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Summary

Key Words: Power, Social Sustainability, Intersectionality, Agriculture Value Chain, Madagascar

Despite the debates around the concept, a so-called sustainability turn emerged over the last two decades. Linked with development, sustainability from a social standpoint seeks to do away with the

status quo and transform power relations in societies for the betterment of all persons. Using the case of smallholder vanilla producers in the north-east (NE) region of Madagascar, this study explores the complex power processes and relations by which marginalization is produced, reproduced, maintained and redressed among actors in potentially transformative agriculture value chains. I start by asking whether the current 'modus operandi' in the vanilla value chain influences power relations between and among actor groups, and if so, how. Using Constructivist Grounded Theory, I craft a complex methodological framework for doing Social Sustainability and Power Research. The analysis takes into account the methodological imperatives of sustainability research as well as the moral and practical implications of researching power relations from a feminist perspective.

Methodologically, I argue for the incorporation of an intersectionality perspective into any power analysis. Employing intersectionality approaches, which emphasizes the use of broad anchor categories, positionality, power and resistance analyses, this work contributes to deepening the social analysis in sustainable development research.

A shift of emphasis from identifying social categories to a qualitative investigation of the complex nature of relations between and among social categories and actors at the production node revealed hierarchically complex patron-client relationships. Power relations characterized by patronage, woven in both consensual and conflictual interactions, provide thus the conceptual frame for the 'pluralistic' theorization of power (plurality of power) that emerged.

At the level of practice, the study opens the spaces for producers to engage in dialogue and reflect on their position in the value chain; their role in the maintenance of negative power relations, and options for redress. Here I address the near lack of collective, self-organized resistance efforts among producers, which is construed a necessary adaptive capacity for ensuring the social sustainability of the Value Chain. With the help of Patricia H. Collins (2000) *Domains of Power*, several possible resistance strategies are proposed, bridging theory and practice.