Development from Participation in Women's Groups

Experiences from Bolivia

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Abstract

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This report is the result of a field study conducted in urban Bolivia on women's group in which women are organised in order to work, get social support and personal capacity building under the responsibility of a licensed psychologist. The study sought to examine the groups by focusing on the experiences of the women in relation to the process of empowerment and the development of the community. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with half of the women participating in the group. Results showed that weekly capacity building workshops and social inclusion have positive effects on the women's development in terms of self-confidence and communication skills. The economic development has not been what the women expected and they showed great disappointment regarding that. The results were further analysed by the use of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological perspective, an analysis in which the main conclusion drawn was the positive effects of strong development from interaction between actors within the women's microsystems. A conclusive analysis has proposed more active participation from the women and more control over the progress of the groups to further promote the process of empowerment.

Keywords: Women's groups, women's empowerment, human development, social inclusion, participation

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1 Introduction

Get yourself a bunch of newspapers, turn on the radio or start zapping through the TV channels and it will probably not take you long to get reminded that a vast number of people in the world are living in socially excluded situations. It can be seen in Gävle, in Paris, in New York, in Beijing, well it is a global phenomena caused by poverty, vague or no access to job markets, absence of social support and from not having necessary services or sustainable networks to name a few examples.

Scan through your newspapers a bit more and it will probably not take you much longer to get reminded that a significant number of these people are women. It is globally known that in general; women are more burdened by poverty by men, violence against women is an issue, women carry a higher domestic workload and that about two thirds of the worlds illiterate are women (United Nation, 2010). Measures of poverty are different but a recurring estimated number says that women represent 70 % of the world's poor (i.e. The Global Poverty Project, undated), many are those women in the world that face injustice and inequality. Widely proved is also that women undertake a considerably higher workload than men in terms of hours, a recurring number is that two thirds of the worlds working hours are conducted by women whom in contrast earn ten percent of the income in the world (i.e. ibid). In general women not only earn less than men but they also undertake more unpaid work in terms of domestic labour regardless of whether they undertake paid employment or not.

Open up a web browser and in any search engine type women's development, women's poverty, women's empowerment or something similar; you will get millions of hits and it will probably not take you long before you read about the Beijing Declaration. In 1995 representatives from 189 countries met in Beijing on the fourth world conference to discuss the topic of women's development, which seemingly set a standard for a great part of social and development work with women. Amongst many things the present countries reaffirmed their commitment to "the empowerment and advancement of women" (United Nations, 1996 p.3). A vast number of agencies today promote empowerment and especially women's empowerment which some fifteen years ago was called a buzzword by Rowlands (1997), it probably still is a buzzword; widely defined and widely used.

Buzzword or not, women or men, poverty or illiteracy, inequality or deprivation; it lies in the core purposes of the social work profession to facilitate social inclusion, to work with and for

people to change inequalities and to promote human development, well-being and social stability. It lies in the core purposes to implement and administer programmes for doing such things (Sewpaul & Jones, 2004). But what is an effective way of promoting development? What is an effective way of promoting empowerment and advancement of women?

Those questions are, when it comes to socially excluded persons and communities, tremendously difficult, perhaps impossible, to fully answer. This report is the result of an attempt to examine one way of doing so through a field study in a marginalised settlement in urban Bolivia where women's groups have been organised to improve the women's social, personal and economical status.

The Plurinational state of Bolivia is being regarded as one of the poorest countries of Latin America, with a lower human development index than the regional average and a bit more than a third of its approximately ten million inhabitants living in poverty (according to statistics from UNDP, 2010). The community where the study took place is no exception, it is a very poor community located in between two administrative geographic areas and vastly immersed in social exclusion. Women in the community live with a low level of effectiveness in their own socioeconomic development due to inferiority to men and heavy workload in domestic duties (Salinas, 2007).

The groups which were under study operate under the name Tantakuna which is a word from the indigenous, accordingly official, language Quechua and signifies to get together. Since the year of 2006 the women in the group have had opportunities to personal capacity building, social support and to work in a bakery, with handicrafts or in small kiosks. The groups are organised within an internationally supported NGO, Proyecto Horizonte, and lead by a licensed psychologist.

1.1 The aim of the study

The aim of this study was to examine Tantakuna by focusing on the experiences of the participating women regarding their perceived development and the significance Tantakuna has for them. To do so it was considered most adequate to focus the experiences in relation to a process of empowerment and the development of a marginalised community.

- What kind of development are the women experiencing from the participation in Tantakuna?
- What does the participation in Tantakuna mean to the women?

1.2 Structure of the report

In the following chapter is background information covered in order to give understanding of the topic and the setting of the study. This is done in two parts, firstly presented is just enough information to understand the contextual setting of the study and to give insight into earlier research from the community. Secondly the concept of empowerment is presented and as will become understood throughout this report it is a concept which has been widely used in social science, thus widely defined and developed. In many scholar works it has been viewed as a theoretical framework, however due to its multisided characteristics it is in the present report argued for as being hard to view as a rigor theoretical perspective. Though, it has been used as an analytical tool and is in the following chapter presented out of the notions from some well recognised scholars in social science and with some examples on empowerment form women's groups.

The theoretical perspective of the present study was based on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development which is presented in chapter three. As will be understood from that chapter, out of the bioecological perspective development is taking place through interacting relations in the surrounding environment of the evolving person and. In the present study it is apart from its well developed and tested characteristics of understanding human development being argued for as an highly effective approach for tackling social exclusion and thus fully respond to the complexity of the aim outlined above.

In chapter four of the report is the methodology of the study accounted for including aspects of credibility and ethics. The results of the study are presented in chapter five together with interpretations and analyses in the light of the background information presented in the following chapter. In chapter six is a further analysis, this time by the use of the theoretical perspective to bring further interpretation to the result and to fully respond to the aim of the study. In chapter seven are the results, the theory and the methodology evaluated and discussed together with suggestions for further research on the topic.

2 Background

In this chapter are presented background information divided into two different sections, *the context of the study* and *empowerment.* The first section covers an introduction to the contextual setting of the study including its history and development and earlier research from Tantakuna. The second part covers the concept of empowerment including a presentation of some prominent notions of the concept and earlier research made on women's groups and empowerment.

2.1 The context of the study

This section includes a brief presentation of the community Mineros San Juan, Uspha Uspha (hereafter referred to only as Mineros San Juan) and the Foundation Proyecto Horizonte which is the NGO in which Tantakuna operates. Tantakuna is a service offered by Proyecto Horizonte to the community and its inhabitants and below is relevant research from the community presented to later in the report cover the aim of relating the effectiveness of Tantakuna to the development of the community.

Mineros San Juan – a no man's land?

The settlement Mineros San Juan was during the present study being called a no man's land in the local newspaper, this due to its geographic and administrative location between two municipalities of whom none of them are present in Mineros San Juan with their statutory responsibility to promote local development (Arellano, 2011). The community located on roadside hills ten kilometres outside the fourth biggest city of the country, Cochabamba, did in June this year celebrate its tenth anniversary.

Initially in 2001 the settlement held an illegal status, which around Cochabamba as well as in entire Bolivia and in other countries around South America is a common urban phenomenon (Proyecto Horizonte, 2010a; Widemann, 2007). The first inhabitants, about 200 families, of Mineros San Juan did initially migrate from other provinces of Bolivia in search for a place where they could be the owners of their own terrain and live with their families (Widemann, 2007), though it was not to become as calm as they had hoped for. People lived in tents or huts of wood, plastic or other garbage and they had to live through constant conflicts and fights for the terrain with people from neighbouring settlements, these conflicts have been described as rough with several causes of death as result (Ibid). Apart from the conflicts

making the life hard for people, the hygienic situation was low; the community did not have access to basic services nor water or electricity. It was not until in the year of 2004 that the community was connected to the electricity network of Cochabamba (Proyecto Horizonte, 2010a). Around this time the community started to be recognised by influential persons and organisations and things started to calm down, people received rights to their own properties and could start building their own houses (Widemann, 2007). Another factor for some kind of stability and the development of the community is by Widemann (Ibid) meant to having been the Sociedad San Vicente de Paúl (which later became a foundation with the name Proyecto Horizonte, further presented below), a charity organisation that actually already in 2001 set up a small health centre "which provided basic medical and dental care, limited schooling and distribution of meals and clothes" (Proyecto Horizonte, 2010a). The organisation did not only provide a small service to the community, it did also help with the legalisation process of the community and has today grown to provide an even greater support to Mineros San Juan (Widemann, 2007).

Today Mineros San Juan has around 10.000 inhabitants (Arellano, 2011), the living standard in the community is still poor and apart from the cobblestoned main street of the community which stretches from the highway up through the community, no street lights exists neither do paved roads. Access to water is still limited, the community still lacks plumbing and sewage systems and for now water is delivered in tanks to central locations by trucks. The majority of the houses in the community are far from completed and consists of one or a couple of rooms and many does not have toilets, walls around the yards are highly prioritised since the inhabitants are carrying a feeling of insecurity. The health, educational and social services that are in the community are provided by Proyecto Horizonte which is located along the main road on a yard housing its kindergarten health centre and administration. About four blocks further up the hill still along the main street is the school located, also established by Proyecto Horizonte. Several kiosks and some eateries can be found in the community, mainly centred around the lighted main road. Local transportation connects the community with the centre of Cochabamba and its great market, La Cancha, the place where the majority of the inhabitants of Mineros San Juan goes for doing their shopping, which is more or less a half an hour trip with local transportation.

The Foundation Proyecto Horizonte

As mentioned above, the provider of the services that today are available in the community is

the foundation Proyecto Horizonte which grew out from Sociedad San Vicente de Paúl who did operate on a small scale in the community as early as 2001. In the year of 2004 the founders (a Bolivian and a German man) of Proyecto Horizonte met and together they started to plan the development of the organisation that took off with a kindergarten in the community, which in December the same year opened up for 100 children (Proyecto Horizonte, 2010a). The plans for developing the community were to become further developed and thanks to support from a German organisation a school could in 2008 open up its door in the community and become a learning centre for more than 600 children. The organisation, did apart from the opportunities to education for the children also develop "education for adults, a health-care station, initiatives to support the cultural development in Uspha-Uspha, support for Microfinance and Microenterprise and much more (Ibid)" In the year of 2008 the organisation became, for organisational reasons a foundation with the name Proyecto Horizonte (Sociedad San Vicente de Paúl), its general objective is:

> [T]o improve the quality of life in vulnerable settlements through integrated services offered by a multidisciplinary and qualified team and with the active participation of the beneficiary community, respecting its culture, beliefs and the individuality of the person

(Proyecto Horizonte, undated)

In the year of 2006 a Spanish volunteer at Proyecto Horizonte organised the women's groups Tantakuna for the first time "to find a place to discuss, exchange information and ultimately find work" (Proyecto Horizonte, 2010b). Tantakuna aims to contribute to an improvement of the needs of the women and the community on economical, social and personal level. This is done through enabling of work, by giving of different capacity building workshops and psychological support, the process of Tantakuna is being further presented in the result section of this paper.

The development of the quality of life in Mineros San Juan

As can be understood the community of Mineros San Juan is and have for many years been in a constant process of development, accordingly Proyecto Horizonte has a great input to this process. In a study conducted in 2009 (Hübgen, 2009) the development of the quality of life since 2004 and the respective impact Proyecto Horizonte did have during these five years is accounted for. A questionnaire was performed with 64 people in the community and included questions about education, housing, health, work, leisure time, security and violence as well as separate questions about Proyecto Horizonte. Of the above mentioned themes the one that

showed to have had the most perceived positive development was health, thanks to the inaugurated health centre in the community mostly because not having to travel to other communities for health service or use home remedies when in need.

On the whole, the participants in this investigation believed that the quality of life had improved during the five years the study focused on; a bit more than half of the participants believed that the conditions had improved and nearly all of them believed that it will keep improving. Of the participants in this study 15,3 % named Proyecto Horizonte as the most important factor for development of the quality of life in the community while a bit more than a third of the respondents considered themselves, the people and the community as a whole as being the most crucial factor for development. Meanwhile Proyecto Horizonte was named as a crucial factor for the development of the community Hübgen (2009) meant that it was hard to actually specify the exact contribution from the organization. What could be concluded was that the conditions in 2009 were clearly improved from 2004 and that the people in the community did appreciate the service they had chosen to use within the Proyecto Horizonte (Ibid).

Earlier research with Tantakuna

In 2009 a diagnostic within Tantakuna was made to identify the characteristics of the interpersonal, social and cultural relations to understand the difficulties that can affect the personal, social and productive development (Cutiña, 2009). This was carried out with the women of Tantakuna which at that stage consisted of 30 participants, methods used was participant observations, questionnaires and focus groups. The result Cutiña draw from her diagnosis was that the women and their families were immersed in a socioeconomically excluded situation due to environmental and nutritional deficiencies and low incomes in relation to big families (a third of the women had 3-8 children). She meant that the women had hard to understand issues of self-esteem and communication skills nor did they seem to believe that those concept where relevant for them within their cultural context. Though some of them did show a belief in themselves and personal capacities (while some did not) it did exist a lack of respect for feelings and thoughts within the groups which rather than speak and become labelled lead to passivity. Moreover Cutiña meant that there was no sense of belonging to a group among the women since there was no active participation as long as a question was not asked directly to a person nor did she experience that attention was paid when someone else was speaking (Ibid).

Cutiña followed up her diagnosis with an intervention focusing on self-confidence, assertive communication and leadership which she in turn followed up with an evaluation. The post-evaluation (presented in Cutiña, 2009, pp.71-78) did give positive results in terms of outcomes of the intervention and the majority of the women seemed to have felt an overall improvement with respect of the three themes. Though it is not possible to tell whether it was the same individuals that have indicated an improvement on every theme or if it varied but it is evident that the women on the whole have experienced results of the intervention.

In the same year an evaluation of the process of Tantakuna (Quespia, 2009) was made by the responsible psychologist of the groups and it gave the following indicators. The women of Tantakuna considered it important to be a part of the groups since they get training, learn to know people, share their knowledge, sell products and join the different activities that are arranged by Proyecto Horizonte. In terms of personal skills; during this year work had been done with mental health, group organisation, alcoholism and comprehensive sexual education and it was considered important to keep on working with themes regarding interpersonal and family relations. In terms of professional skills; the women did appreciate the training they received to further develop their production, they also mentioned the economic input in their lives as an important factor to stay with Tantakuna. The sale of products did go up during 2009 though it was considered important to keep on looking for ways to expand their market and in that way be able to sell more products (Ibid).

2.2 Empowerment

The notions of empowerment are many, during the pre-investigation on the topic of women's empowerment for the present study a wide range of usage and definitions were found. Accordingly many studies have aimed at sorting out ways to measure women's empowerment however no such methods have been used in the present study, rather the effectiveness of Tantakuna have been discussed in the light of a process of empowerment. In this section are presented prominent notions from some frequently recurring scholars on the topic along with some chosen studies on participation in women's groups corresponding to empowerment.

As a verb the word empower literary refers to "to give somebody the power or authority to do something" or "to give somebody more control over their own life or the situation they are in" (Oxford, 2011). This verb is in this section being further developed and is here discussed as a process of development in which a person experiences authority over one's own life.

The root of empowerment lies in the idea of power which in this context can be viewed as

Kabeer suggest; "in terms of the *ability to make choices"* (Kabeer, 2001, p.18, italics in original), an ability which according to her cannot be taken for granted as directly connected to empowerment. Kabeer means that empowerment is directly connected to the concept of disempowerment, thus a person considered powerful by the abilities to make choices in his/hers life does not necessarily have to be empowered since he or she not have been disempowered before. Hence, according to Kabeer empowerment "refers to the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them" (Ibid, p.19).

Kabeer (2001) has distinguished three very useful dimensions of empowerment; r*esources*, which refers to any kind of human or social capital, *agency* which refers to the capabilities to knowing why and how one takes actions and *achievements* which is the positive or negative result of resources and agency. The actual level of empowerment would then be the achievements one ends up with, however as Kabeer points out this depends greatly on what kind of choices and actions a person chooses to make, disempowerment shall not be confused with laziness or similar reasons for not take advantage of what is on offer (Ibid). Disempowerment is rather a shortcoming of capabilities or resources and in an active process of empowerment one shall gain the capacity to distinguish between choices that have a direct implication for life and choices that might affect the quality of life (Influenced by Kabeer, 2001; Oxaal & Baden, 1997; Rowlands, 1997).

Empowerment and development

Clearly empowerment must correspond to an extent of being able to be aware of one's own best interests in relation to others and being able to influence one's own development (Oxaal & Baden, 1997; Rowlands, 1997). The ability to make choices does obviously become affected by several factors, for instance society or different programmes of which the latter it does exist a number around the world aiming to empower women. Following Oxaal and Baden (1997) agencies cannot strive to actually empower women though they can rather foster the process of empowerment, give support and encourage participation without assuming that it will lead to empowerment. They mean that

> empowerment cannot be defined in terms of specific activities or end results because it involves a
> process whereby women can freely analyse, develop and voice their needs and interests, without
> them being pre-defined, or imposed from above, by planners or other social actors

(Ibid, p.6)

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Thus the aim must be that the women empower themselves and that the process of fostering empowerment must be planned as allowing the women to freely reflect and act upon their situation, basically to include the processes that lie behind the ability and possibility to make decisions (Rowlands, 1997).

Women's economic empowerment

On a first glance economic empowerment can naturally be included into what was discussed as the three dimensions of empowerment. Though a part of the idea of Tantakuna is to enable economic contribution through work and what one experiences while spending time with the participants is that for the women the economical part of Tantakuna is of great importance, as also is shown in the result section of this paper. Therefore economical empowerment will be separately discussed by using a definition established by the Swedish International Development Cooperation;

> Sida defines women's economic empowerment as the process which increases women's real power over economic decisions that influence their lives and priorities in society. Women's Economic Empowerment can be achieved through equal access to and control over critical economic resources and opportunities, and the elimination of structural gender inequalities in the labour market including a better sharing of unpaid care work.

(Törnqvist & Schmitz, 2009, p.7)

Unpaid work relates mainly to domestic labour which according to Törnqvist and Schmitz is something that women in general put more time in than men which either makes the working day for the women longer or hinders their possibility to engage in paid work outside the home (Ibid). This has also been proved in the Bolivian context by a study regarding gender inequalities in allocating working time to paid and unpaid work (Medeiros et al., 2007). Medeiros and his colleagues sums up their findings from household surveys by concluding that a distinctly higher part of women than men engage in unpaid domestic labour and even though more women have entered into paid labour while more men have started to engage in unpaid domestic labour the women in general undertake a higher workload than men due to the still existing call for unpaid domestic labour (Ibid).

Needless to say is that women's economic empowerment also must include men in order to address the gender inequality and subordination in domestic duties, nevertheless economic empowerment of women have according to Törnqvist & Schmitz in several studies shown to bring higher changes for poverty reduction (Törnqvist & Schmitz, 2009). They mean that

studies have shown that countries with lower gender inequality have more efficient poverty reduction and that economic empowerment brings more sustainability not only for the women but also for her family due to better possibilities for higher consumption and savings (Ibid).

How can the process of economic empowerment be fostered then? Following the ideas of the Swedish International Development Cooperation the process of women's economic empowerment as it was defined above can be achieved by; *firstly* if the women have sufficient resources and skills, *secondly* if opportunities for economic growth/income are available and the women have control over the benefits they bring and *thirdly* if they can use those benefits to exercise their ability to make strategic life choices (Törnqvist & Schmitz, 2009). However, many are those obstacles that can be met in terms of resources and capabilities, for the present study this can be connected to the process of empowerment as it was discussed above; that agencies can promote and foster the process by enabling the opportunities for development.

Empowerment in women's groups

Rowlands developed her notions of empowerment, which were partly referred to above, from two case studies conducted in Honduras. She has distinguished three dimensions in which empowerment operates; personal, relational and collective which she put in relation to material, structural and inner psychological aspects in order to cover the complexity of empowerment (Rowlands, 1997). One of her two field studies were conducted in an educational programme in which women got organised in small groups with the initial idea to identify their own needs and work with them by weekly meetings and workshops held by people from outside the programme (Ibid, ch.5). The women did from the beginning meet occasionally to share experiences, with time the programme grew and the women produced their own material to work with. The other study was with a health programme where members from 26 local communities were trained in preventive health and basic treatments (Ibid, ch.4). Participation was voluntary and consisted of weekly study circles for about two hours with an addition of a monthly sector meeting where all groups from the different communities met to study a specific theme. There was also a co-ordinating team consisting of five full-time working women recruited from within the groups that each was responsible for supervision and coordination of a number of groups.

On personal level Rowlands (1997) means that increase in self-esteem and level of confidence were significant in both of the two programmes, women had lost their shyness and embarrassment, had started to leave the houses to meet people. It was regarded as important to

be able to talk about personal problems and expressing their own opinions about things. In the health programme the learning of new skills was for many an empowering experience and for some this training led to later employment thanks to the skills learned. Regarding relational empowerment many of the women reported on better relation with the husbands and meant that after participation in the programme they had an enhanced mutual understanding with their husband. Rowlands (Ibid) points out that in the educational programme some men were organised in other groups in the society and she mean that these husbands seemed to be more open for the change. In the educational programme much evidence for collective empowerment had been found, mainly that growing identification of belonging to a group was noticed. The responsibility within the groups were experienced as high and the women arranged their own activities and started to taking contact with other organisations for cooperation and mutual support. In the other programme not much evidence was found for collective empowerment, apart from the co-ordinating team that by time started to work more independently as a group, they did from the beginning have help from a foreign volunteer though the need for this grew smaller by time (Ibid).

Factors working for the process of empowerment within these two programmes were by Rowlands (1997) analysed as being first of all that some significant individuals who contributed with skills and motivation were involved in the development of the groups. The external support through cooperation with and sponsorship by other organisations are brought up as a factor as well the philosophy conveyed that the women could take charge of their own lives. In the latter presented programme the methods were according to Rowlands not very innovatory, however in the primer programme the methodology involving good material, constant encouragement and the work for respect as well as the fact that the women could identify their own needs to work with did most likely contribute to the success. The teaching of specific skills were regarded as important for the empowerment process and so was also the styles of leadership were animators were brought forward from within the groups, and in the latter example where a coordinating was created, also from within the groups, whom seemed to have entered a effective process of empowerment. Finally, Rowlands experienced one crucial factor as fostering the process of empowerment in the first mentioned programme as being a conflict they had with the church, the conflict in itself was not positive however living through it and solving it was experienced as having made the women stronger and more independent when they realised that they could make their voices heard (Ibid).

Another study on how organised groups foster the process of empowerment was performed by

Vijayanthi (2002) on women who participated in self-help groups (SHG) in five slum areas in Pulianthorpe, India. The study focused on "women's levels of awareness and decision making in the family and community, and to quantify their self and group empowerment as a result of membership in SHGs in Pulianthorpe" (Ibid, p.265).

The SHGs was organised under an extensive community development programme and empowerment was achieved by a number of intervention strategies and capacity-building programmes in order to: "to enhance leadership and awareness levels of women on issues related to sanitation, health, diarrhoea, immunisation, income-generation programmes, women's rights, mother and welfare, decision making, etc" (Vijayanthi, 2002, p.266). Furthermore, the women in the SHGs learned from each other by collaborating with similar programmes, by discussions within the groups and by the use of examples from other cases.

The investigation made it clear that the levels of empowerment had gone up and that women felt more freedom for decision making in their households after participating in the SHGs (Vijayanthi, 2002). The training had also affected the women's ability to manage processes and develop the groups they were operating within. Leadership was strengthened and capacities to develop other within the group as well as other groups did develop as well as the relation with the government regarding assistance with the development of their communities. Apart from the collective efforts, through the different activities in the SHGs the awareness of self development among the participants grew stronger due to frequent brainstorming sessions, different development programmes and other social actions (Ibid).

Vijayanthi (2002) suggest that in developmental programmes women shall be considered participants rather than beneficiaries and they shall be planning the approach. Furthermore she suggests that through community action plans capacity building and awareness creation can be enhanced and training in group integration, cohesiveness, and self reliance should be given to the members for sustainability of the groups. She concludes that this study have confirmed that women are strengthened by participation in self help groups and that participation in such "community and self-development programmes through organisation is the only way out for voiceless women" (Ibid, p.273).

3 Theoretical perspective

As can be understood from the presentation of the community Mineros San Juan in the previous chapter the life there is vastly immersed in a socially excluded situation. In the present study ecological systems theory as it has been developed by Bronfenbrenner with his bioecological model of human development has been used as theoretical perspective. It is a theoretical approach that has been argued by Pierson as having useful qualities for tackling social exclusion (Pierson, 2010) since it is a holistic system which understand the important role of a powerful macro-system and the relation it plays with other systems for development to occur. It is a system where the perceptions of the individual who is in development are regarded as "best understood and explained by that person" (Ibid, p.34) and further of fundamental importance for development is the social support and the social links that are in a community. The phenomenological nature of the present study which sought to understand the experiences of the women in relation to the effectiveness of Tantakuna goes well along with those arguments. The ecological perspective is used in chapter six of this report to analyse how the women experience their development by highlighting its emphasis laid on development as an interacting process between the person and its environment over time. Below follows a brief presentation of the defining properties of the bioecological model which suggests a research design which is referred to as the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model. In the present study the four concepts have been taken into consideration during the stages of planning, conducting and analysing. However the design of the study did not fully take the characteristics of the PPCT model hence no credit is taken for having designed the study fully according to Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model. Still the theoretical foundation and its characteristics are represented and the presentation below covers just enough to fully understand the theory as well as the analysis in chapter six of this report.

3.1 The bioecological model of human development

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development is a theoretical system for study of human development over time, it has its roots back in 1958 and has since then gone through constant development, mainly by Bronfenbrenner himself but also by corresponding research designs (Bronfenbrenner, 1999; Bronfenbrenner, 2001). Bronfenbrenner himself made a distinction of two periods for the evolution of the model, the first ending in 1979 when a series of paper were published to form a complex structure which today is referred to

as the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). The greatest development that took place at this time was that Bronfenbrenner distinguished the concepts of environment and process and put process as central for development defined by its relation to the environment and the developing person (Ibid).

The model still holds an evolving nature with its defining properties in a series of propositions where two interdependently propositions (II & III) propose the research design PPCT which is suitable for empirical tests (Bronfenbrenner 2001). Propositions II and III are cited below which highlights the central meaning of process for the developing person in interaction with the environmental systems.

In proposition II the theoretical model is specified and reads as follows:

> Especially in its early phases, but also throughout the life course, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. Such enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to as proximal processes. Examples of enduring patterns of proximal process are found in feeding or comforting a baby, playing with a young child, child-child activities, group or solitary play, reading, learning new skills, athletic activities, problem solving, caring for others in distress, making plans, performing complex tasks, and acquiring new knowledge and know-how.

(Bronfenbrenner, 2001, p.6)

As can be read from proposition II, the primary factor behind development is the proximal processes which must occur with frequency to promote development; proposition number III proposes a corresponding research design as follows:

> The form, power, content, and direction of the proximal processes effecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the developing person, the environment—both immediate and more remote—in which the processes are taking place, the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration, and the social continuities and changes occurring over time through the life course and the historical period during which the person has lived.

(Ibid, pp.6-7)

Bronfenbrenner distinguished the ecological environment of a person in different systems and for development to occur interaction between them must take place, as stipulated in proposition III. He meant that each system shall fit inside another like a set of Russian dolls (Bronfenbrenner, 1994); the distinguished systems are the following four:

- Microsystem; which includes the relations the developing person is experiencing direct interaction with, such as family, peers and work.

  > It is within the immediate environment of the microsystem that proximal processes operate to produce and sustain development /.../ their power to do so depends on the content and structure of the microsystem

  (Ibid, 1994, p.39)

- Mesosystem; refers to interacting processes between two or more settings in the developing person's life, such as home and school or school and work.

- Exosystem: refers to interacting processes between two or more system, though at least one system shall not directly contain the developing person.

- Macrosystem: could be referred to as society as a whole, the macrosystem is the overarching pattern of the other three systems

  (Ibid, pp.39-40)

Bronfenbrenner did also identify a fifth system, the chronosystem which refers to changes and consistency in time both in characteristic of person and also in the environment, such as family structure, employment and socioeconomic status (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). As can be understood from proposition II and III time in which development occur is of paramount importance for its outcomes and it is important to keep in mind that; development shall take place during an extended period of time in order to be effective (Bronfenbrenner, 2001).

The proximal processes have a central meaning in the bioecological model for development to occur and several features for how the properties of proximal processes relate to the environment has been distinguished. First of all, a person must engage in an activity to be able to develop and, as was stipulated in proposition II, it must happen "on a fairly regular basis, over an extended period of time". Activities shall be able to increasingly become more complex for the effectiveness of development, thus the time during which the activity take place must be long enough to allow that progressivity (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Processes are not unidirectional, there must be two-way responses and they do not have to be interpersonal, they can take place through interactions with objects or symbols given that these objects and/or symbols invite to any kind of developmental interaction (Ibid). A developing person shall possess the ability to engage in proximal processes and affect its impact on development. The person does actually have dual significance to the bioecological model since it influences the proximal processes and is the developing outcome of them, therefore person must be regarded as "both a producer and a product of development" (Bronfenbrenner, 1999, p.5).

4 Methodology

Research centred on women and their participation in different groups, their development and empowerment are today common in social science. Many methods have been developed and tested for the purpose of measuring women's empowerment, indicators to do so have been distinguished and both qualitative and quantitative measures have been used. At the same time voices have been expressed regarding whether or not women's empowerment is measurable or even definable (Kabeer, 2001) and it has been questioned whether such development is quantifiable (Oxaal & Baden, 1997). Given that this study did not seek to entirely measure women's empowerment and due to the limitations in time and size no specific or tested method of measurement with predetermined indicators has been used in the present study. Rather, influenced by a vast number of scholars, such as the two above, on the topic and given the phenomenological aim of the present study in search for the participants own experiences a semi-structured interview study was conducted (cf. Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This chapter takes you as a reader through the research process, from the initial literature review of which the results came to influence a great part of the study, to the process of gaining access to the field, conducting the actual research and analysing its results, finally aspects of credibility and ethics are discussed.

4.1 The literature review

An extensive literature review was made by using databases such as Academic Search Elite, Social Services Abstract, Google Scholar, ERIC, SAGE Journals Online and Wiley Online Library. Search terms varied and a number of words in different constellations where used such as: empowerment, women's empowerment, women's groups, participation, human development, poverty reduction, community development, employment, family and social support. A great number of hits were often received and it became evident that the topic of women's empowerment and other kind of development from similar groups is very well researched. However, so it has been done from several different angles and on programmes with varying characteristics. Thus since additional literature from the research site was to be added to the present study and due to its limited framework in time and size, a low but representative number of research and scholarly discussions on empowerment was chosen to be used. Literature on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development is accessible through the databases outlined above.

4.2   Entering the field

Gaining access to the actual research site and entering the field is an important process of field work and involved two separate steps, firstly get access to the field and plant the idea of the study with Proyecto Horizonte and secondly the physical entry into the community (cf. Patton, 2002). The process of planning the study started a couple of months before my arrival in Bolivia and the ideas for the study was taken forward in close collaboration with staff from Proyecto Horizonte. Thanks to that getting access to the field did never involve any problem.

The second part of the entry was to physically enter the field, participate in Tantakuna and in the end get access to do the interviews with the women. I chose to spend a bit more than a month as a participant in the groups on a daily basis before the first interview was done. This had a dual meaning; spending time with the women as a participant in all their activities was probably a crucial factor for the feasibility of the study and I wanted to get to know the context in order to be able to design a valid study.

4.3   Sampling

Interviews were done with nine of the seventeen participations of Tantakuna, however to be fair that number was never known until the last interview had been done. The method used for sampling was what Patton (2002) has called combination or mixed purposeful sampling, which combines several sampling methods in order to best fit the purpose of the study and still stay within the frames and limitations of it, such as time, and resources. Tantakuna is divided into three groups so to include participants from all the groups was desirable and that the interviewees had entered during the years at different moments and have different ages and different family constellations. One group has more members than the two others thus naturally was to include more members from that group and as the data gathering process went on so did the sampling process, in the end nine women had been interviewed and rich data which gives a deep understanding of the process of development had been collected.

4.4   Data collection

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews by using an interview guide (appendix 1) that included certain main questions, with the addition of possible questions and subthemes to facilitate the interview process (cf. Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interview guide was constructed with the influence from the five weeks of participation, earlier research, the bioecological perspective and in accordance with staff of Proyecto Horizonte.

All the interviews were held daytime in the respondents homes at by them proposed times, so that no other activities were to disturb the interviews. The interviews lasted between 25 – 40 minutes each and seven of the interviews were recorded, at one interview no permission to record was given by the woman and the second unrecorded was an error of mine of not having the recorder at the moment of interviewing. During these two interviews notes were carefully taken which implied a bit different questioning and more abruptions due to the writing (cf. Patton, 2002) still, focus was kept on the interview guide and the purpose of conducting the interviews.

The time of participation before starting to interview was as important for the procedure of conducting the interviews as for planning them. As Patton (2002) as well as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) have pointed out, interviewing across cultures requires a knowledge and understanding about language, norms and values. Language for example varies between cultures and countries and what means one thing in one place does not have to mean the same thing in another place. Thanks to the time of participation I learned the norms, values and the way of speaking in this region which was of paramount importance for interviewing the women. During the interviews a feedback dialogue was held with the women to encourage and update them that the interview was fulfilling its purpose and to allow them to fully express their experience a last question asking if anything important had been missed out was included in each interview (cf. Patton, 2002). Sometimes leading questions were also asked in order to, as been implied by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), check the consistency of the answers given. Thanks to my knowledge about the process of Tantakuna living examples could also be included to clarify if questions were not clear or if the women did not seem to feel comfortable in the conversation.

4.5 Transcribing the interviews

After the interviews the recordings were immediately checked and the transcriptions were done by me as soon as possible after the moment of interviewing. During the transcribing process each interview was listened through repeatedly until it could be listened to entirely without correcting anything in the transcript. When all the interviews had been transcribed they were all listened through a last time to check the accuracy of the transcriptions.

One recording came out very bad, occasionally this was one of the first interviews and I did, as a precaution before fully trusting the recording device, take some short notes during the interview. As soon as the problem was detected which was the same afternoon I completed

my notes with what I remembered, due to practical implications there were no chance to in a reasonable time get a hold of this women in order to check the accuracy of my notes, which would have been optimal (cf. Patton, 2002). Excerpts from this interview as well as the two that were not recorded have been sparsely used in the result chapter of this report.

4.6 Analysis

The analysis of the data was done by me in two separate parts, the first part was done with a phenomenological analysis basically guided by Patton's (2002) outlining of Moustaka's transcendental phenomenological model which involves the following four steps; "*epoche*, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation and synthesis of texture and structure" (Ibid, p.486). *Epoche* is an attitude shift in where the analyst becomes aware of preconceptions created by personal viewpoints and try to eliminate these to the highest degree possible (Ibid). I changed the environmental setting during my primary part of the analysis and read through the transcriptions by solely focusing on their content and how the women had expressed their experiences. Secondly, following the steps above, the data were bracket out and reduced by locating experiences and key phrases in direct connection with the purpose of the investigation. In the third step the reduced data was organized into clusters in which repetitive or irrelevant data were eliminated, in this step three major invariant themes were identified; *economic development*, *personal development* and *collective development*. The data in these themes were still quite expanded thus the fourth step included, firstly a textural synthesis of each interview, followed by a structural synthesis of the entire group in which the essence of the experiences were brought together into a descriptive text (cf. Ibid).

This analysis was useful for reducing the data and fully capturing the experiences of the women into synthesised descriptions, however when reading them through it was obvious that they could be broken down further. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) imply that data can after a phenomenological analysis be subject for further interpretations and theoretical analyses. I wanted to deductively get some inspiration from the background information and the theoretical perspective, thus a further analysis was conducted. In this second part of the analysis process concept-driven coding approach was used in which the codes where influenced by earlier research, theory and the already existing transcripts (cf. Gibbs, 2007). The reduced data within the invariant themes was read through in search for patterns to code and some further subthemes were identified together with an idea of how to organize the data.

4.7 Data presentation

For further validation of qualitative data Patton (2002) discusses one way of triangulation as mixing methods, one way to do so can be to turn qualitative data into quantitative scales. In the present study while some of the result were countable they have not been totally triangulated and accounted for in scales, for legible reasons what could be quantified has been chosen to be presented in a flowing text, apart from one figure (5-1). The quotes illustrated were considered to be the most illustrative quotes to support the accompanying text, in some passages several quotes are included to show on different representative viewpoints (cf. Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The results are presented in the following chapter with descriptions and analyses grounded in the background information from chapter two; this has been done with the purpose of illuminating, explaining and interpreting the data from wider perspectives. The theoretical analysis of the data with the use of the bioecological perspective is separately presented in chapter six due to the same reasons above of bringing wider interpretations of the data and by that entirely fulfil the aim of the study.

4.8 Credibility

Ensuring credibility of a research study lies in the responsibility of the researcher and must be treated during the entire research process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2002). The aim of this chapter has been to rigorously present the way of procedure by incorporating purposes and consequences of the choices made. This was done with the purpose of allowing anyone to fully understand and be able to replicate the research process, thus ensuring reliability of the study (cf. Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), below is further aspects of reliability and validity of the present study discussed.

Reliability

It have to be pointed out that this study has been done by me as a single researcher with a small amount of earlier experience from research which most likely affects the credibility of it (Patton, 2002). I did all the interviews, the transcriptions and the analyses myself, the interviews were held in Spanish and the quotations used in this study are my translation. The interview guide was written by me and then discussed with people from the area so that no questions or themes in it could be misinterpreted. I knew the women, the community and Tantakuna in general quite well at the time of interviewing which could have affected my objectivity as an interviewer and accordingly the reliability (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009;

Patton, 2002). To avoid that and to ensure reliable rich data focus was fully laid on the aim of the study and the interview guide during the interviews.

Validity

Validity most often refers to whether the chosen methods are appropriate for the specific investigation they are used in (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), for the present study a clear aim was set up from the beginning in collaboration with staff from the organisation where it took place. The most rigor and accurate method to fulfil the aim was before being decided discussed with the people in field to weigh in their experience of the community and the groups into the decision of methods. In the following chapter thick descriptions of the contextual setting including the community and the process of Tantakuna as well as rich data in form of excerpts from the interviews have built up the presentation of the results in order to secure as much validity as possible (cf. Patton, 2002).

To validate the results and the interpretations of the interviews two types of analyst triangulations were conducted; the preliminary results and interpretations were presented and discussed with the participants and the same was done with staff from Proyecto Horizonte (cf. Patton, 2002). I personally visited every participant in their home to tell them my preliminary interpretation and I asked them if they had any comments about it. Everybody believed the interpretation was in accordance with their view and no significant discussions were held about it. I presented the same result for three of the people working with Proyecto Horizonte whom all had been involved in taking forward the topic to study; this can be regarded as face validity where I got a hint of whether the data was reasonable or not (cf. Ibid). As with the participants, the interpretation seemed reasonable to them and they believed that the initial purpose of examine Tantakuna had been fairly well fulfilled.

Generalization

As generalization being seen in terms of whether produced knowledge is transferrable to relevant situations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) the results in the following chapter are mainly based on analytical generalization. The interpretations are based on the women's experiences and they are supported by assertational logic, earlier findings and theoretical notions, thus the reader is offered a broad analytical basis to guide the understandings (cf. Ibid).

4.9 Ethical Considerations

As with credibility, ethical considerations shall be taken throughout the entire process of

research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) and in the present study principles from the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011) and UNESCO's code of conduct for social science research (Guchteneire, undated) were followed. This report was introduced with a direct connection to social work, promoting empowerment and well-being is defined in the professions international accepted definition so is the fundamental principles of human rights and social justice (see IFSW, 2000). The fundamental principles of the profession have been taken into constant consideration during the present study so has a constant strong connection to social work and the aim of the study with its possible outcomes and consequences for anyone involved.

The fact that mutual confidence had been built up with the women was of advantage for ethical reasons too. The interviews could be held in a good manner and we could go deep into the experience of the process of Tantakuna and their lives in the community since I knew it very well at that time and they knew that I knew it, which did seem to make them more interested in the interview. They also knew my interest as a social worker student in doing this study as well as the interest of Proyecto Horizonte in knowing what it could yield along with their own interest in improving the process. The interviews were done in informed consent with the women, they had been informed about the purpose of the study and the potential use of the result, that their participation was voluntarily and that they could withdraw at any time (cf. Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). They were promised anonymity to the extent that their identities were not to be revealed but they were informed that the name of the community and the organisation were to be presented in the report which were told to be presented both for Proyecto Horizonte and online for the accountancy of my university studies.

4.10 Limitations of the study

The most significant limitation for this study was the framework of time and size. The time for the field study was ten weeks and the underlying purpose was to produce this bachelor's essay which is limited by scholarly guidelines. Doing so with quite a wide aim can be seen as a challenge but the underlying interest of conducting the study was of dual nature by gaining knowledge of the contribution to the community and advancement in the process of empowerment among the women. It was never regarded as impossible but it is a limitation that has to be considered throughout the reading of the report.

5 Results & analysis

In this chapter are presented the results of the interviews divided into the three themes that were identified during the analysis; *economic development*, *personal development* and *collective development*. The results are analysed and interpreted with use of the background information presented in chapter two under each theme and the two latter themes are further divided into subcategories. To fully capture the aim of the study of relating the experiences of the women to a process of empowerment and the development of a marginalised society there is a fourth section; *comments* which includes a concluded analysis of the three themes. Some background information are firstly introduced which consist of my own explanation of the process of Tantakuna followed by a brief introduction to the interviewees and finally an accountancy of the reasons for why the women entered the groups.

Tantakuna

As was presented in chapter two, Tantakuna was initially organised by a foreign volunteer in order for the women to meet, develop and work. Today the aim of Tantakuna is to; contribute to the improvement of economic, social and personal conditions through the organisation of groups of women, technical training and integrated human development in the community Mineros San Juan.

Tantakuna consists of three different groups, one group works in a bakery, one in small kiosks and one with handicraft products which the women knit and weave by using traditional Andean techniques. A psychologist is in charge of Tantakuna which today consist of seventeen participants whom have opportunities to get social support and develop their personal habits and capabilities. The groups have a weekly meeting where generally some kind of workshop is given by the psychologist or an intern from the psychologist program at the local university. Every year a psychology student makes his or her internship for a year with Tantakuna, the intern makes a diagnostic and follows it with an intervention, the latter was in progress during the present study and the themes that was given during this time were communication and nutrition. Apart from the weekly meetings the intern has individual work with the women through visits in their homes; moreover the women constantly have free access to the psychologist who works in the community on a daily basis.

The office of Tantakuna is located in the same buildings as Proyecto Horizonte, the women in the handicraft group work in their homes and comes to the office once a week to have their

meeting. The kiosks and the bakery are located a bit further up the hill outside the school (see chapter 2 for a community presentation), the five women that have the kiosks have their meetings in open air just next to their stands and the two women who works in the bakery do not have meetings for the moment due to lack of time. The kiosks the women have are mobile, built up by tables or a kind of pushcart, they set their kiosks up every morning and in the afternoons they take them to their homes. One of these women has a gas stove on which she makes small portions of food and the other four women bring sweets, soft drinks, school material, stickers, small toys and such things which they sell to the children and the teachers from the school. The bakery is located next to the kiosks with their mayor clientele also being the children and teachers to whom they mainly sell sandwiches, pizza rolls or cakes. The mayor clientele for the handicraft group consists of visitors to the community and occasionally they produce by orders from foreign countries and attend a market in the city. The psychologist administrates all the businesses for the handicraft group as well as makes the accountancies for the bakery once a month.

Participants in the present study

Nine women have been interviewed between whom time of participation with Tantakuna varies, one of them has been with Tantakuna from the start and one has only been participating for one year, the rest entered on different occasions between that. All of the nine women live in their own houses with, in all cases but one, their partner. Everybody have children of which the number varies from one to six, all their children with the proper age attend the kindergarten or the school provided by Proyecto Horizonte. The information in the data collected from the interviews does not motivate a separate presentation of each and every woman; for the presentation in this chapter every woman has, for confidential and legible reasons, randomly been assigned a number (W1-W9).

Why did the women join Tantakuna?

An important knowledge to understand the effects of Tantakuna is why the women entered the groups, in figure 5.1 are theses reasons presented.
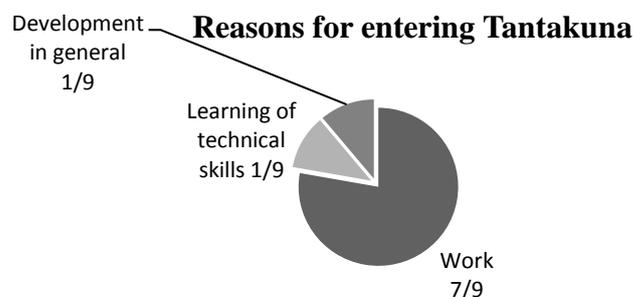

Figure 5.1; Reasons for entering Tantakuna

As can be seen in the diagram seven of the nine women gave a clear connection to work as their primer reason behind entering Tantakuna, two examples are:

> I entered Tantakuna due to the need to take care of my children /…/ I didn't have another job because it was dangerous to leave them alone, since they are girls and were young /…/ I saw the need to look for a job close to my home. Tantakuna did help me a lot (W5)

> Because I had to have a job (W4)

One of the women made a clear reference to work, however she did define the reason as being the learning of new skills, since the skills are clearly related to her occupation she is considered as having entered Tantakuna in order to be able to have a job.

> Because..learn to make..it catch my attention to prepare pastries, cakes, to learn these things, I like it, because of that I entered (W1)

The only woman who did refer to other thing than work put more emphasis on Tantakuna and development in general without specifically express interest in work

> I entered in agreement with the people who were selling and. For that I had decided to continue with them to see how it is, to learn, how Tantakuna is. What things should be shared, what things should be done, in what one and another can support each other. Because of that I had decided to make a communion with them (W6)

As is understandable, it is evident that the reason for entering Tantakuna for the majority of the women were work, below follow the three themes that the results were divided into.

5.1 Economic development

It is obvious when one speaks to the women that their expectations on the economic improvements are up until today not being met. All of the women spoke about desires to sell more and gain more money; they clearly expressed disappointment about the current situation.

> The project says that they are helping us and we are going to the workshops but with what are they helping us? That I wonder/../when they say, we are helping you, with what do they think they are helping us? For me it's not a help, I feel bad /.../ It would be to help if there would have been opportunities to export or at least shops.. so much time I've been and I don't gain a lot .. with Tantakuna in three-five months, twenty-thirty pesos I've gained (W3)

None of the women believe that the income they get from the participation in Tantakuna up until now is significant enough to make a meaningful impact in their lives. However the fact that something is coming in is for the women a contribution in order to keep developing.

> Hmm, for me to be with Tantakuna ..no well..ehh, would be my business .. thanks to Tantakuna I'm sell, no? .. thanks to Tantakuna I sell and also they support us a lot, they give us training, so I

think it would be good..no I am because they help me a lot with my sales (W5)

The same woman spoke about her income in relation to her family:

> Of course I don't help them a lot because my support, I don't gain a lot, it's not a big thing but I gain for the daily bread and to pay the electricity (W5)

One woman who did not have any kind of income before Tantakuna, said the following regarding how having an income has affected her life

> It has affected me a little due to the situation that sometimes I sell sometimes I don't /.../ I can't say that one makes a great thing like that, no..but I have a little, to bread for my son, for his break, for his tickets but then it would be a bit more to make, something, a bit more to increase (W6)

The women do have access to an income and they can control what to do with it, though to be in a process of economic empowerment as Törnqvist and Schmitz (2009) have meant; one shall be able to make strategic life choices and it that sense there is still more to ask for. With a strategic life choice as Kabeer (2001) has defined it one shall be to be able to choose among things and that ability have to be considered to a higher extent than what is expressed above, none of the women experiences that freedom yet.

Due to the fact that today the women do not see a possibility to make the change they want and that they neither can rely on a steady income we spoke during the interviews hypothetically about the significance of gaining more money. One of the women spoke about raising a capital and by that improve her business, meanwhile all of the other women spoke about having more for their children or for their houses that still needs more construction.

> A bit more, I would have more for me and my children and I could at least do something that I need with my house (W4)

> We need them to sell more of our products, so that I would have something for my children (W7)

> Improve my income would mean that my children would have it a bit better, I would have..eh..I wouldn't give them all that I want to give them.. but at least to reach with the less that is possible so that they have food, the most important (W1)

It is hard to analyse impacts of a process on a hypothetically basis but it is clear that the women do have a need and a desire to be able to have more control over their economy. The first thing Törnqvist and Schmitz (2009) means that must be achieved to foster a process of economic empowerment is sufficient resources and skills, the women kept speaking about how they need more possibilities to develop by learning new skills or expand their market.

> We want shops for sure where it sells and we want shops in other countries to send things from here because here not much can be sold, in other countries yes/.../ if there are orders, we sell (W2)

The call for a greater market did exist in 2009 too (Quespia, 2009), whether or not an improvement has been made is hard to establish but it is evident that the women are waiting for the project to sell their products and improve their situations.

> To gain more, we need a greater environment more than anything as our own environment /…/ we have [the psychologist], no? So, she needs to open a market .. offer our products, and towards institutions, and she has to do other things, where we can go, or to [the local market] and have a stall..that would improve a bit (W1)

This woman is not the only woman that waits for improvement of the sales; rather she is one among everyone that also has motives of improve their situations. The objective of Tantakuna says that it shall contribute to improvement, but one can ask what does a contribution mean for the women and what does it mean for Proyecto Horizonte? It is true that there is some kind of contribution however the present study took focus on the experiences of the women who expects different income. Being able to take advantage of opportunities when they are available is an important aspect of the process of empowerment (cf. Kabeer 2001; Oxaal & Baden, 1997) as well as of economic empowerment (cf. Törnqvist & Schmitz, 2009) and the women do believe they have the capabilities to sell more since they ask for, or perhaps demand, more possibilities with confidence in seizing the opportunity. At the same time the women do not feel that they today have the authority to affect this themselves and wait for the project to improve their situation. Vijayanthi (2002) suggest with evidence from her study in India a high level of participation in the work for development. For now it is hard to establish whether the women see themselves, regarding the economy, as participants or as a kind of employees of Tantakuna/Proyecto Horizonte and the natural unanswered question is then how it should be? No matter how it should be or no matter what a contribution would mean for the involved parts it is evident that none, nor the women neither Proyecto Horizonte are progressing with the theme of economy effectively.

5.2 Personal development

This section presents the personal development and the effects it has on the relations the women have. The section is divided into three subcategories; *the capacity building* where the women's experiences of the personal training are presented, *a new forum* which presents the fact that the women have access to a place where they can share their thoughts and experiences with others, finally is presented *the actual development* as well on individual level as with their families.

The capacity building

The perceptions about what the women have learned, or rather, what they have adopted during their time with Tantakuna varies, the majority of the women declared without doubt what they have learned so far.

> In this entire course of time that we are with Tantakuna we have learned about illnesses, they have taught us about nutrition, how to feed the babies and the children when they have anaemia, all that. We have also learned about the human rights, we have learned about the rights of the children, women's rights, we have learned about psychological aggression, mistreatment, this what's it called .. all the interfamiliar that could be problems, that are when the husband and the woman fight, that we have learned and it's good. (W5)

> We have learned a lot of things /.../ For example that we have rights .. that´s it .. there were workshops about communication, then about violence, all that (W4)

> It's nice that they educate us, that they help in Mineros San Juan we do not always know for example about violence, sometimes we ask, how can it be? /…/ we have learned about those things, I like it (W3)

> The always teach us about violence, can be domestic, also that we always have to get along well with the violence or try to understand each other, to dialogue, always to show the smile, sometimes one can see that we have problems and try to improve /…/ Up until now I have learned..for example with [the psychologist] we have learned to make people more educated, ehhm, then the mistreatment of women regarding the violence/…/one can understand for example, between couples, with our children, the education, to get along well as partner, that (W6)

For everyone it was not that easy to account for that, especially two of the nine women did not straight away relate the participation in Tantakuna with personal development. They gave an impression more forgotten about the capacity building or focused more on the opportunity to gain money with Tantakuna when we spoke about what they had learned. One example is an extract from the following interview after several ways of asking her about her personal development:

> W7: They have explained to us about communication, can I speak about that too?
> I: Of course
> W7: ..about communication, eh, what rights the woman has, that too
> I: More specific, now it's for example communication, did you have workshops about for instance self-confidence too?
> W7: Yes, we had a lot but the women have always forgotten
> I: How 's your self-confidence?
> W7: I don't remember what it is

The women have great opportunities to develop on a personal level and during the interviews the theme of economy where never meant to be asked about until the end but still we ended up talking about it primary. As was showed above, there is disappointment among the women and supposedly when one part of an objective (economy) that for the women seem to be very important is not fulfilling the other part (personal development) looses importance. Still it must be pointed out that when the women were asked specifically about personal development and not the process of Tantakuna in general they spoke about it even if it was with some obstacles such as for the two women discussed above.

A new forum

All of the women believe that they now have a place where they can express themselves freely, which is something that none of the women felt that she had have before entering the groups. Seven out of the nine women feel that they have confidence in the other women in the groups and that they can share their problems with them, however all seven prefers to do it with their group since they know the women in it better.

> With the other groups no because we are not together all the time but with [her group] yes /…/ I tell them my problems and they tell me their problems (W1)

> With my group and with the other persons also but mainly with my group. Since we are everybody together everyday looking at each other, always sharing, the smile, the happiness, sometimes the sadness, there's always something. More than anything with them (W6)

One woman lack the confidence to share her problems in the group, she thinks that what she say might possibly leave the group and therefore prefer to speak individually with the psychologist or with only one woman. Another woman said that she can share things but that she doesn't trust the others due to problems they have had earlier in the group. Rowlands (1997) meant from her field studies that for effective development it was considered important for the women to be able to share their problems and express opinions. She also meant, as Vijayanthi (2002) too found in India, that it was considered valuable to learn by collaboration in groups, in Tantakuna whether or not the women have enough confidence to share problems with their peers all of the nine women appreciates a lot the opportunity they have to learn in groups.

> Alone we can't solve problems (W9)

> I believe that among us if we are in agreement; yes we can help each other it's just that sometimes someone is not in agreement with the other, if someone doesn't accept it then no, but, ehh, in my case, my part, my way of thinking, my way of being I'm always open to support them too and I

think that the others have to see that so that they learn if we are to support each other because it's very important for us (W6)

When there are meetings and training, we are trying to understand each other, everyone is not the same and everyone has different problems, we are in different situations (W5)

Cutiña (2009) meant that two years ago there was a lack of respect for feelings within the groups of Tantakuna which most often lead to silence, now the women want to seize the opportunity to learn and support each other in groups which is a development that will be further discussed later in this section.

The access to a psychologist is also something new for the women and accordingly something the women in general appreciates, seven of the nine women said that they have confidence in the psychologist, one woman elaborated it a bit more than the others:

Yes, yes a lot of confidence/.../ she tells us sometimes that this is the solution, this is the way to solve it or she helps us to look for a solution so that we can understand, understand not to keep on fighting like that, for my part I think I have learned a lot more than before, yes it has served me a lot to share with her .. and with other people (W6)

Meanwhile seven expressed that they do have confidence in the psychologist, two (not the same as the ones whom lack confidence in the other women) said that they do not trust her, which in the both cases are connected to their sales, one of them said:

She is not concerned about us (W4)

When she elaborated that reclaim it became obvious that she expects the psychologist to develop her business:

For me, she should have to go and..I don't know look for more..where there are workshops, where they give, eh, to go and look for, go and promote (W4)

It is evident that in Tantakuna the women find a kind of forum that for them never had existed before entering the groups, valuable both thanks to their peers and to the professional psychologist. Factors for empowerment in both the programs studied by Rowlands (1997) were both learning of new skills and ambitious and competent people working with them. In Tantakuna the psychologist is today responsible for the groups including their social support, the personal training and administering the businesses. It is in general appreciated but it has also been indicated in the economy section and recently above that the multiple responsibilities creates expectations among the women and some tends to see this valuable human resource as a link between them and increased income and nothing more. Whether or not this affects their development is hard to establish but supposedly it does, it leads to a call

for something more than just seizing the opportunity of personal development to its best. Still in the end, access to a group where the women find confidence, friendship and psychological support must have positive effects on the development; these effects are experienced as follows.

The actual development

The women spoke about much personal development as a result from the participation in the groups. This development will in this section be shown, partly individually for the women but also with their families, it is evident that the development is thanks both to the training and to the inclusion in groups, as will be further shown in the following section.

> I'm more open as a person, before I didn't know people and it bothered me.. yes, it's good being
> with more people (W4)

Everyone of the nine women feel that they have changed as persons during their time with Tantakuna, however for some of the women it hasn't occurred to them if the changes are thanks to Tantakuna. Though, supposedly, the training with Tantakuna has its effects because when the women who had not thought about that talk about what they have learned from Tantakuna it very well corresponds to the changes they experience within their families. The women spoke about higher self-confidence and about them being more outside their homes now than before due to news capabilities and wills to move forward. Most frequently spoken about were improvements of capacities to communicate and to be among people such as families, the groups or in the neighbourhood and accordingly most evidence of development can be found in relations within their families, for example with the children:

> Earlier we didn't speak a lot, eh, me and my children didn't get along very well, my children left
> the house and they shouted at me, eh, the capacity building have served me a lot to dialogue more
> than anything with my children, we have come to understand each other and we have left
> everything that has happened in the past behind us. Now we have spoken, we have seen how I can
> help them and how they can help me (W5)

> Now I speak more to my children, and more calmly /.../ they have told me: "now you've learned
> something mum, you didn't know that earlier" (W8)

And with the partners:

> I speak to him and he speaks to me before it wasn't like that..we didn't speak in that way (W7)

> They have taught us that we have to move forward and not keep on fighting and that we have to
> speak, like that they have told us /.../ It wasn't like this earlier, it has changed we were quieter and
> now we communicate more (W2)

The women has power as Kabeer (2001) has defined it in terms of ability to choose in certain situations which they have never experienced before, the women can now choose to communicate in situations where they before preferred - or had no other choice - silence or conflict. Even though their families are not participating in the training, seven of the nine women feel that they have the support from their partner and/or their children to keep going with their participation in Tantakuna. Two of the women do no longer have the support from their partners, which evidently is due to the low income they get for the work they accomplish.

> My husband? My husband he, ehh, of course he doesn't like it because I gain little and he tells me that I'm losing my time, "look for another job" (W1)

> He doesn't support it. Don't go and work no more he tells me, leave that you're losing your time and are not gaining anything, he tells me (W4)

The latter woman also reported on difficulties in applying her new knowledge with her husband

> For me it have changed yes, but not for my husband because he is very chauvinistic (W4)

One of the women who felt that she have the support from her husband has the same problem

> Yes I have changed a lot with my child, I try to treat him with love, not only sometimes but always. We have also learned, eh, how to do as a couple, I have tried to change but he hasn't I believe the biggest part of the change should be with the man, no? Or with both but sometimes .. it's hard to change a person too .. but I have tried many ways to change him but no..I yes .. try to treat him with love, maybe, try to understand him or when there are problems not try to fight y not try to answer like that I avoid many times..eh, here we both have been fighting (W6)

Törnqvist and Schmitz (2009) have pointed out, though regarding economic empowerment but still applicable, that it is necessary to include the men in development work for the process to be successful which was also proved by Rowlands (1997) where women who had men whom were organised in group activities had easier to develop together with them. In this study it was never establish whether or not the men engage in such activities but the majority of the women seem to be able to apply their knowledge anyway. A low number have problems with this and it can easily be regarded as a consequence of unawareness of the process of both the development and Tantakuna in general.

In summary what the women learn with Tantakuna serve to develop their personalities and for almost everyone their relations within their families. On the negative side is that there are women whom are losing their trust in the staff of the project and also that there are partners

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that are doing so as well. However keeping the evidence from the section of economy in mind one can say that on a purely contribution to personal development the progress of Tantakuna is an effective way to foster development and the process of empowerment

5.3 Collective development

There is evidence of collective development among the participants in Tantakuna. As was discussed in the previous section, in Tantakuna the women find a kind of forum that has opened up new opportunities to support each other but it has not always been like that. Apart from one group in which the women feel that they always have had a good atmosphere with good relations between them, the women in the other groups feel that the atmosphere between the participants has improved during the years. The women from these groups spoke about two different reasons for that, *firstly* the personal development partly from the workshops

> we were always fighting before, there were always discussions we didn't understand each other/…/there were always fights, not now, now there is a lot, eh, now we know how to hold ourselves back, we have learned to control ourselves with everything that is. Before discussing we have to speak and ask. /…/ We have had courses and training about how to dialogue the aggressions, aggressiveness then we have spoken about the rights but the dialogue more than anything it's good to dialogue when we have differences also it's good to speak and don't insult neither to react strongly, it's good to say the truth about how we feel.. and also we must know how to listen to other women (W5)

and *secondly*, the changes have grown out of the time together

> W6: This year it has improved a lot, we have helped each other, we have entered an agreement to do whatever activity, for whatever thing, to share, sometimes when the psychologist invites us to do a meeting we always do it in agreement, we are always trying to endure a bit better
> I: Did you do something special or has it come with time?
> W6: With time, it's not that easy understand each other like that from night to day, it hasn't been easy, a bit hard but yes we have come to be in agreement all of us

The diagnosis Cutiña (2009) made two years ago showed that it did exist a lack of respect and a lack of active participation in the groups, clear development regarding this is shown above. Rowlands (1997) found in one of her studies where the women meet weekly that a growing sense of belonging to a group were noticed, this can be noticed in Tantakuna as well and can be regarded as a very important development, it is presented as follows.

The importance of belonging to a group

One of the most obvious things one can understand from the interviews is the meaning of

being included in the groups and the importance of the inclusion for the daily life as well as the development. In the groups they find friendship, they find happiness and sorrow and they have a place where they with their peers and with professionals can share different situations and problems in their lives. The social inclusion does as with the training help the women to grow as persons and there is not any single woman who does not appreciate the inclusion, for example one woman related to her group as another family:

> For me it's like another family I have, apart from my family.. it is a part of my family what I feel
> with Tantakuna..eh I feel like that with the other women, like as if they were my sisters (W1)

Important to note is that even though the social inclusion affects her participation with Tantakuna, still there is a focus on work, the same woman continued:

> I feel good there /…/ It's like a distraction too apart from that I learn things and make some money
> it distracts me as well, and moreover to leave the house and also economically it's not always
> enough but a bit is a bit, no? It is a little, to help my husband a bit but I would like it to improve
> more than anything, that my salary improved (W1)

But when she reflected one more time the inclusion once again showed its importance, following the same woman the wish to gain more was put against the inclusion in the group.

> If it doesn't improve I don't stay longer because it's a loss of time /…/ if it doesn't improve I think
> that no longer, we always wants to prosper more, gain more and if it will get worse, I'm no longer
> staying /…/ It's not all about the money for that I told you, hmm, it's not all that important how
> much I make but it's like my family and I feel like that there but all that time too..the time too..it's
> not all about the money for that my husband tells me "so little you make, you are losing your time"
> but I fell good there so with the salary it's just that it improves and I could gain a bit more (W1)

Another example of a woman that also emphasized the fact of being in group with other women said the following

> I think it's a good thing where people can learn, socialize and be together and be able to share
> everything that we are learning there /…/ What I like the most is share with my friends, always
> with the neighbours and also with people that helps us from other countries, they advices us, they
> teach us, that is what most encourages me (W6)

The two examples above are the most colourful examples of something that all of the nine women did speak about; the importance of being together. Tantakuna is not only a place to work and learn but it is also a place to meet other women and even though none of the nine women is happy with the income and that the reason for entering the groups in the majority of the cases was work Tantakuna has grown to something unique for the women. It was established two years ago by Quespia (2009) that the women appreciates to be in the groups

since they get training and can share with other their experiences, this is still regarded as important and now possibly to an even wider extent. Belonging to a group has shown to be probably the most important reason for the women of being with the groups, for instance one woman gave a short concrete but still very significant answer on a question about the most important reason for her to be with Tantakuna:

> Speak with other women (W8)

Another aspect of collective development and inclusion would be a development of the community outside the groups; it has not been possible to find a lot of evidence of changes for the participants regarding this external development. Of course, the women can use their new capacities and knowledge with people that are not a part of Tantakuna but until what extent is hard to establish. Vijayanthi (2002) found in her study that the groups had gained more authority to affect on a wider scale, such as the government the women of Tantakuna do not believe that their groups has the possibility to affect other people. But they do believe that it would be a natural development for the community if more women could learn what they have learned. However since they already do have their groups which are in a process of development there is not a great enthusiasm among the women that more women entered their groups

> Because if other people would enter it can't be the same anymore and moreover if we are together with the same people during time we can do it better (W2)
>
> I believe that we can say .. among us we have always tried to have conversation about such things and among everybody I believe we are better of like this since there are not a lot of sales and I believe that we would find it a bit hard, our sales would go down there's a lot of concurrence and to get along with and understand other women would be hard for us /…/ We already have our group, we already understand each other and with new people I believe it would be very hard for us /…/ that much we have fought before, I believe it would be like start all over again, I do not agree a lot with that (W6)

It is easy to establish that the groups serves as a great help for the women to feel more involved in their community, moreover it is evident that it serves as a great help to promote the process of development and that the women want to keep the process going

> I like that we every week are meeting and talking /…/ I want to keep on moving forward, I no longer want to be like before, we didn't know anything, I want to now new things (W2)

The participants in Hübgen's (2009) study on the quality of life believed that a great factor for development of the community is themselves; to a certain extent do the women of Tantakuna believe so as well. With a continuing progress of moving forward and possible opportunities

to extend the service to more people, the development of the community could go on with the inhabitants as the major reason behind that progress.

5.4 Comments

More than 90 % of the women entered Tantakuna with work as motive and nearly every single one of the participating women express dissatisfaction with the income they get today, it is obvious that work no longer can be the factor that keeps the women with Tantakuna. The results have shown that Tantakuna does have a deeper importance for the women, namely develop as persons and to belong to groups together with other women. Shown has also been that in terms of outcomes the manner of approaching a marginalised group of people like the progress of Tantakuna is efficient in terms of social and personal improvement.

Tantakuna – an empowering experience?

It is obvious that the women has been and still in a way are disempowered since today they do experience an authority in certain situations which they have never experienced before, for instance in communication with their families and within the groups (cf. Kabeer, 2001). Though not in terms of economic outcomes, hence the continued state of disempowerment. Economic empowerment was suggested to led to women's possibilities to having control over benefits and ability to use them to make strategic life choices (Törnqvist & Schmitz, 2009), the women of Tantakuna have still not experienced an opportunity to test these skills. It is true that the women get something but it has not been possible to establish until what extent that input leads to active decision making and control over its benefits.

Three dimensions of empowerment were established in chapter two; *resources, agency* and *achievements* where resources in terms of human and social capital and agency in terms of capabilities leads to achievements (Kabeer, 2001). In Tantakuna the women have resources to learn new things, to get professional help from a psychologist, to meet other women, to develop as person and to make an income. The women have developed agency to change situations within their family, to develop the groups, to choose to attend the meetings of Tantakuna, to produce items and in two groups (bakery and kiosks) to sell them. In terms of positive outcomes, the majority of women have been able to implement changes within their family, they feel more confidence to do things and the atmosphere within the groups has improved. The lack of sales produces a negative outcome and it hinders the women to fully exercise authority over their development, in Tantakuna the women have the possibility to

produce and sell and they also do so daily. However it does not bring the income they expect and the result is that they are waiting for the project to improve their situation a wait which is turning into a loss of faith and disappointment.

Oxaal and Baden (1997) meant that development agencies shall rather than empowering women enabling the women to empower themselves, thus women must freely be able to reflect not only about the outcomes but also about the process leading to the outcomes. The disappointment of the economic situation in Tantakuna leaves the women powerless; they leave the hope in the hands of the project. That supposedly hinders the process of empowerment they experience on a personal and social level since the same stakeholder takes an overall responsibility. They show authority by claiming that they will sell if opportunities raises but today they are not involved actively in the progress of affecting it and according to them it is up to the organisation, possibly because so is their understanding of the objective of Tantakuna.

Tantakuna and the development of Mineros San Juan

Hübgen (2009) found that the quality of life in Mineros San Juan was under positive development up until 2009 and that the foundation Proyecto Horizonte did contribute to a certain extent, it is known as well that Proyecto Horizonte is regarded as a crucial factor for stability and development in Mineros San Juan (Widemann, 2007). What the women of Tantakuna experience is a development which has shown to be very important for them; partly the personal development but - possibly of even more significance - the collective mutuality they found in Tantakuna. The conditions in the community are poor and its seemingly neglected position (see chapter 2) does not produce a lot of opportunities for improvement, the interviews have shown that it exist great abilities and wills to adopt new knowledge among the women of Tantakuna and a belief in expanding the range of the service so the community as a whole gets further possibilities. The contribution Tantakuna makes to a society with around ten thousand inhabitants is not great when only seventeen are involved in it but the present study shows that it surely is a an effective way of development, given that there is a mutual understanding of the developmental process between the agency – Proyecto Horizonte – and the participants – the women of Tantakuna.

6 Theoretical analysis

In this chapter are the results from the previous chapter analysed in the light of the bioecological perspective in which the view is that development occurs depending on proximal processes which are outcomes of interactions between an evolving person and its environment (i.e. Bronfenbrenner, 2001). In this case the evolving persons are the women of Tantakuna, whom are regarded as both producers and products of the development. The women's development is in this analysis produced from the participation in Tantakuna and the processes are defined as the interaction this development leads to with other people around the women. In the end the products of development of which is analysed are the women, the processes must occur on time and must be able to become progressively more evolving (Ibid).

The analysis in this chapter has to be limited to the frameworks of the present study and in the results several different actors with whom the women interact can be identified though nearly all of them can be found within their microsystems. In chapter two of this report the community Mineros San Juan was called a no man's land and the lack of authorities' involvement in its maintenance and development as well as lack of services in the community were discussed, that leaves out a great part of what would form the macrosystem of the women. In one way Proyecto Horizonte can be seen as an actor in their macrosystem, the services that are in the community today are provided by them but Proyecto Horizonte also takes part in their mesosystem through their children's school attendance and in their microsystem due to Tantakuna. Other actors in their microsystems would be peers in the neighbourhood and their families including their partners and their children.

This analysis is further based on three significant statements based on the results from the interviews as presented in the previous chapter. In relation to each statement is the development outcome of the women analysed out of the characteristics of the bioecological perspective, as presented in chapter three of this report.

Today the women experience enhanced communication within their families than before joining Tantakuna

The daily interaction the women engage in with members of their families creates a process which in the result section was shown to have developed towards the positive during the time with Tantakuna. As a producer of development with the knowledge the women get from Tantakuna they lead the process of interacting with their families and evidence from the

interviews shows on a reciprocal interaction leading to developmental outcomes for the women and their families. Before when there were little or no communication the processes were not complex enough to have possibility to evolve. Now the women have been able to apply their knowledge and affect the process between a person in their microsystem and them. This process is taking place during time and with its evolving nature and mutual understanding it produces human development.

This process cannot be regarded reciprocal for everyone since some cannot apply what they have learned in their relations with their partners; hence no changes have taken place. For development to occur, the process their new knowledge produces must get a reply and even though they engage and start the process which obviously runs over time there is no mutuality, thus no outcome is seen and the women nor the partner is a product of development.

The groups of Tantakuna are important for the women Tantakuna

Once again an active interaction within the microsystem of the women makes up a process which the women themselves affect and by that development is produced. In Tantakuna all the women are in the microsystems of one and another in which they engage in a, to a very high degree, recurring processes since they meet at least once a week and for many of them on a daily basis. It is a vast pattern of processes that shapes the development, each and every woman develops her personality and shapes her behaviour which in turn affects the interaction individually with their peers and the entire group as a whole which makes the processes progressively more complex. The women meant that earlier the groups did not have the atmosphere they have now, though the women met frequently and interaction between the persons was in progress which created proximal processes. However the women did not have the ability at this stage to meet the challenges that were and thereto the processes where not likely to progressively develop. With their developed personalities they have been able to affect the processes and with time there have been reciprocal meetings between the women that each are involved in each other's developmental outcome. Now the women experience increased mutuality and the groups have a great significance both to develop and to socialise.

The lack of sales creates disappointment among the women

As Tantakuna functions today and as was presented in the results the women feel that their expectations of economic improvement are not being met and they put the hope in the hands of Proyecto Horizonte to improve it. The women are still the product of development it is just

that in this case the interaction takes place in their exosystem between two systems or actors with whom the women are not directly involved. From another point of view this can also be treated within the microsystems, the women are involved directly in this theme since there is interaction between the women and Proyecto Horizonte regarding this and it can as well be this process that creates the disappointment, or both.

Whatever factor creating the disappointment does not really matter in terms of human development since there seem to be a lack of mutual responses anyway; the results shown that the women have never really felt the benefits they expect. Either if the processes created in the women's exosystem or the processes in their microsystem do not have the complexity to evolve it will hinder the development since the systems are to be met in a wider interaction in the end. Human development according to the bioecological perspective is shaped by a structure of system and they have to mutually interact in order to shape developmental outcomes (see for example Bronfenbrenner, 2001). In this case the content of the processes is not structural, powerful or complex enough to produce effective and sustainable outcomes.

6.1 Comments

Pierson (2010) has argued that the bioecological perspective is a useful approach for tackling social exclusion since it understands and emphasises a powerful macrosystem and the relation between different links that acts in a society. A part of the aim of the present study was focused on to examine Tantakuna in relation to development of the community; however affecting it on a wider scale than what has been discussed above might not really be possible for Tantakuna. Bronfenbrenner (1994) meant that each system of a developing person shall fit inside another but with the absence of powerful actors in interaction with the developing persons that vision cannot be fulfilled. The analysis above showed on effective human development as a result from Tantakuna in which the women themselves shapes their processes and with their relations to other the outcomes of the processes. It is a development that has shown to be able to be sustainable given that the reciprocity continues but it cannot happen without further, more complex interactions with a higher number of actors from a wider range of environmental systems. Having said that, it is not argued here with certainty that no such interaction takes place at all but within the limited frameworks of the present study human development has been analysed mainly on micro-level. This analysis has shown on the effectiveness and shortcomings of Tantakuna for the developing persons undertaking their activities.

7 Discussion

I posed a somewhat metaphorically question in the introduction of this report regarding what is an effective way of promoting development. Whether or not that question fully can be answered will be left unsaid but it did inspire the entire research process from start to end. What can be answered though are the two research questions regarding the women's experienced development and the significance of Tantakuna for the women. The results from the interviews have shown on much development and that Tantakuna plays a great importance in the women's lives. Below are the research process and its outcomes discussed and evaluated in three steps; results discussion, methodology discussion and theory discussion. Finally are suggestions for further research presented.

7.1 Result discussion

Tantakuna is an important experience for the women; no one can argue against that but one can find setbacks of the process. In Tantakuna as in other women's programmes studied by Rowlands (1997) and Vijayanthi (2002), even though they have different characteristics and approaches, the learning of new skills and inclusion with peers are effective factors for development and for fostering the process of empowerment. The entered process of empowerment is though held back by a disempowering experience of economy and since the women are not administrating their businesses nor are involved in the progress of developing them they are today powerless of directly affecting it. I believe the major factor creating the negative outcome of development in terms of disappointment not really is the lack of sales but the lack of awareness and participation to a wider extent. The women show authority and wills to produce and sell, maybe the target should be reconsidered and lean more towards sustainability and women's own management of the business?

Reviewed literature suggests that in a process of empowerment one shall actively be able to make choices that affect the quality of life (i.e. Kabeer, 2001; Rowlands, 1997), I will argue for this being drawn to the extent of actively being able to affect the activity leading to empowerment. This would probably most efficiently be done through more active participation and awareness of the progress among the women. Vijayanthi (2002) meant that women shall be considered participants rather than beneficiaries in development programmes, though the programme she studied did not include economic benefits but the active participation shows importance and it probably does so with economic activities too.

Furthermore in that programme as well as in the programmes studied by Rowlands (1997) successful attempts to promote leadership and coordination of the groups had been implemented, for instance in one case through a coordinating team of women from the community. In Tantakuna no such attempts are today being made but maybe doing so would increase efficiency of development regardless of whether the sales increase or not since the women in that case could and probably would seize a responsibility and possibility of affecting their own situations, thereto their own development.

Oxaal and Baden (1997) have implied that agencies should rather promote empowerment than be the empowering force, thus the women empower themselves and when suggesting enhanced participation and development of leadership I lean at the idea of having the agency as a promoter, not to release the groups from the NGO. Cutiña (2009) analysed two years ago that the women of Tantakuna did not have a good sense of group belonging, neither very developed self-esteem and communication skills; results from the present study has shown on great development regarding these issues. It can be understood that the groups and the human resource of expertise in the area of psychology are excellent tools for development when focus is being fully laid on human development, which also gives great opportunities not only for the women involved. The community of Mineros San Juan has always been and still is immersed in social exclusion (as pointed out in for example Arellano, 2011; Cutiña, 2009; Proyecto Horizonte, 2010a; Salinas, 2007; Widemann, 2007) and research in the community have shown on positive overall development of the community a lot thanks to Proyecto Horizonte (i.e. Hübgen, 2007; Widemann, 2007). Hübgen (2009) found that the inhabitants believe they themselves are factors for development which is a mentality if expressed with wider ambitions would harmonise with an evolved process of empowerment. Though it is hard to promote development in an urban area without a powerful macrosystem and due to the absence of authorities in Mineros San Juan the foundation Proyecto Horizonte does hold a great responsibility; I believe Tantakuna is a great service for prospective development of the community if more women could become incorporated in some way.

Due to the setbacks discussed above the results could never be analysed fully in relation to economic empowerment since the women of Tantakuna still are in the beginning of that process. Nor has it been possible to find out the workload in hours within the households or benefits of income in comparison with the earlier Bolivian inequality showed by Medeiros and his colleagues (Medeiros et al., 2007); the theme of work and economy drowned in the lack of sales and no great will to go deeper into that was shown from the women.

7.2 Methodology discussion

As was mentioned in the method chapter, quantitative attempts and approaches to study women's development have developed preset indicators and measurement scales for that purpose. As for examine Tantakuna a positivistic approach could have been taken and the women could have been asked to account for their development in scales which probably would have given a broader overview of the development and give possibilities to compare outcomes of the participation between the women (cf. Patton, 2002). Though, it would have been at the cost of the richness and depth of information a qualitative approach provides and I reckon that a pure positivistic way of thinking is somehow contradictive to the fundamental ideas of empowerment itself of taking control of one's own life. Therefore it was desired to know how and why development occurs and not only if it does, hence qualitative methods were supposed to be most appropriate. It was under consideration to mix methods in order to strengthen the study as Patton (2002) recommends and initially when entering the field I had an idea of including participant observation as a research method or focus group interviews to supplement the individual ones. Observation would surely have given a further depth to the data however due to lack of training and experience in observing as a research method I considered it most fair to leave it. The idea of focus groups interviews which according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) have good possibilities for more expressive and emotional data was abandoned since I wanted the women's individual experiences and I did not want to risk that they affected each other during the time of interviewing. Only doing individual interviews did surely have consequences, if so positive or negative is hard to speculate in since the study fulfilled its aim fairly well. However it would have given possibilities for alternative understandings, which Patton (2002) means is the advantage with that kind of triangulation.

Even if not actively observing with the purpose of gathering data the time of participation were of paramount importance in order to design the study and to conduct the interviews since I would not have understood the program nor would I have been able to ask the most accurate questions without time of participation (cf. Patton, 2002). Neither do I believe that my will of interviewing the women would have been so well received without having spent this time with them. Many factors can have affected this study in terms of credibility and ethical aspects, for instance the process was dealt with by me alone as an inexperienced researcher, a relatively high number of participants for the limitations of the study were included and cultural and linguistic misunderstandings where most possible (cf. Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009;

Patton, 2002). Therefore close connection to social work and belief in the value of qualitatively producing knowledge have been kept in a research process treated with rigor and consistency from start to end. In this final report I have strived for transparency in every part by for instance accounting for the research process in detail and to provide thick descriptions of the collected data as well as the context of the study. As for the credibility of the results, I reckon the discussions I had with the women about the results were of high importance for me, for them and for the study as a whole. The women could identify themselves in the results and it also gave them confirmation that more participants than them felt like they did and it gave me the confirmation that the research I had conducted was reasonable valid.

7.3 Theory discussion

As mentioned in the introduction of this report empowerment has many times been used as a theoretical frame in social work but in my opinion empowerment cannot be theoretical justified. It is a complex concept and in the present study it was used as an analytical tool but I would not call that tool a clear theoretical framework due to the vast difference in definitions and usages of the concept. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model, as presented in chapter three, was theoretically guiding my examination of Tantakuna and was used for a theoretical analysis of the results. Rather than generate theoretical pattern out of the collected data which through grounded theory is of great popularity in qualitative research (Patton, 2002) I wanted to find explanations for progressing or non-progressing development as consequences of the participation in Tantakuna, which the well recognised bioecological perspective supported me with.

Patton (2002) means that triangulating by using different theoretical perspectives in a qualitative study provides an understanding of how the findings are affected by limitations of the theories and thus different interpretations can be drawn. Unfortunately there was no possibility to triangulate theories in the present study due to the limited framework in time and size; however even though I reject empowerment as a theory my use of it as an analytical tool brought a further analytical interpretation to the data. Nevertheless other theoretical approaches would most likely have given different interpretations and also opened up for a different design in terms of questions to be asked and/or the method of asking them. A possible positivistic approach and its consequences were discussed above and the rich data the qualitative approach gave was analysed in chapter six by the use of a bioecological perspective influenced by Bronfenbrenner (1994; 1999; 2001). This analysis brought an

understanding of how development is triggered or complicated depending on interacting relations and their progressivity, complexity and reciprocity. The bioecological perspective brings a limitation of focusing on the interaction with the surrounding environment, thus how development is triggered or complicated could possibly have been analysed to a deeper extent by different theoretical approaches for instance by social constructionist or critical theories. A social constructionist approach could more extensively have given knowledge to the women's construction of their development; how it is constructed and what constructs it (cf. Patton, 2002), basically go beyond those interactions in the environment discussed above and possibly compare different ways of constructing reality with others. With a critical theory on the other hand the approach would have assumed some kind of injustice or structural deficiency and that the purpose of examining Tantakuna would be to change whatever hinders efficiency today (Ibid). As mentioned, these theories would for optimal reasons have implied a different way of asking but the data I had collected could still have been triangulated by the use of these alternative theories as well as generate theories in a grounded theory approach. Thus in terms of theoretical frameworks the present study is limited to the use of the bioecological perspective.

7.4 Suggestions for further research

Further research in particular related to Tantakuna could be done in order to strive for more efficiency of the progress, to do so I suggest to focus on examine successful development programmes where women have come into active processes of economic empowerment. There is also a wide range of research on women and microcredit which could be reviewed and tested in the community in order to gain knowledge of how to improve Tantakuna.

Empowerment (and women's development in general) is a constantly evolving phenomenon and further studies cannot be superfluous. Whatever study performed will be a contribution not only to society but also to clear out the vagueness of the concept of empowerment in social work, however I do suggest qualitative or narrative studies to fully justify the concept and to complement the great number of quantitative studies that already are. I do believe though that in social work research (and also practice) the concepts of women's empowerment and women's development not necessary have to be limited only to women. There are many oppressed people in the world and the naming of concepts should not hinder the use of good knowledge, the present study does not provide evidence for this but I do suggest that the models and methods from such studies could and should be tested on other oppressed groups.

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Appendix 1 – Interview guide

Year of entering Tantakuna:

Why did you enter Tantakuna?

You are now with Tantakuna since ___ years, can you please tell me about your experience up until now.

- What does it mean to you to be a part of Tantakuna?

    Friendship

    Work

    Development

    Changes during the years

    Tantakuna – to get together

    Examples

How do you experience the atmosphere in the groups?

    Respect

    Responsibility

    Decision making

    Relations

    Support

    Changes during the years (triggers)

- Express oneself freely?

    Before entering

    Signification now

    Development

    Changes during the years

Tantakuna offers several opportunities for personal and professional training, i.e. workshops, psychologist. How has this changed your way of living?

- Development of capabilities, habits

    Self-confidence

    Self-esteem

    Decision making

    Attitudes towards other

Communication

Examples

- Family changes?

Domestic violence

Child raising

Domestic duties

Changes during the years?

Examples

Tantakuna and development of the community?

Direct action as a group

indirect action through the participants

A part of the objective is to contribute on economic level; can you please tell me your experience of the economic contribution?

Income enough to change

Change in what

Control over benefits

Family planning

Changes during the years?

What is the most important reason for you to stay with Tantakuna? (if not yet answered)

What do you miss from Tantakuna, how could it improve?

Do you believe it is something that I still haven't asked you regarding your experience of Tantakuna in order to be able to fully examine the effectiveness of the groups in order to contribute to you, your family and the community Mineros San Juan?