Zeitschrift: Yearbook of socioeconomics in agriculture : Agrarwirtschaft und Agrarsoziologie = économie et sociologie rurales

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Agrarwirtschaft und Agrarsoziologie

Band: - (2010)

Artikel: The embodiment of agricultural machine work of young Swiss farm manageresses

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-966664

The embodiment of agricultural machine work of young Swiss farm manageresses

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Abstract

This article focuses on the embodiment of agricultural machine work and the construction of gendered identity in young Swiss farm manageresses. Our data is based on two focus groups of women who run their own farms. Unlike farming women, these women are meant to operate machinery in one way or another. Hence, the incorporation of machinery and the construction of their gendered identity may involve different features than for farm women. Our research is based on Brandth's (2006) concept of gendered embodiment of agricultural work for farm women in Norway. The analysis shows, however, that young farm manageresses also negotiate their gendered identity differently when dealing with machines. All four processes described by Brandth for farm women were also identified for farm manageresses. Agricultural training is crucial in the construction of gendered identities and the embodiment of machinery. Women who are skilled in operating machinery ignore their femininity and reproduce hegemonic masculine concepts associated with machines. The embodiment of machinery then forms part of their professional and feminine identity.

Key words: agriculture, gender, embodiment, identity, education

JEL Classification: D1, D19

Ruth Rossier and Rachel Picard: The embodiment of agricultural machinery of young Swiss farm manageresses: YSA 2010, 311-328

1. Introduction

In recent years the focus of interest in feminist agricultural research has moved to the body in agricultural work and the construction of gendered identities. Various research projects have dealt with gender role models, embodiment, gender dualism and the relationship between physicality and the cultural/natural landscape, machinery and labour (Schreiber 1996; Saugeres 2002; Saugeres 2002; Pini 2005; Rossier 2005; Brandth 2006; Coldwell 2007; Trauger, Sachs et al. 2008, Rossier 2009).

This study deals with the embodiment of machinery and machine work by Swiss farm manageresses and the construction of their gendered identity. This article is based on the paper "If you know how to do it, then it's great" at the Conference of the European Society of Rural Sociology in Vaasa (Finland) in 2009.

This study analyses a very specific group of women in agriculture, namely farm manageresses. In it, we address the question of how these women construct their feminine identity in their position as farm manager, which is still defined as a masculine job, especially as far as machines and machine work are concerned. It is asserted that women owning and running a farm in their own name incorporate machines and machine work in more or less the same way as their male counterparts, i.e. the female body is interlinked with machines in the same way as the male one.

Two groups of farm manageresses discussed agricultural work and farm business, as well as how they dealt with machines and machine work. These focus group discussions were used to interpret the embodiment of machine work in farm manageresses. This study aims to discover whether Swiss farm manageresses incorporate agricultural machine work as part of their professional and feminine identity when doing so called "men's work".

The article is structured as follows: The next section, chapter two, describes our theoretical and methodological approach, including the concept of embodiment and research by Brandth (2006) and the methodological procedure adopted. The research results are presented and discussed in chapter three, and finally a conclusion is drawn to round off.

2. Theoretical and methodological approach

Some theoretical approaches of feminist (agricultural) research will be introduced, then focussing on Brandth's (2006) concept of the gendered embodiment of agricultural work and followed by a description of the methodological approach.

2.1 Gendered discourses in agriculture

In Swiss agriculture, most women are family worker or business partner in farming (referred as farm women), not independent farmer and farm manager. Thus, farm manageresses have quite a different social status compared to farm women, they operate a farm in their own name. The decision for the "male" that is the agricultural education means a decision against the traditional farm woman's role on family farms (Schmitt, 1997). Thus, female farmers are faced with various prejudices and have to fight for respect and recognition.

Labour organisation on farms is characterised by a differing assessment of male and female spheres of activity, „men's work' being linked to higher social prestige (Goldberg 2003). It should also be noted that this traditional role allocation is being softened by increasing mechanisation. Goldberg (2003) finds two opposing processes in Europe: on the one hand farming is undergoing "masculinisation" (Haugen 1990 in Goldberg 2003, 131). Mechanisation and professionalization are leading to the masculinisation of fields of activity formerly associated with women. The opposite process – the "feminisation of farming" – is triggered by structural change and means that the women are also increasingly doing „men's work'. This is particularly true on part-time farms where the man works away from home (Goldberg 2003).

Changes in role allocation are often accompanied by a revaluation of work. In her study of a southern French community Saugeres (2002) points out that a job is less valued if done by women. Here the valuation of the sphere of activity changes with the gender of the person responsible, i.e. it has no direct connection with the work itself, but is associated with the physical nature of whoever is doing it. Because of their physical shortcomings women are denied the possibility of farming in the same way as their male colleagues: this is supposedly not what the female body was created for and she does not have the attributes nec-

essary for managing a farm on her own and being able to do all the work involved. This imputation results in women's work being rated as simpler and less valuable than men's work: even if women do the same work, the otherness of the female body is used to justify the subordination of women's work. This discursive positioning of the female and of the male body in agricultural work explains the maintenance and legitimization of women's subordination in farming. The study by Saugeres (2002) illustrates how constructions of physicality and gender as well as notions of embodiment are central to the (re)production and legitimization of patriarchal, hierarchical societal and gender relationships, and to the production of exclusion mechanisms for physicalities which do not match this pattern.

2.2 Gendered embodiment of agricultural work

There is a strong connection between masculinities and machines (in Brandth 1995; Saugers 2002 in Pini 2005). A majority of farming women are not involved in machine and tractor work although machines made a lot of strenuous work become easier. In Switzerland, an increasing degree of mechanization, the farming woman takes on tasks like milking and driving the tractor, thus entering domains formerly reserved for men. But some machine work is still strictly a male preserve, such as soil cultivation (Rossier 1992). Pini (2005) described the gender management strategies adopted by farm women undertaking the masculine practice of tractor work. By excluding themselves from this work, they protect and reinforce the masculine subjectivities of their farmer husbands, as well as their own feminine subjectivities. The same author described a range of gender management strategies employed by farming women driving tractors on Australian cane farms, such as minimising or hiding their on-farm contributions to maintain the construction of feminine and masculine identities in farming communities, and emphasising the importance of their domestic and household role to accentuate their feminine identity. Another strategy used by farming women to negotiate their identity is that of separating themselves from the men on the farm as well as from the men's performance of masculine activities, or emphasising their feminine identities by being and acting "ladylike" and wearing a dress in the public sphere. A new strategy for negotiating on-farm physical work and one's feminine identity is the adoption of a farm as a business discourse, i.e. the farm as a partnership between husband and wife. Engaging this business discourse is quite distinct

from the other strategies because it does not rely on enhancing aspects of one's feminine identity (Pini 2005).

Brandth's (2006) concept of the embodiment of agricultural work deals also with the gender-specific incorporation of farm work, particularly the connection between gender identity and the body at work. Here the body is understood as a study object for understanding agricultural work. It focuses on the way the body comes into contact with the work tools, the agricultural machinery. Its study demonstrates how the female body, work and machines are discursively incorporated in one another and give one another meaning. Brandth distinguishes between four different processes by which the bodies of female farmers are incorporated into agricultural work by the use of machines.

Whereas the first two processes make a certain break with the traditional division of labour, the last two continue sexual role allocation. Brandth does not establish a one-to-one relationship between labour and the embodied self, but demonstrates that the three central analytical elements – gender, body and machines – are flexible and dynamic. The relationship(s) between machines and femininities thus turn out to be complex and diverse, creating space for different gendered identities and discourses.

- **"Construction of mutual character between body and machinery"**

The female body is interlinked with machines in the same way as the male one. Skill in handling agricultural machinery gives women self confidence, power, control and autonomy as well as pride in their abilities. The latter are measured against male standards and male patterns of work and behaviour are adopted. Women are indeed aware of the biological differences, but neutralise or ignore the femininity of their bodies in order to be accepted as female farmers. The body itself becomes irrelevant at work, what is important are its abilities when dealing with machinery. In this process the idea of the female body contradicts stereotypical ideas, whereas masculinity and the significance of the tractor remain unchanged and hegemonic masculinity is therefore transferred to female farmers. Masculine standards such as control over machinery remain the norm and constitute part of the identity construction of women as good female farmers.

- **"Machine mediation of the feminine body": "breaking the mutuality of character construction"**

In this process the attribution of machine characteristics to the female body leads to the reaction of women dissociating themselves from it in relation to their bodies. Machine and body are interlinked to a certain point: control of a tractor is indeed part of professional identity and efficiency, but not of the female identity, which does not want to be hard and insensitive. Women develop a variety of strategies in order to compensate for physical weaknesses. Control over her body and farm is more important to a woman's identity than machinery. The masculinisation of her body is therefore denied, resulting in a more active redefinition of the connotation of the female body in agriculture and possibly also entailing a reinterpretation of the symbolism of machines.

- **"Strong machines and weak bodies"**

Mechanisation makes many physically strenuous jobs easier, meaning among other things that the different physical prerequisites of men and women cease to be significant. In this respect machines are a tool for overcoming physical drawbacks. This could be an important factor in the redefinition of the working body in agriculture. But changes in working techniques do not necessarily mean a change in the gendered division of roles and labour. If women only operate machinery in exceptional cases and crisis situations, for example when the man is ill or absent, then this produces neither a change in (body) awareness nor in the above processes. Such exceptions tend to be linked to insecurity in handling machinery. Nor do they bring about an improvement in the female farmer's status in farming society: the man is still mainly responsible for machine work and the woman fulfils her role as a " „flexible gender' in farming " (Thorsen 1993, in Brandth 2006) and as an assistant for unqualified machine work. In this situation the relationship between body and machine is a completely different one from the 'strong machine – strong man' relationship.

- **"Feminine support of the man-machine incorporation"**

The traditional role allocation of agricultural work survives if women do not work with machinery. The indifference of women to agricultural machinery, whether due to lack of time or gendered socialisation, means that agricultural machinery is reproduced as a symbol of male embodi-

ment. The sexual division of labour is not therefore abolished, the gendered body not redefined.

Unlike Brandth (2006), who in her study surveyed women in agriculture, both full-time female farmers (our farm manageresses) who used machines every day and women who married farmers (our farming women), the women we questioned in Switzerland exclusively represented farm manageresses who work with machines more or less daily. It should be assumed, however, that these farm manageresses also incorporate mechanical agricultural work in different ways.

2.3 Focus groups

Focus groups or group discussions are guided discussion forums with between six and ten participants. This method of collecting qualitative data is particularly suitable for investigating social opinion-forming processes and discussing life aspects rarely addressed in daily life (Flick 2004). The group dynamic and the course of the discussion is of special importance here. The stimulation of answers and support in remembering events result in statements which "lead beyond the individuals' answers" (Flick 2004). Although focus groups are an efficient method of collecting qualitative data, they do have certain drawbacks: only a limited number of questions can be dealt with and although perspectives come from a broad spectrum, they have less depth than in individual interviews. Further a balance had to be found between homogeneity and heterogeneity of the focus group although similarities enhance a confidential ambiance of discussion, but also no dichotomies (Finch and 2002). Participants with a different background may stimulate an independent discussion of critical points. At the same time there is a risk of power relation formation within the group and single participants may be reticent in expressing their opinions (Krueger 2000).

In 2009 two discussion forums with young farm manageresses have been held. Six and seven farm manageresses respectively took part, aged between 22 and 35. The women represented a broad spectrum of Swiss agriculture and the structure of their farms, their family backgrounds and careers, their training and life plans were very different. The groups were therefore composed heterogeneously in order to illustrate different aspects and perspectives of the phenomenon under investigation. The target groups are homogenious what the women's

status as farm manageresses is concerned. In this way, we have certain balance between heterogeneity and homogeneity within the focus group.

The questions asked were not directly about physicality, but about the women's relationship to machinery, how they handled it, division of labour on the farm, and their strategies for doing physical work. The women said numerous things which merit focussed analysis in relation to embodiment.

For evaluation we used a method based on Mayring's qualitative content analysis (1997), but also containing elements of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1998). Sequence or group dynamics are not taken in consideration. Content analysis is a rule- and theory-led evaluation method based on a deductively developed category system aimed at reduction. In the grounded theory method the category system is developed inductively from the data. In compiling the category system previous theoretical knowledge and considerations, the results of a written survey (Rossier and Wyss 2008), and the guidelines for the focus groups were accordingly used as the starting point. In the course of coding the codes were gradually revised and supplemented. This led to the inductive refinement of the code structure and network structure. Work to support coding and analysis was carried out with Atlas.ti software.

3. Embodiment of machine work in agriculture

The results show how the aspect of the discursive positioning of body and machine is singled out in the analysis of the embodiment of agricultural work.

3.1 Factors influencing gendered embodiment of agricultural work

Farm structure shows an impact on the gendered embodiment of agricultural work to the extent that on small farms the division of labour looks different than on large farms. If, for example, a farm is run by one individual alone, this individual either has to all the work alone or outsource it to a third party:

Alma: (...) Well, I can't possibly do everything myself, and I worked out quite a good deal with my neighbour. I only make first-cut hay for the horses because subsequent cuts have too much protein, I can't use them. He takes the second and third cuts and in return does my sowing. I just do the driving, prepare things, and then he does the sowing. And he also mows the hay grass for me, that saves me doing it because I've cut down on machinery. I have hardly any machines left, I don't have a plough or. (...) Otherwise you still have to wash them, (...) still needs space and you still have to mend and grease. And so I said I'll simply lease (...).

Farm location strongly influences agricultural work: in mountain and hill regions the land is steeper and the growing season shorter than in the lowlands. This affects farm orientation, machinery and the risk of accidents. Mountain farms are mainly dairy farms; in such locations arable farming is impossible or at least unprofitable. This does away with soil cultivation. Various women expressed a suspicion that arable farming in particular was a sphere dominated by men: they thought that more was expected of women in dairy farming and animal husbandry than in tilling the soil with a tractor and plough. Mountain region topography requires specially designed machines which are smaller and lighter. However manoeuvring machines on steep terrain requires more skill, nerve and strength than on flat land.

According to previous studies (Rossier 1992; Goldberg 2003) women help out more with farm work in mountain farming than in the lowlands. This self-conception also influences attitudes to work, identity and self-image:

Bea: *(...) Well I think (...) in this region, in the lowlands, to be quite blunt, (...) a farm woman is just in the garden, the house, on the land. And here in the mountains you are in the cowshed, you are on the land, you are in the house, you might even have a garden, you are really just everywhere. (...) Yes, it is quite different with us. Here it's the farm women who drive these machines.*

At the same time, however, Bea says nothing about her own machine work, but later sets the record straight:

Bea: *(...) But now I think everything to do with the land out there, when and where to mow, I just leave it up to my husband. I'm fine with that because I have enough to do in the house and have a family and child as well, what's the point of me more or less interfering. It's a good thing I don't also have to think about where we should be mowing now or whatever.*

Bea's statements show that women in mountain regions work with machines every day and take this for granted. If there is a husband, however, in the background this woman leave a lot of the machine work to him. A crucial factor in such role allocation is the workload in child rearing and in the household, emphasizing the feminine identity. Others are the hazards of mechanical work on steep hillsides and physical demands:

Mirjam: *Well I think, it maybe has something to do with the topography. I mean Switzerland has so much mountainous land: (...) where there are some really steep hillsides. As far as mowing is concerned, I must say it's pushing it for a woman to use a mower on these hillsides. Or she's laid low with her back or something by the age of 40. And a man just comes in and does it.*

Women on their own, however take on exactly the same jobs as their male colleagues. Machinery is then part of everyday life, the ability to deal with it the most important part of their identity as female farmers:

Edith: *(...) I must say there are days when I wouldn't do the driving any more, but the next time you go just go ahead and do it. And sometimes you simply take a deep breath first. (laughter). Yes, it's simple – you do it somehow if you have to.*

Women's family backgrounds greatly affect their self-image in their dealings with machinery. If a woman grows up in a farm environment she comes into early contact with animals, agricultural machinery and work on the family farm. This banishes initial inhibitions. Machine work is taken more for granted and becomes familiar:

Mirjam: *(...) Even as a child you drove, sometimes, with your father. (...) Yes, then I learnt from my brother as well, yes I actually learnt as a child. (...) I've never driven a transporter as an adult, but somehow you grew up with the 'Terratrac'. Yes, in fact it was normal.*

In childhood and youth girls and boys try out lots of things, become familiar with machinery, make their first mistakes and even have little accidents. This means that children with a farming family background are several steps ahead of other trainees.

It should be noted, however, that the extent to which girls are taught to drive tractors differs widely from that of boys. The child's interest in machinery plays a part too:

Mirjam: *Well, in our family my father didn't like driving and my brother didn't like driving. (...) No, my sister didn't drive at all.*

Most participants from farming families basically found this family background helpful in their subsequent dealings with machines. During the training years the existing routine also helped them to accustom themselves more quickly to other, often bigger machines. If a teacher realises that the girl he is teaching already has experience, he expects more from her, has more confidence in her and in turn promotes self confidence when handling machinery.

Two women saw an accident of their father's as an important stage in acquiring mechanical proficiency. In both cases the farmer's inability to work resulted in the daughters having to take over his jobs. Both referred to this circumstance as a "godsend" and trace their skill and self-confident handling of machinery back to that time. Their relationship to machine work and their self-confidence in handling it were therefore shaped by this period, contrary to Brandth's (2006) observations.

Edith: *(...) And I sometimes say it's the best thing that could have happened to me, my father had an accident when we were building the barn and he was out of action for nine months. It happened in the spring and I simply had no option. And it actually was for the best. And yes, apart from that I do like driving the machines.*

Agricultural training is a key factor. This is often decisive in handling machinery. Experiences during training do, however, vary. Whereas some (directly or indirectly) came to feel that as women less was expected of them in dealing with machinery, others were thrown in at the deep end and entrusted with all the jobs right from the start. In each case during their trainee years women with a Federal Certificate of Qualification or even a Master's diploma were able to acquire the technical knowledge, experience and routine resulting in self-confidence and self-image in handling machines:

Edith: *I can imagine that it also works with procedures, i.e. with mechanical procedures, or how a tractor works, or even the hydraulic system or suchlike. If you can't visualise it, you don't know why it won't work, say if you want to plug the hose into the valve.*

The women agreed that handling machinery needs technical knowledge, experience and familiarisation. If this is present the relationship between machine, work and their body can change. Those taking part in the group discussions could associate themselves with all four of

Brandth's processes. Those who most clearly dissociated themselves were the few women who had nothing to do with machines in everyday life, i.e. clearly conform to the fourth type. None of these women completed an agricultural apprenticeship and have little experience of machines from their family background. Otherwise the first two processes are of particular significance. The young farm manageresses who had a sound training all had themselves associated with the first or second process. It was found that some adopted, incorporated and thus reproduced the male symbolism of engineering. Their own femininity played no role in the use of machinery. The majority, however, were aware of their femininity and clearly experienced a feminine identity. These women know their technical skills, identify themselves by means of their work, among other things, but do not regard the mechanical part as dominant. However no common ground can be established between any of the processes and the gender-specific features of Swiss farming.

3.2 Machine practice and embodiment

As the above quotations show, the main factors affecting the machine practice and machine embodiment of young farm manageresses are location, family background and training. Several women mentioned often having gone around with the apprentices on the parental farm as girls, thus developing an interest in agricultural work and an ambition to acquire mechanical skills. Later, during training, the crucial step was suddenly to have to take on a lot more responsibility and have to cope on one's own. Very few women had the feeling that they had been spared or had not been entrusted with certain tasks. It can basically be said that skill, experience and practice lead to an enjoyment of machine work. Edith, for example, grew up on the family farm, did her agricultural apprenticeship and her Master's diploma and also works as a farmhand. She is used to heavy machinery and enjoys handling it:

Edith: *(...) I actually like driving the machines. In the autumn I go and work on the big machines for a contractor. I sometimes even get pissed off at home [with the small machines].*

In mountain regions the machines are adapted to the terrain and are correspondingly smaller than in the lowlands. On the other hand the steep hillsides demand more nerve, strength and driving skill. Although all the women from mountain regions stress that it is normal for women to work with machines in their region, they also concede that there is

work which their husbands or fathers do. This is either very strenuous physical or dangerous work. Particularly in the mountain region women are aware of their physical limits and their limited experience due to youth. Doris, one of the very young farm manageresses, knows that she does not have the experience to drive on very steep terrain, so her father (still) does this work:

Doris: *Yes, what I simply don't do now are my two bits which are steep and he [the father] drives the slurry and manure there. I have mowed one but have qualms about doing it (...), with the big tractor and the mowing mechanism on the side, and then it wobbles a bit or lifts (...) So just the two, the steep ones. I wouldn't know how high (...) The previous owner had a fatal accident on one of them.*

Equally essential to the method of embodying mechanical agricultural work is the everyday nature and regularity with which it is carried out. The more routinely she handles machines, the safer and more self-confidently a woman drives, the more she knows she can do:

Alexandra: *(...) When I watch my husband I think "you're mad driving at such an angle, you'll end up down on the railway line or beyond". And you drive no differently yourself.*

The final question posed in the group discussions was what feelings were triggered by sitting on a tractor and working with it. All the women who in the preceding discussion had turned out to be technically and mechanically competent, whether due to family background, training, and/or experience, stressed that they felt great sitting on a tractor. The other women, who either did no day-to-day machine work or did not benefit from a sound agricultural training, thought the tractor symbolism was overrated, felt that tractor driving awoke no emotion. The women who felt "good" driving tractors gave two different reasons. Some enjoyed being able to do something unusual, showing other farmers or strangers: "Look at me! It's a woman, with a trailer!", or even "driving rings round the men". The others mainly felt that working with a tractor was satisfying, that you could see the results right away:

Edith: *It's great, if you can do it ... But you have to be good or they go "Aha, did you see that!" But if you can, it's great driving rings round the men, it's... it's exhilarating (laughs).*

So farm manageress status basically says nothing about the embodiment of agricultural tasks. The women's areas of responsibility vary greatly: one manages every aspect of the farm alone, another shares the work on an equal footing with her husband, a third is supported by

her parents but does all the work and the fourth sees herself as a manager and delegates any machine work to the men of the family or to contractors. The young women's roles and identities are therefore diverse, multiple and very different.

4. Conclusion

This article has discussed the embodiment of agricultural work by young Swiss farm manageresses. Even representatives of the young farm manageress group have different reactions and relationships to machines and mechanical agricultural labour.

All four of the processes described by Brandth (2006) can be identified here. Farm manageresses with a lot of machine experience, sound technical knowledge and a (generally) appropriate agricultural training strike up a relationship with machine work which completely alters their body awareness.

In a first group their skill results in self-confidence, power and autonomy. They are proud of their ability and measure it against masculine standards. In so doing these women ignore their femininity and reproduce hegemonic masculine concepts associated with machines, as described by Brandth (2006) in the first process.

Others, in their identity as women, dissociate themselves from masculinisation. They develop strategies to compensate for their physical weaknesses: they alter the underlying conditions of their work environment by converting the farm to less (machine)-intensive production and adjusting their working day to their physical capabilities. The search for adaptation and alteration strategies to compensate for physical weaknesses corresponds to Brandth's (2006) second process.

Young farm manageresses also include women who work with machinery as little as possible or not at all. They delegate machine work to a male family member or to employees. They themselves concentrate on the role of classic farming woman, person responsible for the animals and/or farm manageress. Any machines used are employed as a tool to surmount physical drawbacks.

The discourse on the suitability of the female body for agricultural work in mountain and lowland regions is held differently. In mountain regions the women work harder on the farm and are more involved in machine work. Although the machines are smaller, it is physically more strenuous and more dangerous to handle them on steep hillsides than on flat land. This means that even more skill, nerve and strength is required for machine work. So on the one hand it is taken for granted that women in mountain regions handle machines more than those in the lowlands; on the other hand, because they lack the physical strength they leave an increased amount of strenuous machine work to the men. It was impossible to establish common ground with any of the four processes described by Brandth (Brandth 2006).

Women skilled in handling machines from childhood, and especially because of their training, take machine work for granted. They are aware of their skill and proud of it. Inadequate training can, however, be compensated for by a lot of practical experience and an intense need to quench one's thirst for knowledge by trying things out. Here the embodiment of machine work takes place according to the first or second process. Consequently the agricultural gendered training system in Switzerland is definitely an important way of reducing gender inequality in agriculture. The gendered organisation of training in farm women's schools on the one hand and agricultural schools on the other does not meet the needs of female farmers. Trauger et al. (2008) have already pointed out that agricultural training should incorporate women's specific needs and strategies.

There are complex incorporations and relationships between young farm manageresses, their bodies and machinery. It was impossible anywhere to establish common ground between gender-specific features of Swiss agriculture and Brandth's four processes. Other factors such as patriarchal gender relationships, stereotypical role models and notions of masculinity and femininity also play an important role. Part of this is the gendered pattern of farm socialisation and farm succession described above, as is the gendered division of labour. Among other things this results in hierarchical judgements of male and female tasks and activities. As this article shows, recognition in turn influences the embodiment of agricultural work.

It is equally apparent from our analysis that the young farm manageresses' identities, and hence also their professional and work identities and embodiment of agricultural work, are subject to spatial and chronological change. Pregnancy and the birth of a child can represent an important turning point at which the women have to prove themselves anew and fight to be able to maintain their role as female farmers. On the other hand this time can also highlight the limits of their physical strength, thus resulting in an altered perception of their own bodies and changing the way they handle physically strenuous and mechanical work. Spatially, for example, the women slip into different identities depending on whether they work at home on the farm, have to stand their ground at a cattle show or a farmers' meeting, or want to appear competent as a farmhand. Here it is also clear to see that the recognition of farm manageresses by those around them is based on various factors and can depend, for example, on the location of their farm or their family background.

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