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Marlene Stockenhuber, Bakk.phil.

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Mag^a Dr^a Michaela Krenceyová

Contents

1. Abstract	1
2. Introduction	2
3. Why the Research Topic Matters	3
3.1 Explaining Terms and Concepts of the Empowerment Discourse	4
3.2 Research Questions	12
3.3 Relevant Studies for the Economic Empowerment Discourse	16
3.4 Regional Conditions that Impact Empowerment	20
4. Methods	26
4.1 Reflection on Position in the Research Process and Ethical Considerations	26
4.2. Procedure for Conducting Research	27
4.2.1 Description of the Organization Kallpa Warmi	28
4.3 Sample, Sampling Strategy and Access	30
4.3.1 Case-Descriptions	31
4.4 Procedure of Analysis	32
5. Findings	32
5.1 Norms, Social Roles, and Their Effect on Agency	34
5.2 The Formal Education System and Empowerment	40
5.3 Employment and Empowerment	44
5.4 Individual Aspirations and Goals	50
5.5 Individual Perception of Power, Decision-Making and Empowerment	52
5.6 Individually Perceived Effects of Participating in Kallpa Warmi	59
5.6.1 Effects on Individual's Self-worth	59
5.6.2 Effects on Relationship and Family	61
5.6.3 Effects on Education and Ability to Follow Goals	63
5.6.4 Effects on Access to Resources	66
5.7 Individually Expressed Needs for Empowerment	67
6. Discussion	70
6.1 Economic Empowerment	72
6.2 Economic Empowerment and its Role in Other Components of Empowerment	76
6.3 Can Economic Empowerment Foster Social Change?	80
7. Conclusion	81
8. References	83

8.1 Image Reference	91
9. Annex: Interview Guide	92

1. Abstract

The present thesis discusses the implications of women's economic empowerment initiatives in the rural town Sayausí, in the province of Azuay, Ecuador, by the example of the local organization Kallpa Warmi. Through the examination of the individual experiences of participants in the local project, in connection to the analysis of the theory of empowerment, economic empowerment and concepts related to them, such as power and agency, the paper tries to offer an understanding of necessities for educational and labor market projects to contribute to empowerment, as well as to explain how the concept of empowerment can be more tangible.

Keywords: empowerment, economic empowerment, power, agency.

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit diskutiert die Konsequenzen von Initiativen für ökonomisches Empowerment in der ruralen Gemeinde Sayausí, in der Provinz Azuay, Ecuador, am Beispiel der lokalen Organisation Kallpa Warmi. Anhand der Untersuchung von individuellen Erfahrungen von im lokalen Projekt teilnehmenden Frauen, welche anhand der Theorien von Empowerment, ökonomischem Empowerment und den dazu in Zusammenhang stehenden Konzepten von Macht und Agency betrachtet werden, soll die Arbeit ein Verständnis dafür schaffen, welche Aspekte von Ausbildungs- und Arbeitsmarkt-Projekten mitgedacht werden sollten, um zu Empowerment beitragen zu können, sowie zu erklären wie das Konzept Empowerment greifbarer verstanden werden kann.

Schlüsselworte: Empowerment, Ökonomisches Empowerment, Macht, Agency.

2. Introduction

When I decided to write my thesis on how educational and labor market initiatives contribute to women's empowerment in Ecuador, I received reactions such as "Why? This concept is so vague, it can mean anything. Everything is called Empowerment today.", or "Isn't that white feminist of you, to assume that paid labor will be empowering?", which made me ask myself a variety of questions.

I have been wondering before, but even more since, what empowerment means to me, but also what empowerment really means and entails for women participating in such initiatives, as well as how initiatives could be tailored to meet the needs of the women taking part in them. Being confronted with multiple factors of social oppression and the needs arising from the circumstances is something that as a white, European female, coming from a financially secure background, I did not have to experience in the same manner as women living in the Global South. How can I assume that paid labor will not contribute to their empowerment?

To me, it appears to be necessary to find out about how women in rural areas of Ecuador themselves perceive their circumstances, needs, and empowerment process, in order to be able to understand them, which reassures me in writing this thesis. There exists an understanding of a persisting tendency to name any welfare or poverty alleviating project an empowerment project (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 40), which points once more at the need to examine the concept of women's empowerment.

Therefore in this thesis, I want to conduct a differentiated analysis of empowerment facilitated through economic empowerment projects. I will offer an examination of the possibilities and limitations in reaching empowerment, that can arise in the process of economic empowerment. The thesis will include an inspection of conceptualizations of empowerment in the projects as well as an analysis of the connection between economic empowerment, power, agency, paid and unpaid labor, bargaining power and the process of overall empowerment as discussed within the scientific discourse. Furthermore, I want to conduct a qualitative analysis of living conditions, needs, and circumstances of the ones who are being addressed by such projects, i.e.,

marginalized women in rural areas of Ecuador, specifically in Sayausí, Azuay. Through this, I want to contribute to a deeper understanding of the process of empowerment in general, and more importantly to an understanding of the needs of marginalized women in rural areas of Ecuador.

3. Why the Research Topic Matters

The term empowerment is frequently used in discourses on gender equality and has been named "a stock-in-trade expression wherever in the world women's issues are discussed. It is one of the most loosely used terms in the development lexicon, meaning different things to different people." (Batliwala, 2013, p. 40). When we look at the implementation of empowerment through vaguely defined goals in agendas of large-scale development projects, a definition of empowerment is usually missing. It seems questionable how much of feminist thinkers' ideas, whose intention was to develop a tool to work towards a more equitable and just society and against the suppression of women, are being realized (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 48).

Projects aiming at women's economic empowerment, such as educational projects that can include a variety of aspects concerning the transmission of knowledge and different skills which offer the possibility to generate income within the formal or informal labor market, can contribute to overall empowerment through the effects of said gained skills, knowledge, and access to material assets, more autonomy, enhanced freedom of personal movement as well as an improved position in decision making. Women's share of employment in the labor force can enhance their own positive association with gender-egalitarian attitudes and assist them in challenging cultural values and norms that restrict women's role to the fulfillment of unpaid domestic work (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p.313). Research shows that projects for economic empowerment can also have unexpected side effects such as an increased risk of domestic violence, a double burden of work due to the same amount of unpaid domestic labor aside from participation in projects, or the shift of unpaid domestic work towards other female family members - often the oldest daughter, who then might be absent at school (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 302).

Another aspect that needs consideration when discussing empowerment initiatives is how projects are conducted and which contents are conveyed in such projects. The transmission of skills that fit into an essentialist paradigm of stereotypically female work might not initiate an empowering process for women since the critical examination and realization of the existence of unequal structures within the home or at the labor market might not occur on an individual level. Knowledge that reinforces or justifies unequal power structures or patriarchal values, instead of challenging precisely those, might not lead to the planned outcome of empowerment projects - or enhance actual processes of empowerment (cf. Stromquist, 2002, p. 26). In order to grasp unexpected side effects or unwanted consequences of projects, but also to gain knowledge and methods necessary for actually achieving empowerment, a defined understanding of this concept, and more importantly, of the needs of the marginalized women who are supposed to be empowered, is crucial (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 29). A defined understanding of empowerment is further especially relevant since one can find a large variety of studies and analysis of women's empowerment within the scientific discourse.

3.1 Explaining Terms and Concepts of the Empowerment Discourse

From its radical roots in the critical feminist movement, empowerment has shifted in different directions, having "a different meaning to different people" (Batliwala, 2013, p. 40). For some, it serves as a meaningful tool to create a more equitable society (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p.48ff.), serving either as means to "challenging patriarchal structures" (Tandon, 2016, p. 8) or "to enable poor women to gain access to, and control of, both material and informational resources" (Tandon, 2016, p. 8) and is to be seen as a process for developing agents of social change." (Tandon, 2016, p. 8).

Others view women's empowerment as the empty shell of a formerly feminist term that has been appropriated by neoliberal governments and large organizations. "Empowerment has emerged as a keyword effectively replacing the now much-maligned term *welfare*" (Sharma, 2008, p. 16), assisting governments "as states attempt to downsize their welfare bureaucracies" (Sharma, 2008, p. 17). Thus empowerment is said to be partly used as an instrument to create a demographic

group, which formerly often depended on government aid, but by being empowered can "fulfill their own needs through market mechanisms instead of relying on state largesse" (Sharma, 2008, p. 17), resulting in a female population that does not depend on state support.

Apart from this dynamic of different meanings or understandings to the term of women's empowerment, also the outcome of empowerment initiatives is viewed ambivalently. Some projects might lead to women having greater control over resources and knowledge, aiding in access to greater power on a personal level within the family and community. At the same time, other programs are criticized for having had unintended, negative outcomes, such as an increase in inter-partner violence (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 314f.).

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the possibilities and limitations of projects for women's economic empowerment, and the implications and methods necessary for those projects to contribute to overall empowerment, the present thesis needs to offer a broad understanding of the theory and concepts related to empowerment, such as *power, empowerment, economic empowerment, agency, bargaining power, and paid and unpaid labor*. Throughout the thesis, these terms will be used and help to understand the research questions, analyze the data gained from the conducted research and give the theoretical framework to answer the research questions.

To define and understand empowerment, it is important first to examine the terms *power, power relations* and *social power*, but also to look at different forms of power, as in *power to* and *power over*.

"Power can be defined as the degree of control over material, human and intellectual resources exercised by different sections of society. These resources fall into four broad categories: physical resources (like land, water, forests); human resources (people, their bodies, their labor and skills); intellectual resources (knowledge, information, ideas); and financial resources (money, access to money). The control of one or more of these resources becomes a source of individual and social power" (Batliwala, 2013, p. 41).

Power and its unequal distribution come into place through different levels of access to and control over resources. The unequal distribution of power can be obtained through the use and threat of violence by the dominant group, as well as perpetuated through a belief system consisting of values and norms accepted by society that is constantly transmitted through institutions such as the state, education system, religion, media or the family. This way, unequal power structures within society are being justified and met with the consent of different societal groups, including the ones who are suppressed (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 41ff.).

This phenomenon has been analyzed by Gramsci, who explained the existence and persistence of hegemony through the forces of suppression and consent. The ruling class maintains its position through the existence of an ideology, which directly or indirectly justifies the unequal distribution of power within society. The suppressed class obeys the said ideology and gives its consent, thus takes part in its subordination. To further understand how this unequal power structure can stabilize itself, Althusser elaborated the RSA theory - the Repressive State Apparatus, and the ISA theory - the Ideological State Apparatus (cf. Umezurike, 2015, p. 154f.). The RSA combines "the government, administration, army, police, courts, and prisons, all working individually and collectively in favor of the hegemonic class while at the same time repressing the minority class, primarily through force or the threat of force" (Umezurike, 2015, p. 154). The ISA works through institutions such as religion, education, family or media, as previously described by Batliwala (2013), thus creating a set of norms and values that are socially accepted, internalized and followed by the population.

"However, power, ideology, or the state is neither static nor monolithic. There is a continuous process of resistance and challenge by the less powerful and marginalized sections of society, resulting in varying degrees of change in the structures and relations of power." (Batliwala, 2013, p. 43). The use of individual power, resulting from "physical and mental attributes as diverse as individual talents" (Batiwala, 2013, p. 43), in unity with others through a collective agenda, can form a collective urge to work towards change, and needs to be perceived as a fount of social power (cf. *ibid.*). Thus, unjust power structures can be challenged in particular situations. Empowerment is a

process where individuals with less power receive enhanced access to resources such as money, materials, skills, and knowledge; are capacitated to uncover and challenge unequal power structures in order to be able to convert values, norms, or ideologies which justify and preserve those unequal power structures. It is concerned with creating more equitable power relations (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 46). In the present thesis, the focus will mainly concern women's empowerment and will work with Batliwala's definition of women's empowerment, the

"process, and the outcome of the process, by which women gain greater control over material and intellectual resources, and challenge the ideology of patriarchy and gender-based discrimination of women in all the institutions and structures of society" (Batliwala, 2013, p. 46),

whereby the focus will lie on research concerning empowerment initiatives in Latin America, but also the work and concepts of authors from other parts of the world, for example, Batliwala (2013) and Kabeer (2005); (2016) will be integrated.

The term women's empowerment arose from the "growing interaction between feminism and the concept and practice of popular education, based on the 'conscientisation' approach developed by Paulo Freire in Latin America in the 1970s as part of his 'liberation theology'. The interplay of these powerful new discourses led, by the mid-1980s, to the spread of 'women's empowerment' as a more political and transformatory [sic!] idea for struggles that challenged not only patriarchy, but also the mediating structures of class, race, ethnicity (...) which determined the nature of women's position and condition in developing societies" (Tandon, 2016, p. 1).

A variety of feminist thinkers have analyzed aspects that have to be integrated into women's empowerment to challenge unjust structures. Parpart et al. (2003) cite Naila Kabeer (1994), who insists on the importance of empowerment for the struggle to achieve gender equality and adds to the definition of power as the control over resources, institutions and decision making, the ability to control discourses and agendas. Therefore, she emphasizes "power within", a power that is rooted in a positive self-understanding, that can inspire women to recognize and challenge gender

inequality in the home and the community. Further, she stresses the importance of "power to work with others" (Parpart et al., 2002, p. 11) in collective, grassroots participatory action, in order to contribute to Empowerment for which individuals need to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions (cf. *ibid.*). "Power within" has been described as an individual's perception of their person as worthy, as well as to be aware of the self. It contains the capability to respect individual differences and others as well as to have trust in the possibility of reaching individual goals. "Power to" defines the capacity of people to direct their own life, to decide how they want to live and what they want to do. When individuals use their "power to" collectively, their joined forces can work towards social change (cf. Veneklasen & Miller, 2007, p. 45).

From a psychological point of view, as already mentioned before, an individual can experience power as "Individual power to", by acting according to individual and personal agendas and goals, to resist subordination and insist on individual freedom. Within the scientific discourse, an individual's "power to" is measured by the degree of access to resources such as money, knowledge, materials, employment, social positions, and other factors theoretically enhancing an individual's capability to work towards personal aspirations (cf. Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 975f.).

Both forms of power, "power to" and "power within" are concerned as "agency - the ability to act and change the world" (Veneklasen & Miller, 2007, p. 45). Agency also defines the capability of individuals to "make and act on their own life choices, even in the face of other's opposition" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 14), and is crucial to the process of empowerment. Individual life choices can concern personal agendas, as well as choices that confront suppressive structures. Since internalized norms, values, or ideologies that legitimize the unequal distribution of power have a significant impact on the self, the process of empowerment usually starts from within. It is connected to the sense and intent which one gives their individual doing or the purpose they give their actions, which can be defined as an "active" agency. The other form of agency can be defined as a "passive" agency, which means to act with limited choice (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 15).

Concerning the possibilities of economic empowerment, the opportunity to earn an income can give a greater sense of agency, as the access to resources has worthwhile effects on self-esteem, one's ability to make decisions, owning financial assets, or the opportunity to be publicly mobile. Thus having a paid job can impact empowerment, but needs to be more than sheer vending of ones' workforce. Studies on the micro-level suggest that the circumstances of how women access the labor market and how much control over their gained income they exercise, are crucial to the extent to which their workforce contributes to empowerment. When entering the labor market leads to an improved sense of self-determination and autonomy, or can be seen as an expression of "active" agency, it contributes to empowerment (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p.15). In order to create women's economic empowerment, which the International Center for Research on Women defines as "the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions" (ICRW, 2016, p. 9), different aspects and their underlying factors must be taken into account. The conveyance of knowledge or skills, which enable individuals to compete in markets is crucial to the process, as well as the individual's fair access to monetary institutions. To profit from remunerative work, women need to be able to take individual decisions and act according to them and be able to control their financial assets. To realize those aspects, it is necessary to consider societal norms and institutions that might impact the possibilities of economic empowerment practices, for example, specific gender roles and their assigned responsibilities which can limit women's possibilities to move freely in public, to work in certain branches of the job market or to control financial assets (cf. Golla et al., 2011, p. 4).

To gain more understanding of women's ability to act upon their choices, the concept of bargaining power is relevant. Bargaining contains the process of communication and interaction on the household level and includes components of differences, as well as of synergy between family members. One's willingness to collaborate usually depends on an outcome of actions, which leaves both parties in a better position than non-collaboration would, but can also depend on the ability to reach shared ambitions, such as gaining more assets that can be used on the home. It is likely that not both parties receive equal benefits from the collaboration, since the amount each of them gets, is connected to their "relative bargaining power", which is determined for

example by the circumstances in which the individual would find him- or herself if no more cooperation between the two parties would occur, also termed as one's "fallback position" (cf. Osmani, 2007, p. 699f.). The most relevant factors for an individual's bargaining power are to own and control resources, to be employed or to receive an income, to have access to communal resources, to enjoy the support of friends or other family members, as well as to receive support from the government or NGOs. Besides that, other aspects as norms and values or perceptions of gender roles have a significant impact on one's bargaining power, as the value given to different contributions to the household is connected to a gendered bias, and gender-stereotypical perceptions of labor often discredit work of women leading to a lesser extent of bargaining power within the household (cf. Agarwal, 1997, p. 10).

Finally, it is necessary to consider restrictive elements to the process of empowerment, such as unpaid domestic care work, which in many cases is done by women, or unequally distributed between men and women and is to be seen as "one of the key constraints on women's labor market participation" (Kabeer, 2016, p. 314). Research shows that, against the presumption that an increase in labor market participation of women would lead to a more equal distribution of domestic work between partners, the female labor force at the market does not manage to bring that expected change. Rather women find themselves confronted with a double burden of labor, or the domestic work is shifted to another female family member. The perception of care work as connected to the female role seems to equally persist, as the male role's perception distanced to care work (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 314). Outcomes of empowerment initiatives could potentially be intensified by considering unpaid domestic work in the planning and conduction of programs and needs further examination (cf. Chopra, 2015, p. 3f.).

Another restrictive aspect to the process of women's empowerment that prevails with women's participation in the labor market and should thus be considered when discussing economic empowerment initiatives is domestic violence. As already mentioned, research suggests that access to income for women leads to mixed results. Some findings show a decrease, while other studies present an increase of inter-partner violence when women take up economic activities (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p.

314f.). Research on the correlation between indicators for "power to" and the prevalence of different forms of violence suggests that in order to tackle inter-partner violence, the focus should move from receiving an income as a trigger of domestic violence towards measures for relationship control and unequal distribution of power within relationships, as well as male perceptions of power as a zero-sum game, in order not to serve as justification for essentialist strains of argumentation against women's labor market participation (cf. Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 989). Non-conformity with gender roles and norms, or the loss of the ability to live up to social expectations of femininity or masculinity, are frequent causes for domestic violence. This is especially the case when the male role is tightly connected to the bread-winning role, or the males' self-esteem or dignity depends on his ability to control women or experience their dependency (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 315).

To further understand this dynamic, the examination of Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence and the economy of symbolic goods are useful. In the patriarchal society, attributions to male and female sex and gender are formed and invented by humans throughout history and time. Norms and values positioning the male sex and gender hierarchically above the female result from invented prescribed gender attributes and are constantly being internalized until they appear natural, which allows essentialist beliefs about male superiority to persist (cf. Bourdieu, 2001, p. 8f). Thus, the male self is constructed through its constant positioning in contradiction to the female, which endangers male self-esteem and pride when men do not distance themselves from anything prescribed as typically female. Male attributes connected to strength, power, and violence, or the necessity to actively produce masculinity in every action, possibly can create a fragile personality bound to violent behavior. Especially in circumstances where there is not much to accumulate and women function as objects of property, women's suppression and control can contribute to male pride (cf. Bourdieu, 2001, p. 9ff.). Thus, initiatives and programs for women's economic empowerment should address and include men in order to dismantle the perception of "power as a zero-sum game", and to explore positive effects of gender equality in order to combat experiences of inter-partner violence, as well as negative social reactions as side effects of empowerment initiatives (cf. Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 989).

3.2 Research Questions

Considering the previously laid out aspects, theories and concepts, as well as an ambivalent perception of the usefulness of educational and labor-market related projects to contribute to women's empowerment, this thesis will seek to answer the following research question-

Under which conditions do educational and labor market projects contribute to women's empowerment in rural areas of Ecuador, by the example of Sayuasí, Azuay?

My assumption to the main research question is that such projects contribute to women's empowerment by creating access to resources as money, materials, relationships to a network of people who can support each other, and through the transmission of knowledge - which are factors that are directly mentioned in the definition of empowerment that is being used in this thesis (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 46). Further, for projects to contribute to empowerment, it is necessary to offer a space for psychological dimensions of empowerment, the discussion of experiences concerning oppression and inequality, and to give a space for collective mobilization and the forming of individual agendas. Thus individuals can perceive themselves as entitled to being empowered (cf. Cornwall, 2016, p. 344).

Concerning possible negative effects of the projects such as the double burden of labor or unwanted social reactions to paid, female labor in the private and public sphere, it could be helpful to include communities and families into projects. This might soften or prevent negative reactions, as mentioned by the Interview Partners chosen for the qualitative research of this thesis as a factor for improving social reactions to their participation in the empowerment initiative, as well as mentioned by Grose and Grabe (2014). The extent to which this is being done in empowerment projects, in general, is not simple to estimate, as there exist a variety of different approaches to empowerment. Therefore in this thesis, I will only cover the extent to which this is realized in the organization's projects that I chose for conducting qualitative research.

Since the present thesis' main research question is quite general, I will work with four guiding sub-questions. It seems relevant to consider which structural barriers or cultural norms, values and expectations towards the role of women might prevent girls and women in Sayausí from receiving education or from being able to have a paid job within the formal or informal labor market, which is thus expressed in the following sub-question1:

Which obstacles do women in Sayausí, Azaúy, face in the process of gaining an education and participating in the labor market?

My assumption to the first sub-question is that, as in almost all parts of the world, domestic labor is shifted to female family members, creating an imbalance between the share of house-work and care-work between women and men, favoring the latter (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 314), unpaid domestic labor fills the day of women in Sayausí in a way that does not allow them to finish school, gain further education, or to have a paid job outside the home. Having a paid job might lead to a double burden of labor for women when domestic work is strongly connected to the female social role (cf. *ibid.*). A possible lack of education and existing responsibilities within the home as well as expectations towards the female role, could pose a limit to women's ability to have a full-time job and rather push women to take up part-time work, as well as jobs that pay lower wages in typically feminized labor sectors (cf. Mandel & Shalev, 2009, p. 1879). Additionally, I assume that starting an individual business is difficult for individuals with limited financial and material resources.

The second sub-question focuses on potential unexpected effects of projects for women's economic empowerment which debilitate empowerment, and is expressed as sub-question 2:

Which unexpected effects that debilitate empowerment do the projects for economic empowerment produce and how do these impact the results?

My assumption to this sub-question is that receiving an income or a job might not automatically signify empowerment. Changes in the distribution of financial assets between men and women can have negative effects on the prevalence of domestic

violence, especially when constructions of desired masculinity are closely connected to the bread-winning role (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 315), and men are not being included into projects (cf. Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 989). Earning an income does not automatically lead to the self-determined use of gained assets, as in some cases, they are collected by male family members, portraying a false image of the empowered woman earning her income and thus automatically gaining autonomy (cf. Karim, 2008, p. 15). This possible unequal distribution of power within families or between genders should be taken into account and treated within the project and together with the family in a sensitive matter in order to be combatted. Another unexpected aspect might be the already mentioned shift of unpaid domestic labor to other female family members who then might not be able to work or receive their education at school, which lowers their chance of finding a well-paid job later on (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 314).

The third sub-question tries to find which aspects of empowerment can be reached in educational and labor market projects, but also focuses on which circumstances or structures within projects are necessary to do so. I express this in the following sub-question 3:

Which aspects of empowerment can be achieved through educational and labor market projects under which circumstances?

My assumptions to this sub-question are that if the participation of educational and labor market related projects for empowerment leads to the participant's access to material resources *and* their involvement in deciding about how to spend their income, or in the best case, their control of the gained financial assets, such projects can lead to an improved position in decision-making processes at family or community level and contribute to empowerment. The act of commanding one's income is crucial for the prospect of changing the power relations one finds themselves in (Kabeer, 2016, p. 313). Further, to simply earn an income is helpful to overcome struggles of poverty, but might not change gender-related inequality or induce an empowering process towards more equality (cf. Cornwall, 2016, p. 345), which is why the access to material resources should be connected to the transmission of knowledge. The contents conveyed in projects have to contribute to the individual's perception of their own

power and agency, which can be enhanced and lead to higher self-esteem and self-determination through understanding oneself as equal and worthy (cf. Cornwall, 2016, p. 345). To accomplish that, the individual's awareness of norms and values which are limiting women to inferior positions and vulnerability have to be uncovered within projects in the form of workshops, in which the realities women find themselves in are being addressed, and unequal distribution of power within the family and community are being discussed (cf. *ibid.*). Further, as mentioned before, including families and communities in workshops and projects to raise awareness about inequality on a wider level might be helpful to contribute to the success of educational and labor market related projects for empowerment (cf. Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 989).

The fourth sub-question examines which aspects of educational and labor market related projects participants find complicating, posing difficulties or even missing within the realization of the project, in order to achieve empowerment, expressed in sub-question 4:

Which aspects of educational and labor market projects do the participating women either miss and wish to be integrated or view as an obstacle, and suggest to change in order to achieve empowerment?

My assumption to the fourth sub-question is that when projects and group meetings or workshops for income generation are time-intensive, the family's repulsion about the women's participation in projects can occur. This can be explained as there remains less time for chores in the domestic sphere, leading to disagreements between family members in contexts where domestic work is tied to the female role. In Ecuador, women work on average about 30 percent more than men, resulting from a double burden of labor consisting of work within the home and paid labor outside the home (cf. De Marco Larrauri et al., 2016, p. 10). Further, the location of projects or classes might be problematic to get to, or only reachable during certain times of the day due to a lack of transportation in rural areas or safety reasons (cf. De Marco Larrauri et al. 2016, p. 11).

In the following, I will discuss different studies concerning the concept of women's empowerment, initiatives, and programs aiming to create such and regional specifics concerning the exertion of women's rights and empowerment in Ecuador.

3.3 Relevant Studies for the Economic Empowerment Discourse

Kabeer (2016) examines mainstream economist's assumptions about the connection between economic growth and gender equality. She emphasizes the importance of analyzing the quality and the quantity of possibilities for women to participate within the labor market, the gender-specific distribution of these possibilities as well as the extent to which policies enhance, reproduce or dismantle gender inequality. She analyzes different regions and highlights patriarchal structures in general and within economic structures as a reason for the persistence of gender inequality. Unequal participation in education, land ownership, and labor market should be seen as consequences of patriarchal constraints and discriminatory practices (cf. Kabeer, 2016).

Kabeer presents studies of India about the contentment and voluntariness of women to solely do unpaid domestic labor at home. 92% of the participating women say they feel pressured to do so in order to keep their marriage intact, instead of voluntarily doing so. (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p 306). Another study presented examines the participation of women at the labor market in Latin America and its connection to their increased well-being, resulting from more financial independence and enforced bargaining power. Furthermore, she presents studies on the change of values of gender equality, discussing the values that become more relevant with expanded participation at the labor market and are increasingly shared by women, and also, to a smaller part, by men (cf. Kabeer, 2016).

Thus, Kabeer's article makes a strong point for the possibilities of empowerment through education and participation in the labor market, but also examines negative effects of economic empowerment, such as a double burden of labor or an increased risk of domestic violence (cf. Kabeer, 2016).

Stromquist (2002) examines the potential of formal and informal educational projects to contribute to women's empowerment. She examines which contents need to be conveyed in such projects in order to overcome patriarchal structures of suppression, and argues for the importance of covering emancipatory gender topics (cf. Stromquist, 2002).

Cultural norms and values that sustain inequality need to be identified in order to form strategies to reach sustainable social transformation. They can be assessed within "creative settings", where knowledge can be found through reflective thought, or workshops about gender subordination, reproductive health, domestic violence, and other similar topics. For this matter, Stromquist examines a "more or less protected enclave to learn and grow intellectually" (Stromquist, 2002, p. 26), meaning a safe space consisting of small groups on a local level with preferably only female members (cf. Stromquist, 2002).

Stromquist notes the importance of formal education, as "literacy often results in empowerment of a psychological nature" (Stromquist, 2002, p. 27). She argues nevertheless, that a more empowering process can start from more than simply reading. It can start from the experience of discussing issues, personal viewpoints and opinions within the group while practicing or learning to read, since these additional activities can enhance the participants self-esteem (cf. Stromquist, 2002). The author argues for the importance of an economic aspect of projects for women's empowerment since women are mostly financially dependent on families and husbands. Projects should combine emancipatory gender contents, conveyance of productive skills, management skills, and microcredit.

Agarwal (1997) examines the concept of bargaining power, meaning the power to bargain, in connection to gender inequality, its production, and reproduction. She emphasizes that the dynamic within households cannot be analyzed as an isolated unit, but has to be seen as connected to the family, the community and the state (cf. Agarwal, 1997). The most relevant factors for bargaining power she names are ownership and control over land- dependent on a rural or urban context, access to work or an income, communal resources, traditional supporting systems such as families or relatives, support from NGOs or groups advocating for female bargaining

power, support from the state, as well as social assumptions on individual needs, and ideas on what appertains to whom. Norms are to be seen as social constructs that are flexible and changeable. They can be shaped to address inequalities and create a context of gender equality (cf. Agarwal, 1997).)

Grose and Grabe (2014) discuss why scientific studies concerning the effect of education and paid labor on women's domestic violence experiences can find both an increase of intimate partner violence related to taking up paid work and a decrease of domestic violence when taking up paid work. The authors explain this ambivalence in findings throughout the scientific discourse due to the use of different indicators and measures for power when performing research. These would be indicators such as power within relationships, as well as of different forms of violence such as physical violence, sexual violence or psychological violence, which are being examined in different studies and therefore lead to very different outcomes, depending on which indicators are being used.

To portray the said ambivalence of findings, the authors name various studies from different countries and continents, suggesting that women with an enhanced degree of "power to" show fewer experiences of violence. Further, the authors name "evidence from Bangladesh, India, Mexico, and Nicaragua that age is associated with violence such that as women get older, they experience lower levels of physical (..) and psychological violence" (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 975). On the contrary, Grose and Grabe present "evidence from 12 other countries", showing that this relationship is not linear" (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 975), as research from Peru and India found that the number of years of schooling women complete has an impact on the degree of violence experienced, showing "that education does not have a protective effect until women reach the secondary or post-secondary level" (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 976). Further, they discuss studies from Mexico and Peru, naming employment as a factor favoring experiences of violence, while studies from India demonstrating that "women's employment has no effect on receipt of violence" (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 976).

Grose and Grabe offer an understanding on a psychological level of how power and control impact the various kinds of violence against women and define *power*, *power to*, and *power over*. *Power to* them means being "capacitated" and having the ability to

"fulfill or impede personal and relational needs" (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 975) and should be seen as an adaptable and changeable variable, formed by social categories and privileges. In the psychological domain, power can be differentiated as "individual power to" and "interpersonal power over". "Power to" concerns being able to act according to individual and personal agendas and goals, to resist subordination and to insist on individual freedom. It is usually measured by the degree of access to "social, material and human resources" (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 975), such as "women's age, income, education level and occupational status" (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 975), as these factors enhance an individual's capability to work towards personal aspirations. The other form of power, "*interpersonal power over*", is defined as the capability "to control or change another person's behavior, dominate or manipulate another, or win a conflict" (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 976), and also to influence another individuals behavior. In the scientific sphere, "power over" is measured by the examination of "spousal differences in resource contribution, differences in control over household decision making, and partner control of spousal behavior and mobility" (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 976). The authors name cultural essentialist beliefs about men's superiority as a factor for not accepting female "power over", which might motivate men to reestablish power and domination by using violence and controlling behavior towards women (cf. Grose & Grabe, 2014).

Grose and Grabe name a variety of studies which show that the usage of measures for "power over" to map domestic violence also lead to ambivalent findings. Research from Southeast Asia, Latin America, and North America found that women who contribute more resources than their partner have a higher level of education or a better job experience more inter-partner violence. In contrast other studies from Southeast Asia find that higher levels of education of women compared to their partner lead to less inter-partner violence (cf. Grose & Grabe, 2014). Regarding the ambivalence of results, Grose and Grabe examined within their study, which was conducted in Nicaragua, the limitations of measures for "*power to*" and "*power over*" in predicting gender-based violence. By assessing the data of 345 women, they found that measures of "*power to*" - for example "income, education level and occupational status" (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 975) - were largely unrelated to all three types of

violence except for a relationship between age and psychological violence, such that older women experienced less violence" (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 981).

Concerning measures of "*power over*", the authors found that there also does not exist a significant relation to domestic violence, but that "higher levels of relationship power were related to lower levels of all forms of violence, whereas higher levels of partner control were related to increased receipt of each form of violence" (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 981). Thus Grose and Grabe find that "measures of power and control reflecting relationship dynamics have the strongest predictive power for explaining domestic violence" (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 987). The results propose that "access to and control over resources may be an important route to improving women's power" (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 988) but in order to grasp and combat gender-based violence it is necessary to examine and reform "power dynamics within the relationship" (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 988). These findings suggest that educational and labor market projects need to consider power dynamics within relationships in order to not produce unwanted effects. Grose and Grabe recommend the inclusion of men into programs in a way that "engages men in exploring how gender equality could benefit them, minimizing the perception of power as a zero-sum game" and leading to a decrease in gender-based violence (Grose & Grabe, 2014, p. 989).

3.4 Regional Conditions that Impact Empowerment

In order to have a better understanding of the implications for educational and labor market related projects in Ecuador to contribute to women's empowerment, the following will take a closer look at regional specifics in Ecuador and Latin America, concerning measures for women's rights and gender equality at government level. Further, I will offer a short view on gender debates and movements in Latin America and their implications for any project focusing on gender equality.

The government of Ecuador has implemented a series of "pro-equity policies" since 1996, when "the first Equal Opportunity Plan (1996-2001)" was created by the former National Directorate of Women DINAMU, now called the Council CONAMU, as a reaction to "the Fourth World Conference on Women and based on the Beijing Platform

for Action" (cf. Valdiviesgo, 2004, p. 4). In 1997 the government developed an "institutional state system" which is supposed to ensure the realization of women's rights "with the establishment of the National Council for Women as the oversight organ for government policies with a gender perspective, combined in a very effective way with reinforcement of the National Congressional Committee on Women and the Family" (Valdiviesgo, 2004, p. 4).

The Ecuadorian states' political Constitution includes in its first two chapters the equality of genders (cf. UN Women Americas and the Caribbean Ecuador n.d.) and "contains a body of law with new elements conducive to an inclusive and nondiscriminatory society, with equal opportunities for all men and women as well as constitutes a valuable instrument for justice and the empowerment of women. The Constitution establishes fundamental principles, such as non-discrimination and equal protection of law; as well as the right to personal integrity and a life free from violence; freedom to decide on one's sexual life; the right to receive information and education on sexuality; the right to decide when and how many children to procreate; the right to receive equal remuneration for work of equal value; equal rights and opportunities for women and men to access and determine productive and ownership resources (...)" (Valdiviesgo, 2004, p. 4). Additionally, the state ratified the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); The Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) (1996); Security Council Resolution 1325 and its six additional resolutions on women, peace and security UNSC 1820 (2008); UNSC 1888 (2009); UNSC 1889 (2009); UNSC 1960 (2010); UNSC 2106 (2013) and UNSC 2122 (2013); and The Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (2000)" (UN Women Americas and the Caribbean Ecuador, n.d.).

Nonetheless, women face severe discrimination within Ecuadorian society, "according to the Human Development Index generated by UNDP, gender inequality is a key element; ranking 89 out of a group of 186 countries in 2012, with a coefficient of 0.442." (UN Women Americas and the Caribbean Ecuador, n.d.). The main gender gap concerns inequality in income, "according to the Transition Committee (CDT) in 2013 average monthly income for rural women was US\$219 compared with US\$293 in men. In urban areas, women make an average of US\$421 a month, and men US\$524. In

2013, the Family Food Basket price tag was US\$601.60" (UN Women Americas and the Caribbean Ecuador, n.d.), resulting in incomes of women being 13-26% lower than the incomes of men. Besides the wage gap, another facet of gender inequality is the unequal distribution of domestic work and care work, which can be seen in "figures reported by INEC [National Institute of Statistics and Census] (2012)", which show that "women in rural areas work in average 23 hours longer per week than men do" (UN Women Americas and the Caribbean Ecuador, n.d.).

Another crucial aspect of remaining inequality is gender violence. In a demographic health survey of 2004, 46% of women in Ecuador had experienced violence over their life course, 95% of these experiences had taken place within their homes (cf. Goicolea et al., 2012, p. 2). Gender-based violence "is one of the main obstacles for the empowerment, thriving and exercise of women rights; as well as an extreme form of inequality between women and men and gender discrimination." (UN Women Americas and the Caribbean Ecuador, n.d.). Despite by the state implemented policies, there seems to exist a constrained will to inflect gender violence, as for a long time it has been portrayed as a private issue (c.f. Goicolea et al., 2012), which "prevents it from being prioritized as a public health problem, resulting in policies and programs with meager results, without continuity, low coverage and quality, and fragile inter-institutional and inter-sectoral coordination." (UN Women Americas and the Caribbean Ecuador, n.d.). The justice system seems to fail in the field of data collection concerning violence against women, "which results in suppression and disregard when presented with these cases and therefore, in impunity." (Un Women Americas and the Caribbean Ecuador, n.d.).

Regardless of advances in the state's policymaking, "Gender equality does not appear to be a priority in the National Development Plan. This strategic document does not set specific targets to reduce the gender gap" (UN Women Americas and the Caribbean Ecuador, n.d.). Further, the "investment on gender equality policies, as registered by the Benchmark of Expenditures on Gender Equality Policies, represents less than 2% of the government's budget; and there are no institutional mechanisms that can monitor and measure this investment. Country-wise, several surveillance and monitoring projects of local government's investments have shown better levels of

communication between women organizations and authorities; the creation and institutionalization of specialized instances on gender equality at local level; and the budgeting of public funds to women driven demands. However, these are pilot experiences not picked up by most territories." (UN Women Americas and the Caribbean Ecuador, n.d.).

Another challenge to combat inequality seems to be "stereotypes and cultural practices that influence the preservation of power relationships that perpetuate the subordination of women before men" (Un Women Americas and the Caribbean Ecuador, n.d.). An example for that is *machismo*, which describes male behaviors of compliance with hegemonic masculinity and sexism, and is a commonly used term within Ecuador and Latin America (cf. Goicolea et al., 2014, p. 400). Within qualitative Interviews, Goicolea et al. (2014) examined which behaviors defined machismo for male Ecuadorean activists for gender equality and found that they perceived homophobia, devaluation of women, male privilege, contempt for male participation in domestic chores and care-work, as well as control over women and domestic violence as common practices that are part of the Ecuadorean machismo culture (cf. Goicolea et al., 2014, p. 409f.). Being the result of patriarchal gender domination, machismo can be seen as deeply rooted in Latin American society's formation through values and norms transported by Iberian colonialism and the influence of the catholic church (cf. Sardenberg, 2012, p.15). As gender violence can be seen as a direct result of machismo, Goicolea et al. (2012) examined differences of the opinions of ordinary Ecuadorean men and Ecuadorean men involved in programs for gender equality concerning their viewpoint on intimate partner violence. They found that the inclusion of men and young male adults into programs that promote gender equality and women's rights shows promising results concerning the decline in rates of intimate partner violence, as men encouraged to reflect on hegemonic masculinity and the domination of women, learn to refrain from violent behavior as a solution to problems within their relationship, and to identify such behavior as suppressing women (cf. Goicolea, 2012, p. 2, p. 8). Considering these findings, local grassroots initiatives, NGOs and other organizations working with the government on a local level for gender equality and empowerment of women might be necessary to contribute to gender

equality aside from state policies, which highlights the need to examine such programs and projects further.

Research on gender debates within Latin America points to region-wide existence of local movements and organizations working towards women's rights, such as the mothers' movements in Argentina (cf. Sardenberg, 2012, p. 18f). The *madres de plaza de mayo* originally started to unite during the Argentinian military dictatorship from 1976 to 1983, as a response to their within the regime disappearing children and grandchildren. Women, who within Latin American culture are strongly confined to the private sphere as homemakers and mothers, began to march in public to demand justice for their children's torture and murder (cf. *ibid.*) Due to their meetings to organize further weekly protests and the government's negative social response to their initiative, but also society calling them *locas*, their urge to speak up and fight against social injustice grew (cf. *ibid.*) Their meetings and growing initiative are to be seen as newly found medium to speak up for a cause publicly - and function as empowering tools since their status of mothers grieving their children helped to legitimize their political actions outside of the private sphere (cf. Sardenberg, 2012, p. 18f). Mothers' activism within Argentina evolved further as a tool to protest against economic measures during the financial crisis and cuts to the social welfare system, further shaping their position within society as well as their view on themselves (cf. *ibid.*). Similarly, mothers' activism has served as a tool for women to protest in other regions of Latin America, for example, in Nicaragua, where family laws, economic constraints and women's activism opened new spaces within the public sphere for debates on motherhood (cf. Sardenberg, 2012, p. 15).

Apart from mother's activism, Latin American women's movements also emerged during the 1980s through neighborly activism as the economic crisis and democratic transitions within the Latin American region lead to collective organizations of neighborhoods to protest and demand improvements and solutions for problems concerning their area of residence. In Brazil, such organizations date back to the 1940s, when neighborhoods organized to collectively demand improvements to the post-war shaken areas from their municipalities (cf. Sardenberg, 2012, p. 20). Over time due to political suppression within the military dictatorship, such movements fell

but began to rise up again in the 1970s and have been growing stronger ever since. Women's major role within these movements can be explained due to their experienced pressure as homemakers in marginal circumstances, since their role as mothers bound to the private sphere within society leads to their explicit knowledge of problems and goods lacking in their immediate environment. Men are mostly working in full time jobs, which often doesn't allow them to dedicate as much time to such forms of organized activism and distances them from deeper information on the problems their community faces (cf. Sardenberg, 2012, p. 20f.). The women's experiences of dealing with authorities within the public sphere, as well as perceiving themselves as capable of reaching their goals and of asserting demands also when facing authorities of the opposite sex, led to the women's questioning of hierarchies between men and women in the public but also the private sphere, and can thus be seen as empowering tool (cf. *ibid.*).

Further research on women's movements in Latin America points to the need to work with a culturally sensitive approach, as indigenous communities often view gender equality and feminism as foreign concepts. Indigenous women perceive inequality as imported by colonialism, and opt for the need to challenge the transported image of the victimized indigenous woman as passive and submissive (Sardenberg, 2012, p. 33). Some indigenous women in Mexico view the male and female as a pair, belonging together and walking together, as complementary elements that need duality. Instead of creating a static equal, some indigenous communities opt for *parity*, for *walking together* (cf. *ibid.*). Similarly, Mapuche women in Chile view feminism and gender equality as by westerners imported concepts that are imposed on them, which is why they prefer the language of rights with which also men tend to identify themselves with easier (cf. Sardenberg, 2012, p. 34). It is thus necessary to create organizational structures and projects, in which women and men are working together, as "indigenous women's struggles should be against the patriarchal systems, which grew out of colonialism, and not against Indigenous men" (Cunningham, 2006, p. 57). Further, it is needed to form an inclusive women's movement that respects and includes indigenous women's spirituality and viewpoints (cf. Cunningham, 2006, p. 59).

This implies for feminist empowerment practitioners to acknowledge diversity in experiences of women worldwide, and to do so without falling into a cultural essentialist romanization, but also without a typical development paradigm that portrays women of the Global South as victims who need to become like western, "successfully" emancipated women in order to be saved. Instead, initiatives should lead to a state where women find a space to analyze for themselves how they perceive their position in society and how they want to challenge oppressive structures, which were internalized through socialization, that are posing limits to them (cf. Sharp et al., 2003, p. 283).

4. Methods

In the following part, I reflect on my position in the research process and present ethical considerations which occurred while conducting research. Further, I discuss the methods and strategies that were chosen for access, sampling, conducting research and analysis.

4.1 Reflections on Position in the Research Process and Ethical Considerations

My decision to write about women's economic empowerment stems firstly from a personal interest in human rights, gender equality and feminism. I believe all of those are necessary for a better and more just society, the strive for which is reflected in every part of this thesis. Having been born in a European nation probably gives me a different perception of being a woman than if I would have been born in the global South, as women from marginalized backgrounds are confronted with multiple forms of oppression (cf. Hughes & Dubrow, 2018, p. 78). I am white, was raised in a privileged context and had the possibilities and opportunities to do and study what I want. Nevertheless, social and gender inequality persists in our society on different levels that also I am confronted with, and I feel the urge to contribute to a more equal world. My interest in women's empowerment projects arose while working with an organization working in the field of empowerment in Nicaragua, where I originally

wanted to conduct the research for this thesis. Due to the worsening of the political situation and the decrease of security, I chose to perform this research in Ecuador, where I currently live. The fact that I was able and free to do that again speaks for the fact that my own experience probably is very different from the one that women in the Global South are living, which I want to be aware of during conducting research. With this awareness, I do not intend to make patronizing assumptions about what kind of suppression who experiences and how that situation can be alleviated. So I intend to listen carefully to what my interview partners have to say and try to investigate - as far as possible, without judgment, prejudice, or (mis)interpretations, to understand as much as I can. Although it is hardly possible to conduct research without having reasonable personal assumptions about the answers to the questions posed, it still is a realistic and acceptable goal to examine the social world without, or at least with the smallest amount of prejudices possible (cf. Graukroger, 2012, p. 37f., as cited in Gullion, 2018, p. 36). For that matter, I previously presented my assumptions together with the research questions, try to be aware of where they come from, and how they might influence my research outcome.

In the first phase of the research, I explained to my interview partners that my intentions for the research are to collect data to write my master thesis, that I do not belong to the organization in any way and will not share their interviews with anyone from the organization. I made it clear that I would transcribe their Interviews, translate and anonymize them, and then use them to write this thesis. The topics that emerged in the course of the research concern the individual experiences of my interview partners. Their insights are very personal and need to be handled very sensitively. Therefore I tried to create an environment of trust with my interview partners where they don't feel judged. For this purpose, I took the time to explain my intentions and plans and handled the information they gave to me as neutral as possible.

4.2 Procedure for Conducting Research

In the following, I will describe the research process, how and why I took certain decisions concerning the conduction of the research and which problems arose during the process. In order to answer the research questions of the current thesis, it is

necessary to understand the obstacles and conditions women in rural areas of Ecuador face when receiving education and participating in the labor market. Further, it is important to examine their understanding of the role that education and labor market participation play in their process of empowerment, their perception of empowerment and their experiences with participating in projects. For that matter, I decided to conduct qualitative standardized interviews. Since this method offers the possibility to explore extensively how individuals perceive reality and view different aspects concerning their individual life, it suits for answering questions related to the personal perceptions the women have of the project they are participating in (cf. Taylor et al., 2015, p. 102). The decision to conduct interviews in a Spanish speaking context required me to write a Questionnaire in English and then translate it to Spanish, in which I conducted the Interviews. The Questions of the English version are presented in the appendix.

4.2.1 Description of the Organization Kallpa Warmi

The decision on which organization the research should be carried out was made after examining a variety of organizations working on women's empowerment in Ecuador. In a meeting with the director of an NGO in Cuenca, I learned about the organization Kallpa Warmi, which is an initiative for women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship guidance and training in Sayausí, Azuay. Since Kallpa Warmi combines in its projects and activities aspects such as education and training for skill development, opportunities for income generation as well as group meetings on gender equality and personal agendas and issues, it seemed to be an applicable option for examining women's economic empowerment projects.

Kallpa Warmi, which means *strong woman* in Quechua, is a local non-profit organization whose declared objectives and mission are to fight for women's rights, dismantle patriarchy, and to assist in establishing individual and collective responsibilities and agendas. They define themselves as an indigenous women's collective of female entrepreneurs, but their activities are also accessible for men (cf. Interview Mayra). Kallpa Warmi receives its funds from an American / Ecuadorian NGO, which's focus lies on assistance for local grassroots organizations through capacity

buildings, education, and training (cf. Hearts of Gold Program updates Kallpa Warmi, 2018). Kallpa Warmi was founded in 2014 and has evolved from a small group of women meeting to talk about their individual life, to a women's collective of estimably 90 members, trying to create opportunities for entrepreneurship in order to support their families and reach personal goals (cf. Interview Vanessa).

The group meets once a month to discuss their individual and collective agendas, form strategies and plan activities. The initiative organizes projects for education and income generation, such as training and capacitation on the production of artisanal products like handicrafts or edible products, workshops on traditional local cuisine, or traditional forms of medicine and healing (cf. Interview Vanessa). The products and services that the members can produce or offer after participating in the classes are sold by themselves at local markets and events at fairs. Further, the participants receive coaching in business and accounting to gain skills to succeed economically with their sales and to create the possibility to start individual businesses. Also, members can offer trainings about anything they are skilled for themselves, to share their knowledge with the group and capacitate each other (cf. Interview Vanessa). Apart from that, the collective organizes talks on a variety of topics, such as gender equality, domestic violence, health, and tries to promote a positive self-image and self-esteem (cf. *ibid.*).



Img. 1: Members of Kallpa Warmi in front of their joint Café. (cf. Kalla Warmi Sayausí, 2018)

4.3. Sample, Sampling Strategy and Access

Originally I planned to create two groups of interview partners, Group A, which would consist of women currently taking part in Kallpa Warmi, and Group B, consisting of formerly participating women and women who never took part in the project. All women should have been between the age of 18 and 35 as I assumed that this age group would form a sample of individuals who might be confronted with structures and implications that hinder them in pursuing education and income generation. Furthermore, I assumed that the age group would have allowed for examining the experiences of women who generally could have finished secondary school in terms of time but possibly already have had to meet responsibilities that make having a paid job difficult or that kept them from finishing school. Due to difficulties in gaining access to women suitable for Group B, I had to change the research structure and focus solely on Group A. Thus the sample finally consists of five women participating in the project between the age of 30 and 46, with different levels of education and diverse experiences concerning the job market, which shall help to receive diversity in the collected data. The individuals who participated in the research will be described more detailed in the following sub-point 4.3.1.

The sampling strategy was a combination of snowball sampling and receiving contacts of participants directly from the organization's directive (cf. Taylor et al., 2015, p. 107f.). One issue that arose was that I could not get in touch with women who formerly participated in the project. The directive was not in contact with women who formerly participated, and did not have their respective contact information they could share with me. After attending one of the organization's group meetings, which the directive invited me to, I conducted my first two interviews. Afterward, I hoped to get contacts of women who formerly participated through my interview partners, but unfortunately, just as the directive, they did not have any contact information they could share with me. In the following days, I met with three more women to conduct interviews with them. I extended my stay in the neighboring city Cuenca and tried to set up more interviews, but unfortunately, there were no more women interested in giving an interview. Due to the limited amount of time I could spend in the area, I chose to adjust my research to the given circumstances and narrowed my examination to the experiences of five

women currently taking part in the project.

4.3.1 Case-Descriptions

In the following, I will present the interview partners and their living circumstances. The fictive names indicated here will be used throughout the analysis in order to anonymize the women's data. All five women are from the town of Sayausí.

- Gabriela is 46 years old and lives together with her husband and her three children in a house. She completed seven years of schooling and currently works cleaning the homes of different families. Gabriela owns a workshop in her home, where together with her family, she produces handicrafts that she sells. Another activity for the family's income generation is agricultural work, such as growing vegetables that the family sells at the local market. Gabriela has been taking part in the projects of Kallpa Warmi for four years.
- Mayra is 37 years old and lives together with her husband and her three children in a house. Mayra completed secondary school, has an education in the design of kids' wear, and currently owns a small catering business. Mayra has been taking part in the projects of Kallpa Warmi for four years.
- Diana is 43 years old and lives together with her grandmother, who she takes care of in a house. She is divorced. Her ex-husband lives in the United States. She has two sons who she raised as a single mother. Both of them are already adults and live independently. Diana completed six years of schooling when she was a child and recently went to night classes to advance until the 10th grade of school. Currently, Diana is unemployed. She has participated in Kallpa Warmi's projects for five years.
- Alejandra is 42 years old and lives together with her husband and her three-year-old daughter in a house. She has two more daughters who don't live with her anymore. Alejandra completed primary school as a child and advanced until 10th grade by visiting night classes as an adult. Currently, she is unemployed. To

generate an income, Alejandra produces potato- and plantain chips, which she sells at the local market. She has been taking part in the projects of Kallpa Warmi for less than one year.

- Vanessa is 30 years old and lives with her parents and siblings in a house. She finished her studies of biochemistry and pharmacology and currently receives education for ancestral medicine. Vanessa works part-time in the hardware store of her father. She has been participating in the projects of Kallpa Warmi for three years.

4.4 Procedure of Analysis

In the following, I will present the procedure and methods used to analysis the collected data and then move on to the formed categories. After conducting the Interviews in Spanish, I transcribed four of them and translated them into English. Due to difficulties in understanding the audio file of the Interview of Diana, I used the help of a female native-speaker for the transcription and then translated it myself afterward. The generated data was anonymized during the process of transcription through the usage of fictive names for the interview partners. The data stemming from the transcripts was then in vivo-coded. For that matter, I created codes that were extracted word-for-word from the data (cf. Saldaña, 2011, p. 100ff.). The codes were then grouped into categories and sub-categories, which were then named in a suitable matter. Subsequently, I created memos about the data coming from the individual interview transcripts in order to visualize coherences or inconsistencies and contradictions within, as well as between the individual interviews (cf. *ibid.*).

5. Findings

The following categories and sub-categories were generated inductively from the data, which resulted from the interviews (cf. Saldaña, 2011, p. 94f.) :

Social role: Individual role in the family, responsibilities connected to the role, gender roles, differences of gender roles within the family, expectations towards others.

Education system: Educational experiences, circumstances influencing education, decision making in the education process.

Employment: Income and job, circumstances of the ability to work, decision making concerning income.

Individual Personal aspirations: Individually perceived limits to reach personal aspirations.

Power and empowerment: Individual definition of power and empowerment, the relevance of power and empowerment in the organization, distribution of power within the organization, distribution of power within the family.

Perceived effects of the project: Effects on the individual self, effects on relationship and family, effects on education, effects on personal aspirations, effects on access to resources, effects on decision making, effects on the individual level of power, negative effects of participating in Kallpa Warmi.

Individual ideas for empowerment: Individual needs, individual vision for empowerment.

In the following, I will discuss the previously presented categories and link them to the previously discussed concepts related to empowerment relevant to finding answers to the research questions. The statements and data which were generated through the qualitative standardized Interviews will be infused integrative to the individual sub-points. First, I will focus on how within the patriarchal system social norms and roles that are being addressed to women shape their opportunities to have an education and receive paid labor, as well as in what sense education and paid labor can be beneficial for the process of empowerment. Then, I will move on to the interview partners individual aspirations and goals which shall offer a frame for understanding the women's actual needs in their process of empowerment, as well as to their definition of

power and empowerment, and their perception of their own degree of power. Finally, I will focus on the interview partner's experienced effects of participating in Kallpa Warmi and analyze how the organization brings the different aspects of empowerment into effect.

5.1 Norms, Social Roles and Their Effect on Agency

Through the examination of the interview partners' perceptions of their social roles and responsibilities connected to them, as well as their perception of gender roles and norms within society, I shall offer a look at how the individual women's sense of agency - "the meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their activity" (Tandon, 2016, p. 9), or their ability to pursue their own goals (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 14) might be affected by their roles. Further, I will analyze how these aspects can be viewed in connection to empowerment, since the concept can be examined through the interconnected aspects of agency, resources and achievements (Kabeer, 2005, p. 14), and is to be seen as the process by which women begin to perceive themselves of capable agents of directing their lives according to their own preferences (cf. Sharp et al., 2003, p. 283).

Agency, as previously explained, represents an individual's ability to act upon their choices, which can also be termed as "power to". Resources shape one's possibilities and opportunities to exert agency, and achievements represent the results of agency (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 14f.). Apart from an individual's "power to", their agency also depends on the degree of power that others can exercise over them, termed as "power over", which can limit their ability to make choices. Also, agency depends on constraints given by institutions, norms, values and social roles that are either concealing or legitimizing inequality (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 14f.). An individual's ability to achieve and direct a for themselves desirable life, is thus bound to the availability of resources, how those resources shape their opportunities, and how much power others can exercise over the individual - while *others* can mean other individuals or social institutions (c.f. Kabeer, 2005, p. 14f.). By incorporating norms and roles, individuals might accept or not realize their subordinate position within society, perceive that demanding change towards more equitable power relations could

insinuate personal or social harm, or even consider change as impossible (cf. *ibid.*). Therefore, empowerment needs to enable individuals to explore their "sense of agency" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 15), to perceive themselves as worthy and able to make decisions to lead the life they desire to live (cf. Sharp et al., 2003, p. 283), and to assist them in giving purpose or meaning to their actions, instead of acting out of a lack of choice (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p.15).

The respondents' perceptions of their individual roles show convergences regarding how they define their social role and which responsibilities they connect to their individual social parts. To a certain extent, the interview partners' responses also converge in how they perceive gender roles and their effects for themselves and their lives. Mayra describes her role within her family as "the central part" and as the one who establishes order and limits (cf. Interview Mayra). She owns a catering business that requires her to work "also in the afternoon", which together with her "responsibilities as a mother" and "as a wife" lead her "responsibilities (to) add up" (cf. Interview Mayra). Currently, she manages "everything that comes up" by "planning ahead". In case she can't fulfill her responsibilities, her "children help out" (cf. Interview Mayra). Mayra recognizes that being a mother and wife at the age of 18 and having the to those roles interconnected responsibilities put her further away from pursuing her educational goals, as she had to "adjust (herself) to the times" (cf. Interview Mayra). This reflects how expectations towards the female care-taking role and decisions concerning the family that are overpowering women's agendas of individual goals can pose limitations to their ability to reach personal aspirations (cf. Pearse & Connell, 2016, p. 38.), and as such pose an obstacle to their agency (cf. Sharp et al., 2003, p. 283).

Apart from her awareness of limitations posed by her role as a mother and wife that she had at the age of 18, Mayra does not see differences between the roles of men and women within her family and states that "everything that one can do as a woman, them as men can do as well", "they (men) iron clothes" and "they cook" (cf. Interview Mayra). When asked about her family members' responsibilities, Mayra responds that she expects from her family members that they "outdo themselves" concerning their studies and can "take care of themselves in the future". On a societal level, Mayra

thinks that "men are more benefitted" concerning the job market (cf. Interview Mayra). Mayra's responses can be seen as a reflection of her awareness of gender roles within society, as she uses stereotypical female role images concerning domestic work such as "iron clothes" or "cook" to express what men can do. She is aware of unequal structures within society as she thinks that the job market is favoring men. On the one hand, Mayra sees herself as the central part of the family who creates order and limits and affirms that within her family, gender-stereotypical division of labor does not exist. On the other hand, Mayra could not pursue her educational goals because she had to fulfill her responsibilities as a mother and a wife and did not continue her studies (cf. Interview Mayra). This can be viewed in connection to norms and institutions concealing or legitimizing unequal structures as previously described (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 14) since Mayra does not question the division of labor concerning childcare within her family.

When examining Gabriela's and Alejandra's responses concerning their role within the home, there are certain similarities to their perceptions. Alejandra states that she manages everything in her family. She is responsible for the "children, their education, their life" (cf. Interview Alejandra). Alejandra does not perceive gender-based division of labor within her family, as she divides the house chores between everyone, and does not "like it when they lie around". Alejandra expects her children and husband to take on responsibilities, to treat each other with respect and love (cf. Interview Alejandra). Although Alejandra perceives the division of labor within her family as equal concerning gender-stereotypical responsibilities, she states that she could not finish her education when her older daughters moved out of the house since nobody could take care of her baby (cf. Interview Alejandra). This can be viewed as a reflection of childcare remaining as a role exercised by women within her family, which, similar to Mayra's experience, poses restrictions to Alejandra's ability to fulfill her goals. Nevertheless, through appearing as natural, legitimate societal structure, it serves as a constraint to her "power to" (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 14), her ability to lead her life according to her desires (cf. Sharp et al., 2003, p. 283).

Alejandra is aware of limiting structures within society and states to sometimes "feel affected by female gender roles" as she could "not study enough (..) to be a different

person, to have a good job, to be independent" (cf. Interview Alejandra). She senses inequality in possibilities between men and women and thinks that "because they are men they get faster what they want. They don't have to wait a long time. There is not a lot of work" (cf. Interview Alejandra). This reflects her awareness of unequal structures concerning the access to the labor market favoring men, as well as structures forming societal inequality in general, as women's options to choose from, are mostly unequal compared to those offered to men (cf. Tandon, 2016, p. 9).

Gabriela, similar to Alejandra, considers her role within her family as the one who takes care of her children and her husband. She sees it as her responsibility to make sure they are well, which entails to cook for them, to clean and to make sure "they become independent" (cf. Interview Gabriela). Part of her responsibilities at home is to take care of the family's vegetable garden and farm animals while the rest of her family members are working outside of the home, which she does aside from her job - outside of the home - of cleaning for other families (cf. Interview Gabriela). Gabriela expects her family members to help and take over responsibilities by contributing financially. Her "oldest son pays for basic services. Like water, power, the phone, the internet. My daughter puts in money for the kitchen (..) My husband covers debts that we have to pay off. All have responsibilities" (cf. Interview Gabriela) Besides helping out financially, Gabriela expects her family members to help her with domestic chores, and considers them as a team. They harvest vegetables together in the afternoons, create handicrafts together. She does not perceive a gender-based division of labor within her family (cf. Interview Gabriela), although it could be argued that typical female care-taking roles remain her responsibility as she cooks and cleans apart from working outside the home.

Diana's and Vanessa's responses show a deeper examination of their position within societal power structures on an individual level. Diana currently lives with her grandmother, who she takes care of. She describes her role as a single mother as being a "father and mother for my children, sister and a friend" for her children (cf. Interview Diana). She felt like she had to fulfill every role and responsibility. Besides her responsibilities as a mother, she was working full time at different jobs in the field of gastronomy and had a schedule of leaving the house at "eight or nine in the morning,

entering the house would be four or five in the morning" (cf. Interview Diana). As Diana experienced violence from her ex-husband, her "only expectations towards her sons" is for them not to follow their father's example, and to not "leave many children behind" (cf. Interview Diana.) Diana views the distribution of childcare in general as unequal and states that "not only the mother should do her part. It would be the role for two" (cf. Interview Diana). Diana further is aware of gender-based inequalities concerning domestic chores that were given to her as a child, since her role was that of "the first daughter", which often entails limitations on fulfilling personal aspirations as the responsibilities of domestic chores are given to girls and are putting at risk their ability to have access to an education (cf. Pearse & Connell, 2016, p. 37f.). Diana was not allowed to finish school as she had to "look after the house" as well as "the boys", while "they continued studying to become paramedics" (cf. Interview Diana). Diana states to feel affected by her role as a woman, as she could not study, which affected her "to be able to earn" (cf. Interview Diana).

Vanessa still lives with her parents and describes her role as "the third daughter". Besides studying and working part-time at her fathers' business, her responsibilities are to cook for the family, to do their laundry, and watch the children of her siblings (cf. Interview Vanessa). Additionally, she has the responsibility of taking over her father's job when her parents are out of town, as well as helping out in her mother's Café on weekends. Although Vanessa's brothers and her take turns in house chores, she senses a difference in the distribution of work between women and men within her family, as well as in general within society. In her family, she views it as unequal that after her working day, she already has "to have ready the food for the others", and the male members of her family expect her to serve them food when "everyone could serve themselves", so she tries to make them aware of that by telling them to serve her, which she does in a "harmonic" way so they learn that "women can do many activities more" (cf. Interview Vanessa). Within society, Vanessa senses gender-based inequality, as in her opinion, the idea persists that "the woman has to cook, to clean, the man has to do the hard work" (cf. Interview Vanessa). The subordinate position of women within patriarchal society that Vanessa perceives is based on historical processes and carved into the legal system, into social institutions and transmitted through socialization, which create wide social consent and leads women to perceive themselves as not

entitled to direct a life stepping away from the norm (cf. Tandon, 2016, p. 8f.). Vanessa is aware of systemic obstacles that are put in the way of women within patriarchal society, as she feels that people expect her to be married, to have children and to be in the house. Vanessa states that she "can have children and work. But no, you have a child they don't hire you" as she experienced female colleagues being discriminated at her job for being pregnant or being a mother (cf. Interview Vanessa). Thus she feels that she does "not want to get married" to be able to follow her goals (cf. Interview Vanessa).

The societal expectations and restraints that Vanessa senses as a woman, also contain another dimension of subordination concerning her position as a woman living in rurality of Ecuador. Vanessa perceives that people think she is "a person that did not study" who is "not capacitated" and "can't express" herself "in public" which would pose a difficulty in acquiring a "public position" (cf. Interview Vanessa). The multiple forms of discrimination that women from rurality and especially with indigenous backgrounds face within Ecuador (cf. Muñoz Ramírez, 2020) are to be seen as crossing forms of oppressions - or intersections - which mold different experiences of subordination for women coming from different backgrounds (Hughes & Dubrow, 2018, p. 80). They require empowerment initiatives to take the whole spectrum of institutionalized suppression women are facing into account and to not solely view power relations that women are confronted with as the result of gender-inequality (cf. Hughes & Dubrow., 2018, p. 85ff.).

The examination of the interview partners' perceptions of their own social role, reflect to which extent they are aware of with which "structures of patriarchal constraint" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 15) they are confronted with. As inequalities that remain accepted or not actively opposed, tend to last and to be replicated, there is a need for "transformative forms of agency" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 16), which allow for longstanding reforms of power structures. Shifts in an individual's apprehension towards the awareness of the own situation are a critical foundation for change (cf. *ibid*). All women interviewed in this research show awareness for patriarchal structures favoring men within society. Most of them do draw to a certain extent a connection to their own situation and even try to find ways of creating more equality within their home. This can

be seen, for example, in Venessa's case, as she tries to actively provoke an understanding of her family members that women and men can do the same things by creating small learning moments (cf. Interview Vanessa), or in Gabriela's and Alejandra's distribution of domestic chores between everyone in their home. Nevertheless, sustainable change on a wider level than that of personal awareness needs to entail progress within aspects "from individual to collective agency, from private negotiations to public action, and from the informal sphere to the formal arenas of struggle where power is legitimately exercised" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 16).

5.2 The Formal Education System and Empowerment

Considering that empowerment is the process and outcome where individuals with lesser power "gain greater access to and control over material and knowledge resources; challenge the ideologies of discrimination and subordination; and transform the institutions and structures through which unequal access and control over resources are sustained and perpetuated" (Batliwala, 2013, p. 46), education plays a crucial role in the process of empowerment. Education trains intellectual and analytical capacities, enables the intake of knowledge and information and should help to make rational decisions concerning an individual's or family member's health, well-being and relationships. Further studies found that education can impact an individual's ability to exert control over their life and participate in the public sphere (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 16), thus impacts one's agency.

Nevertheless, the manner in which education or the formal education system can transmit or promote empowerment needs to be examined further. Education as an institution plays a crucial role in transmitting norms and gender roles, which function to educate individuals to act according to social expectations (cf. Pearse & Connell, 2016, p. 35). Societies in which the female role is mainly characterized by reproductivity, tend to administer a "hidden curriculum" which serves to discourage girls to work outside the home or to obtain from jobs that are not associated with the care-taking role (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 17). Thus, contrary to the assumption that simply receiving education sparks empowerment, the education system itself contributes to the perpetuation and enforcement of patriarchal gender roles. This is especially the case when learning

contents promote women to fulfill responsibilities connected to societal expectations and illustrate the female role bound to domestic care-taking duties, as well as female interests concerning family decisions as inferior to male interests (cf. Pearse & Connell, 2016, p. 37). Thus education can serve to curb women's empowerment, for example, in state-led programs for empowering education that focus on "married life, family planning and marital problems" and are encouraging students to "perform their duties and roles as a good person and member of family as well as society" (Stromquist, 2002, p. 24).

Notwithstanding, education offers the possibility to promote empowerment, under the condition that education modules incorporate aspects that encourage critical consciousness concerning gender equality, as well as awareness about "sexual stereotypes and conceptions of masculinity and femininity that limit the social potential of women" (Stromquist, 2002, p. 24). Looking at the experiences of the in the course of this thesis interviewed women, it seems necessary, apart from examining which contents are conveyed in education processes, to further consider limitations and obstacles in the access of girls and women to education, diminishing empowerment in the first place (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 17). Especially in rurality, this can play an influential role, as factors such as poverty rates, illiteracy, school-drop out rates or the access to computers and the internet varies strongly between urban and rural areas in Ecuador (cf. Calderón Contreras, 2015, p. 5ff.). The data generated through the interviews show certain convergence in the interview partners' experiences of access to and gaining education within the formal school system. Three of the Interview partners did not finish secondary school, one of them completed secondary school and one of the interview partners is studying at the university level. The Ecuadorian school system contains *nivel básico* divided into four sub-levels, reaching from first to tenth grade that children attend from age five to 14, and *nivel bachillerato*, containing three courses that children attend from age 15 to 17, depending on the desired career after school (cf. Ministerio de Educación, 2019, p. 22). Gabriela completed seven years of schooling and describes her experiences in gaining an education as "difficult" since these were shaped by her parents' death when she was six years old. She was then left with her grandmother, who raised her, until she passed away (cf. Interview Gabriela). Gabriela was confronted with limited financial possibilities that posed an obstacle in affording

materials to participate in school and "had to ask for pieces of paper" and "glue them" together to be able to participate (cf. Interview Gabriela). Growing up, she wanted to finish school, go to university and study to become a designer, which she could not afford. Gabriela dropped out of school to earn money by cleaning other families' houses and "soon after" married her husband (cf. Interview Gabriela).

Similarly, Alejandra completed eight years of schooling. She describes her time in school as "beautiful" as she is "curious" and always interested in learning (cf. Interview Alejandra). Since she "didn't have the possibility of money", she "had to leave to work" and "couldn't dedicate" herself "to studying" which "was an obstacle" for her (cf. Interview Alejandra). As an adult Alejandra "went back to study at night" so she "was already in tenth grade". She planned to finish school then, but when her second "daughter got married" she didn't have anyone to look after her youngest child, which forced her to drop out of school. She still misses "three years to graduate high school" (cf. Interview Alejandra).

The experiences of both Gabriela and Alejandra concerning financial obstacles which restrained them from going to school and instead forced them to start to work can be seen in connection to structures which decrease girls' and women's ability to access education. Especially girls confronted with backgrounds shaped by poverty need to be taken into account when education within the formal system is considered an empowering tool (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 17). Further, Alejandra not being able to finish night school when both of her older daughters did not live in her house anymore, which left her without anyone able to look after her youngest daughter, can again be viewed as previously discussed, in connection to the female care-taking role, which reflects women's "limited role in the wider economy" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 17). The role as a mother and Alejandra's lack of other female family members who can watch her child is holding her back from finishing her school education, which does not allow her "to have a good job, to be independent" (cf. Interview Alejandra).

Diana's experiences in gaining education further reflect the restrictions posed by social expectations concerning the female role, limiting her access to education (cf. Pearse & Connell, 2016, p. 35, 37). Diana "could not study" as she "was the first daughter". She

went to school until the sixth grade but had to drop out of school to help in the house, as well as with the mother's agricultural work (cf. Interview Diana). Although she wanted to study, as it was her "biggest dream to become a lawyer", her parents did not allow her to stay in school (cf. Interview Diana). Diana had to "go out to look after the cattle" which was located "more or less three hours away". Her mother would take her there, and "leave" her to chop wood and milk the family's cows. Then she had to carry everything back to the house, where she had to "wash the clothes" of her stepfather who was a policeman. Diana "had to have" his uniform "super clean" and "ironed", as well as to "bring it to the police station" (cf. Interview Diana). "The first thing" her parents would say" to her would be "go take care of the house, the boys" when she came home, while her brothers were encouraged to continue their studies to become paramedics (cf. Interview Diana). This can further be seen in connection to structures enforcing social inequality, as manual work and household work assigned to women and girls serve as obstacles in their education process, which leads to multiple factors of suppression that confront girls with poor social backgrounds (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 17). Recently Diana decided to go back to school, with the financial help of her son, and finished tenth grade (cf. Interview Diana).

Mayra finished secondary school, as her parents encouraged her to study (cf. Interview Mayra). She describes the experience of "going to school in the rural part" as "challenging", as the classes "were limited", for example, "there was no English class" (cf. *ibid*). Mayra's "plans were to continue studying, have a diploma". However, she "didn't achieve to finish all of that" as "getting married and having children" "was already" her "responsibility" at the age of 18, which put her "further away" from reaching her goals (cf. Interview Mayra), which again can be seen as a reflection of "normative forces" that "might operate to hold girls back" (Pearse & Connell, 2016, p. 37) in acquiring education.

Vanessa finished studying biochemistry and pharmacology and currently is studying ancestral medicine. She describes her experiences in gaining an education as "not easy". Vanessa was studying in a private school in the rural part, but because of a lack of financial resources, her parents enrolled her in a public school in the city, which "had consequences" (cf. Interview Vanessa). She was confronted with judgment concerning

her "social category" and perceived that people "don't treat you the same" coming from the rurality. She felt "frustrated" and "didn't want to go back to school" (cf. Interview Vanessa). Another factor that "put her further away from" her "goals was the economic part", as "money is necessary" to study (cf. Interview Vanessa). Vanessa comes "from a family" where it was mandatory "to work a lot on the weekends", she "needed to spend hours studying but instead" she "would be selling tortillas, morocho." which didn't give her enough time "to sit down and study" (cf. *ibid.*). Vanessa's experience of being treated differently as a new student coming from the rural part of the country to the urban school, as well as Mayra's experience of limited classes offered to students in the rural part, reflect the tendency that "social inequalities are often reproduced through interactions within the school system" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 17), since "different groups of children are treated differently" (*ibid.*). As previously mentioned, within Latin America, persists a significant level of inequality between the quality of education offered to children in rural and urban areas, creating a difference of "almost two years of schooling" (OECD et al. 2014, p. 24). This further points to the need to take the intersectionality of women's oppression-related experiences into account (cf. Hughes & Dubrow, 2018, p. 85ff.) when working within empowerment initiatives.

5.3 Employment and Empowerment

Taking into account that access to material resources plays a crucial part in the process of empowerment, and the gains of employment can allow an improved level of financial autonomy (cf. Tandon, 2016, p. 11), I will examine the experiences of the interview partners in the formal and informal job market. Thus, it shall be understandable, which aspects of their paid labor can be perceived as empowering or posing limits to their empowerment process. Considering the theoretically positive effects of family members' contributions to their common fund on the members' bargaining power and their access to resources, women's paid labor should improve their bargaining position. Nevertheless, it seems only to do so when their contributions are perceived as valuable (cf. Patel, 2003, p. 153), which points to the necessity also to consider how which types of work are recognized as valuable (cf. *ibid.*).

The assignment of the female role to the private sphere and the male role to the public sphere, can be seen as a result of the during the European enlightenment enforced idea, that the female body is connected to and equated with nature - due to women's ability to give birth - while the male body was equated with rationality and is thus perceived as belonging to the public. This strain of thought has served as a justification for women's exclusion from politics and economics (cf. Bauhardt & Harcourt, 2019, p. 5). This leads - together with the separation between the home and the location of work during the beginning of industrial capitalist production - to a reorganization and reevaluation of the social sphere after the seventeenth century (cf. Mulvaney, 2013, p. 29). "Productive work" within the public sphere was attributed to men and gained social relevance, while domestic work was attributed to women, became socially irrelevant and thus contributed to women's devaluation (cf. *ibid.*), further leading to the devaluation of work in labor sectors that are stereotypically ascribed to women (cf. Patel, 2003, p. 153). The hierarchically subordinate position of the female gender and the devaluation of work connected to the female role are to be seen as mutually constituting each other (cf. Mulvaney, 2013, p. 42). The value which is socially given to certain (economic) activities and patriarchal gender ideology assigning individuals to certain activities in the first place have an impact on which individuals are perceived as essential and, as a result have access to resources, power and agency (cf. Patel, 2003, p. 153).

Considering intra-family decision making and power relations, as already mentioned above, the perception of value given to individual inputs of family members into the overall family income is decisive in how much say they might have and how they can translate financial resources as a source for bargaining power (cf. Patel, 2003, p. 153). Thus participating in the labor market can positively impact women's agency, as it initiates shifts in power relations within families, and improves the female position in intra-household decisions (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 18ff.). Scientific evidence suggests that women's labor market participation leads to more gender-egalitarian views that women hold on themselves (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 313), which can be seen in connection to Agarwals (1994) analysis of the importance of women themselves begin to perceive their actions and work as valuable (cf. Patel, 2003, p. 153). Further, their labor market

participation can lead to a change of the perception of gender-related norms and values within the broader society (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 313).

Considering the deprivation from access to resources that women were confronted with over time and that the access to financial resources can be seen as an essential aspect of empowerment, not only the access to paid labor but also the ability to actually control the gained financial resources play a crucial role in the process of empowerment (cf. De Marco Larrauri et al., 2016, p. 9). As male family members often control the family's financial resources, even when generated by women, gaining an income does not automatically lead to active control over resources for women (cf. *ibid.*). Another factor limiting the effect of paid labor for empowerment might be the experience of a double burden of labor that women see themselves confronted with, which might enlarge women's workdays (cf. Sharp et al., 2003, p. 282). This could diminish empowering aspects as mobility and newly acquired relationships when there simply is not enough time to take advantage of them. Yet another factor posing difficulties for paid labor to be empowering for women is the exploitative character of jobs that are often available to women, pointing to the relevance of the reasons for women to take up paid labor, as well as to the conditions under which they exercise paid work (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 20) and the need to take these aspects into account when considering the possibilities of employment for empowering women.

Examining the interview partners' experiences concerning their access to paid work and the circumstances shaping their experiences, there can be seen certain similarities in the women's responses that will be discussed in the following. Diana is currently unemployed due to a "traffic accident" that had the consequence of her "lying in bed" for "a duration of six months", as well as "because of depression" that she sees herself confronted with (cf. Interview Diana). Diana also sees her "lack of education" as a reason for not having a job, that she accredits to her responsibilities as a child, the previously mentioned role of the "first daughter" (cf. *ibid.*). When asked about her previous work experiences, Diana reports that during the time she was working in the field of hospitality and gastronomy, she "felt big" because she "had money" (cf. Interview Diana). The possibility to provide financially for her two sons and afford their education gave her a "feeling of power" (cf. Interview Diana), which reflects the positive

effect of having access to resources on an individual's self-esteem, resulting in an enhanced sense of agency (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 313). Having a job "introduced" Diana to "many people" and "a lot of friends" (cf. *ibid.*), which can be connected to empowering aspects of paid work, as participating in social groups, and building networks outside of the home is to be seen as influential for one's autonomy (cf. De Marco Larrauri et al., 2016, p.10). Further, it improves one's social fall-back position, meaning an existing social network that can offer support and help (cf. Agarwal, 1997, p. 8).

Diana perceived it as positive to have been "capacitated, trained", as well as "oriented" in the course of her employment in Hotels (cf. Interview Diana). Apart from that, she reports to not have been able to see her sons, as she was working a schedule from "eight or nine in the morning" while she would come back home around "four or five in the morning", which was challenging and "upsetting" for her (cf. Interview Diana). The money which Diana earned, she "invested in" her "sons", and further spent on debts her ex-husband left her with, which makes her current situation "difficult", as she can't provide for herself (cf. Interview Diana). Diana's experience of working full time in order to afford her sons education and to be able to pay back her debt, combined with her responsibilities at home concerning her perceived pressure to fulfill both roles of the "father and mother" for her children, can be seen in connection to conditions of work that might not contribute to empowerment. Since women often find themselves in "exploitative conditions of work" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 20), being bound to a work schedule that does not allow much social life, aligned with the same amount of domestic work responsibilities as before taking on paid work, the "terms on which women enter the labor force" (Kabeer, 2016, p. 313) need further consideration.

Mayra reports similar experiences concerning the positive effects of having access to paid work. She owns a catering business, and apart from that, designs and manufactures clothing for children (cf. Interview Mayra). Mayra perceives having access to an income as beneficial, concerning the improvement for her home's "economy", as she can provide "financial assets for the home" and contribute to her children's education (cf. Interview Mayra). Apart from that, Mayra mentioned the positive effect of "getting to know friends", to "know more people" and to learn "about

the experiences they had" (cf. *ibid.*). Similar to Diana's case, this can be connected to the opportunity of paid work to contribute to a positive self-image and empowerment through the combination of gaining access to social networks and material resources (cf. De Marco Larrauri et al., 2016, p. 10). Further, coming together in social circles with other women to exchange ideas and experiences can be seen as a chance for changing perceptions about gender identities and relations (cf. Cornwall, 2016, p. 346).

When asked about her control over by her earned income, Mayra responds to take decisions concerning the money she earned "between the two", her husband and her, whereby she "sometimes can" spend money on herself (cf. Interview Mayra). The fact that she is involved into the decision-making process of how to spend her income speaks for a degree of control over her resources, although her response also points at the necessity of taking into account power structures within the family concerning decision-making processes, as Mayra does not have full control over her income. The tendency of "women to be subject to their husband's criteria (...) whenever they need to use any economic resources, even their own" (De Marco Larrauri et al., 2016, p. 9) still prevails.

Gabriela's income stems from cleaning for other families, which she has been doing since she was in school. Further, she cultivates vegetables that she harvests with her family and sells at local markets. Apart from that, she designs and manufactures handicrafts in collaboration with her family, which she sells in her home (cf. Interview Gabriela). She perceives all family members as equals who all participate in decision-making concerning how to spend the family's income, and wants "them to contribute" to financial responsibilities (cf. *ibid.*). Gabriela describes her experiences of cleaning for others as a necessity to make a living, that she had been confronted with for all of her life (cf. Interview Gabriela), and recognizes that "there is no equality" in her (cleaning) job. This again points to the need to examine further how and under which conditions women exercise paid work, in order to gain an understanding of the implications of entering the job market for empowerment, since simply having an income does not necessarily help the process of empowerment (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 313). In contrast to her cleaning experiences, Gabriela considers the agricultural work that she exercises

"as a team" with her family as positive, as they spend time together in the afternoons (cf. Interview Gabriela). Similar manufacturing and designing handicrafts, as well as being able to sell them, gives her "joy" as she can work creatively and has the opportunity to follow her aspirations apart from not being able to study design (cf. Interview Gabriela). This can be connected to an individual's ability to align their behavior with "meaning, motivation and purpose" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 14), which can be considered as empowering as it enhances the personal agency (cf. *ibid.*).

Vanessa currently works part-time in her father's business, and sells "tortillas and morocho" on weekends. Before that she worked part-time in a pharmacy and laboratory. Apart from that, she studies at university, and describes "to study and to work" as "a double sacrifice" as she has to "get up early, work" and "fulfill the schedule", which also contains her responsibilities of domestic work in her parents home that takes up around "five hours daily" in addition to her other obligations (cf. Interview Vanessa). This "double shift" (Kabeer, 2016, p. 314) can be seen in connection to a wider structure of unequal power structures, as a redistribution of housework does not appear to happen automatically with women's labor market participation, and therefore needs to be considered (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 314). Vanessa describes her experience of working in the pharmacy as "demanding" since she "felt a lot of pressure" from her supervisor as her full schedule made her "tired and sick", but she was not allowed to be absent, "one has to be there. Period", no matter in which health condition (cf. Interview Vanessa). This poses another example of the importance of examining which working conditions can contribute to empowerment and which can be considered disempowering (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 313). Vanessa perceives gaining an income as an opportunity "to travel" which she views as a possibility for "learning" (cf. Interview Vanessa). She decides on what to spend her income but also wants to contribute to her family's income which is why she gives "a bit" to her "mother for things" that have to be paid (cf. *ibid.*). In enabling Vanessa to follow personal agendas, receiving income contributes to her being able to give significance to her actions, and can be seen as empowering (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 15). Further, Vanessa's ability to contribute to the household's income can be viewed as an opportunity to provide to the "common fund" (Patel, 2003, p. 153), thus enhancing her position in bargaining processes within the household (cf. *ibid.*).

Alejandra is currently unemployed and is trying to start up a business selling potato chips. She used to "take care of children" for a living, which she describes as "not that easy, not that difficult" since she "values things" and would do "whatever job" that she is given, which she learned from her parents as a child (cf. Interview Alejandra). The experience of selling her own product at markets is "beautiful" for Alejandra, as she goes out and meets people (cf. Interview Alejandra), which can be viewed in connection to the potentially empowering aspect of increased public mobility through access to paid work (cf. De Marco Larrauri et al., 2016, p. 10). Alejandra decides how she spends her income but tells her husband about her decisions, "so that he also knows". Mostly she uses the money on household necessities, but also to buy things for herself since she worked and earned the income (cf. Interview Alejandra), which can be seen as connected to income as means for an improved decision-making position, leading to more autonomy (cf. De Marco Larrauri et al., 2016, p. 12).

5.4 Individual Aspirations and Goals

I shall shortly discuss the interview partners' goals and aspirations to put into perspective, in what sense the interview partners' experiences that were previously discussed concerning their social roles, education and employment, shape their capacity to lead a for them personally desirable life, to make choices and to act upon their choices - especially considering strategic life choices (cf. Tandon, 2016, p. 8f.). By doing so, it will be possible to understand what a for them desirable life actually means, without making patronizing assumptions about the women who were interviewed.

Gabriela describes her personal aspirations as a combination of being successful as a mother, as well as in the economic sphere. She wants to "be the best possible mother" for her children in order for them "to grow bigger" than herself, as well as for them "to study so they don't have to suffer what" she "suffered" (cf. Interview Gabriela). Gabriela wants to leave her job cleaning houses and instead open her own business, "a restaurant" (cf. Interview Gabriela). Apart from that, she wants to continue to work manufacturing handicrafts, which became her "goal" after she was inspired by taking "a walk after fighting" with her husband, where she saw "a showcase with necklaces

and other stuff", which made her decide "to do this". Since then, she started building her own "workshop" where she produces, exhibits and sells by her and her family manufactured handicrafts (cf. Interview Gabriela). Further, Gabriela's plans are "learning more, being more ambitious, be able to grow more", as well as "having more projects" (cf. *ibid.*).

Mayra's personal aspirations are focused on her business of a catering service. She wants to "continue achieving", "succeed in the business" she has and to be "more successful" (cf. Interview Mayra). She views "getting married and having children" as what put her "further away from reaching" her "goal" of "studying" to "have a diploma", that she had while growing up. Further, she would like to form a joint business with the other members of Kallpa Warmi, which will be beneficial for each of the women (cf. Interview Mayra).

Diana describes her goals as partly fulfilled, as she "already reached some" by raising her sons to be "professionals" as they both have a degree (cf. Interview Diana). She further wants to get in the field of ancestral medicine, about which she has thought a lot since she would like to "share and help others with something more" (cf. Interview Diana). What limits her in fulfilling this goal is that she would have to travel and "leave to other places" in order to "be able to share", as she does not feel accepted in her community, but can not relocate to another community since she sees herself confronted with a lack of financial resources (cf. Interview Diana).

Alejandra explains her personal aspiration to "have an income" of "a good job" in order to "be able to survive from it", as well as "to be independent" (cf. Interview Alejandra). She is starting up a business where she produces and sells different kinds of potato chips and plans to expand in the future in order to be able to distribute her products (cf. Interview Alejandra). By this, she wants to "help" her husband with paying bills, "feed" her children and herself, as well as "to do more", as she does not "like being lazy" (cf. *ibid.*).

Vanessa describes her goals as "to be able to help people". She wants to open her own business of a pharmacy and consultation office for natural medicine and healthy

nutrition (cf. Interview Vanessa). Further, she plans to "help the planet through agro-ecology" by starting a seed bank, where people can exchange plants and seeds, in order for traditional plants not to get lost (cf. *ibid.*). For that matter, she wants to create a "micro-enterprise" to "help many women in rurality" by creating employment opportunities (cf. Interview Vanessa). Apart from her professional goals, Vanessa wants to do "volunteering", "travel" and "to be happy" in what she does (cf. Interview Vanessa).

It becomes visible that contrary to the assumptions that the interviewed women might not be interested in labor activities outside of the domestic sphere in order to not be confronted with an extra load of work (cf. Sharp et al., 2003, p. 282), their very own goals consist of successfully raising their children and at the same time of succeeding in their businesses and projects in order to be more independent, contribute to their families' funds, to help others or to do so simply because it brings them joy. This points to the necessity to consider activities that help the interviewed women to get closer to their goals and to be able to make choices as essential for their individual empowerment process, under the condition that those exact activities do not contribute to their oppression and disempowerment or happen out of a lack of choice - but instead out of their own desire (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 14). The conditions under which women exercise income-generating activities and the reasons for which women take up paid work should be examined individually for their potential to improve the women's level of power when deciding how to proceed in the process of empowerment (cf. *ibid.*), instead of declaring them as generally unwanted or contra-productive for empowerment.

5.5 Individual Perception of Power, Decision-Making and Empowerment

In the following I will focus on the interview partner's individual perceptions of power and the circumstances that make them feel powerful or disempowered, and analyze according to that information how their own level of power and ability to have control within their individual life can be understood. It is important to note that the degree of power should be understood as fluent, as individuals can simultaneously experience different levels of power and oppression in different areas of their life according to

structural factors such as class, gender or race (cf. Prilleltensky, 2008, p. 119). By examining the interview partners' circumstances concerning their individual level of power, their needs for their own empowerment process shall become more understandable.

For Gabriela, power and being powerful depends on the ability "to be independent" and to make choices in a manner that allows her "to be able to say I will do this today, or that" (cf. Interview Gabriela). This can be seen as an expression for her to feel power when she is able to decide and act upon her choices, to express wishes and desires and to control how she wants to behave even when facing oppositions of others (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 14; Blanc, 2001, p. 189). The circumstances that shaped Gabriela's ability to get a formal education can be considered as limiting her ability to exercise power, as her financial possibilities constrained her ability to make choices about her schooling. She needed to earn money to be able to survive when her grandmother died and was forced to drop out of school instead of pursuing her goal "to become a designer" (cf. Interview Gabriela). This poses an example for disempowering circumstances, as Gabriela's ability to make choices was narrowed. She had to act out of a lack of choices and by doing so could not pursue her personal agenda (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 13f.).

As Gabriela takes the decision on "how to invest" her income, paid work can be connected to her perception of being powerful when being independent, as she is able to decide about what she will do with her own money (cf. Interview Gabriela). In that sense, her income that she brings to the household has a positive effect on her level of power, as she is able to control her financial assets (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 313), which is to be seen as improving her fall-back position as discussed within the scientific discourse, concerning that access to and control over money and other material resources has a significantly positive effect on one's ability to bargain (cf. Osmani, 2007, p. 712f.). Nevertheless, in Gabriela's housekeeping work, she does not perceive to have power, as she feels that "there is no equality" or possibility to make choices in her job (cf. Interview Gabriela). Further, Gabriela had to take up housekeeping to be able to afford food and housing, which is why her work can be viewed as a means for survival. This can be seen in connection to the within the scientific discourse discussed

working circumstances in which women are often found, that are not to be seen as empowering due to the sole purpose of covering survival needs instead of being taken up out of the desire to do so (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 19), as well as due to "exploitative conditions" of work (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 20). Contrary, manufacturing handicrafts in her workshop, which she initiated in response to emotional suffering because of marital problems, enables her to express her creativity, and to a certain extent, allows her to follow her original plan "to become a designer", as she "didn't have that" education but "still love(s) doing those things" (cf. Interview Gabriela). Thus producing and selling handicrafts is an activity that happens out of her desire to do so, while enabling her to gain material assets that improve her financial independence, and thus can benefit her position within the household as she contributes to the common funds and should be considered as empowering (cf. Patel, 2003, p. 153). Similarly, following the goal of having her own business could positively impact Gabriela's level of power as she would gain the opportunity to pursue her aspirations, act on her choices and be more independent (cf. Tandon, 2016, p. 7ff.). Within Gabriela's family, she perceives power as equally distributed between all the members, as they all contribute to household funds, help out in the house, and share the process of decision-making (cf. Interview Gabriela). "All the family meets up" and discusses different topics, to then "take the decision to do something" only when everyone agrees that "something will be good" (cf. Interview Gabriela). Thus in Gabriela's family the act of equally contributing to funds and to share responsibilities can be seen as impacting the individuals' levels of power within the family (cf. Patel, 2003, p. 153).

Gabriela defines empowerment as a process of enabling others to "not let themselves fall", in the sense of believing in their capacities, valuing themselves and to pursue their goals (cf. Interview Gabriela). She considers it necessary to "have power to help others" for this process, as well as to "work as a team" (cf. *ibid.*). Her definition of empowerment reflects to an extent the outcome of empowerment since the process she describes entails to challenge structures of individual suppression and to potentially gain control over resources in order to be able to reach goals which require aspects of education or material resources (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 46).

Mayra's perception of the term power is partly negative, as to her, it is a "gross" word which means "that you appropriate everything for yourself". She feels powerless when

she "can't decide", which implies that having power also means to her, to be able to make decisions and choices (cf. Interview Mayra). Mayra's perception of power reflects the term's diverse nature, as power can be felt when striving for a self-directed life, negatively when being oppressed by others and positively when freeing oneself and others from oppressing circumstances (cf. Prilleltensky, 2008, p. 119). In the course of her education, Mayra's role as a mother and her to the role interconnected responsibilities did not allow her to pursue her studies at the university level, which would have been her goal (cf. Interview Mayra). Thus the circumstances of the female care-taking role and expectations connected to it limited her ability to decide, as displayed within the scientific discourse as being disempowered by being denied to choose, or acting out of a lack of choice (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p.14).

Regarding Mayra's catering business which enables her to contribute to her "family's economy" and gives her the sense of "being successful", her paid labor can be seen as empowering as she describes it as contributing to her "positive self-image" (cf. Interview Mayra), which is crucial to the empowerment process (cf. Sharp et al., 2003, p. 282f.). Mayra takes part in deciding on how to spend her income but has to discuss it with her husband, and "sometimes" gets to buy something for herself (cf. *ibid.*). To a certain extent, her employment contributes to her ability to decide, thus allowing her more power (cf. Interview Mayra), but also reflects the limits of paid labor for empowering women in patriarchal contexts where the labor's proceeds remain to an extent under the control of male family members. Women would have to control their gained assets in order for their work to have a positive impact on their position (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 313). Within Mayra's family, she perceives herself as the one who takes decisions concerning the children and their education, whereas in her relationship she states that her husband "demands" her, and decides for her (cf. *ibid.*), which considering that she perceives not being able to decide as feeling powerless (cf. Interview Mayra) can be viewed as a reflection for being disempowered (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p.13). Further, this can be seen as a reflection for power being fluent, as mentioned before, considering that individuals can have different levels of power in different aspects of their life (cf. Prilleltensky, 2008, p. 119). Mayra defines the term empowerment as enabling oneself or others to "achieve something" wanted (cf. Interview Mayra). Thus her perception of empowerment reflects to enable someone to

lead a for them desirable life, through giving options and enhancing one's level of control and power, as portrayed within the scientific discourse (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 15; Tandon, 2016, p. 7).

Diana understands power as "working and earning money", as financial resources help to provide for an individual's family and to "deal with problems that come up" (cf. Interview Diana), and as different social positions such as "to be a mother", "to be a leader" or "a president of an association" (cf. *ibid*). In that sense, her perception of power is connected to Batliwala's (2013) previously mentioned definition of power as the "degree of control over material, human and intellectual resources exercised by different sections of society" (Batliwala, 2013, p. 41). Further, she mentions power as the ability of one to be "moving forward" when confronted with difficult situations where "nobody will help you" (cf. Interview Diana). This can be understood as the ability to act and react independently or self-reliant, and is to be seen as an essential aspect of the empowerment process as women must be able to understand and challenge their oppression (cf. Tandon, 2016, p. 7). Diana's experiences in the hospitality industry contributed to her feeling of having power since receiving an income made her "feel big", as she "had money" and could provide for her sons' education (cf. Interview Diana). Paid labor thus contributed positively to Diana's level of power according to her perception of the term, but at the same time confronted her with the pressure of being able to fulfill the roles of both parents when facing long working hours, as she was raising her children as a single mother (cf. Interview Diana). As previously discussed, this points to the necessity to examine the conditions and terms under which women enter the job market in order to contribute to their empowerment process instead of intensifying their workload (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 20). Nevertheless, Diana describes her experiences working in Hotels as extremely helpful for "orienting" and "teaching" her, as well as for building new relationships with others (cf. Interview Diana), which is to be considered as beneficial for the empowerment process as building social networks strengthens one's fall-back position (cf. De Marco Larrauri et al., 2016, p. 13). Diana perceives empowerment as giving one the ability "to do something that one really wants, to follow their goals, something one wants to do" (cf. Interview Diana), which - similar to Mayra's perception of the term - can be seen as a reflection of the within the scientific discourse discussed aspect of leading a

personally desired life and to have the power to act upon choices (cf. Tandon, 2016, p. 8).

For Alejandra, power has an "entirely negative" connotation, as she defines it as "to insult, to beat. One lowers the esteem of others completely" (cf. Interview Alejandra). Nevertheless, she perceives the ability to start up a business as powerful, which also gives the term a positive meaning for her. She mentions to feel powerful when she produces potato chips and sells them, as it gives her self-confirmation and assures her that she can achieve things and assures her in being able to communicate and express herself in front of others (cf. Interview Alejandra). Her experience is thus similar to Diana's case and can be seen as a reflection of the within the scientific discourse discussed aspect of experiencing oneself as self-reliant and capable of challenging subordinating circumstances (cf. Tandon, 2016, p. 7). Further, Alejandra feels powerless when there is "no money to cover expenses, necessities", or when she is confronted with "sickness" (cf. *ibid.*). Considering the aspect of unemployment, Alejandra experiences a lack of power in not receiving an income, as she struggles to "pay for things" (cf. Interview Alejandra). Thus Alejandra's perception of power, similar to Diana, can be connected to the aspect of the power of controlling material resources (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 41). Alejandra defines empowerment as knowing that she is capable, that she "can achieve things" which she wants for herself (cf. Interview Alejandra).

Vanessa defines power as "to achieve something that" she "wanted inside" of her (cf. Interview Vanessa). She recognizes the possibility to perceive power as something positive as well as something negative, "depending on what you do with it" (cf. *ibid.*). Power can be "guiding other people with the same means, that has a benefit for something positive" (cf. Interview Vanessa), which can be seen as an expression for the control of "intellectual resources" (Batliwala, 2013, p. 41), as in to influence the mindset and understanding of others to motivate them to work towards a greater good, or for social change (cf. *ibid.*). She mentions to feel powerless when she is "sick" as she feels "limited or she "can't do" what she wants "to do" (cf. Interview Vanessa). In that sense, for Vanessa, power is strongly connected to her ability to act and to follow her desires and direct her own life (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 14). In the course of finding a career,

Vanessa was allowed to decide and pursue what she wants to do, as her parents gave her "the freedom to choose" (cf. Interview Vanessa). Vanessa senses a hierarchy within her family in which her father "operates" the others "from above". Her ability to make decisions seems to be limited to her education and her career, whereas she realizes that by living in her father's house, there is a set of "rules" that she has to follow (cf. Vanessa). She defines empowerment as to be "capable of realizing not only what they tell" her to do, but to do what she wants to do, as well as to "achieve things to not only satisfy others" but something that satisfies herself and gives her "happiness" (cf. Interview Vanessa). Further, Vanessa states that empowerment means to "change the mentality" of a gender-based distribution of domestic work, as well as to "gain respect" for the fact that women and men have equal capabilities to "learn and do things" (cf. Interview Vanessa). Thus, Vanessa's definition of Empowerment entails the ability to challenge structures that suppress or limit her opportunity to direct her life in a for her desirable way and to challenge patriarchal power structures in general, which is a central aspect in the process of empowerment (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 15). By trying to provoke moments of "harmonic" learning about gender-equality for her male family members in her home, she is actively challenging unequal power structures (cf. Interview Vanessa).

It becomes visible that the interviewed women connect power strongly to the ability to make choices and to direct one's life in a personally desired manner, as well as to act independently and self-reliant (cf. Tandon, 2016, p. 7), which except for Vanessa all of them associate partly with having access to and control over financial and material resources (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 41). For each of the interviewed women it is important to set themselves goals and to achieve those goals - or at least to know they are capable of achieving them in the future - in order to feel powerful. Considering that their aspirations and goals are dependent on having access to financial resources, or focus on building successful businesses, the participation in empowerment projects that are designed to generate an income appear to be beneficial for their individual cases.

5.6 Individually Perceived Effects of Participating in Kallpa Warmi

By examining how the interview partners perceive the effects of participating in Kallpa Warmi, I shall offer a closer look at possibilities and limitations that income-generating empowerment projects can offer for the process of empowerment. The interview partners' experiences concerning their participation within the projects of Kallpa Warmi show convergences of various aspects, such as the impact on their feeling of self-worth, education, and ability to pursue personal aspirations and their ability to access different forms of resources.

5.6.1 Effects on Individual's Self-worth

Gabriela entered Kallpa Warmi in the aftermath of suffering from a "severe disease". After meeting the founder of the organization, who gave her "a hand" and motivated her to join the meetings, Gabriela managed to "pick" herself "up" (cf. Interview Gabriela). She states that participating in the projects "changed" her "a lot", concerning her "perspective" as she "learned to value" herself "as a woman". Further, she learned to experience herself as "capable of doing things" in capacity-buildings and training, and got to experience success in selling her products (cf. Interview Gabriela). The participation in the group taught Gabriela "to move forward", to "share" concerns "with the others" in order to get opinions of others for the process of decision-making, as well as she finds it more important now to "help each other" and "back each other up as women". Similar to Gabriela, Mayra states that the participation in the group helped her to learn to "value" herself "as a woman", as well as to cope with "mood swings" and "emotional stress" as the "friendships" and "companionship" that she experiences by participating in Kallpa Warmi give her a place to "share" about personal problems (cf. Interview Mayra).

Diana perceives that her participation in the group harmed herself. She was asked to help at different events in a manner that limited her in her personal life and created stress for her due to time-consuming schedules of the project. Further, she states that participating limited her financial resources as she had to spend money in order to be able to attend at events, for "tickets and fares". Thus her participation in Kallpa Warmi

results in her urge, to focus more on herself and to do things that are good for her (cf. Interview Diana).

Alejandra states that participating in Kallpa Warmi "changed" her "a lot", as she used to "feel shy" and "uncomfortable" when talking to others (cf. Interview Alejandra). By being involved in group talks and being motivated to lead training herself, she got more confidence and improved her self-esteem (cf. *ibid.*). She feels that now she can "reach goals", and has gained the knowledge for herself that she is "worth it" and "can do things" on her own (cf. Interview Alejandra).

Vanessa states that her participation in Kallpa Warmi sparked a change inside of her, concerning how she directs her life from wanting to please others and doing "what the system wants from you", towards focusing on what makes herself happy, as well as to follow her dreams, to "fight for" the environment, a more healthy society, and more "equality" (cf. Interview Vanessa). Similar to Alejandra, before taking part in the group Vanessa "never liked talking in front of people", and learned through group talks and giving capacity-building to others, to be more confident and "to begin not to have fear, to go out and to take on strength" (cf. *ibid.*)

Except for Diana, the interview partners' experiences within Kallpa Warmi can be viewed as crucial to the inception of empowerment, as "power begins in the mind" (Batliwala, 2013, p. 26). The process needs to entail the fundamental aspect of an individual to gain the perception of being worthy, confident and capable of learning new abilities and skills, which further can be used to direct an individually desired life, as well as to challenge structures that prior denied the possibility to lead such a life (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 26). Considering the changes in the perception of the interview partners individual self, it appears to be that the participation in projects for economic empowerment can positively affect the participant's sense of self-worth, as well as to enlarge the extent of their ability to have "own resources and initiatives" (De Marco Larrauri et al., 2016, p. 10) and "own life projects and spaces" (*ibid.*). These aspects contribute to personal confidence through an enhanced sense of self-determination (cf. *ibid.*), and have to be seen as crucial to the empowerment process (cf. Tandon, 2016, p. 7).

5.6.2 Effects on Relationship and Family

Within patriarchal contexts, the increased participation of women in the labor market, the public sphere and the practice of a liberal and autonomous life can lead to negative reactions of male family members and social pressure towards women to comply with their care-taking role bound to the private sphere (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 314; Jewkes, 2002, p. 1425). This can occur as the male role and masculinity itself are stereotypically bound to the breadwinning role since the beginnings of industrial capitalism (cf. Connell, 2005, p. 28f.). Therefore I will examine the effect that the interviewed women perceived due to their participation in Kallpa Warmi on their relationships and social life, as the project enhances their participation within the public sphere and focuses on female entrepreneurship.

Gabriela states that her family is "happy" and wants her to participate in the project as they appreciate the by the organization created opportunities for income-generation that enhance the family's financial possibilities. She perceives that her family is being included in the project, as they "work together as a team" when manufacturing the products sold at local markets and fairs with the organization and take part in events organized by Kallpa Warmi (cf. Interview Gabriela). Considering that her participation in the project sometimes results in times when she "can't fulfill" her "responsibilities" at home, Gabriela is concerned that she might "disappoint" her family and is worried that her "absence affects them". So far, her "husband takes care" of her responsibilities when she can't keep up with her schedule at home, which allows Gabriela to focus on the project's activities (cf. Interview Gabriela). Similar to Gabriela, Mayra states that her family perceives her participation in Kallpa Warmi "as support", as it "lifts the economy of her home" (cf. Interview Mayra). Additionally, she thinks that her family's inclusion into events leads to their positive perception of the project, as "they know where" she is at (cf. Interview Mayra). When she can't realize responsibilities assigned to her by the organization because of domestic obligations or can't fulfill her domestic responsibilities because of events coming up in the organization, Mayra either "plans ahead" and tries to make time for everything or receives help from her children (cf. *ibid.*). Alejandra states that the participation in Kallpa Warmi resulted in her family members to "support" her in "becoming independent" financially and motivate her to

"believe" in her self (cf. Interview Alejandra). She takes her family to fairs to "show them where" she is "going", introduces them to her "colleagues" and tries "to explain them everything" (cf. *ibid.*).

Vanessa perceives that her and her family underwent a process of her family adapting to her participation in the project. "At the beginning" they perceived her absence due to responsibilities in the group "negatively" (cf. Interview Vanessa). "Because one already leaves, is not there, doesn't come to cook (..) so it would be at first like don't go, don't go!" (cf. *ibid.*). This sparked Vanessa's reaction to challenge their opposition as she thinks that "one sometimes has to take the decision, despite the anger" to believe in themselves and follow their goal (cf. Interview Vanessa). Through her family's inclusion in the organization's events, for example, when Vanessa's family contributes by helping her elaborate the products she sells at fairs or sells the products together with her, she believes that her family approved of her taking part in Kallpa Warmi. Also, she thinks that her personal change "to maturity", which she attributes to her participation in the project, enhanced her family's contentment (cf. Interview Vanessa). Further, she states to now feel their approval for example when they allow her to participate in project-related events during her working hours at her father's business by filling in for her, which she states would not be possible in other jobs (cf. Interview Vanessa).

Considering the interview partners' experiences concerning the effects on their relationships and families of participating in Kallpa Warmi, it appears that the inclusion of families into empowerment projects and the enhanced availability of financial resources for the family's common funds can soften potential negative social reactions towards the women's participation. This becomes visible in the development of Vanessa's family's reaction, the willingness of the other women's family members to take over their responsibilities, or the families motivating the women to believe in their abilities. Thus the inclusion of partners and families can be helpful for challenging unequal power relations, as the potential male self-perception of being the losing end within a process of shifting and changing power relations can be absorbed (cf. Grose & Grabe, 2014, p.989; Dworkin et al., 2002, p. 996f.) Further, it would make sense to include men into the process of women's empowerment and the formation of

respectful and equal gender relations, as the compliance with narrowing aspects of masculine gender norms and the participation in patriarchal, hierarchal social relations negatively affect men themselves (cf. Dworkin et al., 2002, p. 996; New, 2001, p. 730). The claim of oppressive and privileged positions should not be considered as leading to the sole benefit of men within the patriarchal social order, but rather as limiting men in experiencing their full potential as agents within an equal social order in which they could allow themselves emotions, empathy and intimacy- built upon an alliance with women (cf. New, 2001, p. 744).

5.6.3 Effects on Education and Ability to Follow Goals

The interview partner's experiences concerning the educational aspect of their participation in Kallpa Warmi connect to the scientific discourse of empowering education programs among adults, as informal programs administering "knowledge in less restrictive and more creative settings" (Stromquist, 2002, p. 26) enable a critical examination of their realities through "a synthesis of new knowledge, dialogical communication and a reflection on personal experience" (ibid.). "Empowerment develops best initially at local levels, in small groups and in women-only settings" (Stromquist, 2002, p. 26) when a safe space for the reflection of society and one's position within the social sphere is created (cf. Warner et al., 2014, p. 9), thus the within Kallpa Warmi offered group talks, capacity-buildings and workshops held by the participating women themselves contribute to their empowering knowledge, their critical examination of their individual situation, the gain of self-confidence and thus to their empowerment process (cf. Stromquist, 2015, p. 315).

Mayra states that her education profited from her participation in the project "in the personal aspect", as she learned more about "values for women" concerning "equity, self-worth" and "working together", which taught her to be more confident. Further, the training helped her to lead a more successful business as she learned "to establish" her "priorities" in how she spends her financial resources (cf. Interview Mayra). Similar, Gabriela describes that "the perspectives and many things we learn here" have had a "very good" impact on her, as she learned how to value herself as a woman and to "keep moving forward" (cf. Interview Gabriela). In the course of "different workshops",

she learned "to go to libraries", to "organize and give training" and improved her skills of "making the handicrafts" (cf. *ibid.*). Further, Gabriela gained knowledge on how to operate a business and how to manage and organize the income generated through her products' sales at events of Kallpa Warmi (cf. Interview Gabriela). She states that "the group talks and sharing with the other women" are what makes that "one learns" (cf. *ibid.*).

Alejandra perceives that participating in the project benefitted her education in a way that enables her to "communicate better", to express her feelings and needs, and to "ask for forgiveness" (cf. Interview Alejandra). She gained confidence in talking to others, which "is helpful" in general, but also for "selling" her "products". She feels that she profits from the workshops on how to make different products that she can sell and from training on how to organize and manage the generated income (cf. *ibid.*).

Vanessa states that participating in Kallpa Warmi capacitated her in a variety of different aspects, which she couldn't achieve within the formal school system (cf. Interview Vanessa). Before taking part in the project, she was "only concentrated on studying", working, and doing what "the system wants" her to do, which she perceived as "get married, you have kids, and you die" (cf. Interview Vanessa). Within the educational workshops, she learned to focus on her own dreams and developed her own perception of what education means to her, from thinking that being educated means having a degree, to valuing "traditional cultural knowledge" and learning that "everyone has something to teach" (cf. Interview Vanessa). Through this development, Vanessa found her interest in traditional, ancestral medicine and "healing" through "healthy nutrition", which motivated her to "do more than to only work in a pharmacy"(cf. *ibid.*). Vanessa states that working and learning in groups of women gave her the confidence to talk in front of others, which she "never liked", whereas "now" she "can give training" herself (cf. *ibid.*).

The interview partners' experiences concerning their education within the project can be considered as a reflection of empowering education that enables one to think for themselves (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 26), as in the case of Vanessa, who wants to leave the by patriarchal society for women foreseen path and instead follow her dreams that

make herself happy. Further, the interview partners' newly acquired capacities to value themselves, perceive themselves as worthy and as capable of following their goals, reflect the empowering aspects of education concerning the initiation of a transformation from acting within an oppressive frame in which choices are limited or being denied, towards the ability to take control of one's life and to pursue one's aspirations (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 26f.). This improved sentiment of agency further is being reflected in the interview partners' perceptions of how their participation in Kallpa Warmi influences their ability to reach their personal aspirations. As already mentioned, Gabriela's aspirations are to open her own restaurant, to work creatively and to be "the best possible mother". She feels that being a part of Kallpa Warmi lets her get closer to reaching her personal goals because she now can "reach out" to opportunities, through the values she learned (cf. Interview Gabriela). She perceives herself as capable of opening her business "step by step", to organize herself and to gain financial assets through the sales at fairs and markets (cf. *ibid.*). Similar Mayra, who owns a catering business and aspires to become more successful in her work, perceives that she "can achieve more" through the capacity-buildings that she receives in the project (cf. Interview Mayra).

Alejandra states that her confidence improved so that she now believes that she can and also has to reach her goals to open her own business, which she feels is the beginning of realizing her aspirations (cf. Interview Alejandra). By participating in capacity-buildings and training, she learned how to manufacture products that she can sell at fairs, how to market and sell them, as well as how to create a network with others to support each other in the process of starting a business (cf. *ibid.*).

Similar Vanessa, whose aspiration it is to open a natural pharmacy and start a seed bank, perceives that her participation in Kallpa Warmi had the effect of not being "scared of challenges anymore", "it has motivated" her to "already open" her own business, which she is currently working on (cf. Interview Vanessa). She feels more confident and supported through the group and feels that she "can" achieve goals (cf. *ibid.*). Only Diana views the effects of her participation in Kallpa Warmi critically. She states to "have learned some new things" in the capacity-buildings and workshops but did not reach any of her goals, which she prescribes to "not being accepted" within the

organization or the town's community (cf. Interview Diana). To reach her goal of working in ancestral medicine, she thinks she would "have to leave to other places to be able to share" (cf. Interview Diana).

5.6.4 Effects on Access to Resources

In the following, I will focus on the interview partners' perceptions of how their funds of different kinds of resources - and their access to such - have changed through their participation in Kallpa Warmi, which is relevant for their individual empowerment process as power depends on "the degree of control over material, human, and intellectual resources" (Batliwala, 2013, p. 41). The resources which are to be seen as crucial for the empowerment process are - among other things - money, land and other material goods, relationships to others, human labour, knowledge and skills, or access to information (cf. *ibid.*; Tandon, 2016, p. 8).

Mainly it is noticeable that the interview partners' access to financial and business-related resources has shifted, for example, in Gabriela's case. She states that her access to resources "changed" since she started to participate in Kallpa Warmi. Her access to financial resources improved, as before she would sell products at her house and vegetables at the market. Through the project, she has the possibility to sell at different events and create a network to find new buyers and market her handicrafts (cf. Interview Gabriela). The group of women who "do the same" are supporting each other and "back each other up" in the process (cf. Interview Gabriela), and for example, "lend the others" money when they need to invest in their business (cf. *ibid.*). Mayra states that her control over financial resources improved in the sense that she learned to "establish priorities in how" she spends money through the capacity-buildings, which helped her to improve her catering business (cf. Interview Mayra). Also, Alexandra's access to financial resources improved, as the organization "helped" her to "generate money through the sales" with which she is following her goal of building "the business" (cf. Interview Alejandra). Diana perceives that her financial situation worsened through participating in Kallpa Warmi, as she had to spend money on "fares, tickets, trips, lunch" while not finding a way of recuperating or earning back her investments (cf. Interview Diana). Nevertheless, Diana thinks that her access to

resources benefitted in the sense of knowing "more people", which resulted in "some doors" opening for her as well as new knowledge that she gained through workshops "they gave" her. This can also be seen in the responses of the other interview partners, as Mayra states to perceive that her access to resources changed in the sense of "relationships with people who offer support", as she is benefitting from the "friendships" and "companionship" which she found in the group (cf. Interview Mayra). Similarly Alejandra states that her participation in Kallpa Warmi affects her access to resources concerning "relationships" built in the "group", where they "meet up and share a lot. Sadness, joy", they "share everything" and support each other (cf. Interview Alejandra).

Vanessa perceives the capacity-buildings given by volunteers coming to Kallpa Warmi have improved her access to resources, as "they share their knowledge" and "say look, you have to do it like this", which gives the group new perspectives while making her appreciate her own culture even more (cf. Interview Vanessa). Further, Vanessa appreciates the "sisterhood" formed with the women of the group, an "internal companionship" of "support", where they help one another to promote and build each other's businesses, that "will bring" more possibilities of access to resources (cf. Interview Vanessa).

The participation of the interview partners in Kallpa Warmi appears to offer them access to financial resources and social support by the group. Both can be seen as fundamental to empowerment, as enabling individuals to gain assets which support them in making choices and leading a desirable life, as well as forming a network with individuals who can support each other, assist in inhabiting a position from which unjust structures can be challenged (cf. Tandon, 2016, p. 7f.)

5.7 Individually Expressed Needs for Empowerment

As already mentioned, it is necessary to understand the needs of the women who are being addressed in the empowerment process in order to facilitate such successfully, as well as to not further objectify women by speaking for them (cf. Jupp et al., 2010, p. 35). therefore I shall examine the interviewed women's views on which aspects within

the project of Kallpa Warmi they perceive as missing or unhelpful for their empowerment process.

Gabriela perceives that it would be necessary to be "more united" within the group in order to achieve more and to work together as "a team" (cf. Interview Gabriela). She appreciates the sense of "helping each other" that exists within the group and perceives that within the organization, "there always is equity" (cf. Interview Gabriela). They "discuss everything" and welcome "everyone's opinion" when making decisions, which makes her feel on "the same level" with everyone (cf. *ibid.*). Nevertheless, Gabriela thinks that there needs to be more "support for each other as woman", instead of them being "egoists", which is why she would like her "colleagues to be less hard on each other" (cf. *ibid.*). Her expressed need relates to "feminist ethics" (Batliwala, 2013, p. 109), which entail propositions such as "building a sense of solidarity/sorority/inclusion (..) and generally, pursuing non-violent forms of action" (Batliwala, 2013, p. 109f.) and are seen as essential for tackling oppressive structures (cf. *ibid.*). Further, Gabriela wishes to realize more training in a "realistic" manner, by which she means for them to be "closer to each member's needs", which reflects again the necessity to engage with the circumstances of individuals addressed by empowerment initiatives (cf. Interview Gabriela).

Mayra also views a need for "more understanding within the group" in the sense of "working together on one level" (cf. Interview Mayra), which can be - as in Gabriela's case - connected to the need for solidarity among organizations and movements, to combat suppression instead of replicating "power hierarchies that they seek to challenge" (Batliwala, 2013, p. 111). Mayra's perceives a hierarchy that functions through the different positions within the group, as there is "a president" who "has more power compared to the rest" and "has more voice and voting rights" (cf. Interview Mayra). Thus she does see a clear distribution of power within the organization, which she states can be seen as "the fundamental base of this group". Similarly, Vanessa perceives a certain distribution of power within the organization concerning different hierarchical positions. She states that "there is a guide, which is the president, and there is a coordinator" who "dominates" the participants by assigning to them different responsibilities, such as "realizing different workshops".

Nevertheless, Vanessa perceives the aspect of being assigned to different tasks as positive because it leads her to acquire new skills and confidence (cf. Vanessa). Further Vanessa agrees to the present distribution of power because the president "gives" the participants "the freedom to give opinions and to chose different things" (cf. Interview Vanessa).

Diana and Alejandra perceive the distribution of power within the organization negatively. Alejandra states the distribution of power within the project appears to her as "unequal", as she thinks that "sometimes one feels like you stay behind" (cf. Interview Alejandra). She senses a power hierarchy in which one moves up depending on the amount of time spent within the project, whereby she explains her "lower" position by her entering the project "way later than the others". Further, she perceives that differences in access to financial assets between the members lead to more inequality, as she feels "underneath them" (cf. Interview Alejandra). Diana describes a similar feeling, as she states that "there is a directive", which is "making the choices" about every essential aspect of the project (cf. Interview Diana), for example, which contents are conveyed. Since Diana was personally confronted with gender-based violence in during her childhood and marriage, she states that she would have liked more workshops on the topic of violence to be organized but felt ignored (cf. Interview Diana). Further, she felt being "used" on various occasions when the "directive needs something you run. You run here. You run there. Do this do that", and perceived the pressure to do so in order to not being excluded (cf. Interview Diana).

The women's varying perceptions of group dynamics and the distribution of power within Kallpa Warmi point to the need to consider further empowerment-harming effects of hierarchical power relations within empowering projects. The replication of oppressive structures should not be the end of empowering processes (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 111) and can lead to participants' lack of trust in the group or the project in general, as seen in the cases of Diana and Alejandra (cf. Interview Diana; cf. Interview Alejandra). The problem of project participants being excluded from choices or having their needs overlooked is being tackled within the already mentioned discourse on feminist ethics (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 111) or feminist leadership (cf. Lazzari et al., 2009, p. 352f.). According to these concepts, power structures within organizations

should be reorganized so that decisions are taken together, and the control of resources and knowledge should be shared between members (cf. *ibid.*). The aim to do so can be found in the expressed needs of the interview partners, as some of them wish to create a fount of income which will be equally accessible for the participants, for example, Mayra who wants to "achieve a business that will be beneficent for all the participants" (cf. Interview Mayra) or Vanessa who wants to create a business that gives the participants the opportunity "to learn, to capacitate, to exercise" and to receive "more preparation" (cf. Interview Vanessa). Further, Vanessa thinks it would be necessary to regularly "repeat" certain "capacitaty-buildings", as when new "colleagues" enter the project, there is a gap of knowledge between them. She perceives that in order for having "equality" they need to ensure that "all are capable of the same things" (cf. Interview Vanessa), which corresponds to the before-mentioned feminist leadership for empowerment of ensuring to make knowledge accessible for everyone (cf. Lazzari et al. 2009, p. 325f.).

6. Discussion

The complex nature of empowerment as well as the term's frequent use or misuse to label any development initiative or program as empowerment (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 40), lead some to interpret this concept as a vague project that is not actually measurable (cf. Jupp et al. 2010, p. 16). When we consider empowerment as a multidimensional process which does not happen in a linear one-size-fits-all manner, but rather through a fluent change concerning a variety of aspects in people's individual lives, the way to speak about and judge the outcome of empowerment projects might differ - and especially that of economic empowerment projects. An individual might immediately perceive positive and arguably empowering changes in certain areas of their life as a reaction to their participation within projects and initiatives with an economic focus, while a transformation of other spheres might not occur or do so at later points in their life (cf. Jupp et al. 2010, p. 16). This is, for example, observable in projects for economic empowerment, which can significantly contribute to certain aspects and components of women's empowerment when the access to financial and material resources is paired with gender equality training and

the access to empowering knowledge (cf. Dworkin et al. 2002, p. 995f). In contrast, other areas crucial to empowerment, such as an individual's ability to challenge unequal or oppressive structures on a societal level, might not appear to be strengthened through their participation in such projects or could simply not yet appear to be visible (cf. Jupp et al., 2010, p. 16). Thus it is necessary to stress the multidimensional character of empowerment when drawing conclusions about the conditions that are necessary for educational and labor market projects to contribute to women's empowerment, which entails recognizing different spheres and components of empowerment that support each other throughout the entire process, but are distinct in nature (cf. Tandon, 2016, p. 9; Stromquist, 2015, p. 309).

Also, it is, as sufficiently stressed in the previous chapters, essential to recognize and understand the necessities of women who are participating in empowering projects when examining which dimensions of their empowerment process can be treated within educational and labor market initiatives (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p.28f.). This comprehension process should include indigenous women's movements' desires to incorporate their traditional and ancestral values towards a "holistic" feminist movement (cf. Cunningham, 2006, p. 59). It would appear ironic to classify an individual's empowerment process according to fixed empowerment indicators and spheres, without the inclusion of their own perceptions of power and empowerment into measuring the impact of economic empowerment projects on their individual empowerment process. Doing so might transform the participants' statuses of subjects into scientific objects to a certain extent, which in itself should be considered as rather disempowering (Jupp et al. 2010, p. 35). For the in the course of this thesis interviewed women, power is bound to the ability to direct their lives according to their desires and wishes independently. Empowerment entails for them to perceive themselves as valuable and capable of reaching their goals, continuing their efforts to further achieve these goals together with their group and helping others to do so. Their goals, as described in the previous chapter, are concerned with aspirations concerning the satisfaction of their personal and their family's basic needs, their professional career, successfully fulfilling their roles as mothers, acting out their creativity, protecting their local, ancestral, cultural heritage and knowledge, as well as to help and to empower others. These aspirations and the women's ability to reach them can be directly or

indirectly supported through components of empowerment such as economic empowerment, political empowerment, knowledge empowerment and psychological empowerment (cf. Stromquist, 2015, p. 310ff.) and are corresponding to Kabeer's (2005) stressed dimensions of empowerment resources, agency and achievements. In the following, I will analyze how economic empowerment in general and its implementation in Kallpa Warmi as an example, could or could not contribute to the different components and dimensions of empowerment, as well as to what is relevant for the interviewed women in their individual empowerment process. Doing so will allow to define the conditions under which educational and labor market projects contribute to women's empowerment in Ecuador's rural areas, by the example of Sayausí, Azuay.

6.1 Economic Empowerment

Due to its focus on enhancing access to income and material resources, economic empowerment is thought to contribute widely to women's empowerment and gender equality. This aspect is widely explained by the circumstances of women, who as the ones who mostly do a greater share of care and housework and in many cases are responsible for their family's nutrition and management, are found to be the ones who are most vulnerable when confronted with poverty and a lack of access to basic needs, which is thought to be alleviated by an improved access to financial resources, thus alleviating women's poverty is thought to contribute to gender equality (cf. Stromquist, 2015, p. 310). The by neoliberal development organizations promoted ideas that the integration of women into the labor market and economic growth of states, in general, will automatically lead to gender equality, however, have to be reconsidered, as for example the examination of time use surveys of men and women in different industrialized nations have shown that also when both partners work outside of the home, domestic work and care work remain almost unexceptionally in female hands, thus creating a double work shift and longer weekly working hours for women (cf. Stromquist, 2015, p. 310; Kabeer, 2016, p. 314). Simultaneously it is observable on an international scale that women with equal levels of education as men do regularly not reach positions that are as well paid, often because they get pushed into working part-

time to be able to fulfill their domestic responsibilities despite of working outside of their home (cf. Stromquist, 2015, p. 312).

Nevertheless, when considering that the interviewed women perceive power as being able to direct their own lives according to their desires and aspirations, which consist of being successful within the home as a mother and at the same time within the professional sphere by starting an individual business, it becomes clear that condemning women's labor market participation because of a possible overload of work would be patronizing and ignoring the interviewed women's aspirations. This corresponds to the earlier mentioned study by Kabeer (2016) in which 92 percent of women participating in a questionnaire about their voluntariness to stay at home stated that they did so out of compulsion and fear to endanger their relationship instead of not being interested in taking up paid labor outside of their home (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 306). These findings point to the necessity of promoting the equal share of domestic work and care work between men and women to contribute to the possibility of women's empowerment through economic empowerment (cf. Stromquist, 2015, p. 311f.) and to the need of public services to reorganize care responsibilities (cf. Chopra, 2015, p.4), instead of invalidating the aims of economic empowerment by sidelining projects that enhance women's opportunities to participate in the labor market in general. The lack of an equal share of care work is being reflected in the statements of the within this thesis interviewed women considering the distribution of housework they experience. Even though all of them are aware of gender inequality and the difference of opportunities given to men and women within society, which they consider to be a persisting problem, and all of them who live in households with men allocate parts of the domestic work to male family members in order to enforce equality within their home, childcare obligations have remained widely unquestioned in female hands within their personal experiences. Only two of the five interviewed women perceive childcare activities as an activity that women should not solely perform, but both partners should participate in. However, four of the interviewed women stated that their role as mothers and wives - or in Diana's case her role of the first daughter - and the to these roles bound responsibilities within their homes caused their own personal and professional agendas to suffer. Due to a lack of educational opportunities or simply a lack of time or permission to finish their education, their current opportunities are limited, contributing

to their increased level of discontent with their current professional and overall situation. Only Vanessa can make her professional and personal goals her priority from the beginning - in her opinion because so far, she has been deciding against having a husband and children.

Apart from the importance to consider the necessity of equally sharing unpaid care work when discussing economic empowerment, one should also bear in mind that sheer labor market integration of women does not automatically lead to gender equality and women's empowerment as promoted by global corporations (cf. Cornwall, 2013, p. ix). The empowering effect of paid work, among other things, depends on the means and conditions under which jobs are taken up by women (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 313). Due to prevalent gender norms, women are often being pushed into feminized and mostly lower-paying labor sectors, including into the informal labor market, which is mostly characterized by labor-intensive and underpaid work (cf. Nesbitt-Ahmed & Chopra, 2015, p.5; Parpart et al., 2002, p. 13). The underpayment of feminized labor sectors and its often characteristic exploitative working conditions can be accredited to lower social relevance accredited to women's work compared to men's work (c.f. Mulvaney, 2013, p. 30). Such tendency emerged as a byproduct of encouraging women to remain within the private sphere to perform domestic and care work during the rise of industrial capitalism, which lead to less social relevance being attributed to women and in consequence to any activity performed by them in general (cf. *ibid.*). Another factor diminishing economic empowerment's credibility is the perception that integrating women into the labor market is reproducing capitalist structures, which widely contribute to social inequality, instead of challenging such (cf. Biewener & Bacque, 2015, p. 66). As a consequence, social problems are transformed into individual problems with market solutions that the economically empowered, self-reliant, and entrepreneurial individual learns how to make use of automatically, which leads to the depoliticization of social inequality (cf. Biewener & Bacque, 2015, p. 66).

Despite all that, the analysis of the interviewed women's experiences in the labor market and their experiences through their participation in Kallpa Warmi demonstrate clearly how for them, paid labor can have both disempowering and empowering features to it. Jobs that the women took up out of a lack of choice were potentially

disempowering (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 15) - for example, visible in two of the interviewed women's cases who were not finished yet with their education but had to earn money for the sheer survival of themselves and their families. Their jobs have thus functioned as a barrier for their ability to reach goals and aspirations in their later life or pushed them into precarious living conditions as dropping out of school to work had lasting effects on their learning and working opportunities. Other factors aggravating and preventing the empowering effects of paid labor for the interviewed women are working conditions that are to be seen as suppressive. Such would, for example, be working hours that impede a social life and social networking, which also endangers the possibility to unite with others autonomously in order to discuss personal or social issues, curb empowering opportunities of paid labor (cf. De Marco Larrauri et al., 2016, p. 9f.; Kabeer, 2005, p. 20). Another instance of a suppressive working environment limiting empowerment is the endangering of a healthy life style by constantly having to overlook oneself's physical boundaries due to fearing negative consequences concerning their job, for example, visible in Vanessa's case of being concerned to be fired if she would stay home because of sickness.

Differently are the interviewed women's experiences when their jobs are or were not simply serving for their sheer survival, but when their activities offer them the possibility to cover their and their families' basic needs while at the same time their activities serve them to reach additional personal and professional goals. This becomes visible in employment activities which allowed the interviewed women to work creatively, run a successful business that can be beneficial to women in rurality, or to be able to build themselves a career in which they can help others or preserve and pass on their cultural knowledge and heritage - thus activities which the women consider as meaningful (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 14f.). Further the interview partners consider their work as beneficial for themselves when it contributes to their contentment and happiness, and fosters their access to a network of people who offer each other support. Therefore, it is crucial to distinguish between the motivation to work and the conditions under which work is taken up, when discussing initiatives for economic empowerment and the opportunities of paid work to contribute positively to the empowerment process of women (cf Kabeer, 2016, p. 313). The combination or balance of the access to resources and for the women meaningful activities that give sense and purpose to

their actions are to be considered as empowering features of economic empowerment (cf. Kabeer, 2005, p. 14f.) that are being promoted in the network of female entrepreneurs in Kallpa Warmi. This is being realized through group meetings as well as capacity-buildings and workshops where the women discuss business ideas, teach each other about and learn about business relevant and other skills, learn about feminist values for a more equal society (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 202ff.) and create opportunities for their income generation through collaboratively planned events such as fairs and markets, or their plan to develop a joint business for their members.

6.2 Economic Empowerment and its Role in Other Components of Empowerment

Apart from contributing to working conditions that are productive for their empowerment process, the experiences of the interviewed women participating in Kallpa Warmi also reflect the already mentioned importance for projects for economic empowerment to offer or to support their access to resources coupled with gender equality training and empowering knowledge, in order for projects to be able to significantly contribute to certain aspects of women's empowerment (cf. Dworkin et al. 2002, p. 995f). The importance for gender equality training and education in such initiatives roots in the within patriarchic society fixed distribution of responsibilities, norms, and values between the male role and the female role, that pose a limited frame of opportunities to men and women, which results in the internalizing of role expectations towards individuals and has an effect on people's sense of their self, the value they give their individual self or their feeling of self-worth (cf. De Marco Larrauri et al., 2016, p. 10). By prescribing women a position bound to care-taking, as well as constantly portraying their persona in relation to others, women learn to perceive themselves and their bodies solely through the recognition of others, which constructs a female "habitus" bound to pleasing others (cf. Bourdieu, 2001, p. 23f.). "As a result, women's self-esteem is usually developed by living life through "the others" (De Marco Larrauri et al., 2016, p.10), which often negatively affects their perception of the value of themselves (cf. *ibid.*).

The educational aspect of the group meetings and capacity buildings within Kallpa Warmi addresses empowering education to improve women's self-worth. All of the

interviewed women state to perceive themselves as worthy and capable of following and reaching their goals, which they accredit to the by Kallpa Warmi organized group talks in which they learned to value themselves as women, share about experiences and different issues, speak their minds in front of others, lead and teach workshops themselves and to experience themselves as individuals that are capable of and deserve directing their individual lives. These aspects are to be seen as essential to empowerment, as the process - as excessively already mentioned before - begins from within in one's mind and needs to make one-self feel worthy of leading a self-determined life (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 26; Kabeer, 2005, p. 15). Besides contributing to the dimension of economic empowerment, their participation in Kallpa Warmi thus appears to assist their gain of knowledge empowerment and psychological empowerment, assisting the interviewed women in trusting their individual abilities, which also has to be seen as a foundation for other spheres and dimensions of empowerment (cf. Tandon, 2016, p. 9).

Considering that the interviewed women's improved self-image and self-worth, paired with increased working perspectives through capacity training in group settings and provision of income-generating opportunities, have contributed to the interviewed women's confidence, the participation in Kallpa Warmi also leads to a certain extent to the women's ability to decide for own planned activities even when facing rejection from others (cf. Tandon, 2016, p. 7, p. 9; Batliwala, 2013, p. 49). This becomes visible in Vanessa's case, as she, even though her family did not initially approve of her participation in Kallpa Warmi since that meant her being absent and subsequently not being able to fulfill her domestic responsibilities, however, managed to attend regular group meetings and events. Her ability to make choices to direct her own activities and thus her own life according to her wishes and desires is to be seen as a crucial aspect of empowerment - the capability to make choices (Kabeer, 2005, p. 13), having the power to select how to direct one's life, as well as to tailor circumstances in a way that allow one to make choices that enable the desired life are fundamental (cf. Kabeer, 2005; p. 14). For that matter, it is necessary to define actual choice, considering the necessity of having different options to decide from, as well as creating visibility for the available choices (cf. *ibid*; Batliwala, 2013, p. 51f.). To a certain extent, this is reflected in Vanessa's desire to study and do what makes herself happy and interests her,

instead of following rigidly what the patriarchic system expects women to do. The ability to discuss and modify Vanessa's responsibilities within her home and family in order for her to be able to follow her goals is to be seen as political empowerment on a micro level, which is as crucial to the process of empowerment through changes on a household level as the forming of social movements is essential to political empowerment on a macro level. Nevertheless, such negotiations often remain insufficiently addressed in the political empowerment discourse (cf. Stromquist, 2015, p. 311), even though the reorganization of domestic and care work at home towards a more equally shared responsibility between men and women is crucial to gender equality (cf. *ibid.*) and women's strategic interests (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 47f.). The mobilizing of women to follow their preferred longterm interest in order to create a for them more satisfactory life and to acknowledge that old gender structures of male dominance are changeable, (cf. Walters, 1991, p. 18) can be necessary for economic or political participatory opportunities to be seizable for women (cf. Jupp et al., 2010, p. 25). Vanessa's will to actively oppose other family members in order to follow her individual goals is unique to the group of interviewed women. However, the recognition of unequal gender structures within society and the disposition to redistribute domestic responsibilities to all family members in order to foster equality within their home as well as for the interviewed women to be able to attend group meetings, events and to be able to generate an income for themselves also become visible in the experiences and statements of three of the other interviewed women. This form of self-determined shaping of the interviewed women's realities through negotiations reflects bargaining on the household-level (cf. Osmani, 2007, p. 699), which's success The interviewed women accredit to the inclusion of their families into fairs and sales events as well as into the preparation of such, to the improved family economy through the women's financial contributions to the common family fund (cf. Patel, 2003, p. 152f.), or simply to welcoming the women's families into the organization to get to know the members and facility - aspects that are fostering their approval and will for cooperation (cf. Osmani, 2007, p. 699).

The group's network and collective activities fostering empowering knowledge and psychological empowerment, as well as the economic component through access to income-generating opportunities, can also be considered a foundation for further

political empowerment on a macro level. The increased participation in the public sphere, the women's improved self-confidence and financial contributions to their family's common funds foster gender-egalitarian attitudes of the interviewed women themselves as well as gender-related norms and attitudes held by society (cf. Kabeer, 2016, p. 313; Patel, 2003, p. 152f.), which further foster political empowerment, as studies suggest that gender-egalitarian attitudes and women's participation in the labor market foster women's opportunities for their political representation and participating within the political sphere (cf. Ertan et al., 2018, p. 61f.).

Further, it might make sense to consider that economic empowerment projects, due to encouraging women to participate in the labor market, do not automatically have to equal the creation of individualistic, unpolitical citizens who solely strive to modify social, political, and economic options for themselves (cf. Biewener & Bacque, 2015, p. 66). Rather the group setting of empowerment initiatives for adult women that allow exchanging ideas and reflective thought on personal and social issues, paired with challenging patriarchal ideologies (cf. Stromquist, 2002, p. 26), can be an opportunity for women to collectivize and find possibilities to create social and economic alternatives towards more social equality, if they enlarge into bigger social movements, while also generating an income and improving their immediate problems (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 52f.). Another already mentioned but noteworthy aspect that should be considered for economic empowerment initiatives to contribute to empowerment and social equality is the power structure of projects themselves, as hierarchical structures have not only to be challenged in economic social and political institutions but also within empowerment movements (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 109f.). This becomes especially relevant as two of the interviewed women experience the distribution of power within Kallpa Warmi as partly oppressive concerning decision-making processes in which they feel excluded or feeling disadvantaged concerning opportunities given to them in comparison to opportunities given to other members. This reflects the directive's potential resorting to hierarchal structures (cf. Lazzari, 2009, p. 351f.) which have to be overcome to practice feminist, equality-fostering values, feminist leadership and empowerment, but also to form a wider movement that can change social inequality (cf. Batliwala, 2013, p. 53). All women express that they need more cooperation and solidarity and less egoistic ways of thinking for their empowerment process.

6.3 Can Economic Empowerment Foster Empowerment Enabling Social Change?

The aim for more support in between the women and the urge to find social and economic alternatives towards more social equality are being reflected in Mayra's plan to form a joint business for the members of Kallpa Warmi that will allow each of them to benefit from participating in the business, as well as in Vanessa's goal to found a pharmacy and doctors practice to create jobs for women in rurality, that treats patients with traditional ancestral medicine, traditional healthy nutrition and healing plants, or in her project to create a seed bank in order to preserve cultural knowledge about regional, traditional plants and healing methods to preserve indigenous knowledge as well as the traditional flora and fauna. The focal points of these future projects are the participating women and their needs, as well as local culture and ecological preservation, which reflect the aims of solidarity economy, that imagines economy as responsible for serving human beings' needs, instead of human beings being responsible for serving the economy and creating constant economic growth (cf. Bauhardt, 2014, p. 63). The concept of solidarity economy roots in Latin American and indigenous traditional ways of resistance to western capitalist models and consists of self-managed work, redistribution and reciprocity, ecological conscious behavior and democracy and is manifested as governmental economic and social development plan of Ecuador to contribute to *sumak kawsay* or *buen vivir*, grounded in the Ecuadorean constitution (cf. Altvater, 2016, p. 40; Jiménez, 2016, p. 104). Mayra's and Vanessa's project plans, as well as the current integration of the interviewed women into the labor market through income-generating activities such as collectively organized sales at local markets and fairs, or by the women through cooperation created businesses which contribute to their empowerment process and are supported or created through their participation in Kallpa Warmi, are clearly not detached from the capitalist market (cf. Bauhardt, 2014, p. 63). Nevertheless, their planned cooperative projects offer the opportunity to organize and realize economic activities in a manner that sustainably benefits the common good of their community (cf. Bernholt, 2012, p. 131), while their already realized economic activities that are being promoted through their participation in Kallpa Warmi reflect that instead of being exploited for the profit of others and economic growth, the women work for themselves and their needs as well as to fulfill

their aspirations, which they accomplish in cooperation with their collective of entrepreneurs who support each other throughout the whole process (cf. Bauhardt, 2014, p. 63). Thus the aims of Kallpa Warmi concerning economic empowerment through the interviewed women's participation within the labor market is not fully equatable with the simple reproduction of the capitalist market (cf. Biewener & Bacque, 2015, p. 66). Rather their income-generating activities through Kallpa Warmi can be a breeding ground for creating economic activities that are able to support social change and contribute to different dimensions of empowerment.

7. Conclusion

Contrary to the assumption that economic empowerment projects can't foster actual empowerment, as by integrating women into the capitalist market such initiatives only serve to reproduce capitalist structures and create self-sufficient, nonpolitical individuals (cf. Biewener & Bacque, 2015, p. 66), the interviewed women's experiences show that such projects can however significantly contribute to women's empowerment. To do so, initiatives have to incorporate the women's circumstances and needs, create spaces to question their situation and collectively form alternatives for their circumstances, which works best at local level in small women's group settings (cf. Stromquist, 2002, p.26).

Being an indigenous women's collective of female entrepreneurs, Kallpa Warmi offers the circumstances to do exactly that. The participants' needs and demands concerning a life they consider desirable are incorporated into the project's different learning and income-generating aspects. Through capacity building, workshops, and training where the women teach and learn from each other, they search for potential economic alternatives to their current situation and form strategies to create opportunities of income-generation for themselves and for other women living in rurality, which due to various societal constraints have been previously denied to them. Simultaneously, the collective fosters the participants' empowering knowledge and psychological empowerment and thus contributes to their sense of entitlement to follow goals and aspirations, as well as their feeling of being capable of reaching them (cf. Tandon,

2016, p. 11). Further, their growing awareness of feminist values and the importance of equality foster their urge to create equality within their social environment (cf. Lazzari, 2009, p. 352f.), including their home, which, together with their families' inclusion into the project, paves the way for their families' support for their activities. The interviewed women's experiences further make visible that economic empowerment projects can do more than sheer handing out of credits or integrating women into labor-intensive and lower-paying sectors of the job market (cf. Cornwall, 2013, p. ix) which certainly would be rather disempowering. As Kallpa Warmi fosters paid work that consists of for the women meaningful and self-determined activities in non-suppressive settings and allows them to work creatively, incorporate indigenous and ancestral values into their work, participating in the project does not just improve the women's immediate situation but also contributes to multiple dimensions of their empowerment process.

8. References

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8.1 Image Reference

Img. 1 Kallpa Warmi Sayausí. (2018, May 4). Members in from of the joint Café. (digital image). Retrieved from: https://www.facebook.com/KallpaWarmi/photos/a.1059810420781064/1653666028062164/?type=3&is_lookaside=1.

9. Annex: Interview Guide

1. Personal background

How old are you?

Where are you from?

Can you describe the way you are living, your family, how many people live with you?

What are your personal aspirations, goals, agendas?

2. Educational background

How many years of schooling did you complete?

What are your experiences in gaining an education? (things that helped/made it difficult)

What are/were your plans or goals for your education?

Can you describe the things/people that got you closer to reaching your goals and things/people that made it difficult to reach your goals?

Did you make the decisions about your education? If yes, can you describe how you made this decision? If no, can you describe by whom and how those decisions were made?

3. Individually perceived roles

How would you describe your role in your family?

Do you have responsibilities to fulfill, if yes, which ones, and how much time do each of them require?

After your responsibilities, how much time is left for you to gain an education or have a paid job outside your home?

Does the participation in the project interfere with your responsibilities? If yes, is there someone taking over those responsibilities for you, who is this, and how does that change their life?

Is there a difference between the roles of men and women in your family/ community? If yes, how would you describe them?

How do expectations toward your role (as a women) interfere with your participation in the project?

Does your role (as a women) interfere with gaining education or a job? If yes, how would you describe it?

4. Professional background

Have you had your own income before?

What kind of jobs did you have, and which of them were paid?

What are your experiences in getting/having/keeping a job (things that helped/made it difficult)

When you gain an income, do you make the decision on how you spend it? If yes, how would you normally spend your money?

If someone besides you is involved in the decision-making of how to spend your income, how would you describe the process until it is decided how the money will be spent?

When you gain an income, do you buy things that are for yourself?

5. Individually perceived effects of the project

Since when are you participating in the project, and how would you describe its content/purpose?

Can you describe how the participation in the project has affected you, your relationship and your family (life/health/relationships) in general?

How has taking part in the project had an effect on your education?

Since you started taking part in the project, have you gotten closer to reaching your personal aspirations? If yes, can you describe how?

Since you started participating in the project has the way you see yourself changed? If yes, can you describe how?

Has your access to resources changed since you started taking part in the project? If yes, can you describe how?

Has the way you decide on how you spend your income changed since you started taking part in the project? If yes, can you describe how?

Has the way you make decisions in general changed since you started taking part in the project? If yes, can you describe how?

6. Individual perception of power

What does the word power mean to you, and has that changed for you since you started taking part in the project?

How would you define Empowerment?

What relevance has the topic of power in the project you are taking part in?

Do you perceive a certain distribution of power within the organization that operates the project?

How do you think power is distributed in your relationship/ family/ community

In your relationship/family, who makes which decisions?

Do you think your level of power (in areas like your family, relationship, control over your life, job) has changed since you started taking part in the project? If yes, can you describe how?

7. Requirements to participate in the project

What do participants need to take part in the project?

Did you have to acquire certain things/overcome certain obstacles in order to be able to take part?

8. Individual ideas on designing a project

Are there things you would change about the structure /set-up of the project? If yes, can you describe which of them, why and how you would want them to change?

If an organization would ask you, what exactly you need and want so the project is the most beneficial for you, what would that be?

9. Closing question

Is there anything you would like to add, or you feel is important to say?

10. Additional point for the Interview participants who dropped out of the project

How long were you taking part in the project?

Why did you drop out of the project?