

(Re)Negotiating Meaning, Dismantling Patriarchy:

The Politics of Translation in a Bolivian, Feminist NGO

by

Andrea Steigerwald

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Approval

Name: Andrea Steigerwald
Degree: Master of Arts (Anthropology)
Title: *(Re)Negotiating Meaning, Dismantling Patriarchy: The Politics of Translation in a Bolivian, Feminist NGO*

Examining Committee: **Chair:** Pamela Stern
Assistant Professor

Kathleen Millar
Senior Supervisor
Assistant Professor

Gerardo Otero
Supervisor
Professor

Susan Ellison
External Examiner
Assistant Professor
Department of Anthropology
Wellesley College

Date Defended: September 6, 2018

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Abstract

Between 2003 and 2017, Bolivia elected its first indigenous president, redrafted its constitution, “re-founded” the Plurinational State to reflect its indigenous majority, and engaged in a multi-faceted decolonization project. Amidst these transitions, a parallel despatriarcalización project – in short, the dismantling of patriarchy - emerged out of Bolivian, feminist social movements. I employ feminist analyses of NGOs in combination with ethnographic research to examine how State-making projects like decolonization and despatriarcalización are “lived” by employees of a foreign-funded, feminist NGO in El Alto, Bolivia. Feminist NGOs face critique from the Bolivian State and feminist social movements for being colonial, patriarchal institutions. I argue that NGO employees carve out their role in Bolivian State-making through enacting a politics of translation. NGO employees act as translators as they renegotiate the meanings of key terms, such as patriarchy, gender, feminism, and women’s rights, within the Bolivian women’s movement and re-signify despatriarcalización in their daily work.

Keywords: Feminist NGOs; feminist social movements; Bolivia; despatriarcalización; decolonization; gender

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List of Acronyms and Familiar Names

AnA	The AnA Society for Feminist Analyses
FCA	<i>Feminismo Comunitario Antipatriarcal</i> (Antipatriarchal Community Feminism)
FNMCB-BS	<i>Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Bartolina Sisa</i> (The Bartolina Sisa National Federation of Bolivian Peasant Women)
Gregoria Apaza	In reference to the organization <i>El Centro de Promoción de La Mujer Gregoria Apaza</i> (The Gregoria Apaza Center for Women's Promotion)
Gregorias	In reference to the employees of <i>El Centro de Promoción de La Mujer Gregoria Apaza</i>
MAS	<i>Movimiento al Socialismo</i> (Movement towards Socialism)
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
IGO	Intergovernmental organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
TIPNIS	<i>Territorio Indígena Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécore</i> (Isiboro Sécore National Park and Indigenous Territory)
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

Chapter 1

Introduction

What does it mean to “decolonize” Bolivia, nearly two centuries after the end of Spanish colonial rule? In the early 2000s, multiple Bolivian social movements led several major uprisings in large cities known as the “resource wars” (Postero, 2017). The protests translated centuries of resisting colonial legacies into immediate demands for sovereignty over Bolivia’s natural resources, which at the time were mostly controlled by foreign States and multi-national corporations (Postero, 2017). In 2003, despite significant State repression, President Sánchez de Lozada was successfully ousted. In 2005, Bolivia elected a leader of a social movement, Evo Morales, as its first indigenous president. Morales’ election brought decolonization to the forefront of State formation as the primary goal of the newly proclaimed “Indigenous State”. At this time, decolonization signified the unprecedented victory of Bolivia’s oppressed indigenous majority (between 40-60% of the population self-identify as indigenous) over the white-mestizo elite (Postero, 2017). Between 2006-2009, a predominantly indigenous Constituent Assembly convened to redraft the constitution and to “refund” the “Plurinational Republic of Bolivia” to reflect its 36 indigenous nations. Decolonization acted as a rallying cry across Bolivia to confront systemic racism, to reclaim territory, to transform institutions, and to address other lingering impacts of colonization on indigenous peoples (Postero, 2017).

Decolonization not only covers a wide range of demands, but it is strategically (re)defined by both Bolivian social movements and the Indigenous State to further their respective interests. At the heart of decolonization lies the debate about what it means to be indigenous (Canessa, 2005, 2012, 2014; Postero, 2007, 2017; Weber 2013). Indigeneity is about far more than ethnicity, it also concerns class, social status, ways of knowing and being in the world, etc. Decolonization rhetoric is infused with indigenous cosmovisions. Take for example the notion of *vivir bien* or *buen vivir* (Living Well or the Good Life), a concept that resonates with multiple indigenous cultures within and beyond Bolivia. It prioritizes well-being in community and the concept of community includes Nature (Gudynas, 2012, 441). In 2017, the Morales administration continues to evoke decolonization, and specifically *vivir bien*, as an indigenous alternative to neoliberal models of development. But despite the Morales administration’s claim to be

counterhegemonic, Nancy Postero (2017) argues that decolonization has, over time, become a tool for the Bolivian State to further liberal State-making and to police the meaning of indigeneity. This is exemplified by the way the Morales administration enacts *vivir bien* to promote climate change policies that depict indigenous peoples as timeless and homogenous, living in harmony with each other and Mother Earth. Defining what it means to be indigenous in this way meets political ends, but it overlooks and delegitimizes the heterogeneity of indigenous identities, silences opposition, and does not account for the millions of indigenous Bolivians living in urban centers (Fabricant, 2013). Paradoxically, the Bolivian State evokes this essentialized meaning of indigeneity to justify its massive road project being constructed through a national park in lowland¹ indigenous territories, claiming lowland peoples lack access to proper infrastructure (Fabricant & Postero, 2015). The disputed meanings of “indigenous” profoundly impact the direction of Bolivia’s State formation and, in turn, the lives of everyday Bolivian citizens. In this thesis, I return again and again to this simple notion: *Meaning matters*.

During the conflicted Constitutional Assembly process of 2006-2009, as the State and Bolivian society grappled with how to decolonize itself, a parallel project emerged. Decolonization destabilized multiple systems of oppression, providing an opportunity for the Bolivian women’s movement to stake a claim in the State formation process. *Despatriarcalización*, as a concept and demand, was born out of Bolivian, feminist social movements (Galindo, 2013). In short, despatriarcalización meant the dismantling of patriarchy, but like decolonization it was re-signified by a variety of stakeholders. Because of the interventions by feminist social movements, some feminist content was incorporated into the State’s discourse, law, and structure. However, prominent, feminist activist María Galindo (2013) argues that despatriarcalización was (mis)appropriated and stripped of its more radical intent by the State and feminist NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) alike.

I posit that just as decolonization highlights a power struggle over the meaning of indigeneity, despatriarcalización reveals the (re)negotiation of a multiplicity of (sometimes contradictory or inverse) meanings of key words like patriarchy, gender,

¹ Bolivia is divided into two very distinct regions – the lowland Amazon basin and the highland Andes Mountains/Altiplano Plateau. These regions not only indicate major geographical and ecological differences, but also cultural and political distinctions between highland and lowland peoples.

feminism, and women's rights within the Bolivian women's movement. A close look at the distinct meanings of key terms evoked by different stakeholders in the Bolivian women's movement reveals fractures between feminist social movements and feminist NGOs. And it is costly to be divided. Though despatriarcalización is a sister project of decolonization, it is often overshadowed by the State. Without a united front, it is difficult for the Bolivian women's movement to demand that feminist content be a greater priority in shaping the Bolivian State.

In 2017, feminist NGOs are in a particularly precarious position when it comes to participating in Bolivian State formation. Though despatriarcalización and decolonization are in line with many NGOs' goals and well-established programs, these State-making projects present significant critiques of NGOs. Both feminist social movements and the Bolivian State often reduce NGOs to colonial, patriarchal institutions that have a limited part to play (if at all) in Bolivian State-making. Furthermore, the Morales administration boasts close ties between the demands of social movements and the Indigenous State. These ties call into question the role of NGOs as traditional mediators between the State and civil society actors (Monasterios, 2007). Foreign-funded, feminist NGOs are especially targeted because of their international cooperation with western (colonial) States and neoliberal interests, as well as their ties with hegemonic, liberal feminism (García Linera, 2012; Galindo, 2013). Moreover, the funding landscape in Bolivia is such that NGOs are competing for a shrinking pool of both domestic and foreign aid (Ellison, 2018). *The tensions with feminist social movements, the increased scrutiny of foreign connections, the limited funding, and the MAS' "government of social movements" all combine to position foreign-funded, feminist NGOs on unstable ground in terms of their participation in Bolivian State formation. Stated differently, the role of foreign-funded, feminist NGOs is far from a given in projects of national significance in Bolivia, even ones that pertain directly to dismantling patriarchy.* Therefore, my main research question is: *How do foreign-funded, feminist NGOs carve out their role in Bolivian State-making?*

I argue that paying close attention to the struggle over the meaning of terms within the Bolivian women's movement sheds light on what I refer to as NGO employees' "translation work". I build upon Sonia Alvarez's (2014) notion of a "politics of translation" as the movement and transformation of feminist discourses and practices as they travel back and forth across social, political, institutional, disciplinary, and other borders. I

examine the (re)negotiation of the meanings of patriarchy, gender, women's rights and feminism within the Bolivian women's movement, and the multiple interpretations of despatriarcalización in NGO employees' daily work. I demonstrate that it is through a "politics of translation" that foreign-funded, feminist NGOs position themselves as valid contributors to Bolivian State-making. I posit that the despatriarcalización process exposes not only pitfalls, but also unveils positive shifts and potentials for foreign-funded, feminist NGOs in Bolivia.

For my theoretical framework, I draw upon works within and beyond the field of political anthropology. Research regarding Bolivian State formation pertains in large part to decolonization and the important question of indigeneity. Just as despatriarcalización is sidelined by the State, there is relatively little written about it in academia beyond the important works produced by those in the Bolivian women's movement itself, such as Julieta Paredes (2015), María Galindo (2013) and an NGO network organization *Coordinadora de La Mujer* (2012a, 2012b). I argue that a lack of analysis of despatriarcalización results in an incomplete understanding of decolonization and of the Bolivian women's movement's efforts to contribute to Bolivian State-making. In response, my research offers an in-depth analysis of the debates within the Bolivian women's movement that shape despatriarcalización. Though I focus on despatriarcalización, I emphasize that paying close attention to the disputed meanings of key terms is essential for understanding the complexity of *both* decolonization and despatriarcalización as interrelated State formation projects.

In my literature review, I draw upon feminist analyses of NGOs that highlight several case studies of feminist NGOs in context. I also consider that scrutiny towards NGOs' contributions is a geopolitical issue, particularly in authoritarian States (Fikke, 2015; Noakes and Teets, 2018). Though interdisciplinary studies of NGOs consider how NGO actors attempt to legitimize their work in States hostile to their presence, they have little to say about how feminist NGO employees respond when critiques come at them from both sides; from State actors *and* from feminist social movements. My research highlights feminist NGO staff as dynamic actors who generate creative interpretations of despatriarcalización to validate their contribution in State formation. The outcomes of my research have direct implications for the daily work of NGO staff and for State policy in pursuit of a more effective dismantling of patriarchy.

NGO Specifics

My thesis draws upon 3 months of ethnographic research conducted between August and November of 2017. I conducted my research at *El Centro de Promoción de la Mujer Gregoria Apaza* (The Gregoria Apaza Center of Women's Promotion), a feminist NGO based in El Alto, Bolivia. It was founded in 1983, shortly after Bolivia's recovery of democracy after years of military dictatorship. It is an organization that is well-established in the community; it claims that 6 out of 10 El Alto residents have benefited from its services over the course of 35 years ("Historia de Gregoria Apaza", retrieved May 1 2018). It provides a large variety of services such as counseling and legal assistance for women, technical and business skills classes, a daycare, and theater courses for adolescents. It also circulates and publishes a wide variety of materials, engages in policy monitoring, and broadcasts via its own *Radio Pachamama* (Mother Earth Radio). It facilitates meetings between municipal government officials and El Alto community members and is affiliated with a large network of other NGOs in El Alto and La Paz.

The Gregoria Apaza Center of Women's Promotion employs 34 staff members, the majority of whom are university-educated, middle-class women. Many Gregorias live in La Paz and commute into El Alto to work. El Alto is a satellite city, located above the administrative capital of La Paz in Bolivia's highland region. Boasting the highest airport in the world, El Alto is located at 4,100m (13,450ft) above sea level. Especially when viewed by *teleférico* (an aerial cable car, and a primary means of public transportation across both El Alto and La Paz), El Alto is a seemingly never-ending urban sprawl on a flat plateau, surrounded by the Andes mountains. Whereas La Paz is a colonial-era city, El Alto is new; it only officially became a city in 1988. El Alto's population is made up of primarily Aymara and Quechua-speaking migrants who relocated from rural areas. Many migrants came in search of work when they lost their livelihood to grand economic restructuring policies that closed State mines in the 1980s (Lazar, 2010, 30). What began as the "indigenous periphery" to La Paz quickly became a fast-growing "indigenous city" with its own distinct identity (Lazar, 2010, 31).

Bolivia's 2003 "gas war" involved massive public demonstrations that began in El Alto and laid siege on La Paz with widespread roadblocks that cut off the city's food and gas supply. The protests called out the Bolivian State for enabling foreign States and

corporations to exploit Bolivia's rich supply of natural gas (Lazar, 2010). The 2003 protests put El Alto "on the map" on a national and international scale (Lazar, 2010). But they also resulted in its being marked as a "problem city", leading to an increase in foreign aid and democracy programs to redirect its "unruly" citizens, particularly its large youth population (Ellison, 2015). After the uprisings, El Alto quickly became saturated with foreign-funded NGOs directed at addressing its "rebellious", "anti-democratic" reputation.

The majority of people who live/work in and/or identify themselves with El Alto - referred to as *Alteños* - depend on informal labour. El Alto is often referred to as a city defined by its poverty, with many areas still lacking infrastructure. But it is also, in my experience, a city filled with massive markets bursting with life, delicious food, and every imaginable product. It is a place where I enjoyed folk dance classes, jazz concerts, celebrations with friends, indigenous women's wrestling matches, run-ins with packs of scruffy street dogs, and "trekking" (hiking) adventures. And, as I quickly learned, El Alto is a challenging and fascinating site for fieldwork.

The Gregoria Apaza Center of Women's Promotion honors Gregoria Apaza, an indigenous leader and martyr who, along with her brother Tupac Katari and sister-in-law Bartolina Sisa, led a revolt against Spanish rule in La Paz in 1781 ("Historia de Gregoria Apaza", retrieved May 1 2018). I adopt the Center's nickname "Gregoria Apaza" from this point onwards to refer to this NGO. Like the NGO employees themselves, I use "Gregorias" to refer to the staff. My choice of this organization was, in part, because of my interest in how significant transitions in the Bolivian State played out in NGOs from 2003 onward and in how NGOs continue to envision their role in State-making in 2017. El Alto is a city saturated with NGOs and is a site at the heart of the transformation of the State. Gregoria Apaza's website refers to the State transitions and the organization's corresponding goals explicitly. As an organization that is well-networked in the El Alto community and is widely recognized beyond it, several Bolivian connections recommended I collaborate with this NGO. Ultimately, the organization also "chose" me when they took an interest in my research proposal and welcomed me into their "Gregorias" team.

Mapping My Fieldwork

The first part of my fieldwork included daily participant observation at Gregoria Apaza. I was offered a desk in the administrative and executive office (one of several offices and classrooms that make up the Gregoria Apaza Center) where I wrote extensive fieldnotes, read articles and books recommended to me by the staff, and engaged in informal conversations with my colleagues. This office included three separate rooms for the accounting team, administrators, and the Executive Director, Tania Sánchez. These rooms were all connected to a larger open space with five desks, including my own. The other desks were home to four wonderful women responsible for administration, communications, and planning, among other tasks. I shared many *tucumana* pastries, conversations, and laughs with Bertha Quispe, Emma Choque, Elvia Rossio Prieto, and Gabriela Murillo, all of whom were incredibly welcoming and helpful. I would not have been able to organize and facilitate a very important inter-NGO meeting without them! These women and this place acted as the nucleus of my fieldwork from which I would venture out to interview various coordinators and instructors of other programs at Gregoria Apaza. This space provided critical insight into the inner processes of Gregoria Apaza from grant applications, to event planning, to office gossip.

The second part of my fieldwork involved three key meetings. Attending these meetings pushed me beyond the inner workings of NGOs to the external processes taking place outside of its walls. Meetings are a staple of NGO work. First, I attended the *Encuentro de Las Mujeres Alteñas* (The El Alto Women's Meeting) which included municipal government officials, NGO staff, and community members of El Alto. The primary objective of this meeting, organized and facilitated by Gregoria Apaza, was to create a space where the public could present their proposals to the municipality on 4 central issues: 1. Economic Development, 2. Education, Culture & Sport, 3. Health, and 4. Political Participation & Social Control. The second meeting I attended was a set of four seminars facilitated by the feminist activist group *Feminismo Comunitario Antipatriarcal* (Antipatriarchal Community Feminism or FCA, its Spanish acronym). Participants were primarily NGO professionals and a handful of university students. These seminars included presentations by FCA leaders who outlined FCA's position on topics such as the decolonization of feminism, followed by group activities and debates. The first meeting was an opportunity to see the NGO in its collaborative role with the

State and community stakeholders, and the second provided direct insight into the tensions between the work of feminist NGOs and feminist activist groups.

The third meeting I focus on is a *conversatorio* (loosely translated as a brainstorm or focus group) that I organized from my position at Gregoria Apaza as a volunteer and researcher. The attendees included sixteen NGO professionals from organizations focused on women's rights in El Alto and La Paz. Titled *La despatriarcalización: De la teoría a la acción*, its objective was to discuss the successes and challenges of moving from abstract despatriarcalización theory to everyday NGO practices. After two panelist presentations, the conversation shifted to a discussion about patriarchal power operating *within* feminist NGOs. The participants each came to the table with a diverse background of work experience. Several participants were former government ministers who served in Evo's administration, while others had worked for the anarcho-feminist activist group *Mujeres Creando*. All three meetings were a chance to witness the wide network that each employee, and the NGO as a whole, encompasses. The conversatorio was particularly fruitful for my research as I directly encountered the politics of meetings in terms of who (not) to invite and witnessed how the Gregorias carefully crafted the language of invitations.

Ethical Considerations & Data Collection

This research project was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the Simon Fraser University Research Ethics Board. All efforts were made to minimize risk to research participants. My daily field work process included 4 to 5 hours spent at Gregoria Apaza, allowing for 1 to 2 hours of commute time to/from my apartment in La Paz. I recorded brief fieldnotes and then spent an hour or more each day transcribing and expanding my notes to include detailed accounts of interactions and settings (see example in Appendix A). For formal interviews, with the written permission of research participants, I recorded and transcribed the interviews. For informal conversations, I reviewed the key discussion points with participants and asked them if they wished to alter or omit any points. I then acquired their verbal permission to include the agreed upon information, which I recorded in my field notes. Participants were given the opportunity to use pseudonyms, but all preferred the use of their own names. I consulted the Executive Director, Tania Sánchez, on the use of the name of the NGO, and she gave me conditional permission

to use it after being provided with a copy of my thesis. In public meetings, I introduced myself as a researcher and did not include names or other identifiers of participants, unless their name and association were already public knowledge. I recorded the conversatorio with verbal permission of participants. All conversatorio participants were provided with a copy of my contact information and study details outlining their right to withdraw at any time. I then sent all participants copies of the transcription, giving them the opportunity to alter or add to it.

Translations, Positionalities & Word Choices

I elect to use certain Spanish words in my writing that have no direct equivalent in English. The closest but awkward English equivalent of *despatriarcalización* is “depatriarchialization”. As a key term of my research project, I wish to preserve this word in the Spanish form exactly because it is *not* easily translatable into the language of the Northern academy. I do not wish to strip it of its many meanings that are specifically evoked in the Bolivian context. I also elect to use the Spanish word *conversatorio* that is something like a brainstorm, group discussion, or focus group. I struggled to understand the meaning of this word and did not fully grasp it until I had planned one among NGO professionals. I was corrected for not understanding the word when I tried to include too many invitees and didn’t have a focused enough objective. Interlocutors stressed that it was about creating a small, intimate setting where true and intentional *conversación* (conversation, which shares its roots with the word *conversatorio*) can take place. According to the Gregorias, this group discussion was about learning from one another, with each participant having something to contribute. As Susan Ellison (2017) examines, the *conversatorio* is a form of a “model dialogue”, often used for capacity building by NGOs, but it is also a space of contestation over idealized negotiation tactics and the formation of “model” political subjects. In other words, there is no standard way a model dialogue will actually unfold. Indeed, the *conversatorio* I organized, on the one hand, followed a set of steps with panelist presentations and responses from attendees, respectfully voiced one at a time. However, on the other hand, certain voices dominated, some silences were clearly loaded and even dismissive of others, and the central topic of discussion quickly took a different course than planned. Overall, my choice to use Spanish words in my thesis is a constant reminder to both writer and reader that this

research involves and pertains to the challenges of translation between languages and social and academic worlds.

Spanish is my third language, which presented both a challenge and an opportunity for me in my research. I have a less sophisticated vocabulary in Spanish than I do in English. Explaining my research in Spanish therefore automatically cut out the academic jargon that I found myself using when explaining my research project in English. As I stumbled, my research participants helped me find the right words and corrected my mistakes. This positioned them as the “experts” and me as the novice. My imperfectly phrased questions took the pressure off of research participants to respond with “polished” answers; they could speak freely, more assured in the value of their knowledge and experience. My positionality as a young, white woman also undoubtedly impacted my research. There was an age gap between me and many of the Gregorias who took particular concern in taking me under their wing. Gregorias quickly entrusted me with their work, stories, and children, who attended the on-site daycare and would greet me with kisses on our lunchbreaks.

For the duration of my study, I recall standing out daily as the only white person at Gregoria Apaza and in the crowds of El Alto. But whiteness is about more than a phenotype. NGO employees are often associated with the social status of being white-mestizo regardless of the colour of their skin, because NGOs themselves are associated with being white-mestizo run organizations. NGOs’ international funding from western States, coupled with their roots in neoliberal models of development, inform this association. In feminist NGOs, the promotion of liberal (white) feminism, the interests of middle- class women, and the agendas of intergovernmental organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), all further reinforce the association with white/mestizo-ness. The international travel and foreign connections of NGO employees add another layer to the complexity of race as a context-specific categorization. When Latinx NGO employees cross North American borders, for example, they become non-white, “people of colour” and may even be mistaken for being of local Native American heritage (Alvarez, 2014b). The racialization of NGO employees is fluid; it changes as NGO staff move across both domestic and regional borders. Bolivia’s particular history of *mestizaje* - in short, “racial and cultural mixing” - further complicates the question of race in Bolivian NGOs (Rivera, 2010). The Gregorias often joke about their identity in terms of Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui’s signature categories:

The term *cholo/a* is used in Bolivia, generally, to refer to indigenous people who have emigrated to urban areas and live somewhere between the cultural spaces of mestizo and indigenous identity. The term *birlocha* refers specifically to chola women who adopt the dress style and customs of what Rivera refers to in jest as *the refinadas*, the upper-class and formally educated women associated with urban spaces (2010, 51).

Gregorias evoke and complicate these distinctions between ethnic and racial categories, adding and creating their own. However, Gregoria Apaza's location in El Alto, a heavily racialized "indigenous city", still produces a distinct contrast with this NGOs' association with white-mestizo categories.

During my fieldwork, I personally felt the shift in how I was categorized depending on context. My presence at Gregoria Apaza was a point of curiosity for many, but it ultimately "made sense" to Gregorias, because of Gregoria Apaza's foreign connections and its history with international volunteers/researchers. In the feminist seminars, however, I felt more "othered" in the sense that the justification for my presence was not intuited by those around me. Instead I had to spend more time explaining what my research was about before my presence in the seminars "made sense". Bolivian, feminist social movements as subaltern organizations, in contrast with feminist NGOs, are often associated with mestiza and indigenous categories. Even though I was surrounded mostly by NGO professionals in the FCA seminars, the focus on the decolonization of feminism in these seminars heightened my association with western education and white feminism. The seminars were an uncomfortable, humbling, and most of all awakening experience.

When referring to the "Bolivian women's movement" I mean organizations that are run by/for women including feminist social movements and feminist NGOs. To clarify, feminist social movements are a subcategory of the wider Bolivian women's movement. From this point onward, to avoid confusion, I refer to feminist social movements as "feminist activist groups". I therefore use "feminist activists" to refer to members of said "feminist activist groups"². The Bolivian women's movement also includes individuals who identify with feminism and/or women's rights agendas that may

² This is not to say that NGO employees cannot also take on the feminist activist label, many do. But I want to keep the distinction between feminist activists - members of feminist activist groups - and NGO employees - working in feminist NGOs - clear.

not formally be part of an organization or group, as well as those who consult or work directly in the public sector to overcome patriarchal systems.

Feminist activist groups and feminist NGOs are two distinct organizational forms, both as legal categories and in their internal structures (for example, a hierarchical chain of command or consensus-based decision making). I borrow Nancy Postero's definition of "grassroots organizations" to identify feminist activist groups as "membership organizations that represent member's collective economic, political, and cultural interests" (Postero, 2007, 168). NGOs, on the other hand, are "institutions formed to carry out some particular mission like economic development or social justice" (Postero, 2007, 168). Gregorias often referred to their organization, and other NGOs, as *instituciones* (institutions) and feminist activist groups as part of a broader collection of *organizaciones sociales* (social organizations). Feminist activist groups, such as *Mujeres Creando*, would not refer to themselves as institutions, because part of their subaltern identity is to remain "uninstitutionable" (Prada, 2014, 64).

The Gregorias also referred to another type of "social organization" that is an important component of the Bolivian women's movement: "territorial" or "rural" organizations. Research participants used this dichotomy of "urban" vs. "rural" organization to mean a distinction between types of demands. One of Bolivia's most important territorial organizations is the Bartolina Sisa National Federation of Bolivian Peasant Women (FNMCB-BS), which represents peasant women of indigenous heritage with over 100,000 members (Monasterios, 2007). Originally founded in 1980, the "Bartolinas" organize around demands such as indigenous peasant women's increased access to education and land, or sustainable development and food sovereignty (Potter and Zurita, 2009). Bartolinas are concerned with the triple discrimination that indigenous peasant women face for their ethnicity, class, and gender. FNMCB-BS has worked in close alliance with other indigenous, territorial organizations to exert a strong influence on the Morales administration (Rousseau & Hudon, 2017) ³.

³ In 2004, FNMCB-BS agreed to form a "Unity Pact" between five organizations focused on agrarian reform, and indigenous and workers' rights. They represented an influential alliance in, for example the Constitutional Assembly (Rousseau & Hudon, 2017, 46). Though the Unity Pact has worked closely with MAS, the Pact dissolved in 2011 over disagreements with the Morales administration's TIPNIS highway construction project through lowland indigenous territories (Rousseau & Hudon, 2017,49).

Neighborhood councils are another important part of the women's movement, including both men and women, but a significant number of the members are women (Monasterios, 2007). Research participants grouped these councils in with territorial organizations because of their focus on the nationalization of Bolivia's natural resources. Through these councils, women played a significant role in the anti-neoliberal "resource wars" of the early 2000s (Rousseu & Hudon, 2017). Karen Monasterios (2007) states that both the FNMCB-BS and the neighborhood councils come from a non-feminist position and unite around the shared demand for decolonization that appreciates both indigenous positionalities and anti-privatization goals. In sum, the territorial organizations are primarily concerned with sectorial demands or *poder territorial* (territorial power).

The Gregorias maintained that, in contrast to territorial organizations, urban organizations are concerned with more specific demands such as legalizing abortion or ending domestic violence. Their agendas are also shaped more by the middle class and international discourses, such as the UN Convention of Elimination Against all Forms of Discrimination Against Women or the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Monasterios, 2007). A limitation of my study is that I cannot speak to ways urban NGOs like Gregoria Apaza are entangled with territorial organizations. However, the NGO employees, feminist activists, and government officials I encountered all expressed that they have connections with these organizations, especially FNMCB-BS. It is therefore ultimately an issue of the limited duration of my study rather than the lack of access to this part of the women's movement.

I detail what I mean by the "women's movement" because it is often a vague and loosely used term. By employing it I am not assuming that the Bolivian women's movement is united, nor am I claiming that the different components are necessarily moving in the same direction. But I continue to use the singular "movement" rather than "movements" as my work demonstrates that, despite tensions, all components are intertwined. The rise in influence of one often comes at the expense of another. One strand may define itself in alliance with or in strict opposition to the other. Or one actor may participate in multiple parts of the movement at the same time. My work explores how NGO employees participate in the push and pull between different parts of the women's movement in Bolivia. Overall, there is an ongoing motion *within* the movement itself, as well as motion in the ways in which it mobilizes change across society.

Lastly, I elect to use the word “State” with a capital, because it is capitalized in Spanish and State-making is a pivotal concept in my thesis. In referring to the State, I do not delineate boundaries around the top-down State, which encroaches on an entirely separate entity – the progressive, civil society. NGOs themselves complicate this dichotomy as they collaborate with the State, receive funding from the State, and as NGO employees move in and out of positions in the State. Even though they are not a part of the bureaucracy of the State, they are not truly *nongovernmental* either. I follow Nancy Postero (2017) in drawing upon Akhil Gupta’s (1995) notion of the “imagined” State, which argues that the State is powerful in its symbolism and in how people *perceive* the State. Determining where the State begins and ends becomes difficult when talking about perceptions.

Gupta’s (2005) work is part of a broader trend in political anthropology that considers how the State operates “at the margins” or in spaces considered to be outside the State. For example, Daniel Goldstein’s (2016) ethnography of informal markets in Cochabamba, Bolivia argues that even in spaces considered to be beyond the reach of the “formal State”, informal market vendors experience the State’s tangible presence in a multitude of ways. I employ Gupta’s notion of the imagined State when I refer to “State-making” or “State formation”. State-making can involve changing the actual State bureaucracy, such as redrafting the constitution. But Bolivia’s decolonization and despatriarcalización projects also entail reworking who has a say in the State or how everyday people like feminist activists or NGO employees see themselves participating in it. Whether or not indigenous peoples are truly represented by the “Indigenous State”, the use of indigenous symbols by State officials, for example, is powerful for creating the idea of a more accessible government for Bolivia’s millions of indigenous citizens. The State, like the NGO, is not a homogenous body nor an impersonal monolith. Instead, it represents a set of structures, practices, people and perceptions that change over space and time. Social actors, such as NGO employees, do not officially have to be a part of the State bureaucracy to participate in State-making and to envision alternatives to a colonial, patriarchal Bolivia.

Next, in Chapter 2, I expand upon my brief literature review of Bolivia’s State-making politics to further situate my research project within feminist theories of NGOs theory and sociolinguistics. In Chapters 3, 4, and 5 I offer a detailed analysis of the multiple interpretations of patriarchy, gender, feminism, women’s rights, and highlight the

varied meanings of despatriarcalización itself within the Bolivian women's movement. I argue that the Gregorias act as dynamic "translators" as they circulate and transform the meanings of despatriarcalización to define their niche in Bolivian State-making. Finally, my conclusion presents the implications of my research in terms of theory and policy and presents recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

I situate my ethnographic research in the broader context of (a) political anthropology as it pertains to Bolivian State-making, with a particular focus on the decolonization and despatriarcalización projects as they unfolded from 2003 to 2017 and (b) feminist theories of NGOs, which first emerged during the 1980-1990s NGO boom. Nancy Postero (2017) offers a relevant, in-depth analysis of the MAS government, from the 2006 convening of the Constitutional Assembly to 2017, part way through Evo Morales' third term in office. She identifies a shift in how the State evoked decolonization over time; what started as an "emancipatory politics" for the indigenous majority and the new "Indigenous State" became a policing of indigeneity and a form of liberal State-making. Her argument about the change in meanings of decolonization and the question of indigeneity sets up my analysis of the numerous interpretations of despatriarcalización and the debate about gender, and other key terms in the Bolivian women's movement.

Anders Burman (2016) is another Bolivianist scholar who pays attention to the various definitions of decolonization. Burman's (2016) research looks at Aymara ritual specialists' decolonization practices. Though they often perform at State ceremonies, Burman highlights differences in how the State and the ritual specialists define decolonization. He argues that it is not just because of a variation in political positions, but that it is a case of distinct ontologies. Burman examines the Aymara ontology of illness and healing to understand ritual specialists' interpretation of decolonization as a "cure" for the "sickness" of colonialism. Burman (2011) also offers a pertinent analysis of the coloniality of gender in Bolivia and the application of decolonization to the Aymara concept of gender complementarity (*chachawarmi*). First, he highlights "rival voices" in the Bolivian women's movement that debate whether *chachawarmi* was coopted and needs to be decolonized or whether it continued to operate outside of, and in resistance to, colonialisms. Second, he examines feminist activists' concern that the existence of *chachawarmi* as an indigenous concept doesn't reflect the reality that indigenous women endure in their own communities. They are silenced and subordinated in their own indigenous, male-dominated structures, which existed before colonialism. I continue

Burman's important work of examining the implications of various stances on other terms like feminism and women's rights by "rivals" in the Bolivian women's movement.

I ground my research project in Bolivia's complex political scene and I also position it within feminist theories of NGOs to compare it with other, pertinent studies of feminist NGOs in specific contexts. I bring in Laura Grünberg (2014)'s analysis of an NGO she founded in post-communist Romania. I draw a parallel between her work and my research in Bolivia to demonstrate how transitions and crises in States are lived and felt "on the ground" in NGOs. I also discuss Elissa Helms (2014) study of feminist NGOs in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina, which examines the NGO form as a liminal, gendered space. But I primarily build on Sonia Alvarez's work (2014a) because of her expertise in both the pitfalls of and possibilities for feminist NGOs in Latin America. I apply her ideas about the "politics of translation" (2014b) to argue that NGO actors act as dynamic translators that transport and transform feminist practices and discourses back and forth across cultural, political, and personal borders. My research also touches on sociolinguistics when I analyze the multiple meanings of key terms including gender, patriarchy, women's rights, and feminism. I consider how *despatriarcalización* is (re)signified in relationship to these key terms. And I posit that careful attention is due to contexts like Bolivia where "gender" as a word is increasingly scrutinized or even dismissed altogether as part of the western, feminist hegemony.

NGOs and State-Making Projects

NGO research centers on longstanding debates about their connection to neoliberalism, their role in democracy, and their place in feminist organizing. But later, more nuanced analyses challenge previous assertions that NGO agendas are determined by their neoliberal donors and the idealistic notion that NGOs promote a universal democracy as representatives of a "global civil society" (Helms 2014; Ellison 2015). These later analyses also complicate unanimous claims that NGOs "depoliticize" social movements and necessarily exacerbate divides between middle class, white and mestizo/a NGO professionals and working-class, racialized "others" as the NGO's primary constituents (Alvarez 2014a; Murdock 2008). Feminist analyses of NGOs, which previously produced a large share of pertinent NGO critiques, offer a rich contribution to the field of NGO theory that deconstructs and reframes earlier generalizations and assumptions. This body of literature emphasizes the importance of researching the

particulars of NGOs in context, which makes ethnography a valuable research method for furthering NGO theory. Feminist theories of NGOs continue to recognize the close link between NGOs, neoliberalism, democracy, and feminism, but they also consider the social, political, cultural and economic contexts in which specific NGOs (re)emerge, prosper, fail, and adapt (and these not in any particular order) as organizations.

I highlight a few relevant studies of NGOs to provide a comparison with what I observed in my research. Laura Grünberg (2014) discusses the public and private life of a feminist NGO, the AnA Society for Feminist Analyses, which she helped found and run for over 20 years in Romania. She argues that NGOs reflect the history of nations; nationalisms shape NGOs and impact how NGO actors perceive themselves and how they are viewed by the public in relation to other State and non-State actors. Grünberg posits that the State's and the public's perceptions of NGOs have repercussions for NGOs' effectiveness in contributing to issues of national consequence, such as women's empowerment. States in crisis and transition, such as Romania's move from a pre- to a post-communist State, create distinct challenges and opportunities for NGOs to consider. She discusses Romania's process of relearning the practice of civil society after decades of dictatorship and the difficult transition from collectivist, homogenous discourses to individual and human rights-based discourses. Grünberg States that AnA provided a learning ground to gradually figure out how to "do feminism" and democracy in everyday life (2014, 249). Grünberg highlights the growing pains felt by NGOs in Romania as its democracy matured and they had to negotiate an ever-expanding bureaucracy. She also documents the severe obstacles feminist NGOs face when feminism itself is perceived as divisive at a time when a nation is trying to build a new sense of national unity.

Bolivia has similarly experienced massive change and transition, with the uprisings in the early 2000s leading up to the election of Morales in 2005, followed by the signing into law of a new constitution in 2009 and the ongoing State-making projects. Like Grünberg, I argue that national projects in Bolivia are felt and "lived" by the Gregorias in their daily work. Both decolonization and despatriarcalización are incorporated into the foundational principles and strategic plans of Gregoria Apaza. I paid attention to aspects of decolonization in terms of, for example, the public performance of indigeneity, which is woven into Gregoria Apaza's organizational culture. In Chapter 5, I unpack in detail how Gregorias define their NGO roles and lives as

despatriarcalización. But as Grünberg posits, national projects impact not only internal processes and priorities, they also effect how NGOs are perceived. I examine how Bolivian State-making projects inform critiques of foreign-funded NGOs by the State and how they further exacerbate feminist critiques of NGOs which surfaced in Bolivia in the 1980-90s.

NGOs as Liminal, Gendered Spaces

There is a push in feminist analyses of NGOs to move beyond asking whether or not NGOs “do good” as this naturally sets up an oversimplified dichotomy of “good” NGOs vs. “bad” NGOs. A firm grasp on NGO typologies that categorize this extremely varied organizational form remains elusive. NGOs encompass everything from a neighborhood soup kitchen to a multi-million-dollar charity to educate girls, and from an environmental activist group to a faith-based non-profit. NGOs have been referred to as the “third” sector, not fitting entirely in the private or public sectors (Hall, 1991, 147). But as Inderpal & Grewal (2014) suggest, it is NGOs location somewhere “in-between” the private and public sector, with a foot in both the State and civil society, that make them productive spaces for feminist activism. They are “not for profit” but are subject to the rise and fall of global markets as they compete for funding. They are often articulated with international funders but based in local communities, negotiating both domestic and foreign interests. Indeed, it is the struggle to categorize the diversity of NGOs that captures some of their essence as liminal and their need to thrive “in limbo”.

Elissa Helms’ (2014) study of women’s NGOs in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) demonstrates that gender is not only the subject of an NGO, but that it also structures the very institution itself. Helms argues that the label “women’s”, e.g. “women’s NGOs”, is problematically assumed to mean the same thing, regardless of the context. Despite donor expectations, organizations run by/for women do not necessarily undermine context-specific gender roles. Helms posits that many BiH women’s NGOs operate as legitimate spaces for women in terms of traditional family values, because they are perceived as outside the for-profit, public world. Therefore, they offer “appropriate women’s spaces” where women can socialize with other women. In this way, Helms argues they are an adaptation of women’s groups that first formed under socialism. She addresses the paradox that women are empowered by participating in traditional “women’s” activities, like cooking and sewing, in NGO settings. Gregoria

Apaza likewise offers baking and knitting classes (among others). However, as in the case of the BiH NGOs, women often come to Gregoria Apaza to register for classes, but they end up accessing other services as well, such as counselling for domestic violence and legal advice. Moreover, when “women’s work” is paired with business know-how and taught as a set of profitable skills, it gives it value and undermines the patriarchal system that dismisses the worth of women’s labour. NGOs are liminal in that they both operate within *and* subvert gender norms. Both Grünberg and Helms’ works are key examples of the shift in feminist analyses of NGOs to carefully deconstruct the contexts in which NGOs are embedded. My research is a deliberate continuation of this trend.

The Politics of Translation

I primarily build my theoretical framework on the work of Sonia Alvarez, who takes a keen interest in the diffusion of feminist discourses and practices. She is a feminist scholar specialized in Latin American NGOs and she offers both valid critiques of and promise for feminist NGOs. She engages in self-critique (2014a) by reflecting on her own 1998 argument about the problems with a process she, and other scholars, termed “NGOization”. She clarifies that by NGOization she did not simply mean an abundance of NGOs, but also an unprecedented promotion and sanctioning of the NGO form by States and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). For example, the UN organized numerous summits, such as the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing, that brought NGOs to the forefront as a recognized space for feminist organizing.

Alvarez (1998) originally identified three problematic trends of NGOization in Latin America in the 1980s-1990s: (1) NGO employees were consulted as “gender experts” forming a gender “technocracy”⁴ which overshadowed citizen's groups advocating on the behalf of women's rights (2) NGOs acted as surrogates for civil society. States and intergovernmental organizations saw them as a powerful agent of democratic reform and a key participant in both a national and “global” civil society. But NGOs’ role as “stand-ins” for civil society silenced and depoliticized the very voices they

⁴ Gender technocracy is a term “coined by Latin American autonomous feminists as a useful concept to distinguish the elite of professional women working in NGOs from what they considered an authentic feminist movement, struggling from a fundamental anti-patriarchal position” (Monasterios, 2007, 33)

claimed to represent (3) States subcontracted feminist NGOs to advise or carry out government programs, which caused a switch to monitoring policy and sidelined advocacy. This set of NGO critiques was applied in numerous ethnographic contexts across Latin America over time and found to hold merit. For example, Donna Murdock's (2008) ethnographic research of a working-class women's community center run by a feminist NGO in Medellín, Colombia, expanded upon Alvarez's earlier analysis and spoke to the ongoing challenges of cross-class organizing in light of the professionalization of feminist NGOs.

Despite the value of Alvarez's original NGO critiques, Alvarez (2014b) herself highlights her own assumptions in her earlier 1998 argument. She challenges her own assertions, along with blanket statements made by other NGO critics, which deny the "hybridity" of feminist NGOs. Alvarez concludes: "there is no twenty-first century iron law of NGOization in Latin America" (2014a, 299). She posits that feminist NGOs act as important "nodes" in wide networks that "help to interweave disparate feminist actors and articulate them discursively" (2014a, 289). Alvarez argues that NGOs not only mobilize but produce feminist knowledge (e.g. NGOs have the resources to collect important data and analyses necessary for effective feminist advocacy in a variety of settings) (2014a, 290). Alvarez highlights that NGOs are becoming more introspective and are moving beyond policy monitoring towards changing public opinion and local patriarchal values. NGOs are also shifting from a focus on projects (with a definitive start and end date) to ongoing processes in the wake of anti-globalization and anti-neoliberalism movements (both of which are very pronounced in Bolivia). The vision of a "global civil society" is being interrupted by counter-hegemonic models of development and democracy. Alvarez also discusses how the subject of the NGO (e.g. the working class, indigenous woman) is fashioning other feminisms and is therefore not just a passive recipient of western feminist discourses. This is certainly the case in Bolivia where feminist activist groups reject western individualist feminisms and promote community-oriented feminisms. Alvarez's work helps situate the critiques I encountered in the FCA seminars in the problematic patterns of NGO work across Latin America at large. I apply both Alvarez's concerns and hopes regarding the work of feminist NGOs to my case study.

In her reflection on feminist NGOs, there is a glimpse of Alvarez's broader interest in the "decentering of feminisms" (2014a, 291). She develops this further in her introduction to the edited volume *Translocalities/Translocalidades: Feminist Politics of*

Translation in Latin/a Americas (2014b). She describes the “politics of translation” as a process whereby feminist discourses and practices travel and transform as they move across cultural, geopolitical, national, disciplinary and other borders. The book destabilizes Latin America as a delimited territory and breaks down the North-South dichotomy of the Americas. Translocality captures the theories and subjectivities of the “in-between”, which is fitting for understanding NGOs as a liminal, *translocal* space. It goes beyond transnationalism, which still implies a sense of bound nations that are traversed. It also describes how people and ideas move multi-directionally – constantly going back and forth between localities. This is a costly and perilous process causing subjects to be transformed. This book is particularly concerned with the heterogeneity of *Latinidades* (Latin American identities) that are produced as a result. Alvarez states that translocality is closely tied to postcolonial/decolonial theory, but she adds that a feminist paradigm is necessary to call out how hierarchies are maintained *within* subaltern cultures and *between* decolonial subjects like indigenous or Afro-descendent peoples. The value of the feminist lens in identifying power structures within groups resisting oppression is demonstrated by another chapter in the same anthology by Ana Rebeca Prada (2014). Prada identifies *Mujeres Creando*, a Bolivian anarcho-feminist activist group, as challenging even the most radical social movements for being patriarchal, homophobic and misogynistic. She argues that the founders of this group engage in an unprecedented, feminist politics of translation from their subaltern position as lesbian women of colour. I apply Alvarez’s politics of translation to capture how the Gregorias renegotiate the meanings of gender, patriarchy, women’s rights, and feminism, and reinterpret despatriarcalización in their daily work.

Alvarez (2014b) identifies a political subject she terms a *transloca*. *Translocas* originally referred to the research group of Latina and Latin American(ist) feminists which produced the anthology. “*Trans*” captures both the idea of between and across, as well as transgressive and queer. In Spanish, “*loca*” translates as mad/crazy/wild/hectic. With the “a” ending it also has a feminine connotation. *Transloca* is used as a metaphor for the experiences of translocal women and the “maddening” process they undergo of trying to make sense of new places, categories, and identities (2014b, 3). Alvarez argues that *translocas*’ travels and translation efforts are pursued not only out of necessity and survival, but are also “driven by affect, passion, solidarity, and interpersonal and political connectedness” (4). I hope that my research participants will

see themselves in my writing as they relate to being *translocas*. They often commented on their everyday work as chaotic, endlessly busy or *una locura* - demanding so much of their time, energy and even sanity. But they endure because of their passion for improving the lives of women, their deep love for their country, and their comradery (which was lavishly demonstrated during birthday sharing circles in the office), among other motives. I witnessed how the Gregorias constantly move between locales in their travels between La Paz and El Alto, between their own rural towns and urban centers, from conferences in small towns in Bolivia to global summits in Uruguay. They move between jobs in government agencies, IGOs, and other sectors. And they translate between a multitude of actors as intermediaries for NGO constituents and government officials and between feminist activist group's critiques and their own NGO practices. They create encounters between a variety of age and ethnic groups and embody opposing understandings of feminism within one organization. As Alvarez discusses, *translocas* also constantly translate themselves to their families, sports teams, communities, governments, etc. It is no wonder that their work is so demanding when translation is a part of every aspect of their lives!

Finally, I identify myself as a *transloca* and my research itself is an act of translation. In the more traditional sense of the word, I translated between languages - from Spanish to English and vice versa. And some of my research participants translated Aymara and Quechua, the two most prevalent indigenous languages in El Alto, for me into Spanish. The Gregorias also constantly engaged in cultural translation as they showed me how to travel on chaotic public transit systems, how to barter, eat *salteñas*, and play the sport "wally". I then translated this abundance of ethnographic encounters into academic writing, which was a difficult task that did not do justice to all I experienced and learned. Applying Alvarez's politics of translation to my own research and writing helps capture how laborious and transformative of an endeavour it was.

NGOs, Sociolinguistics, and the Language of Development

My focus on the politics of translation involves a close analysis of the language used by the Gregorias and one of the key terms I focus on is gender. Bonnie McElhinny (2014) offers a critical analysis of the assumptions made about gender that shaped gender studies in the field of sociolinguistics and beyond over time. She traces gender over time as (1) problematically linked to the sex binary, thereby reinforcing

heterosexuality as natural, (2) misunderstood as an attribute instead of as a learned practice or performance, and (3) as biased towards the study of individuals rather than systems or institutions. She specifically emphasizes that NGOs are one of many institutions that are understudied, that research is needed to analyze institutions that self-categorize as distinct from the State, and that studies of institutions need to bring to the forefront how they are entangled in transnational processes. McElhinny argues that studies of language and gender can fill this gap and that such studies are especially productive when they pay attention to western, hegemonic understandings of gender that have dominated at the expense of other perspectives. My ethnographic fieldwork is a direct response to McElhinny's critique as it provides a study of an NGO with a focus on gender and language, one that pays attention to how NGO employees evoke the State. I add to her argument about western biases by positing that researchers have not paid enough attention to whether "gender" is in and of itself a term that is increasingly scrutinized, regarded with suspicion, or even dismissed entirely.

I consider which words are used in conjunction with gender and which words replace it altogether in the context of the Bolivian women's movement. Ines Smyth (2007) asks a similar question in her work on the language of development organizations. Smyth is particularly concerned with the "fear of feminism" in organizations like Oxfam that use the word selectively, if at all. Smyth also discusses gender, which she argues has been emptied of meaning by its loose and inappropriate use in development organizations that vaguely address "gender issues". But Smyth holds on to a hope for gender as a term if used with more clarity and consistency and she argues it could bring the "two worlds" of feminist activists and feminists/others working in development organizations together (2007, 284). Smyth also posits that a source of innovation is switching from gender to a focus on women's rights. I argue that Smyth does not account for how women's rights and gender as concepts are irrevocably tied to western origins, which stops them from unifying a Bolivian women's movement that is deconstructing these dominant paradigms.

Cornwall's (2007) ideas about the buzzwords of development are relevant as she specifically addresses how buzzwords like gender act as "fuzzwords" in masking their local origins, biases, contested meanings, political agendas, systems of domination, etc. She states that to identify a fuzzword is to consider words for which there is a "general agreement on the abstract notion that they represent but endless disagreement on what

they might mean in practice” (2007, 471). Her work looks at the use of words like “gender”, “empowerment”, “good governance” or “best practices” in development organizations. She offers multiple options for how to address these fuzzwords, one of which is paying attention to how meaning is created by how words are used in conjunction with each other or by “thinking of words in constellations” (2007, 482). Likewise, I examine which fuzzwords surround and thereby shift the meanings of despatriarcalización.

Next, I turn to a detailed analysis of a selection of key terms I encountered in the Bolivian women’s movement to reveal a power struggle over meaning. Ultimately, I demonstrate that the Gregorias translate despatriarcalización into their daily work in order to etch their meaningful contribution into Bolivian State-making. I rely on a range of ethnographic excerpts of conversations with research participants to support and bring this argument to life.

Chapter 3

Despatriarcalización: Deconstructing Patriarchies

Sixteen leaders of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the neighboring cities of El Alto and La Paz, Bolivia are seated around a large round table. The wall of windows provides a stunning view of the bustling Sopocachi neighborhood of La Paz, a center of embassies, universities, bars, and bohemian cafes. Bright yellow gondolas carry passengers across the city to escape the traffic on congested streets below and the Illimani, one of the tallest mountains in the Andes, looms in the background. This big view is welcome as we pull our chairs in elbow to elbow in this small space to listen to Tania Sánchez, Executive Director of Gregoria Apaza, welcome and thank each of us for our participation. This conversatorio is being held to celebrate success stories and to discuss obstacles to the despatriarcalización process in the daily work of NGOs. Tania introduces the first panelist speaker, María Ángela Sotelo of the Coordinadora de la Mujer (Coordinator of the Woman) - an organization that forms a network of 20+ NGO affiliates across Bolivia focused on women's rights. María Ángela begins by defining despatriarcalización as follows:

The *desmontaje* (dismantling) of patriarchy, confronting the structural causes of the oppression of women (the exclusion from power and political participation, the cultural and symbolic system that discriminates and subordinates women, violence, obstacles to self-determination, economic dependence, inequitable access to resources, income, opportunities, ignorance of the contribution of women, devaluation of domestic work and care), eliminating the power of domination of men and building equality between women and men.

The “dismantling”, in reference to patriarchy, is one translation of *desmontaje*, but this word has more connotations beyond the idea of taking something apart. What despatriarcalización means and who should lead the initiative is not agreed upon in the Bolivian women's movement. But feminist activists, NGO employees, and government officials all use the verb *desmontar* in their definitions. This word implies a taking down or “dismounting” – as in the act of dismounting someone (Patriarchy) from his horse.

There is also the idea of the *montaje* – an assembly or a staging. In this way, *desmontar* can be thought of as the disassembly of patriarchy as an elaborate performance or set of practices⁵. As per María Ángela’s definition, despatriarcalización is an intervention in the “structural causes of oppression” or the system-wide practices of patriarchy. María Ángela named specific acts of disassembling patriarchy like changing cultural symbols, reducing the economic dependence of women on men, and increasing women’s political participation.

Next to speak at the conversatorio was the second panelist, Patricia Flores Palacio. Patricia serves on Gregoria Apaza’s board of directors and started off her presentation by positioning herself as a feminist and social researcher. She walked us through the development of despatriarcalización as a discourse, naming specific scholars and Bolivian writers, and argued that too often this discourse is evoked without recognition of the complex debates that shaped it over time:

It is as if despatriarcalización emerged today out of nothing. And, unfortunately, I think that as a society, as the academy, as movements, we have maybe not had the time to recover, between parentheses, the good practices of our pre-Hispanic past. If we are talking about an overlapping process of despatriarcalización and decolonization, what are we [actually] talking about? Neither have we done a re-reading of colonial documents, of the myths that are still present in the imagination, to see from which moment in time we can recover [these practices] so that we can construct our new platform that allows us to really advance a decolonial and depatriarchal outlook.

To put despatriarcalización in context, Patricia urged the group to remember its close link to the term decolonization. She highlighted the need to recover elements of Bolivia’s pre-colonial past in order to envision a decolonized and depatriarchalized Bolivia for the future. In doing so, Patricia captured a key argument in the politics of decolonization: colonialism persists centuries after independence from Spanish rule through the minds of Bolivia’s colonial subjects, reproducing through the imagination itself. And yet there is

⁵ This echoes Judith Butler’s (1988) argument that gender identity is constructed by way of our repetitive performance of gender; our miming of gender conventions. In *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler elaborates on gender identities as iterative - developed over time, by incremental, even unconscious deeds. Gender as performance is therefore never a single act, but a series of acts, “a ritualized production”, that perpetuate or subvert a specific identity (1993, 95). Throughout this process of becoming, gender is constrained, but not determined. Similarly, patriarchy can be thought of as iterative performance or set of daily practices, with despatriarcalización as an intervention in the small acts of daily life.

hope that a pre-colonial memory endures, continues to resist, and can now be recovered. Patricia's comments raise two important questions: 1. Looking back: Where did despatriarcalización come from and in what historical moment did it emerge? 2. Looking ahead: How do "we" (as NGO professionals, as Bolivians, as women, etc.) construct a decolonized and depatriarchalized Bolivia?

State-Making Projects as lived in NGOs

The transitions in Bolivia over a 15-year period are remarkable, from the 2003 uprisings against the Sánchez de Lozada government, to Evo Morales' controversial push in 2017 to change the constitution so he can be re-elected for a fourth term. This timeframe was preceded by the significant influence of social movements, unions, and neighborhood councils., etc. But I emphasize this 15-year timeframe as research participants focused on these years when talking about the major changes they witnessed first-hand. I argue that Gregoria Apaza as an organization cannot be understood outside of the national projects of decolonization and despatriarcalización. I build on Laura Grünberg's (2014) account of her work with a feminist NGO, AnA, which she helped found and run for over two decades in Romania. Grünberg emphasizes the need to understand the historical moments in which NGOs are born and the national processes at work that shape how they mature. She argues that State projects are felt or "lived" by NGO employees and impact their daily work.

The 35-year history of Gregoria Apaza is captured on its website in five chapters. Gregoria Apaza actively promotes itself through its website and social media platforms, which are all updated regularly to reflect its latest campaigns and projects. The first chapter of Gregoria Apaza's history details the organization's origins in 1983, during a period of re-establishing democracy in Bolivia after years of military dictatorship. Gregoria Apaza's mission statement upholds the values of liberal democracy with an individual right-based focus, whereby men and women are free to exercise their equal rights. The website also references the re-founding of the State and its subsequent national projects as characterizing its fifth era, shaping its strategic plans and priorities. During my fieldwork, Gabriela Murillo, Gregoria Apaza's Planning Coordinator, showed me a flowchart she created to represent how all the institutional processes flowed into one another. Feminism, despatriarcalización, decolonization, and interculturalism were

marked as the four foundational pillars of all of Gregoria Apaza's work. The website and the flow chart are two examples of how the language of State-making is woven into the institutional language of Gregoria Apaza.

One aspect of decolonization that is incorporated into Gregoria Apaza's organizational culture is the public "performance" of indigenous practices in the NGO space (Postero, 2017). The first time I arrived at Gregoria Apaza in August 2017, I noted the lingering smell of smoke - the remnants of a sacrifice burned to honor the *Pachamama* (Mother Earth). The Gregorias explained that, according to Aymara and Quechua indigenous cultures, the *Pachamama* is said in to "open her mouth" during the month of August. She receives gifts of gratitude, because she is tired and in need of nourishment after the harvest. The ritual burning occurs, literally, within the walls of Gregoria Apaza. I was also honored to participate in an *aptapi*, hosted by Gregorias who self-identified as Aymara. Somewhat like a "potluck", this indigenous practice involves each person contributing a dish and sharing with the collective. In classrooms that teach indigenous crafts, tables used to design and sew *polleras*⁶ were pushed aside to make room for a small group of employees and class participants to gather. An astonishing variety of potatoes, plantains, meats, bread, fruit and several bottles of Coca Cola were laid out on colourful *aguayos*⁷. Graduation ceremonies were another example of the spectacle or performance of indigenous identities. The story of Gregoria Apaza, the organization's indigenous namesake, was shared. And course graduates took selfies with their families, decked out in their best *polleras*, and the customary bowler hats, alpaca shawls, and gold jewelry. Decolonization didn't mark the beginning of indigenous cultures being a part of Gregoria Apaza's institutional history. However, Gregorias stated the organization's fifth chapter represents an unprecedented pride and celebration of interculturalism.

Grünberg claims that national projects impact not only what goes on in the day to day of an NGO, but that they also shape how organizations like Gregoria Apaza are perceived. Decolonization's anti-imperialist discourse informed the Morales administration's rationale for speaking out against NGOs. In his book *Geopolitics of the*

⁶ The *pollera* is a traditional indigenous skirt made of layers of coloured fabric.

⁷ *Aguayos* are made of colourful woolen fabric which women of all ages use to wrap around their backs and carry children, groceries, products to sell in the markets, etc.

Amazon (2012), Vice President Álvaro García Linera accused NGOs in Bolivia of being “organizations of other governments on Bolivian territory” (2012, 9). In the name of environmentalism, human rights, etc., NGOs in Bolivia have spoken out against the Morales administration, especially with regard to the hotly debated TIPNIS project (a State initiative to build a massive road through lowland indigenous territories). The TIPNIS protests undermined the decolonization project as they accused the MAS of “internal colonialism”, with Morales acting as the head of a highland indigenous elite oppressing lowland indigenous groups (Canessa, 2014; Fabricant & Postero, 2015). The tense position of NGOs vis-à-vis the Bolivian State spiked in 2013, when the Bolivian State expelled Danish NGO, IBIS, for political interference associated with TIPNIS. A law passed, also in 2013, that requires all foreign and domestic NGOs in Bolivia to (re)register with the State and to reveal their funding sources (Achtenburg, 2015). In 2015, four more NGOs were threatened with expulsion by García Linera, because of their ties to foreign governments and multinational corporations (Achtenburg, 2015). The Morales administration has especially targeted US funding. In 2008, Evo accused USAID of “political meddling” which ended diplomatic ties between the countries (Ellison, 2018). These State threats were tied to specific political issues like TIPNIS and the US “war on drugs” that targeted Bolivian coca farmers. But these instances brought the ties that NGOs have with foreign funders into the State’s spotlight.

The suspicion towards NGOs is a geopolitical issue, particularly pronounced in authoritarian States. According to Geir Fikke (2015), President Putin’s administration has created “precarious conditions” for NGOs in Russia. As of 2012, NGOs receiving foreign funds must register as “foreign agents” or face dissolution, or even imprisonment, and are subject to “unannounced and invasive State inspections” (2015, 103). In 2016, China passed a similar law requiring foreign-funded NGOs to register and to find a Chinese sponsoring agency. Noakes and Teets (2018) argue that international NGOs operating in China adapt by changing their institutional structures to partner with local policymakers and by collaborating with domestic government initiatives to build trust. All of these cases are real-world examples of a longstanding critique within NGO theory, which asserts that NGO agendas are ultimately shaped by the interests of their funders and specifically by those of (neoliberal) imperial States, such as the US and western EU countries (Petras 1997).

In sum, Gregoria Apaza is shaped by nation-wide transitions in terms of its daily operations and the ways in which the decolonization project questions its legitimacy in the eyes of the State. As a recipient of grants from countries like the Netherlands, Gregoria Apaza is subject to the scrutiny directed at foreign-funded NGOs. The State critiques are coupled with earlier assertions by Bolivian feminist activist groups that feminist NGOs de-radicalize the women's movement (Alvarez, 1998). But why the State adopted its position on NGOs as suspect in this specific historical moment is in part due to a larger narrative of decolonization, one that pertains to the alleged close relationship of the State to previously oppressed social movements.

Under the Morales administration, both NGO "critics" - the State and social movements - began to work together in unprecedented ways. Morales rose to power as a leader by way of social movements' increasing influence. The MAS, what would become the governing party in Bolivia headed by Evo Morales, emerged out of an indigenous-peasant movement with its roots in the demands of *cocaleros* (coca-growing farmers) (Albro, 2005). *Cocaleros* were migrants, primarily of Quechua and Aymara descent, who lost their livelihood after neoliberal policies in the 1980s closed State mines in favor of privatization. The *cocaleros* faced repression from the US-funded "war on drugs" which put pressure on the Bolivian State (coca is the raw ingredient used to make cocaine, but it also has many traditional uses in indigenous cultures). The *cocaleros* united around both their ethnic status as indigenous and class status as peasants (Albro, 2005, 439). Moreover, they successfully articulated their movement in terms of the wider public concern over the effects of neoliberal policies that negatively impacted more than just indigenous-peasant groups.

In the early 2000s, Bolivian social movements' push for anti-neoliberal reform and sovereignty over Bolivia's natural resources was demonstrated through massive public demonstrations and road blocks which stopped bustling cities in their tracks. In 2000, protests against water privatization in Cochabamba overturned a private corporation's monopoly over the city's water supply. And during the Black October of 2003 in El Alto and La Paz, uprisings called out the foreign control over Bolivia's rich supply of natural gas. Once former President Sánchez de Lozada was forced to flee, the strength of social movements paved the way for Evo Morales to be elected in 2005. The MAS agenda focused on decolonization as a means to establish a "post-neoliberal" State. And the Morales administration became known as the "government of social

movements” (Albro, 2005, 440). Overall, decolonization responded to the alienation between oppressed groups and the State, seeking to close the gap that a distant, neoliberal State actively maintains.

The promise of a “government of social movements” remains, in more ways than one, unmet. Feminist activist groups, for example, continue to accuse the government of patriarchal practices. Yet self-identified indigenous, feminist activist Julieta Paredes contributed in important ways to, for example, the 2008 National Plan for Equal Opportunity, which brought feminist discourse directly into the State arena. During my fieldwork, feminist activist groups like FCA met with State representatives to present their proposals. What this means for NGOs is that decolonization and despatriarcalización interrogate the need for NGOs to take up their traditional mediating role, as social movements have more direct access to the State than before. Bolivian State-making projects necessitate that NGOs like Gregoria Apaza either insist on the relevance of their intermediary position and/or take up new roles. Again, State-making projects inform NGO work in terms of internal processes and external perceptions of their purpose.

Patriarchies and Origin Stories

The Virgin of Desires feminist café is located on a bustling street in La Paz. The building is impossible to miss as it is elaborately decorated, painted pink with baroque-style balconies. The walls are adorned with a naked woman peering inside the window between her legs, two kissing llamas in traditional indigenous women’s bowler hats, and a heterosexual couple framed by a broken heart with a slogan graffitied below: “We celebrate divorce!”. This café is run by the Bolivian anarcho-feminist activist group *Mujeres Creando* (Women Creating) and is also home to María Galindo, one of the movement’s key founders. Galindo is an activist known for speaking out against the oppression of women by Catholicism, heteronormativity, NGOs, and the neoliberal State. She was characterized as the pinnacle of “radical” feminism by everyone from the Gregorias to Bolivian peers whom I met in folk dance classes to international researchers who cautioned against interviewing her. Though her militant reputation precedes her (one I think she would proudly embrace), Galindo was simultaneously recognized by all as crucial to despatriarcalización. And I was encouraged to learn more about her radio show and the books she published for my research.

Galindo's activism sheds light on how despatriarcalización was born and came to be a parallel project of decolonization. Her signature line is: "*¡No se puede descolonizar sin despatriarcalizar!*" (You cannot decolonize without depatriarchalizing!). This phrase was sprayed in the signature black, cursive graffiti of *Mujeres Creando* across city walls in La Paz. Galindo's book *A Despatriarcar!* (2013), which followed shortly after this provocative intervention, outlines her critique of the colonial and patriarchal nature of the State. She argues that the deconstruction of patriarchy in all its forms is vital for effective decolonization. Moreover, she posits that *the State cannot possibly decolonize or depatriarchalize itself*. She claims that despatriarcalización was a concept born of her authorship and in the context of collective conversations of the *Mujeres Creando* movement during the Constitutional Assembly process (2014, 25). Her book emphasizes that her intervention was intended to reinvigorate the "rebellious and provocative spirit" and to "recuperate the definition of the feminist agenda" (2014, 12). She accuses NGOs and the State of appropriating despatriarcalización, stripping it of its "spirit", and placating the women's movement. Returning to Patricia's comments at the beginning of this chapter, Galindo enters the debate about recovering a pre-colonial past by arguing that *the Bolivian State and society were patriarchal before they were colonial*. In other words, patriarchy existed long before the Spaniards set foot in Bolivia and therefore romanticized notions that decolonization alone will rid society of patriarchy are false. For example, she critiques the way that the concept of gender complementarity (*chachawarmi*) in the Aymara indigenous cosmovision, often proudly evoked by the Morales administration, obscures the exploitation of indigenous women. Patriarchy is not a byproduct of colonialism, rather colonialism exacerbates it. The implication of Galindo's work, then, is that despatriarcalización is not to be implicit or characterized as a subproject of decolonization, it is of equal if not of more importance in creating a just society.

Patriarchy as A System or THE System?

To understand the stories of despatriarcalización is to recognize that there is more than one understanding of how the system it seeks to deconstruct, patriarchy, first emerged and continues to reproduce. María Galindo's (2013) work sparked an important debate about patriarchy's origins. I identify patriarchy as one of the key terms in a

complex power struggle about the meaning of language in the Bolivian women's movement that has repercussions for the roles of stakeholders in State formation.

When I asked Gregorias to tell me about the time they first heard the word *despatriarcalización*, they would start by recounting a version of Bolivia's decolonization politics. Though decolonization brought racist structures to the forefront, it also destabilized other entrenched systems of oppression. Gregorias talked about how decolonization "opened up government"; it became more accessible and transparent. To the Gregorias, *despatriarcalización* and decolonization appeared to be inseparable projects, forming an intersectional agenda that would deconstruct systems of patriarchy and racism in the State and society at large.

But Gregorias followed up their lesson about decolonization politics with a fact intended to shock: the word *despatriarcalización* doesn't appear, not even once, in the 2009 redrafted constitution! It only appears briefly, they would continue, in the 2010 Law of Education. This was a small consolation in light of their hopes for a law of *despatriarcalización*, which never passed. When the new constitution was signed into law, a Viceministry of Decolonization was instituted under the Ministry of Cultures and Tourism. Below this Viceministry lies the Unit of *Despatriarcalización*. This is where the problem begins, they urged, as this small unit is hidden away and receives little funding. A second branch of government, the Ministry of Justice, includes the Viceministry of Equal Opportunity, with an Office of Gender and a Unit of Women. Because the two Viceministries are not articulated, explained the Gregorias, *despatriarcalización* became a diffused rather than a concentrated effort. Ultimately, *despatriarcalización* is lost in the bureaucracy of the State.

These two accounts, one by María Galindo and one by a set of NGO professionals, each have different implications for who is ultimately responsible for the *despatriarcalización* process. Feminist activists like Galindo argue that the State, and by association its NGO affiliates, cannot *despatriarcalizar* themselves, which leaves feminist activist groups as the only actors who can truly lead *despatriarcalización*. For NGO employees, on the other hand, the State needs to reconsider its approach to *despatriarcalización*, and, as I will demonstrate, NGOs position themselves as the ultimate State collaborators.

My research with Gregoria Apaza provided access to a wide network of NGOs, municipal and federal government officials, and leaders in Bolivia's feminist activist groups. The director of Gregoria Apaza, Tania Sánchez, encouraged me to attend a four-session seminar facilitated by Adriana Guzmán, a founder of the feminist activist group *Feminismo Comunitario Antipatriarcal* (FCA). FCA formed in 2017, but its leaders and rhetoric come from a complex background of numerous partnerships and splits within the Bolivian feminist community that lead back to the founding of *Mujeres Creando* in the 1990s. Seminar attendees were primarily women who worked with NGOs (employees, consultants, etc.), as well as a handful of students from local universities. According to the invitation, objectives of these seminars were: (a) to establish a space of debate as an act of decolonizing feminism in Bolivia, allied with similar efforts across *Abya Yala* (an indigenous term used instead of Latin America), (b) to provide useful categories and knowledge in struggles against patriarchy, and (c) to highlight despatriarcalización as an antipatriarchal and community-oriented fight. The tense debates that ensued between participants highlighted how language was evoked by FCA as an intervention in NGO terminology and State discourse.

In our first seminar, facilitator Adriana provided a historical overview of the women's movement in Bolivia, drawing attention to specific Bolivian, indigenous women in history who established an important precedent for later struggles against the patriarchal system. Though this history was familiar to me, it was the first time I heard it collectively, as a part of a Bolivian audience, instead of in a one-on-one conversation. Adriana repeated the words "do you remember" throughout her narrative, identifying it as the story of the women in the room, rather than as an abstract history. She spoke of the "memoria that lives in our bodies" - the body acting as a vehicle by which women carry the weight of patriarchy and the strength of generations of fighting it.

"We need to talk about patriarchy more", Adriana continued the following seminar. She argued that too often we try to define despatriarcalización as the solution, without first discussing the meaning of the problem, patriarchy, itself. The risk, she warned, is that despatriarcalización loses its ability to be deeply transformative of society. Adriana engaged the group in a debate exercise to demonstrate her point. The seminar was split into two and each was assigned an argument. The group of three I was a part of, all of us students or young NGO professionals, was asked to define despatriarcalización by defending patriarchy as THE system of domination. The other

group, a larger crowd of middle-aged NGO professionals, was asked to do so by defending patriarchy as A system of domination. My group jumped in with a clear sense that we were on the “right” side of the debate. In a previous seminar, Adriana had drawn a house on the board, marking patriarchy as the roof with the pillars of colonialism, gender, racism, and capitalism holding it up. We eagerly recounted our understanding of this diagram, arguing that patriarchy was THE system of all systems of domination. “But why?”, neither Adriana or the other group was convinced. The second group then countered that patriarchy was A system of domination; it was one of many, because race, class and gender were intersectional categories and therefore formed intersectional systems of oppression that could not be pieced apart and put into a hierarchy. Adriana listened intently to each side. “Yes, these systems overlap”, she responded. But then, looking back at my group, she continued: “and yet through all of these systems, *patriarchy was constructed, reproduced, and sustained by way of the woman’s body* [my emphasis]”. She explained that all these systems provide new tools that perpetuate the same relations of power between a dominant masculinity and an inferior femininity, profiting off of the exploitation of women’s bodies and Mother Earth. Therefore, she argued, women need to reclaim their bodies, and to recover the *memoria* that they carry within it, to truly transform THE system. The debate continued after this exercise, quickly becoming heated, with each side repeating different versions of the same argument.

The tense debate that ensued raised the following questions: Why was the use of THE or A in defining patriarchy as [blank] system such a small but significant difference? What was at stake here? Moreover, *who* was at stake? I posit that to pinpoint patriarchy as THE system of all systems justifies the importance of feminist agendas. It follows that despatriarcalización becomes the most fundamental project in Bolivian State-making. In other words, despatriarcalización is not just a debate about what patriarchy is or isn’t as a theoretical exercise, but a negotiation of meaning that has implications for *who is actually going to do it*. Defining patriarchy as THE system of domination is coupled with the argument that every part of the State’s structure is implicated and that therefore the patriarchal State (and NGOs by association) cannot be its own antidote. Evoking this meaning of patriarchy necessitates that feminist agendas and the feminist activist groups in which they manifest are imperative for an effective despatriarcalización process.

Despatriarcalización: ¿Políticas Públicas y/o Lucha Social?

Upon arriving at the Coordinadora de la Mujer (Coordinator of the Woman), I am greeted by a large sign over the reception desk that reads: “This is an anti-sexist organization”. A smiling receptionist quickly hands me a steaming cup of coca tea. This tea is the local remedy for altitude sickness, and she is right to assume that my being out of breath is due to my slow adjustment to walking the hilly streets of La Paz, located at a breath-taking altitude of 3,600+m (12, 000+ft). María Ángela Sotelo soon ushers me into her office for our interview, a much-anticipated meeting as Gregoria Apaza’s director assured me she is an “expert” on the topic of despatriarcalización.

The *Coordinadora de La Mujer* is a network organization; an alliance between NGOs that María Ángela explained “defend the rights of women across the country”. María Ángela is the Coordinator of Planning, Evaluating, Monitoring and Knowledge Management. In 2011-2012, she organized a school of despatriarcalización and decolonization to equip leaders about “what it means to give flesh and blood to the concept of despatriarcalización”. It involved women from rural and urban areas, of a wide range of ages, ethnicities and educational backgrounds, who co-created their own curriculum as they learned from each other about their everyday experiences of patriarchy and their strategies to overcome it. She since organized several more national and international meetings between academics, social movements, NGOs, and government officials (see *Coordinadora de La Mujer*, 2012a).

In the interview, María Ángela emphasized that the school and the (inter)national meetings resulted in 5 key calls to action for despatriarcalización as a *horizonte político emancipatorio* (an emancipatory political outlook) (see *Coordinadora de La Mujer*, 2012b). It needs to be “emancipatory”, she explained, so that it breaks free of “patriarchy as a form of political, economic, religious and social organization based on the idea of the authority and leadership of men over women, in the public as well as in the private”. Including the word “political” is essential here too, she added, as one of the biggest barriers to the despatriarcalización is that it has become depoliticized. What first emerged with so much potential impact quickly became absorbed into the bureaucracy of the State and turned into a source of division rather than unity in the women’s

movement.

A few weeks after this initial interview, María Ángela presented as one of the panelists for the conversatorio. Her presentation included a photo of a table with many legs. The table, she said, is patriarchy as “a system of oppression”, and the legs represent economic dependence, structural violence against women, exploitation of women’s work, the symbolic and cultural reproduction of patriarchy, lack of visibility and recognition of women’s contribution in history, etc. The next slide included a large picture of a saw and the words “we need to eliminate these legs!”. It was a visual representation of patriarchy that, in some ways, was similar to the house drawn on the board in the FCA seminars. Both visuals represent systems with deeply entrenched pillars that need to be cut down. And yet María Ángela’s PowerPoint then jumped to another visual depicting patriarchy as “A system”, or one of many tables, alongside, instead of above, two other intersectional axes of domination: colonialism and capitalism.

María Ángela’s presentation was a flash-back to the debate about patriarchy in the FCA seminars, when Adriana remarked that intersectionality was “a dangerous and neoliberal concept”. This warning was counter-intuitive to me as someone educated in the western academy, where intersectionality acts as an important critique of the problematic universalism of first and second wave feminism. It breaks down the assumption that all women experience patriarchy in the same way, thereby emphasizing the heterogeneity of the experience of systems of domination. For example, a woman of colour experiences the weight of multiple, intersecting axis of domination differently than a white woman. Similarly, in the context of the conversatorio, recognizing the complexity of this intersectional nature of patriarchy with other systems of oppression was presented as a necessary precursor to concrete, effective action towards despatriarcalización. A focus on the intersectionality of despatriarcalización articulated the work of NGOs like Gregoria Apaza with a variety of State initiatives to address, for example, racist and capitalist systems of oppression. And yet, just as despatriarcalización became depoliticized in the blur of bureaucratic processes, so too it is arguably de-politicized by its “intersectionalism” which blurs the origins and centrality of dismantling patriarchy as THE feminist project.

The FCA seminars and the conversatorio meeting between NGO professionals were both places of learning and debate about despatriarcalización. But small nuances in language used by these different actors were striking. In defining patriarchy, words like intersectionality were celebrated in one context and dismissed as oppressive in another. I argue that the disagreement over the definition of patriarchy is indicative of a deeper struggle in terms of how the Bolivian women's movement relates to the State. Different actors in the women's movement disagree on whether despatriarcalización is primarily a case of *políticas públicas y/o lucha social* (public policy and/or societal struggle).

For over 30 years, Gregoria Apaza has published an extensive list of books, instructional videos, theater performances, pamphlets, etc. on a range of topics related to their goals and programs. In conversations about despatriarcalización, I was frequently guided by Gregorias towards a selection of sources which, in their opinion, were the most relevant. The book *Descolonización y Despatriarcalización en la Nueva Constitución Política* (2010) (Decolonization and Despatriarcalización in the New Political Constitution) speaks most explicitly to my research topic. One of the authors of the text is Idón Chivi, a prominent spokesperson for the Viceministry of Decolonization. It is written in colloquial language, but clearly explains complex concepts like coloniality and the geopolitics of knowledge. It cites multiple Bolivian and international academics, however it argues that “we are going to look at decolonization as more than an academic debate, rather it is primarily [an issue of] public policy because this is what the State does” (Chivi & Mamani, 2010, 23). It concludes: “In synthesis, decolonization is the concentration of State efforts to combat racism and patriarchy” (2010, 25). Despatriarcalización is defined as: “also material for public policy...in order to make patriarchy visible, in all its manifestations, to diminish its intensity, and, eventually, eliminate it” (2010, 30). What is evident in this book is that decolonization and despatriarcalización are considered fundamentally State-directed initiatives. It justifies the State as the most important actor because it goes on to name the process of decolonization (which by its definition includes despatriarcalización) as its very purpose and function.

It was made clear to me by the Gregorias that Gregoria Apaza changed considerably between 2010, when the book was published, and 2017, because of its

shifts in projects, leadership, and high staff turn-over. The book is notably silent on pre-colonial patriarchies, focusing instead on the manifestation of patriarchy alongside colonialism. This limited idea of patriarchy's origins, along with its overemphasis on public policy, doesn't necessarily reflect the Gregorias' position in 2017. However, written by State representatives and published by the NGO, this book is a prime example of State-NGO collaboration nonetheless. The Chivi and Mamani source is not explicit about the place of NGOs in State-making. But it is in and of itself indicative of the NGO's role in dispersing (State) knowledge to educate the public about State-making and to explain complex terminologies used by academics, government officials, and NGOs in everyday language that the public can understand.

Chivi and Mamani's (2010) book also represents a particular political moment in Bolivia, shortly after the conclusion of the Constitutional Assembly. As per Nancy Postero (2017), at this time, decolonization was about emancipatory politics: the deconstruction of systemic racism and the celebration of long-oppressed groups being represented by the head of the State for the first time in Bolivian history. Postero (2017) argues that decolonization has since become a form of liberal State-making and that the "Indigenous State" is not "post-neoliberal" as it claims to be. And yet despite the Morales administration's continuation of earlier ways of governing, in 2017, many Gregorias still hold on to the idea of the State as the one ultimately accountable for social welfare. Gregorias do not appear to uphold the ideal of a distant neoliberal State that outsources social services to other sectors in the name of efficiency. Instead, they capture a more socialist understanding of the State that the MAS party *claims* to be. This is the essence of Akhil Gupta's (1995) "imagined State" – a State so powerful in how it is perceived or imagined by everyday people. Gregorias talk about the accomplishments of the Morales administration, but simultaneously express their disappointment over a lack of regulation measures that ensured the new constitution and legislation were upheld and put into action. These accounts indicate less of a sense of the doomed State, set to perpetually fail, and more of a *frustration over unmet potential or what the State has yet to achieve*. The answer to the State's unmet potential is not necessarily described as solely increasing efficiency (though that would be appreciated), or as sectors like NGOs and their overworked employees doing the bulk of the social justice work. Instead, Gregorias imagine a partnership and shared responsibility between the government and NGOs. Gregorias often picture the State as a "work in progress", validating their critical

role as collaborators and mediators in despatriarcalización and other intersectional projects.

Karen Villaroel is a licensed psychologist and is part of a team that offers counseling services to Gregoria Apaza's constituents. She is also a key facilitator for the adolescent theater program. Before joining Gregoria Apaza in August 2017, she spent six years working for the municipal government and focused on addressing violence against children and adolescents (in terms of judicial processes, government services, etc.). In an interview, she emphasized that despatriarcalización must be taught starting at an early age and in engaging ways that help young learners to understand how it applies in their everyday lives. She explained that effective programming for teens ensures that "the discourse is the same" - in the home, in school, in the NGO, etc. Gregoria Apaza addresses this by running workshops for parents and educators. Karen urged that NGO programs complement the work of the State, at a municipal and national level, to address issues like patriarchal violence throughout family and community life. Her words capture how multiple Gregorias imagine their partnership role as part of a larger State-led effort: "*Esta entidad debería hacerlo pero no alcanza entonces ONGs necesitan apoyar*" (This [State] entity should do it, but they have not achieved [it]. Therefore, NGOs need to support [them]). Her comment first asserts that the State "should" do it; they are ultimately accountable for addressing violence and paving the way for despatriarcalización. Her use of *alcanzar* (to achieve or reach) is a fitting verb for how the State's reach in society is often portrayed by NGO actors as wide but not complete. In the meantime, as I discuss in the following chapter, NGO actors use the gender approach as a tool/method/approach to "fill the gap".

This collaborative focus between the State and NGOs was also clearly demonstrated in a meeting facilitated by Gregoria Apaza between local government officials, representatives of six NGOs based in El Alto, and other community stakeholders. It was titled the *Encuentro de las Mujeres Alteñas* (The El Alto Women's Meeting) and was intended to be the first of many more meetings of its kind in the future. It created space for women in the community to present their proposals to the municipal government directly on four central issues: 1. Economic Development, 2. Education, Culture & Sport, 3. Health, and 4. Political Participation & Social Control. First, several Gregorias, and a representative of the Municipal Secretary of Social Development, Blanca Mendoza, each presented on an aspect of gender equity in El Alto. As panelists,

the Gregorias acted as educators with PowerPoints focused on teaching participants and providing fuel for discussion. After a brief question and answer period, participants split into discussion groups to draft their list of recommendations on each central issue. Throughout the *Encuentro*, the Gregorias organized logistics, facilitated discussions, and handed out cups of hot *api* (a drink made of corn and spices). They acted as facilitators and key mediators between participants and the State as they conducted the busy work of organizing and running the meeting.

In a grand performance of collaboration, the meeting ended with Blanca Mendoza listening to the final list of proposals and making a verbal declaration that she was committed to what was shared. She stressed the word “alliance” as definitive of the relationship between the State and the meetings’ participants. Representatives of several NGOs based in El Alto were in attendance. Cameras flashed as each NGO director present came up to the front of the room to shake Mendoza’s hand. It was a means for women in the community to witness the NGO as a direct link to the State. This spectacle of collaboration highlights the ways that NGOs publicly perform their partnership with the State. Nancy Postero (2017) argues that decolonization involves lavish, public performances or spectacles of indigeneity. The notion of a spectacle is helpful in understanding how NGOs not only talk about but perform their collaborative role with the State in a grandiose manner. In the *Encuentro*, Gregorias’ collaborative role did not connote that they acted as “stand-ins” for civil society actors. This meeting created space for collaboration, but it also made room for contestation. The attendees of the public were not passive bystanders. Instead, they actively engaged in putting together proposals for the municipal government that reflected *their* demands and pushed back on some of the facilitation methods of the Gregorias⁸. In these kinds of meetings, the Gregorias orchestrate critical links between the wider public, in this case El Alto community members, and the State. In doing so, they negotiate their role in the

⁸ I purposefully use the word “facilitate”, instead of lead, to describe Gregorias’ roles in the *Encuentro*. Attendees of the public followed NGO “procedures”, but they also contested and renegotiated the unspoken rules of how to engage in an “productive” meeting when they stood up to speak directly to government officials, went on long lunch breaks, and spoke over facilitators. In response, the Gregorias, in some ways, enforced the way the meeting was “supposed” to run, and in other ways, they adapted and created spaces for open, flexible means of sharing to unfurl. Overall, this meeting was as much a collaboration between the State and the NGO as it was a negotiation process between NGO professionals and the attendees. For more on NGO meetings as spaces of contestation, see Ellison’s (2017) work on conversatorios as “model dialogues”.

despatriarcalización process as pivotal networkers that create meeting places between a variety of stakeholders.

To summarize, despatriarcalización first emerged out of Bolivian feminist activist organizations during the conflicted 2006-2009 Constitutional Assembly process and in response to the State's decolonization goals. Despatriarcalización began as a debate about the origins of patriarchy. Feminist activists argued that a decolonized Bolivia which romanticized the past would not address pre-colonial forms of patriarchy.

Despatriarcalización debates have since become concerned with patriarchy as the ultimate priority or THE system of all systems, as per the feminist activist groups like FCA, or with patriarchy as A system; an intersectional issue or one of many priorities, as per feminist NGOs like Gregoria Apaza. These small variances in language, I posit, indicate a difference in how these actors imagine the State and their subsequent role in State-making. Feminist activist groups seek to make demands and keep the State apparatus, one that is ever-colonial and patriarchal in its nature, accountable by remaining independent of it. Their independence sets them apart from feminist NGOs which, they argue, may be coopted by the State. Feminist NGOs, on the other hand, pursue partnerships with the "work-in-progress" State to validate their role as educators, collaborators, mediators, and allies. They attempt to change the State from *within*. Their cooperative focus distinguishes them from feminist activist groups which, they assert, may resist, and inhibit the State.

Overall, the decolonization and despatriarcalización projects impact Gregoria Apaza in terms of their internal processes and priorities. But these projects bring into the spotlight critiques of NGO work by both the Bolivian State and feminist activist groups. The Morales' administration's claim to have a close relationship with social movements (like FCA) threatens the traditional mediating role of NGOs between civil society actors and the State. In response, feminist ONGs have to push for the legitimacy of their influence on State formation. A close look at the key term "patriarchy" reveals a power struggle within the Bolivian movement over the meaning of language as stakeholders try to establish their unique contribution to State-making and despatriarcalización in particular. The Gregorias publically perform their roles as educators/facilitators/

/mediators/collaborators with the State, demonstrating their ability to create valuable spaces of collaboration and contestation between NGOs, El Alto community members, and the State.

Chapter 4

Despatriarcalización and/or Gender Equity: Complement or Contradiction?

“Why is gender even included here? It’s a category of analysis, not a system of domination like the others [capitalism, colonialism, racism]! Gender is what allows us to do the analysis, to understand these systems of domination. Maybe I have more of an academic understanding [of gender], but I do not agree...” (Participant of the Feminismo Comunitario Antipatriarcal seminars)

As I write my thesis at Portland State University library, I can choose from multi-use, binary (male or female) or all-gender bathrooms. Posters across campus advertise events that subvert gender norms and celebrate LGBTQ+ diversity. At my part-time job with Multnomah County, the largest county of Portland’s municipal government, I must sign off on an extensive policy explaining the difference between transgender, gender non-conforming, gender expansive, gender pronouns, gender expression and gender identity. In all these contexts, “gender terminology” is ascribed new meaning to create space for diversity and to call out exclusion, discrimination, and harassment. The concept of gender, first developed in the academy, takes on new significance as it is applied in the everyday life of student advocacy, government rhetoric, or the development discourse of NGOs, etc. (Cornwall 2007). Within the academy, it is also a dynamic concept. Bonnie McElhinny (2014), for example, examines the important historical shift in academia from studying what gender *is*, as an attribute, to investigating *how* gender *does*, as a practice. In other words, researchers moved from examining how gender *describes* difference to how it *produces* difference. McElhinny highlights how gender research is limited by western hegemonic biases as its tendency to focus on the individual actor comes at the expense of inquiries into how gender operates at a collective and institutional level. What is consistent in my daily encounters and in McElhinny’s analysis is that gender itself, as a word, remains central to deconstructing systems of oppression. As in the quote above, gender *enables* analysis. *For how can gender be a system of domination itself when it is exactly the tool or lens needed to explain and debunk oppressive systems?*

This question is at the heart of a complex gender debate that is a source of friction between Bolivian feminist activist groups and NGOs focused on gender equity in El Alto and La Paz. Like patriarchy, gender is a key term in a bigger negotiation process about the meaning of language in the Bolivian women's movement. First, I discuss Gregoria Apaza's "gender approach" and the FCA's stance on gender equity to set up the different sides of the debate, with gender as a means or obstacle to despatriarcalización. I then narrow down a broader politics of language and build on Sonia Alvarez's (2014b) notions of translation and translocality to capture NGO actors' as dynamic translators operating in NGOs as "in-between" spaces. I argue that Gregorias act as translators between regions, cities, languages, academies, etc. and even translate themselves within their social worlds.

Putting Gender to Work: NGOs and the "Gender Approach"

Género y equidad de género (gender and gender equity) were terms used frequently and across all programs of Gregoria Apaza. Gender was defined *both by what it is and what it is not*. Tania Sánchez, the Executive Director, described gender as a mechanism, tool, instrument, and method. She urged that it is not a political position like feminism. It is not a *tema* (theme or topic) (i.e. gender is not an isolated "issue") because it is *transversal* (i.e. at the core of or at work across all parts) in society. Tania's descriptions of gender were made in the context of an interview by a visiting Spanish scholar studying the Morales administration's "gender laws". These laws, the first of which passed in 2005, addressed, for example, the requirement for municipalities to allocate "gender equity funds" and the protection of women against 16 forms of violence (physical, emotional, sexual, spiritual, etc.). Tania argued that though these laws were a great step forward, gender [inequity] was not going to be "fixed" by laws alone and required transformation *de fondo* (bottom up). She perceived the "gender approach" as "grassroots", implemented on the ground in the everyday work of NGOs. Gender terminology was introduced to Bolivian NGOs in the mid-1980s, when international cooperation funds were increasingly channeled through NGOs in the name of "gender in development" (Monasterios, 2007).

Conversations with multiple coordinators of Gregoria Apaza's key programs highlighted the *enfoque de género* (gender approach) as integral to the NGO's daily operations. The Daycare Program Coordinator, Marisol Paredes, for example, described how the gender approach involves encouraging all children to play with the same toys (e.g. giving girls access to cars and action figures, not just dolls or other stereotypical "feminine" toys). Children read stories with messages about equality and are taught from a young age that particular trades and professions are not limited to a specific gender. Another example is the *brigadistas* program, which incorporates the gender approach through offering classes to teens with interactive activities that educate them about gender equity and sexual/reproductive rights. The goal is to prevent teen pregnancy, address sexism, and provide resources for responding to and preventing violence, particularly violence against women. These teams of adolescents then perform in local schools to share what they have learned with their peers.

Gregoria Apaza offers a range of courses to teach skills such as baking, knitting, *pollera* and shoe-making. The majority of the participants are young adult women and many are also *señoras de pollera*⁹. Elissa Helms' (2014) study of women's NGOs in Postwar Bosnia Herzegovina (BiH) argues that women's participation in NGOs is, in part, because NGOs offer socially acceptable spaces for women to socialize and participate in traditional activities like sewing or cooking. In this way, women can participate in NGOs exactly because NGOs fit into gender norms as gendered (i.e. women's) spaces. But Helms adds that women can simultaneously be empowered as entering the NGO space often also introduces them to feminist discourses and practices that challenge gender norms. Similarly, women participate in "traditional" women's activities at Gregoria Apaza, but by coming to the center they also gain access to, for example, learning about worker's rights and business skills. As Carla Gutiérrez, Coordinator of Economic Autonomy and Labor Rights emphasized, the courses

⁹ Literally meaning "women of the *pollera*", this term describes women who wear the traditional indigenous skirt. *Polleras* are often accompanied by other signature accessories such as bowler hats, which can denote a special occasion and/or economic status. Research participants described the term *señora de pollera* to me as the more politically correct term for *cholita* – an indigenous woman of the Andean region of Bolivia. *Cholita* is used more often in everyday conversation, but it can also be a derogatory term depending on the setting. Women may self-identify as indigenous and choose to not wear a *pollera*. Other terms that indicate important, politicized distinctions are *pueblos originarios* (original peoples) to refer to highland native groups, and *pueblos indígenas* (indigenous peoples) to refer to lowland native groups.

themselves include discussions about how to work towards gender equity in the family and in Bolivian cultures at large. In this way, Gregoria Apaza both operates within and subverts gender norms.

Sonia Alvarez (2014a) noted a shift in feminist NGOs' towards addressing the cultural, patriarchal constructs that are specific to their local contexts as an important turn away from NGOs relying too heavily on international conventions and policy monitoring to produce change. Likewise, Carla Gutiérrez talked about the importance of addressing contextualized ideals of womanhood by inviting family members of course participants to participate in workshops addressing patriarchal gender roles. Daniel Vargas, Gregoria Apaza's Administration and Finance Coordinator, commented that the hardest part about despatriarcalización is that it "starts in the home". Therefore, the inclusion of the whole family is imperative. Classes at Gregoria Apaza equip participants with the business skills to generate their own income. When women have an independent source of income, Carla explained, it gives them the option to leave a violent partner and financially support their families. She also argued it provides a more predictable, secure livelihood than selling in El Alto's informal markets. Carla concluded that gender equity is reliant upon improving women's economic autonomy.

These examples of how gender is talked about by Gregoria Apaza's program coordinators all reinforce Tania's description of gender as an instrument or tool - applicable in any external program offered to the public as well as internal NGO processes. In sum, Gregoria Apaza's gender approach brings a multi-generational, multi-ethnic collective of constituents together into the NGO network. But I posit that defining gender as an approach is more than just a means to run accessible programming and build a diverse constituency. Again, it is a productive way for NGOs like Gregoria Apaza to capture their "gender approach" as a bottom up, grassroots effort that corroborates with the State-wide despatriarcalización process.

By observing the specifics of Gregoria Apaza's programs, talking to coordinators about their work, and attending meetings with NGO partners I witnessed how the gender approach is constantly being regenerated in various aspects of Gregoria Apaza's programs. Gregorias expressed that the gender method was the means to gender equity and despatriarcalización, two terms which were sometimes used interchangeably. One research participant, for example, defined despatriarcalización as *equity* in terms of "all

of us being people”, “respect between people” and “preventing inappropriate exercises of power”. What is the actual difference (if any) between gender equity and despatriarcalización? Can one be achieved without the other? What does despatriarcalización offer (if anything) that gender equity does not?

Feminist Activists Bury Gender Equity

“The technocracy of gender and gender equity is embraced by NGOs. Though it results in more visibility for women, it doesn’t change the reality of violence and patriarchy...Gender equity is a dead term” (Adriana Guzmán, Facilitator, Feminismo Comunitario Antipatriarcal seminars)

This comment from the FCA seminars speaks, in part, to a long-standing critique in the academy about NGOs’ “gender experts”. This critique concludes that NGO professionals form an elitist group, often made up of white/mestiza, middle-class women. These women employ a gender lens that depoliticizes the struggle of more radical feminist activist groups and exacerbates the divide between NGO professionals and constituents as working-class women of colour (Alvarez, 1998). It is possible to apply this critique to the FCA seminars by drawing attention to how particular white/mestiza NGO employees debated with the self-identified indigenous feminist activist facilitating the group. These participants pushed back condescendingly on FCA’s stance, arguing that gender was perhaps applied problematically in the past, but concluding that it remained a viable method for achieving a more equal society. But I posit that this image of class and race power struggles alone does not capture other, critical dynamics at work that position these actors in a multi-faceted politics of gender. It too quickly flattens the analysis by not giving careful attention to how gender was defined and debated in the context of these seminars:

Gender is a prison imposed upon the body. There is a masculine and a feminine prison, which includes social roles and expectations; definitions of what is feminine and what is masculine. The masculine prison exists but it is more valued than the feminine one... A man can do something feminine and its more valued, just look at, for example, male chefs! Gender is a prison because it is inherently about unequal relationships of power and subordination.

In Marxism, class denounces equity. It doesn’t talk about the classes being equal, it talks about classes being transformed and overcome. So too with gender. We envision a community without genders. Even if we include

more genders, it is still the same problem. You still, for example, have the masculine dominating the feminine in a lot of homosexual relationships¹⁰. Patriarchy lives on.

As per the excerpts above, FCA articulates gender as *profoundly political*. In NGO contexts like Gregoria Apaza, the gender approach or method is employed as an outflow of the feminist political position. Stated differently, gender is considered to be implicitly political by its association with feminism. But the Gregorias rarely emphasize gender's political nature or its foreign roots in their day to day work. The Gregorias' definition of gender as an instrument quickly renders it neutral, a valuable tool exactly because it is applicable in any program and in any context. FCA, on the other hand, demands an explicit recognition of the origins of the term gender. It posits that gender cannot be pulled apart from the foreign, neoliberal development discourse, first perpetuated by the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Bolivia. Gender can also not be teased apart from the hegemonic, liberal feminisms of the academy and gender equity NGOs. As an alternative, FCA evokes Marxism to call for freedom from the "cages of gender" and the burial of gender equity – a term that is dead because it is neither an achievable, let alone desirable outcome. Gender equity cannot be the goal, according to FCA, because gender itself exists and reproduces by way of the superiority of the masculine and the inferiority of the feminine. Both genders experience the limits of their "prisons", FCA argues, but women are particularly exploited as they are forced into the less valued "feminine cage". True societal transformation, therefore, is to forgo the inherent relations of subordination that make up class and gender. To overcome patriarchy is not to create room for more gender categories and expressions, but to abandon gender altogether.

Like my discussion of intersectionality in the previous chapter, the literature and everyday western rhetoric of gender often assumes it is ultimately a term that is emancipatory (if it is re-appropriated and makes room for diversity). I add to Bonnie McElhinny's (2014) argument, that western hegemonic biases shape the studies of

¹⁰ This is a personal comment as Adriana Guzmán is a self-identified lesbian woman who, in March of 2017, spoke out against her former partner, Julieta Paredes. In a highly publicized statement, she accused Paredes of committing patriarchal violence in their relationship and in the organization which they founded together - *Feminismo Comunitario*. It is at this point that the organization split and Adriana, along with other former members, formed their own *Feminismo Comunitario Antipatriarcal*. This is another example of how language is used to differentiate between actors, in this case *within* the community of feminist activist groups.

gender in the academy, by positing that researchers have not paid enough attention to whether “gender” in and of itself is a term being scrutinized, deconstructed, and perhaps even, as in this case, dismissed entirely. Its birth and development in the western academy alone makes gender far from an apolitical term. The story of gender is certainly not singular – actors like FCA arguably evoke an incomplete history as they ascribe gender solely to the western hegemony. For example, there was no mention by FCA of any nonhegemonic feminisms, such as black, queer or indigenous feminisms, being present let alone significant in the Northern academy or development discourse. But the question is less about identifying the “true” histories of gender as a concept and more about identifying *how the meaning of gender is constructed in specific ethnographic contexts and to what end*. Contexts like El Alto, Bolivia are particularly interesting as there is such a stark contrast between how actors in the women’s movement theorize gender.

Noting gender’s absence is just as important as noting its presence. What words are being used instead and why? Ines Smyth (2007) makes a similar point as she examines the language of development organizations: “what are the terms that are being used or deleted from daily spoken and written language in the field of international development?” (583). Smyth posits that in development organizations gender is used loosely and inappropriately, which empties it of meaning. But Smyth holds on to a hope for gender if used with more clarity and consistency and she argues it could bring the “two worlds” together in terms of feminist activists and feminists/others working in development organizations. What Smyth misses is that gender may have the potential to unite women’s movements in some (western) contexts, but it is highly unlikely to do so in contexts like Bolivia where movements like FCA make it clear that gender will not be “raised from the dead” as the language of unity and freedom.

Sociolinguistics and specifically studies of the language of development raise suspicion about words applied as if they have universal meanings and application. Cornwall’s (2007) concept of buzzwords as “fuzzwords” unveils how words like gender mask their local origins, biases, contested meanings and political agendas. She argues that it is critical to reveal where these fuzzwords come from and how they are evoked by development organizations. Cornwall offers multiple options for addressing these fuzzwords, one of which is paying attention the creation of meaning when words are used in conjunction with each other or “thinking of words in constellations” (2007, 482).

Cornwall's recommendation is helpful as I consider how the meaning of gender is evoked in partnership with or in juxtaposition to the meaning of *despatriarcalización*. FCA's critique of gender equity, for example, as foreign, neoliberal, and oppressive makes way for an "authentic" Bolivian, transformative concept of *despatriarcalización*. According to FCA, *despatriarcalización* is a worthwhile endeavor, because it, unlike gender and its neoliberal ties, is a concept born and bred "close to home". In other words, FCA's definition of gender as "other" sets up an ideal contrast with *despatriarcalización* as a word that is "ours"; that came out of Bolivian, feminist activist organizations and the struggles to form a new State. It becomes a term that embodies the specific cultural and political landscapes of Bolivia that gender obscures. FCA argues that gender equity is not only contradictory but counterproductive to *despatriarcalización*. In doing so, feminist activist groups like FCA implicate NGOs focused on gender equity and position themselves as the primary actors able to lead an effective *despatriarcalización* process.

Introducing a Politics of Translation

The debates I witnessed in the FCA seminars indicate how the politics of gender in the Bolivian context cannot be simplified by the generalization that "professionalized" NGOs simply oppress "radical" feminist activists. FCA boldly named the gender technocracy argument, which calls out the elitism of gender "experts" that run development organizations, to an audience primarily made up of NGO actors. Feminist activist groups are far from a passive "victim". The FCA seminars created a space of provocative debate that brought different, even opposing ideas of gender into the same room. The room itself was a space made available by an NGO, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. And not all participants openly disagreed with FCA's stance - many listened intently and participated enthusiastically in the activities. These seminars themselves were identified as a political act of *despatriarcalización*. FCA argued that NGOs cannot *despatriarcalizar* themselves because of their gender equity focus, their hierarchical structures, and their overemphasis on *políticas públicas*, which makes them close allies of the (patriarchal) State. These seminars, then, were a way for feminist activists to confront and engage in discussion with NGO professionals, leading the way as the actors that can *despatriarcalizar*. A conversation between myself and a prominent leader of FCA revealed the following:

Leader: The feminist [social] movements cannot be the recipients. They cannot be the ones the NGOs are trying to help...we have to be the ones creating the mandates that NGOs then put into action with their resources.

Andrea: So, there can be alliances between feminist [social] movements and NGOs, but only so long as it's a relationship where the feminist [social] movements are in control of the demands?

Leader: Yes, it can't be this unequal relationship. If anything, it's NGOs on the receiving end, rather than vice versa.

The gender debate can quickly pit feminist activist groups against gender equity NGOs and imply that there can be no partnership between these two groups of actors as they negotiate their role in the despatriarcalización process. However, as this leader's comments demonstrate, this is not necessarily the case. NGOs' domestic and foreign State connections give them access to a larger pool of resources, one feminist activist groups often lack. The concern becomes addressing the power dynamics of who is "on the receiving end", which traditionally marks the movements as the "have-nots". But if feminist activist groups are recognized as demand-makers and leaders in determining how resources are put to use, it encourages the multi-directional movement of resources, knowledges and practices and strengthens partnerships between feminist activist groups and feminist NGOs.

The power struggle over language in the Bolivian women's movement, with gender as one of a set of key terms, is ultimately about different meanings moving across and colliding by way of networks of NGOs, feminist activist groups, government agencies, IGOs, academies etc. In this process, meanings change and transform to serve particular agendas and outcomes. Another way to reframe it is to think about this movement of feminist discourses and practices as acts of translation. I build on Sonia Alvarez's (2014b) "politics of translation" to demonstrate how translation is part of multiple aspects of NGO work. Alvarez is a prominent feminist scholar who has written extensively on NGOs in Latin America and who is interested in the decentering of feminisms across the region. Alvarez (2014b) captures the concept of translocality as people and ideas moving multi-directionally – that is back and forth – between porous borders. Alvarez (2014b) identifies a political subject she terms a *transloca* as a metaphor for the experiences of translocal women and the "maddening" process they endure to make sense of new places, categories, and identities (2014b, p.3). *Translocas*

engage in translation in the traditional sense between languages. But *translocas* also partake in cultural translation whereby their worldviews, intentions, and agendas cause them to reinterpret and re-appropriate feminist discourses and practices. In the FCA seminars, for example, FCA facilitators acted as *translocas* when they pursued the difficult task of translating different meanings of gender across the boundaries between feminist activist groups and NGOs, western-based, liberal feminisms and Bolivian, community-oriented feminisms, Marxism and despatriarcalización. I argue that NGO employees are *translocas* as well who experience the *locura* (craziness/chaos) of translation in their meetings and daily operations.

Translating Gender

“Is there, in your opinion, a difference between gender equity and despatriarcalización?”, I ask Tania Sánchez. We are seated across from each other in her office at Gregoria Apaza. She laughs, pauses, and responds: “From my theoretical standpoint and personal position, no, there is no difference...The difference is more your political position. In other words, [despatriarcalización] is not a method like the gender approach. It is much more. However, I do think that the gender approach works well as a part of what despatriarcalización sets out to do...For this pugna (conflict) the defenders of women’s rights come from the white middle class, ultimately the middle class. You cannot talk about the rights of women without talking about individual rights, no cierto? It is part of a liberal process. And the concept of the gender approach or gender is a concept developed in Europe. I am in agreement with some of [gender’s] methodological processes and instruments, but not with others. I think that within the gender approach itself - what is part of the theory - is that you cannot apply it without looking at the context. Misunderstood, misunderstood I think because of a political process more than anything - it is thought that when you talk about the gender approach, you are only talking about liberal rights, a colonial term, from la Colón. This is a part of Feminismo Comunitario, [it] is part of a process of deconstruction, of decolonizing. However, one does not contradict the other.”

Tania explicitly names the gender approach and the notion of women’s rights as rooted in their (neo)liberal European context and the (white) middle class. Tania Sánchez is relatively to Gregoria Apaza, having only worked as the executive director for a couple of years. She is a highly educated, networked, and well-recognized figure in

women's rights circles in Bolivia. Though Gregorias rarely directly refer to gender's origins in their daily work, Tania is very familiar with gender as an academic concept and she argues that the theory of gender itself requires a sensitivity to setting. In other words, Tania recognizes gender's link with neoliberalism and occidental feminism, but she considers it to be less problematic because of how the gender method can be adapted to fit the El Alto context. The dismissal of gender by FCA, according to Tania, is ultimately because it is caught up in decolonization politics. Tania's description is an example of the translation of gender from Europe/the Northern academy into Bolivian feminist NGOs. She is a broker, transporting western feminisms in the form of gender discourse across the border of decolonization discourse, suspicious of foreign agendas. Tania incorporates some aspects of gender but not others into the Bolivian NGO context (she didn't provide examples of what she cuts out, making her point somewhat vague, but her metaphor of tailoring remains useful). By Tania's definition, gender has a more malleable application than it does for FCA members.

In further conversation with Tania, she brought up the critiques of NGOs by feminist activist groups. She discussed the limits of NGO autonomy due to their ties to the State and dependency on foreign funding. But Tania countered that while feminist activists, and working-class indigenous women in particular, play a crucial role in resisting patriarchy with the languages of their own movements, middle class women also contribute to the Bolivian women's movement in significant ways by wielding the liberal notions of gender and women's rights. Tania also raised counter-critiques of feminist activist groups. Firstly, by insisting that despatriarcalización is "theirs" and authentically Bolivian, feminist activist groups quickly become isolationist by denying the influence of international discourses and movements. Secondly, NGO professionals like Tania take issue with how feminist activist groups universally dismiss the work of all feminist NGOs as if they are all the same¹¹.

¹¹ The stigma associated with the NGO label runs deep within feminist activist groups - to the point that some organizations even become NGOs reluctantly. Several NGO employees brought up the fact that despite Maria Galindo's ongoing attacks against NGOs, her own feminist organization *Mujeres Creando* had recently become an NGO legally to receive a considerable amount of foreign funds. I was assured that *Mujeres Creando* would never actually refer to itself as an NGO. This paradox presents a strong argument for *Mujeres Creando's* need to reconsider a universal write-off of NGOs. But *Mujeres Creando's* rejection of the NGO label is likely an effort to not be homogenized and to maintain that there are clear differences between different types of feminist organizations. Moreover, *Mujeres Creando's* significant accomplishments in enacting a feminist

Tania's translation of gender is significant because it pushes back on feminist movement critiques. And it also indirectly strengthens NGOs' collaboration with the State. Tania argues that despatriarcalización is nurtured by the gender method; the two concepts do not contradict each other. The language of women's rights and gender equity was a part of Gregoria Apaza's discourse long before the re-founding of the State and the emergence of the term despatriarcalización. Despatriarcalización, though a more comprehensive project, is in some ways "more of the same" for NGOs like Gregoria Apaza. In other words, capturing gender equity as a complementary component to a larger despatriarcalización process justifies the valuable expertise of NGO as organizations that have decades worth of experience in the language of women's rights and gender. NGOs thereby position themselves as valuable, experienced contributors to despatriarcalización.

Lastly, my conversation with Tania revealed one more essential point about the relationship between feminist NGOs and the State. Tania mentioned in passing that gender terminology is often avoided by government officials. This comment did not hold up with my experience of several meetings in which government workers repeatedly referred to gender and gender equity. I later realized that there was a distinct difference between how gender was being translated at the level of the municipal vs. the federal government.

Throughout the course of my fieldwork, meetings between the municipal government and Gregoria Apaza occurred monthly, if not more frequently. The meetings concerned different issues, but they followed a pattern of presentations by municipal government officials and Gregorias (or other "experts") that presented information to educate and encourage participation from attendees (whether that be more general audiences of other NGO professionals, members of the public, or more targeted groups like adolescents from local schools). In all these meetings, gender equity was a principal theme. The strong NGO-municipal State partnership formed because of State decentralization in the 1990s, when an influx of aid was channelled through municipalities and NGOs. In line with Morales' claim to be a "government of social

politics of translation comes from their positions as subalterns (as lesbian women of colour) and as a result of rejecting all forms of institutionalization (Prada, 2014).

movements”, feminist activist groups like FCA, on the other hand, had more direct access to the federal government than feminist NGOs. Julieta Paredes, for example, founded multiple feminist activist groups and played a crucial part in drafting the State’s 2008 Plan of Equal Opportunity. The different levels of access to government by feminist NGOs vs. feminist activist groups was further exemplified by how each of these actors approached 2017’s International Women’s Day. FCA drafted its proposal to be presented in a public hearing to the federal government, a detailed list of recommendations specifically concerning despatriarcalización. Gregoria Apaza organized a meeting with municipal government officials to discuss shared gender equity goals. Plans changed last minute when women working in government positions were (technically) given the day off in a public decree, in support of women’s day and the recognition of women’s labour. Somewhat ironically, many women in government weren’t available on women’s day to address the issues of gender inequity and patriarchy.

On “The Day of the Woman” (the widely-used translation of International Women’s Day in Bolivia), I attended the Ministry of Tourism and Culture’s televised, public gathering between about 50 journalists, other members of the public and a handful of prominent women government officials. The meeting focused on the struggles and successes of women with disabilities. I did not hear gender or gender equity discussed in this federal State space. Instead, the word “mujer” was, literally, the name of the day. Throughout the meeting, speakers repeatedly called upon the attendees to join in a chorus: “*Que vivan las mujeres!*” (Long live women!).

My analysis does not include space for an in-depth comparison of State discourses at distinct levels of government. It is unlikely that the translation of gender (or lack there of) is always consistent at a particular level of government. But I emphasize that the translation of key terms like gender should not be assumed to be the same in a disaggregated State. Paying attention to the way gender is (and isn’t) translated into different parts of the State is significant as an entry point for understanding at what levels of government feminist NGOs and feminist activist groups primarily exhibit their respective influences on State formation.

Chapter 5:

The Politics of Translation and Gregoria Apaza's *Trabajo Cotidiano*

“What does despatriarcalización mean in the women’s movement and how does it translate into our daily work? How is it translated into our relationship with social organizations, [into the relationship shared] between us, and with the State as well?” (Tania Sánchez, Gregoria Apaza’s Executive Director during her introduction to the conversatorio)

In the quote above, Tania perfectly captures Sonia Alvarez’s (2014b) “politics of translation” in her choice of words. Alvarez defines translation as a metaphor for the ways feminist ideas and people move back and forth through networks and across borders, transforming discourses and subjects. Tania likewise raises the crucial question of what despatriarcalización means in the broader women’s movement and in the everyday work of NGO professionals. She connects translation with relationships; translation is inherently about a negotiation or brokering across relational (and other) borders. Despatriarcalización involves the movement of theory, resources, people, etc. back and forth between NGOs themselves, between NGOs and the State, between NGOs and social organizations like feminist activist groups or territorial organizations, etc. The “politics of” in the politics of translation indicates the negotiation process that occurs in order to mobilize feminist ideas and practices. Feminisms rarely “flow” across open borders; they have to be brokered or even smuggled across borders under different (false) names like gender equity or women’s rights.

Next, I first wrap up my analysis of key terms in the Bolivian, women’s movement with a discussion of the disputed meanings of feminism and women’s rights. Then, I bring in specific examples of how Gregorias as *translocas* translate despatriarcalización into their *trabajo cotidiano* (daily work). In doing so, I identify the valuable multiplicity of interpretations of despatriarcalización that a single NGO encompasses. Lastly, I focus on the conversatorio meeting to highlight the self-critiques by NGO professionals who, despite their shared goal of dismantling patriarchy, identify ongoing patriarchal practices within their own organizations.

The excerpt below details a particularly memorable encounter during my fieldwork at Gregoria Apaza, a prized moment of tunnel-vision clarity amidst a sea of interruptions. I quickly learned that the busyness of NGO work is not amenable to pre-arranged, quiet interviews. I had to be ready at any time to squeeze in an exchange in the hall or over lunch, or during a lucky break between phone calls. The chaotic daily work of the NGO often seemed to get in the way of “productive” research. But, as an ethnographer, I had to adapt my research methods to the realities of my research site and the lives of my interlocutors, rather than insisting on my “way”. I also had to ask *why* Gregorias’ daily work was so chaotic, instead of writing it off as a generalized pattern of overworked employees in NGO work. The busy work of Gregoria Apaza is indicative, in part, of circumstances like new constraints on funding and high staff turn over. But the “*locura*” (madness) of NGO work is also reflective of the never-ending translation work that Gregorias engage in, often a tiring and costly process. I depict Gregorias as dynamic translators who reconfigure despatriarcalización, translating it between the NGO and the El Alto community, between the municipal government and the public, between their work and private lives, between neoliberal individualism and community-oriented agendas, between the government seat city of La Paz and the migrant city of El Alto, etc. NGO employees must also translate *themselves* into the translocal NGO space – a borderland - as former government officials, consultants to international organizations, self-identified anti-feminists, academics, and/or leaders in their urban neighborhoods and rural communities.

“We All Have Something to Say About What Despatriarcalización is Here”

I hear Emma’s warm voice calling “ciao Andreita” after me as I close the door to the buzz of the administration office. I dodge and greet rushing parents and children whose echoing giggles and cries carry up the steep flights of stairs to the daycare center. I pass through cold hallways with colorful murals of women marching arm in arm with signs reading “Justice!”, “Rise above violence!”, “No to mistreatment!”, “No to impunity!”, “No to femicide!”. After taking a sharp left to find Norah’s office, I come across a sliding door and a middle-aged woman with intense, dark eyes, a black braid down her back, and the signature vest embroidered with Gregoria Apaza’s logo. She welcomes

me in and signals for me to take a seat. I thank her for her time and explain that I want to learn more about what despatriarcalización looks like in the daily work of Gregoria Apaza. I mention that coworkers suggested I speak to her because of her longevity with this organization. She begins by stating that “despatriarcalización needs to be recovered as a central theme in NGOs” and starts to tell me about her role. As she responds she intermittently takes phone calls and answers questions as people pop their head through the crack in the door. But, for a few moments, I have her full attention when she looks straight at me and addresses me by name: “Andrea, we need to consider what despatriarcalización means in our life. It’s not something you can see directly...Andrea, you have to think more about what it means for someone’s forma de ser (way of being). It is essential to not just think about despatriarcalización as a discourse, it can easily stay that way, no, it is also practice. Because I have met a lot of women who have a lot of empowerment and knowledge, are well-educated and call themselves feminists. But these women treat other women in a very oppressive way. It’s not just about how men treat women, despatriarcalización is about how other women treat women and men, men”. She pauses, I scribble down field notes while holding her gaze, not wanting to miss a word. She continues: “Despatriarcalización, in my opinion Andrea, is fundamentally non-academic, it’s not a theory but a posture. And it’s very hard to change your way of being. We need to construct new ways of thinking about despatriarcalización, and to not say one organization or person is doing better at it than the other. That’s not what it is about. Despatriarcalización needs to be part of our principles and interpersonal relationships. We take little steps at a time, but they are pasos seguros (secure steps) here at Gregoria Apaza, you will see Andrea. Because we all have something to say about what despatriarcalización is here.”

Norah Quispe is the Coordinator of Local Management and Active Citizenship and is one of few employees who has worked for Gregoria Apaza for over 10 years. Before this, she worked in several other NGOs focused on Aymara women and with rural indigenous communities. Her insight is particularly valuable as she witnessed firsthand how despatriarcalización became part of the language of organizations over time, after it first emerged as a concept during the Constitutional Assembly process. She acted as a principle facilitator in the meetings I attended between NGOs and the municipal government and, when describing her role, expressed that she is committed to

strengthening women's political participation¹². For Norah, the fact that "despatriarcalización needs to be recovered" in the NGO setting means strengthening Gregoria Apaza's political edge. Despatriarcalización is interpreted by Norah as making the political participation of women - that of Gregoria Apaza's constituents and that of the Gregorias themselves - a greater priority in this NGO's objectives.

Multiple Gregorias described despatriarcalización as in need of "recovery" because it became depoliticized as a result of government bureaucracy and antagonism within the women's movement, limiting its ability to be a prioritized and united front. To re-politicize despatriarcalización, argues Norah, is to translate it from an abstract discourse into a grounded practice. I repeatedly encountered this narrative that despatriarcalización needed to be (more) action-based. A comment by Gabriela Murillo, Gregoria Apaza's Coordinator of Planning, offers a pivotal example. Gabriela helped me edit invitations to the conversatorio, the inter-NGO meeting I planned with the critical assistance of several Gregorias. The wording of the invitations included a discussion question I had written about "the successes and challenges of implementing despatriarcalización in NGOs". Gabriela interjected stating that the verb "implement" was redundant and unnecessary as despatriarcalización *is in and of itself an action*. Another example comes from Gregoria Apaza's active participation on social media platforms. The Gregorias framed their Facebook profile pictures with the hashtag:

¹² Norah's comment about "political participation" is associated with a particular moment in Bolivian history that brought about significant shifts to NGOs like Gregoria Apaza and enabled them to form key alliances with the municipal State. In the 1990s, the Sánchez de Lozada administration implemented large-scale economic development projects and neoliberal restructuring, such as the privatization of State industries, under the watch of the WB and IMF. This administration also passed the 1994 Law of Popular Participation which led to decentralization and the strengthening of municipal governments. It responded to the increasing pressure of indigenous demands by recognizing indigenous leaders and their communities in municipal development decisions (Postero, 2017, 30). Nancy Postero argues this era was defined by the State's push for neoliberal multicultural citizenship, but that it was "more of a politics of recognition than redistribution" (30). However, she concludes this law carried important symbolic significance in terms of beginning to legitimize indigenous leadership in Bolivia. The Law of Popular Participation also had favorable outcomes for NGOs focused on women's rights, such as Gregoria Apaza. Local development projects in the city of El Alto became a means to "access services and power" for women, bolstered by a significant increase in foreign aid ("Historia de Gregoria Apaza", retrieved May 1 2018). NGOs like Gregoria Apaza therefore embraced the language of development and citizenship at this time. A later conversation with Norah confirmed that this era resulted in strong ties between Gregoria Apaza and the municipal government being formed. In 2017, strengthening the political participation of women is still considered an important issue for many Gregorias. Employees like Norah voiced that they want to it see become a greater priority again, like it was in the past, as it has been put on the back burner in favor of other, more immediate priorities.

#ConRecursosNoConDiscursos (With resources, not with discourses). This hashtag was in reference to preventing violence more generally, but it speaks to staff members' push to "take action" by way of accessing practical, tangible resources rather than debating abstract discourses.

Norah defines *despatriarcalización* as practice not only in terms of outward-focused, political action, but she also directs it inward as transformative of a person's very way of being. To understand *despatriarcalización* is not about evaluating NGO programs or the individual efforts of NGO employees to determine which "organization or person is doing better at it than the other". Instead, Norah translates *despatriarcalización* in terms of the Gregorias' need to work on its interpersonal relationships – both inter and intragender. I came into our meeting framing my interest in studying "what *despatriarcalización* looks like in the daily work of NGOs", but Norah argues it is "not something you can see directly". Instead, it is incremental, *paso a paso* (step by step) change because "it is difficult to change a person's way of being". Throughout my research I initially found myself making note of where I "saw" *despatriarcalización* occurring, as if I could draw conclusions after only a few weeks in the field. But the slow and yet "secure steps" of *despatriarcalización* are not amenable to this rushed, calculating approach. My conversation with Norah was an important reminder that the core of ethnographic fieldwork is *capturing how research participants understand their social world*. In this case, Norah offers over 10 years of experience in witnessing *despatriarcalización* as a slow transformation that manifests in how (NGO) actors relate to one another in non-oppressive ways.

Many Gregorias, such as Norah, have pursued or are in the process of completing university degrees in disciplines such as economics, sociology, human rights, law, environmental studies, etc. Norah's push for *despatriarcalización* as "fundamentally non-academic" is a reminder to the Gregorias that their education is not what enables them to do the work of *despatriarcalización*. Her comment also presents a paradox as I write a thesis about something that research participants expressed they want to loosen from the grip of academic discourse. In response, I re-shifted my focus from trying to come up with a comprehensive singular definition of *despatriarcalización* and, as needed, communicated with research participants that I was not at Gregoria Apaza to establish a "*despatriarcalización* standard" by which I could measure and

evaluate their organization. Instead, I paid attention to the many ways despatriarcalización was being (re) interpreted in the daily practices of Gregoria Apaza.

Translating Feminism Itself into Feminist NGOs

Norah's remarks about "women who have a lot of empowerment and knowledge, are well-educated and call themselves feminists" characterized feminists as women oppressing other women. This comment was surprising for me to hear at first, as Gregoria Apaza identifies feminism as a foundational pillar in its work and triannual plans. But it must not be assumed that feminism itself translates easily or singularly into the feminist NGO. Indeed, feminism was interpreted in a variety of ways by different Gregorias. For example, in the planning stages of the conversatorio, I proposed we use "feminist NGOs" to describe who would be attending. But Tania, the executive director, was reluctant. She explained that not all NGO employees nor even organizations we were considering as invitees identify as feminist. To be more inclusive, I needed to describe the type of NGO invitees as those who "defend the exercise of women's rights".

Norah, as a self-identified non-feminist, later explained that feminism divides and fractures community. Laura Grünberg's (2014) analysis of feminist NGOs in post-communist Romania notes that feminism is often perceived as especially divisive during State transitions when nations are trying to re-establish unity around new nationalisms. The divisive nature of feminism is partly the issue for Norah. She provided examples of indigenous women who witnessed the changes in Bolivia and reconsidered their indigenous identity and the roles of women in their cultures. But even when they recognized patriarchal structures, feminist activists shamed them for still wanting a husband and children. Feminists, Norah stated, and specifically those associated with feminist movements, were too hostile and militant towards women who willingly took on traditional women's roles. She explained that her status as an unmarried woman with no children often results in her being labeled as a feminist. She argued that she isn't who she is because she is a feminist, instead her status reflects "what I chose". She continued: "*Vivo mi libertad* (I live my liberty), this is what I have to say. Freedom, for me, that is what despatriarcalización is". In Norah's translation, if feminism means oppression and division, despatriarcalización means freedom and unity.

Ines Smyth (2008) discusses the ways NGOs such as Oxfam avoid feminism but willingly take on “gender talk” as a safer and less challenging discourse. The “fear of feminism” prevails, Smyth argues, because it is demonized and belittled or because feminist discourses are (rightfully so) critical and greatly challenge the work of development organizations. Smyth points out a negativity associated with feminism, which gender activists or others in the development world often choose to avoid. I posit that at Gregoria Apaza, it is not so much a fear of feminism itself, but there is a clear negativity associated with feminist activist groups as radical, aggressive, and uncooperative. Apart from Norah, there are many Gregorias who proudly embrace the feminist label. While planning the conversatorio, Gabriela encouraged me to invite members of both FCA and *Mujeres Creando* because she said *despatriarcalización* came from these movements and that I would be missing a critical part of the conversation. She recognized that it was a provocative move. Her suggestion resulted in a response from others involved in the planning process that the conversatorio was meant to be “an intimate, safe space” where NGO professionals could share and learn from each other. This was not the “right space” to engage in dialogue with these movements because past attempts to engage with them in this way had resulted in feminist activists coopting the meetings and attacking the work of NGOs. It was a matter of managing a “productive” conversation. Overall, it was a subject of disagreement that revealed tangible tensions *within* NGOs about how to collaborate with feminist activist groups. Again, the reluctance concerning feminist activist groups is not about a fear of feminism across the board, but of the ways certain groups translate feminism to discredit the work of NGO employees.

I asked Tania what it meant for Gregoria Apaza to be a feminist organization and she answered as follows:

Feminism for *nosotras* (us) is a political position and I believe it is expressed institutionally by Gregoria Apaza. It’s a political positioning, a political standpoint that is made up of various methodologies, of various theories. For many of *nosotras* it is more than just our political standpoint, it is our mode, our expression of life. There are various levels [of feminism] in the institution. In fact, when Gregoria Apaza was born it did not recognize itself as feminist. Many *compañeras* (coworkers) say: “I am not a feminist, but I fight for women’s rights”. There are differences within the institution... I believe in the last triannual plan and in our strategic mark, yes, we recognize ourselves as a feminist organization - taking into account

that feminism is a political position, that has various currents, not just one, recognizing different postures and theories within it, different approaches and methods and tools. For example, the gender approach is this, it's a methodology...feminism is a political position, not an expression like *machismo*."

Feminism, for Tania, is a diverse "mode" or "expression of life" as it involves combining multiple currents, postures, theories and tools in different ways, depending on the actor. The gender approach is one example of these methodologies. The Gregorias can therefore choose to take on the feminist political position or not. As Tania points out, Gregoria Apaza itself has not always been an organization that took on the feminist label, and, like the Gregorias who continue to avoid this label, there is other language that can be used in its place. In this translation, "women's rights" operates as inclusive of a variety of political stances in the same NGO.

The FCA seminars, inversely, stressed that "women's rights" rhetoric is *exclusive*. Feminist activists argue the language of women's rights is based on hegemonic, euro-centric feminism that worships the individual rights-bearer. They take issue with these dominant streams of feminism which claim to be the origin of all feminisms, replicating a problematic universalism that the introduction of the individualism of the west to places like Bolivia preceded struggles against patriarchy. FCA activists are quick to point out the problematic ways that Northern hemisphere, western notions of feminism are translated into the Southern hemisphere, Bolivian women's movement. FCA therefore defines its counterhegemonic feminism as: "the struggle of whichever woman, in whatever part of the world, at whatever time in history who fights, resists, and has resolve in the face of patriarchy that oppresses her or attempts to oppress her" (Paredes & Guzmán, 2014). For FCA, a focus on rights is exactly what is divisive of community because it sets up one individual against the other. FCA's and Gregoria Apaza's interpretations of feminism and women's rights are, in a way, inversions of each other in terms of which word is more inclusive and which word is more exclusive. What is constant for both feminist activists and NGO employees is their search for unity by way of specific definitions of these terms.

Translation Examples in the Gregorias' Daily Work

My fieldwork presented a variety of examples of Gregorias as *translocas* who reinterpret despatriarcalización in their work and life. My research dealt with the challenges of more traditional translation between languages. But it also made me pay attention to the ways the Spanish language is gendered in ways the English language is not. This provides unique opportunities to address patriarchy with words. In referring to their team, Gregorias frequently use the word *nosotras* – the feminine “us” or “we”, and *compañeras* – the feminine word for coworkers. The use of the feminine terms is not necessarily to the exclusion of men, but it notes that women are present and recognized as the majority in the space. Traditionally, even if one man is present in a sea of women, the masculine *nosotros* is the default term. But even when men were present amidst many women, Gregorias resisted the traditions of gender norms in language in their insistence on using the feminine form of words. They referred to attendees at meetings by using both the masculine and feminine versions of “all” - *todos y todas* – when *todos* would traditionally suffice. In this way, they translated feminist discourses into their everyday conversation and expressed feminine versions of words that captured the comradery of a Gregorias sisterhood.

The Gregoria Apaza team member I interacted with most on a daily basis was Gabriela Murillo. When I asked Gabriela, or Gaby for short, to introduce herself for the purposes of my thesis, she began by stating that she was a daughter of a mining family who came to El Alto to start over. Gaby is pursuing a masters' degree in social economics and identifies herself as a feminist fighting for women's rights. Before joining Gregoria Apaza in 2016, she worked for the State Services of the Autonomies, which oversees the territorial, autonomous regions of Bolivia. Gaby pointed me to an article she co-wrote in 2014, while working for the State Services, about what despatriarcalización means in terms of autonomy. The article outlines women having autonomy over their bodies, as well as political and economic autonomy (Murillo & Vargas, 2014). As an act of translation, Gaby's article articulates feminist notions of autonomy with State concerns about (indigenous) territory and governance.

Gaby is Gregoria Apaza's Planning Coordinator, but she also stars as the motivational speaker for the participants in Gregoria Apaza's courses, encouraging them

to work hard to learn new skills. Gaby is a frequent panelist at meetings with the municipal government as well and has friendly connections in feminist activist groups. She is a favorite of multiple daycare children who come to visit her on their lunch break for treats. Gaby is truly at the heart of a web of relations and acts as an avid interpreter between them. Gregoria Apaza is an organization running so many activities at once and with such a wide network that it requires translation work by Gregorias like Gabriela to bring people and ideas together.

One of Gaby's planning-related responsibilities is completing EU grant applications, with which she enlisted my help. The applications include bureaucratic language so complex that the English wording often felt like a foreign language to me as a native speaker. Grant applications place Gregoria Apaza into checkable boxes about organizational typology and legal documents (like tax ID numbers, statutes, etc.) confirm its "official" NGO status. Gregoria Apaza programs are reinterpreted into campaigns recognizable and fundable from half way around the world, like ending femicide or teaching sexual/reproductive rights to teens. In this way, Gregoria Apaza operates as a translocal space, translating its programs into globally recognized initiatives.

Conversations with Gaby pointed to how despatriarcalización translates into her life outside of work as well. She is an advocate for women in sports and was quick to have me join the office "wally" team (a sport similar to volleyball, played in a court with 4 walls that team members can use to strategically bounce the ball off of). As we watched players punt balls over nets, she talked about despatriarcalización in terms of more opportunities for women's and mixed sports teams and for women playing traditional male sports such as football (soccer).

For the three-month duration of my research project, I was given a desk and a computer at Gregoria Apaza just steps away from Gaby's desk and those of a team of wonderful women who work in communications and administrative positions. As a result, despatriarcalización was woven into my commute, lunch breaks, extracurriculars and everyday conversation with my *compañeras* (coworkers). One day, the group was talking about how to curb their children's early desire for independence. Gaby jumped in: "Children need their independence. They need to learn, to be given the tools to handle risks and dangers. You can't raise them in a glass bubble." She told a story about how when she was young, her mom took her everywhere and wouldn't let her travel alone.

She recalled an instance in university when she was caught in a large public demonstration/march and had to call her brother because she was lost and couldn't find her way home. She made the point that she would have been better off being taught at a young age how to rely on herself. I wandered over to Gaby's desk to join in on the conversation, when suddenly the rest of the group was whisked away into a meeting with the director. Gaby looked at me and continued: "This is despatriarcalización. Parents talk to their children like they are fools". She talked about patriarchy being "adult-centrist", and the need for NGOs to counter this by treating the adolescents and children they work with as equals in terms of their thoughts and contributions. She highlighted instances of Gregorias still "talking down" to adolescents. In a later conversation, Gaby elaborated on the need for despatriarcalización in terms of "parity". She asserted that Gregoria Apaza needed to shift to "horizontal rather than vertical relationships" as an alternative to placing employees in a hierarchical line of command. For Gaby, despatriarcalización is closely linked with autonomy, independence, more opportunities for women in male-dominated spaces like sports and establishing relationships of equality in every aspect of NGO work.

Saturnina Quispe, referred to affectionately by the Gregorias as "Profe", lays out a table of beautiful alpaca scarves, hats, and gloves. She points out various designs that incorporate Aymara symbols into the patterns. She preoccupies herself with her students, who are glancing at me curiously, as I carefully select a shawl made of the softest, baby alpaca wool. Profe smiles and beckons me to the mirror and wraps it around me, showing me how it's usually worn around the shoulders. She then hands me several catalogues, asking that I contact her if I come across any interest in these goods in the Canadian market. She signals for me to take a seat, so she can hear more about my research project.

Profe has worked at Gregoria Apaza for 7 years as an instructor teaching courses in *pollera*-making, her area of expertise. She is one of few Gregorias who is a *señora de pollera*, donning her bright turquoise skirt. Outside of her role at Gregoria Apaza, she is also the president of an association of artisans that creates a range of high-quality alpaca products. During our conversation, we discussed the courses she teaches that all incorporate values from the Aymara culture. For example, she encourages all students to share "*lo poco que tenemos*" (the little we have). She explained that patriarchy is interlinked with capitalism. For Profe, despatriarcalización

encourages sharing with the collective, in opposition to the individualism which she says came from Europe. She talked about how there used to only be *intercambio* (exchange) in the markets because “we didn’t use money”. Profe is a successful business woman with a degree in sociology who has learned to navigate the capitalist economy. Yet she upholds the values of community and reciprocity that she argues are lost in patriarchal, capitalist systems. She talked with a sense of urgency about the need to recover Aymara values because she describes El Alto as a city of migrants “who moved here and forgot our customs”. Profe translates Aymara culture into NGO discourse, defining despatriarcalización as an act of recuperating indigenous cultural values.

Like multiple Gregorias, I lived in La Paz but worked in El Alto. Gaby showed me how to navigate *teleféricos* (the aerial cable cars that transport people across La Paz and up to El Alto) and cram into minibuses (a small minivan converted into a 16+ passenger ride, the principal form of public transit in in El Alto and La Paz). She guided me patiently when El Alto transformed into a massive market, selling everything from fake DVDs to (stolen) car parts, from household goods to live animals, from delicious street food to used clothing. Many say there is nothing you cannot find in the market and claim it is the biggest market in the world! On my long commutes back and forth, I began to realize the Gregorias translate constantly between these two cities. The cities were often discussed in contrast to one another. First, the Gregorias talked about going *abajo* (down) for meetings. El Alto literally meaning “tall” or “high”, looming above the lower La Paz - the city in a bowl circled by the Andes mountains. La Paz is the seat of government with its narrow streets and buildings constructed during the colonial era. El Alto is a new and booming peri-urban city of migrants and brick buildings in various stages of construction. In everyday conversation with people from la Paz or *Paceños*, I paid attention to their descriptions of El Alto in as, for example, “unsafe” and “unclean”. Some *Paceños*, for example, were surprised when I told them I ate lunches in El Alto, crediting my bouts of food poisoning to El Alto’s lack of food safety. I was also instructed by Gregorias on “minibus etiquette”, which involved never wearing jewelry or getting my smartphone out while in transit. This was followed by vivid stories, accompanied by sympathetic laughter by the rest of the team, of “that one time my phone was snatched right out of my hands through an open taxi window!” These accounts were practical warnings and social commentaries that instructed me, as a foreigner and a temporary resident of La Paz, on how to translate myself into the ways of life in El Alto.

Many Gregorias described cultural differences between El Alto and La Paz in terms of the Aymara and Quechua languages spoken in El Alto¹³. This focus on indigenous languages was coupled with El Alto being labelled as a city of constant partying, drunkenness, danger, violence and unruliness. These comments are undoubtedly in part pejorative commentaries on race and class differences, but there is a further reference to El Alto's history and reputation as a "rebellious" city. El Alto's slogan reads: "*Estamos de pie, nunca de rodillas*" (We are standing, never on our knees). This line comes from the 2003 uprisings which surged in El Alto and carried over into the city of La Paz, spreading images across the nation (and internationally) of massive road blockades, marches and protests, met with violent crackdowns by State officials. Susan Ellison (2015) examines US democracy assistance programs in El Alto and the surge of aid that resulted out of donor's intentions to quell the "antidemocratic" spirit of *Alteño* citizens. Similar to the translation work I discuss, Ellison (2015) captures the ways that *Alteños* trained by democracy programs replicate, and "refract" democracy through their unique histories and social lives. In doing so, *Alteños* translate *their* interpretations of democracy in ways that may contradict donor agendas. Ellison elaborates on this argument in her book *Domesticating Democracy: The Politics of Conflict Resolution in Bolivia* (2018) that looks at alternative dispute resolution programs in El Alto and how they aim to turn "cultures of conflict" into "cultures of peace" (91). She defines "domestication" in terms of "the processes through which conflict resolution programs seek to discipline disruptive political tactics in the service of democratic governability, as well as to de-escalate and displace physical violence as a means of resolving disputes" (2018, 19). Domestic also refers to Bolivians' concerns with regard to sovereignty over their own country and its resources, as well as the impact on the private, or interpersonal sphere (2018, 22). Again, Ellison argues that democracy and justice are "translated", "refracted" or "hybridized" as they are employed in specific contexts (2018, 20). The politics of translation in Bolivian feminist NGOs similarly considers the ways meanings of key terms are altered and re-signified by uniquely situated NGO actors.

¹³ For a detailed analysis of the links between indigeneity, indigenous languages, the State, and education systems see *New Languages of the State: Indigenous resurgence and the politics of knowledge in Bolivia* (2009) edited by Bret Gustafson.

The Gregorias participate in creating portrayals of El Alto that both perpetuate and challenge El Alto as a “problem” city and *Alteños* as “unruly citizens”. They would, at times, refer to it as distinctly “other” and in different moments would identify deeply with the place and its history. Gregorias may self-identify as *Paceño*, *Alteño*, both or neither. Their translation work between La Paz and El Alto results in reconceptualizing their own ideas of self and belonging. One of the ways that Gregoria Apaza challenges the notion of El Alto as a violent city is through careful consideration of how this city is represented via its Radio Pachamama programs. With its center based in El Alto and meetings and affiliates in La Paz, and with many of its employees living in La Paz and commuting to work, Gregoria Apaza is an organization that spans - and translates between - two cities.

Elizabeth Morales has worked for Gregoria Apaza for 5 years and is the Coordinator of Radio Pachamama. Eli talked about how she still hears sexist language or patriarchal stereotypes used in radio programming, and this is an area that she is working to improve. She described her primary role as navigating the demands of the El Alto community by providing news and entertainment on one hand and incorporating the demands of the institution that promote its agendas on the other. During our interview, the radio played softly in the background and every half an hour the Gregoria Apaza jingle reminded listeners of its institutional ties. At noon every day programming is interrupted to play the El Alto “anthem of love” which calls *Alteños* to sing to remember their history and to stand together in friendship and strength. Eli described air time as a competition of different interests between producers and listeners. Overall, Eli’s work with the radio translates between the El Alto constituency’s cultures/agendas and the institution’s cultures/agendas.

Eli reinterprets despatriarcalización in her work by recognizing the transformations in *proyectos de vida* - people’s plans and visions of their vocations, hopes, aspirations, etc. (Ellison, 2018, 118). One of the regular radio programs includes community participants testifying to the impact of Gregoria Apaza in their lives. Despatriarcalización, according to Eli, is counter to neoliberal models of success which render individuals as statistics (i.e. how many seats are there in each class run by an NGO). Instead, she talked about how the radio is an opportunity to witness and give voice to “profound change” in people’s trajectories that offers far more than a number can. She argued that NGOs like Gregoria Apaza teach people not to fight for their rights as one individual against to other, but to negotiate their desires while still firmly planted

in their families, work places and communities. In sum, Norah, Gaby, Profe and Eli all offer examples of the different translations of despatriarcalización into each of their respective NGO positions and non-work lives. These translations of despatriarcalización indicate how Gregorias see themselves participating in wider, Bolivian State formation processes.

Conversatorio Translations: Talking Patriarchal Power

Patriarchal power was the main topic discussed in the conversatorio, attended by 16 NGO professionals. Elizabeth Salguero was one of three former government officials in attendance. Salguero is a consultant for UN Women and served as Bolivia's former Minister of Cultures between 2011-2012, during which time she had direct oversight over the Viceministry of Decolonization and the Unit of Despatriarcalización. Her input stems from her direct experience working alongside Evo Morales and the MAS political party in the initial years of defining what decolonization and despatriarcalización entailed in the new Plurinational State. During the conversatorio, Salguero launched the group into a conversation about how, under her leadership, despatriarcalización resulted in concrete changes to public policy (such as revisions to the family code). She argued that the great challenge is to "demand specific elements of despatriarcalización so that the concept is not depoliticized". Salguero agreed with panelist María Ángela Sotelo, who emphasized the need for specific steps to dismantle each pillar of patriarchy, and stated:

When I go into different meetings, of course they address the subject of despatriarcalización as something super abstract. But if you have those pillars to dismantle, it makes sense, and you can advocate, whether you are in a women's organization or some public function... In addition, women have a lot of creativity, like the *chacha-warmi*. There are some who say that it does not exist. But then it has been used as one of the arguments to support parity. *Chacha* and *warmi* - man and woman - must be in the law. This indigenous argument has helped us to say ok, perfect man and woman, *chachawarmi*, present in the decisions.

Salguero's response speaks to the multiple ways that women advocate for themselves from their positions of influence, such as drawing upon indigeneity as a tool to justify their place in decision making. *Chachawarmi* (the Aymara concept of gender complementary) is often evoked by Morales to support the politics of equal

representation and as an example of an alternative to the patriarchal notion of the family (Postero, 2017). Anders Burman's (2011) detailed article examines the differing stances in Bolivia on how *chachawarmi* is evoked in terms of decolonization and overcoming patriarchy. Salguero briefly evokes this debate when stating: "some say that [*chachawarmi*] does not exist", referencing arguments by feminist activists that romanticized notions of complementarity do not represent the reality of unequal relationships between (indigenous) men and women. Despite this point, Salguero posits that *chachawarmi* remains a useful concept and references her success as a public servant to move from an otherwise abstract despatriarcalización into practical laws, decisions and favorable outcomes for women (an example of what Postero would argue is the translation of indigeneity into liberal State-making). For Salguero, despatriarcalización, then, is a strategic translation of indigenous cosmovisions to promote women's movement agendas in the State.

Silvia Fernandez works for the *Fundación Colectivo Cabildeo* (Lobbying Collective Foundation), a foundation focused on research regarding the discrimination and subordination of women. Fernandez is recognized for her expertise in evaluating the effectiveness of municipal government budgets in furthering gender equity. She responded to Salguero's comments as follows:

How do we dismantle a State that has in its essence, that has as its base, the appropriation of women's bodies? And the exploitation of nature and the human being? How is that changed if it is necessary for the reproduction of the capitalist system? What good can we recover from the societies and cultures and precolonial States? What do we recognize as the patriarchal condition of these States? *Chachawarmi* is not necessarily the elimination of patriarchy – it is an understanding of the duality of existence...Another feminist theme is the Wolstoncraft dilemma. Do *nosotras* [we] want power, for what [purpose] do we want power? What does it mean to participate or have political power in these structures? What do we do to transform? Do we become part of this power which oppresses, that has only one form of exercising power? Do we need this power to decolonize and depatriarchalize?

Fernandez brings in capitalism as one in a series of State reproductions of colonial and patriarchal systems which exploit nature and humanity, and women's bodies in particular. She raises the familiar question about the origins of patriarchy and *memoria* (memory) in terms of how to recover "the good" and also locate patriarchal power in the precolonial State. Fernandez challenges the use of *chachawarmi* as a means to

overcome patriarchy when it is more of a question of ontology. Moreover, her response directs the conversation to patriarchal power, the what and how of wielding it, and asks whether *nosotras* – the term for feminine majority “we” – want to exercise State power if it perpetuates systems of domination. Fernandez identifies a road block in translating *despatriarcalización* into a State based on systems of oppression.

Claudia Peña contributed next to the debate, pushing the discussion from the focus on patriarchal power in the State to how it manifests within NGOs themselves. Peña works for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and coordinates this NGO’s educational programs (and notably acted as the host for the FCA seminars). She is also the former Minister of Autonomies. Peña Stated:

When we talk about patriarchy, and of course *despatriarcalización*, we are certainly talking about power and relationships of power. It seems to me that if we focus on these relations of power and we start thinking that these relations refer to the State, I think that we have not left this bubble of colonial thinking...How are we managing our own relations of power that do not only begin and end with the State, that also come from our own daily life? It is not enough that women are in power...we need a new logic of the exercise of power. Are we looking at changes within our organizations and institutions?

Peña asks what *despatriarcalización* means within the NGO, in terms of “our own relations of power”, bringing the threat of patriarchy close. As Peña highlights, the exercise of patriarchal power is not limited to the State. Gabriela Murillo of Gregoria Apaza agreed with Claudia, adding: “Yes, this battle is not yet won. How are we perpetuating patriarchy within our organizations, do we have horizontal relationships?”. Beatriz Condori, Gregoria Apaza’s Coordinator of the Prevention of Violence, also spoke about this stating: “This perverse patriarchal power, how do we defend ourselves from it?”. The language of *despatriarcalización* often takes on the vivid terminology of battles, violence, defense, and struggle against the stronghold of patriarchy. Again, this vocabulary stresses the importance of actively “holding down the fort”; of engaging in *despatriarcalización* as a vigilant and enduring practice. The topic of power was so pressing that the conversatorio concluded with the objective of planning another conversatorio just to talk more about patriarchal power structures within NGOs.

The self-reflexive shift in the conversatorio was one example of a positive trend in NGOs that Alvarez (2014a) discusses as increased introspection by feminist NGO

staff. The conversatorio talked about patriarchy as close, but it only just started to identify specific ways in which it manifests in the very organizations that seek to dismantle it (e.g. Gaby touched on the need for horizontal relationships, Norah brought up her argument about interpersonal relationships, etc.). Gaby debriefed with me after the conversatorio, saying that she felt there was much more to be said. She felt conversatorio participants still held back on their stronger, more critical opinions of trends in NGOs, and she concluded there was much more work to be done yet. Unwillingness to be introspective, she said, is classic patriarchy. Gaby's remarks indicate not only *that* shifts are taking place (even if its just the start), but also *what* is driving them in context– something Alvarez's more general observations do not account for. In the Bolivian context, State-making projects like despatriarcalización result in more opportunities for feminist NGOs to reflect on and respond to critiques of their own work. My research project itself was indicative of the introspective trend in feminist NGOs. From the start, Executive Director Tania Sánchez took a keen interest in putting a depoliticized despatriarcalización back in the spotlight by having me document how Gregorias “lived” it in their daily work, and where they saw room for growth.

Nancy Postero's (2017) work talks about decolonization as horizons “and the difficult and often contested efforts of the Bolivian State and its citizens to move towards them” (13). I often think about despatriarcalización in the same way, as something being worked towards, but still far off. This metaphor is useful for capturing it as an ongoing process, a motion towards a horizon that is always just out of reach. But Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) offers another, important image of cycles. She reorients the idea of linear time with decolonization (or despatriarcalización) as the distant, end goal and instead evokes an indigenous, cyclical understanding of time. She posits that an increase in decolonization practices does not necessarily mean a decrease in colonial ones. Rather, they co-occur. She is wary of the western notion of progress that does not account for how decolonization in one arena might result in strengthening colonial power in another. In the daily work of Gregoria Apaza, then, I draw on Rivera Cusicanqui's framework to suggest that NGO actors can recognize how patriarchy manifests itself in their midst. But they can also participate in the small but secure steps of dismantling patriarchy *at the same time*.

In conclusion, Bolivian State-making processes impact the daily work of foreign-funded, feminist NGOs like Gregoria Apaza in terms of internal processes and external

expectations about their contributions. In light of multi-angled critiques from feminist activists and the Bolivian State, Gregorias have to validate their contributions to State formation projects. Bolivia's decolonization project encompasses a large variety of interpretations of what it means to be indigenous. I demonstrate that despatriarcalización, as a sister project to decolonization, likewise entails a (re)negotiation of key terms including patriarchy, gender, feminism, women's rights within the Bolivian women's movement. I demonstrate that key terms are re-signified by the Gregorias to carve out their roles as collaborators, mediators, facilitators, educators, networkers, etc. in State formation projects. I build upon Sonia Alvarez's politics of translation. Translation necessitates a negotiation of meaning and it also captures how NGOs operate in the "in-between" as borderlands between disciplines, academies, cultures, cities, etc. My analysis reveals the multiplicity of ways that NGO employees see themselves contributing to despatriarcalización in their daily work. Where gender has failed to unify the Bolivian women's movement, despatriarcalización results in more introspective NGO practices and, I conclude, has the potential to for build partnerships between feminist NGOs and feminist activist groups if they can co-create meaning and, together, dream and demand alternatives to patriarchy.

Conclusion

Questions about the relationship between State formation and NGOs are compelling in the Bolivian context because of substantial State-wide crises and transitions between 2003 and 2017 that reverberated in the daily work of NGO employees. Foreign-funded, feminist NGOs felt the intense impact of the decolonization and despatriarcalización State-making projects because these projects illuminated critiques of NGOs by both the Bolivian State and feminist activist groups. NGOs like Gregoria Apaza were flanked from both sides by assertions that they were inherently colonial, patriarchal institutions. These attacks on the validity of feminist NGOs' contributions resulted in an uncomfortable ambiguity for organizations like Gregoria Apaza regarding their role in State-making.

2017, the year I conducted my research, presents a particularly difficult political moment for feminist NGOs, beyond responding to the well-established State and feminist activist critiques. Under Morales' centralized government, State funding is being redirected into State-controlled organizations and agencies. This is coupled with Bolivia increasingly becoming a country deemed in "less need" of foreign aid. Research participants talked about foreign funders pulling out as they determined that Bolivia had become "too developed" or "too stable" for particular kinds of grants. The Morales administration is also unlikely to actively promote Bolivia as "in need" of international aid and assistance, when it is attempting to shed its economic dependence on "colonial" States. Susan H. Ellison's (2018) research on alternative dispute resolution programs in El Alto is important for understanding the impact of changing funding landscapes over time on *Alteños* and the organizations/programs they engage with. Bolivian NGOs are competing for a shrinking pool of domestic *and* foreign aid, causing organizations like Gregoria Apaza to restructure, reduce their number of staff and shift their priorities to more lucrative projects (for feminist NGOs this means, for example, pursuing options that check the boxes of EU grant applications such as campaigns against violence or sexual/reproductive rights against women).

It is not uncommon for NGOs to engage in cycles of tension and sighs of relief over receiving enough funding, and to demand long hours from their staff in the name of meeting targets or higher callings towards social justice. But teams like the Gregorias

are experiencing particularly high pressure to manage daily operations, adjust to new responsibilities and high staff turn over, and streamline processes, all while also maintaining their 35-year-old roots in political participation, interculturalism, etc. When the hold of a well-established and highly respected organization like Gregoria Apaza is shaken, it is indicative of just how much is at stake for Bolivian NGOs in 2017 as they attempt to adapt to change.

Between 2003 and 2017, Bolivia grappled with such a significant amount of change (some of which remains empty promises of change by the Morales administration) that the term *proceso de cambio* (process of change) itself became a deeply political and controversial term. The MAS election, headed by Evo Morales, swept in a socialist platform with a populist leader (Postero, 2017). The “post-neoliberal” Indigenous State was established as a deliberate turn away from the decentralization laws, privatization goals, and nation-wide economic restructuring of the 1990s (Postero, 2017). To what extent the “Indigenous State” actually abandoned its neoliberal priorities is highly scrutinized. However, in 2017, Morales remains a figurehead of change and his administration’s decolonization agenda, coupled with his fight to stay in power for a fourth term, represent an ongoing negotiation of power between indigenous peoples and the white/mestizo elites in Bolivia. Beyond this dichotomy, decolonization is also a bargaining process *between* social movements, and other civil society organizations that identify with indigenous demands, about what a truly decolonized, indigenous State really entails. The meanings of decolonization are also debated *within* the diversified State as a set of people, structures, perceptions, etc.

Decolonization efforts by all stakeholders, at least to some extent, converge on disputed ideas of what it means to be (or not be) indigenous as a class, race, ethnicity, social status, ontology, etc. The decolonization project concerns the interpretations of other interrelated terms beyond indigeneity as well, such as sovereignty, autonomy, and *vivir bien*. *Despatriarcalización* - in short, the dismantling of patriarchy - similarly involves a renegotiation process within the Bolivian women’s movement about the meanings of patriarchy, gender, women’s rights, and feminism. *Descolonización* and *despatriarcalización* as State formation projects are both heavily focused on re-signifying key terms. And in both cases, meanings matter because they have implications for how stakeholders, such as feminist activists and NGO employees, justify the importance of their influence and unique contribution to State-making.

The importance of a “politics” of language – i.e. the negotiation process and power struggle that surrounds language - is not to be underestimated. In other words, single words are “meaning-full”, or literally full of multiple meanings, because they are indicative of wider debates and (trans)formation processes. Terms uttered in everyday speech reveal what is going on at a municipal, regional, national, global and ultimately *translocal* scale (the places/spaces in between; the borderlands). Therefore, a close analysis of language is an excellent entry point for “zooming in” on how State formation impacts everyday people, and vice versa. On the one hand, identifying the most pivotal terms to analyze is a matter of paying attention to words that are clearly controversial. While at the same time, it is also critical to listen for the buzzwords - or what Andrea Cornwall (2007) so accurately refers to as “fuzzwords” – words used so often their meanings seemingly go without question (e.g. development, gender equity, sustainability, *capacitar*, *fortalecer*, etc.). Fuzzwords are brought back into focus by considering the following questions: Where did these words come from? In what spaces are they used frequently? And in which spaces are they the unspoken words? What words are used in conjunction with them? What are the main debates shaping the meanings of these words? And, most importantly, why do their meanings matter – what can these terms tell us about wider processes like NGOs’ roles in Bolivian State formation?

My analysis of the politics of language includes identifying the numerous meanings within the Bolivian women’s movement of a set of key terms (i.e. fuzzwords) including patriarchy, gender, women’s rights and feminism. Feminist activist group FCA defines patriarchy as THE system of all systems of oppression, and dismantling it is therefore their greatest priority. They argue that their position as outside the patriarchal State is prime for making the demands and leading change. Feminist NGOs like Gregoria Apaza, on the contrary, emphasize an intersectional approach to deconstructing patriarchy alongside other social issues, validating their role in supporting the “work-in-progress” State as excellent collaborators/mediators/educators/facilitators (etc.). Gregorias highlight gender equity as complementary to *despatriarcalización*, arguing for their expertise in the gender approach. They argue they are versatile in how they broker western concepts and articulate them with decolonization discourses, tailoring gender to the Bolivia-specific context. FCA, on the other hand, argues gender equity is the antithesis of *despatriarcalización* as a foreign, oppressive construct, with

despatriarcalización as the authentic Bolivian alternative. Feminism is understood as a political position by the Gregorias, a label some choose to adopt, and one that others reject in favor of women's rights. While the language of women's rights is seen as inclusive of multiple political standpoints in the Gregoria Apaza context, FCA argues it is exclusive because of its roots in western feminism and individualism. FCA and Gregoria Apaza exhibit an inversion of meaning in how they define feminism and women's rights as inclusive or exclusive. However, both sets of actors re-signify feminism and women's rights in their own ways with the common objective of unifying their respective groups.

The emphasis on language in my research involved an intentional listening to what large scale negotiation processes between the State, feminist NGOs and feminist activist groups sound like in the everyday speak NGO employees. I argue that ethnographies focused on identifying the various meanings of key terms offer a nuanced understanding of how social actors "live" or experience and play their part in State formation. I posit that jumping immediately to and relying too heavily on the study of grand social, economic, political (etc.) structures and systems overlooks how dynamic, on-the-ground, social actors like NGO employees or feminist activists are. Ethnographic research accounts for what broader discourses and practices like neoliberalism, democracy, feminism, decolonization, despatriarcalización, etc. actually mean in the day to day lives of people.

Sonia Alvarez's (2014b) politics of translation adds nuance to studies of the language of feminist NGOs, because translation makes room for the production of *contradictory* meanings. The basis of many critiques of NGOs is that NGO employees are hypocritical in how, for example, they further patriarchy from their position of influence in organizations claiming to dismantle it. The presence of contradiction is often used to discredit NGO work, when in fact I wonder whether NGOs can ever truly be free of it. NGOs may necessarily produce contradiction because they are juggling such a wide range of discourses, life stories, political positions, etc. Take for example, the anthropology museum teaching appreciation and respect for indigenous cultures that exhibits objects stolen from indigenous peoples. Or a supervised injection facility that provides drug rehabilitation programs and medical intervention for overdoses, while also offering clean needles and spaces for users to administer drugs. Or a feminist NGO that exhibits some patriarchal qualities as it fights to adapt in a competitive context, one that is critical of its contributions, and yet also dismantles patriarchal values in the community

and offers new opportunities for women to be financially independent and for “women’s work” to be valued.

Gregoria Apaza’s Executive Director, Tania Sánchez, emphasizes the need to discuss the “contradictions and opportunities of NGO work”. Concluding that contradiction is a part of NGO work is not to dismiss the importance of recognizing and minimizing it. Introspection by feminist NGO employees, coupled with insights from an outside perspective by other stakeholders in despatriarcalización, are both paramount for NGO employees to be able to address contradiction head on. But what if what produces contradiction is also what produces opportunities for NGOs to carve out their unique contributions in State-making? NGOs as liminal spaces between the State and civil society, between cities, nations and disciplines, between academies, feminisms, institutional and constituent demands, etc. makes for fertile ground for contradiction to grow. And yet the feminist NGO as a translocal, “in-between” space is also what enables NGO employees to be vital translators of feminist discourses and practices between a wide range of people and places. As a result, Gregoria Apaza embodies a rich variety of creative interpretations of despatriarcalización in one organization. By not immediately discrediting NGO work because of the existence of contradiction, studies of NGOs within and beyond Bolivia can go deeper by examining the borderlands that particular NGOs embody and the subsequent, valuable translation work of uniquely-situated NGO employees.

My research has theoretical significance for feminist analyses of NGOs in highlighting that NGOs’ position “in between” necessarily produces *both* contradictions and opportunities for translation by NGO employees. A close look at the power struggles over meaning is also productive in revealing how NGOs are heavily impacted by nation-wide transitions. My central argument that Bolivian, foreign-funded, feminist NGOs enact a politics of translation to validate their position in State-making projects reveals a way that NGO employees respond to contexts that question their contributions. Similar research of NGOs in authoritarian States that approach NGOs with suspicion could consider how particular meanings of key terms pertaining to State formation are evoked and renegotiated to demonstrate the importance of collaborative, intermediary NGO roles vis-a-vis otherwise hostile States and/or social movements.

The lack of a nuanced analysis of despatriarcalización in research of Bolivian State formation results in a limited understanding of the interrelated project of decolonization and an incomplete acknowledgement of how the Bolivian women's movement negotiates its roles in State-making. My detailed study contributes to political anthropology and specifically studies of the decolonization State-making project by providing an in-depth exploration of the interpretations of its sister project despatriarcalización within the Bolivian women's movement. I highlight how both decolonization and despatriarcalización necessitate the renegotiation of meanings of key words. As per my case study, the various translations of key terms in the Bolivian women's movement have direct implications for justifying the influence of different stakeholders on State formation.

My research has theoretical significance in terms of sociolinguistics, and specifically studies of gender, as well. I posit that more attention should be paid to how gender is applied or dismissed altogether by different stakeholders in women's movements around the world. Looking at how gender is put to work or tossed aside in organizations like feminist NGOs or feminist activist groups requires a careful consideration of what concepts are being evoked alongside or instead of gender as the language of unity, freedom, etc. in women's movements and beyond.

Alvarez (2014a) argues that positive shifts are occurring in feminist NGOs that focus on process, introspection, and changing specific cultural, patriarchal values. She also recognizes that NGOs are important actors in the ways they diffuse and produce feminist knowledges and practices. Gregoria Apaza reflects these shifts. It approaches despatriarcalización as a process, instead of a program with a definitive end date. Gregorias are tasked with changing specific cultural values that oppress women in El Alto, some of which are rooted in the pre-colonial patriarchy of indigenous cultures. Meanwhile, Gregorias like Profe also work to recover particular Aymara cultural concepts of community and reciprocity that benefit women. Gregorias recognize the origins of despatriarcalización in Bolivian feminist activist groups as I was reminded again and again to familiarize myself with Bolivian feminist authors. The recognition by NGO actors of authors like Rivera Cusicanqui, Galindo, or Paredes - even when these writers speak out against NGOs - is a valuable means to continue to link despatriarcalización back to a connection with feminist activist groups. Moreover, through an introspective discussion in the conversatorio, Gregorias and other NGO

professionals began to identify the work of patriarchal power in their own organizations. Norah, Gaby, Eli and Profe highlighted areas they saw needing improvement in Gregoria Apaza in terms of despatriarcalización. They talked about more respectful intra-gender, interpersonal relationships, and horizontal organizational structures. Their comments were far from exhaustive in listing the specifics of how patriarchy manifests in feminist NGOs. There is much more work to be done yet to identify and confront the threat of patriarchy being practiced within the walls of feminist NGOs.

Tania Sánchez asked me to provide feedback in terms of instruments or tools that Gregoria Apaza may use to continue despatriarcalización in their daily work. Based on my research, I identified 10 principal meanings of despatriarcalización expressed by Gregorias and drafted 5 key recommendations. I recommended, for example, that Gregoria Apaza use the word despatriarcalización more in their daily NGO speak. Gregorias had a lot to say about despatriarcalización once I asked them about it directly, but otherwise gender terminology dominated the institutional language. As I demonstrated in my analysis, gender often does not translate into feminist activist groups or the federal government. Relying too heavily on gender terminology, then, limits the ability for feminist NGOs to build partnerships. The translations of despatriarcalización were comparatively the most diverse and creative vis-à-vis the other key terms. Highlighting despatriarcalización more in their daily work would reveal Gregoria Apaza's valuable ability to encompass a wide range of perspectives in one organization. Gregorias and constituents could engage in an exercise as simple as: "In my daily work, despatriarcalización is...". Second, I suggested a library be created as well that anyone can access that brings together all kinds of despatriarcalización sources. This would ensure that despatriarcalización, as per Patricia Flores' remarks, does not become a fuzzword that seemingly "came out of nothing". An accessible library could serve as a reminder of the history of despatriarcalización, which was born in feminist activist groups and raised in the context of years of advocacy and intervention by numerous stakeholders in the Bolivian women's movement. I also stressed that more conversatorios be organized to talk openly and freely about the "nitty-gritty" of how patriarchy actually manifests within feminist NGOs. This, in turn, would produce a well-informed, introspective process enabling Gregorias to respond to the "close" threat of patriarchy.

My ethnography brings multiple voices in the Bolivian women's movement onto the same page. However, the reality remains that the voices of feminist activist groups and feminist NGO employees are, in my experience, rarely heard in the same room. What my research reveals is that both Gregorias and feminist activists reduce the other to stereotypes that do not reflect the variety of people and interpretations of *despatriarcalización* that each has to offer. I firmly believe the two parties could re-negotiate and co-create meaning if they set up "safe" spaces where difficult, intentional dialogues were possible. The goal would not be to undermine differences in favor of harmony, but to reinvigorate and re-politicize *despatriarcalización* by demonstrating how it comes to life in its diverse meanings and applications. As a stronger, united, but not homogenous front, feminist activist groups and feminist NGOs could meet their common objective of demanding the State rely more on the Bolivian women's movement to effectively *despatriarcalizar*. Feminist NGOs have an incentive beyond building solidarity to pursue stronger connections with feminist activist groups. With feminist NGOs closely linked to the municipal State and feminist activist groups closely linked to the federal State, a collective effort to push for feminist content in State-making would infiltrate multiple levels of government and ensure a greater clout for both in State formation. Partnership would make each party more robust, secure, and able to lean on the other's spheres of influence should future changes in Bolivia return to a more decentralized State or continue to be concentrated in a centralized State.

The Bolivian State itself would benefit from not only providing more funding and resources for *despatriarcalización*, but also from recognizing *despatriarcalización* as a significant, parallel project (instead of subproject) to decolonization. This recognition could take the form of changing the State structure to ensure *despatriarcalización* is not lost in the bureaucracy. To ensure it is not depoliticized, the State would serve to benefit from creating a federal and municipal platform by which the creative, diverse understandings of *despatriarcalización* by everyday people could be shared.

My research examines translation in the details of the everyday work of uniquely situated NGO employees. Further research on how feminist NGOs in Bolivia negotiate and exchange ideas, people, and resources with territorial organizations like FNMCB-BS would add another dimension to understanding the translation work of NGO employees. A more in-depth, longterm study would also follow particular individuals over time as they move between multiple parts of the Bolivian women's movement – between

government positions, IGOs, NGOs, the academy, feminist activist groups, etc. – to see how their translations of feminist discourses and practices morph and multiply. Research that reveals instances of women in NGO or government positions moving “against the tide” into feminist activist groups would be particularly interesting as the opposite trend is more common. This study could also analyze how women broker despatriarcalización in their professional and private lives, paying attention to how they move between their roles as Gregorias, daughters, mothers, lovers, friends, sisters, community leaders, teammates, etc. This study would do more justice to the complexity of how *translocas* translate themselves as a precarious and rewarding process.

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Appendix A.

An Example of Ethnographic Fieldnotes

September 6th, 2018

Daily Log

- Arrived at GA at 10am
- Emailed KV re: theater schedule, as per BC rec
- Typing up fieldnotes at GA
- Lunch with GM
- Reading, see if I hear back re: scheduling
- ER sent picture of me during my radio interview!
- Theatre 3-5pm? Confirm with BC invite. Meeting with her Monday AM.

Observations and Encounters

Lunch is often one of the most productive parts of my day in terms of conversation: GM and I walk over to our usual lunch spot, about 10min from Gregoria Apaza. I am still a follower, so easily lost in El Alto. I wouldn't be able to find it myself. I notice there is a lot of trash everywhere, more than usual. It's as if it hasn't been picked up since the *Día del Peatón*. We walk around scruffy, sleeping dogs in the middle of the sidewalk. I give them a wide berth. I am more cautious of street dogs, cute as they may look, since a pack of them ran up to me growling and barking last weekend because of the plastic bag I was carrying. I note that the roads are busier than usual around here, there might be a blockade somewhere redirecting traffic. GM asks me how the Bolivar vs. Strongest football match was yesterday. We talk about how fun it is to watch football in the stadium, with the roar of the crowds, the banners, the streamers, and the wild fans yelling expletives at the opposite team. I tell her I yelled myself hoarse. I also talk about my experience with the minibus that didn't finish its route, so we had to walk to the stadium, and how people had a stand-off with the driver as they refused to pay. She says drivers raised the prices to ride last year to 2 bol., but there were requests that the services be improved. Like better seating and not changing routes. But this hasn't happened, she says, it's at the mercy of the driver. We arrive at the lunch place and greet everyone with the customary *buenas tardes*. My favorite quinoa soup is served and we start to watch the TV reporting the news. We both sit on the same side of the table so we can watch, eat, and chit chat. News comes on about DACA and I cringe, I try to explain what little I know to GM. I say it's crazy that one president can change things so much. She tells me that it's the same here in Bolivia. She is wearing a t-shirt for a feminist meeting which she points out to me. She said one thing they talked about was that all these advances they have made as women aren't irreversible. Someone can come into office that can easily

change them, like the violence against women law. She says this is also what is happening in Brazil, they are just taking away their rights. She asks me about my project, and says you know it would be interesting to look at the proposals made by the government and to *despatriarcalizar* them. She mentions a book I have on my desk about the 2015 proposal (also available online). She says I could look at the whole thing, not just that which mentions gender directly. I thank her for the suggestion. I say I have been thinking about the fact that despatriarcalización really isn't a State-led project like I thought. Women's movements and institutions have changed it, I say. There seem to be contradictions. GM nods, she is engrossed in the TV. Two of our coworkers walk in and sit at the other table, so they can view the TV too. A news flash comes on about a group of youths that kicked someone to death. Women and men are lined up at the police office. Some with small bandages on their foreheads. How awful, comments GM. Then another story comes on. GM explains to me that there are blockades in district 14, where the trash collection service is located. The *vecinos* aren't letting the trash collectors leave the district, so it is just piling up. That is what I noted this morning, I say. Next is a story about women who die from abortions. GM had explained to me before that abortion is illegal under the MAS government. Did you hear that? 13!, says GM to E and NQ. Yes, E says. Something for the radio**, says GM and E nods. I ask for clarification. GM says that 13 percent of women that die in Bolivia die from illegal abortions. *Que fuerte*, I say. She says: Yes, that's a lot isn't it. We finish our lunch and pay our 15 bol. bill. We tell everyone *aproveche* as we leave and start to walk back. GM lights up a cigarette as we walk. She tells me about a 15-year old that was gang raped and killed in Tarija. And that there were women present when this happened. This is what people don't talk about, she says. That women, not men, are the worst friends (*el amigo peor*) of other women. She said that it is taboo to talk about but it's true. A car drives by and someone whistles at us. We laugh, that's a first since I got here. We arrive back at Gregoria Apaza.

**I think it is interesting how G asked them to include it in the Radio. Talking about Radio Pachamama has come up before over lunch. Women and violence is a central topic of conversation. They seem to talk about it to process and also to bounce ideas off each other. It could be that GM just provides a lot of input in general. But it seems to me that many Gregorias outside those working directly for the Radio are invested in it and want to talk about what to broadcast.

Notes to Self

- Look into 2015 proposal
- Read up more on gender laws and abortion issue
- Confirm with BC