

The Gender Equality Discourse in Austrian Agriculture – Applying a Feminist Political Ecology Lens

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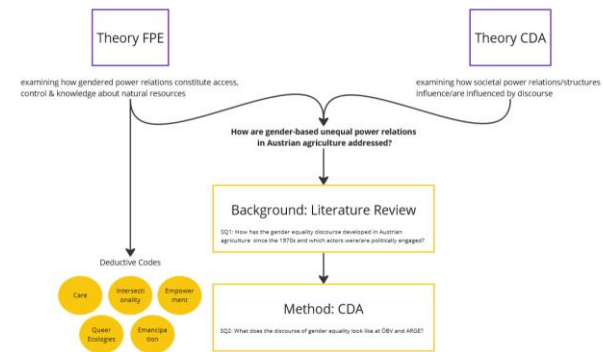
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Background

The Austrian agricultural sector is male-dominated (Quendler and Oedl-Wieser 2023). Gender disparities are reflected, among other aspects, in an unequal distribution of care responsibilities, underrepresentation in decision-making, inequalities in farm ownership and property conditions, a lack of suitable employment opportunities in rural areas, as well as traditional gender roles (Bergmann et al. 2019; Quendler and Oedl-Wieser 2023; Oedl-Wieser et al. 2022). An important way to shed light on existing power inequalities is by addressing and discussing them. According to Fairclough (2012), power relations in society are reflected in the language that we use to discuss them. Fairclough played an instrumental role in finding a way how such power relations can be critically analyzed by studying language: critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis aims to uncover how discourse influences and is influenced by social context, and how power relations are manifested and perpetuated through language (Fairclough 2012). This thesis examines the gender equality discourse at two Austrian organizations that represent farmers' interests in national agricultural politics.

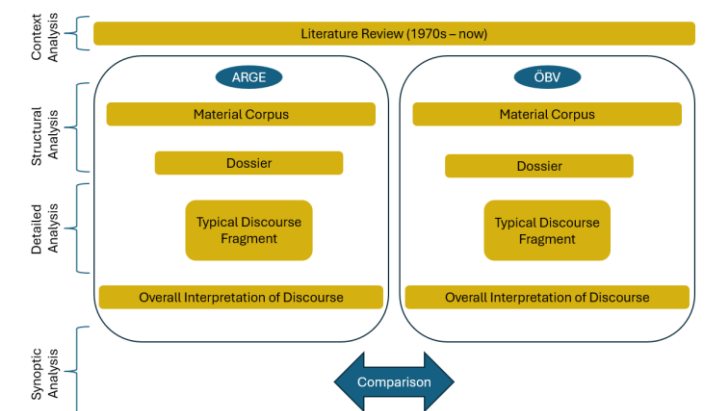
Research Question

What does the discourse of gender equality at ÖBV (Österreichische Berg- und Kleinbäuerinnen Vereinigung) and ARGE (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Österreichischer Bäuerinnen) look like and how do these organization understand/conceptualize gender equality?



Methodology

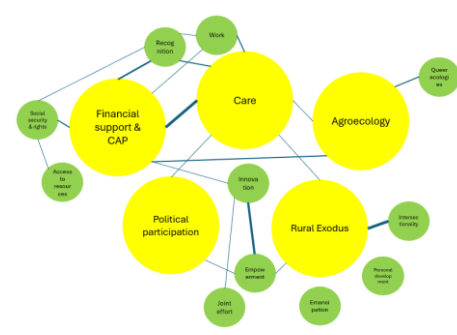
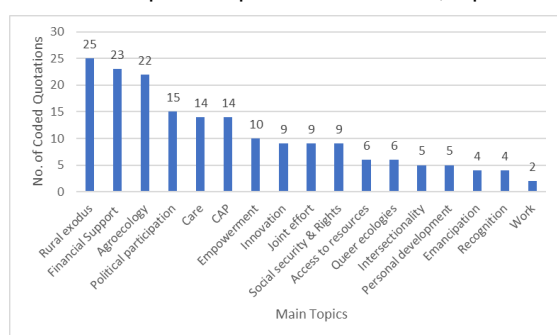
- Literature review
- Critical Discourse Analysis based on the methodological suggestions by Siegfried Jäger (2009)
 - Context analysis
 - Structural analysis: identification of main and sub-topics, entanglements, discursive events, use of collective symbols, use of pictures
 - Detailed analysis: typical discourse fragment → institutional context, text surface, linguistic-rhetoric mediums, contextual-ideological statements
 - Overall interpretation
 - Synoptic analysis: comparison and putting results into context



Results - ÖBV

Structural analysis:

Material corpus: 11 press statements, 1 position paper, 2 letters to ministers, 2 calls, 1 manifesto



Detailed analysis: Position paper, 2020, "Österreichische Berg- und Kleinbäuer_innen Vereinigung zu Gleichstellung im Programm Ländliche Entwicklung 2021-2017"

- Use of gender-sensitive language
- Binary understanding of gender
- Collectivism, agroecology
- Clear structure, simple vocabulary
- International orientation & cooperation
- Inconsistencies in vocabulary, grammar & structure

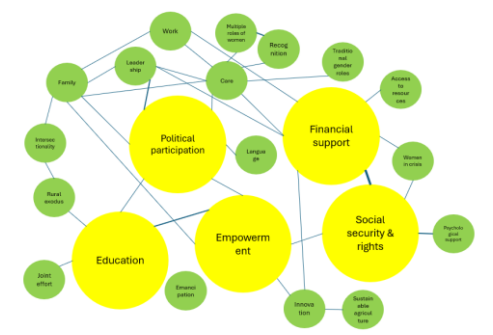
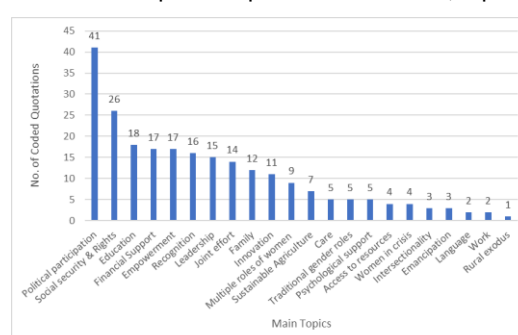
Overall interpretation:

→ holistic, international, and progressive understanding of gender equality

Results - ARGE

Structural analysis:

Material corpus: 30 press statements, 1 position paper, 1 charta



Detailed analysis: Charta, 2017, "Charta für partnerschaftliche Interessensvertretung in der Land- und Forstwirtschaft"

- Binary understanding of gender
- Collectivism, involve society
- Clear structure, simple vocabulary
- Traditional family farm structure
- Display of traditional gender-based role and character attributions

Overall interpretation:

→ conservative, more traditional understanding of gender equality

Conclusions & Recommendations for further research

Results indicate that ÖBV approaches the gender equality discourse from a more inclusive and holistic point of view. This aligns with the organization's orientation towards agroecology. ARGE approaches the gender equality discourse from a more conservative perspective by focusing on the family farm and equal partnership between men and women. However, ARGE includes more sub-topics and nuances in their gender equality discourse than ÖBV. In order to follow up on this research, I suggest to examine how ÖBV and ARGE actually implement their claims and demands for gender equality. Furthermore, it would be interesting to see how the organization's members perceive the gender equality discourse. In conclusion, this thesis contributes to understanding how gender equality is conceptualized in the Austrian agricultural sector. Additionally, the methodological approach of this research can serve as an example for how to conduct a critical discourse analysis in other contexts.

Sources

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