

Beyond farming women

Queering gender, work and family farms



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Abstract

Agri-culture is a set of practices to cultivate land and keep animals to produce food and other goods. It is also a socio-cultural practice. It involves norms for who produces what, when and how that are articulated, among other things, in a gendered division of work and labour. These govern the tasks that are considered suitable for men and for women, thus producing masculinity and femininity. Agriculture is hence one of the domains in which binary gender roles are constructed. The issue of gender and agriculture has been on the research agenda since the 1970s. This research shifts the attention from the production of traditional gender roles, or the recognition of the role of the women-farmer, to an ethnographic exploration of the farming cultures of queer farmers.

I make use of thick description, weak theory and autoethnography to distance myself from my perception of the world and take the research subject's perspective(s). Drawing from the approaches of performativity theory and weak theory, I investigate how the research subjects understand their farming performances and how these interact and intermingle to create gender and sexual identities that, in turn, inform farming practices.

Through participant and participatory observation on four queer farms in Switzerland as well as unstructured and semi-structured interviews, daily and seasonal activities have been recorded and then analysed through grounded theory. This has afforded new insights into how relationships are formed, identities are created, and work is shared among farmers when traditional gender roles are challenged.

On queer farms, it emerges, the traditional division of labour between farmer (*Landwirt*, *Landwirtin*, and/or *Bauer*) and farm wife (*Bäuerin*) is subverted; tasks are openly and often discussed and assigned according to embodied knowledge, interests, bodies, time, farm imperatives and the outside. These are themselves influenced by gender and sexuality, which, for example, co-determine the types of knowledge, interests, bodies and farms that are developed. The research subjects' experience lays bare the heteronormative contexts with which queer people in agriculture are confronted and the strategies they devise to deal with them, for example, how they adapt the division of labour and hide their queerness, and how they rebel and network. Finally, through the informants' performances all work, all traditional roles are queered: *Bauer* are queer women that do the work of *Bäuerin* and vice versa, *Landwirtin* are *Bäuerin* and transwomen, ciswomen, heterosexual, lesbian, and queer.

Based on these findings, I argue that the conventional and traditional production of binary gender, sex, sexuality, and farming identities is made evident and questioned alongside the *raison d'être* of these socially constructed categories for the attribution of different skills, possibilities, roles and futures. Through their performances, queer farmers not only redefine male and female and masculinity and femininity but also challenge the gendered division of labour on the farm. As a result, their subversive gender performances have the potential to redefine agriculture as gender-neutral. This insight contributes to a filling of the scholarly gap on how to move agriculture away from the (re)production of the traditional gender binary and its inequalities.

To conclude, this research makes three main contributions to the literature. First, it evidences the glaring lack of research around and the invisibility and non-recognition of queer farmers in Switzerland. This lack that is exposed extends to the mechanisms through which farmers are turned away from farming as a livelihood on the basis of their gender, sex and/or sexuality – for example, through the celebration in Switzerland of heterosexual cisgender family farms. This thesis further highlights subversive performances and how these challenge the production of binary gender, sex, sexual, and farming identities as well as the attribution of skills on the basis of these socially constructed categories to imply alternative possibilities, roles and futures. Finally, it is suggested that farming can be an accommodating space where people can become who they feel they want to be.

Key words: Performativity, agricultural practices, weak theory, ethnographic research, Switzerland, queer.

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Note on Terminology

In German-speaking areas of Europe, the debates about developing a gender-conscious language to achieve the inclusion and equality of all genders have resulted in different linguistic gendering systems. The usage, for example, of the generic masculine – with ‘*der Landwirt*’ and ‘*der Bauer*’ for ‘farmer’ and ‘peasant’ (smallholder) – is not appropriate. Institutions have issued guidelines for a gender-inclusive language introducing gender pairings – such as ‘*Landwirt*’ (m) and ‘*Landwirtin*’ (f) – or combined binary forms using parentheses or a slash – ‘*Landwirt(in)*’ or ‘*Landwirt/in*’. These are inclusive of women and men only. When gender is not important, gender-neutral formulations may be used – such as ‘*in der Landwirtschaft tätige Personen*’ for ‘people working in agriculture’. The gender*star, gender:colon and gender_gap – so ‘*Landwirt*in*’, ‘*Landwirt:in*’ or ‘*Landwirt_in*’ – may be used to connote the entire gender identities spectrum (Imboden, 2021). In this text, I will use the slash (‘*Landwirt/in*’) to refer to institutional texts and their categorisations; otherwise, I will use the gender:colon (‘*Landwirt:in*’) to include all genders.

Glossary

<i>Bauer</i>	Parallel to the English term 'peasant'. In Switzerland, there is no educational path that makes you officially a <i>Bauer</i> . 'The term <i>Bauer</i> generally refers to an owner, proprietor or tenant of an agricultural property, which is farmed by the <i>Bauer</i> himself with his family and possibly some outside labour' (translated from Della Casa et al., 2015).
<i>Bäuerin</i>	Linguistically, the female form of ' <i>Bauer</i> '; traditionally, the farm wife: ' <i>Bäuerin</i> are considered to be the wives who, in addition to managing the household and working on the farm, are usually also responsible for small livestock and vegetable production'. (translated from Della Casa et al., 2015). Since 1999, <i>Bäuerin</i> has also been a recognised profession; one can attend a farm management school and gain a diploma to become an officially certified <i>Bäuerin</i> (as distinct from the <i>Landwirt/in</i> diploma; see below).
<i>Betriebsleiter/in</i>	A <i>Betriebsleiter</i> is a male (farm) manager/operator; a <i>Betriebsleiterin</i> is a female (farm) manager/operator.
<i>Cisperson</i>	'People whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth – so most people' (Transgender Network Switzerland, 2020, p. 72); hence 'cisman' and 'ciswoman'.
<i>Heteronormativity</i>	'The assumption that heterosexuality is the standard for defining normal sexual behaviour and that male-female differences and gender roles are the natural and immutable essentials in normal human relations' (APA American Psychological Association, 2020a).
<i>Heteropatriarchy</i>	A 'set of racialized, gendered, and sexualized power relations that privileges those who are white, cisgender, men, and/or heterosexual and limits human resources for those who do not and cannot fit these boxes' (Wypler, 2019, p. 948).
<i>Heterosexism</i>	The 'prejudice against any non-heterosexual form of behaviour, relationship, or community, particularly the denigration of lesbians, gay men and those who are bisexual or transgender. Whereas homophobia generally refers to an individual's fear or dread of gay men or lesbians, <i>heterosexism</i> denotes a wider system of beliefs, attitudes, and institutional structures that attach value to heterosexuality and disparage alternative sexual behaviour and orientation' (APA American Psychological Association, 2020b).
<i>Landwirt/in</i>	A <i>Landwirt</i> is a male farmer; a <i>Landwirtin</i> is a female farmer. A <i>Landwirt</i> is sometimes also referred to as a <i>Bauer</i> . ' <i>Landwirt/in</i> ' is the official label for the recognised profession; they cultivate the land and grow crops and/or keep animals for meat, milk and egg production. A certified <i>Landwirt/in</i> is a person that has successfully completed the <i>Landwirt/in</i> school.
<i>Non-binary</i>	All genders that are not exclusively male or female (Transgender Network Switzerland, 2020, p. 73).
<i>Queer</i>	While recognising that the term ' <i>queer</i> ' indicates an 'attitude to life and theory that considers gender identity and sexual orientation without categories such as man/woman or hetero/homo/bi, as well as a socio-political attitude that is critical of these categories' (Transgender Network Switzerland, 2020, p. 74); in this thesis, I use it to refer to persons who do not identify as heterosexual and/or cisgender.
<i>Severin:e</i>	Name of a research subject (an individual on the farm). In spoken German, the (typically male and female) names ' <i>Severin</i> ' and ' <i>Severine</i> ' have the same pronunciation; as this person wanted a gender-neutral written form

for their name, we decided to use the gender:colon form that makes it gender-inclusive (see above, Note on Terminolgy).

Trans

A feeling people have ‘that they do not belong, or only partially belong, to the gender to which they were assigned at birth’; used to replace ‘terms such as *transgender*, *transidentity*, *transsexuality*’ (Transgender Network Switzerland, 2020, p. 74).

Wo:men

Women, trans, and inter persons; from the German ‘*Frauen*’.

Preface: Agenda for a subversive everyday life

*you identify as a heterosexual ciswoman
the feminine gender with which you identify is the one attributed to you
you feel comfortable in your gender*

*you move, dress, speak, eat, and laugh in line with the script given to you
reinforced and co-constructed by women in Switzerland
you bleed monthly, cross your legs when sitting, shave your legs and pluck
your eyebrows, you wear a bra and smile constantly*

*you fit the norm and
suffer less discrimination than gender queer and non-heterosexual persons
until you engage in farming*

*you drive tractors, milk cows and dig the land
you engage in farming practices that do not fit the gender role assigned*

*over the years, the masculinity produced through your farming practices
takes over and flourishes in your anorexic body
no more period, no energy to shave nor smile, no breasts to cover with a bra*

*anorexia feels like a heavy old villain sitting on your chest
but it has its advantages:
your body receives less sexual attention*

*suddenly, you don't have to worry about comments
on your backside when digging the ground, nor about peeks
at your chest when planting new trees
your identity is queered*

did you become a privileged white cisman?

This is the story of many or maybe none, but it is the story that raised all my questions.

I am happy to have the opportunity to write on the occasion of this infamous and inglorious golden jubilee of women's right to vote in Switzerland. I honour the occasion by reflecting on how our practices remain influenced by the construction and constrictions of sex, sexual and gender identities and how these are in turn anchored in agricultural practices themselves.

I draw from my own farming practices, through which I bent my gender identity, to argue that through farming as a cultural practice, a masculine gender identity is (re)produced. Through farming, my (cis)gender identity veered off the feminine script. I wore boyish clothing, let my body hair grow and developed a boyish body, and my sexual and gender identity was questioned. But what should really be questioned is how masculinity is produced in farming practices and how farming can be performed without reproducing the traditional gender binary.

1. Introduction

Agriculture is essentially co-production – that is, the interaction between and interweaving and mutual transformation of the natural and the social.

(Ploeg, 2003, p. 199)

In this first chapter, I look at agriculture as a set of practices that comes with rules on who produces what, when and how. First, I focus on the Swiss agricultural world and how agriculture became one of the fields in which binary gender roles are constructed. Then, I review the debates around farming and gender that started in the 1970s. Finally, I shift my attention from the (re)production of traditional gender roles, focusing on the role of the farm wives and farming women, to an exploration of farming cultures at queer farmers' farms.

1.1. Farming Women: Blurring the boundaries of 'work' and 'home'

Agri-culture is a set of practices performed to cultivate land and keep animals in order to produce food and other products (Harris & Fuller, 2014). At the same time, it is a socio-cultural practice that comes with norms for who produces what, when and how. In agriculture, there is no natural that is not social too, and vice versa. This (re)production includes gender. The modern world of farming in Switzerland and other Western countries has traditionally been portrayed as masculine; research has mainly focused on the male farmer, while women's role has long been neglected.

The issue of gender and agriculture has been on the research agenda since the 1970s. In *Farming Women*, Sarah Whatmore (2014) gathers the debates around farming and gender that started in the 70s and takes the discourse one step further. After a critique of the binary segregations in the analysis of 'family' versus 'farm' and work' versus 'home' in Marxist political economy that had led to the neglect of women's work, she builds on post-structuralist theories to challenge the boundaries of 'work' and 'home' and 'production' and 'reproduction'.

Whatmore does not stop at revealing unequal gender relations on family farms but goes on to analyse how gender roles and relationships are (re)shaped and continuously (re)negotiated in and through daily performances. Her study reveals how gender defines the principal axis according to which labour is divided: women are responsible for domestic household work (childcare, care-work, housekeeping, laundry, cooking, running errands) and men for agricultural work (the supposed heavy labour). Naturalised as the woman's role, the primary responsibilities of a woman as wife and mother (and sister and daughter, etc.) involve areas of work that are non-negotiable. As one research subject put it, household work is 'just an ongoing chore... you know... like washing your face, that just gets done' (Whatmore, 2014, p. 90). Besides 'women's work', Whatmore continues, a farm wife (*Bäuerin*) is expected to help out when the husband needs. This offers some room for manoeuvre; while domestic work is integral to the naturalised responsibilities of women, they can renegotiate their contribution to farm labour by favouring their preferred tasks and limiting their total workload.

Farming Women uncovers the ways in which gender identities are mobilised through daily practices that simultaneously rest on and strengthen the general construction of subordinate women identities, thus effectively masking the exploitative nature of family farming. Whatmore's work has opened the way for more research around the processes and daily practices through which unequal gender relations are created and maintained in and through family farms.

After 50 years of research, discussions and experiences, however, Switzerland – like most Western countries – remains rooted to tradition. Agri-culture in Switzerland is articulated in a conventional gender division of labour that defines the tasks and sites considered suitable for men and for women and (re)produce masculinity and femininity. The farming professions in Switzerland have been gendered thus. The profession of *Bäuerin* (see Glossary, p. 7) not only holds onto its linguistically feminine connotation but also its performative nexus: for example, it was not until May 2019 that a man first entered and successfully concluded the *Bäuerin* diploma course (Contzen, 2019). In Box 1, the official agricultural professions and educations are further explained.

Box 1. *Landwirt/in* and *Bäuerin* education

In Switzerland, one can become an agricultural professional and access state subsidies through multiple basic trainings, namely *Bäuerin*, *Landwirt/in*, market gardener, fruit specialist, poultry farmer, winegrower, wine technologist and agricultural practitioner. In all fields except wine technology, the trainees can specialise in organic farming. Here, I focus on the *Landwirt/in* education and on the organic farmer education as this combination was the educational path followed by all but one of the respondents.

The *Landwirt/in* apprenticeship lasts three years, during which the apprentices mostly live and work on a training farm. While it is not compulsory to change farms yearly, this is highly recommended. *Landwirts* learn to cultivate the land; they grow crops and/or keep animals for meat, milk and egg production. Apprentices that have a previous education (federal certificates and/or bachelors) can usually complete the farmer apprenticeship in two years; if a federal certificate has been gained from another agricultural profession, the apprenticeship only takes one year.

In contrast to the *Landwirt/in* education, which only requires the school-leaving certification gained at 16 years old, the *Bäuerin* education cannot be accessed directly after school as it requires a completed apprenticeship. The *Bäuerin* school is the result of a collaboration between the farm wives organisation (*Swiss Bäuerinnen and rural women's organisation*) with the educational centres for domestic economy and agriculture. It focuses on the household (washing, cleaning, food provisioning) as well as food processing, administrative work and direct selling. The school prepares its students to become good partners for a *Landwirt/in* by preparing them for all the complementary areas to the *Landwirt/in* job. Beside the school training, the trainees are required to do a two-year practical period in a farm household – defined as the household of a farm that is entitled to direct payments.

A *Bäuerin* takes care of the farm household (including childrearing and caring for the elderly), the kitchen garden (including providing for small animals) and of young calves; she is responsible for processing and direct selling of farm products as well as the administrative aspects of the business. A *Bauer*, on the other hand, manages the farm business, the fields, and the stables; he uses the agricultural machinery and looks after the large livestock (mainly cows), and he is often involved in politics.

The official name for the profession of the *Bauer* is the *Landwirt/in* – linguistically inclusive of men (*Landwirt*) and women (*Landwirtin*) and per se all officially recognised genders, as the Federal Council have stated and reiterated that 'no third gender category is introduced' (Swiss Federal Department of Justice and Police, 2019). Of the apprentices who completed the *Landwirt/in* education with a Swiss Federal Certificate of Competence in 2020, 19% were women (Statistik, 2021a), up from 2.3% in 1995 (Contzen, 2019).

As the Federal Office of Agriculture (FOAG) reports, women have always played a central role in Swiss agriculture. In 2012, farming women were working an average of 65 hours a week, and in 2019, 36% of the people involved in Swiss farming were women (BLW, 2021), yet 94% of all farms in Switzerland belong to and are managed by men, while the *Bäuerin's* work often remains unacknowledged and unpaid. It was not until two decades ago that the *Bäuerin's* contribution to farm income appeared on Swiss agricultural statistics. Previously, these merely recorded the farm income and total income of the farm household, a practice that hid important gender issues. In 2014, 70% (31,000) of *Bäuerin* were still insufficiently covered by social insurance (old age survivor's, accident, unemployment or employers' liability insurance). In case of divorce, pregnancy, injury, premature death, illness or other ruptures of the routine, they remain without assistance as their work is not legally recognised (Gremaud, 2019).

Much of the research around gender and farming in Switzerland has focused on the unequal gender relations on farms and the *Bäuerin* contribution to agricultural production and rural economy (Contzen & Forney, 2017; Droz, Ott, et al., 2014; Rossier & Reissig, 2015). Contzen and Forney (2017) researched family farms in the Swiss context and looked at how inequalities arise and are perceived by different subjects. According to their research results, most Swiss family farming

enterprises are built around the ideas of masculinity and femininity, whereby women 'naturally' take on the reproductive tasks (care work, housework, education, etc.), while men are responsible for productive areas. Despite this gender labour division, the authors asserted that inequalities are mainly related to the status on the farm and less to gender. Against this, the discussion section below (Chapter 5) considers how status on the farm is simultaneously anchored in and productive of gender identities.

Droz et al. (2014) found that Swiss family farms function with respect to two 'social logics': the strong ideas of male and female complementarity and the concept of 'family solidarity' between husbands and wives. They observed how these social logics, deeply internalised by farmers, translate into a particular division of labour on Swiss family farms with strong hierarchies and de-facto inequalities. Despite the asymmetry of roles, *Bäuerin* themselves rarely perceived their situation in terms of inequality as these tend to fade in the face of the farming imperative of survival. This resonates with further research showing how gender inequalities are constructed but also contested through work practices and how these are legitimised and naturalised through the traditional gender principle within the familial institution (Whatmore, 2014). Droz et al. (2014) added that the persistence of these inequalities also finds its roots in the gender prescripts that pervade in the institutions of the Swiss agricultural sector well as Swiss laws and policies.

Box 2. Gender, sex, and sexuality

The concepts of *gender*, *sex* and *sexuality* are problematic insofar as *sex* and *gender* are often used interchangeably, and *sexuality* is often assumed to result from these. For instance, cis- and transmen that perform femininity (appear feminine, take traditionally female roles, do 'women's work', etc.) are assumed to be gay, while cis and transwomen that perform femininity are assumed to be heterosexual. In this research, I utilise performativity theory and treat sex, gender, and sexuality as distinct yet intertwined socially constructed categories.

Sex is a social construct that ascribes discrete categories to the spectrum of biological characteristics of human bodies. It is legally assigned at birth, based on biological characteristics. In Switzerland, births must be registered during the first three days postpartum, which involves the name of the new-born being entered in the birth register along with one of the available options for sex: male or female. When the sex of the new-born cannot be unambiguously determined (e.g. micro-penis, divergences between biology and genetics), one or the other sex is selected as deemed appropriate (Büchler & Cottier, 2005).

With this assignation of sex commences the construction of gender, whereby gender is assumed to be the expression of the prior factual sex; those assigned to the category of female at birth are expected to become girls and women and perform traditional femininity, and likewise for males. Gender can be again divided in gender expression and gender identity, where the former includes how we communicate our gender (how we move, sit, dress, etc.), and the latter how we ourselves perceive our gender and name it (hues, global justice collective, 2017).

Sexuality is distinct from gender and sex as it concerns how we perform in relation to others in terms of if, for whom, and how we feel and act sexually. It centres on attraction and arousal but extends to love and romance.

These categories are to be understood as continuums, wherein woman- and man-ness, femininity and masculinity, as well as female- and male-ness are ideals. They cannot be fully embodied, as there is neither an intrinsic quality or entity to be expressed nor a fixed and objective ideal that can be inhabited. They are not necessarily discrete but rather names for ways of conceiving a broad area of interlinked types of practice and experience.

Research in Switzerland and other Western countries has shown that women/*Bäuerin* perform multiple roles that are central to the farm's functioning. These include farmworker, business holder, secretary, and off-farm income earner (Whatmore, 2014). Recent studies in Switzerland have

shown that women also take up responsibilities for selling and welcoming guests in the case of on-farm diversification (Droz, Ott, et al., 2014; Droz, Reysoo, et al., 2014). While research on women's roles on traditional family farms is ample, research into non-traditional gender, sexual and sex roles on farms is very limited and mainly focused on female farm managers (Contzen, 2003; Rossier, 2005, 2013, 2019; Rossier & Reissig, 2015).

1.2. Beyond the binaries: more boundaries to be blurred

In my literature review, I was unable to locate any studies at all on the subject area of queer communities in Swiss agriculture; the notions of farming, gender, sexuality, sex and family identities there are, restricted to the dichotomic understandings, and the traditional ties between these identities are left unquestioned. While in Switzerland, gender in agriculture is confined within its binary framing, however, worldwide, debates have developed that recognise and implement feminist and queer scholarship. These take gender – and sex and sexuality – in and through agriculture to be more complex and diverse.

Leslie, Wypler and Bell (2019) researched the relation between queer farming and agricultural justice. They rooted relational agriculture in a feminist and queer agrarian praxis in order to deconstruct the naturalistic narrative around gender and sexual roles in today's agricultural context. Basing on queer theory approaches, they asserted that identity is produced in and through practice, and by showing how agriculture always has been relational – thus revealing how heteropatriarchy shapes farming practices in the US today.

Leslie also investigated possible transition pathways towards sustainable and just food systems. They applied a queer perspective to both understand the role of sexuality and heteronormativity in agriculture (2017) and interrogate how sexual identities and relationships affect whether, where, and how farmers access resources (Leslie, 2019). By studying sustainable farmers of diverse genders and sexualities, Leslie recognises and advocates for the importance of sexuality for food justice, as well as for land preservation. They advances the argument that queerness holds the potential for more sustainability, arguing that it triggers a questioning of traditional social structures beyond sex, gender and sexuality, which, in turn, leads to the extension of questioning practices to other areas, such as farming and capitalism. Queer theory was applied by Wypler (2019), who conducted ethnographic research among lesbian, bisexual, transexual and queer (LBTQ) sustainable farmers in the US to understand how they access resources in a heteropatriarchal context. Wypler concluded that LBTQ farming networks facilitate LBTQ farmers' access to sustainable agriculture in general.

Queer scholars have also directed their critical attention to the family farm narrative. Through queer lenses and queer experiences, they have evidenced how heteronormativity, white privilege and ableism bloom in and through the family farm narrative and how this operates to marginalize queer persons (Hoffelmeyer, 2021; Leslie, 2017, 2019; Leslie et al., 2019; Wypler, 2019).

In Switzerland, the family farm's right to exist and its importance for a healthy farming community is reiterated as axiomatic by national legislation, at the very opening of Article 1 of the Federal Law on Peasant Land Law, the *Bundesgesetz über das bäuerliche Bodenrecht* (Art. 1 Abs. 1. lit. a, 1991). What a family farm is, is not explicitly defined, but it is performatively specified through the routine representation of heterosexual, white, abled, cisgender couples with children in the media, agricultural organisations and politics. This heteronormative definition is further reinforced by the lack of description of the gender positionality of research subjects by scholars or assumed imposition of pre-defined categories on them – and indeed, by the lack of queer studies in the area. Thus, for example, the FOAG states that 98% of the farms in Switzerland are family farms according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (Garner & de la O Campos, 2014) definition of the UN: 'Family farming is a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and is predominantly reliant on family labour, including both women's and men's.' Clearly, this has the performative effect of excluding non-binary and intersex persons as family labour, let alone as constituents of family farms and agents in the national domain of agriculture more widely.

Research among the LGBTQ farming communities has thus far applied queer theory to study constraints faced by them in accessing resources, their exclusion from family farm narratives and their potential for a socio-ecological transition in farming. I argue that we need to take a step back and: first acknowledge that agricultural practices on traditional family farms in Switzerland produce masculinity and femininity as well as crops. Further, departing from Butler's (1988) performativity theory – according to which gender is performed and is only real to the extent that it is so – we need to look at whether and how gender is (de/re)constructed on queer farms. With gender being the main axis along which labour is divided and power relationship shaped on traditional family farms, I ask what happens when gender roles are queered, and if particular practices are associated with and constitutive of a certain gender identity on the traditional family farm, then how is this in queer farms?

By looking at and – per engaged sociologist – myself performing daily practices on queer farms in Switzerland, I gain new insights into how relationships are shaped, identities created, and work divided among farmers when traditional gender roles are agitated. This affords an analysis that goes beyond the conventions of gender and farming women as enacted and researched in Swiss agriculture today.

1.3. Main aim and research question: plunging into troubles

Focusing on the Swiss case, I aim to take feminist discourses in the domain of agriculture one step further, contributing to closing the research gap around gender performativity and the role of sexuality in farming. This may, in turn, contribute to closing the theoretical gap around how agriculture can be performed without (re-)producing traditional femininity and masculinity and the inequalities that tend to go with them.

The understanding of the relationship between gender and on-farm performativity starts by exploring the existing practices, by recovering '*the geographies of "other" human groupings – the geographies of peoples other than white, middle-class, middle-aged, able-bodied, sound-minded, heterosexual men*', because, like Philo (1992, p. 193), I also believe that these can '*offer challenging new ways of thinking (or maybe ways of rethinking) rural studies*'. So, we start from those who trouble gender, sex, sexuality and farming identities and the link between these, thus performing agriculture and gender beyond the locally traditional gender and breadwinning norms. This study is grounded among queer farmers in queer farms in Switzerland, which leads us to the main research question:

How are the practices and relationships of queer farmers in Switzerland gendered?

My political agenda is that to claim that through their subversive gender performances, queer farmers not only redefine masculinity and femininity for themselves but also question the agriculturally gendered division of labour itself by performing otherwise. Further, because rules and roles change over time, I claim that these subversive gender performances have the potential to redefine agriculture as gender neutral – or, drawing from Butler (1988, p. 530), it may come to pass that these various agricultural acts '*usually associated with gender, express nothing*'.

Just as jeans in the Swiss farming context shifted from a strictly menswear item to gender-neutral, farming performances might no longer define our gender identities. Just as women wearing jeans is no longer regarded as a radical socio-cultural statement – on-farm and off – so also might terms like 'Women in the male domain of agriculture' (*Frauen in der Männerdomäne Landwirtschaft*; Contzen, 2004) become void. But for now, let us start in the present by leaving the male/female, *Bauer/Bäuerin* domain, and entering one in which binary slashes are blurred and swept aside to leave space for improvisation, bended scripts and new choreographies. This may lead us to the portal to an agricultural world where nobody feels unsettled by the gender, sex or sexual identity of the human driving the tractor, nor of the one serving dinner.

Thus, in order to answer the main research question, the following sub-questions are addressed:

What are the main agricultural practices (of [re]production, distribution, marketing, etc.)?

How are these practices distributed among the queer farmers?

How do these practices redefine gender, sex, sexuality and farming?

1.4. Thesis structure

The thesis is introduced in this chapter through a verbal problematisation of the gender division of labour in farming, in which the man is the head of the farm, known as the farmer, and the woman the person who supports him (Chapter 1.1.). Drawing from both queer and feminist scholars, I then problematise binary understandings of gender, sexualities, sex, farming identities and the family farm (Chapter 1.2.). Before stepping into the domesticated wilderness (queer farms) to understand how – through which practices – gender is continuously (de/re)constructed on (queer) farms in Switzerland (Chapter 5) and how this might open new ways towards more social, environmental, economic, and gender justice (Chapter 6), I first introduce the theoretical framework that implemented to gain a better understanding of the underlying dynamics that shape queer practices in the Swiss farming context (Chapter 2). In Chapter 3, I present my methodology, the approaches and techniques applied in data gathering, analysis and management. Chapter 4 delivers the results of the research sub-questions; Section 4.1 answers the first and second sub-questions, Sections 4.2 and 4.3 the third.

2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical starting point of this research builds on two main pillars: first, weak theory combined with thick description and autoethnography, and second, performativity theory as an extension of the relational approach. Through these lenses, gender, sex, sexuality and farmers' identities are studied as social constructs that are continuously (re)negotiated and (re)shaped through the practices they inform. The aim of the theoretical framework is to develop an appreciation of the perspective of queer farmers, as with this research I want to recover their stories, to look at agriculture from a (queer) perspective that was made silent, invisible, non-existent. Not only because I think that these perspectives count, but because I think that queer farmers can offer us as humans and as researchers new angles for fresh, insightful perspectives on old problems.

2.1. Weak theory and thick description

The first pillar of this theoretical framework comprises weak theory and thick description and evolved during fieldwork to include traits of autoethnography. Throughout the research, I try to take the perspective of the research subjects, to understand and convey how they themselves make sense of their world and surroundings. To do so, I needed to escape my preconceptions – through weak theory – and to find meaning through attention to detail – through thick description. The pinch of autoethnography forced itself into my framework as I realised that what I see and perceive is deeply dependent on how I feel. When I felt sad, the barn became smaller and darker, other farmers turned into impenetrable perplexing aliens, and every word was against me, while on positive days, the barn was a sunny place by the sea again, filled with loving humans and animals trying to change the world. I came to realise that I cannot separate my observations from my personal diary; what I feel, what I rationalise and physically experience are not independent and cannot be analysed as such, so I found it essential to include them in the text. It was only in a second step that I tried to separate – through colour-coding – what were my feelings, questions and impressions from what I observed.

My research around queer farmers' practices in Switzerland thus starts by refusing 'strong theory' and by stepping into the train of thought developed by Gibson-Graham (2008) to theorise diverse economies and then enriched (in 2014) to 'rethink economy' under the guidance of Clifford Geertz's (1973) *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture*.

As Gibson-Graham (2014) powerfully asserts, the practice of weak theory requires the active avoidance of the categorisation of performances and discourses into fixed analytical groups and assumed trajectories. 'Strong theories' trap researchers along rigid thinking pathways that prevent them from looking beyond categories, thus leading them to ignore that which does not fit. As a result, argues Gibson-Graham, political economy scholars have long failed to see the (extra)ordinary diversity of economic practices. In my case, 'strong theories' could blind me from seeing the complexity of farm performances, gender and sexuality.

In the present research, weak theory is used to take the research subject's perspective and avoid imposing – consciously or otherwise – external, pre-defined categories that might erase the

nuances of performances situated at their intersections or outside. Taking off the blinkers forged through preconceptions and predetermined hypotheses is an active work. Specific to my research field, three main thinking patterns had attracted me: the clear-cut division between work and leisure, the heteronormative and static understanding of gender and sexuality and the normative, traditional understanding of family and kinship. This was where thick, ethnographic description stepped in to help.

While weak theory allowed me to identify my categorical thinking and let go of it, thick description became my practical tool to look at performances and describe them in their entirety as I perceived them, so that few small meanings remained buried under the 'main activities' and broad categories. Thick description has been my hook to resist the magnetic attraction that strong theories enact; through this method, I described what I saw, not only the general practices but also the subtleties of communication and human relationships that need attentive interpretation, such as double-meanings, sarcastic grins, alluring glances, accusing and ironic silences – that is, the slightly contingent performances that constitute practice. I performed thick description by plunging into queer farming cultures, I lived and worked on queer farms, and I wrote down everything I felt, saw, heard, tasted, said. I felt out of place for days while building my understanding of how to move and communicate on queer farms. In time and through trials and errors – such as confusing grass, straw, and hay and forgetting to close the gate causing all the goats to escape the barn by night – I built a rapport with the research subjects, with and through which I tried to interpret, feel and understand the subtleties of their (and for a time my) mundanity.

My aim has been and still is to recognise and understand the research subjects in terms of complex ongoing performances that by their very nature cannot be completely determined nor explained. All the farmers I met are ongoing processes; they do their best to take care of themselves and their (extra-)human environment. Weak theory allows me to recognise the importance of critical thinking but gives more relevance to allowing emerging seeds the time to sprout and grow, accommodating diversity and accepting imperfection. In the next section, I look at how queer farmers come into being in and through their performances.

2.2. Performativity theory

To research gender and farming practices, I avail myself of the extension of the relational approach developed by Judith Butler: performativity theory. While a relational approach focuses on the mutual (re)production of places and social actions, performativity theory foregrounds the mutual (re)production of gender and social actions. I thus look at agriculture as a bundle of actions in which gender is continuously (re)produced, while also recognising that there is no performance that is not gendered (Butler, 1988).

In applying performativity theory to the present research, I view the subjects as fluid processes whose gender identities and status on the farm are continually constructed through singular and/or repeated performances. This allows me to distinguish particular acts or practices through which one becomes a *man*, *woman*, *queer*, *Bäuerin*, *Bauer*, *Landwirt* and/or *Landwirtin*. When Butler claims that gender is performative and not the expression of a pre-existing gender identity or sex, she implies that the 'realness' of gender is not to be measured; gender is real as long as it is performed. Performativity theory allows me to look at bodies and, while recognising their natural or physical existence, investigate how it is that through acts and practices, they actively carry cultural meanings like gender and status on the farm. By conceiving gender like a performance in a theatrical sense, it is understood as a pre-rehearsed act, a performance done by bodies. When we do our gender, we perform this script, thus reinforcing it, and we might slightly deviate from it, thus bending gender norms – but we can also create new scripts.

The gender script (re)written participatively over generations by repeated gendered performances that in turn define how gender is to be performed on Swiss farms is at times fixed and condensed in descriptions and definitions – such as the UN definition of family farms (see Chapter 1.2.). It is also acted rather than just enacted, with original parts staged by alternative performers. As a result, on-farm gender is not a fixed, universal, hegemonic concept; rather, it is historically and culturally situated, thus contingent, subject to changes over time and variation across space.

For example, while, until the 1800s, milking was a women's job in numerous countries worldwide, by the 20th century, men had taken over this sector in many places. Thus, a farm wife milking a cow was gender-appropriate in the 1800s in North America, England and Ireland and Denmark yet subversive in Switzerland today (Shortall, 2000). Performativity theory allows me to problematise the dichotomous construction of gender in and through Swiss agriculture to infer that bodies categorised as males are ascribed masculinity, heterosexuality and the main farmer role, while those assigned as females are ascribed femininity and understood as those who work/volunteer 'next to him. The deconstruction of queer farmers as bounded, fixed entities opens a sphere of possibilities for redefining gender and farming identities. Given that gender identities are conceived as fluid and contingent, not only can gender boundaries be crossed, but multiple – even conflicting – gender and farming identities can coexist in the same body, independently of its biological attributes (Butler, 1988).

Subversive performances open up the imagination of the possible, leading the way to a new collective rewriting of gender scripts for doing our gender otherwise. The subversion of gender roles – the performances outside gender scripts, such as *Bäuerins* driving tractors – potentially trouble the agricultural world (Butler, 1988). It is precisely these troubles and swirls that attract my interest: what happens when queer persons run the farm?

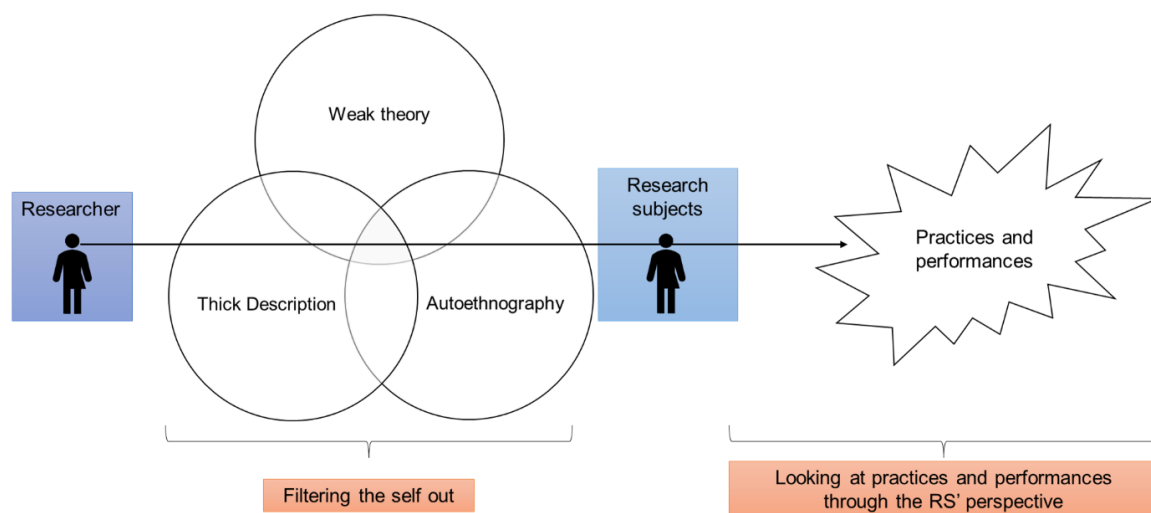


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework, using thick description, weak theory and autoethnography to take the research subject's perspective and study practices and performances informed by performativity theory.

Queer persons bend gender norms, they perform outside the heteronormative norms by challenging the associations among gender, sex and sexuality, and in so doing, they collectively rewrite *gender scripts*. Furthermore, the absence of cismen on the homonuclear ciswomen farm pushes queer farmers to perform outside the traditional roles and breadwinning models of Swiss agriculture. Their existence and performance not only open up possibilities for doing gender and agriculture otherwise but might even redefine gender and sexuality in agriculture more broadly, within and through agriculture. Through the repetition of new subversive acts, gender scripts in agriculture can be bended and rewritten and even erased. Queer farmers' experiences are not read simply as the direct results of the current gender scripts that marginalise them; rather, their subjective experience is recognised in the potential to (re)structure and (re)define (existing) social and political arrangements (Butler, 1988).

Finally, in Figure 1, I place the two pillars under one roof. I combine thick description and weak theory with autoethnography to distance myself from my own perception of the world and take the research subject's perspective. I thus perform the role of looking at the performances and identifying the meanings that the subjects themselves give to them as well as how they themselves

perceive the impacts of their performances and how these, in turn, define and co-construct them in the context of persons on the farm.

3. Methodology

In the next sections, I review the methods and methodology used for data collection and analysis.

3.1. An ethnographic blueprint

To address the research questions and start bridging the knowledge gap through the described framework, I conducted ethnographic research. This allowed me to challenge my initial working assumptions and approaches on the ground and hence have them reshaped and co-shaped by and with local actors. This is essential in a weak theory framework as it entails a dynamic and participatory stance towards research. The ethnographic research was deeply challenging and unsettling to me. One cannot possibly prepare for or predict what the field will bring or take.

For two months, I had little to no control over my agenda. I deliberately allowed my informants to decide when, where and how to meet me and what to share with me. I let myself be guided by the informants until I had gained enough knowledge to approach them and introduce an appropriate methodology – i.e., focussing on unstructured interviews in which I learnt from the farming people in ways that we co-created, I embraced the contemporary ethnological methodology of complete immersion in the everyday life of the subjects of study.

I lost myself multiple times in the interesting fields of knowledge that I experienced through and together with my research subjects. I had to learn to let my research be revised and reworked by the local actors while also keeping to my own path, for example, by letting go of the post-humanist theories towards which I was steered by Severin:e. Yet, without an open stance towards research, I would have never experienced a day at the farming school since it was Severin:e’s idea for me to go there. Similarly, my questions were reformulated and reoriented during my fieldwork on the queer farms, when the intertwined questions of the family farm and of kinship became increasingly relevant as I noticed the frequency of these arguments at the dinner table.

At the centre of my observations and research were and are the practices that constitute gender, sexual and farming identities. Analysing the practices on selected queer farms allowed me to gain an understanding of how queer farms see, shape and are shaped by farming, sexual, sex and gender ideas as well as how they act and relate these ideas and practices to their own being in the world.

Fieldwork research was conducted between May and July, which is a relatively short time for ethnographic research in agriculture – this should normally last for at least a year so that the researcher can observe all the seasons. Given the short time at my disposal, I was not able to observe all the intrinsically seasonal practices in which the research subjects engage. To make up for my shorter time frame, I used rapid assessment methods, namely a focus group and free-listing activities (Bernard, 2018).

In Table 1, the three sub-questions are linked to the applied fieldwork methods and the resulting data.

Table 1. Sub-questions linked to methods, data and results

Sub-question	Fieldwork Method	Result
What are the main agricultural practices (of [re]production, distribution, marketing, etc.)?	a. Participant and participatory observation b. Semi-structured interviews	a&b. Overview of agricultural (e.g., planting, purchasing seeds) and non-agricultural (e.g., communication) activities
How are these practices distributed among the queer farmers?	a. Participant observation (casual chatting, informal interviews)	a. Overview of who does what, when and how on the farm, including the tasks

	b. Semi-structured interviews with members of queer farm (who does what, when why?)	assigned to me, by whom, when b. Overview of the motivation behind task distribution from the farmer's perspective
How do these practices redefine gender, sex, sexuality and farming?	a. Participant observation (including informal chats) b. Participatory observation (how do practices influence my gender, sex, sexuality and farming identity and vice versa?) c. Semi-structured interviews with members of queer farm (how do practices influence my gender, sex, sexuality, and farming identity and vice versa?) d. Final focus group with all study participants	a. Insights into how particular jobs come with particular definitions of being/identity and how gender/sexual identities are produced in/through the work b. Insight into if/how work identified as male/female is 'queered' c. &d. Farmer's perspective on how gender and sex influence their own task distribution and how performances, in turn, influence their gender, sex, farming, and sexual practices

As my aim is to look at the *micro* – the daily performances – and make it speak for larger societal concerns – the *macro* (Whatmore, 2014, p. 49), I chose a case-study design and limited my sample size to four farms. The farms had to be either officially (co-)led, legally (co-)owned, and/or inhabited by a person who is socialised as queer. I limited my study area to the German-speaking part of Switzerland (see Box 3).

Box 3. Switzerland: Four national languages

Switzerland has four speaking regions: The German region occupies the widest area and is in the east, north and centre; the French part is in the west and slightly smaller, the Italian area is in the south, below the smallest, Romansh-speaking area. My main language is Italian, but I decided not to do the study in the Italian part for two reasons: first, the *Bäuerinnen* education and Swiss *Bäuerin* organisation website only exist in German and French. As I find the existence of two complementary educations (*Landwirt:in* and *Bäuerin*) fascinating – not to say problematic – I wanted to work in a region that clearly distinguished between a *Bäuer:in* and a *Landwirt:in*, which was not the case in the Italian region. Secondly, with the Italian region being quite small, I was afraid that I would not find enough respondents. The German region was preferred over the French one based on my language skills.

The first four farms that met these criteria and were willing to collaborate with me over a sufficient period of time (one to six months) became my case studies, namely the Horn Farm, the Forest Farm, the CSA Farm, and the Butterfly Farm. Additionally, I visited a farming school and followed their classes as a student for one day.

3.2. A palette of strategies

The four farms were all found through word of mouth. To find them, I contacted and spread the word among rural sociology and agricultural researchers, journalists and consultants as well as among *Bäuerins*, feminist and queer organisations. I found some organisations through online research using keywords such as 'transgender', 'farming' and 'Switzerland' combined with phone calls with a journalist and direct messages to feminist and LGBTQ groups (via email and Telegram). Over time, this networking effort bore fruit, and useful information and contacts were

forwarded to me. Despite my expectations, however, snowball sampling did not bring me any case studies, and none of the farms linked me to other queer farmers. I located one farm through two online articles, one on a regional news and community platform and the other on a national online news and information service. The articles treated the trans-specific experience of the queer farmer, how she accepted her queerness and how she came out and acted upon her acknowledgement. The agricultural aspects remained in the background.

Following a first communication (by email or phone), during which I introduced myself and explained the aims and backgrounds of my research, I made a farm visit during which I met the interviewees and sometimes their (farming) partners. The aim of the first visit was not only to answer possible questions from the research subjects but also to build a rapport with them through informal chats. During these first meetings, I decided not to jot down or record anything as I felt that it would disturb the tone and sense of the exchange. To avoid losing too much information, I decided to take a long walk after every meeting, during which I talked into my voice recorder. The focus of the recording was a verbal reconstruction of the encounter: I recounted what I saw – through thick description – and felt – through autoethnography – before, during and after the meeting. Once home, I immediately transcribed the recordings manually.

Every first visit featured a tour of the farm with a meeting that lasted around two to three hours. The only exception was Horn Farm, where I stayed overnight and worked with them immediately (for two days). After these first encounters, I left open the possibility for the farmers of stepping out of the research, and I sent a participant consent form by email. Two farms were not keen on me working at their side over a longer period of time, but they agreed to an interview with one of the two main farmers. The Horn farmers agreed to have me work and study (with) them, so I stayed over and worked for ten days and visited them repeatedly to help them out – and myself. A mixture of researcher curiosity, work pleasure, friendship and a sense of responsibility keeps me still regularly visiting the farm.

The main methods of data gathering during my stay on the farm were participant and participatory observation, which entailed my partaking in the daily practices of my study subjects. This enabled me to develop a rapport with the interviewees and, over time, reduce the response effect. The focus of my observation shifted from summarising the basic practices to identifying task distribution, and finally, I inquired about the basis on which tasks were divided. These three steps interlaced and intermingled as the number and detail of practices grew richer. In like manner, I analysed my own agricultural performances with questions such as Which jobs are (not) assigned to me and why? Do gender, experience and personal strengths/age/nationality/etc. play a role? How do my identities and practices change my relations with others and with myself?

Participatory and participant observation were deeply intertwined with informal interviews. We would chat while cleaning the barns or harvesting herbs, and I would pose questions while making cheese or shovelling manure or grass/hay and listen while drinking tea or coffee or over lunch and dinner. Data was gathered through jotting and note-taking during the day – upon agreement of the participants – which was expanded into proper fieldnotes every evening.

Thick description was a challenge during participatory observation, as I had decided to work as much as Severin:e in order to take every opportunity to experience and understand Severin:e's daily life. Severin:e gets up at 5:30 – but lately at 4:30 – and works on and off until eight in the evening. I moved cow and goat herds, cleaned them and their barns and gave them fresh water and fed the calves; my face was licked by the cows and my arms by the calves looking for their milk. I sat on the tractor next to Severin:e and enjoyed how tidy the field looked after we collected the grass swaths; I trembled with them when the rain grew stronger and washed the farm street away; I worked beside them to repair it with rakes, a pickaxe and sweat; I cleaned the floors, washed the dishes, cooked and ate. In the short breaks and during lunch breaks, I jotted down everything I felt and smelt, tasted, saw and intuited; and in the evening, I expanded my fieldnotes into a diary. After two days, I was exhausted, crying in my room and on the verge of leaving and giving it all up. This too flew into my notes, where my personal diary, methodological and observational notes intermingled and merged into a single text. Only in a second step, I did try to separate my feelings, questions, and impressions (in *italics*) from what I had plainly observed to filter myself

out of the perspectives I was aiming at: the perspectives of those farming with whom I was living and working. Here an extract from my fieldnotes:

Box 4. Diary/fieldnote extracts

6th June 2021, Sunday 7 p.m.

Noemi cooks, she improvises. Kohlrabi is the only vegetable in the fridge that will serve 4 people. She invents. For dinner there is kohlrabi with apples and apple must [freshly pressed apple juice], with millet. Fresh cheese and cow's cheese, as well. At dinner it's me, Noemi, Cleo, and Severin:e. Then Severin:e does the dishes and the rest of us leave. *Severin:e surprises with these acts of kindness, out of the blue Severin:e gives us a break and keeps working alone, taking on one more task on her infinite list, why? We eat in the living room at the round table, there is a corner-bank and two chairs; nobody has a fixed spot, it seems important to Severin:e, like a game, is it a way to avoid hierarchies? Severin:e often asks where you want to sit and you have to decide. In this game I notice how like creature of habit I am, I would love to always sit on that chair, on the left, next to the window.*

7th June 2021, Monday 6 a.m.

I am tired, agriculture makes me tired, my body has very little energy and I do not know if I am eating enough. I decided not to run this week, at least not in the morning. One week's break isn't bad for me. It'll get me back stronger in my running and everything.

So today the alarm rang at 6 am, I delay it by 10 minutes and then to 6.30. Normally I never snooze. *So this is new, am I more relaxed? Or am I just exhausted?*

Then I get up, drink, take my vitamins, brush my teeth, and make my way down – I sleep upstairs, the kitchen, living room and exit are downstairs. I go in the changing room, where we always leave the barn clothes and rubber boots that never enter the house, I wear my smelly, long-sleeved, black t-shirt, large grey pants, a red bandana and the rubber boots that hurt my big feet. Then I make my way up to the barn. I clean my boots and enter the milk room, *the only manure-free place in the barn*, I fill up 4 litres of milk, like Severin:e taught me yesterday, clean the baskets with boiling hot water. Then I open up the milk manually and fill the basket. I'm lucky and I fill in the exact right amount. I divide it among 2 baskets. 2 litres of milk per calf, 2 calves. I use the hot water to warm up the milk to 40 degrees. I take the plastic mammary glands; I clean them and take everything to the calves. When they see me, they start moving, licking in the air, looking for a teat. The process of feeding the calves is *too emotional, too visceral for me, I am not their mother and do not deserve this; they want the milk but there is no love in this milk, they only get 4 litres a day from a metal basket*. They lick me, they look for teats. I finally manage to feed them and as they finish the milk, I put some grass and my whole hand into their mouth. *I feel drained. Then I abandon the calves again, alone in the dark barn, their mom one wall apart, so near,*

Given that my research question regards gender, sex and related practices on the farm, I could have summed the nearly 400 words in Box 4 in 16: Noemi cooks, Severin:e does the dishes, and, in the morning, I wake up and feed the calves. In fact, much of the 600 pages of the material (among fieldnotes and interview transcripts) that I collected was not relevant to my research question. Have I wasted my time? I do not think so. Some pages gave me context or stimulated my thoughts, and others raised new questions and doubts. For example, writing made me realise how I felt about feeding the calves (see Box 4 above), and I asked myself and my respondents how they could possibly stand to be the cause of its separation from the mother. From this small observation arose a discussion around kinship, artificial insemination and organic farming, all input into the findings that I could use for the development of the interview guide.

While going over my fieldwork data, I created an interview guide (see Appendix A) and organised the interview dates. Due to the extreme weather at the time – heavy, persistent rain and hail – and its impact on the farm and farm life, three meetings had to be moved and one of them cancelled.

Eventually, a total of seven semi-structured interviews and one focus group were undertaken. The interviews were recorded – upon agreement with all concerned subjects – with a voice recorder and computer. I later manually transcribed the interviews on my laptop and saved all the data daily at three separate locations, namely the computer storage, OneDrive Wageningen and on external hard disks. In order not to accumulate too much raw data,¹ I made sure to transcribe the recordings weekly. Each transcript was then sent to the research subject, who could review what they had said but also withdraw all data (including images). Only one respondent reviewed the interview commented and corrected when needed; none of the interviewees withdrew their data.

The interview transcripts were coded with Atlas.ti. The field diary and the focus group data were not coded, but excerpts from the field diary were included in the results to substantiate statements and give insights into the daily life on a farm, how much happens, how much one can observe, feel, smell.

In the coding phase, I used grounded theory to organise my data without losing its thickness. Fortunately, in this regard, summarising has never been my strength – my friends are still laughing at my 20-page summary of a 20-page chapter! – so, thick description comes quite naturally to me. In fact, I have difficulties in deciding what is *not* important: what if I leave out exactly the nuance that changes everything? Thick description fed into my compulsion for detail, and I ended up with more than 600 codes. Again, I provoked laughter – from my roommate this time – when I confessed to having ten codes just for animals, like *cows*, *rabbit* and *no-dogs*. At this point, I would say we had a situation; I couldn't see the woods for the trees. The moment had come for me to group and merge codes by paying attention to repeating items and patterns, which, in turn, pointed towards key ideas. Some of these became main concepts, such as *Bäuerin*, *Bauer* and *family farms*, while others turned out to be irrelevant to my research question – indeed, *cows*, *rabbit*, *no-dogs*, *horse* and *suchlike*. The main goal of this exercise was to organise my data (the results – Chapter 4) into topics and themes for the chapters. Of the ten animal codes, in fact, three did survive – although only three – and this long work brought me to one small insight, that cow-related activities are rather masculine, smaller animals more suited to women, with horses in an in-between land that I have not yet quite figured out. Anyhow, I reduced my system to 115 codes. My codes were still grounded in the detail, but my theory was taking shape, and I could slowly see the woods again – without losing sight of the trees.

Thick coding – my own term for a grounded theory of thick description (detailed, raw data) – helped me to understand how and when details are important and let go of those that are important but not directly relevant to my research questions. For example, one of the questions that emerged through thick coding concerned the relationship between animal and human rights regarding reproduction: *How can my research subjects identify as feminist, stand up for their (non-)reproductive rights and yet decide on whether a cow is to have sex ('mate'), and if so when, where and with whom (which bull)?* Or, in Severin:e's formulation, provocatively inverting the issue to be considered: *How can I find it completely ok that humans are artificially inseminated, but with animals I find it somehow wrong?* This is just one – or two – of the numerous issues raised during the data-gathering stage that I could not follow-up on due to the need to focus on the research question I had already established.

After writing the result chapter and before proceeding to the discussion, I shared the results of this process with my seven respondents. I invited them to my home – though only three out of seven could show up – to communicate that I wanted to disclose to them as they had to me, and in one afternoon, we got to know one another (not all the people from the farms had met before), I presented the results, and we discussed them. This process was extremely helpful in enabling me to

¹ By 'raw data', I mean the recordings and the unedited notes of the interviews; in fact, as Holstein and Gubrium (1995) remind us, there is no such thing as raw data, as every form of knowledge is co-constructed by the researchers and their subjects and thus interpreted, never 'raw' as such.

check that I was doing justice to the respondents, that I was accurately representing their perspective and not distorting it through my own personal and/or academic lenses. Most of the results were confirmed, yet this helped me put the dots on many 'i's before proceeding.

In the discussion, I continued deriving my inferences from my data while reinforcing the codes and concepts through the research of other scholars. Finally, the thesis emerged, the result of the continuous re-reading and re-analysis and re-allocation of codes to make concepts in an iterative process between data, field and literature. I have attempted to narrate the whole process, from how my interest was born and I went into the field to how it changed me, my perspective, and how, in turn, I influenced the study site. In these times in which physical travel is constrained, I allowed myself to adventure into the countryside to discover new palettes of genders, knowing that this trip would not leave me unchanged.

3.3. A critical assessment

There are, of course, drawbacks to the methods and methodology I have employed. Some I had taken into consideration since the beginning, while others emerged along the way.

The chosen methodology allowed me to dive deep into gender, sexual sex and identarian matters, providing detailed descriptions and insights into the research subjects' understanding and perceptions of how farming can be performed away from the (re)production of masculinity and femininity. My case study design does, however, limit the reliability and generalizability of the results. The seven queer farmers I have interviewed may not be representative of the queer farmers' population in Switzerland and elsewhere. Furthermore, during my fieldwork, I only interviewed queer farmers; the perceptions of those working with and beside them was not taken into consideration. This further limit to reliability was something that I countered, to some extent, through participant and participatory observation.

These limitations were planned in, as I considered the importance of depth of analysis to outweigh generalisability and reliability in the light of my theoretical framework that aims at understanding located positions and perceptions. Yet, soon into my research, I balked in front of what seemed to be too big a plunge. How deep was I willing to go, how far was I capable of going uninjured? My willingness to contribute to the understanding of how sex and gender are anchored in practices and how they are in turn influenced by the latter is fiercely personal. I realise how my affinity to the topic represented, on the one hand, an advantage but, on the other, entailed the emotional danger of exploring my own sexual and gender as well as professional identities. Tackling such sensitive topics could have endangered both me and the research subjects. At times, through reflexivity and joint reflections with family, friends and my supervisor, I had to let go of topics not only to protect myself and my subjects but also to appreciate how my research might be diverted to tackle certain power relations and/or perpetrate others. As Said (1978) eloquently argues, knowledge production and circulation are never neutral but infused with power dynamics. Giving visibility to the research subjects and to myself as concrete persons made and still makes us vulnerable – for example, to heterosexism, mental illness stigmas and transphobia. Reflexivity might have hindered me from maximising the extraction of information from myself and my respondents, yet it is part of an approach to research that prioritises safe handlings and social justice over knowledge-production.

Finally, the performance of this thesis is still ongoing insofar as the reflection continues. I am still wondering whether I made the right decision in not anonymising some research subjects, for example. The modes of anonymisation were, in fact, agreed upon with the research subjects, allowing them to determine their own names. Two research subjects specifically desired to have their real names used as they believed that their visibility was important in order to attract more queer farmers. I still wonder if that was the right choice, as I am afraid that they will be recognised and face more gender troubles because of me. I felt conflicted between my academic knowledge and the moral obligation of anonymisation – scholars screaming in my head, 'Always anonymise!' – and my desire not to patronise my research subjects. Have I made the right decision? Or have I been utterly wrong?

4. Results

4.1. Setting the stage

Through purposive sampling (see Chapter 3), four farms were located whose farmers were ready to collaborate by letting me stay and work on the farm and/or be interviewed. The following sections present an overview of the structures and organisations of the farms and the farming practices (Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2) before an analysis of the main factors that determine task divisions (Section 4.1.3.).

4.1.1. Farm description

The four farms studied are located in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. They are between ten and fifteen hectares in size, with four to eight hectares available for agricultural use. The Swiss national average for agricultural land per farm in 2011 was 18 hectares (*Situationsbericht*, 2013). The plot size typically used to determine a smallholding varies between two and ten hectares, so these farms could be categorised as large smallholdings by standard definitions (Garner & de la O Campos, 2014, pp. 7–8).

All the farms are organic certified by Bio Suisse and have diverse production areas. They sell animal products as well as vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts and fruits. For anonymisation purposes, I named them after a detail the farmers were proud of and/or that particularly struck me. The seven people I interviewed – Severin:e, Noemi and Cleo, Stefanie, Curcuma, and Maria and Ciliegia – all lived and/or worked on these farms. There was Horn Farm, whose protagonists were Severin:e, Noemi, and Cleo; Forest Farm, featuring Stefanie; Butterfly Farm, with Curcuma and Emma; and the CSA Farm ('CSA' stands for Community Supported Agriculture) with Maria and Ciliegia.

Horn Farm, owned by Severin:e, is a certified organic farm of around 15 ha set in quite steep agricultural land. The main commercial products are cow's milk, goat's cheese, fruits and by-products, as well as grains and oilseeds that vary year to year. There are two horses, a flock of chickens, a kitchen garden and many biodiversity areas as well as woodland. Six people live on the farm, all white and abled. The main farmer is Severin:e – a federally certified organic farmer with a master's degree in social sciences, assigned female and in a lesbian relationship – with Noemi – who is also assigned female and holds a master's degree in social sciences but also has an off-farm job – along with the trainee, Cleo – assigned female, in a monogamous heterosexual relationship, holding a Federal Diploma of Higher Education in another agricultural field – and Severin:e's parents – a heterosexual couple, abled with age-related barriers, who live on the farm in a separate house. Finally, there is Adele, the upstairs tenant – a goat and business owner, assigned female.

Forest Farm is situated on around 15 hectares of agricultural land. Stefanie is a white, abled, male-assigned (trans)woman and separated from her wife (who also still lives on the farm). She inherited the farm from her father. During her hormonal treatments, Stefanie converted the farm to organic and then wrote it over to her wife before having gender confirmation surgery. The main commercial product is chickens with eggs and vegetables on a smaller scale for direct selling. The farm is also doing an agroforestry experiment with nut trees, and they have donkeys, sheep, high-trunk fruit trees, woodland and a pond. Stefanie is a federally certified carpenter and farmer with a full-time, off-farm job. She graduated from two courses (after her coming-out) on organic farming with her wife, who is a federally certified *Bäuerin* (they had taken courses for organic farming together when they converted to organic). They had two children together, and they live on the farm, too. Stefanie also has a stepson – from her wife's previous marriage – who works on the farm; he had stepped up his work on-farm when Stefanie went abroad for her gender confirmation surgery.

Butterfly Farm – organic-certified – consists of around ten hectares of steep land, of which four are in agricultural use and the rest forest. The main commercial products are lamb, eggs and honey. On the land are sheep and chickens, along with rabbits, bee colonies and semi-wild cats. There is a kitchen garden that covers the vegetable needs of the residents and other families during the summer. Assigned female, Curcuma is a white, abled woman in a lesbian relationship, with a

bachelor's degree and multiple federal diplomas of higher education, including organic farmer. She is the official farm manager and lives on the farm with her partner Emma – also assigned female, white, abled, with a bachelor's degree and a federally certified organic farmer. Both also have another job outside of farming; Emma's off-farm job provides their main income.

Farmed according to the principles of community-supported agriculture, the CSA Farm is run by a collective of five professionals and over 100 members. The land consists of around ten hectares of flat land and woods. The main commercial products are vegetables, various grains, seeds and pulses, beef, chicken, eggs and high-trunk fruits. All the products are sold to the members, who pay a contribution in advance – to cultivate, for example, a vegetable field whose harvest they will later receive. Besides the cows and chickens, there is also a herd of goats on the farm. In summer, the livestock are moved up-mountain. Maria – assigned female, white, abled, in a lesbian relationship and a federally certified organic farmer – is one of the five professionals – the others are heterosexual, three ciswomen and one cisman. Ciliegia – assigned female, white, lesbian and abled – has a bachelor's degree and is a federally certified organic farmer. One of the regular helpers and members of the farm, she was substituting for one of the professionals, who was injured.

Box 5. First trip to a farm

I wake up early in the morning and I am nervous and excited. I prepare my things to go on the farm. The backpack is too small and all my clothes too city-bred. What shall I wear? Jeans are uncomfortable, and I don't have a proper rain jacket. I wear jogging pants, inappropriate, too feminine... Later, I feel everyone's eyes on my legs. Are they admiring my strong legs? Or do they think they're too skinny? Are they laughing at my pants? I'm sure I look too feminine, so, as soon as I arrive on the farm: I mess up my hair, bind it in a low chignon, and I wear my shaggiest pullover, a brown one. I wear my boyish self, and I move more boyishly. Agriculture for me already means balancing on this fine line between farmer and woman identities.

I hurry to the station I take one train, then another, a regional train. The train is short and slow; it runs along a cantonal street, and the cars are faster than we. The train itself seems an allegory of this place, somewhere between modernity and rurality.

I smell nothing and I feel cold. I see big birds and small birds, big fields and small fields, cows grazing between trees and others on nearly desert land. I see 2xNEIN posters and flags everywhere.¹ The sky is grey and threatening rain. The landscape features small lakes, rape fields, cows and small towns. I get the sense of a retiree hotspot, of an economy that seems to turn around agriculture and birdwatching tourism. I see nature conservation parks and industries for agricultural machinery. In the sky, there are black kites, storks, great crested grebe and Marsh warbler.

As the train slows, I see a woman at the station. She looks like a caring person. I smile, and she smiles back.

4.1.2. Main practices

On all four farms, there are tasks to be performed daily to keep the house and the farm going. Among these are practices related to animals, such as feeding and taking care of them (petting, grooming, talking) and cleaning their stables. These tasks are pretty much the same every day throughout the year, except for the livestock when they are off-farm in the summer. In the winter, the livestock spend more time in the barn, so there is more barn work; in the summer, the animals are more outside, so fences need to be erected and animals directed to appropriate areas. On the farms that produce milk, cows and/or goats need to be milked twice daily. Among the more salutary practices are slaughtering and disease treatment along with sheep shearing, taking the animals to the mountain and moving the chicken mobile houses.

In the summer, parts of the fields are mowed and grass collected to feed the ruminants with fresh grass (in the summer); other parts are preserved for winter fodder (as hay or silage). The practice

of haymaking extends through the months of May to July. Animal manure is spread on the grassland by the grazing animals and by tractor. Every three to four months, the barns that have hay beds need to be mucked out, a job done by hand that requires quite a lot of physical strength and/or a large labour force.

Box 6. A day on Horn Farm (short version)

5.22 I hear someone waking up and leaving, might be Noemi or Severin:e or both.

6.30 I get up and feed milk to the calves and take them fresh hay; then Severin:e and I take the cows up to the pasture.

Breakfast; someone calls from a cantonal control office, they will visit tomorrow.

8.40 Cleo and I go to the barn, Severin:e has to meet the accountant. Cleaning the goat barn, cleaning the cow barn, feeding and giving minerals to the cows, feeding the goats, taking in the flags that delimit the fields, bringing the cows back because of pouring rain, taking the goats from the stanchion to the walk barn, feeding the young cows. Chat with Cleo. Severin:e is making cheese all morning.

12.00 Lunch. I set the table, with bread, salad and cheese.

13.00 I call a journalist who is an expert on women farmers in Switzerland. In the meantime, Cleo and Severin:e are back at work. I join them. I clean a very dirty bathtub they used for animals to drink from. Severin:e mows, and Cleo spreads manure.

16.00 Snacks.

16.15 Cleo and I take the bandage off from a wounded horse, bring in the older goats, groom the cows, feed the calves, feed the cows, continue grooming them.

18.30 Break. Severin:e cooks, I write.

19.00 Severin:e calls us, dinner is ready; pasta with nettles. It tastes delicious.

19.15 Outside it's pouring again and Severin:e gets upset and worried, it wasn't expected. Severin:e is afraid that their street might be washed away. If that happens, the milk lorry will not make it up and collect the milk. There is no insurance for that, so Severin:e will have to pay. That already happened twice last winter.

20.00 Severin:e leaves. Cleo and I do the dishes.

21.00 I go to bed.

The house is also a place where practices repeat: cooking, dishwashing, and eating recur three or four times daily; less frequent yet regularly recurring practices are cleaning and food provisioning, including harvesting and taking care of the kitchen garden. The vegetable fields require regular upkeep, such as watering, weeding and in-season harvesting, as well as seasonally recurring tasks, such as soil preparation practices (ploughing, manure spreading), growing (sowing, pricking and planting seedlings) and plant protection measures (spraying).

On arable land, the soil is usually prepared mechanically (by the farmers or external contractors); then the seeds are sown; there might be some weeding, some spraying and watering, depending on the culture and on the weather; and then there is the harvest. In the case of grain crops, threshing is commissioned out to external contractors. Tree farming does not involve any daily routinised practices, yet two high points, the harvest season and the pruning season, both involve big workloads.

Often, at the end of the day, there is still office work to be done. This includes, among other things, communication with consumers, members, volunteers, external contractors and agricultural

businesses, shopping for business and household essentials, administrative work, and packaging and selling practices.

As explored in Chapter 1.1., farm work in Switzerland is traditionally organised around the core heterosexual couple, namely the *Bauer* and the *Bäuerin*. Gender is thus the main axis around which tasks are distributed – at least in the collective imagination, as this might not be the case in practice (below, Section 4.3.2). The four cases studied here lack the traditional heterosexual core and hence the clearly gendered division of tasks that follows. As a result, the farmers find other ways in which to divide the work. In the course of the data collection and analysis, I grouped the ways in which the respondents described tasks as distributed into six categories: *embodied knowledge*, *interests*, *the body*, *time and presence*, *farm imperatives* and *the outside*. It should be noted that factors in task division are at the same time consequences of that – for example, Noemi developed a curiosity for and knowledge of animal farming through working with animals. The listed factors are intertwined with each other and not an exhaustive list; nor are they presented in any order of importance, which seems anyway to vary over time.

4.1.3. Factors in task division

Here, I have grouped the responsibility and labour division patterns as explained by the study subjects. This structuring of the collected data is just one of the many ways in which it could be organised and presented. It resulted from the grounded theory approaches, and the research subjects were able to relate to it.

Embodied knowledge

Knowledge encompasses both that acquired through formal education and that acquired through experience and routinised practice over time. As such, it is strongly dependent on educational paths on one side and life experience on the other. In the next paragraph, two examples are presented to indicate how knowledge is attained but also needs to be practised over time and how knowledge differences are cemented through the (lack of) repetition of practices.

On Forest Farm, Stefanie is responsible for spraying the crops because she acquired the knowledge during the farmer's education and kept carrying the responsibility for this area over the years. Her wife – a certified *Bäuerin* – has no experience in this area that is considered tricky, dangerous and thus requires experienced, knowledgeable hands, in this case, Stefanie's hands. Knowledge differences deem Stefanie to hold and continuously re-iterate her embodied knowledge in this area and Stefanie's wife to continue to not experience this task and lack this knowledge. On the other hand, Stefanie's wife, who grew up on a market garden, is the one who as the saying in the vegetable garden, her life-long experience make her the most suitable for organising the garden and carrying the main responsibility. In this area, Stefanie is just a helping hand; her wife is in charge.

On Horn Farm, Noemi, who lacks a farmer education, does not milk or drive tractors; her partner Severin:e does not let inexperienced helpers perform certain tasks for safety reasons. Yet, it is not (only) the external prohibition and lack of embodied knowledge that prevents her from performing these tasks, but the fact that Noemi has no interest for this area of work. In fact, while Noemi does not learn to drive tractors, the trainee (Cleo) does. Cleo wants and has to learn driving tractors – has to if she wants to pass the vocational exams – so over time she can perform harder tasks and gain experience, embody the theoretical knowledge she acquires at the farmer's school. Task division is thus adapted to the knowledge that already was acquired, but also to the knowledge that wants/has to be acquired.

Interests

Interests – encompassing all the things that one enjoys doing – thus, plays a role in the research subject's knowledge, but it also directly plays a role for task division: all the interviewees mention that they favour distributing tasks not only according to capacities/embodied knowledge but, in Stefanie's own words: '*so that the person does the work that suits him or her and enjoys doing it.*' What we call an interest can also be an effect of normalisation and socialisation and thus be gendered, too (see Chapter 5).

In time, through experiences and new knowledges, the interests may shift. For example, Noemi arrived on the farm as 'a plant person', she had a passion for plants and took care of the garden, then she started appreciating the work with the animals in the stable and cheesemaking and *'the division of labour came about as a result'*. On Horn Farm, the division of labour shifts strongly yearly to adapt to the curiosities and knowledges of the new trainees, as farmer education pushes the trainees to change their training farm every year.

What surely lightens taking interests into account is the fact that all the interview partners with a farmer education (Curcuma, Ciliegia, Stefanie, Severin:e, Maria, and Cleo), when asked what their favourite activity is, struggled to answer the question, they liked to do everything, and it took them some time to find a practice they could not enjoy. All of them also reported that what they appreciated in farming was the diversity of the occupation, so when they distribute tasks, they make sure that all farmworkers can rotate activities. Noemi, on the other hand, expressed altogether a clear preference for what she calls 'fine-motor' activities – activities that include movements of the hands and fingers, and/or altogether precision of movement and coordination – over *'anything that's gross motor skills, like working in manure or digging up beds or something.'*

To sum up, interests are taken into consideration during task division, which shifts as these develop and knowledge grows and with changing farmworkers.

The body

Maria likes working with machines and emphasises that she is just as skilled as the male farmer she works with in this area. Yet, there is one thing: the taps of the large, liquid-manure barrel are just too big for her hands, and she struggles to attach them. Most of the time, she is stubborn enough to develop a technique and make it work, but this time she states: *'Shit, this part is just not made for my body, it just doesn't fit. I'm too small, and too [...] My hands are too small, and I'm just too weak [...] These taps, they're almost too heavy for my little hands, so he does it most of the time.'*

Maria's perception of her body is similar to Severin:e's, as something that one has, just like one has a certain mind, and inside there is the 'I' that has to work with that body, its capacities and its limits. Severin:e explains it thus:

I'm a human being, and I have a certain body and a certain constitution and, for example, for me, simply because I'm so thin and so light, there's a certain limit to how [much] I can lift or how I can do some things.

Maria's and Severin:e's bodies become a resource with certain features and certain limits, strengths and weaknesses that are related to their constitutions, not to their gender. Yet, the body can also be ascribed tasks and fulfil possibilities on the basis of gender norms, which leads us to doing them in a certain gendered way (see below, Chapter 5). Severin:e perceives the limits of her body and recognises the need to be careful with which tasks she performs and how so that the body is not overwhelmed. Task division is thus organised around the physicality of farmworkers – which body can perform which practice and which cannot.

The identity relationships in the gender discourse not only concern embodied knowledge – the farming training and experience – but also the physical realities of strength and fitness, which also carry dynamic possibilities for change. The body itself develops with and through the practices. For instance, Ciliegia, Maria, and Severin:e report how through farming, they feel and look stronger. Curcuma's body became slower but more resilient through the constant farming practices, and she never experienced illness or chronic physical pain.

Further to the bodily changes of increased strength and improved performance, however, other bodily changes lead to a reduction of activities; some practices that were previously performed routinely are no longer feasible for certain bodies. For instance, the previous farm-owner at Horn Farm still does work on the farm and is described by Severin:e as a *'big help'*, but at the same time, he is also a source of uncertainty because he has an ageing body that cannot perform as before. The process of ageing implies increasing restrictions on what can be done safely, what Severin:e can trust him with and what now seems too risky. Over the years, Severin:e, the farm

trainees and Noemi have adapted to the ex-owner's ageing body whose limits increasingly require the steady adjustment of task division. During the plum harvest, for instance, he helped move the ladders, but he did not climb up the trees with me as he may have done years ago. I must be clear, though, that his help was essential for me; moving the five-metre ladders required his experience not only to position them on a safe and strong branch but also to manage them without injury.

On Forest Farm, Stefanie feels the ageing process too. While previously, she could both keep up a full-time off-farm job and work as a farmer, as she '*got older, the strain just got greater and greater*' until she fell victim to burnout:

And from there, I did realise that it doesn't work in the long run, it just doesn't work. And that's why I'm really no longer so strongly involved in farming [...] But I notice that I also need time for myself. Even just the recovery phase when working shifts is also simply a sign of age. Twenty years ago, I could switch from one shift to another without any problem. That doesn't work anymore. [Coughs] Yes, those are the changes [coughs].

The division of tasks is thus adapted to the ever-changing body strength. In Chapter 4.2, we will focus on the research subjects' perception of their gendered bodies.

Time and presence

Another factor that affects task division is time availability and presence on the farm. This involves the availability of farmers at the moment when and place where a task has to be performed, which is related to total the time that the farmer spends on the farm (presence). While time availability has a major influence on task division, the areas of responsibilities are also tightly linked with the presence of the person on the farm. This is exemplified by Noemi's shifting responsibilities on Horn Farm as she started spending less time there. She explains the effects of this reduction of time spent on the farm due to her off-farm job and education:

[A] few years ago, I also had the responsibility for a part of the garden and that became too much for me [to do] from a distance – being there only part of the week – and I found that quite difficult. And then I said, 'I don't want to be responsible for a part of the garden; I like to help in the garden, but the responsibility doesn't make sense to me.

Noemi now visits the farm one or two days a week, and it is hard for her to gain an overview of the tasks. As a result, she struggles to take up responsibilities and prefers helping by performing tasks that are assigned to her by Severin:e. The person who lives on the farm, in this case Severin:e, spends the most time on farm and is the one with the overview of what needs doing, where and when is the person most likely to set the programme of the day and assign tasks. Task division is then adapted to the others' own time availabilities and obligations, such as their off-farm jobs. In this case, therefore, Noemi tends to be assigned jobs and retains few areas of responsibility.

Less extreme is the case of Emma and Curcuma. Emma only leaves Butterfly Farm for outside work one day a week. Thus, although Curcuma does have a better overview of the farm, Emma can still take on responsibilities – in this case, the vegetable garden and cleaning duties in the house. Curcuma explains:

I'm sort of the manager and, but I'm, I... so we're very equal with Emma, and also, I don't have more to say than she does, or only in very specific things where I have more knowledge or I can take more time to think about certain things or so, but otherwise it's not so I'm the boss and Emma follows, it's not. We discuss a lot together, and yes, sometimes we disagree and then you have to find a way [...] but I'm just, purely in terms of presence, I would say, I'm the one who lifts things up a bit, who always knows a bit [more] about what and where, but otherwise we are very equal in deciding how things are done.'

In this affirmation, Curcuma is concerned to accentuate their avoidance of hierarchical relations on the farm notwithstanding their different ownership positions and income inequalities – as mentioned (above), in fact, Emma provides the main income to the farm through her off-farm job.

Box 7. What is equality anyhow?

Curcuma claims that she and Emma are equals, thus raising questions around the meaning of equality. In fact, if two people have different knowledge positions, or claim to have them, this introduces a hierarchy in terms of whose voice counts more. Curcuma explains that task division and decisions are the result of discussions, after which one of them, she or Emma, has to adapt, thus (partially) ‘submitting’ to the will of the other, which in a first moment seems to contradict the concept of equality. What makes them equals, however, is that things balance out in the long term. Roughly, equality is reached through the number of times that one adapts to the other. Curcuma’s equality is thus a long-term outcome of their (working) relationship that builds not only on their unequal level of knowledge but also their unequal power positions in different areas. In fact, fields where they have equal knowledge seem to cause bigger frictions; for example, Emma decided to let Curcuma be responsible for mowing as this had become the source of excessive competition among them.

Although presence and time availability together with embodied knowledge and interest and important factors determining participation and task division, there are also moments in which farm imperatives rule.

Farm imperatives

I coded as ‘farm imperatives’ things that need to be done to keep the farm running. With this, I included not only those things that were vital for the farm as a profit-oriented business but also those that were key to its functioning as an ecosystem, so that all living beings on the farm can satisfy and be satisfied in regard to their needs. Farm imperatives are deeply intertwined with the weather and the extra-human. They encompass the tasks and practices that need to be performed at a very specific time and place, which are sometimes regular and predictable – such as milking activities required every 12 hours – sometimes semi-regular and semi-predictable – such as harvesting days – and occasionally unpredictable and sudden – such as illnesses and extreme weather events.

The regular and predictable imperatives on livestock farms, for example, include the need for farm-workers to adapt to farm animals, such as milking every 12 hours. Thus, Severin:e gets up every morning at 5.30 to clean the cows, milk them and take them to the pasture (on rainless mornings), and at 5.30 in the evening, she (or the trainee) milks them again. The daily farm activities are thus organised around and as a function of these imperatives that are repeated without exception and cannot be delayed – or only very marginally. Severin:e, who carries the responsibility for the farm and is the only one with a full overview and knowledge, can only very rarely leave the farm for one entire day – this has occurred twice since we met, six months ago. Otherwise, the milking schedule fixes the day, every day. The various other constant imperatives and mundanities are organised around the primary needs of the livestock.

While farm imperatives are already planned into task division, sometimes they irregularly impose on other factors, such as personal curiosities. For example, as noted (above), Noemi does not like shovelling and other activities that involve gross motor skills, and the farm’s task division is adapted to this; routinely, she gets to perform the activities she likes the most. However, sometimes all workforce – including Noemi – is needed for tasks she might like less. For example, every two-to-three month, the goat stable has to be mucked out: layers of hay, urine and dung that form a compact, 50-cm-thick lasagne is shovelled into barrels. Everyone – in this case Severin:e, Cleo, Noemi, and I – fills their barrel – full enough but not too much, to be sure that we can still control it – then we push the barrel to the upstairs area of the barn where the compost heap is. This is where the tricky part starts, the fine-gross motor part, balancing on the thin wooden boards on the compost while carrying, pushing and pulling the barrel. Noemi might not love this activity – neither did I – but sometimes the farm imperatives rule over interests, demanding a small sacrifice that lightens

the job for everyone. Doing this job alone would be brutal, says Severin:e, done together, one feels less hopeless in front of the unappetising heavy lasagne, and it only takes around an hour.

Finally, there are farm imperatives that cannot possibly be predicted, which was something I stumbled upon multiple times during my fieldwork. For instance, when Severin:e called me at 9 p.m. the evening before my farm visit, the hail had turned their roof into a colander, and we needed to cancel my visit. Severin:e did not know what had happened to the fruits on the trees nor the rye field, Severin:e was overwhelmed and had no capacity for my visit, so we postponed. Later that week, I was supposed to visit Butterfly Farm, yet they called the day before too, to ask me not to come: the sun was shining for the first time in weeks, and they had to muck out the goat stable that day, a task that would take them the whole day and in which I could not help, so they did not have the capacity for hosting me. The farm imperatives thus take the farmers by surprise, and the whole task division sometimes has to be reviewed, impacting the research subject's schedule (and, in turn, mine).

The outside

On multiple occasions, interviewees talked vaguely about '*the outside*', 'people of the village', and 'farmers' in general and gave their opinions and perceptions of them. In their usage of these terms, the interviewees take themselves out of that category and deny their role in constituting the context referred to.

The research subjects perceived their farms as queer, sustainability-oriented, left-wing bubbles that they juxtaposed with the broader regional and farming contexts. These were characterised as conservative and traditional, chiefly in respect of their gendered and sexed understanding of the world. The division between these two worlds at times requires a redistribution of tasks. For example, Stefanie and her wife took a decision that overrode all the other task-distribution factors:

Now, for example, our son, he is now in a Swiss Wrestling association. And the club is two villages away. And we have to drive him there because it's a bit much to cycle himself to the training. And this is now a case where I strictly don't drive him. And that's simply because the Swiss wrestling scene is very conservative, and we don't want to confront our son, the junior, with the fact that my trans theme could become a problem.

Furthermore, to adapt to the context of *the outside*, Stefanie and her wife had decided to write the farm over to the latter, making her the official farm-owner and manager. Stefanie explains that being perceived as a trans-woman is, in her farming context, even worse than being a woman. Stefanie's credibility thus falls away with her masculine façade. She affirms that, where her word was previously believed, now she is doubted in what she says, does and knows.

When the research subjects come to the subject of the farm-external context, their narratives recount experiences of and reactions to discrimination regarding their gender and sexuality.

4.2. Gender and sexuality

The question about what gender and sexuality are to the research subjects is considered below (Section 4.3). Here, the focus is placed on how they are perceived and perceive themselves in terms of their gender and sex – while reiterating that the research subjects cannot be reduced to their sex nor gender as they are multi-faceted developing beings.

On Horn Farm live two queer persons (Severin:e and Noemi) who are mostly perceived as women. They are 'ok' with that, yet to them their gender is not very relevant. Cleo, the trainee, identifies as a woman and thus far has only had heterosexual relationships. On Forest Farm lives Stefanie, a woman who was perceived as a man and is now perceived and identifies as a (trans)woman, together with her wife and two children. Stefanie's sexuality remains undefined; after her recent transition, she still needs to explore if, how and to whom she might be attracted. On Butterfly Farm live Curcuma and Emma; both identify as lesbian women and are perceived as such. Finally, on the CSA Farm work Maria, identifying and perceived as queer woman, and at times Ciliegia, who identifies and is perceived as a lesbian woman.

'How do gender and sexuality impact your farm practices?' were one of the questions that should have triggered a narrative, at least according to my expectation. Yet, without exception, I was told that gender and sexuality are not important and do not play a role in task division on the farm. The research subjects explained to me that they managed to create a space on and through the queer farm where gender and sex roles and prescriptions play little to no role. As a site of gender and sex freedom, the queer farm allows the research subjects to not prefer or avoid certain practices over others because of their gender, sex, or sexuality. This freedom does not stop where the neighbour's land starts, moreover, but expands through their networks. 'So many people who come here know the farm,' Cleo explains, 'so I have the feeling that such a gender role is not there'. In fact, the boundaries of *the outside* are not geographical; it starts in that space where heteronormativity inserts itself, making oneself (and those close to one) feel uncomfortable.

Curcuma explains to me that queerness – in her case, lesbianism – is important for the creation of the gender-neutral farming space – the inside – as it implies that no cismen is on there. 'If I were there with a man, it would take more energy to overcome traditional gender roles,' she says, adding, 'I suppose it would be different, I suppose there would be more division of roles [...] bigger hurdles to overcome to question certain roles.' The discussion (Chapter 5, below) looks further at how the absence of a 'man' – perceived as the *Bauer*, the boss, the decision-maker, in this case, reached through a queer sexuality – results in reduced gender trouble. On Maria's farm, things are a bit different. There, the presence of a straight man means that sometimes she thinks twice during lunch and specifically avoids cleaning the dishes to keep an equilibrium because she has the impression that he helps out less with housework tasks.

Nevertheless, gender and sexuality do become important as soon as the research subjects leave the farm and its network. When they are outside, they are confronted with different forms of discrimination. These gender, sex and/or sexuality-based discriminations are considered in the following sections. The role of the latter in determining the broader farming conditions – such as the conditions of farming and the types of knowledge, interests, and bodies involved – is investigated in the discussion.

I organised the data on discrimination in three main pools: gender trouble, encompassing dogmatization of women's role(s); queer trouble, covering direct and indirect mobbing of queers; and double trouble, incorporating sex- and gender-based verbal and practical exclusion. These are the topics of the following three Sections. As with any pool, one has to develop strategies to stay afloat; these are presented below (Section 4.2.4).

4.2.1. Gender troubles: 'I can't have a woman as a trainee, it's too harsh here.'

In this section, I group all the encounters reported and displayed by the research subjects on discrimination forms aimed at reminding them where (in which areas) and how (as women) they could(n't) and should(n't) operate.

Cleo still remembers her schoolteacher telling her, 'You're not able to do that [the farmer education] anyway' and the family friends who still question her to this day: 'Isn't it [the farmer education] a bit too much for you?' Cleo is quite sure that those comments would not have been directed to her had she been a man.

Following her transition, Stefanie is no longer perceived as a farmer. In town, they ask her if she even works on the farm anymore; they have the impression that she lives privately as a woman, and she does not want to get her hands dirty anymore. Furthermore, as Stefanie makes clear through the next two examples, she has lost authority and credibility through her transition:

[W]hen, for example, I want to book an external contractor, in the past [when perceived as a man], it was clear, it was binding [...]. Now I notice that I've fallen behind in the hierarchy as a woman.

Yes, it is difficult now [...] Before the transition, the advisor used to say, 'Yes, ok, that's good, and do you still have questions? Ok', and now it's 'Remember, you really must do this and that'. In the past, there was trust that I would do all

this, and now, probably because I'm a woman, I'm not credible, or I lack the knowledge. It's really noticeable that they still have to add 'Remember, you have to do this and this and this.

Severin:e's and Ciliegia both grew up on a farm where the gender roles between the parents were very traditional. Both had male brothers who were supposed to take over the farm one day, Severin:e and Ciliegia themselves were not taken into consideration for that role. Ciliegia expresses her views on the matter:

As a child, the distribution of roles is, of course, already decisive, I have the feeling, isn't it? You're born as the third child, you are still younger, and my brother said it quite clearly, he drives a tractor, he learns with the machines and he liked it, and he didn't need me at all for that.

Ciliegia's role was made clear early on in her life; she was to go to the French-speaking part of Switzerland to learn French, do a year's apprenticeship in domestic work and get married. Clearly, there was no question of doing the farmer's education.

Severin:e does not say much about the impact of her childhood and youth; she does say that her parents had a very traditional division of tasks, and they had already made plans for one of her brothers to take over the farm – a plan that did not work out as the brother soon left farming. Severin:e remembers how much more freedom there was during the studies; gender was important, but Severin:e's gender was not important; one could just be, without being reduced to one's gender. Since taking over the farm, however, Severin:e has felt much more reduced to her gender. Severin:e remembers multiple issues of discrimination around being perceived as a woman, from 'the classic thing about you being a woman and somehow you can't lunge so hard' to farms that refuse to have women as trainees because the work there would be too hard for them. Yet Severin:e feels accepted in her (farming) context and lately just recounts forms of microaggressions that sound like compliments – she calls these 'positive discrimination'. For example, having been farming for more than ten years now, Severin:e still receives compliments like 'You can really drive a tractor well!' something that 'You'd take for granted with a man.' While Severin:e has learned over the years to drive tractors and use big machines, Ciliegia is still 'respectful' in front of these machines. It is an area that has never become her own; she prefers to leave it to others.

Maria – who works in a collective with three women and a man – is often not taken seriously by *the outside* when it comes to machines, and other agricultural partners in the region tend to take the man as the boss, the main farmer. Maria then goes back in her mind to the past and underlies that on the apprenticeship farms, it was rather tedious as a woman. Her lack of previous experience with machines and tractors – a result of a feminine socialisation – led to her not being taught what she needed to pass the exams. Her co-workers thought that it would be too much work to teach her how to use the machines. 'For example, in the first year of my apprenticeship, it was during the final apprenticeship exam that I drove the loader wagon in reverse for the first time because no one ever showed me how to do it.' Maria passed the exam.

For her part, Noemi has not experienced gender discrimination in farming, but she says this might be due to the fact that she takes on jobs on the farm that are perceived as appropriate for her gender. Her second job, on the other hand, is more in a man's world, and there she has to face comments and discriminatory remarks. Finally, returning to microaggressions masked as compliments, Curcuma and Emma report that they are admired for 'the fact that two women can simply run a farm like that and also operate all the machines and actually do everything without a man'.

Summarising, all the research subjects agree that farming is a man's world. First, as a woman participant, in some regions, you are less likely to be taken seriously in discussions; second, a strong (partly internalised) narrative defines women's bodies as not strong enough for agriculture; and third, agricultural machinery is built for big, strong, abled bodies, and sometimes the research subjects are simply not strong or big enough.

4.2.2. Queer troubles: 'You should know it's not natural'

Queer trouble groups together the discriminations that the interviewees experienced due to their ways of living their sexualities and their subversive relations to the links between gender, sex, sexuality and related practices. Direct discrimination through mobbing of the specific person or their family members is only one part of discrimination that affects the interviewees.

Stefanie had lived for more than 40 years as a man, been married and had two children before she had her coming out as a woman and decided to go through the hormonal and surgical gender confirmations. This had some major impacts, such as a loss of credibility as a farmer, which comes with being a woman but is exacerbated by being perceived as a transwoman. Furthermore, Stefanie notices how a silence developed around her, how she lost friends and people who had liked her as a person but could not handle her coming out and distanced themselves. The trans-thematic became a problem for her children, too, who were bullied at school to begin with: '[N]ow people have got used to it a bit, and it's no longer such an issue'.

Direct mobbing remains the exception, however, and only a minor part – in terms of frequency – of the discrimination faced. Much more extensive and insidious is the background noise of jokes about queerness, the homophobic comments and behaviours that make queer people feel unwelcomed and the discursive annihilation of queerness in agriculture that triggers a wider sense of exclusion.

Ciliegia had come out as a lesbian to her parents and friends 25 years ago. When she told her father she was in love with a woman, he replied, '*You should know that it's not natural*'. After this direct attack, she experienced a sense of unease at her various workplaces and during the first year at the farmer school. For example, her classmates '*often talked about others during the break, that they were gay, they were just [derogatory word for gay] or something*'. These sorts of homophobic jokes were passed around in several other farms she considered working at, and even though Ciliegia does not 'want to insinuate that everyone is homophobic', she still thinks that in the Swiss farming context, many are.

Maria and Cleo report similar experiences of not fitting in and homophobic jokes during their first year at the farmer's school. Maria describes the agricultural world as a '*super heteronormative conservative environment*' that completely excludes queer people. She is happy that her farm is different, and she '*can also help people who [otherwise] would never set foot on a farm, access farming as a livelihood or a hobby*'. On her farm, she now feels at ease, but there are still topics discussed at lunch from which she feels excluded, such as '*having children, and being heterosexual, and being [in] a family*'.

Besides the homophobic jokes and heteronormative discourses, queer farmers do not know what the farming community says about them. Severin:e feels that '*otherwise*' – meaning despite being perceived as a lesbian woman – they are '*more or less well accepted and taken seriously*', which is also due to the fact that Severin:e is not a complete stranger, having grown up on the farm that she inherited and manages well. Maria would sometimes '*also like to know what the other farmers say*', but she soon changes her mind and adds that '*Maybe it's good that I don't know*'. Curcuma, in contrast, thinks that she and her partner are admired in town for running the farm without men.

Against the negative aspects also, the interviewees feel that lesbianism is sometimes perceived as an advantage in a farming context. For example, Maria thinks that the fact that she lives alone and not with a traditional heterosexual family allows her to be taken seriously as a farmer colleague. Finally, her early identification with butch women facilitated her decision to become a *Bauer* and not a *Bäuerin*.

4.2.3. Double trouble: 'Does that even exist in Switzerland?'

The aforementioned forms of discrimination are spoken verbal and active discrimination forms, from mobbing through questioning to the classical gossiping and judgements about (im)morality and what is(n't) 'natural'. Yet, there is another form of discrimination, one that perhaps ought to be

emphasised: the *invisibility* of queer farmers in Switzerland. My experience in preparing this study attests to that.

In order to identify suitable case studies, I contacted various researchers in agronomy and rural sociology along with agricultural counsellors and heads of farmer's organisations. They were mostly surprised by the request. They asked if queer farmers existed in Switzerland. It was a genuine question on their part, asked of themselves as well as directed to me. If queer farmers did exist in Switzerland, they did not know any. While for Swiss academies and institutions queerness in agriculture remains a nonentity, Swiss agriculture has already been queered. Thus, I was able to locate study subjects – individuals and farms – yet only through informal networks, word-of-mouth, and one online article. The reasons for this are complex. On the one hand, the heteronormative impulse of society in general encourages the queer to take avoiding action as a survival strategy of self-protection. This is even more pronounced in the rural domain of agriculture, which is particularly conservative when compared to the city. On the other hand, the institutional bias operates against queerness in a discriminatory way, where 'institution' is understood both formally, as a public body, and sociologically, such as the institution of 'the family farm'.

Maria and Curcuma, for example, cannot find their space in the concept of the family farm, which is universally defined, represented and imagined in terms of the heterosexual family, with children, and a farm succession to family members – traditionally through the male line, which still persists, as the examples recounted above show. Noemi thinks that this is very harmful as it automatically links '*certain qualities of small-scale farming and sustainable agriculture to the family in the sense of heterosexual family*'. As such, Maria and Curcuma strongly reject the concept of family farm, while Noemi, Severin:e, Cleo and Stefanie try to reclaim the term and expand it (below, Section 4.3.2).

Finally, I asked my respondents if they could identify with any agricultural organisation. Their answers ranged over a wide number of organisations, all of which focused on ecological/sustainable farming or on the rights of small-scale farmers. No organisation was mentioned more than once during the interviews, suggesting the lack of a platform for queer farmers to communicate, exchange information, share experiences and offer and find support. What was very evident was that they did not identify with either of the two main agricultural organisations, the *Bauern* and *Bäuerin* organisations, whose narratives and discourse are perceived as very traditional and deeply heteronormative.

With all these noises in their heads, wo:men on queer farms pick up the shovel daily to maintain and continuously co-create a space for themselves in which to work, live, love, and thrive. They employ a range of different strategies to resist the lived discrimination and create room for manoeuvre.

4.2.4. Troubleshooting: Network, hide, overwork, adapt, rebel

When faced with the aforementioned discrimination, the research subjects network, hide, overwork, adapt, and rebel.

Network: 'I prefer to be with my women'

All of the research subjects I found were working/helping/living on organic farms, which would seem quite surprising given the fact that in 2020 in Switzerland, only 15% of the farms are organic (Statistik, 2021b). Of course, both the queer and the organic represent alternatives to the 'mainstream', but how does this work in practice? I took the 15% finding to the interviewees and asked for their ideas on it. They developed different theories.

First, the organic movement is perceived as more open and less sexist than the conventional one. Cleo, the trainee, is attending the farmer's education (Box 1 on farmers' education page 2). She is at the end of her first year, meaning that the organic and conventional classes are still merged, but in reality, she is the only one specialising in organic, one of two women among 20 people and the only vegetarian. The day before her interview she went on a class trip, so she is still quite emotional and tired when she shares the following:

*Well, I don't know. We can speculate a lot about whether organic people are more open, so it's easier to feel accepted. But conventional is actually already *poah*, so the gender-hostile jokes, I can imagine that they are really less into organic. They went full throttle again yesterday [in relation to the class trip].*

Among her classmates, she had found no friend; she shares her break with her cigarettes and sometimes with the only other girl in her class. Cleo says that, besides being women, they have nothing in common – the other one's background and worldview are conservative – but they team up anyway. Ciliogia and Maria look back at their farmer's education with similar, bad memories of the year with mixed, organic-conventional classes; Maria says that she '*really had no place there and no access*'. She had to resist leaving the school in order to continue her apprenticeship.

Box 8. Heteropatriarchal plunges

In my one-day visit to the conventional farmers' school occurred when, one Wednesday, we decided I should go to school with Cleo. At the end of the day, I wrote in my personal diary: *Went to school with Cleo. Drained my energy. The patriarchy, being treated like an object. An outsider you talk about but not with. Need to restore and be alone. Now in my room calming down. I want to go home, but I hold on.*

We had woken up at 6 a.m., and, tired as usual, had breakfast in silence. Then, we cycled to the train station, took the train, then a bus that went through hilly neighbourhood of many one-family houses that look like upper-middle class. At the end, we walked to the short distance to the school, around five minutes. Many cars sped by; we were the only ones that went by public transport. All the cars have a 2xNEIN sticker on the back, a campaign aimed at stopping two initiatives that would make all Swiss agriculture organic.

We arrive in class. We are the only women; the only other woman is sick. When we sit and the others look, they talk, but not to us. Cleo wants to go outside for a smoke, and I go with her. We stand next to a group of guys who ignore me joyfully except the one with a surfer van. He asks who I am. I explain that I am studying gender in agriculture in Switzerland and that I go on farms with non-typical configurations. They laugh. We go back in, and the class starts. My eyes are closing. The topic of the morning is machines! We watch four videos over about an hour, with several promotional films. In total, I count one woman's voice, a narrator. At lunch in the cafeteria, I see a woman for the first time – serving food.

In the afternoon, the main professor arrives. He asks if I have introduced myself to the class. I say no, everyone says no, and someone makes a joke I do not catch. Then I introduce myself. Nobody takes further interest in me or my project.

During the break I go out alone where the whole group is. I am not joined by Cleo. While the whole group is on one side, I am alone on the other. I see one of the guys looking at me. I know he is preparing. I stand next to the wall leaning against it. To my left a group of 10-15 boys, all wearing hats. I am stared at, alone, I feel like I don't know what to do. I try to stay cool; it's just a day, and I'm here to be the odd one and observe, not be observed. Then it comes: one of the guys shouts towards me, without making any effort to come close: 'Prisca, so are you coming to our school?' 'No!' I answer very spontaneously, I think they hear the judging, scared tone of my voice, and they laugh. So, I add 'I've already done enough school'. Then I understand that what they want is numbers to judge me, just like they calculated the best bull to buy to impregnate their cows, the best age to slaughter their animals, they want to calculate if I am a worthy *Bäuerin* for their farms. 'How old are you, if I may ask?', '25' I answer and readily regret. One of them says 'not bad' and they all laugh. I understand that they were never really talking to me, they were talking to each other about me. I was never a person to them. I leave and go back inside, knowing that I have the last word, and it is an accusation: sexist.

After these testimonies and my own experience on a farming school (see Box 8), I had a very critical view of the farmer's education. I had the feeling that it was a very women-hostile

environment. Yet, Cleo and Severin:e made sure to give me a more complete vision. The school I went to is a particularly harsh one, located in a very traditional and catholic region. The organic class is different, something that is later confirmed by Maria and Ciliegia:

And in the second year in the bio-school there were already many women and many more topics that were somehow close to my heart and so on. [...] I am very happy that I was able to attend the organic school, yes. The knowledge I was able to acquire there has had a great influence on my thinking, but also on my self-confidence in the sense of 'I can also work in agriculture as a woman' because we also had women as lecturers, and that was cool. You don't really have that at the conventional school, or at least not subject-specific things. From that point of view, the education was important for me.

Organic farming schools seem to represent a safer network for women and queer persons to gain the knowledge they need to run a farm. Trainees, however, go to school only one day a week; the rest of the week, they mostly live on the farm where they work 50 to 66 hours a week (depending on the region) with 1 to 1.5 free days. The choice of farm is partly dependent on what one wants to learn – small and diverse? a bigger farm? how modern? – but more importantly on its liveability, whereby queerness becomes a vital factor. For Ciliegia, it was not easy to find the right farm, a place where she would not have to hide her homosexual relationship: *'Do you bring lesbianism up during the conversation when you go introduce yourself? Or do you notice that people are open to it?'* On one of the farms that she considered and visited, Ciliegia intercepted jokes, and she instinctively knew that homosexuality would not have been welcome. Finally, she did find the right apprenticeship farm where she could openly live her homosexual relationship, but she says that *'it was not so easy to find'*. Later on, she worked on different farms, some led by lesbian women, others by straight ones, but generally, she looked for men-free environments.

Severin:e, who had followed another study path and did not have work on different farms, shares her experience from another point of view, that of an employer. Severin:e has so far only employed wo:men as trainees, a combination of her own conscious choice to give more space to wo:men and queer farmers and the attraction that a queer farm has for other queer people.

Networking seems thus to be essential to keep farming while avoiding direct discrimination. Women look for other women farming, queer people for other queer people. They are attracted to places where they feel welcomed and where their passion for farming can be cultivated together with their other passions. Often this seems to take place in the organic agriculture space.

Hiding: 'I'm in a relationship'

A form of protection that the interviewees adopt consists in hiding their sexual orientation. Ciliegia, for example, never told her classmates at the conventional farmers' school that she has a lesbian relationship. When they questioned her, she would merely answer, *'I'm in a relationship'*, a tactic that she uses at different workplaces. At the graduation, which was taking place *outside* the queer farm, she asked her partner not to be present, which her partner could not understand:

She was extremely disappointed, and she somehow couldn't understand, but yes, it's simply... I just didn't want to, I'm not strong enough, let's say not strong enough, to somehow still carry it out there, even though I wouldn't see those people anymore afterwards.

Hiding traditional femininity is a hard task, yet Stefanie had done it for forty years. Stefanie has always been a woman, something that she hid from herself through overwork, namely doing two full-time jobs, for years and through the appropriation of typically masculine jobs, such as carpenter and farmer. At the same time, she had to hide her traditional femininity from others and constantly prove her masculinity. After her coming out, she no longer had to hide her femininity from either herself or from others. However, due to her transition, she had to hide from public life to avoid troubles for her family. Initially, after her transition, she went into politics and gave many interviews, but she and her wife noticed that the transgender topic was having a negative influence on the

farm and their son, so Stefanie had to take a step back. Her wife became the farm manager, and Stefanie left politics and no longer drove her kids to school. Now things seem to be working again, but for a while, she says, *'I simply showed myself as little as possible, so that the topic faded into the background a bit.'* As mentioned (above), however, she still does not drive her son to Swiss wrestling training.

Overworking: 'You just have to do better'

Without defining work, I ask my interviewees how long their working days are. Severin:e works Monday to Sunday 10-12 hours a day; Stefanie used to work 14-15 hours daily until she experienced burnout, and now she works eight hours a day off-farm and one or two hours on the farm; Curcuma and Emma work on the farm from 6.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. with breaks, except on Wednesday when Emma works off-farm for eight hours; Cleo works from 6.30 in the morning to seven in the evening, and has three free days every two weeks; Noemi has different jobs and no regular working hours; on her free days she goes on the farm and helps; Maria works 80% on the farm, and Ciliegia has different jobs with various working hours.

A difficulty in agriculture lies in specifying what work is (not). Curcuma's description of a working day on the farm is quite representative:

[T]he time from half-past six to half-past six includes everything, communicating, cooking, reading something, and so on. It's not just a full 12 hours of always, always doing something physical outside, it's like just a lot of things combine in the 12 hours.

What I learn from the interviews is that long working hours are a part of being a farmer in Switzerland – as elsewhere, indeed, and so does being constantly tired and having too much to do. Curcuma remarks that she does not feel like a 'full farmer' because she does not work as much as other farmers; she does not put as much into it as *'a Severin:e, for example'*. Severin:e, on the other hand, cannot refrain from working too much, which is partially due to the weight of responsibilities but also to the pressure of being read as woman and queer. In order to feel accepted by the farming community and not to leave herself open to attack, Severin:e always tries to do better:

I just put so much pressure on myself. It's the same for [...] women who are in [other] male professions, that you just have to do better, because you always have to prove that you can do it, and that's also very much the case with me. [...] I think that if the farm weren't to run well, then [...] that would be put down to our being different.'

To my follow-up question – *'And you have the feeling that if you were a man, or if you had a husband here, you could allow yourself more mistakes?'* – I received a concise answer: *'Yes, exactly.'*

Being read as a queer woman in a man's profession brings with it the pressure of representing the whole category of women and of queerness. If the farm is successful, it is successful despite the lack of men on the farm; if it is not successful, it is due to the lack of men on the farm. To avoid the latter and decrease their vulnerability to attack, some of the farmers work more than is sustainable in the long term. Severin:e concludes, *'In any other profession, where I wouldn't have the animals and everything, I'd have had burnout long ago.'*

Adapting: 'It's still exhausting'

Where overworking does become unsustainable, changes have to be made. Finally, the interviewees adjust their approach, their vision, their bodies, and/or task division to the situation.

For example, Maria's long struggle to be perceived as a *Bauer* by other farmers required her to speak *'the language that they [the other farmers] understand'*, which implied stating that she is the boss of the farm. Maria knows that it is not the truth – they are a collective, and they all have a voice in decision-making – yet stating *'I am the boss'* seems to be the only effective way to be

taken seriously. The art of accommodating a different vision of the world and communicating or even collaborating with it is something that Maria had to learn over years of working in a male-dominated environment. Even though she still finds discussions with groups of men farmers exhausting, she is used to it and has gained some self-confidence in and through her practice.

Besides adapting her language, Maria also has adapted her location and modes of farming in order to cultivate what she labels as her two passions: farming and her relationship with her partner. She does not think that she could have them both were it not for the collective farming model they employ:

I don't think I'd have been able to rent a farm somewhere and get it, for sure, not as a couple but also not as a single woman. Similarly, I wouldn't have even decided to rent a farm somewhere in Graubünden [a Swiss canton] because my girlfriend would have tended to stay here. My girlfriend and I have much less this idea of 'we are one organism [...] and we move together', which is typical of heterosexual families.

The lack of land access combined with the separate lives that Maria and her partner lead exclude the possibility of a traditional family farm, so Maria adapted by farming in a collective close to the city.

Rebellion: 'Defiant-reacting humans'

Rebellion encompasses all the ways in which the interviewees counter the (gendered and sexed) rules and trouble the normal and accepted customs. These can be verbal or non-verbal performances. Ciliegia made a statement that appeared representative of the battles that queer farmers have, that they fought, are fighting and will fight:

I have always, my whole childhood, my whole youth, tried to fight for the same rights or the same opportunities as my brothers because I somehow had the feeling, from my point of view, that as a woman, you simply don't have the same chances, or you are reduced to your gender [...] I always rebelled against that, and I didn't have to [complete a commercial apprenticeship and get married] in the end. And I'm still rebelling against that because I just don't want to, I don't know, be a Bäuerin. No I don't want that.

Ciliegia started to fight the private and professional gendered expectations as a child, she continued as a teenager, and she succeeded; she avoided marriage and the commercial apprenticeship, she became a farmer and is in a lesbian relationship. Further to these life-choices, Ciliegia rebels against the role that her entourage routinely wants to ascribe to her: she remarks that she is not a *Bäuerin* but a *Landwirtin*; she does not take on traditionally feminine jobs, such as cooking on the farm (the differences between a *Bäuerin* and a *Landwirtin* are investigated below, Section 4.3).

A queer farmer's rebellion involves performances of 'things that women are not supposed to do'. For example, Cleo, who describes herself as a 'defiant-reacting-human' (*Trotzreaktion Mensch*) was told that she could not attend the farmer's school. She did not have a ready reply – she is not 'a quick-witted human' (*Schlagfertiger Mensch*) – her answer came slowly; she did the farmer's education.

Severin:e not only rebels against gender roles, by occupying the main farmer position, but also against a traditional understanding of kinship that rests on blood and marriage ties. The slogan 'Make kin, not babies' (Haraway, 2016) hangs on the kitchen door. Severin:e's blood siblings are not her kin; Severin:e counts as her family Noemi, Adele, Ada, Cleo, the previous farm owners – Severin:e switched from calling the previous farm managers "Papa and Mama" to calling them by their first names, revising their relationship in a way that had been a huge help in accepting the privilege of inheritance (of the farm). Severin:e is still trying to come to terms with that privilege, and it is helpful not to see the previous farm managers as parents but as part of an extended family, two of the many kin that come, live, help and/or work on the farm.

Maria is the only one of the interviewees to talk about anger. Maria gets angry when she cannot do something, be it because of her own physical limits – like when she cannot attach the big liquid manure barrel – or societal ones – when she cannot participate in conversations because she is not taken seriously. With physical limits, she has to come to terms and adapt; against the societal ones she gets angry, remarks on her knowledgeable role and (re)claims her place as a farmer and boss. The boundary between physical and societal limits is treated as clear-cut here; in the discussion section (Chapter 5), however, it is recognised as anything but, since bodies are ascribed possibilities and agricultural machinery built for certain bodies.

Verbal performances consist of ‘*giving back some jokes*’ – hence, the art that some interviewees (would like to) employ to rebel against sexist and homophobic jokes. This is performed differently depending on the subject. During the interviews, I could rarely extract examples of what ‘*giving back some jokes*’ meant, though I did gain an understanding of it as a way of shutting up others by surprising them with witty retorts queering sexist and heteronormative views of the world. For example, when people are surprised at the idea of a woman shovelling, Noemi exclaims: ‘*No, don’t worry, of course I can’t shovel, I’m just pretending to!*’ Severin:e, like Cleo, describes herself as not quick-witted: so, Severin:e mostly comes up too late with the smart answers to the sexist and homophobic jokes of an agricultural contractor who regularly visits. Ciliegia, on the other hand, can laugh at sexist jokes and make some herself – but just because she knows that at the end of the day, she has nothing to do with men and can retreat to a safe space where such jokes and comments do not exist.

Severin:e’s fundamental rebellion, like that of Cleo, Curcuma, Ciliegia, Maria, Noemi, Emma, and Stefanie, lays in her farming practice, through daily performance in a man’s world, interacting where excluded. All the interviewees engage in practices in a context where they are considered unfit. Maria expresses how farming as a queer woman is a rebellion itself:

I have to somehow fight for these spaces and somehow bring in these [queer] topics, which is sometimes hard, but often I think it’s good that I do it.

I shape certain spaces in a queer way and raise queer awareness – that wouldn’t happen if I didn’t live as a homosexual.

More rebellious acts are mentioned in the next section, which first considers sex, gender and sexuality as socially constructed categories that queer farmers appropriate and seek to queer and deconstruct before going on to focus on farming identities (*Bauer, Bäuerin, Landwirtin, family farms*) and how these are perceived, appropriated and queered.

4.3. Identities

4.3.1. Gender and sexuality: ‘*human is human*’

One of the methodological imperatives I was taught is that during interviews, one is supposed to collect socio-demographic data (Bernard, 2018). Some suggest doing this at the start of the interview, others at the end. I did it at the beginning. After asking for their name (the name they wished to be anonymised with), I asked the interviewees their gender and pronouns to make sure I would address them correctly.

I posed the question as a quick introductory question, and their answers allowed me to, on the one hand, get the pronouns right and, on the other, gain a first insight into their understanding of gender and their familiarity with the topic. Sometimes the ‘quick question’ turned into a long monologue or backfired in questions to me:

Prisca: And your gender is?

Ciliegia: Ah, so... I feel like I am feminine, but I am often perceived as a... man...

Curcuma: I am a woman.

- Cleo: *Feminine.*
- Noemi: *So do you mean the self-perceived?*
- Maria: *Woman. Well, up to now [laughs].... One never knows if it might still change, but still, yes.*
- Severin:e: *Uh... [laughs]. That is already... so... now... er... in agricultural contexts actually it is tendentially woman and lesbian, because for me for me gender is actually a strategical category.*
- Stefanie: *Feminine.*

My question attempting to 'gender' the interviewees garnered mixed reactions, with some answering in a straight-forward way and without doubts and others resisting a simple categorisation, evading the question and appearing to challenge my understanding of gender. In such cases, I would let the topic drop and come back to it later on in the conversation to understand how agricultural practices influenced their genders to their understanding. The following question triggered similar reactions:

- Prisca: *And your sexual orientation?*
- Ciliegia: *Lesbian.*
- Curcuma: *Lesbian.*
- Cleo: *Er, up to now, hetero.*
- Maria: *Er... Yes, so I'm together with a woman at the moment, but er, I wouldn't call myself 'lesbian', I don't think... I'd call myself 'queer' probably.*
- Noemi: *Er... pfff! I would still say rather 'lesbian'.*
- Severin:e: *Yes, that too. Well, I find that difficult too.*
- Stefanie: *Yes, that's still difficult.*

Here again, the resistance to categories comes up strongly in the answers. What some of the interviewees want to highlight from the beginning is that sexual orientation is not static, does not have to be defined and definitive, and need not be dependent on the current partner. The range of answers seems to be not only diverse in length, but also in content. In the next three sections, three understandings of gender and sexuality are considered. These are not mutually exclusive, which means that subjects can embrace them all, as some do.

Gender as socially constructed

Curcuma, Ciliegia, Cleo, Maria, and Stefanie answer without hesitating: they are feminine/women.

Later on in the conversation, they add nuance to their statements. When they talk about their gender in relation to their farming practices, gender loses its importance. Maria tries to explain the mechanisms that render gender secondary:

I say I call myself a woman, but when I think about it a lot, maybe not. Or it doesn't play such a role for me. I move in a gender area that is perhaps not originally my intended one – by the fact that I am socialised as a girl. As a result, I think I was able to acquire such a broad view of the whole thing.

Maria learned through her farming activities how to move and communicate in men's domains; she joins the three male farmers discussing the new tractor, she coordinates and gives orders to male agricultural contractors. Maria knows her way around in and with both major genders, and her movements and performances effectively bend gender borders. As a result, her broad view of gendered matters comes with a loss of importance of the borders.

Stefanie has taken movement from one gender expression area to another to the next level; for 40 years, she lived as a man and moved in masculine spaces, but since her transition, she has moved in feminine spaces. Stefanie says that now that she has experienced them both, she is more and more convinced that *'a person is a person and [...] everything is actually socially prescribed'*. Here, I would reiterate that although Stefanie's gender self-identity was always feminine, her expression of gender was masculine, intended to fit the heteronormative norm that ascribes masculinity to bodies constructed as male.

Cleo is also convinced that if she were a man, things would not be different in her farming life, with the exception that she *'might have had it a bit easier at school, but no probably that's also... not necessarily'*. Cleo, Ciliegia and Curcuma, too, make me understand during the interview that despite identifying as women, they do not put much store by gender; there are many differences among humans that cannot be reduced to gender:

*There are, there are men who are louder, there are women who are louder,
there are men who are sensitive, there are women who are sensitive.*

There is, of course, one thing that Curcuma, Severin:e, Cleo, Noemi, and Stefanie have in common: they all live on a farm and perform in spaces that are either man-free or sensitised to gender-matters. Maria and Ciliegia, on the other hand, only work on the farm and live elsewhere. Their farm is a rather open space with CSA members coming and going daily. As such, the next considerations were only shared by the first group of interviewees, whose farm had become a bubble constructed away from gender norms:

I think farming gives you a holistic sense of 'I'm on the farm now', it's like you would define that very much. But not necessarily related to woman-man, but more in the sense of 'This is my everything, this is my universe'.

But I don't think that my gender has changed, I don't think that. More, maybe, my self-image of what I'm doing in the world. I just have a farm [laughs].

Later on, Curcuma summarises her thoughts in the assertion that *'farming made gender less important'*, and goes on to claim that actually, she defines herself through the farm and not over her gender.

Altogether, all the interviewees struggle to tell me where and how their gender and sexuality define them and their practices. Sexuality remains in the background of every interview, and my attempts to bring it back into the conversation are quite vain. Finally, if gender is socially constructed and then deconstructed on the farm, then there is no such thing as a homosexual or heterosexual. The understanding of gender as socially constructed here has as the consequence that the interviewees' gender is not important anymore because they live and farm in places where gender roles are bended or simply are not. Curcuma does, however, take her reflection a step further by mentioning that lesbianism is important as it means that they are two women on the farm which makes it easier for them to avoid gender roles as just one gender is present. As soon as they leave the farm, or as the farm is penetrated by outsiders – be they agricultural partners, tourists, farmers or other others – gender and sexuality both gain in importance.

Gender and sexuality as strategic preference

The appropriation of discrete gender and sexual categories is at times explicitly and/or implicitly strategical, whereby the non-existence of an essential 'woman' and/or 'lesbian' perspective and/or subject is recognised when these terms are used for political purposes. In the previous paragraphs, being a lesbian woman, a queer woman, a trans-woman has been emphasised as of little

importance for the interviewees' sense of self because they recognise the internal contingency of these categories as open, multiple and non-normative; here, they are considered as relevant categories for political purposes – especially in traditional heteronormative farming contexts.

It was noted at the beginning of this section that Severin:e and Noemi needed some time to answer the question on gender. They have an academic background in the gender field and distinguish between self-perceived gender identity and gender expression. Noemi, for political reasons, would describe her gender identity as 'not relevant', but she has no problem with the fact that she is identified as a woman from *the outside*. Severin:e chose a gender-neutral name and prefers that I either avoid pronouns whenever possible or else use the pronoun 'sie' [German equivalent for 'she']. Severin:e's appearance is not classically feminine, and sometimes people perceive Severin:e as a man. In agricultural contexts, however, the categories of gender and sexuality gain in importance, and both Noemi and Severin:e 'become' lesbian women.

What Severin:e and Noemi consciously do and describe as a strategic or political use of gender and sexual categories is also performed by the other interviewees. For example, when Cleo is asked who her farm trainer ('*Ausbildner*') is, she accentuates the fact that her trainer is a woman ('I have an '*Ausbildnerin*' not an '*Ausbildner*'). Cleo wants to highlight that not all trainers are men. Curcuma, too, is proud to do something that not many women do, and she knows that her farm is admired because it is led by two women who do everything without a man. Ciliegia also always cares to remark on her role on the farm in relation to her gender. Their strategy is aimed at giving visibility to women farmers, women who take a different role on the farm from the traditional *Bäuerins*. Severin:e explains why gender is important as a strategical category:

So, during my studies at university, I wasn't reduced to my gender, and my gender was somehow more open. Then, I simply noticed that in agriculture, everything is so male-dominated that it was almost important to me to be read as a 'woman'. And that's why I call it a strategic category, I've sort of become more classically feminist again.

But actually, after all, I think gender is just a category that should not be relevant in the way that it is in our current society; on the other hand. I think it has to be relevant as long as people are discriminated against because they are women, then you can't just say that gender doesn't exist.

Faced with the realities of agricultural life, Severin:e chooses to become a woman, thus essentialising the women category, like Whatmore (above, Chapter 1.1) and second-wave feminists, but as a performance, for political ends.

Stefanie, too, makes strategic use of her gender. Since her transition, she has entered the public sphere and gone into politics. Stefanie lives on the farm she grew up on, located in a conservative, Catholic area. She says that if her coming-out happened relatively late, it is also because trans-topics are not present in the area, neither physically nor as a notion. As such, Stefanie did know that something was different, but for a long time, she could not locate what, where, or how. Now that she has recognised it and gone through the hormonal and surgical operations, she uses terms like 'trans', 'woman', and 'transwoman' in her life as a politician and in her public persona. Stefanie thus reclaims her feminine gender but leaves sexuality in the background. Indeed, she does not know what her sexuality is; unexplored since her coming out as a woman, it remains undefined, in both her private and public lives.

Severin:e, Noemi, and Maria, on the other hand, make sexuality an important strategical category. Their aim is to bring queerness into farming, to which end they deploy two main strategies.

First, their own very existence and visibility expand the imaginary of an agricultural context they perceive as conservative. Maria thinks it is very important to define herself and live as a queer woman to present, embody, and perform new examples of who and how farmers can be, to shape certain spaces in a queer way and to generally raise queer awareness. Maria concludes, '*I think that really changes something because they [conservative families] suddenly get images of [queer]*

realities that also exist'. Severin:e reports a similar experience: on the farm, queer(-aware) visitors/workers/friends meet the previous farm owners and suddenly two worlds, a queer one and a traditional, conservative one, exchange, interact and *'deal with it quite well, I think'*. Noemi adds that there are situations in which they particularly make it clear that Severin:e and herself do not live heterosexually or have a classical structure, for example, at *'some event with loud farmers with their wives, with the farmers' wives'*.

Secondly, they create the physical possibility for queer people to experience farm life by opening up the farming space in a different way. Maria explains that many queer people *'would never set foot on a farm because it's simply a super-heteronormative conservative environment'* (Section 4.2.2.), yet on the CSA Farm they find a place. Maria's role is that of a frontiersperson; through farming, she is opening up the space in a queer way.

To sum up, a strategical use entails the acknowledgement that the 'woman' and the 'lesbian' are essentially non-existent reifications, that they are to be kept as open, contingent and non-normative categories – there is no essential woman, nor femininity, nor femaleness, nor lesbian. For political purposes, however, these terms and the essentialisation of women and lesbians are accepted and deployed. These are labels that they reclaim and thus ascribe to themselves to open up the imaginary of contexts perceived as heteronormative and sexist and show that not all *Bauer* are male and not all *Bäuerin* are straight. Finally, man and woman, queer and straight, homosexual and heterosexual are understood as social constructs that became too normative *outside*, so they appropriate them when they meet the *outside* to queer these terms and to trouble the links between gender, sex, sexuality and (farming) practices. Yet, there are exceptions.

Gender as intrinsic/natural

In two cases, gender is discussed by different interviewees as something *'maybe not completely socially constructed'*, namely, when in relation to nature/non-human life and to physical strength.

Stefanie, Ciliegia, Cleo and Severin:e experience a connectedness with nature and animals that they – more or less hesitantly – connect to their femininity. Stefanie is *'generally more lenient with nature'* than her entourage: she suffers when trees are cut and entire fields mown without letting wildflowers blossom, when nature is dominated by artificial fertilisers and chemicals, when living beings are not treated as equals. This sufferance, this connectedness is something that she is not able to locate exactly but intuitively is somehow connected to her femininity: *'I think there is something that is not all socialised, I have the feeling'* she tries to explain. *'Because the feminine, that is, they say, Mother Earth and so on, and I think there's something there, that you just feel the connection a bit more, we women [laughs]'*. Ciliegia, Severin:e, and Cleo are more doubtful. They *'don't know if it's really gender specific'*, but they experience *'a very strong empathy'* with farm animals; they struggle to distance themselves, especially when it comes to slaughtering. Severin:e and Ciliegia think that women farmers might be somehow *'emotionally closer'* to animals and blur the borders *'between humans and animals'*, Severin:e is the only one to clearly (re)connect this emotional closeness to animals to feminine socialisation.

Physical strength and technology are topics that interact and intermingle when discussed in relation to gender. They often come up when I ask the interviewees how gender influences their practices; these topics are touched on by them all, yet their responses diverge. Severin:e and Maria repeatedly remark on their physical limits in relation to machinery, which is not made for their bodies; it is too big, too large or too tightly screwed on – but they do not reduce bodily limits to their gender. This is different for Stefanie, Ciliegia, Curcuma and Emma. Stefanie thinks that men have an intrinsic flair for dealing with machines, while Curcuma and Emma believe it is necessary to have the strength of a man on the farm if one wants to have big animals like cows and/or large tractors. To support their argument, they tell anecdotes of machines that can be operated by one man but need two women and of the size of cows, next to which Curcuma looks small and powerless. Ciliegia agrees, she believes that agriculture can be done without men, but she thinks it would be easier *'with a strong man because we're simply limited in such matters'*.

When talking about physical strength and gender/sex-specific characteristics, hormones are mentioned during the interviews too. Curcuma and Cleo, for example, believe that testosterone is important and is what is missing in their farming with female bodies. Hormones are treated by Maria

and Severin:e as a separate issue from gender and sex, but they are still mentioned when talking about gender differences in performing practices. Maria's hormonal cycle has a strong influence on her and what tasks she can and wants to perform; practices that are physically difficult or uncomfortable are the most problematic. Severin:e, on the other hand, has not menstruated in years and states that her hormonal cycles, if they occur, have little to no impact. Hormones are something that Severin:e seems to experience from the outside, through other people's bodies, like Noemi's, whose menstruation comes with sharp pains, or that of one of her trainees who gave birth during her apprenticeship.

4.3.2. Farmer spectrum: 'I'm (not) a *Bäuerin*! I'm (not) a *Landwirtin*!'

The Horn Farm's business and land officially belong to Severin:e, who inherited it. On paper and in practice, Severin:e has the knowledge and, in fact, does carry the whole responsibility for the farm. Severin:e is the only one to depend totally on the farm for her income.

The Butterfly Farm's land is owned by a man who rents it to Curcuma and Cleo. Officially, Curcuma is the main farmer, but it is Curcuma and Cleo together who have the knowledge and capacity to manage the farm. They live in a shared economy, pooling their resources and outgoings, and they have equal decision-making rights in the house and on the farm, although the main income is provided by Cleo's off-farm job.

The Forest Farm was inherited by Stefanie. For 20 years, her wife 'helped out' on the farm without formal recognition – hence without social insurance. As mentioned (above), Stefanie signed over the farm to her wife before going through the gender confirmation surgery. Officially, the farm now belongs to Stefanie's wife, but in practice, they have always managed it together. The family's economy depends on the farm, with Stefanie's off-farm job supplying an additional input to the farm business.

The CSA Farm is organised as a limited liability company (*Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung, GmbH*), which owns the land. The GmbH is owned by Maria, the other four farmers who officially run the farm and two members of the managing group. The five main farmers carry equal responsibility, have the same rights and all depend on the farm. Ciliogia is among the 100 CSA members that help out on the farm and substituted one of the main farmers for a while.

On paper, my interviews number five *Landwirts*, a trainee and a volunteer; in practice, I find a *Landwirtin*, a helper, and a 'trainee to become an organic *Landwirtin*' (Horn Farm), a farm manager (Butterfly Farm), a *Bäuerin* (Forest Farm) and a *Bauer* and a *Landwirtin* (CSA Farm). Most of the interviewees had strong feelings regarding the terms; the thoughts and feelings behind these identifications are displayed in the next few pages.

Landwirt/in and Bauer

One, two years or three of *Landwirt/in* apprenticeship (depending on previous education and experience) is what makes a person a *Landwirt/in* in the eyes of the Swiss government. *Landwirt/ins* are legally entitled to receive state subventions. People registered as females become *Landwirtins*, and males *Landwirts*. My interviewees perceive this differently. For example, Cleo, the trainee, does not know if she will self-identify as a *Landwirtin* at the end of her apprenticeship.

Stefanie and Maria – both *Landwirtins* on paper – find the term too abstract; Stefanie calls herself '*Bäuerin*', Maria '*Bauer*'. For both, it would be acceptable to be called '*Landwirtin*', but it is not the term that they would choose. The abstractness of the term is confirmed by the conversational contexts in which the latter is mostly used, namely when the topic is agricultural education, politics, or agriculture in general. As soon as regional topics, neighbours, or other farmers are discussed, the term '*Bauer*' is used – '*Landwirtin*' remains, however, to refer to female farmers (female *Bauer*) and distinguish them from *Bäuerin* (farm wives).

Despite her *Landwirtin* diploma, Curcuma struggles to identify herself as such because for her, it refers to someone who has been farming 'for 20 years or so' and has done '*much, much more work, and put much, much more into it*'. Curcuma sees herself as a *Betriebsleiterin* (farm manager and owner) and *Quereinsteigerin-Landwirtin* (lateral entrant farmer), first, because she has other

income sources (from her and her partner's second professions), second, because they do not take everything they can out of and maximise the farm economically, and third, because they do not have cows.

Thus, only Severin:e and Ciliegia self-identify as *Landwirtin*, and they feel strongly and rebel when people confuse *Bäuerin* and *Landwirtin*. '*Landwirtin*' denotes the traditionally masculine areas of work on the farm while underlying the fact that the *Bauer* is a woman. Their sense of being a *Landwirtin* comes from the diplomas they have, the knowledge that comes with it and, last but not least, Severin:e likes the name, the fact that it contains 'land'.

Landwirtin is an important label for the interviewees because it distinguishes what they actually do from the traditional woman position on the farm (*Bäuerin*/farm wife); in fact, they do the job of the *Bauer* – but we will see in the next section that they also take on the role of a *Bäuerin*. Maria self-identifies as a *Bauer*, but Severin:e and Ciliegia, who are sometimes confused for men, mention that the connotations of '*Bauer*' are too masculine for them; they prefer '*Landwirtin*', which allows them to reclaim a feminine identity and *Bauer* occupational profile.

Bäuerin

Becoming a *Bäuerin* in the eyes of the Swiss government takes two years of apprenticeship, after which one is certified *Bäuerin* (independently from its gender) and can receive state subsidies. The *Bäuerin* school focuses on the household (washing, cleaning, food provisioning) as well as food processing, administrative work and direct selling. The school prepares its students to become good partners for a *Landwirt/in* by preparing them for all the working areas that complement the *Landwirt/in* job.

None of the interviewees had completed the *Bäuerin* school (Stefanie's wife, who effectively did, was not among the interviewees). Other than Stefanie, none of the other interviewees identifies as *Bäuerin*, and they react quite strongly when I include *Bäuerin* in my question aimed at investigating their farmer identity:

Noemi: 'I wouldn't call myself a *Bäuerin* in any case'.

Ciliegia: 'So definitely not a *Bäuerin*'.

Maria: 'So, certainly not as a *Bäuerin*'.

The respondents' prompt, firm and energetic answers have a less quick explanation, however. They can be analysed as displaying four facets. First, the most trivial, *Bäuerin* is a profession, for which one requires an education they do not have, they have a *Landwirtin* education, that is another job. Second, *Bäuerin*, as a professional profile, does not reflect their role on the farm.

Third, in agriculture, persons perceived as women are quickly assumed to be *Bäuerin* by people both inside and outside the agricultural context. The latter often fail to distinguish *Bäuerin* from *Landwirtin*; there is a widespread unawareness that these represent two distinct educational paths. People in the agricultural context referring to a *Bäuerin*, however, are specifying a woman on the farm who plays the classical female role. Thus, my interviewees require and desire precision about the name of their job and what they actually do on the farm. This may represent a political statement, as Severin:e emphasises: '*There are also Landwirtin, not only Bäuerin*'. This also explains the retort in their prompt answers; they have often been categorised, put in a box they do not belong in: women can be *Landwirtin* too, not only *Bäuerin*.

Finally, the imaginary that comes to the interviewees' minds when the term '*Bäuerin*' is used is one linked to the '*image of the Bäuerin in the house and the Bauer outside, so the term itself is connected to a certain tradition*'. Curcuma's statement is reiterated by Noemi, who claims that a *Bäuerin* '*is usually regarded as the wife of a Bauer who lives and works with him on the farm*' and explains that '*It's more of a heterosexual frame that this word is used in*'.

As previously mentioned, there is one exception, Stefanie, who does, in fact, identify as a *Bäuerin*. When she tells me this, I struggle to keep my surprise from showing. I explain that all the other

interviewees distance themselves from the label 'Bäuerin' for a number of reasons (which I do not recount). I ask her to explain what a *Bäuerin* and a *Landwirtin* are to her, and she answers thus:

Because I used to call myself a 'Bauer', not a 'Landwirt'. I was just a Bauer, and that's why I'm a Bäuerin now.

Simple. And then she adds

I know that in the past it was called 'the Bäuerin school', so, according to that old understanding the Bäuerin was like the partner of the Bauer [laughs]. But I understand that a Bäuerin is simply a female Bauer. Sure, I understand it that way for me.

Unfortunately, I would say, this was wishful thinking. Stefanie is one step ahead. We are not there yet, we still have a *Bäuerin* school where the students (linguistically and visually defined as cis-women) learn about 'taking responsibility regarding the needs and expectations of family members, staff and guests' (*Bildung - Schweizerischer Bäuerinnen- Und Landfrauenverband*, n.d.) and a *Landwirt/in* school in which, Cleo asserts, most students live on farms 'with traditional gender relations', meaning 'they don't have to cook, they don't clean, and they never learn that' since 'when they have a farm themselves, either they have a girlfriend who takes over the whole thing or their mother'. Stefanie and I return to the current Swiss agricultural context, and she adds:

I understand that women say they are 'Landwirtin' and not 'Bäuerin' because otherwise, they might be wrongly classified in their professional role.

Along with their strong repulsion in general to the *Bäuerin* label, many interviewees feel the urge to clarify two points. First, none of them wants to 'devalue the profession of the *Bäuerin* at all, that would be a big misunderstanding' (Severin:e). They value that work, what a *Bäuerin* does also belongs on the farm and is necessary. Yet, the term does not represent the interviewees' professional area. Severin:e does, however, add that in the final analysis, she also does the *Bäuerin* job (housework, direct selling, administrative work, etc.), so really she is both a *Landwirtin* and a *Bäuerin*, which only goes to highlight that housework is work and should be recognised as such.

Severin:e's acknowledgement links to the second point: the popular and professional image of a *Bäuerin* does not reflect the occupational profile of a *Bäuerin*, the activities that a *Bäuerin* actually performs on the farm. That is the conclusion to be drawn from the free-listing exercise, when I asked the interviewees to write down in two minutes all the practices performed by a *Bäuerin*, and, when they were finished, asked them to do the same for a *Bauer* (see Appendix D). Much more interesting than the results of the free-listing, however, were the comments made in conversations that arose. Severin:e summarises these succinctly:

I would claim that the so-called Bäuerin actually very often does everything, so she maintains the household and looks after the children, but she also drives the tractor, and she also does the milking, so I have the feeling that in the classical context there is actually, as is often the case, a system where there is permeability on one side, so the women do everything. But on the other side, it is much less permeable, so far fewer Landwirt or Bauer actually do household chores or childcare to a serious extent, it is much rarer.

So, the collective imaginary of what a *Bäuerin* does matches the *Bäuerin* education but is very different from the activities that a *Bäuerin* actually performs on the farm.

After this reflection Severin:e, Ciliegia, Maria, Curcuma, and Cleo, stop for a moment and add:

Well, maybe I am a Bäuerin after all.

Finally, Noemi, who has attended neither the *Bäuerin* nor *Landwirt/in* school, does not identify as either. She identifies as a farm resident and helper. The figure of the helper and the occupation of 'helping' caught my interest, so I have elaborated on it briefly in Box 9.

Box 9. Helpers help, workers work

Practices are divided into *working* and *helping*. The designation of a practice does not depend just on the practice itself but also on who performs it and in what context. For example, Stefanie *helps* her wife in the vegetable garden and *works* one or two hours a week on the farm; Noemi always *helps* on the farm; friends and visitors *help*; Cleo *helps* Curcuma with the bees; otherwise, she *works*.

Helping occurs when the task performer neither carries the responsibility for the area of work nor depends on it financially or professionally. Notwithstanding the fact that helpers have often acquired enough knowledge to carry out the task independently, they lack the sense – or confidence – of overview and (feel the) need to ask the farm manager for confirmation of the daily programme. Helpers are often assigned tasks, they work voluntarily, and in exchange they receive farm products, some money, and/or live on the farm.

Family farms

To my question 'Do you think of your farm as a family farm?' there were different types of answers ranging from an unreserved 'Yes, we really are definitely a family farm!' (Stefanie) through the more careful 'It depends on what you mean by family' (Severin:e, Noemi and Cleo) to the defiant 'No, my farm is no family farm, and that's why it can be my farm' (Maria, Curcuma, Ciliégia).

Stefanie, the only respondent who unreservedly calls their farm a family farm, understands the family as 'a bit of a construct'. Even if her family 'falls a bit outside the norm', they still see themselves as a family, 'but no longer as [with] a married couple, maybe that's the difference'. Whilst in the house, living arrangements changed after the coming out – Stefanie moved to the downstairs apartment – on the farm, nothing changed; they are still a family farm.

Noemi, Severin:e and Cleo give me the impression that they have already reflected deeply on the topic. They answer promptly and refer to discussions they have already had with one another. Severin:e has a general discomfort with the traditional idea of a family of origin and, through a queer lens, redefined who is family and who not. Everyone (including farm animals) living, working, and regularly helping on the farm is family. Instead, not all Severin:e's blood siblings – with whom the exchanges are rare and limited to selling and buying products – are.

Noemi and Cleo agree with Severin:e, yet they 'don't have such 'a huge problem' with the term 'family' or with the connection to the nuclear family of or family of origin – compared to Severin:e, who has much more discomfort there'. For Noemi, 'it would also be alright if Severin:e would call it a family farm in its self-conception, a farm that she has taken over from her parents, so to speak, and I as her partner am somehow also part of the family' (Severin:e is referred to as 'she' in daily life and has no problem with it, but in and through texts Severin:e prefers gender-neutral formulations). Noemi, on the other hand, makes use of the term 'family farm' for strategic reasons. When extending her residence permit – a legal requirement in Switzerland for EU citizens who, like Noemi, live and work in Switzerland – she finds it useful to include the information that she works on the family farm; it testifies to her exemplary integration into the Swiss folk.

What troubles Noemi, however, is not the exclusive conception of family farms, but the very quick linking of

...certain qualities of small-scale farming and sustainable agriculture to family in the sense of the heterosexual family and farm succession to family members [...]. Small-scale sustainable agriculture can also be practised in other ways than just family groups.

Finally, Curcuma and Maria feel completely excluded from 'the family farm', which they perceive as an 'insanely heteronormative image', one in which they really do not have a space.

As Noemi mentions, the concept of the family farm is deeply intertwined with farm succession practices. Among the research subjects, access to farmland is in general a hot topic that was brought up multiple times during informal conversations. Patrilinear intergenerational farm transfer, which characterises traditional farming contexts in Switzerland, does in fact (partially) hinder wo:men's access to farmland. Of the four cases studied, Severin:e had inherited Horn Farm, but only after it emerged that the older brother that completed the *Landwirt/in* school did not want to farm anymore (see above Section 4.2.1), while Stefanie had inherited Forest Farm as she was perceived as a man, before her coming out (and later wrote the farm over to her wife; Section 4.1.1). Butterfly Farm occupies a piece of land that is leased from a '*big rich man*'; Ciliogia did not inherit the farm she grew up on, her brother did (Section 4.2.1). The CSA Farm was bought from a male farmer by the CSA GmbH and now belongs to the farming business (which includes Maria; Section 4.2.1).

To summarise the main findings reported here regarding gender and sexuality, five areas of interest have been identified. First, the research subjects' main practices and factors pertaining to task division have been recorded and analysed in terms of embodied knowledge, interests, the body, time and presence, farm imperatives, and the *outside*. Then, the impact of gender and sexuality on the farming practices of queer farmers has been investigated, and the discriminatory measures that queer farmers have to deal with as related to their gender and sexuality have been located – as ranging from mobbing, exclusions, gossiping, to silencing practices – together with the reaction strategies of queer farmers – listed as networking, hiding, overworking, adjusting, and rebelling. Finally, ways in which practices, in turn, make identities and how farming identities and sexual and gender constructs are variously appropriated, reiterated and subverted have been explored.

5. Discussion

In describing what I have harvested from the field, my role has been that of a mirror. Of course, it has been an imperfect and necessarily interpretive one, with the limitations, distortions and particular perspectives of my identities, but nevertheless one that involved an attempt to present the world of the research subjects. I have plunged into queer farming cultures to explore how they perceive, understand and make meaning of their farming practices, relationships and identities from a sex, gender and sexuality point of view. Now, I climb out of the field to disentangle the knotted 'facts' gathered. The internal dialogue that has occupied my mind for the past twelve months has featured the voices of respondents mixed with mine and those of other scholars; the results are contradictory yet logical, upsetting, perhaps, yet apparent.

Half a century ago, Sarah Whatmore launched a discussion with her argument that the separate analysis of family farms in Marxist political economy – based on the separation of reproductive from productive work – leaves the work of farming women unacknowledged as well as unpaid. Whatmore's critique of the shortcomings of the classical approach to gender is, however, itself based on a dichotomous understanding. She builds on post-structuralist theories to develop a framework that challenges the binaries of 'work' and 'home', and 'production' and 'reproduction' – but not of 'men' and 'women'. In and through her research, women's work is made visible, yet it leaves the question of what a woman is undisputed and undefined, thus naturalising, essentialising and reifying gender, as if there were only men and women, as if these were neutral, preordained and immutable categories that cannot be questioned or (re)defined.

I use Judith Butler's performative understanding of gender to critique Whatmore's approach to women and gender. As stated (in Section 2.2), gender is understood here as an act, one that is performed (insofar as it is) in relation and according to a gender script that has been participatively (re-)written over generations by repeated gendered performances that in turn define how gender is (not) to be performed (see Box 2, p. 3). This establishes the heteronormative context – generally in society and specifically in farming – that is continuously and dynamically reproduced – and queered.

In and through (*agri-*)culture in Switzerland, sex, gender, and sexuality are continuously performed and co-constructed as binary, contributing to the legal and practical recognition of only two genders (men and women) and two sexes (male and female) and the naturalisation of the link between gender, sex, and sexuality based on core characteristics treated as paradigm and then fixed as

facts. Thus, female bodies are 'naturally' ascribed femininity and attraction to cismen and male bodies, masculinity and attraction to ciswomen. Deviants, transgressives and alternatives undermine and challenge this directly and indirectly through their actions and by their being – they perform an opposition or queer the socio-cultural norm. Queer persons – such as intersex and non-binary gender persons and including queer farmers – uncover how gender functions as a social and performative construct. This is effected by displacing its stable and dichotomic assumption and thence troubling the naturalised link between gender and sex (e.g. transwomen and transmen) and/or by displacing compulsive heterosexuality and thus the perception that sexuality follows from gender (e.g. lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, gay persons).

While recognising Whatmore's pioneering role in the conversation around the role of women in agriculture, I argue that there are more concepts to be troubled. As such, in the next few pages, I will combine the experiences of queer farmers to call into question the boundaries between men and women, between contrasting definitions of family (farms), and between *Bauer, Bäuerin, Landwirt, Landwirtin*.

First, I explore how, before the creation of the queer farm, gender is reproduced in and through the research subjects' young bodies and performances and how for some of them, it became partially naturalised. Then, the role of sexuality is considered in terms of the (re-)production of gender and on-farm gender roles (Section 5.2), leading to a questioning of the family farm construct (Section 5.3) Finally, in Sections 5.4 and 5.5, I bring it all together to go beyond the dichotomic perceptions as a current possibility and present (un)reality.

5.1. **Outside gender: the influences of a gendered *outside***

Chapter 2.2 looked at how a performative understanding of gender implies that gender can be constructed differently in time and space. In the present chapter, I argue that the space-time gradient through which gender construction varies can be very wide. In fact, *inside* the queer farm, we may be *outside* of gender, while *outside* the farm, we are *inside* gender. Every performance has a gendered meaning and is in turn influenced by gender: the *outside* is itself gendered.

Throughout the fieldwork (interviews, informal chats, etc.), the research subjects tended to resist gender and sexual categories, for example, by evading questions and challenging (my) gender assumptions. Over and over again, they stated that neither gender nor sexuality influence *their* farming practices, as the latter are rooted in other factors, namely their bodies and embodied knowledge, their time availability and presence, their interests and those of the farm, and more rarely *the outside* (Section 4.1.3.). Here, I return to Severin:e's explanation around the lack of correlation between farming practices and gender:

I'm a human being, and I have a certain body and a certain constitution and, for example, with me, simply because I'm so thin and so light, there's a certain limit to how [much] I can lift or how I can do some things.

Bodies, too, are ascribed possibilities, and Severin:e's body has been ascribed with a femininity in an environment where the female body is constructed as less adept for machinery work and taking care of the larger livestock. Acknowledging (again) that the construction of femininity varies in space and time – so what is perceived as natural in Switzerland might be unnatural elsewhere and elsewhere (see Shortall, 2000) – in the next few paragraphs, I build on the example of women and agricultural machinery to show how a gendered socialisation influences all the aforementioned factors – including Severin:e's body – and thus, also, queer farmers' practice.

Ciliegia grew up on a traditional heterosexual family farm, developing a fear of machines as a child; the certainty that she as a woman does not belong on a tractor is etched deep in her being. Her brothers, on the other hand, were positively encouraged to drive tractors and from an early age showed an interest and acquired a familiarity with the vehicles and background knowledge of their workings. This difference becomes a chasm during the farmer's education. Entering the farmer education with a slightly smaller knowledge and interest for machines through a female socialisation means needing more time to learn how to drive, repair, operate and approach agricultural machines in comparison to colleagues with a masculine socialisation. This is a knowledge gap that has to be consciously filled by extra learning; Ciliegia never develops enough interest in the matter.

Maria does – even if she does have to reverse for the first time during the exam (Section 4.2.1) – but she can never practice on the apprenticeship farm. Despite her active efforts and her passion for learning machines, the knowledge gap widens, and what was a small difference becomes a bigger one. Even though Maria picks up the same theoretical knowledge as her peers, she cannot retain much of it because she has no space to practice and her knowledge cannot be embodied. As a result, on arrival at the CSA Farm, the cisman that works with Maria is much more comfortable with the machines. Furthermore, his body is ascribed with masculinity in a context where masculine traits, such as muscular strength, technical abilities and mastery of nature are reinforced through agricultural technologies (Brandth, 2020).

In this situation, it is pertinent to review the factors identified for task distribution (Section 4.1.3). Upon arrival at the farm, the cisman has more knowledge, a body that is ascribed more strength, the approval of the *outside* and shows more interest in operating agricultural technology. As such, not only will he be more likely to handle machinery and take on mechanical work, but he will also have more power for decision-making in this area. This difference in power is then likely to be reinforced through the factor of time and presence. In time and through repetition, the cisman will ‘naturally’ tend to take over the machinery tasks, thus developing more interest in this domain and building a body for it, while the person with less embodied knowledge in the area will be further marginalised and tend towards other tasks, thus finally ending up with no time spent on machinery practices.

Maria and the cisman do, however, counter this process by dividing tasks against the six factors for task division in the first period. Now that period is over and the effects of a female socialisation have been countered, according to Maria, as she now can perform all the machinery tasks as well as the cisman and the division of tasks feels ‘natural’ – because bodies ascribed with masculinity *and* bodies ascribed with femininity can both drive big tractors. Maria’s appropriation of machinery knowledge did feel *less* ‘natural’, however – precisely because she farms with a cisman and de-constructing what has been socially constructed to that point takes some work.

Firmly convinced that gender is socially constructed through and through, Severin:e – who farms without any cisman – successfully tends to a cowherd, a goatherd and drives two tractors without anyone’s help. The appropriation of these areas felt more natural for Severin:e due to the absence of cismen. It was achieved through a queer sexuality, through queering the farm.

Whereas Maria and Severin:e actively sought to counter the feminine conceptualisation of their bodies by driving big machines and tending big livestock, Ciliegia, Stefanie, Cleo, and Curcuma experience parts of the ascription of femininity to their female bodies as natural, confirming the force of gender performativity in naturalising gender (Butler, 2004). As such, while they understand intellectually that gender and sexuality are socially constructed, they still perceive that men are inherently stronger, better at machinery work, and tending big livestock, with women having a stronger connection to nature. The naturalisation of the feminine ascription to their bodies keeps them from performing work with big machines or big livestock, further reinforcing the construction of machinery and big livestock as masculine.

The research subjects’ biographies show us how the heteropatriarchal Swiss farming space impregnated and co-constituted their mind and bodies, normalising which interests they can and should develop, the knowledge they can and want to acquire, and the bodies that are imaginable. Thus, during their early years, persons perceived as men (generally due to their ascribed sex at birth) tend to acquire a slightly different knowledge base for life than persons perceived as women do. Of course, an ‘alternative’ performance – showing interest in gender-non-normative domains – does have the potential, at least, to enable a wider experience and access to the ‘other’ gender’s knowledge – but this is really quite limited in agricultural contexts that are typically quite conservative. Queering the farm is not at all ‘natural’.

In the next two sections, I take my argument forward to explain the research subjects’ felt disentanglement between gender identities and farming practices, I argue that queerness is central to the performative constitution of the farm as a gender- and sexuality-neutral space. Regarding queer scholarship, the interesting finding announced at the beginning of this chapter emerges: the research subjects argue that gender is not relevant inside – on the queer farm – but is extremely

important *outside*. When queerness is the norm, it is no longer very queer (from the *inside*); hence, the inside queerness is de-queered! Queerness itself then becomes a heteronormative category only performed on the *outside*.

5.2. *Inside queerness: undoing gender*

In the introduction, I reviewed how queer scholars have been moved to critique feminist scholarship in rural sociology as overlooking the role of sexuality in food systems and how, through queer lenses, they have revealed the heteropatriarchal organisation of agriculture in the US (Hoffelmeyer, 2020; Leslie, 2017; Leslie et al., 2019; Wypler, 2019). Similarly, I have shown how being socialised and perceived as both woman and queer in the Swiss agricultural context is linked to a double discrimination and disadvantage. Now, I proceed to explore how, through queerness, traditional gender ideologies are undone *inside* queer farms. In so doing, I open the discussion to an enhanced understanding of the modes of deconstruction of gender roles, constructs and inequalities.

Again, I depart from Whatmore's (2014) *Farming Women*, which locates the marriage tie – which ascribes traditional femininity to women who perform as wives, mothers, and homemakers while men are ascribed the role of the main farmer and traditional masculinity – as the base and source of patriarchal gender relations. Thence, girls grow up as daughters, sisters and family-carers, to later marry and become family-makers, or else stay home to look after the [grand]parents; men, meanwhile, are required to enter the world of work, society and power. Through this research, however, I claim that the marriage tie is not the source of patriarchal gender relations. The evidence for this emerges from the fact that the lack of a marriage tie does not automatically lead to more gender equality on queer farms. This argument is the focus of the present section.

The following paragraphs look at how queerness facilitates the deconstruction of gender and the inequalities that go with it on farms in Switzerland. The aim here is to gain an understanding of the modes through which queerness plays a role in gender (in)equality. As a pragmatic or policy, our societal aim should then be to facilitate an expansion of the *inside* that queer farmers construct so that sustainable farmers can practice agriculture, live, love and thrive independently of their gender, sex and sexuality. Here I must reiterate that issues of race, class, religion, disability, physical appearance and their intersections are not addressed in this research for lack of data, and that more research in this direction is urgently needed.

As noted in the previous section, queer farmers assert that gender and sexuality have no influence on their farming practices. Curcuma displays this in her claim that the farm is '*my universe, my everything*', not only through the enveloping and all-encompassing feeling that a farm can give – as defining one's whole life, which I felt myself in moments of despair and joy – but also through the possibility of creating a world in and through which gender is undone and made irrelevant. This confirms the possibility of creating the world that Butler (1988, p. 530) referred to: a world in and through which performances 'usually associated with gender, express nothing'. But how are queer farmers (un)doing gender?

Curcuma claims that the absence of cismen (achieved through lesbianism) on queer farms facilitates the avoidance of traditional gender roles, and Maria's experience confirms her claim – since, in the presence of a cisman, traditional gender roles have to be actively countered. Maria, meanwhile, suggests that lesbianism can enable women's identification with farming identities that are constructed away from traditional femininity – since she does think that her butch identification probably facilitated her access to the primarily male farming role she adopted, that of the *Landwirt/in*. While recognising the importance of the absence of cismen and the availability of role models like butch women that construct femininity differently (from the traditional), my observations and analysis lead me to assert there is more to it than that.

Through queerness, queer farmers and their networks start to interrogate and performatively disrupt the link between gender, sex and sexuality. This questioning is consequently brought into their mundanity, whereby the linkage between their gender and their practices is questioned, too. The construction of the queer farm bubble as a gender and sex-neutral space thus starts with the individual and collective conscious and sub-conscious re-examination(s) of the links between gender, sex, and sexuality and continues with the *active avoidance of traditional gender roles* – which is exacerbated when and where cismen are present.

Yet, Ciliégia challenges my statement in and through her self-questioning: has her constant rebellion against the lifepath she was condemned to when she was ascribed femaleness and femininity, in turn, influenced her sexuality? Did Ciliégia's lesbian identity lead her to refuse traditional gender roles, or did the refusal of traditional gender roles make her question the link between gender, sex, and sexuality? Here, again, a post-structuralist approach challenges us to go beyond the binary. It is rather, I would propose, that Ciliégia's sexual, farming, gender and sex identities were co-constructed in and through time and experience whereby a non-traditional farming role intertwined and emerged with a non-traditional sexuality and gender expression. They emerged together, defining each other, like a dance, like the strands of a double-helix co-constituting their own DNA – which is why they cannot really be separated.

It follows from this that queerness is not in itself a prerogative giving carte blanche to undoing or doing gender otherwise, but it does encourage a further undermining and ongoing review or re-discussion of the naturalised links between gender, sex, sexualities and farming practices, which in turn seems to lead to enhanced gender equality. As a result, I push Whatmore's connection between marriage ties and gender inequality and assert that a source of gender inequality is located in the binary understanding of gender and the naturalised link between gender, sex, sexuality and farming practices that traditionally and still paradigmatically imbues heterosexual marriage ties.

5.3. The question of family farms

In Switzerland, rural sociology research has investigated how inequalities arise and are perceived by different subjects on family farms (Contzen & Forney, 2017), how social logics are constructed and mobilised through farming practices (Droz, Ott, et al., 2014) and how gender prescripts are at the basis of inequalities (Droz, Reysoo, et al., 2014). In these studies, much like Whatmore's (2014), what counts as a family and family farm has generally not been problematised. Thus, it has been implicitly defined in the assumptions made by the researchers. As a result, traditional, white, heterosexual Swiss family farms provided the locus of research, leaving heterosexual and cis-gender privileges untouched (along with those of race, class, etc.). More recently, queer scholars have criticised feminist scholarship for overlooking how compulsory heterosexuality and cisgenderity shape the family farm narrative and our food system (Hoffelmeyer, 2020; Leslie et al., 2019).

In Switzerland, the importance of family farms for healthy rural communities and food production is engraved in the federal act (see Section 1.2). This raises questions about the idea of a family farm and who can identify with this narrative. The Swiss federal act asserts supporting '*family farms as the basis of a healthy farming community and an efficient agriculture oriented towards sustainable land management and to improve their structure*' (Art. 1 Abs. 1. lit. a, 1991). My research shows how the family farm narrative may, in fact, be keeping potential sustainable farmers away from farming – by making non-heteronuclear and non-traditional families feel excluded. Curcuma and Maria, for example, refuse the family farm label as it is too far from their queer realities, too heterosexist, too exclusionary. Maria thus needs to distance herself from what she expresses as the '*insanely heteronormative image*'.

Let us recap: Curcuma is the main farmer and co-founder of the Butterfly Farm, which is small-scale, organically certified and situated on steep agricultural land. Maria is part of the five-person collective of the CSA Farm, which supplies the organic food they grow on ten hectares of flat land and woods to more than 100 members. Neither the Butterfly Farm nor the CSA Farm is identified as a family farm, and nor do they fit the UN definition of a family farm (see Section 1.2). Clearly, they are not considered as a part of '*the basis of a healthy farming community and an efficient agriculture oriented towards sustainable land management*' – and this notwithstanding their very evident contribution to more sustainable food systems (since sustainability is one of the rationales for organic as opposed to conventional farming, which tends to degrade soil). This lack of official recognition goes to reconfirm previous findings around the heteronormative nature of the family farm narrative (Leslie, 2019) and how '*the family farm category is analytically inept at offering useful observations about the ecological outcomes of these farms*' (Hoffelmeyer, 2020, p. 352). Consequently, the relevant part (1[1][a]) of the Federal Law (BGBB, 1991) should be modified so that all sustainable farmers feel included in the narrative and supported by it – that they, too, are constituent of a healthy farming community.

While thus far, my results confirm previous research, I further argue that the potential of queer farmers to redefine the predetermined labels that major society serves them with – such as ‘family farm’, ‘Bauer’, ‘Bäuerin’, ‘Landwirt’, ‘Landwirtin’, ‘man’ and ‘woman’ – has been overlooked. The results of this research show that we can no longer ignore how queer farmers feel included or include themselves in the family farm narrative and how they actually expand the latter to include non-heterosexual, non-cisgender families – in Forest Farm’s case – as well as families that construct their kinship away from sexual and marriage bonds – in Horn Farm’s case. Such an incorporation is surely the very definition of a healthy community insofar as vitality is born of diversity – socially as well as ecologically.

Stefanie, in fact, unreservedly calls their farm a family farm, thus extending the family label to embrace separated spouses and trans parents. Noemi, Severin:e and Cleo redefine family altogether by expanding it beyond marriage, blood ties and humans to cover all those who help on the farm and farm animals. Queer farmers thus show us new ways to construct family farms – even with new ontologies evaluating animals in terms of personhood. They certainly confirm Butler’s (2004, p. 26) statement that ‘kinship ties that bind persons to one another may well be no more or less than the intensification of community ties’. In other words, what is at issue is not just the family – and its farm – but the wider society – and its health, through close ties as well as through diversity and the inclusion of animals. The redefinition and reappropriation of ‘family farm’ advocated is one that goes beyond the sex, gender and sexuality binaries – but this is not itself a simple matter. In fact, it involves an appropriation of (farming) roles and performances parallel to that of the family (farm).

5.4. Beyond the binaries: *Landwirt/in, Bäuerin, wo/men*

The penultimate section of this chapter is dedicated to those performances of the research subjects in and through which they appropriate the very categories they criticise: *Landwirt/in, Bäuerin* and *Bauer*. The research subjects affirm that these categories are connected to different farming performances by different groups.

Table 2 presents an overview of how the research subjects define and perceive these farming identities based on gender performance (first row) and farming performance (second and third rows). The second row, ‘Outside conception’, describes what *Landwirt/in, Bauer*, and/or *Bäuerin* learn in school, which corresponds, more or less, to how the research subjects think that the *outside* perceives those roles; the third row, ‘Inside conception’, gets at how the research subjects themselves perceive and understand the categories.

Table 2. Overview of research subjects’ perceptions of gender connotations and farming performances of the categories *Bäuerin, Bauer, Landwirt, and Landwirtin*

	<i>Landwirtin</i>	<i>Landwirt</i>	<i>Bauer</i>	<i>Bäuerin</i>
Gender conception	Feminine connotation	Masculine connotation	Masculine connotation	Feminine connotation
Outside conception	Manage farm business, fields, stables, agricultural machinery, big livestock	See <i>Landwirtin</i>	See <i>Landwirtin</i>	Household, food processing, administrative work, direct selling
Inside conception	<i>Landwirt/in/Bauer</i> AND <i>Bäuerin</i>	“	“	<i>Landwirt/in</i> AND <i>Bäuerin</i>

As noted (Section 4.3.2), interviews typically started with something along the lines of ‘I wouldn’t call myself a *Bäuerin*’ and ended with ‘Maybe I am a *Bäuerin*’. In the transition between these assertions there was also a shift in my perceived identity as interviewer. At the start, the respondents were talking to me as an *outsider*; they assumed that my understanding of *Landwirtin, Bäuerin* and *Bauer* coincided with the *outside* conception. When they meet the *outside* (in this case, me), Maria calls herself ‘*Bauer*’, Severin:e, Ciliegia, and Curcuma ‘*Landwirtin*’, Stefanie ‘*Bäuerin*’, and Noemi ‘helper’. During the course of the interview, however, the research subjects make their claim

clear: these terms carry different meanings to different societal groups and none of them fully describes their selves, at least not in a way that they can feel comfortable with and are happy to own.

For example, Maria calls herself a *Bauer* to state that her role on the farm is ‘managing farm business, fields, stables, agricultural machinery [and] big livestock’, yet at the same time, she thinks that *Bauers* are overrated and *Bäuerins* underrated. This view is shared by all the interviewees. *Bäuerins* do do ‘household, food processing, administrative work, and direct selling’, but they also take up the practices ascribed to *Bauers*. After being guided by the interviewees through their own understandings of these four farming identities, I become an *insider* and they use the terminology of farming identities according to their *inside* conceptions, secure in the knowledge that I would understand what their farm roles and gender roles are. Now, they are all – except Noemi – *Bäuerin*, because they not only take care of household matters but also deal with the farm (i.e. they operate in both – or all – domains).

This assertion can be compared with Whatmore’s (2014) findings around the multiple roles of farm wives and the internal contingency of this category. Yet, if Whatmore’s aim was to show the role of women on the farm and the construction of their subordinate identity, my aim – as announced in the introduction – is to deconstruct the dichotomic understanding of man/woman, and with it of *Bauer/Bäuerin* and *Landwirt/Landwirtin* and displace the associated ideals (i.e. of heteronormativity). Which is what I believe the interviewees do – what they perform on the farm and express in their discourses – and what I here report and analyse.

Thus, employing performativity theory, I claim that a deconstruction of the farming, sex, gender and sexual categories is achieved in and through the usage of the *Landwirt/in*, *Bäuerin* and *Bauer* categories in combination with gender and sexual categories when queer farmers go *outside* the queer farm, because in doing so they state that women can and do drive tractors, can and do run farms, and that heteronuclear family farms are not the only way to run a sustainable small-scale farm. The going outside is conceptual, of course; sometimes it may be literally enacted, when physically leaving the farm, but other times the outside may enter, entering and denting the bubble (by people, virtual communications, etc.).

The deconstruction occurs in three ways. First, the masculine and heterosexual connotations of the term ‘*Bauer*’ is lost when Maria performatively and verbally reclaims a *Bauer*, *Bäuerin*, queer and woman’s identity. Second, the deconstruction of the binary understanding of farming identities is realised through the performative appropriation of the identity of *Bauer* or *Landwirtin* and *Bäuerin* by the same person at the same time (Severin:e, Maria, and Stefanie) and reinforced by the assertion that *Bäuerin* has basically always been a *Bauer* but just ascribed with femininity and assigned additional responsibilities (for the household, garden, childrearing, administration, and direct marketing). Third, in much the same way, the *Bauer*, *Bäuerin*, *Landwirt*, *Landwirtin* are suddenly both homosexual and heterosexual, both female and male, both cisgender and non-binary.

In sum, sexual and gender categories are important to give visibility to farming women and/or queer farmers who – by labelling themselves as ‘lesbian’, ‘trans/women’, etc. and performing farming practices conventionally ascribed to either heterosexual cismen or ciswomen – open up the imaginary of conservative farming contexts to create space(s) for more queer persons to farm. Thus, through their discursive and performative acts, queer farmers expand the possibilities of both conservative and queer environments; they demonstrate that queer people can and do navigate the Swiss farming ‘*super heteronormative conservative environment*’. Even more, through queer performances, all binaries are already blurred.

The effect of this discourse and performance is hampered by two factors: the lack of a common organisation or network of queer farmers and the lack of visibility. Unlike in the US (Wypler, 2019), queer farmers in Switzerland have not organised in a dedicated network. This contrasts with the situation of traditional heterosexual farmers: *Bauer* and *Bäuerin* have major agricultural organisations, the ‘*Swiss Bauern Union*’ and ‘*Swiss Bäuerinnen and Landwomen Union*’, respectively – whose narrative is (perceived as) traditional, white, and deeply heteronormative and therefore excluding queer farmers (Section 1.1), just like in the US (Leslie, 2019). On top of that, our academics and institutions are not paying attention and are still performatively silencing gender and sexual queerness in the Swiss farming context. Not only is the perspective of queer persons in agriculture

omitted, but heterosexism in farming schools and other institutions remains hidden and unquestioned, with all the disadvantages of doing queerness and farming in heteronormative contexts that this implicitly condones and thus actively entails.

I here join Brower's (2013, p. 80) persuasive words and simply assert that it is time for rural sociology – as well as scholars across disciplines and the media, politics and suchlike – to join the work done by queer farmers and help them '*expand the imagination of the possible*', so that more non-cisgender and/or non-heterosexual can identify as *Landwirt/in, Bauer* and/or *Bäuerin* – and thus also enrich communities and the context of agriculture. Expanding the '*imagination of the possible*' in this case means becoming more aware of and giving visibility to the already existing alternatives to the traditional family farm, including the traditional gender roles and inequalities that tend to go with it.

5.5. Lacking intersections

Finally, we arrive at the upsetting conclusion mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Earlier (Section 1.3), I had stated my intent of recuperating '*the geographies of "other" human groupings - the geographies of peoples other than white, middle-class, middle-aged, able-bodied, sound-minded, heterosexual men*' (Philo, 1992). Now, I realise that the geographies I recovered are indeed those of white, middle-class, middle-aged, able-bodied, sound-minded persons with the only difference that they are not heterosexual nor cismen. This demographic homogeneity fails to promote any understanding of forms of othering and discrimination in agriculture – including those that are not based on gender or sexuality. Relatedly – or inevitably, as a consequence – it also fails to interrogate the impact of intersections of discriminations, such as queerness and not being a Swiss native. How is it for the gender-queer coming from villages in Syria, for example? Is there any space at all for them on the Swiss 'family farm'? Could we strive to make some?

Among the impacts that I could not measure remains also the question of how many queer farmers already have left farming. Drawing from my experience, I would say many. I spent one day at the farming school, and that was enough to know that I will not go back. I do not choose willingly to place myself in a context that perceives me as either a sexual object or not at all. Stefanie's experience delivers further evidence. She went through her transition in parallel with moving the deeds of the farm to her wife; as a heterosexual ciswoman, Stefanie's wife 'only' has to face patriarchy, not heteropatriarchy. As such, I carefully reinforce Wypler's (Wypler, 2019 in: Hoffmeyer, 2021) hypothesis that '*Farmers who experience heterosexism may leave farming as a livelihood*'. Manifestly, this is another area that needs more research – and appropriate public policies.

I draw from the experience of Severin:e – who recognises the role of farming roots in being granted acceptance in farming contexts – to hypothesise that the absence of, say, queer non-Swiss farmers, queer bodies with disabilities and queer lower-class persons might not be incidental but rather due to Abelson's (2016, p. 1539) hypothesis that those who cannot embody sameness – e.g. sharing (rural) culture and background, whiteness, and the like – entirely steer clear of rural areas – and farming.

I thus draw from Leslie, Wypler, and Bell (2019), who call out the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) census, and spur the *Sections Environment, Sustainable Development, Territory and Economic Structure and Analyses* of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office to include, along with sex, a question on gender identity – that expands the possibilities beyond the current binary – along with questions on sexuality, as well as nationality and ethnicity. This will give a solid basis to Swiss researchers and institutions to first, better understand the exclusions performed by and intertwined within our agricultural system; second, appreciate queer experiences in order to tackle gender inequalities in farming businesses; and third, discover new ways to arrest the decline of rural farming communities and boost sustainable farming.

6. Conclusion

Some half a century years ago, Sarah Whatmore tackled the invisibility of farming women by placing them at the core of her study and demonstrating how, through discursive processes and daily

practices, unequal gender relations are created and maintained in and through farming practices that are themselves embedded in and reinforce gender ideologies.

And now I ask questions pertaining to this analysis. What is a woman? Which practices are connected to which gender ideology? What happens where gender ideologies are not the – heterosexist – ones of the dominant Western society? Hence, grounding my inquiry in my own Swiss context, I set out with the following main research question:

How are the practices and relationships of queer farmers in Switzerland gendered?

By participating, observing, describing and analysing the daily practices of selected queer farmers – seven persons on four farms – this thesis has shown how gendered socialisation can play a decisive role in defining task division on farms and how gender and sexual queerness hampers this through the absence of cismen and a raised awareness of gender troubles. As a result, practices and relationships of queer farmers in Switzerland become de- and non-gendered as the gender prescriptions are actively avoided on the farm through the construction of an ‘inside’ (the queer farm) where gender is undone and not done. A direct effect and complimentary corollary of this deconstructive construction is that practices and relations become extremely gendered outside the farm. The genders and sexualities of my research subjects are at the same time a source of discrimination and yet also appropriated and celebrated to state that gender, sex, and sexuality are performative social constructs and not prescriptive for farming practices or farming, gender or sexual identities.

The aim of this study has been to recover perspectives that have been silenced and/or overlooked to investigate old and persistent problems in Swiss agriculture, focusing on heteronormativity and gender inequality. This involved letting go of the preconceptions of heteropatriarchal culture that define the conservative context I grew up in. I made use of thick description, weak theory and autoethnography to distance myself from my own perception of the world and take the research subject’s perspective. Through performative theory, I have attempted to give a voice to how the subjects themselves give meaning to their practices, to the impacts of the latter, and how these performances define and co-construct their identities.

Entering this research, I realised that I – secretly – expected to find confirmation of what I had myself experienced through farming performances. I had constructed a masculine identity for myself and was increasingly perceived as a lesbian. Yet, I found that farming performances make gender *irrelevant* for queer farmers on the farm and *increase* the *appropriation* of gender and sexual categories (woman, lesbian, queer, etc.) off-farm. Within the ‘bubble’, classifications were deconstructed and performatively ‘destroyed’; outside, they were re-constructed and strategically deployed.

I now end this thesis enriched with a new understanding of my experience. I had farmed in a cismen dominated context where my young, pretty, abled, feminine body was ascribed less strength, durability and abilities than the male bodies, independently of their age and any physical or mental handicaps. As a result, I constructed for myself a masculine identity to divert attention away from the feminine features of my body and towards its actual capacities. I swear – allow me some humour – that female bodies can work under pouring rain too, that they can build a greenhouse, they can shovel soil and shit – and they can definitely drive a tractor without breaking either body or machine. So, this time there were no greenhouses to build, but I did work through foggy, freezing mornings, I did help repair streets with pickaxe and rake, I did shovel heaps of manure, and I did bring the cow herd back to the barn – and then cleaned the floors, washed the dishes, cooked, and ate. This time I did it all as Prisca, without being pushed into the female role or claiming a male one, and if my sexuality was questioned, then it was me questioning it because once we start questioning one traditional social structure, they might all fail and fall. Goodbye sex, gender, and sexuality – and much more besides!

That said, this research has, of course, had its limitations. The ethnographic nature of this study constrained me to focus on four case studies in the German part of Switzerland, which hinders the generalizability of the results. For example, in Switzerland, the Italian-speaking region has a different starting point as there is no *Bäuerins* school, which raises questions around the existence of different terms to define a *Bäuerin* other than *Landwirtin* (Curcuma suggested the terms ‘*contadina*’

and '*agricultrice*', respectively). Regarding the existence of a *Bäuerin* school in the French- and Romansh-speaking regions, I would hypothesise that this may derive from the French terms '*paysanne*' und '*agricultrice*' and Romansh '*pura*' and '*agricultura*' as equivalents to '*Bäuerin*' and '*Landwirtin*'. Similarly, although the term 'family farm' has a translation in most languages, its socio-cultural meaning will be somewhat variable, according to the norms of those societies and cultures.

Notwithstanding the limited generalisability of the results, however, this research does provide new insights into how farming can be performed away from the (re)production of masculinity and femininity and its potentials for more sustainability, community-building and social justice. The findings also raise questions around the impact of the intersection of multiple minoritarian identities – such as gender, sexuality, race, handicaps and social class – for access to resources for farming. This becomes particularly acute where, as in the case of queer farmers, there is a lack of organisation and networking. Where structures of self-help are lacking, outreach becomes more important.

Based on these conclusions, I reiterate: first, that Swiss academies and institutions should be more reflexive of their role in perpetrating the heteronormative bias. Second, they do need to address issues of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and handicap, not only in farming per se but in the whole food system (from label organisations to agricultural suppliers, from governmental and international institutions to small food processing industries) – and, moreover, not stop at national or human borders, as our interdependency does not stop at the Swiss border or at the human skin – as COVID19 has violently reminded us. Third, it is time for rural sociology to attend to and theorise about performances in and through which gender, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and handicaps are subverted and how and when these performances may lead not only to more egalitarian agriculture and food systems but even the whole society towards greater justice.

In the face of the climate emergency, the pandemic, rural depopulation, the biodiversity crisis, growing gender inequalities, class inequalities and altogether what might be summarised as an increasingly uneven distribution of privilege and vulnerability, it is surely high time that we recognised fairer, more sustainable '*insides*' and the potential barriers that prevent them from expanding into the '*outside*'. We need to turn barriers into building blocks. To this end, the normativity's produced in and through the performances of practices should be further examined to gain wider and deeper understandings of how and where gendered, sexed, and sexual (pre)scripts are created, maintained and contested in and through mundane tasks like tractor-driving, ploughing and cooking. Just as my research subjects questioned one traditional social structure after the other, rural sociology should do the same and raise questions around the social structures that hinder societal groups and prevent them from farming.

Such issues concern not only the academy but also our lawmakers. Here, I would make three points. First, this study has shown that not all family farms farm sustainably and not all sustainable farms are family farms. For a more sustainable agriculture and food system and for thriving rural communities, we need to question the linkage between family farms and assumptions about sustainability. The risk of not rewriting the opening of the Federal Law (BGGB, 1991, 1[1][a]) might be to support unsustainable family business while potential sustainable farmers leave farming because they cannot relate to the family farm narrative and its material realisation in agricultural grants and suchlike. Yet, we need further studies in this direction. Given the diminishing farm numbers and increasing farm sizes in Switzerland, as well as the increasing environmental problems that intertwine with the dominant agricultural paradigm, I assert that we need to understand how to take down the access barriers for sustainable farmers of all categories, including all sexes, genders and sexualities.

Second, through the experience of the interviewees, it becomes evident that the educational system for farmers is imbued with heteropatriarchal discriminations that steer people socialised as women towards the *Bäuerin* education – the only educational path in Switzerland without a gender-neutral title – and those socialised as men towards the *Landwirt/in* education. In and through these educations, heteronormative models are reinforced just like the knowledge gap – and with it power imbalance – between *Bäuerin* and *Landwirt/in*. At this point, I echo Contzen (2004) and make a call to bring topics treated in the *Landwirt/in* education to the *Bäuerins*, and vice versa. Furthermore, an education that grants access to state subsidies needs to produce professionals whose practice aims at federal goals – specifically, in the current context, away from the reproduction of

gender inequalities and heterosexism. This means farmers who not only take care of their crops, and their farms, of their animals and tractors but also of themselves, of their homes, their kins, their children and elderly, their communities. How can the *Landwirt/in* do this when the education requires them to be in barns and on fields up to 66 hours a week – and, parenthetically, find time to study? And how can the *Bäuerin* do so if their training does not touch upon things like agricultural machinery? I would argue that we need to first, combine the two educational paths and second, include anti-heteropatriarchal training to tackle the flourishing heterosexism that is keeping potential farmers away and oppressing actual queer farmers.

Finally, we need to stop '*legislating for all lives what is liveable only for some and similarly, to refrain from proscribing for all lives what is unliveable for some*' (Butler, 2004, p. 8). Referring to the first part of the sentence, it is evident that Switzerland is legislating in favour of cis-heteronuclear family farms based on notions of gender complementarity while disregarding other forms of (sustainable) farming. At the same time, we are proscribing binary genders for all lives; this study proves, once again, that transgenderism is a reality that cannot – indeed must not – be ignored. Our lawmakers should recognise the existence of third – fourth, fifth, sixth... – genders.

A central aim of this research has been to contribute to an understanding of the (de)construction of gender roles on queer farms aimed at closing the theoretical gap in feminist scholarship and rural sociology around performativity and the role of sexuality in agriculture and to better understand how agriculture can be performed away from the (re)production of traditional femininity and masculinity and the inequalities that go with them. Seven queer farmers opened the doors of their homes, barns, and culture to my curious presence and allowed me to enter into a conversation together with Sarah Whatmore, Judith Butler, and other feminist and queer scholars. At times I confirmed their theories, such as on the performativity of gender; the heterosexist essence of family farm narratives and their ineptness as sustainability indicators; the possibility of constructing kinship away from blood and marriage ties; and the heteropatriarchal privileges that imbue our food system. At times I contradicted them, by questioning the definition of women and family farms in Whatmore's contributions and rural sociology in Switzerland. And at times I took these one step further, using performativity theory to queer predefined categories and dichotomic perceptions of gender, sexual and farming roles. Yet, I believe that the biggest contribution of this study can be briefly summarised by the following six points.

First, it has evidenced the rather shocking lack of research around the visibility and recognition of queer farmers in Switzerland and the mechanisms through which they might be turned away from farming as a livelihood on the basis of their sex, gender and/or sexuality. Second, it has problematised the solid production of binary sex, gender, sexual and farming identities as well as the attribution of different skills and possibilities, different roles and futures on the basis of these socially constructed categories. Third, it has shed light on the celebration of heterosexual cisgender family farms in Switzerland – in and through the different forms of discrimination that pervade and operate at school, in agricultural organisations and through other institutions. Fourth, it has highlighted how subversive performances call into question the arbitrary relations between sex, gender and the traditional agricultural field and clear the stage for new criteria for task division that suddenly become conceivable. Finally, it has suggested that (organic) farming can also be an accommodating space where people can become who they feel they want to be.

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Appendix A: Interview guide (German)

Aufwärmen: Vorstellung meiner Person, meiner Forschung und deren Zweck

Reminder: Informed Consent

Bevor wir im Interview wirklich einsteigen, möchte ich noch einmal kurz ein Paar Wörter sagen, zu meiner Person, zu dieser Forschungsarbeit und zu diesem Interview.

Prisca, Studieren an der Universität Wageningen in die Niederlande, im Departement Rurale Soziologie. Untersuche den Zusammenhang zwischen Genderrollen und Landwirtschaftliche Praxis. Um meine Frage zu beantworten führe ich Interviews mit FLINTA* Landwirt:innen durch. Und deswegen kam ich auch zu dir, und deswegen ist deine Teilnahme total wichtig für meine Studie.

Frau, bisher heterosexuelle aber immer wieder in Frage, in ländlicher Raum aufgewachsen und habe mich für die Landwirtschaft interessiert. Daher meine Interesse: Entweder wurde meine Geschlechtsidentität in Frage gestellt, als ich als Frau eine landwirtschaftliche Praxis ausführte, oder meine Fähigkeiten Landwirtschaft zu betreiben. Also frage ich mich, und euch, welche Praktiken werden mit Maskulinität/Weiblichkeit identifiziert und produzieren diese? Wie haben Praktiken binäre Identitäten (*Bäuerin/Bauer*) hervorgebracht, wie wird die Identität jetzt in Frage gestellt?

Ich will einfach nur wissen, was DU denkst und was DEINE eigene Beobachtungen sind, weil ich denke, dass deine Meinungen und Beobachtungen zu Gender, Sexualität und Landwirtschaft besonders wichtig sind, da du diese auf deiner Haut erlebst, und zwar täglich.

Wenn es für dich in Ordnung ist, möchte ich während unseren Interview Notizen nehmen und das Gespräch aufnehmen. Ich lasse den Recorder auf dem Tisch lassen, du kannst jederzeit ausschalten, falls es dir unangenehm wird. Ich werde sicherstellen, dass du anonym bleibst und ich verpflichte mich zur Vertraulichkeit, ich bin hier, ohne dich zu urteilen, ich möchte verstehen, wie Landwirtschaft, Sexualität, Gender einander beeinflussen, alles was du sagst hilft mir und ich werde es nicht weitergeben. Wenn du es dir wünschst, werde ich allerdings die Transkriptionen des Interviews dir zuschicken, falls du noch Kommentare/Korrekturen hast.

Hast du Fragen?

Persönliche und soziodemografische Daten:

- Name:
- Geschlecht:
- Pronomen:
- Alter:
- Sexualität:
- Ausbildung (*Bauern* schon in der Familie? + Deine Lebensunterhaltsaktivitäten):

Hauptthema	Fragen	Hinweise
Einblick in Tätigkeitsfelder Sub 1&2 25 min	Hast du längerfristig auf Betriebe gearbeitet?	Landwirten deine Haupttätigkeit.
	Kannst du mir ein bisschen über die Betriebe erzählen wo du gearbeitet hast?	Was macht ihr und wer wohnt und arbeitet da? Was ist das für ein Hof? Wer arbeitet auf dem Betrieb? Wer wohnt da?
	Wem hat den Betrieb gehört?	
	Wem gehört das Land?	
	Wie wurde das Einkommen aufgeteilt?	
	Welche waren die Haupttätigkeiten (die Arbeiten) die täglich, und/oder saisonal gemacht werden müssen, um den Betrieb und das Haus voranzubringen und wer macht diese?	Im Stall, Auf dem Feld, Im Garten, Küche, Büro, Andere Tätigkeitsbereiche, Haus, B&B...
	Was war deine Rolle auf diesem Betrieb und im Haus? Welche waren deine Hauptverantwortungen auf dem Betrieb und im Haus?	Könntest du mir mehr darüber erzählen?
	Wie lang war dein Arbeitstag? unter der Woche/am Wochenende?	
	Räumlich gesehen, wo warst du am meisten? Wo bist du nie?	Im Haus, auf dem Land, weiter.
	Gibt es Aktivitäten/Praxis/Aktionen/Tätigkeiten, die du nie machen konntest, wolltest, durftest? Wieso?	Gibt es Aktivitäten die ausschliesslich du gemacht hast? Wieso?
	Gibt es Aktivitäten die du besonders gern hattest?	Und andere die du gar nicht gern hattest?
	Gibt es Aufgaben, die andere für die Person nicht für richtig halten/ hielten? Die dachten, das kannst oder solltest du nicht machen?	Oder Tätigkeiten, die Du nicht machen willst?
	Wer hat langfristige Entscheidungen getroffen? Über das Zusammenleben/über den Betrieb/über Geld?	War es schon immer so?
	Wer trifft kurzfristige/alltägliche Entscheidungen? (Tagesprogramm, was Kochen, Einkaufen...)	
Einfluss der Tätigkeiten auf Gender, Sex, und Landwirtschaftliche Identität	Wenn du in der Landwirtschaft arbeitest, wie identifizierst du dich? Identifizierst du dich als <i>Bauer/Bäuerin/Landwirtin</i> /**? Wie kommt es dazu?	Warum genau sagst du das? War es schon immer so?

Sub3 50 Minuten	Und wie wirst du in der Landwirtschaftswelt (von <i>Bäuerinnen/Bauern/Institutionen/Behörden/...</i>) wahrgenommen?	
	Gibt es Tätigkeiten, Arbeiten währenddessen du dich <i>Bäuerin/Landwirtin/Bauer</i> fühlst? Kannst du diese auflisten?	
	Hat sich das <i>Bauern</i> auf deinem Körper/Aussehen ausgewirkt und wenn ja wie genau und hat diese Körperveränderung deine Selbstwahrnehmung geändert?	Und hat nun wiederum diese geänderte Selbstwahrnehmung, dieser anderen Körper, das beeinflusst, was du machst du was du nicht machst?
	Hat das <i>Bauern</i> , deine Aktivitäten auf dem Betrieb einen Einfluss auf deinem (wahrgenommenen) Gender/(wahrgenommene) Sexualität?	Könntest du mir mehr darüber erzählen?
	Wie hat sich die Bäuerinnenausbildung auf deiner Selbstwahrnehmung/Wahrnehmung von anderen (Landwirt*innen, Behörde, Städter...) ausgewirkt? Und auf deine Aktivitäten?	Wieso hast du die Ausbildung gemacht? Was denkst du über diese Ausbildung? Wie beeinflusste das dein Verständnis von Genderrollen, von
	Findest du dich im Begriff Familienbetrieb/ <i>Bauernfamilie</i> wieder? Wieso (nicht)? Wenn nein, gibt es ein Wort, welche eure Betriebsstruktur widerspiegelt?	
	Denkst du, dass deine Sexualität und/oder dein Gender einen Einfluss auf deinen Entscheid hatte, die Bäuerinnenausbildung zu machen?	
Einfluss der Gender/Sex auf Tätigkeiten Sub 3 65 Minuten	Du identifizierst als Frau/Mann, hat dein Gender einen Einfluss auf deine landwirtschaftliche Tätigkeiten?	Wenn ja, was wäre anders, wenn du eine andere Geschlechtsidentität hättest? Wieso?
	Beeinflusst die Heteronormativität/Patriarchat (Gendervorschriften, Familienmodelle...) deine Landwirtschaftliche Praxis? Wie genau?	Wird es immer so sein?
	Gibt es etwas das du aufgrund deines Gender nicht machst?	War es schon immer so?
	Gibt es etwas das du aufgrund deines Gender machst? Anders (als «die Norm», als du dich wünschst) machst?	Oder hatte die Bäuerinnenausbildung einen Einfluss? Hat somit dein Gender einen indirekten Einfluss, weil du die Bäuerinnenausbildung wegen Gender gemacht hast?
	Hat dein lesbisch-leben einen Einfluss auf deine Tätigkeiten ?	Wäre etwas anders wenn du heterosexuell leben würdest?

		<p>Wäre etwas anders wenn du den Betrieb mit einem Mann verpachtet hättest?</p> <p>Was genau?</p>
	<p>Alle die von lesbischen oder transsexuellen Personen geführte Betriebe, die ich gefunden habe, werden nach Bio-Richtlinien bewirtschaftet. Siehst du einen Zusammenhang zwischen Queerness und Nachhaltigkeit?</p>	
	<p>Mit wem tauschst du dich aus? Gibt es eine LW-Organisation, in welchem du dich identifizierst/mit welchem du im Austausch bist?</p>	
Free-Listing Übung	<p>Auflisten, alle Tätigkeiten dir im Sinn kommen, wenn du an einer Bäuerin denkst (2 min) dann Gleiche mit <i>Bauer</i></p>	
Pile Sorting und Pause	<p>Alle die Aktivitäten vom «Free Listing» teilen zwischen, «mache ich gern» und «mache ich nicht gern».</p>	
Schliessen 77 min	<p>Eine letzte Frage: Müsste sich etwas ändern? Auf welche Ebene? Was genau? Gibt es noch etwas, das du mir mitteilen möchtest?</p> <p>Herzlichen Dank für deine Zeit, das war extrem wertvoll für mich! Ich werde demnächst diese Interview transkribieren und anschliessend diese dir weiterleiten, falls du Lust und Zeit hast, kannst du es gegenlesen und Kommentare/Korrekturen einbringen. Zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt, möchte ich alle meine Interviewpartner:innen zusammenbringen, um mit euch gemütlich zu diskutieren, hättest du Lust?</p>	<p>Fokus Punkte: Lehre Landzugang Nachhaltigkeit Kleider</p>

Zeitplan für das Interview

9:30: Ankunft + Vorstellung + Einrichten:

9.45: Beginn des Interviews

10:50: Pause

11:00: Anschlussfragen und praktische Fragen und Raum für weitere Diskussionen.

Appendix B: Participant consent form (German)

TEILNEHMER:IN-INFORMATIONSBLETT

Sie sind eingeladen, an der Forschung zu Geschlechterrollen auf LINT-Betrieben in der Schweiz teilzunehmen. Prisca Pfammatter von der Universität Wageningen leitet diese Forschung als Teil ihres Masterstudiums. Bevor Sie sich für eine Teilnahme entscheiden, ist es wichtig, dass Sie verstehen, warum die Forschung durchgeführt wird und was sie beinhaltet. Bitte nehmen Sie sich die Zeit, die folgenden Informationen sorgfältig zu lesen.

Was ist der Zweck der Studie?

Der Zweck der Studie ist es, zu verstehen, wie Gender auf LINT-Landwirtschaftsbetrieben konstruiert wird.

Warum wurde ich ausgewählt, an der Studie teilzunehmen?

Sie sind eingeladen, an dieser Studie teilzunehmen, weil Sie als LINT-Personen sozialisiert sind und einen Bauernhof besitzen.

Was sind die Vorteile einer Teilnahme?

Indem Sie Ihre Erfahrungen mit uns teilen, tragen Sie dazu bei, besser zu verstehen, wie Landwirtschaft abseits der (Re-)Produktion von traditioneller Weiblichkeit und Männlichkeit und den damit oft einhergehenden Ungleichheiten betrieben werden kann.

Sind mit der Teilnahme irgendwelche Risiken verbunden?

Es gibt keine nennenswerten Risiken, die mit der Teilnahme verbunden sind.

Muss ich mitmachen?

Nein - es liegt ganz bei Ihnen und Sie können jederzeit zurücktreten.

Für einen Rücktritt wenden Sie sich bitte an Prisca Pfammatter (Kontaktinformationen finden Sie unten). Sie müssen keinen Grund angeben. Die Entscheidung, sich zurückzuziehen oder nicht teilzunehmen, hat keinerlei Auswirkungen auf Sie.

Was passiert, wenn ich mich entscheide, teilzunehmen?

Ich werde mit Ihnen auf dem Bauernhof arbeiten und Sie werden eine Reihe von Fragen gestellt bekommen. Ihr Interview wird transkribiert. Sie erhalten eine Kopie der Transkription.

Datenschutz und Vertraulichkeit

Die im Rahmen dieser Studie gesammelten Informationen werden in einer Weise berichtet, die Vertraulichkeit gewährleistet. Um die Vertraulichkeit zu gewährleisten, werden die Daten sicher aufbewahrt und können nur von den Projektmitarbeiter:innen eingesehen werden. Außerdem werden in Veröffentlichungen Pseudonyme (anstelle Ihres echten Namens) verwendet. Angesichts der geringen Anzahl der Fallstudien der vorliegenden Studie werden Standorte und ausserbetriebliche Berufe anonymisiert und / oder geändert.

Was wird mit den Ergebnissen dieser Studie geschehen?

Die Ergebnisse dieser Studie können in veröffentlichten Artikeln, Berichten und Präsentationen zusammengefasst werden. Zitate oder Schlüsselergebnisse werden in allen formalen Ausgaben

immer anonymisiert, es sei denn, wir haben Ihre vorherige und ausdrückliche schriftliche Erlaubnis, sie mit Ihrem Namen zu versehen.

Eine Beschwerde einreichen

Wenn Sie mit irgendeinem Aspekt dieser Forschung unzufrieden sind, wenden Sie sich bitte zuerst an die leitende Forscherin, Prisca Pfammatter (Kontaktinformationen unten). Wenn Sie immer noch Bedenken haben und eine formelle Beschwerde einreichen möchten, schreiben Sie bitte an Associate Professor Joost Jongerden, den Betreuer dieses Projekts.

joost.jongerden@wur.nl

PO Box 8130, 6700 EW Wageningen, Die Niederlande

Bitte geben Sie in Ihrem Brief Informationen über das Forschungsprojekt an, nennen Sie den Namen des Forschers und beschreiben Sie die Art Ihrer Beschwerde.

Kontaktinformationen von Prisca Pfammatter

prisca.pfammatter@wur.nl, 077 513 18 82

Um es nochmals zu wiederholen, haben Sie als Teilnehmer:in, haben Sie das Recht:

- (a) Sie können sich jederzeit aus dem Projekt zurückziehen und alle zuvor verarbeiteten / unveröffentlichten Daten (einschliesslich Bilder) zurückziehen.
- (b) Es wird garantiert, dass das Projekt nur zu Forschungszwecken dient.
- (c) Es wird garantiert, dass alle von Ihnen angegebenen persönlichen Daten geschützt und nur dann offengelegt werden, wenn Sie der Offenlegung zugestimmt haben oder dies gesetzlich vorgeschrieben ist.
- (d) Gewährleistung, dass die Sicherheit der Forschungsdaten während und nach Abschluss der Studie geschützt wird.

EINVERSTÄNDNISERKLÄRUNG

Zustimmung

1. Ich habe mir das obige Projekt erklären lassen und das Informationsblatt gelesen.
2. Ich bin damit einverstanden, an dem oben genannten Forschungsprojekt teilzunehmen, wie im Teilnehmer:ininformationsblatt beschrieben.
3. Ich stimme zu:
 - für dieses Projekt interviewt und aufgezeichnet werden.
 - Erlauben Sie der Forscherin, auf der Farm zu bleiben und zu arbeiten
4. Ich möchte:
 - in Veröffentlichungen oder Präsentationen im Zusammenhang mit diesem Projekt anonym bleiben.
 - im Namen für meinen Beitrag zum Projekt anerkannt werden und daher in Veröffentlichungen oder Präsentationen im Zusammenhang mit dem Projekt nicht anonym bleiben.
5. Ich erkenne an, dass:

(e) Ich verstehe, dass meine Teilnahme freiwillig ist und dass ich jederzeit vom Projekt zurücktreten und alle zuvor gelieferten unverarbeiteten / unveröffentlichten Daten zurückziehen kann (es sei denn, aus Sicherheitsgründen sind Folgemaßnahmen erforderlich).

(f) Das Projekt dient Forschungszwecken. Es kann für mich nicht von direktem Nutzen sein.

(g) Die Privatsphäre der von mir bereitgestellten persönlichen Daten wird geschützt und nur dann offengelegt, wenn ich der Offenlegung zugestimmt habe oder wenn dies gesetzlich vorgeschrieben ist.

(h) Die Sicherheit der Forschungsdaten wird während und nach Abschluss der Studie geschützt.

Zustimmung der Teilnehmende

Vollständiger Name der Teilnehmende:

Teilnehmer:in: _____ Datum: _____

(Unterschrift)

Appendix C: Focus group (German)

Fokusgruppe: Que(e)r durch die Landwirtschaft: Queer, Landwirt:in und Bäuer:in

Ziele

1. Einander Kennenlernen, erste Basis für einen Austausch
2. Klarheit schaffen: Widersprechende Aussagen nachgehen, Ergebnisse erläutern/widersprechen
3. Neue Ideen einbringen

14:00	Ankommen	Kurze Tour der Genossenschaft und Wohnung	Nach COVID-19 Test fragen/ob Masken oder nicht/Lüftung
14:15	Vorstellungsrunde	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alle haben einen Objekt: Name des Betriebs? - Im Kreis sitzen und sich vorstellen 	Anfangen und im Kreis
14:30	Einführung: Ziel des Treffens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kennenlernen: Basis für längerfristigen Austausch - Hauptergebnisse: Anekdoten 	Darf ich aufnehmen?
14:40	Austausch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender ist nicht wichtig auf dem Hof (es wird abgebaut) aber sobald ihr den Hof verlasst wird es eine sehr wichtige Kategorie. Erkennt ihr euch in dieser Aussage? - Aufklärungen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Gender: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fokus Natur und Kraft ▪ Gender ist eine strategische Kategorie ▪ Will nicht gendered werden ▪ Biologische Landwirtschaft ist es offener? Anthroposophische Bewegungen können sehr konservativ sein. 	Moderatorin + Notizen
15:40	Abschluss	Zusammenfassung der: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Haupteindrücke/Konklusionen. - Teilnehmende beleuchten, bestätigen, erläutern Infos. 	

Appendix D: Results of free listing exercise (author's translation and categories)

For the free listing exercise, the interviewees were given two minutes to write down all the activities that came to their minds when thinking of a *Bäuerin*. On a second step, they did the same for a *Bauer*. This exercise resulted in 80 terms for *Bäuerin* and 57 for *Bauer*. I organised the tasks in categories for readability and erased repetitions. Figures 1 and 2 show word clouds for the results – word clouds visualise the most recurrent words, the smallest being the least used terms and the largest the most used.

Bäuerin:

House, kitchen and garden:	baking, harvesting, vegetable gardening, garden, preserving, cooking, helping, childcare, household, looking after everyone who comes and goes on the farm, mother-in-law, grocery shopping, flowers, making sure that the house is beautiful, jam, caring
Animals:	small animals, barn, chickens, milking, milk processing, caring for calves, horse riding, animal husbandry, cows, raking hay, pigs, büsi [house cat], animal health
Office:	organise, bookkeeping, administration, external contact, farm planning, purchase of agricultural inputs, sale, (direct) marketing, accounting, invoices, communication
Machines:	tractor driving, operating machines
Characteristics:	working permanently/being available, keeping an overview, organisational talent, consistency, sleep deprivation, being innovative, enjoying routine, a lot of work
Social:	rural women's association,
Clothes:	headscarf, apron



Figure 2. Word cloud of the translated version of the free-listing exercise 'Bäuerin'.

Bauer:

House, kitchen and garden:	child rearing, hopefully also cooking and spending time with the children or other people on the farm,
Animals:	big cows, milking, everything that has to be milked, livestock, barn work, animal health, cows
Office:	management, farm planning, purchase of inputs
Machines:	tractor, machines, building maintenance, buying machines (too many, too big), repairs
Characteristics:	working permanently/being available, keeping an overview, organisational skills, consistency, sleep deprivation, being innovative, enjoying routine, timbering
Social:	yodelling/music club, hornussen [traditional fight in Switzerland], chatting with fellow farmers, meetings where he almost exclusively meets other (male) farmers / occupational politics, cattle market, drinking beer/pub, landi [local agricultural retailer],
Fields and forest:	haymaking, timbering, arable farming, manure and slurry management, forest maintenance, crop spraying, everything on the field + pasture, fencing, fodder production, sowing/harvesting,



Figure 3. Word cloud of the translated version of the free-listing exercise ‘Bauer’.