

MAPPING GENDER DISCOURSES IN EUROPEAN FARMING – A REVIEW OF ACADEMIC LITERATURE

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State-of-the-art of structural barriers and opportunities to gender equality in agriculture and rural areas (WP 2, Task 2.1)

Introduction

At SWIFT's March 2023 meeting, we planned a systematization to identify gaps, themes, and conceptual approaches relevant for SWIFT aims. There hasn't been a comprehensive review of gender relations in European farming since Brandth (2003), with recent studies focussing on specific economic aspects or countries. Gender relations refer to the systems of social interactions, power dynamics and norms which influence the positioning of gendered subjects and the relations between genders in the public and private sphere. Taking an intersectional feminist approach, we recognize that gender relations do not exist in isolation from other social categorizations and mutually constituted. Our systematization therefore considers structural inequalities and individual agency (Collins, 1990; Christoffersen, 2023). We ask: **What literature exists on gender relations in European farming? What are previous approaches and central discourses?**

Methodology

We identified academic literature using SCOPUS, Google Scholar, and consortium resources, creating an overview with Biblioshiny & VOS Viewer. We then analyzed central discourses, understood as structures and agencies that shape gender relations. Using feminist critical discourse analysis (Lazar, 2007), we applied structures and agency as analytical categories.

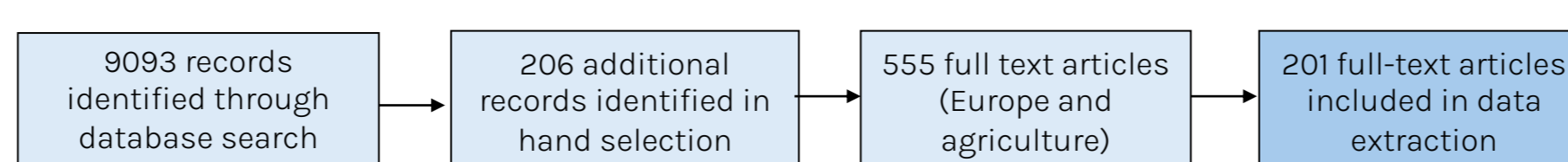


Figure 1: Simplified study selection process

Geographic analysis and key words

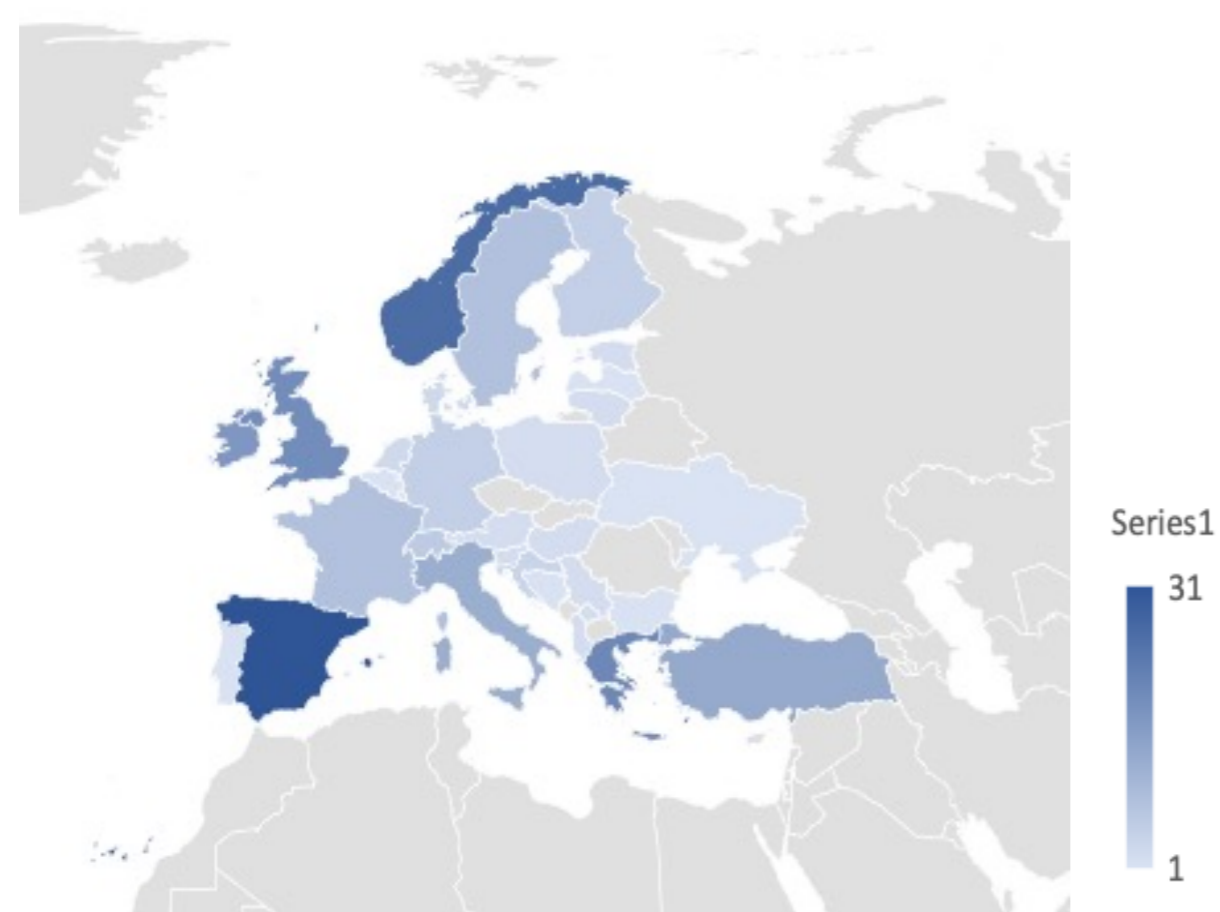


Figure 2: Countries studied in examined body of literature.

Table 1: Most prominent authors

Author	# of Documents
BRANDTH B	10
HAUGEN MS	10
SHORTALL S	6
GIDARAKOU I	5
EVANS N	4

Table 2: Most frequently cited references

Most frequently cited references	Local Citations
BRANDTH, B. (2003) SOCIOLOGIA RURALIS	23
LITTLE, J. (1996) JOURNAL OF RURAL STUDIES	8
BRYANT, L. (1999) SOCIOLOGIA RURALIS	7
GIDARAKOU, I. (1999) JOURNAL OF RURAL STUDIES	7
SHORTALL, S. (2002) SOCIOLOGIA RURALIS	7

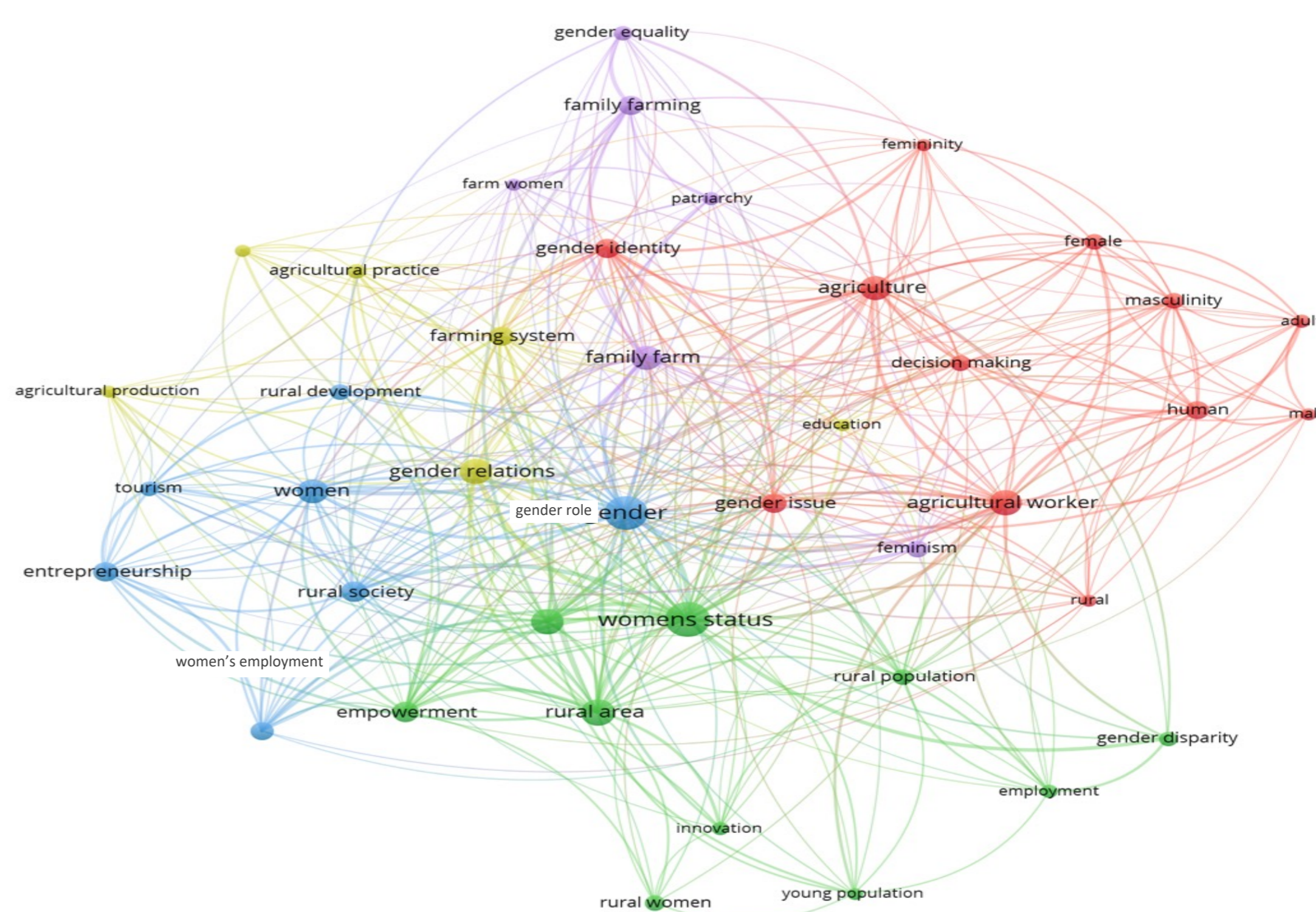


Figure 3: Key-Word co-occurrence, all keywords Source: VOSViewer

Five discourses of gender relations in European farming

Facing norms and expectations – This discourse analysis reveals that despite some challenges to traditional gender hierarchies, heteropatriarchal norms persist, often to protect the family farm.

The centrality of the family farm – Gender roles are closely tied to the family farm. Roles within it can change, but the centrality of family farm stays strong and adapt to social and political shifts. The strong connection between people's identities and the family farm contributes to its continuity through these changes.

Change through entrepreneurship – Gender relations can be changed by creating economic and employment opportunities for women. There is a strong focus on individual and collective entrepreneurship and pluriactivity justified through its potential for empowerment. This can challenge patriarchal norms, yet it often remains in a feminine niche.

Change through public policy – Top-down institutional changes can influence gender relations. Some research highlights gendered effects of policies. Many studies call for more public support, yet there are few clear examples of policies that actually transform gender relations.

Relevance of collective public action – There is limited research on public action, but the studies available show that gender relations can change through public initiatives, bringing private issues into the public eye. These studies highlight the important role women play in building communities and the challenges they face in political participation.

Key insights

- Concentration of studies in **Spain, Norway, UK, Greece**. Studies in CEE focus strongly on cooperative structures.
- **Conceptualizations of gender most frequently constructionist** Conceptualizations by Judith Butler (1990) and Candance West & Don Zimmermann (1987) occur frequently.
- **Gender remains synonymous with women**. Only few studies look at masculinities and even fewer consider non-binary gender identities.
- **Research acknowledges different social categories but only few reference intersectionality**. Categories of age and class are considered most frequently while there is a lack of engagement with race, family status and the theories of intersectionality.
- **The concept of the heteropatriarchal family farm remains central**. There is very little engagement with queer identities and other farming models.
- **There is a lack of engagement with public actions to transform gender relations** (e.g. social movements, protest). Intersectional theory posits that while individual acts are important, only collective action can effectively challenge and change interlocking domains of oppression.

References:

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Christoffersen, A. (2023). Applying Intersectionality in Policy and Practice: Unseating the Dominance of Gender in Responding to Social Inequalities. *Sozialpolitik.ch*, 1(1.7).
Lazar, M. (2007). *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis*. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 4(2), 141-164.
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West, C. and Zimmermann, D. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society*, 1(2), pp. 125-151.