

Overcoming inequalities without challenging women's loyalty to the indigenous community

– Case study in the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe,
Colombia

Blanca Iris Sandoval Ferro



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Abstract

A large amount of resources are devoted by indigenous populations in Colombia to reestablish their political, cultural and territorial autonomy. There is no doubt about the commitment of indigenous men and women with such communal aims. However, the unequal power relations that women experience to participate in the social and political life of their communities lose attention in front of the discourses of these broader issues. Thus, the present thesis aims to understand how indigenous women reconcile the loyalty to their communities, while needing to bring up inequalities they experience.

Fieldwork based on participant observation and interviews was carried out in the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe Tekh Ksxaw in the northern Cauca department, Colombia. Feminist and postcolonial theories guide this thesis to uncover the forms that inequalities take and the mechanisms that allow their reproduction. The study also explores the effects of dominant discourses on women's agency in the struggle for gender equality.

In addition, this thesis contributes to research on forms of discursive colonization, and study of organizing principles of the public and the private spheres.

Keywords: Cauca, Colombia, agency, discursive colonization, gender, indigenous woman, power relations, public sphere, social and political participation.

Resumen

Importante cantidad de recursos son destinados por los pueblos indígenas de Colombia en el restablecimiento de su autonomía política, cultural y territorial. No hay duda sobre el compromiso de hombres y mujeres indígenas con estos objetivos comunes. Sin embargo, relaciones inequitativas de poder que mujeres experimentan para participar en la vida social y política de sus comunidades, pierden atención frente a discursos sobre dichas luchas. Así, la presente tesis busca entender cómo las mujeres indígenas reconcilian la lealtad a sus comunidades y la necesidad de abordar las desigualdades que ellas experimentan.

El trabajo de campo de esta tesis se basa en observación participativa y entrevistas realizadas en el Resguardo Indígena Nasa Kiwe Tekh Ksxaw, norte del departamento de Cauca, Colombia. Teorías feministas y postcoloniales guían esta tesis para revelar formas que toman las desigualdades y mecanismos que permiten su reproducción. Este trabajo también explora los efectos de discursos dominantes sobre la agencia de la mujer en la lucha por la igualdad de género en este contexto.

Además, el trabajo contribuye con investigación sobre formas de colonización discursiva, y el estudio de principios organizativos de las relaciones en las esferas pública y privada.

Palabras clave: Cauca, Colombia, agencia, colonización discursiva, esfera pública, género, mujer indígena, participación social y política, relaciones de poder.

Table of contents

1 Introduction.....	8
1.1 Aim of the study and research interest	8
1.2 Indigenous women in social and political life	9
1.3 About the present thesis	11
2 Theoretical framework	13
2.1 Gender	13
2.1.1 Cultural relativism and colonial discourse	14
2.1.2 Gender in the context of indigenous movements	16
2.1.3 Participation of women in the politics of indigenous movements	18
2.2 Personal and collective agency	19
2.3 Women, Culture and Development	20
2.4 Concept of the private and the public	20
3 Methodology	22
3.1 Methods	22
3.1.1 Participant observation.....	22
3.1.2 Interviewing.....	23
3.2 Analysis of the data: Discourse analysis	23
3.3 My role as researcher	24
4 Empirical field	26
4.1 The indigenous movement in Colombia	26
4.2 The indigenous movement in northern Cauca.....	27
4.3 Indigenous Regional Program of Woman in northern Cauca.....	28
4.4 The Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe Tekh Ksxaw.....	29
4.4.1 Social and political life of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe	30
4.4.2 Nuevo México	31
4.4.3 The Program of Woman of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe	32
5 Findings and analysis	34
5.1 Private and the public spheres in the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe.....	34
5.2 The social and political life, a field dominated by men	36
5.2.1 A case of women´s introduction in the politics of the indigenous movement.....	36
5.2.2 Passing by to the public sphere	38
5.2.3 Women gossip and men discuss	39
5.2.4 Technical language of men	40
5.3 Resistance to men´s dominance	41
5.4 The few spaces of discussion for women.....	43
6 Final discussion and conclusions	46
References.....	50
Appendix 1 Model of the survey	53
Appendix 2 Glossary	60

Table of figures

Figure 1 Localization of land areas of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe. Source: Santander municipality.....	12
Figure 2 View of Nuevo México, land area of the Community Nasa Kiwe. Photo: Blanca Sandoval April 2013.....	12
Figure 3 General assembly of the Community Nasa Kiwe. Photo: Blanca Sandoval April 2013.....	33
Figure 4 Localization of indigenous communities in Colombia. Source: Contraloria 2012....	33

Abbreviations

ACIN	Association of Indigenous Governments of Northern Cauca In Spanish, Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca
CRIC	Indigenous Regional Council of Cauca In Spanish, Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca
ONIC	National Indigenous Organization of Colombia In Spanish, Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia
SGP	System of General Participation In Spanish, Sistema General de Participaciones

Notes

- Translations from Spanish to English that appear in the present thesis are made by the author.
- The names of the informants have been changed to fictitious names.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Aim of the study and research interest

“... and we, the women, have gained a lot of space... but we have many limitations... We have been limited in our spaces of capacity development. There is always discrimination, the women gathered, as they were saying in the indigenous government; there are those women gossipers. Because we have always been named like gossipers. If we meet to talk, it is said that we are talking about the husbands, the men; that we are resentful; that the husbands have abandoned us and that is why we are in that way”, Pilar, coordinator of Program of Woman of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe Tekh Ksxaw¹, April 7 2013.

The extract above is part of an interview in which Pilar, based on her experience as member of the indigenous government and at present as a leader of the Program of Woman in the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe, argues that women face limitations to participate in the social and political life. The Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe is located in Santander de Quilichao municipality, in northern Cauca department of Colombia. The Regional Program of Woman and related communities' local Programs of Woman, are part of the operative component of the indigenous movement in northern Cauca. The Program of Woman in Nasa Kiwe aims to raise awareness within the community, on issues of women's political rights, reduction of domestic violence against women and the creation of local livelihoods especially for women.

Based on my empirical material, and reflected in Pilar's interview, one can find three main limitations experienced by women in this context. First, the functions of women as wives and main carers of the family prevent women from participating in the social and political life. Second, the participation of men and women in public spaces is framed according to the attributes assigned to both sexes in this context, i.e. women as reserved and supportive, men as talkative and leaders. Hence, a woman who behaves with attributes out of the norm, for example women who question and talk with a strong voice, are seen inappropriate by both men and some women. In addition, some men belittle discussion spaces of women considering them as anti-men forums for gossiping and resentful women. This situation discourages women to continue participating and influences the way they participate in the social and political life, i.e. in the indigenous government, in communal meetings or regional projects. Thirdly, among women there is a lack of support to tackle these issues and to question male leadership. This barrier in the struggle for a change can be traced partly to a fear of being negatively labelled by both men and some women, and partly to avoid losing benefits mainly managed by male leaders. Such benefits include for instance jobs, inclusion in projects and academic scholarships.

A meeting with a group of 12 women, also coordinators of the Programs of Woman from different indigenous communities from northern Cauca, showed that in addition women leaders feel they have little influence over the political life of their communities (women's

¹ In the rest of the document, I will refer to Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe or Community Nasa Kiwe.

meeting on February 25 2013). In a discussion about the impacts of the gold mining on women's lives, one woman expressed:

“What to do if one does not want it and the same members [of the indigenous community] are practicing mining... We, women, can organize ourselves, but what to do if the indigenous government gives the permissions”, women's meeting on February 25 2013.

These narratives demonstrate unequal power relations in the participation of women and men in the social and political life of indigenous communities in northern Cauca department in Colombia. Women in this context are experiencing difficulties to participate in the public sphere and they are envisioning a more inclusive involvement. The present thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing initiatives, reflections and questions in which indigenous women in northern Cauca are engaged. Concepts of gender, discursive colonization, agency and participation will thereby be applied to create an understanding of these processes. Consequently, the research question of the present thesis is:

How do women bring up questions of gender inequalities vis a vis men without challenging their loyalty to an indigenous community?

In the context of the social and political life of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe, the following sub-questions will be explored:

1. *How do women participate in the social and political life?*
2. *How are unequal power relations reproduced?*
3. *How do indigenous women envision their involvement in the social and political life?*

The sections below contain a literature review and a general background of the indigenous population in Colombia, as well as the context of the research. At the end of the chapter I present the disposition of document.

1.2 Indigenous women in social and political life

The field of gender studies shows that women in both developed and developing contexts, experience inequalities in access to resources, opportunities and self determination that deserve to be understood and voiced. Esther Duflo investigates different cases from around the world, mainly from Asia and Africa. In her analysis about correlations between women's empowerment and development she draws the conclusion that women in general lack access to education, labour market opportunities, political representation and legal rights (2011, p. 3). Seema Arora-Jonsson (2013) sheds light on ways of discrimination experienced by women in the context of Sweden, a country recognized as a gender equal society. Sarah Radcliffe and Andrea Pequeño state that “Latin American states are structured around hierarchical intersecting relations of class, race and gender with ‘first class’ citizenship reserved for white, male, urban and wealthier individuals and ‘second class citizenship’ for indigenous peoples, individuals of Afro-descent, women, and rural and poorer groups”. Thus, in Latin American context indigenous women are more disadvantaged than non-indigenous women and indigenous men in terms of access to resources and services (2010, p. 984-985).

Indigenous movements in Latin America have been both a significant issue in the politics of the region and an important topic of study for academics. François Correa argues the asymmetrical conditions of indigenous in the social and cultural context of Colombia has been an inevitable reality that anthropologists have tackled (2006, p. 37-38). Arturo Escobar understands indigenous, women and environmentalist movements as part of anti-globalization social movements that have alternative ways to construct the world (2004, p. 219, 223).

However, the participation of women in the political life of indigenous communities in Latin America has only recently started to gain attention within the academia, mainly

derived from interest on gender studies and the relation women and environment (Ulloa 2007, p. 18; Méndez 2007, p. 35). Olga Luz Restrepo states that in Colombia and most of the American continents, ethnicity and gender have been difficult to relate to (2005, p. 14).

Astrid Ulloa, Luis Alfredo Londoño and Olga Luz Restrepo are Colombian researchers in themes of gender, development, environment and the indigenous populations in the country. Additionally, Georgina Méndez, a Mexican researcher, has looked into Colombian cases in her studies on gender and indigenous women.

Astrid Ulloa writes that an important feature of indigenous movements in Colombia is that their cultural identity is based on the relation between culture and territory. Their political struggles related to the environment are intrinsically linked with the right to territory and maintenance of their natural resources (2001, p. 12-13). Similarly, for example, in northern Cauca the indigenous movement is against gold mining in their territories, arguing for the preservation of the mother earth.

Indigenous women in Colombia have always been contributing to indigenous struggles and movements (Ulloa 2007, p. 17). Since the 1970s there is evidence of indigenous women claiming more participation in the social and political life. Luis Alfredo Londoño cites an anonymous indigenous woman from an article titled *Indigenous women in the struggle*, in 1976². Londoño mentions that this was the first article published by the newspaper Unidad Indígena (Indigenous Unity) the newspaper of the indigenous communities of Colombia, addressed to women. At that time she questioned that women, as also some men, believed women's roles in terms of getting married, have children and help out to do some material work. The participation in meetings and discussions were on the other hand only reserved for men. She argued that women lacked "activity, strength, clearness and organization" to fight under equal conditions with men in the political struggles of land recovery for instance. She requested women to get into the men's functions of participation and management of the social and political life to configure a stronger unity to face their struggles (UI No 18, XII/1976 pág.8 cited in Londoño 1999, p. 67).

But demands of women about their inclusion in the social and political life have been careful to avoid breaking down the borders of a vision of complementarity between men and women that dictates the Nasa cosmo-vision³ or ideology, and the unity that the indigenous movement requires to face their struggles. The demands of indigenous women are kept framed within these important notions; the Nasa cosmo-vision and the unity of the movement. Women have been explaining inequalities due to effects of external influences to destabilize the movements for instance, and not due to possible inequalities and discrimination generated from inside.

The anonymous indigenous woman, cited by Londoño, argued for instance, that "the system surrounding us has created an artificial world" in which women were kept aside from political decision-making. In the woman's opinion, this can be understood as a strategy to weaken the indigenous movement. The woman refers to such system as the place of the "exploiters" and the "enemy" of the indigenous struggles (Londoño 1999, p. 67).

Avelina Pancho expresses correspondingly that the relationship between men and women, their roles and responsibilities have been historically defined by laws and ancestral values. There are activities like cooking and farming that can be conducted by both men and women. But certain activities are exclusively allocated to men or to women according to cosmo-vision. She does not specify which kind of activities. Besides, in most indigenous cosmo-visions, relationships between men and women are framed in terms of duality and harmony. She adds however, that in some communities such values have been altered due

² During 1976 and 1984 the newspaper was published by the Indigenous Regional Council of Cauca, CRIC. Afterwards, the newspaper passed to be managed by the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia, ONIC, when it was created in the 1980s (Londoño 1999, p. 63).

³ Nasa or Páez is the main indigenous ethnic group in northern Cauca. During this research people used the term cosmo-vision to refer to the principles, beliefs, traditions and rituals that configure the ideology of being a Nasa indigenous. In the rest of the document I will continue using the term when referring to this ideology.

to the external influence (2007, p. 55, 59). Pancho herself is a Nasa leader with advanced studies and a career in the indigenous movement in Colombia.

The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia, ONIC, acknowledges in their webpage that the development of the indigenous movement in the country has been significantly fostered by the initiatives and the activism of the indigenous communities of Cauca department (ONIC b n.d.). Cauca is home to 19% of the total indigenous population of Colombia, which in turn represents almost 22% of Cauca's total population (Contraloría 2012, p. 14; DANE 2010a, p. 2). The Nasa or Páez is one of the biggest indigenous ethnic groups of the country, mainly concentrated in Cauca. The creation of the Indigenous Regional Council of Cauca, CRIC, in the 1970s was the starting point for the development of the national movement represented by the ONIC (ONIC b n.d.). The demands made by indigenous communities since the 1970s have been related to the recognition and reestablishment of their cultural, territorial and political identity and autonomy (ONIC a n.d.; CRIC b n.d.). Based on events related to the socio-politics of the indigenous movement in northern Cauca, they claim that first the Spanish colonization and legacy, and now the capitalist model that dominates the course of the country, have been the causes of their cultural, social and political detriment. In addition, the internal conflict due to illegal armed groups and illegal crops has affected people in rural areas in Cauca where the indigenous communities live.

1.3 About the present thesis

The present thesis is based on interviews of people and participant observation of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe, carried out during February 16 to April 7 2013. The social and political life of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe is linked to the indigenous movement of Colombia, more specifically, to regional politics of the Association of Indigenous Governments of Northern Cauca, ACIN. Therefore places and views of actors beyond the borders of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe are also dealt with in this thesis.

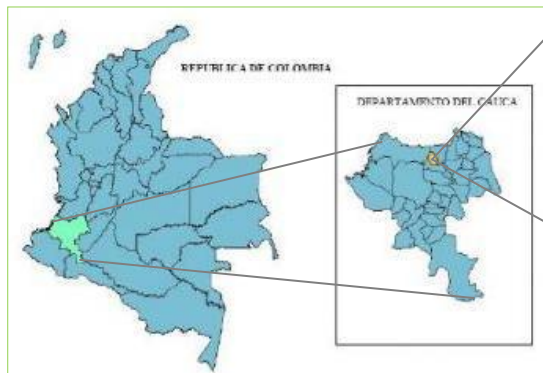
Most of the members (mainly grouped in families) of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe live in Santander town, and to a lesser degree, in three areas belonging to the community that are located around the Santander town, in the Santander de Quilichao municipality, northern Cauca department, South-western Colombia. This is a mountainous region rich in water, forest and mineral resources such as gold. Santander town is an important centre of business and services supplier for northern Cauca. It is situated an hour drive from Popayán and Cali; two major cities of the region (see Figure 1). Santander de Quilichao municipality has 86.502 inhabitants, 46.353 in the main town of Santander (DANE 2010b, p. 1). The headquarters of the Association of Indigenous Governments of Northern Cauca, ACIN, is also located in Santander town. The north of Cauca is formed by 10 municipalities including Santander de Quilichao.

In the present thesis I analyze the participation of indigenous women in the social and political life of the Community Nasa Kiwe. Empirical data were gathered through ethnographic methods, such as participant observations and interviews. I draw on feminist and postcolonial theorists such as Chandra Mohanty, Karin Barad, Sarah Radcliffe and Seema Arora-Jonsson. I refer in particular to Colombian researchers dedicated to study gender, development, environment and ethnicity in the region, such as Astrid Ulloa, Luis Alfredo Londoño and Olga Luz Restrepo. My main focus is on the context specific analysis, study of power relations, and detection of discourses and its effects. This led me to uncover subtle forms of inequalities that limit the participation of women in the public sphere. Connections between unequal power relations, gender and dominant discourses were also identified.

From here on the document is organized in five chapters. Chapter two contains the theoretical framework and chapter three contains the methodological outline. In the fourth chapter historical data and socio-political organization of the indigenous movement in Colombia are described. It also offers a background about women's participation in the social and political life in Colombia, specifically from the area of this study, i.e. the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe. In the following chapter contains the findings and the analysis. The last chapter is dedicated to a final discussion and main conclusion of this thesis.



Colombia in the world



Cauca department in Colombia, and Santander de Quilichao in Cauca.



Santander de Quilichao municipality and land areas of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe.

Figure 1 Localization of land areas of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe. Source: Santander municipality



Figure 2 View of Nuevo México, land area of the Community Nasa Kiwe. Photo: Blanca Sandoval April 2013

2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that guides this thesis is based on feminist and postcolonial literature. It includes studies on the intersections between gender, ethnicity and development. Most studies derive from scholar's interest in dynamics of indigenous movements in Latin America. These gender studies led me to think about power relations present in people's interactions; the understanding that a whole consists of diversities that deserve context-specific analysis and not generalizations; and finally, the search for connections between past and present, between narratives and practices.

The theoretical framework is organized in four sections. The first section starts by presenting three approaches to study gender that have been used in this thesis. Then, works on cultural relativism and colonial discourse are introduced to serve as a point of departure to approach inequalities in contexts of traditional beliefs or practices. To generate a framework about challenges that women face in this context, studies about gender and women's participation in relation to indigenous movements in Latin America and Colombia were reviewed.

The second section covers a study on personal and collective agency of women in the struggle for gender equality. In the subsequent section, an approach about development sheds the light on the necessity to consider the intersections between gender, ethnicity and post-colonial relations. The final section presents a framework to search for the meaning of private and public spheres within the context of this thesis.

2.1 Gender

Joan Wallach Scott argues that gender is a category of analysis in the extent that gender is used to "think critically" about the production of the meanings of sex and sexual differences (2010, p. 10, 13). Jo Little finds it relevant to approach gender as a social category in the field of rural geography. This has allowed the examination of difference and diversities in the study of identity, beyond the categories of women and men (2002, p. 41, 178-180). In this thesis, gender is understood as an analytical category since it is used to study the organization of power relations (Arora-Jonsson 2013, p. 5, 31). This will allow me to further discuss how the organization of power in the social and political life in the Nasa Kiwe takes place.

I will refer to gender following three interrelated approaches given by Seema Arora-Jonsson in her book *Gender, Development and Environmental Governance* (2013). First, gender refers to a description of society in terms of attributes, characteristics and roles assigned to the sexes (2013, p. 4, 31). In the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe, identified attributes assigned to men and women, were also found to be expected in their participation in public spaces.

Secondly, gender refers "to studying the organization of power relations between and among men and women" (Arora-Jonsson 2013, p. 4, 31), in relation to the social and political life of indigenous communities. Following Michel Foucault, power is understood

as something permanently immersed in individuals' interactions taking the form of a "net-like" series of relations, circulating between bodies, in different directions and in all human life spheres. Foucault also states that power is not possessed; individuals exercise power and experience its effects (Barker 1998, p. 27-28). Hence, a way to evidence the existence of power is by tracing how people's subjectivity is transformed or reproduced by the effects of power contained in social practices and relationships (Foucault 1979, p. 26-27 and Knights and Willmott 1989, p. 541 cited in Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000, 226-227).

Arora-Jonsson states that power relations are embedded in categories of social differences like age, class, caste, occupation and sexual differences. She states that "gender was, and always is, entangled with and never separate from other forms of social difference" (2013, p. 5). For example, a discussion about mining exploitation provoked a group of women to express inequalities they were experiencing or knew about, in indigenous communities in northern Cauca.

Thirdly, Arora-Jonsson studies "how gender becomes an 'issue' in environmental governance and development, a problem that needs to be solved" (2013, p. 5). Gender as an issue in the social and political life of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe, became obvious to me during the fieldwork of this thesis. It was present in narratives of indigenous women. Although they did not use the word gender, they expressed their perceptions of situations that favour men, which concern the women.

In the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe the word gender was hardly heard in the speeches of men or women during the fieldwork. Gender as a word does not exist in the Nasa-Yuwe, the language of the Nasa ethnic group, according to the ex-governor Arturo and narratives from a meeting with 12 women from different communities of northern Cauca. I perceived through their narratives that the word gender was foreign for them, since it does not exist in the Nasa Yuwe language. Gender is perceived as an outsider word coming from the non-indigenous society, used to segregate people into male and female. In the meeting with the women, they defined gender based on the Nasa cosmo-vision and their reality, as relationships of duality, complementarity and harmony between indigenous men and women, and with the nature, and without discrimination.

This definition resulted from a discussion about impacts of gold mining on women's life from a gender perspective, in which the 12 women ended up exposing several unequal power relations that they had experienced or knew had happened in their communities. The women came to talk about *gender* because an external facilitator had suggested doing so, despite that some women did not understand or were not familiar to the concept of gender (women's meeting, February 25 2013; interview with Arturo, April 4 2013). The case will be further presented in section 5.4.

This understanding of gender, supported by elements of the Nasa cosmo-vision and existing unequal power relations, highlights the central issue of the research question of the present thesis; how indigenous women, committed to their culture and political struggles, at the same time handle inequalities in their communities.

2.1.1 *Cultural relativism and colonial discourse*

The social and political life of indigenous communities in Colombia is grounded in customs and traditions, and political struggles against inequalities they have faced historically. In studying gender and power relations in this context, one can misplace the focus and fall into reductionist arguments to explain inequalities. Therefore, I believe it is important to define my standpoint to approach cultural relativism and colonial discourses in the analysis of gender inequalities.

In the book *Ecofeminism* by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, the authors state that the ecofeminist perspective does not accept cultural relativism that justifies violence, patriarchal and exploitative institutions and customs against women. They assert that "for cultural relativists, traditions, expressed in language, religion, custom, food habits, man-woman relations are always considered as particular, and beyond criticism". They suggest

that the way to remove oneself from cultural relativism is in the hands of the directly affected men and women, in their activities and struggles for subsistence (Mies & Shiva 1993, p. 11-12).

Chandra Mohanty in her article *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, argues that western feminist writing “discursively colonize the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world”. That is, for instance, the tendency of some feminists to assume women as a singular or homogeneous group on the basis of a shared oppression. Rather than disclose the historical and social context in which differences among women might be informing that not all of them are victims or oppressed. She indicates that scholars writing about their own cultures are not excluded to commit discursive colonization (1988, p. 62, 65-66).

Mohanty analyses a variety of writings from themes on female genital mutilation to Women in International Development, in which she focuses and finds connections in the way that the authors represent third-world women. Some authors are for instance Fran Hosten, Maria Rosa Cutrufelli, Juliette Mincez, Beverley Lindsay and Patricia Jeffery (1988, p. 66-74). Based on such analysis, Mohanty discusses three methodologies that she has found to be applied in western feminist writings to demonstrate the oppression of women by men. She criticises all three approaches for their lack of historical and context specific analysis, which result in inaccurate assumptions. The first methodology equates the use of the veil by Muslim women to the assertion Muslim women are oppressed. She argues that this disregards historical meaning and context-specific analysis of the practice.

In the article *Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others*, Lila Abu-Lughod expresses a similar critique. She argues that a piece of clothing could not be the main reason for western societies to value women’s freedom and take on a role of saviours. Instead, what Abu-Lughod considers important is to find the way “to deal with difference without accepting the passivity implied by cultural relativism”. Along her article, Abu-Lughod elaborates about the historical origin and meaning of burqas for Muslim women, and also analyses the positions of Afghan women feminist and activists about their desires to reform or rebuild their society (2002, p. 786-788).

In the second methodology, Mohanty asserts that “concepts like reproduction, the sexual division of labour, the family, marriage, household, patriarchy, etc.,” have been used to elucidate subordination and devaluation of women, without delving into the cultural and historical context of concrete cases. The existence of sexual division of labour for instance, is assumed by some feminists as universal indicator of subjugation of women. Mohanty states however, that the sexual division of labour “indicates the differential value placed on ‘men’s work’ versus ‘women’s work’”. This also changes “radically” from one context to another. Hence, sex division of labour is not sufficient to explain the subjugation of woman in the workforce. Instead, what is needed is an analysis of particular local contexts, and a “careful analysis” of what devaluation of women is about (1988, p. 75-76).

The third methodology refers to the adoption of the logic of universal categories into empirical studies of gender differences. That is, take universal categories like nature:culture and female:male, to explain specific categories contained in the empirical material. This results in reductionism of context-specific categories that might be informed by fieldwork (Mohanty 1988, p. 77).

Frequently, men and women during my fieldwork brought into the discussions some concepts of the Nasa cosmo-vision, e.g. complementarity, harmony, equilibrium and duality. They used such notions to evoke the correct way of relationships, for instance, between couples or between members of the indigenous government. They recurrently also stress their belonging to the Nasa ethnic group.

Melissa Marie Forbis is an American anthropologist with interest on women’s studies. In her doctoral thesis *“Never again a Mexico without us”: gender, indigenous autonomy, and multiculturalism in neoliberal Mexico*, Forbis studies the struggle for gender equality in the Zapatista movement in Mexico. She states that “Indigenous women are caught in the vise

of tradition and change or modernity... indigenous culture is dynamic and relates to practice”. In relation to the use of complementarity, Forbis questions what this type of notions mean for people who have been removed from the relations where the concept was seen as a value. From her experience in Mexico, Forbis did not find the notion of complementarity. Instead, *parejo* (“similar to” or “parity,”) was used to denote “being an equivalent, but not necessarily always *exactly* the same”. In her analysis, *parejo* derives from the notion of dignity which is central in the Zapatista movement. Dignity is about the equality regarding the opportunity to exercise power (2008, p. 150, 178-186).

The narratives of woman presented in this thesis show how women relate their lives to notions of cosmo-vision. Moreover, these narratives show how women, in addition to their traditional authorities and cosmo-vision, speak about inequalities that take place within their communities.

In the following section I will discuss issues of cultural relativism, more general in a Latin American context.

2.1.2 *Gender in the context of indigenous movements*

The understanding of gender in the context of indigenous populations in this thesis is based on the following authors, whose work is dedicated to examine the social dynamics of indigenous movements in Latin America. Olga Luz Restrepo is a Colombian journalist and researcher in topics of gender and development. She has been an advisor of the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia, ONIC, indigenous senators and the national government in the development of the women’s policy (Restrepo 2005, p. 54). Astrid Ulloa is a Colombian anthropologist and does research on topics related to indigenous movements, environment and sustainable development. She has been teaching and has been a member of different research groups in Colombia, Canada, France and Germany (Asociación Ambiente y Sociedad n.d.). Georgina Méndez is an indigenous Mexican anthropologist. She has been studying gender and indigenous women of Mexico, Ecuador and Colombia (Mujer en Red 2006).

The article of Olga Luz Restrepo titled *Citizenship, Gender and Conflict in Indigenous Populations* analyses how awareness about individual rights, especially women’s rights emerges in a context of crises and conflict. Restrepo comments that the categories of ethnicity and gender have been difficult to relate to. First, indigenous movements think about feminist discourses in terms of ideas coming from past feminism, i.e. based on ideas of a dichotomy and rival relationship between men and women, which goes against indigenous cosmo-vision. Second, Restrepo argues that scholars owe respect and carefulness to issues that involve their own cultural or value system, and the vast diversity of indigenous ethnic groups and cultures about which scholars cannot simply generalize. Still, she considers that “it is possible to talk about tendencies or common problems that indigenous women face” (2005, p. 14-15).

Restrepo points out that the discrimination experienced by women, children and elderly is even deeper within ethnic minorities. For her, indigenous women in Colombia experience multiple discrimination, both inside and outside of their societies and values system. She explains that such discrimination comes from the cultural and ideological colonization in which systems of traditions and knowledge have been left aside, giving space to different scales of values, e.g. academic knowledge and titles. Also, because struggles for collective rights and the need to be indigenous men and women together, to resist, diffuses internal voices that claim good treatment, no gender discrimination and inclusion (2005, p. 17, 36).

Furthermore, Restrepo states that in most anthropological studies and “official” discourse of indigenous populations women are considered being the ones that secure physical reproduction and cultural maintenance of the ethnicities. However there is not yet “an attitude and politic of recognition and respect, about the improvement of women’s position within the communities and organizations” (2005, p. 32). She adds that indigenous movements state “that the defence of culture is a priority and getting into the consideration

of specific rights of women generates conflicts within the communities” (Work-table Woman and Conflict 2003 cited in Restrepo 2005, p. 32).

Consequently, Restrepo asserts that indigenous ethnic groups lack their own framework to analyse and to interpret gender relations in their cultural context. This can partly be explained by a reluctance of indigenous movements to get into discussions of gender issues, since gender is seen as division between men and women, threatening the unity of the movement (2005, 18).

The work of Astrid Ulloa titled *Indigenous women: dilemmas of gender and ethnicity in Latin American scenarios* introduces the articles of five indigenous women from Centro and South America, involved in professional, academic and institutional spaces, about participation of women in indigenous movements⁴. Ulloa states that these women perceive that gender is an external category⁵ that threatens the autonomy and identity of indigenous populations, imposing external processes under the Western logic. These indigenous women believe that the category of gender contains demands of Western women, which are not the same as indigenous women’s demands. However, the claims, categories and demands of non-indigenous women are considered by indigenous women as contributions to their own construction of categories of gender, which in turn allow women to establish intercultural dialogues (2007, p. 25, 30-31).

Ulloa states that the five indigenous women in their works expressed that “cultural process between indigenous men and women respond to ancestral contexts which are considered as complementarity and equity”⁶. They also agree that “it is necessary to analyse certain cultural dynamics which have generated exclusion of indigenous women” (2007, p. 25).

Most of the papers that Ulloa looked into, the authors talk about the existence of patriarchal structures in indigenous communities, in which indigenous women have tried to gain a space. In the article of Georgina Méndez an indigenous leader expressed that when women are born they lack care because they are seen as less intelligent and valuable in labour processes than men. Furthermore, women have been denied the right to choose whom to get married to (2007, p. 39). In Eliana Huitraqueo’s article an indigenous woman mentions that she was denied education. Instead her parents sent her away to be a domestic worker. Also, she argues, decision making was a male prerogative (2007, p. 74-75).

Additionally, in the articles of Lucrecia Pisquiy (2007, p. 51), Avelina Pancho (2007, 59) and Florinda López (2007, p. 80), inequalities and exclusions of indigenous people are explained as a consequence of historical processes, namely of merging national societies with non-indigenous visions. In relation, Restrepo explains that colonization imposed attributes of “restraint, obedience, fidelity, chastity, resignation and virtue” on indigenous women, which has put them in an inferior position compared to the white woman and the members of their own culture (2005, p.31).

Restrepo argues that some indigenous discourses are focused on issues of power relations with “the State, with the other, the outsiders, the aggressors”, and that they overlook the existence of power relations within the indigenous communities. The author states that the indigenous movement demands the unity of the ethnicity to resist. It denies the diversity of its members, which already exists. For example, “that women look for alternatives – often silently- to solve their situation”. Alternatives like working in associations, migration and process of acculturation in urban contexts. Based on Restrepo’s arguments, one can

⁴ Astrid Ulloa is one of the editors of the book *Indigenous Women, Territoriality and Biodiversity in the Latin American Context* (2007), which is based on articles presented during the *Second International Seminar of Indigenous Women: territoriality and biodiversity*, held on September 2006 in the National University of Colombia, in Bogotá. Ulloa discusses the writings of five indigenous women; Georgina Méndez writes about indigenous women in Colombia and Mexico, Lucrecia Pisquiy about Costa Rica, Avelina Pancho about Colombian cases, Eliana Huitraqueo about Chile, and Florinda López about Panamá.

⁵ This reference to gender as category means gender as a notion coming from a Western type of gender equality. The indigenous women perceive this condescending, as it is considered dictating what indigenous women should do – from outside. This is different to gender as category of analysis (an academic term), which I use in the production of knowledge in this thesis.

⁶ In this document I have literally maintained equity or equality according to the writing of the authors.

understand that the indigenous movements should recognize the diversity of the population, including the existing demands for recognition of diversities (2005, p. 17).

The views of indigenous women about gender presented in the article of Ulloa (2007) have an interesting correlation with the analysis of gender in indigenous movements made by Restrepo (2005). The five indigenous women cited in the article of Ulloa perceived gender as a foreign concept which may embed ways of new colonization. At the same time, indigenous women are constructing their own categories of gender following cultural premises of “complementarity and equity” (2007, p. 25, 30-31).

On the one hand, one can understand the disinclination of indigenous women to adopt external concepts as gender equality due to aversion to colonization processes. But on the other hand, one can question to what extent such an aversion is influenced by the dominant discourse of indigenous movements about unity, which can be understood an expression of power relations.

The present thesis studies forms of unequal power relations that take place in the public sphere of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe. These forms of inequalities are not always easy to detect, and even more, to interrupt (Arora-Jonsson 2013, 34). These subtle inequalities vanish in the larger external struggles of the indigenous movement in northern Cauca.

2.1.3 *Participation of women in the politics of indigenous movements*

Now I will focus on how the participation of indigenous women look like in the indigenous movements. In this thesis, participation is understood from the perspective offered by Susan Senecah. She defines participation as the confluence between access, standing, and influence in a communicative act. The access refers to opportunities of expression and to sufficiently and appropriately understand the process, e.g. in education and information. Standing is the “legitimacy, the respect, the esteem and the consideration of all stakeholders’ perspectives”. Influence is to which extent stakeholders contributions are considered in the whole decision making process (2004, p. 23-25).

Georgina Méndez in her article *New scenarios of participation: experiences of indigenous women of México and Colombia*, states that indigenous women were restricted to the places and activities related to the family, the orchard, the socialization and transmission of the culture, and few were recognized for their participation in the struggles of indigenous movements. Just recently indigenous women have appeared in public spaces and questions about their leadership and demands are rising. Without overlooking discrimination that gives rise to political struggles of indigenous movements, Méndez emphasizes that traditions and social dynamics inside indigenous communities have limited the political participation of women. As also argued by Lynn Stephen (2001), indigenous women in Mexico decided to question indigenous traditions and male leadership, while at the same time supporting the struggle of the movement (Méndez 2007, p. 36-40).

In the case of Colombia, Méndez mentions that women have challenged traditional spaces assigned to them, like the communitarian and the domestic ones, to participate in governmental, academic and organizational institutions. To enter these new scenarios they have had to overcome their lack of political experience, knowledge about indigenous issue and rights, and the use of the Colombian National funds transferred to indigenous communities. She also states that indigenous women have been obliged to work harder to accomplish their private and public tasks (2007, p. 41-42).

What I observed during my fieldwork correlates with Méndez’ research. In general, in the context of northern Cauca, the responsibilities of women at home compete with their involvement in the social and political life. When Pilar decided to be active in the movement because she was tired of the routine of the house, she asked for support from her husband. He did not accept and they separated (interview on April 7 2013).

Méndez concludes that even though the participation of women has increased, it is conditioned to the guidelines and agendas of the indigenous organizations. “In this way

indigenous women are forced to maintain a position about it, and/or analyse the context of their participation in relation to the organizational dynamics of the indigenous movement” (2007, p. 44).

In the article *Gender, Citizenship, and the Politics of Identity*, Lynn Stephen discusses how women participating in grassroots movements in El Salvador and Mexico, constructed their collective identities. Stephen mentions that the participation of women in grassroots movements “is a constant process of negotiating difference, the need to create unitary names, symbols, and goals [which] can result in the essentialization of women as “mothers,” ... or as “Indians.”. Categories as “mothers” or “Indians” respond to a political necessity of movements to project “sameness” to outsiders, but they do not inform about internal processes of identification. Instead, the contested discursive field to negotiate differences and create a collective identity was for women in Mexico the construction of the notion of “autonomy” (2001, p. 54-55, 65).

Stephen traces the participation of indigenous women in the process of construction and negotiation of the Law on Indigenous Rights and Culture between the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation, EZLN) and the Mexican government during 1994 and 2001. In this process, indigenous women contributed to broaden the meaning of indigenous autonomy, questioning aspects related to internal practices and decision-making modes of indigenous communities. The notion of autonomy produced by indigenous women was clear in recognising and demanding the “physical and psychological integrity of women’s bodies and reproductive decision making [, which] are linked to the right to land, property, and participation in political decision making in all arenas” (2001, p. 60-61).

However, the accords and proposals of the EZLN and finally the approved Law on Indigenous Rights and Culture in 2001 overlooked the demands proclaimed by indigenous women regarding “the democratization of the home and sexual violence”. Nonetheless, Stephen states that the networks that indigenous women created across the country “have lives of their own”. Stephen considers that the contribution of women has “begun to carve out a space and a political vision that links home, community, and nation to a new framework for being indigenous in Mexico”, opening new possibilities of political spaces for women in general (2001, p. 63-64).

Women in northern Cauca participate in the social and political life of their communities, and have spaces of capacity development as the Regional Program of Woman. However, as Stephen suggests, collective identities do not inform about internal processes of identification where power relations operate. Thus, the participation of women in the social and political life of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe and the Regional Program of Woman is explored in this thesis.

2.2 Personal and collective agency

The work of Seema Arora-Jonsson in the article *Discordant Connections: Discourses on Gender and Grassroots Activism in Two Forest Communities in India and Sweden*, shows that dominant discourses about equality and modernization influence how women understand, recognize and respond to unequal power relations, which at the same time influence women’s collective identity and agency.

Doing a participatory inquiry, Arora-Jonsson found that women in Drevdagen, Sweden, perceived themselves as autonomous, modern, working women, not disadvantaged by being women, and equal to men on personal and individual levels. But when it came to issues of forest management, which is an important economic part of the village, women were neglected and excluded from the decision making. It was difficult for women to acknowledge such discrimination and they felt embarrassed to openly express inequalities through formal spaces in a society highly recognized as equal.

In Nayagarth, India, women were excluded from decision making in forest issues as well, but gender was recognized as an issue. In contrast to the Swedish case, women in Nayagarth were more open to recognize and challenge discriminating structures collectively. This included sensitive topics as violence and dowry. Despite their confidence and success in the public spaces, under a solid collective identity, they were subject to hierarchical practices of respect to older males at home, as individuals. In this respect, Arora-Jonsson concludes that discrimination takes many different forms and that there is not necessarily direct correlation between personal and collective agency that leads to emancipation (2009, p. 232-234).

The reestablishment of cultural, political and territorial autonomy, from the Spanish colonization to contemporary capitalist model of development, reshapes dominant discourses and practices in the social and political life of indigenous communities in northern Cauca. Gender is not mentioned here, but there is a Regional Program of Woman that aims for “equity and justice for women and men” (ACIN c.n.d.). I will therefore look into the Regional Program of Woman in order to understand how it relates to gender and power relations, as individuals and collectively.

2.3 Women, Culture and Development

Development is a concept that did not appear in the language of my informants. But indigenous men and women were concerned and mobilizing resources to pursue something that could be called development. For example, people in Nuevo México were pursuing the improvement of housing conditions. Also the indigenous government Nasa Kiwe in cooperation with the ACIN, was establishing a local production and marketing of products. Hence, this section gives the theoretical framework to understand the organizational processes of indigenous population in which indigenous women are also participating and contributing.

Sarah Radcliffe and Andrea Pequeño analyse development approaches directed to indigenous women, in their article *Ethnicity, Development and Gender: Tsáchila Indigenous Women in Ecuador*. The main critique made by the authors is that approaches as ethnodevelopment and Gender and Development, GAD, have not been comprehensive enough to challenge the intersections of gender and ethnicity. They argue that indigenous women are overlooked as women in ethnodevelopment, and ignored as indigenous in GAD.

Radcliffe and Pequeño state that for indigenous women “disadvantage is explained not by the cultural tradition of their ethnic group nor merely by racism of dominant society, but examining how indigenous women are made as subjects of rights and development (or not) in relation to indigenous men, non-indigenous woman and non-indigenous men” (2010, p. 985). The proposal of the authors is to look for what indigenous women envision with development, which the authors argue, differs from current development policy and practice. And to consider development as the intersections of gender, ethnicity and post-colonial relations (2010, p. 985-987, 1011).

To a certain degree this thesis deals with the intersections mentioned by Radcliffe and Pequeño. Despite the emphasis that the indigenous communities have on broader struggles with the State or capitalist agents in northern Cauca, inequalities in the organization of power in the public life emerged as an issue, an issue of gender, among the women I met. Thus, this thesis will illustrate that gender is also an important issue in this context.

2.4 Concept of the private and the public

These are concepts generally used to denote the world of the personal, “exclusive, selective and not open to all”, the private, e.g. the home, the family, the indoor. The public has been related to the “domain that is open to all and governed by universal norms, and in particular

to the state, conceived of as a collective body of citizens”. The private and the public have been seen as separate spheres of activity, and quite frequently in opposition. Feminist in the 1970s and 1980s for instance, argued that “the exclusion of women had been legitimized by the distinction between the private and the public”. The private was a realm out of the scrutiny of the law and the state, where inequalities against women could not be questioned and challenged (Mahajan 2009, p. 133-134, 138).

Ruth Lister refers to the private sphere as a female domain associated to the ‘ethic of care’, and the public sphere as a male sphere associated to the ‘ethic of justice’. She also asserts that: “women’s activism is breaking down boundaries between the public and the private” (Lister 1997, p. 101-110 cited in Arora-Jonsson 2013, p. 20, 221).

In her book *Gender, Development and Environmental Governance*, Arora-Jonsson states that the ‘ethic of care’ and the ‘ethic of justice’, the private and the public, are indivisible. In the cases she studies from India and Sweden “local development and forest governance could not be separated from the care work of women and men in the community”. Arora-Jonsson explains that through the alternative spaces created by women to take up issues of development in their communities, they brought together issues of interrelation of private and public (2013, p. 217, 221).

Arora-Jonsson states further that “the public and the private might be regulated by similar relationships but they are organized by principles that serve different purposes”. For instance, a couple in a public space could be connected by logic of remuneration, because they run a company together, but in the private life they could be tied by love and loyalty (adapted from Arora-Jonsson 2013, p. 222). Such organizing principles may exist or not, they are not predefined or given, but when they exist, power relationships change from one sphere to another, following unpredictable patterns (2013, p. 222).

In the present thesis, the notions of the ‘ethic of care’ and the ‘ethic of justice’ are starting points to depict what could be private and public in the context of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe. They will also enable me to examine how the public and the private are connected and overlapping in this context. Furthermore, in this thesis I will identify organizing principles that may be determining relationships in the private that potentially can explain attributes of women in the public sphere.

3 Methodology

I depart from the idea that the empirical data of this thesis are the base to search for: how women understand the public sphere and perceive their involvement, how women are able to participate, and how women and men act within and give shape to the public sphere.

This necessitates a qualitative approach and the use of ethnographic methods which are suitable to search for content and processes (Russell 2006, p. 233, 385).

The collection of data was carried out in several locations of Santander de Quilichao and Caloto municipalities, in the Cauca department, Colombia, in interviews and participant observations of events connected to the social and political life of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe. The fieldwork was carried out during February 16 and April 7 2013. Below I present the outline of the methods to gather and analyse my data as well as reflections on my position as a researcher.

3.1 Methods

This research is based on participant observations, informal conversations, unstructured and structured interviews. The collection of data pursued narratives of people about their expectations and experiences related to communitarian and the indigenous movement developments. The views and experiences of the members of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe are valuable, hence an effort was made to interview as many men and women as possible.

3.1.1 *Participant observation*

I am from Colombia myself and I have been working in different occasions during 2004 and 2011 in the area of the study. Hence, I know the language, have profound background knowledge about the context and I already knew people from the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe. For example, I knew about the functioning of Santander de Quilichao municipality and the political struggles of indigenous communities in Santander.

However, doing this fieldwork, living with a nice family in Nuevo México and being quite flexible with my time, enabled me to participate in several meetings and get engaged with people. This provided me with deeper understanding of the context than I had before.

I did participant observations continuously. I could observe gender and power relations, main issues of general interest, the dynamics of the indigenous socio-political organization and discourses about natural resources and development. These more formal participant observation situations however were the following:

- Three sessions of the course on Women, Territory and Economy, framed in the Regional Program of Woman of the ACIN, February 25 and 26, and March 19 2013, in La Selva village, Caloto municipality, Cauca (east of Santander municipality, see Figure 1).

- One meeting with a group of 12 women, coordinators of the Programs of Woman from different indigenous communities from northern Cauca, February 25, in La Selva village.
- One meeting of the Regional Program of Woman to plan and coordinate the local celebration of the International Day of Women on May 8 and the Congress for Peace from April 19 to 22 in Bogotá, Colombia's capital. The meeting was held in Santander de Quilichao main town in March 1.
- Three community assemblies of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe developed in La María, March 3 and 17, and April 7.
- Three communitarian meetings to discuss ongoing issues of Nuevo México. They were held in the local school of Nuevo México, on March 14 and 21, and April 3.
- Four meetings of the Program of Woman of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe, during the days February 28, March 21, 24 and 28. They took place in Nuevo México.

3.1.2 *Interviewing*

With the indigenous governor, Omar, we agreed to develop a survey. This survey contained an analysis of the state of housing, water and sanitation that the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe needed for project proposals⁷. Most of the inhabited houses in Nuevo México were surveyed, 51 of a total 52. Insights to design the survey were taken from models used in water, sanitation and housing sectors, feedback from the Governor, my Supervisor in Colombia, Luis Alfonso Hurtado, and the architect Sandra Rincón, who is a former colleague of mine with experience from projects in indigenous communities (see model of the survey in Appendix 1).

Three residents of Nuevo México accompanied the realization of half of the survey and another helped me to process a part of the survey. The survey served me mainly as background information, but also was a way to enter the community and get myself accompanied to living there and get to know my informants.

In total ten unstructured interviews were made. I had interviews in which people talked about what they wanted, and I made questions of my interest. I asked my informants for permission to use the information for the analysis in my thesis. All my interviewees were supportive and nobody denied permission.

In addition, opportunities to do informal interviews were at hand while going to some place or during the survey. These interviews provided me with information about people's engagement in projects, life experiences, views about the communitarian and indigenous movement, and beliefs connected to cosmo-vision.

3.2 Analysis of the data: Discourse analysis

In order to answer my research questions I use a discourse analysis to examine the empirical data. Discourse analysis aims to identify how individual subjects negotiate their way through discursive structures/meanings (Stapleton & Wilson 2004: 46 cited in Bacchi 2005, p. 199).

'Making meaning' can be understood through Karen Barad's thoughts on discursive practices. They are part of the ongoing reconfiguration of the world. A discourse is "what constrains and enables what can be said". Humans and nonhumans are permanently giving meanings, boundaries and properties to the world. She asserts that humans are part of "the world in its open-ended becoming" (2003, p. 819-821). What makes the phenomenon

⁷ The Excel file with the survey's information and a report of the survey which contains results and analysis, were submitted to the indigenous governor of the Community Nasa Kiwe and two representatives of the communitarian water supply committee in May 2013 for their use.

complex is that subject agency in this light must be considered a cause as well as a consequence of discourses.

Starting from the empirical material, the discourse analysis of this thesis has been carried out studying and interpreting what people say and do, and why. The aim has been to see the effects of conversations and interactions in people's agency. At the same time I looked into how and why conversations and discussions were altered.

Correspondingly, during the fieldwork it was found that just one piece of reality was not enough to make conclusions, regardless how determinant an event seemed. Reflection and further questioning of past events revealed different understandings. For instance, from my participant observations in two meetings of the Program of Woman Nasa Kiwe, I had the impression that its members had handed over the control of the group to a male leader (meetings on March 21 and 24 2013). However, in a conversation with Pilar, the coordinator of the Program, I was given a wider understanding of what happened (interview on March 28) (see case in section 5.3). This shows the importance of continuously questioning what seems to be true at some moment.

Since the research questions of this thesis relate to power relations, special attention has been given to understand how power relations are exercised, negotiated and how they influence decision making and practices of people. As said previously, discourses are produced by intra-actions between humans and non-humans accordingly to Barad (2003), but they also produce subject positions. They are thus tightly interrelated with the relation between power and knowledge. They influence subject's practices and ways of thinking (Foucault 1990 cited in Arora-Jonsson 2013, p. 33).

The discourse analysis was supported by secondary information. This included the review of historical background material on women in the social and political life of indigenous communities in Colombia, as well as motives and emergence of the indigenous movement there. The purpose of this search was to understand the historical context of the issues of interest of the present thesis.

3.3 My role as researcher

This is my first thesis in a social science discipline, which means stepping into a new role. I have been working in the field of water and sanitation development, in which the relationship with stakeholders was mediated, in most cases, by tangible benefits. During my fieldwork it was challenging to understand my new role as a researcher where knowledge is the basic output, benefiting me at first glance. The fieldwork helped me moreover to realize the significance of the production of knowledge, and also to appreciate the opportunities to find new understandings about people's and my own reality.

I also changed my research question. Initially, I was looking for processes of decision making in issues of access to basic sanitation at household level in Nuevo Mexico, from a gender perspective. During my fieldwork opportunities to participate in social and political events of the indigenous movement in northern Cauca appeared where I could notice differences between men and women's participation. Here, unequal power relations were more evident than inequalities in sanitation access on a household level.

When I returned to Sweden, I began to understand that participation of women in the public sphere in general was a much bigger issue than the situation on the household level. In the public sphere inequalities were more evident and I could talk about it with the women. I also believe that the issue about access to basic sanitation in the case of Nuevo México is more related to how formal and informal institutions influence decision making at household level. Finally, reflecting on the empirical material with my supervisor, I decided to change my research question to women's participation in social and political life.

During my fieldwork, most of the time I observed and wrote down what people talked about, with whom, when, and what they did, without altering the situations. I have to say

that I realized several situations in which women were in a disadvantaged position or there were preference for men. I waited to see the natural course of the situation, and then I tried to support the inclusion of women, for instance in community projects.

Taking field notes was a permanent activity. At the very beginning I was insecure to show my notebook and to take notes in the presence of community members. But soon, I understood that showing my notebook was a way for people to recall that I was a student doing my thesis. The field notes were collected in handwritten-notebooks and with laptop, recordings and pictures.

4 Empirical field

4.1 The indigenous movement in Colombia

Colombia is a country with Amerindian origin which was colonized by Spain in the beginning of 16th century. Nowadays, out of Colombia's 45,5 million inhabitants, 3,4% are indigenous and 10,5% afro-Colombians (DANE 2010c, p. 1-2). According to the Government, in Colombia there are 748 legally recognized indigenous communities,⁸ belonging to 87 ethnic groups. These are present across the country; in 28 of its 32 departments⁹ (Contraloría 2012, p. 13, 20), see Figure 4 at the end of the chapter. However, the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia, ONIC, states that there are 102 indigenous ethnic groups (ONIC c n.d.).

Of the total indigenous population 60% is concentrated in four departments, of which Cauca, where this thesis was developed, is one of them with 87 indigenous communities (Contraloría 2012, p. 13-14, 29). In this department most of the Nasa or Páez people live, which is one of the two indigenous ethnic groups with more than 100.000 persons, the rest of the groups contain of less than 5.000 persons each (MAVDT 2003, p. 7).

Cauca has been and is the scene of internal conflict due to illegal armed groups and illegal crops. About 50 years ago the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC, one of the guerrillas of the country originated in Cauca. This guerrilla has found strategic conditions in northern Cauca to produce coca and move it from the centre of the country to the Pacific Ocean. The confrontation between the FARC and the Colombian Army has caused disruptions in many lives within the civilian population of the area.

Luis Alfredo Londoño is a Colombian researcher and teacher at the Cauca University. Part of his research focuses on the indigenous, afro-Colombians and peasants of Cauca, rural development and political economy. In the article *The gender perspective in the indigenous organization of the Cauca department: an approach to a historic retrospective* Londoño offers insights about the situation of indigenous women in the 1970s and the emergence of the indigenous movement in Cauca which afterwards influenced the creation of the national movement. The author states that in 1970 the living, economic and social conditions of indigenous populations in Cauca department were precarious. A good part of indigenous in Cauca were paying rent or working for landowners in land that had been owned by indigenous ancestors. Indigenous populations were overcrowded in steep and poor land, child mortality was the highest and women's life expectancy the lowest in the country (1999, p. 63-64).

⁸ These are indigenous reservations, i.e. indigenous communities with legally assigned land to exercise their traditions, customs and forms of government. There are legal distinctions of organizational forms of indigenous communities regarding their tenancy (or not) of land which are presented in appendix 2. In the present thesis I refer to indigenous communities with traditional governments legally recognized by indigenous communities and the State, regardless their ownership (or not) of land. However, all the indigenous communities mentioned in the present thesis have communal land.

⁹ Departments are the political region of Colombia.

This situation motivated the establishment of the Indigenous Regional Council of Cauca, CRIC, in 1971, by seven indigenous communities (Londoño 1999, p. 64; CRIC a n.d.). After its creation, the CRIC proclaimed a platform of struggle and devoted itself to achieve a public recognition of the situation of indigenous communities, to strengthening indigenous governments, and to raising awareness and training of communities in political matters, among others (Londoño 1999, p. 65).

Apart from indigenous communities in Cauca, CRIC also started to include the struggles of indigenous populations from other places of Colombia. This led to the creation of the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia, ONIC, in 1982, to take on challenges across the country (ONIC b n.d.). Then, in 1994 the Association of Indigenous Governments of Northern Cauca, ACIN, was created to achieve better integration and more possibilities (ACIN a n.d.) in the accomplishment of common and regional objectives.

According to the web pages of the CRIC and ONIC the platform of struggle proclaimed by the CRIC in 1971 has been the starting point for the current platform of struggle of the national indigenous movement, i.e. the ONIC. Some points of the platform are: defense of the indigenous autonomy and territory, the recovery of land, control over natural resources of their territories, and strengthening of indigenous customs and traditions (e.g. economy, education, languages) (ONIC a n.d.; CRIC b n.d.).

In Colombia, indigenous ethnic groups are generally divided in many indigenous communities, sometimes with a wide geographic distribution. At the same time, an indigenous community can be made up of only one village or a large area with a number of small villages and dispersed houses in a communal territory. In most cases, an indigenous community has its own territory. However, as mentioned before, the recovery of land is one of the key issues in the platform of struggle of the indigenous movement in Colombia. ONIC states on its web page that 27% of the total indigenous population of the country lacks of collective territory (ONIC c n.d.).

4.2 The indigenous movement in northern Cauca

The ACIN is composed of 17 indigenous communities from municipalities of the northern Cauca department. The five existing indigenous communities in Santander de Quilichao municipality are part of the ACIN; they are Canoas, Guadualito, La Concepción, Nasa Kiwe and Munchique-Los Tigres. All of them belong to the Nasa indigenous ethnic group.

In its web page, the ACIN defines its Plan of Life as the “collective dream and the everyday way to make it real, having as referent principles of spirituality, reciprocity, integrity and respectful use of the land”. The Plan of Life pursues the consolidation of the indigenous traditions and customs “in full freedom and autonomy, through the effective participation of the community” (ACIN b n.d.).

The indigenous communities in northern Cauca collaborate to defend their Plan of Life through an organizational component which includes congresses, manifestations, communitarian projects and assemblies. There are seven communitarian projects which are taken up by one or more groups of indigenous communities. The board of ACIN is integrated by representatives from each one of the seven communitarian projects. Besides that, the Plan of Life has a technical-operative component, divided into five Weavings of Life; economic-environmental, population and culture, justice and harmony, defence of life, and communication and external relations. The Weavings of Life are like plans, which in turn include programs and projects. The Weaving of Life of Population and Culture aims to promote “the identity and welfare in harmony with the Mother Earth, and includes the Programs of Health, Education, Woman and Family, and Young” (ACIN b n.d.).

On its web page, the ACIN also describes three forms of indigenous traditional authorities which operate at the level of an indigenous community. They are: general assembly, indigenous government and community work. The general assemblies are important spaces within indigenous communities, taking decisions about life, the control of

the territory, legal and justice issues. This space is based on the participation of all members of an indigenous community, and decisions are meant to be consensual. The indigenous government consists of members of an indigenous community, elected during the annual general assemblies to legally represent a community, for periods of one to two years. An indigenous government is composed by the positions: main governor, second governor, mayor or captain, secretary, treasurer and sheriffs (ACIN b n.d.). These government's members do not receive salary for their job. Women and men can occupy any of these positions. In regards to communitarian work, it corresponds to one day of work periodically contributed by all the families of a community to work in activities for common benefit, i.e. clean a road or weed a communal crop.

4.3 Indigenous Regional Program of Woman in northern Cauca

Under the framework of the Indigenous Regional Council of Cauca, CRIC, in its IX Congress held in 1993, a group of women proposed the creation of the Program Woman with the objective to “unify the regional committees [as the ACIN]; training future women leaders; create solidarity funds for women, and interchange experiences” (CRIC 1997 cited in Londoño 1999, p. 70). As a background, in 1987 groups of indigenous, peasant and urban women in a meeting had concluded that “even though they recognized their active participation in the activities called as organizational (‘land recovery and tasks associated to this struggle’), when it was about assuming the leadership of the organizational work the contribution [of women] was low” (UAN¹⁰ n° 12 III/1989:5 cited in Londoño 1999, p. 70). This was explained by the lack of confidence and training of women, their responsibilities at home and historical discrimination (1999, p. 70).

The Program of Woman began operating in 1996 according to Londoño. A preparatory document for the X Congress of the CRIC held in 1997 included an internal evaluation about the organizational experience of the CRIC. In regards to the Program of Woman, the evaluation showed a lack of support by indigenous governments due to the feminist character of the Program which generated difficulties within some indigenous governments and communities. The same evaluation also evidenced positive aspects of the Program as the creation of groups of women carrying out productive projects (e.g. poultry breeding and home orchards), the active participation of women in community issues, and the role of women as educator of cultural values (Londoño 1999, p. 70).

The Regional Program of Woman of the ACIN was implemented in 1996. It consists of 17 Programs of Woman representing 17 indigenous communities existing in the north of Cauca, which in turn conforms the ACIN. Within each indigenous community there is a Program of Woman composed by a coordinator and Program members, which has its own activities and agendas. The coordinator of each local Program is the representative in the Regional Program of Woman.

The ACIN explains on its web page that the purpose of the Regional Program of Woman is to “generate spaces for meetings and reflection of women about their personal, familiar, communitarian situation and within the organization, and come up with proposals to accomplish equity and justice for women and men, evidenced in harmonic relationships, total participation and improvement of the quality of life of all persons” (ACIN c n.d.).

There is a team in charge of the management of the Regional Program of Woman. It includes five positions for coordination and administrative matters, and advisers in psychological and juridical topics. They decide about the agenda of the Regional Program of Woman.

The Regional Program of Woman develops training courses consisting of lectures, fieldtrips and discussions, offered to women and men from 17 Programs of Woman. For instance, the Course titled Women, Territory and Economy consisted of a two-day session, each month during mid 2012 and mid 2013. Some themes of the course were Nasa cosmo-

¹⁰ Álvaro Ulcué Unity, a newspaper of the CRIC.

vision, national politics and legislation about territory and economy, autonomous government proposals, research methodologies and formulation of projects.

The Regional Program of Woman aims, through the coordinators of the Programs, at helping battered women to realize their rights and duties, and sensitize their families (ACIN 2013). The procedure, lead by coordinators of the Program of Women in each indigenous community, is to detect cases, approach the affected people and offer psychological or juridical support according to the case, based on the human resources of the Regional Program of Woman (interview with Pilar, coordinator Program of Woman of the Community Nasa Kiwe, July 31 2013).

Conclusions from a committee of the Regional Program of Woman held in April 2013 suggested the recognition of inequalities inside the indigenous communities due to an existing and reproducing patriarchal system. These include the kind of inequalities in the public sphere in which I am referring to in this thesis. However, the focus of the Regional Program of Woman is to overcome violence against women at home, in the community or from the internal conflict of the country (ACIN 2013; interview with Pilar, July 31 2013).

4.4 The Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe Tekh Ksxaw

The Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe is one of the most recently created in northern Cauca. Its creation started in 1999 representing 235 families with indigenous identity coming from different parts of the Cauca department, who were dispersed in Santander town. Through the process of land recovery, the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe acquired three separate land areas; Nuevo México, La María and Quitapereza. The three land areas are located in the surroundings of Santander town, no more than ten km distance from Santander town (see Figure 1). Their territories occupy slightly hilly areas at an altitude of 1.100 meters above sea level. They have tropical conditions with an average temperature of 26°C and two rainy and dry seasons annually.

At the moment the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe has 3.680 individuals. About 184 persons are living in Nuevo México, around 30 in Quitapereza and La María is expected to consist of 1.000 (public speeches of the indigenous governor Omar in general assemblies March 3 and April 7 2013; survey carried out in Nuevo México by the author). The rest of the members are living in Santander town. Among the members one can observe people with more marked indigenous physical attributes than others, as well as different levels of knowledge and connections to Nasa traditions and cosmo-vision. The language of the Nasa people called Nasa-Yuwe is spoken by some people, but the majority speak Spanish.

The land recovered by the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe has been allocated for housing and farming purposes to its members¹¹. Nuevo México for instance has been divided in plots of 7x15 m for housing purposes and farm plots of 50x50 m for housing and agricultural activities. There are also communal land areas for cash crops, parks, playing grounds and for community meetings (interview with the indigenous governor Omar, February 16 2013).

According to the survey and informal interviews made during the present thesis, members of the Community Nasa Kiwe have moved to these land areas regardless of the lack of basic services as water and electricity, due to economic pressures. Most of the residents of Nuevo México were paying rent in Santander town for instance.

The traditional economy of indigenous Nasa is based on agriculture. Working in an orchard for own sustainment is a natural activity of being indigenous Nasa, independent of other jobs or social/political activities in which one could be involved (interviews with Omar, February 16 2013; Pilar, March 29 2013). In a couple of conversations with members of the Nasa Kiwe, they commented negatively on people with big stereotypes,

¹¹ Under the platform of struggle of the indigenous movement regarding the aim of recovery of land, this land was legally assigned by the National Government to the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe to exercise their rights of use on it. This land is communal which means it cannot be sold or transferred.

furniture, cars and ATVs (four-wheel vehicles). In their opinion, accumulation of goods and luxury is not part of being a Nasa (informal interview with Sonia, second indigenous governor, February 21 2013; interview with Lilia, April 2 2013). However, in Nuevo México people have televisions, stereos, some have motorcycles, and most of them pursue the improvement of their housing conditions in general.

The allocation of plots in the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe has raised different issues. On the one hand the indigenous governor Omar argues that farm plots in Nuevo México are abandoned, some houses are not inhabited and that some people had sold the plots (public speech of Omar in general assembly, April 7 2013). On the other hand, some members of the Community Nasa Kiwe find the process of allocation of plots unfair. They claim that in some cases members who already have plots benefit (interviews with Ana, March 27 2013; Rita, April 1 2013; public claim of a woman during the general assembly April 7 2013).

The Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe has the right to take part in the System of General Participation, SGP. These are resources that the Colombian State transfers to territorial entities (i.e. departments, districts and municipalities) to finance their functioning and implementation of plans, programs and projects, especially in the sectors of education, health and drinking water and basic sanitation. In general, resources from the SGP assigned to an indigenous community can be invested to any kind of projects directed to the welfare of the community and according to their Plans of Life, traditions and customs. These resources cannot be used to cover functioning expenses, like salaries or bonus to indigenous governors or members of indigenous government for instance. To access these resources, indigenous communities must prioritize investments, formulate project proposals and make follow ups of the implementation of the projects. In turn, the municipality in which the indigenous community is located, is in charge of the administration of the resources and implementation of the projects. The indigenous community does not access monetary resources (DNP 2012, p. 9-13, 25, 43, 50-51). The resources allocated by the Colombian state to each indigenous community are based on the proportion of its population in comparison to the total indigenous population formally recognized by the State (Contraloría 2012, p. 36).

4.4.1 Social and political life of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe

As it was introduced in section 4.2, the general assembly, the political organization and the communitarian work are forms of indigenous traditional authorities. In the case of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe, it holds general assemblies the first Sunday of each month. They can take place in any of the three land areas of the Community Nasa Kiwe. Usually the assemblies are combined with communitarian work and can endure an entire day. During these activities one can see entire families participating, i.e. women and men of all ages.

During general assemblies, members of the indigenous government report about ongoing projects, and present disciplinary cases, as well as on key issues to be decided upon. Then the issues are open to be discussed and decided by the general assembly. Both women and men have opportunities to express their ideas. There is no restriction in doing so, except for situations in which members of the same general assembly commanded silence because they find people's contributions inappropriate and extensive. Finally, the decisions are taken according to what the majority says.

In the general assemblies of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe in which I participated, the indigenous governor, Omar, was mainly in charge of the management (assemblies of March 3 and 17, and April 7 2013). The second governor, Sonia, and the jurist¹², Luz, were in charge of disciplinary cases on domestic issues. Disciplinary cases involving thieves and rapists were managed by the Indigenous Governor.

¹² This is the title of the position. It consists on investigate and prepare disciplinary cases to be presented in general assemblies.

In addition, manifestations and communitarian meetings also define the social and political life of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe. During my fieldwork, the Community Nasa Kiwe supported a manifestation due to the national crisis of the coffee sector. From February 25 to March 8 2013 there were manifestations and blocked of main roads against the low price and imports of coffee, in the coffee producing areas. I noticed how the indigenous government of the Community Nasa Kiwe was asking for in kind and monetary resources from members of the community during the general assembly in March 3, to support its participation in the national manifestation. Projects of communal interest also constitute the social life of the Community Nasa Kiwe. For instance, I participated in meetings in Nuevo México related to improvements of the water supply system and access to energy. Within these meetings, local initiatives on access to public transportation and the creation of a course for illiterate adults also emerged.

The Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe has programs on health, education, traditional medicine and woman. There is also an indigenous guard in charge of the security of the indigenous community. That is, taking care of the security of the land areas, creating security lines during manifestations, and capturing and imprison persons accused of robbery. The current indigenous guard consists of 25 members and one coordinator. One can see teenagers and adults, men and women, participating in the guard.

4.4.2 Nuevo México

At present Nuevo México represents the most stabilised populated land area of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe. It is located a 10-minute walk, about 1 km, from the peri-urban area of Santander town. Nuevo México has 184 inhabitants; 93 men and 91 women, distributed in 52 households. Overall, Nuevo México has a young population where almost 80% of the total population is less than 45 years old. In general, the households are composed by families with two parents. There are only five women heads of households, with children/teenagers under 19 years old. The average amount of persons per house is 3,5. Only eight households have between 7 and 9 members (survey carried out in Nuevo México by the author).

More than half of the households of Nuevo México originally came from rural areas and small towns of Cauca department and moved to Santander town (35 households) and Cali city (4), before populating Nuevo México. The reasons for the displacements from rural to urban areas of the current households of Nuevo México, include being victims of the internal conflict in Colombia and desires to improve livelihoods. For instance, Elena and her family came from the Caldono municipality, also in northern Cauca. They were affected twice by guerrilla attacks directed to a neighbour policy station. Elena and her husband told me that they had a well established market in their house that they re-built after the first attack. But they could not afford the second one, and decided to migrate to Santander municipality looking for better life conditions (informal conversation with Elena and Luis, March 28 2013).

Regarding water supply, most of the households fetch water from local springs and communitarian deep wells, or capture rain water in the rainy season. In general, laundry and bathing are done in the local springs or in rivers located about half hour walking from Nuevo México during dry season. In March 21 2013 a local water supply committee was created to advance the organizational aspect of this service. About 40% of the houses in Nuevo México who lack toilet, the household members use the toilet of a neighbour or practice open defecation. The solid waste is managed by each household; organic waste is used to fertilize plants, and plastic and paper are burnt. The appearance of Nuevo México is clean.

I asked a group of children and teenagers what the nicest thing about living in Nuevo México was, and a girl said “nothing” and a boy responded “there is no water”. I asked again, and the girl said “we can see the landscape, the sun set”. Then I asked for the less nice, and the group agreed on the lack of water (February 21 2013).

In Nuevo México there is one electric transformer and connection of electricity which supplies the local school, to which most of the houses are connected. The quality of the energy is just enough for a couple of lights and a television.

The local school is attended by 130 students under 17 years old, taking primary and secondary courses. Most of the children and teenagers of Nuevo México study in the local school. The level of education of the adults is low and men show slightly higher levels than women. Just 6% of the 105 adults living in Nuevo México have done some form of higher studies, 20% finished primary school, another 20% secondary courses and 20% are illiterates (survey carried out by the author).

Most of the occupations of men and women correspond to work at home or in the farm plot, and informal low-skilled jobs in Santander de Quilichao town. Only few men and women, with higher levels of education, have relative permanent and formal jobs like teacher, cashier, nurse or sellers in stores. About 20 of a total 52 households, have members with quite permanent or formal jobs and therefore some regularity in their income, it varies between 0,4 to 2,0 minimum legal salary, i.e. 250.000 to 1'179.000COP (850 to 4.000SEK¹³).

Half of the 50 adult women identified themselves as housewives. The rest are paid workers in temporal or day-labour, cleaning or cooking in houses or restaurants in Santander town, or informal sales of vegetables on market days in Santander town. In contrast, almost the total of the 52 men who work are paid workers. The majority has temporary and informal jobs as day-laborers in farming or construction for instance.

In general, women have the function to work at home and men the provision of monetary income. To work at home in the context of Nuevo México means taking care of the children, prepare food, fetch water, do the laundry, look for firewood and grass to feed animals. Men also contribute fetching water, firewood and grass. Both men and women participate in tasks related to building or reparation of houses. Men have generally more knowledge about construction, but also women undertake building tasks by themselves.

4.4.3 The Program of Woman of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe

In the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe the Program of Woman has been active as a group from the beginning of 2011. One of the concerns of the Program is the displacement of men and women, who pursue jobs in other cities like Bogotá and Cali. This generates disruptions in families and child care needs to be handed over to relatives. The situation also keeps people away from the social dynamics of the indigenous community and limits children to learn traditions and values as members of an indigenous population (interview with Pilar, March 28 2013).

In 2011 the group had 35 members, 6 men and 29 women. Nowadays the group has 13 members, 3 men and 10 women. One of the main reasons for leaving the group was said to be the displacement to cities looking for sources of income, or the discouragement of not finding a source of income or access to a plot through the Program of Woman (interview with Pilar, March 28 2013).

Therefore the group is looking for projects to generate livelihoods locally, avoiding the displacement of Program members to other regions. The alternatives that the group explores are related to farming and poultry, considering the farm plot assigned to the Program of Woman in Nuevo México (50x50 mt of area). By March 2013, the Program was exploring a proposal for setting up a restaurant near by Nuevo México or in Santander town. Also the Program members were analysing a proposal about cattle breeding, that a farmer of Nuevo México had made to the group.

The Program members meet once a week to work in the farm plot of the Program. The products are for own consumption of the members. After the work in the farm plot the members have meetings to discuss issues of their interest. That is, family values, recovery

¹³ For 2013, a minimum legal salary in Colombia is 589.500COP=2.000SEK a month. Calculated with exchange rates of August 17 2013 using <http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/>

of traditions (e.g. the orchard, traditional medicine, interchange of hands), and women's self-care, among others (interview with Pilar, March 28 2013).



Figure 3 General assembly of the Community Nasa Kiwe. Photo: Blanca Sandoval April 2013.

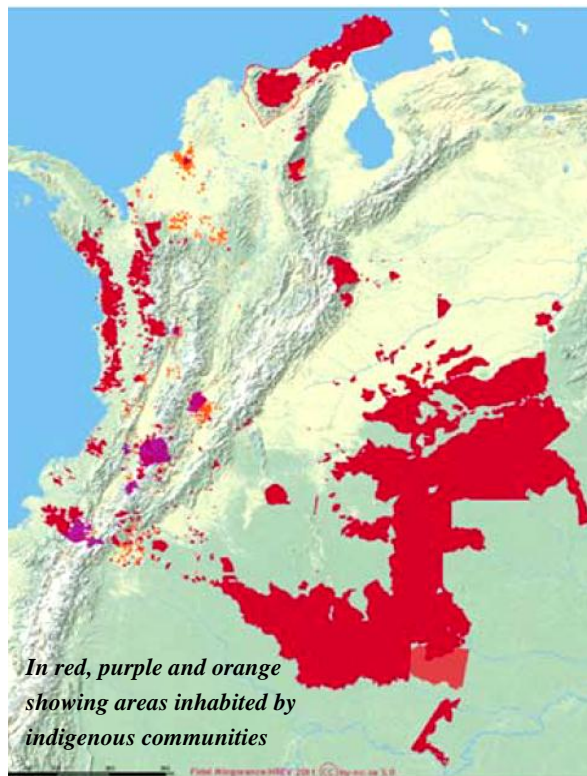


Figure 4 Localization of indigenous communities in Colombia. Source: Contraloria 2012.

5 Findings and analysis

The findings of the current thesis presented in this chapter result from the analysis of the material gathered during my fieldwork, guided by the theoretical framework and the research questions. This chapter is organized in four main sections related to the sub research questions, as follows:

1. *How do women participate in the social and political life?*, is addressed across the entire chapter. All the narratives presented here relate to how and in which spaces of the public life women participate.
2. *How are unequal power relations reproduced?*, is tackled through four cases depicted in the second section.
3. *How do indigenous women envision their involvement in the social and political life?*, is approached in the third and fourth sections of the chapter.

Based on these findings, the main research question of this thesis will be tackled in the next chapter, i.e. *How do women bring up questions of gender inequalities vis a vis men without challenging their loyalty to an indigenous community?*

5.1 Private and the public spheres in the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe

Based on the work of Seema Arora-Jonsson (2013) on the concepts of private and public presented in section 2.4, I am going to explore the meaning of public and private in the context of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe. This is a starting point for the coming sections, since the analysis of the participation of women in the social and political life is enriched by discussing first, what the public and the private are in this context.

As introduced in sections 4.2 and 4.4.1, the social and political life of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe is characterized by the dynamics between the general assemblies, the indigenous government and community work. These forms determine the system of decision-making, social control, application of justice and management of communal resources. Nasa Kiwe is also involved beyond their own community, in regional plans, projects, training courses and manifestations for instance, as members of the indigenous movement.

Men have mainly been in charge of social and political life (public) and women of the domestic life (private) in the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe. As presented in section 4.4.2 on Nuevo México, around half of the adult women take care of the domestic tasks and half have paid jobs (most of them related to cooking and cleaning tasks). Men on the other hand are paid workers, for instance as day-labourers, in construction, mechanics and farming. None of the men mentioned being in charge of domestic work. A couple of comments of the indigenous leaders Emilio and Pedro, suggested that there is the general idea that hard work is for men and the preparation of food or cleaning is up to women (March 21 and 23 2013).

As the narratives in the following sections will illustrate, mainly men have been in charge of decision-making on the public life of the Nasa Kiwe. Women also have political positions and participate in initiatives at communitarian level. Following Senecah's perspective of participation (2004, p. 23-25), one can say that women in this context have access to opportunities of expression in the public sphere. However, the participation of women did not always receive legitimacy, respect and influence to shape a more inclusive participation, as depicted in the sections below.

The occupations or the kind of work that women develop put them closer to the 'ethic of care' and the political positions of men to the 'ethic of justice'. However, similar to the findings of Arora-Jonsson, the 'ethic of care' and the 'ethic of justice', the private and the public, are indivisible (2013, p. 221), in the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe. Issues related to health, traditional medicine, woman and domestic disciplinary cases, which could be associated with the 'ethic of care', are part of the public sphere, and both men and women are involved in their management.

For instance, in general assemblies held by the Nasa Kiwe, which are important spaces to decide upon political and financial issues of communal interest, also disciplinary cases dealing with problems between spouses and gossips are treated. One of the cases involved two members of the indigenous government. The second governor Sonia introduced a case saying that captain Amanda was accused of creating disharmony in the indigenous government. The issue was that Amanda had told the governor's sister that he had received some money and that it was not clear why. The governor Omar questioned Amanda for not addressing her thoughts directly to him, before doubting his honesty in front of others (general assembly in La María, March 3 2013).

Arora-Jonsson asserts that relationships in the private and the public might be responding to different logics and principles (2013, p. 222). Identifying the organizing principles of the private and the public spheres is a demanding task, in my opinion. However, I found principles of dependency and obedience of the private sphere that can explain insecurity of women to talk in the public sphere.

In the private sphere people are tied by familiar or couple relationships, for instance, defined by principles of love and loyalty as exemplified by Arora-Jonsson (2013, p. 222). Also, there are in some cases and not always, principles of dependency and obedience of women to men. Cecilia, the mother of the family where I stayed in Nuevo México, did not want to look for a paid job because she felt it was her obligation to prepare food for her husband and her adult son. Sometimes, I perceived that she was treated as the housemaid of the house, in the sense of being commanded and being responsible for domestic tasks. In several occasions, I noticed that Cecilia's husband talked to her using a commanding and aggressive tone. Most of the times, Cecilia did what he told her, but once he questioned her because she had not made a phone call, i.e. going out of the house to look for a mobile phone. She responded to him that if he would have taken care of her tasks at home, she would have done what he was requesting. She was not lacking self determination.

The case of Lucy exemplifies what Arora-Jonsson writes as there is not necessarily direct correlation between personal and collective agency that leads to emancipation (2009, p. 232). I saw Lucy confident and active in a couple of meetings, side by side with her partner, both active members in the indigenous movement. But at home, she described a different situation, where she felt humiliated, undervalued and pressed to be there due to her lack of an employment (interview with Lucy, March 26 2013).

The ex-governor Pedro considered it important to know the marital status of women who would participate in the restaurant project. The case will be presented in section 5.3. In his view, men in this context tend to control and discourage women's involvement in activities outside home.

"I know it very well, including a man scolding a woman, also hitting, just for being delayed half or one hour [when coming home] ... I am one of those that when my wife went to one

meeting, I said to her: well, mija¹⁴, did you not say that you were going to come back around noon? Look, it is 4 p.m. She answers: yes, but the meeting took longer than expected. Ok, I said. I know that those meetings take a long time, but there are husbands that – if they do not hit their women – at least they curse at them and make them sad. These women are not willing anymore to come back [to the meeting] ”, meeting of the Program of Women Nasa Kiwe, March 21 2013.

These relationships of dependency and obedience between women and men are associated with difficulties or women’s lack of confidence to talk in public spaces. On several occasions it was common to hear people saying that women are too shy to speak in public. Talking publicly was recognized as an achievement during the Course of Women, Territory and Economy, and within the Program of Woman Nasa Kiwe.

“You [women coordinators of Programs of Woman] represent the communities and those women that feel embarrassed to speak”, Elsa, organizing woman Regional Program of Woman, March 1 2013.

Similarly, men have attitudes in the private sphere at home that they also display in the public sphere. In families, in which I spent time, I noticed that the relationships were hierarchical and the final decisions were in charge of the husbands. For instance, in my host family and the family of one of the leaders, the wives referred to their husbands as “the chief”.

As discussed so far, in context of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe, the public sphere has been more a field of men and the private of women. However, this is not a rigid pattern. Women and men act in public spaces. They both are engaged in issues related to the private sphere or the ‘ethic of care’. In addition, organizing principles of relationships in the private sphere are appearing in attitudes of women in the public.

The following section will illustrate what happens when women do talk in the public sphere, a field historically dominated in this context by men.

5.2 The social and political life, a field dominated by men

In this section four cases are presented that show facets of the participation of women in the social and political life of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe. The cases concur in demonstrating that the public sphere has been a field of male domination, in which the organization of power is determined by men. Power relations are dynamic, though. Political position and recognition, and the level of education are assets, which are valued in this context. In some instances, through acquiring these assets women can also make themselves recognized as active participant in the public sphere.

However, discourses and practices reproduced by both men and women contribute to the maintenance of the domination of men in the public sphere, to which women have to conform. In addition, the functions of women at home compete with their involvement in the public sphere.

5.2.1 A case of women’s introduction in the politics of the indigenous movement

The case depicted below shows how a group of indigenous women had to overcome their lack of knowledge and experience concerning the indigenous movement and pursue their functions as mothers, while volunteering for months to create an indigenous community. To overcome their inexperience in the political life, the group of founders looked for support from men with political power who acted as their advisers. The case also illustrates that the political life of the indigenous movement has been a field of men, new for women in regards to decision making.

¹⁴ In Spanish, ‘mija’ is short for ‘my daughter’ and ‘mijo’ for ‘my son’. It is also used by elderly or mature couples to call each other.

In 1998 a group of five indigenous women who lived in Santander de Quilichao town had meetings to talk about their jobs and daily issues. The group started to discuss the benefits of being part of an indigenous community, e.g. scholarships for higher education¹⁵. They also were concerned about the poor indigenous families that were living in Santander town, paying rent. Hence the group of five women started the process of forming an indigenous community that represented and grouped together indigenous families that were dispersed in Santander town (interviews with Ana, March 27 2013; Rita, April 1 2013).

The first and significant approval to the initiative was given by Jesús Piñacué, a recognized political indigenous leader in Colombia, when two of the women founders consulted him in May 1998. After that, the group of five women started the process to gather the requirements to create an indigenous community. This included obtaining formal support from the Mayor of Santander municipality, and from the 14 indigenous governors in the 14 indigenous communities that existed at that time in northern Cauca. The first attempt was unsuccessful. Neither the Mayor nor the 14 indigenous governors gave the approval to the group of founders.

In general, what the group of founders did was to look for the support from national or regional instances that could influence the local authorities, which in fact worked out. A contact to the founders suggested them to participate in the fifth congress of the ONIC, in Bogotá. The founders selected two of themselves that “were good to talk” to present at the ONIC congress. In Bogotá, the results were not as expected. It seems that one of the founders was strong and direct in her way to communicate, and in Bogotá “one has to be very docile and humble” (interview with Rita, April 1 2013).

However, the two founders met two indigenous male leaders, who later connected them with the Colombian Minister of Interior Affairs. One of them was an indigenous leader from the ethnic group Wuayu, Abadio Green, who at that time was a candidate for the presidency of the ONIC. The Minister gave his support to the initiative and subsequently the Mayor of Santander municipality and the 14 indigenous governors followed. On April 10 1999 the creation of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe was decided in the general assembly, with the 14 indigenous governors from northern Cauca, all of them men. The first indigenous government of the Indigenous Community was integrated by the group of five women founders.

“We were the first women... This was about achieving the recognition to accept women leaders, which was offensive... The motto was unity, capacity and solidarity. In the Community we collected people from the countryside that were abandoned there [in Santander town]”, interview with Rita, April 1 2013.

After that, the group of founders, now as government members, were facing new problems such as manifestations related with land recovery and general assemblies. But they had two men advisers who support them. Their main advises were: “- if you do not know, do not talk, - in regional elections vote for the one who seems to be the preferred, and - keep aside to avoid that others make you talk” (interview with Rita, April 1 2013).

The group of founders were single heads of households. They participated in manifestation that endured 15 days. They had to leave everything ready at home with their children to be able to participate in the manifestations (interview with Rita, April 1 2013). Likewise, Georgina Méndez (2007, p. 42) and Avelina Pancho (2007, p. 58) show that functions of women at home reduce their availability to develop other activities out of home, e.g. have a job or be an active member in the indigenous movement.

The process of stepping into the public sphere of indigenous communities in northern Cauca was not easy for the group of founders. The group did not know about legal themes or how to perform in public spaces. Nevertheless, they gained access through their conviction and hard work, and connections with male leaders to establish the community and made their way into the more formal political circles.

¹⁵ In Colombia educational institutions offers special quota, flexibility in admission requirements and discounts in tuition fees to members of ethnic minorities to facilitate their access to higher studies.

5.2.2 *Passing by to the public sphere*

To study gender equality as organization of power relations as presented in section 2.1, enabled me to observe inequalities during the creation of the water supply committee in Nuevo México. The fact that women could assist, talk and make proposals in community meetings was not enough to conclude that they were equally participating. A group of men with political recognition and experience, dominated the moment of decision making about who would be member of the committee. One woman with higher education and more experience in public life allowed her to start gaining recognition within the committee. The case denotes that political recognition and academic knowledge facilitates people to exercise power.

During a communitarian meeting on March 14 2013, the governor Omar suggested the creation of a water supply committee and commanded the ex-governor Pedro to advise such a committee in technical and administrative aspects. In a meeting held on March 21, Elena, Lilia and Luis, new residents of Nuevo México, volunteered to be part of the water supply committee. They already had elaborated a list of users from their neighborhood, aiming to advance in administrative issues. Then, the indigenous governor Omar asked Emilio, teacher and recognized male leader of the community, to join the committee. Emilio responded that he already had several positions at a communitarian level. He invited young people to join the committee. Then, another ex-governor Mario, started to call other ex-authorities men to join the committee.

In general, I observed a group of men leaders (mature, ex-governors or with high political positions within the indigenous government Nasa Kiwe) calling each other to be members of the committee; their first choice did not include women. Finally, the committee consisted of 7 members; 4 men and 3 women. Elena was the treasurer, Lilia the secretary and Diana, a woman I proposed, the spokeswoman. As I mentioned in section 3.3, this was one of the moments in which I involved myself to support the inclusion of women.

During meetings on March 21 and April 3, addressed by Pedro, Elena made several suggestions about the management of the water supply, which demonstrated her knowledge in accounting and willingness to contribute to the committee's work. In this regards, the ex-governor Mario said:

"I feel happy because there are people here [referring to Elena] that have gone to school and know accounting, what we do not have in the Indigenous Government members", April 3 2013.

At the outset Elena did not enjoy the recognition in the water supply committee. She had been promoting a couple of communitarian initiatives in Nuevo México and during the three meetings, mentioned above, she were able to make relevant contributions to the committee. Compared to the experience of the community founders discussed in the previous section, Elena did not find major obstacles to start gaining her recognition.

The entrance of the group of founders into the political life at the end of the 1990s was the first indigenous community led by a group of women in northern Cauca (interview with Rita, April 1 2013). It seems that male leaders perceived the participation of women in the public sphere more threatening at that time than nowadays. It is possible that the gaining of access to the public made by the group of founders has contributed to social and political changes in the life of indigenous communities in the region, which would require further research.

In the Community Nasa Kiwe, the level of education, networks and experiences of participating in the struggles of the indigenous movement create different opportunities for women, for instance to get jobs, training and recognition. For example, the key for success of the group of founders was the networks they had, while for Elena it was her education and working experience. At the same time, this indicates that there are differences among indigenous women in terms of occupations, education and economic level.

Some of the organizing women of the Regional Program of Woman for example have professional careers and have trajectories in the governments of their communities. During

a planning meeting of the Regional Program of Woman, criteria to select women to participate in a congress in Bogotá were to have political experience (e.g. as governor), and be good at talking in public (meeting on March 1 2013). Lacking these criteria prevents other women from entering this public field. The criteria were introduced by the organizing women of the Regional Program of Woman.

According to Pierre Bourdieu, networks correspond to social capital, while the level of education can be understood as a part of cultural capital (Inglis 2012, p. 216-219). In the case of Nasa Kiwe, these capitals not fully determine the entering of the field of social and political life. However, they are considered relevant. People in the Nasa Kiwe know that networks and the level of education have a high value when looking for a job or recognition in the community. Section 5.3 illustrates that members of the Program of Woman Nasa Kiwe were aware of the importance of access to networks. They could get this access for instance by involving one of the male leaders in a project they were pursuing.

5.2.3 *Women gossip and men discuss*

Here, I refer to how attributes and functions of men and women in the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe influence the way their participation in the social and political life is expected. I base my analysis on the work of Arora-Jonsson (2009) when she studies how discourses about gender influence the way in which women organize the social.

In context the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe spaces for social and political discussion have been a terrain of men as discussed so far, in which they are allowed to be talkative and leaders. While, participation of women in social and political spaces is expected to follow attributes assigned to women; reserved and supportive. If women act in a different manner, for instance, questioning, using a strong and direct way to communicate, women are judged as problematic and quarrelsome (interview with Pilar, coordinator of the Program of Woman Nasa Kiwe, April 7 2013). In Pilar's opinion this is a strategy of men to remove women from the political spaces. In her experience as member of the group of founders of the Nasa Kiwe, Rita expresses that in political spaces women should behave docile and humble, contrary as one of the co-founders did (interview on April 1 2013).

Pilar says that a discussion of women is seen as a fight, while men debate and discuss. I asked Pilar if men do not fight or use a strong tone during meetings as some of them consider inappropriate for women. "Of course", Pilar said, one man had been screaming in a recent meeting. He was allowed to do so, in Pilar's view, because he has a high political position in the ACIN and he has incomplete higher studies, but enough to gain the respect of men and women in the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe (interview on April 7 2013).

Even more, women spaces as the Regional Program of Woman, a formal space created by the ACIN, is seen by some people as a space for gossip and resentful women. Pilar says that some authorities and women do not understand the meaning of this space. Also Elsa, one of the organizing women of the Regional Program of Woman, mentioned in a meeting that:

"When women are talking it is said that they are gossiping, but our reflections start with the family to the outside", March 1 2013.

The effect of this situation, in Pilar's opinion, is a feeling of shame and the withdrawal of the participation for some women. Pilar mentioned that "women leave because they feel judged by men" (interview on April 7 2013).

Pilar asserts that men have control over resources, so women do not want to lose opportunities to access such resources by being recognized as conflictive. Supporting men leaders is required to keep good networks and to access jobs for instance. This situation makes it difficult for women to criticize men leaders and support other women without access to power and resources. This is viewed by Pilar as a limitation for women in general to have a better political participation (interview on April 7 2013).

The creation of the Community Nasa Kiwe by a group of women discussed in section 5.2.1, was a moment in which women stepped into the exercise of power related to the political life of the Nasa Kiwe. The negative judgement of women's performance in the public sphere, as individuals or collectively, can be seen as a strategy of men to take the power back. Similarly, the next section illustrates a way in which power is maintained by men in indigenous communities of northern Cauca.

5.2.4 *Technical language of men*

Indigenous men are embracing a language with terms and concepts that for women seem foreign and difficult to understand. These terms come from the legal world, which is required when dealing with political and legal struggles of indigenous communities. This discourages women to discuss political issues with men. Consequently, men keep leading the social and the political life. But I saw examples where women were also learning this technical language.

As introduced in section 4.3, three-day session of the Course Women, Territory and Economy were held, about the economy of gold mining, the logic behind it and advances to influence the reform of the current mining code (February 25 and 26 2013), and law of victims and restitution of land due to violence in Colombia (March 19).

The facilitator of the gold mining theme was a lawyer called Edgar who has been supporting the ACIN over the last ten years. The participants were coordinators and members of Program of Woman coming from different indigenous communities in northern Cauca; in total about 40-60 persons of which 10% were men. The format of the two-day session was mainly lectures of the facilitator. In addition to the facilitator and two organizing women of the Course, an indigenous leader, David, gave a lecture to contextualize the gold mining in northern Cauca.

In general, the position of the ACIN supported by agents as the lawyer Edgar is against the massive gold mining in their territories. Nonetheless, there are cases of indigenous governors in northern Cauca that are allowing the gold mining in their territories, justifying it due to the pressure on local population searching for employment.

"We live in a capitalist model, for profit, without ethic and moral. We have not reached the socialist model yet... The profit is private, for the few. Not for the workers... Nature is sold, not transformed. Thus employment is not generated and poverty continues", lawyer Edgar, February 25 2013.

The facilitator Edgar was hard to understand. He was talking, for instance, about unequal exchange of natural resources and revenues for the country, and laws related to gold mining. He used terms as economy of enclave, euphemism and factual. The other facilitator, a woman, whose topic was the law of victims and restitution of land, used a more simple language (session on March 19). Both topics from my viewpoint were fundamental for women, and also both included legal terms and procedures somewhat complex to understand.

However, participating women were dispersed in several occasions and given low attention. They just asked once for a language clarification to Edgar, when they could have asked many times. Someone also, told me that women do not like this kind of topics.

"I do not understand anything, I am very sincere. I talked in the Nasa style. Explains those two little words [exploitation and exploration]", a woman participant of the Course, February 25 2013.

The night on February 25 2013 a group of 12 participating women met to develop the assignment proposed by Edgar which would be presented the next day. During the discussion, women mentioned that men leaders usually use a modern language full of technical terms that do not belong to the Nasa indigenous context, and are difficult to understand.

“They [men] are getting into external terms and concepts, and the community gets confused. For instance, economy¹⁶ is confused with the world economy... Therefore, the authorities should reflect about those concepts. To search for words in Nasa-Yuwe. We have done mistakes taking external concepts... Talking about impact, that is a technical term”, Alba, women’s meeting, February 25 2013.

Some women are also learning the language of the men leaders. I noticed that one woman during the presentation of the assignment used the word “chaotic” and the phrase “it is said that indigenous is against the development”, which had been said by David and Edgar the day before. In fact, during the night session another woman had said that “chaotic” was a strange word.

The technical language of men, locals and outsiders, seems to limit and discourage the communication between men and women, and, I believe, among men who are not part of the indigenous political life or lack the level of education too. Evidently women participate in discussions and debates about the everyday life, health and domestic issues, as I observed during general assemblies and communitarian meetings. Nevertheless, I could notice a reduced participation of women when it comes to themes containing legal and technical terms. Facilitators as Edgar should adapt to use a simpler language. Also if women want more political participation, there is a technical language that they must learn.

5.3 Resistance to men’s dominance

In this section the narratives exemplify that the organization of power in regards to management of communal resources in the Community Nasa Kiwe were circumscribed to decision making and a network of men leaders. The case also illustrates the response of the Program of Women to such organization of power, and how the members used their collective agency to denote self-determination.

As introduced in section 4.4.3, a restaurant-project emerged from the Program of Woman members of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe, to generate better livelihoods locally, especially for women. While the project was still going on, the Program also received a proposal of cattle breeding.

The indigenous governor, Omar, changed the terms for SGP resources transferred by the Colombian Nation (see section 4.4) to projects of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe, by turning them into loans. Normally, projects should not pay this type of financing support. However, the Indigenous Governor proposed this as a strategy to make projects sustainable (interview with Omar, February 16 2013). Therefore, he offered a loan to the Program of Women Nasa Kiwe to start the restaurant¹⁷. Nevertheless, the restaurant project was the only one with this condition (interview with Pilar, July 31 2013). Pilar, coordinator of the Program of Woman, perceived the offer of the Governor as unfair.

In addition, the project of the restaurant attracted the attention of several people of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe, including the ex-governor Pedro. In an internal meeting on March 21 2013, the Program members wanted to discuss how to handle such interests and started outlining the project proposal¹⁸. The participants in this meeting consisted of one man and four women members of the Program, including Pilar. Suddenly, the ex-governor Pedro appeared in the place of the meeting. He had been invited, but had not confirmed by Pilar. Hence, it was a tense situation. He expressed his discomfort and Pilar explained to Pedro what they wanted to discuss before the inclusion of new members. Nevertheless, Pilar welcomed him and he took the leadership of the meeting. It transformed

¹⁶ Economy in the Nasa culture means the orchard; land to work and have products for own consumption and sales, but not with accumulation purposes.

¹⁷ The loan was about 7 million COP=23.850SEK. Exchange rates of August 17 2013 using <http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/>

¹⁸ I was invited by Pilar to support the proposal writing.

into six hours of Pedro's detailed and indoctrinating speech to the group, and the group apparently gave him the approval to take the leadership of the project.

The first argument of the ex-governor Pedro was that the idea of the restaurant came from the time when he was indigenous governor. This was a kind of justification of his presence in the project. Then he talked about several topics in connection to the restaurant project. In between, Pedro stressed his position as leader:

"That was what I was saying to you [Pilar], that it was needed to write little by little to see how we were organizing the formats [project proposal] ... You will be the general [manager] in all as I am doing now, i.e. you [Pilar] do the presentation of what I am introducing to you... Did you understand me?. What I am saying, what I am presenting here, you [the group] are recording, and you will expose in a group there [in the general assembly], without me, but you will do it... So what do you [the group] think about what I have said, what is your opinion, do you agree?", Program's meeting on March 21 2013.

Then Pilar asked how the indigenous government Nasa Kiwe would manage resources to buy cows, since Pedro had mentioned it. The Program members had discussed previously that such resources could be allocated to households in Nuevo México, in order to economically strengthen them. At the same time they could sell milk and meat to the restaurant. The response of Pedro, on the other hand, laid the ground for a proposal that Ricardo, a resident of Nuevo México, had made to the Program of Woman. This was about obtaining land in Nuevo México to expand the grazing areas for the cattle of Ricardo, through the Program of Woman. While the Program would help to take care of the cattle, they could use the milk from the cattle and produce dairy products. The response of Pedro to Pilar's question was:

"In regards to cattle, I was thinking about Ricardo. Ricardo is a specialist in that topic. So, now we have a person to manage and train the group. He would take five women [Program members] that would take care of the animals, but they would go to a general assembly Each one would have one heifer. They [the five women] will ask for 5 plazas [32 hectares to graze 4-5 heifers]", Program's meeting on March 21 2013.

In general, the advice of the ex-governor Pedro attempted that the group formulated a good project proposal to be approved by the Municipality and access SGP resources. His intervention also aimed towards a formation of two initiatives. First, Pedro proposed that the projects supported by the Indigenous Government to access the SGP resources, give some percentage of their profit to the Indigenous Government and the local school. The money would be used as a kind of bonus for the governor, secretary and treasurer for instance. He cited that in other indigenous communities they are already working in that way, which has been a relief for members of the indigenous governments, since they do not receive any remuneration for their work. Second, Pedro proposed the creation of a planning committee within the Community Nasa Kiwe to give support to projects. He was clear in suggesting who should be part of such a committee; ex-governors (he included the two women ex-governors), ex-coordinators, founders and elder-leaders without a clear role. He himself also meets the criteria to be part of the committee.

In summary, the Program of Woman wanted to receive unconditional support from the indigenous government Nasa Kiwe. However the loan became a barrier for the group to move forward in a project that they had proposed. Pedro also added more weight to the group when he suggested to give part of the restaurant's profit to the Indigenous Government and to local school. Besides, Pedro approached the group overlooking the member's capacities and own ideas about the restaurant project during the meeting on March 21. He used the same approach during meetings in regards to the water supply committee presented in section 5.2.2.

One barrier discussed by the Program members was that they did not have a place or a plot where to locate the restaurant¹⁹. A plot would cost about 12 times the loan they were

¹⁹ The Program of Woman Nasa Kiwe has a farm plot in Nuevo México. They were searching for plots along the national road near to Nuevo México, where travelers and truckers could access the restaurant.

offered. Besides, the monthly rents in a local in Santander town were also too high for them²⁰. If they would accept the loan from the Indigenous Government, they would be responsible for paying back the loan plus rent every month, which overwhelmed the group.

Moreover, the group perceived that interested people to join the group were attracted by the idea to get some income from the restaurant project, and they were not at all committed to the Program's essence. The group did not want to deny their participation, but they were discussing a strategy to handle those interests. For instance, the apparent approval of the participation of the ex-governor Pedro was not a case of handing over the control of the group to him, as I thought had happened during the meetings on March 21 and 24²¹ 2013. The group knew that Pedro "appears due to self-interest", and the group also knew that he has information to look for plots and contacts in the ACIN (interview with Pilar, March 29 2013). For that reason, the group let Pedro take over the meetings, but his participation would be set as for any other persons.

Similarly, the Program members identified in the proposal of Ricardo conditions of which they did not agree. The group perceived their autonomy threatened due the attitude of command of Ricardo and his emphasis on profit. Finally, the group agreed to write down the criteria of participation in the Program of Woman, make Ricardo aware of them, and welcome his participation if he accepted such criteria (Program's meeting on March 28 2013).

These cases show that, on the one hand, it is natural for men with recognition to lead and dominate initiatives over other men and women that lack this recognition in the public sphere. On the other hand, such attempts of domination did not find an easy path. The Program of Woman analysed the situations and prioritized what was more convenient for them.

5.4 The few spaces of discussion for women

This last section of the chapter is dedicated to illustrate how it looks like when indigenous women from communities in northern Cauca take spaces in the public – emerging out of a discomfort with male appearance and behaviour, like negative labelling of women's discussions for instance. This was the only space from a total of four days of activities organized by the Regional Program of Woman, in which women proposed what to talk about and they were actively contributing to the discussion. Furthermore, the case shows that inequalities brought up by the women were not tackled within these activities of the Regional Program of Woman.

During such a session a group of 12 women met to deal with the task that had been assigned to them by the facilitator of the Course Women, Territory and Economy. The questions were "How to analyze the mining phenomenon from a gender perspective? And what are the consequences of the mining activity over the life and women's body?" (facilitator Edgar, February 25 2013). By themselves they started by choosing two women to take notes and to present the assignment the next day. This conversation lasted about five hours, in which all women had something to share and they kept discussing topics of their interest.

Arora-Jonsson writes that power relationships are entangled with forms of social differences like age, class, caste or occupation, and sexual differences (2013:5). In this case, a discussion about mining exploitation was one way to shed light on unequal power relations that women in the indigenous context of northern Cauca were experiencing or knew about. For instance, unequal distribution of land which favours certain people, who already have land, over young people. Also, that access to credits is easier for men than for

²⁰ About 400.000COP=1.360SEK, Exchange rates of August 17 2013.

²¹ On March 24, the Program members and the ex-governor Pedro conducted a field visit looking for plots to locate the restaurant, while discussing related issues.

women. The women have difficulties to influence their authorities -most of them men-, to avoid the mining exploitation.

“There are people that have land and they are given more. We must reflect if I do good use of the land or am I accumulating”, Alba, women’s meeting, February 25 2013.

The analysis of the group also contained alternative solutions to stop gold mining in their territories and explanations of the situation, based on the Nasa cosmo-vision. They proposed two complementary strategies, each one led by a women team. The first consists of covering the mining holes in the mountains with the spiritual help of the traditional doctors. The other was to raise awareness within the population about the damages and negative impacts of gold mining, using videos and theatre for instance. Olivia and Pilar explained the gold mining as a consequence of disrespect for the gold and internal problem within the indigenous communities:

“We disregard all that traditional knowledge, the relationship between nature and us. Therefore I was saying that there is a need for more clarity about the topic of cosmo-vision because it is strongly related to how I see the earth. There it is everything. What we do to the gold is returned to us, because the gold has an owner. As one asks for permission to the mountains, one has to ask for permission to the gold... that is why there are deaths and accidents [because of the lack of permission]”, Olivia, women’s meeting, February 25 2013.

“In fact, there are internal difficulties. Women are not recognized and taken into consideration... In the indigenous government there is dispute for power, the elders are ignored. This [the mining] is the outbreak... What kind of authority do we have? If they [miners] have necessities, what is needed is to put them to work in the traditional economy [e.g. farming]”, Pilar, women’s meeting, February 25 2013.

Afterwards, I suggested summing up their contributions in which I could notice a definition of gender in terms of power relations. The group concluded that in the Nasa-Yuwe the term gender does not exist. However, they associated gender from the Nasa cosmo-vision as “harmony and equilibrium for both sides [i.e. men and women], with the nature, and without discrimination” (women’s meeting, February 25 2013).

The women came to talk about gender because the facilitator had suggested doing so, assuming that the women were familiar with the term gender. This was not the case. The women developed their analysis in respect to gold mining in their territories. Although not familiar with the term and expressing that it was difficult to understand, they brought up issues of power relations and organization of power of the social and political life in their communities. After the group had developed the discussion I dared to say that they were talking about things I would consider as gender relations. In the end, the group was proud to be able to define gender from their everyday life experiences, problems and cosmo-vision.

The next day, after the two delegates presented the assignment to the group, the facilitator Edgar introduced a definition of gender as a social construction and as an issue of power relationships. He did not make any connection to the material that the women had already contributed with, although it corresponded to what he technically was saying about gender. Furthermore, there was not any discussion about the inequalities that women manifested in their conclusions (Course session on February 26 2013).

During the closure of the two-day session of the Course Women, Territory and Economy, there were again several expressions suggesting the low political influence that women leaders have on their indigenous authorities. However, there was not any practical initiative in this regards.

“How to convince the [indigenous] authorities? Recently they approved mining to a group of young people. I presented my position [to the indigenous governor] and his question was what is the option?”, young woman participant, February 26 2013.

The agenda of the indigenous movement in northern Cauca is occupied with political and territorial struggles with the State, the guerrilla and private interests to extract gold. However, inequalities related to the participation of women in the social and political life (public sphere), as the ones illustrated before, were not found as an issue on the public agenda. In general, I noticed that the Regional Program of Woman has a delimited agenda and resources that could not solve all the concerns and particular situations of each of the 17 Programs of Woman, which include issues of illegal crops and guerrilla attacks.

Nonetheless, I believe that the Regional Program of Woman should engage in issues raised by the women themselves related to the public life of the indigenous movement. The Regional Program of Woman has the potential to be the space to discuss and raise inequalities that women experience in the public life, and not only in the private sphere or in relation to broader political struggles of the movement.

The way that the group of 12 women led this session showed a different dynamic in comparison to formal sessions organized by the Regional Program of Woman. The women were active in making questions and contributions, and keep working on the task. The group brought up sensitive issues about unequal power relations, which I did not hear in any other space during my fieldwork. The analysis of the mining issue by the group remained framed within the Nasa cosmo-vision, whose aspects were evoked with respect and nostalgia of the good old times. They used notions of their cosmo-vision as equilibrium and harmony, to reject discriminations with elders, young people and women (including women's low political influence), occurring inside their communities. In this regard, Forbis suggests that "rights predicated on notions of a static unchanging indigenous culture precludes efforts to change that culture from within" (2008:181). For the group of women it did not seem difficult to relate their cosmo-vision to their ongoing struggles. However, further research is needed to get more depth into this theme.

6 Final discussion and conclusions

The final question of this paper is *how women bring up questions of gender inequalities vis a vis men without challenging their loyalty to an indigenous community*, in the social and political life of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe.

In the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe practices of men and women denote respect and commitment to forms of indigenous traditional authorities, like the government, the general assembly and community work. To a larger extent they define the social and political life of the indigenous community, the public sphere. Men and women are constantly giving new meanings and establishing social dynamics upon these traditional authorities. Currently relationships contain inequalities that limit women's participation in the public sphere. The following unequal power relations were identified in this context:

i) Women's spaces for political discussion are given a different and belittled meaning than the ones occupied by men. Historically these spaces have been addressed by men. 40 years ago women started to enter into the social and political life of indigenous communities in northern Cauca. However, the strong attachment of men to the public sphere, makes women's spaces for political discussion seem illegitimate. Men tend to degrading them to spaces for gossiping.

ii) Attributes assigned to men and women in this context influence the way in which their social and political participation is framed. Women are supposed to receive attributes as reserved and supportive, and men as talkative and leaders. These attributes have their origin in the ways men and women have established their relationships and division of labor. Women are in charge of the domestic tasks and men of the public issues, although there are women with paid jobs or holding political positions. Women are labeled by men and also by some women, as problematic and quarrelsome, if they behave different in public spaces than is expected.

iii) The technical language that men have embraced from their experience in the public sphere limits women to participate in public debates about legal and political issues. Women perceived such language as foreign and difficult to understand. Women do participate and discuss, but rather about topics they know, such as everyday life, health and domestic issues. Their participation in meetings decreases when technical language appears.

iv) Men leaders configure a network in which they keep supporting each other, taking decisions and managing the public, most of the time excluding women. It seems natural for men leaders to dominate and take over projects and initiatives, overlooking other people less recognized. Even more, where men have the control over communal resources.

There are differences among indigenous women in northern Cauca in terms of level of education and occupation. Some women manage to get their voices heard in public sphere, which does not allow for generalizations. Still, the above presented unequal power relations make that many women feel a low capacity to influence indigenous authorities. It discourages them to participate in the social and political life in general, and limit women's participation to follow certain parameters as presented before. Also, some women conform

to these inequalities, due to a fear of losing access to opportunities and resources managed by men, or to be recognized as conflictive.

It is possible that these mechanisms that reproduce unequal power relations enclose conscious intentions of men and women, which would need further investigations. However, as discussed below, I believe that the power of discourses – narratives and practices– trap us in certain forms of realities, preventing us from seeing other ways to establish relationships.

Olga Luz Restrepo argues that some indigenous discourses are focused on issues of power relations with “the State, with the other, the outsiders, the aggressors”, and that they overlook the existence of power relations within the indigenous communities (2005, p. 17). Similarly, in the social and political life of indigenous communities in northern Cauca communal struggles dominate the public agenda, containing a sense of unity, constantly shaping a collective identity. Also in the case of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe, this overlooks unequal power relations that exist inside indigenous communities.

Indigenous men and women, and external supporters of the indigenous movement in northern Cauca, are constantly reinforcing a discourse on unity, which finally shapes a political struggle against the State or capitalist agents. In addition, the indigenous movement devotes resources to gain support among a broader population, e.g. get their positions recognized in the media, carrying out manifestations and training activities. On the one hand, this political struggle is perceived to need unity, in order to mark a stronger position in public discussion.

On the other hand those discourses have two effects. One is that dominant discourses invisibilize and diminish other important issues that happen inside the indigenous communities, as Restrepo asserts. And two, such discourses make people fall into a kind of cultural relativism or reductionism. That is, make people tend to believe as given and beyond questioning, that the outsider, non-indigenous, is always the source of alteration and detriment of the indigenous modes of existence.

For instance, the teacher and ex-governor of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe, Arturo, explained that unequal power relations between men and women, e.g. machismo, come from the Western views and laws. That from the Nasa cosmo-vision, men and women share relationships of equality (interview on April 4 2013).

But again, as Chandra Mohanty reminds us, it is important to make context-specific analysis of what the oppression of women (1988, p. 75-77), or indigenous women in that case, is about.

In the context of northern Cauca, dominant discourses about broader issues, with the opponents outside of the indigenous communities, have become the universal representation to explain inequalities that indigenous suffer. However, what is overlooked is that these inequalities also have found a certain approval and followers inside the indigenous movement. Inequalities have historical roots, they are influenced by colonial practices, by “the other”, but they are also reproduced in the present. In other words, inequalities that women face to participate in the social and political life are effects of current practices and decision making of indigenous men and women. Hence, the struggle for gender equality in this context needs to challenge and deconstruct the discursive colonization of blaming the outsider.

Similarly, in narratives of indigenous women referenced by Astrid Ulloa (2007) or in positions of the Regional Program of Woman in northern Cauca, the patriarchal system (inherited from the Spanish colonization) is a recurrent argument. This is used to explain why indigenous men have excluded women from decision-making in the public sphere or why they commit violence against women. Such argumentation lacks explanations on what constitutes the patriarchal system in the present: what are the social dynamics that give ground to it, and how is it reproduced, from the most evident to the more subtle forms.

Exceptions are the experience of indigenous women in Mexico examined by Georgina Méndez (2007) and Lynn Stephen (2001). The case of indigenous women in Mexico very

strongly makes clear, that women, by themselves, challenged issues of their traditions after they recognized that inequalities were also inside the indigenous movement. Similar processes are going on in the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe.

Seema Arora-Jonsson shows that discourses influence women's subjectivities to organize their personal and collective agency (2009). In the struggle for gender equality, effects of discourses partly determine the scene for what women envision.

The inequalities presented at the beginning of the chapter, e.g. the labelling or technical language, reduce the agency of women as individuals to participate in the public sphere. Besides, women's collective agency is shaped in spaces like the Regional Program of Woman and the Programs of Woman in the indigenous communities in northern Cauca.

The Regional Program is framed under the policies and resources of the indigenous movement as a whole, which do not leave any spaces for internal disputes or to question the fundamental community structures. The communities' Programs of Woman are also spaces under the policies of the indigenous movement, but they do not respond to formal arrangements. This represents differences in the way that women take action in one or another space.

During formal spaces of meeting and training organized by the Regional Program of Woman in which I participated, some women from communities' Programs of Woman had the courage to express inequalities that women had experienced in the public sphere. Remarkably, such inequalities were not challenged by anyone of the whole set of people that assisted these sessions; organizers, facilitators and participating women themselves.

In contrast, the reflections and actions made by women members of communities' Programs of Woman demonstrated greater agency compared to formal spaces in the Regional Program of Woman. For instance, the Program of Woman Nasa Kiwe in the restaurant and cattle breeding proposals, expressed discomfort and did not accept the decision-making of a network of male leaders. As well, a group of 12 women, from Programs of Woman, in a discussion about gold mining the low political influence of women leaders on indigenous male authorities was pointed out, among other inequalities.

In this context, the collective agency of women in the struggle for gender equality is limited by dominant discourses about the struggles that the indigenous movement faces against outside agents. In addition, a collective identity is shaped by the formal compromises on which a collective is founded. Compromises meaning for some women access to opportunities, not wanting or daring to interfere with public issues.

Indigenous women face subtle forms of unequal power relations to participate in the social and political life of the Community Nasa Kiwe and in general, in indigenous communities in northern Cauca. What makes it so complex is that men and women are interwoven in the intersections between gender, ethnicity and post-colonial relations, which deserve equal attention (Radcliffe & Pequeño 2010, p. 1011). The challenge here is that inequalities are realized as an issue, a gender issue worthy, at least by women, to be challenged in the public agenda.

Narratives collected during this thesis illustrate that women envision relationships between men and women in equilibrium, without discriminations. That is, relationships in which women without constraint, as individuals or collectively, can self-determine their participation in the public sphere. Moreover, women envision to participate in the organization of power of the social and political life of their communities.

When the women that are involved in the public sphere of indigenous communities in northern Cauca could not participate in such organization of power, relationships became problematic. Namely, decision-making of male leaders appeared as illegitimate and ambiguous for female leaders, communication and trust decreased between them, and women leaders had to work harder to conform to guidelines of male leaders while working on their own initiatives. Thus, I believe that the participation of women in the public sphere

is important for a better exercise of the social and political life of communities. Besides, the women themselves have a wish to strengthen their involvement.

The history of women's participation in the indigenous movement in Cauca indicates that inequalities have been overcome when women have demanded, for instance, their inclusion in political decision making. For example, 15 years ago the women founders of the Indigenous Community Nasa Kiwe experienced difficulties to step into the political life of the indigenous movement in northern Cauca. Today women have certain possibilities to occupy political positions.

Nevertheless, inequalities exist. To reveal unequal power relations may seem difficult when at first glance, one can find men and women participating in the social and political life. However, narratives presented in this thesis show that indigenous women notice and do not conform to subtle forms of inequalities, which I believe is meaningful in the struggle of gender equality.

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Appendix 1 Model of the survey

Reconocimiento de la situación en abastecimiento de agua, saneamiento básico y vivienda de los pobladores de la vereda Santa María, finca Nuevo México, Resguardo Indígena Nasa KiweTekhKsxaw, municipio de Santander de Quilichao, Cauca, Colombia¹

Fecha: _____ Hora: _____

Identificación visita domiciliaria: _____

Nombre de quien atiende: _____

Relación con la madre o padre cabeza de familia: _____

Casa propia o arrendada? _____

Realizan la visita domiciliaria: _____

A. Identificación de residentes vivienda:

A1. Miembros de la vivienda que usualmente residen allí:

Fam.	Nombre	M	H	Edad	Relación	Ocupación	Nivel de educación formal	Lugar procedencia

¹ Trabajo en colaboración entre el Cabildo Indígena Nasa KiweTekhKsxaw y Blanca Sandoval con el objetivo de recopilar información para la gestión de proyectos adelantada por el Cabildo, y como parte de la tesis de Blanca Sandoval (Estudiante de la maestría en Desarrollo Rural y Manejo de Recursos Naturales, Universidad Sucre de Ciencias de la Agricultura).

A2. ¿Existen familiares o personas cercanas que pasen temporadas en la vivienda?

Nombre	M	H	Edad	Relación	Ocupación	Educación	¿Cuándo permanece?

B. Características de la vivienda

B1. Espacios con que cuenta la vivienda:

No. cuartos: _____ Sala: Si No Comedor: Si No

Cocina: Si No Baño¹: Si No

Otros: _____

B2. Espacios de la vivienda y materiales de construcción (chulear en la casilla que corresponda):

	A2.1. Cuartos	A2.2. Sala	A2.3. Comedor	A2.4. Cocina	A2.5.	A2.6.
Pisos						
Tierra						
Cemento						
Cerámica						
Otros						
Paredes						
Ladrillo						
Bloque						
Repello acabado						
Esterilla						
Esterilla con polisombra						
Esterilla con barro						
Otros						
Techo						
Teja barro						
Zinc						
Material vegetal						
Otros						

¹ Caseta con la taza sanitaria o inodoro.

Obs.:

B3. Mejoramiento de la vivienda

B3.1. En su opinión, ¿usted mejoraría algo en su vivienda?

Si Si "Si", ¿Qué mejoraría primero?

1. _____, ¿y luego?

2. _____, ¿y luego?

3. _____

No

B3.2. ¿Ha hablado de estas mejoras con algún otro integrante de la familia?

Si Si "Si":

¿Con quién?	¿Estuvieron de acuerdo?		¿Qué mejoras propuso la otra persona?
	Si	No	

No

Obs.:

C. Enfermedades más frecuentes

C1. ¿Se ha enfermado alguien durante el último mes que no haya implicado hospitalización?¹

¿Quién(es)?	¿De qué?	¿Por qué?

C2. ¿Durante el último año alguna persona estuvo hospitalizada?

¿Quién(es)?	¿De qué?	¿Por qué?

Obs.:

¹ Apéndice D, Profamilia et al., 2010, p. 651.

D. Abastecimiento de agua

D1. ¿De dónde toman agua, cuándo y para qué usos¹?

Fuente	Época verano		Época invierno		Ocasionalmente	
	Metros ²	Usos	Metros	Usos	Metros	Usos
Aljibe o pozo						
Ojo de agua						
Agua lluvia						
Acueducto						
Agua embotell.						
Otro:						

D2. ¿Quién o quiénes traen el agua?

D3. ¿Qué recipientes usa para traer el agua?

Usos: Consumo Aseo personal Lavado manos Lavado ropa Lavado platos Aseo casa Vaciado inodoro Bebida animales

D4. ¿Usa carreta, moto u otro para cargar el agua?

D5. ¿Qué recipientes usa para almacenar el agua?

Volumen
total: ____/____

D6. ¿Dónde pone los recipientes con agua?

D7. ¿Cada cuánto traen el agua?

¹ Drangert 1993, p. 272.

² Se refiere a distancia en metros desde la vivienda.

E. Disposición de excretas:

E1. ¿A dónde van para hacer del cuerpo?

(Escribir en el cuadro Si o No según el caso)

				Mueble sanit.	Olor	Moscas	Vent. a la vista	Heces	Bombillo	
Letrina (bacinete en cemento, madera u otro) <input type="checkbox"/>	{ Letrina Seca Letrina con pozo de absorción Otro:	<input type="checkbox"/>								
		<input type="checkbox"/>								
		<input type="checkbox"/>								
Baño seco <input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>								
Taza campesina <input type="checkbox"/>	{ Con descargue a campo abierto Con descargue a pozo de absorción Con descargue a tanque séptico Otro:	<input type="checkbox"/>								
		<input type="checkbox"/>								
		<input type="checkbox"/>								
		<input type="checkbox"/>								
Inodoro de bajo consumo <input type="checkbox"/>	{ Con descargue a campo abierto Con descargue a tanque séptico Otro:	<input type="checkbox"/>								
		<input type="checkbox"/>								
		<input type="checkbox"/>								
Inodoro de alto consumo <input type="checkbox"/>	{ Con descargue a campo abierto Con descargue a tanque séptico Otro:	<input type="checkbox"/>								
		<input type="checkbox"/>								
		<input type="checkbox"/>								
Campo Abierto <input type="checkbox"/>	Distancia desde la vivienda (mts): _____ Dónde van? Lugar comunitario formal: <input type="checkbox"/> Lugar comunitario informal: <input type="checkbox"/>									
Hoyo en losa, tierra u otro <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Otro <input type="checkbox"/>	Cuál?									

Obs.:

E2. ¿Dónde queda ubicada la caseta de baño?

¿Integrada a la vivienda? Estado camino: _____

¿Separada de la vivienda? Distancia desde la vivienda (mts): _____

Estado camino: _____

E3. ¿Dónde se realiza el aseo personal?

Caseta con ducha: Sin caseta, junto al lavadero:

En los tanques (ojos de agua):

Otros: _____

E4. ¿Dónde se realiza el lavado de manos?

F. Descripción cocina

F1. ¿Dónde queda la cocina?

¿Integrada a la vivienda? Estado camino: _____

¿Separada de la vivienda? Distancia desde la vivienda (mts): _____

Estado camino: _____

F2. ¿Hay agua en la cocina?

Grifo: Acarrea desde otro sitio: Almacena en la cocina y usa:

Otro: _____

F3. ¿Dónde se realiza el lavado de platos? _____

F4. ¿Combustible para cocinar?

Gas natural Electricidad Leña, madera o carbón

Otro: _____

F5. ¿El humo del fogón sale fácilmente al exterior de la casa?

Si No ¿Entra a la casa? Si No

G. ¿Qué hacen con la basura?

Residuos cocina: _____

Plástico: _____

Papel: _____

Vidrio: _____

Papel higiénico: _____

Otros: _____

Appendix 2 Glossary

Indigenous community

It is a group or set of families with Amerindian origin, who are conscious about their identity and share values, features, uses and customs of their culture. As well as forms of government, management, social control or own normative systems that distinguishes them from other communities, having or not property titles, or that could not be legally accredited, or that their reservations were dissolved, divided or declared vacant (Ministerio de Agricultura 1995, Article 2o).

Indigenous Cabildo or government

It is a special public institution with a traditional socio-political organization. The members of the cabildo belong to an indigenous community, they are elected and recognized by the indigenous community. The function of the Cabildo is to legally represent the community, exercise authority and develop the activities attributed by the law, their uses, customs and the internal regulation of each community (ibid 1995).

Indigenous reservation

It is a wasteland occupied by one or several indigenous communities, which has been delimited and legally assigned by the Incora to them to exercise on it the rights of use and usufruct with exclusion of third parties. The indigenous reservations are communal land of ethnic groups, for the purposes established in the article 63 of the Political Constitution and Law 21 1991 (ibid 1995).