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Governing agriculture, (re)producing gender

Continuity and change of social difference amidst Rwanda's socio-ecological transformation

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Cover: A view of a partly cultivated marshland in urban Kigali backgrounded by informal settlements and formal housing on a hillside. Photo: Karolin Andersson, 2024.

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Abstract

Rwanda is currently undertaking an ambitious development agenda that aims to achieve a structural transition and turn the country into a modern high-income one by 2050. This largely state-led process includes reorganising agricultural land and livelihoods through modernisation policies and interventions across the country, in the countryside as well as in cities. The various changes this engenders have profound implications for the country's millions of farmers, often in gendered ways and not infrequently to the detriment of less privileged social groups. Within this context, this thesis explores how Rwandan farmers' gendered and intersectional identities, relations and experiences are shaped through contemporary governmental policies and interventions aimed at agriculture, in the city and in the countryside. It does so by drawing on perspectives in feminist political ecology, gender and development and critical policy studies. Based on analysis of agricultural and urban development policy and on qualitative fieldwork in Kigali, the thesis shows that while policy formulation and implementation to some extent renegotiate and change unequal relations and responsibilities, at least at an individual level, it largely tends to reproduce social difference in ways that rather sustain existing inequalities. The thesis moreover shows how agricultural policy intended for the countryside has gendered effects also in urban Kigali, which highlights how political frameworks, geographically separated in the abstract, in practice are entangled to some extent. The thesis concludes that the prospects for sustained, profound social and gendered change for farmers within Rwanda's current development agenda remain limited and that further knowledge and debate are needed on the geography and scale of agricultural politics and governance.

Keywords: agricultural modernisation, urban development, policy, gender, intersectionality, feminist political ecology, Rwanda, Kigali

Styrning av jordbruk, (re)produktion av genus: Kontinuitet och förändring av social differentiering i Rwandas socio-ekologiska omvandling

Abstract

Rwanda genomför för närvarande en ambitiös utvecklingsagenda med syfte att uppnå en strukturell övergång till ett modernt höginkomstland till år 2050. Denna till stor del statligt ledda process inkluderar omorganisering av jordbruksmark och agrara försörjningsmöjligheter genom en moderniseringspolitik över hela landet, på landsbygden såväl som i städer. De förändringar som detta medför har djupgående implikationer för landets miljontals jordbrukare, ofta genusrelaterade och inte sällan till nackdel för mindre privilegierade sociala grupper. I detta sammanhang undersöker den här avhandlingen hur rwandiska jordbrukares genusbundna och intersektionella identiteter, relationer och erfarenheter formas genom samtida statliga policys och interventioner riktade mot jordbruket, i staden och på landsbygden. För detta ändamål utgår avhandlingen från perspektiv inom feministisk politisk ekologi, genus och utveckling samt kritiska policystudier. Baserat på analys av policy om jordbruks- och stadsutveckling samt på kvalitativt fältarbete i Kigali visar avhandlingen att trots att policyformulering och genomförande till viss mån omförhandlar och förändrar ojämlika maktrelationer och ansvarsfördelningar, åtminstone på individnivå, tenderar det till stor del att reproducera social differentiering på ett sätt som snarare upprätthåller befintliga ojämlikheter. Avhandlingen visar också hur jordbrukspolitik primärt avsedd för landsbygden har genusrelaterade verkningar även i de urbana delarna av Kigali, vilket belyser hur politiska ramverk, geografiskt åtskilda i det abstrakta, i praktiken är hopflätade i viss mån. Avhandlingen drar sålunda slutsatsen att utsikterna om varaktig, djupgående social och genusbunden förändring för jordbrukare inom Rwandas nuvarande utvecklingsagenda förblir begränsade, och att ytterligare kunskap och debatt erfordras kring jordbrukspolitikens och styrningens faktiska geografi och skala.

Nyckelord: jordbruksmodernisering, urban utveckling, policy, genus, intersektionalitet, feministisk politisk ekologi, Rwanda, Kigali

Contents

List of publications

This thesis is based on the work contained in the following papers, referred to by Roman numerals in the text:

I. Karolin Andersson, Katarina Pettersson and Johanna Bergman Lodin (2022). Window dressing inequalities and constructing women farmers as problematic – gender in Rwanda's agriculture policy. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 39, pp. 1245–1261. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-022-10314-5.

II. Karolin Andersson. *Manuscript*. Agricultural modernisation in the farming-disabling city: Urban farmers' emergent subjectivities and gender relations from 'professionalisation' in Kigali, Rwanda. Accepted with major revisions in *Geoforum*, March 2025.

III. Karolin Andersson. *Manuscript*. 'This city is not for me' – farmers' differentiated experiences of, and responses to, reorganisation of urban marshlands in Kigali. Resubmitted to *Gender, Place & Culture*, April 2025.

Papers I-III are reproduced with the permission of the publishers.

The contribution of Karolin Andersson to the papers included in this thesis was as follows:

I. Andersson is first author and wrote the majority of the text, with comments and feedback from Katarina Pettersson and Johanna Bergman Lodin. Development of concepts, analysis and conclusions were made through discussion between all authors. Andersson is responsible for the correspondence with the journal.

II. Andersson is single author. Comments and feedback were provided by Katarina Pettersson and Johanna Bergman Lodin.

III. Andersson is single author. Comments and feedback were provided by Katarina Pettersson and Johanna Bergman Lodin.

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Abbreviations

AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
AU	African Union
BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIP	Crop Intensification Program
CoK	City of Kigali
EDPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
FPE	Feminist Political Ecology
GAD	Gender and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoR	Government of Rwanda
GR4A	New Green Revolution for Africa
GTA	Gender Transformative Approaches
GYMS	Gender and Youth Mainstreaming Strategy
Ha	Hectare
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KCMP	Kigali City Master Plan
NAP	National Agriculture Policy
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NST	National Strategy for Transformation
PSTA	Strategic Plan for Agricultural Transformation
RTA	Reflexive Thematic Analysis

RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
RQ	Research question
RUDP	Rwanda Urban Development Project
RWF	Rwandan Franc
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
UR	University of Rwanda
USAID	The United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
WB	World Bank
WID	Women in Development
WPR	What's the problem represented to be?

1. Introduction

International and national political approaches to agriculture and development have for long been central in shaping lives, livelihoods and lands in Rwanda (Huggins 2017), often in gendered ways (Jefremovas 1991; Bayisenge 2018). Since the catastrophic events of the civil war and genocide against the Tutsi in 1994 – themselves partly a result of governance of land and agriculture (Musahara & Huggins 2005) – the country has undergone remarkable economic, ecological and social changes, with land and agricultural change centre stage. In the decades to come, the government of Rwanda (GoR) envisions a structural transition of the country that includes, among other things, reorganising the agricultural sector in line with the paradigm for a New Green Revolution for Africa (GR4A) and expanding, formalising and modernising Kigali and other cities. Such changes constitute key means to morph the country from an agrarian into a high-income, service- and knowledge-based economy (GoR 2020; Mullikin *et al.* 2022). These state-led processes, not infrequently characterised by top-down control, surveillance and disciplinary 'sensitisation' (Purdeková 2011; Mullikin *et al.* 2022), imply, again, far-reaching changes to the people and environment across the country (Ansoms & Holvoet 2008; Reyntjens 2013; Cottyn 2020).

In this thesis, I explore how contemporary governmental agendas, policies and interventions aimed at agriculture – in the city and in the countryside – are involved in shaping farmers' gendered and intersectional identities, relations and experiences. Based on critical analyses of agricultural and urban development policy and on qualitative fieldwork in Kigali, my research seeks to develop knowledge about the relationship between contemporary agricultural and development governance and the production of farmers, farming and their relations in rural and urban parts of Rwanda. The research is broadly framed within critical rural and development studies and specifically informed by work in feminist political ecology (FPE), gender and development and critical policy studies. It draws on theory that conceptualises such notions as gender, discourse and policy as situated, unstable processes emergent through practices and constitutive of both marginality and privilege (Nightingale 2006; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016). This enables me to critically interrogate how Rwanda's political agendas for

agricultural and urban change shape farmers' socially differentiated struggles over resources, relations and responsibilities.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of this thesis is *to explore how farmers' socially differentiated identities, relations and experiences are shaped through contemporary state-led governance and change of agriculture across space in Rwanda*. The research undertaken is guided by three research questions (RQs):

RQ1: How does the dominant discourse of agricultural development, prevalent in global and national development circles, shape farmers' gender identities and relations in Rwanda?

RQ2: How does national and urban governance of agriculture shape gendered and intersectional identities, relations and experiences among farmers in urban Kigali?

RQ3: What are the limits and possibilities for more socially just outcomes through contemporary governance of agriculture in Kigali and Rwanda?

The three individual papers (I, II and III) that constitute the thesis are located at overlapping empirical, methodological and theoretical vantage points to address the aim and RQs. Paper I addresses RQ1 by studying how problematisations of gender and gender inequality in national agricultural policy discursively constitute gendered subject positions that reinforce and negotiate normative representations of what women and men farmers are and what they should do. In Paper II, I explore how the ideas about agricultural modernisation, dominant in the contemporary paradigm for rural and agricultural transformation in Africa shape farmers' gendered subjectivities and relations in urban Kigali. It thereby addresses aspects of both RQs 1 and 2. Paper III speaks to RQ2 by examining farmers' heterogeneous experiences of, and responses to, the reorganisation of cultivated urban marshlands in Kigali that is part of the city's 'green' urban development agenda.

RQ3 aims to capture the change-orientated imperative of critical and feminist research like the present one. It represents a prompt to reflect on the possible ways towards increased equality, within and beyond the present

paradigmatic structures. Inspired by various perspectives and debates among scholars concerned with inequalities and vulnerabilities in agricultural contexts, I address this question throughout all three papers and discuss it in this thesis essay (Chapter 6). Table 1 provides an overview of the papers and their respective contribution to the thesis.

Table 1. Overview of Papers I-III.

Paper	RQs in the paper	Analysed material	Theoretical framework	Main findings	Contribution to the RQs of the thesis
I: Window dressing inequalities…	How is gender inequality problematised in Rwanda's agricultural policy? How are gendered subject positions discursively constituted through the policy? How can gender inequality in agriculture be problematised differently?	National policy documents about agriculture	Critical policy analysis; *What's the problem represented to be?* approach (WPR) (Bacchi 2009)	Gender inequality is instrumentalised to leverage economic growth. Unequal gender relations and responsibilities are reproduced, women farmers are represented as problematic, men as normative. Policy needs to increasingly address the causes to inequality and centre equality as a goal.	Explores how the dominant discourse of agricultural development constitutes gendered subject positions through policy texts (RQ1). Discusses alternative policy approaches for increased equality (RQ3).
II: Agricultural modernisation in the farming-disabling city…	How are ideas about agricultural modernisation, associated with rural change, enrolled in the production of urban farmers' gendered subjectivities and social relations?	Interviews and participant observations with farmers National policy documents about agriculture	FPE: gender-environment relationality	Agricultural 'professionalisation' reduces some women's marginalisation, and enables gendered subjectivities that challenge social norms and expectations. Emancipatory potential of 'professional' urban farming is limited by its own discourse. Rural-urban divisions of agricultural governance and change need reconsideration.	Analyses how the national agricultural development discourse, as articulated and enacted by farmers in Kigali, shapes the farmers' gender subjectivities and social relations (RQs 1 & 2). Discusses limits and possibilities for emancipatory change within and beyond development agendas (RQ3).

Paper	RQs in the paper	Analysed material	Theoretical framework	Main findings	Contribution to the RQs of the thesis
III: 'This city is not for me'…	How does intersectional social difference shape farmers' experiences of, and responses to, current reorganisation of Kigali's cultivated urban marshlands?	Interviews and participant observations with farmers in Kigali Policy documents about urban development in Kigali	Intersectional FPE	Gender, age, ability/health and education shape vulnerabilities and responses to conversion of urban farmland. Urban policy and planners to foreground structural inequalities and consider heterogeneity of affected farmers to achieve inclusive resilient urban development.	Analyses how the reorganisation of urban marshlands is heterogeneously experienced by farmers in Kigali (RQ2). Discusses avenues for more socially inclusive and environmentally resilient urban development (RQ3).

The findings from this research show that, although changed in some ways, farmers' gendered and intersectional identities, relations and experiences are mainly continued following the changes to agriculture anticipated by policy and programmes in both cities and in the countryside. Overall, through processes such as agricultural modernisation and reorganisation of urban cultivated marshlands, farmers' socially differentiated positionalities tend to be reproduced or reinforced in ways that sustain existing inequalities and, to some extent, exclude farmers from development. Deep-seated social norms and differential responsibilities remain largely unquestioned. Thus, despite governmental claims to inclusivity and mainstreaming of gender, the thesis concludes that the promises for sustained and profound social change for farmers within the present development agenda remain limited. Yet, the research also observes how the significance of agriculture in Kigali drives responses to change that partly challenge the political rationales for such exclusionary trajectories and how some urban farmers, especially some women, experience agency from shifting agricultural practices fuelled by GR4A ideas. This is of high importance to the people involved and motivates reflections on what more equal political frameworks for agriculture in Rwanda, in both cities and in the countryside, might look like beyond the present framework.

Research on shifting gender and social relations amidst agricultural development and change in Africa has generally focused on the consequences and effects for rural people and places and less on the impacts of these processes on farmers in cities. Building partly on this rural-orientated literature, the findings moreover show how governance of agriculture intended for the countryside shapes gendered lives also in the city and that rural and urban development agendas intertwine to shape farmers' gender identities, relations and experiences in Kigali. Gender and intersectional difference is thus (re)configured through agricultural change processes beyond rural places all the way into the capital city. As such, this thesis is at once an example of and a call for further research and debate that transcend the rural-urban divide in seeking deeper understandings about the pathways by which unequal power relations and socially differentiated marginalisation in agriculture are maintained, contested and changed across space. The insights facilitate reflections on the limits and opportunities for social change through contemporary agriculture and development frameworks, the multi-sited and multi-scalar nature of agricultural

governance and, consequently, the methodological implications of this for agricultural and rural development research.

Together, the insights from the papers and the additional reflections presented throughout this thesis essay contribute one piece to the puzzle of how socio-ecological change from governance of agriculture in contemporary (Central-East) Africa shapes, and is shaped by, gender and intersectional social difference. Individually, the papers address a range of empirical and conceptual limitations in the existing literature, for instance: advancing knowledge about the under-researched urban agriculture in Rwanda (Papers II and III), a feminist post-structural approach to policy in the African agricultural context, combined with FPE (Paper I and, in part, Paper III), an intersectional perspective on urban agriculture (Paper III) and a gender lens on rural-urban entanglements (Paper II). Together, the papers further knowledge about the gendered nature of Rwanda's ongoing reorganisation of agricultural practices, relations and spaces that are part of wider structural changes. But the research also brings to the debate a call to challenge the rural focus of research on agricultural change in Africa, to also consider agrarian dynamics within and around cities and how these are always bound up with change in the countryside as well as with national and global development narratives of change (Tornaghi & Dehaene 2020; Tornaghi & Halder 2021; Gillen *et al.* 2022; Gururani 2024).

Zooming out further to consider the purpose, the overall relevance of this work, I conceive of this thesis as an intervention into, and a contribution to, the longstanding development debates in both research and practice about the problems and solutions to social inequality in agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically, it is a thesis that troubles the ideas and assumptions about gender and social difference in both the contemporary GR4A paradigm and in urban development, and that questions the rural-urban divide of agricultural policy and research. I am one of countless feminists to criticise the ways in which gender and social inequality are side-lined, under-prioritised and instrumentalised in (agricultural) development (Arora-Jonsson 2014; Kabeer 2015). Yet, the continued paradigms for both agricultural and urban 'modernisation' in many African countries, with the idea of gender mainstreaming often added in a tokenistic way, underscore the significance of feminists' sustained ventures into challenging the ideas and premises that perpetuate inequalities for farmers anywhere – and into making alternatives visible.

In a yet wider perspective, having witnessed three decades with gender inequality high on the development agenda (Wallace 2020), the direction at which much of the world seems to be moving indicates that this might be, and is, changing (Antić & Radačić 2020; Cupać & Ebetürk 2020; Ajayi 2025). Insisting on a politicised, critical approach to gender and social difference in (agricultural) development (Cornwall & Rivas 2015; Wallace 2020) appears as crucial as ever given the presently escalating climate crisis, militarisation, economic instability, de-prioritisation of development aid and research and rising authoritarianism in which the relevance of gender and social equity are increasingly questioned, downplayed or hijacked as veritable threats to entire societies (Butler 2024; Garric 2024).

1.2 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured as follows. In the next chapter (Chapter 2), I first situate my research in the debate on agriculture, development and gender in Africa, sketching the main contours of policy discourse and change over the past three decades. I then provide context to my study by outlining the current context of agricultural and urban development in Rwanda and Kigali.

Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical points of departure and the key concepts that inform the research. I first outline the theory around policy and discourse that underpins post-structural policy analysis. This is followed by a presentation of the conceptual approaches to gender and intersectionality in human-environment relations and processes, emergent primarily from FPE scholarship.

In Chapter 4, I present and reflexively discuss my research methodology. After initial thoughts on the methodological journey, I outline the methods and materials used to operationalise the thesis aim and research questions. Reflections on positionality, research ethics and the politics of knowledge production are included throughout the chapter.

After summarising each paper (I-III) in Chapter 5, I revisit the aim and research questions of the thesis in Chapter 6 to connect and discuss the arguments and findings made throughout the papers. By relating the findings to existing literature and pointing to further research needs following this, I also use this chapter to put the thesis in a wider scientific and empirical context, in part thus addressing the purpose of this research. Finally, Chapter 7 offers some concluding remarks.

2. Background

The contemporary politics of agriculture in Rwanda that this thesis is concerned with is a product of many past and present processes, events and debates, occurring from local to global scale. In this chapter, I outline and connect some of these in order to situate my research in the present debate on gender, agriculture and development in Africa broadly, and Rwanda specifically.

Section 2.1 provides a brief overview of rural and agricultural development in sub-Saharan Africa and an outline of some of the ideas, actors and critiques of the GR4A project, in particular those concerning its gendered dimensions. In section 2.2, I narrow the scope to Rwanda and its ongoing transformation directed through the government's development agenda, 'Vision 2050'. I connect the wider trajectories outlined in the first section to processes concerning rural and urban development politics in Rwanda and Kigali with a focus on farming and farmers. The section also sketches some context around agricultural practices, landscapes and relations in Rwanda and Kigali.

2.1 Agricultural development in sub-Saharan Africa

While European colonialism is said by some to have recast agricultural systems and relations in Africa into predecessors of today's (Huggins 2017), others centre the discursive 'invention' of development and modernity in the post-World War II period as key for the formation of contemporary rural and agrarian systems in Africa and the global South (Escobar 2012). Certainly, all historical events are connected in inseparable chains that constitute the present. Due to my rather substantive focus on GR4A politics in this thesis, I begin this brief overview in the late 1990s. This signifies the period when the seeds for a smallholder-based new green revolution for Africa sprouted, following twists and turns in academic and policy debates about development, poverty, food security and the future of farming (Havnevik *et al.* 2007; Escobar 2012; Moseley *et al.* 2015), and following the dissemination of a particular narrative of the outcomes of the 'first' green revolution in Asia and Latin America almost half a century earlier (Patel 2013).

In the late 1990s, agricultural production systems had been slowed down and poverty and food insecurity in many African countries were on the rise (World Bank 2001; Havnevik *et al.* 2007). This situation followed from almost two decades of economic austerity and structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) after African governments had been drawn into high indebtedness from large investments in rural and agricultural development during the 1970s (Huggins 2017). At the same time, the shifting lending philosophy by development funders such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had led to reduced state presence, market deregulation and financialisation of agriculture (World Bank 2007; Patel 2013). Around the turn of the millennia, reflecting the trend in broad development discourse (Escobar 2012), rural poverty and African smallholders' conditions regained focus among development organisations, donors, funders and African governments. Organisations such as the WB and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) published reports and committed large amounts of funding in support of smallholder agricultural productivity for poverty reduction and increased food production (Patel 2013; Schurman 2018).

A range of agreements, alliances and initiatives were formed during this time that were central to what would unfold as the GR4A in the coming decades. Key formations included the African Union's (AU) economic development programme, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), in 2001 and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) in 2003. The CAADP, which was run by NEPAD, was established to promote development through smallholder-based agricultural growth and came to be a central institution for disseminating GR4A policies across the continent. A central event was also the 2003 Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa in which African heads of state committed to allocate at least 10% of national budgets to agriculture and rural development, among other things (Nyenyezi Bisoka & Ansoms 2020). Although at least initially emphasising the importance of a continued state presence, these alliances came to embrace and support the rationales in vogue among institutions such as the WB and IMF of development and poverty reduction as best achieved through economic growth and market capitalism – of which smallholders' technological advancements and integration into markets and value chains constituted a central element (Moseley *et al.* 2015).

Moreover, in 2006, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) was established. It was an outcome of a partnership between the philanthropic Rockefeller Foundation, the BMGF, the WB, NEPAD, African governments, agrochemical companies such as Yara International, development agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and agricultural research such as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) (Patel 2013; Moseley *et al.* 2015). Inspired by the alleged successes of the earlier Green Revolution in Latin America and Asia, in particular by influential calls for 'Africa's turn' (Rockefeller Foundation 2006) for a 'Doubly Green Revolution' (Conway 1997), its vision was to catalyse the idea and implementation of the GR4A. Since its inception, AGRA too has become a major actor in disseminating ideas, managing knowledge and diverting funds for the kind of modernised African agriculture envisioned by international mainstream development actors (Dano 2007; Holt-Giménez 2008).

2.1.1 The New Green Revolution for Africa

The idea of a green revolution for Africa thus centres on small-scale farmers and their shift from largely subsistence forms of agriculture to commercialised farming of improved, high-yield and high-input-requiring staple crops. Farmers are anticipated to integrate into markets and agricultural value chains in order to increase their incomes and purchasing power (Patel 2013; Moseley *et al.* 2016). The outcome of transformation, it is assumed, is to increase yields and productivity in an equitable and ecologically sustainable way, thereby increasing food security, reducing poverty and mitigating harmful environmental and climate effects while also achieving economic growth (Conway 1997; Toenniessen *et al.* 2008). A key feature of the GR4A, which differs from the original Green Revolution (Patel 2013) as well as the state-led development approaches in Africa during the 60s and 70s (Huggins 2017), is the central role played by non-state actors such as agrochemical and biotechnology companies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and development agencies, such as the USAID, in disseminating the technologies, knowledge and infrastructure required (Moseley 2024). The (philantro)capital-driven character of AGRA and the GR4A (Dano 2007; Schurman 2017; Vicedom & Wynberg 2023) marks this structural shift and reflects the mainstream notion that liberalised, demand-driven markets are seen as the driver of poverty reduction in the global South

(Holt-Giménez 2008). At the same time, the strong presence of foreign aid and development agencies such as (until recently) the USAID in African agricultural development signifies a continuity of the geopolitical tensions seen during the Cold War era in which the 'first' Green Revolution took place.

Notwithstanding the, at the time, recent wave of pivotal and epoch-making critiques of mainstream development from postcolonial and Third World feminist scholars and activists across Africa, Asia and Latin America (McEwan 2001; Escobar 2012), the past two decades have witnessed extensive dissemination and implementation of policies and interventions geared towards the GR4A throughout many countries in Africa, including Rwanda[1]. AGRA, NEPAD and other actors have kept the vision alive by reiterating, recommitting and funding for smallholder-focused, economic growth-orientated agricultural development. Implementation and outcomes have differed significantly across contexts, with improvements in food security, poverty reduction or social equality in some places around sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., Sanchez *et al.* 2009; Bergman Lodin *et al.* 2014; Quisumbing *et al.* 2015). Yet, mounting evidence also suggests significantly adverse, or unimproved, outcomes. From its emergence around 2006, countless critiques of the GR4A policies and interventions have been raised. They concern, for instance, smallholders' continued or amplified levels of poverty and food and nutrition insecurity (e.g., Holt-Giménez 2008; Hajdu *et al.* 2012; Nyantakyi-Frimpong & Bezner Kerr 2015; Dawson *et al.* 2016; Wise 2020; Boafo & Lyons 2021; Moseley & Ouedraogo 2022)[2], environmental degradation and farmers' climate vulnerability (Holt-Gimenez *et al.* 2006; Bezner Kerr 2012), loss of biodiversity and genetic wealth (Thompson 2012), continued (gendered) concentration of capital and power (Amanor 2012; Patel 2013; Nyantakyi-Frimpong & Bezner Kerr 2017), racial and colonial legacies of GR4A ideas and policies (Eddens 2019; Fischer 2022), and, pertinent to this thesis, continued gendered and social inequalities (Bergman Lodin *et al.* 2012; Bezner Kerr 2012; Gengenbach

[1] AGRA has historically operated in 13 focus countries: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia (Wise 2020).

[2] Indeed, through a commissioned evaluation, AGRA itself has found that their goals of smallholders' increased incomes and food security have not been met (Blair *et al.* 2021).

2020; Vercillo *et al.* 2020; Clay & Yurco 2024). The next sub-section expands on this final dimension of critique.

2.1.2 Gender and African agricultural development

The role of gender in development has been debated since the publication of Esther Boserup's influential work on women's role in agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa (Boserup 1970). From the formation and critiques of the Western liberal feminist discourse on Women in Development (WID) in the 1970s (Mohanty 1988; Mueller 1991), through Gender and Development (GAD) approaches (Pearson 2005), to the 'neoliberalisation' of feminism (Prügl 2017), 'smart economics' (Chant & Sweetman 2012) and more recent gender backlash in development institutions (Cupać & Ebetürk 2020), feminist scholars and activists across the globe have fought to get, and to keep, gendered and intersectional inequalities on the development agenda. Shaped by theoretical and epistemological shifts concerning gender, the environment and sustainable development during this period – not least from post-structural and postcolonial scholars and activists (McEwan 2001) and feminists' questioning of the terms of science and knowledge production itself (Haraway 1988) – views on how this ought to be done have been varied and contested (for an overview, see e.g., Arora-Jonsson 2014). Since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, gender mainstreaming[3] has constituted the central policy mechanism through which to address gender inequalities in environmental and agricultural governance (Arora-Jonsson 2014; Arora-Jonsson & Leder 2021). Amidst growing criticism of development actors' limited uptake, operationalisation and implementation of gender mainstreaming frameworks (see e.g., Milward *et al.* 2015; Mukhopadhyay 2016), this has remained the case also in the present GR4A context.

Gender inequality is approached in GR4A policy and practice primarily through the idea that women, as key actors in small-scale African agriculture, are at once a source of the problems of agricultural productivity and transformation, agents of change *and* beneficiaries from the same transformation. Many national and transnational agricultural policies and

[3] Strategies to integrate concerns and objectives for gender equality into policy practices (Davids & van Eerdewijk 2016).

interventions, including those in Rwanda, commonly refer to a 'gender gap' in African agricultural productivity that needs to be closed in order to achieve both agricultural transformation and gender equality in agriculture (Clay & Yurco 2024). Efforts for gender mainstreaming thereby commonly target women farmers to improve their access to resources, knowledge and skills and to integrate them into markets and crop value chains (Gengenbach *et al.* 2018; Clay & Yurco 2024). The approach has followed from lessons of the unequal outcomes of the first Green Revolution in Asia and Mexico (Bezner Kerr 2012) and from the earlier global push for gender mainstreaming of development (Arora-Jonsson 2014).

However, the approaches to gender and inequality adopted in the GR4A framework, as well as their outcomes, have met criticism. For instance, the overall validity and relevance of targeting mainly women and focusing on a 'gender gap' in agriculture have been questioned. Arguments have been made that this approach risks overlooking and undermining gender transformative changes (Doss 2018; Tavenner & Crane 2022; Clay & Yurco 2024). Moreover, over the past 20 years, scholars across a wide range of contexts and disciplines have studied the situated gendered and unequal implications of GR4A inspired agricultural interventions, with a primary focus on rural smallholder farmers. This large body of work, far from possible to give justice here, explores the gendered dimensions of change processes such as market integration and commercialisation (Tavenner & Crane 2018; Gengenbach 2020; Moseley & Ouedraogo 2022; Vercillo 2022), adoption of mechanisation technologies (Kansanga *et al.* 2019), shifting uses of new seeds and breeds (Wangui 2008; Bergman Lodin 2012; Addison & Schnurr 2016) and chemical input use (Luna 2020). Still others have focused on how gender mainstreaming efforts in agriculture are formulated and translated in and across levels of governing institutions and organisations (Acosta *et al.* 2019; Ampaire *et al.* 2020; Drucza *et al.* 2020).

Overall, much of this research points to continued limitations of contemporary approaches to gender and social difference in agriculture to reduce gender inequalities and, rather, to their tendencies to largely reproduce and reinforce rural smallholder farmers' unequal gender relations and differentiated struggles over resources. But, in part following evolving theoretical and methodological applications (e.g., Nightingale 2006), studies in this field have increasingly also highlighted how gender relations and identities are at once reworked, negotiated and changed through both GR4A-

related processes (Bergman Lodin *et al.* 2014) and their interconnection with alternative visions for agriculture, such as agroecology (Kansanga *et al.* 2024). While pointing to an overall tendency of reproduction of gender, the literature thus also underscores the complexity and contextual nuances of the GR4A paradigm and of the necessity to approach agricultural change as a situated, gendered process with heterogeneous effects (Clay 2018; Gengenbach *et al.* 2018; Clay & Yurco 2024).

2.2 Rwanda's socio-ecological transformation

As a small and highly densely populated, landlocked, mountainous nation, land is a fundamental resource around which much struggle for livelihoods and development revolves in Rwanda, not least for the country's millions of farmers (Huggins 2014). From the early 2000s, a number of laws and policies concerning rural and urban land, not least agricultural land, have been central tenets of the country's post-genocide development agenda, led by the state but substantially shaped by international development actors' agendas and funding. The government's agenda envisions a 'new Rwanda' characterised by prosperity, unity and modernity and has been pursued through a national policy framework spearheaded by the 'Vision 2020' (GoR 2000), later 'Vision 2050' (GoR 2020). The overall aim is to transform Rwanda from an agrarian low-income to a knowledge- and service-based high-income country through market-liberal modernisation policies anticipated to reduce poverty and food insecurity through economic growth and structural change of both cities and the countryside.

In different ways, cities and the countryside in Rwanda have experienced far-reaching ecological, economic and social changes in the decades since 1994. Agro-ecological landscapes and housing structures have been reorganised through, for instance, land use consolidation, terracing and concentration and formalisation of settlements, land use and agricultural production patterns have shifted through agricultural modernisation interventions, and social relations, labour divisions and subjectivities have been altered through various projects to sensitise the population towards new practices and mindsets (see e.g., Ansoms *et al.* 2014a; Ansoms & Cioffo 2016; Shearer 2017; Mullikin *et al.* 2022). Significant progress has been made concerning, for example, rapid macroeconomic growth, agricultural productivity gains, overall poverty reduction, women's improved land rights

and improved education, health and infrastructure across both rural and urban areas (Goodfellow & Smith 2013; Manirakiza & Ansoms 2014; Ansoms *et al.* 2018; Illien *et al.* 2022). This progress has led the international aid and donor community to celebrate Rwanda for exemplary development (Mann & Berry 2016), for instance, in the agriculture sector (Ansoms *et al.* 2018) and in Kigali (Goodfellow & Smith 2013).

Yet, as the lived, on-the-ground experiences of the decades of post-genocide development policies have been studied, a more complex and less optimistic picture has emerged. Across disciplines and contexts, critical studies have revealed a multitude of adverse, including gender unequal, effects and outcomes of Rwanda's rural and urban development policies between and within social groups, more so among less privileged ones such as smallholders and urban dwellers (Manirakiza & Ansoms 2014; Shearer 2017; Ansoms *et al.* 2018; Finn 2018; Mullikin *et al.* 2022). This growing scholarship points to some of the more problematic dimensions of the development approach taken by the Rwandan government, led by president Paul Kagame and his Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) since 2000 (Thomson 2013; Ansoms & Cioffo 2016; Cioffo *et al.* 2016; Mullikin *et al.* 2022). Unanimously, the scholarship emphasises the continued need for detailed, local-level knowledge about marginalised groups' situated experiences of Rwanda's contemporary development, which is orchestrated by the government through meticulous implementation and monitoring in highly disciplinary and incentivised ways and that reaches most parts of the country and aspects of life (Purdeková 2011; Reyntjens 2013; Ingelaere 2014).

2.2.1 Agricultural transformation

After almost ten years of total physical and institutional reconstruction after the civil war and the 1994 genocide, agriculture in Rwanda regained attention from the government. In 2004, the first National Agricultural Policy (NAP) was published, outlining the government's ambition to 'modernise' the sector into a market-orientated intensified one for poverty reduction in line with the concurrently growing support for the GR4A (Huggins 2017; Ansoms *et al.* 2018). The agricultural policy came during the same period as other related laws and policies, such as the 2005 organic land law and the 2007 land reform, that regulated the formalisation and consolidation of land use and ownership, among other things (Mullikin *et al.* 2022). Since then, a number of laws, policies and strategies have been put in place to detail the

trajectory concerning land use, rural housing structures, the organisation of farmers in cooperatives, agricultural practices and particular crops of priority for the government, all within, or tangential to, a green revolution stream of thought. Examples include new versions of the NAP, five versions of the Strategic Plan for Agricultural Transformation (PSTA) released from 2004 to present, and the Crop Intensification Programme (CIP). But also sector-specific strategies concerning, for example, irrigation, agricultural mechanisation or particularly important crops (e.g., rice) have steered agriculture in a particular direction.

This emergent framework for agricultural transformation has been represented as an engine for national growth and thus as a central pillar of the overall national development strategy. Throughout the years, these agricultural and rural policies and interventions have efficiently, in part coercively (Hasselskog 2015; Ansoms *et al.* 2018), been translated, implemented and monitored throughout all administrative levels, from the national level, through the province, district, sector and cell, all the way down to the smallest village level (kin. *imidugudu*) (Ansoms *et al.* 2018). Across all levels of this decentralised governance structure, official development targets, for instance concerning agricultural production, are set and followed up through performance contracts (kin. *imihigo*) that function as a system for national authorities to manage policy implementation throughout society (ibid.).

Agriculture remains central to the livelihoods of the majority of the Rwandan population and to the national economy at large. The contribution of the agriculture sector to national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has remained around 25% throughout the last ten years (MINAGRI 2024b), and around 70% (2.3 million) of all households in the country have at least one member engaged in agriculture (NISR 2022a). Around 15% of these reside in urban areas, i.e., more densely built-up areas (ibid.). Although numbers and percentages fluctuate across various public documents, recent figures indicate that around 58% of Rwanda's farmers are women (MINAGRI 2024a; NISR 2024a), a number which appears to have reduced over at least the past decade (see e.g., GMO 2017). The majority of Rwanda's farmers practice both crop and animal production. Generally, beans are the most commonly grown crop, followed by maize, cassava and sweet potato. Cattle is the most common livestock, before goat, pig and chicken. Fruits are generally more common to grow than vegetables (NISR 2024a).

Land used for agriculture in Rwanda currently amounts to 58% of the total land area (NISR 2024b). The average agricultural landholding is 0.45 hectare (ha) per household, although half of the country's farming households own less than 0.2 ha each (MINAGRI 2024a). The bulk part of farming takes place on the mountainous hills so characteristic of the Rwandan landscape (NISR 2024b), but many wetlands, often also referred to as marshlands, in between have been cleared and drained and are also cultivated in line with modernisation and intensification policies (Ansoms *et al.* 2014a; Treidl 2018). Marshlands have been owned by the state since the 2005 organic land law and are most often collectively farmed through formal cooperatives. Historically, they have served as 'testbeds' of agricultural transformation practices such as land consolidation, mono-cropping and input intensification (Ansoms *et al.* 2014b). The formalisation and collectivisation of marshland farming in the 2000s has tended to work exclusionary for poorer farmers as well as many women farmers, who often struggle to provide the specific labour and financial resources required for access to marshlands and who are less socially connected to local decision-making authorities (Ansoms *et al.* 2014b; Treidl 2018; Treidl 2021).

The past 20 years in Rwanda have witnessed increasing shares of farmers engaged in practices aligned with GR4A ideas. Such preferred practices involve, for example, expansion of market-orientated farming, increased use of improved seeds, fertilisers and pesticides, land consolidation and mechanisation, all of which are anticipated to generate productivity gains and economic growth (MINAGRI 2024a; MINAGRI 2024b; NISR 2024a). The effects of the agricultural transformation agenda have been significant for many farmers, with reduced poverty and food insecurity primarily for relatively more well-off rural elites, yet at the expense of entrenched poverty, marginalisation and despair for many of the least privileged who struggle to access this modernity (Ansoms & Rostagno 2012; Pritchard 2013; Ansoms *et al.* 2014a; Cioffo *et al.* 2016; Clay 2017; Ansoms *et al.* 2018; Berglund 2019; Clay & King 2019; Pasgaard *et al.* 2022). Moreover, through 'villagisation' – the incentivised move of scattered rural housing structures into concentrated settlements over the past two decades (Mullikin *et al.* 2022) – and through the formalisation and consolidation of agricultural land, the meanings, shapes and uses of the country's cultivated rural hills and marshlands have been altered (Ansoms *et al.* 2014a; Huggins 2014; Claessens *et al.* 2021; Mullikin *et al.* 2022).

While these are overall patterns of the GR4A-immersed rural and agricultural development in Rwanda, an increasing number of studies also point to various actors' subtle negotiations of these modernisation politics. Importantly, they highlight the agency and capacity of farmers and others to subvert, resist and negotiate the dominant development trajectory, thus questioning and altering the anticipated direction and carving out new practices, relations and meanings within the structure (Ansoms *et al.* 2014b; Hahirwa *et al.* 2017; Nyenyezi Bisoka & Ansoms 2020). This work shed light on the dynamisms, complexity and non-linearity of development also in rather strongly managed governance contexts.

Gender, development and agriculture

As for the implementation of GR4A policies and development in general, Rwanda has also been internationally promoted as a model for its efforts to combat gender inequalities (Ansoms & Holvoet 2008). Although, of course, women's movements in Rwanda operated also before the genocide, gender inequality gained significant policy attention in Rwanda from the late 1990s, following dramatic demographic changes and subsequently altered gender relations and responsibilities during and after the civil war and genocide (Debusscher & Ansoms 2013). While facing extreme hardship and trauma, women in the immediate post-genocide period were forced to take on new tasks in the household and society, as immense numbers of men had died, fled or been imprisoned (ibid.). The women's movement in Rwanda gained momentum during this period, with significant advocacy impact on emergent policies and laws. For example, women's rights advocates were involved in the processes that preceded the 1999 inheritance law, the 2003 new constitution and the 2005 organic land law, all of which led to improved conditions for equal land inheritance, ownership and access and equal participation in decision-making organs (ibid.).

Along with the proliferation of post-genocide development policies, gains for women's rights and gender equality in Rwanda have been furthered, particularly in relation to governance and institutional environments, health and education. While these improvements should be acknowledged, concerns have been raised about the limits to the government's modernisation agenda for achieving long-term, structural change of deep-seated gender norms and responsibilities that sustain inequalities (Burnet 2011; Debusscher & Ansoms 2013; Berry 2015; Kagaba 2015; Madsen 2018). These accounts find persistent unequal gender norms and relations to

be largely conserved rather than challenged and changed. Others suggest that Rwanda, as an authoritarian state, in actuality might mobilise a gender equality agenda less to transform structural inequalities and gender norms and more to manage public relations (Debusscher & Ansoms 2013) and attract donor and business capital – to 'gender wash' (Bjarnegård & Zetterberg 2022).

Following the 1995 Beijing Declaration and as stipulated in the National Gender Policy first published in 2010, a key means for the government and other authoritative institutions to deal with gender inequalities came to be through gender mainstreaming of policy and interventions across all sectors and levels of society. The 2019 Gender and Youth Mainstreaming Strategy (GYMS) constitutes the primary framework that directs how this is to be done in the agriculture sector. Framed around a problem of a 'gender agricultural productivity gap', common within mainstream agricultural development discourse in Africa (Clay & Yurco 2024), it is intended as a tool for the integration of a gender (and youth) sensitive perspective in the wider agricultural policy framework and its interventions. Broadly speaking, the main focus areas of the strategy concern women farmers' integration in market-orientated agriculture and value chains, their improved agricultural skills and uptake of good agricultural practices such as mechanisation and input use, their increased access to finance, extension and technology and their enhanced roles in decision-making (MINAGRI 2019b). This policy approach to gender in agriculture is what Paper I is critically concerned with.

A growing subset of work on Rwanda's ongoing agricultural transformation shows that the GR4A-inspired agricultural and rural development interventions rolled out over the last 20 years have tended to, in various ways, reproduce or reinforce farmers' uneven gender relations, norms and responsibilities in and out of farming (Bigler *et al.* 2017; Clay 2017; Bayisenge 2018; Treidl 2018; Bigler *et al.* 2019; Illien *et al.* 2022; Bayisenge 2023; Clay 2023; Clay & Yurco 2024). Aligned with related work in other parts of Africa (see section 2.1.2), these scholars have called for, among other things, agricultural policy and programmes to conceptualise Rwanda's ongoing agricultural transformation as an inherently gendered process (Clay & Yurco 2024), to comprehensively integrate measurements to challenge and change deep-seated gender norms and to redistribute gender divisions of work, in particular women's unpaid care work (Bigler *et al.* 2017; Bayisenge 2023). Others have urged policy to adopt an intersectional

approach to agricultural development in order to address the interplay between gender, class and other social differences amidst agricultural change (Treidl 2018) and to ground mainstreaming efforts on an equality and justice rationale rather than an economic one (Debusscher & Ansoms 2013).

2.2.2 Urban development

In the early post-genocide period, when large numbers of refugees returned primarily to Rwanda's urban areas, urban development emerged as a critical arena for the government through which to maintain security and exert control (Goodfellow 2013). This urban policy focus has since continued and remains central to the contemporary development agenda. Along with agricultural transformation, controlled and rapid urban growth and modernisation are deemed key by the government to achieve national development objectives. A main ambition is to move from today's 28% of the population living in urban areas to 70% by 2050 (GoR 2020).

As for the rural parts of Rwanda, urban governance has come to centre on the reorganisation of environments, people and their relations through policies regarding, among others, urban land use planning through zoning systems, spatial restructuring and housing formalisation (Manirakiza & Ansoms 2014; Mullikin *et al.* 2022). Since 2008, several strategic documents detail how this is to be done, such as the overarching Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategies (EDPRS) and the National Strategies for Transformation (NST). Other important urban-specific regulations and prescriptions include the 2008 National Urban Housing Policy, the 2015 National Urbanisation Policy and the Urbanisation and Rural Settlement Sector Strategic Plans 1-3. These and other frameworks have outlined targets and indicators for urban areas and set the roadmap for a range of urban development projects. The Rwanda Urban Development Projects (RUDP) I and II, funded by the WB, have, for instance, supported local infrastructure investment in Kigali and six other cities since 2016. They include a large component for wetland restoration, which implies reconfiguration and conversion of the urban marshlands where much urban agricultural activity takes place (Górna & Górny 2021).

Through this urban development framework, cities in Rwanda, in particular Kigali, have procured a position in the national development agenda as symbols of progress and modernity, constituting an important means for the government through which to mobilise authority and control

over the development process, and through which to reshape urban landscapes and the socio-economic configuration of urban populations (Goodfellow & Smith 2013; Manirakiza & Ansoms 2014; Mullikin *et al.* 2022; Shearer 2024).

Kigali: development and agriculture

With a population of only about 50,000 after the genocide, Kigali has faced enormous changes in the last 30 years. With extreme population growth during national reconstruction and development, places in Kigali that were once rural have, within a relatively short period of time, become urbanised hubs associated with inner-city life (Manirakiza & Ansoms 2014). At present, around 3.7 million (28%) of Rwanda's 13 million inhabitants live in urban areas, 1.5 million of them within urban Kigali (NISR 2022b). Kigali, or the City of Kigali (CoK), is one of Rwanda's five administrative provinces and is located in the centre of the country, currently covering 730 km^2 of land that sprawls across four ridges and in-between valleys covered by large marshlands (Manirakiza *et al.* 2019). The province is subdivided into three districts: Gasabo, Nyarugenge and Kicukiro, all of which are further organised into sectors, cells and villages. Gasabo is the geographically largest district and the one with the most agricultural activities (Górna & Górny 2021).

Kigali may commonly be equated with the urban, yet most of the land within the CoK is deemed rural or 'peri-urban' – the spaces adjacent to the most densely built-up areas (MINAGRI 2019a). This is, however, rapidly changing due to high in-flux of people to the city and outward expansion of built-up areas (Manirakiza & Ansoms 2014; Mugisha & Nyandwi 2015). Agricultural land in the whole CoK amounts to approximately 63% (CoK 2020). A recent study estimated at least 11.7 km^2 of these to be located in built-up areas (Górna & Górny 2021), which at the time might have been around 10% of the city's urbanised land (c.f. MINAGRI 2019a). In the urban parts, valley marshlands are some of the main places where farming takes place, along with many adjacent not-yet built-up hillsides as well as backyards (MINAGRI 2019a; Górna & Górny 2021). The mixture of formal housing and informal settlements densely packed on hills and hilltops often creates a clear contrast against the large open cultivated marshlands down in many of the valleys (Figure 1, see also Figure 2 in Paper III).

Figure 1. Farming in an urban marshland. Ongoing construction of new houses on the hill in the background. Photo: Karolin Andersson, 2024.

While agriculture is the most common livelihood activity in rural areas of Kigali, recent national census data shows that also around 15% (65,000) of the city's urban households have at least one member engaged in farming, primarily in crop production (NISR 2022a). While the data does not specify to what extent this farming takes place within urbanised areas, it may still suffice to say that, from my own observations and earlier assessments by Górna and Górny (2021), large areas of urban land in Kigali are presently cultivated and they provide food, income and well-being to a not insignificant share of the city's population.

In urban marshlands, the primary site for my fieldwork, farmers are commonly organised in formal cooperatives or farmer groups that rent the land from the government. Farmers usually pay a rental or membership fee in order to access a piece of the land and are thereafter expected to farm crops, individually or collectively, in accordance with priorities made by the cooperatives and authorities at different administrative levels. Common crops grown in urban areas include banana, maize, yams, manioc and sweet

potato, as well as vegetables and horticulture crops such as amaranth (kin. *dodo*), cabbage, tomato, chilli and French beans. Most farming is rain-fed and dependent on manual labour; casual farm workers are a common sight in the fields (Górna & Górny 2021; own observations). Moreover, in contrast with agricultural households in the rest of the country, farmers in urban Kigali, or specifically the heads of agricultural households, have higher levels of education, with around three times as many having attended secondary, vocational or tertiary levels than in other provinces (NISR 2022a). Urban agricultural households in Kigali also have multiple times higher access to television, computers, smartphones and the internet than rural agricultural households elsewhere in the country (ibid.).

Despite the seemingly widespread and organised practice of urban farming in Kigali and the importance it appears to have for somewhat large numbers of the urban population's livelihoods and food provision, research, reports and grey literature on the topic are meagre and fragmentary. Farming in Kigali was an important means to food security for the urban poor both before and especially during urbanisation booms after the genocide (Górna & Górny 2021). Still, despite being far from a recent or marginal phenomenon, only a few scattered studies have hitherto, more or less extensively, explored dimensions of urban farming in Kigali (Etale & Drake 2013; Kasper *et al.* 2017; Hakizimana *et al.* 2019; Górna & Górny 2021). By contrast, the literature on urban agriculture in many other parts of sub-Saharan Africa is comprehensive, diverse and has proliferated throughout many decades (Graefe *et al.* 2019). This large scholarship has, very broadly speaking, explored the multi-faceted roles and opportunities that urban agriculture displays for people, economy and environments, the challenges and inequalities it upholds and reworks, as well as its place, tensions and synergies within broader (urban) development pathways (e.g., Drakakis-Smith *et al.* 1995; Maxwell 1995; Page 2002; Mougeot 2005; Crush *et al.* 2011; Webb 2011; WinklerPrins 2017). Not least, important contributions have been made in demonstrating the gendered dimensions of agriculture in African cities, including limitations as well as possibilities of farming to forge social, sustainable change and equity in urban and urbanising contexts (Slater 2001; Hovorka 2005; Hovorka 2006; Hovorka *et al.* 2009; White 2015; Olivier & Heinecken 2017; Whitley 2021). As a country with gender equality, agriculture and urban development high on the development agenda, with change propelling at high speed in both cities and in the

countryside, important lessons might be gained from this scholarship, at the same time as the Kigali context and experience may bring new knowledge and perspectives to urban agriculture elsewhere in Africa.

The clear need to know more about urban farming and farmers in Kigali and Rwanda becomes perhaps even more pungent when one considers the CoK's current development agenda, which generally does not seem to work in favour of farming in the city. As part of a centrally regulated set of binding policies for local urban development (MININFRA 2024), the Kigali City Master Plan (KCMP) is the central governance framework that details the direction for land use allocation, housing standards, infrastructure and service development and environmental management in Kigali. The overall vision of the KCMP is to turn Kigali into a modernised African metropolis with a clean and green appearance, developed infrastructure and formal housing structures that attract investors and visitors (Goodfellow & Smith 2013; CoK 2020). While positive for many, emergent studies present experiences of dispossession, displacement and marginalisation of poorer urban dwellers and disruption of their livelihoods following urban modernisation interventions (Finn 2018; Nikuze *et al.* 2020; Shearer 2024).

Kigali's urban development agenda also puts strong pressure on most of the currently cultivated urban lands (Górna & Górny 2021). In earlier development plans, urban agriculture was approached as a strategy for food security for the urban poor (CoK 2009). In the present KCMP, however, the ways in which urban marshland cultivation tends to be represented as an 'encroaching' activity deemed more suitable for rural parts of the province and in a more modernised form indicate that this approach has changed. Although not explicitly stating a goal to remove all urban farming (though all marshland farming) and while retaining some ambitions for, for instance, urban kitchen gardening (Górna & Górny 2021), the zoning maps for planned land allocation in the KCMP show how land used for farming in the urban areas of Kigali is due to drastically reduce by 2050 (CoK 2020). Most of the less steep hillsides occupied by farming activities and informal settlements – deemed unsustainable and hazardous by local authorities – are due to be turned into formal housing areas within the coming two decades (Manirakiza & Ansoms 2014; CoK 2020; Mullikin *et al.* 2022). Moreover, the KCMP emphasises protection and conservation of green areas such as urban marshlands and foresees that the marshlands currently used for 'encroaching' and environmentally detrimental purposes are to be restored

and converted into green parks destined for conservation, climate adaptation, tourism and recreation. During the past decade, at least two urban marshlands, earlier covered by farm plots, have been reorganised: one being turned into a 120 ha eco-tourism park (Figures 2 and 3) and the other into a large golf resort in the middle of the city (Figure 4). In the years to come, five additional marshlands face the same destiny within the RUDP II project (REMA 2025). While environmental protection and climate adaptation by every means are crucial dimensions of city planning, the current governance approach envisions drastic reductions of urban cultivated land in ways that may jeopardise livelihoods, food security, well-being and social relations for many of the city's urban farmers and other people currently dependent on the marshlands.

Figure 2 (left). Bike lane in an eco-tourist park in urban Kigali, which was earlier cultivated. Photo: Karolin Andersson, 2024.

Figure 3 (right). Native tree (kin. *Umuguruka*, lat. *Pterygota mildbraedii*) on display in the same eco-tourist park. Photo: Karolin Andersson, 2024.

Figure 4. Series of satellite photos illustrating the conversion of a cultivated urban marshland (top) into a golf course (bottom) between 2019 and 2025. Top and mid photos reproduced with permission from Górna and Górny (2021). Bottom photo: Map data: Google Earth, ©2023/Airbus [2025-04-04].

3. Conceptual framework

In this chapter, I outline the theories and key concepts that have helped me to 'see' how farmers' social difference is reproduced and negotiated under changing agricultural conditions. I draw primarily from critical policy studies and feminist political ecology (FPE), outlined in sections 3.1 and 3.2, respectively. The scholarship broadly shares core understandings of power as productive, discourse and materiality as mutually constitutive, social difference as intersectional and emergent through practices, and justice and emancipation as an overall normative aspiration. The theories and concepts in these fields of study have enabled me to approach the research questions from complementary yet interrelated conceptual and methodological vantage points. Foucault's theory of discourse (McHoul & Grace 1995), on which Bacchi (2009) bases her framework for policy analysis, shaped my initial ontological understanding of power and knowledge and of the relations between the discursive and the material emergence of subjects. It also laid the ground for the emergence of a practice-orientated analytical approach, as did work on the performativity of gender (Butler 1990) and intersectional social difference (Crenshaw 1991). Application and refinement of these theories in countless studies of environmental and agricultural change, mainly in the global South, helped me to further translate social theoretical abstractions to contextualised analytical practice.

3.1 Policy 'problems' and the production of gendered subjects

For reasons discussed in the next chapter (Chapter 4), I entered this research through the study of policy, which I early on came to conceptualise as a form of discursive practice that is part of the process whereby 'things' receive meaning in the world and that shape people's actions and worldviews. Aided by feminist thought applied to the study of policy, I moreover came to view policy as practices that set the scene and boundaries in a place regarding gender: what it means to be a woman or a man in a specific context. As such, I understand policy, not least in the Rwandan context of strong state presence, as intertwined with other forms of practices, symbolic as well as material, in the production of gendered experiences, relations and identities. I elaborate on these perspectives in the following subsections.

3.1.1 Discourse and policy

Approaches abound to the concept of discourse: what it means, the role it has in the world and how to study it differ across disciplines and theories. In this thesis, I deploy a Foucault-inspired conceptual and analytical framework that conceptualises discourse as socially produced systems of knowledge mediated through language and understood as constitutive of how the world is understood (McHoul & Grace 1995). In this notion lies an assumption that language, through the particular knowledges it carries, represents particular meanings of the world rather than a mirror of a 'real' world. With this view, discourses and the meanings they produce construct, limit and enable what becomes possible to know, think, speak and do (McHoul & Grace 1995; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016).

The systems of knowledge that make up discourses are formed through discursive practices; practices, including spoken and written words, that are part of underpinning, producing and fomenting particular forms of knowledge (Bacchi & Bonham 2014). Moreover, meaning-making practices occur in a context of discursive struggles, a kind of battle between different systems and types of knowledge, where some are granted precedence over others in specific places and at specific times. Under certain conditions, some knowledges thus emerge as more legitimate, important and 'true' than others, thereby establishing dominant systems of meaning, or hegemonic discursive formations that become the normative, 'naturalised' way of understanding things (McHoul & Grace 1995).

Following this understanding of discourse, I approach the governmental texts – policies, regulations, strategies and project proposals – about agriculture and development that I study as made up of politicised claims to knowledge geared to support certain desirable 'truths' about farming, farmers, their relations and role in society, rather than as neutral, extra-political descriptions of already existing problems about agriculture to be solved. Thus, the policies are seen as discursive practices that direct and govern what becomes possible and desirable to do in particular agricultural contexts (Bacchi 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016). Such an approach enables an analysis of policy as part of a politicised struggle over the meaning and interpretation of what are the problems and solutions in agriculture. Problems, thus, become seen as political ideas about what ought to be done and how people ought to behave, and as such, an important arena for critical interrogation (Bacchi 2012).

3.1.2 Policy as constitutive and gendering

From the notion of policy as productive of 'truth' about what needs to be done follows that the problems that policies set out to solve are not undisputable, naturally existing givens waiting to be 'identified' by policy. Rather, problems are understood as constituted through policies, made and represented in particular ways through the uses and formulations of particular knowledges (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016). It is through such constituted representations of problems, or problematisations, that governance takes place, by enabling certain meanings and experiences of the world and disabling others (Goodwin 2011). In Rwanda, for example, the governmental policies I have analysed construct what is to be understood as the problems of agriculture in quite different ways in rural and urban areas, respectively, by drawing on and giving precedence to different types of ideas and meanings about, for example, food, work, land, sustainability and development. Problematisations, in other words, are the effects of situated politics rather than the other way round.

Policies are also involved in shaping what people become and how they relate to each other and themselves. In a conceptualisation of policy like the one outlined, provisional subjects, or subject positions, are formed through the formulation of policy and the forms of knowledge it uses. These subject positions are symbolic representations of certain characteristics and behaviours of people, or groups of people, that the policy seeks to accomplish. In this sense, in addition to problematisations, people are seen as made and becoming through policy. Similarly, this conceptualisation of policy also conceives of things – objects – and places as made, given meaning and relevance in the world, in and through policy and their problematisations (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016).

Moreover, feminist policy analysts in this theoretical tradition conceptualise policies as constitutive of specific subjects based on social and unequal difference, such as gender. For example, Bacchi (2017) argues that policies are 'gendering' by producing specific meanings and relations between people based on gender, thus establishing what it means and ought to mean to be a woman or a man (or any other gender) in a certain context. What people can think, do and become depending on gender is shaped in and by the meaning and knowledge produced by policy, among many things. Analytical attention is thus given to how the categories of, for example, women and men are made through discourses of policy texts (Bacchi 2017),

categories that become available for people to enact or reject, thereby shaping what people become and how they understand themselves and their place in the world, their subjectivities (Weedon 1996). In similar ways, policies constitute subject positions based on a range of other categories of difference. Often, Bacchi (2017) goes on to argue, these provisional subject formations tend to reproduce existing relations of inequality between social groups, further demonstrating the role policy texts have in producing how the world comes to be known, experienced and lived. Conceptualising policy as gendering, or 'socially differentiating', enables an examination of how phenomena, such as gender inequality, become constructed as particular problems with effects on the different subject positions made (un)available to, for example, women and men in specific contexts. For instance, in Rwanda's policy that primarily targets agriculture in the countryside, gender inequality is framed as a problem within a discourse of agricultural modernisation for economic growth, which has particular effects on how women and men are represented differently in relation to each other and to their role in agricultural change.

If policy's constitution of 'things' occurs in a processual battle between discourses and truths, then discourse, and policy, ought to simultaneously be seen as inherently unstable formations of knowledge amenable to change over time and space. By questioning the truth status of dominant knowledges and claims, it becomes possible to think and see other kinds of 'truths' based on other assumptions and evidence than those presently in vogue (Bacchi 2009). Thus, since what is considered 'true' and legitimate knowledge can and does change through continuous interaction and negotiation, the meaning of 'things' is constantly made and remade in and through the same discursive struggles from which dominant discourses emerge (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016). This means that also provisional subject positions and the meanings of objects and places emergent from policy can be renegotiated by interrogating and questioning dominant discourses and their underlying assumptions, and by pointing to alternative perspectives (Weedon 1996). With an imperative for equality, the task of such exercise is to challenge unequalising policy discourses and chisel out alternative problem formulations based on other knowledges and assumptions that may engender subjects, objects and places in more emancipatory ways.

Critical research on the relationship between humans and the environment has for long focused on the inherent politics and unequal power

dynamics in socio-ecological processes of change (Watts 1983; Blaikie & Brookfield 1987; Leach 1994). Drawing on a multitude of theories and methodologies and grounded in extensive empirical work, political ecologists have brought important insights on environmental problems and processes, such as agriculture, as simultaneously embedded in, emergent from and productive of social and political processes across space and scale (Bridge *et al.* 2015). From the 1990s onwards, however, focus increasingly shifted to the power and politics of representations and the struggles over knowledge and truth about socio-environmental processes (e.g., Escobar 1996). This led to new understandings of who was considered holders and producers of knowledge and moved analytical focus towards such 'actors' as texts of environmental policy and programmes staged by governments and organisations. In such work, it is shown how state policies and interventions for socio-ecological change construct specific meanings and positions for people and the environment. This has particular bearings on how policies are enacted, for people's understanding of themselves and their place in the world and for how places and the environment come to be understood and materialised (Fairhead & Leach 1996; Agrawal 2005; Li 2007). These and other contributions have served an important role in illustrating and translating theories of discourse and policy in environmental and agricultural contexts.

In my thesis, the outlined approach to discourse and policy as productive of problems and (gendered) subjects is put to explicit work in Paper I. Together with my supervisors, I study how gender and gender inequality is constituted as a problem in Rwanda's agricultural policy and how particular knowledges and assumptions construct women and men farmers and their relations and role in agricultural development. Drawing on feminist perspectives on development and socio-ecological change, we also discuss how different problematisations could constitute alternative subjects and solutions to inequality. The approach also shaped Paper III, mainly by guiding interpretations of how policy and planning documents about urban development construct problems and solutions concerning the environment, marshlands, farming and livelihoods in Kigali. This then informed my analysis and discussion of how farmers' experiences of the reorganisation of urban marshlands are shaped by social difference. In Paper II, it forms the backdrop to my analysis of how farmers' enactment of agricultural

modernisation discourse is involved in shaping gender relations and subjectivities with lived and material implications in urban Kigali.

3.2 Social difference in socio-ecological processes

A founding point of departure for my research is that gender plays a central role in human-environment relations and in socio-ecological change processes. This means that I assume gender as always in some way present in shaping people's experiences, practices and relations in natural-resource-related contexts, manifested differently across scale, space and time (Rocheleau *et al.* 1996; Elmhirst 2015). Throughout this research, I have come to approach gender through slightly different but interconnected theoretical lenses: a 'gender-as-a-variable' approach, gender as performative and gender as intersectional. This may seem contradictory; a conceptualisation of gender as performative, for example, largely rests on a critique of the categorical and may reflect somewhat different social theoretical and ontological positions (Elmhirst & Resurreccion 2008). I discuss this after I have elaborated on the approaches I have deployed, which draw primarily from a broad FPE scholarship emergent over the past four decades.

3.2.1 Conceptualising gender in socio-ecological contexts

The role of gender in natural-resource and environmental contexts has been debated for at least five decades (Nightingale 2006; Arora-Jonsson 2014). From the early 1990s, FPE emerged as a loosely defined field of study from political ecology, feminist geography and gender and development studies (Rocheleau *et al.* 1996; Elmhirst 2015), in response to discontent with depoliticised, decontextualised and gender-essentialist approaches to gender in development policy and programming (Elmhirst & Resurreccion 2008). Along with general paradigmatic shifts in social theory, the field has since then undergone theoretical and methodological development and diversification, with strands of scholarly conversations taking influence from, among others, post-structuralism, decolonial thought and post-humanism (Elmhirst 2015; Agostino *et al.* 2023). In my research, as it has turned out, I draw on conceptualisations of gender associated with some of these streams of thought.

First, in what Elmhirst (2015) terms a 'feminist political ecology of resource access and control', gender is approached as a socially and culturally constructed category or variable that shapes women's and men's differentiated access to and control over resources, in agriculture often meaning access to land, inputs, information, markets, technology, finance and labour. Amidst changing conditions for natural-resource-based livelihoods and production, such as conversion of urban farmland or agricultural intensification and commercialisation, categories of gender become a dividing factor that configures differentiated experiences, responses and strategies to change (Carney 2004; Hovorka 2006). Gender, mostly defined in binary terms of women and men, is thus understood as a variable of analysis that helps to highlight the gender-specific and unequalising impacts of socio-ecological governance and change on people (Rocheleau *et al.* 1996). Gender relations, the (often unequal) power relations between women and men, are also considered within this approach as a central site of analysis in ecological contexts (Elmhirst 2015). FPE work focused on this highlights how pervasive gender relations at the local and household levels are both reinforced and changed through environmental change, generating new practices, differentiated responses and negotiated social norms and responsibilities (e.g., Leach 1994; Paulson 2005; Hovorka 2006). This scholarship, building on the pioneering work by Rocheleau *et al.* (1996), has contributed to an expanded scale of analysis into the household, emphasising the need to study everyday practices, embodied experiences and intra-household micro-politics of change to understand the impacts of change.

Second, and in line with my approach to policy as constitutive and gendering (Section 3.1), I also draw on a processual and practice-orientated approach to gender. In critical response to notions of gender as binary relations and essentialist categorisations of people, which may overemphasise difference and opposition (Elmhirst 2015), FPE scholars in a processual tradition conceptualise gender as constituted in and through various forms of discursive and material practices associated with ecological processes, through the continuous (re)production of provisional subject positions and materialised subjectivities (Weedon 1996; Nightingale 2006). This approach, emergent from the 1990s and informed by developments in feminist theory, feminist geography and gender and development debates, sees gender not as a constant identity pre-existing the context in which it is

situated but as made relevant and given meaning in and through relations and practices (Nightingale 2006; Elmhirst 2011). It builds on performativity theory, most known to have been developed through Judith Butler's (1990) project to denaturalise and politicise social categories through deconstruction. In FPE, this challenges the aforementioned more representational approaches that study gender as a category that structures interactions and roles and mediates access to and control over resources (Elmhirst 2015). A processual and performative conceptualisation of gender departs from, yet without completely rejecting, such ideas about gender as structuring opportunities and constraints. It moves the analytical lens towards how gender, as a performed continuity, is constantly reproduced through changing environmental conditions and people's alignment with, or negotiation of, subjectivities, social norms and power relations (Harris 2006; Nightingale 2006).

Third, I have engaged with the concept of intersectionality. Intersectionality implies the idea that various forms of social difference operate as connected, interlocking systems of power that shape inequalities in situated ways (Collins 2015). Forms of difference include, among many others, gender, class, age, sexuality, constructions of race and education. The ways in which intersectional inequalities unfold create diverse and uneven experiences for people within and between the various groups of difference. An analysis of intersectionality thus examines how interconnected social differences combine to produce historically and geographically specific experiences of marginalisation and privilege (Lykke 2010). Intersectionality as a theory and concept was developed in Black Feminist Thought (hooks 1984; Crenshaw 1991; Collins 2008). It was brought into FPE research along with general shifts in feminist theory and through feminist postcolonial and geographic contributions (e.g., Sultana 2009; Nightingale 2011; Mollett & Faria 2013). Intersectionality has evolved as a central concept in studies of natural resource struggles and socio-ecological change over the past 15 years (Sultana 2021), with key contributions including, among many, Nightingale's (2011) study in Nepal of the intersectional and performative constitution of gender, class, caste and the environment through everyday politics and practice, as well as Harris's (2006) and Sultana's (2009) enquiries into how struggles over water are shaped by, and shape, multiple intersecting subjectivities. Such studies illustrate the relevance of intersectional FPE to understand how power works not only through gender,

age or sexuality in isolation, but across axes of difference, in and through environmental struggles (Sultana 2021).

3.2.2 A reflection on conceptual plurality

The analysis of Paper III approaches and presents urban farmers' intersecting social differences largely as categories or positionalities that, along with societal norms and political structures, influence their experiences of and responses to changing farming conditions evoked by authorities' reorganisation of urban marshlands. Engaging with intersectionality was grounded in my emergent interpretations of the context and the material where I observed how gender was one of several forms of difference that farmers occupied and that were at play in the process. In Paper II, on the other hand, a more processual and performative approach to gender can be seen as it traces how the national agricultural policy's dominant constructions of gendered subject positions and gender inequality in agriculture are manifested among urban farmers in Kigali. Aligning the theoretical premises from Paper I with those in Paper II, I reasoned, could provide interesting insights across both the discursive-material and 'rural-urban' dimensions of my thesis, as discourses are part in the production of the material and vice versa (Bacchi & Bonham 2014). Or, to use the words of Li (2007, 27), studying 'the intersection of governmental programmes with the world they would transform' can help to understand some of the ways in which governance and policy about agriculture in Rwanda manifest in context.

The different but interconnected and overlapping approaches to gender in environmental contexts that I have engaged throughout this research might in part be read as a reflection of my learning process. As a once natural science student gone social and into development studies, I had little training in social, critical and feminist theory prior to my doctoral studies. Comprehending the genealogy of the gender and environment debates, situating myself somewhere within and applying the associated theories and concepts has been, and continues to be, a winding process of confusion, trial and error and 'aha'-moments. I experience particularly intersectionality and performativity as complicated to operationalise, and while I cognitively align with these since initiating the analysis of Rwanda's agricultural policy (Paper I), my analysis has in practice encompassed a blend of approaches shaped by theory and existing research and my interpretations.

However, I see this as also related to the nature of my research methods, as well as to the interrelation, rather than opposition, between the various conceptualisations in the gender-environment debate. In terms of methods, to comprehensively study the dynamic production and reconfiguration of gender along environmental change as produced through routinely performed practices, implies that practices are observed in people's everyday lives, for example through ethnography. As a study to a large extent based on analysis of interviews conducted during five weeks, there are empirical limitations, as I see it, to the extent to which performativity theory can and should be applied. As such, my empirical material has in one sense guided how I have conceptualised and analysed social difference in relation to governance of agriculture in Rwanda. Yet, as Paper II exemplifies, the spoken – also a form of constitutive practice – combined with observations and backgrounded by an analysis of the discursive production of subjects (Paper I), can indeed provide the basis for an analysis informed by a processual approach.

Moreover, theory shaped by post-structural thinking, such as Butler's notion of performativity, represents a continuation rather than complete rejection of ideas of structure and categorical thinking, in which I perceive much of the gender and development/environment debates until the 1990s to be situated (Elmhirst & Resurreccion 2008). Structures do exist to some extent, such as dominant meanings and categories of gender, and they do shape lives in fundamental ways across the globe. But performativity and processual thinking around social difference makes it possible to deconstruct and destabilise those structures and categories, to see them as provisional, performed and amenable to change through forms of discursive and material practices that can negotiate and subvert the established and taken for granted. In that sense, to engage different notions of gender in the same study may not, after all, be so contradictive or surprising; it may even be an expected consequence of the always 'superstructural' nature of theory. As long as critiques and pitfalls of different approaches are reflexively addressed to the best of ability, conceptual plurality may be useful in trying to understand the complexities of how and why social inequality persists in environment and development contexts, and the various ways in which it can be challenged and changed (Cornwall *et al.* 2007; Elmhirst 2015).

4. Methodology

In this chapter, I present and reflexively discuss my methodological approach and procedures. I first reflect on my methodological process before I account for the methods employed to address my research questions. Questions of positionality, research ethics and the politics of knowledge production are considered intermittently throughout the chapter and in relation to fieldwork.

In the methodological journey that has become, I have combined critical policy analysis following Bacchi's (2009) *What's the problem represented to be?* (WPR) approach with qualitative fieldwork in Kigali that included interviews and participant observations with farmers. In combination, these methods have enabled an exploration of the research questions across a discursive-material continuum, critically interfering with governance of agriculture both at the level of visionary formulations and their situated manifestations on 'the ground'. Moreover, by applying the methods across a rural-urban divide of both policy and research, it has also been possible to understand and reflect on some of the interconnections between gendered agricultural change in the city and in the countryside.

4.1 Towards a flexible methodology

When I began writing this chapter, I announced to my supervisors that I was going to 'temporarily "forget" about the Covid-19 pandemic and what it had done to my research and to me as a doctoral student,' as a strategy to focus more on what had happened instead of what had not. I saw it as a constructive and rational way to outline a methodological account disentangled from my subjective, quite emotional, experience of the process, at reasonable distance from the pandemic which, after all, had been a hardship not only for me but for most people on this planet – indeed, I even belonged to one of the least affected cohorts. At that time, I also felt frustration over being haunted by methodological uncertainty with plans B, C and D, an uncertainty that shaped my relation to this thesis to the extent that I longed for writing something 'normal' that followed at least some 'standard' structures of qualitative research methodologies.

Of course, the task I gave myself turned out to be an impossibility. Since the early stages of my doctoral education – more precisely in March 2020, after about seven months of studies when my just then upcoming four-month

fieldwork in Kigali was put on indefinite hold – my approach and relation to this research have been riddled with emotions about my empirical field, my methods, my data and myself as a doctoral student and knowledge producer. Many of those have been closely connected to unexpected, untimely, and sometimes uncontrollable events – from the pandemic at the global level to the level of my own body through the birth of my second child – and have inevitably shaped my methodological rationales and decisions. From previous fieldwork experience (Andersson *et al.* 2016) and reports by numerous others (e.g., Thomson *et al.* 2012; Billo & Hiemstra 2013; Caretta & Jokinen 2017), I was familiar with and somewhat prepared for the messiness and emotional roller coaster of conducting qualitative *methods* in the physical field context. But I was unprepared for the sudden push that the pandemic instigated to substantially rethink time and again my *methodology*, my grounds and procedures to identify, produce and analyse data about a topic in a place far away. This was not made easier to handle while also dealing with the heavy feelings of loneliness, fear and sadness caused by the pandemic itself, a crisis of a magnitude I had not lived through before.

The implications of these experiences cannot be escaped, 'forgotten' or put in a final section about researcher reflexivity. The worry, fear and overwhelming frustration about 'cancelled' ethnographic fieldwork, perceived 'failed' adaptations, ambiguous feelings of both anxiety and relief about maybe not going to the field at all and then going there for a much shorter period than planned, the emotions involved in being away from small children for the first time, sentimental comparisons to things that could have been, and then joy, curiosity and excitement about how it instead turned out are inevitably an intrinsic part of my methodology. Emotions and my subjective experiences of various events throughout these years have, in other words, undoubtedly shaped my decisions about if, why and how to pursue certain methods and others not. Acknowledging and reflecting on this is important to discern the methodological rationales as they were, and to understand the implications of the research. The types of methods used, how I used them and the knowledge produced is the result of many adaptive measures and changed plans that were shaped by my personal 'luggage' (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002), global and personal events and my experiences of them. Recognising this makes it possible to conceive of the process of how I (re)-thought and (re)-designed the study by exploring alternative methods and topical and theoretical directions as an undetermined

and messy trajectory that progressively shaped the direction of the study and the final result. Acknowledging the role of emotions in the research process has also, however slowly, taught me to work with, instead of against, uncertainty, a point also made by Gonda *et al.* (2021). Therefore, given the ways in which my doctoral research unfolded in a context of a great deal of uncertainty and change, I cannot find any more suitable way of representing it than as a process of *becoming* methodologically flexible (McArdle 2022) and accepting to uncertainty and disruption (Harrowell *et al.* 2018; Chambers 2020).

Approaching qualitative inquiry as a flexible process of knowledge production is central to feminist methodological thinking and practice (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002). Attending to the role of researcher subjectivity and positionality, including the role of emotions, in the research process has for long been central to understandings of what it means to do qualitative research among feminists and, seemingly a little later, political ecologists (England 1994; Rose 1997; Widdowfield 2000; Sultana 2023). The last decade has witnessed an upsurge in reflections on the place of researcher emotions (Humble 2012; Laliberté & Schurr 2016; Askins & Blazek 2017; McGarrol 2017; Ng 2017; Jenkins 2020; San Roman Pineda *et al.* 2023). If anything, what has persisted throughout this research is my ambition to pursue research in line with such imperatives of self-reflexivity. In that sense my initial idea to single out some of the subjective research experiences from my methodological account contradicts this ambition. Longing for methodological 'normality' shows how I, despite ambitions, was to some extent influenced by still prevalent scientific norms concerning researcher objectivity associated with robustness and credibility of research (Caretta & Jokinen 2017). In feminist methodology, the 'normal', if there is such a thing, instead constitutes critical attendance to the role of researcher subjectivity and positionality for the process and outcomes of research (Rose 1997; Hiemstra & Billo 2017). I take this contradiction as a learning experience and as an attestation to the always unaccomplished practice of reflexively challenging one's subconscious biases and assumptions about knowledge production (Rose 1997). As I now go on to present my methods, I will integrate reflections on the methodological rationales and the role of my positionality in that process.

4.2 Methods and material

In this section, I first outline the procedure for conducting critical policy analysis, with primary but not exclusive reference to the analysis of Rwanda's agricultural policy (Paper I). I then describe the processes for conducting interviews and participant observations with farmers in Kigali, which formed the basis for Papers II and III. Finally, I present and reflect on my analytical approach and process.

4.2.1 Critical policy analysis

The decision to analyse how gender and gender inequality are represented and problematised in Rwanda's national agricultural policy (Paper I) was largely driven by pragmatism and practical aspects following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, which put my planned ethnographic fieldwork with farmers in Kigali on hold for an unknown period of time. Analysing online accessible material about agriculture in Rwanda was considered the most feasible alternative activity to pursue from home when most of the world was in lockdown. But the decision was also influenced by a combination of my growing interest in discourse and discourse analysis, my curiosity in debates and feminist critiques of global development agendas on food, poverty and agriculture and, according to research, the seemingly strong presence of the Rwandan state in shaping the country's agrarian landscapes and practices (e.g., Ansoms 2009; Clay 2017; Huggins 2017).

Following the conceptualisation of policies as politicised discursive practices with constitutive power (Section 3.1), I applied Carol Bacchi's methodological framework called the *What's the problem represented to be?* (WPR) approach (Bacchi 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016) to the study of Rwanda's national agricultural policies. The framework departs from the notion that policy is reliant on, and productive of, particular representations of a problem, for example, gender inequality in agriculture. Given the constitutive power and multiple effects of such problem representations on people, things and places, and the relationships between them, the task of the policy analyst becomes to identify, scrutinise and challenge the means by which they gain legitimacy and interpretive dominance over other 'problems'. This includes, for instance, assessing the broader discursive formations in which the 'problem' is situated, for example, agricultural modernisation for poverty reduction and economic growth, and the specific assumptions and knowledges that underpin and support it, such as the

'gender productivity gap in agriculture'. To do this, the WPR approach prompts the analyst to expose the policy material to a set of questions (Table 2). Together with two of my supervisors, Katarina Pettersson and Johanna Bergman Lodin, I draw on these questions in Paper I, adapted to the specific aim of the study, to investigate how gender inequality is problematised in Rwanda's growth-driven agricultural policy and in what ways this shapes the discursive construction of farmers' gendered subject positions and anticipated practices and responsibilities.

Table 2. Questions in the *What's the problem represented to be?* (WPR) approach (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016, 20).

1.	What's the problem represented to be in a specific policy or policies?
2.	What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem' (problem representation)?
3.	How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
4.	What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be conceptualised differently?
5.	What effects (discursive, subjectification, lived) are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
6.	How and where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted and replaced?

In line with feminist ambitions to find ways towards equality, an important task for WPR-informed policy analysis is to consider how a policy 'problem' might be represented differently, how it may be situated in other systems of knowledge, and thereby resulting in different proposals and effects on people, places and things. We dedicate this task significant space in Paper I by reflecting on how perspectives from FPE and gender-transformative approaches (GTA) in development and agricultural research and practice could generate a policy for agriculture that better aligns with justice-orientated goals.

By applying the WPR approach and the theory behind it, I have been able to see how the agricultural policy documents in Rwanda are not innocent representations of 'real', non-negotiable issues of gender inequality in farming, but that power-laden struggles over meaning and interpretation of 'problems' such as inequality occur at every point and level of agricultural governance and change. In Paper I, we show how proposals about why and how to address gender inequality in agriculture are politicised and grounded

in specific ideas about what agriculture is and should be, the different roles people have in it and why social equality is needed. In this regard, the WPR approach contributed to the research and thesis by highlighting the power of representations and discourse over meaning and their effects on social difference and gender equality. It also illustrated the instability of discourses and thus opened up a space to consider alternative policy approaches. Notions in feminist theory of the constructedness of gender and social difference, and in FPE of the processual production of gendered subjects in environmental change, were important for our reflections on the policy's discursive production of gendered subjects and what that may mean in material terms in the agricultural context. In addition, the emphasis in political ecology, geography and other related fields on the role of scale and context in shaping human-environment relations (Sultana 2021) has been helpful to see how the problematisation of gender inequality in agricultural policy is not confined to the nation borders of Rwanda. Although the agricultural policy is shaped by national historical, social, economic and geographical dynamics, they are also profoundly formed by some of the most influential financial, corporate, governmental and non-governmental agricultural development organisations in Africa and the world (as described in Chapter 2). Situated in historical debates about development, poverty and food security in the global South, these actors establish normative frameworks and problematisations of farming and farmers in Africa that have direct impact on people and landscapes in most agricultural contexts of the continent, including Rwanda.

Pursuing critical policy analysis – a methodological adaptation provoked by the pandemic – pushed my research in new and, for me at the time, unknown directions in several ways. For one, through closer engagement with the theories and methodologies of critical and feminist policy studies and the WPR approach in particular, I came to view policy and other instructive texts about agriculture in Rwanda in a strikingly new light. Instead of static, bureaucratic and, to be frank, boring pieces of prompts and prescriptions about this and that technicality or indicator, the texts morphed in front of my eyes into productive 'actors' with power to produce the desirable and suppress the undesirable. This power over truth and narratives, over people and environments, became evident in the interviews with farmers in Kigali, who often drew on normative ideas for both agriculture and development articulated in policy. However, the insight about the also

always unstable nature of discourses and truths helped me to 'see' subtle negotiations of dominant representations that also took place. This rather transformative shift in understanding policy and its role in society and the environment followed me beyond Paper I into the rest of the research and Papers II and III.

Moreover, conducting critical policy analysis informed by a post-structural tradition became a 'gateway' into beginning to conceive of also the more material part of the world – people, things, places – as emergent, dynamic and performatively produced. The policy study probably allowed me to read up on feminist theory and epistemology earlier than would otherwise have been possible. As such, although the WPR approach constitutes the methodological basis first and foremost for Paper I, its theoretical foundations have had a profound influence on my interpretations far beyond the analysis of documents. Indeed, studying policy in place of long-term fieldwork during the early stages of the research was important in moving the research in a more theory-conscious and theory-driven direction.

Finally, having originally set out to study gender relations in agriculture in *urban* Kigali[4], the decision to analyse agricultural policy – a framework centred around development of the *rural* and devoid of considerations of farming in cities – troubled the thematic scope of my research and broadened it towards a less disciplinary and geographically distinct one, one that moved at the interface of agriculture in both cities and the countryside. Ultimately, after years of conceptual headache about the implications of this for my thesis and for the field of rural development, this resulted in a kind of explorative problematisation of the geographical divides in which the first research plan was framed. I discuss this further in Paper II and Chapter 6.

A reflection on WPR and the politics of knowledge production

It should be noted that the WPR approach also includes a seventh question that insists that the researcher applies the questions in Table 2 to their own practice of constructing problems deemed legitimate for investigation of policy (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016). Following a reflexive research practice, this exercise is relevant beyond studies of policy and applies to all types of

[4] In fact, the very original plan was to conduct an ethnographic study of urban agriculture in *Tanzania*. The shift to Rwanda was the first of several adaptations that this research went through, which followed from concerns about personal safety in Tanzania at the time being.

work that seek to interrogate the power and subjectivity imbued in the knowledge production process (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002). To be sure, questions about how and why problems are formulated, their underlying assumptions and their effects and alternatives are legitimate and relevant also in relation to other kinds of texts, such as scientific ones, that make claims on knowledge. Therefore, although not explicitly responding to the WPR questions, I consider this seventh task as incorporated in my wider reflections on researcher subjectivity, positionality, research ethics and the politics of knowledge production throughout the remainder of this chapter.

To begin with, the outlined conceptualisation of discourse theorises texts as discursive practices productive of specific forms of knowledge and meanings of such 'things' as problems, subjects, objects and places. Going beyond the WPR and its focus on policy texts, this view implies that also this thesis and the knowledge it constructs ought to be understood as such, and as embedded in a politicised discursive struggle over what constitutes the problems of agriculture, urban development and gender inequality in Kigali, Rwanda, and beyond. As little as the policies studied in this thesis represent a neutral mirror of 'reality', as little do the interpretations, claims, arguments and conclusions in the thesis itself. Indeed, my understandings and preconceived ideas of the context and of what constitutes problems and how they ought to be solved shape the performance of my research, its knowledge outcomes and the ways in which I represent 'things' (Gregson & Rose 2000; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016). The texts that constitute this thesis[5] thus also reproduce, reinforce and/or negotiate particular non-neutral, at times probably problematic (though unintentional) meanings of, for example, women and men farmers and their relations, agriculture, the GR4A, marshlands, development, Kigali, Rwanda and Africa. All of which are a result of particular knowledge, assumptions, interpretations and delimitations articulated from a certain place at a specific point in time.

[5] Including the various, often non-neutral academic practices that underpin them, such as citation patterns and publication decisions.

4.2.2 Fieldwork in Kigali

In my third year of doctoral studies, after a pandemic, a policy study, not-so-fruitful and frustrating attempts at various online qualitative, partly visual methods, a pregnancy and a year of parental leave, it was finally time to explore farmers' experiences and perspectives of agricultural governance and change through place-based fieldwork in Kigali. As it was, during a total of five weeks spent in Kigali (four weeks in 2023 and one week in 2024), I conducted semi-structured interviews and participant observations with farmers whose fields were located in marshlands in or just outside the more densely built-up areas of the city, in Gasabo district (Figure 5).

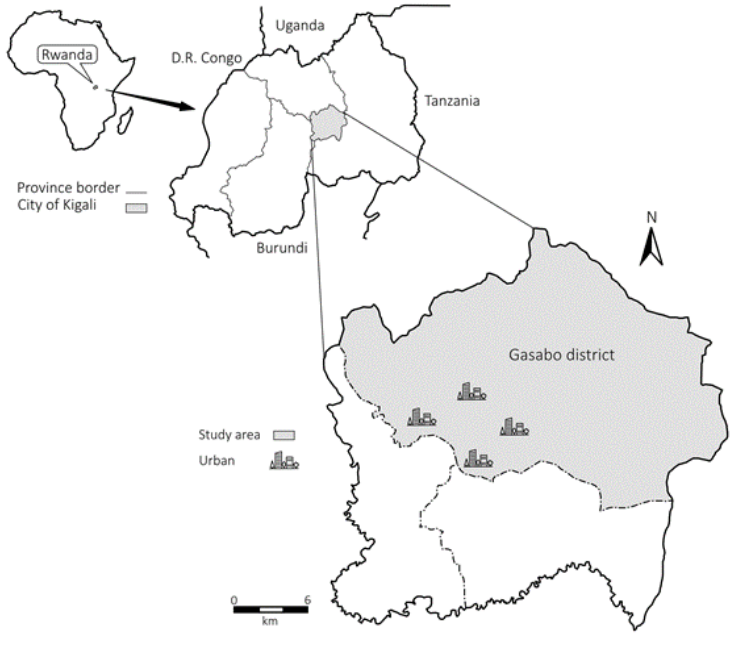

Figure 5. Map showing the study site in Gasabo District. Fieldwork was carried out in or just outside the urban parts of Gasabo district, illustrated by the small city icons. Drawing: Karolin Andersson.

The decision to pursue interviews as the main method was based on both practical and empirical considerations. For personal and work-related reasons, such as time left until defence and the emotional struggle that being away from my children implied (see also Jenkins 2020), the relatively short

time spent in the field[6] required a rather focused approach while in Kigali. Also, having read and thought a lot about agriculture in Rwanda over the past four years, I was now eager to listen to the experiences and perceptions of farming in Kigali, of urban governance and development and of agricultural visions and norms. Since this was my first encounter with Rwanda and due to the limited scientific and grey literature on urban agriculture in Rwanda and Kigali, I wanted to listen to as many voices as were possible while remaining within the qualitative domain. I therefore decided to focus on conducting mainly semi-structured interviews (22) during the first round of fieldwork in 2023, approaching the field with a mind as explorative as possible. In 2024, I followed up with participant observations (4) and semi-/un-structured interviews (3) with some of the same farmers, with the aim to gain more in-depth and nuanced insights.

Of course, while largely unbeknownst to the conditions and practices of urban farming in Kigali, I did not arrive in Kigali as a blank sheet – far from it. Motivated by an ambition to challenge social inequalities, the research was from its cradle politically situated (Haraway 1988). Those ambitions were further framed from my position as a Swedish, white feminist, which inescapably implies particular experiences and articulations of the causes and solutions to inequality (Mohanty 1988). Moreover, having our agricultural policy analysis fresh in mind, as well as urban policy and existing critical research of both rural and urban development in Rwanda, I entered the field with a critical sensibility towards dominant development discourse and practice, with a predisposition to question unequal power relations and to seek the experiences of the marginalised.

Interviews

All interviews, 25 in number and ranging from 40 to 90 minutes each, were arranged with the farmers beforehand, which allowed them to prepare for the meeting and have an idea about who I was and why I was there. This turned out to be important in order to receive trust and consent from respondents. All interviews except two were held individually with farmers. In one instance, a participant observation was disrupted due to heavy rainfall and instead turned into an unstructured group interview with four women farmers in the same site. In another instance, confusion about the plan for the

[6] At least in relation to the lion's share of anthropology-driven rural development research.

interviews and respondents' expectations made us decide, while on site, to hold one interview with two respondents instead of two individual ones. Except for the group interview, all interviews were recorded after respondents' informed and voluntary consent. All interviews were translated *in situ* from Kinyarwanda by one of my two Rwandese research assistants.

During approximately one week of the first round of fieldwork, two of my supervisors, Katarina Pettersson and Johanna Bergman Lodin, joined to observe and co-conduct some of the interviews. Depending on whether one or both of my research assistants were able to join, we alternated between conducting the interviews together (with the supervisor then taking more of an observer role, occasionally asking questions) and splitting up to hold one interview each at the same time. One implication of this collaborative effort during parts of the fieldwork was that it enabled more empirical material and, assumedly, more perspectives to be included in the analysis. It also created a foundation for a shared understanding of the research context between my supervisors and me, which proved useful in subsequent discussions about my analysis and interpretations. At the same time, although relying on the same interview guide (following Bryman 2009), also translated into Kinyarwanda (see Appendix), our different positionalities, such as research background, experience, seniority and more, likely shaped the conversation and the researcher-assistant-respondent relationships (Caretta 2015).

The sampling procedures are outlined in Papers II and III. Here, I take the chance to extend and reflect on them more freely than what the respective papers allow for. Following discussions with my local partners at the University of Rwanda (UR) and my supervisors, a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) facilitated the initial, purposive sampling (Bryman 2009) of interview respondents. With no previous partners or experience of doing research in Rwanda, and given recommendations to sample through known channels to ensure respondents' trust and comfort in the interview situation, as also argued elsewhere (Thomson 2010), I received a list from the NGO of possible farmers to interview. The usefulness, or even necessity, of being able to refer to an established entity like the NGO became evident after having experienced a not-so-successful interview situation in a marshland, in which a more spontaneous approach to a farmer unaware of the NGO and of us arriving at the marshland was met with clear scepticism and discomfort. The list was distilled from a mammoth document with all farmers in Kigali (from the outer rural to the urban areas) who were or had

been involved with the NGO, who ran development projects in the area. The suggestion of farmers was based on my request for diversity based on gender, age, position in the farming cooperative or group (to avoid bias towards, for example, farmers in leadership positions), mode of farming (subsistence, market-based or both) and location of the farm (in different marshlands, mostly urban and a few 'peri-urban' although this categorisation in practice was more of a continuum). The NGO representatives were also helpful in informally sharing knowledge and information that contributed to my contextual understanding.

In the consecutive steps of approaching farmers and conducting the interviews, the NGO was uninvolved. My research assistants phoned each farmer to introduce themselves, me, and the study and to schedule the interview. In addition to the facilitated initial sampling, I also 'snowballed' (Bryman 2009) four respondents in the first round of fieldwork from farmers already interviewed to diversify the sample from the NGO's list. In 2024, I approached some of the same farmers for interviews and participant observations purposively based on a review of their first interview and its relevance to my ongoing analysis for Papers II and III.

The NGO was a faith-based organisation working for farmers' poverty reduction and economic development in Rwanda through development projects. During the time of my research, it operated a project for the commercialisation of horticultural crops in Gasabo and three districts adjacent to Kigali. As such, it was an influential actor for many farmers in the area, both in terms of the ideas and practices about agriculture it promoted (as I discuss in Paper II) and the impact it may have on the livelihoods and well-being of farmers and their families. Many of the farmers I interviewed were, or had been, involved in that project at least to some extent. As I begin to discuss in Paper II, notwithstanding the importance of the NGO in facilitating the interviews, its involvement in the sampling procedure has inevitable implications for who became part of my research and who did not. This has likely influenced the character of the empirical material. As we explained how we accessed their contact information, all farmers knew we were in touch with the NGO. Although we clarified the informal nature of the collaboration and my independence from the organisation, it is not unlikely that this influenced to some extent how they related to the study and possibly how some represented their farming experiences and practices as well as their views on urban agriculture and development in general.

Each interview encounter began with an introduction of the research assistant, myself, the study and the purpose and format of the interview, including informed consent from the respondent to participate. We also allowed time for questions and concerns from the respondents regarding the interview and the study. The interviews were held in or just next to the respondents' fields, which allowed everyone involved to relate to the place and its ongoing changes in a direct way during the interview. This was helpful for my understanding of the conditions and processes that the farmers described in words, but that I was able to see and feel directly in the field. It also allowed me to clarify or challenge things said with things I observed while on site. For example, a common topic of conversation was the landscape changes that occurred over time following both the reorganisation of urban marshlands and climatic events such as flooding. In those discussions, both the respondents and I were helped by pointing to and seeing specific parts of the landscape, such as buildings, hills, rivers and fields in front of us. Holding the interviews in the fields also allowed me to observe the marshlands and what was going on there before and after the interview, as a form of non-participant observation. During these visits to the field, I also took photographs with my mobile camera as a way of making visual field notes. They helped me to later recall the materiality of the context: the senses, the sounds, sceneries and smells associated with urban marshland farming in Kigali (Pink 2021).

All interviews conducted in 2023, except the unstructured group interview, departed from an interview guide with explorative questions covering themes related to farming in Kigali (see Appendix), yet it remained flexible to the respondents' main concerns and interests. This means that the interview guide was not followed in a strict sense, but rather as a guide in case it was needed, which it initially often was. For the interviews in 2024, I reviewed the transcript from the first interview and drafted key questions and concerns that served as points of general reference for further discussion in our second encounter. However, although I kept a focus on the topics relevant to my ongoing analysis for Papers II and III, these second interviews were of a significantly less structured character than the first.

Participant observations

For the week spent in Kigali in 2024, I planned to conduct participant observations with a few of the farmers interviewed the year before. The idea was to join one farmer in their field during one whole day, doing farm work,

observing the surroundings and talking to the farmer. The objective was to complement the interviews by getting a more nuanced and contextual understanding of farming in Kigali and better understanding the farmers' lived experiences. In contrast to the interviews, I wanted to spend longer time with the farmer to allow for more informal conversations and to be able to comprehend the place, including its landscape, people and the ongoing activities. However, as my research assistant and I (this time I worked with only one) approached the farmers, it turned out that two had just recently been asked by local authorities to stop their farming activities due to the city's ongoing development projects (RUDP II) that turned cultivated urban marshlands into green parks. A participant observation in the way I had imagined was not possible with those farmers. The situation that had arisen for them was, however, highly relevant to my ongoing analysis for Paper III, so I nevertheless decided to hold interviews with them instead of searching for new farmers for participant observation.

Moreover, upon arrival in Kigali, the air temperature during the days was very high. Farmers had been waiting for the usual rains for almost three weeks, but the sun kept shining day after day. This had turned the soil in several of the marshlands, most of which were dependent on rain for irrigation, concrete hard and led several farmers to pause farming activities or limit farm work to the slightly cooler mornings. Given this, and not least given my own limited ability for physical work under a blazing sun while staying alert and observant, we adapted by conducting half-day (morning to noon) participant observations with three farmers and one informal walking interview in one farmer's field. During the three to four hours, my research assistant and I joined the respective farmer in their work, such as manual weeding and land preparation (Figures 6 and 7), at the same time as we talked informally about topics related to farming in Kigali and Rwanda and observed the surrounding environments and activities. Some pre-prepared topics and questions based on the earlier interview served as prompts for our conversations but most of the time the discussions flowed rather organically.

While few in number, the participant observations were important to my understanding of the context and the farmers' perspectives and experiences. The longer time spent with each farmer enabled questions and explanations to evolve more slowly. Doing joint physical work also generated a substantial amount of joy for everyone involved, as we shared both food and anecdotes and exposed some of our (my) limits to hard work. This opened

up for more relaxed and open conversations about the topics of my research, diluted (at least to some extent) the unevenly constructed relation of researcher/'expert' – researched/'non-expert', and provided a glimpse into the farmers' everyday, embodied experiences of farming in Kigali. Finally, spending three to four hours with the farmer, instead of a full day, made it possible for the assistant and me to follow up on the morning's impressions during the same day. In that sense, we were better able to recall the conversations and observations.

Figure 6 (left). Rows of vegetables and horticultural crops being cleared from weeds in an urban marshland. Photo: Karolin Andersson, 2024.

Figure 7 (right). Dry soil in another urban marshland being manually prepared for planting of chilli seedlings. Photo: Karolin Andersson, 2024.

Field notes

Throughout the periods of fieldwork, I made various types of field notes including a not-so-structured mixture of empirical, methodological and analytical as well as emotional and personal reflections on the fieldwork experience. I recorded them in both written and oral form in a notebook, on a laptop and on my mobile phone. During the days of fieldwork, I mainly wrote or spoke my reflections into the phone in between interviews and observations: in a taxi, while waiting for someone or during lunch. Bringing

out a notebook to write down observations by hand in a context like Kigali, where everyone we met always had their (often smart) mobile phone close, felt more complicated and strange than simply and quickly writing or speaking onto the screen. Most evenings or mornings during fieldwork, I also spent time writing down the impressions from the past day while also adding questions and concerns to explore further. These notes were a way to record my observations during the days, keep track of my continuously moving interpretations, and capture upcoming ideas for topics for further analysis post fieldwork.

If field notes constituted more of a supplement to the recorded and later transcribed interviews, they served as key material for the unrecorded interview and the participant observations. During the participant observations, I first wrote brief key words and bullet points on my mobile phone to remember the topics discussed, what the farmers shared and the observations made on site. Again, this appeared to be the most appropriate and convenient procedure in the given context, as everyone, including farmers, the research assistant and by-passers, brought up their phones every now and then.

Immediately afterwards, my research assistant and I jointly discussed and reflected on the impressions from the field encounter, clarified confusions and wrote more extensive notes, aided by the phone notes. Later the same day or the next, I used those jointly extended notes to audio record my own lengthier reflections. These were partly more analytical, as I already then began to associate our observations with my ongoing analysis, theory and existing literature. I later transcribed these recordings and included them in my analytical process for Papers II and III.

Working with research assistants

Throughout fieldwork, I worked with two Rwandese research assistants, one woman and one man. Both were in their twenties and had recently finished their undergraduate agricultural studies. In many ways, the assistants were absolutely essential for the process and outcome of the fieldwork and, as such, for the thesis and the knowledge produced. For one, Kinyarwanda, which I do not speak, was the preferred language of all respondents, which made *in situ* translation to English a necessary part of the interviews and participant observations. During the interviews and observations, the assistants worked hard to make the translations as detailed and accurate as possible, although translation inevitably implies sieving away and modifying

contextual nuances, and that the questions and knowledge conveyed between us are mediated not only through languages but also through our positionalities and unequal power relations (Caretta 2015; LaRocco *et al.* 2020). We often briefly discussed the interviews afterwards to clarify and preliminarily interpret what had been said, and the assistants occasionally also transcribed sections of the recorded interviews directly from spoken Kinyarwanda to written English.

As a first-time visitor to Rwanda and Kigali in 2023, my understanding of the social and cultural customs in the country and the specific research setting was evidently limited. The two research assistants demonstrated strong interpersonal skills through their ability to approach farmers, introduce and explain the research, and conduct the interviews and observations, in my eyes without complications. Their apparent expertise, experience and passion for agriculture and the lives of farmers in Rwanda were crucial in enabling rapport and engagement among the respondents, argued elsewhere as particularly essential in politicised contexts like Rwanda (Thomson 2010). But so was also their acquaintance with the city of Kigali. The combination of their agricultural knowledge and knowing the places and people in the capital became very helpful for this research. Moreover, although having intensely studied satellite maps and images of Kigali for the past year or two, I heavily depended on the assistants and their communication with farmers and drivers for the meticulous navigation to the right parts of the marshlands.

For these reasons and more, the assistants were vital not only in translating but also in facilitating and interpreting the specific context, practices and people, in turning my research idea into practice, reshaping it and facilitating its implementation. Throughout fieldwork, they were the central persons upon whom I and the fieldwork depended, and the ones with whom I continuously discussed many decisions and impressions.

Research ethics and positionality in the field

Throughout fieldwork, as for the whole research process, I followed research ethical practices to the greatest extent possible, taking every measure thinkable to act and pursue the research within applicable ethical and regulatory frameworks while keeping the best for the respondents in mind and striving to attend to the inevitable relations of unequal power in the research setting. Again, the research assistants were instrumental in facilitating much of this in a contextually appropriate manner. Of course,

informed consent and voluntary participation with the permanent, unconditional option to withdraw or refrain from answering were basic features of the procedure. So was clear and timely communication in the ways preferred by respondents and sharing of as transparent information as possible about myself as a researcher, the study set-up, its purpose and expected results and outcomes. Moreover, questions of the respondents' security and integrity were carefully considered throughout fieldwork as well as in the subsequent analysis and writing processes. All respondents were assigned pseudonyms in the process and I was alert to present the findings in ways that precluded identification of individuals and their connection to specific places. This procedure applies, of course, in every research situation but felt crucial in this context due to the allegedly far-reaching control exercised by the state that shapes most people's everyday lives in Rwanda (Purdeková 2011; Reyntjens 2013; Ingelaere 2014).

The question of compensation for farmers' participation in the research initially constituted a dilemma, where others around me as well as myself had contrasting and ambiguous views. Compensation to research participants is a matter to be determined based on the specific research circumstances: where it is located, for instance, what the local customs look like and who the participants are. In earlier field experiences with farmers in rural Tanzania and Kenya, I had brought small household items such as soap, rice or beans as a way to show appreciation to respondents while also trying to increase the chances that the compensation benefitted the whole household, which money risked not doing. In the present case, some collaborators advised compensation in terms of a smaller sum of money instead of such items, intended to cover costs involved in participation, such as transportation costs from the respondent's home to the marshland. Others were of the opinion not to compensate to avoid respondent bias and a perception of being paid to participate. Both options caused me discomfort; not compensating for relatively strained farmers' loss of time and money in the high-cost Kigali context felt problematic for the tones of unequal benefits and disrespect for people's lives and livelihoods it implied. It also felt uneasy to think of the potential influence of monetary compensation on the researcher-participant relations and the empirical material and on how the respondents in practice would, for example, respond to questions or experience the possibility to withdraw. In short, issues of power were involved in this dilemma. Ultimately, after consultations, I decided to

compensate through an individual mobile money transfer of 5,000 Rwandan Francs (RWF), equivalent to approximately four United States Dollars (USD) at the time. The transfer was made to all respondents on the final day of each period of fieldwork. In this way, I disconnected the transfer from the direct event of the interview and, hopefully to some extent, avoided speculations or unfulfilled expectations during the periods of fieldwork.

All respondents were well above 30 years of age, the youngest one being 36 at the time for the first round of fieldwork. This means that all, in one way or the other, lived through the run-up, unfolding and aftermath of the 1994 genocide, and that it is safe to assume that this left severe marks in these people's lives. While focusing on present-day farming, there were a number of occasions during fieldwork where I sensed the connection of a topic with experiences related to the civil war and genocide, indicated, for example, by drastically changed atmosphere, serious faces and silence. Questions about relations to the countryside, for example, and procedures or rationales for moving to Kigali were sometimes met with subtle undertones of seeming sorrow. So were answers to, in my mind, ostensibly uncontroversial and generic questions about family and household. Mindful of not causing harm and tearing up trauma (Thomson 2010), this made me very careful in how I followed up or shifted topics in these situations. Here, ethical commitments, of course, overruled my curiosity to better understand, for instance, some urban farmers' historical relations to the countryside or their reasons for taking up urban agriculture in Kigali.

Undeniably, as in any research setting, the fieldwork and its outcomes were imbued with a plethora of hierarchical and unequal power relations (England 1994), all shaped by the various and shifting subjectivities, or positionalities, of me as well as of the respondents, the research assistants and others involved (Caretta 2015). While realistically unfeasible to identify and address all of these and their role for the research (Rose 1997), some are more detectable and possible to reflect on. For one, although white people in Kigali's built-up areas are far from uncommon, my presence as a white researcher in the urban marshlands, which arguably shed a more 'rural' atmosphere than other parts of the city, did not pass unheeded and surely influenced how respondents related to me and how they represented themselves in the interview. Also, farmers' knowledge about my connection, however informal, to the NGO that facilitated my sampling may have shaped what they decided to disclose and how. Indeed, in any social occasion, all

circumstances combined do shape what and how we choose to speak about ourselves and others.

To also note is that my own positionality in the field shifted in relation to respondents and other actors I encountered. For instance, during the interviews, I often felt positioned as an expert, a researcher with assumed agricultural expertise. This was quite contrary to how I perceived myself in the situation, rather feeling like a student among many specialists. This quite hierarchical researcher-respondent relation shifted somewhat during the participant observations when we worked in the field and my limits to farm work were exposed. Moreover, given the heterogeneity of the respondents, different dimensions of my own identity were more and less accentuated in relation to various narratives, such as the experience of losing a close family member or of being a mother and caring for children. This likely shaped how the interviews unfolded since the research situation is a subjective and relational experience of interpretation and translation between researcher, assistant and respondent. In other encounters with, for example, extension agents in the field, government and NGO officers and university staff – the relatively uncomplicated access to whom may have been enabled by my affiliation with a Swedish university – I felt positioned as less of an expert and more as an undergraduate foreigner. Among mainly natural science-orientated professionals, however, I was sometimes gained by drawing on my title as an agronomist to position myself as more than 'just' a social science PhD student doing a study on gender. It must be stressed, however, that all field encounters were highly professional and mutually respectful.

Most respondents had children. For many of them, in particular women, providing food and healthy diets to them and the family was a key driver for their efforts and investments in farming, as was their determination to secure their children's future through education and paying school fees. As a parent of two young ones myself, though in a context with diametrically different conditions and circumstances, children and care emerged in several instances as a point of mutual experience and understanding that took the interviews at least a bit beyond their initial formality. Yet, my experience of parenthood happens to intersect with an unconventional and, in many parts of the world, controversial choice of partner and co-parent. This constitutes a subjectivity that the research context did not allow me enough comfort to expose. Therefore, motherhood at a certain point also became the subjectivity that bounded my proximity and relations to the respondents, my assistants and

the overall field, and that came to shape how I chose topics and steered conversations.

The above considerations illustrate what others have already pointed out; that positionalities of researcher, research assistants and respondents, characterised by conflations of privilege and vulnerability, shape the relations, processes and outcomes of field research in both enabling and complicating ways (Caretta 2015; Caretta & Jokinen 2017; Nyantakyi-Frimpong 2021).

4.2.3 Analytical approach and process

This research has confirmed that qualitative analysis, not least the more temporally stretched one, is anything but a neat, predetermined, objective and chronological exercise divided into a set of phases that occur in between 'data collection' and 'writing'. Generally speaking, my analytical approach and process for this research have rather been characterised by reflexive and subjective interpretative work consisting of iterative movements between my research material, flows of concepts and theories and related existing research, all operating like moving and evolving targets throughout time. In practice, my process to interpret and answer questions began before any 'purely' analytical activities were undertaken. It was ongoing at least, if not earlier, from around the time we decided to conduct the policy analysis. It continued throughout the period of interrogating policy texts and the writing of Paper I, including during the revise and resubmit stage, took new forms before, during and after the two periods of fieldwork, and has continued through the writing of Papers II and III as well as this thesis essay. Throughout, my interpretations have shifted and will continue to do so also in future revisits to the texts and material herein. Indeed, conceptualising knowledge as always partial and situated (Haraway 1988), I approach analysis, and the knowledge emergent thereof, as an always ongoing subjective attempt at understanding and explaining a problem or question that changes over time as it encounters new knowledge and perspectives. The subjectivity of analysis is shaped by, among others, the researcher's educational and scholarly background, theoretical inclinations, personal experiences and interests, political convictions as well as relations and experiences in the field, relations that are in turn shaped by the identities and positionalities of the researcher, assistants and respondents. Certainly, therefore, there exists a multiplicity of alternative subjective lenses through

which different interpretations and knowledges could be constructed from the same material (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002).

During this process to make sense and explain, I have taken inspiration and guidance from a few frameworks and methods for analysis. Heavily, of course, and in the most comprehensive way, from the WPR approach (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016), where our analytical procedure was relatively confined compared to the more open processes for Papers II and III[7]. But I have also been helped by more generic analytical frameworks such as reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke 2022) and manuals for coding (e.g., Saldaña 2013). These frameworks, though not visible in my accounts of analysis in the respective papers, have constituted important elements of direction and support in my analytical journey. Importantly, they have often functioned as concrete tools for action during periods when I felt 'stuck' in the analysis or gone lost in the mazing universe of 'reading up' when trying to make sense of something in the material.

However, although these frameworks for analytical structure have been important to stay or get back on track, my overall rationales and practices for answering questions and reaching insights have by and large occurred much more organically, on the basis of a combination of curiosity, intuition and pragmatism, all along staying centred on the specific research question(s). Most of the time, my way of reaching and articulating insights has been best achieved by engaging interchangeably or in parallel (yet not all at once) with different practices such as coding transcripts (with pen and paper and in NVivo at different rounds of reading), thematic grouping, reading theory and talking or writing about it and writing analytical memos and draft manuscripts. Importantly, writing as analysis, both paper manuscripts and less structured 'thought text' has been an important means through which I have understood and articulated things. But important ideas have also been born during activities such as walks in nature or while picking up my children from preschool. In these situations, I have often let myself deviate from a set plan to delve into writing forth those ideas. This dynamic approach to the analytical process has allowed me to stay attentive to intuitions about the material, to follow lines of thought and to nurture some sort of creativity instead of suppressing emergent ideas into side notes for later, when their

[7] I outline the analytical processes in each of the three papers, respectively.

point might have been lost. In the analyses for Papers II and III, this organic character was particularly prominent, as they were more exploratory in terms of emergent themes and patterns and their relations to theory and concepts and since the two analytical processes originally emerged from one.

Finally, since this research has unfolded over a period of six years, during which a lot has happened in the Rwandan context and for me as a person and a researcher, my analytical procedures have also been shaped and changed following my evolving contextual, theoretical and methodological knowledge. To give an example, an analysis concerned with the processual emergence of gendered subjectivities (Paper II), or one informed by intersectionality theory (Paper III), was not part of my theoretical or analytical repertoire back in 2020. Moreover, the fact that my fieldwork occurred relatively late in the research process had implications not only for my understanding and interpretation of the context but also for the more deductive orientation that my analysis took (as discussed in section 4.2.1).

5. Summary of the papers

5.1 Paper I

Window dressing inequalities and constructing women farmers as problematic – gender in Rwanda's agriculture policy

Co-authored by Karolin Andersson, Katarina Pettersson and Johanna Bergman Lodin. Published in *Agriculture and Human Values*, Vol. 39, March 2022, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-022-10314-5.

This paper focuses on the constitutive role of policy texts in the Rwandan agricultural context. Departing from the notion that policy, through discourse, is productive of the problems it sets out to solve, as well as the gendered subjects, objects and places it concerns, we analyse if and how gender inequality is problematised in Rwanda's national agricultural policy framework, what assumptions and knowledges about agriculture, development and gender underpin and legitimise this and what it implies for farmers' gendered identities and relations. By questioning the policy's claims to facts and knowledge, we open up for alternative ways of problematising. Our analysis is guided by four research questions, adapted from Carol Bacchi's *What's the problem represented to be?* (WPR) approach:

How is gendered inequality problematised in Rwanda's agricultural policy?

What dominant discourses and assumptions underpin the problematisation?

How are women and men farmers constructed through the problematisation?

How can gendered inequality be problematised differently?

Rwanda has been internationally applauded for its achievements in promoting both gender equality and transformation of the agricultural sector in line with the continent-wide push for intensified, market-based farming and smallholder subsistence farmers' integration into food value chains. Yet, these efforts have increasingly been shown to have more complicated, gendered and adverse implications than presented by state authorities, for instance, in terms of increasing income inequalities, land dispossession and

gender unequal access to and control of resources among the least privileged farmers. In light of this seeming discrepancy between formal claims to success and the more nuanced and problematic picture on the ground, critical interrogation of the texts that prescribe the pathway for farming and farmers in Rwanda is needed. By applying the WPR approach as an analytical framework, we critically question the taken-for-granted assumptions in the agricultural policy documents and aim to understand how the policies construct particular representations of problems and people related to agriculture in order to make visible alternative, more emancipatory framings of problems.

Through in-depth analysis of 12 national policies and strategies related to agricultural development, the paper shows that gender inequality is largely left unproblematised throughout the documents. When addressed, it is mainly reduced to a problem of women's low agricultural productivity, which responsibilises women to close the so-called 'gender gap' in agricultural productivity while paying less attention to structural inequalities. The policy thus focuses on framing the symptoms and effects of gender inequality and turns gender mainstreaming into an instrument for national economic growth. The paper argues that by insufficiently addressing the underlying socio-political causes of gender inequality, Rwanda's agricultural policy risks reproducing inequalities by reinforcing dominant gender relations and constructing women farmers as problematic and men as normative farmers.

The paper calls for the agricultural policy to view gender equality more as an end in itself and less as a means to agricultural economic growth, for instance through integration of perspectives from feminist political ecology and gender transformative approaches. This could shift policies' problematising lens from economic growth to social justice, and from women's shortcomings and disadvantages in agriculture to the practices and relations that perpetuate inequality, thus paving the way for more equitable and just agricultural futures in Rwanda.

5.2 Paper II

Agricultural modernisation in the farming-disabling city: Urban farmers' emergent subjectivities and gender relations from 'professionalisation' in Kigali, Rwanda

Authored by Karolin Andersson. Accepted with major revisions in *Geoforum,* March 2025.

Rwanda is undergoing substantial socio-ecological changes through modernisation policies aimed at restructuring both cities and the countryside. With reference to agriculture, a key sector to the country's economy and development, these policies reconfigure farmers' lives and livelihoods in largely different ways given their divergent approaches to the role of agriculture in rural and urban contexts, respectively. While urban farming in Kigali has historically been an important livelihood strategy for many of the city's poorer and vulnerable residents, the current push for urban modernisation and 'greening' threatens its viability and existence. At the same time, the highly influential idea of agricultural modernisation, dominant in rural-centred agricultural policy and aligned with the wider development paradigm of a new green revolution for Africa (GR4A), frames 'modernised' farmers in the countryside as an engine for development and economic growth and promotes intensified, input-dependent and market-orientated agricultural practices. Both of these development trajectories have been shown in previous research to proliferate along unequalising lines of gender and other intersecting social differences.

Despite growing scientific awareness of the interconnections between rural and urban dynamics, there remains limited understanding in the Rwandan context as to how these divergent and geographically divided policy frameworks overlap and entangle to shape lives, lands and livelihoods beyond their spatial demarcations. This paper examines how ideas in the rural-orientated vision of agricultural modernisation influence the emergence of new gendered subjectivities and social relations among urban farmers in Kigali. In doing so, the paper aims to improve understanding of how agricultural policy and discourse transcends the rural-urban divide and reshapes urban lives and to reflect on the implications of this for development policy.

Through analysis of interviews and participant observations through a feminist political ecology lens, the research finds that agricultural 'professionalisation' is the normative vision among urban farmers in Kigali and that the agricultural modernisation discourse reshapes gender relations and identities. For some women, engaging with these ideas and practices engenders less marginalised positions in local communities and households as well as new gendered subjectivities that challenge social norms and expectations. Yet, this leverage of gendered agency is largely framed in terms of women's societal and household economic contribution through market-based farming, which implicitly reinforces gendered expectations about productivity and leaves issues of unequal divisions of care work unaddressed. The paper thus suggests that these gendered changes remain at an individual, rather than a structural, level and that they are conditional and largely embedded within continuous gender norms and responsibilities. Therefore, while agricultural 'professionalisation' offers some women new avenues for agency and social leverage, the contingency of this alignment with market-based productivity norms leaves deeper gender inequalities and uneven divisions of care burdens largely unchallenged.

These findings present an opportunity to reflect on the role of farming in cities in Rwanda and beyond, to discuss new articulations of urban and rural governance and to rethink the agendas for agricultural change and social equality in Rwanda. The paper calls for policy to more profoundly address structural gender inequalities and argues for urban agriculture to be understood as a critical site for inclusive development. The paper also illustrates the utility of feminist political ecology as a framework through which to build further knowledge about the gendered dimensions of rural-urban dynamics and entanglements.

5.3 Paper III

'This city is not for me' – farmers' differentiated experiences of, and responses to, reorganisation of urban marshlands in Kigali

Authored by Karolin Andersson. Re-submitted to *Gender, Place & Culture,* April 2025.

As part of Rwanda's ambitious agenda for national transformation, Kigali is currently undergoing significant social, ecological and economic changes. These changes, anticipated to transform Kigali into a 'green' and modern African metropolis by 2050, are primarily guided by the city's widely influential development roadmap, the 2020 Kigali City Master Plan. An important part of this visionary roadmap is the conversion of Kigali's urban marshlands into uncultivated parks destined for recreation, conservation and climate mitigation. However, many of these marshlands are cultivated by urban farmers and provide important sources of food, income and well-being. The reorganisation of urban marshlands, legitimised by a representation in the policy of current marshland activities as 'encroaching' and 'threatening' to urban sustainability and development, thus poses challenges to the urban farmers who rely on the marshlands.

In this context, and backgrounded by existing research in other areas on Kigali's and Rwanda's exclusionary and marginalising development, this paper explores how urban farmers' intersecting social differences shape their experiences of, and responses to, the reorganisation of Kigali's urban marshlands. The research is based on semi-structured interviews and participant observations with 22 urban farmers in Kigali analysed through an intersectional feminist political ecology lens. The findings show that the reorganisation of Kigali's urban marshlands mainly reproduces farmers' vulnerabilities in ways that are shaped by intersecting axes of gender, age, health/ability and education. However, some of the farmers' responses to the changes, shaped by social difference and relational and emotional attachments to the marshlands, demonstrate the continued significance of the marshlands as central spaces for their social, economic and food-related security. The findings raise concerns about who benefits from development and who does not and, to some extent, challenges the representation by policy of marshland farming as solely a problem for the city's 'green' and allegedly inclusive development.

Based on these findings, the paper argues that urban development policy in Kigali needs to foreground the differentiated positionalities and heterogeneous vulnerabilities of farmers affected by the changes in order to turn its ambitions for inclusive and equitable urban transformation into practice. It needs to engage a more profound emancipatory development agenda that challenges and changes the gendered responsibilities that underpin vulnerability as well as the generational and health/ability-related employment barriers that 'unskilled' urban residents face. Moreover, the paper discusses opportunities to reimagine the role of marshlands and farming in Kigali's transformational agenda. Instead of removing and relocating the city's food producers, urban planners might pay closer attention to the role played by urban marshlands for some of the city's less educated, ill or disabled women and men to develop a productive, long-term urban farming and food system that contributes not only to environmental but also to social and economic sustainability. This, the paper suggests, could turn marshland farming into an integrated part of Kigali's development, turning marshlands into multifunctional spaces that enhance resilience and contribute to equity and inclusion.

6. Discussion

I now return to the thesis aim and research questions to discuss the findings of my research. As a feminist intervention into development debates about gender and its role in agricultural change in Africa, the thesis has aimed *to explore how farmers' socially differentiated identities, relations and experiences are shaped through contemporary state-led governance and change of agriculture across space in Rwanda*. Built into this aim and motivated by an imperative not only to highlight inequities but also to seek ways to redress them, my research has also sought to reflect on alternative development pathways, or governance approaches to agriculture, that may open up for sustained social change. These two sides of the aim are reflected in my research questions (RQs), restated here:

RQ1: How does the dominant discourse of agricultural development, prevalent in global and national development circles, shape farmers' gender identities and relations in Rwanda?

RQ2: How does national and urban governance of agriculture shape gendered and intersectional identities, relations and experiences among farmers in urban Kigali?

RQ3: What are the limits and possibilities for more socially just outcomes through contemporary governance of agriculture in Kigali and Rwanda?

Section 6.1 briefly synthesises the findings from Papers I-III in relation to the aim and RQs. I outline how policies that address agriculture, both in the countryside and in urban Kigali, mainly, but not only, reproduce or reinforce farmers' gendered and intersectional relations and vulnerabilities to change, despite claims by Rwandan authorities for gender mainstreaming in agriculture and for inclusive urban development. In section 6.2, I discuss the insights concerning how the rural-orientated agricultural modernisation discourse reproduces gender in both discursive and lived terms (RQ1). I relate the findings to existing literature while intermittently reflecting on their implications for policy and further research. Section 6.3 discusses insights concerning the gendered and intersectional implications for Kigali's urban farmers of both the agricultural modernisation discourse and of the

reorganisation of urban marshlands (RQ2). I reflect on the coexistence of these political frameworks and agendas in Kigali that engage rather different approaches to agriculture. This also raises some considerations on the implications for existing and future research on rural and agricultural development studies, discussed in section 6.4. Throughout the chapter, I discuss the limits and possibilities of the studied governance frameworks for gendered change and reflect on alternative approaches (RQ3).

6.1 Governing agriculture, (re)producing gender

The three papers (I-III) that constitute this thesis collectively explore some of the gendered and intersectional dimensions of policy-induced changes to agriculture in Rwanda. Paper I unpacks the discursive effects of the national, rural-orientated agricultural policy on gendered identities and their possible implications for farmers' lived gender relations and responsibilities. It focuses on how the problem of gender inequality is represented within the discourse of agricultural modernisation and how this constructs specific subject positions for women and men farmers. Represented mainly as a problem of women's low agricultural productivity and their association with subsistence farming, gender inequality is found to be simplified and instrumentalised for achieving economic growth, constructing women farmers as problematic and men as normative farmers. Combined with insufficient problematisation of unequal gender relations and divisions of work, the paper suggests that this leads the national agricultural policy to largely reproduce unequal gender relations and norms while constituting women as those that need to improve to change their own marginalised situation. The paper argues for the policy framework to approach gender inequality in agriculture in a way that prioritises social justice over economic expediency by recognising gender equality as an end in itself and that challenges farmers' unequal gendered responsibilities.

However, as also pointed out in Paper I, mainstream (agricultural) development does not inherently need to reproduce and reinforce inequality. Since agricultural development policy and discourse unfold in situated ways and in confluence with other political, social, ecological and economic processes, examining the context-specific manifestations of development policy and discourse is pertinent. In a sense complementing, and building on, the discursive focus in Paper I, Paper II turns to the Kigali context to explore

how ideas in the rural-centred agricultural modernisation discourse seep into the city and reshape urban farmers' gendered subjectivities, relations and positions in the community and household. The findings in Paper II point to significant changes for some women farmers' well-being, dignity, independence and authority in decision-making following engagement with 'professionalised' urban farming. As discussed in the paper, these changes are of fundamental importance to the lives of the farmers, and I use this as an opportunity to reflect on the possibilities for a more emancipatory policy approach to urban agriculture in Kigali's development trajectory. Yet, although potentially promising in a more justice-orientated urban agenda than the current one, the embeddedness of these gendered changes within the productivity- and growth-centred modernisation discourse nevertheless conserves structural inequalities and limits the prospects of sustained social change through 'professional' urban farming to the individual level.

Staying with the idea of change as shaped by multiple political frameworks and change processes, Paper III shifts attention to urban governance of agriculture and explores the implications for farmers of Kigali's modernisation agenda that targets marshlands with urban greening interventions. It shows how positionalities of gender, age, health/ability and education intersect to shape farmers' differential vulnerabilities and responses to the conversion of cultivated urban marshlands into parks and recreational areas. The paper challenges the policy narrative that marshland farming in Kigali is incompatible with urban sustainability and instead proposes that these spaces could be reimagined as multifunctional landscapes that support both environmental goals and the socio-economic resilience of the city's less privileged residents. In doing so, it echoes calls in the first two papers for a reorientation of development policy in Rwanda towards more profound inclusivity and equity while also underscoring the need to better incorporate the lived, heterogeneous realities of urban farmers into Kigali's development agenda.

The three papers, individually distinct yet empirically and methodologically interconnected, jointly offer a critical account of how governmental efforts for modernisation of both the countryside and the city tend to insufficiently address deep-seated gendered inequalities and social difference in agricultural contexts while simultaneously producing new forms of gendered division and marginalisation for the country's farmers. Collectively, they argue for alternative visions of the development of cities

and countrysides that better address Rwanda's farmers' intersecting vulnerabilities to change and that centre agricultural development more profoundly around goals of justice and the elimination of structural inequalities and marginality of farmers.

6.2 Continuity and some (limited) change through agricultural modernisation

Speaking back to RQ1, the findings from papers I and II show that the dominant agricultural modernisation discourse, prevalent in global and national governance circles, largely reproduces unequal gender relations and identities in agriculture, leaving structural inequalities unchallenged or merely symbolically questioned. However, for some farmers in the city, being able to enact and manifest that discourse in the practice of farming might mean the difference between suffering from, or being relieved of, gender-based subjugation, conflict and violence. This insight confirms that mainstream development need not be inherently unequalising and that important change to some extent can take place within structurally constrained contexts (e.g., Quisumbing *et al.* 2015; Clay 2018). It also illustrates the relevance of studying 'the intersection of governmental programmes with the world they would transform' (Li 2007, 27) to understand how dominant policy ideas become involved in and shape people's lives in situated ways, also beyond the areas for which they are intended. It reminds of the continuous need to approach development as unfolding in dynamic, plural and locally situated ways (Clay 2018) and to attend to the possibilities of seemingly incremental changes as possible stepping stones towards broader change (Davids *et al.* 2014).

Yet, when considering the potential of mainstream development, it is also necessary to pay attention to who is able to benefit from it and who is not. Echoing insights on the uneven distribution of costs and benefits in the Asian Green Revolution (Bezner Kerr 2012; Patel 2013), mounting research shows how it is often the relatively better off who seem to be able to enjoy the benefits from agricultural modernisation policy and interventions in Africa, whereas the most disadvantaged and impoverished face too high barriers to engage (in the Rwandan context, see Ansoms & Rostagno 2012; Dawson *et al.* 2016; Treidl 2018; Berglund 2019; Clay & King 2019; Pasgaard *et al.* 2022). In light of this, I presume that social differences that have not been

analysed in this thesis are also involved in shaping the outcomes of agricultural modernisation. While Paper III applies an intersectional lens to the effects of urban development policy, Paper II centres 'only' on the gendered aspects of involvement in 'professional' urban farming. I do not doubt that also class and other positions of relative privilege, perhaps the contested issue of ethnicity, are involved in the emergence of farmers' subjectivities and social relations in this context. Similarly, Paper I focuses on gender, although the agricultural policy framework certainly also has a generational dimension given its strong focus on youth for agricultural development. This presents a limitation to the findings and a space for further research.

Nevertheless, as the positive changes observed are limited within the discourse that also upholds inequalities, the overarching conclusion in relation to RQ1 is that issues of gender inequality are insufficiently addressed and instrumentalised in agricultural development policy and discourse, and that they reproduce, rather than challenge, unequal gender identities and relations at a structural level, in both symbolic and lived ways. This conclusion reiterates longstanding feminist critiques of mainstream development in general (Chant & Sweetman 2012; Cornwall & Rivas 2015; Wallace 2020) and, of significance to this thesis, of contemporary African agricultural development in particular (e.g., Debusscher & Ansoms 2013; Treidl 2018; Ampaire *et al.* 2020; Clay & Yurco 2024). This literature and much additional feminist scholarship argue, as do I in this thesis, that agricultural policies and interventions need to address the causes of gender inequality rather than only the effects of it in order to move towards sustained gendered change. Rather than a problem of the shortcomings and inadequacies of one group or the other, gender inequality in agriculture (and other sectors) needs to be approached as a problem of persistent unequal power relations, norms and expectations based on gender and other intersecting social differences that shape practices, experiences, relations and identities. As such, the focus of policies and interventions concerned with agriculture needs to shift from seeing gender equality only as a means to something else to seeing it also as an end in itself.

A growing body of research investigates the gendered implications of Rwanda's ongoing agricultural transformation (Bigler *et al.* 2017; Bayisenge 2018; Treidl 2018; Bigler *et al.* 2019; Illien *et al.* 2022; Bayisenge 2023; Clay 2023; Clay & Yurco 2024). As a contribution to this scholarship, the

findings of my research bring to this and related work across Africa a critical, destabilising perspective on the texts and formulation of the policies that set agendas and formulate problems and solutions about farming, farmers and their role in development. Adopting this perspective highlights the relevance of questioning knowledge claims, assumptions and taken-for-granted 'truths' in the wide range of proposals that govern agricultural change in the current GR4A era. It directs attention to how governance of agriculture at its formulation is inherently political, gendered, or gender*ing* (Bacchi 2017), as well as changeable. This approach is supported by recent work in Rwanda that calls for attention to the gendered nature of policy and interventions amidst Rwanda's agricultural transformation (Clay & Yurco 2024) and ought to challenge assertions that agricultural policy in Rwanda is enough gender mainstreamed and that inequalities are the result of insufficient implementation and adoption (e.g., Bigler *et al.* 2017). I propose that this approach has particular relevance in Rwanda, where governmental policy and programming exert a significant influence over how norms, ideas, practices and subjectivities unfold across the country (Reyntjens 2013; Ansoms & Cioffo 2016; Berglund 2019; Nyenyezi Bisoka & Ansoms 2020; Nyenyezi Bisoka *et al.* 2020; Pasgaard *et al.* 2022).

In light of this, an important aspect of policy that deserves further attention in the Rwandan context is the power dynamics and discursive struggles at play in the processes of production and management of knowledge and 'truths' during the formulation of agricultural policies and strategies. How are the problems of, for instance, gender inequality negotiated among different organisations, groups and individuals? What knowledge gets precedence and what does not, and how are problems and solutions to inequality negotiated among different actors? Such explorations could provide important insights about how inequality is understood and dealt with in the policy process, how it is translated and interpreted by authorities and officials throughout the administrative system and how strategies to move policy towards justice and equality might be best developed in the Rwandan context.

6.3 Intersectional difference and multiple governance of agriculture in Kigali

Moving on to address RQ2, the research shows that the influences of the agricultural modernisation discourse and the closure of cultivated urban marshlands both reproduce and relieve marginality and vulnerability among urban farmers. On the one hand, farmers are under the influence of the agricultural discourse aimed at the countryside, facilitating important, yet limited, changes to gender subjectivities and social relations for some. On the other hand, many experience harsh and deteriorating conditions for their (often only) livelihood as a result of urban policy that aims to phase out urban marshland farming. This leads to patterns of marginalisation along intersecting lines of gender, age, health/ability and education. The findings reflect much of the existing FPE scholarship that demonstrates how unequal gender relations are variously reproduced and renegotiated through social and environmental change (Nightingale 2006; Elmhirst & Resurreccion 2008; Elmhirst 2015) as well as how gendered vulnerabilities emerge in combination with multiple axes of difference to produce specific experiences of marginalisation and privilege (Harris 2006; Sultana 2009; Nightingale 2011; Sultana 2021).

In the Kigali context, the findings contribute new insights concerning issues at the intersection of urban development, agriculture and gender. By illustrating the heterogeneous vulnerabilities produced by urban marshland conversion (Paper III), the findings bring a feminist perspective to a growing scholarship that objects to and challenges the narrative of Kigali's development as a linear journey of success by highlighting its darker sides of displacement and dispossession (e.g., Finn 2018; Goodfellow and Smith 2013; Shearer 2024). This thesis illustrates to this literature how a feminist perspective helps to illuminate the gendered and socially heterogeneous effects of change (Resurreccion & Elmhirst 2008) and brings a feminist agenda to the discussion. The findings also highlight farming in Rwanda's city spaces as an area in great need of scholarly attention. This is pertinent in order to better understand the outcomes of Kigali's ongoing changes concerning urban food security and resilience, not only to climatic shocks but also resilience to unanticipated changes caused by changes in economic relations, pandemics or global security issues. Such events presently seem to occur relatively often, so creating multifunctional, resilient food systems that support and include, rather than exclude, the city's vulnerable residents

appears as a relevant strategy to undertake for a city and country that is serious about equality.

Finally, as mentioned in section 1.1, my thesis forms one particular piece of a puzzle of how social difference is configured through socio-ecological change induced by state-induced governance of agriculture. I have pursued my analysis primarily through a post-structural-orientated feminist lens, albeit, as discussed in section 3.2, not entirely consistently. A significant amount of attention has been given to governmental policy and discourse concerning agriculture and its constitutive effects, as well as how discursive representations are enacted and manifested among urban farmers to (re)configure identities and relations. Ample opportunities thus remain to study the gendered dimensions of agricultural change in Kigali and Rwanda through other lenses of gender. What would, for instance, an analysis through a new material feminist or post-humanist lens bring? One that de-centres the human experience and centres nature's and non-humans' agency (Lloro-Bidart 2018) or that studies how social difference is shaped through human and non-human interactions (Hovorka 2012)? In a context like Rwanda, where much development focus is on advancing economic and material wealth, such more-than-human perspectives could add new and important dimensions to the debate about the role and future of agriculture in Rwanda.

6.4 The city as a space for agrarian and rural development research?

The findings from Papers II and III further show that many farmers in Kigali operate within an environment where they navigate and are influenced by different politics of agriculture, engendering both agency and vulnerability in different ways. The farmers are, in that sense, situated in between, or rather across, development agendas mapped onto a rural-urban divide that approach agriculture in ways that at once empower and marginalise. In the context of Rwanda, a country that holds its tail high for its achievements in reducing gender inequalities as well as for its allegedly successfully gender-mainstreamed and inclusive agricultural and urban development, this insight is pertinent as it points to mainly unfavourable socially differentiated conditions and outcomes for many of urban Kigali's farmers. By exploring the implications of agricultural governance centred on both the city and the countryside, the findings in this thesis collectively complicate discussions

about both rural and urban policy and change in Rwanda. By illustrating how social dynamics in the city are influenced by discourse and governance aimed at the countryside, the thesis is at once an example of and a call for further attention to how change occurs amidst overlapping political processes and frameworks. Knowledge about how various governance frameworks concerning agriculture unfold in interlinked ways beyond their geographical demarcations could build a more nuanced picture of the actual impact of politics and support a policy shift towards less geographical division and a more comprehensive, national approach to food production and the role of all farmers in the development process.

Research on agricultural change in Rwanda and Africa almost exclusively focuses on people, processes and places located in the countryside. This also includes much research that may fall under the FPE umbrella (although see, for example, Hovorka (2005; 2006; 2023) and White (2015)). While understandable in many ways, this thesis highlights some of the limits to this rural focus in feminist and critical agrarian scholarship. By moving the analytical lens across the 'rural-urban' and 'discursive-material' dimensions of agricultural governance, the findings from the three papers together highlight the city as an important context in which to explore the socially differentiated implications of agricultural development and transformation, in Rwanda and beyond. The agricultural policy in Rwanda targets farming and farmers in the countryside. But, as Paper II shows, the policy's GR4A-related ideas of agricultural modernisation seep into the centre of urban Kigali through their integration in the social, ecological and economic dynamics that make up the city, its residents and their relations, despite city authorities phase-out of urban farmland. This thesis thus shows that ideas about agricultural modernisation are present in shaping 'things' also within the rapidly urbanising city (albeit, in the case of Rwanda, under increasingly constrained conditions). As such, for scholars committed to understanding the processes and outcomes of agricultural change in Africa at the present conjuncture, the city and its farmers constitute a context in which much remains to be understood in terms of connecting dots, forging insights and transcending divides between research contexts, fields and disciplines. Rural-urban links are certainly being studied in contexts such as migration and mobility, but I see an opening for more detailed investigations on the ways in which the African agricultural development agenda shapes lives, spaces and ecologies within cities, perhaps as a process that is involved in

the production of the city itself. This implies that critical scholars on agricultural change in Africa need to break this predominantly rural focus by doing (at least) two things. First, engaging with the extensive critical scholarship on urban agriculture in Africa (e.g., Slater 2001; Page 2002; Mougeot 2005; Hovorka 2006; Crush *et al.* 2011; Olivier & Heinecken 2017; Whitley 2021) could facilitate mutual insights about the conditions, challenges and opportunities African farmers face across cities and countrysides. Second, as initiated in Paper II, engaging with theoretical and empirical insights from burgeoning scholarship emergent, for example, in India and Southeast Asia (e.g., Gururani 2020; Balakrishnan & Gururani 2021; Gillen *et al.* 2022), but also elsewhere (e.g., Jacobs 2018; Tornaghi & Dehaene 2020; Tornaghi & Halder 2021) that forges urban, rural and agrarian studies across geography, anthropology and related disciplines, could further insights about how development processes interconnect to shape places and people.

These reflections on where to study agricultural development and change have bearing also for rural development as a broad topic and field of study. As indicated, rural development and critical development studies, the fields around which my thesis circulates in a wider sense, commonly set out to study processes of change and their implications for people and places quite exclusively in the countryside. Yet, along with the growing number of calls to bridge historically divided fields of rural and urban research, this thesis points to an opportunity to reconsider what processes, people and places are deemed relevant to study as part of a rural development field. I find it helpful to consider the idea of 'ruralisation', a concept coined by Krause (2013) and recently reinvigorated by Gillen *et al.* (2022), that seeks to make visible how not only urbanisation and other processes in and from the city reconfigure the countryside (something which I believe is more common to study in rural development), but also how change processes in and from the countryside shape towns and cities. An implication of this for critical and rural development studies is that, if we are to study such change processes in the countryside, such as agricultural transformation, and if these shape lives, lands and livelihoods beyond the countryside *and* are entangled with change processes in the city, then we ought to expand our empirical context into the lives and landscapes within towns and cities to better understand the entanglements of these processes. In a time signified by mobility and multi-sitedness across space, by 'entangled geographies of ruralisation and

urbanisation' (Gillen *et al.* 2022, 189), critical rural development research might have much to gain and contribute through deeper engagement with contexts, concepts and methods that can capture these entangled relationships and how they shape lands and lives in countrysides *and* in cities. In doing so, dots may be connected that further understanding about socio-ecological change and their differential implications.

7. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have aimed to explore how farmers' socially differentiated identities, relations and experiences are shaped through contemporary state-led governance and change of agriculture across space in Rwanda. In seeking knowledge, I have asked questions about the discursive effects of dominant agricultural development ideas on farmers' gender identities, how such ideas are enacted and manifested by farmers to shape gendered subjectivities and social relations, and how interventions for urban sustainability and modernisation shape farmers' experiences and vulnerabilities. Throughout, a general ambition to highlight inequalities and look for alternatives has provided guidance to the research.

Based on analysis of policy, interviews and observations informed by critical policy and development studies and feminist political ecology, I have shown how Rwanda's national agricultural policy discursively reproduces certain ideas and meanings of gender (Paper I), how this utterly rural-orientated agricultural discourse seeps into the city to shape urban farmers' gender subjectivities and relations in Kigali (Paper II) and how, at the same time, urban greening efforts in Kigali engender significant challenges for farmers in ways that are shaped by multiple, intersecting social differences (Paper III). The research has thus moved from the national and discursive, via the manifestation of rural-focused policy into the urban, to the lived experiences of urban governance in Kigali. Together, the thesis weaves a critique of how Rwanda's contemporary development policies that target agriculture, both in the city and in the countryside, overall tend to reproduce and reinforce identities, experiences and relations pertaining to gender and intersectional social difference while leaving structural inequalities largely unchanged.

The insights and arguments developed through this research offer calls for policy in Rwanda to reconsider agricultural and urban governance in ways that move towards more equitable, resilient and inclusive trajectories for farmers, where equality and social justice for the marginalised is foregrounded as a standalone goal, not only as a growth instrument. As argued throughout, such reorientation may entail policies' profound problematisation and interventions' practical countering of deep-seated unequal norms and responsibilities concerning, for instance, exclusionary urban livelihood structures and employment opportunities and gendered

household and care responsibilities. It should also involve greater awareness and consideration by policy and interventions of farmers' more-than-gendered differentiated vulnerabilities, especially those already at the relative margins, to the substantial changes that are underway from the government's visionary agenda for transformation.

Moreover, through its illustration of how different governance frameworks for agriculture overlap and concurrently (re)produce gender in the city, the thesis also challenges the accuracy of a distinct rural-urban policy divide in Rwanda (and in most other places) that create boundaries in ways that may not be reflective of people's lived experiences. A less spatially divided governance of agriculture could potentially aid the development of a more comprehensive approach to the national food system and reconfigure the position of urban farming and farmers in the development of both Kigali and Rwanda. Relatedly, the thesis argues for critical agrarian and rural development scholarship in Africa to expand its empirical and possibly theoretical scope to also examine the implications of agricultural and rural development processes for cities and the people and places therein (c.f., Gururani 2020; Tornaghi & Halder 2021; Gillen *et al.* 2022).

I would like to close this thesis by taking a step back and return to the overall purpose of the thesis: to make a critical contribution to the enduring development debates about the problems and solutions to social inequality in agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa. Although gender inequality has long figured high on the development agenda (Wallace 2020), this study of the Rwandan case illustrates that, while seeds of positive change exist, much remains to be done to move towards sustained, structural social change for African farmers. The thesis thus testaments to the importance of continuing to challenge the ideas and interventions that perpetuate inequalities for farmers and to highlight alternatives. This message, I believe, acquires particular relevance in light of the global political and economic developments we currently witness. In a world that experiences compounded environmental, political, economic and security crises and that sees a profound reorganisation of development environments in many places (Cupać & Ebetürk 2020; Ajayi 2025), insisting on the need for feminist perspectives in agricultural development research and policy seems as crucial as ever. Not least, as cracks may now open to rethink agricultural futures in Africa (Mokgonyana 2025), such perspectives could come useful when countering inequalities perpetuated through previous paradigms.

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Popular science summary

In this thesis in rural development, I study the social consequences of agricultural politics and governance in Rwanda, both in cities and in the countryside. Since the country's reconstruction following the civil war and genocide against the Tutsi in 1994, the government of Rwanda has adopted an ambitious and comprehensive, though contested, political vision for national development. With a goal to achieve the status of a modern high-income country by 2050, this state-driven development strategy with authoritarian elements reshapes the landscapes and lives of people across the country. This is done not least through policies that aim to change how, where, why and by whom agriculture is carried out. Although this reorganisation has had positive effects for some, such as reduced poverty, increased food security and economic growth, it has also had significant adverse effects on poverty and food security for many of the country's millions of smallholder farmers, especially for many women, poor and other vulnerable groups.

Against this background, the aim of my thesis is to explore how the identities, social relations and experiences of Rwandan farmers are shaped by state governance of agriculture in urban and rural areas. Based on this aim, I ask questions about how farmers' gender identities are shaped by dominant policy ideas about agricultural development, how farmers' different (intersectional) experiences and relations in the local community are shaped by political approaches to the role of agriculture in urban and rural areas, respectively, and the possibilities for social change and gender equality within and beyond Rwanda's current development framework.

To understand the varying impacts of state governance on farmers, I bring together research from fields such as feminist political ecology and critical policy studies. Based on this literature, my research assumes that social difference, such as gender or age, play an important role in contexts of natural resource management and control. It also assumes that it is through different kinds of actions, or practices, that things get their meaning and significance. These 'things' can be physical objects and places as well as people's identities and perceptions of themselves. For example, what it means to be a woman or a man in an agricultural context is not predetermined but is continuously 'made' through repeated actions. Actions can be what people say and do. But even the written word, such as a policy document

about agriculture, is a kind of practice that maintains or reworks the meaning of 'things' through the ideas and knowledge it conveys. With this understanding, I analyse policy documents related to agriculture in rural as well as urban development contexts, together with interviews and participant observations with farmers in Rwanda's capital, Kigali.

In my research, I show that although policies on agriculture create some opportunities to challenge existing inequalities in agriculture, they often reinforce existing gendered positions, power relations and distribution of responsibilities. For example, norms are repeated, the different effects of interventions for farmers are insufficiently addressed and gender inequality is used as a tool to increase economic growth. This shapes farmers' gender-based possibilities for income, food and agency and creates different conditions for dealing with change. I also show how gender-based differences are linked to other social inequalities such as age, health and ability. This further shape farmers' vulnerability to different types of change, such as the ongoing urban greening in Kigali through the construction of tourist parks on previously cultivated land in the city's urban marshlands.

Interestingly, the research also shows how policies designed primarily for agriculture in rural areas also have gender-related impacts for farmers in urban areas of Kigali. Some women, for example, experience increased empowerment and a strengthened position in the local community and household as a result of their engagement in farming according to principles of modernised, market-based agriculture. At the same time, the strong and comprehensive agenda for urban greening in Kigali creates major changes and challenges for many of the farmers in the city. This shows how seemingly separate political agendas, situated within the same framework of national transformation but aimed at rural and urban areas, respectively, are in practice interconnected and, to some extent, contradictory.

In the thesis, I conclude that Rwanda's current development strategy does not sufficiently challenge prevailing different and unequal power relations to bring about lasting social change for the farmers who bear the heaviest burden of this inequality. I also suggest that more knowledge and debate is needed about how different but interconnected policy agendas intended for different places influence and are influenced by each other to better understand their effects in practice.

Populärvetenskaplig sammanfattning

I denna avhandling inom ämnet landsbygdsutveckling studerar jag sociala konsekvenser av politik och styrning som rör jordbruk i Rwanda, på landsbygden såväl som i staden. Alltsedan återuppbyggandet efter långvarigt inbördeskrig och 1994 års folkmord på landets tutsier har Rwandas regering anammat en ambitiös och långtgående, om än ifrågasatt, politisk vision för nationell utveckling. Med en målsättning att uppnå statusen för ett modernt höginkomstland till år 2050 omformar denna utvecklingsstrategi med auktoritära inslag landskapen och livet för människor över hela landet. Detta sker inte minst genom en politik som syftar till att förändra hur, var, varför och av vem landets jordbruk utförs. Även om denna omformning har haft positiv effekt för en del, till exempel minskad fattigdom, ökad matsäkerhet och ekonomisk tillväxt, så har den också betydande ogynnsamma konsekvenser för fattigdom och matsäkerhet för många av landets miljontals småbrukare, särskilt för många kvinnor, fattiga och andra utsatta grupper.

Mot denna bakgrund är syftet med min avhandling att utforska hur rwandiska jordbrukares identiteter, sociala relationer och erfarenheter formas av statlig styrning av jordbruk, i staden och på landsbygden. Utifrån syftet ställer jag frågor om hur jordbrukares genusidentiteter formas av dominerande idéer om jordbruksutveckling, hur jordbrukares olika (intersektionella) erfarenheter och relationer i lokalsamhället formas av olikartade politiska förhållningssätt till jordbrukets roll i staden och på landsbygden, och om möjligheterna till social förändring och jämställdhet inom och bortom det rådande politiska ramverket för utveckling i Rwanda.

För att förstå den statliga styrningens påverkan på jordbrukare förenar jag forskning från områdena feministisk politisk ekologi och kritiska policystudier. Med grund i denna litteratur utgår jag ifrån att sociala skillnader såsom genus eller ålder spelar en viktig roll i sammanhang som rör förvaltning och kontroll över naturresurser. Jag utgår också ifrån att det är genom olika slags handlingar, eller praktiker, som saker och ting får sin innebörd och betydelse. Dessa ’saker och ting’ kan vara fysiska objekt och platser såväl som människors identiteter och uppfattning av sig själva. Innebörden av att vara kvinna och man i ett jordbrukssammanhang är till exempel inte förutbestämd utan ’görs’ kontinuerligt genom upprepade handlingar. Handlingar kan vara det människor säger och gör. Men även det skrivna ordet, såsom ett policydokument om jordbruk, är handlingar som

upprätthåller eller omarbetar innebörden av ’saker och ting’ genom de idéer och kunskaper det förmedlar. Med detta synsätt analyserar jag policydokument som rör jordbruk i landsbygds- såväl som stadsutvecklingssammanhang tillsammans med intervjuer och deltagandeobservationer med jordbrukare i Rwandas huvudstad Kigali.

I min forskning visar jag att även om policy kring jordbruk skapar vissa möjligheter att utmana rådande ojämlikheter inom jordbruket så befäster och förstärker de ofta befintliga genusbundna positioner, ansvarsfördelningar och maktförhållanden. Till exempel återupprepas normer, varierande effekter av insatser för jordbrukare adresseras inte och ojämlikhet utnyttjas som ett verktyg för att öka ekonomisk tillväxt. Detta formar jordbrukares genusbundna möjligheter till inkomst, mat och egenmakt och skapar olika förutsättningar att hantera förändring. Jag visar även hur genusbaserade skillnader är sammanlänkade med andra sociala olikheter såsom ålder, hälsa och funktionsvariation, vilket ytterligare formar jordbrukarnas utsatthet för olika typer av förändring, såsom Kigalis pågående förgröning genom anläggandet av turistparker på tidigare odlad mark i stadens urbana våtmarker.

Intressant nog visar forskningen som helhet också hur politik utformad primärt för landsbygdsområden har genusrelaterade verkningar även för jordbrukare i de urbana delarna av Kigali. En del kvinnor upplever en ökad egenmakt och stärkt position i lokalsamhället och hushållet till följd av sitt engagemang i odling enligt principer om ett moderniserat, kommersiellt jordbruk. Samtidigt skapar den starka och övergripande agendan för urban förgröning i Kigali stora förändringar och utmaningar för många av jordbrukarna i staden. Detta visar hur till synes separata politiska strategier, båda inom ramen för nationell transformation men riktade mot landsbygd respektive stad, i praktiken är sammanlänkade och till viss del motsägelsefulla.

I avhandlingen drar jag slutsatsen att Rwandas nuvarande utvecklingsstrategi inte tillräckligt utmanar rådande ojämlika och olikartade maktförhållanden för att åstadkomma varaktig social förändring för de jordbrukare som bär den tyngsta bördan för denna ojämlikhet. Jag föreslår också att mer kunskap och diskussion behövs kring hur olika men sammanlänkade politiska agendor avsedda för olika platser påverkar och påverkas av varandra för att bättre förstå dess effekter i praktiken.

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Appendix

Interview guide for semi-structured interviews

English

Farming practices (characteristics, activities, roles and responsibilities)

1. Can you tell us about your farming/backyard farming/veggies growing/gardening/animal rearing? For example, what, how and where do you grow food/rear animals for food?
    a. What crops do you grow or what animals do you rear?
    b. Which activities need to be done related to your farming?
    c. Do you do the farming as a fulltime or hobby/part-time activity? What else do you do for income generation?
2. Does your farming play an important role in your life? Can you explain how?
3. Can you tell us the story of how you started with farming/gardening/growing/animals?
4. Who is involved in the farming more than you?
5. How are the different tasks related to farming divided among the people who are involved?
6. In your view, why do you think the tasks are divided like that?
7. In your view, are some of the tasks more appropriate for women to do than men, and are there some tasks that are more appropriate for men to do than for women?

Resource access, control, and governance

8. Can you tell us about the different things that you need for your farming?
9. How do you experience the quality of the soil where you farm?
10. If growing in pots etc.: Why do you grow in pots/boxes and not in the ground soil?
    a. Do you think it is a good solution to grow in pots etc.? Why?
11. Can you tell us the story of how you got access to the land/location/space where you farm?
12. Who owns the land/space where you do your farming?
13. In your view, how is the general situation to access land/space to farm on in Kigali?

a. How do you experience that land available for farming has changed from the time you started farming until now?
b. In your view, are there competing interests for land in Kigali? Please explain.

Reasons, perceptions, and attitudes to farming

14. What are your reason/s for farming?
15. Are your farming activities an important part of your life right now?
    a. If yes, in what ways?
    b. If no, what role does it play in your life?
16. Do you think about yourself as a:
    a. Farmer? Why/ why not?
    b. Urban farmer? Why/ why not?
    c. Entrepreneur? Why/ why not?
17. Has there been a tradition of farming in your family?
18. What do you enjoy about your farming?
19. What do you not enjoy about your farming?
20. In what ways is the farm land/space important to you?

Challenges and opportunities with urban farming

21. In your view, how does your farming help you in your life?
22. What are some of the challenges or disadvantages you face in your farming?
23. What are some of the opportunities and possibilities you face in your farming?

Gender aspects of farming in Kigali

24. Based on your experiences, what is it like to do farming in Kigali as a woman/as a man?
25. Based on your experiences, are there gender norms/stereotypes attached to farming as a woman/a man in Kigali?
26. Have you personally experienced any of these norms or stereotypes?
27. In your view, have these gender norms and stereotypes changed over time?

28. In your view, are there different roles and responsibilities for women and men who do urban or peri-urban farming here in Kigali?

The role of urban farming in Kigali

29. In your view, what seems to be the public opinion on farming that takes place within the urban areas of Kigali?
30. In your view, how can urban farming create positive change in Kigali?
31. Based on your experience, what kind of support does the City of Kigali provide for urban and peri-urban farmers?

Kinyarwanda

IMIRIMO Y'UBUHINZI (ibiyiranga, akazi gakorwa, akamaro n'inshingano)

1. Watubwira ku buhinzi bwawe?/ Akarima ko ku rugo/ akarima k'imboga/ ubusitani/ubworozi bw'itungo riribwa? Iki kibazo cyemerera ubazwa gusobanura birambuye ndetse no guhitamo icyo ashakako tuvugaho.
    a. Ni ikihe gihingwa uhinga/itungo riribwa utunze?
    b. Ni iyihe mirimo ubona ikenewe gukorwa muri iki gihe?
    c. Ese ukora ubuhinzi nk'akazi kawe kaburi munsi cyangwa ubikora nko kwishimisha/nyuma y'iyindi mirimo? Niyihe mirimo y'indi ikubyarira inyungu ukora atari ubuhinzi?
2. Ubuhinzi bwawe bwaba bufite umumaro ukomeye mubuzima bwawe? Niba ari byo, uwo mumaro n'uwuhe?
3. Watubwira amateka y'uburyo watangiye ubuhinzi/ ubworozi bwawe?
4. Ninde wundi ukurikirana ibikorwa byo mu murima wawe kukurusha?
5. Ni gute ugabana inshingano n'abandi bantu bakora mu buhinzi bwawe?
6. Ukurikije uko ubibona, kuki iyi mirimo igabanywa gutya?
7. Ukurikije uko ubibona, haba hari imirimo utekerezako yagenewe abagabo, abagore batakora? Cyangwa iyagenewe abagore abagabo batakora? Ndakwinginze dusobanurire.

KUBONA IGISHORO CY'UBUHINZI, KUGICUNGA N'IMIYOBIRERE

8. Watubwira ku bintu bitandukanye ukenera kugira ngo ukore ubuhinzi bwawe?
9. Ni gute umenya ubwiza bw'ubutaka bwaho uhinga?
10. Niba mohinga mubikoresho by'ibumba cyangwa ibindi bikoresho, kubera iki aribyo mwahisemo mudahinga mu butaka?
    a. Utekerezako guhinga mu bikoresho by'ibumba cyangwa ibindi bikoresho ari igisubizo cyiza kuri wowe? Kubera iki (sobanura)?
11. Watubwira amateka y'ukuntu wabonye ubutaka ukoreraho ubuhinzi bwawe?
12. Ninde nyir'ubutaka uhingaho?
13. Ukurikije uko ubibona, ubona kubona ubutaka bihagaze gute muri Kigali?
    a. Ni gute ubona ko ubutaka buhari bwo guhinga bwahindutse uko ibihe bigenda bihita uhereye igihe watangiriye ubuhinzi bwawe kugeza ubu?
    b. Ukurikije uko ubibona, hari ibindi bintu byakoresha ubutaka kandi bikazana inyungu kurusha ubuhinzi muri Kigali? Ndakwinginze sobanura.

IMPAMVU, IBITEKEREZO, NDETSE N'IMYUMVIRE KU BUHINZI

14. Ni iyihe mpamvu ituma ukora ubuhinzi?
15. Ese imirimo yawe y'ubuhinzi n'ingenzi mu buzima bwawe?
    a. Niba igisubizo ari 'yego', ni mubuhe buryo?
    b. Niba igisubizo ari 'oya', ni akahe kamaro ubuhinzi bwawe bumaze mu mibereho yawe?
16. Mbese ujya utekereza nkaho;
    a. Uri umuhinzi usanzwe? Kubera iki ariko ubitekereza/ kubera iki atariko ubitekereza?
    b. Uri umuhinzi wo mu mujyi? Kubera iki ariko ubitekereza/ kubera iki atariko ubitekereza?
    c. Umuhanga-murimo? Kubera iki ariko ubitekereza/ kubera iki atariko ubitekereza?
17. Ese mwaba mwarigeze mukora ubuhinzi gakondo mu muryango wanyu?
18. Niki kigushimisha mu buhinzi bwawe?

19. Niki udakunda/ kitagushimisha mu buhinzi bwawe?
20. Ni mubuhe buryo ubutaka bwawe uhingaho ari ingenzi kuri wowe?

IMBOGAMIZI N'AMAHIRWE BIBONEKA MU BUHINZI BUKORERWA MU MUJYI

21. Ukurikije uko ubibona, ni gute ubuhinzi bwawe bugufasha mumibereho?
22. Ni izihe mbogamizi cyangwa ingorane wahuye nazo mu buhinzi bwawe?
23. Ni ayahe mahirwe n'ubundi buryo bushoboka waboneye mu buhizinzi bwawe?

IHAME RY'UBURINGANIRE MU BUHINZI BWO MURI KIGALI

24. Ugendeye ku gihe umaze ukora ubuhinzi, bivuze iki kubukorera muri Kigali nk'umugabo cyangwa umugore?
25. Ukurikije uburambe ufite, hari kirazira ndetse n'imyimvire ijyanye n'ihame ry'uburinganire ku buhinzi waba uzi cyane cyane nk'umugabo/ umugore wo muri Kigali?
26. Kugiti cyawe hari kirazira cyangwa imyumvire iganisha kwihame ry'uburinganire waba warahuye naryo?
27. Ukurikije uko ubibona, kirazira n'imyumvire kw'ihame ry'uburinganire byaba bigenda bihuka uko ibihe bigenda bihinduka?
28. Ukurikije uko ubibona, haba hari itandukaniro riri hagati y'akamaro ndetse n'inshingano z'umugore n'umugabo bakora ubuhinzi mu mujyi cyangwa mu nkengero zawo hano muri Kigali?

AKAMARO K'UBUHINZI BUKORERWA MU MUJYI WA KIGALI

29. Ukurikije uko ubibona, niki kigaragara nk'igitekerezo cy'abaturage muri rusange ku buhinzi bukorerwa mu mujyi wa Kigali?
30. Ukurikije uko ubibona, ni gute ubuhinzi bukorerwa mu mujyi mushobora kuzana impinduka nziza muri Kigali?
31. Ugendeye kugihe umaze ukora ubuhinzi, n'ubuhe bufasha umujyi wa Kigali uhereza abahinzi bo mu mujyi no munkengero zawo?

Papers I-III

I

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Window dressing inequalities and constructing women farmers as problematic—gender in Rwanda's agriculture policy

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Abstract
Rwanda is often depicted as a success story by policy makers when it comes to issues of gender. In this paper, we show how the problem of gendered inequality in agriculture nevertheless is both marginalized and instrumentalized in Rwanda's agriculture policy. Our in-depth analysis of 12 national policies is informed by Bacchi's *What's the problem represented to be?* approach. It attests that gendered inequality is largely left unproblematized as well as reduced to a problem of women's low agricultural productivity. The policy focuses on framing the symptoms and effects of gendered inequality and turns gender mainstreaming into an instrument for national economic growth. We argue that by insufficiently addressing the socio-political underlying causes of gendered inequality, Rwanda's agriculture policy risks reproducing and exacerbating inequalities by reinforcing dominant gender relations and constructing women farmers as problematic and men as normative farmers. We call for the policy to approach gendered inequality in alternative ways. Drawing on perspectives in feminist political ecology, we discuss how such alternatives could allow policy to more profoundly challenge underlying structural constraints such as unequal gender relations of power, gender norms, and gender divisions of work. This would shift policy's problematizing lens from economic growth to social justice, and from women's shortcomings and disadvantages in agriculture to the practices and relations that perpetuate inequality. In the long term, this could lead to transformed gender norms and power relations, and a more just and equal future beyond what the dominant agricultural development discourse currently permits.

Keywords Agriculture policy · Gender equality · Rwanda · Policy analysis · WPR approach · Feminist political ecology

Abbreviations

AMS	Agriculture Mechanization Strategy
FPE	Feminist Political Ecology
GALS	Gender Action Learning Systems
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoR	Government of Rwanda
GR4A	Green Revolution for Africa
GTA	Gender Transformative Approaches
GYMS	Gender and Youth Mainstreaming Strategy
NAP	National Agriculture Policy
NAEB	National Agricultural Export Development Board
PSTA4	4Th Strategic Plan for Agricultural Transformation
WPR	What's the problem represented to be?
USD	United States Dollar

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Introduction

Gendered inequality has been considered a crucial issue in agricultural and development governance ever since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995. It is often addressed through the governance strategy of gender mainstreaming.[1] In agricultural institutions, gender mainstreaming has largely implied integrating more women farmers into existing agricultural projects and programs that are

[1] Gender mainstreaming refers to strategies to purposefully integrate concerns and objectives for gender equality into policy practices (Davids and van Eerdewijk 2016). The original aim is to transform organizational processes and practices by eliminating existing gender biases (Benschop and Verloo 2006).

framed within gender-biased neoliberal ideas of efficiency, competition, and market-led development (Arora-Jonsson and Leder 2021; Gengenbach et al. 2018). Accordingly, debates are ongoing about the problems of and solutions to gendered inequalities in agriculture (Arora-Jonsson and Leder 2021; McDougall et al. 2021), and in development more generally (Chant and Sweetman 2012; Parpart 2014; Cornwall and Edwards 2010; Moser 1989).

Indeed, discussions about the meanings and problems of gendered inequalities, and the strategies by which to eradicate them, occur in contested processes of interpretation and knowledge creation, where some forms of knowledge gain prominence over others. Such discursive struggles determine what assumptions about gender and inequality emerge as "true," relevant, and legitimate for policy action. In this paper, we show and argue that discourse and its effects on how problems and people are constructed in policy are important to study and understand, as has been argued elsewhere (e.g. Davila 2020; Gottschlich and Bellina 2017; Schneider 2015).

Feminists continue to reveal and challenge the biases and effects of prevailing conceptualizations of gender in dominant approaches to development (Gerard 2019; Harcourt 2016; Jackson and Pearson 2005) and agriculture (Ossome and Naidu 2021; Razavi 2009; Sachs 2019). In the current neoliberal development paradigm, critics argue that development theory and practice should (re-)connect with feminist theories of care, justice, and emancipation to achieve substantive and sustainable social change (Cornwall and Rivas 2015; Nyambura 2015; Wallace 2020). In contemporary African agricultural restructuring and transition, known as the New Green Revolution for Africa (GR4A), scholars highlight and challenge the gendered, unequal outcomes of interventions for, among others, agricultural mechanization (Daum et al. 2021; Kansanga et al. 2019), new and improved seeds and varieties (Addison and Schnurr 2016; Bergman Lodin 2012), new breeds (Wangui 2008), irrigated agriculture (Nation 2010), inorganic fertilizer and pesticide use (Christie et al. 2015; Luna 2020), market integration (Quisumbing et al. 2015; Tavenner and Crane 2018) and commercialization (Gengenbach 2020). Recent studies of national agriculture policy in Africa consider its limitations with regard to advancing equality. They indicate that gender mainstreaming is limited within and across governance levels (Ampaire et al. 2020; Drucza et al. 2020; Tsige et al. 2020) and that structural inequalities are insufficiently addressed upon implementation (Ampaire et al. 2020), which turns gendered inequality into an apolitical and technical problem (Acosta et al. 2019). The analyses highlight important weaknesses in interpretation and implementation of gender mainstreaming in agriculture policy and practice. However, the discourses in national African agriculture policy that underpin and legitimize how problems of gendered inequalities are formulated and addressed have hitherto not been extensively examined.

We contribute such an examination by drawing on Bacchi's (2009) *What's the problem represented to be?* (WPR) approach to analyze if and how gendered inequality is problematized in Rwanda's agriculture policy documents. According to Bacchi (2009), problems are not given, but constructed through problematization and often created in such a way that a manageable solution can be found. We thus study how the policies construct the problems they seek to address (Allan et al. 2010), which means analyzing what discourses and assumptions they rely upon to appear legitimate for intervention. Moreover, problem formulations shape, or limit, what course of action and behavior the policy's target population can pursue. For this, we use the concept of gendering effects (Bacchi 2017) to analyze how women and men farmers are constructed in different and potentially unequalizing ways through the problem formulations. Finally, the WPR approach also serves to challenge existing problem formulations and to reflect on how they could be understood and formulated differently.

We have chosen Rwanda as our case of analysis, which is internationally known for its achievements in gender-equal parliamentary representation, health, and education (WEF 2019). These achievements have influenced women's autonomy and respect in the family and community to some extent (Burnet 2011), yet research shows that the picture needs to be nuanced (Ansoms and Holvoet 2008; Berry 2015; Debusscher and Ansoms 2013). Similarly, Rwanda is widely celebrated as a model example of GR4A implementation (Nyenyezi Bisoka and Ansoms 2020a). The country pushes a policy agenda of agrarian and structural transition based on economic growth, and it aims to reach high-income country status by 2050 (GoR 2020). Agriculture is Rwanda's largest sector in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) and employment (WB 2019). Increased agricultural productivity and efficiency through modernization and professionalization of farming and farmers is represented as key to rural poverty reduction and national economic growth.[2] These points combined make Rwanda's agriculture policy an interesting and relevant case in which to analyze how the Government of Rwanda (GoR) problematizes gendered inequality in agriculture.

In this paper, we explore how the problematization of gendered inequality in Rwanda's agriculture is underpinned and legitimized by specific discourses about gender, agriculture, and development, and how this constructs women and

[2] See Nyenyezi Bisoka and Ansoms (2020b) for an account of the process whereby Rwanda has embraced a productivist agricultural agenda.

men farmers in specific ways. By questioning the policy's claims to facts and knowledge, we also open up for alternative ways of problematizing. Our analysis is guided by four research questions, adapted from Bacchi and Goodwin (2016):

1. How is gendered inequality problematized in Rwanda's agriculture policy?
2. What dominant discourses and assumptions underpin the problematization?
3. How are women and men farmers constructed through the problematization?
4. How can gendered inequality be problematized differently?

Following an overview of the scientific knowledge on gender relations in Rwanda's agriculture, we introduce the study's methodological approach. Next, we present our analysis of how gendered inequality is problematized in the agriculture policy, including its underlying discourses, assumptions, and gendering effects. We then draw on perspectives within feminist political ecology (FPE) to discuss alternative, more gender transformative ways for the agriculture policy to construct the problem of gendered inequality.

Gender and agriculture in Rwanda

Rwanda's development strategy aims to continue and intensify socio-economic development and the agriculture sector forms a cornerstone of this process (GoR 2020). Agriculture is described as a crucial engine for past and future economic growth, poverty reduction, and food security. At the same time, the GoR claims agriculture to remain insufficiently productive and highlights its underutilized economic potential. Arguments are therefore made for a sector-wide transformation of smallholder and subsistence based farming to a market-driven and modernized agriculture sector (GoR 2020). To further legitimize this agricultural transformation, the GoR draws on a narrative that claims agricultural yields to be insufficient in relation to land availability and the growth and density of the population. The GoR also assumes correlations between agricultural productivity and farmers' increased incomes, and between increased incomes and poverty reduction, food security, and economic growth. Increased agricultural productivity[3] is thereby represented as a key to successful development. In the strategy for agricultural development, the GoR proposes gender mainstreaming as a way to address and prevent gendered inequalities (GoR 2018; 2019).

Interventions for increased agricultural productivity in Rwanda have allegedly improved the lives of many Rwandans (Meador and O'Brien 2019; NISR 2012). Yet, the picture is contested (Ansoms et al. 2017; Okito 2019). Mounting evidence in the scientific literature indicates that many agricultural interventions exacerbate patterns of differential access to and control of resources, which increases the vulnerability of already marginalized populations (see e.g. Ansoms 2008; Ansoms and Cioffo 2016; Cioffo et al. 2016; Clay and Zimmerer 2020; Huggins 2017; Nyenyezi Bisoka et al. 2020; Wise 2020). Some outcomes of the interventions are distinctly gendered. Examples include male capture, i.e. men's appropriation of crops with increased economic value (Clay 2017; Ingabire et al. 2018), women's unequal participation in rural labor markets (Bigler et al. 2017; Illien et al. 2021) and farming cooperatives (Treidl 2018), and negative effects on women farmers' wellbeing and workload (Ansoms and Holvoet 2008; Bigler et al. 2019; Clay 2017; Debusscher and Ansoms 2013). Such outcomes are often explained by, among others, unequal gender norms, gendered division of work, and institutional and structural constraints.

The reviewed literature challenges the narrative of a successful on-going agricultural transformation in Rwanda, and confirms gendered and unequal outcomes of its policy implementation. While the studies bring insights to the limits and gendered nature of Rwanda's model for agricultural transformation, they mainly analyze the gendered effects of policy upon implementation. Women and men's characteristics and relations are thereby assumed as pre-givens that are not questioned. Less attention is paid to how policy, in its very formulation, construct and condition the characteristics, actions, and roles that become possible for women and men farmers to adopt. Studies with such *constitutive* approach to policy, as this one, bring insights about the discursive effects of policy, thus contributing important complementary knowledge to existing scholarship. A few studies, however, recently brought this approach to Rwanda's agricultural context. Ansoms and Cioffo (2016) study how dominant discourses on agriculture and citizenship construct rural citizens in particular ways in Rwanda's state-led reorganization of rural space and production. Nyenyezi Bisoka and Ansoms (2020a) analyze how Rwandan farmers resist the productivist agricultural norm in the GR4A and renegotiate their agency as well as the norm itself. These studies show how dominant agricultural discourses construct, and are reconstructed by, farming and farmers. They shed light on the relevance of analyzing and challenging the discourses that policy (re)produce, and of assessing their effects on people. Our analysis builds on these insights to understand the distinctly gendered discursive effects of Rwanda's agriculture policy.

[3] Defined as the economic value of agricultural produce per unit of cultivated land (GoR 2019, p. 14).

Methodology

Our study starts with an understanding of meaning as constructed in and through language. The meaning of things and phenomena evolves through discourses, defined as socially produced systems of knowledge, which limit and enable what is possible to think, speak, or write (McHoul and Grace 1993, cited in Bacchi and Goodwin 2016, p. 35). Moreover, meaning making takes place in processes of discursive struggles that are characterized by unequal relations of power. This causes some forms of knowledge to acquire precedence over others, thereby emerging as more legitimate, or more "true." However, what is considered as true and legitimate knowledge is never fixed or stable, since discourses change across time and space (Weedon 1996). Therefore, the meaning of objects (things) and subjects (people) are constantly made and remade, or *constituted*, in and through meaning making processes, or discursive practices (Allan et al. 2010; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016).

Policy as gendering practice

With this constitutive approach, we understand policy to discursively produce and construct the problems, subjects, and objects they seek to address (Allan et al. 2010). Such discursive production occurs in ways that may produce and reproduce gender disparities. We thus understand policy as a gendering practice where the social categories "woman" and "man" are constructed through language and meaning making in policy in specific ways and in a relation of inequality (Bacchi 2017). What women and men can think, do, be, and become – their subject positions – is shaped in and by the meaning and knowledge produced by policy. This refers to the gendering effects of policy. The analytical focus thereby becomes how policy *produces* things or people, instead of the effects of policy on them. Attention is given to how the categories of women and men are *done* (constructed) through specific discursive practices in policy texts (Bacchi 2017, p. 21). This approach to analyzing policy enables an examination of how phenomena, such as gendered inequality, become constructed as particular problems with effects on the different subject positions made (un) available to women and men. Because discourse is dynamic, such examination also opens up the possibility to understand and construct policy problems differently, based on alternative discourses and with other gendering effects (Bacchi 2012; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). The task of this paper is to analyze the discursive practices that legitimize particular problem formulations of gendered inequality in Rwanda's agriculture policy, to consider its gendering effects, and to reflect on alternative ways of problematizing gendered inequality. Next, we describe how this analysis was conducted.

Analytical framework and procedure

Our analysis follows the prompt by the *What's the problem represented to be?* (WPR) approach to "work backwards" in policy documents, to "examine the 'unexamined ways of thinking' on which [the problematizations] rely, to put in question their underlying premises, and to insist on questioning their implications" (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016, p. 16). Our analytical goal is thus to challenge what may *appear* as "truths," to make the politics in the policy visible, and to open up for alternative problem formulations foregrounded by a feminist vision of just and equal outcomes (ibid.).

The analysis consisted of an iterative process of individual and joint in-depth reading and re-reading of policy documents. Key analytical means encompassed memo writing, categorization, and grouping by hand and in NVivo, and discussions among the authors. In the initial phase, we explored the documents in terms of relevant themes, concepts, and ideas in relation to the first three research questions. A word count of terms directly or indirectly relating to gendered inequalities indicated the extent to which it was addressed in each of the documents. Through discussions and analytic memo writing, we identified and explored different problematizations related to gender and considered what knowledges and assumptions they were based on. We also discussed the large parts of the documents where gendered inequality was not considered, and paid particular attention to potential gender biases within those silences.

In the second phase, the identified themes and concepts were further analyzed and, by hand and in NVivo, grouped together under broader categories of problematizations. Some new material was identified and included for in-depth reading during this phase, which allowed for emergent ideas and insights to be tested, juxtaposed, confirmed, or revised.[4] In this phase, we also identified forms of knowledge and their underlying assumptions and sketched out how these were connected to problematizations of gendered inequality.

The WPR framework suggests that the discourses and assumptions that legitimize a particular problematization are identified and traced to understand their origins, pathways into policy, and their rationale in the specific policy context. For this reason, we also reviewed a broader set of national and international reports, strategies, and agreements by public authorities, donors, and organizations that were cited in, or otherwise related to, the analyzed documents. This helped us to follow discourses beyond the boundaries of Rwanda's agriculture sector, which helped understanding Rwanda's

[4] The material included for analysis during this phase was: National Agriculture Policy (NAP) 2018; NAEB Strategic Plan: Increasing Agri-export revenues (NAEB) 2019; Rice Development Strategy (RDS) 2011, see Annex 1.

policy in the broader context of regional, continental, and global agricultural development.

In the final phase, we revisited and discussed analytic memos, thematic grouping, and categorizations. This led us to delineate how specific discourses and assumptions about gender, agriculture, and development operated in and across the documents to form one main problematization of gendered inequality. Following this, we also discussed how women and men farmers were constructed in specific ways through this problematization, and what implications such constructions could have for existing gender norms, relations, and structures in Rwanda's agriculture.

Our reflection on alternative problematizations of gendered inequality was based on insights from the first three research questions and by revisiting feminist scholarship on agricultural development policy and practice, notably within the field of feminist political ecology (FPE). We engaged with relational and performative conceptualizations of gender and power in agrarian and otherwise socio-ecological contexts. This led to ideas and suggestions guided by gender transformative approaches (GTA) to agricultural development where an alternative policy increasingly and strategically would problematize the underlying causes of gendered inequality in agriculture, with the aim to achieve gender equality.

Analyzed material

The policy documents included for analysis encompassed national-level policies, strategies, implementation plans, and reports related to Rwanda's agriculture. A selection of sub-sector documents was also included, such as strategies and plans for rice cultivation and irrigated agriculture. In addition to the requirement for online accessibility, the material was selected to cover a wide and representative range of the agriculture policy framework. In total, 12 documents were analyzed, comprising approximately 1330 pages. In addition, relevant strategy documents, reports, and policy briefs from national and international agricultural and development organizations, funders, and donors were reviewed, as were national policies of overarching character, agreements, and declarations related to agriculture at regional and continental level. A list of the analyzed and reviewed documents is provided in Annex 1.

Problematization of gendered inequality in Rwanda's agriculture policy

Window dressing gendered inequality

Our first key insight points to a limited attention to gendered inequality as a problem in Rwanda's agriculture policy. A word count shows that the term "gender" occurs between zero and 47 times in each of the 12 documents, excluding the Gender and Youth Mainstreaming Strategy (GYMS), which mentions "gender" 574 times. The 4th Strategic Plan for Agricultural Transformation (PSTA4) scores 47, but in all other documents, "gender" occurs fewer than five times. Similar patterns are observed regarding the terms "women" and "men," although "women" occurs five to eight times more often than do "men." Moreover, content related to gender is mostly confined to chapters towards the end of documents or to subsequent sections of chapters, often referred to as a "cross-cutting issue." For example, in the National Agriculture Policy (NAP), gender, or rather women along with youth, receive attention in a sub-subsection under the last policy pillar named "Inclusive markets and off-farm opportunities" (p. 33 of 38). Similarly, the PSTA4 includes "gender and family" as a cross-cutting issue together with other themes such as "capacity development," "nutrition-responsive agriculture," "environment and climate change," and "regional integration" (p. 70 of 97).

The overall peripheral placement of gender concerns is also reflected in numbers and tables, as finance for gender equality efforts seem under-prioritized. For instance, the PSTA4 dedicates 1.9% of its total 7-year budget (2018–2024) to gender mainstreaming activities. Cross-document comparison shows that the 7-year budget of the GYMS (2019–2025) is 36% of the size of the budget for the Agricultural Mechanization Strategy (AMS). Similarly, the GYMS budget is 17% of the size of the budget for the strategy for information and communications technology in agriculture (ICT4RAg), and 5% of that of the strategy for the Crop Intensification Program (CIP).

Because of the policy's generally limited attention to and acknowledgement of gendered inequality as a problem, the GYMS emerges as the main space to tackle it. This overall isolation of gender considerations together with the fact that the issues of "gender" and "youth" are consistently considered in tandem, further presents gendered inequality as a side-lined problem among others and constructs the target populations (women and youth) as homogenous groups in need of particular intervention. For example, the GYMS includes mainstreaming strategies for both women and youth, and The National Agricultural Export Development Board's strategic plan to increase agri-export revenues (NAEB) considers the two as thematic considerations along with "knowledge management," "human capital development," and "environmental sustainability" (p. 62 of 127). Our analysis suggests that this under-prioritization and marginalization compartmentalizes the problem of gendered inequality in agriculture and disintegrates it from the overarching agriculture policy framework. Gendered inequality is constructed as an add-on problem to key action areas such

as farmers' market integration, agricultural productivity, technology adoption, and innovation. We find that this reflects a limited and superficial understanding of how gender is integral to shaping the conditions and outcomes of these action areas, and in agrarian transitions in general. Notions of gender as a system of power relations that form specific norms and practices in agriculture (Nightingale 2011) remain silent.

Yet, we find this superficial understanding contradictive in light of an economic argument presented for taking gendered inequality seriously. The argument is elaborated in the GYMS and based on the "gender agricultural productivity gap:" the persistence of differences in agricultural productivity between farms managed by women and men. Because of its alleged hampering effect on economic growth, this gender gap becomes relevant within contexts dominated by the mainstream agricultural development discourse, such as Rwanda. Closing the gender productivity gap in Rwanda, the GYMS presents, could lead to a direct GDP increase of USD 418.6 million (or approx. 5% in 2013/2014[5]) and lift 2.1 million Rwandans out of poverty (almost 33% of the country's poor in 2013/2014) (UN Women et al. 2017). We will later question that the GoR concentrates its efforts for remedying gendered inequality in agriculture on closing this gap. However, in light of the GoR's overall economic growth-driven approach to agricultural development, we interpret the contradiction between the policy's limited recognition and integration of issues of gender, and the alleged economic benefit of closing the gender productivity gap, as window dressing concerns for gendered inequality. We would expect more and in-depth attention to gendered inequality throughout the documents to correspondingly reflect the benefits assumed from closing the gap.

Constructing women farmers as problematic

Our second key finding relates to the policy's construction of women farmers as problematic – and men as normative farmers. This can be traced to the association of gendered inequality with low agricultural productivity as a limit to economic growth. Foregrounded by a vision of capitalist, neoliberal agricultural modernization, the parts of the policy related to gender are centered on women farmers and their purported low agricultural productivity. The vision and aims of the GYMS reflect this:

> "The Vision is that there is increased and sustainable productivity in the agriculture sector for healthy and wealthy women, men and youth. The aim is for women and youth to have increased knowledge and access to services, to participate equally in all parts of the value chain, and to work in collaboration with men to improve their agricultural productivity and economic empowerment."
> - GYMS, p. 38.

The policy thus seeks to change, and thereby sees as a problem, women farmers' low productivity by addressing their access to, decision-making, and participation in various agricultural resources and activities. In so doing, our analysis suggests that the policy problematizes the effects of gendered inequality rather than its causes, such as underlying structural inequalities and unequal power relations. Embedded in Rwanda's vision of modernization and in line with the GR4A model, the agriculture policy draws on a gender-biased discourse of mainstream agricultural development to establish women's low agricultural productivity as a legitimate problem for intervention. Specifically, we find that legitimacy is derived from reliance on knowledge and assumptions about women farmers as different from men with less desired agricultural practices, and from overgeneralizing evidence on the gender agricultural productivity gap in Rwanda.

Hierarchical divisions of gender and agriculture

First, we find that the policy constructs women and men as two different groups of farmers, each with fixed, homogenous characteristics. This is reflected in the frequent references to women as a proxy for "gender" and as a uniform group with specific needs, in statements such as "women in agriculture are more vulnerable to climate change and land degradation" (PSTA4, p. 25), and in proposals to develop "women-friendly tools in farming operations" (AMS, p. 45). It is also visible in statements claiming that "Compared to men, women have limited access to formal finance and are more likely to be financially excluded" (PSTA4, pp. 24–25). By comparison, men are likewise homogenously represented, but with contrasting features such as having access to formal finance, or as not vulnerable to climate change. In addition to the statements' essentializing effects on what both women and men can be and do, assuming gender as static, binary, and comparative constructs a hierarchical division between the two categories. Given the national desire to maximize agricultural productivity, women's agricultural practices and outputs are generally valued lower than men's. The valuation of men's farming over women's is mainly established by a hierarchical division between subsistence farming (farming for household consumption) and market-based (modernized) agriculture, and the association of women with the first and men with the latter. Subsistence farmers, allegedly the "majority of

[5] Authors' calculation based on UN Women et al. (2017) and financial statistical data for Rwanda for the fiscal year 2013/2014 (WB Data 2021).

Rwandan farmers"[6] (NAP, p. 26) and mostly women, are said to "…face a complex set of challenges that suppress yields below potential, such as limited access to finance, insurance, technology, skills, irrigation, mechanization, seeds, fertilizers, and other key inputs" (PSTA4, p. 23). Women – along with youth – are also explicitly problematized for their unsatisfying integration into the agriculture sector:

> The agriculture sector currently fails to maximise (*sic*) the contribution of, and benefits to, women and youth.
> - PSTA4, p. 25.

The association of women/subsistence farming and men/market-based agriculture is made in value-laden statements such as "…women are still overwhelmingly engaged in producing lower-value subsistence crops while men tend towards cash crops" (GYMS, p. 18) and "…most of women *(sic)* involved in agriculture are in subsistence farming, as they have limited access to the market and decision-making power in their family" (NAEB, p. 63). While cash crops remain unspecified, subsistence crops, the alleged domain of women, are discouraged by the policies because of their low economic value. Women farmers are instead targeted to integrate into modernized market-based farming, for example through interventions for increased resource access and improved technical capacities and business skills. This will also increase women's economic empowerment, the policy implicitly assumes, which is anticipated to have positive effects on food security, poverty reduction, and economic growth.

Because of the assumed correlation between market-based agriculture, poverty reduction, and economic growth, possibly via women's economic empowerment, subsistence farming is constructed as economically unviable and a historical artefact in depictions of modern capitalist Rwandan agriculture. The division between desired market-based and undesired subsistence farming is underpinned by neoliberal idea(l)s of commercialization, competition, and economic growth in line with the GR4A. We find that the one-sided preference for modernized agriculture obscures perspectives that insist on a more nuanced picture and argue for the interdependency and co-existence of subsistence and market-based capitalist farming in Rwanda's agrarian transition (Clay 2018; Illien et al. 2021).

We suggest that the hierarchical divisions described legitimize women's agricultural productivity as the main problem for gendered inequality. We consider this a simplistic and inadequate problematization, since the policy only symbolically recognizes underlying issues of unequal gender roles and responsibilities that shape farming practices. Most gender related proposals argue for the improvement and change of women's way of farming, while significantly fewer consider the underlying gender norms and responsibilities. The policy thus problematizes women's farming practices rather than the drivers for women and men's different farming. In our view, this represents a government ambition to integrate women in market-based farming via gender mainstreaming tools to increase their contribution to economic growth. Gendered divisions of work, especially women's responsibilities for care and household work, as a driver for women's predominance in subsistence farming is only occasionally considered. For example, a seemingly ambitious target is set by the GYMS to achieve gender-equal division of rural household work by 2026, and men are proposed to engage in the work for gender equality.[7] However, proposals to address this issue are insufficiently, if at all, brought into action plans, results frameworks, and budgets. Although it may be symbolically important at implementation and subsequent policy levels, we suggest that unequal divisions of work are merely recognized in the national policy, and with little ambition to challenge status quo or take action for change. The few proposals that challenge gender roles and responsibilities tend to suggest technological quick fixes aimed at reducing women's reproductive work but only to enable increased productive farm work and more or higher quality household work and care:

> "Foster labour-saving (*sic*) technologies, especially to reduce women's workload and allow them to allocate more time to other productive activities and child feeding and care."
> - NAP, p. 24.
> "The low levels of mechanization… restrict the engagement and performance of household tasks, more so by women."
> - AMS, p. 16.

This serves to show that the policy reinforces, or even exacerbates, dominant gender norms, specifically those regarding women as responsible for reproductive work. Contradictory to the vision of agricultural modernization and women's integration into market-based agriculture, this approach rather keeps women associated to subsistence farming and leaves them burdened not only with additional productive responsibilities, but with continued and intensified expectations on reproductive work. Without profound challenge of deep-seated unequal gender norms, relations, and responsibilities between women and men, this

[6] Yet, Illien et al. (2021), among others, show how strict subsistence farmers in Rwanda are rare and diminishing, and that subsistence farming is increasingly commodified and integrated along with capitalist agriculture.

[7] Through campaigns such as the MenEngage approach (MenEngage 2021) and MenCare + (MenCare 2021).

integrationist approach risks reproducing and aggravating inequalities, and rendering gender mainstreaming into an instrument for economic growth rather than gender equal practices and outcomes.

Overgeneralizing the gender agricultural productivity gap

The view of women's lower productivity as a problem is also legitimized through the policy's reproduction of a dominant discourse of the gender agricultural productivity gap. When framing gender and youth issues in agriculture, the GYMS draws substantially on a technical analysis showing that Rwandan farms managed by women were overall 11.7% less productive than farms managed by men (UN Women et al. 2017). The findings of the analysis are explicitly preliminary, yet it forms the core of the policy's gender analysis, and of the construction of women's agricultural productivity as a key problem:

> "By analysing the gender gap in agricultural productivity, we can identify underlying system constraints to inform agricultural policy, strategies and programmes… (*sic*)."
> - GYMS, p. 14.

The emphasis on closing the productivity gap between women and men thereby forms the rationale for considering gender as an issue in agriculture, which further consolidates the view of productivity as a key aspect of gender issues.

Moreover, our analysis suggests that the GYMS overgeneralizes the evidence for the gender productivity gap in Rwanda. The evidence considers productivity at farm level, yet the policy ends up assuming this to be valid also at an individual level:

> "The difference between the agricultural productivity… of female and male farmers is referred to as the gender agricultural productivity gap (*sic*)."
> - GYMS, p. 14.

Although the GYMS initially refers to productivity of women and men-managed farms, we observe a shift throughout the strategy to a point where all women farmers' productivity is targeted and problematized. It occurs through sweeping claims and proposals about women farmers with no specification about their position in the household, farm, or community. For example, it is claimed that "…a host of limitations constrain women's ability to increase productivity." (p. 18), and that "women… [are] to work in collaboration with men to increase their agricultural productivity" (p.38). We assert that this overgeneralization lacks support by evidence and that it incorrectly individualizes and feminizes the issue of gendered productivity differences. Generalizing evidence from farm to individual level and pointing to women's productivity as the problem constructs the heterogeneous category of women farmers as a monolith legitimate for targeted intervention. The tapering attention to all individual women farmers also puts responsibility on women themselves to close the gender productivity gap. Thus, the remedy of women's generally disadvantaged positions is put in their own hands.

The equally diverse social category of men is likewise constructed as a homogenous group, and their agricultural productivity is generalized to the individual level. In contrast to women, however, they are discursively produced as normative model farmers to which women ought to aspire. Since gendered inequality is problematized in terms of productivity, men emerge as *un*problematic actors in relation to issues of gender, and thereby not in need of interventions such as gender mainstreaming. Reverse to constructing women as responsible, the representation of men as not part of the problem exempts them from liability to counteract unequalizing practices and structures. This further reduces the problem of gendered inequality in agriculture to an issue about women, which obscures the diverse and complex effects that gendered norms and power relations have also on men farmers, particularly those who are poor and marginalized. Importantly, the role of men in reproducing as well as changing practices and patterns of differentiation is obfuscated.

The policy's reliance on and overgeneralization of the gender agricultural productivity gap constructs women's farming as a problem, and gender mainstreaming as an instrument to agricultural and economic growth. Underlying factors for a farm-level gender productivity gap are circumvented or insufficiently addressed, such as gendered divisions of work, social protection, land tenure structures, and gender biased agricultural markets. We thus contend that the discursive practice of overgeneralization discussed here suppresses, or smothers (Davids and van Eerdewijk 2016), perspectives that view unequal power relations, norms, and structures as the problems that lead to such outcomes as the gender agricultural productivity gap.

Limited acknowledgment of underlying causes

Similar to the limited problematization of gendered division of work, attention to gender norms, structural inequalities, and power relations is scant. When considered, it appears as marginal and symbolic in relation to the dominant problematization of women's productivity. The GYMS recognizes it through statements such as: "The patriarchal system that predominates rural life in Rwanda limits women's access to and control over productive assets" (p. xvii). The PSTA4 states that "Women and men farmers in dual households are generally characterised *(sic)* by unequal power relations, leaving women with very limited decision-making powers"

Table 1 Synthesis of main insights based on guiding research questions 1–3

The problem of gendered inequality is largely…	-Marginalized and under-prioritized in the overall policy framework, which appears as window dressing of gendered inequality
How is gendered inequality problematized in Rwanda's agriculture policy?	-As a problem of women's low agricultural productivity compared to men's
What dominant discourses, assumptions, and discursive practices underpin the problematization?	-A gender-biased discourse of neoliberal agricultural modernization; -Ideas about women farmers as different from men with less desired agricultural practices, and: -Overgeneralization of evidence for the gender agricultural productivity gap in Rwanda
How are women and men farmers constructed through the problematization?	-As problematic and normative farmers respectively, which points to women farmers as largely responsible for increasing agricultural and economic growth, and for reducing gendered inequalities
This implies that…	-Gendered inequality as a problem is turned into an instrument for increased economic growth through productivity gains, and; -Only the effects of gendered inequality are addressed, which leaves its causes unchallenged, and risks reproducing underlying structures and constraints

(p. 25). Similar expressions surface in the NAP and two of the other reviewed documents.[8]

Despite this occasional recognition of underlying causes to gendered inequality, the documents nevertheless end up targeting their subsequent effects, in particular women's overrepresentation in subsistence farming and gendered differences in productivity levels. Consideration of unequal power relations barely makes it from the GYMS to the wider policy framework, as indicated by a single reference to the issue in the NAP and PSTA4 respectively. As such, gender norms and structural inequalities as important problems in agriculture is diminished in favor of proposals for women's increased productivity. The following quote is illustrative, as it begins by recognizing unequal power relations as an explanation for productivity differences but ends up targeting, thus problematizing, women's technical skills and access to inputs.

> "…unequal power relations leave women with limited decision-making powers. This affects their control over agricultural assets, inputs, produce, and capacity building opportunities, resulting in lower average productivity. Women empowerment *(sic)* is linked to many positive spill-over effects on the overall economy: household members' health, food security and nutritional status, and reduction of gender-based violence and discrimination. Women economic empowerment *(sic)* will be fostered through provision of technical skills and promoting access to inputs."
> - NAP, p. 25.

[8] Gender and Agriculture (GMO) 2017; National Strategy for Climate Change and Low Carbon Development 2011, see Annex 1.

The policy's problematizing lens remains firmly directed to women farmers' practices and shortcomings, despite an apparent recognition of some of the processes and mechanisms by which inequality emerges. The recognition may hold some symbolic relevance for policy formulation and implementation at subsequent governance levels, since authoritative documents are part of the discursive and political struggles over what knowledges count as "true" and legitimate. However, the national agriculture policy analyzed here consistently and unequivocally compromises the problem of gendered inequality to technical, measurable propositions to fix women in order to achieve goals of national development and economic growth. We suggest that this way of constructing and legitimizing the problem is one that is politically manageable, and thus particularly suitable, within the GoR's overall neoliberal and growth-oriented vision for development. Again, this undermines prospects to transform structures and relations of inequality and excludes men as part of both problems and solutions. Before turning to a reflection on alternative ways to problematize gendered inequalities, we synthesize our main insights made so far in Table 1.

Alternative problematizations of gendered inequality

We have hitherto questioned the discursive practices in Rwanda's agriculture policy that problematize the symptoms and effects of gendered inequality rather than the causes. As indicated, however, the policy *does* occasionally address the underlying gender norms, power relations, and constraining structures, yet in problematic ways and marginal to the dominant approach. We now discuss how this symbolic recognition can be leveraged to enact a

more emancipatory policy approach to gendered inequality in agriculture. For this, we draw on perspectives of gender and power within feminist political ecology (FPE) and emphasize the need to prioritize long-term strategic problems along with short-term practical ones. We also discuss how gender transformative approaches (GTA) to agricultural development may provide concrete policy guidance.

Gender as emergent through power relations

One alternative to Rwanda's current policy approach is to engage with conceptualizations of gender as relational and performative, such as in contemporary feminist political ecology (FPE). Work with an FPE approach focuses on the relations of power that reproduce unequal socio-ecological conditions and outcomes (Elmhirst 2011; Nightingale 2011). Contrary to an essentialist notion of gender as binary and static, gender is seen as socially performed and constructed through actions and relations, including discursive practices in policy (Elmhirst 2018; Nightingale 2011). Such practices and relations are imbued with power, which is seen as a productive force embedded in the interactions that shape conditions and outcomes in particular ways. In the context of Rwanda's agriculture, this helps to see how the interactions between agricultural actors, from farmers to policy makers to policy itself, are characterized by power imbalances that both shape and are shaped by ideas and assumptions about what the social categories of women and men can be and do. Such gendered power relations in turn influence the norms and structures that determine what people are expected to do in agriculture depending on their socially ascribed gender, how they are perceived of and treated by others, and how they perceive themselves and behave in relation to others (Gottschlich et al. 2017; Leder et al. 2019; Nightingale 2011). The view of gender as a dynamic process, rather than a fixed state, is useful because it can redirect policy's problematizing lens towards the unequal power relations that lead to the gendered outcomes addressed in the policy, such as resource access, skills and education, market participation, and agricultural productivity. This implies that gendered inequality is to be seen as an integral problem to agriculture, and thereby to be explicitly considered throughout all areas and interventions across the policy documents. Moreover, a performative approach to gender and power facilitates policy to move from a growth-oriented, women-centered rationale for gender mainstreaming to one based on goals of justice and gender equality for the marginalized and disadvantaged farmers who live and work through Rwanda's agrarian transition.

Practical and strategic policy problems

The issues of gender targeted by the current policy are, in one important sense, indeed practical challenges for the many farmers in Rwanda who experience the effects of structural inequalities, gender norms, and unequal power relations in highly material and everyday ways. In this context, how may a more solid problematization of the underlying structures and power dynamics through an FPE lens manifest in agriculture policy? How may Rwanda's current policy framework look different with this approach?

We suggest that an agriculture policy with the alternative approach to gender outlined here couples the short-term practical interventions against gendered agricultural outcomes—the dominant focus in the current policy—with an increased emphasis on long-term strategic, emancipatory approaches for justice and social change (Moser 1989; Wallace 2020). The recognition of structural constraints and unequal power relations that currently surface in the policy may be seen as a crevice of opportunity upon which a reframed policy agenda may draw. The difference, as we see it, would lie in a drastic increase and prioritization of the long-term strategic interventions aimed at transforming the gender norms, power relations, and structures that perpetuate unequal outcomes. This would first imply a different problem analysis, including a rearticulation of gendered inequality as not a problem of women's low agricultural productivity as a barrier to development and growth, but one of unequal gender norms, structures, power relations, and gender divisions of work. It would also imply significantly increased budget allocations for interventions framed within this problem analysis, as well as their improved and detailed frameworks for action, results, monitoring, evaluation, and learning, including qualitative indicators of change. Moreover, it could involve substantially increased resources and high priority given to knowledge expertise of gendered inequality and its causes throughout policy formulation and implementation processes.

Gender transformative approaches to strategic problems

Recent trends in agricultural research and development for gender equality can give concrete guidance to the policy's shift to prioritize strategic problems and solutions. Over the past decade, an increased awareness of the significance of power relations and gender norms among agricultural development actors has led to an emergence of various gender transformative approaches (GTA) to policy and programming (Kantor et al. 2015; McDougall et al. 2021). GTA constitutes a broad response to the limits of how gender tends to be addressed in dominant agricultural discourse, including the instrumentalization of gender equality and

Table 2 Synthesis of reflections on an alternative policy approach to gendered inequality, corresponding to guiding research question 4

How can gendered inequality in agriculture be problematized differently?	-As a problem of unequal power relations, gender norms, and unequal structures and institutions -As an integral problem to agriculture, central to all areas across the policy framework -As a problem to be addressed for the purpose of social justice and gender equality
How may such an alternative approach manifest in the agriculture policy?	-The problem analysis is reframed with an understanding of gender as performed through power-imbued relations and practices (FPE), which influence the outcomes and distribution of benefits -Strategic long-term issues of unequal social structures, gender norms, and power relations are elevated as top policy priority. Strategic interventions are coupled with practical short-term efforts to mitigate unequalizing effects on farmers' everyday lives -Gender transformative (GTA) tools and methodologies are applied and prioritized in policy interventions to address long-term strategic issues

the essentialist responsibilization of women for development and economic growth. Specifically, it "…represents a shift toward engaging with the underlying constraining social structures and intersectional power dynamics that perpetuate gender inequalities across scales" (McDougall et al. 2021, p. 388). A gender transformative policy can be characterized as "fostering examination of gender dynamics and norms and intentionally strengthening, creating, or shifting structures, practices, relations, and dynamics toward equality" (IGWG 2017, cited in McDougall et al. 2021, p. 368). Rwanda's agriculture policy occasionally recognizes the need for critical examination of norms and power relations for equality, mostly in the gender and youth mainstreaming strategy (GYMS). However, we suggest a transformative approach to elevate from mere marginal and symbolic recognition to permeate every action area across all policy documents, including problem formulation, budgets, action plans, and results frameworks. The GYMS refer to Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) as a possible tool to address unequal divisions of both productive and reproductive work and women's unpaid workloads.[9] Such and similar tools and methodologies (see e.g. Cole et al. 2020) have potential to change deep-seated unequal gender relations, norms, attitudes, and behaviors (Kantor et al. 2015; McDougall et al. 2021; Njuki et al. 2016). We encourage the agriculture policy to integrate, scale up, and prioritize gender transformative interventions, accompanied by an approach to gender as performed through power-imbued practices and relations in line with an FPE perspective. Such shift could, among other things, increase policy's emphasis on the need to consider issues of reproductive work along with productive in agrarian transformations (Debusscher and Ansoms 2013; Ossome and Naidu 2021). Before turning to the discussion and concluding remarks, we synthesize our reflections on alternative problematizations in Table 2.

[9] Specifically, GALS refers to "a community-led empowerment methodology for individual life and livelihood planning, collective action and gender advocacy for change, and institutional awareness raising and changing of power relationships with service providers, private-sector stakeholders and government bodies" (Farnworth et al. 2013, p. 55).

Discussion and concluding remarks

In this paper, we have shown how Rwanda's agriculture policy problematizes gendered inequality in a simplified and instrumentalist way, which appears as window dressing. Through hierarchical divisions of gender and agriculture and by overgeneralizing the evidence for a gender agricultural productivity gap in Rwanda, the policy constructs women's agricultural productivity as the main problem and rationale for considering gender issues. This, we argue, renders gendered inequality a politically manageable (and measurable) problem that fits within the dominant discourse of mainstream, growth-driven agricultural development aligned with the GR4A paradigm. The policy discursively reproduces and exacerbates unequal gender norms and relations by constructing women farmers as problematic and men as normative farmers and by reinforcing gendered divisions of work. We thus contend that the policy mainly diminishes possibilities to realize gender equal outcomes in Rwanda's agriculture. To disrupt the anticipated reproduction of inequalities, we suggest the policy to shift perspective to seeing gender equality as an end in itself. This implies redirecting the problematizing lens from the effects of inequality to its underlying causes. Putting issues of unequal power relations, gender norms, and responsibilities as integral drivers of every policy action area holds promise for sustained change towards gender equality and social justice. Such an alternative approach, suggested here to be underpinned by notions of gender as performed in power relations and practices in line with feminist political ecology (FPE), could enable the

policy to prioritize strategic interventions that challenge deep-seated unequal relations and structural barriers to gender equality within agriculture. This could in turn lead to more equal agricultural outcomes. To concretize, we finally reflect on the prospects of applying gender transformative approaches (GTA) to such prioritized strategic long-term policy interventions.

Our analysis supports previous insights on African agriculture policy's limited integration of issues about gendered inequality (Ampaire et al. 2020; Drucza et al. 2020) and insufficient attention to underlying structural inequalities (Ampaire et al. 2020). We confirm earlier assertions that policy aimed at women's increased participation and integration into market-based agriculture in Rwanda may further entrench inequalities unless equivalent efforts are made to reduce and redistribute women's unpaid reproductive work (Debusscher and Ansoms 2013; Illien et al. 2021) and to change gender norms and unequal power relations (McDougall et al. 2021). At the same time, our analysis contradicts recent claims that all development policies in Rwanda are gender mainstreamed and that persisting inequalities in agriculture is a matter of poor implementation, farmers' inadequate adoption, and of a failure by policy to "trickle down" to farmers (Bigler et al. 2017; 2019). Instead, we argue that the policy's window dressing and instrumental approach is bound to leave structural inequalities and power relations intact and unchallenged (Ampaire et al. 2020; Debusscher and Ansoms 2013). In this perspective, the gendered and uneven agricultural outcomes observed in research and problematized by policy are unsurprising.

Nevertheless, mainstream development interventions may indeed benefit both women and men (e.g. Bergman Lodin 2012; Quisumbing et al. 2015). As agricultural interventions in Rwanda are "plural, dynamic, and contested social-environmental process[es] situated within broader currents of agrarian change" (Clay 2018, p. 352), their outcomes are heterogeneous and in hybrid interaction with other processes of change. This highlights a continuous need to complement discursive policy analyses with empirical studies on how farmers approach, relate to, and partake in policy interventions on gendered terms, and what gendering effects and outcomes interventions have on lived realities. Treidl (2018) and Illien et al. (2021) are among recent examples of this in the Rwandan context.

In the context of African agricultural development, our assertion that Rwanda's agriculture policy marginalizes and instrumentalizes gendered inequality aligns with the neoliberal, productivist ideas of the GR4A model that dominates the continent. Widely celebrated as a model example of GR4A implementation (Nyenyezi Bisoka and Ansoms 2020a), Rwanda's approach to gender in agriculture is comfortably embedded in, and supported by, this mainstream paradigm. In relation to this, we highlight a need for research to "study up" agriculture policy in Africa beyond the national level. Critical interrogations of the gendered aspects of Africa's contemporary agricultural transformation are emerging (e.g. Gengenbach et al. 2018; Nyambura 2015). However, deeper insights are needed about how knowledge-making processes are governed within and between African and transnational agricultural development institutions. Specifically, such analyses need to focus on how these processes shape, and are shaped by, specific ideas of gender and the intersecting social categories such as class, ethnicity, and age. This constitutes one aspect in understanding the origins and power-imbued trajectories of agrarian transitions, their implications for national policy processes, and their subsequent effects on people.

In terms of development more broadly, we concur with longstanding feminist critiques of the mainstream approach to gender equality as "smart economics" or "smart justice" to deflect problematizations of systemic gendered inequalities (Chant and Sweetman 2012; Davids and van Eerdewijk 2016; Gerard 2019; Parpart 2014). To paraphrase Cornwall and Edwards (2010, p. 8): "Policies that view women as instrumental to other objectives cannot promote women's empowerment, because they fail to address the structures by which gender inequality is perpetuated over time." To this end, we join those who advocate that short-term practical solutions to unequal agricultural outcomes must be coupled with a priority on strategic, transformative approaches for social justice (Cornwall and Rivas 2015; Moser 1989; Wallace 2020), for instance through engagement with GTAs (McDougall et al. 2021).

Our study brings a feminist analysis of agriculture policy to the debate of the gendering nature of agrarian transitions. Specifically, it provides a hitherto rare approach to studying the gendering effects of policy in the African agrarian context. We have questioned some of the taken for granted "truths" about gender in Rwanda's agriculture policy to open up for alternative problematizations. Our study shows that knowledge in policy is not unequivocally fixed and clear-cut, but constructed, ambiguous, and dynamic. In particular, it shows that established meanings, ideas, and "facts" about gender and agriculture are legitimized through discursive practices, and that other types of knowledge can change the frame for social and political maneuver. Moreover, the particular problems, things, and people that policy targets are also dynamic and changeable, as they are also constructed and reconstructed through discursive practices. Such insights indicate the relevance of studying how discourses on humans, society, and nature operate through language to mobilize and (re)produce certain problems, subjects, and outcomes while suppressing others (Davila 2020; Gottschlich and Bellina 2017; Schneider 2015).

We concur that "Agrarian transformation is necessarily a feminist project and…linking agrarian transformation and

feminism is the unavoidable challenge facing agrarian development policies" (Nyambura 2015, p. 311). Such feminist links will inevitably be manifold and vary across contexts and time. In this paper, we have explored how gendered inequality in Rwanda's contemporary agriculture policy might be differently problematized through a view of gender as performed through power relations and practices with potentially uneven effects on distribution and control over benefits. Viewing socio-political environmental processes, such as agrarian transitions, in this way shifts the focus from those disproportionally affected by gendered inequality to the practices and relations that induce and perpetuate them. Possibly a winding process of struggle and deliberation in contemporary development contexts, such alternative perspectives would center social justice and transformation of gender norms and relations as cornerstones in political efforts for agricultural transformation.

Analyzed and reviewed documents

See Tables 3, 4.

Table 3 Analyzed documents

Document title	Publication year	Duration	Publishing authority	Document type	Number of pages
National Agriculture Policy (NAP)	2018 (+2017)[a]	2017-2030	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI)	Sector policy	52 (+39)
Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation IV (PSTA4)	2018	2018-2024	MINAGRI	Sector implementation plan	235
Gender and Youth Mainstreaming Strategy (GYMS)	2019	2019-2025	MINAGRI	Sector strategy	144
Strategies for Sustainable Crop Intensification in Rwanda (CIP)	2011	2011-2017	MINAGRI	Sector strategy	59
Agricultural Mechanization Strategy for Rwanda (AMS)	2013	2013-2018	MINAGRI	Sector strategy	82
National ICT4RAg Strategy (ICT4RAg)	2016	2016-2020	MINAGRI	Sector strategy	70
National Agricultural Extension Strategy (NAES)	2009	N/A	MINAGRI	Sector strategy	54
NAEB Strategic Plan: Increasing Agri-export revenues (NAEB)	2019	2019-2024	National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB)	Sector strategy	128
Rwanda Irrigation Master Plan (IMP)	2010	N/A	MINAGRI	Sub-sector report	259
Rice Development Strategy (RDS)	2011	2011-2018	MINAGRI	Sub-sector strategy	89
National Policy on Cooperatives in Rwanda (NPC)	2018	N/A	Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM)	National policy	60
National Land Use Policy (NLUP)	2019	N/A	Ministry of Environment (MoE)	National policy	59
Total pages analyzed					1330

[a]The policy was updated from a 2017 to 2018 edition during the analysis. Both documents were analyzed

Table 4 Reviewed documents

Document title	Publication year	Duration	Publishing authority	Document type
Annual report 2018-2019	2019	N/A	MINAGRI	Report
Vision 2020	2012	2012–2020	Government of Rwanda (GoR)	National strategy
Vision 2050	2020	2020–2050	GoR	National strategy
National Gender Policy	2010	N/A	Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF)	National policy
Gender and Agriculture	2017	N/A	Gender Monitoring Office (GMO), Rwanda	Government report
The State of Gender Equality in Rwanda	2019	N/A	GMO	Government Report
Green Growth and Climate Resilience: National Strategy for Climate Change and Low Carbon Development	2011	N/A	GoR	National strategy
National Land Use and Development Master Plan	2020	2020–2050	GoR	National strategy
National Environment and Climate Change Policy	2019	2019–2024	MoE	National policy
Revised National Export Strategy (NES II)	2015	2015–2018	MINICOM	National Strategy
East African Community Vision 2050	2015	2015–2050	East African Community (EAC)	Regional strategy
Malabo Declaration on accelerated agricultural growth and transformation for shared prosperity and improved livelihoods	2014	2015–2025	African Union (AU)	Continental agreement
African Union Agenda 2063	2015	2015–2063	AU	Continental strategy
Gender Equality Strategy: UNDP Rwanda	2018	2019–2022	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Organization strategy
Country Partnership Framework Rwanda	2020	2021–2026	The World Bank Group (WB)	Partnership framework

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This thesis examines the production of farmers' socially differentiated identities and relations through state-led governance of agriculture. In light of Rwanda's ongoing socio-ecological transition, in cities and in the countryside, the thesis draws on policy analysis and fieldwork in Kigali to show how inequalities are largely sustained in this process, and that political frameworks, separated in the abstract, in practice are entangled. Emancipatory policy agendas are needed, as is knowledge on the geography of agricultural governance.

Karolin Andersson holds a BSc in Food Science and an MSc in Agriculture from SLU, as well as an MSc in Agricultural Development from University of Copenhagen, Denmark. She undertook her doctoral studies at the Department of Urban and Rural Development at SLU.

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