regularly responded to my questions with answers that were hybrids of her personal experience and information she had obtained through conversations with Rocío. For example, when I asked her about which foods, if any, were bad for one's health, she gave a response no one else had: “It depends on *how* the food is grown that makes it healthy or not – food grown with chemicals are unhealthy.”

Interestingly, along side her unique admission that she did not in fact have sufficient farming knowledge when she returned to the countryside, was that her mother, in a separate interview, absolutely insisted that she had provided all her children with the necessary knowledge to farm, and though eleven was admittedly young to have acquired all that, Claudia was no exception as the oldest of her three children, and the only one so far to return from urban living. This particular woman focused her attention on telling me what people lacked in the communities, emphasizing the tribulations of her household and of one of her granddaughters for whom she was the guardian while the girl's mother



worked in the city. She emphasized the extreme poverty that she attributed to poor soils and other difficult growing conditions, but knowledge and training were not things she described as lacking, or needing.

Since a great deal of local knowledge is acquired through action rather than narration, on a daily basis, without having to go to a special institution (like a school or even a workshop), it is possible that this type of knowledge transfer was not seen on the same level as specialized knowledge taught by a professional. Even when it came to what parents considered to be important knowledge to pass down to children, how this knowledge was passed down was not always registered. Claudia was clear, on more than one occasion, that it was her husband who passed knowledge on to their son. She was responsible, she told me, for teaching their daughter. Yet it was easy to observe that the young boy was learning a great deal about daily life and local work from his mother through the number of hours he spent with her compared to his father. There were also jobs that were more appropriate for children, in which boys clearly learned from their mothers, for example planting seeds, rather than plowing the field with the oxen which required a level of physical strength and experience with the strong and sometimes unruly animals.

#### v. *The Value of Local Knowledge for ODEP Facilitators*

ODEP relates the idea of sustainable agriculture to the Andean worldview and understanding of *Pachamama* (Mother Earth). In the first EICPAL *Promotores* workshop, Rocío gave a presentation in which she described sustainable agriculture as a “mutually beneficial relationship between people, plants and animals, and the Earth.” ODEP’s technician/facilitators’ practices with organic farming were sometimes built on a

foundation of “ancient” Andean farming techniques. For example ODEP supported farmers growing broad beans where potatoes had been planted to replenish the soil with nitrogen. This was a common practice, but the harsh climate (hail being a key problem) and soil erosion made this crop particularly insecure. Thus ODEP provided beans for planting to its participating families. *Tarwi* (a bean, very rich in protein) was also enjoying a ‘comeback’ in popularity as the Bolivian agricultural development industry recognized its nutritional and environmental value. The agronomists also drew on their scientific knowledge and what they understood to be ancient Andean knowledge – such as in their adaptation of building terraced fields on steep hillside. This was an example of what Rocío had repeatedly explained to the farmers when she mentioned *saberes locales* – ancient techniques of the farmers’ *ancestors* and wisdom that needed to be restored. But terrace building as an example of ancient farming knowledge in Tomacoyo and Q’ayarumi was less straightforward to the farmers in my study. Despite the visible markers of grown-over ancient terracing further up the mountain behind the communities of Tomacoyo and Q’ayarumi, men and woman alike clarified to me that those had been the ancestors of *different* people (see chapter VIII; also Zoomers 2006).

When the concept of *saberes locales* was mentioned by ODEP to farmers the explanation involved vague references to the farming knowledge of local peoples’ ancestors, or grandparents. This can be read as a counter-discourse to the attitude of many local farmers that local people *knew nothing* prior to increased formal education and the intervention of development organizations. ODEP’s framing could be read as a positive reinforcement of local wisdom and culture. However, this framing was too vague and temporally distant to be useful in practice. For example, Rocío’s efforts to

employ this framework twice during EICPAL *comunal* workshops were not as successful as she might have hoped. Another possibility to consider is that because, as two communities that were designated as ‘*campesina*’ rather than as ‘indigenous,’ the notion of *saberes locales* may hold less resonance, at least for the intervening agronomists. I return to this point in the concluding chapter.

vi. *The Interface of Theoretical and Practical Agricultural Knowledge*

While virtually every professional I talked to emphasized their role in the training process (not surprisingly, as this was key to their jobs), many referred to the practical knowledge they had acquired through working in the communities. This was especially the case for those who had been working for many years – compared to those who had graduated more recently from university. For some, this was simply a product of working in the field rather than studying ‘theory’ in university, but for others, this more practical knowledge was explained as emerging from encounters with those already familiar with the land. Rocío, for example, drew attention to the regular work she did in the fields with farmers. She highlighted how conversations about growing techniques and timing happened organically in quotidian aspects of her job.

There were other circumstances in which people expressed the importance of the practical knowledge gained in the field. When I asked farmers what, if anything, they thought ODEP’s agronomists might have learned from the community, or from working with them, some immediately thought of the practical nature of learning in the field rather than the classroom. I asked everyone if there was a difference – and, if so, what they thought the difference was – between learning about agriculture in university, compared

with growing up in the countryside (keeping in mind that many of the agronomists also grew up in rural locales and learned on the land before pursuing formal education). Several men suggested the same answers that the agronomists tended to give me: the countryside presented opportunities for practical, rather than theoretical, learning. The common response from women was that there was a difference, but few were willing to suggest what they thought that difference might be. Others simply told me that it was the same – different, but equal. Evita, the grown daughter of a couple who participated with ODEP in the hopes of improving their access to water, began her response in precisely this way, but as she elaborated, her tone changed and her statement became more of a commentary of the power dynamics in which some forms of knowledge are given value over others:

[...] People that live in the country have *experience* – they know how to prepare the field, when to prepare – they know the timing! Agronomists also know, but it's more theoretical, they don't *really* know, right? The people from the country know when it's going to rain, they know how to interpret the wind and the rain. The agronomist could say that the moon has risen so it's going to rain. But in the end it won't rain. People from the country say it's going to rain because they have that communication with the stars. The agronomists they know because they have read many things in books, but people from the country know because they have *lived* it. They don't have a *diploma* – that's the difference with agronomists.

Both of them learn from each other. I believe people from the country know more than the agronomists, but at the same time the agronomists can teach us some things, like how to improve the system. [...] For example they told us to grow fruit and it's good because it's good for our own consumption, for our health. But the people from the country have more experience because they have more experience looking at the sky – they know about the *stars*, they know about the *wind*. People from here know, for example, the moon is over there, which means we are going to have frost.

The point Evita makes, that university-trained professionals lack important farming knowledge because they miss or misunderstand the signs that nature provides, is important. Her statement signals the idea that knowledge results in lived experience; it is

not something that can be simply shown off with a diploma.<sup>35</sup> As a rural schoolteacher, she also talked about the importance of formal education; while I was there she became increasingly interested in participating in ODEP's EICPAL *Promotores* workshops (at the end of which she would receive a diploma). But as the following quotes indicate, she resisted the power dynamics ingrained in the notion of agronomists teaching farmers how to farm.

[JENNY]: Before ODEP came here, or perhaps separate of ODEP, are there people in the community who have more knowledge than others?

[EVITA]: No. They already have the knowledge but sometimes people don't know everything so they sometimes go to a leader, or a 'promoter' and they ask for advice.

Evita is careful to maintain her position that everyone is knowledgeable, while allowing for the potential that someone may ask for advice from one of the leaders or promoters.

At a later date I asked her to elaborate on her motivation to participate in the EICPAL *Promotores* workshops:

[EVITA]: I want to anticipate some of the signs for when a plant is going to get sick, because there are various illnesses that can affect the plants. I also want to graft and know how to take care of the plants and when the best time is to plant vegetables, because my father is getting older. I want to know what I need to do to plant – when, which month. Because I have seen my father doing that each time, but I have never done that before.

[JENNY]: Is it possible for you to learn from your father?

[EVITA]: Oh yes, my father teaches me of course.

[JENNY]: So what is the difference between the knowledge your father has and what you can learn from ODEP's courses?

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<sup>35</sup> I also heard from various people not directly involved in agriculture, such as people in town, that professionals from 'institutions' were not necessarily taken seriously or trusted by farmers, community members themselves never told me this. I can only speculate as to whether it was because community members did not in fact feel this way, or whether/when I, as an outsider, associated with the NGO (through my research of their projects) was not someone to whom they would admit this.

[EVITA]: Some is the same of course, but if you are an agronomist you can use that to work here too. It is very good together with the knowledge that we have here. It is better together! [She clasps her hands together for emphasis]. That's why some people in the community become agronomists – like don Romeo – and now his wife is taking courses through the university.

[JENNY]: Can you give me an example of how that knowledge is useful when combined?

[EVITA]: Oh yes, well with the peaches and little fruit trees that are newer here, of course. [...] Also, the *climate is changing and we must adapt*. Farmers know how to do that, but agronomists know about these changes too and they know about how to protect the land.

Evita indicates here the role that ODEP and similar organizations may play as a useful resource for farmers, by virtue of their knowledge about environmental problems. For example, Adelmo, a Q'ayarumi farmer, explained the importance of working with ODEP in terms of both personal and community gains. He was among the men who emphasized ODEP's role in advancing the community, but he was also proud of how much he knew about some of the environmental concerns raised by the NGO and another organization he had worked with in Sucre when he lived there for a few years. From my fieldnotes of his interview:

As usual chickens cluck loudly through the interview as we sit in on faded and worn *aguayos* on the large cold rocks in the dusty yard outside his home. His two youngest of six children (those who did not get on the school bus to go to the high school in [town]) are sent here and there to do tasks before walking down across the fields to the school that can be seen in the distance. His motivations for working with the NGO differ from Consuela's [his wife]. She has told me that her primary concern is to have more knowledge about nutrition for the sake of taking care of their large family. [...]

He points to the garbage at the edge of his field – an empty plastic bag from a 'yogumon' [a cheap sugary yogurt drink, popular with children and promoted for its nutritional value]. "Look at that – we throw garbage everywhere – we contaminate the land! Now we know that plastic pollutes – we know, but we haven't changed our practices! [...] You know, the ozone layer is going away... there is too much pollution!" As he talks to me about these issues and his concerns about climate change with a clarity

and confidence in his answers that I rarely hear among participants with ODEP, he says, “I know a lot about pollution, don’t I?”

(Fieldnotes: September 6, 2010)

For Adelmo, environmental protection involved putting into practice something community members already knew (though he was clear this was ‘new’ knowledge – not something ‘*los abuelos*’ [the grandparents] had known). Romeo, a Q’ayarumi evangelical farmer who was trained as an agronomist, described his dreams for the future of his community in similar terms, but with emphasis on discourse between indigenous community members:

My vision for my community – and Bolivia really – is that *los originarios* [the natives] will reach a point where *we* talk about conservation and cleaning up pollution and garbage. At that point it will not just be the institutions teaching us – we will *know*, and we will live better!

These farmers recognized the application of the environmental knowledge offered by ODEP and similar organizations for the future well being of their families and communities. They also address the potential to take relevant knowledge and integrate it into their local knowledge.

vii. *The Future of Local Knowledge and Hybrid Knowledge Potentials*

A second theme I wish to draw out from Evita’s statement above is a notion of hybrid knowledge that keeps local knowledge alive. Evita’s desire to learn about things her father is understood to already know indicates that *local* knowledge can be maintained and developed through *inclusion* of outside influences, rather than abandoned to outside ideas. I explore this theme in this subsection.

When I asked Rodolfo about the potential difference between agronomist knowledge and farmer knowledge, he responded by taking the discussion in a different direction. He highlighted the danger of losing local knowledge, and the extent to which the global market is implicated:

People from the countryside have the wisdom of their parents and grandparents transferred down to them. But the children and the youth who go away to the cities are losing the local knowledge. [...] It's an issue of globalization and the market – in terms of clothing – it's easier to buy clothes now in Llalagua than to make clothing or hats. Or in terms of agriculture, it may be more expensive to *grow* vegetables than to buy them because of the big companies. You need to gain more money.

ODEP involved youth in various aspects of its work; particularly the teenagers and daughters of the more active participants, by encouraging some of them to attend the *Promotores* workshops. Sometimes teenaged girls attended the EICPAL *Comunal* workshops in lieu of their parents, and often in projects that involved physical work such as the making of *bocashi* (discussed below). Young men, or older boys would be enlisted to help even if they did not work directly with ODEP. Although they were included in these ways, ODEP was branching out to be more involved with high school students. ODEP's director, Juan Luis, highlighted one of the benefits of working with youth as being that they were generally more interested in experimentation than their parents, and thus willing to try new things.

For various reasons, few youth I talked to wanted to work with the NGO now, or in the future, first and foremost because they had no intention of staying in the countryside. However, I did notice times where Juan Luis's point was supported. In one of several conversations with Saturnina (who approved of ODEP's work, but was not interested in participating as she didn't want "to go to school" – see chapter VI), she



laughed about her thirteen-year-old daughter, Alcira's, enthusiastic effort to grow sunflowers from seeds she had acquired from a neighbouring community.

“She thinks she's going to grow sunflowers – she wants to roast the seeds,” Saturnina informed me, laughing and shaking her head.

“That's a good idea isn't it?” I replied.

“We'll see,” she shrugs, smiling, but still shaking her head, seemingly dismissive.

Some of the young people in the communities were interested in specific techniques put forth in organic agriculture production. One fifteen year old boy from a remote community, but living in town in order to attend high school, was excited to bring his new knowledge of compost-making that he had learned at school, back to his parents' vegetable garden.

Mario, the PASA-FAO agronomist, also supported Juan Luis's comment about the younger generation:

[JENNY]: I'm interested to know more about the role of the next generation in sustainable agriculture.

[MARIO]: I'm going to tell you about an interesting experience. When we have worked with adults [...] we have failed, because these people have listened, but then the knowledge didn't go anywhere. But the experience that we have had working with young people and children in school has been different. We have seen how sustainable agriculture has started to succeed. And we have also done local fairs, and through these fairs we have spread these concepts.

In this strategy the children teach their parents, so in this approach we work with the kids upward. Same thing with women – women have the ability to work with more quality they are more meticulous, whereas men are rougher, more general. We have found that the best strategy is to work with young people and women.

[JENNY]: [...] What about the issue of youth moving to the cities? [...] Is this a problem in terms of agriculture?

[MARIO]: Yes, fewer young people stay in the countryside – it's called displacement of youth. Because if they are studying they don't have many options if they stay in the

country; they have more options [for work] if they go to the cities [...]. In the countryside and town, the only people who stay are women, children and seniors.

Therefore we want to work with people who stay in their places, then even though the youth leave the countryside they go with the knowledge. There's also the fact that some of them will come back to their towns at some point for the sake of nostalgia. [...] This is the mentality of Bolivians; [...] what we want to do is to die in the place where we were born.

If they succeed [in the city] then they will help their families [through remittances], or if they return later then they help their communities then. But it's not easy because ecological agriculture is "*un trabajo de hormiga*" [literally 'ant work,' meticulous and time consuming].

[JENNY]: Interesting. So if the youth have been taught this before they leave they may return with this knowledge?

[MARIO]: I was a high school teacher. [...] Because I worked as an [agricultural] engineer, they asked me to help them with an agricultural production module, and I took advantage of the practical side and the theoretical side that I knew because of my experience with ecological agriculture. [As a result] many of the students were motivated to become agronomists because it was interesting. Therefore there are many who studied agronomy and they have returned to their communities. [...] We know that agriculture is the profession of the future!

These examples highlight the potential for youth, to integrate their local agricultural knowledge with professional ecological agriculture. The study of agronomy opens up possibilities for rural youth to return to the countryside with an education and a profession that will benefit them (a point made by Benancio and others in discussing the importance of education for all – even those who “just farm”). The notion of children teaching their parents has interesting implications for local knowledge and power relations. What potential is there for dialogue around agricultural knowledge between parents and children? Could it produce a hybridized local knowledge that was less laden with power imbalances than exists between the status ‘professionals’ enjoy and farmers? The answer to this remains open, but further complicating these questions and the discussion thus far is that fact that among the ecological agricultural interventions, knowledge is contested.

viii. Contested Expert Knowledge

The holders of expert knowledge do not always agree about what constitutes expert knowledge; they are also not a homogenous group. Interviews with agronomists working with other organizations, as well as previously with ODEP, revealed critiques of ODEP's approach. One of the more tangible aspects of ODEP's training involves teaching how to make 'green' fertilizers (*abonos verdes*), through encouraging the use of compost and a rapid form of compost, *Bocashi*, primarily for vegetable gardens. The value of doing this and the training in how to make it was carried out in the communities – at individuals' homes and at the communal EICPAL workshops, as well as at the *Promotores* workshops. However even among experts in organic agriculture, these methods were not completely agreed upon. For example, the agronomist from PASA FAO argued that making *bocashi* was impractical because it required too many steps. He pointed out how part of the fermentation process of making *chicha*, which was already very familiar to anyone in a region growing corn, could also be used as fertilizer. In fact, this stage of *chicha* production was used by those in ODEP in the making of *bocashi*.

[...] *Bocashi* has a lot of ingredients and it is complicated. What I have told the producers is that they should simplify the process in order to fertilize. *Bocashi* is very good but we can adapt it [...] we don't *need* this; there are other alternatives. There are very efficient microorganisms like EEM and they are patented at the international level, but we have our *own* EEM that are not patented but we use them everyday! Like *chicha* – it has a big population of bacteria, mushrooms and yeasts – it's faster, and they drink it and what is left over can be used as fertilizer – they are good quality ingredients and very effective.

This is an important point for those living at altitudes where corn grows in abundance, like the mountain valley where Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi are located, though the argument seems less applicable to those living at higher altitudes where corn does not grow.

Virginia, an agronomist with another Bolivian NGO working in Norte de Potosí, and the daughter of a farm household participating with ODEP, criticized ODEP and similar organizations for trying to create projects that were unrealistic, and suggested a solution for working within the limitations of the local environment:

[VIRGINIA]: Micro-irrigation and reservoirs are needed but I ask where is this water coming from? I prefer to work with corn and broad beans that grow with the rain. Then when some people grow these and others grow onions there can be an *exchange*!

Implicit in her statement is the idea that people can also work with what they know; it does not require training in the same way that ODEP and various other NGOs and local governmental organizations were trying to implement. However the NGO with which she works also provides training, and she readily talked about its importance for boosting women's self-confidence.

[VIRGINIA]: As an institution we try to help everyone [in the community]. Because we do multiple activities – it depends on the area where they need our help –on their resources – some of them have soil, some have animals, plants. For example, when they have water we help them with micro-irrigation and reservoir construction. When soil is their resource, we build terraces. We try to work with everyone, not some here some there. But instead with ODEP they help people and they focus on water – irrigation, reservoirs and with training. So their focus is narrower.

As I sat on the steep hillside field with her and her father and another older man, who were taking a break from building terraces, she continued to reflect on the work of ODEP in the community.

[VIRGINIA]: My dad and don Segundino work with ODEP right? People in the community are envious of them because they have access to water. If there is no water for agriculture then there is nothing, but at the same time, those people don't do anything about it.

What is interesting about this statement in the context of a critique of the NGO is that, like others, Virginia draws attention to how some people want the results without doing the work, but she also talks about jealousy between community members and

highlights how her NGO makes a point to work with everyone. By contrast Rodolfo, and others have highlighted the importance of working with some members rather than trying to work with everyone:

[JENNY]: Why do some people want to work with ODEP while others do not?

[RODOLFO]: Because it depends on the facilitator. How they focus on [or consider] the project. It is not good to work with the whole community; it's preferable to work with ten, or so, people. We can't work with everyone, we need to work with people who *want* to work with us – they can be the innovative engines.

As addressed in chapter VI, the issue of whether to work with individuals, or the community as a whole, portrays the challenge of reconciling the neoliberal influence on both development and communities themselves. Both scenarios recognize that some individuals will be more motivated than others to participate, but one view sees the solution in persisting on being as inclusive as possible. There is sustainability in unity. On the other hand, ODEP recognizes the potential for greater success by focusing on the “innovative engines” – *certain* families. In this view, sustainability is to be found through *promotores* maintaining the NGO's introduced or encouraged practices. Endeavoring to work with people who are not motivated to work with the organization may be a waste of time, energy and resources, but restricting the NGO's work to the household level risks upholding or promoting a neoliberal framework of individual ownership and responsibility, that also sums up failed projects to laziness and cycles of dependency.

### 3. Knowledge Exchange and Interruptions

#### i. Expert Knowledge and Exchange

ODEP's Canadian partner NGO, CANGO, emphasizes the notion that farmers themselves are holders of expert knowledge. This perspective is not only evident in the

CANGO's literature, but was part of the discourse of the various staff members who met with ODEP and visited the communities in 2010 and again in 2011, irrespective of whether their backgrounds were in social science, management, or the physical sciences. It was quickly evident through observation that ODEP applied the farmer-as-expert model in a comparably limited way. Beyond the consensus among farmers and ODEP agronomists that the role of the latter was to train the former, there were few observable moments when farmers were recognized as having valuable knowledge to exchange with agronomists. Nonetheless, *Campesino á Campesino* was one of ODEP's participatory methodologies. It was integrated into the EICPAL workshops, particularly the *Promotores*, in the bringing together of several farmers to discuss challenges they face with climate changes, agrobiodiversity, and any other number of subjects that might be addressed formally and informally during group-work, or even over meals.

The idea of exchanging knowledge and experience was raised often around efforts to organize, or participate in farmer "*intercambios*" – farmer experience exchanges. However I came to understand that these involved less of an *exchange* per se and more of a fieldtrip for the farmers to learn some new – albeit interesting, and arguably important – things about organic farming and environmental sustainability. The 'exchange' that I attended in Cochabamba, as one of the modules for the EICPAL *Promotores* workshop, was indeed often fascinating (e.g., visiting a completely environmentally sustainable orphanage, producing its own food, reusing everything in creative and progressive ways).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Also at one of the large farms visited, a woman talked about starting an association of women who had been making alpaca wool clothing for sale internationally, but had found the dyes hazardous to their health. As a result they altered their production methods to be

At one farm, in a barn full of guinea pigs, we learned about organic production in this region and the growing interest in creating a national market with national standards of certification. During this presentation, two Bolivian male agronomists from PASA-FAO (Mario and another man) arrived to speak to the farmers about sustainable agriculture and its importance for Bolivia. Emphasis was placed on the important work that the FAO and the Bolivian government were doing in agriculture. After they introduced themselves and their topic, the director of ODEP, Juan Luis, introduced the farmers from the EICPAL *Promotores* workshop, as farmers from Norte de Potosí. He highlighted what a great opportunity this was for the government agronomists to ask the farmers from a remote area about their experiences and challenges related to farming, food security and access to the market. To my knowledge this was the only moment where the possibility for an actual experience of exchange was stated explicitly during the three-day ‘exchange.’ While it is possible that the PASA-FAO men took up the suggestion in a one-on-one basis during the lunch break that followed their talk, at no point during the workshop did they ever ask the farmers anything about their experience, or ask for feedback during their Spanish presentation.

Their inability to engage with the farmers reminded me of Angel from PIAB during his presentation in Pocomachurí, in which farmers were called upon only to answer closed questions and repeat back information. These instances also shed light on the challenge ODEP faced in overcoming larger (national and global) entrenched power relations of who is recognized for their knowledge and given a voice. In this context, it is

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as environmentally sustainable as possible and looked for international allies that would help them sell their products in niche markets at a global scale.

arguable that ODEP made real efforts to facilitate the collaboration of knowledge between farmers and the NGO, so that my critique of where ODEP fell short should be contextualized within its national and global context.

Still, the ‘farmer experience exchange’ organized for the participants of the *promotores* workshop is a good example of the loose representation of participation. In this case the term ‘exchange’ is deceptive in its implication that knowledge transmission is multidirectional. The fieldtrip does allow the Norte de Potosí farmers to participate in several farming experiences showcased by farmers and university professionals. They can ask questions and experience hands-on learning through making *bocashi* (again) and other demonstrations. The fact that some of the teachers were farmers themselves allows for instances that can still be considered ‘Farmer-to-Farmer’ or *Campesino-á-Campesino*. But the important point here is that the Norte de Potosí farmers always remain students in this framework.

#### ii. NGO-NGO Knowledge Exchange

Collaborations of knowledge through ‘exchange’ could be seen more clearly in some of the *intercambios* held between NGOs. Some ODEP staff have learned participatory teaching methods through workshops organized by a well established Bolivian Foundation working with conservation of tuber species. In another case, an ‘exchange’ had been set up between ODEP and another regional NGO, during which ODEP had taught the other NGO to make *bocashi*, while the other NGO had had taught ODEP a method for making environmentally friendly wood burning stoves. ODEP had applied this knowledge in several communities with an effort to replace several



households' old adobe stoves with the newer adobe wood-burning stoves that produced far less smoke.

Periodically, CANGO organizes exchanges between farmers from the global South, and between staff from various partner NGOs or others with whom they collaborate. CANGO describes one of its goals in terms gathering a wealth of knowledge that can be shared amongst farmers, scientists, and other practitioners involved in food security. Juan Luis had been to Canada twice, the second time with Rocío while I was conducting fieldwork. The first trip had resulted in ODEP's interest in attempting a participatory research methodology being employed in Honduras (the farmer-agronomist experimental teams, which I originally expected to study), though how the Bolivian NGO applied this turned out to be quite different than the Honduran model. ODEP was finding some success with agronomist-led experimentation, but limited involvement by farmers. As it was being applied in Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi it was associated with individual households rather than in, for example, a *community* garden, so that research teams would most likely be restricted to an individual farmer and an agronomist, rather than a group of community members. Experimentation was not unfamiliar to the farmers. Claudia, Evita, and a few others took the time to describe to me how plants were carefully observed, and adjustments made, so that households could see which varieties had grown best and decide to buy seeds (or save seeds when possible) that held the most promise for growing in the poor soil and harsh climate. Thus, local farming knowledge included novel experimentation and the NGO was making efforts to document this knowledge through written and illustrated records.

But to talk about agrobiodiversity, follow-ups and evaluations involved using the agronomists' university-trained language, so that agricultural knowledge is packaged in a scientific framework. This meant that the participatory work between farmers (especially female farmers) and agronomists could easily slip from the hands of the former into the hands of the latter, so that as experimentation became more systematic it might stop being discussed with the farmers at all. This was not necessarily the case for all communities in Pocomachurí, but it became clear during my research period in Q'ayarumi, when I finally located the illusive participatory experiment I had come to study. When I finally found the supposed participatory research in question, Edelmira, the farmer to whom the garden belonged, had no idea that her onion garden was a site of experimentation! Eventually someone from ODEP admitted that an agronomist in this district had instructed the farmers on how best to plant their varieties of onions in a few gardens, and regularly stopped by to document progress, but that this follow-up would not necessarily be known to the farmer herself.

By the end of my research period, Teresa was establishing such experiments in one or two household vegetable gardens in each community. It was clear that at least one member of these households understood the premise behind the experiments to try different varieties of the same crop. It remained to be seen whether it would simply be another tool for teaching farmers, or a process that would build collaborations of knowledge between farmers and agronomists.

The two informal *in situ* seed banks, which at first appeared to be as illusive as the participatory research, suggested a more hopeful collaboration, though also on the household-NGO level, rather than communal. The tuber seed bank was in another

municipality in a mountaintop community, while the corn seed bank was in Tomacoyo in the corn-producing mountain valley. In the case of the latter, Claudia and Guillermo were known in their community for their extensive variety of corn. Though they did not recognize the term “seed bank,” the reasoning behind saving the seeds was far clearer and less of an outside idea than formal experimentation. When I asked Juan Luis about this, his answer suggested that ODEP was achieving a non-intrusive, but supportive role:

[JUAN LUIS]: We are going to support Guillermo with an *in situ* seed bank because he has a large variety of corn. Each year growing, he is rotating the fields with different varieties of corn. We are not thinking in terms of infrastructure for this, we just want to promote and support Guillermo getting seeds of a better quality. We are not going to innovate in this section; we are just helping to improve the quality of the seeds. This is *real sustainability* because he has the seeds and he should maintain them. That’s why we are going to give him incentives with supplies and tools.

It is noteworthy that Juan Luis does not mention Claudia in this quote. It was common among community members and ODEP staff (with the exception of Rocío, who was always inclusive of women in her language) to only mention the man of the household when talking about either farming work or participation with the NGO. When someone was asked directly about this, most men and women reinforced the idea that couples share everything, make decisions together and that men and women are equal in Andean cultures. Yet Juan Luis’ mention of supporting *Guillermo’s* seed bank reflects the ease with which women are excluded, even as efforts are made to overcome the exclusion of women.

### iii. Exchanging Knowledge on Climate Change

The efforts for more collaboration and sharing of experience did have some success in the time I was conducting research. For example, at the very beginning of my fieldwork, ODEP, in collaboration with a university in the region and at least one other

NGO, organized an event during CANGO's visit, at which farmers from different communities working with ODEP, a couple of agronomists, and the scientist from CANGO gave presentations on the challenges of adapting to climate change to agronomy students and other interested parties. The Quechua presentations and one English presentation on climate change were translated into Spanish. CANGO's program director found the event generally impressive, but noted that of all the presenters only one was a woman. It also became evident that the woman, from a very isolated community, was at a disadvantage in that Spanish was not translated into Quechua, something that would not be as necessary for Guillermo from Tomacoyo, or most of the other male presenters.

During the event, one of the agronomists, the director of another regional NGO, raised environmental concerns, pitting what he referred to as the "Andean culture of life" against the Western/global North's "culture of death." This dichotomy was drawn to show how the world was being polluted most from the richer nations and that the people of the Andes were not responsible for it, but forced to live with it. An Italian professor at the university self-identified as someone from this so-called "death culture" in the discussion period following, taking issue with this version by highlighting the progressive environmental movement at various levels coming from the West. The two men remained composed, but tensions rose. Juan Luis intervened. He gingerly suggested that the presenter's dichotomy was not particularly helpful since all of us – from the North and the South -- needed to find ways to combat climate change and conserve biodiversity. Divisive labels would do little towards this goal.

Perhaps he was concerned this presentation had offended his Canadian visitors, but Juan Luis later told CANGO (in my presence) that he had been disappointed that this

man had done a presentation at all. The man had either misunderstood or disregarded the invitation to facilitate farmers from the communities in which his NGO worked so that they could give presentations on their experience and challenges related to climate change. Instead the man had chosen to give a presentation himself (and did not appear to have brought any farmers with him). The dichotomy he presented raised issues of power relations on a global level and the ensuing dialogue generated a brief but worthwhile discussion, but this event highlights how challenging it can be to organize opportunities for sincere exchanges between farmers and professionals. Logically, in terms of distance traveled and language barriers exchange involves a great deal of time and energy, but importantly, even in an effort to be clear about the purpose of such an event, participants may not be able to transcend their ingrained biases and expectations of who is an ‘expert’ and what is considered valuable information to transmit.

Despite this problem, overall this example of bringing together farmers, scientists and agronomists to the same stage to talk about climate change and biodiversity at various levels of experience (addressing students and a variety of development actors and local government representatives) is one of the only examples that I witnessed of overt sharing of knowledge across lines that are rarely crossed: the majority of agronomists and agronomy students became the *audience*, rather than the holders of ‘expert’ agricultural knowledge to be presented.

#### 4. Discussion: The Global-Local Position of Ecological Agriculture

Let us return to the paradox addressed at the beginning of this chapter, in which agronomists could unproblematically describe local knowledge in ways that made it seem irrelevant to the work they were doing *and* talk with pride about how their own

knowledge was thanks to ‘local knowledge’. It may be tempting to see local knowledge in this case as an idea that receives lip service, while rarely recognized as applicable in practice. It is likely that this was sometimes the case, but it is too simplistic in its assessment. Such a generalization of the agronomists’ perspectives misses the positioning of agrobiodiversity conservation and organic agriculture in relation to forces other than local farming knowledge. These efforts are positioned firmly in relation – and in *reaction* – to the conventional farming practices of global agri-business, such as the development of “suicide seeds” and more locally the damaging effect of the ‘green revolution.’ The latter brought chemical inputs seemingly to solve the problem of poor soil conditions with the nitrogen-absorbing tubers, but developed a much bigger problem of decreasing biodiversity and increasing reliance on chemical fertilizers (Altieri 2009; Saad 2009; Walsh 2003). The ecological agriculture movement has drawn on indigenous practices, long undermined by the power relations of scientific agricultural knowledge and technologies guided by neoliberal notions of efficiency and economic growth. Despite growing popularity, organic agriculture remains marginal in the global market. Organic production has often found a place in niche markets for consumers in the global North, which has not necessarily readily benefited the producers of these goods (Altieri and Toledo 2011). Efforts to promote organic farming contend with a long history of indigenous farming practices being devalued both globally and locally, so it is not surprising that ODEP emphasizes the importance of revaluing locally grown, native foods and finds ways to support these practices. Within this framework it is also clearer how farmers can be imagined to have once had the ‘self-esteem’ that ODEP looks to ‘restore’ (see chapter VII). Yet in practice, power relations remain entrenched most of the time

and the staff member with the most concern with leveling power differences still understood her main role in the community as a transmitter of crucial agricultural knowledge.

It is helpful to recall one of Cooke and Kothari's (2001) arguments addressed in chapter II of this dissertation, though here I emphasize a different aspect of their point. They recognize that participation that involves sharing knowledge, negotiating power relations, and political activism may challenge oppression and injustices. Yet these concepts may be drawn upon in describing participation, while the participation in practice may actually conceal and reinforce oppressive power relations and injustices in their various manifestations (2001:13). How this argument can be applied to ODEP's participatory approach to working with farm households and communities depends on scale.

At a larger scale, ODEP's work with farmers involves working against the dominance of agri-business giants and unjust global market relations. It involves both technical and political approaches to increasing food security and draws on both traditional Andean farming knowledge and scientific knowledge to do this. Sheppard (2005:36) argues that NGOs "cannot succeed in utilizing local knowledge without challenging some of the fundamental tenets of development, not only in terms of development's reliance on external or foreign technologies but also in terms of the kinds of narratives that are invoked to define the problematic of the local environment." ODEP's promotion of organic agriculture, agrobiodiversity and food sovereignty challenges the reliance on external/foreign technologies. It challenges the narratives invoked to define the problematic of the local environment in the sense discussed in the

previous chapter – that is, in terms of drawing upon, as well as translating, aspects of the Andean cosmovision and notions of complementarity to their international funders. This approach has been taken by sustainable development discourses more broadly, with a tendency to rely on polemical and oppositional categories in which indigenous efforts and small-scale participatory projects have uncritically come to represent sustainable development (Swartley 2002). However Swartley (ibid: 75), and others, have challenged this assumption; calling into question whether there has actually been a fundamental change in the structure and practice of global development by developed nations, despite the use of development buzzwords, including ‘poverty alleviation,’ ‘local knowledge’ and even ‘sustainability’ (Scoones 2010).

Meanwhile, at the *local* scale of relations between NGOs and participating farmers, in many ways power relations remain entrenched, with agronomists as teachers and farmers as students, and in which participatory approaches are recognized to be most beneficial for their promise to transfer knowledge to the student (also see chapter VII).

i. *Who Holds Agricultural Knowledge?*

Despite much discourse to the contrary during exchanges among NGOs, and in ODEP’s literature, the relationship between the Bolivian NGO in this case and the farmers shifted easily, and regularly, into a common power dynamic in which, as Hobart (1993:11) put it, the relationship of developers and developed are usually regarded hierarchically by *both parties*. This was particularly apparent with participating women farmers. Thus “*communication* easily becomes the giving of information or instructions by those with expert knowledge.”. So farmers expressed their lack of knowledge as they



defined it in terms of formal education, saying things like “we did not know anything before ODEP came.” Time and participant observation provided insight into which farmers seemed to really feel this way, compared to those who made such statements but who also recognized that they, as farmers, had much more practical local knowledge than the agronomists. But traditional power dynamics that encourage rural people with local knowledge to defer to professionals with scientific knowledge encourage even those who recognize that the value of their own knowledge is muted.

ODEP’s efforts to raise the confidence of farmers are undermined not only by gender biases (see chapter V), but by the limitations of their definition (in practice) of local knowledge. Treating local knowledge as something that the farmers’ *ancestors* held -- reifying this aspect of indigenous cultural heritage – emphasizes what the farmers today, lack. And, in a context where farm families readily identify knowledge as something that one attains from formal education, few of the agronomists are challenged to transcend the comfortable position of relative power they enjoy. Rocio was exceptional in thinking critically about how to resist traditional hierarchical relations along class lines, and incorporating it into her work (i.e. discouraging formal titles, or sitting and cooking with women). At the same time, however, she readily embraced her role as knowledge provider, and was key to transmitting the notion of local knowledge as lost. There is a disconnect between that practice and the conscious effort to collaborate and treat these different types of knowledge as equal. Pre-conditioning about which type of knowledge is considered valuable thwarts the potential for collaborations, let alone what is worthy of exchanging. While ODEP’s text discussed above guides agronomists to think like ‘facilitators,’ if it is not part of a re-education process, many agronomists

will not automatically make such a shift, having received training that undermines this view.

The farmers who choose to work with ODEP participate in this dynamic by devaluing their own knowledge. While windows of opportunity arise through the efforts of individuals with a strong dedication to removing barriers along class/status and gender lines, this does not mean that the players involved will be open to such exchanges. Thus the farmers themselves do not often offer their own knowledge and experience without being asked very pointed questions, and those who enjoy ‘expert’ status in agriculture do not necessarily recognize the resource of farmer knowledge.

Returning to Tsing’s (2005) point that collaboration is not a simple sharing of information, but creates gaps where truths that are incompatible are suppressed, we can look at sustainable agriculture – through organic production and agrobiodiversity conservation – as “globally circulating knowledge” that creates new gaps even as it grows through the frictions of encounter. ODEP, and other professionals, can draw parallels between some of their techniques and ancient local knowledge while either ignoring, or relegating to cultural mythology, ancestral knowledge that farmers described as the *practices* of their parents and grandparents.

Andean agricultural local knowledge has strong and deep roots. ODEP and other actors in agroecology (non-governmental and governmental alike) place emphasize on revaluing this knowledge as key to not only local problems of food security, but global concerns of biodiversity knowledge. ODEP’s efforts are sincere and dedicated to strengthening marginalized farming communities against the ever-encroaching forces of the neoliberal global agri-business. NGOs like ODEP participate (to varying degrees) in

the growing resistance to the ‘agri-business-as-usual’ schemes to monopolize ownership of genes and knowledge, while finding ‘solutions’ to food shortages through the global economic market that rarely provide lasting improvements in the lives of small farmers (the prevalence of ‘suicide’ seeds is a good example). Altieri and Toledo (2011:609) shed some light on what is needed in a way that reflects the beliefs underlying ODEP’s work:

[D]ismantling the industrial agrifood complex and restoring local food systems must be accompanied by the construction of agroecological alternatives that suit the needs of small-scale producers and the low-income non-farming population and oppose corporate control over production and consumption. Of key importance will be the direct involvement of farmers in the formulation of the research agenda and their active participation in the process of technological innovation and dissemination through *Campesino á Campesino* models where researchers and extension workers can play a major facilitating role.

This is, in part, what ODEP and others consider as they form alliances – not just with other organizations or local governments, but also with universities and potential future ties with schools. Still, in ODEP’s use of the *Campesino á Campesino* model information flows in one direction most of the time. Participatory language masks tendencies to fall into traditional patterns: this chapter has shown that what qualifies as ‘exchange’ may be unidirectional.

The issue of exchange raises another question about how knowledge is interpreted by those whose aim is to ‘facilitate.’ The agronomist from PASA-FAO determined, through “experience exchange,” that small farmers have less knowledge than he had expected. Though I risk romanticizing local knowledge by insisting that it was *there*, but he just could not see it, that possibility must also be examined. It raises the question of how the design of “exchange” between farmers -- despite sincere efforts to facilitate it -- might be framed in a way that does not necessarily achieve its goal.

Facilitators shape the vehicle(s) of knowledge transmission. Within this framework some knowledge will be communicated and some will not. The participants are still informed by underlying power relations. Thus it is reasonable to raise the question, given what has been demonstrated in this chapter: how often is a farmer or group of farmers (particularly women) silent because they defer to a professional, accepting pre-established power dynamics even when the professional might have voiced his or her wish to hear from the farmer?

My field experience indicates that people with some education are in a position to talk about knowledge in ways that the majority may not. Interviews revealed quickly how much easier Evita and Romeo -- as farmers *and* country schoolteachers -- could talk about agricultural, culture and knowledge, compared to other adult community members. Women who had spent extensive time in cities and received some degree of education in those environments, such as Edelmira, or Claudia (who was educated by the female head of the household where she worked as a domestic from the age of eleven), or even those like Benancio who had worked as agricultural labourers in Argentina (where they would learn more Spanish and have an ear for a different accent), were willing and able to elaborate on ideas that dozens of others were not.

The tendency to use as few words as possible to explain something to me, or to say “I don’t know,” “It’s just what we do,” “It’s just custom,” reflects a discomfort with a superficial imposition to *narrate* their knowledge. It also sometimes reflected expectations regarding what *I* was capable of understanding as an outsider (not limited to white foreigners, but urban professional and even extension workers from a range of professions). The inability, or unwillingness, to engage in a process of narrating lived,

experiential knowledge, might at times be misinterpreted as a lack of knowledge, particularly if those same farmers pay lip service to that idea and the need to be trained by knowledgeable professionals.

Moreover, it must be asked: how often are farmers dismissive of their own knowledge as a strategy to achieve their goals of institutional support within the established power relations – from colonialism and dependent capitalism to neoliberalism – that emphasize the need to teach farmers? While ODEP’s concern with raising self-confidence in *promotores* may be warranted, as evidenced throughout this dissertation, certain farm households conformed to ODEP’s requirements – of which training is key – in order to secure assistance with their more pressing concerns. Perhaps the best example of this phenomenon could be seen in chapter II with certain farm families positioning themselves in relation to the NGOs as “crying babies” to ensure their needs would be met.

Group work, such as within EICPAL *promotores* workshops, do allow for a degree of farmer-to-farmer knowledge exchange in important ways. The chance for farmers to work in groups on given issues, who live in different communities within the same region, leads to interesting possibilities for collaborative knowledge across commonalities and difference. But the subjects are shaped by the NGO facilitators, and ultimately lead to learning – and reinforcing – *certain* concepts. It also shapes the way that discussions take place, so that shared knowledge emphasizes topics that fit within the ideas that ODEP is trying to transmit – issues of resource management and marketability, rather than shared rituals of other types. As touched on in chapter VII, the concern with interculturalism in the workshops may lead to opening up dialogue about customs and

traditions that provide more opportunity for collaboration. But it may not. It may mean that traditions are repackaged to make sense within scientific knowledge as something that is morale boosting for participants, such as Mario's description of the *coa* and assessment that 'they' have more culture than 'us,' but lack knowledge.

The treatment of local knowledge, as something rooted in a vague glorified ideal of the Andean past – as the knowledge of ancestors – lends extra legitimacy to modern ecological agriculture practices. The development organizations intervening in these communities are thus able to be framed as local knowledge being *reestablished*. But placing value on local knowledge as something that has been, or is being, lost but restored through the work of ecological agriculture, has a greater implication than 'simply' maintaining power relations that stubbornly persist. Ultimately an enormous irony is at work. Farmers remain in a position of lacking both scientific agricultural knowledge *and* local knowledge, while the agronomists who resist conventional agriculture can become the holders of *both* scientific knowledge and local knowledge. The agronomists, already enjoying the position of 'experts,' are then able to impart these knowledges in a combined, repackaged way to their clients, the farmers.

## **Chapter X:**

### **Conclusion:**

#### **Gendered ‘Concrete Engagements’ in Participatory Development in a (not-so-) post-neoliberal Bolivia**

##### 1. Participation, Partnerships and Neoliberalism

This dissertation has examined the tensions that arise in efforts toward exchange and collaboration of agricultural knowledges in participatory development, through a gendered lens. Analyzing ODEP’s use of participation, in discourse and practice, requires the recognition that ODEP is a complex agent, rather than an actor whose views and positions can be treated as singular (Cornwall and Brock 2005). ODEP, and the many personalities within it, strives to learn from experience, and improve on its methods. At the same time, it is not moving through this process in a vacuum; its position in development and its national and international relationships have an impact. Like other NGOs and governmental organizations of the global South (such as PIAB and PASA-FAO), ODEP engages in power relations within its partnerships that may reinforce barriers to collaborations. The use of equalizing and inclusive language, such as ‘partnership’, ‘participation’ or ‘exchange,’ works toward leveling power imbalances, but also serves to whitewash power differentials. This dissertation has shown how ODEP’s relationship to its Canadian partner NGO includes tensions that speak more generally to the differences in power in funding relationships.

The tensions in North-South development relationships and efforts to promote ecological agriculture are illuminated in the context of a State, such as Bolivia, working to establish a post-neoliberal framework. The Bolivian State espouses an anti-neoliberal

discourse vis-à-vis United States' foreign policy and 'aid,' while maintaining a neoliberal framework in much of its development work and citizen-shaping (e.g. in its approach to participation and to training farmers to be more economically productive individuals). What the State wants, from the perspective of the agronomists in the governmental organizations PIAB and PASA, is to strengthen *sovereignty*. A key role of these organizations is to realize greater Bolivian autonomy through ecological agriculture and food sovereignty.

Like Haargard and Andersson (2009) and Kennemore and Weeks (2011), I have argued in this dissertation that the backlash against neoliberalism is constrained by neoliberal policy reforms, so that indigenous rights and environmental protection are undermined by immediate political and economic gains. The fact that food sovereignty from the government's perspective is also possible through conventional agricultural schemes, is just one of many examples that illustrate the double narratives and policies of the MAS administration.

The tensions that arise in governmental-non-governmental relations are further complicated by the degree to which neoliberalism has penetrated rural communities (e.g., two decades of chipping away at collectivism in favour of individualism). While these processes are not uniform, it means that the government has to contend with neoliberal approaches from more directions than just the right-wing elite, or international funding agencies. Examples throughout the dissertation have highlighted ways in which farm households argue in support of individualism over collectivism, for example. ODEP makes adjustments to its approach along these lines as well, while reinforcing



individualism in a range of ways from developing ‘leaders,’ to creating incentives to participate through competition.

ODEP has directed much attention to organizing participation into a framework, which makes the NGO’s work legible for their partners. (CANGO staff reported how pleased they were with how well ODEP documents its work and its transparency). ODEP’s EICPAL workshops – particularly those based in the communities – serve to legitimize the organization’s actions. The regularity of these encounters with community members, and importantly, the listed participatory methodologies supposedly incorporated into the structure, can give the impression that ODEP is always receiving input from the farmers. To an extent this is accurate, but as this dissertation has demonstrated, a communal workshop is more likely to involve (women) farmers sitting and listening quietly to facilitators than discussing their concerns with them. In reality, the ideals of participation and exchange and the high attendance of women obscure how much knowledge travels in both directions (Mosse 2001). One of the reasons for inconsistencies in the application of participatory approaches in practice relates to Mosse’s (2001) argument that participatory ideals are constrained by formal and informal bureaucratic goals within the institutional development context – yet participation remains important as part of a project’s ‘system of representations.’ While these representations may not reflect local practice, they remain essential in negotiating relationships with donors, and in underpinning positions within development policy debates (ibid.).

In ODEP's workshops it was recognized that participation is more than *numerical* (in contrast to PIAB's approach) and facilitators actively apply a variety of strategies (albeit unevenly) to encourage shy people to actively participate. At the same time, the notion of encouraging 'natural' leaders appears to ignore questions of power – power that allows space for some to be more confident speaking than others, and for some to have greater expectations of being heard than others. Such inequalities are clarified when examined through the lens of gender, as double standards along gender lines also surface. Hence the experiences of the men and women participating in development work are diverse: an organization's actions can be experienced as either empowering or tyrannical, depending on factors such as (gendered) motivations to participate and (gendered) notions of leadership qualities. The farmers in this study neither passively accepted nor actively resisted the development framework of intervening organizations; they were *strategic* in their participation with ODEP, and their motivations varied. Recognizing this point helps to avoid presenting an over-determined view of what 'local people' do (Crewe and Harrison 1998) in development contexts.

The facilitators' training manual for the EICPAL workshop (and the many participatory methodology labels within its structure) reinforces the NGO's policy on participatory methods as effective teaching tools. Underlying these approaches are principles of respect for participants' knowledge, as participants choose to involve themselves with the NGO. Efforts to level power imbalances along the lines of class and gender emerge in text and rhetoric, and to varying degrees in practice, depending on the context and individuals involved. My observations paint a picture in which some ODEP facilitator/technicians maintain a focus on employing participatory methodologies, while

others come to it more reluctantly. Moreover, the use of these methods as tools, is not always the only, or best, way to address power relations. Importantly, the use of these methods by an agronomist who lacks the ability to recognize and respect local knowledge or gender equality, for example, may find these techniques useful for teaching, but their adoption *will do little to level imbalances of power*. The approach of the technician/facilitator – and how participants receive him or her – is ultimately more important than the tools themselves (Hailey 2001).

Hailey's (2001) argument that research into NGO-beneficiary relations should not overlook the importance of such personal interactions in shaping the development agenda at a community level is particularly constructive for the analysis of ODEP's focus on participation in Tomacoyo and Q'ayarumi, as well as the participatory spaces of the NGO's EICPAL workshops. Hailey's analysis inspires Cooke and Kothari (2001:8) to ask a worthwhile question: have participatory methods driven out other methods, which may have advantages participation cannot provide? While Hailey suggests that this is the case, this remains an open question and I would argue that Andean communities in Bolivia (with a cosmovision of reciprocity and complementarity) could provide an interesting context for further exploration of this question.

## 2. Future Gendered 'Concrete Engagements'

### i. ODEP and gender equality

The irony identified in this dissertation, that development agronomists doing ecological agriculture work in Norte de Potosí can become the holders of *both* scientific knowledge and local knowledge, while local farmers – positioned as lacking – can then become the beneficiaries of a repackaged version of these knowledges, is one that must

be addressed. Further research needs to shed light on this development paradox and consider strategies for resolving it. It is also a problem that should be addressed by ODEP and other actors involved in ecological agriculture that draw on local knowledge and scientific agricultural knowledge. In an early report to ODEP I suggested that concrete examples of local knowledge, rather than vague references to an imagined past, would benefit the farm communities and the collaborations between farmers and the NGO, and help to clarify what this local knowledge *is* that ODEP professes to support.

Moreover, respecting local knowledge includes acknowledging dissent.

Occasionally participants were outspoken about their displeasure with ODEP. Perhaps they felt their community was receiving little attention, or they had spent the day at the agro-biodiversity fair only to win a plastic bowl, or they had waited for hours for an agronomist who never arrived at their house. Certainly these situations are not the sole responsibility of ODEP workers. There were cases of people who did not appear to want to do any of the work themselves, but felt ignored when ODEP facilitators placed their attention elsewhere. But I maintain (as I suggest in chapter VI) that there are benefits to looking closer at more marginal participants, and to considering what they have to say. Counter-discourses should not be dismissed, if the work of NGOs like ODEP and farmers are actually to engage in a transformative project toward social justice (Saad 2009).

Another irony that threatens efforts to increase the participation of women in development processes involves burdening them with increased workloads in the name of equal access and full participation. As seen in this dissertation, clearly one answer to increasing women's participation is to ensure the presence of a woman agronomist. However, without contextualizing women's participation within larger contexts of gender

dynamics in household decision-making, this in itself does not answer the question of whether participation will ‘empower’ women. Yes, female technicians matter, as do participatory methodologies (as opposed to top-down approaches). Yet it does not matter how well techniques are applied, the degree to which women can benefit from these will be greatly hampered by households’ ulterior motives in sending women to participate. If the context of power-dynamics within households and ‘gender complementarity,’ along with the power dynamics of farmers and professionals, are not scrutinized, women who truly enjoy participating may appear to be natural leaders with skills to foster, while women who feel coerced to participate (perhaps by both the NGO and their households) may be misunderstood.

While ODEP and CANGO appear to share common ideals in terms of contending with issues of climate change and increasing food security through biodiversity, complications arise on the question of gender. One such complication is the intermediary role that ODEP plays in balancing the pressure it faces to promote gender equality, as it is understood from a Western liberal tradition, with respect for local customs and traditions and Andean notions of complementarity. I suggest that perhaps the EICPAL (Intercultural Training School for Agricultural Production and Leadership) workshops would be an interesting space in which to address these notions in a way that might generate clarity and even collaborations of knowledge.

The EICPAL workshops already address self-esteem in an effort to raise the confidence of small producers, and ODEP plans to incorporate more discussion of ‘interculturalism’ to raise awareness of indigenous rights. This would be an ideal setting in which to discuss gender equality and to ‘demystify’ gender complementarity – as the

national government has planned to do in choosing to make “*chachawarmi*” (*q’ariwarmi*) an official part of the new constitution (Burman 2011). It would create an opportunity for men and women in the workshops to discuss their perspectives (including men’s attitudes and actions that add to women’s ‘fear’) and discuss possibilities for women to feel more confident (and preferable to scolding them for not participating enough).

One of the benefits of addressing the sometimes converging, sometimes opposing perspectives of gender equality and gender complementarity at the *Promotores* workshop would be that people from different Quechua-speaking cultural groups attend, increasing the perspectives and opportunity for exchange among farm women and men. ODEP would have to see the value in such an exercise in relation to sustainable agriculture – which they might not, if gender is simply something to address for the sake of appeasing Northern funders (a sentiment suggested by a couple individuals within the NGO). ODEP is concerned with gender equity and with involving women in a meaningful way in its work, but at the time of my research ODEP lacked the training and background to express confidence when tackling some of the greater challenges of incorporating gender into all aspects of their work. For tensions to be resolved, some ODEP facilitators and workshop animators would benefit from some type of (indigenous) gender sensitivity training.

It is also worth noting that, in terms of gendered participation, little actions can have big implications for collaboration: in my presentation to ODEP and CANGO at their annual meeting, I commented on the benefits for building rapport through the NGO facilitator participating in the activities of farm households; not just having the farmers participate in structured ODEP activities.

“ODEP will not be the same without Rocío - she *cooked* with us!” I quoted a woman from Tomacoyo, highlighting the respect Rocío had gained through this approach, by showing that she did not think herself better than the women with whom she worked. Moreover, it provided the opportunity to have a *dialogue* about ecological agriculture, agrobiodiversity, climate change or any other subject, in a manner that was not in a classroom setting. The next day on one of the community visits, organized for CANGO by ODEP, a female agronomy student doing an internship with ODEP sat down and assisted the two women peeling vegetables for the large group’s lunch.

ii. *Future Participatory Development and Knowledge Research*

A central theme that has surfaced throughout the chapters of this dissertation is that power relations prevail in North-South NGO partnerships. The examples drawn upon here are representative of others in which ODEP staff expressed concern for what I would or would not report to CANGO, looking for ways to position me where I would be more likely to see successful collaborations and the successful participation of women.

Limiting candid conversations about what is not working in favour of showcasing the most active and successful participants reflects a dynamic that is not specific to the NGOs in this case-study. It reflects a larger issue that also affects CANGO and its ongoing quest for funding: its need for a discourse with a mass appeal that pairs ‘resource management’ and training producers to be more economically competitive with notions of social justice and environmental conservation. Sillitoe and Marzano (2008:20) explain the dilemma for NGOs that resonates with various examples throughout this dissertation: The role of NGOs and their staff can be laden with ambiguity as they become ‘subjects’ of development, “shaped, funded and regulated by international agencies.” This in turn

increases the potential of NGOs becoming part of the ‘problem’ of development, as they simplify local arrangements and problems to fit in with donors’ expectations: persuading local people that only they are capable of identifying their ‘real needs’ and providing potential solutions, and employing stereotypical constructs of rural backwardness if locals prove to be resistant and uncooperative.

This dissertation brings these tensions to light through an examination of the reluctant collaborations between the Bolivian government and Bolivian NGOs. This reluctance is reflected in collaborations at the national-international level, the NGO-governmental level, in relationships among NGOs and in the State’s collaboration with ODEP, though they are working toward similar goals. Beyond the scope of this project, but related to this theme, are the pressures ODEP faces as it builds partnerships with a *growing number* of organizations from the global North. This raises a question as to whether this Bolivian NGO is upholding or resisting neoliberal frameworks. How do organizations like ODEP negotiate a larger number of international relationships and at the same time build relationships with a State that (formally) eschews such connections?

The power imbalances, tensions and contradictions, drawn out in this dissertation, only scratch the surface of the interface of differing (gendered) agriculture knowledges. Research into local knowledge is necessarily a long-term activity. Continuing fieldwork and language acquisition deepens this understanding, and allows for the opportunity to witness the impact of outside influences on local knowledge. Future research could usefully consider how youth – for example the children of participants with ODEP – integrate different farming knowledges, as well as how they understand what it means to be a farmer in a place where agriculture is being talked about, by Mario from PASA-FAO for example, as the ‘career of the future.’



The case study examined in this dissertation also raises important theoretical questions regarding indigeneity and the value placed on local knowledge. My findings support those of Zoomers (2006) who found that people living in Andean communities rarely identified themselves as *andinos*, despite the much discussed ‘Andean way of life’ and ‘Andean cosmovision’ within both mainstream development, and alternatives to it. This has implications for whether local knowledge, as it is understood in the narrow terms of ancient (Andean) wisdom, will resonate with local communities. Rocío’s efforts to employ the framework of ‘local knowledge’ as ancient Andean knowledge during EICPAL *comunal* workshops, was not as successful as she might have hoped. Not only was it vague and temporally distanced, but there are questions as to its utility in communities that are designated as ‘*campesina*’ rather than ‘indigenous.’ As chapter VIII demonstrates, this issue is further complicated by the fact that farmers in this area do not identify themselves as either ‘indigenous’ or ‘campesino.’ In any case, if local knowledge is constructed as ancestral knowledge that modern-day farmers lack, does not such a description of farmer knowledge only remove these communities further from being recognized as holders of such knowledge?

In examining notions of local knowledge and how this knowledge interfaces with scientific agricultural knowledge, a contribution of this dissertation is that a focus on households brings to light questions about how local knowledge develops within household dynamics. Although the notion of complementarity – distinguishing men and women while (ideally) valuing the contributions of both – downplays gendered power imbalances, it does highlight the potential for gendered knowledge collaborations *within households*. How both local knowledge and ‘expert’ development knowledge are

received (or perhaps rejected) and incorporated into the work and lives of people within households bears further scrutiny. The exploration of local knowledge (as well as gender complementarity and identity) from the perspective of farmers reveals what we might call ‘household knowledge,’ a concept that challenges homogenous notions of local knowledge. Further research into household knowledge, and its relationships to the kind of local knowledge being constructed through international-local collaborations between farmers, local and international NGOs and the State, could contribute to more nuanced understandings of local knowledge, including *how* traveling knowledge is transformed at the local level. In this way, insights could be found not just in the interface between the knowledges of say, an agronomist and a farmer, but also within households, between women and men and between generations.

The ongoing harm to humans and their environments within the global agribusiness system, as we know it, demands ongoing research that supports alternatives to conventional agricultural practices and food sovereignty. At the same time, research must continue to address ways to overcome barriers to collaborations between various actors (farmers, NGOs, states, activists, social scientists, etc.), and problematize partner relationships. Challenging status quo power dynamics in these relationships is an ongoing concern if there is to be meaningful social justice changes for small-scale farm families of the global South.

Map 1: Bolivia



■ Norte de Potosi

Map 2: Province of Chayanta, Potosí, Bolivia



 Chayanta

## GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND NON-ENGLISH WORDS

### Acronyms

AOPEB	Association of Ecological Producers' Organizations of Bolivia (Asociación de Organizaciones de Productores Ecológicos de Bolivia)
CANGO	Canadian NGO (pseudonym)
CNAPE	The National Council of Organic Production ( <i>El Consejo Nacional de Producción Ecológica</i> )
EICPAL	<i>Escuela Intercultural de Capacitación en Producción Agrícola y Liderazgo</i> - pseudonym (Intercultural Training School for Leadership in Agriculture Production)
-- Comunal	The series of workshops held in the communities
-- Promotores	The workshops for “promoters”
-- Jovenes	Youth workshops, held for agronomy students
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
MAS	Movement towards Socialism (political party led by Evo Morales) Movimiento al Socialismo
ODEP	<i>Organización de Desarrollo Ecológico de Potosí</i> (Ecological Development Organization of Potosí) pseudonym
PASA-FAO	<i>Programa de apoyo a la Seguridad Alimentaria</i> – FAO (Support Program for Food Security, funded by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization)
PIAB	<i>Programa de Investigación Agrícola de Bolivia</i> (the Agricultural Research Program of Bolivia) pseudonym
SEP	Participatory Follow-up and Evaluation <i>Siguimiento y evaluación participativo</i>
USAID	United States Agency International Development

## Spanish Words

Alcalde	Mayor (in this case, at the municipal level)
Alcalde comunal	Community mayor
Buen día	Good morning
Campesino/a	Peasant/Rural Resident
Campesino á Campesino	Farmer-to-Farmer (methodology)
Chicha	Fermented corn drink
Chuño	freeze-dried potato
Don/doña	Honorifics (male/female)
Indígena	Indigenous
Indio	Indian
Ley 3525	‘Regulation and Promotion of Ecological Agricultural and Non-timber Forest Production,’ known as ‘Law 3525’
Líder	Leader
Liderazgo	Leadership
Mote	generic name for several grains cooked in water, consumed in many South American countries. In Bolivia "mote" refers to grain cooked in its husk – usually corn, but may also be broad beans (or Tarwi)
Originario	Original resident or ‘Native’
Productor(a)	Producer, in the context of the case study, synonymous with farmer
Promotor(a)	Promoter, sometimes synonymous with Leader
Saberes locales	Local Knowledge
Sindicato	Union

Sub Alcalde	District mayor (sub-mayor to the municipal mayor)
Tia	Aunt, also a term of respect to a woman older than oneself

### Quechua Words

Aguayo	Woven blanket for carrying goods or children (sometimes spelled <i>awayu</i> )
Arí	Yes
Ayllu	precolonial to present day system of organization: kin-based community governance, includes communal land
Mana	No
Pachamama	Earth Mother
Pollera	Skirt
Q'ari	Man/husband
Q'ariwarmi'	refers to gender complementarity, literally “man-woman”/”husband-wife”, it is the Quechua version of the official State version “Chachawarmi”
Wawa	Baby/Child
Warmi	Woman/wife

### Place Names

Tomacoyo	Farming community (pseudonym)
Q'ayarumi	Farming community (pseudonym)
Urku Valle	Political District (including the two communities above) (pseudonym)
Llaqta	The municipal town of Pocomachurí (pseudonym)

Pocomachurí	The municipality (one of four in the province – pseudonym)
Chayanta	A northern province in the department of Potosí
Norte de Potosí	The northern region of the department of Potosí
Llallagua	The capital city of the region, norte de Potosí
Cochabamba	The name of a larger Bolivian city, within a department with the same name to the north of Potosí



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