Land tenure and forest rights of rural and indigenous women in Latin America: Empirical evidence

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ABSTRACT

Latin America's land-use and communal forests needs a better understanding through a lens of women. This research article aims to examine Latin America's secured individual land tenure legal reforms and communal rights in indigenous territories. Two empirical case studies are presented to assess the current dynamics of rural women's land title rights in coffee agroforestry under Colombia's new Formalización Propiedad Rural program, and indigenous Quechua women's communal forest land rights for indigenous foods like kañawa and quinoa farming in highland Bolivia. In doing so, it also gives an introduction to the five empirical research papers that are part of this Special Section edited by the author. The specific case studies are from the Brazilian Amazon, Bolivia's Gran Chaco area, Nicaragua's indigenous territories and two studies from Mexico – one from Oaxaca's central valley and the other is based on smallholder farming in Calakmul rural area. In conclusion, the author discusses the need to prioritise women's role in individual land rights and communal forest tenure in Latin American countries.

Dedication

This Special Section of Women's Studies International Forum journal is dedicated to all indigenous and local communities and to the environmental human rights defenders – particularly women who are guardians of the forests and natural resources all around the world. Berta Cáceres, the Honduran indigenous and environmental rights campaigner and the Goldman Prize recipient, was murdered in her home in Honduras in March 2016. Latin America emerged as the most dangerous region of the world for people defending their land, forests and rivers against destructive industries. According to the Global Witness Report, a record of 153 environmental defenders has been murdered since January to October 2017. 2015 was one of the worst years on record with 185 killings of land and environmental defenders across 16 countries. Hundreds of environmental defenders continue to inspire us to recognize land and forest tenure rights of indigenous and rural communities in Latin America and across the globe.

Background

In the recent years many developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, have introduced legal frameworks and targeted policies to recognize rural agricultural land and communal forest tenure rights (Blackman, Corral, Santos, & Asner, 2017; Bose, 2017). Some of them were introduced in the country for the first time to recognize and protect the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities (ILC, 2011). This year, 2017, marks the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The UN Declaration was adopted as a tool to set an important standard for the treatment of indigenous peoples towards eliminating human rights violations. The UN Declaration assures the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources and stresses that states are obliged to give legal recognition and due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of indigenous peoples concerned.

It remains to be seen how these otherwise well intended reforms have direct impacts on the governments to achieve the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals such as poverty reduction, environmental goals and gender equity. In some countries these promising legal frameworks are either yet to be fully implemented and/or contradict with other policies that are detrimental to environmental and human rights goals denying international human rights obligations, including women's land rights (Global Witness, 2016; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2015).

Land rights discrimination of women is regarded as a violation of human rights by the United Nation's Economic and Social Council Commission on the Status of Women. Equitable access to land is a human rights issue and, improving gender and social inclusion in land and forest administration is considered to be effective in improving
sustainable management of resources (Robinson, Holland, & Naughton-Treves, 2014). The women’s rights to land and forests are dependent on various social, education, economy, culture, legal and political dynamics at the micro (household), meso (regional) and macro (national/ international) levels (Bose & van Dijk, 2013). Access and property rights of women are dependent on many aspects. These include, for example, formal legal systems such as land use control, divorce, death and marital property rights, and inheritance; religion, culture and custom such as customary laws, division of labour, family support and identity in community/household; and local administrative set-up such as national land administration, laws and empowerment.

Globally, property rights and access to forestland and land tenure for smallholder farms is most often gender biased (RRI, 2017). Women and men have different access and property rights, which in turn impact their ability to participate in sustainable management of natural resources and land-use management (Bose & van Dijk, 2013). For example, has about six million indigenous inhabitants, which is about 60% of the country’s population. Yet, according to IWGIA report (2017), the country lacks a differentiated statistical base on indigenous peoples, especially on indigenous women. According to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), gender disparity in Argentina and Honduras is due to the lack of women’s participation in decision-making processes or policies related to recognition and protection of indigenous lands (IWGIA, 2017).

During the 2017 Land and Poverty Conference of the World Bank, a book by Segura, Fernández, Smyie, and Springer (2017) was launched. This summary report is based on lessons from six countries in Latin America that are currently being assisted by the World Bank to formulate and implement national REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in developing countries) strategies. In brief, the report points out that insecure or unclear communal forest and individual land tenure are underlying causes of deforestation, which is an obstacle to REDD+ implementation. This study, by Segura et al. (2017), however, fails to elaborate the status of women within rural and indigenous communities with regard to their participation and access to various elements in the ‘bundle of rights’. The expression ‘bundle of rights’ refers to different rights often obscured by use of overarching concepts like ‘property’. These different rights include access, withdrawal, management, exclusion and alienation to the same piece of land (Schlager & Ostrom, 1992). In other words, it includes rights to use the land through a lease or communal access, the right to make decisions or control and the right to transfer the land in terms of selling or mortgaging the land. Land tenure is often categorized broadly as private, communal, open access and state property. Private properties are those with exclusive rights to residential or agricultural parcels, communal access is wherein each member within a community has a right to use, and open access refers to specific rights often without anyone excluded to have free access to the resources.

Open access is different from communal systems in a way that under a communal system inclusion and exclusion happens based on membership or pre-identified rules. Most states attempt to bring the scope, content and recognition of property rights under the power of the law and administrative supervision either at a central or more decentralized level. In many instances the indigenous and traditional rural communities contest the state monopolisation of property rights invoking their traditional ancestral management rights, for example, with regard to rangelands, forests, rivers, etc. Therefore, in practice both statutory and customary laws govern land and forest tenure in many communities. Conflicts exist between traditional norms and national laws, which is the direct result of failure of the state to ensure effective and informed consultation as we have seen in the case of Dakota Access Pipeline in the United States and more recently the land rights protest by the indigenous tribes in the Brazilian Amazon (Bose, 2017).

Often, attempts to assert women’s rights through reservation quotas can turn violent with male-dominated traditional tribal bodies regarding it as an infringement of the customary laws. Bose (2017) illustrates the case of India’s tribal dominated state of Nagaland, which has a special constitutional status, but an attempt to introduce 33% of women’s reservation quota in political participation was faced with resistance and debate about traditional values and women’s empowerment. In many countries, statistical information about land titling is incomplete and, in places where it exists, lack of uniformity in understanding concepts like ownership, co-owner, joint-title holder complicates as to what extent women may actually hold control, use, access, transfer and management rights of land and the natural resources than men.

According to Lastaria-Cornheil (1997), in Gambia, Africa, even when formal title to land is registered in women’s name the household head, often male, designated the land as marro land i.e. family-cleared farm land farmed by the family under the control of the male household head. Moreover, the quantitative data of statistical information provides no understanding about the extent to which women have control and say over the land use and management. The same argument extends to the communal rights where women may be present in the meeting, but may not necessarily have decision-making power. Though quantitative measures are valuable, but using the numbers without in-depth ethnographic or other qualitative measure cannot provide accurate understanding of women’s access to, ownership of, and control over property. In other words, the value questionable of quantitative indicators such as number of land titles, joint titling, or even participation in meetings determine women’s access to resources. Such data may even act against actualisation of women’s secured land rights.

**Aim of this Special Section on women and land in Latin America**

There is an increasing trend in examining women’s access and property rights and participation (Deere & Leon, 2001; Lastaria-Cornheil, 2006), yet this is comparatively miniscule in the face of the scope and urgency of the issue in Latin America and the Caribbean. As a focal lead (2013–2015) of the Forest, Trees and Agroforestry – Gender of the CGIAR Research Program at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), one of my roles was to provide a platform for scientists and researchers working in Latin America. I coordinated and facilitated two scientific workshops in Cali, 2013 and in Bogota, 2014 with the aim to share knowledge and to generate on-the-ground primary data on forest and land tenure through the gender lens. In addition, capacity building of Master degree students was an integral part of this research program, which was done through a number of internship projects that I co-supervised together with the staff of Universities in Bolivia, Colombia and the Netherlands.

The collection of articles in this Special Section is one of the process outputs of workshops that were part my gender and tenure research project in Latin America. Out of nine research articles, five were accepted through the rigorous peer-review process of the journal to be part of this Special Section. Two empirical case studies included in this article are outputs of the internship of this research project conducted in Colombia (2014–15) and Bolivia (2013–14). These two studies bring additional evidence about how joint titling and access to farm and forest land matters for rural and indigenous women in Latin America. Our key objective of this Special Section is to share empirical evidence and the current scenario about women’s land and forest tenure rights in rural areas and indigenous territories in Latin America.

This research article is divided into five parts, including this background. Next, I briefly introduce Latin America’s communal forests in indigenous territories and land tenure through the lens of women. The third part presents the key concepts and approach, and highlights the five empirical research studies that are part of this collection: two from Mexico, and one each from Nicaragua, the Brazilian Amazon and Bolivia. I present two brief case studies, Colombia and Bolivia, in the fourth part as a supplement to the empirical evidence research of this Special Section. The case study on Colombia analyses the role of a
national joint titling programme on the smallholder coffee agroforestry and rural women's empowerment, and the study in Bolivia examines the effect of international demand for the indigenous foods quinoa and kañawa's on women's traditional access to land. Key lessons learned and concluding remarks are presented in the final part of this article.

At the end of this Special Section, an overall synthesis article by Bose et al. (2017-in this issue), is the joint contribution of all authors contributing to this collection. It presents a way forward in framing policy and research agendas in Latin America. Based on the empirical evidences, the concluding article primarily draws some key policy lessons with a suggested future research agenda for inclusive women's role in land and forest tenure globally, and in particular in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Land, forest and forest resources for Latin America women

Land reform, in Latin America including the Caribbean (LAC), runs into many dilemmas and contradictions (ILC, 2011; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2015). About one-third of land in LAC countries is granted in concessions for mining, oil, agro-industrial or forestry exploitation (FAO, 2017). The issue of land grabbing and foreignization is closely interlinked with land reform settlements that occur across different regimes of property rights (Robinson et al., 2014). The land struggle movement in various countries was struggles against land dispossession and displacement, as well as people's struggle for land re(possession) (Goméz, 2014). The Latin American countries are considered to have the most unequal land distribution in the world.

As per the FAO report (2017), the Gini coefficient, which measures inequality, applied to the distribution of land in the region as a whole reaches 0.79, far surpassing Europe (0.57), Africa (0.56) and Asia (0.55). In particular, in South America the inequality is even higher than the regional average (FAO, 2017). In LAC countries, the land in the hands of small landowners has decreased significantly. This situation, according to the FAO report (2017), affects women, who only own 8% of the land in Guatemala and 33% in Peru, properties that are usually smaller in size and lower in quality than those owned by men. The report further states that roughly about 23% of Latin American lands are managed or are owned by indigenous peoples. This could be attributed to the decentralization process of land and forests in Latin America in early 2000s. Larson, Pacheco, Toni, and Vallejo (2007) in their synthesis research paper highlighted the ways in which the forest-dependent groups have benefited and/or could benefit further from decentralization in Bolivia, the Brazilian Amazon, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua. The study shows that the direct benefits of forest decentralization to forest-dependent groups as a result of indigenous struggles are due to policies guaranteeing access to land and forests in Nicaragua, Bolivia and to some extent in Honduras. However, the study failed to provide a specific analysis of how women benefit from forest decentralization with regard to land tenure and decision-making process in Latin America.

As per Oxfam report (2016), a study conducted by the Central American Network of Rural, Indigenous and Farming Women (RECMURIC) found that women only hold 12% of land in Honduras; in El Salvador, about 13% of property titles are in women's names; while in Guatemala women work in about 15% of land but it does not always belong to them; and Nicaraguan women have access to about 23% of farms that are less than ten hectares in size. The report further suggests that in Colombia, only 50% of land is formalized, often in the name of male owners, according to the Rural Agricultural Planning Unit (UPRA, in Spanish). Such data illustrating the gender gap in access to land tenure and management of communal forests are alarming. Global Witness (2016) report concludes that in general, Latin American societies are patriarchal in nature with women being subordinate to men. The patriarchal culture is considered to be one of the key reasons for women being the victims of hostility, repression, and violence for challenging social, cultural, and religious gender norms (Global Witness, 2016).

In Latin America, men and women have been part of a long history of social movements for agrarian reform aimed at eliminating the land concentration and the dualistic latifundio-minifundio land tenure structure. Latifundios are large commercial estates of over 500 ha each for commercial purposes and minifundios refer mainly to subsistence-oriented small-holders often by indigenous and peasant households. However, agrarian reforms are traditionally often targeting household heads and those who are permanent agricultural workers – typically men dominate both groups. According to Katz (1999) a very small percentage of women (between 4 and 15%) in Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Peru have benefited from land distribution programmes.

A recent report by the Rights and Resources Institute (RRI, 2017) suggests that the nine countries in Latin America provide the strongest protections for women's overarching inheritance rights and greater recognition of women's community-level membership rights. The report highlights eight of the nine Latin American countries assessed to provide equal statutory protection at least on paper for the inheritance rights of daughters, widows, and women in consensual union. There is limited qualitative research and sex-disaggregated data to show women who do own land and property rights whether they are in complete authority and have independent access to resources. Often, such studies tend to focus from the changing economic roles of women (Katz, 1999; Deere & Leon, 2001).

Approach and the evidence-based studies

In this part I highlight the five empirical research studies that are included in this Special Section: two from Mexico, and one each from Nicaragua, the Brazilian Amazon and Bolivia. Each of the five research articles of this collection addresses the dimension of rural land tenure and communal forest rights through the lens of women and/or gender. All the countries studied have adopted some form of legal regimes that recognizes the rights of women and local communities. To what extent such reforms are effective in recognizing and implementing rural and indigenous women’s rights to individual and communal land demands further studies. Broadly the key concepts used by the contributing authors are the rights-based approach, empowerment, decision-making power or participation, and knowledge.

The rights-based approach along with the bundle of rights is commonly used in gender, women and development studies to examine the issue of land. For example, Pena, Maiques, and Castillo (2008) use the rights-based approach to make a case for Nicaraguan women. Their findings supported the ‘idea that bargaining power at home increases when women's self-esteem and perception of themselves as rights-holder increases, and this occurs when they are able to realize their entitlements to economic assets’ (Pena et al., 2008:64). Empowerment is another key concept correlated to the rights-based approach and integral to this collection of studies. Mosedale (2005:252) defines ‘women's empowerment as the process by which women redefine and extend what is possible for them to be and do in situations where they have been restricted, compared to men, from being and doing’. Needless to say, women's positions vary geographically, within households, and over time. Therefore they have to be investigated and understood also in the given local context. The studies by Radel et al. (2017-in this issue) and Lastarria-Cornhiel et al. (2017-in this issue) have some aspects of the rights-based focus as well as empowerment analysis in their study findings.

Lastarria-Cornhiel et al. (2017-in this issue) studies the gender empowerment in the Gran Chaco region in Bolivia. The forest around the indigenous Guaraní communities in Isoso provides them food, medicine, fuel, building materials, climate regulation and water sources. The authors examine the drivers of change in the indigenous institutions of the Isoso Territory and how these are affecting gender
norms and productive practices that may be ecologically unsustainable, but that at the same time provide both new opportunities for women as well as risks. The overall conceptual framework analyses the impact of the market economy on a society traditionally based on a subsistence economy. This impact consists of deep changes not only in the logic of production but also in the norms and practices regarding the use of land and natural resources. From a gender perspective, changes also occur in the gender division of labour and equity within the community and the household. These change in gender relations are examined as a process of empowerment.

Radel et al. (2017-in this issue) explores the gender dynamics of conditional cash transfers and smallholder farming in Calakmul, Mexico. Their research explores how Oportunidades, Mexico’s anti-poverty conditional cash transfer (CCT) program, impacts production and gender dynamics in the smallholder agricultural sector. A 2010 household survey in one south-eastern municipality of Calakmul captured data on Oportunidades receipt, land use and yields, as well as gendered patterns of asset control, decision-making, labour, and income receipt. The study analysis suggests that households with Oportunidades are more likely to engage in semi-subsistence maize cultivation and on average harvest more maize. Thus Oportunidades appears to support semi-subsistence production. The study documents persistent gender gaps in land control, decision-making, labour, and income receipt. The findings indicate that households with Oportunidades have on average smaller gaps of particular kinds: women receiving Oportunidades are more likely to hold de jure land rights and to share in income receipt from four main crops. These effects of Oportunidades on gendered smallholder production dynamics are important ones in smallholder women’s lives.

Another key concept that is measured is the decision-making power or participation. Various factors including socio-cultural norms and traditions define and shape behaviours of men and women’s position. For example, Kosoy, Corbera, and Brown (2008), uses three distinct approaches - process-based, rule-based and a behavioral approach - in their study to understand participation in payments for ecosystem services in the Lacandon rainforest, Mexico. However, Kosoy et al.’s (2008) study fails to elaborate on the behavioral approach to distinguish the men and women’s participation in ejidos. Successful management of community-based natural resources requires that decision-making power is decentralized to local institutions and that the local populations have access to resources and ability to participate.

The findings from Ribot’s study (Ribot, 1995:1596) in rural forested Senegal from about 20 years ago, still hold valid today to explain that ‘even if benefits and decision making powers are devolved to local communities, participation without locally accountable representation is tantamount to charity, corvée, or even a modern reproduction of indirect rule’. In other words, in the absence of empowerment and legitimacy at the communal and at the individual level participation and decision-making power are ineffective. In Mello and Schmink’s (2017-in this issue) study fail’s to elaborate on the behavioral approach to distinguish the men and women’s participation in ejidos. Successful management of community-based natural resources requires that decision-making power is decentralized to local institutions and that the local populations have access to resources and ability to participate.

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Knowledge sharing is a concept that demands further investigation to examine how learning networks can incorporate new knowledge to deal with gender differences. Colfer (2013) outlines that through successive rounds of learning and problem solving gender plays a big role with the result that co-management arrangements of land and natural resources become adaptive collaborative management (ACM) in time. Kristen et al. (2017-in this issue) uses the ACM approach while Vázquez-García and Ortega-Ortega’s (2017-in this issue) case study raises the issue of knowledge sharing and dynamics of gender relations interlinking with the decision-making.

The fourth article in this collection by Kristen et al. (2017-in this issue) examines the challenges for women’s participation in communal forests. They bring empirical evidence from Nicaragua’s indigenous territories. This research analyses gender-differentiated use, decision-making and perceptions regarding communal forests in indigenous communities of Nicaragua’s Atlantic coast. Methods include a survey, focus groups, participant observation and adaptive collaborative management processes over a two-year period. Results revealed that while a higher percentage of men than women participate in the harvest of eight forest products, women participate substantially in product sales and have some control over income. A majority of men and women believe that women participate in decision-making, but that participation was of low efficacy. Women face significant obstacles to effective participation in forest decision-making in the community: weak community organization, pressure by spouses, difficulty organizing among themselves and informal sanctions. Improving meaningful participation of women in decision-making requires addressing challenges and obstacles at multiple levels; obstacles at the communal level, where the future of the forests will be decided, cannot be overcome without attention to the household.

Vázquez-García and Ortega-Ortega (2017-in this issue) studies the dynamics of gender, local governance and non-timber forest products interface with focus on the use and management of Satureja macrostema or poleo in Oaxaca’s central valleys, Mexico. Their article explores the gendered norms regulating access, use and management of poleo Satureja macrostema (Benth.) Briq., a multi-purpose non timber forest product used as ornament, food or medicine in western and central Mexico. The authors conducted empirical research in San Miguel Mixtepec, a Zapotec community of Oaxaca’s Central Valleys. Drawing on the literature on governance, forests and gender rights, the paper aims at answering the following questions: who gets to make poleo access, use and management rules? How does gender ideology shape these rules? Whose knowledge (men’s, women’s, both) takes precedence in poleo decision-making? What is the relationship between these rules and governance efficiency?

In the following part, I briefly analyse two case studies: one from Cauca region of Colombia and the other from Lake Titicaca region of Bolivia to further supplement the above-mentioned key dynamics related to land tenure and women’s role in rural and indigenous territories of Latin America.

**Joint titling and access to land: Colombia and Bolivia**

*Women in coffee agroforestry: Colombia*

This case study synopsis is based on Schoeber’s internship report (2015) and my fieldwork in Timbio and Popayán municipalities respectively in Cauca state of Colombia. The aim of this study was to analyse the role of formalization of land reform, which was carried out by the Programa Formalización Propiedad Rural. The case study used the rights based approach as a framework to analyse the data collected from the coffee small agroforestry farms through the women’s lens in the year 2014–15 using ethnographic research. In total the findings are representative of 14 individual case studies of women, and semi-structured interviews with 58 women and men, including youths. This
case study presents qualitative data from Timbio and Popayán municipalities where the process of land formalization began in 2013. In particular, this ethnographic study focuses on recognizing how space is separated between men and women, and to what extent women have control over the resources (Schoeb, 2015). In order to understand access, we examine what men and women control, and how land formalization such as joint titling influence this access.

The Colombian government has introduced progressive laws that protect the right of women mentioned in the Colombian Constitution. There are laws that specifically recognize and protect women’s rights and that recognize economic emancipation of women for example to the goods acquired through the marriage or during the marriage (Law 28 of 1932); for both men and women rights for work of equal value (through Law 54 of 1962 ILO Convention 100 of 1951); equal opportunities, treatment and non-discrimination (Convention 111 of 1988); and adequate and effective participation of women in the decision-making levels of the different branches of public authority (Law 581 of 2000 and Law 731 of 2002).

Formalización Propiedad Rural (FPR)

The Colombian Constitution states that all people are free and equal. In practice, however, there still remains the common belief that agriculture is man’s business, whereas the role of the woman is to stay at home to fulfill basic needs and requirements for the family (MinAgricultura, 2014). Often, the property acquainted through marriage and during a marriage, is signed under the name of the husband, while the woman is named as ‘other’ because women did not earn the property to be fully identified with her name (MinAgricultura, 2014). In Colombia, informal land ownership is common, which is defined as the absence of formal land registration. This affects land markets, agricultural production, and investment and resource allocation on the land. It is estimated that almost half of the total rural land in Colombia is not yet formalized. It is in this context that, in 2013, the Colombian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, introduced Formalización Propiedad Rural - a program on the formalization of rural property (henceforth FPR). The FPR was introduced to fulfill Article 64 of the Colombian Constitution that states it is the obligation of the state to stimulate rural development, by promoting access to land for farmers, in order to improve their income and quality of life (MinAgricultura, 2014). Joint titling is often regarded as a solution for gender equity. The question is whether land formalization in Colombia ensures gender equality in practice. Formalizing the land through FPR is assumed to be an easy process, and cost efficient. Anyone who lives, or owns land in one of the zones or municipalities where the FPR is implemented can access the program.

Women and joint land titling in coffee agroforestry

Agroforestry systems, is a land use management in which trees are grown around or among other crops. Agroforestry aims to increases land use yields, to add supplements in food and nutrition consumption at the household level, and to increase the amount of available fuel wood, and often proves effective in climate adaptation for the marginal smallholders, particularly women (Kiptot & Franzel, 2011).

In our study in Colombia, we focussed on smallholder family farm coffee agroforestry to understand its significance for women and their land titling. In every household, coffee plantation is intercropped with other crops, and most commonly also banana plants. In the Popayan study area, which is an undulating terrain, the beneficial effects of intercropping such as pineapple and avocado is also linked to increase the resilience of the coffee production due to climate change and climate variability and strongly reducing erosion in this hilly region. The coffee production was for selling, while the other produces were for own consumption.

The results of the case study show that there are a variety of social networks, family relations, sources of income and ways of how the livelihood is formed. The basis for all of this is land tenure, since land is used for living purposes, used for crop production, and therefore is used to create a livelihood. However, in 89% of situations, the male (often the husband) were the head of the household. In those situations where the woman was a widow and/or living with her children, the woman was the head of the household. Gender roles in the livelihood is an important issue because it describes the culture, the traditional norms of gender relations and shows how everyday live is created, and how different groups of people take part in. The role of gender can be divided into household activities, and into activities related to the agroforestry system. In both the study areas, the majority of women work in the household that includes tasks such as cleaning, washing, cooking, looking after the children. Sometimes the women also take care of elderly. Further the case studies reveal that multiple social networks for women work better to seek support in farming and off-farm activities. Such informal network, according to women, act as a safety net to seek access to their family farmland and its resources.

The findings clearly show gender division of labour in coffee agroforestry. The tasks that need to be done in coffee production can be divided into the production stage and the market stage. In each of these stages, men and women play a different role. During the production phase the common pattern is that the females often continue to do household chores, while the men mainly takes decision related to seed selection, nursery management, planting, pruning, shade management (canopy) and stumping on the field. According to Maria Solarte, one of the respondents, “When the woman is done working in the household, she contributes her time working on the fields. Men however, rarely work in the household in the study area.” The exception is in case of absence of women in the household. In terms of difference between the work men and women do in the field, responses range from no to little difference. The findings show that women are responsible for harvesting the coffee and putting the coffee beans into bags, and do some of the weeding while men are responsible for the other work, such as handling pesticides and fertilizers.

In case of women-led households, Ana, one of the individual case studies, explained “We do all the household chores and work on the field. Women’s work in coffee agroforestry is limited to weeding, milling, drying and packing. That’s how we have managed even before formal recognition of land. Land tenure recognition has not dramatically changed our status in the community, we are still expected to do women’s jobs.” In all cases, men are interested in producing coffee intercropped with bananas because it brings the highest income in comparison to other crops since coffee is the only commercial crop produced in the area. The case study findings indicate that the most important reason for this traditional method of intercropping is that bananas provide shade, mulch, nutrients and moisture to coffee plantations. However, this also means that women do not have much choice in what they want to produce. Other common crops are cassava, maize, avocado, sugarcane, and pineapple, which are often preferred by women for household consumption and selling. The findings indicate that the biggest constraint in being able to make decisions is that the land is not big enough to produce more crops other than coffee, but also often women lack ownership and/or access rights.

The last stage in which the producers are involved is when the coffee is sold on the market. When the coffee is not organic (i.e. produced with a Rainforest Alliance certification), all the coffee is sold at either the coffee federation or the cooperative, also part of the coffee federation, in Timbio and Popayan. All the other products, such as bananas, lemons, cassava, tomato’s etc. are sold mostly by women at the local market. The formalization of joint titling has a limited impact on women’s decision making power for intercropping crops. The study findings indicate that when the widow is living alone in the house, her children and neighbours extend help to sell the crops in the local market. In some households women sold chickens or milk at home to consumers who bought directly from them at relatively cheaper prices compared to the market rate.

In situations of joint land titling, women and men in the household
continue to practice traditional roles as it was before receiving the formal title. The findings in both Timbio and Popayan show little or no difference in their daily routine with respect to agroforestry and coffee farming. However, the majority of women with joint title rights of land were able to voice their opinion about their agreement or disagreement for mortgaging or selling the land. This was, according to the case study respondents, the positive outcome of the joint titling. For widows and single women headed households land title has given them a sense of security, but no direct benefit in marketing of coffee and agro-products or receiving mortgage from banks. Gomez, one of the elderly women from study area explains “Despite formalisation of joint titling, women rely on a male member of their extended household (brothers, son or son-in-law, for example) or neighbours to support them in land management and marketing of agro-products. We continue to follow our local traditional system because there is no other alternative for us.”

The FPR is expected to promote greater legal security in land rights, facilitate justice in terms of property rights, promote sustainable agricultural development, and stimulate gender equality by giving them the possibility to have full legal ownership of the land, so that in the end investments, markets, and transparency are stimulated (MinAgricultura, 2014).

Although the FPR legislative reform protect women, our case study findings indicate that the informal systems often throw a shadow over reality, and possible opportunities for women and their rights. According to the Ministry, women should play the protagonist role in rural development policies, in processes of change, and should be supported with the distribution of subsidies. Lastaria-Cornheil (2006) researched about joint titling in Bolivia and Laos, and they conclude that ‘cultural norms and practices work against extending legal land rights to women’. Our case study findings indicate that it is too early to observe direct impact of FPR on gender equity. Nevertheless, both men and women in the study area perceive Colombia’s initiative for FPR as a good development for women to legally own land.

Quinoa and Kañawa women’s farmlands near lake Titicaca: Bolivia

‘Grano de Oro’ (golden grain) commonly known as quinoa (Chenopodium quinoa) and its lesser-known hardy cousin Kañawa, are the staple diet for many indigenous communities in Latin American countries, particularly Bolivia. In recent years, many researchers have studied how quinoa has transformed from an invisible food to an industrial farming. The same year our research was launched, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2013 as the ‘International Year of Quinoa’. In recent years, few crops other than quinoa have received global attention. Bolivia held the presidency of the international committee for the International Year of Quinoa, while Ecuador, Peru and Chile shared the presidency to coordinate the celebration.

Quinoa boom

In this case study, we refer to the ‘quinoa boom’ we mean the impact of globalization of this high nutritional grain that sells expensively to overseas health food consumers. The ‘quinoa boom’ resulted in socio-economical and environmental impacts on indigenous and local communities. Some of the studies have highlighted the need to emphasize examining the cultural and historical specific challenges and whether pressure of foreign demand puts food security at risk in Bolivia (Kerssen, 2015). It is estimated that over 7000 tons of quinoa is imported by the European Union annually, at least 90% of that is from Bolivia (Carimentrand, Baudoin, Lacroix, Bazile, & Chia, 2015).

This case study is based on the ethnographic research about indigenous Quechua men and women of agro-pastoral communities of the Lake Titicaca region of Bolivia. In 2013, I did a preliminary field trip for primary data collection, which was later complemented by an intern’s (Juán Vilca) fieldwork. Semi-structured interviews with 49 women and men and 21 individual family historical timeline case studies were conducted in Quechua language and later translated in Spanish and English. We also interviewed quinoa traders in La Paz and cooperative association including women’s business. This case study examines how international demand for the indigenous foods quinoa and kañawa influences women’s traditional access to communal and family farmland.

Romina calls quinoa ‘the mother of all grains’, while her husband, Den, explains that the ‘golden grain’ of the Andes is rooted in Quechua communities’ history. Traditionally the Quechua women often in the collective land farmed the quinoa and kañawa crops. Different varieties of quinoa were cultivated due to its hardy crop properties while kañawa has been regarded as the drought and frost resistant crop. The small-scale community based production was mainly used for household consumption as a staple food. In lake Titicaca region, sandy soil conditions combined with high altitude make these crops one of only few options for cultivation that demand minimum input. Women used kitchen gardens and community land to plant kañawa and quinoa crops respectively. The findings indicate that the quinoa boom has resulted in a slow decline in the diversity of quinoa cultivation. This is because the market demand prefers certain varieties of quinoa, particularly white and reddish colour. The production of other varieties including kañawa has been limited to some family farms for household consumption.

The findings show that Quechua women would traditionally barter kañawa or quinoa in the local market. The quinoa boom caused the promotion of large-scale mechanized cultivation of quinoa, which in turn resulted in low market prices for quinoa. As a direct impact of this poor economic value of quinoa, traders were pushed to discontinue informal trade of bartering with Quechua women. The majority of women and men interviewed suggested that the quinoa boom has pushed them to produce double the amount of quinoa to earn the same amount they would earn few years ago. The quinoa boom also resulted in various value-added by-products such as reddish-brown, yellowish-white, or even black quinoa juice, cookies, popcorn, and cakes that are sold informally in La Paz market. Outsider farmers introduced the value addition products and they usually hired local women to help them prepare cakes and cookies. Our study indicates that Quechua women are losing their roles both as collective entrepreneurs and as individuals failing to barter quinoa for household items. Each of the 21 family case studies shows that the quinoa boom has resulted in some form of land disputes, particularly in the collective land.

Collective land tenure system of Quechua indigenous women

In our case study areas, Quechua women have traditionally been owners of a wide variety of quinoa and kañawa seeds in terms of colour, taste, and texture. They have often been sowing collectively in communal land. This was a practice of convenience to manage the crops rotationally. Though the management these crops require is minimal, the collective action helped women to support each other at times of vulnerability due to drought or extreme frost.

In the study area, the collectively management land has remained a commons as it traditionally was without formal recognition of tenure rights. In the past ten years, according to Maria, a Quechua woman, the quinoa boom has brought changes in the way land is managed traditionally. According to Maria, “We (women) used to manage the production of quinoa and kañawa crops and the small earning helped us to run our households. The collective land was never disputed nor claimed. However this has changed.” The collective land has been claimed and sold away as individual land to outsiders and large scale white and red quinoa cultivation has been introduced. Women continue to support farming of quinoa crops, but the decision making and
marketing has been taken over by men. Romina explains, “Men traders when they arrive they prefer to talk to our men. Moreover, I do not speak the Spanish language and traders don’t understand Quechua. My husband is the owner of the land therefore he makes the decisions.”

The interview findings point out that a majority of low-income indigenous families in the Lake Titicaca region are using quinoa as cash crop while incorporating white rice and Irish potatoes in family farms for consumption. This change in food system has direct implications on household’s food security, particularly of women and children. Almost all women of the study area were of the opinion that any other crops cannot replace the nutrition value of their traditional crops. The findings highlight that commoditization of quinoa has challenged the women’s traditional practice of managing the commons. Land tenure was never a priority for the Quechua community in the study area till the commoditization of quinoa occurred. During the fieldwork, we observed that women were discussing the ways to secure their collective rights, which was not a priority for most of the men in the community. Through formal and informal networking women’s collective activities of protecting quinoa and kañawa biodiversity have been challenged due to an exclusively export-driven orientation of mechanization of agricultural production. This case study highlights that fragmentation of secured collective land management due to individualisation process of land tenure impacts collective management of indigenous Quechua communities. The findings indicate that with commercialization of indigenous communities’ traditional crops quinoa and kañawa and land governance system has unintended outcomes at household level making Quechua indigenous women vulnerable.

Thus, the case study fully confirms the paradox that the global economic success of the local has detrimental effects on the local communities in general and on the women in particular.

Conclusions

It is undeniable that when women are denied access to land and natural resources it affects the livelihood of her family, and the wellbeing and development of the entire community. Joint titling through FPR in Colombia with all its positive intentions to promote gender equity has still a long way to go before actually changing the social and cultural norms of local communities. In Bolivia, the development of the commercial growth of quinoa in traditional indigenous territories has unintentionally affected the livelihood of Quechua communities in general, and women in particular.

All research articles of this Special Section and the two case studies presented in this article suggest that women’s role in forest and land tenure is vital to the management of resources. Our Special Section contributes towards a dialogue for stakeholders including researchers, students, development practitioners and think-tanks to acknowledge women’s forest and land tenure issues in Latin America. It calls for further investigation to focus on the women’s empowerment after land formalization. Secondly, they show the need to better identify cultural norms and family structures to understand how the livelihood dependency is created. In this perspective, it is critical to: (a) recognize customary collective and individual land tenure rights of rural and indigenous communities; (b) adopt appropriate land governance that promotes gender equity; (c) gain further insights in the interactions between land tenure, property rights and gender equity.

The concluding policy synthesis article of this Special Section (Bose et al., 2017-in this issue) titled ‘Women’s rights to land and communal forest tenure: A way forward for research and policy agenda in Latin America’ of this Special Section provides examples of key lessons learned and establishes some items for the policy and research agenda. We hope that the evidence-based research papers presented here will provoke further discussion. This Special Section, we hope, will be part of the reframing, or at least reconsideration of, the policy and research agenda on women and land and forest tenure in Latin America.

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