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Cooperative Entrepreneurship as a Livelihood Strategy for Dispersed Indigenous Women in Manaus - Brazil

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Global Development Studies

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Declaration

I, Jemily Lisboa Anderssen, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

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Abstract

In the pursuit of sustainable economic development, the people-centred and democratic approach of cooperatives has shown to be an alternative model to conventional capitalist enterprises that often prioritize profit over human capital. One of the activities cooperatives make use of for income generation is entrepreneurship. As part of a historically marginalized group, indigenous women have resorted to cooperative entrepreneurship as a self-employment strategy to achieve socio-economic change and empowerment. This study proposed to analyze cooperative entrepreneurship as one of the livelihood strategies that dispersed indigenous women rely on, and how these women perceived the social network as a means for socio, economic, and political change. To illustrate the application of this study, I chose the Association of Indigenous Women from the Alto Rio Negro – AMARN, located in Manaus – Brazil. The methodology applied was qualitative, based on semi-structured online interviews with 11 participants chosen from the association members. The results suggest that outcomes such as well-being and capabilities improved achieved by the association members are perceived as more important aspects of their livelihoods than the financial return they earn from the craftwork sales facilitated by the organization. The data shows that limited attention is given to underlying gender and race issues that affect and influence these women's livelihood despite their role as bearers and transmitters of indigenous culture. More engagement and open discussions about gender-related issues regarding the inclusion and participation of indigenous women in the women and indigenous' rights movement are suggested.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AMARN – Association of Women from the Upper Black River

CARE - Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere

COIAB - Coordination of the Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon

DFID - Department for International Development

ICCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

IDS - Integrated Development Services

NORAD – Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

OXFAM - Oxford Committee for Famine Relief

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

SLA – Sustainable Livelihood Approach

SLF – Sustainable Livelihood Framework

UN – United Nations

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

WCED – World Commission on Environment and Development

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Terminology

Sustainability	A state of affairs where the sum of natural and man-made resources remains at least constant for the foreseeable future, so that the well-being of future generations does not decline (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010).
Social Economy	Social economy is a diversity of enterprises and organizations like cooperatives, mutuals, associations, foundations, ethical banks, and social enterprises among other forms specific to each country. SE enterprises and organizations prioritize people and communities over profit, they are governed democratically, and they reinvest most profits. (Social Economy Europe)
Cooperative	An autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. (International Cooperative Alliance)
Social entrepreneurship	The pursuit of enhanced social well-being akin to non-profit institutions achieved by creatively overcoming constraints characteristically encountered by for-profit institutions (Yujuico, 2008)
Capabilities	Based on the *Capabilities Approach,* it refers to means that enable people to do and to be, opportunities, and liberties people have to live dignified and fulfilling lives as an end in themselves, not means to something – or someone – else (Nussbaum, 2002).
Asset	Means that are owned, controlled, claimed, or accessed by the individual/household. Assets are defined as stocks of capital that can be utilized directly or indirectly to generate a means of survival for the household or to sustain its material well-being at different levels. It can also be referred to as resources (Ellis, 2000).
Capital	Assets, understood as resources that give people *capability* to be and act. They can be produced, human, natural, social, and cultural (Bebbington, 1999)

1. CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

As a current topic, sustainability has been the mean and the goal of development projects and businesses all around the world. Civil societies, organizations, and governments have prioritized sustainability over results on many of their economic activities (Bastida et al., 2020). Furthermore, both the SDG and the UN 2030 Agenda reinforce principles and values, as equity, solidarity, democratic management, and commitment to the environment as a series of guidelines that emphasizes the value of human being over capital (Guzman, 2019). In this regard, cooperatives offer an alternative model to conventional capitalist enterprises that prioritize profit over human capital. As a model of sustainable economic development, cooperatives have a people-centered approach, whose management is designed to benefit all stakeholders (Fernandez-Guadaño et al., 2020). In the pursuit of development goals, cooperatives are an important ally contributing to a more sustainable and fair economic system.

One of the activities exercised by cooperatives to achieve the SDG is entrepreneurship. In addition to the creation of social and economic value, the entrepreneurial capacity of cooperatives aggregates a positive dynamism on the economic system (Guzman, 2019). Also called community-based enterprises, these cooperatives provide cultural association and enable the existing social structures to develop business models that benefit the community of a certain geographic area or with a common goal (Hayton, 1996; Ratten & Dana, 2017). Especially for indigenous communities, as part of a minority being governed by wider interest groups, community-based enterprises have provided a great source of social capital. These networks serve both community and entrepreneurial purposes to those residing on traditional lands as to those that for one or other reason needed to migrate (Bailey & Waldinger, 1991; Ratten & Dana, 2017). Such cooperatives allow the integration of marginalized people and their values into the global economic system creating protected spaces for them to develop (Burke, 2010). When it comes to indigenous women, entrepreneurial cooperatives are even more significant to these women's social protection and financial independence.

As one of the most vulnerable and socially marginalized populations in the world, indigenous women have relied on cooperative entrepreneurship as a tool to boost their empowerment and socio-economic development against poverty (Minniti, 2010; Shah & Saurabh, 2015; Terjesen & Amorós, 2010). In an intersectional approach, indigenous women face not only gender-based problems, but also financial, educational, racial, and different forms of violence such as sexual, psychological, and physical, both in main societies as in their own communities (Moyle & Dollard, 2008; Pearson & Helms, 2013; Tovar-Restrepo & Irazábal, 2014; Wood & Davidson, 2011). Particularly in developing countries, societal discrimination increases vulnerabilities and the risks those indigenous women face on a daily basis (Croce, 2019). In this regard, indigenous women cooperatives provide a safe space where these women can find legal, emotional, and economic support to cope with the challenges they face.

However, despite indigenous women importance in achieving sustainable development goals, there has been limited studies focused on the intersectionality of indigenous women and entrepreneurship, especially in the context of Latin America (Croce, 2019). Because entrepreneurism tend to be a male dominant field associated to individual skills, females cooperative entrepreneurship have been largely disregarded due to their limited financial access and community-focused orientation (Kelly, 1991). There are intrinsically different values between conventional capitalistic entrepreneurship and indigenous female cooperative entrepreneurship. Understanding their differences and aspirations is fundamental to be able to draw effective policies and measurements to evaluate the success of such enterprises. Therefore, the aim of this research is to analyze the importance of social networks in enabling indigenous women entrepreneurship as a mean to promote sustainable livelihoods and to identify how these women perceive these social networks as a mean for social, economic, and political change.

Indigenous communities are distinct from one another and their customs, traditions, and gender-perceptions varies greatly depending on where they locate. For this research, I will focus in one association in which women from different ethnicities but with the same language group (Tukanoan) came together to form an association in the city of Manaus, capital of the Amazon state of Brazil. Through the Association of Women from the Upper Rio Negro (Associação de

Mulheres Indígenas do Alto Rio Negro - AMARN) - Numia-Kurá, indigenous women are able to increase their social network, develop entrepreneurial activities that contribute to their livelihoods, obtain health and legal assistance, and not least, share a safe space in which they can share experiences, values, traditions and maintain their culture alive.

2. CHAPTER TWO: The Research Problem

a. Problem statement

Assuming that there are no differences among different indigenous communities even from a same region is rather wrong, but common characteristics have been identified as part of indigenous culture. Three majors of these features are: communal orientation, kin-based social structure, and social aims of exchange (Peredo & McLean, 2013). This community-based orientation and democratic decision-making process, also present in cooperatives, are key differentiating factors in indigenous entrepreneurship and result in different outcomes than conventionally more individualistic entrepreneurship approaches would pursue (Ratten & Dana, 2017).

NORAD started funding AMARN in the year 2000 with the objectives of "strengthen organizational development" and "professionalizing handicraft production toward self-sufficiency", but after seven years, the agency stopped the fund transference claiming lack in "progress in professionalization" and "financial profitability" (Chernela, 2011b, pp. 108,109). In this regard, AMARN's aim has been since its beginning, to prioritize collective solutions, minimize risks, and foster sociability and social security instead of producing high individual returns and profitability (Chernela, 2011b). In effect, it is of utmost importance that donors and funding agencies understand how indigenous values and principles are embedded in their entrepreneurial ventures and how the outcomes might differ from what it is expected by conventional standards established as success measures in our societies.

Unfortunately, AMARN is not alone in "failing" to comprise with similar criteria of profit generation utilized by funding agencies and donors to assess the success of indigenous organizations, for the same happened with national-level associations such as COIAB facing withdrawal from OXFAM and other funders (Chernela, 2011b, p. 112). However, despite capital accumulation not being the focus of AMARN, the association has been since its beginning very successful in building up, developing, and increasing their members' social capital and quality of life. As Stiglitz (2009) points out, the first reason that make cooperatives succeed is their democratic-based regime that leads to less exploitation of workers, customers, suppliers and which is also directly related to job satisfaction. The problem is that there has not been enough research to understand these alternatives models of organizing society, particularly when it comes to indigenous cooperatives, their goals, and motivations.

Besides social and economic benefits, cooperatives provide an important space for challenging, confronting and at some extend, changing the dominant political and economic scenario (Burke, 2010). Due to the patriarchal colonial heritage, indigenous women have been excluded from decision-making processes and little focus has been given to how their leadership and traditional knowledge-transfer role within their communities can empower them and their communities to achieve better living conditions (Dzisi, 2008; Ward & Kiruswa, 2013). It is imperative that the nuances of gender and indigenous perspectives are considered when studying entrepreneurship, and the access to the different assets that compose these women's livelihoods.

Most studies on gender and entrepreneurship have focused on an individual level, not considering the community influence, especially indigenous community influence and their experience as financially excluded women (Megan & Wilfred, 2011). Furthermore, inclusion is the main driver of change that cooperatives and associations derive their power from. Being able to study how it operates and its implications on the internal relationship dynamics between their members and members of other social groups is essential to assess cooperatives success (Burke, 2010). Given these points, researching the relationships that build social networks and the internal dynamics in these networks is of fundamental relevance to all the actors involved in such institutions.

b. Research objectives and questions

Given the above, the main objective of this research is to identify the importance of social networks in enabling indigenous women entrepreneurship as a livelihood strategy, and to understand how these women perceive social networks as a mean for social, economic, and political change. The main research question to be answered is:

- How does gender-focused indigenous associations contribute to the improvement of livelihoods of dispersed indigenous women?

To answer that, three sub-questions were created:

RQ1: How does AMARN facilitate the access and transformation of assets into sustainable livelihoods?

RQ2: How do AMARN members perceive the opportunities and barriers faced by gender-focused associations in enabling indigenous women to expand their assets and capabilities?

RQ 3: To what extent do AMARN members perceive that their relationship with each other and with different partners had an impact on the socio/economic/political change they experience in their lives?

c. Justification of the study

Indigenous women entrepreneurship has been an underrepresented research topic in academia. The literature on entrepreneurship, gender, and indigeneity has been growing, but the intersection of these themes remains limited and focused in the context of North America, with few case-studies in Latin America and Africa (Croce, 2019). Furthermore, cooperative entrepreneurial activities have been shown to be a "tool for advancing self-emancipation, leadership development, well-being, and self-confidence through economic and social empowerment" (Croce, 2019, p. 4; Kuokkanen, 2011). However, due to the scarcity of official statistics on indigenous women education, socio-demographic profiles, and professional entrepreneurial experience, it is a challenging topic to carry on specific analysis (Pearson & Helms, 2013). Nevertheless, the present study provides a great opportunity to look at a well-stablished

organization in which these three topics interrelate, and how the participants perceive the contributions of the cooperative to their livelihood outcomes.

3. CHAPTER THREE: Background

Focusing on entrepreneurial activities developed by indigenous women living in urban centers brings about several particularities and intersections that are worth to be understood. The first aspect would be the indigenous and the ethnic nature of entrepreneurship; the second is the cooperative nature and the gendered perspective of indigenous entrepreneurship; and lastly, the context of indigenous people living in Manaus, Brazil.

a. Indigenous and Ethnic entrepreneurship

Generalizing indigenous people in one common definition can be problematic due the diversity of indigenous peoples all around the globe. However, establishing a broad definition of indigenous people will be useful when analyzing why the same principles and motivations of traditional entrepreneurship might not apply to the indigenous population. Despite political connotations, among the various definitions given to indigenous people, three elements are present. These are: indigenous people are those descendants from populations inhabiting a region prior to conquest or colonization; they have suffered geographical, political, and economic domination by later inhabitants; and they still maintain distinctive social-cultural norms and institutions (Peredo et al., 2004). The attachment to ancestral lands and resources, subsistence economic arrangements and distinctive language is also part of what is pictured as main characteristics of indigenous people even though these traits might not be mandatory for someone to consider themselves as indigenous.

Additionally, in respect to the right of self-determination established by the ICCPR and the ICESCR, indigenous peoples have the right to define, identify, and determine themselves "whether they are indigenous or not and how their membership is attributed" (Daes, 2008). This right is

particularly important in cases where due to colonization and discrimination, indigenous people were exploited and repressed, resulting in fear or shame to self-identify as indigenous. Nevertheless, indigenous people are distributed in all continents and their members might be among "traditional hunter-gathers and subsistence farmers to the expert professionals recognized in industrialized nations" (Peredo et al., 2004, p. 5). In essence, the definition and context of indigenous people will have direct implications to how entrepreneurship develops among these populations especially in urban areas.

Although entrepreneurship has been largely studied, its application within indigenous people either as a community, individuals or small groups who migrate deserves a separate attention. In general terms, entrepreneurship can be defined as the pursuit of economic gains through competitiveness aiming wealth creation and entrepreneurs as those who explore opportunity gaps in the marketplace (Ratten & Dana, 2017). Furthermore, there has been generalized understandings about entrepreneurs' motivations, strategies, behavior, and contributions to economic development. Nevertheless, much is to be discovered whether the same generalizations apply to indigenous people (Peredo et al., 2004).

Peredo and McLean (2013) point out that indigenous cultures have different motivations for exchanges and value differently these processes, which many times conflicts with the standard market assumptions about price, supply, demand, and maximization of individual profit. In this regard, two concepts might emerge when analyzing entrepreneur activities of indigenous people who migrated to urban centers, which are: indigenous entrepreneurship per se, or ethnic entrepreneurship.

Although both concepts might overlap at some points, it is important to distinguish between them when analyzing the differences and particularities of each one and its application on concrete cases. First and foremost, indigenous and ethnic entrepreneurship are both characterized by the strong sharing of cultural heritage, language, and history of subjugation by another majoritarian group (Peredo et al., 2004; Zhou, 2004). As part of an often marginalized and unprivileged group, indigenous and ethnic minorities tend to pursuit similar strategies to cope with socio-economic

disadvantages and limitations, being migration one of them. In this sense, one of the distinctions between indigenous and ethnic entrepreneurs results from the definition given to indigenous people, which consequently reflect on the business model they develop.

According to the definition of indigenous people, for indigenous entrepreneurship to be considered as such, it needs to be often related with community-based development and the access and rights over natural resources and traditional territories (Peredo et al., 2004). Ethnic entrepreneurship, on the other hand, addresses immigrant populations or individuals that develops and rely on social capital to conduct their businesses (Light, 2003), and it refers mostly to middleman minorities or enclave entrepreneurs, conducting economic activities bounded by co-ethnicity and location (Zhou, 2004). These activities tend to be mostly related to enterprises at an individual or familiar level instead of a whole community (Peredo et al., 2004). Furthermore, a significant characteristic of indigenous entrepreneurship is how aspects of their culture, knowledge, and values influence the means, goals set, and the outcomes obtained through such enterprises (Cahn, 2008; Ratten & Dana, 2017).

In the pursuit of self-determination and economic sustainability, Foley (2000, p. 11) emphasizes that indigenous entrepreneurship promotes social change and the economic opportunities indigenous people seek. It therefore becomes an important strategy for social and economic ascension since as victims of colonial expansion, social acculturation and geographical dislocation, indigenous people have been among the most vulnerable groups in society when it comes to chronic poverty, low educations levels, and poor health (Peredo et al., 2004). Self-employment promoted through entrepreneurship becomes then a key strategy to promote socio-economic ascension among migrant indigenous people.

As can be seen, differentiating ethnic from indigenous entrepreneurs living in urban centers is not a straightforward task. Therefore, rights as self-determination and personal motivations should be considered case by case, as well as the strategies developed by these individuals or groups towards socio-economic improvement, better wellbeing, and improved capabilities regardless of the setting indigenous people become entrepreneurs.

As indigenous entrepreneurs face discrimination due to cultural differences, indigenous women entrepreneurs are even more marginalized due to their disadvantaged gender position. In this regard, the intersection of their identities of being both indigenous and women, is of primary importance to the development of their entrepreneurial activities (Croce, 2019). Furthermore, indigenous women's entrepreneurs' experiences vary significantly according to different contexts globally. Particularly from the perspective of small-businesses enterprises, their entrepreneurial success is not measured in terms of economic profit (ibid). Therefore, understanding their entrepreneurial experiences of everyday life and their status, roles, and institutional constraints allow us to explore the complexities that indigenous culture has on the perspectives and on their views about indigenous women entrepreneurship. In this regard, most of the indigenous entrepreneurs, women or not, have recurred to cooperatives enterprises to develop their activities to align their personal and community values and socio-economic goals.

i) Cooperatives

Cooperatives have positive influence both on the people that are involved with it as in the region where it is located (Bretos & Marcuello, 2017; Guzman et al., 2020). In the Amazon region, cooperatives have been particularly important in the pursuit of sustainable development agendas as they work as a social capital catalyzer assisting their members to mobilize and develop other forms of capital (Gertler, 2004). Additionally, as cooperatives are rooted in specific areas by groups of people with common interests, they tend to take accountability for their communities and the environment more seriously than conventional capitalist enterprises (Fernandez-Guadaño et al., 2020; Piekielek, 2010). For these and other reasons, cooperatives have become strategically important when it comes to sustainable development and social cohesion.

As profit-motivated corporations tend to follow consumer-driven demand, it is unlikely they will significantly invest on successful conservation and development projects in comparison to cooperatives (Burke, 2010), especially in times of economic difficulties. As a matter of fact, due to the historical importance of the role of cooperatives, "some of the economic problems we face today are a result of the conversion of those cooperatives into profit-maximizing enterprises"

(Stiglitz, 2009, p. 350). Furthermore, due to the democratic nature and transparent management of cooperatives, job satisfaction is another important factor that contributes to the efficiency of such enterprises (Stiglitz, 2009), which also contributes to well-being and income improvement.

In Bolivia, the cooperative-based rural tourism initiative of Tapacarí, one of the poorest communities in the country, have considerably improved the condition of indigenous women, contributing for the socio-economic development of women and the region, through environmentally friendly approaches (Galindo-Reyes et al., 2016). Ultimately, cooperatives are important drivers of local socio-economic sustainable development, and not surprisingly, indigenous communities have actively used them as enterprise models to build and secure their livelihoods.

ii) Indigenous cooperatives

Traditionally, indigenous societies have been a model of sustainability, in which resources are used in a communal and sustainable way, ensuring that enough supply will be provided for future generations (Ratten & Dana, 2017). Not surprisingly, cooperative entrepreneurship contributes to the empowerment of the community responsible for its management as they are the ones measuring their progress and development (Bretos & Marcuello, 2017; Guzman et al., 2020). As indigenous communities organize themselves into cooperatives, they implement into their business model the same cultural values of community development and attitudes towards sustainability that are common to their societies. This premise is valid to those residing in their communities as to individuals who dispersed to larger cities.

Despite physically distant, dispersed indigenous entrepreneurs maintain strongly cultural ties to previous or existing social networks that benefit and are benefited business outcomes (Ratten & Dana, 2017). Equally importantly, ethnical identity has been shown to increase and solidify cooperative affiliation (Piekielek, 2010). In that sense, community-oriented enterprises ruled by indigenous people carry cultural and social aspects that results in unique styles of entrepreneurship, generating diverse livelihood outcomes (Cahn, 2008) when compared to

conventional enterprises. In the pursuit of self-determination and economic sustainability, indigenous entrepreneurs expand their initial resources and achieve social change through self-employment (Foley, 2000).

Particularly for indigenous women, self-employment becomes one of the main enablers to their participation into the economic activity (Padilla-Meléndez & Ciruela-Lorenzo, 2018). In such context, cooperative entrepreneurship becomes an important strategy in the sustainability path by providing indigenous women the necessary tools for their empowerment and economic development.

iii) Indigenous women's cooperatives

Throughout the years, the role of indigenous women within and outside their communities have changed drastically in many parts around the world. Their rights as women and indigenous have been increasingly recognized especially when it comes to environmental and sustainable issues. Nevertheless, the work of indigenous women have for long remained subjugated to male dominance on the family and in the community, meaning that for most of the time, indigenous women's main occupation has been as caretakers at home (Ratten & Dana, 2017). Although this scenario might remain actual in many parts of the world, indigenous women have expanded their possibilities and income generation sources.

The absence of indigenous women remained for a long time reflected on entrepreneurs' initiatives due to the attribution of male traits to the activity, as the inherent competitiveness and risk-taking nature commonly present in this business model (Dato-on & Mueller, 2008). This has changed with the advent of community-based and social entrepreneurship which has brought more feminine traits to such enterprises, as collectivism and cooperation (Ratten & Dana, 2017) allowing them more independence and opportunities in and outside their communities. Additionally, empirical research has shown that besides been more cooperative and empathetic, women tend to value interpersonal relationships more than their male counterparts which reflects on their priorities, goals, and motivations for wealth and capital building through business ownership (Dato-on & Mueller, 2008; Kelly et al., 1991).

As Witbooi and Ukpere (2011) point out, differently than for traditional men entrepreneurs, for most of women entrepreneurs business growth is not as important as it is to be able to balance their career and family members' needs. Furthermore, as entrepreneurship opens space for self-employment and flexibility, it has become an attractive strategy to women pursuing income generation and more financial independency despite market discrimination and limited scholarity or working experience (Baughn et al., 2006; DeTienne & Chandler, 2007; Jamali, 2009). However, one of the main challenges when it comes both to women as to indigenous women entrepreneurship is the access to credit and financial support for the development of such enterprises. As a matter of fact, indigenous women face even more challenges when it comes to financial capital and access to credit than indigenous men do (McDonnell, 2004). Not surprisingly, Carter et al. (2000) found that women tend to focus their entrepreneurial efforts on business modalities that are easier to establish and maintain despite the lack of financial support. That is one of the reasons why indigenous women found in cooperatives a safe and reliable way to tackle the inherent risks of becoming entrepreneurs. All in all, cooperative entrepreneurship has shown to be one of the most important livelihood strategies to indigenous women that need to conciliate and balance the demands of family responsibilities and income generation.

b. **Brazilian context**

i) **Poverty and inequality among indigenous population**

In the Brazilian context, inequality is a persistent and old problem that directly affects indigenous people. There has been strong emphasis on the colonial roots of inequality of wealth, human capital, and political power, but globalization after the 1980s also played a significant role in the rise of inequality in Latin America (De La Escosura et al., 2007). From 1981 to 1990, Brazil's Gini coefficient rose from 0.57 to 0.63 (Ferreira et al., 2008), which coincided with the beginning of many neoliberalist approaches and the industrialization driven by foreign capital in the country.

Since poverty reduction depends on the growth of average income and how income is distributed, poverty remains closely associated with the inequality history of the country (De La Escosura et al., 2007, p. 298). Furthermore, ethnicity and poverty are strongly correlated, especially in Latin America where indigenous are among the poorest population (Chernela, 2011b). A previous study from the World Bank observed that being poor and indigenous were synonyms, and another report from the UN appointed that despite comprising only 5% of the world's population, 1/3 of the indigenous people were among the extremely poor rural people. The report also pointed that in Brazil, about 38% of the indigenous population lived in extreme poverty (Economic & Issues, 2009).

Different definitions and diversity of communities and circumstances, make it difficult to estimate the indigenous population. Although many countries do not possess a precise and accurate number to report, economic deprivation and widespread chronic poverty seems to be a persistent characteristic of many of these populations all over the world (Peredo et al., 2004). In Brazil, some criteria as ethnic belonging, language spoke at home, together with the self-determination right were used to establish for the first time in 2010 the number of self-declared indigenous people (da Cruz, 2019). Brazil's indigenous population was estimated at around 310.000 people, from which less than 10% living outside indigenous areas (Cunha & De Almeida, 2000). They are organized in 206 societies, of which 160 are in the Amazon, being highly diverse from each other, with 195 different languages subsumed under four major linguistic units (Cunha & De Almeida, 2000, p. 322).

ALTO E MÉDIO RIO NEGRO: FAMÍLIAS LINGÜÍSTICAS

Figure 1: Alto and Medio Rio Negro: Linguistic families (Cabalzar & Ricardo, 2006)

In the North region of the country, where the biggest concentration of indigenous territories is located (figure 2, green area), it is estimated that 20.000 indigenous people are speakers of Eastern Tukanoan[1] languages (Chernela, 2014). These groups live along the streams of the Rio Negro in Colombia, Brazil, and Venezuela, from which the Brazilian portion composes the Uaupés River and its affluents. The region is home to speakers of the Tukanoan language groups, including the Desana, Tuyuka, Wanano (Kotiria), Tukano, Piratapuia, Cubeo, and others (Chernela, 2014). The Eastern Tukanoan language group is considered by its members as "a group of patrilineal

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[1] The region of the Northwest Amazon, which covers the basin of the Upper Rio Negro has been traditionally inhabited for at least two thousand years by ethnic groups who speak languages belonging to three language families: Arawak, Maku and Tukano. Retrieved in https://pib.socioambiental.org/en/Povo:Etnias_do_Rio_Negro

relatives descending from a rank of ancestral brothers", which evokes a sense of fraternity and closeness among the community to the point that marriage between members of a same language group is forbidden (Chernela, 2011a; Jackson & Jackson, 1983).
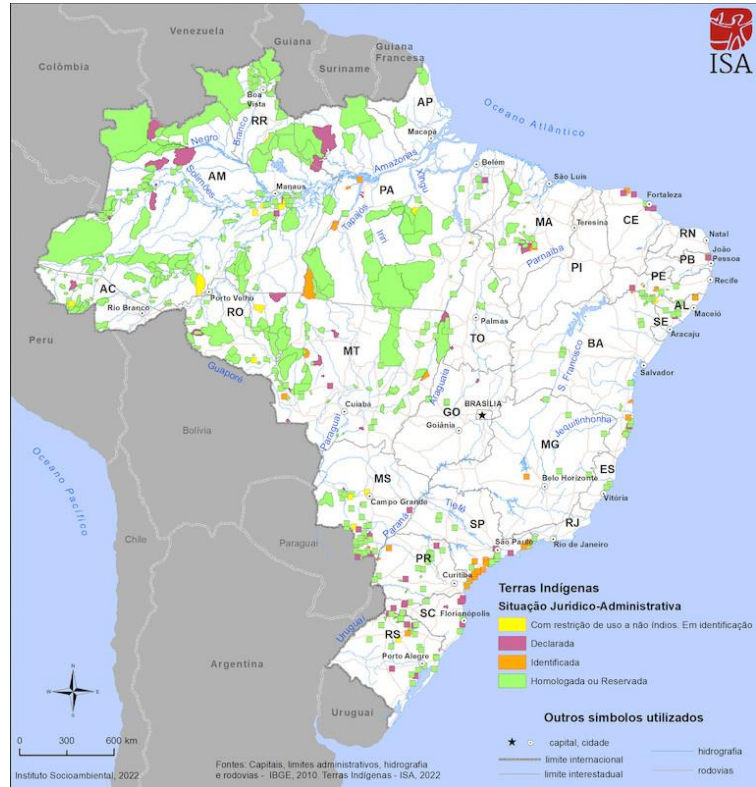
Figure 2: In green, homologated or reserved Indigenous territories in Brazil. October 2022. (Source: ISA – Instituto Socioambiental)

ii) Indigenous population in Manaus

In the North region of Brazil is located Manaus which today is the capital of the state of Amazon. Manaus holds the largest indigenous population in the country despite not belonging to any indigenous territory as near municipalities do (da Cruz, 2019; Mainbourg et al., 2016). For many centuries before the Portuguese colonization, which took place in the middle of the XVII century, the area was composed of small indigenous communities, particularly from the ethnicities Tarumã, Baré, Baniwa and Passé. These communities were later transferred and dispersed to other adjacent regions as the new migrants started to establish in the town (Freire, 2003).

Between 1870 and 1920, Manaus started to expand and become an attractive economic zone due to the exploration and production of rubber in the Amazon which led the indigenous people to stop being the majority among the population (da Cruz, 2019). In 1967, a new wave of industrialization and migration started in the city with the creation of the Manaus Free Trade Zone, which was a government attempt to provide fiscal incentives aiming to develop the industrial, commercial, and agricultural Western Amazon region (Melo & Moura, 1990). During this period, together with migrants from other regions, many indigenous people also started to populate Manaus. Their reasons varied from the pursuit of economic opportunities to the lack of health and education opportunities near their communities (da Cruz, 2019; Mainbourg et al., 2016).

According to the last official census of 2010, from around 1.8 million habitants in Manaus, 4.040 people declared themselves as indigenous mostly from indigenous territories of the Amazon, from 99 different ethnicities, with more than half of them coming from the Rio Negro region (da Cruz, 2019; Mainbourg et al., 2016). The groups with more representation were the Baré, Sateré-Mawé, Tukano, Múra, Tikúna, Kokama e Mundurukú (da Cruz, 2019). Comparing to the general population, the indigenous women population was 10% higher than their male counterparts, particularly from the age group from 10-29. This can be partially explained due to the popular working offer for women as domestic servants or to the opportunity to further continuate their studies (Teixeira et al., 2009).

Regarding scholarity, indigenous people from the Rio Negro region represent the largest percentage of those among the indigenous population which have completed high school or college degree, probably due to the fact that in many of the communities that they come from there are religious initiatives to educate and literate children particularly up to secondary school (Mainbourg et al., 2016). When it comes to occupation, two thirds of the indigenous population of Manaus work on the informal sector and from these, one third of them as self-employed, especially producing and selling handcraft products, another percentage of them work on civil society and government organizations, and another part as mid-level technicians, leaving still a significant part of them unemployed (Mainbourg et al., 2016).

c. Case Description

As a generally socially disadvantaged group, indigenous people have developed entrepreneurial skills out of the necessity of generating income, but also as a mean of developing innovation and creativity (Ratten & Dana, 2017), and the same holds true for indigenous women. Between 1965 and 1980, hundreds of indigenous women were brought from forested villages to Manaus to work as domestics servants. Among these were Tukanoan women that, pursuing better quality of life, were lured and transported to the urban center to work as "unpaid and underpaid domestic servants in military households" (Chernela, 2011b, p. 93). The strategy was part of an assimilation policy to integrate indigenous people into the Brazilian culture, where they would be under the protection of the state and the missionaries responsible for integrating them into society. In the meantime, indigenous girls were sent to work in the private residences without documented contract and kept under nearly slavery regimes (Chernela, 2011b).

As anthropologists and international organizations became aware of the situation, the case was brought to the Russell Tribunal under the accusation of "trafficking in persons for purposes of labor exploitation, in particular forced and compulsory labor and other slavery-like practices", violating the Convention N.29 and N.105 of the International Labor Office. Due to the international repercussion of the case, it did not take long to bring the practice to an end (Chernela, 2011b). Several women together with their advocates created AMARN, with the objective of protecting vulnerable indigenous women and creating a space where these women could share their stories and find solutions to their problems (Damasceno, 1987).

AMARN, the Asssociacao das Mulheres do Alto Rio Negro/Association of Women from the Upper Rio Negro – or in Tukanoan terms "Numia Kura," meaning "group (or kindred) of women" - constitutes an organization of members from ten ethnicities: among them, six Tukanoan (Arapaco, Desana, Piratapuia, Tukano, Wanano (Kotiria), Tuyuca) and two Arawakan (Tariana and Baniwa) (Chernela, 2015, p. 214). The association was registered in 1989 in the city of Manaus, with the objective to provide social, economic, and political support in securing the resources and

services needed by indigenous women after their migration to work at family houses (Chernela, 2014).

Ever since, AMARN has expanded and today, together with partner organizations, the members are able to sustain an indigenous market space where they can produce and sell handcraft products generating income enough to cover maintenance costs and surplus revenues, while also providing opportunities to work with and inspire upriver relatives (Chernela, 2011b, 2014). By and large, although not measured in conventional economic terms, AMARN's success has a lot to draw from the social capital that these women were able to mobilize throughout the years. Through the association they were able to improve their livelihoods, while also empowering themselves and the indigenous movement.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: Theoretical Framework

a. Sustainable livelihoods framework

Livelihoods is a frequent and flexible term that comprise many meanings in the development field. It has to do with how people in different places live, regardless of the setting (urban or rural), occupation (farming, fishing), social differences (gendered, generational), direction (pathways and trajectories), or pattern (sustainable or resilient) (Scoones, 2009). Chambers (1995, p. 174) define livelihoods as "the means of gaining a living, including livelihood capabilities, tangible and intangible assets". Based on these definitions, analyzing local livelihoods has become a key aspect of development policies to better understand and improve people's quality of life. By focusing on enhancing peoples wellbeing, livelihood becomes a people-centered concept aimed to provide resources so people can enjoy their lives (Morse & McNamara, 2013). Therefore, as a holistic term, livelihoods inevitably include sustainability as one of the aspects of human reality.

Making livelihoods more socially and environmentally sustainable is a way of putting such a broad concept into practice. Although the junction of sustainability and livelihoods might be relatively new, early definitions can be traced back to the Brundtland report, WCED in 1987 with

clear links to sustainable development. A livelihood is environmentally sustainable when "it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance people's capabilities, assets, and activities both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base" (Chambers & Conway, 1991; Serrat, 2017, p. 21). It is considered socially sustainable when it has the ability to perceive, predict, adapt to and exploit changes in the physical, social, and economic environment and still remain resilient (Chambers & Conway, 1991). Above all, normatively based on capability, equity and sustainability, sustainable livelihoods can be applied in both rural and urban contexts emphasizing that future generations will not have their livelihoods damaged or restricted due to the choices of the present generation (Chambers & Conway, 1991; Morse & McNamara, 2013). In other words, the sustainable livelihoods approach emerged as a way of thinking and as an intervention tool for development agencies aiming to improve people's lives without compromising the environment.

The Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) inspired the creation of several frameworks to guide practitioners in development projects. Although the application of such framework has been less employed over the years, it still works as an effective tool to explore the diverse elements and relationships in place (Scoones, 2009). Furthermore, the SLA can also be used as a set of principles rather than an intervention tool. Despite relatively vague in matter of how broad these principles are, applying the SLA as a practical framework can be extensively time and resource consuming, and difficult to implement (Morse & McNamara, 2013). As an integrated approach, some of these principles are: acknowledging the importance of people and the local context, focusing on capacities and capabilities rather than needs, and putting normative emphasis on poverty and marginality to guide new methods, frameworks, institutions and funding stream to sustain new alliances and networks (Scoones, 2009).

Most of the SLA literature comes from project proposals and programme reports as a condition for receiving funds from development agencies, which makes it more operational and less available to the public. In this sense, the abstract concept of sustainable livelihood became more popular and attractive than the SLA framework among academics (Allison & Horemans, 2006; Morse & McNamara, 2013). For example, as researchers cover sustainable livelihoods, it is common to focus on aspects of the framework, such as one of the capitals or the role of institutions.

Nevertheless, having in sight a framework that considers the connections between the different capitals and institutional context, trade-offs, different livelihood strategies and outcomes is extremely valuable as an analysis tool both for practical as for research purposes. In brief, SLA is all about people and their livelihoods regardless of where they are, as it is about making sustainable development practical while considering people's aspirations of wellbeing and the environment in which these livelihoods thrive.

Departing from SLA as a set of principles, seven of them can be set out as leading and most important ones when applying the SLA approach to development projects or research. These are: be people-centered; be holistic; be dynamic; build on strengths; promote micro-macro links; encourage partnerships; and be sustainable. In elaborating them, Morse and McNamara (2013) point out that people should actively participate in all phases of the project; people are free to adopt as many strategies to secure they livelihoods as they deem necessary and with as many actors as they will – private sector, ministries, civil-society and/or international organizations -; SLA should seek to understand the different dynamics that might influence livelihoods; it should focus on people's perceived strengths and opportunities rather than problems and needs; SLA should examine policies and institutions and how they influence people's livelihoods; encourage broad public and private partnerships, and last but not least, aim for sustainability.

These principles should be observed both when applying SLA as a practical tool and as a research guide regardless of the context. It should be noted that SLA does not replace other participatory development tools and approaches, but it allows the connection between people, their environment, their livelihood strategies and outcomes in terms of skills, social networks, access to resources and the influence of institutions and organizations (Serrat, 2017). In sum, a framework that encompasses the SLA principles, even if broadly, will greatly improve the way livelihoods are analyzed and applied through development projects.

Reality cannot be grasped through a simplistic heuristic model, but frameworks provide a guide for thinking of how different elements might interact and how they are related (Scoones, 2015). Likewise, such a framework does not depict a theory as it does not establish procedures to be followed, but it does provide guidelines for how to approach development (Mazibuko, 2013).

Several frameworks were created and developed to understand what makes a livelihood sustainable, and each of them with a particular focus but similar essence. Part of the essence of a SLA framework is the role and importance of formal and informal institutions and organizations in working together with people to maximize their chances of success and their ability to achieve livelihood outcomes (Morse & McNamara, 2013; Scoones, 1998).

In brief, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework – SLF (figure 3) links livelihood contexts to livelihoods resources (inputs designed as "capital", "assets", or "capabilities") which mediated by institutions and organizations are developed into strategies that will result in various livelihood outcomes. The framework also recognizes the influence of different contexts, and the different assets and claims people have access to build their livelihoods, and how the combination of strategies will result in various outcomes, both material – as increased number of working days – as immaterial – well-being and capabilities improved. For all that it is, the SLA framework is "unique to the specific context within which it is applied" (Morse & McNamara, 2013, p. 146).
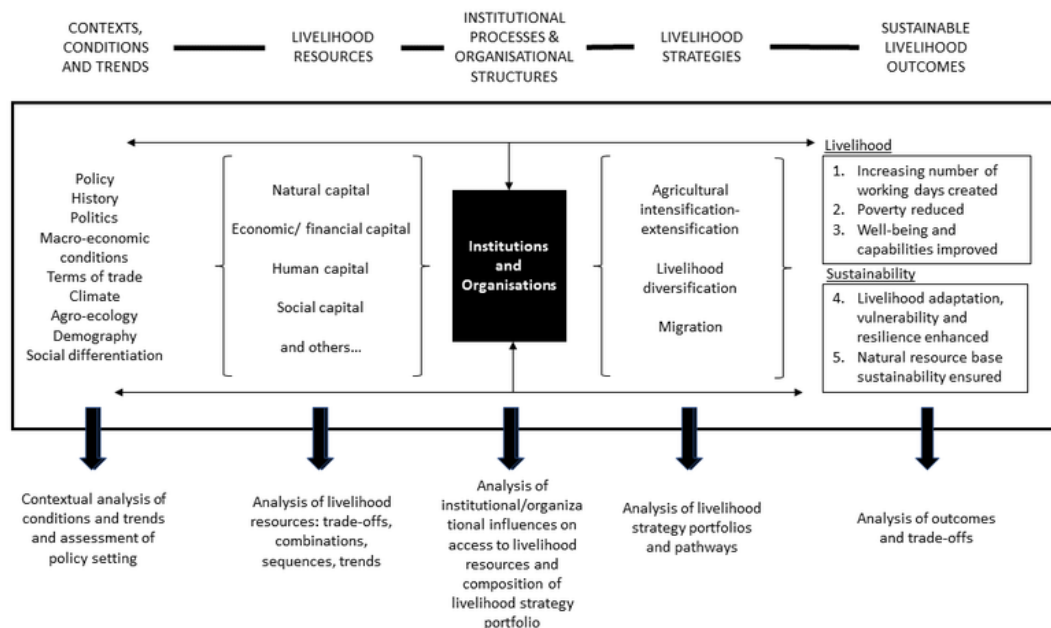
Figure 3: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Scoones, 1998)

The SLA framework can be applied in any context where livelihoods are to be analyzed, but in practice it has been more widely applied in development programs on developing countries, especially in rural areas, focusing on rural development, poverty reduction, and environmental management (Morse & McNamara, 2013; Scoones, 1998). However, the application of the framework is not limited to rural settings, as people that live in peri-urban and urban contexts also have livelihoods to be considered. Livelihoods are complex, multidimensional, and socially differentiated, and as such, the SLA framework can help to put these complexities into perspective and provide different ways to think and act, besides helping to identify practical priorities based on the interests of those concerned (Scoones, 2015; Serrat, 2017).

While the SLF does not offers predictive power, it provides a broad checklist of issues to explore and factors that constrain or enhance livelihood opportunities, while encouraging the right questions to be asked and how they might relate to a particular context (Scoones, 1998; Serrat, 2017). Equally important is the scale to which the SLF is being applied. The SLF can be employed from individual to households, to villages and national scales, shedding light on key livelihood resources, institutional processes, strategies, and outcomes at all the different levels of the framework, suggesting different entry points for development intervention (Scoones, 1998).

Regardless of the strategy, one of the main objectives of applying the SLF is to promote sustainable livelihoods towards poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. Farrington (2001) points out that the SLA can be seen or applied as a set of principles, as a formal analytical framework, and/or as a developmental objective guiding development intervention. In all the approaches, alleviation of poverty due to increased livelihood sustainability is achieved either through strengthening key capitals, making them less vulnerable to stresses and shocks, or improving institutional contexts (Morse & McNamara, 2013). As an example, development agencies as the DFID employs the SLF as a basic framework for analysis, while organizations as CARE and UNDP use it to "facilitate the planning of concrete projects and programmes" (Krantz, 2001, p. 4). Either way, the framework provides a holistic and contextualized understanding of livelihoods as a research analysis or to ensure positive impact in cases of development interventions.

Despite the involvement of socio scientists in the creation of the SLF, to make it more attractive to economists and funding agencies, some terms needed to be prioritized in spite of others. One example is the term "capital" to describe the resources when referring to the livelihood resources of the framework. Used to describe a factor of production, capital is largely employed in classical economics, and as such, taken as a physical or tangible asset, possible to measure and quantify in economic units. This nomenclature was not received without objections since some of these assets are neither comparable nor easily measurable (Scoones, 2015). A clear example is social capital, but also spiritual and cultural capital which can be equally important assets to people's livelihoods but cannot be easily quantified. Nevertheless, capitals should not be merely understood as means of production, neither the SLA as "factors underpinning production", but as Bebbington (1999, p. 2022) posits as means by which people can "engage more fruitfully and meaningfully with the world, and most importantly the capability to change the world".

Building sustainable livelihoods is a current concern around the world, particularly among the most vulnerable. Much has been and can still be learned through the application of the SLF, both in practice as in research, particularly about livelihoods resilience, institutional context, access and control of capitals and the influence of gender and power relations, and about the trade-offs people have to make to achieve livelihood outcomes (Morse & McNamara, 2013; Scoones, 1998). Yet, a rather low output of publications about SLA results have been perceived throughout the years (Morse & McNamara, 2013). Below, I will explore some of the topics of the framework which can be understood to draw valuable insights on the relationships involved in people's livelihoods.

i) Context, conditions, and trends

The holistic nature of the SLA framework makes it broadly applicable, but highly context specific. This brings the importance of understanding "why things are the way they are and why people do what they do" besides considering local biophysical, economic, institutional and political contexts and uncertainties (Morse & McNamara, 2013, p. 40; Scoones & Wolmer, 2003). As trends also matter in influencing future outcomes, knowing historical legacies is very important

to delineate possible vulnerabilities and how these will impact the changes and access to key assets or capitals to people's livelihoods (Morse & McNamara, 2013).

In the SLA framework, context and conditions can also be depicted as vulnerabilities to stresses and shocks to which livelihoods are submitted to. According to Conway (1987, pp. 101,102) stress can be defined as "frequent, sometimes continuous, relatively small and predictable disturbing force which has a large cumulative effect" while shock as "an infrequent, relatively large and unpredictable disturbing force". Serrat (2017, p. 23) defines vulnerability as "insecurity in the well-being of individuals, households, and communities in the face of changes in their external environment". Definitions of sustainable livelihoods invariably will include ways to cope with and recovery from stresses and shocks (Chambers & Conway, 1992). Identifying which capitals are central to people's livelihoods and the contributions they make is essential to assess the vulnerability context and the effect stresses and shocks will have on them (Scoones, 1998).

ii) Assets and resources

A highly debated and important part of the framework are the livelihood resources. These are defined as assets and claims to which people have access to. These assets might be tangible – as land or properties – or intangible – as social networks. Chambers and Conway (1992, p. 8) define claims as access or demands, and appeals for practical support, "based on combinations of rights, precedent, social convention, moral obligation, power". In this regard, a household does not necessarily need to own an asset for it to be a key contributor to a livelihood, as long as such asset is easily accessible or can be claimed (Morse & McNamara, 2013). As a matter of fact, people might even temporarily give up a particular capital in favor or another if they deem appropriate for their livelihood strategy (Bebbington, 1999). This results in trade-offs people have to make, like for example, temporally give up human capital in form of education to increase the financial capital, as for example, working more hours to increase the income of the household.

These assets or capitals in the framework are divided in four main categories (human, social, natural, and physical) in most of the literature, which does not mean that definitions and measurements about them and the possible inclusion of other capitals have not been extensively

debated (Scoones, 1998). This is the case of some scholars considering the inclusion of spiritual, intellectual, cultural, or political capital in the list (Morse & McNamara, 2013). Nevertheless, the variety of capitals people rely on to build their livelihoods could be endless considering all the possible contexts and realities. For this reason, considering capitals as means in which people interact fruitfully and meaningfully with the world (Bebbington, 1999) is enough to cover and understand the most commonly capitals the framework explores. For this study, I will use the five main capitals as described by Serrat (2017, p. 23). They comprise:

- Human capital: health, nutrition, education, knowledge and skills, capacity to work, capacity to adapt;
- Social capital: networks and connections (patronage, neighborhoods, kinship), relations of trust and mutual understanding and support, formal and informal groups, shared values and behaviors, common rules and sanctions, collective representation, mechanisms for participation in decision-making, leadership;
- Natural capital: land and produce, water and aquatic resources, trees and forest products, wildlife, wild foods and fibers, biodiversity, environmental services;
- Physical capital: infrastructure (transport, roads, vehicles, secure shelter and buildings, water supply and sanitation, energy, communications), tools and technology (tools and equipment for production, seed, fertilizer, pesticides, traditional technology);
- Financial capital: savings, credit, and debt (formal, informal), remittances, pensions, wages.

Capitalizing livelihood resources as mere economic units is simplistic and rather problematic, particularly because many of its elements cannot be quantitatively assessed. It is understandable that a more instrumental and economic approach has remained as the focus of sustainable livelihood analysis once these were dominated by aid agencies (Scoones, 2015), but equally important to people's livelihoods is people's wellbeing, lifestyle and expectations (Morse & McNamara, 2013). Assets which are not directly measurable nor quantifiable. In the same way that assets in form of income matters for people's survival, it also does matter assets in ways that increase people's wellbeing, and empowerment as means to affect their human experience (Bebbington, 1999). In other words, livelihood dimensions that are less measurable by numbers and indicators than by qualitative approaches in which people can tell what they perceive as

important assets to their livelihoods. In this regard, looking at assets as not only "what people have but also what they believe, feel and identify with" (Scoones, 2015, p. 40) have opened discussions about how dynamic livelihood assets are and how these assets might comprise elements not economically measurable.

In effect, the SLA framework does not specifically require a particular method or technique to explore the capitals, institutions, vulnerability, and so on. Instead it provides enough freedom to qualitative methods to be implemented, as observation, focus groups and interviewing (Morse & McNamara, 2013). Institutional dimensions have also been emphasized in several IDS studies particularly regarding the mediating role of institutions and organizations and the influence of complex processes of power, politics, and governance through in-depth qualitative research (Scoones, 2009). That because not only access to capital assets are important as it is how access to these assets depend on the established institutional structures in place (Serrat, 2017).

iii) Institutions and organizations

Although some quantitative elements of the framework regarding input-output-outcome are easily recognizable by economists, social and institutional dimensions might be disregarded in many livelihood analysis (Scoones, 2009). Interestingly enough, it is these institutional dimensions that determines most of the trade-offs people make and the livelihoods strategies pathways available (Scoones, 1998). For this reason, emphasis is given to institutions and organizations in this version of the SLA framework due to its importance on mediating the social structures and processes that allows or constrain sustainable livelihood outcomes to be achieved (Scoones, 2015). Institutions and organizations receive a central position due to their role in enabling people's access to resources and in assisting them in the transformation of these resources through livelihood strategies. Moreover, by providing opportunities and incentives, institutions stimulate people to make better choices as they influence peoples' interpersonal relations (Morse & McNamara, 2013; Serrat, 2017).

In a broader sense, institutions are both formal and informal practices, or patterns of behavior, long established and structured by rules and norms of society, which can be perceived differently by different actors (Giddens, 1979). Complementary, as institutions create rules, they also give meanings and guide organizations to achieve certain objectives by following these rules (Leach et al., 1997). In this regard, institutions are constantly being shaped and reshaped by the dynamics between the actors and the power relations within institutional forms (Scoones, 1998). Therefore, taking an institutional approach allows us to understand the social processes and to identify the barriers and opportunities to sustainable livelihoods at the same time that these institutional relationships shed light on how different actors have access and control over resources (Leach et al., 1997; Scoones, 1998). The role of institutions and organizations and the power dynamics between these and people is then key to understanding how people mobilize assets to create sustainable – or not – livelihoods.

Power and politics are inherently embedded in the relationships between individuals and organizations which in turn, influence the institutions and structures around that make the linkage between these actors. It is through the access to the assets mobilized by institutions and organizations that people become agents of power, capable "to reproduce, challenge, or change the rules that govern the control, use and transformation of resources" (Giddens, 1972, Bebbington, 1999, p. 2022). Institutions are mediated by power relations which can work both facilitating access for disadvantaged groups through collective action and alliances, as perpetuating and reproducing power inequalities and marginalization of particular minorities (Scoones, 2009). As Bebbington (1999) points out, the access to institutions and organizations has been proven fundamental to secure access to other resources, while the failure to create and maintain these relationships and networks can greatly contribute to the increase of vulnerability and poverty. In sum, it is through these institutions and organizations that people are able or not to access and transform their available resources into livelihoods strategies, which will generate measurable and immensurable outcomes for their livelihoods.

iv) *Livelihoods strategies and outcomes*

Livelihood strategies comprise the activities in which people rely on to achieve livelihood outcomes. In different contexts and scales, people develop several strategies and trade-offs to achieve certain outcomes (Scoones, 1998). Some of these strategies can vary between natural and non-natural resource-based activities, migration, remittances, pensions and grants to mention a few (Serrat, 2017). In this regard, Scoones (2009) compares these different strategies to a "complex bricolage or portfolio of activities" that will invariably affect livelihood outcomes. Furthermore, building up these strategies depends on the availability and accessibility of different assets, either material or immaterial, as well as how these resources have been combined on that specific setting (Scoones, 1998). In sum, as the choice of strategies set up the achievement or not of outcomes, they become a fundamental aspect of any analysis pursuing to understand the nuances of livelihoods.

Surely one of the advantages of the framework is the possibility of setting up outcomes and indicators which can assist policymakers to track progress towards sustainable livelihoods (Morse & McNamara, 2013). The SLA framework divided the outcomes into two categories: one focused on livelihoods and other with focus on sustainability. The first three elements focused on livelihoods comprehends work and poverty reduction connected with broader issues of well-being and capability; and the last two elements regarding sustainability embrace livelihoods resilience and the natural resources livelihoods depend on (Scoones, 1998). Although most of these outcomes have been assessed through quantitative indicators to facilitate development interventions practices and the implementation of public policies, many of them require a more in-depth analysis, as it is the case of well-being and capability assessments of livelihoods.

In the same way as some of the capitals cannot be precisely measured, some of the outcomes will also vary in matter of priority and assessment techniques. For the outcome 1, creation of working days, 200 days a year have been considered as a minimum level to secure a livelihood, although a more qualitative assessment in terms of job satisfaction, rights, flexibility could also be applied (Scoones, 1998, 2015). For the outcome 2, poverty reduction, quantitative

and qualitative assessments can be used in combination, as well as Gini coefficient measures or income/consumption based methods (Scoones, 1998). For outcome 3, well-being and capabilities assessments tend to be less straightforward and often beyond material concerns. According to Chambers (1989, 1997) and Scoones (2015) a well-being approach to poverty highlights relational and psychological qualities of livelihoods which allow people to establish the criteria they deem relevant, as factors like self-esteem, happiness, stress, vulnerability and other immaterial conditions are considered beyond material earnings. Last but not least, the two outcomes focused on sustainability will assess the resilience and the ability to cope with different types of stress and shocks and the "ability of a system m to maintain productivity when subject to disturbing forces" (Scoones, 1998, p. 6). Both require more technical and specific indicators, but that in the same way as the indicators of the other outcomes, are also subject to negotiation, contradictions, and trade-offs.

b. Social Capital

In the same way sustainable livelihoods is a complex concept, social capital has also posed many challenges when it comes to its definition and consequently, its measurability. Largely elusive, the concept of social capital gained more visibility from the later 1980s-1990s within literature from the "new sociology development" which comprised ethnic entrepreneurship studies and institutionalist studies of state-society relations (Quibria, 2003; Woolcock, 1998). One of the early definitions of social capital stated it to be a sum of collectively held resources available to its members through association (Bourdieu & Richardson, 1986).

Popular among scientists, Bourdieu's definition of social capital acquire a more individualistic tone since the focus is on how the individual is benefited through group membership (Malecki, 2012; Quibria, 2003). Coleman (1988, p. 98), which also spread the term on academia, stated that social capital is defined "by its function", "not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors—whether persons or corporate actors—within the structure". Later, Putnam (1992), through his analysis on civic organizations concluded that social capital was defined by its characters, such as trust, reciprocity, norms, and networks, which

improve efficiency and coordinated actions of a society, enabling participants to pursue shared objectives. Such definition made him popular among policymakers aiming to develop better social policies (Malecki, 2012).

As can be seen, in the same line of concepts as sustainability and livelihoods, social capital is a challenging concept to define where different authors might focus on different conceptualizations of the term. However, despite variation on what does it really mean, its essence remains the same. Based on trust, reciprocity, and social networks, social capital is a fundamental asset to achieve socio-economic development, regardless of the scale in which it is developed.

Social capital is, to a larger or smaller extent, an asset present on households, neighborhoods, local communities, and nations. It is the basic raw material that allows civil society to thrive (Onyx & Bullen, 2000). As Fukuyama (1995) pointed out, it cannot be generated by the individual alone and it derives from spontaneous sociability and cooperation, being related to various range of networks, from limited to extensive in size and capacity (Stone, 2001). Conceiving social capital in different dimensions gave risen to what Woolcock (2004) called bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. Bonding social capital meaning close networks of family, friends, and neighbors – helping in the process of "getting by" on a daily basis; bridging social capital meaning extended social networks between distant colleagues and associates – facilitating "getting ahead" through opportunities provided by complexes networks; and linking social capital, which is related to networks with people in position of power and authority, allowing change in a much larger scale (Malecki, 2012; Stone, 2001).

The extent to which these networks are based on trust and reciprocity varies according to their range and to how long people intend to remain as part of the network. It also varies according to the sense of belonging among its members, once bonding social capital tend to be stronger among people with the same age, sex, religion, ethnicity, religion, etc., while bridging tend to allow more effective connections among different groups and networks (Poder, 2011). In this regard, bridging social capital tends to alleviate the possible negative consequences of some of the aspects

of bonding social capital, such as exclusion of outsiders, restriction on individual freedom, and excessive compliance with rules and regulation. Therefore, Malecki (2012) pointed out that the meso-scale, or intermediate dimension of social capital – bridging social capital - tends to affect the most development outcomes. Nevertheless, bonding, bridging, and linking social capital are all equally important variations of social capital, which are not excluding but mutually reinforcing.

Social capital has its most positive and long-lasting effects in livelihood and development when people manage to effectively foster social connections and solve eventual dilemmas resulting from all spheres of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. Woolcock (1998, p. 186) concluded that "when people are willing and able to draw on nurturing social ties (i) within their local communities; (ii) between local communities and groups with external and more extensive social connections to civil society; (iii) between civil society and macro-level institutions; and (iv) within corporate sector institutions" it is when social relations fulfill their purpose and optimal development outcomes can be achieved.

On the other hand, when people are unable to build up and draw upon networks and links among different levels – other network groups, state, market, civil society – that would assist them to protect and expand their resources, livelihoods can become severely vulnerable (Bebbington, 1999). That is because as social capital is built on mutual trust and reciprocity, it is manifested in the ability to socialize and share access to information that enable social networks to work as a source of support and coping strategies, reaching and influencing political contexts through local organizations (Mazibuko, 2013). Therefore, social capital is a critical asset in establishing access to other types of capitals, enabling people to take the most of their other resources to build sustainable livelihoods.

Moreover, understanding the mechanisms of how social operates allows us to identify how relationships between actors from different spheres (market, civil society, government, community) can influence and mobilize other types of resources, and how it can expand peoples' access to the other assets (Bebbington, 1999). Especially when people start to diversify their

livelihood strategies from being purely based on natural resources to being based on combinations of assets, income sources, production and labor market, the relationships and transactions between members of a household and other spheres, access to social capital becomes central to the framework. In sum, although this form of capital cannot be clearly measured or quantified, it is of utmost importance that its role is recognized as perhaps the most important asset in which people draw their livelihoods from, so public investments can become more effective and relevant.

In this study, the SLA will be used to analyze the livelihoods of dispersed indigenous women living in an urban context. The approach and framework will be used as a set of principles and applied in a scale comprising the cooperative, and the context, resources, strategies, and outcomes achieved in building its members' livelihoods. Since this is a qualitative study, no indicators were used but the participants' perceptions gathered through the interviews. Due to limited technical competence and data accessibility issues, the livelihood outcomes covered by this study concerns only the livelihoods' aspects of the framework, such as the participants' perceptions of working satisfaction, income, well-being, and capabilities improvement. Additionally, AMARN will be used as the central institution/organization when it comes to providing social capital and mediating its members' access to other resources, contributing to reducing indigenous women vulnerability and making their livelihoods more resilient to possible stresses and shocks. Emphasis is given to social capital as the most important asset they have access to.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: Methodology

a. Study design

Given the objective of this research, a qualitative methodology seemed more appropriate. To explore and understand the personal impacts of impersonal social structures, qualitative methods can offer valuable insights on people's perceptions and their meanings of the world (Brockington & Sullivan, 2003; Scheyvens, 2014). Bryman (2016, p. 210) points out that qualitative research allows the researcher to see "through the eyes of others" and achieve a deep

understanding of the person or group at focus. In this study, I wanted to understand how dispersed indigenous women perceived the role of social capital in their lives and how it improved their livelihoods. As the objective was to deepen the understanding of the role of AMARN in its members' lives, a case study approach was chosen.

Some of the critics about qualitative methods claim that it is too open and subjective to allow precision and generalization, and that it is highly influenced by the researcher bias (Potter & Desai, 2006). However, by focusing on the in-depth investigation of micro-level cases, precision and generalization do not tend to be the goal of qualitative research. Instead, through exploring different particularities obtained mostly through informal interviews, participant observation, and visual media, qualitative research allows researchers to have a holistic understanding of complex issues and processes that create people's realities. Regarding the researcher's bias, Potter and Desai (2006) points out that even researches that claim to pursuit objectives truths are not free from the complexities and sources of bias and error throughout the research's development process. Furthermore, researchers naturally pursuit a topic of their interests which leads them to observe different things resulting in the emergence of different findings. Such findings are not necessarily replicable, particularly not on qualitative research when replicability is not common, neither aimed for (Bryman, 2016). This is the case of this study in which the research questions are directed to understand the perceptions of women and their experiences about one single organization. Still, to minimize the bias effect, information from different sources was applied to cross-check the data gathered and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the study.

i. Epistemological approach

In alignment with the qualitative method and the main objective of this study, a phenomenology approach was used to gather data and analyze the findings. Bryman (2016) classifies this epistemological approach within the category of interpretivism, which incorporates different perspectives and approaches to make sense of the world. Differently from natural science research, having people and institutions as the object of a study requires a distinctive methodology that allows a deeper reflection on the various facets and dynamics of the relationships between the

variables. In this regard, phenomenology is a philosophical approach focused on "how individuals make sense of the world around them, and how, in particular, the philosopher is able to overcome their own preconceptions to better understand the phenomena that are associated with human consciousness" (Bryman, 2016, p. 25). In other words, the objective of this study was to interpret the data according to the participants' meanings and points of view regarding the role of social capital in their livelihoods and capabilities.

b. Sampling

The sampling selection criteria for this qualitative study was purposive and snowball sampling. As the research questions were directed to the perceptions and experiences of members of AMARN, it was natural to select the participants among the artisans of the organization. Bryman (2016) defines purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling technique that directly involves the search of people who will provide relevant and significant information for the purpose of the study, while snowball sampling will occur when the researcher contacts a person or a group of people connected with the research topic, and gather from them, more participants for the research. I also tried to contact some of AMARN partners through social media to have a perspective of outsiders about the association, but my attempts were not successful.

I found about AMARN while searching online for indigenous women organizations connected with entrepreneurship and women empowerment in Brazil. The first website I found about the association was at Artesol[2]. After reading about AMARN, I got the contact of one of the coordinators of the organization and she became my first gatekeeper for this study. Through her, I was put in contact with another person who introduced me to 16 of AMARN's members. From these, 11 of them returned my messages and became participants of this study. Although the access to people through gatekeepers might be problematic due to their influence over the participants, in many circumstances it is advisable to make use of them since one might need their permission to access the participants (Potter & Desai, 2006) and to gain participants trust. Considering that I

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[2] A non-profit Brazilian civil society organization that supports and promotes craftsmanship of cultural tradition, and the socio-cultural and economic development of artisans in the country.

conducted the interviews from another geographic area, without previous contact with the participants or the organization, I needed someone to introduce me to the organization members as someone they could trust. Furthermore, the gatekeeper was not part of the interviewing process which minimized their influence on the answers the participants gave me. In addition, following the principles of anonymity and free withdrawal at any time, the participants could feel more comfortable answering without exterior influences. To secure that, I sent them the informed consent form beforehand and at each interview, I repeated their rights as well as did not record their names. Their consent was given orally due to resource limitations.

Some criteria were used to select the participants, among them:

- Female members between 18 and 80 years.
- The participants should be working with the association for at least 2 months.
- The participants should have indigenous background.

c. Data collection

One of the main concerns of qualitative research is to understand reality through the process in which events and patterns occur and unfold over time (Bryman, 2016). A characteristic of this type of method is the use of unstructured and semi-structured interviews in which participants reflect on the events and how they construct their realities. For this study, primary data was gathered through online semi-structured interviews. As I could not leave the Schengen area due to the delaying process of my Norwegian immigration visa, field work was not a possibility. To complement the primary data gathered through the interviews, I relied on secondary data obtained through social media and other academic and non-academic articles.

The semi-structured interviews were the chosen method because it allows participants to freely engage with the topic and explore areas that were not previously articulated by the researcher. It also captures participants' perceptions and ideas on different thoughts (Potter & Desai, 2006). They were developed and adjusted, based on a phenomenological three-interview model in which the questions were designed in a way that participants would "plumb the

experience and place it in context" (Seidman, 2006, p. 17). Due to the impossibility of scheduling three interviews with the same participant, I designed the interview guide to be divided into three parts. The first would contain questions establishing the context of the participants' experiences, focusing on their life story; the second, describing details of the participants' experiences and context; and the last part, encouraging the participants' reflection on the meaning of their experiences for them. Such process and structure were of great importance both to establish a good connection with the participants as it was to cross-check the information collected through the interview. Apart from one, the interviews lasted for the duration of one hour and deeply contributed to my understanding of the topic, as well as answering the research questions proposed.

Due to the exploratory nature of women's perceptions about the organization's contribution to their livelihoods, I find it rather problematic to claim that I achieved theoretical saturation regarding sampling and data collection. Every interview told a life story of a unique woman and her perceptions of reality, her experiences, and personal achievements. However, Bryman (2016, p. 307) states that theoretical saturation is also obtained when "new data are no longer illuminating", relationships among categories are well established and validated, and the concepts have been fully explored. In this sense, the information gathered by the 11 in-depth semi-structured interviews and the secondary data were enough to cover the livelihood aspects proposed by this study.

d. Data analysis

For this study, the chosen method to analyze the data gathered was content analysis. As described by Berg and Lune (2012, pp. 350, 364), content analysis is a "coding operation and data interpreting process" that "examines a discourse by looking at patterns of the language used in the communication exchange, as well as the social and cultural contexts in which these communications occur". For that, the first step was transcribing the interviews. Seidman (2006) points out that researchers might use initials or some other form of identification on the transcriptions for future references. I opted for identifying the age of the participant and attributing a number from 1 to 11. The transcription process was not without challenges, as the interviews

were lengthy and some of the recordings had noise interference. To minimize that, I proceeded to the transcription as soon as the interviews ended. The sampling size allowed me to manually transcribe all the interviews and easily codify the information to find the patterns for answering the research questions. An interpretative approach was used to codify the texts on relevant themes (Bryman, 2016), which was followed by deductive and inductive reasoning to correlate the codes and themes with the theory and conceptual framework applied in this study (Berg & Lune, 2012). As this is an interview study, the results and discussions are presented in a way that the transcripts around the themes of the research questions became the focus of the analysis.

e. Ethical considerations

Throughout this study, I tried to follow the major ethical principle of social research, which is to protect the participants from any harm either during the research process or resulting from its findings (Bryman, 2016). To comply with that, I elaborated the informed consent which was sent to my key informant and gatekeeper at AMARN, in a way that the participants could get a first contact about the research and decided for themselves their interest or not to join the study. According to the standards, the document contained general information about the study, main procedures to be taken during the interview, possible risks and benefits, a confidentiality clause, as well as their right as participants to withdraw from the study at any time. Due to resource limitations, it was not possible to gather written signatures for these consent terms. However, before each interview, I made sure to explain the general content of the document and repeat their rights in a way that they could understand and give me oral permission to record the interview. The voluntary participation was reinforced at all times. Additionally, considering that the participants had a direct employment relationship with the organization – although in a cooperative form, which disregards hierarchical positions -, the right of remaining anonymous was also repeated before each interview.

Another important ethical consideration to be elucidated for this study is the concept of compensation, or payment for participation. Bryman (2016, p. 62) states that in the context of social research ethics, justice should always be keep in mind of the researcher, meaning that the

"burdens and benefits of research should be spread evenly across society". In my perception, that means that the participants should be benefited and compensated as much as I do. In social research, most of the benefits are obtained through knowledge increase, and in specific cases, positive social reform, both having intrinsic value in themselves. However, some circumstances might require researchers to resort to various strategies to recruit participants. A symbolic payment for participation was one of my strategies to attract potential interviewees to this study. This was necessary because since it was not possible to do the field trip nor get directly in contact with members of the association, it was also not possible to get in contact with the association members through social media only. A gatekeeper was needed to give me access to the members of the association. Furthermore, to compensate them for the entire hour the participants dedicated to answering my questions, I offered the amount of NOK 130 per person, USD 12. This was previously agreed with the gatekeeper who was acquainted with the local context and resource limitations of recruiting the participants.

Potter and Desai (2006) points out that there is no perfect formula or "absolutely right way of doing things", but rather that different strategies that might be deemed good or appropriate depending on the context, as long as the research does not result in negative outcomes for the participants (Scheyvens, 2014). Offering gifts, rewards, and payments to participants cannot be seen without problems, however, it is mostly unethical if it lead participants to take risks they would not otherwise accept (Bryman, 2016), or to commodify their contributions transforming the research in a market exchange (Head, 2009). However, when dealing with the challenge of recruiting participants, offering payments, vouchers, and gifts can have some benefits. Although in clinical trials, medical, and psychological studies, monetary payments are commonplace, in social research there has not been much discussion or even openness about the practice (Bryman, 2016; Head, 2009). Some of the discussions involve the role and impact of such practices to the validity or trustworthiness of the research undermining their informed consent, as well as how it can reinforce power unbalances between the researcher and the participants, making socio-economic inequalities even more evident (Bryman, 2016; Head, 2009; Largent et al., 2022). Below, I will present arguments to counterbalance these points.

First, regarding accuracy and credibility, researches involving human subjects and their opinions, perceptions, and behaviors will always involve some degree of uncertainty whether the participant is being authentic and truthful or whether they will say what the researcher wants to hear or believe is the "right answer" (Potter & Desai, 2006). To minimize that, the researcher should always make clear her positionality and consider how it might be perceived and considered by the interviewees (Skelton, 2001). In other words, credibility can also be achieved when the "interpretations presented in the study ring true to the people observed" (Bryman, 2016, pp. 204, 205), regardless of whether participants received monetary compensation for their contributions or not.

Secondly, when it comes to power relations it is worth to mention that students of Western universities doing research in developing countries are naturally perceived as relatively privileged in comparison with the locals (Scheyvens, 2014). Many studies have shown that monetary gains are not the main incentive that led people to agree participating in research, even for participants considered low-income. As a matter of fact, many interviewees feel a sense of accomplishment for being heard and for telling their story and experiences (Head, 2009). On her study about participant's perspectives on payment for research participation, Largent et al. (2022, p. 18) found out that although different sums were randomly assigned to participants, they alleged that "while money was a source of motivation for them, it was not the only source" neither the deciding factor for joining a study, particularly for those who had previously enrolled in other researches. In this regard, apart from one participant, all the others admitted being satisfied with their economic situation and some of them have contributed with other researchers about AMARN before. Bryman (2016) adds that even such monetary incentives might not be enough to interest people to show up and I experienced the same while recruiting people for this study since not everyone I contacted, showed interest in participating.

Lastly, as previously mentioned, payment for participation is more commonly employed as a compensatory tool, particularly when the risks and costs of participating in certain research overcome the benefits. This was not the case of this study, while a symbolic monetary sum was used more as a recruitment strategy and as a compensation mean for the participants time and

contribution. Goodman et al. (2004) points out that it is also a matter of justice that participants receive compensation for their time as a way to overcome the inherent power imbalance between researcher/participant since the researcher is the one getting directly benefits from the research, either through salaries or academic rewards. While my interview guide did not include questions about the participants motivation to join the study, gratitude and openness was what I experienced as the most important things I exchanged with the participants.

f. Study limitations and trustworthiness

Due the qualitative nature of this study and the research questions it proposed to answer, the first limitation is its applicability. Krefting (1991, p. 216) defines applicability as "the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings or with other groups; it is the ability to generalize from the findings to larger populations". As mentioned previously and as the author reinforces, this is not always relevant to qualitative research projects, particularly when the objective of the study is to "describe a particular phenomenon or experience, not to generalize to others". Lincoln et al. (1985) points out that provided a "rich and detailed account of a group's culture or people's experience" (Bryman, 2016, p. 206), transferability becomes the responsibility of the person wanting to expand the findings of a study to another situation or population which was not the original one. Additionally, another criterion to be considered when assessing the trustworthiness of a study is the transferability, which is closely related to its applicability (Bryman, 2016). As most of the qualitative studies cannot produce robust generalizations and have limited applicability, it suffices that the researcher provides enough descriptive data about data collection, findings, and interpretations. This was done through cross-checking the consistency and credibility of the data gathered and the extent to which it reflected the participants' realities and point of view.

Another limitation of this study was the limited resources as I had to get in contact with the organization and its members, and possibly other partners of the organization. It was not possible to have access to internal documents, such as contacts of partners, projects, budgets, revenues, and other accounting reports which would make the results and the analysis more

trustworthy. Therefore, my contact with the association was established initially through text and audio messages, and later video and audio calls. Although online interview has been proved a valuable tool, particularly after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is still a limiting factor when it comes to reaching out those with more limited access to internet. Bryman (2016) points out that online and in-person interviews have become more and more similar due to the closer contact people exchange when seeing each other through webcam technologies. However, it does not come without limitations, especially considering the sample selection. First and foremost, people from my sample had to be chosen from among those with access to a reasonably good internet connection and this condition contributed to the limited sampling I was able to achieve. Secondly, although not optimal, I used WhatsApp to make the calls because the use of more professional programs, like Zoom, would require more data and better connection than what was available to most of the participants of my study. WhatsApp also tend to be preferred by the participants since they have more familiarity with its functions, and because it creates a more personal contact between the interviewer and the interviewee, establishing more trust and closeness between the researcher and the participants. All in all, despite not being representative, the sample of this study was enough to cover and answer the questions proposed.

Finally, regarding the researcher bias and the neutrality of the study, my epistemological positionality was established from the beginning. Although I have always been inspired by gender and indigenous issues, I had no experience or previous contact with the association or any of the participants prior to this study. Therefore, the approach I chose was based on the perspectives of the participants and not pre-conceptions I could have about the topic. In this regard, for the qualitative research, the neutrality refers to the findings as a solely product of the data gathered from the participants and the conditions of the research instead of a product of the researcher motivation and personal perspectives (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991). Therefore, the confirmability of the data through the findings addresses neutrality issues that might emerge from this study.

6. CHAPTER SIX: Results and Discussion

a. AMARN

Figure 4: Some of AMARN members. Source: Facebook

Currently there are 60 women registered in AMARN as active members but counting other family members from these associates who also receive direct benefits, as cesta básica[3] - or staple food basket -, this number reachs 81 women. They come from 10 different ethnicities out the 23 present on the Alto Rio Negro – Upper Black River amazon region. Most of these women come from communities of the Iaurete district, which is part of the municipality of Sao Gabriel da Cachoeira – AM (figure 5). The municipality known as "Dog's head" for the similarity with the shape of the region's border between Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela, is also known as the one with the largest Indigenous population of the country, 76,75% according to the census of 2010 (Morais, 2022). With great diversity of ethnicities and languages, Sao Gabriel da Cachoeira works as a transition zone between the community and the urban life (ibid). However, due to the high concentration of villages in comparison with other indigenous regions, resources as agricultural land and fishing become scarce, particularly during dry seasons, leading to great periods of food insecurity and dependency from external supply (ISA, 2022). As the interviews showed, such

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[3] Brazilian economic term to define a package containing staple food goods to cover the minimum needs of sustenance and nutrition of a typical family.

conditions were also responsible for the migration of many of these women to Manaus in pursuit of better opportunities and quality of life.

> When we moved from the community, I was a child. We were three sisters. My mother and my father decided to come because it was too much suffering there (…). The only thing I remember when it was a meal, is that everyone got together to eat from a common bowl as we didn't have much. *[P.11, 50 years old, interviewed on 20/02/2023]*
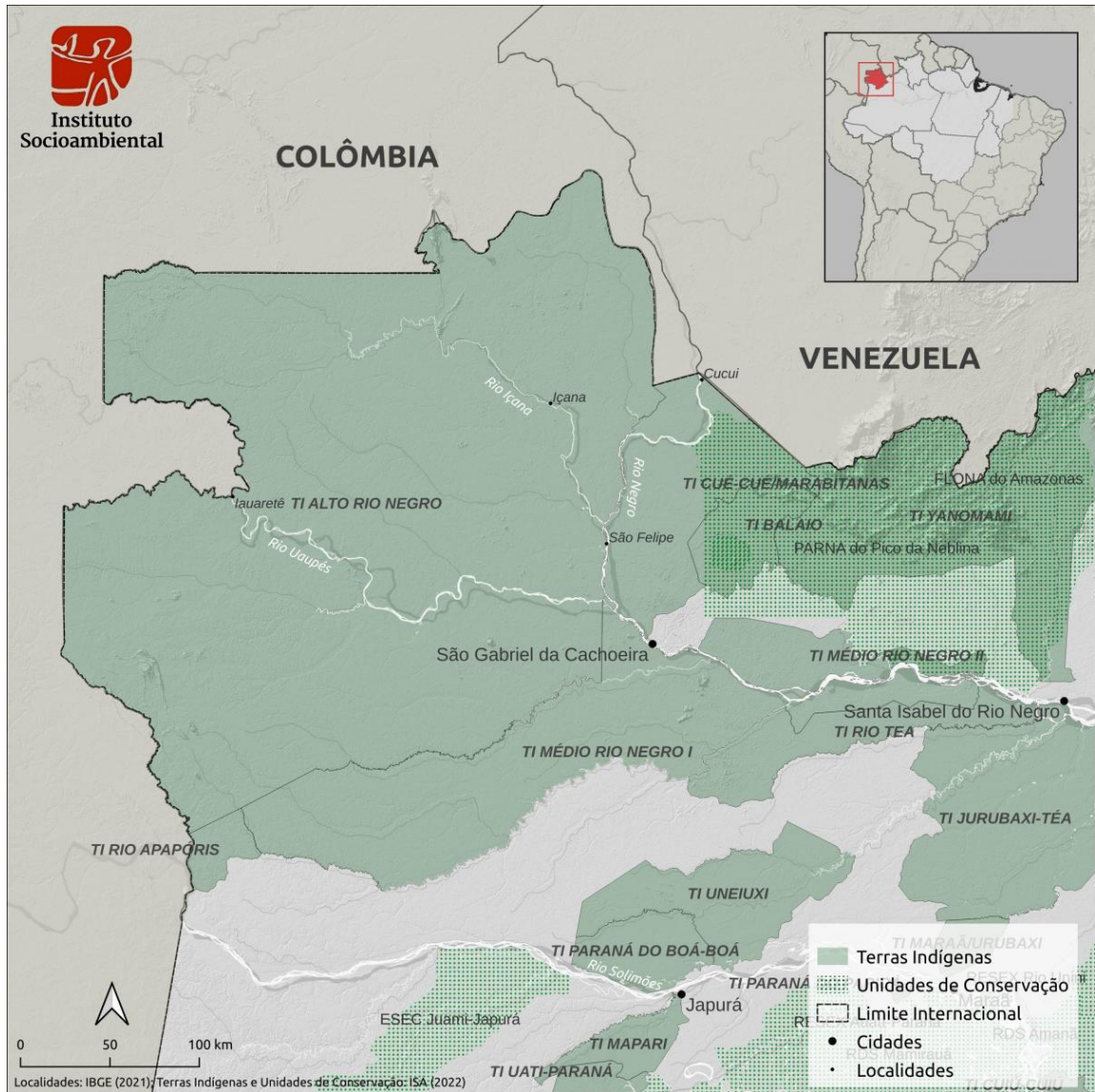
Figure 5[4]: Sao Gabriel da Cachoeira – Amazon state, Brazil. Source: Instituto Socioambiental

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[4] Indigenous territories are coloured green.

There are 30 women working at AMARN as artisans. Although my sample was not representative of all the members of the association, corresponding to 37% of the artisans (n=11), much of what was collected through the interviews was in line with the literature found. From my sample, 91% of the associates migrated to work as domestic servants in households of Manaus (table 1). This finding reflect previous literature regarding the conditions in which young indigenous women from the Alto Rio Negro were brought to Manaus to work at military officials' households in poor conditions, often unpaid and unaware of rights compensation, days-off or a limited work-day (Chernela, 2014).

> I worked for 2 years with this priest's friend, Mrs. X. She lived downtown... once my uncle went to visit me and asked how much I earned. I said she used to give me soap, clothes, but money she had never given me. He said it was wrong because I had to help my mother too. Then he said to her: "Mrs. X, she's my niece, what you're doing is not right, so I'm going to get her out of here. I'm going to take her to where my wife is working, (…) so he took me out of her house. *[P.9, 58 years old, 20/02/2023]*

From another women:

> In the first place I worked, I didn't have… success. I didn't have a salary. I didn't have anything... I worked there for 6 years. I worked for free, without earning anything but soap, some clothes, toothbrush, toothpaste. I didn't even know what a salary was, I didn't even know what money was, to have money, I didn't know anything... nothing at all. *[P.1, 70 years old, 16/02/2023]*

Table 1 - Migrated to Manaus to work as domestic servants.

	N	%
Yes	10	91%
No	1	9%
Total	11	100%

Source: Compiled from the Interview data 2023

This finding could also be explained by the fact that 45% of my sample were older than 51 years (table 2), and therefore, less acquainted with monetary and labor exchange when they moved from their communities to the city. AMARN was officially registered as an association in 1987, as an attempt to be a place of support to indigenous women in search of job, health assistance, care support to pregnancy and small children care, while also a meeting center (Chernela, 2015; Damasceno, 1987).

> I worked for 15 years at a family house. In 1989, I got pregnant, but my child's father didn't want to take over (…) so I kept working and living with this family until she was 4 years old. That led me to the association. A friend of mine told me that there was an association that could help people who have children. She said they could help with daycare, and there would be weaving activities too. I got very interested and went to attend a meeting. When I got there, I signed up right away. *[P.3, 73 years old, 18/02/2023]*

Table 2 – Participant's age

Age		
	N	**%**
18-30	**1**	**9%**
31-50	**5**	**45,5%**
51-80	**5**	**45,5%**
Total	**11**	**100%**

Source: Compiled from the Interview data 2023

The sixty associates pay a monthly fee of BRL 20,00, which corresponds to USD 4,00. This fee is used to pay for the monthly bills, for the handicraft shop expenses, expositions, and for some of the allowances to cover expenses from the boarding members that manage the association. Part of the expenses are also covered by the selling of the handicraft they sell in a month, either through the shop or through pre-made orders from external buyers.

Figure 6: AMARN's handicraft shop. Source: Instagram

The boarding members, or coordination as they usually refer to, is composed by four women who are chosen for the voluntary position of presidency, vice-presidency, secretary, and the financial secretary. The association also relies on voluntary counselors to make decisions and check the accountability that will further be presented in assembly to all the association members (figure 7). This feature has been part of the organizational culture of AMARN from the beginning, when the decision-making structure was established as being based on consensus and egalitarianism, reflecting the collective nature characteristic of indigenous cooperativism (Chernela, 2011b; Ratten & Dana, 2017). This was confirmed through the interviews when nearly all women mentioned the fact that the boarding members were transparent about the association management and how that make them feel valued and appreciated for the work being done by the coordinators.

Figure 7: Accountability and strategic planning meeting – February 2023. Source: Facebook

> I do feel – that they are open, transparent –. Before I used to get scared. "Will they accept my proposal? Will they not accept it? Can I talk? Before I was like that a lot, not now. When I want to talk, I talk, you know, when I don't want to, I don't (laughs). *[P.2, 46 years old, 18/02/2023]*

Although the four members of the board receive assistance from some of AMARN's partners and from the administration office to cover expenses such as food and transport, they do not earn a monthly income or salary. Volunteering is a condition since the creation of AMARN's statute, but it was presented several times during the interviews as a hindrance to stimulate women to participate in the board, and for the growth of the association.

> The difficulty I felt the most when I was in the coordination was allowance because we work on our own, we are volunteers, not every day we had money to go there. From here to the office, I had to take 2 buses, every day, from Monday to Friday, so in one month we spent a lot of money (...) you don't have time to do handicrafts, so we would go after the partner, worried, to see if they would give us some money to share. We were 4 women, to divide a thousand reais (USD 100). It didn't last one month, so it was difficult to talk to the partner, to say:

look, we need this, we need money for lunch, to sell handicrafts, to go to places… For me this was a concern. That was the biggest challenge. *[P.7, 52 years old, 23/02/2023]*

Another participant:

I worked for a while on the board because there weren't many people to work. Everyone ran from it; whoever wanted to take over was pushed into it. (…) since it's just a volunteer work, everyone runs away from it. I joined, I liked it, I learned, but I don't want to be on the board anymore (laughs). *[P.9, 58 years old, 20/02/2023]*

The lack of financial support is perceived as a challenge even when it comes to partnering with other grassroots organizations from the Alto Rio Negro. Overall, the lack of a stable income for the members of the board was constantly pointed out as one of the aspects the associates would change. However, it remains the question as how to change it since the association does not have the administrative structure to comply with the demanding requirements of large-scale projects and donors in the development sector. After the termination of the technical and financial support of agencies as NORAD and Petrobras[5], the association has relied mostly on small projects and partnerships.

They gave us a lot of support, but they said we had to learn to walk with our own legs[6]. Then the partnership ended. Petrobras also financed some projects to help us with the raw material for a while, but they also stopped – the partnership. Now there are only these small projects. *[P.9, 58 years old, 20/02/2023]*

From another participant:

What I would change is the question of financial support. AMARN doesn't have support, they don't have salary, they don't receive anything. For you to work there, you have to have money from somewhere else. Even to be able to help other associations that are far away, like AMIDI[7] and the suppliers from the communities so they can improve their conditions, AMARN needs support. They need a specific boat, for example. So, it all comes to financial help. *[P.6, 38 years old, 19/02/2023]*

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[5] Petrobras: Brazilian state oil corporation
[6] Popular expression meaning that one should be independent.
[7] AMIDI: Association of Indigenous Women of the District of Iauaretê – Filiated association of FOIRN: Federation of Indigenous Organizations of Rio Negro,

Regarding the artisans' income, although some rely primarily on the income they make from the sales of the handicraft - 27% of the sample -, most of them rely on income from other activities, on the income of other household members, or on social benefits as the main revenue for the household (table 3). This percentage matched the one found by Mainbourg et al. (2016) on her study in 2007 with 1557 residents of Manaus, among 694 were indigenous and 833 non-indigenous (table 4). One of the reasons for that can be explained by the fact that sales are not fixed, varying from month to month, which creates a degree of financial instability, particularly for those with children to support.

Table 3 - Source of the main household income

	N	%
Retirement/Social benefit	2	18%
Income as domestic servant	2	18%
Income from other household members	4	36%
Handicraft	3	27%
Total	11	100%

Source: Compiled from the Interview data 2023

(..) even working with handicrafts, most of them work at family houses. The money from the handicraft is a complementation for their family budget. They receive the raw material to produce and once a month they are paid for the products that are sold. Everything is registered. *[P.4, 45 years old, 16/02/2023]*

Table 4 - Main paid occupation, excluding students, Manaus, 2007 (Mainbourg et al., 2016).

Main Occupation	Total	%	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous		
			N	%	N	%	P
NGO members and handicraft	100	16,13	72	**26,97**	28	7,93	<0,00001
Technician	36	5,81	21	7,87	15	4,25	
Management	49	7,90	23	8,61	26	7,37	

Services and commerce	224	36,13	92	34,46	132	37,39	
Industry	148	23,87	36	13,48	112	31,73	
Other	63	10,16	23	8,61	40	11,33	
Total	**620**	**100**	**267**	**100**	**353**	**100**	

As an important aspect of livelihood outcomes, livelihood strategies comprise a portfolio of activities that depend on the availability and access of assets and how resources are combined in different setting (Scoones, 1998). This became evident with this study since most of the women in the sample diversify their activities to build and maintain their livelihoods. As a matter of fact, despite the variable nature of the monthly income for 64% of the households (table 5) all the participants admitted that they were satisfied with their monthly revenue.

Table 5 - Household monthly income

	N	%
Fixed	4	36%
Variable	7	64%
Total	11	100%

Source: Compiled from the Interview data 2023

Furthermore, an interesting finding showed that more than 80% of the sample were able to, throughout the years, purchase a building site or a house, becoming rent-free (table 6). Although the relationship between homeownership and subjective well-being remains inconclusive, owning a house is highly encouraged by governments since it can contribute with positive benefits both to the individual as to society (Hu, 2013). From an economics point of view, some of these benefits are increased consumption behavior, greater ties to their neighborhood and community, asset-building strategy, but also as a contributing factor to higher social status and self-esteem, sense of security and higher levels of life satisfaction (Dietz, 2003; Hu, 2013). Important to note that apart from one participant, all the others have worked with the association for more than four years, a factor which the participants related contributing for enabling them to own a house.

Table 6 - Housing ownership

	N	%
Owned	9	82%
Rented	2	18%
Total	11	100%

Source: Compiled from the Interview data 2023

> I worked for many years for a family and these people helped me a lot, as well as AMARN. While I was working for the family, I was also making baskets, necklaces, handicrafts to sell. I used the money I got from selling the products to buy food, and the money I got from working at the family house I bought the material to build my house. When people look at what we do, people with a good heart, they will help when we deserve it, so I was helped a lot on that point. *[P.9, 58 years old, 20/02/2023]*

Apparently, according to the interviews, more important than a stable monthly income, it seems to be the contribution that the association provides to these women in matter of access to other resources that not purely monetary. They often expressed that besides the opportunity to make an extra income with the craftwork, the association provides numerous benefits that cannot be quantified, but which strongly contribute to the maintenance of their livelihoods, their wellbeing, and their cultural expression. Overall, the handicraft they produce is an expression of their identity which all of them were proud to replicate and spread to the world.

Figure 8: Vases in Tucumã (or Tukum[8]) fiber.
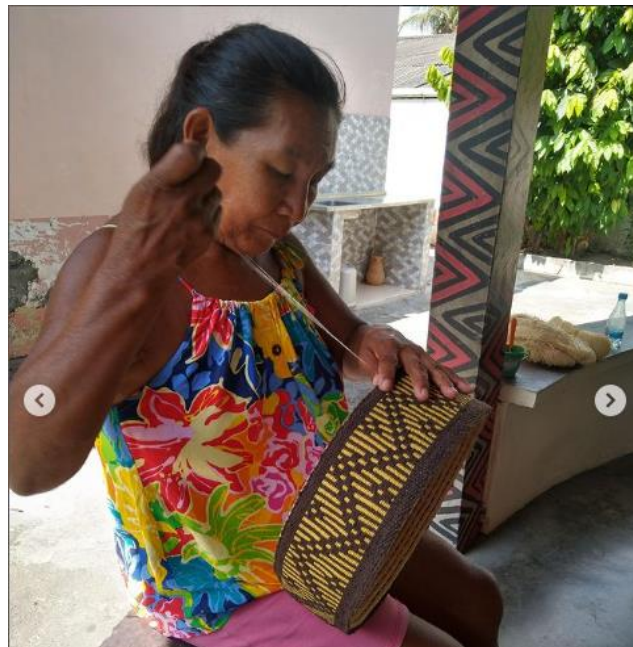
Figure 9: Artisan sewing basket in tucumã fiber. March 2023. Source: Instagram

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[8] Tukanoan name for the turumã fiber.

Figure 10: Indigenous handicraft exposition, AMARN vases. March 2023. Source: Instagram

b. BUILDING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

A sustainable livelihood is one in which people's quality of life, wellbeing, and capabilities are maintained or increased despite stresses and shocks, without compromising the environment (Chambers & Conway, 1991; Serrat, 2017). Expanding livelihoods concepts from merely survival means to means to make life more fulfilling, livelihood resources become the central tools in which people can enhance their welfare and enjoy life. In this regard, analyzing how people have access to resources becomes paramount if people are to build sustainable and poverty alleviating livelihoods (Bebbington, 1999). In this study, I attempted to analyze AMARN's role as an institution and organization in mobilizing social capital to increase indigenous women access to resources in a way that they can build and increase their livelihoods. I based the analysis on the principles promoted by the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework provided by Morse and McNamara (2013), which are illustrated in the figure bellow:

Figure 11: SLF principles. Source: Adapted from Morse and McNamara (2013)

These principles recognize the importance of people in their local context and focus on capacities and capabilities instead of the normative emphasis on poverty and marginality (Scoones, 2009). Additionally, the Sustainable livelihood approach (or framework) allows the identification of the fundamental aspects that compose and connect people, the environment, livelihood strategies and outcomes in terms of access to resources and the influence of institutions and organizations (Serrat, 2017). In this regard, by strengthening and improving institutional contexts and access to key capitals, AMARN has shown to be a fundamental actor in the livelihood outcomes of dispersed indigenous women in Manaus.
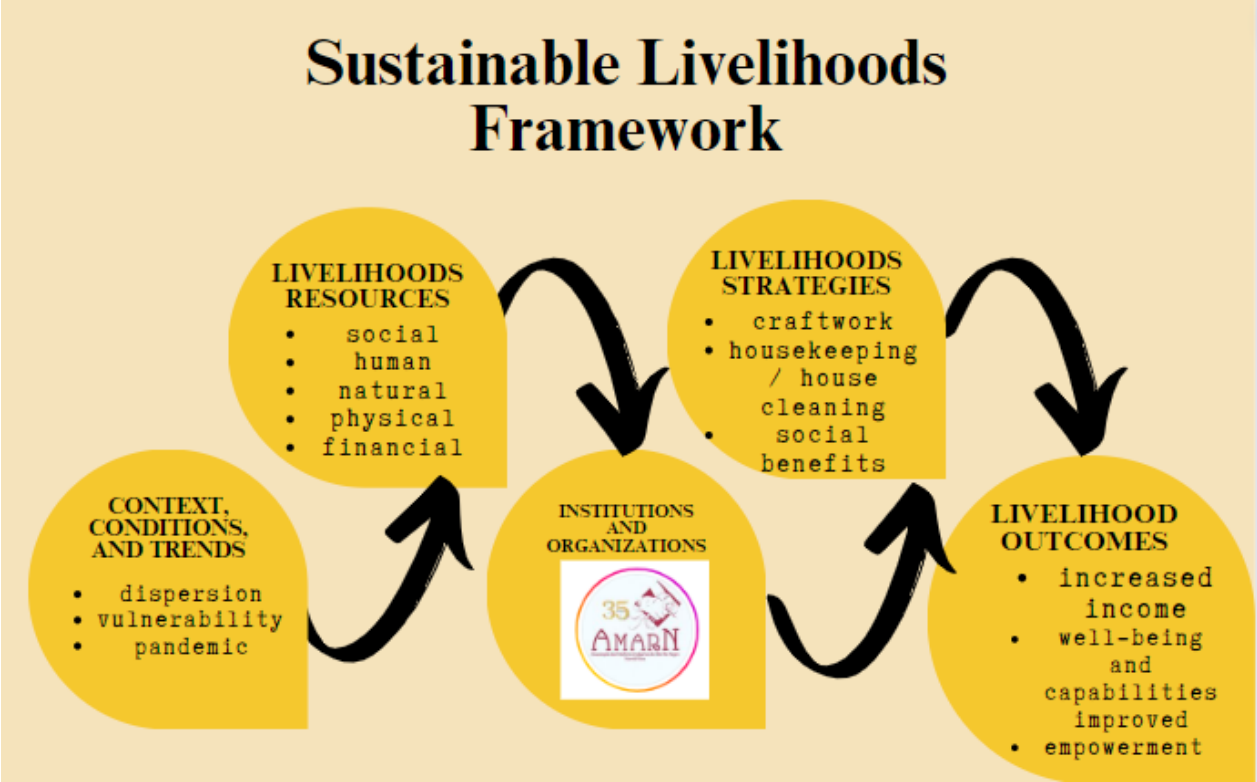
Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

LIVELIHOODS RESOURCES
- social
- human
- natural
- physical
- financial

LIVELIHOODS STRATEGIES
- craftwork
- housekeeping / house cleaning
- social benefits

CONTEXT, CONDITIONS, AND TRENDS
- dispersion
- vulnerability
- pandemic

INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

35 AMARN

LIVELIHOOD OUTCOMES
- increased income
- well-being and capabilities improved
- empowerment

Figure 12: SLF applied to AMARN. Source: Author's own illustration.

The first aspect of the framework covers the context in which these women move from their communities to Manaus, the vulnerability in which they find themselves living in a big city and occasional stress and shocks they might experience when trying to build their livelihoods. As an organization that was created to assist indigenous women that migrated from the Alto Rio Negro, AMARN has the experience, knowledge, and social connections to help these women improve their livelihoods based on their needs and capabilities. The history of the association and its journey and achievements throughout the years has served as a key point that creates identification and trust between AMARN and the women that come to look for support. As previously explored, most of the indigenous women who migrate to the city, do so in hope to improve their quality of life, but also to support the families they leave in their communities. However, as they arrive, they find themselves in a position of vulnerability and precarity due to their lack of experience and support from public authorities. For many of these women and their families, AMARN is a key actor in assisting them to establish themselves in the city and providing the necessary tools for their personal and financial independence.

> The history of my life is just like the history of AMARN. Like the story of the first women who came as domestic servants… mine was not different, it was the same thing. I came to work as a domestic servant from Sao Gabriel to Manaus when the association already existed, in 97. I arrived here in Manaus to work when I was 17 years old, and I went straight to the family house. I heard about the association through my sister but at first, I didn't join them right away, I just participated in some meetings. *[P.4, 45 years old, 16/02/2023]*

From another participant:

> The creation of the association was very good, because when a lot of people came to Manaus with their families, they had nowhere to go, but then the association welcomed them… That was Janete[9]'s intention – when she started – as she told us. She saw Joao when his sister got sick… when she left the hospital they had nowhere to go when his sister was discharged. That's when this idea of having a house of our own started… to welcome people who leave the hospital or family house, or got unemployed, or those with children… *[P.9, 58 years old, 20/02/2023]*

A sustainable livelihood is one able to cope with shocks and stresses that might eventually impact peoples' means of living. These stressors can be continuous or sudden and are identified as declining in labor work available, wages, yields, population pressure on limited resources and so on (Chambers & Conway, 1991). A recent stressor that impacted livelihoods all over the world was the COVID-19 pandemic in which many people lost their livelihoods or had it severely affected by the lockdown and other public measures that increased their vulnerability. The impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous people livelihoods was even more aggravating due the fact that they already were the population with the highest scores of vulnerability, performing the worse conditions in all indicators assessing deprivation, infection, and recovery from the disease (Tavares & Betti, 2021). Nevertheless, the association played a key role in supporting the associates and their beneficiaries to go through the pandemic without severe disruptions to their livelihoods.

> We received a lot of cesta básica[10] with the help of partners, so for those who were unemployed it helped a lot during the 2 years of covid. If it wasn't for our association, I don't know what would have

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[9] Janet M. Chernela: anthropologist who initiated AMARN
[10] Basic staple food package

> been of us because we couldn't work, we had to stay at home. But we had a lot of help. God bless all the partners because it was very good for us to be able to help other people as well, for example, my daughters and my brother who are not part of the association. I shared with them some of what I got and for those I couldn't give, I would bring them to my home. *[P.9, 58 years old, 20/02/2023]*

From another participant:

> (…) during the pandemic, we didn't just stop. We worked only with pre-orders, but suddenly we got 100 of them. It was a good amount of work for those times. *[P.3, 73 years old, 18/02/2023]*

Another:

> At the time of the pandemic, AMARN was a mother to me. It was a great support for us when we asked for help. They donated cestas básicas for us and they never forgot about me, sending messages, asking me to pick up things… oh that meant a lot to me... I have so much gratitude for the association…*[P.11, 50 years old, 20/02/2023]*

As can be seen, the organization acts as a catalyzer of several resources that contribute and strength these women's livelihoods, either through providing or facilitating them access to these resources. Below, I will discuss how the association provides each one of the five capitals explored in this study and how they correlate with the SLF principles.

i) Social capital

One of the most significant findings of this study was the ways in which the association enable these women to have access to various assets to build and maintain their livelihoods. Social capital emerged as the asset these women more benefit from, either because it is through the social network that they directly derive part of their livelihoods from, or because through the association they enhance their wellbeing and capabilities. Through the interviews, I could identify some of the key aspects of social capital that Serrat (2017) points out, among them: kinship; relations of trust and mutual understanding and support; shared values and behaviors; collective representation; mechanisms for participation in decision-making; and leadership. All these points are closely

related to the SLF principles of being people-centered, dynamic, promoting micro-macro links and encouraging partnerships. Below are three interviews excerpts that illustrate some of these points:

> Here we work as a cooperative. We learn together, we work together so we can deliver faster at the end of the month. When they sell, they pay us; when they don't, we wait for the next month. It's a business, that's how it goes. (...) I work mostly from home, but whenever I can I'm there with them. *[P.1, 70 years old, 16/02/2023]*

> (…) what I like the most is the support, the guidance, the welcoming… especially the welcome they give when we arrive in the sector, and the opportunities that appear that they share equally. We are treated equally, no one is better than anyone there, that is what I value the most. *[P.6, 38 years old, 19/02/2023]*

> We work collectively within the association, in union. Here I don't think only about myself but about everyone. (…) We identify different ethnicities here, but we speak mostly Tukano and Portuguese. The language connects us. I'm from the Tariano people but I speak the Tukano language. It's the way we demonstrate our culture. We can't lose that, we have to rescue our culture, even living in the city. *[P.2, 46 years old, 18/02/2023]*

One of the critics towards bonding social capital is the exclusion that outsiders might perceive when trying to integrate, since bonds tend to be stronger among people sharing similar characteristics (Poder, 2011). This can be true particularly for non-indigenous people trying to integrate into the association, or for indigenous women who do not speak the Tukanoan language. However, the association provides its associates Tukanoan language course on Saturdays, where they can participate and learn together with their children. Furthermore, not speaking the language is not a hindrance for enjoying the opportunities and benefits provided by the association.

> Right at the beginning I felt really excluded there… There are many ethnic groups there, but they speak Tukano. I left the village with my parents, and after that they didn't speak much in Tukano. I learned and understand a little, but I don't speak everything, so I felt a bit isolated at the beginning. But I started participating in the classes on Saturdays

and I developed more, learned more with them... They encouraged me to participate more in the class… *[P.11, 50 years old, 20/02/2023]*

Figure 13: Cultural meeting and Mother's Day celebration. May 2022. Source: Instagram and Facebook

Differently from other types of capital, social capital does not have a universal definition, neither indicator (Malecki, 2012). However, its role in development and the positive impacts it has on governance and welfare is widely recognized (Poder, 2011). Some of the most used measures of assessing social capital in a community or country-level are based on how trust and reciprocity are perceived by the different actors. It is out of the scope of this study to measure social capital per se, but the trust and reciprocity between the members became evident as a measure of success achieved by the organization.

Figure 14: Collective weaving. September 2022. Source: Instagram

ii) Human capital

As social capital, human capital is also known for enhancing people's capabilities and enabling them to become agents of change (Bebbington, 1999). Capabilities as Nussbaum (2000, p. 223) points out should be pursued in a way in which people are treated as an end on themselves and not like an mean to someone else's end. This is particularly important when talking about women that have been treated "as the supporters of the ends of others, rather than as ends in their own right". Thus, what is in the core of a dignified free human being is that they are capable enough to shape their lives in cooperation and reciprocity with others, instead of being shaped by others (ibid). As a mean to provide health care, nutrition, education, knowledge and skills, capacity to work and adapt (Serrat, 2017), AMARN mobilize various partnerships to fulfill its associates' needs but also potentials. By promoting a safe space in which women can manifest their interests and necessities - being people-centered -, AMARN promote micro and macro links, in a dynamic and holistic manner.

Here at AMARN, we have a counselor in partnership with SEBRAE[11], SETRAB[12]… after holding a meeting with our associates to find out what they want, what they are interested in learning, we get in touch with these partners and they help us with workshops, courses, training. We also have partnership with some professors from college and the UFAM[13] that helps us with the preparation of the women for the exam to college entrance. *[P.4, 45 years old, 16/02/2023]*

From another participant:

In my opinion, the most important is the support they give us because if I'm in need, I'm sure I have the support of AMARN. If I don't know how to do something, if I feel I can't, I talk to the staff, ask them, then they go looking for partners, looking for people who can help me. That makes us feel safe. *[P.6, 38 years old, 19/02/2023]*

And another:

The most important for me was the workshops, you know… As soon as I joined it here, I started to participate in handicraft workshops and to learn, acquire knowledge that I didn't have from the community. I learned to weave, make jewelry, earrings, and various types of handicrafts. *[P.11, 50 years old, 20/02/2023]*

Particularly regarding education and training, most women declared it to be the most important benefit they receive from the association. Not only to them, but to their children and relatives. Several of them mentioned the support received by the board members to continue further their studies. Two of them managed to complete secondary education past the age of 50, claiming it to be one of the biggest achievements the association helped conquer in their lives.

- I think it was completing high school, last year (laughs). It was Miss X who encouraged me. *[P.1, 70 years old, 16/02/2023]*

From another participant:

Back in 2017, 2018 AMARN helped my daughter with an apprentice scholarship through the government here. We received some money

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[11] SEBRAE: The Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae) is a private entity that promotes the competitiveness and sustainable development of micro and small business ventures.
[12] SETRAB: The Secretary of State for Work and Income (SETRAB Manaus) has as its main mission to implement public policies of the Government of Amazonas aimed at promoting employment and income, as well as new job opportunities.
[13] UFAM: Federal university of Manaus

from that, which she used to pay for her course and now that she has graduated, she has been working as a public employee. I'm proud of her. That is why when we have meetings, I talk to the women that AMARN also help our children too. That's why I told you I'm never going to leave; I'll keep fighting here with them. *[P.7, 52 years old, 23/02/2023]*

One of the most recent partnerships is with the state university in which women get lectures on Saturdays to improve their math and Portuguese competence and in the pursuit of higher education. Although the partnership is new, the support in education dates back many years. The association also holds a Tukanoan language course lectured by an indigenous teacher, with the objective of protecting the language and passing it on to the indigenous women' children and grandchildren.

Figure 15: Math and Portuguese lecture in preparation for the entry exam to the Indigenous degree of the University of Manaus – UFAM. February 25, 2023. Source: Facebook

This year we are going to have an entry exam for the Indigenous degree at UFAM. The coordinators always come and talk to us. I lack a bit of interest because of my age, I'm already 45, but Miss X always tells me "If you want to study, then keep trying". I tell her that I'm old, but she says: "don't think like that, you have to keep learning, there's still time". So, I keep participating… it is very fruitful and rewarding. *[P.2, 46 years old, 18/02/2023]*

Regarding physical health, AMARN offers through some of the partnerships, yearly follows-ups so the associates and other beneficiaries can access vaccines, eye, and women health examination. AMARN also provides psychological support, and this was pointed out by two of the participants as one of the most important types of assistance they could get, particularly because they are indigenous women living in the city.

> (…) especially here in the city because we are indigenous, we don't have priority. Where I lived before, we had visits at home, they were concerned. Here in the city, we don't have that, but AMARN helps in that matter, they give medical and psychological help, they help a lot.
>
> The most important among these I think is the psychological help (…) because there are many women who need this help. It is a more sensitive issue, because many times they don't even know how to deal with it, with sons who are on drugs or alcohol, with daughters who are in a vulnerable situation, the family itself… so for that, the most important is the psychological help they give to these women. *[P.6, 38 years old, 19/02/2023]*

From another participant:

> We talk about our problems to them and after they hear what we say, if they can't help, they find someone who can. I had a problem here, at home with my husband, they helped, but they also got someone to help too. So, with these kinds of things, like family problems, they help us find a solution. That's what I did, and I am very grateful to have AMARN as a partner. *[P.7, 52 years old, 23/02/2023]*

Figure 16: Partnership with USAID-ONU Migração. Medical care. June 2022. Source: Facebook

iii) Natural capital

In the context of dispersed Indigenous women living in the city, the most important aspect of natural capital that the association provides, is the raw material they need to produce the traditional handicraft from the Alto Rio Negro region. The basic raw material the women use to produce their craftwork is the fiber of an Amazonian palmer called tucumã (tucumã-i) or *Astrocaryum acaule*. The fiber of tucumã or tukum (in Tukanoan language) has been appointed as a good and sustainable textile material for the production of handicraft and it has been used by traditional communities for many generations (Maciel & Lucas Filho, 2007). The palm tree is found naturally occurring in the forest, and due to its traditional use, there is a concern with the conservation of these trees so that collectors aim for removing only the necessary straws to minimize waste and rotating the harvesting, in a way that previous harvests can be spared and have time to regenerate (Jati & Santos, 2018).

The different colors are obtained through pigmentation from local fruits and flower, as turmeric root (Curcuma longa), genipap (Genipa americana), and capiranga (*Arrebidaea chica*), and through the manual handling of the fiber (Jati & Santos, 2018; Maciel & Lucas Filho, 2007). The process is not easy as the palm tree has thorns. The collectors usually work in groups using

sickles and machetes, first removing the fibers from the tree, and later removing the thorns from the straws, letting the cleaned fiber dry under the sun for three days (ibid). After this process, the fiber is ready to be transported and used for the production of hats, baskets, bags, earrings, bracelets, vases, hammocks and what else the artisans' creativity inspire them to.

The use of tucumã as the raw material for the handicraft instead of synthetic materials that can be more easily purchased in the city is an important principle AMARN holds to be both sustainable and to promote a small-scale local economy for the indigenous suppliers from the Alto Rio Negro. It is also one of the strengths of the association when establishing its identity and the culture of its associates. In this regard, many of the associates also purchase tucumã from the suppliers they got to meet through the association. In that way, they can work both with the material they get from the association or purchase the material to produce their own stock of products and sell to private customers. Among the participants, two of them had their own handicraft shops and although one of them was able to get the tucumã fiber from her sister who lives in the upriver region, the other still purchased the tucumã she needs from the same supplier introduced by the association. The other participants who produced for personal sales, also purchase the fiber from AMARN's suppliers.

> I tell many customers that there is a way to locate the material, to know where it is from. The Baixo Amazonas works a lot with seeds, but the Alto Rio Negro does not. We focus on fiber products, like bags, necklaces, macrame, baskets. So, the raw material we buy comes from the upriver region. This is also a way to help our family there, our relatives who send us material. Buying from them helps them with a source of income too. Every time they come selling tukum, when I can, I buy it. I don't complain about the price, it's already cheap for the work they have. It is difficult to harvest and prepare the fiber. *[P.9, 58 years old, 20/02/2023]*

From another participant:

> The suppliers sell to the association, but they also sell individually to the associates. It works like this: they sell to the association what the association will use, then the association distributes to the associates what we will need to make the handicrafts. If we need, we look for this person – the supplier - to buy separately for us, individually, to produce our own handicraft. *[P. 8, 54 years old, 20/02/2023]*

Figure 17: Tucumã palmer, the drying process of its fiber after pigmentation, and the fiber being braided.
(Source: Studio Dora Santoro)

iv) Physical capital

The association also provides many services through the physical space they dispose of at the headquarters. As mentioned before, during Saturdays, the associates have access to preparatory courses in math, Portuguese, and Tukanoan language. Besides the raw material that AMARN provides the associates, they also can use the association facilities to produce their craftwork during the week if they do not want to work from home. AMARN also offers a space in which newly-comers or indigenous women and families in difficulty can take shelter as together they work for solutions to their problems. At its office, besides psychological support, the association provides legal counseling as well, for matters regarding retirement and marriage disagreements.

> When I needed it, I spent 15 days at their house, in the association. Back then, I was having problems with my husband, but I could always talk with someone from the board. I always looked for Miss X. She listens and gives us advice and tells us how to proceed with these things. Even financially, when I needed to help my son, they helped me a lot. I feel privileged in this matter. *[P. 8, 54 years old, 20/02/2023]*

From another participant:

> I think I'll give the example of a colleague of mine who just arrived at the association. She came through another association from the Rio Negro. Before she came, she spoke with someone from the board. She was unemployed, with children to raise. If you don't know anyone to help you in the big city, life is very difficult. But she said that she found support in the association when she came with her husband. The association found a place for her to live, and they are seeking a job for her husband, while she is getting involved and working as a craftswoman in the association. She is there almost every day. *[P.11, 50 years old, 20/02/2023]*

v) Financial capital

Differently from social capital, financial capital is easier to identify and measure particularly in economic terms. In the context of this study, it refers to the financial viability of living from the handicraft produced by the associated women of AMARN, but also to the financial support they receive from the organization. As previously mentioned, the monthly income of the main household activity seems to vary considerably (table 5) in more than 60% of the sample, although the findings suggested that this is not a particular concern for the participants. This is explained by the fact that in most of the households of the sample utilizes the handicraft sales as a complementary activity, and other non-monetary benefits obtained through the association as more valuable than the economic return they get from the sales. As also mentioned, some of the artisans have their own business which they started after joining the organization and the training programs. Others produce their own handicrafts to sell to clients outside the association. Nevertheless, it was unanimity among them that they would prioritize the work for the association if needed be.

> My handicraft shop is doing well… I always try to encourage the other women, it's just that when we have our own business, we can't do much more. I only have 2 arms (laughs) but when they need it, I take – products - from here and help them or I make the products they need. *[P.9, 58 years old, 20/02/2023]*

From another participant:

> Financially, in my life, like, it's still normal, it never got so much better, but we never went through many difficulties either. Because with the handicraft work, we earn depending on the production. If I produce little I earn little, if I do a lot, deliver a lot, I earn a lot. It depends on that, on the work of each one, the skill, because each craftswoman has her own skill, some are fast, others are slow. I'm on the slow side… because it's a manual job, laborious, with needle, with tukum… It takes a while to make the pieces. There are a lot of people who work very quickly. They make the pieces and deliver and earn good money. For me it is more because this handicraft is our cultural identity, it came from our ancestors, it has a meaning. It's a lot of work, but also very rewarding. *[P.2, 46 years old, 18/02/2023]*

Furthermore, they all expressed a high degree of satisfaction regarding the way they are paid since the payment is production-based. When they get the raw material from the association, they are paid for their labor in the percentage of 60% of the final product price while 40% goes for the association. When they purchase the raw material themselves to sell at the association, they get 70% of the final price and the association the remaining 30%. Important to note that as the handicraft products [14]are not considered industrialized, the production is tax-exempted as a federal measure to foster small businesses in Brazil.

> I am satisfied because we earn depending on what we produce, if a person produces a lot, they earn a lot. If they produce little, they earn little, so I am satisfied, I get paid for what I do. (…) In the end it does not make much of a difference – [to produce with the association's material or with her own material] - because if you are to buy the material directly from the supplier you also have costs. *[P. 8, 54 years old, 20/02/2023]*

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[14] Associations considered non-profitable are tax-free.

Finally, when it comes to credit and loans, some participants declared having received financial help in times of need. However, this seems to work more as an informal loan process than something more structured with fixed rent and obligations.

> It's very difficult to live in the city. It's not like living in the community, where you plant, or hunt and you can eat it. Here in the city, you have to work to have something to give the children. In the association, if you ask for help when you don't have it, they lend you a bit of money. You can say: "look, I'm going through this situation, there's a problem with my children, with my husband" … and they do what is possible to help you. *[P.11, 50 years old, 20/02/2023]*

From another participant:

> (…) because when we are going through some difficulty, if we have a talk with them, they even help financially. If you need money, they lend it. They really help. *[P.7, 52 years old, 23/02/2023]*

vi) Livelihood strategies and outcomes

As mentioned, craftwork is a complementary economic activity. The associated women recur to several strategies to compose their livelihoods. What became evident is that entrepreneurship through handicrafts is more a means to strengthen their identities and keep their culture alive, than it is a primary means to sustain themselves. Even so, several of them have on the craftwork the source of their main livelihood income. In this regard, it became clear that despite the urban context and the concern of providing for themselves and their families above their communities, the artisans of AMARN are indigenous entrepreneurs not only ethnic entrepreneurs. One of the arguments lies in the associates' values and motivations behind their work. As Ratten and Dana (2017) pointed out, indigenous entrepreneurship has been proven to be an important tool in the pursuit of empowerment and socio-economic improvement, while also a mean of innovation and creativity expression. Moreover, as Croce (2019) highlighted, for indigenous women their success tend not to be measured in terms of economic profit and the findings of this study corroborate to that.

> It is more about our identity, and no one can take that away from us. We are indigenous and will always be. I think it's beautiful when we meet, work together, speak on our language… We, indigenous women,

are able to undertake a business, to give opportunities to our friends, and to benefit ourselves by doing our things, our handicrafts. I think indigenous women are capable of everything they want [P. 8, 54 years old, 20/02/2023]

From another participant:

Sometimes I sell privately when I have my own tukum, but when I take tukum from AMARN, I deliver it there and they pay me. What I produce with my tukum, I sell it here. There are a lot of people who buy it, people from my church for example, but now I don't have time to make mine... I prefer to deliver those for the association because the customer is already waiting (laughs). (…)

Sometimes people say: "you have to do yours, do not depend on the association, because when you sell your product, you earn for the whole price. With them, you earn just for your labor". But I think this is good enough. I like it. I don't complain. I know I'll only receive for the labor, but at the same time I'm helping the association. For everything I already got from them, for everything they have given me. I have no complaints. *[P.7, 52 years old, 23/02/2023]*

Such findings could also be explained by the fact that entrepreneurship requires more than just technical training, but also personal traits that individuals should have to develop their businesses. Some of these personality traits that lead to the success of female enterprises involve planning and control mechanisms, business skills, and risk-taking propensity besides personal ambition as found by Padilla-Meléndez and Ciruela-Lorenzo (2018) and Briggs (2009). In this regard, cooperative entrepreneurship seems to be the most appropriate for these women due to their collectivist traits and the possibility it offers to balance their work, family needs, and lifestyle, while minimizing risks and fostering sociability and social security. These preferences are in line with the findings of Bastida et al. (2020), Bonet (2005), and Senent (2008) about the role of cooperatives in linking women and social economy development. They stated that cooperative principles such as solidarity, fair and democratic management, equality among the members, and social responsibility towards the community are the main factors that lead women to prefer this business model. All in all, living and working by these principles seems to be the main drivers to the livelihood outcomes perceived by the associates, namely: increased income, as well as well-being and capabilities improvement.

c. OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS

One of the issues this study tried to address was how the participants perceived the opportunities and barriers faced by them as a gender-focused association. Especially due to the key role of indigenous women in the climate change regime and the focus on sustainability, it was expected that AMARN associates would be more aware of their importance in the local, national, and international scenario. However, as an intersection of two widely marginalized groups, women and indigenous people, even in the international arena little focus is given on their participation in climate governance, their rights, and therefore, their role (Prior & Heinämäki, 2017). Apart from one participant who linked gender as one of the barriers faced by the organization, all the others did not recognize any gender-related issues, nor perceived as barriers or envisioned as opportunities for a gender-focused organization. This was an interesting finding since in the last years, more attention and emphasis on gender unbalances have been given by international actors of civil society.

> (…) not every time they will listen to us. We have to wait, to be patient. Sometimes, they prefer men more than women, but we have to be patient. We are indigenous women, not everyone will welcome us with open arms. There is this thing of sexism that sometimes we suffer, but we have to be there, persisting to see if they will assist us. *[P.7, 52 years old, 23/02/2023]*

Instead, some of them mentioned the differences they perceived about the indigenous women role when they were young, at their communities, and how this role has changed today. This can be explained by the history of women participation in the indigenous movement in Brazil and by the social organization of indigenous people. For many years, it was part of many indigenous society's tradition that men, exclusively, were the responsible for intermediating the communication between the community and the public sphere, and women for mediating the domestic affairs (Matos, 2012). This scenario has changed in the past decades once the indigenous movement started to grow and gain more visibility and representation on public spheres (figure 18). In this sense, the participation of indigenous women has been defined by them as mostly complementary to the male participation in the indigenous movement than as a strategy to separate and differentiate them from the movement.

From when I was a girl until today, there has been a lot of change. (…) my mother was one of the people who joined when AMIDI[15] started. She was involved in this cooperative environment. In the beginning, indigenous women had a lot of difficulties. The Indigenous men, even our fathers, our relatives, they left women outside. They had no voice because they were women and women were supposed to work in the roca[16], take care of the children and it was the men who fought the Indigenous cause. It was like that, but for some time now, women have been standing out, and they are the ones who participate in the meetings, they are the ones who speak, they are the ones who fight, who change things. In the meetings now, women have more voice, along with men, just like same now, that's the difference. *[P.6, 38 years old, 19/02/2023]*

Figure 18: Some members of AMARN participating at the national march "Free Land Camp" in Brasilia demanding the demarcation of indigenous territories. April 2023. (Source: Instagram)

Most of the participants focused on the financial aspects and limitations that a non-profitable association faces on a daily basis, but not how the fact that composing a minoritarian group affected how they feel perceived as an indigenous women association. Overall, there has

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[15] AMIDI: Association of Indigenous Women of the District of Iauaretê
[16] Small piece of land dedicated to subsistence farming

been limited integration and discussion about the intersectionality of gender and race, and therefore, how indigenous women are impacted differently in issues regarding their rights and the historical, social, and political context they live in (Prior & Heinämäki, 2017). Furthermore, their perception of gender issues is still very strictly intertwined with their role as supporters of the indigenous peoples' rights. As Kuokkanen (2012, pp. 234, 235) pointed out, "indigenous women advocating their rights have been repeatedly accused of being disloyal to their communities" and "of introducing alien concepts and thinking to indigenous communities and practices".

> Every time I see a fight between Solimoes River[17], the men say: "ah every time they only bring women from the Rio Negro River, everything has a woman from Rio Negro involved". But this is the only way. There's no other person to come in to do what have to be done, say what have to be said about indigenous rights. We have to do it. We have to learn what we need and keep fighting for the movement. *[P.4, 45 years old, 16/02/2023]*

One interesting point I realized through the interviews was that the participants did not seem to notice the importance of the role of indigenous women in keeping their culture alive, not only because they are indigenous, but because they are women. Often the one responsible for the children's upbringing and transmission of their culture. Although most of the communities are patrilineal, where the woman is the vessel and the child belongs to the clan of the father and his brothers, their cosmologies also put the women as responsible for sustaining the social and political organization of the community, as well as protagonists of the worlds' creation and transformation (Matos, 2012). This became evident to me because when mentioning how they learned the Tukanoan language or the handicraft in their communities, they learned it through their mothers, even if they claimed their ethnicity to be a different one, inherited by their fathers. Moreover, by incentivizing their children and grandchildren to participate in the Tukanoan language classes offered by the organization, they have been doing the same as their mothers, but in an urban

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[17] Solimoes is the name often given to upper stretches of the Amazon River in Brazil from its confluence with the Rio Negro upstream to the border of Peru. Source: Wikipedia.

context. This suggests that, although they might not be aware of, the perpetuation of the indigenous culture is still very much dependent on their key role as indigenous women.

> My father is a Tariano from the upper rio Negro, my mother is Tukana. I never learned my father's language, my language, but I spent a lot of time with my mother's family, that's why I speak Tukano. That's what happened, I didn't learn the language from my father but from my mother. Everyone from Rio Negro speaks the Tukano language. There are other ethnicities, but everyone speaks Tukano. *[P.9, 58 years old, 20/02/2023]*

From another participant:

> I think from my part, it was my father who didn't teach me his language. I saw him speak his language, my language, which is Tuiuca. With his relatives he spoke it, but he never taught me. It's his language, but we generally speak Tukano, which everyone speaks. I don't know why. I think it was the parents who taught their children. If I had learned it from when I was a little kid, I think I would be able to speak now. I would have been delighted to speak my language. *[P.11, 50 years old, 20/02/2023]*

By and large, indigenous women ought to have their rights and the importance of their roles acknowledged both in the women's right as in the indigenous' rights movement. Only through their inclusion and participation on local, national, and international networks regarding gender and race discussions will they be able to recognize their true importance and realize their full potential, as bearers of their culture and as key actors for a sustainable development. This is not to say that the female indigenous movement should assume the same politic positioning as the western feminism, but that gender issues ought to take more space on the indigenous and women's right agenda, creating and bringing more awareness to this segment of the population.

d. AGENCY AND EMPOWERMENT

One of the most important aspects of livelihood outcomes is how it can empower and enable people to become agents of change. Giddens (1979) brings to the attention that more than

adaptation and poverty alleviation tools, assets are the basis of agent's power to act, challenge and change governing institutions. As social capital helps us understand how actors engage with each other to gain access to resources, it also serves as a catalyzer in which how economic, social, and political relationships create wealth and enhance peoples' capabilities (Bebbington, 1999). Through this study, I wanted to understand how AMARN members perceived changes in their lives, if any, regarding these three spheres: socio, economic, and political, and to what extent do they attribute these changes to the social network they are part of. As it happens, indigenous female associations emerged not only with the purpose of improve indigenous women's income, but to foster political discussions about women's participations in the indigenous movement, and to bring the attention the particularities of indigenous female rights towards the Brazilian state (Matos, 2012). It was in this context that AMARN was created, working as a space in which women are constantly stimulated to speak their voices, to learn, to pursuit their objectives, and to break the barriers they might encounter by being indigenous women living in the city.

Defining empowerment and its implications would require a separate chapter, which would stretch far beyond the purpose of this study. However, regardless of how empowerment is conceived, agency seems to be a critical component to it, which is built on the resources, assets, capabilities, and opportunities available to individuals or communities (Sen, 1999). In this regard, Hennink (2012) describes six mechanisms in which empowerment operates, depending on the level being assessed – individual, community, organizational. Some of these mechanisms will be used as a guide to the findings concerning empowerment and agency building of AMARN members.

Table 7 - Mechanisms of empowerment (Hennink, 2012)

Mechanism	Definition
Knowledge	Access to education, training and information from formal or other sources
Agency (a) Self-identity (b) Decision-making (c) Effecting change	Capacity to act independently and make choices – comprised of three components: (a) self-confidence and self-efficacy to set and achieve goals (b) ability to make informed decisions that are recognised and respected (c) belief in own ability to take action to effect change based on own goals
Opportunity structure	Existence of an enabling environment of social, political, institutional and community support to foster individual and community development
Capacity-building	Harness community capacity to provide or advocate for services or self governance, and to seek accountability from government service provision agencies
Resources	Access to physical and financial resources, or skills for seeking resources, to develop communities
Sustainability	Ability of communities to develop and support initiatives towards long-term sustainability

As previously mentioned, many of the participants mentioned access to education and training was one of the biggest benefits of being part of the association. Knowledge is one of the basic tools when building and improving peoples' capabilities and therefore, it is a fundamental mechanism when empowering people. In this sense, Hennink (2012, p. 206) defines individual empowerment as "a process of transformation that enables individuals to make independent decisions and take action on these decisions to make changes in their lives". For this to happen, core elements such as access to knowledge, agency, and an enabling environment need to be in place for an individual to feel empowered. This became pretty evident by the talk of many of the participants as can be seen below.

> Joining AMARN was a good opportunity to lose my shyness. I was very shy, very shy. I didn't have the courage to speak in front of people, you know, at meetings. I was ashamed to speak, but not now. I opened myself a lot and it was really good and very rewarding to be in an association. We can talk to everyone. When I feel I have something I need to talk to the coordinator, I do it. I can talk about whatever is happening to me. *[P.2, 46 years old, 18/02/2023]*

From one of the participants from the board:

> When we have meetings, we always open space for them to talk, to speak their minds. Before, most women didn't want to say anything. They were most silent... Before they just accepted what was said, but not now. Now they always talk. Ms. X always tells them: "you have to talk, you have to decide for yourself, and say 'that's what we want and that's what we're going to do! It's time to talk, to join the movement, to participate more'".
>
> (…) We tell them: "if you need help, speak in your language and we translate. We make mistakes, but we learn from them". I think this encourages those who are more at the forefront and who understand more about politics, so they keep talking, encouraging each other and we learn together. *[P.4, 45 years old, 16/02/2023]*

From another member participant:

> Before I joined, I was afraid to speak in public. I just kept silent, just listening when they talked about politics, about a lot of things. I felt so lost without knowing, asking myself: "how am I going to learn to speak about these things?" Then when I joined the board, I said: "my god, now what do I do?" We ran after the benefits for the women, we ran after everything, we did everything we could. What made it more difficult was leaving my children. I had to be there – at the association - every day. Sometimes my children complained and as a mother, you get divided. But I learned to speak in public, about politics and many things. It lasted only 3 years. It's over quickly. But public speaking, that I learned. *[P.7, 52 years old, 23/02/2023]*

Other participants added that through their process of gaining more self-confidence through the meetings and the engagement with other associates, they became more able to defend themselves from abusive partners and from discrimination they would eventually suffer from the "White" people they could encounter. This aspect of agency is closely related with the affirmation of their self-identity, which is straightened through the craftwork they produce and learn more about in the association. This also explains why, for most of them, being able to make handicrafts and get connected with their roots is more important than the revenue or income they get from the economic activity they exercise at the association.

> Even if I got another job or changed career, I would not leave the association. This handicraft is part of our cultural identity, and it is very important to us, because it comes from our ancestors. We inherited these things, working with handicrafts is very good cause it is the same our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents used to do. We do it today and will teach our children. *[P. 5, 30 years old, 28/02/2023]*

From another participant:

> What I like the most, is also about eating our own food and speaking our own language… We talk about our things, our culture. I think that here at AMARN, our culture is much more appreciated than where I used to live. Here we learn to value our culture, to continue speaking Tukano, to continue knowing our stories, knowing how it really was. We become more curious about our indigeneity, something I wasn't even when I lived in the community. Here I keep wanting to learn and pass the handicraft art on. I see it with my daughters, for example. They already wanted to stop speaking our language, but here we get to speak, practice it. So now I see the value of the indigenous language. I'm going to pass on my language to them, they're going to give this continuity. *[P.6, 38 years old, 19/02/2023]*

As part of their agency building and empowerment these women have experienced, several of them mentioned changes in the socio, economic and political spheres of their lives. Social change can be perceived when comparing a social system in two points in time – or even at one point – and then "rely on the extrapolation between these two states or from the one state, to indicate the course of change" (Barth, 1967, p. 661). For many of these women, that meant a way in which they perceived themselves and one another before and after joining the association. Socially, that means the community feeling and the comradeship they found at the organization.

> Before joining the association, I felt alone. I didn't know that there were so many parentes[18] who spoke my language, so many of my people. But when I come here, I feel good because I meet my parentes and we can talk about our things. Do things together, work together. *[P. 8, 54 years old, 20/02/2023]*

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[18] Parentes can be directly translated to relatives, which is a way in which indigenous people refer to other indigenous people.

From other participant:

> It really means a lot, you know, I'm representing all indigenous women. I'm not going to say: "ah I'm not going to mingle with Tukano, ah I'm not going to mingle with Desano". That I don't have anymore. How can I say… that differentiation. I talk to all the women there equally.
>
> (…) I learned to respect others, to know how to listen… For me this is important. To respect others, including other ethnicities. *[P.11, 50 years old, 20/02/2023]*

From another participant:

> For me, AMARN feels like a welcoming mother who gives us attention and care. Many of us come to Manaus alone, to live in the middle of the White, but when we find the association and get back to our customs, our food, our language, our indigenous way… you feel at home, with your family. You recognize and say: "this is me; this is where I came from, this is not for someone else who is not indigenous". So, it feels like a mother's hug, from the heart. When I am here, I feel that I'm with my parents, I'm with my father and with my mother close to me. *[P.4, 45 years old, 16/02/2023]*

For a livelihood to be viable it is expected that people will experience a minimum of financial gains and economic improvement in their lives. Although, as shown before, this was not the most significant achievement on many of AMARN members since they rely on handicraft mostly as a secondary economic activity, many of them reported a significative improvement in their income generation and familiar budget. Moreover, it was through the extra income that many of them became rent-free, managed to open their own business, or started earning money working from home. This denotes a great accomplishment for them, as historically, indigenous women face ongoing disadvantages due to the limited resources they have access to. These disadvantages which ca be either economic or social, end up invariably affecting their bargaining power at various levels – from households to international stances (Prior & Heinämäki, 2017). Therefore, despite the income earned through the craftwork might not be enough to be the only income source for their families, it certainly contributes to reducing the economic inequality they often are subjected to.

> Life got better. I got to buy my building sit and build my little house, which I didn't have before… Now I have my own place. So, I would say that my biggest achievement was this house and the knowledge I got from the partnerships. Almost all the partners know me. It seems that I have "AMARN" written on my forehead (laughs). People see me and ask: "how is AMARN? "What has been going on?". I have many acquaintances, and knowledge because of it… about people, about the work, about the institution... *[P.3, 73 years old, 18/02/2023]*

From another participant:

> - My finances – (…) it improved a lot because this association helps a lot. Before it was a very difficult time for me. I have children and no one to watch them for me to get a job. That's why I became an associate. The handicrafts I do and sell here help a lot with the family budget at home. This is the most important thing, the handicrafts and being able to earn my own money to support my children and buy my things. *[P. 5, 30 years old, 28/02/2023]*

Last, but not least, are the changes they experienced regarding their political perceptions. Although some of them admitted not paying much attention to the topic, the majority said they learned a lot and became much more engaged than they were before joining the association. One of them even mentioned that bringing political awareness to indigenous women was the main objective that AMARN was created for. This is in line with the female representation on the indigenous movement nowadays. If historically, indigenous women participation was characterized by their support to the indigenous cause, in the last decades they have conquered their own space and agenda in the movement. Nowadays, in many other indigenous associations it is possible to find a Women's Department that deals specifically with gender issues (Matos, 2012). The increase diversification of indigenous organizations in the context of the indigenist policy and the growing bridging and linking social capital that these organizations have constructed have opened space to gender discussions in a way that indigenous women can gradually become the protagonists of their own fight and demands. Through AMARN, indigenous women have been able to acquire administrative skills, as accounting, production and commercialization of handicrafts, project and report elaboration, but also political literacy and expertise as conflict resolution, articulation of interests, networks and alliances (Chernela, 2014).

When we talk about AMARN sometimes we just think about working with handicrafts, which is a very important part for us women, the income generation. But over time we also start to understand and learn with each other a little more about public policy and how it affects us here in the association. *[P.7, 52 years old, 23/02/2023]*

From another participant:

AMARN instruct us in public policy and things like that…for example, many women want to retire, you know, so the women from the coordination help with this, among other things… They follow-up… women are also invited to go to the meetings and discuss the agenda of indigenous peoples' rights, indigenous women's rights, violence against indigenous women. We learn all that. *[P.4, 45 years old, 16/02/2023]*

And another:

After I joined AMARN, as I said, I acquired more knowledge, first about handicrafts, and then in the area of public policies. I wasn't very interested initially (laughers). But later I understood that this was the most important thing. To know about public policies concerning us. To know our women rights better. This is what I have been trying to learn more every day. I am learning a little to know where the women's place is, how as an indigenous women can I defend myself, you know…*[P.2, 46 years old, 18/02/2023]*

In the final analysis, AMARN has shown that more than contributing to women's livelihoods, contributing to these women's agency and empowerment is at the core of the organization. It is through these assets – material and immaterial – that the association is able to promote socio-economic and political change in the lives of hundreds of indigenous women that have benefited one way or another in all the years the association exists. Although the extent to which these women perceive these changes may vary depending on how long they have been part of the association, it was unanimity that all of them experienced these changes at a significant degree due to the role of the organization in their lives.

7. CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion

Indigenous women are paramount and key actors when it comes to building a more fair and sustainable future. Still, there have been limited discussions about their inclusion and participation regarding their importance and role in the achievement of some of the sustainable development goals. In this regard, a close attention to how these women build their livelihoods could reveal much of where public, private, and civil society efforts could contribute to support indigenous women's growth and empowerment. Therefore, this study proposed to analyze cooperative entrepreneurship as one of the livelihood strategies that dispersed indigenous women rely on, and how a social network that supports this strategy has promoted sustainable livelihoods while enabling changes and empowerment in these women's lives. To illustrate the application of this study, I chose the Association of Indigenous Women from the Upper Black River – AMARN, since it is the oldest association of this kind that operates in Manaus, the capital of the Amazon state in Brazil.

As has been shown, AMARN is a grassroots organization that from a bottom-up approach has succeeded in creating and strengthening bonding, bridging, and to a lesser extent, linking social capital to improve the income and well-being of its members. It has enabled the social connection between indigenous women from the Alto Rio Negro that migrated to Manaus, it has created ties between suppliers of raw materials from local communities of the Alto Rio Negro and the artisans in the city and established local and regional partnerships with broader civil society organizations and state agencies. Moreover, through the social network enabled by the organization, women have increased their access to human, natural, physical, and financial capital which significantly contributed to their livelihoods, capabilities, and agency building.

The findings suggest that craftwork does not tend to be the primary economic activity for most of the associates, but it is the one in which they derive more satisfaction despite the limited financial return. This can be explained by the risks involved and personal traits required by entrepreneurship as a business model, which are compensated and minimized by the cooperative modality that these women opt for. In this regard, women recur to a series of livelihood strategies to compose their livelihoods, handicrafts being one of them. Nevertheless, the revenue generated by selling handicrafts is an important source of household income as demonstrated by the fact that many of them have relied on it for years and managed to become homeowners. More important

seems to be the immaterial livelihood outcomes, as well-being and capabilities these women have improved through the association. Through the production of handicrafts and cooperative association, they have strengthened their identity, increased their self-confidence, and expanded their access to various types of knowledge that enhanced their agency and empowerment. In other words, they have become agents of change and experienced this change in several dimensions of their lives despite composing a marginalized and vulnerable minority.

However, some issues also emerged as topics to be further explored during the data collection. Some of these which deserve special attention is the fact that these women have migrated due to severe poverty and a lack of infrastructure and public policies regarding basic health care and education in their communities. Historically, public authorities have neglected this segment of the population which has led to an ever-increasing dispersion of indigenous people to urban centres, often aggravating their vulnerability, poverty, and social issues that could not be covered by this research, such as racism, alcoholism, drug abuse, prostitution, domestic violence and so on.

Additionally, one interesting finding this study shed light on was the limited awareness these women have of gendered issues leading to barriers and opportunities they face. Despite the institutionalized patriarchal culture characteristic of many South American and indigenous traditions, the majority of the participants seemed to see the indigenous women's cause as an integrant part of the indigenous peoples' movement. Nevertheless, it became evident their role as guardians, bearers, and transmitters of their culture, both in the community as well as in the city. As discussions about gender and race inclusion become more spread in the international arena, it is expected that the engagement between actors of civil society might contribute more actively to gender-related issues within the women and indigenous rights movement.

Finally, one of the contributions this study hopes to provide is that indigenous cooperativism and indigenous entrepreneurship is not limited to the production of commodities, nor exclusively focused on community-based development, as broadly described in the literature. Indigenous entrepreneurship is present wherever individuals with indigenous backgrounds decide to venture employing their efforts to transmit their culture and way of life, be it through the production and selling of traditional foods, handicrafts, or modern apps. In effect, it is of utmost importance that donors and funding agencies understand how indigenous values, principles and

aspirations are embedded in their enterprises and how the economic outcomes might differ from what is expected by conventional standards established as measures of success in our societies. Be that as it may, it is, however, indigenous peoples' constitutional and human right to have the resources and opportunities they need to realize their capabilities and potential regardless of where they decide to live.

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