Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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“Give a Person a Loan and Will She Be Fed a Lifetime? Microcredit, Aquaculture and Capabilities in the Bolivian Amazon”

Department of Geography

Wednesday, April 25, 2018
2:00 P.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B007

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Mark Flaherty, Department of Geography, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Denise Cloutier, Department of Geography, UVic (Member)
Mr. Stewart Anderson, Vancity (Additional Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Ana Maria Peredo, School of Environmental Studies, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Fraser Hof, Department of Chemistry, UVic

Dr. Stephen Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

The development interventions of the past thirty years have relied on microcredit and other microfinancial services as a way to include the poor in the dynamics of the free market, so they may have a better chance of benefiting from economic development. Nowadays, the microfinance industry in Bolivia is highly developed, and the country is usually mentioned next to Bangladesh and India as a success case of microcredit, as a myriad of microfinancial institutions operate combining credit, savings and insurance with education, women empowerment or production efforts. In this setting, the Peces Para la Vida II project, was started in Bolivia in early 2015, with the objective of improving food security in Bolivia thorough the promotion of small scale aquaculture and fisheries in the Bolivian Amazon. As a part of this promotion strategy, a microcredit component was included in the project with the intention of scaling up the benefits found in the first stage of the project via an individual microcredit component and a group microleasing operation. Using a qualitative application of an analytical framework that combines Amartya Sen's capability approach and the Department for International Development's sustainable livelihoods approach, this thesis will argue that unless certain conditions on access to markets that enable savings and wealth creation are met, individual microcredit alone may not be sufficient to lead its users towards capabilities that ultimately improve their access to better endowments of various types of capitals, and that the group leasing operation appears to be more promising in terms of allowing those involved as it tackles productivity and market issues simultaneously, but with an implementation plagued with problems and the short time the operation has been underway, it would be premature to be definitive about these results.