

‘Coffee Depends on Women’:  
The Gendered Coffee Paradox of Kenya’s Coffee Industry

by  
Erika Jean Koss

A Thesis Submitted to  
Saint Mary’s University, Halifax, Nova Scotia  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Global Development Studies

April, 2024, Halifax, Nova Scotia

© Erika Jean Koss, 2024

Approved:	Dr. Gavin Fridell Supervisor
Approved:	Dr. Edward F. Fischer Examiner
Approved:	Dr. Alexandra Dobrowolsky Reader
Approved:	Dr. Elizabeth Fitting Reader
Date:	April 8, 2024

## Abstract

### ‘Coffee Depends on Women’: The Gendered Coffee Paradox of Kenya’s Coffee Industry

By Erika Jean Koss

A “coffee paradox” – evident through the unequal political and social relations within coffee’s global value – as named by Benoit Daviron and Stefano Ponte (2005), created a “coffee boom” in consuming countries and a “coffee crisis” in producing countries. This paradox certainly exists, and my research takes their argument a step further. Using a feminist political economy perspective, informed by an intersectional feminist approach, I identify an additional paradox, which I name as the “gendered coffee paradox,” because while “coffee depends on women,” it remains a “man’s crop” through policies and practices that favour men and discriminate against women.

Kenya’s complex coffee chain was created by the British government and European settlers during the colonial era (1880s to 1962). Yet, even after Kenya’s 1963 independence and significant gender advancements since Kenya’s 2010 Constitution, women in coffee experience gendered barriers. While colonialism discriminated against all Africans, it set up specific discriminations for the gendered disempowerment of women. As such, twenty-first century neoliberal approaches to “empower women in coffee,” as adopted by global and national institutions, as well as the specialty coffee industry, fail to address entrenched structures of gender inequity and women’s intersectional challenges.

Through my field work in the Republic of Kenya, I present a case study centred on a Kenyan coffee estate, Chepsangor Hills Coffee, and on interviews with both leaders and farmers throughout Kenya’s coffee industry, to showcase women’s continued challenges regarding land ownership, income gaps, and time poverty (the “double burden”). The study also highlights several examples of ways Kenyan women utilize business and nonprofit initiatives, seeking empowerment for themselves and their communities. My study suggests that “accompaniment,” as a relational approach premised on mutuality, may be an alternative to “empowerment.”

April 8, 2024

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In working on this PhD dissertation for so long, nearly everyone in my life has been, or is, involved in my PhD in some way! While naming everyone to whom I feel grateful would be impossible on this one page, there are five general categories of people to whom I send heartfelt appreciation:

- Family & friends with whom I entrusted my younger son Everett while I taught, worked, or went on dozens of coffee trips around Africa and the world to make my PhD possible, including: my dearest older son, Ethan, whom I love as deep as the ocean and as high as the sky; Charlotte & Fred in Boston; Esther & Ben in Boston; Tobias & Maher in Halifax; the Pound family in Nairobi; Ashley & Jeff in Halifax; Ann in Nairobi; Corrie, Kam, & family in Nairobi. Sincere gratitude!
- Saint Mary's University faculty & staff who offered support and funding: FGSR and staff, Dr. Rohini Bannerjee, Student Services (Taryn, Marcella, & Chad), the International Mobility Award, the Hewitt Foundation & SMUSA. Thank you!
- Librarians: SMU especially Susan; Kenya's National Archives; the Dag Hammarskjöld Library at the UN headquarters, New York; the JFK archives, Boston; Halifax Central Public Library; my childhood library, Burbank Public Library. My committee: Ted, Gavin, Alexandra, Liz. Thank you!
- My Coffee Sustainability students, coffee professionals from more than 40 countries around the world: you made it possible for me not only to pay my rent and other bills during my doctoral degree, but also to share ideas with you and learn from you. Thank you!
- Research participants of this study: with appreciation for your time and trust, as you shared your knowledge and stories with me. Extra special gratitude to Rosebella Langat, Sammy Langat, Ann Njuguna, and Stephen Vick: Asante sana!

This PhD would not have come to fruition without the encouragement and support of seven individuals:

- My dean, Dr. Adam Sarty: merci beaucoup for modeling what it means to be a visionary leader and for supporting my PhD studies in more ways I can count here;
- My PhD mentor, Professor Winnie Mitullah: asante sana for including me as a Research Associate at the University of Nairobi and for advice when it was most needed;
- My Fairy Godmother, the Rev. Dr. Susan Corso: gratitude for living through this doctoral degree with me, in its kaleidoscope of challenges, and for all your prayers and Reiki;
- My Coffee Sister, Nora Burkey, gracias for being a true friend even before my doctoral years, for countless voice mail messages, stories, and collaborations, with more fountains to come;
- My dearest younger son, Everett: thank you for being my favourite person to travel with and for spending half of your life thus far, day in and day out, in this doctoral degree with me, between Canada and Kenya. Thank you for your hugs, wit, smiles, drawings, and good humour through it all, especially the sorrows. I adore you exactly as you are.
- My beloved parents, Merrill Koss and Valerie Carlson Koss (1952-2022), all that I am is because of your love, sacrifice, and commitment to my education. You believed in my dreams and goals, even through the darkest valleys, even when I almost gave up. Deepest gratitude to you both for being the best parents and grandparents on planet earth.

**I dedicate this study to the Chepsangor Women in Coffee Group and Rosebella Langat in Nandi, Kenya. May we all rise up and soar with wings of eagles.**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<p><b>Chapter One:</b>  <b>‘As Complicated as Its Own Soil’: An Introduction to Kenyan Coffee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Introduction to the Dissertation</li> <li>1.2 Problem Statement</li> <li>1.3 Global Coffee Context</li> <li>1.4 Research Need</li> <li>1.5 Kenyan Kahawa (Coffee) Context: An Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. A Gender Analysis of Kenya’s Complex Supply Chain</li> <li>B. Estates and Cooperatives</li> <li>C. Domestic Consumption in Kenya</li> <li>D. Coffee and Gender: In Nairobi and Beyond</li> </ul> </li> <li>1.6 Theoretical Approach &amp; Methodology</li> <li>1.7 Overview of Dissertation Study</li> <li>1.8 Author’s Context</li> <li>1.9 Conclusion</li> </ul>	<p><b>pages 6-77</b></p>
<p><b>Chapter Two:</b>  <b>‘The Talk Is So Sweet But the Action is Not There’: Literature Review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Overview of Chapter Two</li> <li>2.2 Introduction</li> <li>2.3 Part One: ‘We Thought of Including Women in Coffee’: Social Science Coffee Literature (1990-2021)</li> <li>2.4 Part Two: ‘A Big Agenda, Not Just in Kenya but Around the World’: Literature of Empowerment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Literature of Intersectional Feminism and Coffee</li> <li>B. Specialty Coffee Industry reports: A Feminist and Intersectional Analysis</li> <li>C. Coffee Studies Social Science Scholarship: Empowerment for Women in Coffee</li> </ul> </li> <li>2.5 Conclusion</li> </ul>	<p><b>pages 78-161</b></p>
<p><b>Chapter Three:</b>  <b>‘The System is Not Friendly’: Kenya’s Coffee History from Colonial Era to Independence (1880s to 1963) as Viewed through a Feminist Political Economy and Intersectional Lens</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1 Introduction</li> <li>3.2. From Ethiopia to British East Africa Protectorate’s ‘Age of Atrocity’</li> <li>3.3 From the British East Africa Protectorate to World War II, 1880s – 1940s</li> <li>3.4 From Mau Mau to the Republic of Kenya, 1950s – 1963</li> <li>3.5 Conclusion</li> </ul>	<p><b>pages 162-217</b></p>

**Chapter Four:** **pages 218-283**  
**‘Coffee Belongs to the Man’: Post-independence Gendered Challenges for Women in Kenyan Coffee**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 A New Era for Kenyan Coffee?: Examining Coffee History from Independence to the Coffee Act 2001
  - A. ‘A Just and Equitable Coffee Agreement’?: The ICA and Independence under Jomo Kenyatta (1962-78)
  - B. ‘The Farmer Became a Slave’: Structural Adjustment under Daniel arap Moi (1978-2002)
  - C. Kenya’s Coffee Act 2001
- 4.3 “Coffee is Better than Anything We Have”: Contemporary Context under the New Constitution under President Mwai Kibaki (2002-13) and Coffee Revitalization goals under President Uhuru Kenyatta (2013-2022)
  - A. A Case Study of Chepsangor Hills Coffee Estate in Nandi, Kenya
  - B. Three Gendered Challenges for Women in Kenyan Coffee
    - 1. Land ownership: ‘We Need the Goodwill of Men to Give Us the Land’
    - 2. Wage disparity: ‘Coffee Used to be Gold’
    - 3. Time poverty: ‘Coffee Pulls You in a Hundred Directions’
- 4.4 Conclusion

**Chapter Five:** **pages 284-319**  
**‘Who Are You Without a Group?’: Women Centred Initiatives that Address the Gendered Coffee Paradox**

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 International Women’s Coffee Alliance
- 5.3 Gender Action Learning System (GALS) Methodology
- 5.4 Point Zero Café
- 5.5 Accompaniment an Alternative to Neoliberal Feminist “Empowerment”
- 5.6 Conclusion

**Conclusion** **pages 320-334**  
**‘You Have the Gold in Your House’**

**References** **pages 336-371**

**Appendices** **pages 372-379**

Appendix A : Interviews, 2019-2023

Appendix B: Conferences and Participant Observation, 2019-2023

## CHAPTER ONE:

### **‘As Complicated as its Own Soil’: An Introduction to Kenyan Coffee**

#### **1.1 Introduction to the Dissertation**

At least three dozen pairs of human hands are involved in the creation and production of a single cup of coffee—and since many of those hands belong to women, what are their challenges and their solutions? This study demonstrates that injustices for women in the coffee sector, which began under colonialism, continue into the twenty-first century’s unequal international relations between the Global North and Global South, as well as within inequitable social relations throughout coffee’s supply chain. The title of my study, “Coffee Depends on Women,” derives from a seemingly simple, yet under-researched claim that was repeated by several of my research participants during 19 months of field work research in Kenya.

A complex coffee supply chain was created in Kenya by the British government and European settlers during the colonial era. Despite Kenya’s 1963 independence and significant advancements toward gender equality established in Kenya’s 2010 Constitution, women continue to face gender gaps in fundamental, structural ways, especially in land ownership, labour discrimination, and the ‘double burden’ of time. While a proliferation of international development rhetoric since the 1970s highlights the need for gender equality, this has not effectively closed an ever-widening global gender gap (WEF 2019, 2022), especially for rural women in agriculture. Despite the coffee industry’s adoption of the concept of “empowering women in coffee,” beginning in the early 2000s, there remains significant gendered barriers for rural women coffee farmers in Kenya. Originally a transformative concept (Kabeer 2005), “Empowerment” has become an overused buzzword in the twenty-first century. In the specialty coffee sector, for example, a panoply of gender talk exists – gender mainstreaming, gender

equity, gender equality, gender gaps – but very little transformation of patriarchal structures or solutions that address real-life barriers faced by rural women.

Despite all this gender rhetoric and gender programs, there exists a key paradox in the coffee industry. This is what I have named the “gendered coffee paradox,”<sup>1</sup> borrowing from the concept of the “coffee paradox,” a term created to describe the current political and social relations of the global coffee industry by scholars Benoit Daviron and Stefano Ponte (2005). To briefly summarize here: the paradox they observe is that even as coffee producing countries experience a coffee crisis, simultaneously, consuming countries experience a coffee boom. This paradox creates a further problem: the voluminous creation of lower quality 'commercial' coffee, although it is higher quality coffee ('specialty coffee') that generates higher prices (cf. Chapter Two for a full discussion).<sup>2</sup> Certainly this paradox is evident in the continued ways unequal trade and unequal distribution continues between the Global North and Global South, which is the theme of Daviron and Ponte's paradox.

While their coffee paradox remains an accurate depiction of continued global trade relations, I observe, from my field work and participant observation, an additional coffee paradox, which Daviron and Ponte, and other political economists, have overlooked, which originated under colonial rule in coffee producing countries. My study shows that the global coffee paradox does not only exist between countries that trade coffee as producers and consumers. The paradox exists in the social relations among and between Global South

---

<sup>1</sup>This will be a key concept throughout this dissertation that I will discuss more thoroughly in Chapter 2. I draw the concept of the “coffee paradox” from the scholarly analysis by Daviron, B. and Ponte, S. (2005). *The Coffee Paradox: Global Markets, Commodity Trade and the Elusive Promise of Development*. London: Zed Books.

<sup>2</sup>Specialty coffee as distinct from commercial coffee. The term was first created by Edna Knutsen in the 1990s and used to denote micro-origins (terroir) of coffee; however, the term now refers to a quality grading scale whereby beans are evaluated as 80 or above out of 100 by “Q graders” (quality graders), who are trained coffee tasters and authorized to score coffee. Most of the world's coffee is “commercial” and therefore untraceable to any particular origin country or farm. Therefore, this dissertation focuses on the specialty coffee sector, where more value is possible due to high quality beans, sustainable initiatives, and greater transparency (cf. Grant 2019; Fischer 2021).

producers, through a gendered division of labour, with socio-economic and racial implications, that favours and benefits men in distinctive contrast to women. This paradox, what I will call the gendered coffee paradox, is based on unequal, patriarchal social relations (Mitullah 2020:175). This is evident not only in the ways that commodity chains lead to unequal outcomes between Global South ‘producers’ and Global North ‘consumers’ in international trade generally (as Daviron and Ponte observe), but also through specific ways these global dynamics under neoliberalism create and perpetuate inequitable hierarchies, dichotomies, and ruptures between men and women at the national or local level. As a state, Kenya depends on coffee. Women depend on coffee. Coffee depends on women. Yet, in the twenty-first century, coffee continues to “belong to the man,” a comment I repeatedly heard from several Kenyans who participated in my study.

This is why I argue that an additional coffee paradox exists for women in coffee-producing countries: because although women’s labour is essential to the very production of coffee, women remain alienated and undervalued, in part, due to a gendered international division of labour, as well as gender-assigned roles in the domestic sphere (Spivak 1988:43; Lyon et al., 2019). Even as women depend on coffee, so does coffee depend on women – thus reproducing continued unequal relations, not only between countries who produce and export coffee, and who also depend on coffee for their foreign exchange, but also between men who rely upon women’s unpaid or underpaid labour at the farm level, a system created under colonialism and widened under neoliberal capitalism. This paradox is a seeming contradiction because while the global coffee industry depends on women for their labour, the coffee “value chain” is the mechanism that captures and alienates women’s labour, meanwhile perpetuating gendered barriers and inequities. Too often, this very value chain fails to “value” women.



The gendered coffee paradox is problematic for many reasons, especially in the ways rural women's labour is used to produce and reproduce unequal social relations through international markets under twenty-first century neoliberalism. Given that capitalism is not favourable to women, especially women who are marginalized by race, class, nationality, or education (Mohanty 1988, 2003; Lorde 1984; hooks 2000, 2015; Hickel 2014, 2017, 2018; Lauri & Backström 2019; Spivak 1988), the promulgation of gendered language works to obscure the perniciousness of neoliberal "value." On the surface, "empowerment" rhetoric gives attention to women, yet ironically, it camouflage women's labour, value, and time – another aspect of the gendered coffee paradox.

For example, international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank promote economic advancement of women, noting that their participation in the labour force will increase their nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (UN 2009; WB 2022). This focus perpetuates neoliberal assumptions of western feminism and individualism, by focusing attention on investing in women and girls, extending credit, and focusing on ways to close the financial gender gaps (USAID 2022; UN 2010, 2009, 2008; WB 2022, 2014). Motivated by the economic arguments for gender equity that promote "smart economics," these organizations promote women as "agents of change," citing copious statistics that women work harder, motivated to spend their earnings on their families and communities (USAID 2022; WB 2017, 2006; Lyon et al., 2019:35).

However true this may be for some women, such narratives may also produce and reproduce increased burdens for women, who are forced to enter labour markets, receiving unequal or no remuneration for their domestic or care work (Beneria 1999; Folbre 2011; Fraser & Gordon 1994; Coffey et al., 2020). As such, neoliberal empowerment narratives adopted by

development agencies and non-profit organizations, and advanced by the specialty coffee industry to “empower women in coffee,” do not necessarily result in the kind of “power” that effects structural change, especially if colonial legacies and the structural, gendered intersectional barriers for women are obscured (Koss 2021c). In fact, global capitalist expansion and neoliberalism perpetuates “the imperialist project; in the name of modernization, in the interest of globalization” and in so doing, continues to “ignore or invade the subaltern” (Spivak 1988:51).

As a result, coffee’s physical labour and complex supply chain can exploit women so that, despite a “triple burden” (Lyon et al., 2017) of work—at home, on the farm or office, and in organizational or leadership roles, gender gaps remain. That this remains true despite a global spotlight on “empowering women” in general and in the global coffee trade in particular, is an aspect of the gendered coffee paradoxes that this study examines.

My field work reveals that true examples of empowerment do not derive primarily from outside organizations trying to “build empowerment” for women, but instead through women’s relationships and networks both global and local, and through methodologies that help to effect household transformations. However, I do not wish for this study to be mis-understood as one that is against “empowering women.” Here I critique assumptions that “empowerment” comes from “without”—or, as “power over” – to borrow language used by Jo Rowlands (1995; 1997). What I witnessed during my field work, and what I believe needs to be further examined, are specific, intersectional ways that governments, the coffee industry, and private sector partners might accompany women (see Chapter Five) and enhance their “power within” (e.g. “psychological strength, personal self-confidence”), “power to” (e.g. “individual agency to make

and carry out decisions”), and “power with” (a “collective process of ‘empowerment’ that necessitates support of peers and organizations”) (Rowlands 1997; Lombardini et al., 2017: 16).

My theoretical approach employs feminist political economy theory, as this is an interdisciplinary study that analyzes the intersections of the political, economic, and social worlds, and the ways in which power and resources are inequitably distributed both historically and through the present day, using the case of the global coffee industry with a specific focus on the Republic of Kenya. As a feminist study, this dissertation explores the connections between market and domestic relations, particularly the ways in which rural women have been invisible. This study is also informed by an intersectional feminist lens, using gender as the primary variable for analysis, because that what my research participants and the literature focuses upon. However, I also acknowledge that ethnicity, race, class, marital status, and age as among other identities that contribute to women’s discrimination, too often omitted in the coffee literature (cf. more details later in this Chapter and in Chapter Two).<sup>3</sup>

This study is based upon original field work: what I learned from current literature, archives, and from 19 months of field work in Kenya, primarily conducted in 2019 and 2020, with some follow-up from 2021-2023 (further detailed later in this Chapter). This study includes some observations and reflections from leaders and farmers in Kenya’s coffee industry, from various points of view within Kenya’s coffee complex supply chain, to demonstrate the ongoing links between the colonial past with the contemporary coffee industry. My study focuses on a coffee estate in western Kenya, near the border of Uganda, named Chepsangor Hills Coffee

---

<sup>3</sup> I recognize that “gender empowerment” cannot be isolated from race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, indigeneity, ability, or nationality, especially among voices of women historically marginalized (LGBTQ+, racialized minorities, indigenous communities, the disabled, the socioeconomically oppressed in Global South), and that the phrase should include discussions for men and boys, but given the limitations of my study, I focus here on “women” as a general category. I hope my study will provide a basis upon which other marginalized groups may analyze if “empowerment” is a benevolent term, or not, for them.

Estate in Nandi county, which is led by a Kenyan woman who chooses to focus her business on sustainability and “empowering women.” Coffee estates in Kenya often have more flexibility than cooperatives to provide services to local small-holder farmers, due to the dearth of processing stations in their remote and rural region (as explained more thoroughly later in this chapter). The co-owner and director, Dr. Rosebella Langat, is featured prominently in Chapter Four, based upon multiple conversations with her, her husband Sammy Langat, as well as my observations from four different visits to her coffee estate between 2019 and 2022. During those visits, I conducted open-ended interviews and talked with dozens of men and women about coffee’s gender gaps, challenges, and solutions.

My study makes the following key contributions:

- (1) A critique of “empowerment” literature in coffee, from a feminist political economy theoretical lens, integrated with observations from field work in Kenya’s coffee sector and a review of the specialty coffee literature that highlights “empowering women in coffee.”
- (2) An analysis of the historic roots of the gendered division of labour in coffee. This study provides a feminist reading of Kenya’s colonial era, focused on the gendered exploitations in land, labour, and taxes, from a feminist, intersectional lens.
- 3) An examination of what I name as “the gendered coffee paradox” to summarize the contradictions implied when the global coffee industry depends on women for their labour, and when women depend on coffee, yet men reap the benefits.
- 4) A demonstration of one specific female-led coffee estate and female-led solutions to showcase the importance of networks, relationships, and the need for ‘accompaniment’ in the coffee sector, rather than top-down international “solutions” that tend to focus on generic “women’s empowerment” goals for individuals.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The title of this chapter comes from my interview with Régine Guion-Firmin, a Nairobi-based authorized Specialty Coffee Association coffee trainer (AST),<sup>4</sup> who said that Kenyan coffee is “as complicated as its own soil” (Guion-Firmin, personal interview, Feb. 2020). Here she was specifically speaking about the complex flavour notes of Kenya’s specific coffee taste and the complex supply chain of how coffee literally moves from rural farms to the Mombasa port, and the complexities for the people who steward the farming and harvesting of Kenya’s treasured coffee.

In its first-ever report on gender and coffee (2018), the International Coffee Organization estimated that “between 20% and 30% of coffee farms are female-operated and up to 70% of labor in coffee production is provided by women, depending on the region” (ICO 2018: 16-17). Despite these percentages, in Kenya, “coffee is considered a man’s crop”—a comment I heard repeatedly from my research participants both from Kenya and other countries—while women “remain an invisible work force” (Panhuysen & Pierrot 2018:13, cf. also Lyon 2008:262; FTUSA 2021:5; ITC 2021:69).

Both in global and regional contexts, the rhetoric of “women’s empowerment” has become prevalent in the last two decades, especially after the Millenium Development Goals (2000-2015) and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030). Since then, twenty-first century international interagency organizations, national governments, and non-profit organizations have promoted global goals of gender equality (ICO 2018) and gender equity

---

<sup>4</sup> According to the Specialty Coffee Association education website: there are more than 1,800 global Authorized SCA Trainers (ASTs), who are certified, professional trainers with career experience and coffee knowledge and deliver quality SCA courses to coffee professionals and the wider coffee community. I am also an AST (2018-2025): <https://education.sca.coffee/trainers-how-it-works>.

(SCAA 2015). Gender is often integrated through “gender mainstreaming” (Mitullah 2020; Morris et al., 2015)— with the goal to “close the gender gap” so that women will “be empowered” or “achieve empowerment” (Gressler 2002; Oxfam 2020) through programs that target the individual –such as microfinance or access to extension or technical services – rather than on structural change.

However, gender mainstreaming often fails to address power relations (Mitullah 2020). This is one reason why, in the twenty-first century, a focus of development policy to “empower women” is not sufficient to change rural women’s lives (Alkire et al., 2012). Empowerment has become a “means to increase efficiency and productivity,” yet, as Anne-Emmanuèle Calvès (2009) argues, the vagueness of the term maintains the status quo rather than as a “mechanism for social transformation” compared to its radical origins from the 1980s and 1990s (Calvès 2009:XII).

To give one example (cf. Chapter Two for more), a USAID program in Kenya, called the “Women’s Economic Empowerment” (WEE) Initiative, states that “when women are economically empowered, they re-invest in their families and communities, producing a multiplier effect that spurs economic growth and contributes to global peace and stability. The Initiative seeks to reach 50 million women in the developing world by 2025 through U.S. Government activities, private-public partnerships, and an innovative fund. The website states that Kenyan women cannot prosper in the workplace, or succeed as entrepreneurs, until “we break down the legal, policy, and social barriers that inhibit their full economic participation. While 80% of Kenyan women are engaged in smallholder farming, only 1% own land, access less than 10% of available credit, and access less than 1% of agriculture credit” (USAID 2022).<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>As discussed with Professor Winnie Mitullah in Nairobi in February 2024, such sweeping statistics are often quoted in international development reports and websites about Kenya and requires more specific context to be meaningful.

On the surface, this may sound like an ideal movement toward the advancement of woman. But under neoliberalism, these feminist goals become subsumed into instrumentalist rhetoric that articulates its value for women based upon what they *do* with their financial resources, rather than for who they *are* as human beings – and this obscures the intersectional needs of women around the world.

For this reason, it is problematic that “empowering women in coffee” has become a key goal for various stakeholders of the global coffee supply chain, from businesses to non-profit organizations (Pflaeger 2013), although the attention may be “quite little, quite late” (Millard 2017: 38). In specialty coffee, the term “empowering women” has become ubiquitous: Women’s empowerment is featured in the mission of global and local organizations devoted to women’s equality; in associations that seek to unite women to use their voices and band together; and in programs from soil management to latte art that seek to train women (Millard 2017: 39). This rhetoric is evident in the coffee industry when, for example, coffee companies focus on the productivity of women, or when gender equity goals are related to statistics that if you “empower a woman,” then her coffee trees will yield more fruit (Lyon et al., 2019:35).<sup>6</sup> While empowerment may indeed help her become a better agronomist and manager of her coffee trees, the emphasis on women’s need to prove their worth and “value” through agricultural productivity is a result of the neoliberal focus on market-driven solutions, often coming from

---

For example, Kenya’s Land Alliance conducted an audit of the gender responsiveness of Land Inventories submitted for unregistered Community Land in Kenya, and found that between the years 2013 to 2018, in a data mine of 3.2 million land titles across Kenya, that only 1% were owned by women, and 6% were jointly owned between female and male head of households. In addition, the KLA confirms that while more female representation is needed on management land boards, some boards have representation (cf. all KLA documents in references section).

<sup>6</sup> An example comes from Mountain Harvest Coffee in Uganda: “when women are empowered with managing household finances, the family is more likely to be fed and clothed, children get books for school and the quality of life improves” (Bryman 2023:98). There is no other comment in the article about the basis for this data, or a detailed explanation about what this means.

top-down, external organizations, rather than considering what empowerment might mean for her intrinsically as a human being (Koss 2021c; Lyon et al., 2019; Pflaeger 2013).

Despite some advancement of women's "power" through legal and political advancement of rights, especially evident in Kenya's 2010 Constitution that declares equity for Kenyan women, historically entrenched and discriminatory structural barriers remain in the global coffee industry and in Kenya's patriarchal coffee sub-sector. As created under European colonialism and continued under capitalism, coffee's gendered, racialized, and class dynamics often remain ignored or overlooked in coffee industry debates. Men and women have been set up in "hierarchical and oppositional relationships" where "women are structurally inferior" (Cornwall & Rivas 2015: 403). This does not only happen between men and women, but also between classes of women: such as when "First World" Feminists who may represent themselves as subjects ("educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies"), while "Third World women" may be represented as objects (who are "ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound [...] and "sexually constrained") (Mohanty 1988: 65, 79). Such binaries perpetuate structural issues that drive discrimination, imperial or colonial attitudes, and inequality both toward *and* between women (Mohanty 1988:77; Spivak 1988). Class and socio-economic differences are evident in areas such as land ownership, income distribution, labour roles, and the time gap (cf. Chapter Four).

Social science scholars of coffee have acknowledged the "gender oppression" that was (and is) "central to the historical development of the coffee industry" (Fridell 2007:131) and remains so into the twenty-first century, which has led to systemic inequities for women (Lyon et al., 2019). As a result, this dissertation argues that the ongoing orthodoxy of empowerment for women (Calvès 2009) and specialty coffee's co-opting of the concept – especially as both



emphasize market-driven solutions as the way to ‘empower’ women – both obscure larger structural inequities created under colonialism and that continue to this day under neoliberal capitalism in the areas of land, labour, and time. Without transforming the current global structures of patriarchal capitalism, sexism, and racism, development mechanisms for “empowering women” can perpetuate colonial hangovers and gendered inequalities that obstruct women’s possibility to flourish. Women’s voices must be heard, consulted, and considered in the solutions that affect their lives. Power relations between genders, both within Kenya as well as between Kenya and its Global North partners, must shift if women’s empowerment will become the reality for all women, not just a buzzword of international development.

### **1.3 Global Coffee Context**

#### **A. Coffee Production and Consumption**

All the world’s coffee grows between Earth’s imaginary lines of latitude, the Tropic of Cancer (23.5 North) and the Tropic of Capricorn (23.5 South)—a zone known by coffee aficionados as the “Bean Belt.” This comprises more than 70 coffee-producing countries, most located in the tropical and subtropical countries in the Global South. With the exceptions of Brazil and Ethiopia, most coffee producing countries focus on exporting their coffee beans, rather than on domestic consumption.

Recent global coffee statistics state that “world coffee exports amounted to 10.88 million bags [60 kilogram bags] in December 2022, compared with 11.89 million in December 2021” (ICO 2021a). Of all this coffee, the world’s dominant coffee production leaders are Brazil and Viet Nam in terms of volume. For more than 150 years, Brazil has been the world’s largest producer—often providing more than one-third of the global supply of coffee—and is considered the most advanced and industrialized coffee producing country, as well as consuming a large

amount of its own coffee (Nunes et al., 2022:9; Hussain et al., 2020:10). Since 1999, Viet Nam has ranked the world's second leader in global coffee exports, witnessing production increases every year (ICO, n.d.; Grant 2019). In 2020, Brazil (40.7 million bags) and Vietnam (27.4 million bags) accounted for almost half of all the world's volume of coffee, with three countries – Colombia, Indonesia, and Honduras – as comprising another 25% of the world's coffee output (ICO 2020; ICO 2021a; Panhuysen & Pierrot 2023, 2020:8,12). In recent years, 85% of the world's coffee production comes from only five countries (Brazil, Viet Nam, Colombia, Indonesia, Honduras, in this order), demonstrating the challenge of origin concentration (Samper et al., 2017:9-10; Koss 2023:30-32).

Despite this concentration, the other origin countries, who comprise 15% of the world's coffee, depend heavily upon coffee, both for its foreign exchange and to support the livelihoods of millions of rural farmers. This dependence is especially evident throughout Africa, which relies upon the export of dozens of agricultural commodities, among them coffee, as a high percentage of all its export goods (ICO 2020; Ndirangu 2020, Carrington 2019: viii; Panhuysen & Pierrot 2020: 44).

Although coffee originated in Africa (cf. Chapter Two), coffee was not a native crop to most parts of the continent. Through colonial administrators, colonial police, missionaries, and/or settlers, coffee spread throughout Africa, and Indigenous Africans<sup>7</sup> were exploited and forced to clear forests and provide human labour for coffee plantations (see Chapter Three). In

---

<sup>7</sup> When I use the word “Indigenous” in this study, I refer to African “tribes” and communities who were living in Kenya before British colonialism. I do not refer to pre-colonial people in Kenya as “Kenyans” in that context, because of the various names that were used to describe Kenya before its formation as a Republic in 1963. The colonial government and colonial settlers used the words “native” and “natives” as will be evident from some laws and policies cited in Chapter Three. Following academic Canadian style and my Canadian PhD committee, this study will capitalize the word “Indigenous” when referring to people, although capitalizing this word is not standard practice either in Kenya's academy or in Kenya's media as I discussed in person with two distinguished University of Nairobi Professors (February 2024 in Nairobi), Professor Winnie V. Mitullah, Research Professor Institute for Development Studies & UNESCO UNITWIN Chair and Professor John Habwe, Professor of Linguistics.

the twenty-first century, African coffee production has significantly decreased (Carrington 2019:13). The entire continent of 35 coffee-producing countries produces approximately 10% of the world's total coffee volume (Carrington 2019; ITC 2020:89; Panhuysen & Pierrot 2020:17). Of these 35 African countries, Ethiopia and Uganda together account for 85% of Africa's total volume of coffee (Carrington 2019:13). As the original "origin country" of the species<sup>8</sup> of coffee known as *coffea arabica* (cf. Chapter 3), Ethiopia remains unique. With more than two million smallholder farmers, Ethiopia is Africa's top producer and consumer of coffee, exporting about 50% of its arabica beans (3.9 million bags in 2020) and keeping approximately 50% for its own domestic consumption (Carrington 2019:13; ITC 2020:89; Panhuysen & Pierrot 2020: 14-15). As the birthplace of *coffea canephora* (popularly known as "Robusta"),<sup>9</sup> Uganda is Africa's top exporter of coffee (4.5 million bags), producing Africa's highest volume of cultivated robusta coffee beans by approximately 1.7 million smallholder farmers who typically own less than five-acre plots of coffee (Daviron & Ponte 2005: 135; Bryman 2023:94, 97, 107; Carrington 2019:13; Hussain et al., 2020:45; Ndirangu 2020; Panhuysen & Pierrot 2020:14-15).

In some west African countries, such as Cameroon or Nigeria, the coffee that once dominated exports under colonial rule is now a small part of their foreign exchange dollars (ICO

---

<sup>8</sup> A coffee "species" is "the principal natural taxonomic unit and generally considered a group of individuals similar in appearance and behavior who are capable of reproducing each other" (Tuth 2015), such as *coffea arabica* and *coffea canephora*. Within these species, there are many coffee varieties and coffee varietals. A variety is "usually a group of organisms at a level below that of species, the term used to recognize natural groups of individuals within a species who are more similar to each other in some way than to other members of their species" (Tuth 2015). Examples in Kenya include SL28 and SL34 – both which were developed at Scott Labs, the colonial British research centre that is now renamed as at the Coffee Research Foundation (now Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization, KALRO) – and Batian. Ruiru 11 is officially a "hybrid," bred at KALRO in the 1970s (WCR n.d. Ruiru 11). SL 28 and SL34, along with K7 (Kent 7), are sometimes referred to as Kenya's 'traditional' varieties, while Batian and Ruiru 11 are sometimes called the "improved" varieties (KCD 2023:17; WCR n.d.: SL 28, SL34).

<sup>9</sup> Arabica coffee (*coffea arabica*) is the high-quality coffee seed that comprises all of Kenya's coffee (as well as Brazil and many other countries). Robusta (*coffea canephora*) is the coffee primarily farmed in, for example, Viet Nam and Uganda and is more resistant to coffee diseases and climate change.

2020) and largely forgotten, even by coffee professionals, as a “coffee origin”.<sup>10</sup> Dependence upon coffee is prevalent in the East Africa Community (EAC)—the regional intergovernmental organisation that comprises Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania. For EAC countries, coffee is regarded as an essential cash crop. For Kenya, coffee remains its fifth largest foreign exchange earner (tourism, tea, horticulture, and diaspora remittances are the other top four), and employment for more than 70% of Kenya’s rural population (KCD 2023:xiii). Kenya is consistently regarded as a desirable coffee origin, particularly in the specialty coffee industry (Carrington 2019; Gressler & Tickel 2002).

According to recent estimates, Kenya contributes less than 1% of the world’s global coffee supply (Ndirangu 2020; Synder & Gitonga 2023:5). According to the 2021-22 Kenyan Coffee Year Book<sup>11</sup>, since independence in 1963, Kenya’s highest coffee production year was 1987-88, producing 128,862 metric tonnes (MT) of coffee, dropping to an average of 45,000 MT of coffee between 2012 and 2020 (KCD 2023:26). Despite this consistent volatility, Kenya remains dependent upon coffee (ICO 2021b; ICO 2021c; Carrington 2019:13). Prior to 1989, coffee was Kenya’s main foreign exchange earner (KCD 2023:26); still, in coffee year 2021-22, coffee production contributed foreign exchange earnings of \$303 million USD (KCD 2023:47; Ndirangu 2020).

In coffee year 2021-22, Kenya exported coffee to more than 40 different countries, with the top five destinations listed as the United States (135,067 60kg bags; 19%), Belgium (134,868

---

<sup>10</sup> “Coffee origin” is a term used frequently in specialty coffee to denote a coffee-producing country, so any of the 70+ coffee producing countries may be identified as a “coffee origin.” The term is used in a number of contexts. A coffee buyer might say, for example, that she is going “to origin” in order to visit a coffee farmer, or a bag of specialty coffee might say, “Single origin,” beans, meaning that the beans are traceable to the farm named.

<sup>11</sup> The Kenyan Coffee Year Book is a publication of the Kenyan Coffee Directorate and is sometimes annual, or biannual, based on funding and data collection. The 2021-22 Year Book is the most recent publicly available edition, published in 2023, and is the version I reference in this study (KCD 2023). The 2022-23 Year Book is currently under production and will be published later in 2024.

60kg bags; 19%), Germany (101,476 60kg bags; 11%), the Republic of South Korea (72,465 60kg bags; 10%), and Sweden (36,559 60kg bags; 5%) (Apuoyo 2019:18; KDC 2023:47).

Coffee industry leaders and economists estimate that “green coffee value accounts for less than 10% of the US\$200 to US\$250 billion of revenues generated in the coffee retail market” (Panhuysen & Pierrot 2020:16; Samper et al., 2017). This is one reason why a focus on exporting coffee as unprocessed green beans remains a continued debate in Kenya: because then coffee’s export value transfers from Kenya to consuming countries. In Kenya, very few roasters export Kenyan coffee as roasted beans that are packaged and ready to sell in international markets; one unique example is African Coffee Roasters, which buys, roasts, and fully packages its coffee outside Nairobi, and then exports as a ready-to-sell product primarily to Scandinavia and other European Union countries (Vick, personal interview, 2019).

For the past several decades, the United States has been the world’s largest buyer of unprocessed green coffee with about 83 percent of adults consuming the beverage after green coffee is roasted, ground, and brewed. However, in recent years, the European Union has taken the top spot for coffee consumption (Panhuysen & Pierrot 2020:6) with Europe at 24% of the world’s consumption and the USA at 16% (Panhuysen & Pierrot 2023:8). The retail value for the U.S. coffee market is estimated at \$48 billion; specialty coffee comprises approximately 55 percent of this value share (SCAA 2015). During the 2020-21 coffee market years, world consumption of coffee totaled 166,346 bags (in thousand 60 kg bags) of this, the European Union (buying 40,251 bags) and United States (buying 26,982 bags) combined have purchased the majority of the world’s green coffee supply compared to other countries (ICO 2021b). Europe and the United States remain key actors in the movement toward (more) sustainable coffee, especially in the quest for environmentally sustainable coffee (Millard 2017:34).

## **B. The Human Hands of Global Coffee Production**

Given that the world consumes approximately three billion coffee cups a day (Samper et al., 2017:7), the specialty coffee industry, in the last two decades, has successfully galvanized much-needed attention on climate change, often considered as coffee's biggest threat (ITC 2021), due to changing and unpredictable weather patterns, increased coffee pests and diseases due to rising heat, and decreased arabica coffee yields per tree (Carrington 2019:8; Davis et al., 2012; Millard 2017:34). As a result, there has been a significant investment from both the academy and industry on the science of coffee (WCR 2022; Grant 2017:60), particularly as research on coffee varieties, coffee seeds, coffee soil, and coffee diseases (Bunn et al., 2015; Gichuru et al., 2012; ICO 2015; IPCC 2014) is the focus of research institutions such as the World Coffee Research at University of Texas; the University of California at Davis Coffee Centre; and the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew. This is vital work given the desire to conserve the plant called *coffea*, especially since an increasing number of scientists predict that by the year 2050, dozens of wild *coffea arabica* species may become extinct due to the diminishing of arable coffee land (Bunn et al., 2015; Davis et al., 2012; Jaramillo et al., 2011; Jaramillo et al., 2013; Panhuysen & Pierrot 2020:19).

But even if scientists create more resilient coffee seeds, this does not address the problems of social sustainability in coffee. Millions of people depend upon coffee for their livelihoods—both those who harvest and process coffee, as well as family members who depend on the cash income that coffee brings. How many millions? The estimated numbers range, both globally and in Kenya. The most frequently number states that, globally, there are 25 million coffee farming families, with 100-120 million people who rely on coffee that is produced on 12.5 million farms (ICO 2019a; Carrington 2019: 1; Millard 2017:34; Enveritas 2018; Panhuysen &

Pierrot 2020:12; Millard 2017:34). Another source confirms this number (25 million coffee growers), and notes most have fewer than 5 acres of coffee (Samper et al., 2017:6).

Whatever the exact number of the humans who depend on coffee, there is far less social science research that seeks to understand the challenges and solutions for the people who make coffee possible. There remains insufficient attention “to the bodies that grow and harvest coffee” and to the links between the sciences and the social sciences (Grant 2017:60).<sup>12</sup> One recent advancement in this direction is evident from the recent edition of *The Coffee Guide* (2021), written and produced by the International Trade Centre (ITC), which makes explicit the link between climate disasters and gender inequality; for example, that differences exist between the ways that men and women experience climate threats and emergencies (ITC 2021). For Kenya, this link is significant because of years of droughts, unpredictable weather patterns, and a recent rise in locusts. Also, in Kenya, coffee berry disease (CBD), coffee berry borer (CBB, which is a beetle), and coffee leaf rust (*la roya*) remain negative factors that increase cost of production and decrease coffee yields (Hussain et al., 2020:45; KCD 2023).

Such climate issues have gendered impacts, because most of the people who work in agriculture are women, often on small-scale farm with less than five hectares of land (FAO 2011). Women workers are much more dependent on agriculture for survival than male workers, due to having less access to non-farm jobs (Agarwal 2011:5-6). In East Africa, most coffee comes from smallholder farmers with less than three hectares of land (Kieyah et al., 2016; ICO 2019). Various sources document that smallholder farming women contribute up to 70 percent of

---

<sup>12</sup> Despite several funded science-based or sensory-focused coffee research centres in North America, including World Coffee Research and UC Davis, the only social science focused centre in North America was the Coffee Equity Lab at Vanderbilt University, which ran from 2020-22, and, to my knowledge, focused on undergraduate student initiatives rather than research collaborations or provide opportunities for external funding. The Coffee Equity Lab carried forth the legacy of the Vanderbilt Institute of Coffee Studies.

the total labour force that farms and provides food to the global south (Agarwal 2011:8; KCD 2023). Within these millions, the exact number of women smallholder farmers remains unknown, although an estimate from a study of five coffee producing countries estimates that from 8% to 40% of coffee farm labour is done by women (Pindeo Caro 2020:4-5; 60). The IWCA estimates the numbers of women at 441,464 people (IWCA, n.d.). Other studies, such as a recent one focused on Uganda, states, in general terms, that women conduct most farm labour in Uganda (Bryman 2023:98).

#### **1.4 Research Need**

As previously noted in this chapter, rural women – especially from precolonial times – are obscured or ignored in much of the literature (Kurian 2003:1; Odwol 1999:179). The challenges of data collection for rural women is perhaps best summarized by two scholars, who summarized their struggle to obtain pre-colonial and colonial histories of rural women in Latin America: “Our task is difficult because rural women wrote less, spoke less, and are less present in the archival record than rural men or urban women” (Fowler-Salamini & Vaughan 1994: xiii). In addition, rural women “have been traditionally excluded from or marginalized in the areas where the written historical record is strong: in war, politics, intellectual life, property ownership, and large-scale commerce” (Fowler-Salamini & Vaughan 1994: xiv-xv).

Despite technological and statistical advances in the twenty-first century,<sup>13</sup> gender-disaggregated data for farmers globally is rarely done (Lyon et al., 2017: 318; Morris et al., 2015). This is a notable absence, given that gendered inequities are ubiquitously considered to be

---

<sup>13</sup> In 2022, women comprise a little less than half of the world’s total population (total male: 50%; total female 49.7%). For the continent of Africa, women and girls “constitute the majority constituent of the population” (AU 2020:110, online). In Kenya, the last national census, taken in 2019, confirms World Bank data, that there are slightly more females in Kenya than males (total male: 49.687%; total female: 50.313%) (World Bank 2022a; 2022b; 2022c)<sup>13</sup>.



among the twenty-first century's most urgent development challenges and given that most of the "wage labor in export-oriented agriculture is female labor" (Cramer et al., 2014). This scarcity of knowledge is corroborated by large, global coffee organizations (ICO 2018), including the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA), which laments the "scant data on gender and coffee," especially that what might lead to "real, measurable results" (SCAA 2015:21). At the time of this writing, reliable, verifiable, global data about the specific global number of women involved in producing coffee globally does not exist, although some estimates for some countries exist (IWCA 2023; Solidaridad 2023; ICO 2018; Pindeo Caro 2020).

One notable example comes from a report conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO), which examines wages and working conditions in the coffee sector by looking at a range of coffee-producing countries: Costa Rica, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, and Viet Nam. The author states that these five countries contain more than six million workers employed in the coffee sector (Pindeo Caro 2020:4-5) and gives some approximate numbers of women in coffee between 2016-2018:

- Costa Rica: reported 46,140 total number of workers in coffee; 8.65% are women;
- Ethiopia: reported 2,612,508 total number of workers in coffee; 42.11% are women;
- Viet Nam: reported 1,439,712 total number of workers in coffee; 43.96% are women;
- Indonesia: reported 1,500,670 total number of workers in coffee; 40.2% are women (2020:4).

Still, the report does not tell us what roles in coffee these women specifically perform, although the report concludes that gender pay gaps exist in every country of the study and that there remains substantial non-compliance with minimum wages (Pindeo Caro 2020:17).

For the Republic of Kenya, it is rare to find disaggregated data based on gender, even in agricultural-specific national reports, even though the population of Kenyan women is greater than men (World Bank 2022a; 2022b). To give a recent example: I attended a synchronous virtual webinar in September 2023, hosted by the Kenya Coffee Platform with leaders of Kenya's coffee subsector as speakers. During the questions and answer period, I asked about the specific number of women compared to men who work as coffee farmers: no one knew the number, nor was able to offer an estimate (cf. Appendix II).

While the lack of data is a key problem, even existing data presents challenges. As Sammy Langat confirmed to me, regarding the registers for coffee payment: "Women are doing 90% of the work, but their names are not there." This leads to a challenge with data collection and accurate numbers: "men's names are the ones in the registers, and they may or may not have anything to do with coffee farming" (Sammy Langat, personal interview, 6 Feb 2022). Data may not consider women's marital status (this affects the numbers especially when polygamy makes this even more complicated to "count" farmers when a male head-of-household may have several wives involved in farming, but each wife is not counted, only the husband). Basing numbers of women off a single male head of household may lead to inaccuracies also because who gets "counted" as a coffee grower is the person who owns land (Pindeo Caro 2020:4-5; cf. Chapter Two). Also, numbers of women growers may be inaccurate because the coffee literature often groups women's issues with "youth" issues, especially given women's roles as mothers and caregivers. Youth numbers are problematic, too: they rarely distinguish between young men and

women, and the definition of “youth” varies according to cultural context and country data.<sup>14</sup> Women who remain uncatalogued or uncounted, merely subsumed into generic “coffee farmer” categories, do not allow for consideration that women’s challenges as distinctive from men’s or “youth.” Furthermore, gendered complexities in Africa – such as polygamy, “female husbands,” or “lesbian men”<sup>15</sup>– make counting farmers problematic if the counting is based on heterogenous men vs. women.<sup>16</sup> Finally, as homosexuality remains illegal in Kenya, and I found no coffee literature on East Africa that gives any attention to non-binary, gender-neutral, and non-heteronormative persons. These complexities are among the reasons why finding reliable disaggregated numbers that clarify how many of Kenya’s approximately 700,000 to 800,000 small-holder coffee farmers are women remains a challenge.

### **1.5 Kenyan Kahawa (Coffee) Context: An Overview**

The Republic of Kenya is a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural<sup>17</sup> country (Ogechi 2019), an “agrarian society,” where the economic backbone remains agriculture

---

<sup>14</sup> My study dissertation focuses distinctively on women and not youth, but it is vital to clarify a definition of “youth” because “women and youth” are so regularly juxtaposed together in the literature. The interviews I conducted were only with adults those over the age of 18. The term “youth” in African contexts is diverse and complex, and I will occasionally use the term in Chapters 4 and 5. Among the most popular definitions in the literature of “youth” is from the United Nations: “persons between the age of 15 and 24” (UNESCO 2018). However, variations across countries and continents exist, and even UN agencies differ in their age brackets when defining youth, with ending ages ranging between 24 and 35. The African Union categorizes youth as those between ages 15 and 35 (AU 2006:3).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Despite contemporary laws that discriminate against legal position of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community in Africa, including Kenya, Africa has always been, to quote the title of a blog post by the Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre, “Sex in Africa is More Diverse than Gay-or-Straight.” There is a long tradition in Africa of woman-to-woman marriages that are culturally recognized depending on the specific ethnic community and categories like the “female husband,” which remains sexually ambiguous, assumes the responsibilities and duties of a man/husband, or a sexually ambiguous category like “lesbian men” (Morgan & Wieringa 2005). These practices have precolonial tradition in Kenya, including in Nandi, the county where my key case study takes place (Green 1998; Oboler 1980).

<sup>16</sup> These are the terms used in scholarship, not necessarily terms used by Africans about themselves. Such terms may or may not have implications regarding sexuality, a debate that is beyond the scope of my research and which I have never seen named in any coffee literature.

<sup>17</sup> The government of Kenya formally recognizes 44 “tribes” (Balaton-Chimes 2021; 2022). Such “ethnic groups” have traditionally always been called “tribes” in English, but now, most Kenyans, including most of my research participants, use the term “communities”—and is therefore the term that I will use throughout this study. I also make this choice because some scholars argue that “in Kenya, most so-called ethnic groups derive their names from the

(Kanyinga 2007:258). Coffee remains vital to provide for the economic needs of Kenyans as publicly acknowledged by former President Uhuru Kenyatta (Kenyatta 2020).<sup>18</sup> Despite a 30% decline in Kenya's acreage under coffee from 170,000 to 119,000 hectares, and despite production drops 70%, from 129,00 to 40,000 metric tonnes between 1990 and 2020, *kahawa* (Kiswahili for coffee) continues to play a "central role in the socio-economic development of Kenya" (ICO 2019: 26).

The Kenyan coffee sub-sector is rife with complex political and gendered relationships between thousands of people who work in coffee in various roles from seed to cup. Almost every person I interviewed from Kenya considers the economic and cultural importance of coffee as central to their livelihoods, a fact consistent with the literature (Morris et al., 2015; USDA 2015; TechnoServe 2017). Coffee has various meanings to people around the world, and while I rarely asked research participants directly "what is coffee to you," often, it was revealed during our interview:

- "Coffee is a global spirit" (Eva Muthuuri, 12 December 2019);
- "Coffee is me, me is coffee" (Javen Ngeywo Chemiat, 23 August 2019);
- "Tea and coffee has been used as a weapon of power" (Anonymous Kenyan man, 22 Feb. 2019);

---

days of colonialism" (Ogechi 2019:111). Using the word "tribe" is also complicated since newly recognized groups in Kenya have complex histories, languages, and migration stories, such as when the government of Kenya recognized the minority Nubian ethnic community, or when Kenyans of Indian descent were recognized as the 44<sup>th</sup> tribe in June 2017, many who are descendants of the "Indian coolies" forced to come to Kenya under British colonialism in India, to build the Kenya-Uganda Railway under British colonialism in Kenya (Ogechi 2019:124). While I recognize that ethnicity can be an important part of intersectionality for Kenyans, it is not appropriate for me to investigate these complex dimensions, as a student researcher who does not speak any indigenous languages and is not fluent in Kiswahili.

<sup>18</sup>Former President Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of the first Prime Minister and first President of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, was president during the time when I was conducting my field work (2019-2020); as a result, this dissertation will not focus on period after September 2022 when President William Ruto was elected President, under whose leadership there have been many contested and debated new coffee policies and new regulations, currently contested and under review by various stakeholders in Kenya.

- “Coffee was punishment” [in her childhood] (Dr. Cecilia Kathurima, 6 June 2019);
- “Coffee is my life” (Anonymous Kenyan woman, 17 May 2019);
- “Coffee is a key to development in Kenya that we must not allow to rust” (Wangeci Gitobu, 12 March 2020);
- “Coffee is the blessed beverage” (Régine Guion-Firmin, 7 Aug 2019);
- “Coffee is a gift from God and a treasure” (Andrea Moora, 4 Feb. 2020).

Indeed, Kenyan coffee is considered as a treasure by specialty coffee buyers and aficionados (Carrington 2019:15; Kanyinga 2007). Kenya coffee is beloved around the world for its distinctive taste and purchased by many of my research participants for its bright acidity, sweetness, and distinctive blackberry and citrus flavour notes (personal interviews with: Vick 2019 and 2020; Guion-Firmin 2019 and 2020; Nordby 2020; Schackman 2020; Doshi 2020; Carrington 2020; Prime 2021; Lindemann 2020; Anonymous 2021; Lalonde 2023). There is a differentiation for top grades of Kenya coffee: “specialty” AA Kenya coffees can be sold at higher prices than “commercial coffee”: for example, in 2019, an AA grade Kenya fetched \$12-14 USD per kilogram, more than the auction price that year of \$5.10 per kg (Carrington 2019:15; Nairobi Coffee Exchange n.d.; Daniel Mbithi, personal interview, 2019-20). Yet it remains alarming that many farmers have still never tasted their own coffee, a fact supported by my observation and travels to dozens of coffee cooperatives and estates in Kenya and other sources, such as many farmers “know little about what happens to their coffee after it leaves their farms” (Carrington 2019:15). On many occasions, I was served instant Nescafé by Kenyan managers or farmers when visiting coffee cooperatives or estates in Kenya.

Ndirangu (2020) notes that coffee is “a strategic crop” in Kenya, employing an estimated an estimated five million people in Kenya (ICO 2019: 17, 26; Kieyah et al., 2016; Ndirangu

2020; Hussain et al., 2020:10). By some estimates, Kenya has 800,000 coffee farmers (Hussein et al., 2014: 14), others state the number is 500,000 (Carrington 2019:20; Kanyinga 2007:259) with others stating 700,000 (Kieyah et al., 2016). I note the discrepancy in these numbers, but the data for exact numbers in Kenya is inconsistent at best and non-existent at worst. For example, even the Coffee Year Book lists the number of farmers at 500,000 (KCD 2023:xiii), omitting any reference to women farmers as there is no existing data point that can provide details related to gender. However, Solidaridad, an international NGO who works throughout Kenya's coffee sector, estimates that 30% of Kenyan women are involved in coffee farming with most smallholder farmers controlling about 75% of the total hectares of land under coffee production, contributing 70% of the national annual production of clean coffee beans. In Kenya, most "smaller farmers own under 2 hectares of land and around 1,000 coffee trees. With this, they can only produce 2 to 3 kilograms of cherry per tree on average" despite the potential for more than 30 kilograms of cherry per tree (Solidaridad 2023). Finding reliable numbers that disaggregate how many of Kenya's 700,000 small-holder coffee farmers<sup>19</sup> are women has not been established at the time of this writing.<sup>20</sup> This is one justification for this study's focus on women in coffee and the need for national attention to be given on the vital roles that women play in Kenya's coffee sector.

### **A. A Gender Analysis of Kenya's Complex Supply Chain**

Coffee trees require consistent effort and attention year-round. The flowering is among the most important moments of the year for any coffee farmer. Some trees can flower more than

---

<sup>19</sup> I was not able to learn if this number includes cherry pickers and temporary workers, but this in the number in reports by the Government of the Republic of Kenya.

<sup>20</sup> This was confirmed during a conversation that I had via Zoom with the interim director Kenya's Coffee Directorate in February 2023. He confirmed that the current number of female farmers in Kenya is unknown, and that the farmer data currently collected by the Coffee Directorate does not disaggregate for gender. However, he confirmed that this is now one of his goals for future data collection, as he confirmed to me, "that this is very important for us to know" (informal conversation in Nairobi, Kenya on 29 February 2024).

once a year, sometimes even more than once a harvest. Bees go crazy on their quest to pollinate the flowers, and they only get three days. Healthy coffee trees have many branches that will ultimately bring dozens of little buds jutting up all around and down the branches. Days after the buds appear, these burst into little white flowers 10 to 15 millimetres in diameter, each with five thin petals like tiny pinwheels. During a heavy bloom, the flowers bunch up so closely, it looks like powder-puffs are lined up and down the branches (Koss 2021b).

Copious clusters of green leaves and white flowers combine to make a gorgeous sight. Standing closer to the flowers, the jasmine scent that perfumes the air is a sign that the tree will be healthy enough to transform white flowers into tart cherries. Two months later, plump red cherries, a deep shade of red like merlot wine and cranberries, are ripe and ready to be harvested. Ripening periods vary based on climate conditions and soil fertility. Freshly picked coffee cherries must be processed swiftly. If they are not, cherries will ferment, which negatively impacts both quality and taste—and ultimately will not be desirable for sale to the specialty coffee market (Koss 2021b). In East Africa, lots may be separated by growers with some coffee destined for the commercial market, and other “micro-lots” desired for specialty coffee buyers or roasters, through a “differentiated market” of those willing to pay more for higher quality coffee, sustainability, or transparency (Carrington ITC 2020: 8).

Gender and class dynamics are evident in Kenya from seed to cup: while men are certainly involved in various stages of coffee production, at the farm level, women primarily dig, plant, pick, and sort *kahawa* (Kiswahili for coffee). Women’s hands nurture coffee seeds, seedlings, and trees; women’s hands harvest, pick, and sort red, ripe coffee cherries (ITC 2008; ITC 2021; Anunu 2015; ICO 2019; Hussain et al., 2020:10). This division of labour was repeated by almost every research participant from farms to Nairobi to Mombasa. As one example: when I

visited the Coffee Directorate offices in downtown Nairobi to meet with Sheila Agida, Head of Coffee Quality and the Lab at Kenya's Agriculture and Food Authority, she shared that in her five years of working as a quality assurance officer, "all the farmers who bring me coffee are men." She further observes, "and this isn't fair, because it's the women who are carrying coffee everywhere from the farm to get it to the factory. Ladies are doing everything for the harvest" (Agida, personal interview, 10 May 2019).

Throughout East Africa in general and in Kenya in particular, it is considered "women's work" to pick coffee. Harvest work is tedious and mundane. Not all the cherries on a single branch will be ripe at the same time. Each cherry must be plucked by hand with its cherry skin intact. According to an International Trade Centre (ITC) report, around the world, women harvest and pack "more than 140 million bags of coffee produced each year" (Carrington 2020: iii). From observing harvest season during dozens of visits to estates and cooperatives, I noticed that, in Kenya, women comprise most of the people planting, picking, sorting, and carrying coffee in Kenya, something that is confirmed globally by ITC. Worldwide, labour categories are divided by gender: in coffee, this means that women perform most of the fieldwork, harvest work, and processing of coffee (including drying and sorting coffee); meanwhile, the transport, export, and marketing of coffee tend to be conducted by men—jobs that regularly provide higher wages and may take them away from their families for long periods of time (ITC 2008; PGE 2015; SCAA 2015; Anunu 2015).

I witnessed these gender-segregated dynamics during multiple visits to estates and cooperatives in Kenya. When I asked my research participants to explain the reason why harvesting and processing are divided by gender, and often stated as "women's work," the following answers are representative:



- Because “women pay attention to detail” (Anonymous, coffee professional from Uganda, personal interview, 2019);
- Because “women can shift their minds quickly” (Anonymous, entrepreneur Kenyan man who grew up on coffee farm, personal interview, 2019);
- Because “men are known to be careless” (Mugasitsi, personal interview, 2019);
- Because “ladies follow the rules and are neat, so they are more useful than young men” (Nyaga, personal interview, 2019);
- Because “men are not as patient, women are very good in picking” (Rosebella Langat, personal interview, 2023).

In Kenya, some coffee pickers are paid a flat rate per day, perhaps somewhere between \$1.50 - \$4 USD a day. Others might be paid, not only by the number of buckets of picked cherries, but by the weight of cherries.

After picking, pulping is the process that removes the red ripe cherry skin from the “coffee bean,” which is actually the seeds of the fruit that most coffee drinkers think of as ‘coffee.’ Under the external red skin is a thin layer of sticky, slimy mucilage that also must be removed before coffee can be dried and sold.

While there are several ways to process coffee, in Kenya, coffee has historically been processed in the “washed” method (also known as “wet processing”), which means coffee will be harvested, pulped, fermented, and dried to become parchment coffee (Daviron & Ponte 2005: 19%), and remains the prevalent coffee processing method in Kenya with 93% of all coffee being processed with the wet method and 7% with dry (natural) (KCD 2023:28). Washed coffee (“wet processing”) requires a large washing station with several machines and access to water and electricity. In every estate or cooperative I visited during harvest season, I witnessed ripe

coffee cherries being put in a pulping machine to remove the sticky mucilage, as one key step in the processing of coffee. However, the “natural” method, sometimes called “dry processing,” requires much less water or electricity and is slowly being introduced in some estates (see Chapter Four; KCD 2023). In washed coffee, the cherries move through the machine and then after, during fermentation and washing, the coffee moves through a waterslide like structure. Through this process, the red cherry skin and the mucilage are removed so that coffee can become transformed into ‘parchment’—labelled for the papery-thick whitish layer that covers the beans. This will be dried, usually in Kenya, in the direct sunshine, coffee is then placed on wiring that is elevated on raised African beds, then covered at night with green or black mesh. Drying is essential to avoid mould in the storage process and throughout coffee’s long waiting period and export journey. After coffee is thoroughly dried, and sometimes sorted again for visible defects, this parchment coffee is ready to be put in large bags and transported to the milling station.

At this stage, most small-holder farmers in Kenya will never see their coffee again. They sell their coffee at the cherry stage, usually to whatever processing station is possible for them to transport their heavy cherries. This ‘transport’ is often done by women, who may carry freshly picked cherries on their backs, even as far as several kilometres to a processing station (what Kenyans will call “the factory”). In Kenya, as in many other coffee producing countries, coffee price is determined by weight: the heavier cherries, the higher the price. Heavy cherries mean the two seeds inside have received all the nutrients they need and have sufficiently matured. At this point, farmers and pickers will receive a receipt: payment will come to them months later (see Chapter Four).

As one example, in Meru county – an area north of Nairobi with a long history of coffee as it was among the “first districts where the colonial government allowed controlled growing of coffee [by Africans] outside the areas scheduled for white settlement” (Kanyinga 2007:259) – one estate, Kianjiru Estate, has 10,000 coffee trees, mostly of the SL-28 coffee variety,<sup>21</sup> and is owned and managed by husband-and-wife co-owners and co-directors, Michael and Purity Muriuki. They both told me that “small scale farmers are being swallowed,” for many reasons: their cost of production is not consistent, nor is the price they receive for their parchment coffee. “Our neighbors have 100 stems [coffee trees] and zero cash,” Purity tells me. When I interviewed her, she worried about the scarcity of labour for their harvest for picking and sorting coffee. “Most of these jobs are done by women,” Purity confirmed. During harvest season, Kianjiru Estate might employ up to 80 women a day, mostly seasonal workers from their nearby village, although “people are leaving cash crops and going to horticulture” (Michael Muriuki, personal interview on phone, 9 October 2019; Purity Muriuki, personal interview in person, 9 October 2019).

After parchment coffee, coffee will be transported again to be milled, a completely separate process in Kenya from what happens on the farm level. In Kenya, there are only 20 mills in total (KCB 2023:2), and in rural areas, they are sparsely disbursed, often located in far distances from some farms. The milling process often remains mysterious to many smallholder farmers and pickers but remains vital to yet another transformation of the coffee: parchment coffee to “green coffee.” Green coffee isn’t actually green in colour; it is more of a greyish tone, completely dried and processed by this point, and then ready for export. Exported coffee must be completely “clean”: no leaves, stones, insects, or anything other non-coffee material is expunged

---

<sup>21</sup> SL-28 refers to “Scott Labs” 28. SL28 is a distinctive Kenyan coffee varietal; see note 8 earlier in this chapter.

during the milling process. In Kenya, many mills are old with machines that need repair; in the 2017/18 coffee year, the counties that clear the “cleanest” coffee in the mills in Kiambu (21% of Kenyan coffee); Kirinyaga (17%); Nyeri (13%); Murang’a (11%) (KCD 2023:25; AFA 2018:50; Hussain et. al, 2020; Carrington 2019).

Green coffee will also be graded at the mills, usually by large machines and is based on size of the final green bean. In Kenya, there are seven grades of coffee—AA, AB, C, E, PB (Peaberry), T, TT)—which will partly determine the prices paid, but grades do not necessarily indicate quality. T and TT will fetch the lowest prices. AA is considered the highest quality (although Q graders<sup>22</sup> may score AB higher than AA based on sensory attributes) and tends to bring the highest cherry rate paid to farmers (KCD 2023:30; Hussain 2020 et al., 2020; KCD 2023:32). The majority of Kenya coffee is AB (40.87%) or AA (21.66%) in coffee year 2021-22 (KCD 2023:32). Of all Kenyan coffee, 4.91% is Kenya Peaberry (PB) (KCD 2023:28), a rare and desirable coffee that can fetch high prices from some by specialty coffee roasters due to its unique single-seed cherry for its distinctive form of bright acidity and citrus flavour notes.

In Kenya, it is unlikely that most smallholder farmers are involved in any part of selling their coffee. There are several actors whose key role is the trading and transport of coffee, which include exporters and importers, typical roles in most coffee producing countries. But Kenya’s value chain includes some other roles that differ from other countries. One example of this is that for coffee to be sold in Kenya, farmer cooperatives must rely on their designated “marketing agents” to handle the sale of their coffees each year. When Kenyans critique the “coffee cartel,”

---

<sup>22</sup> “Q Grader” is a title for a coffee professional who is skilled, trained, and certified in sensory evaluation of green and roasted coffee through a process called “cupping.” They are employed globally in jobs such as coffee quality or coffee training. Q graders may be certified in the Q Arabica program, the Q Robusta program, or both by the Coffee Quality Institute, a non-profit organization registered in California, but trainers teach in certified coffee labs around the world, including one outside of Nairobi, Kenya (cf. CQI: 2022).

they may be referring to this group of actors, because they are the ones with access to the Nairobi auction. As of the 2021-22 Coffee Yearbook, there are a total of nine commercial marketing agents in Kenya (KCD 2023), and despite my attempts, with one exception only this year, no other marketing agent would go “on the record” for an interview with me, even anonymously.<sup>23</sup>

Much of the complexities of the politics of Kenya’s coffee chain remain linked to its colonial past when the British colonial government forbade Africans from planting, milling, or roasting their own coffee and when Indigenous Africans were forced under grossly unjust labour conditions to pick coffee and work on European coffee farms (see Chapter Three). Even after some coffee laws and policies started to change in the 1950s, and even after Kenya’s 1963 independence, coffee remains regulated and governed by state institutions, national laws, and local policies, many created under British colonialism and maintained even after independence in 1963 (Hedlund 1992; Kieyah et al., 2016; ICO 2019). Structural adjustment policies involving coffee in the 1980s and 1990s hindered the economic advancement of Kenyan coffee farmers (see Chapter Four), and despite liberalization of the domestic market—which, for Kenya, began slowly in the early 1990s—coffee remains marketed through a state-controlled board and a state-controlled auction in Nairobi, called the Nairobi Coffee Exchange (NCE) (Daviron & Ponte 2005: 97, 100, 103; ICO 2019; Kanyinga 2007:258).

Approximately 90% of Kenya’s coffee remains traded through this auction system, located in downtown Nairobi. This system began in 1935 under British colonialism to grade, sell, and export green coffee and remains one of several government-run coffee agencies in Kenya (Synder and Gitonga 2023:3; Hussain et al., 2020: 7; NCE n.d.).<sup>24</sup> Most farmers find the auction

---

<sup>23</sup> The one exception, Mr. Peter Ndambiri (2023) is mentioned in more detail in Chapter Five in the context of the GALS initiative.

<sup>24</sup> Kenya is among one of the only regional countries with a commodity exchange or auction; Tanzania and Ethiopia are the other two (Carrington 2020:12).

difficult to access due to the distance from their farms and the time it takes to withstand Nairobi's indomitably delayed traffic combined with the expenses of transport, although they are welcome to visit<sup>25</sup> (Kieyah et al., 2016).

Before COVID-19 in March 2020 forced the auction to close, I visited the auction several times at the invitation of the NCE director, Mr. Daniel Mbithi, who has been working in coffee since 2006 and has been the director of the auction since 2013. At the time of our interviews, he managed the auction and the sample room with eight staff members, all government staff positions. Among their duties is to create a weekly coffee catalogue of available coffees so that the bidders (buyers) will be prepared on Tuesdays when the auction takes place. The NCE also receives weekly green coffee samples on Fridays, and they keep a huge room organized, with several long rows of tables with green coffee samples on them, held uniformly in small blue trays, so that buyers can see any visible physical defects as they walk by.<sup>26</sup> According to Mr. Mbithi, "The beauty of the auction is the competition with other buyers" and because farmers have to agree on the price for which their coffee is sold, Daniel says the system is "an empowering process" (Mbithi, personal interview, 14 May & 19 November 2019). But from what I have witnessed, this remains debatable. In order to bring coffee to the auction, the marketing agent must be licensed by the Coffee Directorate and registered. Most years, the busiest time takes place during the end of November and December, after Kenya's main crop is harvested and the last will be sold by May or June, which would be very late. Once when I was sitting in the auction room, a farmer from Machakos county sat near me, and so we talked – and

---

<sup>25</sup> During my three day-long visits at the Nairobi Coffee Exchange (NCE), the Executive Director often welcomed and even introduced me to coffee farmers who were visiting the NCE to see both the auction and the large room where green beans are present for visual confirmation and traceability. As it happens on the days I was visiting, all coffee farmers I met were men.

<sup>26</sup> One must taste coffee in order to determine if it is a desirable "clean" coffee that is free from defects. Still, Kenya continues to favour visual and size elements to determine quality (e.g., coffee grade do not depend on taste or quality but on size).

because his county neighbors Nairobi, it is possible for him to come visit on a Tuesday morning. When I asked him informally about his challenges as a farmer, he mentioned that chemicals are too expensive and that his solution would be for all Kenyan coffee to have a minimum price at which it is sold.

After March 2020, the auction became virtual, for the first time, but before that, every Tuesday during harvest season, Kenyan-based exporters would sit in a dark wooden theatre-like auditorium, facing a large screen, to press a buzzer to bid on coffee they wanted to purchase. Green coffee buyers possessed a panoply of coffee choices in the upstairs “sample room” to look at samples of green coffee in all available Kenyan grades or certifications of coffee. “Direct sales” has only been legally permitted since 2006 by the Government of Kenya, which must be arranged “through direct sale contracts [which] must be registered with Kenya’s Coffee Directorate, a regulatory branch of the Agriculture and Food Authority” (Synder & Gitonga 2023:3). The significance of this for Kenya is important, because both direct sales are increasing in terms of coffee volumes (from 10,444 MT to 11,841 MT in 2021-22) and value (from \$68.24 million 23.9% to USD \$84.55 million in 2021-22) (KCD 2023:xi). This is also important for coffee estates, such as Chepsangor Hills Coffee Estate, because it allows owners such as Rosebella Langat to bypass the auction and sell coffee directly to international buyers and roasters (see Chapter Four).

Even as there are many steps to move coffee from farms to Nairobi, there are many more as green coffee begins its journey from Nairobi to its port of destination and beyond to its buyer. After coffee becomes “green,” until it is sold at the NCE and ready for shipment, it will wait in huge warehouses, such as Bolloré Logistics in Nairobi, where I witnessed dozens of men and women working to package and move coffee out of Kenya: from sewing the top of jute bags,

loading bags into mammoth-size warehouses, packaging bags on pallets, moving bags into trucks or containers destined for transport to Mombasa's port (Koss 2022a).

After all paperwork is signed, Kenyan coffee moves from its warehouse by truck or train more than 300 miles to the coast, to the Port of Mombasa. By the time the container reaches the port, dozens of pairs of hands have already transferred its movement, with many more engaged in transporting coffee from the port of departure (POD) to its destination port called the port of loading (POL), where exported coffee will make its way to its buyer (Koss 2022a). Two containers of Kenyan coffee will not necessarily take the same ocean route even if they are both headed for the same destination: routes are determined by bookings and vessels, which may take months. Those going through the Suez Canal may take less time, but a container is likely to pass through at least one transshipment port—where coffee containers are unloaded and reloaded to a new vessel—which may even change destinations *en route*, where more delays are inevitable.

After all these tangles, coffee stops at its delivery port, before making its way to another warehouse, where bags will be palletized and strapped (wrapped with plastic cellophane). The importer or roaster who purchased the coffee would arrange for a trucking company to collect the coffee and drive it to the roaster facility. At this point, coffee's journey from port to roaster may add at least two weeks. The green coffee would then arrive at its roaster's storage facility, and at that moment, it officially belongs to the roaster, ready to be roasted, packaged, and sold either retail, wholesale, e-commerce, or at a café. This route of coffee from Kenya to roaster underscores the complexity of time and human labour at each step of the supply chain, months after coffee leaves the hands of farmers, in order to become sold as roasted whole beans for home brewing, or as a beverage at a café in Europe, North America, or Asia.



Given the continuation of colonial policies and structures, as well as “weak coffee sector systems, sub-optimal extension services, and low (and fluctuating) global coffee prices against the rising cost of production” (Solidardiad 2023), small-holder Kenyan farmers struggle to make a living through coffee. Most rural Kenyan households have once had, or still have, at least one acre of coffee, although many of them have been uprooting their coffee (Synder and Gitonga 2023:3-5), some in specific acts of political protest against low prices since current prices cannot meet their cost of production (Njurge 2020). Whatever the motive to uproot coffee trees, coffee remains among the top Kenyan cash crops that provides foreign exchange dollars and remains essential to the livelihoods of smallholder farmers (ICO 2019: 17, 26; Kieyah et al., 2016), with tea and horticulture (cut flowers) leading agricultural exports for Kenya (Hussain et al., 2020:7).<sup>27</sup>

## **B. Kenya’s Cooperatives and Estates: A Gender Analysis**

The organization of the coffee value chain is among the complexities of Kenya’s system. Currently, there are two distinct systems of coffee production, estates and cooperatives, which organize the structures and movement of coffee, from farm to sale, each with its own supply chain path (Hussain et al., 2020:9; Karanja and Nyoro 2002; Kanyinga 2018). According to the 2021-22 Coffee Year Book, there are 2,694 coffee estates and 590 cooperative societies in Kenya (KCD 2023:20; cf. also Hussain et al., 2020:14). There is no data to confirm how many of Kenya’s cooperative members are women or men, nor is there data to show how many estates are directed, owned, or managed by women compared to men. The cooperative system began in the 1950s under British colonialism and has a complex history all its own, which has been well-documented by Kenyan scholars and is beyond the scope of my study (Kanyinga 2018:262;

---

<sup>27</sup> For 2017 exports, tea (22.3%), cut flowers (11.2%), coffee (5.5%) and 56% of total labour force in Kenya works in agriculture.

Wairegi et al., 2018; Dada 2007; Baka 2013); however, a brief comparison of cooperatives vs. estates may be helpful for readers unfamiliar with Kenya's coffee sub-sector.

At least 70% of coffee production in Kenya is done by smallholders from the cooperatives, who, by law must sell and market their coffee through a cooperative, as most do not have their own pulping station or processing machines (KCD 2023; Kanyinga 2018; Karanja & Nyoro 2002; Nyangito 2005; Synder & Gitonga 2023:3). According to Kenya Law in 2016, farmers with less than two acres of mature coffee, or with annual production of less than 20 tonnes of fresh cherries are not allowed to pulp, mill and market their own coffee and therefore must deliver their coffee to cooperative societies (Kenya Law 2016; Wairegi et al., 2018). At the cooperative societies, coffee cherries will be wet-processed and dried (at the "factory," as mentioned above, where many small-holders carry the coffee cherries they picked). Coffee is then transported as dried parchment coffee to registered millers for milling and grading. From the mill, marketing agents will then sell coffee as green beans through the Nairobi Coffee Exchange under the management of the Kenyan Coffee Directorate (Wairegi et al., 2018:190; observation at anonymous cooperatives). The head of procurement, production, and quality control Kenya's African Coffee Roasters, Stephen Vick, explained some of the value chain dilemmas to me: "Farmer cooperatives must rely on the marketing agents to handle the sale of their coffees each year, and roasters cannot plan for and contract the same coffees year after year. Pricing is not necessarily based on quality or cost of production, rather on the Nairobi Coffee Exchange auction pricing, which varies wildly year after year" (personal interview, 26 February 2020). All these factors contribute to the challenges of long-term direct business relationships to exist between cooperatives and buyers/roasters. This is not only a challenge for farmers at all levels but also for coffee buyers and roasters, because then they "cannot plan for and contract the

same coffees year after year” (Vick, personal interview, 2019). Some cooperatives offer other services such as training opportunities or credit, but the types and availability of services, and who may attend or participate in activities, such as extension services or trainings widely differ among cooperatives based on resources available, resulting also in differing opinions of “the trust that members have in them” or the “satisfaction of members with services provided” (Wairegi et al., 2018:191). Part of the reason for this may be a high number of farmers who have “defaulted on loan repayment,” which is why the 2016 proposal to “settle farmers' debts and to offer a subsidized input package (Government of Kenya 2016) could have made a difference, had it gone into effect (Wairegi et al., 2018:197; Shanguhya 2015).

Kenyan coffee estates are privately owned businesses and can be various sizes: small (5-20 acres), medium (20-50 acres), large (50 or more). They have many advantages compared to cooperatives. Estate owners have flexibility to experiment with their processing methods, such as various washed methods, as well as honey and natural processed coffee (see Chapter Four), both which are increasingly desired by specialty coffee roasters in the U.S.A. and Europe (KCD 2023), allowing for the possibility for more money to get back to farmers and seasonal labour. Estates have direct access and the ability to mill their own coffee (Michael and Purity Muriuki, personal interview, 9 October 2019). Estates can also sell “direct” to buyers around the world and market their own coffee; they are not required to take their coffee through the Nairobi Coffee Exchange, as cooperatives are. Still, this is not to say that estates are completely unregulated: they must possess several different licenses, including one to sell coffee. They are all expensive and time-consuming to obtain and maintain. Finally, compared to coops, estates have “better access to finance, markets, and infrastructure” (Daviron & Ponte 2005:158).

Cooperatives as social and economic units have the potential to address market failures or oversights and can bring unite people together in collective action (Vo 2019:212). In the best-case scenarios, cooperatives are able to apply their ideals, but in the coffee literature, there is a wide range of literature critiquing the failures of cooperatives to live up to these values especially in East Africa (Kangile et al., 2021; ). As Vo (2019) summarized in her study of two Costa Rican coffee cooperatives: “Cooperatives, particularly producer cooperatives [...] are Janus-faced; they are both inward facing as they are accountable to their members and outward facing as they integrate into global networks. As they mediate local and global forces, they experience economic tensions” (Vo 2019: X).

While the International Cooperative Alliance articulates several key principles – such as open and voluntary membership, democratic member control, and concern for community – this can many forms depending on the crop and its geographic context (International Co-operative Alliance n.d.). An “enduring history of the cooperative movement” has persisted over four decades around the globe and with many products, including coffee, there is no doubt that this organizational model is “uniquely adaptive” in its “underlying values and principles” (Vo 2019: last page) with some examples of “triumph of the co-ops in the world of coffee” (Gudmundson 2021:22). In some contexts, such as Rwanda, many cooperatives thrive, in part because of government and donor investment in, for example, the building of coffee washing stations linked to cooperatives has a key tool to promote high-quality coffee in Rwanda that brings increased income for peasant farmers and therefore reduces poverty (Gisaro Ca-Madeberi et al., 2013).

For coffee, the cooperative movement and the fair-trade movements are often inextricably linked in some contexts, but neither is the focus, or the intended goal, of my study. However, readers who are critical of the possibilities of private estates to promote development

goals, such as sustainability or gender equity, may wonder why I did not choose to focus my study on cooperatives. This question may be answered in three ways: by looking at the literature, from my field work, and from my personal experiences as a researcher in Kenya.

First, from the literature, I consider a brief comparative view of literature on cooperatives outside of Kenya. Cooperatives have been particularly important in Latin America, as ways of understanding the social economy from an approach that emphasizes the importance of collaborative processes, community relations and organization among workers (Arévalo et al., 2022:9). Existing literature on cooperatives outside of Kenya primarily focuses on fair trade cooperatives; however, the comparative literature on cooperatives does not necessarily contribute to an understanding of the ways that cooperative membership or cooperative participation enhances gender equity as compared to estates in particular, although there are many studies that compare certified cooperatives (especially fair-trade cooperatives) to non-certified cooperatives (although there is no explanation in these studies that discusses the specific structure of “non-certified cooperatives”).

For example, a study from a fair-trade cooperative in Honduras, “We Know Our Worth,” demonstrates that while fair trade remains a key entry point into some markets, it does not guarantee that this coffee will be sold. This is one way this study demonstrates that farmers are aware of their worth beyond the prices they receive for their coffee (Smith & Loker 2012) and that financial benefits are not the only ways that farmers perceive their value; they also consider their contribution to community as meaningful.

While much of the literature on coffee cooperatives neglects gender perspectives (Kormelinck 2014:168), yet of the literature that does include research on gender, most seems to focus on considering if certifications enhance gender parity (Lyon 2008:263, 266). As one study

asserts, while women have played formative roles since the formation of cooperatives in Cuba, their roles have not been reflected in evidence of decision-making positions throughout history, for most coffee cooperatives (Arévalo et al., 2022:8). In this example, while the principles of cooperativism, in theory, align with the quest for a more egalitarian society between men and women (Arévalo et al., 2022), the literature sometimes tells a different story. In one study from Cuba, coffee cooperatives are directed and administered mostly by men, which has not sought to “develop the capacities and ability of women” due to the “patriarchal system [that] dominates” (Arévalo et al., 2022:10). As a result, gender gaps are evident women work in the lowest paid coffee jobs (such as in the seedbeds), less access to credit, and “repeated absences from work due to their role as caregivers” and time poverty (Arévalo et al., 2022:12). Men tend to own land and usually transfer knowledge and inheritance to men, “reproducing a sexist division of labor” (Arévalo et al., 2022:13).

While this cooperative in Cuba was not identified as part of a certification scheme, several studies demonstrate that coffee cooperatives do not show different working conditions between farms that are fair trade certified compared to those that are not certified, especially for poor female wage labourers who face wage discrimination and non-secure work (Cramer et al., 2014; Lyon 2008). Research of fair trade cooperatives in Uganda and Ethiopia confirmed that the wage labour is “female labour” (Cramer et al., 2014:11,118). Some scholars, such Sarah Lyon, have written extensively on gender in cooperatives, which I discuss further in Chapter Two, but to summarize: overall, her research demonstrates that “fair trade cannot simply rely on a trickle-down effect of male income into the household” (Lyon 2008: 260) and although she does see some coops appearing to be willing to give women leadership opportunities, these are usually unpaid (2008: 263). Still, examples can be found of coffee cooperatives that seek to promote

women's empowerment, including celebrated examples such as in Uganda's Bukonzo Joint (Mayoux 2012; Millard 2017; Meier 2016) and Peru's Café Femenino (Alegría, 2019), or a study of eight Guatemalan cooperatives (Bilfield et al., 2020), providing evidence that gender equity and coffee cooperatives can thrive together.

Next, I consider the literature of research studies conducted within Kenya. Private-owned estates, in principle do not involve worker voice and, in theory, replicate capitalist social relations, yet from an African context, the cooperative system has not necessarily upheld the ideals of the cooperative movement globally, especially when it comes to collective ownership or gender equity.

This has especially been the case in Kenya after the ICA collapse and liberalization (cf. Chapter Four). Before 1989, more services were often provided by cooperatives, but now that is not necessarily the case. A study by Kanyinga (2007) summarizes some of the challenges that happened after liberalization: "problems around internal governance have undermined efficiency of some of the cooperative societies leading to the collapse of some" (2007: 269-70). Many old cooperatives broke off into very small coop societies due to a "general disillusionment with the management of societies" and acrimonious disagreements ensued on subjects including overhead costs, credits, and debt (Kanyinga 2007: 273-4, 276). In addition, the abolishment of strict control and quality regulations of the cooperatives that existed before coffee sector liberalization has, in some cases, led to a decline in quality and production in some cooperatives (Kanyinga 2007:269), leading one writer to consider the cooperatives a "dismal failure" due to corrupt leadership and price exploitation (Mude 2006). More recently, literature on Kenyan cooperatives centred on marketing (Kuguru et al., 2020; Vorlaufer et al., 2012) rather than social sustainability issues.

While in some cases, some cooperatives may have changed since the publication of these articles (Wairegi et al., 2018: 198), which is a question that begs explicit study focused on gender equity in the cooperatives, but my field work confirms some of these challenges to be ongoing, particularly in the struggle for gender equity and youth inclusion. For example, one more recent study of six Kenyan cooperatives demonstrated that prices that farmers receive are partially influenced by factors along the value chain; other issues included theft of coffee and poor security, leading to the assumption that there may be a lack of funds to hire more security guards or obtain properly functioning security systems (Wairegi et al., 2018:197; Baka 2013; Hedlund 1992).

Second, from my field work, it was clear that conducting research on cooperatives would not yield unbiased results. There are many challenges in the current cooperative system that lead some farmers to choose the estate model if they have the option to do so. One anonymous coffee estate owner shared with me: “The future is estate coffee, because cooperatives have so much waste and theft. In addition, farmers often can’t pay their kids’ school fees [with the profits]; certifications are expensive for the cooperatives.” As this estate owner said, the story of Kenyan coops has often highlighted its financial mismanagement: “how much money leaders take and don’t give to farmers and the overall lack of transparency.”

This lack of transparency was a refrain often repeated by many of my participants. This is among the key reasons why Regine Guion-Firmin has decided to work only with small estates that are less than ten hectares. As she explained to me: “I do this because I want transparency. I want to know that my money goes to the person I work with. The problem with coops is that they can make promises – farmers will bring cherries, they receive a slip of their amount of money for the year. Then, come back even years later: you can find a farmer with a bunch of slips and no



money! The coop can tell them, without reason, ‘your coffee was not good enough.’ It is an opaque system. It really stop me” (Guion-Firmin, personal interview, 2020). Regine was one of the only people in my study who was willing to go on the record with this much honesty in her experiences with cooperatives.

Several participants requested anonymity because of their negative experiences with cooperatives, sharing ways that women or youth faced discrimination. While some certified cooperatives do display signs that assert “no gender discrimination,” that is not necessarily the reality for women unless they own land, since land ownership is the condition for cooperative membership. As one small-holder coffee farmer told me about women pickers or farmers: “if her name is not on the cooperative list, she can only talk in the kitchen” (Deborah, interview 10 December 2019), meaning that a woman without cooperative membership does not have any rights or ‘power’ to talk outside of the domestic space.

There is also the challenge of the leadership, which mostly comprises older men in Kenya; based on my research participants and observations, cooperatives do not necessarily encourage the leadership of women or younger adults. Dr. Cecilia W. Kathurima, Coffee Quality Manager at the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) Coffee Research Institute, told me, as we were talking about who is “counted” as a coffee farmer, that to be considered a coffee farmer with a “cooperative you must have an identification & membership number” (Kathurima, personal interview, 2019). To get this number, you must own at least five acres of land. But as we will see in Chapter Four, gendered and class barriers hinder this for rural Kenyan women. Women have long been faced with restrictions for Kenyan cooperatives (Greesler & Tickel 2002:34-5), based in large part because of the requirement to own land in order to obtain membership (Carrington, personal interview, 13 Feb 2020).

While, according to the 2010 Constitution, the two-thirds gender rule is mandated to apply to all Kenyan institutions, including coffee cooperatives, this is not the reality on the ground. This may become a key actionable issue for organizations like the Association of Women in Coffee Industry (AWCI), the Kenya chapter of the International Women in Coffee Alliance (cf. Chapter Five). As the current AWCI president, Josphine Njoki Ndikwe, stated publicly on a recent webinar (cf. Appendix II) that a proposed bill on cooperatives is underway and that the Kenya chapter is working to include more women as part of their advocacy efforts for women in coffee. As she further explained in our interview: “You find that now the government agencies strive to have at least women represented in those boards, so [now some] women are coming into those boards. But for the cooperatives, especially because of how leadership is put in place, that is what the challenge is. Like I mentioned, we are patriarchal society. The cooperatives are run at the local level. So, implementing the general rule becomes quite a challenge at the ground level, compared to the government” (Ndikwe, personal interview, 6 December 2023).

As Josphine and I continued our discussion, I shared with her that every time I have been to a cooperative, I observe that – from who I meet of the leadership comprises older men above the ages of 60 or even 70, not even younger men, let alone women. I asked her if this is an accurate reflection of what's going on in Kenya coffee, to which she replied, “Yes, that’s accurate.” I asked her if this is partly why estates have more flexibility and openness, even to a researcher like me: “Yes, because there's more independence in the estates; people can form them at the family level. Some families have entrusted women to be the decision-makers and leaders of these estates. But when you compare to the cooperatives, like you've properly mentioned, we have an aged society membership. I think the last survey that was done, the

average age [of the cooperative leadership, men] was 65” (Ndikwe, personal interview, 6 December 2023).

This leads to another challenge for cooperatives that came up several times from my participants: the issue of “youth” involvement. While youth are perceived to be “more entrepreneurial and more educated than the old and poor farmers,” yet are not given the opportunity by their elders to prove their ability to manage more responsibility (Wairegi et al., 2018:197). Once again, an exception can be observed from the coffee estates. For example, in the case of Maguta Estate in Nyeri, near Mt. Kenya, David Maguta was 26 years old when he first took over his mother’s coffee estate, because she could no longer care for it. His estate produces desirable coffees that are well-regarded by specialty coffee buyers and roasters; it was even the coffee chosen by the 2020 Kenyan Barista Champion.<sup>28</sup> When I asked him about the difference between estates and cooperatives, he focused on the challenge for “youth”<sup>29</sup> in Kenya, because “youth are not in management of coops. It’s not possible for young people to be in leadership positions. Coops are old management; the systems are old and based on land requirements, so youth cannot obtain license requirements are such that you need to own five acres of land required to get the pulping license or to be in leadership” (personal interview, 16 December 2019). To make the situation even harder, “young farmers have difficulties in accessing credit through the cooperative as it is based on the amount of coffee delivered to the cooperative and previous year’s coffee prices. The young farmers may also have difficulties in

---

<sup>28</sup>This is based on my first-hand experience, as I have visited David’s estate several time with coffee buyers and roasters, both from Kenya and other international countries. I was a judge during the 2020 National Barista Championship in Kenya when the winner, Martin Shabaya, won the competition, using coffee from Mugata Estate.

<sup>29</sup>Among the most popular definitions is that used by the United Nations, youth is defined by “persons between the age of 15 and 24” (UNESCO 2018). However, variations across countries and continents exist, and even UN agencies differ in their age brackets when defining youth, with ending ages ranging between 24 and 35. The African Union defines youth as those who are ages 18 to 35 (USAID Feed the Future 2018; AU 2006:3).

accessing credit from banks and other financial institutions due to inadequate collateral” (Wairegi et al., 2018:197).

Finally, from my personal experiences as a North American researcher living and conducting my field work in Kenya, conducting field work at a cooperative proved impossible considering my own limitations and identities. Several Kenyan research participants in this study warned me about the difficulty of conducting field work at the coffee cooperatives, primarily due to lack of transparency about the working conditions of its members and the income generated from coffee. I was also warned that my ability to collect data would be more difficult, due to the cultural expectations for women who may not feel freedom to voice their opinions if their husbands or other male leaders are present. In addition, as a woman myself, to be able to conduct research I would need time and freedom, to live near such a community, where I would be welcomed to write about my findings. Despite my attempts and while I did visit some cooperatives, such hospitality was not afforded.

What I learned from my research participants in interviews was confirmed by my visits to several cooperatives in Kenya between 2020 and 2022, the names of which must remain anonymous in this dissertation, as none would go on the record with their name. During these visits, I never met a female “chairman,” or leader in any cooperative, and most often, I was on the visit as a guest of other coffee buyers or roasters. As Josphine aptly summarized: “You will find more women thriving in the estates compared to the cooperatives. There are a few cooperatives that have very strong women leadership, but they are very few exceptions. They're not the norm” (Ndikwe, personal interview, 6 December 2023). In a follow-up conversation with Sheila Agida in her Coffee Directorate office, I learned that there are now at least ten cooperatives that are run by women, many which she has visited. According to Sheila, in some

cases, “the women cooperatives are the opposite of men’s” (22 March 2024). When I asked what she meant by this, she reported to me, “I can assure you, from the moment you arrive to the cooperative society, the women in leadership will greet you, and you will see the difference. It is obvious. They maintain good cleanliness, even in their fermentation tanks and drying beds, and they really put things in order. They even maintain good records. Their coffees score high, and they get good prices from the auction” (22 March 2024).<sup>30</sup>

As Regine once questioned me: “Have you noticed how hard it is to go to a coop? And how easy it is to go to an estate?” She’s right. Visiting cooperatives is challenging and, in my case, has only happened when I was invited to join a buyer’s trip organized by Nairobi-based or international coffee buyers with long-term farmer relationships. In one cooperative visit in 2023, I did meet a female board member, but during the official meeting, which comprised approximately a dozen of her fellow cooperative leaders and members as well as approximately a dozen guests, she never once voiced her opinion to the group on any subject, and no man called upon her to do so.<sup>31</sup>

It remains an open question, if cooperatives are making efforts to change their criteria for membership or election on leadership boards, in order to encourage more inclusion? And even a woman is included as a leader, what will be the reception by its current leadership, to listen to her voice and address women’s concerns? This is also a challenge noted in the literature,

---

<sup>30</sup> This conversation on 22 March 2024 was a follow-up from our initial interview on 10 May 2019. After I finish my PhD, Sheila confirms that she will invite me to join her on her visits to these cooperatives later this year during harvest season, and perhaps the subject of women-led cooperatives in Kenya will become a future article. In both conversations, Sheila confirmed that the Coffee Directorate has not conducted any gender-focused research or collected any gender-aggregated data.

<sup>31</sup> This is consistent even in my other experiences in such meetings. As a female visitor, I have rarely been invited, or felt welcome, to speak (often I was the only woman in the room), and usually, if I was invited to give an introduction, I was only invited to do so after every man spoke first.

especially by Lyon in her eclectic studies on gender in coffee (Lyon 2008; 2019; Lyon et al., 2010; 2017; 2019).

These are among the reasons why for this study, I focus specifically Chepsangor Hills Coffee Estate in Nandi, supplemented with other voices of rural men and women, mostly from other coffee estates, as key informants, and research participants.

### **C. Domestic Consumption in Kenya**

Among its duties of data collection, the Coffee Directorate of Kenya has, in the last decade, been conducting studies on domestic consumption in Kenya;<sup>32</sup> however, to date, gender has not been a key variable considered. However, a recent study provides some key pre-COVID insights, as presented by Dr. Benson Apuoyo<sup>33</sup> at the African Fine Coffee Association Conference in October 2019.<sup>34</sup> In his speech, Mr. Apuoyo summarized that “in Kenya, we are struggling to increase domestic consumption and with the support of our partners we have increased some level of domestic coffee consumption, which is very much encouraged.” His presentation attributed this increase to the “government’s deliberate effort to promote domestic coffee consumption (youth in Kenyan universities and tertiary institutions-target); increased disposable income of the middle class; love for coffee; increased investment in coffee outlets.” He stated that Kenya’s domestic consumption of coffee is “5% of national production” (Apuoyo

---

<sup>32</sup> As one of the first studies on domestic consumption in Kenya, the Coffee Directorate collected data of factors affecting consumption in 2011 and 2012, to consider the factors used by Kenyan specialty coffee consumers when selecting specialty coffee shops. There were 450 respondents to a survey questionnaire, yet the study is outdated because there has been a marked increase in coffee shops and barista competitions in Kenya since 2012.

<sup>33</sup> At the time of this study, Dr. Apuoyo was the Market Research & Product Development Manager of the Kenya Coffee Directorate; now he is the acting director of the Coffee Directorate and my findings in this section derive from a combination of his talk in October 2019 and an informal video call that we conducted on February 29, 2024.

<sup>34</sup> I heard this presentation in person, titled, “Strategies to Promote Domestic Coffee Consumption in Africa, Case Study: Kenya,” in Zanzibar, October 2019 (cf. Appendix II). The study was conducted before COVID-19 hit Kenya in March 2020, and closed all restaurants and cafés. Since then, the Coffee Directorate has not published a new study, although Dr. Apuoyo noted on our phone call that an updated version is in progress for release in 2024. Many Kenyan cafés never reopened, or changed their business models, since government restrictions ceased in 2022, and many baristas or hospitality workers lost their jobs permanently. However, as a result of the study, two new cafés have been created and opened at Kenyan university, to promote domestic consumption among university students.

2019: 4), highlighting that there remains an “over reliance on export of green coffee in Kenya” with “over 95% of the Kenyan production is exported to various international markets as green coffee” (Apuoyo 2019: 18).

At no point in his presentation did he discuss the perspectives of farmers; the focus was on the urban centres of cafés, which, from 1977 when there were zero cafes, has increased to 278 in 2017 [128 in Nairobi (40% of all Kenya coffeehouses) and 21 in the port city of Mombasa (8%)] (Apuoyo 2019: 39). The study focused on strategies focused on beverage choices in these cafes, and the goal of the Coffee Directorate to increase coffee drinking by adding cafés to Kenya’s universities. There was no mention of gender, either in the study or during his presentation. The Coffee Year Book (2021-22) updated these numbers to confirm a significant increase in coffeehouses: 506 (KCD 2023:38).

However, in contrast to the study of the Coffee Directorate, at least one study in Kenya centred upon the gendered nature of drinking coffee (Ngeywo et al. 2016: 206). The study summarizes the issues:

Kenya has had low domestic consumption ranging from 3-7% for the last half a century. This has also been complexed with reduced production from late 80’s when the peak production was 130, 000 MT of clean coffee to the current average production of 47,000 MT. Ethiopia produces more coffee than Kenya but also consumes about 50% of its coffee, resulting to a per capita consumption of 2.4 kg per person per year, while in Kenya consumes it is 70g per person per year. Despite several initiatives by the Coffee Directorate and the government, the coffee drinking culture is yet to penetrate the culture of the average Kenyan consumer. (Ngeywo et al., 2016: 208)

The study concludes with this summary: “It is seen [to be] high class to [drink coffee when] coffee farming, a culture that was introduced and perpetuated by the Colonial era” and that “most of the women and poor youth have no access to information on how to prepare coffee as well as on the benefits of coffee drinking, majority of which are in the rural areas where coffee farming occurs” (Ngeywo et al. 2016: 211). In fact, in every visit I made to a coffee estate or cooperative in Kenya, I am usually served instant Nescafé. In Kenya, I have never been served the coffee from the estate or cooperative that I am visiting.

One of my research participants, Esther Otieno, confirmed the findings of the aforementioned study (Ngeywo et al., 2016), based her experience as a barista, trainer, and now founder and owner of a barista training school in Nairobi.<sup>35</sup> She had much to share about why, of the 2% of Kenyan coffee beans that remain in Kenya<sup>36</sup>, there is a long way to go before coffee-drinking comes to match tea drinking. Tea remains the hot beverage of choice for most Kenyans enjoyed regularly in the morning and throughout the day in both urban and rural areas. This is because it is inexpensive, readily available, and often considered by Kenyans as part of their “culture,” but it is more complex than a simple beverage (Otieno, personal interview, 31 January 2022). She gave a clear and passionate response when I asked her why Kenyans do not drink coffee:

The main reason is because of the colonial era. The negative link of colonialism and coffee, that’s number one. The colonial ruler who comes along and says, ‘you’re not allowed to drink coffee, you drink tea, coffee is for *us*.’ Coffee was for the colonial ruler, or only for *mzungu* [Kiswahili for ‘white people’]. Even for

---

<sup>35</sup> The training school is called Barista Pro, which she founded in 2014. She and her team now train dozens of baristas per year who seek jobs in the hospitality sector of Nairobi or Mombasa (hotels, restaurants, cafes). Esther has been involved as a sponsor and organizer of the annual National Barista Championships in Kenya.

<sup>36</sup> Based on my conversation with interim director, Kenyan Coffee Directorate, on 29 February 2024; cf. note 31.



me, people are shocked when they see me, a black Kenyan woman, drinking coffee, teaching, owning this school. They are amused, they'll say, "You drink coffee as a *mzugu* drinks."

Number two: People don't know this coffee! Even if they decide to give it a chance, they'll go to a coffee shop and have horrific experiences. 'The coffee is bitter, horrible,' they say, 'I'm never going to drink coffee now!' When students begin here, they don't drink coffee, so I ask them at first, 'why not?' And they'll always say, 'it's too expensive and it's bitter and I don't know how to make it myself.' So, the main reason is the colonial era, and second, they don't know how to brew it. And this is the reason why I have a barista school. (Otieno, personal interview, 31 January 2022).

Esther's viewpoint was collaborated by other research participants of this study. This ongoing challenge of domestic coffee consumption in Kenya is among the reasons why I include Point Zero Café as one solution to address the gendered coffee paradox (cf. Chapter Five).

#### **D. Coffee and Gender in Nairobi and Beyond**

The length and complexity of Kenya's coffee chain may be considered detrimental to Kenya's coffee sales worldwide. The state continues to be deeply involved in coffee sector governance; one anonymous research participants in this study told me, "people die for coffee politics in Kenya." As mentioned in previous sections, coffee remains managed through governmental agencies—the Kenya Coffee Board, Coffee Directorate, and the auction. Several research participants who are green coffee buyers in Kenya, roasters in Kenya, or roasters who have or do buy coffee from Kenya, told me about the specific difficulties of buying coffee from Kenya. These coffee buyers, roasters, and Q graders include some living or working in full-time

Kenya from countries ranging from France, England, and the United States—as well as those whom I interviewed as they visited Kenya from Sweden, Germany, England, and the United States (personal interviews with Vick 2019 and 2020; Guion-Firmin 2019 and 2020; Nordby 2020; Schackman 2020; Doshi 2020; Carrington 2020; Prime 2021; Lindemann 2020; Anonymous 2021; Lalonde 2023). In particular, the complexities of the auction, as well as political and logistical difficulties to buy coffee “directly” from farmers, is among the reasons why some Global North traders and roasters may choose Ethiopian, Ugandan, or Rwanda beans to roast and sell as their single-origin African coffee, rather than choosing Kenya.

Those who do continue to purchase from Kenya are those with long-standing relationships with farmers, exporters, and importers. As a result, some international buyers and “many large commercial roasters have all but stopped using Kenyan coffee in favour of cheaper alternatives” (Carrington 2019:13), but my interviews with buyers and roasters did not identify price as a key hindrance: rather, it is the continued difficulties of the supply chain, especially with cooperatives and the auction (Koss 2022a). Kenya is praised for offering high-quality, desirable coffee beans, but the system provides less certainty for buyers and roasters (Carrington 2019:13-4). Certainly Kenya, along with Ethiopia and Rwanda, benefits from the premiumization of its coffees in the specialty market; as a 2018 example: specialty Kenya coffee brought a median FOB (free-on-board) price at \$3.23/ pound (lb), compared to the 2018 average C price of \$1.09/lb (Carrington 2019:14).

Coffee also provides livelihoods for workers in urban centres in Kenya. Kenya’s capital city provides many men and women with leadership and business opportunities in the coffee sector.<sup>37</sup> Kenya is also a vital coffee hub for East African coffee in general, because Nairobi is a

---

<sup>37</sup>While I interviewed many urban women in coffee, this dissertation focuses on women’s challenges at the farm level of the coffee supply chain.

central logistics hub with dozens of warehouses for green coffee. In 2021, the capital city of Nairobi boasted 501 “coffee houses”—far more than any other African city—although domestic consumption remains less than 5% of Kenya’s total production (Apuoyo 2019; ICO 2019: 23; KDC 2023:38). Kenya’s coastal city of Mombasa is the major international port that not only exports Kenyan coffee, but other East African coffees to North America, Europe, and Asia and around the world (Hussain et al., 2020:43).

Nairobi is also important as a hub for global development and research institutions in Africa, many who work on coffee projects. Many agencies locate their African headquarters in Nairobi, including intergovernmental organizations such as UN Women (based in New York city) or research institutions like the Stockholm Environmental Institute (based in Stockholm). What scholars have critiqued as the “NGO-ization of feminism” is evident throughout Kenya as a country and particularly in Nairobi as its capital. This critique began in the 1990s in reference to the bureaucratic boom and professionalism of NGOs (Lang 1997; Alvarez 1999; Hearn 1998; Guenther 2011), which may have contributed to the diminishing effectiveness of grassroots and more radical calls for social transformation in the global South. Sonia Alvarez (2009) defines “NGOization” as “national and global neo-liberalism’s active promotion and official sanctioning of particular organizational forms and practices among feminist organizations and other sectors of civil society” (Alvarez 2009: 176). Lang (1997) notes this occurs when “social movement organizations become primary service oriented rather than advocacy oriented (Lang 1997).

In Nairobi, for example, the “NGO-isation” is evident in sectors ranging from health, education, and agriculture, among many others. With more than 11,200 registered NGOs, many are centred on women’s issues, women’s rights, and other social services including healthcare (Mitullah 2020:167; Karuti & Mitullah 2007). Dozens of non-governmental organizations have

offices in Nairobi and provide services in the coffee sub-sector, including agronomy and gender training by non-profits such as Solidaridad, TechnoServe, FairTrade Africa, Rainforest Alliance, and Catholic Relief Services.

Such NGO-ization became even more prominent after 1985, the year that marked the end of the “UN Decade for Women” (which began with the Mexico City launch in 1975) and became a catalyst for more women's NGOs, growing numbers of professional feminists focused on neoliberal gender mainstreaming, and feminist governance – all which had implications both for class and racial lines within various feminisms. Nairobi holds an esteemed place in women’s history as it was the location for the historic women’s conference in 1985. Thousands of women around the world gathered in Nairobi, including renowned scholar and activist Angela Y. Davis, who writes about the experience of attending the conference in her essay “Finishing the Agenda.” There she highlights that the Nairobi conference confirmed that “the international epoch of conscious challenges to the age-old oppression of male supremacy had only just beg[un]” and that the global, multiracial women at the conference “had finally created a firm foundation—but only a foundation—for a more influential and more politically mature international women’s movement” (Davis 1990: 110).

Despite the auspicious history of this vibrant movement to end discrimination toward women, and despite decades-long justice work accomplished by Kenyan women that enacted gender equality into the 2010 Constitution (Kabira et al., 2018; Moghadam 2005; Baraza 2018), gender parity has not been accomplished in Kenya (Mitullah 2020:164, 167). Kenya’s form of pervasive patriarchy is noted by Kenyan scholars (Mitullah 2020; Kabira et al., 2018; Kinyanjui 2015, 2018), perhaps most poetically as a “web of patriarchy” (Kabira 2018:7). Many of my research participants shared stories of oppressive cultural contexts, where women have little

decision-making control over land, income, their household, or their bodies (cf. Chapter Four), but requested anonymity.

Patriarchal culture and associated practices continue to subject women to deeply discriminatory norms (Mitullah 2020:170), a fact noted by other scholars when applied to the coffee (Imron & Satrya 2019:217). In Kenya, patriarchal structures remain in many of Kenya's policies and practices, even identified as "patriarchal" in some of its own country reports (ICO 2019:13). In 2007, Kenya had the lowest number of female representatives in its national parliament of any African country (9.8%); in comparison, Rwanda had 56.3% female representatives (World Bank 2007). Especially after 2010, an ongoing gap remains notable, despite the achievements of the 2010 Constitution that addresses women's rights and the two-thirds gender law. While these have encouraged broader political participation by women, many gendered discriminations have not been remedied in practice (Kabira & Kameri-Mbote 2018; Kabira et al., 2018; Mitullah 2007) (cf. Chapter Four).

When I asked Esther Otieno – a "city girl who was born and bred in Nairobi" – about her thoughts on the 2010 Constitution's gaps between policy and practice, she replied: "It's there, yes, the law has provided a certain number of positions. But, in the government, women are not always showing up. What are we supposed to do? The government is saying: 'We have provided this law, and we want to give you this position.' But women don't want it! Women need confidence and show up" (Otieno, personal interview, 31 January 2022).

In 2023, there are 47 elected female Members of Parliament out of a total of 290 seats (Kenya Parliament n.d.). While in some areas, minimal gender parity has been advanced in Kenya, yet in others, there are clear achievements accomplished by women. This is especially evident in Kenya judicial system; for example, in the Kenya Supreme Court, the Honorable

Chief Justice Martha K. Koome, assumed office in 2021 as the Chief Justice and President of the Supreme Court of Kenya, and is the first woman to hold this office. Her Vice President of the Supreme Court of Kenya is also a woman: the Honorable Lady Justice Philomena Mbete Mwilu, who was appointed in 2016 as the 3rd Deputy Chief Justice and VP.<sup>38</sup> Considering these advancements and achievements in the judicial realm, one can hope to see similar gender advancements in agriculture, especially in coffee.

## **1.6 Theoretical Approach and Methodology**

This study builds upon the work of an interdisciplinary group of scholars, writers, and activists from political science, anthropology, women's studies, and other social science disciplines.<sup>39</sup> As such, I use feminist political economy as my theoretical approach to analyze the intersections of the political, economic, and social worlds, and the ways in which power and resources are distributed both historically and in the contemporary case of the global coffee industry with a specific focus on the Republic of Kenya. As a feminist study, this dissertation explores connections between market and domestic relations, particularly the ways in which global supply chains, such as coffee, perpetuate an invisibility of those who remain at the production level, such as rural women. This dissertation focuses on gender as the key variable, because that is the variable that my research participants and the literature focuses upon. However, this study remains informed by an intersectional feminist lens, and even as I also acknowledge class and socio-economic dynamics, ethnicity, race, marital status, age, and education, as among the key intersectional identities that may contribute to women's

---

<sup>38</sup>For the list of Supreme Court Judicial appointments, see <https://judiciary.go.ke/category/supreme-court-judges/>.

<sup>39</sup>My research is authorized by two research licenses: Canada Research license (REB File #19-024) and Kenya Research License from the National Commission Science, Technology & Innovation (#15Y6228458).

discrimination. Exploring these dynamics is often omitted in the coffee literature (my theory and sources are further cited and explained in Chapter Two).

In doing so, I draw upon the interdisciplinary work of various social science scholars as a model of how to apply a feminist analysis of Kenya's coffee sector (especially evident from the numerous contributions of anthropologist Sarah Lyon on gender and coffee, see Chapters Two and Four), as well as inspiration of a gap to fill, because many studies overlooked the gender gaps and vital labour of women in coffee. In the area of historical, feminist political economy, this study draws upon the non-coffee-specific work of Mohanty (1998, 2003), Hickel (2014, 2017, 2018), Boserup (1970), and Rodney (1972). In the area of coffee studies, I draw upon scholarly books and articles by Stoleke (1998); Fowler-Salamini (1994, 2003), and Kourian (2003). In political economy, my study is directly fueled by the ways in which the vital political contributions of Daviron & Ponte (2005), Bates (1997), and Talbot (2004) remained almost completely silent about women and the gender gaps in coffee. My literature review in Chapter Two derives insights from all these scholars and others such as Fridell (2011, 2014) and Crenshaw (1991).

Canadian feminist Isabella Bakker, as one early voice who noticed the congruence between feminism and political economy, argues for the link between the two disciplines, because "both feminism and political economy understand power as a fundamental category situated within a historical and materialist context" (1989:99), because "feminism can benefit from the developed analysis within political economy of how social relations are conditioned by economic structures and processes" (Bakker 1989:99). Because coffee is involved in complex processes, both global and national, political economy, with a feminist lens, is best suited to my study, because as I look at the gendered coffee paradox and the ways women are essential to

coffee's global labour force, the divisions within this labour force based on gender in the context of Kenya, and the continued invisibility of women who also, paradoxically, play a central, yet too often invisible role in agricultural commodities such as coffee.

To consider all these complexities in a Kenyan context, intersectional feminism helped me to try to avoid the “analytic traps” that are too often enacted by “western feminisms” in the production of “the ‘third world difference’” (Mohanty 2003:63-4, 270). My work presupposes that, when discussing gendered inequities, “historicizing and locating political agency is a necessary alternative to formulations of the ‘universality’ of gendered oppression” (2003:107). An intersectional feminist approach offers one such one “necessary alternative” that I see given the diversity and complexity of historically unjust forces of the global coffee industry. Lawyer and professor Kimberlé Crenshaw created the term “Intersectionality” in 1989 (Crenshaw 1991) to label the layers of discrimination faced by African American women in the United States and bring attention to the “triple oppression” faced by “Blacks, women and members of the working class” (Yuval-Davis 2006: 193-4). Originally centred on intersections between race, class, and gender, Intersectionality has since expanded to include sexuality, education, nationality, among others—contribute to multiple forms of exclusion and/or discrimination. The term is now used in many disciplines to understand bias and prejudice, from education to International Development Studies, but it is rarely applied in the coffee literature (Nunes et al., 2022; Koss 2022b), a point further discussed in Chapter Two.

I used a combination of qualitative research methods—primarily based on documentary evidence and semi-structured in-person interviews—because of the dozens of actors and stakeholders involved in moving coffee from seed to port in Kenya's supply chain. Due to the sensitive nature of gender issues, and the need for time and trust to exist between the researcher



and the research participant, I needed open-ended and flexible interviews to help me investigate the layers of power embedded in this chain, and to include voices from women (Newman & White 2012:6) from small-holder farms, most of who are linked with, or manage, Kenyan estates. To “fully appreciate the complexity of gender” (Mitullah 2020:166), in-depth conversations in the form of open-ended, flexible qualitative interviews were best suited to the kind of understanding I sought for this study.

This dissertation is based on original field work and archival research in Kenya. I obtained my Kenya Research License authorized by Kenya’s National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation, during an initial two-week trip, from 20 February to 2 March 2019, from Canada to Kenya. My Kenyan research permit was authorized for one year, February 2019 through February 2020, during which time most formal interviews took place, with some follow-up interviews taking place between 2021-2023, both in Kenya and occasionally via Zoom, where I needed to fill in some gaps since the original research proposal. In February 2019, I began my role as Research Associate at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Nairobi,<sup>40</sup> and soon thereafter, began conducting formal and semi-formal interviews. My primary field work was accomplished during 19 months of living in Kenya, from February 2019 to August 2020. In addition, I returned to Kenya in January and February 2022 on a five-week trip. Since August 2022, I have been living in Nairobi full-time, from where I revise and complete this dissertation study in March and April 2024.

The first aspect of my multi-pronged research plan, focused on government actors, including documentary analysis of Kenya’s colonial coffee history from archival and government documents in Kenya. Since the Kenyan coffee sector comprises dozens of governmental actors, I

---

<sup>40</sup>No compensation from any African institution or any individual was given to me for this research.

visited, sometimes more than once, several intuitions to both witness the activities there and interview key actors, as well as key stakeholders. These included the Coffee Directorate; the Nairobi Coffee Exchange (NCE); and the Coffee Research Institute, one of several official institutes of the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO). Along with secondary, academic sources and industry reports, my research draws upon primary sources that include government documents from archival research at the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi, Kenya; the Dag Hammarskjöld Library at the United Nations Headquarters in New York city, New York, USA; and the John F. Kennedy Presidential library in at the Kennedy Museum in Boston, Massachusetts, USA.

Second, I engaged in participant observation at several global, regional, and national gatherings focused on coffee and/or gender policy from 2019 to 2023. During these years, I made several trips relevant to this research from Kenya, including trips to visit coffee farms in Rwanda and Ethiopia, and to conferences in Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Greece, and Italy where, in each case, I was a conference speaker or panelist (cf. Appendix II). My objective in data collection at these global conferences and workshops was to listen and analyze the discourse of colonialism, post-colonialism, feminism, and gender equity. In addition to hours of informal conversations at conferences, I conducted several semi-structured interviews with state actors, industry leaders, scholars, non-profit administrators, cooperative managers, farmers, or roasters.

Third, I conducted key informant individual or group interviews centered on learning about the gender challenges experienced by farmers in the Kenyan coffee sector. I conducted 95 one-on-one interviews; 12 interviews in duos or trios (total of 26 people); and one focus group with 42 female farmers in Nandi county; therefore, 163 people are included in this study. Several interviews included two or more follow-up conversations in person, on Zoom, or by WhatsApp.

At the farm level, I conducted qualitative semi-structured group interviews, focus groups, or open-ended informal interviews (Mikkelsen 2005: 171; Scott & Gardner 2011) with the goal to hear from the voices of coffee managers and farmers. As the average age of coffee growers and farmers is 60 years old in Kenya (Kieyah 2016: 14), I utilized purposeful and snowball sampling to include a diversity of gender, age, marital status, and experiences (Newman 2006: 223-4). Most of my participants specifically asked me to use their real name; any pseudonyms are clearly noted if quoted within the study and/or marked “anonymous” in Appendix I. To distinguish between my research participants and my textual analysis, this study uses first names when referring to anyone I interviewed, after first identifying them with both first and surname.

My case study includes interviews and focus groups conducted at various coffee communities in Kenya, in the counties of Nyeri, Kiambu, Meru, Embu, Kisii, Kericho, Nandi, Kisumu, and Trans-Nzoia. As mentioned, the most prominently featured estate in this study is Chepsangor Hills Coffee Estate in Nandi, Kenya. When I first saw its director, Dr. Rosebella Langat, she stood tall in a navy business suit, confidently poised on stage at the “Green to Grow” conference hosted at the World Agroforestry Centre in Nairobi in November 2019. Her speech articulated the sustainable, gender-friendly focus of her newly formed coffee company. Ultimately, I chose to focus my case study on Chepsangor, in part, because Rosebella invited me to visit her in January 2020, which I did, and continued to welcome transparency through my repeated trips to Nandi and our multiple conversations. I am grateful for her, and her husband’s, repeated hospitality, and their support of my doctoral studies.

Unless conducted on a farm, most interviews were conducted in Nairobi roasteries or coffee shops, or in Mombasa, including at some conferences or workshops listed in Appendix II. I travelled to all farms at my own expense. Obtrusive, non-disguised observation methods were

used as I employed direct and indirect observation to witness the gendered divisions and interactions in coffee production (Silvestri 2012). Key informant interviews centered on women business owners in Kenya and rural coffee farmers (referred to as “growers” in Kenya). While women are the focus of my research, I also included men’s voices to discern nuanced perspectives (Cornwall 2011; Mikkelsen 2005: 172). Because most owners and business leaders are men, interviewing women only would not have yielded a complete picture of either challenges or solutions in Kenya’s coffee sector.

In Kenya, coffee is a crop that excites both enthusiastic debate and controversial opinions: I cannot count the number of times someone’s eyes lit up when they learned that I was not in Kenya as a tourist, but as a researcher examining coffee. Many spontaneous conversations happened in taxis or Ubers on long road trips to coffee communities. Unexpected debates and discussions took place in many of Nairobi’s coffee houses, or on the *shamba* (Kiswahili for “farm”). When women learned about my research, often their reaction included “please tell our story,” with my promise that I intended sincerely to do so. Learning introductory Kiswahili was crucial to enhance my credibility, especially in spontaneous conversations, as was my willingness to share part of my own life stories and experiences of single motherhood.

A great deal of turbulence has taken place, not only in the world and in Kenya, but also in my own life since I first started my field work in February 2019. During the time when I was attempting to extend my Kenyan research license (which expired Feb 2020), the first COVID-19 case was publicly announced on Friday 13 March 2020, and all government and travel operations shut down the following week of 16 March, some within a single business days’ notice. My research plan was significantly affected by travel cancelations, a strict and varied Nairobi curfew, and other restrictions. I had a series of trips to western Kenya, and a follow-up focus group

planned for April 2020 at Chepsangor Hills Coffee, which I was unable to take due to travel restrictions both in and out of Nairobi. Short trips scheduled were also cancelled due to COVID-19, included trips or coffee conferences in Ethiopia, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Africa. This research study does not address concerns during the period of COVID-19. Unable to then renew my research permit, I had to leave Kenya and return to Canada.

Due to my financial challenges, my family responsibilities, and family tragedies, this dissertation study was repeatedly delayed. I returned to Canada in August 2020, while still hoping to be able to return to Kenya within a few months. As COVID travel restrictions continued to fluctuate, that became impossible. Then, the summer before I planned to return to Kenya, my beloved mother died unexpectedly in our Los Angeles hometown. When in August 2022, I was able to return to Kenya with the purpose of finishing my dissertation, several factors had changed: most notably, a new President, William H. Ruto elected in August 2022, and his opponent, former Vice President Raila Odinga, would not concede the election, leading to a series of protests and political and economic unrest that lasted several months.

During COVID-19, the Nairobi Auction updated itself, and rather than meeting for its decades-long tradition of Tuesdays, it became digital. In Nairobi, all cafés closed, dozens for good, with even takeaway service limited. Those with jobs as baristas – more men than women – or in the hospitality and tourist sectors suffered dearly without reliable income, and barista training centres (such as Esther Otieno's) have never fully recovered from the loss. By the time I returned to Kenya in August 2022, in the coffee sector, things seemed to be steadily improving as the price of coffee was steadily rising, new cafés in Nairobi were opening or reopening, and Kenya's barista champion from 2020 had performed better than any other in its history, earning a

spot in the top five of the World Barista Championship.<sup>41</sup> Kenya's coffee sector seemed to be thriving again, but there continue to be many debates, upheavals, and uncertainties regarding coffee policy under the new administration, a point that is worthy of further investigation, but beyond the scope of this study.

Now as I finish writing this dissertation from Kenya in March 2024, it remains to be seen if any of Uhuru Kenyatta's reforms will be adopted, or will Kenya's new leadership create their own? Either way, will gender equity be at the forefront of the debate? Or will Kenya continue to divert its attention in the coffee sub-sector on the growth of coffee volumes, the high cost of fertilizer, the failure of some coffee varieties to combat coffee leaf rust, or the lack of available certified seedlings? While all these complaints are valid, I believe that Kenya's continued overlooking of the specific needs of rural women in Kenya's coffee sector is a lost opportunity—both for Kenyan coffee at large and for Kenyan families in particular. Unless Kenya addresses the challenges for women – no matter how many climate-resilient varieties may be available – I predict that Kenyan coffee may not have anyone to harvest coffee.

### **1.7 Overview of Dissertation Study**

This study is divided into five chapters and a conclusion. This current Chapter One introduces the argument of this study and the problem statement, offering a brief explanation of, what I name as, the “gendered coffee paradox.” I provide a global overview of the coffee industry, in order to provide the background required to understand the complexity of the Kenyan context, as well as a gendered analysis of Kenya's coffee supply chain, including a comparison of the estate vs. cooperative systems that analyzes some gender dynamics and a discussion of domestic

---

<sup>41</sup>See note 27 in this chapter.

consumption in Kenya. The chapter ends with a review of my theoretical approach, methodology, and my author context.

Chapter Two is this study's Literature Review. It comprises two distinct parts: Part One: 'We Thought of Including Women in Coffee': Social Science Coffee Literature (1989-2021) and Part Two: 'A Big Agenda, not just in Kenya, but Around the World': Literature of Empowerment. The division is essential because the Literature Review covers a broad range of interdisciplinary literature, from Political Economy Literature, Postcolonial Feminist Literature, and Literature of Supply Chains with a focus on Gender and Coffee. Part Two includes a review of the Literature of Intersectional Feminism and Coffee; Coffee Industry Reports on Gender Empowerment and Intersectionality; and Coffee Studies Social Science Scholarship: Empowerment for Women in Coffee. Chapter Two demonstrates that despite the breath of all this available literature, to date, scholars and industry professionals have overlooked the distinctive gendered links between colonialism and gender inequities in the context of Kenya's coffee industry. Chapter Two more deeply examines the gendered coffee paradox, highlighting key aspects of the paradox as inspired by feminist social sciences who focused their field work on gender and coffee.

My historical analysis begins in Chapter Three, where I examine Kenya's colonial history from a feminist political economy lens. Coffee's history begins in Ethiopia, so I begin with a short description of as the birthplace of *coffea arabica*. I then turn attention to Kenya, what was once called the British East Africa Protectorate under British colonial domination. I trace coffee's gendered history through World War II and the Mau Mau movement in the 1950s, which led to Kenya's independence from colonialism in 1963. This chapter analyzes coffee's historic roots of the gendered division of labour in coffee often by showing the ways women were either absent

from decision-making or exploited under colonialism. This chapter sets the stage for Chapter Four's focus on ongoing gender gaps as part of the gendered coffee paradox.

Chapter Four showcases what has, and has not changed, for women since Kenya's independence. This chapter begins with the first Jamhuri Day (Kenya Independence Day) in 1963 and highlights several key coffee moments in Kenya's history, such as the enforcement of the International Coffee Agreement in 1963 and its subsequent collapse in 1989; the emergence of Structural Adjustment Programmes in the 1980s and 1990s; and the creation of Kenya's Coffee Act of 2001 – showing that in these three examples, both international and Kenyan political apparatuses ignored women's participation and omitted their needs. This chapter briefly discusses Kenya's new Constitution, ratified in 2010, the first to legally grant gender equality in Kenya in a variety of political and social arenas. Yet when it comes to coffee, many gendered challenges remain. Kenyan women have much farther to go before parity in land ownership, wage disparity, and time poverty will be a reality, especially for rural coffee farmers. I then seek to demonstrate ways that my case study of Chepsangor Hills Coffee, an estate in Nandi county, western Kenya, both does, and does not, address the gendered coffee paradox.

The final Chapter examines three solutions in Kenya that emerged through my field work. Chapter Five reveals that despite the challenges, Kenyan women, alongside global and national partners, including Kenyan men, seek to address these challenges with solutions and opportunities that will work in their specific context by joining together with other groups, international, national, and local, to effect their own empowerment. These include the International Women's Coffee Alliance; the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology; and Point Zero Café in Nairobi. This chapter also suggests an alternative to



neoliberal feminist “Empowerment” initiatives in coffee might be the concept of “Accompaniment.”

My conclusion provides an analysis of the popular addition of “women’s-produced coffee” from the last decade in specialty coffee. I suggest key implications of this study, both for Kenya’s coffee sub-sector, and for Global North actors, considering some ways the gendered coffee paradox might be areas for future study and action.

### **1.8 Author’s Context**

I was hospitably received by the University of Nairobi into a vibrant community of scholars and practitioners as a Research Associate at the renowned Institute for Development (IDS) Studies, established in 1964 and one of the oldest institutions for development studies globally. IDS provided two opportunities to present my work publicly: once in person in 2019 and once via Zoom during COVID-19 in 2021. I am especially grateful to my mentor, Professor Winnie Mitullah, for her constructive criticism, encouragement, and time.

As I examine the way discourse constructs fantasy and shapes reality, I take Ilan Kapoor’s admonition to heart: that we from the Global North must “gaze upon ourselves before we investigate the Other” (Kapoor 2005:1204). I acknowledge the reality of something Edward Said highlights in *Orientalism*: that “both learned and imaginative writing are never free, but are limited in their imagery, assumptions, and intentions” (Said 1978/2003: 202). As a historian of contemporary Africa, scholar Frederick Cooper asks a poignant question: “how can one study colonial societies, keeping in mind—but not being paralyzed by—the fact that tool of analysis we use emerged from the history we are trying to examine?” (Cooper 2005:4). The power dynamics inherent within any research project, including mine, did at times, paralyze me – as well as my own participation in unequal capitalist relations (Spivak 1988; Kapoor 2005; West

2012). I was, and remain, mindful of my positionality as a white woman, born and educated in North America, and I am also grateful to be the first member of my extended family on both sides to earn a graduate degree or who has ever travelled to or lived in Africa. Mohanty's and Spivak's critiques of white feminisms keep me humble, as I seek to listen and learn from all my research participants who trusted me with their stories, time, hospitality, and memories.

Kenya depends on coffee, and Kenyan coffee depends on women. Yet this study highlights the colonial and contemporary obstruction of women's voices that continues to serve as barriers to the celebratory achievement of Kenya's 2010 Constitution—this is also part of the gendered coffee paradox. Despite my study's contribution, I acknowledge that I do not speak for Kenyan women in coffee—as Rosalind Morris asserts regarding Spivak's work: “The hundreds of shelves of well-intentioned books claiming to speak for or give voice to the subaltern cannot ultimately escape the problem of translation in its full sense. Subalternity is less an identity than what we might call a predicament, but this is true in a very odd sense. For, in Spivak's definition, it is the structured place from which the capacity to access power is radically obstructed” (Morris & Spivak 2010: 8). For myself as an academic and a coffee professional, my contribution is demonstrated by the ways I listened to voices of living women, doing my best to showcase some of their thoughts, feelings, and experiences as recounted to me. In doing so, I tried to make sense of a way to look at the historic legacies and contemporary challenges of why women's voices remain, to use Spivak's term, not only obscured but “obstructed” due to the gendered coffee paradox. Kenyan women are resilient, determined, and creative with strong voices. While many women can, and do, speak out for themselves in a variety of ways, I am grateful that dozens of Kenyan women and men trusted me to share their stories and expressed their excitement to be part of my dissertation project. As a researcher, my goal is to demonstrate curiosity, awareness,

patience, and sensitivity for the complexity of each community and each person who invited me to visit. Still, my educational background, combined with travel and long periods of living in Kenya since 1994—particularly the period of concentrated field work research in Kenya for 19 months between February 2019 and August 2020—as well as my return since August 2022 with my younger son—as well as the various jobs and roles I have worked in the coffee industry since 1995—give me a particular lens by which to examine the coffee industry. Even as I critique the gaps of gender empowerment in the current coffee industry, I must acknowledge some important steps forward have been taken by the global coffee industry in general, and the Kenya coffee sub-sector in particular. Among the surprises during this study: I never encountered any coffee professional or farmer, of any gender or nationality, who did not readily confess the reality of the gender gaps in coffee. Most were delighted when they understood that I was writing about these issues, and they wanted to contribute their honest thoughts and time. I hope that my study will contribute to advancing equity for people of all genders and identities.

On a more personal note, I am often asked how I became interested in coffee. The answer rests in large part upon my experiences as a native Californian, where I was influenced as a teenager by the writings of John Steinbeck (1902-68), particularly *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and the ways in which political and economic forces shaped one family in California. Also, César Chávez (1927-1993), who grew up as a migrant farm worker in California and became the leader of the non-violent grape boycotts (1965-70), is a key influence, as he once proclaimed that “the fight is not about the grapes or lettuce; it’s about the people.” In a similar spirit, my research in Kenya, and all my writing and work in coffee, is about much more than the coffee; it’s about the people—more specifically, about the women.

One aim of my dissertation is to awaken the coffee industry to become more “alert” to the “machinations” of ideology (Kapoor 2005:1205), especially that which gives an illusion of empowering others but may not. If my research contributes toward coffee’s supply chain becoming more sustainable and equitable for all its members, then my efforts will not be in vain—especially if it enhances the possibility for women, children, and our future generations—not only to survive or obtain a fair price from coffee—but to flourish.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

If the words we choose reflect our thoughts, the word “empowerment,” most popularly juxtaposed with equality for women, is problematic, because it has lost its transformational edge (Cornwall & Rivas 2005:404; Calvès 2009: IX). Rarely is the term “empowerment” itself defined on international development websites, a claim that is, unfortunately, often true for reports and websites of specialty coffee organizations, programs, and businesses, even those who claim that the goal of their work is specifically to “empower women.”

Chapter One introduces the argument of my dissertation and the problem statement regarding the challenges for women in coffee in Kenya. I introduce the concept of “the gendered coffee paradox” in the global coffee chain. I offer a gendered analysis of Kenya’s coffee supply chain from farm to cup, demonstrating the contemporary gendered division of labour and the complexities of Kenya’s contemporary coffee sub-sector. I explore the global context for the production and consumption of coffee, a multi-billion-dollar industry that relies upon the labour of rural farmers in the Global South, specifically women, and fuels foreign exchange dollars in East Africa. While Kenya provides less than 1% of the world’s coffee volume, an estimated 700-800,000 Kenyans work in the coffee sector. Chapter One emphasizes the continued importance of coffee for the Republic of Kenya, revealing the complex layers of the political economy of

coffee of Kenyan coffee, “as complicated as its own soil,” especially since more than 90% of Kenyan coffee beans are exported to Europe, North America, or Asia. Given the scant data of women in coffee, both globally and in Kenya, my research contributes to the growing movement toward gender equity in specialty coffee.

Political economy and coffee discourse needs to take feminist and postcolonial theories into account, not as add-ons, but as integral revisions in the intersectional ways to consider both challenges and the solutions for the twenty-first century coffee industry and all its people, including all women. Despite international development rhetoric that focuses on empowering women, coffee remains a “man’s crop” in contemporary Kenya. In the current supply chain, some men get paid and yet do not work, and too often, women perform the labour yet sometimes do not get paid (cf. Chapter Four) – this is a key feature of the gendered coffee paradox.

This background in Chapter One sets the stage for Chapter Two, which provides a critical literature review of the scholarly, governmental, non-governmental, and industry coffee literature, as well as some highlights from the literatures of political economy and intersectional feminist studies.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### **‘The Talk Is So Sweet but the Action Is Not There’: Literature Review**

#### 2.1 Overview of Chapter

On the day in December 2020 that I arranged an interview in a Nairobi office with a smallholder coffee farmer, whom I will call Ruth, who also held leadership position in Kenya’s coffee industry, she surprised me by bringing a friend, another smallholder female farmer, whom I’ll call Deborah.<sup>42</sup> Ruth had access to networks and trainings that her friend did not – which is why Ruth wanted to include Deborah in our conversation.<sup>43</sup> Deborah was eager to share her voice and opinions with someone who would listen. After I explained that I might write about her in my dissertation study, she was enthusiastic, yet both women were worried about the implications of their honesty. Promising them both anonymity in my study, this interview was among the most honest and lively of my duo interviews, since together both women shared their passion for coffee, as well as their grievances with me, many which centred on political challenges they face specifically as women. Among their key complaints of Kenya’s governance, Ruth said, “The talk is so sweet, but the action is not there” (interview 10 December 2020).

This literature review is divided into two key sections: (1) Part One examines some social science literature from political economy, feminism, postcolonial, and global supply chain literature of coffee, and (2) Part Two considers the feminist, “empowerment” literature of coffee, from both scholarly and industry voices, as well as a review of the limited literature of

---

<sup>42</sup> When I use a pseudonym to name an anonymous research participant, it will be clear from the context such as here with these two women, “Ruth” and “Deborah,” and later in this chapter, with “Paul.”

<sup>43</sup> It was a common occurrence among my duo and trio interviews, where I witnessed one Kenyan woman of a higher socio-economic status with urban or international networks, intentionally include another Kenyan woman to uplift her and encourage her speaking out or her learning. While I did not ask for details about each woman’s socio-economic situation, the interview revealed that XX had more education, more coffee trees, and more connections in Kenya’s coffee industry, among the reasons why she wanted to bring her friend, who had not experienced any leadership positions and may have had fewer opportunities to afford transportation to Nairobi (cf. Chapter Four for other examples).

intersectional feminism as applied to coffee. These sets of literatures set the foundation for my understanding of the ways in which a “gendered coffee paradox” exists, which the current neoliberal rhetoric of “empowerment in coffee” neither addresses the structural injustice roots of the issues (colonial, capitalism, neoliberalism), nor does it consider the intersectional needs of women in coffee.

## 2.2 Introduction

In April 2015, I attended my first global specialty coffee conference, held in Washington state, USA. Since then, I have attended dozens of coffee conferences from Seattle to Kigali—as well as dozens of virtual webinars and meetings—where leaders in coffee industry talk about “the market” as if it were a living, breathing entity—however invisible. Beginning in fall 2017, when I started my doctoral degree in International Development Studies, I heard a repeated refrain about “the invisible hand” that guides modern economics, according to Scottish philosopher Adam Smith, in his classic text of political economy, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776).<sup>44</sup>

But the intellectual labour that Smith used to write his renowned treatise would not have been possible without the labour of women—more specifically, his mother—to whose Scottish home he returned in 1767, during which time he wrote *The Wealth of Nations*. Adam Smith never married, so his mother cooked his dinners and managed their household. Yet he overlooked the reality that either his mother’s labour, or any women’s labour, contributes to the wealth of all

---

<sup>44</sup> The now-famous quote comes from Book IV “Of Systems of Political Economy”, Chapter Two: “He intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest, he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it” (1776 [quoted from Vintage Classics edition 2020]: 399). According to Gavin Kennedy’s book *An Authentic Account of Adam Smith*, this passage attracted little attention from 1776 to the 1870s, and hardly any from the 1870s until 1948, when an economist included the metaphor in a classic economics textbook, through which its ten revised editions brought the metaphor its “current celebrity status”.

nations, including his own. In his view, domestic and care work by women would not have been considered or named as “work” (Waring 1988: 50).

Adam Smith was right: an “invisible hand” exists, which “promotes an end which was not part of [its] intention” ([1776] 2020: 399). If we apply this concept to the global coffee trade: we see that this hand is overlooked and ignored, but it does not belong to the “market” and it is not mysterious. These invisible hands—let us make this plural—belong to women, or to be even more specific, rural black and brown women in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

What if Adam Smith *had* counted women, as feminist scholars would more than 200 years later (Waring 1988)? We’ll never know if, or how, Smith’s conclusion may have differed. The invisible, unpaid labour of women—which contributes to household income and national development—continues, even in the twentieth-first century, to remain uncatalogued and unrewarded.<sup>45</sup>

### **2.3 PART ONE: ‘We Thought of Including Women in Coffee’: Social Science Coffee Literature**

There exists a very large body of social science work comprising “coffee literature,” and this chapter will highlight those from a political economy or feminist point of view from 1989 to 2021. The quote leading this section, “we thought of including women in coffee,” was spoken to me by a Kenyan man, whom I will call Paul, during a formal meeting at a rural cooperative factory, where I had been invited to join a trip with both Kenyan and ex-pat coffee professionals who work in Nairobi. Typically, visitors are introduced in a formal meeting, going around the

---

<sup>45</sup> Among the many feminists who make this point, Marilyn Waring’s *If Women Counted* (1988) is a key text, but others who identified the gaps in agriculture include Boserup (1970) and Agarwall (1994). Now many feminist scholars are starting to fill some of the gaps of data collection and knowledge in coffee, such as those discussed in this Chapter, such as Stoleke (1998), Fowler-Salamini (1994, 2003), Kourian (2003), and especially Lyon’s single-authored (2008; 2011; 2014; 2019) and co-authored works (2010; 2017; 2019)



circle. For this visit, I was not introduced until the end of the meeting. When Paul asked me, “What are you doing in Kenya?”, and I replied, “I’m conducting field work for my PhD, which focuses on Kenyan women in coffee.” His immediate reply was, “Oh yes, we thought of including women in coffee.” Yet women were never mentioned during the entire meeting, and it was only after I made this comment that women farmers in their cooperative were mentioned. This statement, of women as afterthought, as needing to be “included,” although women already comprise much of coffee’s farm labour, represents a similar blind spot from both academia and industry.

A significant amount of contemporary scholarship and international development reporting focuses on coffee. Much of the coffee literature is science-driven, focused on themes such as the need for climate change mitigation or adaptations due to coffee diseases or the quest for new coffee seed varieties (Bunn et al., 2015; Davis et al., 2012 & 2020; Gichuru et al., 2012; Jamarillo et al., 2011 and 2013; ICO 2015). However, as anthropologist Sarah G. Grant argues, “we might also give due attention to the bodies that grow and harvest coffee” (2017:60). While social scientists have provided a firm foundation from which I build upon for my work, no full-length scholarly book exists currently that is centered upon an analysis from an intersectional feminist lens, focused on women and development through coffee in Africa. Dozens of books, articles, and reports from various social science disciplines, primarily focused upon Latin America, have been written that focus on identifying the gender gaps in agriculture.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> See footnote 41 in this Chapter for some examples.

This section of the Literature Review highlights some key texts from thirty years of literature within “coffee studies” in the social sciences from 1989<sup>47</sup> to 2021<sup>48</sup>. Here I analyze both the literature of the political economy of coffee, as well as literature of gender and coffee studies, to examine what the literature says about the gendered challenges and solutions within coffee. It is evident that the “gender oppression through the imposition of Western patriarchy” has “been central to the historical development of the coffee industry” (Fridell 2007: 131). Such patriarchal systems in coffee remain in place through a variety of outcomes revealed through the literature. As addressed in Chapter One, while the numbers of men compared to women farmers throughout the coffee world remains unknown, “coffee is considered a man’s crop” (Panhuysen and Pierrot 2018:13). Meanwhile, women’s labour remains historically invisible (Topik and Clarence-Smith 2003: 408; Panhuysen and Pierrot 2018:13)—thus revealing the gendered coffee paradox that is a central argument of this dissertation.

### **Invisible Women: Global Overview**

Scholarly studies on gender and coffee observe that ‘women in coffee’ face a series of inequalities and experience long list of challenges based on the patriarchal systems of most coffee-producing countries (Stoleke 1998; Fowler-Salamini 1994, 2003; Korian 2003; Lyon 2008; Lyon et al., 2017, 2019). In 2003, Topik and Clarence-Smith concluded that the “central part played by women and their children in coffee economics is increasingly being recognized” (2003: 394), but such recognition came very late to coffee, only leading to any meaningful

---

<sup>47</sup> The International Coffee Agreement collapse in 1989 changed global trade relations for coffee, which will be noted in Chapter 4. I begin this Literature Review with this date to frame the continued gendered inequalities noted in the literature between 1989 and up to 2021.

<sup>48</sup> Most of my field work research for this dissertation was conducted between February 2019 and March 2020, during which time I was living in Nairobi full-time, before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. The first COVID case in Kenya was publicly announced on 12 March 2020, and all international airports were suddenly shut down. I remained in Kenya through August 2020 and then returned to Nova Scotia until June 2022. This among the reasons why 2021 is the cut-off for this literature review.

discussions about gender in the specialty coffee industry beginning in 2015, as this Chapter will demonstrate (Millard 2017:38). While recognition is a starting point, it has not necessarily led to transformative outcomes for women, given the historic entrenchment of coffee's gender gaps (Topik and Clarence-Smith 2003:408; Panhuysen and Pierrot 2018:13; Fridell 2007:131).

To date, the political economy of coffee remains shaped by the state, yet most political economy literature of coffee overlooks gender as a key variable in the dynamics of an unequal global supply chain. Of the coffee literature that addresses gender, approaches to “empowering women” often fail to consider intersectionality. This matters because without an intersectional lens, multiple layers of women's identities remain obscured, especially among women who face competing challenges based on social constructions of race, ethnicity, age, education, marital status, and/or caste. Even in contemporary coffee reports, as will be explained later in this chapter, lists of “solutions,” claiming to “empower women in coffee” (ICO 2018; SCA 2018; PGE 2018; FTUSA 2021), overlook the diversity of intersectional complexities that women may face in different contexts, which are rooted in the colonial past and continue under neoliberal capitalism. A one-size-fits all approach is both ineffective and disrespectful to women, because the oppressions that women face are not only based on gender but also due to other identities, including, but not limited to, race and class (Mohanty 1988; Crenshaw 1991). For example, from my fieldwork in Kenya, I observed that marital status, number of children, and age are key factors that differentiate various needs of women. Women with land and income of their own; women with adult children; women in good health or a university degree are more likely to have more decision-making options than rural women without education, ownership (or joint) of their own land, with young children, or in ill health.

The literature shows that, despite focus on “empowering women,” both globally and in the coffee sector, female farmers continue to have little to no access to or ownership of resources such as land, wages, credit, markets, decision-making, and their own time. The academic coffee literature shows that neoliberal market solutions are not sufficient to “empower women in coffee.” However, my study shows that despite challenges, some women do support each other and work together to “empower” each other—and these relationships may be far more sustainable than top-down interventions from global institutions national NGOs (cf. Chapters Four and Five).

### **Political Economy of Coffee’s Global Value Chain and the Gendered Coffee Paradox**

As a colonial cash crop with a bitter history of slavery and exploitation, coffee is a commodity that remains entrenched in a complex global political trade system (Bates 1997; Ponte 2002; Talbot 2004; Fridell 2011). These legacies of inequity continue through the coffee lands and remain a threat to the future of coffee, both as a crop and for the people whose livelihoods depend upon it. Family and women’s labour changed due to “coffee statecraft” in Africa, central and South America, and Asia as European colonial governments used coffee as, one of my research participants articulated “as a weapon of power” to expand their empires (anonymous Kenyan man, 1 May 2019).

As introduced in Chapter One, current political and social relations of the global coffee industry has led to a “coffee paradox,” so named by the book title of Benoit Daviron and Stefano Ponte (2005) that centers on a global value chain analysis of coffee. The paradox they observe is that while coffee producing countries experience a coffee crisis, simultaneously, consuming countries experience a coffee boom. This paradox creates a further problem: the voluminous

creation of lower quality 'commercial' coffee, while it is higher quality coffee ('specialty coffee') that generates higher prices.

Since global value chains are increasingly driven by large actors based in the North, Daviron and Ponte's research interrogates who really benefits after liberalization in the coffee sector since "low-income countries are stuck in producing and exporting goods that are valued only for their material quality attributes" (2005: 8). Using case studies of four East African countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Uganda), Daviron and Ponte demonstrate that deregulation and decreased state governance in the trade of coffee has not led to a better situation for coffee farmers and producers, instead they find the key beneficiaries to be large transnational corporations (TNCs).

While some scholars argue this was generated by the 1989 breakdown of the International Coffee Agreement (further explained in Chapter Four) and the subsequent oversupply of coffee from Brazil and Viet Nam, Daviron and Ponte also attribute this value gap between the post-ICA collapse between what they name as the "material production"—coffee cherries or green beans that are sold in origin countries—compared to the immaterial "symbolic production" of coffee, which comes from branding, promotions, and advertising, as well as the "in-person" attributes of serving coffee. This is important to their analysis because the symbolic and in-person attributes are where "the most value is generated" in the Global North by roasters, retailers, and cafés (2005: 2-5, 8, 221). Their analysis of this "material," "symbolic," and "in-person" values of coffee has been taken up not only by scholars (e.g. Fischer 2021; Berger 2020), and global industry associations (especially the Specialty Coffee Association as they develop their new 'value assessment' tool, cf. SCA 2021).

While it is true that a global “coffee paradox” exists, based on *unequal trade relations* between the Global North and Global South, there remains an additional coffee paradox, which Daviron and Ponte (and others) have overlooked. This paradox, what I name in this study as the “gendered coffee paradox,” is based on *unequal social relations*: not only the ways that commodity chains lead to unequal outcomes between Global South ‘producers’ and Global North ‘consumers’ in international trade generally, but also the specific ways these global dynamics create and perpetuate inequitable hierarchies, dichotomies, and fractures between men and women on the basis of gender, class, race, and other barriers.

In this sense, the coffee paradox is not just between countries that trade coffee—although the international division between who produces and who consumes coffee are certainly among the ways that coffee’s “value” is unequally distributed (Fischer 2021). I also see a paradox existing within and among Global South producers, evident in the gendered division of labour that favours and benefits men in distinctive contrast to women, primarily based on gendered norms, the conditions of which began under colonial rule (see Chapter 3). As such, I argue that a specific coffee paradox exists for women in coffee-producing countries: meaning that while women’s labour is essential to the very production of coffee, they remain alienated, invisible, and undervalued, arguably due to their gender-assigned roles to “remain” in the domestic sphere. While this point has been made in coffee industry and scholarly literatures, my dissertation names this specific problem as “the gendered coffee paradox,” drawing on the idea of the “coffee paradox” created by Daviron and Ponte (2005). Even as women depend on coffee, so does coffee depend on women – thus reproducing continued unequal relations, not only between countries who produce and export coffee (who also depend on coffee for their foreign exchange) but also between men who rely upon women’s unpaid or underpaid labour at the farm level.

“Women in coffee” experience various forms of this coffee paradox that affects their daily lives (demonstrated from the literature in this chapter and in Chapter Four). Despite development or industry efforts to “empower” them, women’s labour remains invisible, unpaid, or underpaid – and the gender gap created under colonialism has become wider under neoliberal capitalism.

Despite the coffee industry’s focus on market-driven “solutions,” governments remain deeply involved with “coffee statecraft” (Fridell 2014: 8), as a commodity cash crop, and remains heavily regulated by dozens of international and state actors in law, policy, and trade; this is particularly true for Kenya (Hedlund 1992: 175, 191; Daviron & Ponte 2005). Several Kenyans I interviewed affirmed that “coffee is a political crop,” although most requested anonymity when we discussed coffee’s colonial past, or contemporary constraints based on political and economic inequity. After all, the structures of Kenya’s coffee industry—created by colonial Britain yet perpetuated in the twenty-first century—lack transparency. They were never designed to provide living wages to Indigenous<sup>49</sup> African farmers. Despite more than 50 years after independence and a new Constitution in 2010, Kenya’s coffee structures have not been updated to advance gender equity, a point noted in the report commissioned by former President Uhuru Kenyatta, the National Task Force of Coffee Sub-Sector Reforms (CSSR), even as the committee observes that existing Kenyan laws that govern coffee value chain have not been realigned with the Constitution of Kenya 2010 (Kieyah et. al., 2016: 1).

Older studies of the political economy of coffee have thoroughly explained the international layers of inequality in coffee’s supply chain between the Global North (consumers) and Global South (producers). However, many social science scholars who focus on the political

---

<sup>49</sup>When I use the word “Indigenous” in this study, I refer to African “tribes” and communities who were living in Kenya before British colonialism. See Chapter One, note 7, for more.

economy of coffee have underestimated the gendered<sup>50</sup> dynamics of the global coffee chain, overlooking specific gendered discriminations that women experience under neoliberal capitalism. Some important contributions, full-length studies of coffee's political economy, from the 1980s and 1990s, do not mention women's contributions to coffee production, or feature any reference to the specific ways women are affected by coffee politics, such as Robert H. Bates's book *Open-Economy Politics: The Political Economy of the World Coffee Trade* (1997) and sociologist John M. Talbot's book *Grounds for Agreement: The Political Economy of the Coffee Commodity Chain* (2004).

Political scientist Gavin Fridell takes his argument a step further than either Bates and Talbot when he asserts that the state “is not just one player among others [...] but is central to creating and reproducing the very social relations that underpin the entire global coffee chain” (2014: 8). Fridell calls this “coffee statecraft” (2014: 8), noting that these “social relations” are rooted in “highly unequal social class relations in the global coffee industry” (2007:130). He declares these relations need to “be contextualized within systems of ethno-racial and gender exploitation” (2007: 130).

In naming these exploitative systems, Fridell calls attention to gender in ways that Bates and Talbot fail to do, as Fridell describes the global systems at work in coffee: “While patriarchal systems existed prior to European expansion, the spread of colonialism and capitalism had the effect of eroding those matriarchal systems that did exist” (Fridell 2007: 131). He acknowledges the “highly gendered norms around male and female work” and that “women have often been subjected to the worst labor conditions” including lower pay, fewer benefits, and seasonal work (2014a: 101-2). However, his study did not have the goal to provide a feminist

---

<sup>50</sup>While I acknowledge that race, class, and more are intersectional concerns, since my literature review focuses on gender as the key variable, this study primarily focuses on gender (cf. Chapter One).



illumination of specific challenges or solutions for women, and gendered examples provided tend to highlight the Global North. For example, he notes the gender wage gap in the USA at a Hills Brother coffee factory (2014a: 102), an example he also uses in his book on Fair Trade coffee (2007: 132). He also reveals the gendered, class, and nationalist focus of Global North advertising campaigns for coffee (2014a: 99).

Other studies, while acknowledging the distinctive oppression of women in coffee, give passing notice to specific stories or challenges for women, except with generic stereotypes that seem to just add the word “gender” or add a brief note from one woman’s life. One example of occurs in a book by American anthropologist Daniel Jaffee, who overlooks any specific gender inequities experienced by women who work in Mexico’s coffee industry. In a book 287 pages long, which analyzes fair trade coffee in Mexico, Jaffee makes a single declaration: that “Coffee labor is also gendered”, providing a one-page example shared by one female participant in his research study<sup>51</sup> (Jaffee 2007: 117-18). Such examples demonstrate the contribution my study makes: by centring my field work and this study on the challenges and solutions for women in the coffee sector.

### **Postcolonial Literature and Feminist Histories**

I now turn to insights from postcolonial literature and feminist histories of coffee, which inform the historic basis of today’s gendered divisions of labour in coffee.

I begin with historian Walter Rodney (1942-80), who furthered the arguments of Latin American dependency theorists that focused on class. Rodney’s book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972) critiqued empire, slavery, capitalism, and the ‘scramble for Africa’ and took this a step further as he showed that colonialism was a system specifically

---

<sup>51</sup> Jaffee notes the gendered division of labour and then shares a story from Maria, a widow and experienced Michiza coffee producer (Jaffee 2007: 118).

created to advance the underdevelopment of Africa and the development of Europe through racial segregation. He exposed the “great divergence” during 70 years of legal and political colonialism that remains sustained by capitalism in the twentieth century, through the “draining of Africa’s wealth.” This is among the reasons why he argues that “African development is possible only [with] a radical break with the international capitalist system” (1972: preface).

Contradicting Walter Rostow<sup>52</sup>, who denied the wealth of the west was based upon the exploitation of the “third world” (1956:53), Rodney demonstrates that Europe’s flow of wealth depended upon the impoverishment and labour of Africa, and thereby one produced, and reproduced, the other. To Rodney, “underdevelopment” is therefore both comparative and dialectical (1972: 21, 81) since he views underdevelopment and development are two sides of the same coin.

This is not merely because of “contact with” each other, but because of the specific exploitation of Africa by the “west” and a transformation of the ways that humans related to each other. Racism was “an integral part of the capitalist mode of production,” according to Rodney, as he argues that the basis for slavery was economically motivated by Europe in order to exploit Africa’s labour power (1972: 99). This is one example of the “contradiction between the elaboration of democratic ideas inside Europe and the elaboration of authoritarian and thuggish practices by Europeans with respect to Africans” (Rodney 1972: 100).

Such authoritarian and thuggish practices were enacted through the cash crop of coffee, and while Rodney does not directly name coffee in his book, he showcases that domination over agriculture was only aspect of colonialism’s malevolent goal. The extraction of indigenous

---

<sup>52</sup> Rodney’s 1972 book contradicted modernization theory, the dominant theory at the time, and I mention Rostow specifically here since he is considered among the most influential theorists of his time and the “father of modernization theory” (cf. Rostow 1956).

resources, from diamonds to coffee, throughout Latin and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia, were exploited to enact Europe's development and profit Europeans (Rodney 1972).

Colonialism's wealth came from trade and export of goods, especially of agricultural "beverage crops" including coffee or cacao, or drug crops such as tobacco and sugar, and this wealth did not remain in producing countries. As a result, colonial policy often forced Indigenous peoples to give up their lands and replace subsistence crops, upon which they depended for survival, with new colonial cash crops (cf. Chapter 3). The brutal system of taxation and debt bondage were economic strategies designed to disenfranchise native peoples were forced into a wage economy that would ultimately develop their own underdevelopment.

Aside from political power, this underdevelopment was enforced through "direct appropriation by Europeans of the social institutions within Africa" (Rodney 1972: 208), which included social relations between African men and African women. Among the deleterious effects include a change in gender roles: leading men's work to be "modern" and women's as "traditional," and therefore led to African women's "social, religious, constitutional, and political privileges and rights disappeared" (Rodney 1972: 210). While Rodney affirms that some African women maintained their power even under colonialism, far more suffered because "the social, religious, constitutional, and political privileges and rights disappeared, while the economic exploitation continued and was often intensified" due to new the "division of labor" between men and women (1972: 210).

Even as Rodney had been researching and writing his critique of the development of underdevelopment more generally (1972), a Danish economist, Ester Boserup, had been conducting research on the specific division of labour between men and women, specifically by focusing on women's roles in agriculture in African and Asian farming systems. Her pioneering

book, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (1970), based on her original empirical research in the late 1960s, demonstrated that women's roles in agriculture are socially constructed. Like Rodney, her work challenged dominant assumptions through key insights that—however obvious these seem today—were completely overlooked by European scholars up to that point. She noted that gender is a key variable in the division of labour in African and Asian farming systems, and that female labour in household, agricultural, or industrial sectors contribute to their national economies, even when this labour is unpaid. She discussed the work burden born by rural women in the gathering of food, fuel, and water, as well as the care for the household, which often includes multiple children and elderly persons.

One of Boserup's insights, distinctive for her time, was the bifurcation that she observed between two systems of farming ("male farming systems" and "female farming systems"). She argued, using data collection from mostly South Africa and Senegal, that while women provide an essential role in agriculture and contribute to "national development", women remain on the economic margins due to low wages and lack of decision-making. She also contested the assumption that these two systems were "natural," instead arguing that both the roles and effects of inequality were socially and culturally constructed.

Another observation from Boserup—also uncommon for her time especially among her European scholarly peers—was that European colonialism created the conditions for the gendered division of labour. As she demonstrated: "Europeans showed little sympathy for the female farming systems which they found in many of their colonies," because European colonialists believed farming was men's work and so reproduced a sexual division of labour in ways that did not previous exist (1970: 54-60). As such, she argued that the cultivation of cash crops benefited men, regulating women to farm subsistence crops on less land using traditional

farming methods, while men become proficient with newer ‘modern’ farming technologies. She observed that “nearly all the tasks connected with food production continue to be left to women” including care for domestic animals such as cows, goats, and chickens (1970: 54-60; Wilson 2015:4).

While Boserup was among the first to argue that women’s labour is central to the economic productivity—or, we might say, to the wealth—of any nation, she helped fuel a long and passionate debate about the role of women in agriculture. She posited that both women’s productive and reproductive labour are vital to agricultural economies and laid the foundation for today’s current, global, debate about to best measure, value, and compensate women’s labour, and how to make the invisible labour of women visible in the context of global supply chains.

Boserup was looking at subsistence systems, not cash crops like coffee, but her ideas demonstrate ways that coffee’s division of labour was linked to the “coloniality of gender” (Boserup 1970) and her work had ripple effects on development economics. Similarly, if we fast forward to the year 1999, another economist, Amartya Sen asserted that “main object and the primary means of development” is the “enhancement of human freedom” in his aptly named book, *Development as Freedom* (1999). For Sen, development includes “the need to assess the requirements of development in terms of removing the unfreedoms from which the members of the society may suffer” (Sen 1999:33). This process leads to, what he names as, “agency,” or the “capability approach” (Sen 1999:36). A strength of this approach is its departure from income-centred development economic approaches, instead centring on a “heterogeneity of factors” that accounts for one’s “quality of life and substantive freedoms” (Sen 1999: 24, 77), such as five that he names as the following: “personal heterogeneities” “environmental diversities,” “variations in

social climate,” “differences in relational perspectives” and “distribution within the family” (Sen 1999:70-1). Gender is one key variable within these categories (1999:88-9).

But to share the strengths of his approach does not imply that my study used the capability approach as this study’s methodology. Why not? Among the reasons are because Sen considers that the state and society should shift to play a supporting role in human development rather playing a starring role—and my field work shows that a combination of factors will be necessary to effect women’s empowerment in the coffee sector. Also, Sen’s phrase “human-centred development” has become almost synonymous with evaluating an individual’s “capabilities.” To conduct a robust analysis of his capability approach in the coffee sector would require a researcher to draw some comparison of the “substantive freedoms” (“the capabilities—to choose a life one has reason to value”) with an individual’s “unfreedoms” (Sen 1999:74). While I believe this could be a valuable undertaking for a qualified scholar, it differed from my goal of specifically critiquing women’s empowerment and coffee’s gender gaps. Finally, given my own “unfreedoms” in the process of conducting this research, I would not have been capable of employing his approach in a way that could be helpful to the communities included in my study.<sup>53</sup> However, I appreciate that Sen’s economic work centres on the need for people to be

---

<sup>53</sup>As mentioned in the section “Author’s Context” in Chapter One, the “unfreedoms” that I experienced from the beginning of my doctoral studies in 2017 continue even as I finish in 2024. As Sen acknowledges, “some capabilities are harder to measure than others,” among these are gender, especially for an outside researcher to conduct unless they have the languages, cultural knowledge, and dexterity of schedule – capabilities that I did not possess. For an outside researcher to be able to evaluate the “valued functionings” and intrafamily dynamics (the phrasing that Sen discusses when considering a household’s distribution of resources) of any rural community would require a long period of trust, ideally with the researcher living in that community, combined with a keen investment of time and study of their languages. Given my own personal limitations—both in terms of financial capabilities, as well as my family responsibilities as the single mother of two sons—my research was dependent on selected visits to Nandi, not on living or commuting regularly from Nairobi to western Kenya. However, I believe that Sen’s approach could be a valuable undertaking, and I hope the absence of this analysis in my own study may lead to other researchers with a Kenyan cultural context, who have sufficient support and funding (cf. Bilfield et al., 2020 for a study that uses Sen’s approach in the context of Guatemalan coffee cooperatives).

seen “as being actively involved—given the opportunity—in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs” (Sen 1999:53).

That this has not always been the case in the coffee industry is part of how I came to recognize the existence of a gendered coffee paradox, both globally and in Kenya. To demonstrate specific layers of the gender coffee paradox began, I turn my attention to four feminist scholars, who all analyze the ways in which the cash crop of coffee specifically created gendered inequities in coffee in four different countries: Verena Stoleke (1988); Heather Fowler-Salamini (1994; 2003), Rachel Kourian (2003); and Sarah Lyon (2008, 2019). While all these studies were conducted in Latin America or Asia, combined they paint a clear picture of the ways that historic, structural inequities in the global coffee industry were created—and all four of these issues can apply to Kenya. These feminist studies also demonstrate some ways that “capitalist penetration” through coffee transformed family relationships and gendered patterns of work at the farm level, leading to the gendered coffee paradox.

These feminist scholars provide a firm foundation upon which I build upon for study and case study of Kenyan coffee. They demonstrate that “women’s work—considered no more than a complement to men’s labour—is severely undervalued, and they appear to be even more marginalized by the development process than their male counterparts” (Fowler-Salamini & Vaughan 1994: xiii). Taken together, the work of these four scholars,<sup>54</sup> who all employ a feminist lens of coffee history, showcase four aspects of the gender coffee paradox:

---

<sup>54</sup> Despite my best attempts, I could not locate any examples from Africa that provided scholarly, historical, feminist accounts of Kenyan women’s challenges in coffee, which is a contribution that I hope my research makes in this neglected area of coffee research. Within my review period of study (1990-2021), on the subject of “women’s empowerment” in Kenyan coffee, there are dozens of blog posts, mostly from NGOs (such as Sucafina and TechnoServe) and certifying bodies that work in East Africa, such as FairTrade Africa and Rainforest Alliance. Other studies that allude to Kenyan women in coffee are referenced in my study, such as a critique of Zoégas Coffee by Lauri and Backström (2018), or the study conducted on women and youth (Morris et al., 2015).

(1) The paradox that women's hard work in coffee has led them to have to work harder in coffee (women's "nimble fingers"), which has sometimes led men to leave coffee and migrate to other jobs.

(2) The paradox that under colonial capitalism, especially in the absence of male-headed households, in order to take care of their families inside the home in the "reproductive/domestic" sphere, women must labour outside the home in the "productive" sphere to obtain cash income.

(3) The paradox that women have been taken advantage of in both spheres through being underpaid or unpaid: as female labour has been historically lower in the "productive" labour sphere and continues to be unpaid in the "reproductive" labour sphere.

(4) The paradox that while development rhetoric focuses on aspects that women "lack," yet women are still producing such high-quality coffee desired by Global North.

First, I begin with the example of Brazil because it remains the dominant producer of coffee for the past 200 years (Nunes et al., 2022). This context demonstrates a first feature of the gender coffee paradox, namely the paradox that women's hard work in coffee led them to have to work harder in coffee even as women's "nimble fingers" in coffee ultimately led men to ultimately migrate to other jobs.

Feminist anthropologist Verena Stoleke (1988) provides an anthropological history of the ways that planters, workers, and wives shaped changing labour conditions on São Paulo coffee plantations from 1850 to 1980, centred on class conflict and gender relations. Such shifts were not a "necessary consequence of the 'capitalisation' of agriculture" but rooted in political and social system based upon class and gender-based hierarchies (xiv). Before 1850, coffee had become the dominant export crop in Brazil due to labour exploitation through slavery. During the transition between slavery and its abolition São Paulo planters began to introduce 'free labour'



(Stoleke 1988: 2) systems based upon sharecropping contracts, much of this based on recruitment of immigrant labour whereby debt bondage would begin their new lives as coffee workers.

As a substitute for slave labour, a new form of remuneration began in the 1860s on some São Paulo coffee estates (Stoleke 1988:17), which would last until the 1960s, by “planters” (landowners) called the “*colonato*” system, whereby “labour was hired and worked in family units” (Stoleke 1988:18, 208). Stoleke’s scholarship contributes to this history by illuminating ways that, even after the institution of the free labour system (1988: 29), labour was organized based on class and gender, including in family units – an example of why an intersectional feminist approach is vital to analyze the complexities of how coffee was used to create and maintain unequal social dynamics.

Colonial coffee “planters” exploited the entire immigrant family and preferred to hire larger families to capture higher returns (Stoleke 1988: 214-5). In the 1960s, the *colonato* system was as a wage-incentive sharecropping system that reinforced the rural “labourers” family’s interdependence (1988: 17-19). Contracts were signed by the male head of household (1988: 212), but the family as a unit shared debt (especially high for immigrants), restrictions on their movement, and received income as a family unit based on their joint labour productivity (1988: 210, 213). Wages were paid to the family unit based on the direct labour of husbands to their estate (1988: 146), based upon a fixed rate paid for weeding one thousand coffee trees year-round (1988: 17, 214), or during the harvest at a “piece-rate” system that varied based on coffee cherry yields (1988: 17). Wives, responsible for domestic chores and maintaining food crops for their family unit “earned nothing for the labour they invested in growing food” (1988: 214). Although their basic needs were met under the auspices of the family unit, this is not to idealize

this system as women faced sexual coercion and harassment from men on the estates (Stoleke 1988).

Both wives and children worked to harvest coffee, usually in the form of unpaid family labour (Stoleke 1988: xiv), but for women who were paid, they would receive the same day wage as men (1988:141). Women were “usually assigned half the number of coffee trees allocated to the men” (1988: 212). Although gendered tensions emerged through the *colonato* system based on labour divisions: “men often disliked working among women because it was thought that women tended to work harder and with greater perseverance than men. The women themselves stressed that they were *teimosas* (stubborn, persistent) whereas men now lacked *coragem* (courage) to work” (1988: 144).

Gendered tensions led men to begin to reject coffee picking work and attempt to move into higher-paying jobs. Men claimed that “because of their proverbial nimble fingers, women are better at it” (Stoleke 1988:144)—a claim I also heard repeatedly by men in Kenya to explain the reason why women are “better” at picking coffee. Women then began to fill lower-paying jobs abandoned by men (1988: 144), which began to be “typified as feminine” (1988: 145), providing another reason men did not wish to perform work perceived as unmasculine.

By the 1970s, the system in Brazil changed again so that “coffee was tended predominately by casual wage labour brought in from outside, as well as by the wives and children of some of the remaining resident wage workers” (1988: 141). This casual labour became known as “*volante*” (the ‘new nomad’) (1988:66). For women, this shifted changing patterns of labour from *colonato* to individual wage workers transformed “family morality and gender relationships” and as a result, “created new contradictions between women and men within the family” (1988:208). It was expected that all able-bodied individuals would work for a

wage, but to survive, families had to pool their resources since wages were so low (1988:209). Stoleke's research revealed that "coffee and cotton-picking, which was formerly done by the whole family, and which is paid by result, is now generally carried out by women and children alone. Payment by result entails hardly any rest" (1988:144). Thus, gendered hierarchies became embedded within family units and another paradox emerged: while the family unit can provide women from economic hardship, especially during difficult times, women's domestication became the source of her subordination (1988: 210). Family units and women were a vital part of "shaping strategies of accumulation adopted by coffee capital" and providing a flexible labour supply despite gendered and class-based discriminations and their absence on recorded pay sheets (Stoleke 1988:6).

A similar kind of discrimination of women was also forming in Mexico (Fowler-Salamini & Vaughan 1994: xvii) after the civil war (1854-67), and reveals a second aspect of the gendered coffee paradox: the paradox that under colonial capitalism, especially in the absence of male-headed households, women must labour outside the home in the "productive" sphere to obtain cash income, so they can care for children or elderly persons that, under gender assigned roles, women are responsible for inside the home.

During his reign, Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910) introduced a "process of rapid market penetration," including the "influx of foreign capital" that restructured family relations and household labour, especially as women were forced to increase their income-earning activities (Fowler-Salamini & Vaughan 1994: xix). In addition, the civil war led to more female-headed households because of "mortality, abandonment, or male migration" (Fowler-Salamini & Vaughan 1994: xix). As a result, "economic necessity prompted changes in the familial organization of labor and forced women into new areas of paid and unpaid work" that

“altered gender relations and deepened class fissures” (Fowler-Salamini & Vaughan 1994:xv & xxii).

Contradicting the developmentalists who argue that women benefit from capitalist expansion, we can see that, especially in the absence of male-headed households, the gendered coffee paradox “takes advantage of the surplus of cheap female labour while women must become increasingly engaged in income-producing activities to ensure the survival of their peasant families” (Fowler-Salamini & Vaughan 1994: xiii). Scholars of gender in Mexico showcase “men’s primary control over most agricultural tasks but [also] highlight women’s contribution to both reproduction and production” (Fowler-Salamini & Vaughan 1994: xiii). For example, “La mujer trabajadora” was known to perform seasonal labour in coffee, often providing “more manual labor than the rancho himself” because “in addition to her household tasks, she ground corn, stoked the fire, bleached beeswax, made cheese, and wove clothing and baskets” (Fowler-Salamini & Vaughan 1994: xiv). As Fowler-Salamini shows through oral history interviews and archival historical research, women shaped a major part of coffee’s labour force as they grew in numbers and influence, both within and without their family units (Fowler-Salamini 1994). However, while in Mexico, “Landownership has been considered almost exclusively a male domain” even as other family members “have been envisioned as invisible bystanders or dependents whose primary attribute is their need to be supported” (Fowler-Salamini 1994: 51). As a result, the nineteenth-century Mexican rural family “shared diverse agricultural activities in a complex household in which multiple income earners, including women, contributed to family income” and at the same time, for other women, “female-headed households were actually quite common” (Fowler-Salamini 1994: 51).

In the 1880s-1890s, women's coffee labour in Mexico, because no machines had yet been invented to process coffee. As a result, women and children were brought in from Mexican country villages to sort and clean coffee in preparation for export (Fowler-Salamini 2013: 83). However, as the coffee industry increased in capitalistic modernization, women fought for workers rights by helping to create labour and trade unions (Fowler-Salamini 2013: 161-2). However, the labour revolution ultimately failed to protect women's "relatively secure form of employment" as sorters of green coffee (Fowler-Salamini 2013: 1). In 1965, coffee exporters laid off all women workers (Fowler-Salamini 2013: 1, 235). Women were replaced with electronic sorting machines in the state's efforts toward modernization, an event that thus became "the most traumatic event in their working and personal lives" (Fowler-Salamini 2013: 236), showcasing some challenges of industrial capitalism.

Even as the gendered coffee paradox is evident in these two examples from Brazil and Mexico, similar transformations were happening in Asia as European colonial governments used coffee profits to expand their empires. My third observation of the gender coffee paradox comes from colonial Ceylon (Sri Lanka): the paradox that women have been taken advantage for their labour in both the "productive" and "reproductive" spheres: getting paid lower wages than men in the "productive" labour sphere while not getting paid at all in the "reproductive" labour sphere.

Before Ceylon (Sri Lanka) came under full administrative British colonial rule in 1815, coffee was a 'garden crop' intercropped with other food crops. After 1815, Britain introduced large-scale coffee plantation systems, set up with exploitive gendered and racial hierarchies with "predominantly white male management and ownership" (Kurian 2003: 174). State policies further enshrined racial hierarchies with policies that favoured European ownership of the export

market (Kurian 2003:175). Profitable British plantations required a great deal of labour, which local peoples were not inclined to work, due to the low wages and due to their focus on needing to harvest their own subsistence crops (Kurian 2003:175). The scarcity of Indigenous labour in 1840s Ceylon led Britain to turn toward recruiting from nearby colonies to obtain a “foreign” work force predominately from the Tamil districts of southern India (Kurian 2003:176-7).

Still, this 1840s labour force was migratory, based on season patterns of the coffee harvests. Over time, more female laborers were recruited both because they were paid less than half of what men were paid (Kurian 2003: 181). Kurian estimates that “between 1843 and 1877, an average of 56,000 men, 10,300 women, and 8,000 children came to Ceylon to work on coffee estates”; women comprised one-fifth of the migrant force (2003: 180). Bringing women was a strategy to try to keep migrant men to stay longer to form a more “reliable”, permanent labor base for the island’s colonial government (Kurian 2003:181). In addition, “health reasons” were a motive to entice women to the island: one administrator noted there was only one or two women per 50 to 100 men, leading to a high rate of STDs and other diseases among men from the hospital records (Kurian 2003: 181-2).<sup>55</sup> There was a very high mortality rate and lack of sanitation and inadequate medical care (Kurian 2003: 187-8).

Kurian notes that the lack of data about women during this time prevents more specific details, but clearly, “women faced the worst effects of class, social, caste, and sexual oppression” (Kurian 2003: 185). Wage rates were not systematized and “ranged from four pence to nine pence for a working day of ten to eleven hours in the 1830s and 1840s, and rose to about 10 pence per day in the 1860s” (2003: 187). With women “at the bottom of the pyramid, and male domination was enforced at each and every level” (2003: 182), including infrequency of wage

---

<sup>55</sup>No specific data is recorded about the numbers of women engaged in sexual services or who were victims of sexual abuse (although both are noted in Kurian 2003: 182).

payments, lower wages than men, and less freedom of movement or mobility (Kurian 2003: 187). Housing for coffee workers was far from humane, including overpopulated barrack-like structures called “Line rooms” (Kurian 2003:188).

Finally, a fourth aspect of the gendered coffee paradox is evident from more contemporary examples: the paradox that while development rhetoric focuses on all the things women “lack,” women are able to produce high-quality coffee desired by Global North specialty coffee buyers/roasters. This point is demonstrated by Sarah Lyon, who employs her lens as a feminist economic anthropologist to her coffee scholarship. Her work provides a key model in the ways she critiques neoliberal ‘solutions’ for female coffee farmers. While she laments the scarcity of, and need for, more gender-based research in coffee (Lyon 2008, 2011:155; Lyon et al., 2017, 2019), her scholarly work has served to fill this gap through her field work in Central America.

A key focus of her book *Coffee and Community: Maya Farmers and Fair-Trade Markets* (2008) examines the ways in which certification schemes, particularly fair trade, have failed to improve gender equality consistently and comprehensively. While fair trade organizations include “the empowerment of women” among its top ten impact areas, her ethnographic analysis of fair trade coffee cooperatives in Guatemala reveals that “gender mainstreaming” is far from a reality on the ground (Lyon 2008: 109-121). She observes the challenges to implement equality in three core areas: (1) a lack of women’s participation in democratic cooperative management; (2) “onerous household duties that preclude” women’s involvement in leadership activities or meetings; and (3) women’s failure or inability to find a market for non-coffee products (2008, 2011: 111, 114, 116). According to Lyon, until Fair Trade more aggressively advocates for

gender equity, then it is unlikely gender equality targets will be possible for female coffee farmers in light of global commodity flows of coffee.

Lyon notes that the very construction of the “female coffee farmer” is problematic in the quest for gender economic equality (Lyon et al., 2017). Amidst the growing “global uptick in a ‘feminization’ of agriculture,” there is an increased “in the percentage of women farmers as a share of the world’s registered farmers is paired with a set of women-targeted policy interventions” from government, IDS organizations, and businesses, which focus on “smart economics” based on things that women lack, such as land, income, or resources (Lyon et al., 2019: 34).

As Lyon et al., shows (2019) with case studies from Oaxaca, Mexico, women face “a set of unique challenges,” but “this does not encapsulate the complexity of their personal identities that emerge from a very specific political-economic and cultural context” (Lyon et al., 2019: 38). This means at least two things in this study: First, “a discursive depiction of women” (e.g. “entrepreneurial and altruistic”), which “draws on ‘smart-economic’ policy initiatives that frame women as altruistic caregivers who are more likely than their male counterparts to invest economic resources in their households and children’s future” (Lyon et al., 2019: 35). Second, a focus on “practical policies” (e.g. “use of registries, commodity grading schemes, and participatory assemblies”).

Among the problems with the popular rhetoric of “smart economics” is its agenda on “constructing women as agents of global financial recovery, viewing women and girls as a value for financial investment, and relating gender issues to corporatized diversity management discourses” (Lyon et al., 2019: 35). Women targeted for “smart economics-inspired women’s coffee programs,” because she is viewed as an “efficient worker who produces high-quality



coffee and invests her profits in her household's well-being and children's future" (Lyon et al., 2019: 36). This is ironic, because while much of the industry reports about "women in coffee" focus on what women lack (e.g. land, credit, tools, education), women are still producing quality coffee for the specialty market. This is yet another injustice regarding the ways that global value chains "capture women's underpaid and unpaid labors in household community spheres" (Lyon et al., 2019: 37).<sup>56</sup> In coffee, women's labour remains "alienated to a greater degree than men's labor" (Lyon et al., 2019: 37).

These four feminist social science scholars all demonstrate various ways in which gender and coffee collided, intersecting into a complex web that discriminated, not only on the basis of race for both men and women, but also ways that women faced additional levels of abuse and unequal treatment. Such cultural divisions were not a "natural" process based on biology but created as gendered constructs to keep women domesticated and to capture her unpaid labour.

### **Literature of Supply Chains, Gender and Coffee**

Gendered dynamics remain obscured despite the prevalence of twenty-first century coffee certifications. While my dissertation does not analyze certifications, they remain such a prevalent topic in the social science coffee literature that I would be remiss to overlook them, especially since fair trade and other schemes identify gender equality is one of their pillars of social sustainability<sup>57</sup> (FTO 2009). Limitations of such audits have been well-researched by scholars,

---

<sup>56</sup>On Fairtrade: It is beyond the scope of this study to analyze fair trade specifically, but Fairtrade International employs the rhetoric of "gender mainstreaming" frequently on its websites and reports. For example, gender-specific criteria are included in the Fairtrade Standards, they established a Gender Strategy (2016-2020), and they provides strategies for how Fairtrade International is to attain its aim of closing the gender gap in smallholder agriculture. In Kenya, FairTrade Africa is one of the certifying bodies.

<sup>57</sup> There is a vast scholarly literature on the ineffectiveness of fair trade certification in coffee (Jaffee 2007; Lyon 2008; 2019; Fridell 2007; 2014), but this is not the focus of my study. One Fairtrade International report (2016) conveys its new "gender strategy," *Gender strategy 2016–2020: Transforming equal opportunity, access and benefits for all*, and a 2021 report by Fair Trade USA will be discussed later in this Chapter.

especially one popular audit regime, fair trade (Jaffee 2007; Lyon 2008; Lyon 2019; Fridell 2007; 2014)—a certification rooted in the belief that the market is not the problem, but the answer. By putting focus on consumer power to transform the lives of impoverished Global South producers through Global North purchases, Fridell argues that fair trade shifts the attention away from state responsibility (Fridell 2007 & 2014). Can the invisible hand of the fair trade market alleviate poverty considering the gendered complexities of coffee's value chain? Two examples from the literature provides insights.

Feminist scholars have addressed the particular challenges faced by women in global supply chains, and ways in which these challenges differ than the challenges men may face. In a co-authored article, "Reaching the marginalised? Gender value chains and ethical trade in African horticulture" (2005), the four authors adopt a gender value-chain approach that unites a Global Value Chain (GVC) analysis "with a gendered economy perspective" and focuses on the "intersection between value chains and employment at the production end of the chain, as well as the way employment is embedded with the social and institutional context in which value chains operate" (Tallontire et al., 2005: 563). They demonstrate that unequal labour relations and human rights violations affect female workers disproportionately to men, in part due to women's unpaid care-giving responsibilities. For women, for whom the metaphor of the chain represents historically rooted systems of marginalization in value chains, in part due to the "double burden" (Folbre 2011: 42) that women experience while facing demands in labour both outside and inside the household. Unpaid domestic responsibilities include care for at least several children and the elderly. In addition, women tend to have less stable or reliable jobs. Repercussions of seasonal, flexible, and informal employment are particularly detrimental for female workers (Tallontire et al., 2005: 564), since, compared to men, far fewer female labourers are given employment

contracts, and more women are forced to work overtime, recruited for low-skill wage-based jobs, or lack representation in unions (Tallontire et al., 2005: 566-7). Women tend to work in lower paid, seasonal wage positions that focus on planting or harvesting (see Chapters One and Four).

While the analysis provided by Tallontire et al. (2005) considers case studies from three African sectors—Kenyan flowers, South African fruit, and Zambian fruits and vegetables—their examination can also be applied to coffee, even as ethical codes of practice fail to repeal the structural implications of the gendered economy (Tallontire et al., 2005: 559-60). This top-down governance structure is particularly complex when sectors rely on European markets for their exports and re-exports, which remain the case for various agricultural commodities, including flowers, fruit, vegetables, and coffee (Tallontire et al., 2005: 560). This maintains a continued reliance upon Global South producers to Global North markets, thereby entrenching gendered dynamics and contributing another layer to the gendered coffee paradox.

Using one certification scheme as an example, a 2014 report “Fair Trade, Employment and Poverty Reduction in Ethiopia and Uganda” addresses the knowledge gap in the global trade of agricultural products with poverty reduction and the labour market dimensions of Fairtrade certification (Cramer et al., 2014). The purpose of the research was “to understand better the comparative benefits/ disadvantages of different institutional arrangements for agricultural production for poor rural people needing to access wage employment” (Cramer et al., 2014:5) and the international “links in the chain of international trade in agricultural commodities” especially coffee and tea (Cramer et al., 2014: 119). A key question was if Fairtrade certified producer organizations provided better opportunity for rural workers dependent on wage employment for their family’s survival. After spending more than one thousand hours researching Ugandan and Ethiopian coffee cooperatives (Cramer et al., 2014: 18), the research

team demonstrated that much of the “wage labour in export-oriented agriculture is *female* labour” and remains prevalent in the export of coffee commodities (Cramer et al., 2014: 11, 118).

The report is rife with language of women as producers and reproducers, and while it seeks to look “beyond gender,” the report also argues that “the gender value chain approach takes as its starting point two interrelated concepts: that gender bias exists in economic activities; and that an analysis of productive activity must be supplemented by an analysis of reproductive activities” (Cramer et al., 2014: 12). Although intersectionality is not directly named, the researchers do acknowledge a variety of factors contribute to women’s barriers, including complexities of marital status (a high number of separated, divorced, and widowed women), education (many women who possess little, or no, primary education), and limited access to financial assets (Cramer et al., 2014: 119).

While the report does not claim that Fairtrade itself *causes* low wages, “the research does reject the hypothesis that there is a positive causal chain between Fairtrade certification and working conditions” (Cramer et al., 2014: 120), especially in answering: “is a poor rural person dependent on access to wage employment for their (and their family’s) survival better served by employment opportunities on certified farms or on non-certified farms?” (Cramer et al., 2014: 120). Relative to other forms of employment, the research team argues that there is no positive difference between certified or non-certified coffee cooperatives, especially if gender sensitivity is absent. Most of recommendations from the FTEPR report include the need for states to address equitable agricultural export policies for women, including better resources for child care, paid maternity leave, and reduction of wage discrimination (Cramer et al., 2014: 124-5). But as states have yet to accomplish these goals, we can consider these as even deeper dimensions of the gendered coffee paradox.

## **2.4 PART TWO: ‘A Big Agenda, not just in Kenya but Around the World’: Literature of Empowerment**

During my interview with Josphine Njoki Ndikwe, the president of the Association of Women in Coffee Industry, she declared that “empowering women is a big agenda, not just in Kenya, but around the world” (6 December 2023). On the surface, it may seem that this global focus on “empowering women” would, necessarily, lead to a transformation of women’s empowerment. Yet, despite some notable changes and improvements for some women, the global rhetoric has not translated to the empowerment of all women. For this reason, this study now moves from the literature of political economy, history, and supply chains, to examine the ways that empowerment is being used in international development and in the coffee literature in the review period (1990 – 2021).

First, I begin by examining the Literature of Empowerment. I then move to consider Literature of Intersectional Feminism and Coffee, including specialty coffee industry reports or texts that utilize gender empowerment and/or intersectionality. Finally, I examine the ways coffee literature uses or critiques “empowerment” in three studies from coffee producing countries of in Nicaragua, Honduras, and Colombia.

### **The Fantasy of “Empowerment” in Development Discourse**

Empowerment seems to shine like a silver bullet, one that will address the growing gender gaps. After all, is it not true that if you empower a woman, then you empower a community, a nation, even the world? On the surface, empowering women seems to be a noble goal, one that promotes human rights and ends the suffering of women around the world, leading women to have more voice, more choice, and more income. But “women” do not comprise a

monolithic global group (Lorde 1984; Mohanty 1988). The ways women seek agency, as well as the intersectional barriers women face, are as diverse as women themselves (Wilson 2015).

Such language of empowerment reflects a stark shift in rhetoric since the beginning of the United Nations' focus upon women. Optimistically, this may demonstrate a measure of the impact of women's movements around the global, including transnational feminist movements. Pessimistically, however, such language may perpetuate colonizing social relations and devalue women as pawns in a neoliberal, capitalist agenda that seeks development due to its financial benefits and continued use of goods by the Global North, not as a motive for global justice or human rights for the Global South. As Mohanty says: "claiming universality of gender oppression is not the same as arguing for the universal rights of women based on the particularities of our experiences" (2003: 107), especially as the appropriation and neoliberalization of feminist discourse has increased in the twenty-first century.

Cultural-materialist critic Raymond Williams believed that some expressions can function "as keywords, sites at which the meaning of social experience is negotiated and contested" (1976). The words we use to identify ourselves and others shape the reality we create for ourselves, how we wish others to see us, and how we view others. As political scientist Amilcar Antonio Barreto states, "Languages are merely means of communication—conduits through which we exchange ideas" (2009: 42). Comparative political paradigms, then, become a medium through which states view individuals and through which individuals shape their own realities, especially in questions of human rights. Indeed, "the terms that are used to describe social life are also active forces in shaping it" (Fraser & Gordon 1994: 310).

To illustrate this, let us consider the once popular phrase "third world woman." Among the problems of such rhetoric is that "sexual difference becomes coterminous with female

subordination and power is automatically defined in binary terms: people who have it (read: men) and people who do not (read: women). Men exploit, women are exploited” (Mohanty 2003). Although the switch from a rhetoric of first, second, and third world has replaced to a dualism between the “Global North” and “Global South,” narratives about women have hardly changed and the idea that there is such a thing as a monolithic “woman” remains prevalent in development and industry reports and texts that fail to acknowledge the reality of intersectionality (Gresser & Tickell 2002; SCCA 2015; PGE 2015; TWIN 2013; ICO 2018; Pindeo Caro 2020; FT USA 2021).

International declarations and conferences led by the United Nations, such as the 1945 Universal Declaration for Human Rights, that assert the fundamental value of all men and women around the globe. The UN’s development strategy in the 1960s supported W.W. Rostow’s modernization theory, which preached that that “development” gains in the “first world” would trickle-down to “third world” on the launch from “traditional” to “high consumption” societies (Rostow 1957). But no where did Rostow’s “five stages of economic growth” consider that women’s needs differed from men, as women were absent from his analysis.

In the 1960-70s, the “Women and Development” movement focused on poverty as the key problem for women, and so the argument became that women’s development was central to the economic productivity of any nation. The narrative was focused on “woman as victim” based on female oppression from governments, war, men, sexual violence, childbirth, labor, illness, and suffering. The UN’s development strategy in the 1960s supported modernization theory and this “trickle-down” approach. For the first time, the phrase—created by Gloria Scott of Jamaica in 1969—“the integration of women in development” was used and, ultimately according to Margaret Synder, a revolution began regarding women, development, and the

United Nations (Snyder 2006: 28-9). A new story needed to be told about women, that they were “agents of change,” not merely “objects of services” (Snyder 2006: 28), although discrimination of women within this paradigm was not necessarily addressed (Wilson 2015:34).

Global conferences and conventions helped to begin to shift the narrative toward a feminist vision of women’s rights that focused on neoliberal individualism. The 1975 UN Conference on Women (the first of its kind, held in Mexico City) and the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEAFDW), were part of a global shift that would come to focus, at least rhetorically, on the rights of women. After the mid-point assessment in 1980 in Copenhagen, the first international women’s conference to be held in Africa took place in 1985 in Nairobi, Kenya, where more than 157 States were represented. This also marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations and functioned as a culmination to assess how much the status of women had advanced during the decade. What was lacking: Women needed equality in the legal sphere, equality in social participation, and equality in political representation and decision-making. Assessing how many barriers had been dismantled, or not, came to be the focus of the key policy document created and adopted at the conference: the “Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women” (A/CONF.116/28/Rev.1). This document focused on ways that, despite some advancements in during the decade, women were yet to be fully integrated into every sphere, not just those pertaining to gender, and upon ways that development could better integrate *all* women, including marginalized women who faced specific barriers such as women who were elderly, dispossessed by their families, or the sole person responsible for their household.

However, it was in 1995, during the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the largest U.N. gathering to that point in its history, where more than 40,000 women gathered. The



Beijing Platform for Action became the legislative mouthpiece and an important moment in the history of global women's rights. Statements such as "governments must not only refrain from violating the human rights of all women, but must work actively to promote and protect these rights" (UN 1995: 215) are rife throughout the Platform for Action. Later, develop tools were created to attempt to measure gender outcomes, such as the Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM).

By the year 2000, the United Nations created eight Millennium Development Goals, with the third addressing women directly: "to promote gender equity and empower women." The third goal centered on three outcomes: closing the gender gap in education at all levels; increasing women's share of wage employment; increase seats held by women in national parliaments. Each of these three indicators "has the potential to bring about positive changes in women's lives, but, in each case, it is the social relationships that govern access to the resource in question that will determine the extent to which this potential is realised" (Kabeer 2005: 13). The MDGs led to a marked increase of the word "empowerment" in the global rhetoric of human rights and women's rights is evident.

But all this focus on women's empowerment may have been a double-edged sword. Empowerment fits in too well with the rise of neoliberal feminism and its failure to bring transformative change. For example, the World Bank's Gender Action Plan of 2006 (what was to be implemented in fiscal years 2007-2010) argued for that "economic empowerment" is "smart economics" because nothing else will increase a nation's GAP faster than women's participation in the labour force. The ideological assumptions in some development texts – from the United Nation's *Human Development Reports* and the World Bank's *World Development Reports*— reveals the bias toward neoliberal feminism that focuses on the individual, rather than

community goals, and assumes that women will be the “better” investment of development funding and programs because they are more likely to reinvest in their families or communities. One explicit example may suffice from World Development Report (2012)—for although this report is now more than a decade old, it was the first of any WDR report to centre on gender—titled, “Gender Equity and Development.” There it is argued that patterns of gender inequality matter:

. . . for two reasons. First, gender equality matters intrinsically, because the ability to live the life of one’s own choosing and be spared from absolute deprivation is a basic human right and should be equal for everyone, independent of whether one is male or female. Second, gender equality matters instrumentally, because greater gender equality contributes to economic efficiency and the achievement of other key development outcomes.

There is much to be said about this paragraph that intersects with questions about gender and social policy issues—not the least which is binary assumed in the discourse between “male or female” only. But for the purposes of this dissertation, what is worth pointing out is that while the WDR states the first motive is intrinsic to anyone’s human rights, the more-than-200-page report focuses on the second outcome—the instrumental—which is linked to “economic efficiency” and “the achievement of other key development outcomes” (WDR 2012: 3).

The World Bank bemoans the “economic losses” when a woman cannot “be engaged in activities that make the best use of those abilities” (2012: 3). Rife throughout the discourse of this report is the claim that women will accomplish their “empowerment” by becoming a member of the “work force.” To advance a development agenda that focuses primarily upon women entering a public (non-domestic) work force, only provides a cookie-cutter approach that

assumes women are “empowered” through more paid work. And perhaps even more pernicious is the consideration that all of this “empowerment” rhetoric has become as “deliberate state strategies encouraging or pushing women into the labor market” (Orloff 2005: 4). Such focus on employability is addressed by feminists (MacDonald & Dobrowolsky 2020), and I, too, am skeptical of the rhetoric and the ways in which the (im)balance of power is maintained through, in the case of this dissertation, the coffee industry, especially considered the ongoing poverty of many coffee farmer families around the world.

While the definitions of “poverty” and “empowerment” have been contested for decades, Sabina Alkire has spent the last decade thinking about how to measure both. Alkire is the director of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), a research center within the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford. Perhaps she is best-known in international development circles for creating, with James Foster, the now-widely used “Alkire-Foster Method” that measures multi-dimensional poverty. It is unique in its ability to measure not only who is poor but *how* they are poor, in areas such as living standards, education, and health; in Alkire’s words: the aim of the OPHI is “to supplement the traditional benchmark of income poverty, \$1.25 a day, by painting a more nuanced picture of exactly how people are poor in different parts of their lives” (Wheatley 2015).

The measurement has been used in the United Nations Development Programme’s Human Development Reports, and several governments have utilized the method, including, for example, the government of Busan in their gross national happiness index. Alkire believes that we need better ways to measure and observe poverty, for the purpose of eradicating it (Wheatley 2015). When Alkire (and Foster) developed this tool, what was notably different than other measurements were the ways in which they were – as inspired by Sen’s capabilities approach –

looking at non-income methods to measure poverty. They also considered the overlap of varied factors of poverty, so it might be evident to see where an individual might experience more than one area of extreme poverty (Alkire & Foster 2011).

But despite their achievement, there was still a gap when it came to measuring gender empowerment. Even other gender-focused data-gathering indices, such as the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), could not be disaggregated by age, region, or other social groups, and no index accounted for women in agriculture, or the ways in which women did, or did not, have control over agricultural resources (Alkire et al., 2013:72). Using what she learned from creating the multidimensional poverty index, one of Alkire's next accomplishments was prompted by the Feed the Future initiative of United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and its desire to find a way to measure if their gender work was reducing gender gaps. Commissioned by USAID, Alkire and her team at OPHI then joined with the International Food and Policy Research Institute, particularly Agnes Quisumbing, to create the first comprehensive, standardized data tool to measure women's empowerment.

Launched in 2012, the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) comprises two sub-indices. The first assesses the degree to which respondents note their empowerment in "five domains": (1) decisions about agricultural production, (2) access to and decision-making power about productive resources, (3) control of use of income, (4) leadership in the community, and (5) time allocation. The second sub-index assesses gender parity by measuring women's empowerment relative to men within their same household. As the creators of the tool describe, the tool can "builds up a multidimensional empowerment profile for each man and woman that reflects their overlapping achievements in different domains, and aggregates these": this is "based on individual-level data collected by interviewing men and women within the same

households” (Alkire et al., 2013:73). As a result, the WEAI is “reflects the overlapping kinds of agency at the individual level; it can also be broken down by subnational region, by age, by social group, as well as by each indicator” (Alkire et al., 2013:73). (To my knowledge, the only study in coffee that uses this index was conducted in Honduras by Dietz et al., 2018; cf. the final section of this chapter.<sup>58</sup>)

As the MDGs were set to end in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals replaced them – this time, with women being most directly addressed in goal number five, “to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” This led to an increased rhetorical focus on “empowering women,” a point that shall be discussed later in this chapter, as the coffee industry began to adopt the language of “empowering women” more publicly in 2015.

Words are more than labels. They are means of creating and shaping reality for ourselves and for others. These words are a shield and a weapon: a way to express our humanity, a way to become channels of social and political change. This dissertation’s argument hinges on a fundamental presupposition: that political action derives from words and that words derive from thought. The good news is, as Edward Said noted, that because of this, change is possible. There is, after all, no “ ‘real’ Orient to argue for” but the people of any region around the world must (and do) “struggle on for their vision of what they are and what want to be” (Said 2004: xix). Such monolithic generic groupings of people are ontological fictions and discourses of power (Said 1978: 328). The desire to “empower” a woman, especially if one has not asked her what she needs, wants, or desires, continues an imperialist agenda of Orientalism.

---

<sup>58</sup>If future opportunities or funding allows, I hope to be able to utilize this tool to consider if the index is a useful measurement for rural Kenya coffee households. See note 53 in this chapter for further details of why I did not use the WEAI for this study.

This is among the reasons why “Empowerment” discourse can be problematic, especially if it has been “sanitised” by the development machine (Cornwall & Brock 2015: 1051), which exists in sharp contrast to the beginning of the empowerment discourse in the 1980s and 1990s. At that time, feminist movements viewed empowerment as a radical approach concerned with transformation (Calvès 2009; Cornwall & Rivas 2015: 404), but already by 1994, scholars were concerned that the “growing talk of women’s empowerment was in danger of losing the concept’s transformative edge” (2007: 343). Now more than two decades into the twenty-first century, the empowerment rhetoric needs to shift toward more inclusivity and toward a consideration of intersectionality—but this is not yet revealed in the ways that specialty coffee has coopted the term. One anonymous director of a global coffee NGO also notices the loss of this transformative edge, as she criticized the overuse in specialty coffee: “What I don’t like is all the phrases such as ‘we work to empower others,’ that’s where it makes me uncomfortable. Global North institutions are giving things to people [in the Global South] that we think they lack, so we inherently assume we have the power to give it to them, to change their lives, and almost exclusively we are giving them something to be used in a system that the Global North doesn’t want to actually change” (personal interview, 8 October 2019).

If transformative gender goals will be accomplished, then coffee needs to address “the structural barriers to women’s individual self-actualization” as well as their “collective mobilization” (Cornwall & Rivas 2015: 400)—and this will only take place if an intersectional feminism will be adopted. Given our global complexities and diverse experiences, women need far more than the “add women and stir” development approaches. These are proven to be ineffective because they fail to transform the relations of power, both political and social (Cornwall & Rivas 2015: 409)—a point noted by contemporary feminist scholars who call for

intersectionality (Townsend-Bell 2012 and 2023; Koss 2022b). Such transformations should, according to Erica Townsend-Bell, take place within “feminism itself” because too often we witness that feminism has become “yet another instrument of dominant neoliberal governmentalities, adapted to neoliberal priorities,” that increasingly “reduce[s] governance to a set of tools that prioritise resource access, capacity-building and other moves meant to centre self-sufficiency and the individual” (2023: 88). Put another way from a Ugandan female leader in coffee who works throughout East Africa, Teopista Nakkungu expressed her frustration with the overuse of “empowering women”: “Who knows what the word means now, it’s frustrating! All these trainings happen, they all talk about economic empowerment, but still many women don’t have food or education. You cannot train women for one day. We have to look at households and communities. Gender is not just a woman’s thing. We want to see changes in communities” (interview, 13 February 2020).

The large body of ‘empowerment literature’ makes similar critiques of development’s gendered lexicon (Kabeer 1994 & 1999 & 2005 & 2011; Rowlands 1997; Cornwall & Brock 2005; Calvès 2009; Cornwall & Rivas 2015; MacDonald and Dobrowolsky 2020; Townsend-Bell 2012 and 2023). While I am not necessarily opposed to using the term “empowerment,” I am opposed to the uncritical adoption of the term by the coffee industry, without an uncritical<sup>59</sup> appropriation of the term that categorizes “women in coffee” into one large category. As I finish this study in March 2024, the use of “women’s empowerment” in coffee has only increased since I began this in 2017: through its specialty coffee associations, organizations, and businesses and embraced the development industry’s fixation of the concept. While my critique of “empowerment” is not necessarily new, I have yet to read a deliberate analysis that considers the

---

<sup>59</sup>When I published my article “The Limited of Empowerment” (2021) in the coffee industry magazine, 25, the editor and her review team, believed I was the first to critique the term in a public coffee magazine.

context of coffee's multiplicity of cultures, geographies, or diverse peoples around the world. I hope this study will contribute to the debate and discussion, of the ways that "empowerment" for women may, or may not be, an appropriate term in specific cultural and geographic contexts.

### *The Etymology of Empowerment*

To begin my examination of "empowerment," I appreciate the ways that Christina Rojas (2001) offers two possibilities: "one is to analyze the word in the same way we examine an object; the other is to engage in a conversation with the word." The first she says is "reifying because the word is turned into a word-thing and its understanding is separated from the power of the word to confer meaning. The second is a dialogic penetration into the word—a conversation that opens up fresh aspects of the word (Bakhtin 1981) (2001: 571). My study seeks to offer both, as many coffee industry reports or websites centred on "women in coffee" do not provide clear definitions of empowerment, or what they mean by "women's empowerment," although this is proclaimed as one of their key goals. Thus, I begin first with my own analysis of the word's history and etymology to explain why this word is not sufficient to convey the intent it tries to communicate, nor to create the change the concept so frequently promises.

First used in 1657, the English verb "to empower" [*em-* prefix + *power*, verb] means: (1) To invest with legal or formal power or authority; to authorize or license *to* do something; (2a) To confer power on, make powerful; or (2c) To give (a person) the means, ability, or strength to do something; to enable.<sup>60</sup> As with all transitive verbs in English, "empower" requires an object. This means that the focus of any "empowering" emphasizes the agency of the *subject*, not the object. In other words, when we analyze the grammar and sentence syntax, we discern that the subject is the agent who effects "empowerment," because they possess the power to "invest,"

---

<sup>60</sup> "Empower, v.". OED Online. December 2020. Oxford University Press.



“authorize,” or “confer”; therefore, the object lacks their own power, hence the reason it is needed from another source (the subject) (Koss 2021c).

Deconstructing this further, sentences such as “we seek to empower coffee farmers,” as one popular example, logically expresses that for farmers (grammatically speaking, the objects) to receive power, it comes from an external source (subject, “we”). Put another way, both the word itself and the concept of “empowerment” can perpetuate a (nuanced but nevertheless tangible) form of dependency between the subject and object and perpetuate colonial social relations of power, through the gendered coffee paradox. At times, when the Global North focuses on the goal of “empowerment,” they center themselves as a saviour, as the one with power who, even when altruistically intended, holds the power to “save” women. As a result, twenty-first century conceptions of empowerment may preserve unequal social relationships unless they consider the intersectional barriers that women may experience. And, if we are not careful, the word itself and the concept that follows can perpetuate a devious reenactment of past colonial calamities, wickedness, and heartbreaks. Furthermore, “Empowerment” as a term is further complicated by its absence in many languages in the coffeelands; for example, in Kiswahili, there is no literal translation for “empowerment” in English, and it is often substituted or translated with a word such as “enable.”

### *Scholarly Critiques of Empowerment*

Feminist scholar Naila Kabeer will be my starting point to showcase the debate about the appropriation and limitations of the “empowerment” discourse and its value for women (and girls), because she has published an array of her essays and books that analyze feminist discourse (2005; 2011; 2012; 2017). Kabeer defines empowerment by “the ability to make choices,” emphasizing that not only must alternatives actually exist (“the ability to have chosen

differently”), but also “must also be *seen* to exist” (2005:13, emphasis in original). The distinction she makes is important to my analysis since the application of empowerment has “both positive and negative connotations” (2005: 14). In the positive, “the ‘power to’—refers to people’s ability to make and act on their own life choices, even in the face of others’ opposition.” In the negative connotation, “the ‘power over’—refers to the capacity of some actors to override the agency of others through, for example, the exercise of authority of the use of violence” (2005:14). Kabeer’s view of empowerment highlights the necessity of agency, which “implies not only actively exercising choice, but also doing this in ways that challenge power relations” (2005:14).

I employ this view of empowerment as well, as Kabeer put it: empowerment is a process that “often begins from within” and affects one’s capacity to access resources or achievements (2005:14). To access “transformational forms of agency” women must, therefore, “question, analyse (sic), and act on the structures of patriarchal constrain in their lives” (2005:14). The central outcome for Kabeer is the question of culturally specific ways to “undermine the systemic reproduction of inequality,” which requires women to move beyond individual changes of consciousness that “are an important starting point” (2005:16). Kabeer’s examination of the unequal and discriminatory ways in which social relations are reproduced through education, labour, and politics needs to factor into current empowerment “solutions” (cf. Chapters 4-5), because the potential for transformation depends upon the extent to which “the change in question is a genuine expansion of women’s choices, rather than a token gesture of paternalist benevolence” (2005: 23).

Through her field work research featuring rural women in Bangladesh, Naila Kabeer argues that empowerment must be grounded in history and the reality of women’s lives (2011;

2012) – an example that is a model for this study. As a replacement for “empowerment”, Kabeer prefers “gender justice,” because she argues that justice declares the “architecture of rights,” formally referring to the “international norms and conventions relating to women’s rights as well as various forms of national legislation seeking to promote gender equality” (2012: 217). To Kabeer, “gender justice” is a term far more robust than the more subjective concept of empowerment, although the later “must entail changes in women’s consciousness, in the way they perceive themselves and their relationships with others” (2012: 216).

This need to change women’s consciousness was also apparent to Jo Rowlands, as she was working in the development sector throughout the 1980s. By the 1990s, she noticed the usage of “empowerment” was becoming less revolutionary and much less precise. By the time she was working on her doctoral dissertation in the 1990s, Rowlands set out to “provide a definition that could encourage more precise usage” of empowerment, one that would indicate a process that she was witnessing during her field work in Honduras (1997: vi). As a result, Rowlands created a more nuanced approach to defining and evaluating empowerment in her book *Questioning Empowerment* (1997), one that has now been used by international NGOs such as Oxfam (Lombardi et al., 2017) and social scientists (e.g. Bacon 2010) (cf. discussion of both later in this chapter). Even Alkire draws upon Rowlands’ the four categorizations of power in some of her work (Ibrahim & Alkire 2007).<sup>61</sup>

To use Rowlands’ full explanation, let us consider her four layers of power:

- power over: controlling power, which may be responded to with

---

<sup>61</sup>As Ibrahim & Alkire summarize this: “power *over* (ability to resist manipulation); power *to* (creating new possibilities); power *with* (acting in a group); and power *from within* (enhancing self-respect and self-acceptance)” as they also draw “on Rowlands’ typology, we propose indicators for four possible exercises of agency whose increase could lead to empowerment: choice, control, change and communal belonging” (Ibrahim & Alkire 2007).

compliance, resistance, or manipulation;

- power to: generative or productive power, which creates new possibilities and actions without domination;
- power with: 'a sense of the whole being greater than the sum of the individuals, especially when a group tackles problems together';
- power from within: 'the spiritual strength and uniqueness that resides in each one of us and makes us truly human. Its basis is self acceptance and self-respect which extend, in turn, to respect for and acceptance of others as equals.' (Rowlands 1997:13).

These definitions of “power” must go beyond formal or institutional for feminists, because “from a feminist perspective, interpreting 'power over' entails understanding the dynamics of oppression and internalised oppression. Empowerment is thus more than participation in decision-making; it must also include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions” (Rowlands 1997:14).

For this reason, the experience of empowerment may operate within at least three dimensions:

- personal: developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the effects of internalised oppression
- relational: developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decisions made within it
- collective: where individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have had alone. This includes involvement in political structures, but might also cover collective action based

on co-operation rather than competition. (Rowlands 1997:15)

Even as Kabeer's earlier definitions of empowerment "takes choice as its central concept" (2012: 217; citing herself in 1999) and as Rowlands considers layers of power (1997), so does political anthropologist Andrea Cornwall advance these ideas in dozens of single-authored and co-written articles and scholarly book chapters on feminism, development, and empowerment – much of it focused on African contexts. Her work emphasizes that "words make worlds" (2007: 471), as she has deconstructed the ways that "buzzwords and fuzzwords" diminish development efforts. For example, the significance of Kabeer's definition is noted by Cornwall and Althea-Maria Rivas (2015), as they offer a genealogy of empowerment that calls for a more vigorous agenda in the twenty-first century. They deconstruct the "discursive moves" of development organizations who negate Kabeer's "emphasis on the *ability* to make strategic life choices by those who were *previously denied* such an ability" (2015: 406, emphasis in original). They praise Kabeer's definition for its articulation of the need for structural change, but note that, as interpreted by organizations such as the World Bank, Kabeer's more transformational definition was downgraded to "empowerment [as] the process of enhancing capacity" and upon the quest to "improve the efficiency" of "individual and collective assets" (qtd. Cornwall & Rivas 2015: 406). But instead of invigorating the possibilities for agency among and between women, this deliberate shift emphasizes instead moves toward "the sterile zone of gender frameworks" (2015: 409) and professional feminism, which is evident from the shift toward feminist governance around the world through gender mainstreaming, gender-based analysis, gender finance, and gender experts (cf. Sawer et al., 2023; Paterson & Scala 2020; Paterson 2010).

Development narratives that “presume a set of hierarchical and oppositional relationships between men and women” in which women are “structurally inferior” (Cornwall & Rivas 2015: 403)—even as Mohanty warned, the sex/gender binary does not reveal the “material reality” of the source of inequity for all women (1988: 82). Conjugal relationships are not the only power dynamics in women’s lives, and in some cases, they may not even be the key source of discrimination or inequality (Mohanty 1988; Cornwall & Rivas 2015: 403). Focusing on the gendered bifurcations tends to obfuscate the more pernicious sources of discrimination resulting from the structural violence of current systems, implying that the source of women’s oppression is not a problem of women, or even of men, but “the social *constitution* of gender relations” (2015: 403-4, emphasis in original). This may also include forms of discrimination between women, although I did not witness examples of this in my research.

That the discourse of “women’s empowerment” obscures unequal social, and political, relations is among the reasons why its growing dominion in twenty-first century development industry is pernicious. Among the “buzzwords and fuzzwords” in the development industry, “empowerment” has become “one of the most elastic” (2016: 342), getting its “buzz”, as all buzzwords do, “from being in-words, words that define what is in vogue”, and thereby “gain their purchase and power through their vague and euphemistic qualities” (Cornwall 2007: 472). Empowerment is also a “fuzzword,” as it evokes a “comforting mutuality” and “a warm and reassuring consensus” (Cornwall & Brock 2005: 1045) that “shelter multiple meanings” so they are “politically expedient” in their very application “by lending the possibility of common meaning to extremely disparate actors” (Cornwall & Brock 2005: 1056).

Such constructions have propelled the development industry toward “emotive calls for action” based on “fulsomely positive” rhetoric that “promise[s] an entirely different way of doing

business” (Cornwall & Brock 2005: 1043). This feel-good rhetoric also appears to “offer a neat route-map for implementation” and carry “the allure of optimism and purpose, as well as considerable normative power” (2005: 1044). Other normative tools such as the MDGs and SDGs “serve an almost ceremonial function in bolstering a feeling of togetherness” (Cornwall & Brock 2005: 1055).

This normative power exists through the ways in which “empowerment” is a concept that has “come to symbolise (sic) the legitimacy to pursue today’s generation of development blueprints” and is “used to purvey a storyline that situates [mainstream development agencies] as guardians of rightness and champions of progress” (Cornwall & Brock 2005: 1055). The deleterious nature of this storyline is what Cornwall actively seeks to both to uncover and undo throughout her scholarly writing, which the fashionable language of “gender mainstreaming” and the “gender agenda” veils.

These critiques have been followed by other scholars, including Winnie Mitullah in Kenya (2020), as well as Stephanie Paterson and Francesca Scala who critique gender mainstreaming, especially gender-based analysis (GBA), because according to Paterson, “gender mainstreaming constructs a new form of worker: the ‘gender expert,’ who is then given authority to analyse, monitor and suggest interventions based on ‘expert analysis’”. From this perspective, gender analysis becomes a ‘technology of rule,’” and this is problematic because it “obscur[es] the ways in which gender systems are reproduced or fractured by gender mainstreaming itself” (Paterson 2010). This is also evident from recent feminist scholarship that demonstrates the ways governance feminism and some feminist ideals have built institutions and have become bureaucratic fixtures in some states (Halley et al., 2018)—meanwhile, this leadership often reflects neoliberal feminism in countries around the world (Dobrowolsky 2020), and even

Kenya's 2010 Constitutional two-thirds gender rule may be considered an example of the difficulties of implementing feminist governance (Nzomo 2018; Kameri-Mbote & Kabira 2018; Baraza 2018).

As a result, the language of “women’s empowerment” has become not only a buzzword, but in some cases, also a “plastic word,” (Sachs, W. 2010: xiii)—and another mechanism that shrouds neoliberal practices, rooted in colonialism and sexism. “One-size-fits-all development recipes” are ineffective and may enact “violence to the very hope of a world without poverty” (Cornwall & Brock 2005: 1058), especially if intersectionality is not considered in contemporary policy and practices (Townsend-Bell 2023). Without a more precise vocabulary, development words and its subsequent practices will continue an even wider gender gap, as hollow as an empty grave.

Such hollow efforts are critiqued by scholar Jason Hickel, whose writing consistently addresses the unequal divide between the Global North and South in his books and articles (Hickel 2017; 2018), arguing that “inequality is a political phenomenon” (2017: 2218). For example, his incisive critique of the World Bank’s convergence narrative shows that, contrary to their (and others) claims that inequality is diminishing or that it is not quite as severe as we all believe, the reality shows that the global inequality gap between rich and poor countries is not only increasing but has “grown dramatically over the past half century” (2017: 2217). In sharp contrast to dominant development rhetoric, Hickel’s narrative analysis reveals why “global inequality must be understood as a relational phenomenon,” and why it is essential to consider “internal conditions of each country” and “the balance of global power” (2017: 2210).

In a 2014 essay, Hickel refutes the motivations and methods of the “girl effect”: the progressive, neoliberal focus on girls as the previously undiscovered treasure who can rescue



their countries and communities through their labour. As articulated by international organizations such as USAID, donors such as the Nike Foundation, or in the best-selling book-turned-television documentary *Half the Sky* by Kristof and WuDunn, the focus on the “untapped potential” in girls; the call that “investment in girls’ education” provides the “highest return”; and the promotion that adolescent girls in have the potential to “end poverty for themselves” (Hickel 2014: 1362, who qtd. Kristoff & WuDunn 2009) has become a dominant narrative. But as Hickel rightly criticizes: this instrumentalist focus on “empowering girls” redirects attention from the deeper and longer-standing ruptures that began, in many countries, under colonial rule, and the structural violence that led to the Structural Adjustment Programmes when such countries earned their independence (cf. Chapter Four).

Therefore, Hickel centers his critique on two key arguments: (1) “that empowerment interventions rely on assumptions about ‘freedom’ that are particular to the Western liberal tradition, which focuses on achieving individual authenticity and self-mastery” and (2) “that in the context of neoliberal globalization, policies justified on the basis of women’s empowerment – such as expanding access to the labour market and to credit – often end up placing women in new forms of subservience as workers, consumers and debtors” and therefore, “ignores the most substantive drivers of poverty and hunger: structural adjustment, debt, tax evasion, labour exploitation, financial crisis and corruption in the global governance system” (2014: 1356).

His attention to these larger “drivers of poverty” has influenced the way I evaluate the specialty coffee industry’s push toward women’s empowerment. Even as he wonders how adolescent girls can lift themselves out of poverty given the pressure that “women and girls are made to bear the responsibility for bootstrapping themselves out of poverty,” so do I question the pressure on “women in coffee” to be entrepreneurial leaders, especially given the “triple burden”

and continued lack of payment for domestic or leadership work (Lyon et al., 2017) (more about this in Chapters 4-5). This is why I question the possibility that the coffee industry's "empowerment" rhetoric may have (unintended) pernicious effects. Neoliberalism can be a kind of "twisted logic" that, according to Hickel, "is caused in part by the very institutions that purport to save them" (2014: 1356), unless power dynamics shift. For example, as applied to the 'girl effect,' the language becomes subsumed "under the rubric of liberating individuals" (2014: 1358), which is why Hickel rightly argues that "increasing women's participation in the global labour force is not necessarily empowering in the context of a labour market that exerts steady downward pressure on wages and conditions" (2014: 1363). The idea that labour can be "liberatory" under the current waged system is neither likely nor kind, especially when the labour conditions are exploitative toward women, such as in sweatshops (2014: 1362-3) or in the coffee field. If labour is intended to a liberatory means of empowerment, then stability and far more than a "living wage" should be provided to both men and women. Women and girls need to flourish (as do men and boys!), rather than merely survive. Placing responsibility for ongoing "structural and institutional drivers of underdevelopment" (Hickel 2014: 1365) upon women, especially in the attempt to "empower women according to Western notions of agency" may perpetuate a "logic that once underpinned European colonialism" (2014: 1368).

#### **A. Literature of Intersectional Feminism and Coffee**

Such "Western notions of agency" have historically centered on white women's feminism, so it is vital to examine the gender gaps in the coffee industry through an intersectional lens. While this literature is scant, here I consider what existing literature does, and does not, say about the relationships between intersectionality as applied to the coffee industry (from 1990 to 2021). If Boserup were alive now, I wonder if would she agree with Mohanty, as I

do, that “historicizing and locating political agency is a necessary alternative to formulations of the ‘universality’ of gendered oppression and struggles” (1988)?

Certainly one “necessary alternative” formed due to the ground-breaking work of lawyer and professor Kimberlé Crenshaw. In 1989, she created the term “Intersectionality” in 1989 to name the layers of discrimination faced by African American women in the United States (Crenshaw 1991), particularly bringing attention to the “triple oppression” of barriers that women experienced as “Blacks, women and members of the working class” (Yuval-Davis 2006: 193-4) in legal settings.

Intersectionality, as a concept, highlights the ways that various forms of discrimination overlap in political, legal, economic, and social spheres. While Crenshaw originally focused on the overlap of race, class, and gender, the term has since expanded to include sexuality, education, nationality, ethnicity, physical abilities, religion, and among other intersections that may contribute to forms of exclusion and/or discrimination. As a result, Intersectionality is more than just a theory or method; it is a way to address “single-axis thinking” (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall 2013), because “multiple-marginalized people, especially women of color” (Choo & Ferree 2003) experience overlapping identities that their shape experiences (Yuval-Davis 2006). While “each social division has a different ontological basis” and is therefore “always constructed and intermeshed in other social divisions” (Yuval-Davis 2006: 195). Since Crenshaw created the term, Intersectionality is now used in many disciplines to discuss and eliminate bias, from psychology to law, from education to International Development Studies.

Crenshaw’s influential 1991 article “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex,” articulates her goal to “develop a Black feminist criticism” specifically because of the tendency in the United States to “treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and

analysis” (1991: 139). Her original critique centered on examples from legal procedures and race discrimination cases, during which the then-common grouping “Blacks and women” did not represent the needs, barriers, and specific discriminations faced by people who were both Black and women. Crenshaw’s many articles provide dozens of examples where a court failed or “refused to acknowledge that the employment experience of Black women can be distinct from white women” (1991). While many women may face marginalization, slander, barriers, obstructions – not all women face these oppressions in the same way, or for the same reasons – and so the category of “woman” is insufficient to “address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (1991). This is why Crenshaw argues that when frameworks are cast as either “women’s experiences” or “the Black experience,” they must be “rethought and recast” (Crenshaw 1991).

One early global example of such global recasting is expressed through an analysis of “this compound discrimination,” is evident from “The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women”—the report that emerged from World Conference for Women, hosted in Nairobi in July 1985:

Women, by virtue of their gender, experience discrimination in terms of denial of equal access to the power structure that controls society and determines development issues and peace initiatives. Additional differences, such as race, colour and ethnicity, may have even more serious implications in some countries, since such factors can be used as justification for compound discrimination (UN 1985: 17).

Acknowledgement of this “compound discrimination” is named several times in the report as a necessary advancement for women, alongside needs for “social adjustments to ease women’s

burden of child and household care” (UN 1985:28) and the enablement of all women “to participate on equal footing with men in all spheres of the political, economic and social life of their respective countries, particularly in the decision-making process” (UN 1985:8). Specific groups of women – named as “vulnerable and underprivileged groups” – are identified in the report as requiring additional government support due to the “multiple obstacles facing such groups” (UN 1985:67). The report calls for governments to “respect, preserve and promote all of their human rights, their dignity, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic identity and their full participation in societal change” (UN 1985: 67-74). Examples of such groups include “women who are sole supporters of their families,” “young women,” “minority and indigenous women,” and “refugee and displaced women,” because these:

minority groups or populations which have historically been subject to domination and suffered dispossession and dispersal. These women suffer the full burden of discrimination based on race, colour, descent, ethnic and national origin and the majority experienced serious economic deprivation. As women, they are therefore doubly disadvantaged. (UN 1985:67)

The report asserts that marginalized women “should be fully consulted and should participate in the development and implementation of programmes affecting them” (UN 1985: 75). Ten years later, the Fourth World Conference on Women urged governments, through the Beijing Declaration in 1995 to “intensify efforts” that will “ensure equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all women and girls who face multiple barriers to their empowerment and advancement because of such factors as their race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion or disability or because they are indigenous people” (articles 22-24).

The first time that the World Bank comprehensively acknowledged gender occurred in the World Development Report from 2012, when it rightly claims about gender inequalities that “disparities persist when multiple reinforcing constraints combine to block progress” (WDR 2012: 13). To make such verbal shifts are more than rhetorical—and progress in this area is evident. When institutions make assumptions about what women want, desire, or need, then colonial ghosts, not ‘women,’ are empowered to speak.

Some scholars and coffee industry leaders seek to address the gender gaps by using an intersectional lens, and there is no shortage of articles that in some way deal with coffee’s gender gap (Lyon 2019; Lyon et al., 2010; Quinones-Ruiz & Giraldo-Lievano 2022; Tanhua & Komba 2022; Sandberg & Tienari 2022; Heiliger 2013; Sarirahayu & Aprianingsih 2018; Scholar 2008; Kanyamurwa et al., 2013). Most of these articles focus on gender as their key unit of analysis – a point that Townsend-Bell observes in much feminist scholarship (2023) – without directly engaging in an intersectional viewpoint. Some, like Quinones-Ruiz & Giraldo-Lievano (2022), consider the intersectionality of gender and class by evaluating the unequal economic status of rural women in coffee through a case study of men and women farmers in Colombia. For example, Jenn Chen, a freelance coffee writer who publishes in various coffee periodicals wrote a blog article, “On Gender and Racial Equity in the Coffee Industry,” which was her first personal essay on intersectional feminism that had a public reach. In 2022, I published an essay that linked Sustainability with Intersectionality for South Africa’s *Coffee Magazine*, where I assert that for the coffee industry to achieve social sustainability either in the short or long-run, an intersectional lens must be used for solutions as the industry comprises such diverse voices (Koss 2022b). An admirable example of a coffee organization that is doing this work can be

found in Costa Rica, through the non-profit called Bean Voyage,<sup>62</sup> a “feminist nonprofit with a mission” and considers intersectionality as one of its key goals. Through the service they created called “Care Trade,” they provide training, financing, market access, and mentorship to smallholder women farmers in Costa Rica. Their website includes some thoughtful reflections on the gender gap and women’s empowerment, that analyzes feminist works by Naila Kabeer and others, and models their impact through her framework of empowerment and three area of impact as a model (resources, agency, achievements).

As observed by other scholars (Kanyamurwa et al., 2013), coffee’s household economic and social gains after the liberalization measures have maintained levels of poverty within the coffee sector, especially for coffee producers in small-scale production. As they note, coffee producers “had to work longer hours to obtain these economic returns, and spent more cash on health care and food from commercial sources” and thereby concluding that small-scale women farmers “who are producing coffee in Uganda as an export commodity cannot rely on the income from their crops to guarantee their health and nutritional wellbeing, and that the income advantage gained in coffee-producing households has not translated into consistently better health or food security outcomes” (Kanyamurwa et al., 2013). A similar outcome can be perceived in other cash crop industries, as demonstrated through a case study provided through a contemporary ethnographic account centred upon the Dalit women’s protests at tea plantations in India and suggests that the protest led postcolonial women to turn into “active political subjects” and demonstrated how feminist literature on intersectionality can be “an integrative narrative”

---

<sup>62</sup> Disclaimer: Bean Voyage is led by a Korean coffee professional Sunghee Tark, who lives in Costa Rica and who was my student in my Specialty Coffee Association course “Coffee Sustainability” and her focus on intersectional feminism was part of her professional project that she crafted under my guidance. Tark has crafted her organization as a “feminist nonprofit with a mission” in Latin America, focuses on Costa Rica.

(Rama 2020). Similarly, there is evidence that women in coffee may be integrating themselves as more “active political subjects” (cf. Chapter Five).

### **B. Specialty Coffee Industry reports: A Feminist and Intersectional Analysis**

Considering all these insights from social scientists and coffee professionals, when I read the industry reports on gender and coffee of the last twenty years, I view the use of “empowerment” not only as “plastic” (Pörksen 1995) but also problematic. Industry discourse, including that from corporations, intergovernmental and trade organizations, and nonprofit organizations, combined have enforced the resounding theme that coffee, and increased labour and productivity, are the means to “empower women.”

In 2015—interestingly the same year that the Sustainable Development Goals were announced—one of the first reports on the topic of gender in coffee was published by what was then called the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA), now the SCA.<sup>63</sup> This white paper acknowledges that “gender in coffee is a relatively new area of research, and much still remains to be studied and tested, to assure that development and industry efforts have the intended impact” (SCAA 2015:16). Since this time, what do the reports from organizations such as Oxfam, the Specialty Coffee Association, Nestlé, and the Coffee Quality Institute all contribute to the voices talking about gender? As the final section of this literature review, I now turn to the ways that the coffee industry has (mis)appropriated the term “empowerment” and overlooked the importance of intersectionality for women in coffee.

In the last two decades, several industry wide and nongovernmental organizations have refocused their efforts on gender equality, gender equity, or gender empowerment for “women in

---

<sup>63</sup>This organization was formerly called the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA), which was founded in 1982 by a group of American coffee professionals. In 2017, it merged with the European group, a then-separate organization called the Specialty Coffee Association of Europe (SCAE) founded in 1998, to form one global association, renamed as the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA). This white paper was conducted by the SCAA.



coffee,” particularly in the specialty coffee industry. Insights derive from reports of such nongovernmental organizations that work with coffee farmers, or white papers from professional organizations. These focus on the instrumental purpose of women as producers rather than her intrinsic value as a human being. Reports usually overlook colonialism, even as a passing reference, thus ignoring the historical power dynamics between Global North coffee-consuming and Global South coffee-producing countries.

These reports prove that “the basic questions of intersectionality remain the same: who is not included here, and as a result, what – what problem, what experience, what alternate conception – is not included here? This stubborn gap ranges on a spectrum from unintentional – but nonetheless consistent and problematic – exclusion, to proactive hostility” (Townsend-Bell 2023: 89). This “stubborn gap” remains notable when the state *talks* about women’s rights, and it is in this sense that the gendered coffee paradox is revealed through my case study of Kenya coffee, because while an admirable amount of political will and determination led to the New Constitution that guarantees women’s rights, there has been far less attention to achieving this and making it possible (Kameri-Mbote 2018; Nzomo 2018; Baraza 2018; Mitullah 2020).

In Nairobi, although dozens of non-profit organizations are working toward “empowering women,” this is evident as a particularly stubborn problem. While it is certainly the case that NGOs have stepped into areas where the state as been absent or ineffective, nevertheless this kind of empowerment governance, typically focuses on market-driven outcomes. This is evident from the literature in two key categories: (1) through global reports that center on social issues in coffee, where we see that gender has become a key issue in the twenty-first century coffee industry; (2) through Kenya-specific reports on the coffee industry, in some cases, where gender

is barely mentioned, with little to no specific solutions identified for the gap between the social realities faced by women compared to men.

Industry and NGO reports are often vague in their descriptions of women's issues, even those that centre on social and economic issues. As an early example of a report that did not sufficiently focus on gender issues, Oxfam published "Mugged: Poverty in your Coffee Cup" (2002) where authors Gresser and Tickell reviewed the state of the coffee industry, calling for "a systemic, not a niche solution" (Gresser & Tickell 2002:3). Yet now more than two decades after that research was conducted, the coffee industry has not created any major transformations or reforms. On the face of things, it can seem like all this rhetoric surrounding "women's empowerment" is an advancement—and for some farmers, it has been. Many advancements in sustainability are evident from the specialty coffee industry, which accounts for an estimated 40% of the value of US coffee sales in North America (Gresser & Tickell 2002:25). But as most of the world's coffee is traded commercially, coffee profits continue to benefit the Global North more than the Global South as evident from the coffee paradox (Daviron & Ponte 2005).

As the Oxfam report centered on building awareness in the Global North regarding the poverty in the Global South through coffee, they offered a list of final solutions. Yet only two address women specifically: "assess the impact of the ICO Quality Scheme on small producers, especially women farmers" (Gresser & Tickell 2002:50) and "protect the rights of seasonal and plantation workers to ensure that labour legislation, consistent with core ILO conventions, is enacted and implemented. Particular attention should be paid to the rights of women labourers" (2002:51) – the only two gender-specific recommendations in a three-page list that ends its report (2002:49-51). Nothing more was said about how this might be accomplished.

Since this report, Oxfam has published several reports focused on gender justice, such as the “Measuring Women’s Empowerment” report (Lombardini et al., 2017), that incorporates the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index. While the Oxfam report does not focus on coffee, it does centre on Oxfam’s approach to the SDGs given its history in large-scale development projects (Lombardini et al., 2017: 5). The report utilizes a framework developed by VeneKlasen and Miller (2002), as well as that developed by Alkire et al. (2013), focused on measuring women’s empowerment in rural and agricultural contexts. The framework demonstrates the three levels may shift take place for individuals: personal, relational, and environmental. Personal refers to that within the person; relational refers to power relations and dynamics within the woman’s context; environmental considers the broader context both informal or formal in her society or political contexts (Lombardini et al., 2017: 5).

Among Oxfam’s strengths include the acknowledgement that “there is no single correct way to approach this question” of how to measure women’s empowerment. For the past five years since the report’s publication, Oxfam has uses the Women’s Empowerment Index in evaluations, using five steps toward “women’s empowerment”: (1) defining the characteristics of empowerment; (2) questionnaire design and defining indicators; (3) data construction and application of cut-off points; (4) define the relative weight of each indicator; and (5) create the empowerment index (Lombardini et al., 2017:10-14). This report compliments the work of Jo Rowlands (1995, 1997), who expresses the four dimensions of power: power within, power to, power with, and power over.<sup>64</sup> According to Oxfam, the first two are personal (power from

---

<sup>64</sup>See earlier discussion in this chapter. In an essay reflecting upon her work, Rowlands stated that during her field work in Honduras, she “noticed the multi-faceted nature of power quickly became evident. To make sense of ‘empowerment’, and in particular to explore ways in which women might grow their power, I felt it was essential to differentiate between forms of power and the ways in which the forms that are not zero-sum might effectively be thought about and cultivated. I worked with the now widely used ideas of power *to*, power *with*, power *within* and power *over*, and found them helpful in thinking through how initiatives towards women’s empowerment might be approached” (Rowlands 2016).

within/power to), and the other two are relational and therefore may relate to systemic changes: power with/power over (Lombardini et al., 2017:17-18)

Most other twenty-first century coffee reports advocate for gender equality in the coffee value chain without specific gender frameworks identified, but rather focus upon gender gaps in areas such as: land ownership, the distribution of labour and income, and representation in leadership/decision-making (SCCA 2015; TWIN, 2013; ICO 2018). While these areas certainly remain key areas of inequity for women in coffee's Global South producing countries (ICO 2018: 4), and while I also focus on these as important areas in Kenya, I am concerned at the ways in which industry reports and academic articles fail to direct accountability for structural transformation to the state and focus solutions upon neoliberal assumptions of individual rights and individuality, without looking at specific contexts.

These assumptions underpin almost every gender-based coffee report published in the last nine years, beginning with one of the first-ever industry white papers on the topic of gender and coffee. Published in 2015 by the Specialty Coffee Association<sup>65</sup>, coffee's largest professional global trade organization, the white paper was written by the former leadership group known as the Sustainability Council and titled "A Blueprint for Gender Equality in the Coffeelands." The white paper<sup>66</sup> defines "gender empowerment" as "the ability for men and women to participate equally in society at the household, community, and national levels, especially regarding economic and political decision-making." They define "women's empowerment" as that which "narrows the focus when there is a gap in equality in order that women have the ability to realize

---

<sup>65</sup> See note 63.

<sup>66</sup> This is the first report focused on coffee and gender from then-SCAA, now SCA (see note 63), which many other coffee reports cite. Since 2015, the SCA has not produced any gender-specific reports, although the more recently created SCA magazine, "25" an online and print publication under the staff and funding of the SCA, has published some gender-focused essays, including one written by me (cf. Koss 2021c).

their full potential to participate in society as decision-makers. Both gender empowerment and women's empowerment work to create a balanced society" (2015:3). The Council summarizes some of the challenges that female farmer-producers face, all centred upon market-level challenges, because "women earn less income, own less land, control fewer assets, have less access to credit and market information, greater difficulty obtaining inputs, and fewer training and leadership opportunities" (SCAA 2015: 2). The report notes that while men have an 8-hour workday, women work up to 15 hours a day. Other gendered constraints include the narrowly prescribed category of "Women's roles," which "offer little in terms of opportunity for economic advancement, whereas men receive and control a disproportionate amount of income from coffee relative to work performed. The distribution of labor into gender stereotyped roles leads to a lack of earning power and control over income for women" (SCAA 2015: 5; cf. Twin 2013).

Rather than focusing on the inherent humanity of women, the paper focuses on women as producers and reproducers of labour in coffee, with comments such as: "if women have better access to agricultural inputs, they can engage in a more productive agricultural practice. This has the potential to increase both their food production as well as their coffee production, thereby improving both food security and income" (2015: 7). The white paper continues in this vein, noticing the key factors that lead to the gender gap, and at the end, offers solutions they believe should come from the industry, rather than governments or communities, such as involving women in technical training (2015:9-10), promoting initiatives that create more balance in households (2015:11-12), or giving women access to financial credit or resources (2015: 13-15).

In addition to the SCAA report (2015), another early industry report on gender was a manual called "The Way Forward," developed by the Partnership for Gender Equity (PGE), which, from 2015 to 2019 was an initiative of the Coffee Quality Institute (CQI) until PGE

became an independent organization in 2020. In my interview with its founder, Kimberly Easson confirmed that PGE was the first strategic initiative in the coffee industry to focus on gender. From 2013-15, although she was working full-time on the issue of gender equity in coffee, employed by CQI, even she was not invited to join board meetings. Despite the growing global focus on gender, Kimberly struggled to make significant progress on gender issues given the paucity of available funding, which as she told me, “then and still, remains a key problem: gender is not being invested in for research” (Easson, personal interview, February 2023).

Despite this challenge, during the years she worked on the initiative, Kimberly worked to create a strategic focus for gender empowerment in the coffee chain and an articulation of gender equity principles as applied to coffee. The construction of gender equity indicator was presented in the report “The Way Forward: Accelerating Gender Equity in Coffee Value Chains” (2015), confirmed in our interview as one of the first gender reports in coffee [perhaps the first] (Easson, personal interview, February 2023). The report offered eight recommendations to accelerate gender equity in the coffee chain:

- Increase participation of women in training programs and revise trainings to be gender sensitive (PGE 2015:11).
- Develop a list of principles for gender equity in coffee (2015:12).
- Increase women’s access to credit and assets (2015:13).
- Achieve greater gender balance in leadership positions (2015: 14).
- Support joint decision making and ownership of income and resources at household Level (2015:15).
- Specific resources and markets for women producers and coffees produced in gender equitable conditions (2015:16).

- Invest in programs to reduce time pressure for women (2015:17).
- Continue to build understanding through research and measurement (2015:17).

What I notice from this list is that six out of the eight list of recommendations focus on individual actions that women are expected to accomplish, putting arguably more pressure on women, adopting neoliberal empowerment rhetoric that groups women into broad categories and without considering intersectional needs of women from Latin America, Asia, or Africa.

After PGE funding ended her salary, Kimberly started a new initiative that became independent of CQI called “Equal Origins.” In this capacity, Kimberly continues to work on gender with an advisory board and a small team of staff and volunteers, focused on creating the “Gender Equity Index.” This is an online diagnostic tool created for companies that provide sustainability education and technical support to farmers and farmer organizations, offered in different languages.<sup>67</sup> It was created for businesses that give services to farmers and work with farmers, asking questions such as, “are women included in a project’s design” and “are women included in training that reaches the women doing work.” As Kimberly told me at a 2023 coffee conference, “I created Equal Origins to address challenges for all the other women, such as rural and Indigenous women. We can see that women who can attend [these] conferences have “their foot in the door” – but what about other women who are usually missing from any global gathering? I want them to be included, too” (Easson, personal interview, February 2023).

Advancing the work of PGE and Equal Origins, the International Coffee Organization (ICO), the inter-governmental organization founded as one outcome of the International Coffee Agreement negotiations in 1963 (see Chapter 4), produced a report that, for the first time in their history, focused on gender (2018). Titled “Gender Equality in the Coffee Sector,” the report is

---

<sup>67</sup> Gender Equity Index: <https://equalorigins.org/the-gender-equity-index/>.

unique because it showcases six case studies that feature public-private partnerships in the coffee sector, all with the goal to enhance or promote gender equality in coffee. The report accurately affirms the scant available data on gender and coffee and argues that more research is needed in gender and coffee (2018: 4), because a deficiency of data is available specifically for coffee farming and “more efforts are needed to improve systematic data collection” (ICO 2018: 35) on gender and coffee.

However, the ICO missed an opportunity because their examples are rife with the rhetoric of empowerment and sweeping, general statements, such as “a deeper understanding of the state of women’s empowerment as well as equal opportunities in the coffee sector is required” (ICO 2018: 6)—but they offer no funding or no resources to make this a reality. The report’s stated goal is of “empowering women and enabling them to participate in commercial and export-orientated agriculture” (ICO 2018: 29) without details of the role of governments to make this happen. Rarely are countries identified and no women are specifically cited from any part of the global coffee sector, despite (unnamed) photographs of smiling women throughout the 36-page report. As with other reports mentioned, the ICO report missed any opportunity to offer a consideration of the complex, intersectional identities of women who work in coffee.

Instead, commensurate with other coffee reports, the ICO focuses on economic empowerment for women, centred on gender gaps in coffee for women producers at the farm level only. The report claims to offer “new evidence on the extent and determinants of the gender gap in coffee farming” (2018: 35), but it offers nothing new compared to what had been discussed before: the ICO solutions do not focus upon global structural inequities but instead what is perceived to be household imbalances, such as in statement: “Programmes aiming at women’s empowerment try to change the underlying power balance between men and women in



order to achieve benefits that are sustainable” (ICO 2018: 28). The report overlooks ways this might be accomplished, especially given the complexity and diversity of cultures between and within coffee-producing countries.

While it is true that household transformation is needed (see my Chapter Five), the ICO report omits the need for more structured governmental change or responsibility – ironic given that the ICO is the intergovernmental organization focused on the economics of coffee. This is problematic because it adopts neoliberal solutions as the answer. The ICO seems to direct responsibility for change, based on uneven power balances at the household level, and seems to also assume that the individual is the key culprit when it comes to disempowerment. The report only mentions its goal to address the role that the public and-private sector has in working toward closing the gender gap—leaving out the role of governments, for example—despite the reality that land ownership and property rights (ICO 2018: 30) and access to credit at financial institutions (ICO 2018: 31) are often a matter of national and local laws (especially customary laws) and not under the jurisdiction of the private or public sectors, nor of households or individuals. The report is an example of one that, while identifying serious challenges for women, ends with conclusions that do not match the problems. The solutions listed in the report—agriculture extension programs and farmer schools; financial literacy; certification schemes; access to technology—may have a positive effect on gender equality, but all solutions focus on instrumental, top-down possibilities for women and thereby putting additional pressure constraints upon the very people who do not have additional time nor labour. That the ICO would centre its appeal for gender equality on the economic possibilities is no surprise, but future reports should consider an intersectional lens.

Other reports provide a good summary on general coffee issues but fail to address the subject of gender, such as a 2020 International Labour Organization (ILO) (Pindeo Caro 2020). This report examines wages and working conditions in the coffee sector by looking at a range of coffee-producing countries: Costa Rica, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, and Viet Nam. These five countries contain more than six million workers employed in the coffee sector (2020:5). The report is part of a larger project supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, which seeks to develop indicators and methodologies that will strengthen the capacity of governments and social partners to negotiate and set adequate wage levels (2020:5). Aimed at “improving the information on wages, employment levels and hours worked in the coffee sector to fill the existing knowledge gap,” the report also seeks to “strengthen the ability of governments, social partners, and others to negotiate and set adequate wage levels in the sector” (2020:5). While exact numbers are not provided, the report does summarize an approximate number of women among coffee workers, which varies from an estimated 8 per cent in Costa Rica; 17 per cent in India; and up to more than 40 per cent in Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Viet Nam. The report notes a gendered “characteristic of the employment structure is the prevalence of women in unpaid roles” as “unpaid family workers” (2020:5). In all five countries, the average coffee wages are “far below average country wages and lower than the averages wages paid in the agricultural sector” and women in the coffee sector “earn substantially less than men” (2020:11) as evident from these key findings:

Part of the gap arises because of the relatively high number of women working as unpaid family workers. Looking only at average wages for employees, gender pay gaps in monthly wages amount to 44.5 per cent in Costa Rica, 12.4 per cent in Viet Nam, 34.9 in Indonesia and 23.3 in India. With the exception of India and

Ethiopia, wage gaps are higher than the national average gaps. Hourly gender wage gaps also show that women earn less in all countries, the gap ranging from 39.2 per cent in Costa Rica and 32.5 per cent in India to 8.3 per cent in Viet Nam. (Pindeo Caro 2020:5, 11)

The 30-percentage points difference attested between the gaps of Costa Rica and Viet Nam might suggest the existence of varying degrees of discrimination (Pindeo Caro 2020:11). Because women are often included in the unpaid family worker category, this means that assigning “employment status” is “related to the own-account/unpaid family worker dichotomy” where men tend to hold the own-account worker title” (2020:9). As previously noted in Chapter One, an admirable offering of the report is that it provides some clear approximate numbers of women in coffee between 2016-2018:

- Costa Rica: reported 46,140 total number of workers in coffee; 8.65% are women;
- Ethiopia: reported 2,612,508 total number of workers in coffee; 42.11% of the share are women;
- Viet Nam: reported 1,439,712 total number of workers in coffee; 43.96% of share are women;
- Indonesia: reported 1,500,670 total number of workers in coffee; 40.2% of share are women (2020:4).

In all countries average coffee wages are far from average country wages. The difference is particularly dramatic in Ethiopia, with the average employee earning five times more than the average field worker (Pindeo Caro 2020:13). The report concludes that gender pay gaps exist in

every country of the study but that the percentage differ widely from country to country and that there is also substantial non-compliance with minimum wages (Pindeo Caro 2020:17).

In the last few years, coffee corporations have also been publicly sharing their sustainability and gender reports. As *The Coffee Barometer* notes, “the coffee supply chain is closely tied to the top ten multinational roasters that represent over 35 percent of global trade in green coffee and engages millions of smallholders and workers” (Panhuysen & Pierrot 2020:4). Since Nestlé is the top buyer and roaster of coffee worldwide, I have chosen to use one of their recent gender reports here as an example. Nestlé, the world’s largest buyer of coffee beans (Panhuysen & Pierrot 2018), created a gender program in 2017 for its Nespresso brand coffee through its AAA Sustainable Quality Program, a Voluntary Sustainability Standard (VSS), which has been praised in reports and articles (ICO 2018: 13; Millard 2017). As their website states, Nespresso partnered with the international development non-profit TechnoServe and other partners to develop the “AAA Gender Analysis Tool,” which is “designed to unearth the insights needed to empower women” (Nestle, n.d.). In their report, the only African country in the study was Ethiopia, between 2017-2020, where, in collaboration with Rainforest Alliance, Nespresso “launched a holistic, sustainable approach to coffee sourcing in 2003. The programme is based on three pillars: good-quality coffee, productivity, and social and environmental sustainability of farming communities. Farmers can choose to apply for certifications through Rainforest Alliance, Fairtrade International and Fairtrade USA” (ITC 2021: 56; cf. also Millard 2017).

In contrast to the vaguely articulated outcomes of the Nestlé program, an admirable exception is evident from the FairTrade USA’s “Gender Equity and Women’s Empowerment” (2021) report, which claims that “gender equality and women’s empowerment” are essential aspects to their model and “essential for sustainable change and impact.” They state they are

“committed to continuous improvement in its approach to understanding the role of women in fair trade supply chains, to ensuring the model benefits and uplifts women, and to driving towards the vision of gender equality” (FT USA 2021:12). Among the admirable aspects of this report is that they define “empowerment” as more than just an individual phenomenon, but as “the ability of an individual or community to take ownership of their life and choices with confidence and the related sense of accomplishment and well-being due this ability to make decisions for themselves that affect their livelihoods and trajectories. Women’s empowerment refers to this ability specifically for women and girls as individuals and a collective” (2021:2).

Consistent with the findings from the other reports already mentioned, FairTrade USA believes that women are disproportionately represented in low wage jobs and in lower tiers of the supply chain and “receive a disproportionately small proportion of both aid and extension services—it is estimated that women receive only 10% of total aid for agriculture, forestry and fishing, and female farmers receive only 5% of all agricultural extension services” (2021:3). They also note that women play “comparatively unseen role[s]” in agricultural systems, naming that “women often play a large role on the farm, while their husbands formally represent the family within a cooperative or at the market” (FT USA 2021: 5). In addition, “female workers are often subject to harassment and assault, which can be exacerbated in situations where women work alone in isolated areas such as in fields” (FT USA 2021: 6). Because “women are responsible for the bulk of the child-care and household responsibilities in addition to their paid work—they spend three times as many hours as men each day on these unpaid duties. Women are also responsible for water collection in 80% of households that do not have water access on the premises” (FT USA 2021: 6).

As a result of the gendered challenges, Fair Trade USA takes a three-pronged approach in their solutions for women: 1) create a safe space for women, 2) focus on empowering women, and 3) recognize gender equality as a means of driving broader impact goals (FT USA 2021:7). In this context, the focus of “empowering women” for FairTrade USA centres on leadership and committee work; for example, “In smallholder agricultural systems, when knowledge gaps between men and women are reduced via training for women, productivity can increase by as much as 131%. In addition to these productivity increases, studies also show that prioritizing women’s participation in smallholder supply chains leads to improved product quality and better use of inputs” (2021:7); Under the third “empowerment” goal, they identify that “women’s influence on the spending of the Community Development Fund results in investments such as the funding of daycares, subsidized grocery stores, cooking stoves, washing machines, and access to healthcare, that benefit the health and well-being of families and communities for years to come” (FT USA 2021: 10). Still, however admirable this report compared to other NGOs or businesses in its articulation of a definition of ‘empowerment’ and specific outcomes, FairTrade USA does not account for any specific intersectionality, or identify challenges or barriers faced in the marketplace by Africa, Asian, or Latin American women in coffee.

A similar focus on women’s investment in their families and households is evident from the fourth edition of the coffee industry’s most comprehensive guide, *The Coffee Guide*,<sup>68</sup> published by International Trade Centre (ITC) (2021). In its focus on “people and planet,” the director states that “ITC’s technical assistance helps our partners countries reverse centuries of

---

<sup>68</sup> This edition reflects changes in the last ten years and new dynamics that have come into play. First published as *Coffee-An exporter’s guide* in 1992 and subsequently updated in 2002 and 2012, this practical handbook has become the world’s most extensive publication on the international coffee trade.

commodity dependence, turning exports into diversified growth and poverty reduction” (ITC 2021: iii).

This latest edition includes far more of a focus on the challenges and needs of women, especially since several advisory members are leaders from the International Women in Coffee Alliance (see Chapter Five). For example, chapter 2, “Improving livelihoods: From survive to thrive” notes the specific ways that climate change and a “very male-dominated” coffee sector “threatens the future of coffee,” with a subheading “The rise of women in a male-dominated sector” (ITC 2021: 69). The guide states that:

the coffee sector is often more favourable to – and dominated by – men. There are inequalities at production level in terms of pay, working hours, professional opportunities, decision-making roles and basic rights. It is necessary to increase representation, agency and pay for women until they are on the same footing as men. This starts with understanding the challenges women face at all levels of the industry – as well as how they vary according to country, culture, race, sexuality, disability and more. Women empowerment and a movement towards a gender inclusive coffee supply chain is happening at every level, from farm to cup. (ITC 2021: 69)

While this paragraph maintains a focus on neoliberal aims toward increasing women’s market access in coffee, there is also an admirable shift toward considering women’s challenges as an “invisible, less empowered, workforce” (ITC 2021). The report states that “women are the backbone of the coffee business at farm level” despite the reality that women “often face the ‘double burden’ of both working on the farm and doing the housework” (ITC 2021: 69).

Compared to other reports, the ITC guide admirably links women’s issues with other coffee

issues and provides a more comprehensive look at the ways women are affected by the gender gap in coffee, such as the connection between gender and climate challenges: because “climate change affects women disproportionately” and in addition to talking about climate related disasters, they noted a serious obstacle to women’s achievement of “living income is the lack of land tenure security for rural women. An estimated 20%–30% of coffee farms are female-operated, and women provide up to 70% of labour in coffee production, depending on the region” (ITC 2021: 30), citing the same ICO gender report addressed earlier in this chapter.

But *The Coffee Guide* still focuses on instrumentalist reasons to focus on women’s empowerment: “Women’s access to land involves right of use, but not ownership” and “with women making up such an important percentage of the coffee cultivation workforce, it is vital to empower women in the coffee farming sector. This is crucial to meet the world’s rising demand for coffee while lifting millions of producers out of poverty. To be viable and long-lasting, greater productivity must be balanced by environmental and social sustainability and enhanced resilience to a changing climate” (ITC 2021: 30). As the report addresses solutions for women, the focus remains on technical assistance, access to leadership roles, and more access to markets (ITC 2021: 36; 52-3)—which may often highlight neoliberal solutions for women in coffee, rather than focusing on structural transformation from federal, national, or local government policies (Cornwall & Brock 2005:1043). In this sense, the quest for empowerment in coffee may be among the “new forms of subservience” that Hickel critiques (2014: 1369).

### **C. Coffee Studies Social Science Scholarship: Empowerment for Women in Coffee**

This section on the coffee studies in the social science scholarship will demonstrate ways that the “material reality” (Mohanty 1988: 82) for women in coffee is far more complex and complicated than current coffee industry reports reveal, especially since, as previously I have



noted in Chapter One, these scholars also note the paucity of studies that assess or evaluate gender parity and women's empowerment in coffee (Pineda et al., 2019: 64).

This section examines literature that demonstrates examples of the discourse of "women's empowerment" and some ways the concept of empowerment has emerged as a frame to discuss gender in coffee. These examples here consider specific coffee communities in Latin America, specifically Nicaragua, Honduras, and Colombia; to date, I have not located attempts to conduct similar measurements of "empowerment" within coffee studies as applied to African contexts. However, these studies advance the debate about the ways and means through which women in coffee may be "empowered." Even as scholars mentioned in this section here maintain a binary dichotomy of gender and do not overtly discuss intersectionality, combined, they do take class, socio-economic status, access to property or land, and geography into consideration.

In Nicaragua, Christopher Bacon's study defines empowerment as that which "refers to the ability of individuals and groups to act on their own to achieve their self-defined goals" (Bacon 2010: 53), examining the response of three small-scale coffee cooperatives to the 1999 global coffee crisis. He borrows a process approach using Rowland's empowerment framework for three levels of empowerment—personal relational, and collective—and uses this model in his research design of and questions to both Nicaraguan men and women farmers (Bacon 2010: 53, 57). He examines agrarian reform during Nicaragua's revolution, using coffee as a case study, by interrogating the methods through which small-scale Nicaraguan farmers depended on the marketing of coffee under neoliberalism (his dates are 1989-2006) (2010: 55-6), showing that the cooperatives formed and relied upon each other via the fair-trade network of selling coffee to support their precarious livelihoods (Bacon 2010: 57).

Bacon's study, like mine, uses gender as the key variable, although socio-economic issues are linked since he considers an all women-formed group involved in an NGO-supported micro-credit program (2010: 60). However, the gender of Bacon's surveyed participants is sometimes unclear; for example, when his team asked farmers about the most important events from their life stories, "these farmers often talked about the importance of gaining access to land" (Bacon 2010: 59). His study does not clarify if "these farmers" refer to men, women, or both. Although he generalizes about the needs of both men and women farmers, his conclusions give insight to the reality that "market-centered international development advocates that higher coffee prices do not necessarily promote empowerment, much less gender equity," especially because fair trade has not kept up with inflation and fails to include producer voices in governance (Bacon 2010: 65). His research contributes to the understanding that the neoliberal marketing strategies focused on price is insufficient to explain social inequalities and the differences in empowerment outcomes (Bacon 2010: 63). A key insight from Bacon's study is that higher coffee prices is not enough to "empower women."

During a study conducted in western Honduras, co-authors Dietz, Chong, Gilabert, and Grabs (2018) used the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index to measure the levels of empowerment between men and women in coffee-producing households (cf. earlier discussion in this chapter on Alkire's development of this index). This 2018 research sought to understand the correlation between women's economic advancement in coffee with "their power to make and act on economic decisions" (Dietz et al., 2018: 34). Given to 153 households, the survey included couples who live together in rural areas, although some men "could not be located" (2018: 40): "mono-parental households" were excluded (2018:40). The "patriarchal structure that characterises Honduras, especially in rural areas" (Dietz et al., 2018:48) with "high levels of

machismo” detailed (Dietz et al., 2018:44) continues to prevent barriers to women’s measurable empowerment. Their sample showed that “all men but one were empowered” (Dietz et al., 2018: 44, 48) and that “60.3% of women do not achieve parity with their male counterpart” (Dietz et al., 2018: 41), using the five dimensions of women’s empowerment, as mentioned earlier in this chapter (Alkire et al., 2013).<sup>69</sup> The authors demonstrate that the “least empowered” women with a “lack of control over use of income and low access to and decisions on credit,” including land ownership and land allocation (Dietz et al., 2018: 48), despite “government policies designed to address gender discrimination” (Dietz et al., 2018: 48).

For a study conducted in Colombia, Javier A. Pineda, Maricel Piniero, and Anayatzin Ramirez offer further insights of ways that coffee renovations and certifications programs contribute toward women’s empowerment in coffee (2019). As the third largest producer of coffee in the world (Pineda et al., 2019: 65), Colombia provides key insights through its government-led National Federation of Coffee Growers (FNC) of which 96% of members belong to *‘la familia cafeteria’* (‘the coffee-producing family’), and whether these efforts are effectively increasing “women’s empowerment” (Pineda et al., 2019: 64). FNC renovation programs that began in 2009 have “resulted in the renovation, or replanting, of more than 3,400 million coffee trees”; trees that were very old or had been susceptible to coffee rust, a fungus that destroys coffee trees and cherries (Pineda et al., 2019: 65). This program claims to have changed gender norms by giving women “the opportunity to acquire the coffee producer identification card (ID) that provides them access to the incentives provided by FNC programs,” the primary one being a credit program to purchase certified coffee seedlings (Pineda et al., 2019: 66). Previously,

---

<sup>69</sup> As noted earlier in this chapter, the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index measures: (1) decision-making power about agricultural production; (2) access to and decision-making power about productive resources; (3) control over use of income and expenditures; (4) leadership in the community; and (5) time allocation” (Alkire et al., 2013); these are the measurements that the study by Dietz et al., 2018: 34 considered.

women were denied these ID cards and were therefore not recognized themselves as “coffee producers”; they could not own their own plots of land for coffee (Pineda et al., 2019: 66). Such solutions such as “opening opportunities for the exercise of women’s own agency, through their decision making and access to technical and productive resources shows that it is possible to make changes in the predominant gender norms” (2019: 65). Still, I question this study’s assumptions: that women’s “empowerment” will come via more work, as amplified under neoliberal capitalism (Hickel 2014).

### **Conclusion of Part Two: Empowerment Literature**

This section has examined the literature of empowerment, highlighting international development discourse as applied to women in the Global South. In the twenty-first century, women’s empowerment continues to be celebrated as the mission of global and local organizations devoted to women’s equality; and in associations who seek to unite women to use their voices and band together. This is also apparent in the coffee industry, from programs in soil management to latte art that seek to train women. Increasingly ubiquitous as a goal in the specialty coffee sector, critical examinations use of the term “empowering women” in coffee still seem to seek to rescue the term from its negative usage. In contrast, I argue that the benevolent rhetoric of “empowerment” obfuscates the global reality: the very focus on “empowerment” serves to widen inequities due to neoliberal “smart economics”, despite normative power of international development and coffee industry attempts to close the “gender gap.”

To conclude, I showcase some examples of what women think about their own empowerment, I cite a sampling of three Kenyan women’s responses: two whose coffee work centres on the farm level and one whose coffee work is located in Nairobi. What follows here are

excerpts of, in each case, much longer conversations about what empowerment is, and what it means for themselves or the women with whom they work

First, I asked Sarah Cheroich, a smallholder coffee farmer in western Kenya, who, after she used the word “empowerment” unsolicited in our interview, I asked her, “what does empowerment mean for you in your specific context?” She replied immediately, “That you can generate your own income and you employ yourself in coffee. It’s independence. You can depend on yourself when you have coffee” (personal interview, 6 February 2022).

Second, when I asked Doreen Gaichugi Arimi, a smallholder coffee farmer in Meru county, “what does empowerment mean to you”, she replied: “It is the giving you strength or act as a catalyst to enable somebody to reach to a place where that person was not able to be before” (personal interview, 7 June 2023).

Third, to turn attention to Nairobi, during my interview with Wangeci Gitobu, co-owner of Point Zero Café in Nairobi, I asked her, “despite all the challenges, do you feel empowered?”:

Yes, I do. Definitely. I think this has a lot to do with my upbringing. From my grandmother on both sides: both being educated and both midwives. Then to my own mom who is an entrepreneur. She had some resistance from my father, whom I love dearly, and has been very supportive of me and my sister, but my mom has been very strong and just did it! If she saw barriers, she found a way to go through them, around them, under them. She’s always been involved with committees of strong women, pioneers in her field, she was friends with Wangari Maathai, so I have never in my mind thought I can’t do what I want to do with business or work. I still feel empowered, and I know I am capable of doing a lot.” (Gitobu, 4 December 2023)

As we continued to discuss where “empowerment” comes from, she replied, “It’s not from the outside. It’s inbuilt. For me, it’s in the DNA of the way I was raised and from my family.”

What is notable about all three responses is how often they feature ideas of Rowlands (1995; 1997; 2016), centred upon the multi-level complexities of power and empowerment: the psychological strength and personal self-confidence of “power within”; the individual agency to make and carry out decisions of “power to”; and the collective process of ‘empowerment’ that necessitates support of peers and organizations of “power with” (Rowlands 1997:13; Lombardini et al., 2017: 16).

From one point of view, these three women may be regarded as beneficiaries of neoliberal feminism since they all have some measure of market access, and the possibility of enhancing their economic empowerment. But these quotes also reflect the desire of Kenyan women, both rural and urban, with different achievements in education and different family opportunities, to use their “empowerment” to care for their families *and* to share their knowledge with other women in their communities. These women live in three different geographical regions of Kenya with stark differences of socio-economic situations. They do not know each other, yet each of them expressed the desire to “empower others” (I also chose these three women here because more context is given for their contexts in Chapters Four and Five). As reflected in these short responses of Kenyan women, talking about ‘empowerment’ in Kenyan coffee is not a monolithic discussion. Even as Kabeer, Rowlands, Alkire, and Cornwall all argued in their various writings, understanding the layers of “empowerment” for women takes a conversation that requires thought, time, and understanding, and a concern for contexts within specific communities.

## 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined wide and diverse literatures from an interdisciplinary point of view. Chapter Two's literature review demonstrates a key point of my dissertation's overall argument: That the historic forces of colonialism and contemporary structures of neoliberal "women's empowerment" combine as two global systems that continue to render women's essential labour in coffee as invisible and create a gendered coffee paradox.

We can learn many things from this literature. Despite evidence from the literature that market-level interventions do not necessarily 'achieve' women's empowerment in coffee, coffee-centred international development reports and industry attention continue to focus on neoliberal market solutions rather than on the, admittedly more difficult, task of shifting structural and systematic dynamics of international trade through governments, or community/household levels. This chapter therefore centred on the task of understanding gender in coffee in light of the political economy of coffee, what we know, what is overlooked in the literature, and what industry texts and voices reveal.

In Chapter Two, five key insights emerge from the coffee literature and a variety of social science scholars who provide a solid foundation for the rest of my dissertation:

- (1) The political economy of coffee remains shaped by the state, yet most political economy literature of coffee overlooks gender as a key variable in the dynamics of global inequity and most feminist literature in coffee overlooks intersectionality.
- (2) In the IDS and coffee literature, gender is the key variable for 'empowerment,' and there remains a failure to take intersectionality into account regarding women's diverse needs and context-specific identities, which may include marital status, number of children

and/or family care responsibilities, religion, race, ethnicity, education, class, geography, health, and more.

- (3) While industry and NGO reports clearly acknowledge the gender gaps between men and women, most reports fail to account for the role of the colonial state in creating current social relations between men and women, the role of capitalism that perpetuates unequal dynamics, or women's diverse and intersectional needs. Twenty-first century solutions offered in such reports often focus on solutions to enhance coffee's agricultural aspects, such as techniques to increase production volume of coffee cherries, or to adopt vertical integration strategies, rather than on structural or social solutions (ICO 2018; SCAA 2015; Catholic Relief 2017; Twin 2017).

The coffee industry maintains a system of dependence on global commodities even as Rodney analyzed and predicted; in fact, Oxfam claimed Africa is more dependent in 2002 than twenty years prior (Gresser & Tickell 2002:31). The coffee paradox that Ponte & Daviron noted in 2005 continues to be an ongoing global challenge, even as the gendered coffee paradox that I observe has specifically widened gender gaps both between the Global North and the Global South, and between men and women within a country's particular coffee value chain.

For these reasons, a greater understanding is needed of the ways that colonial capitalism has created conditions and social relations that will continue to perpetuate injustice for women under neoliberal capitalism. I question the long-term sustainability for female small-holder coffee farmers, if current global political and social relations continue. This is particularly problematic given the amount of research on coffee communities in central and South America, yet there is little evidence that "empowerment" for women is taking place. If such initiatives are ineffective in Latin America, why would they work in Africa or Asia?



Coffee has the possibility to empower both men and women in coffee, as well as youth and other genders, which could reverse the detrimental affects of the gendered coffee paradox. This chapter and the literature examined contributes to our understanding of the entrenched inequalities within the political economy of coffee's trade, which perpetuates gendered inequities, despite a contemporary focus on "women's empowerment." Considering this, in the next Chapter, let us turn the clock backward to understand the relation between the past and the present as applied to the gendered coffee paradox.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### **“The System is not Friendly”: Kenya’s Coffee History from Colonial Era to Independence (1880s-1963) as Viewed Through a Feminist Political Economy and Intersectional Lens**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Chapter Three outlines how and why coffee—brought to Kenya by European missionaries in the 1890s—was a key crop that entrenched a binary gender division of labour between male and female Africans after the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) began to settle in East Africa in 1885. This chapter focuses on the colonial era up to Kenya’s independence (1880s through 1963), setting the stage in Chapter Four to showcase some ways this division continued even after Kenya’s independence in 1963 to the new Constitution of 2010, as well into contemporary times.

This chapter narrates this history viewed through a feminist political economy and intersectional lens, highlighting some ways that racism, sexism, and classism manifested through Kenya’s coffee origins and British colonialism’s creation of a commercial export industry. There has been very little attention given, within studies of Kenya’s history, that examines precolonial or colonial roles of women in coffee. This chapter considers the ways coffee’s history was entwined with colonial imperialism (‘the age of atrocity’) and entrenched an international division of labour and a national gendered division of labour between men and women in Kenya, specifically through land, taxes, and labour. This chapter sets the stage for an examination in Chapter Four of the ways that twenty-first century challenges for women in the Kenyan coffee sub-sector may be rooted in the colonial past. As one French ex-patriot in Kenya, who has lived and worked for many years in Nairobi for a top coffee roaster, told me, as we were talking about

Kenya's coffee industry: "the ghost of colonialism is all over the place" (Prime, personal interview, 28 February 2021).<sup>70</sup>

Understanding this violent ghost can unveil some reasons why postcolonial, neoliberal, and even feminist neoliberal solutions, driven by Global North coffee drinkers, are not sufficient to "remove the bitter residue" of "colonial exploitation from their cups" (Dicum 2003: 77). As one scholar states: "colonialism was conceived of as a system in which gender became a crucial domain of power" (Rizzo 2012:9). Examining this history advances my argument that solutions that focus merely on women's individual empowerment are ineffective at best and pernicious at worst, as they obscure the ways gendered roles and dynamics were created as part of an intentional British strategy that bifurcated the rights of women from men (Presley 1992: 29; Mama 1997: 47-48). This is why it is vital to explore this history from an intersectional feminist lens to more fully understand the distinctive discrimination that Indigenous African women experienced during colonialism, which is the "imperial source" for the contractions and discriminations they faced on the basis of sex, gender, race, and class.<sup>71</sup>

This chapter focuses on ways in which Kenya's colonial regime in three categories – land, taxes, labour – specifically discriminated against women through patriarchal policies and practices that set the foundation for the structures of inequality that exist in the coffee industry to this day. The title comes from my interview with Eva Muthuri, director of Eva's Coffee and a coffee farmer, who told me, "the system is not friendly," as we discussed colonialism and its ongoing effects on coffee's sub-sector in Kenya (Muthuri, personal interview, December 12,

---

<sup>70</sup> As American novelist William Faulkner once said, "The past is not over. It is not even the past."

<sup>71</sup> As explained in Chapter One, I acknowledge the import of nuanced complexities of women's identities, including ethnicity, class, race, education, and geography and others, but due to the scope and limitations of this research study, I use gender as the key variable.

2019).<sup>72</sup> While this remains true for Kenyans of all genders, the system under colonialism was distinctively “unfriendly” toward women.

In addition to the literature reviewed, this chapter is informed by my research at the Karen Blixen Museum in Nairobi, established in 1986 as the first “house museum” of the National Museum of Kenya.<sup>73</sup> This chapter also draws upon archival research in the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi, where I focused on the development of colonial agricultural policy that included legislation on coffee, as well as colonial agricultural conferences and advertising documents for coffee used to attract Europeans to come to Kenya, not as short-term residents but as long-term settlers.

### **3.2 From Ethiopia to the British East African Protectorate’s ‘Age of Atrocity’**

In the novel *The River Between*, written by renowned Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and first published in 1965, a Gikuyu<sup>74</sup> father tells his son an origin story of the gender dynamics long before Europeans arrived to the country now called the Republic of Kenya:

Long ago women used to rule this land and its men. They were harsh and men began to resent their hard hand. So when all the women were pregnant, men came together and overthrew them. Before this, women owned everything. The animal you saw was their goat. But because the women could not manage them, the goats ran away. They knew women to be weak. So why should they fear them?”

(1990:18)

---

<sup>72</sup>Such comments in the literature are rare, but poignant when articulated, such as an African woman from colonial Botswana who attributes the ruin of her people to four things that settlers brought with them: tobacco, sugar, alcohol, and coffee; to use her words, “these things have turned us into slaves” (Daymond 2003: 315).

<sup>73</sup> This house-museum is the only former home of any European under the National Museums of Kenya (cf. Hussein 2005 and Karen Blixen Museum n.d.)

<sup>74</sup> Some Kenyan writers explain that the European way of spelling the word ‘Kikuyu’ is incorrect and should be spelled “Gikuyu”; therefore, I will use this spelling unless I cite a source that spells it “Kikuyu” (cf. Kenyatta 1965: xv, n1; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 2009).

Although a fictional novel, this literary gloss on women's former leadership and ownership is revealing in contrast with Jomo Kenyatta's assertion that everything a Gikuyu wife owns belongs to her husband, while she is simultaneously considered the "foundation-rock on which the homestead is built" and "motherhood is looked upon as a religious duty" (1965: 176, 263).

Although my study begins with a historical analysis with the colonial era, I acknowledge that centuries of history existed in Kenya before British colonialism (Rodney 1972: 207),<sup>75</sup> during which time, textual representations of African women's precolonial status remain overlooked from scholarly analysis, and that which exists was often informed by a distinctively European, male-centred bias (Odoul 1993:168). Among the historical records that exist, what little that was recorded of women in precolonial and colonial times comes from mostly European, primarily British, records written by upper class white men, including travellers' accounts, archival documents by colonial administrators, and historians (Odoul 1993:168; Robertson 1997a: 24; Fowler-Salamini 2013).<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, colonial texts by white European women fail to depict African women's lives and employ racist, sexist and class-driven stereotypes (Dinesen 1937; Huxley 1967). Written records demonstrate the violence and segregation in Kenya under British colonialism was based not only on racism and ethnic discrimination but also on sexism, as the lives of African women changed dramatically under colonialism, specifically as prostitution, rape, and sexual violence were rife in Nairobi specifically due to the dominance of white European men (Mama 1997:47-49).

---

<sup>75</sup> Scholars tend to divide African history into three general eras: "precolonial," "colonial," and the "postcolonial era" (Cooper 2002: 14). Various appellations are for the second era, such as the phrase "colonial parenthesis" or "the imperial century," or "the colonial episode" (Nigerian scholar J. Ade Ajayi qtd in Cooper 2002:15), or, as Kenyatta said, "the advent before the arrival of Europeans" (1965).

<sup>76</sup> Among these, she considers Louis Leakey's account as the most elaborate and focuses on the Gikuyu people. She notes that until her own study, oral histories centred on testimony by African men (Robertson 1997a: 24, 27 n10).

I begin this coffee-centred dissertation in the 1880s, because this decade cemented the beginning of the “colonial parenthesis” in East Africa (Cooper 2002:15) that created conditions for coffee to become an exploitive cash crop in Kenya. Such a parenthesis should, according to Kenyan writer Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, “be addressed by its rightful moniker, ‘the age of atrocity,’ for its egregious will to violence, its slaughter of humans worldwide, for offenses against nature, for the frenzied, inhuman, and obscene worship of the golden calf” (Koss 2021a: 29). She asserts that the bitter residue of this past, “falls into the present, and that adumbrates the future. In the age of atrocity, an intrinsic, natural, and essential covenant of human relating was betrayed and shattered” (Koss 2021a: 30).<sup>77</sup>

A key part of this betrayal and shattering is reflected through relations between African men and women during the rapacious quest of European nations that sought to build and expand their Empires and altered every area of life for Africans (Shanguhya 2015: 9). In Africa, this form of extractive colonialism was systematically violent both to people and land, involving the abduction of people and “the looting of raw materials” (Césaire 1950: 22). This included coffee,<sup>78</sup> as seeds were spread and transported by colonizers and missionaries alike throughout Africa. Understanding the complexity of British colonial domination and the historical political economy of coffee reveals a triple layer of barriers faced by Indigenous African women due to racism, sexism, and classism.

To begin my analysis, I turn attention to coffee’s Ethiopian origins and precolonial women’s roles in the land that would be declared as the “British East African Protectorate” in

---

<sup>77</sup> Part of my in-person interview for this study was published as “A Conversation with Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor” in the journal *IMAGE*, Issue 109 in 2021. As I hold the copyright for published interview, I list it under my name.

<sup>78</sup> Césaire does not mention coffee specifically in his *Discourse on Colonialism*.

1895. This section demonstrates that coffee's emergence into East Africa was one of the key cash crops used to create a gendered division of labour.

### **A. From Ethiopia to the World**

In Ethiopia, coffee was once considered “a forest spirit” that “primarily served a sacramental purpose,” according to Owuor (Koss 2021a:36). Ethiopians, historically and to this day,<sup>79</sup> cherish coffee as medicine, community builder, medium of celebration, and beverage enjoyed in a formal coffee ceremony where coffee is roasted, brewed, and served by women (Bulitta & Duguma 2021; Burhardt 2011; Davis et al., 2020:11-13). Coffee is not only a drink: it is also “food” that was and remains chewed and made into a kind of energy ball often consumed on long journeys (Davis et al., 2020:11; Koehler 2017:48; Gore et al., 2013/2015). However, as coffee moved around the world, coffee's “sacramental purpose,” ultimately “got lost in [coffee's] long history of appropriation, commercialization, and commoditization” (Koss 2021a:36).

This shift from sacrament to commodity began in the fifteenth century, as Portugal sent leading “explorers” to discover new sea routes (Nicholls 1971: 20-21), which “laid the foundation for the expansion of Europe beyond its boundaries” (Akram-Lodhi 2021: 22). Portugal discovered a route to India around the Cape of Good Hope in 1498, and in the decades that followed, they conquered the strategically important towns and islands on the East Africa coast; Mombasa was the Portuguese administrative capital of, what was then known as, “the Swahili Coast” (Nicholls 1971: 21, 45, 67). Commercial interests dominated East African trade, centred on ivory, gold, shells, and human lives, especially for French and Arab merchants (Nicholls 1971: 84, 353, 377). Such trade took place through merchant companies that had royal

---

<sup>79</sup> In addition to experiencing this myself during my travels to southwestern Ethiopia in 2023, including in the Kaffa biosphere where *coffee arabica* originated, I interviewed several Ethiopians for this study, who all agreed that coffee remains as central and as sacred to Ethiopian life, culture, religion, as it ever has been historically.

charters from their governments, such as the Dutch East India Company that by the 1670s “was the richest firm in the history of the world, with over 150 merchant ships, 40 warships, 50,000 employees and a private army of 10,000 soldiers” (Akram-Lodhi 2021: 24). At this point, according to German coffee historian H.E. Jacob, European use of coffee was primarily medicinal, but by the eighteenth century, during imperial expansion, coffee became the key beverage for intellectual debate and even protest (1935: 202-3).

One manifestation of such expansion came through the development of cash crops to support European empire-building. Fierce was the motive to acquire and expand control of lands that could produce “luxury crops” such as sugar, tobacco, indigo, cacao, and coffee (Rodney 1972: 208-10).<sup>80</sup> Since these crops depend on specific tropical conditions, such as year-round sun and specific rainfall patterns, they could not be grown in Europe. Subsequently, coffee came to play a leading role in colonial extraction throughout Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia (Pendergrast 2010:17); for example, the first shipment of coffee from Java was sent to Amsterdam in the year 1712 (Jacob 1935: 212), and the beginning of coffeehouses in London is also dated in the seventeenth century (Cowan 2005:7, 258). European governments and marketers considered coffee as a drink, not for the “peasants and proletarians,” but for export as a “bourgeois beverage,” in part to cover their high taxes (Topik 2003: 36). Europe grew in dependence upon greater volumes of production in equatorial colonies. The industrial revolution led coffee to become the poor man’s drink (Ukers 1922; Cowan 2005) quelling hunger, however temporary. By the nineteenth-century, European demand for the drink was fueled, in part, by the

---

<sup>80</sup>Not only Europe but also the Omani empire experimented with such export crops on the Swahili coast, especially in Zanzibar, where by 1822, experiments with cloves, cinnamon, coffee, and other spices are recorded. In the 1850s, ship records include coffee as an item shipped from Zanzibar to Europe (Nicholls 1971: 82, 352-3).



rise of European cafés, particularly in Paris and Vienna.<sup>81</sup> In Berlin, coffee-drinking came to surpass tea-drinking by 1840 (Jacob 1935: 186, 221).

This “bourgeois beverage” and the growing café culture in Europe relied upon the exploitation of colonialized people throughout Latin America, Africa, and Asia to produce the crop and to transport coffee on long sea journeys (Dicum 2003; Pendergrast 2017; Nicholls 1971: 354).<sup>82</sup> As the fictional character Marlow declares in Joseph Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness*: “The conquest of earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much” (Conrad 1899/2005: 35-6).

But when I “look into it” as a social scientist, I wish to give – as anthropologist Sarah G. Grant notes – “due attention to the bodies that grow and harvest coffee” (2017:60). If we take her lead, it is evident that two crops – sugar and coffee – unite in a contradiction: what created sweetness and wealth for Europeans produced bitterness and poverty for those forced to labour as slaves to clear land and harvest both crops (Mintz 1985: xx, xxiv, 29, 140). Since sugar was often used to sweeten coffee, the two cash crops often unite in the historic and colonial literature. One poignant account derives from the travel journals of an imperial French botanist and writer, J. H. Bernardin de Saint Pierre, who wrote in 1773: “I do not know if coffee and sugar are essential to the happiness of Europe, but I know well that these two products have accounted for the unhappiness of two great regions of the world: America has been depopulated so as to have land on which to plant them; Africa has been depopulated so as to have the people to cultivate

---

<sup>81</sup> In the year 1680, Paris and Vienna were European hubs for café culture; Amsterdam was also an important early café city. While Germans consumed much more coffee than tea by the 1840s, a café culture did not begin there until later (Ukers 1922; Jacob 1935).

<sup>82</sup> Arab vessels used slave labour on large ships with a “virtual monopoly” on the “carriage of goods from East Africa to Arabia” (Nicholls 2017: 354). Human labour involved in transporting coffee remains under-researched (Koss 2022a).

them” (Pendergrast 2010:17; Mintz 1985: preleaf). Even as coffee became appropriated as “mocha,” and came to be known as “arabica” rather than from its homeland of Ethiopia (Koss 2021b; Vega 2008), so were African peoples abducted, kidnapped, and transported from their homelands to build sugar and coffee plantations throughout the Americas (Clarence-Smith & Topik 2003; Jacob 1935: 228).<sup>83</sup> That so many of the people forced to cultivate coffee were women is a history that remains overlooked and obscured in many historic accounts both by scholars and government reports; for example, some sources attest that there were greater numbers of females than males kidnapped as slaves (Presley 1992; Robertson 1997).

Throughout the eighteenth century, European demand for coffee production fueled demand for slave labour –“the dehumanized labour power”– from both West and East Africa (Turner & Brownhill 2004:27). For example, in 1715, French colonialists brought coffee to the island of Bourbon (now Réunion), and in 1734, to the island of Santa-Domingue (now Haiti) (Topik 2003: 28-9; Campbell 2003: 67-69; Pendergrast 2010:17), whereby “approximately thirty thousand African slaves were imported each year to accommodate the needs of rapidly expanding coffee plantations” (Dicum 2003: 73). By the end of the eighteenth century, Santa-Domingue produced about half of the coffee exported to Europe “cultivated with the labor of nearly half a million slaves,” and France held the global monopoly on the coffee trade (Dicum 2003: 73; Topik 2003: 30). Africans who were enslaved worked long hours, were brutally beaten, and sometimes killed, and were forbidden or excluded from drinking the beverage of the fruit they laboured to produce. As one scholar summarizes, “Colonial states drew all members of colonial societies—white and native women, native men, elites, lower classes—into their orbit,

---

<sup>83</sup> Carl Linnaeus, a Swedish Botanist who focused his research on classifying plants, named *coffea arabica* in 1737, and later realized his mistake: coffee did not originate in Arabia. Despite his attempt to change the name, it had already become popular (Koss 2021b; Vega 2008).

creating and reproducing hierarchies and hegemonies that buttressed colonial authority” (Ghosh 2004:755).

But colonial injustices did not come without resistance from coffee labours, including from African women, although finding specific examples remains difficult (Odoul 1993; Turner & Brownhill 2004), in part because of the burning of many colonial records (Elkins 2005). Among the most well-known examples of revolt is the Haitian slave revolution of 1791, a twelve-year fight for freedom that was “both a war for national liberation and a slave rebellion” (Topik & Clarence-Smith Conc 2003: 398). It was initiated and sustained by Africans who were enslaved, conscripted to worked on sugar and coffee plantations (Hochschild 2005: 256-79). Ultimately, this rebellion ruined the island’s coffee industry (Topik 2003: 29), especially after some “rebellious slaves regarded [coffee] plantations as symbols of their slavery” and therefore burned the coffee crops (Jacob 1935: 164). By 1801, “when black Haitian leader Toussaint Louverture attempted to resuscitate coffee exports, harvests had declined 45 percent from 1789 levels” (Pendergrast 2010: 18). In 1801, Napoleon sent a series of troops to attempt to reconquer Haiti, but they found only abandoned coffee plantations and no coffee to send to France (Jacob 1935: 163). Learning of their final defeat in late 1803, Napoleon burst out, “Damn coffee! Damn colonies!” (qtd. in Pendergrast 2010: 18); Haiti became an independent nation in 1804. The rebellion had an unintended effect: France lost its cherished monopoly on coffee and turned attention to its colonies in Asia (such as Java); the coffee-trading advantage shifted to England (Jacob 1935: 164). The stage was set for Europe to seek other lands that could quench the growing thirst for coffee, and so attention turned to Africa.

## B. The “Scramble for Africa”

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, European leaders initiated a more strategic, divisive quest to build their Empires, fueled by industrial capitalism and coinciding with the rise in slavery, taking more land and labour throughout Asia and Africa for colonial expansion, or what Rodney called “robber statesmen” (1972: 125). Boundary lines partitioning Africa into separate territories by Europe had begun in West Africa in the 1870s. In the east, conflicts ensued for control of the island of Zanzibar, as a strategic port in the Indian Ocean (Nicholls 1971), as well as upon King Leopold II of Belgium’s pursuit of the Congo Free State (Wesseling 1996 Harlow & Carter Vol. 2: 2003).<sup>84</sup>

By the time the notorious Congress at Berlin began formally in November 1884, competing European nations were primed to stake their claims in Africa, to acquire territory in what they considered “the dark continent” (Harlow & Carter 2005). At the Congress, fourteen rival nations, notably Germany, Italy, Portugal, France, Britain, Belgium, and Spain, debated an agenda that included the “race for the interior” of the Congo River basin and the conquest of the African coastline (Wesseling 1996: 126-8; Harlow & Carter 2005). Deliberations centered on the diplomatic rules and principles about how Europe would treat each other in occupation and conquest of Africa. The trade relations brokered, and Afro-European contracts written resulted in dozens of treaties that allocated which European country would take over which part of Africa (Wesseling 1996: 127; Harlow & Carter 2005), or, to use Walter Rodney’s critique: “to decide who should steal which parts of Africa” since no Africans were present at either the conference or subsequent meetings (1972: 125).

---

<sup>84</sup> Leopold was responsible for the first gathering of a group of European explorers, geographers, and leaders in Brussels in 1876 in his quest to take over land several times larger than the size of Belgium (Hochschild 2005; Pakenham 1991).

What became known as the “Scramble for Africa,” after the term was first used in 1884, was not a single event, but a longer period of time between 1876 and 1914 (Meredith 2005). During this time, Europe “made a grab for whatever they thought spelled profits in Africa” (Rodney 1972: 126) through the “General Act of the Conference of Berlin” signed in February 1885. They sliced up Africa “like a cake” as illustrated by one notorious British cartoon (Pakenham 1991: xxiii). The official “slicing of the cake” took place after proceedings ended in Berlin in February 1885 with England, France, Portugal, Belgium, and Germany as the victors and no Africans present (Harlow & Carter 2005). Lord Salisbury, the British Prime Minister, presided during this “carve-up”, ensuring Britain’s strategic advantage by taking 15 out of 30 new colonies and protectorates through his perceived “right of conquest” (Pakenham 1991: 581).<sup>85</sup> New European ownership of most of the African continent comprised “10 million square miles of new territory and 110 million new subjects” (Pakenham 1991: xxiii) and further divided Africa and Europe on racial and gender lines (Delap 2021:16), and through more than 190 cultural groups (Meredith 2005:1). While this “slicing” of land and borders is well-documented, what is far less discussed are the specific ways that colonial policies also sliced gender relations, dividing roles between African men and women in what would become entrenched bifurcations based on race and class (Delap 2021:16).

This imperial expansion was motivated, according to Kenyan Nobel Prize laureate Wangari Mathaai, by the quest to seek “outposts from which they could launch campaigns against each other to preserve their geopolitical dominance” as well as to find “new sources for the raw materials they wanted to expand their industrial economies” (2009: 26). Europe’s

---

<sup>85</sup> To my knowledge, there were no women leaders present at this meeting and in every account I have read, women are entirely absent from the discussion. I could not find any documentary evidence of a specifically gendered impact or the gendered dynamics of this act.

creation of the lines and boundaries on a map ultimately created the conditions for “the wealth of Africa [to] flow outwards” so that “the natural resources and the labour of Africa produce economic value which is lost from the continent” (Rodney 1972: 21). Decisions and negotiations in Europe link directly to the origin of who began to plant coffee throughout Africa, as well as whose labour would be conscripted to do the work.<sup>86</sup>

When paper imperialism proved ineffective, “the Maxim gun—not trade or the cross—became the symbol of the age in Africa” (Pakenham 1991: xxv); for England, most of this occurred during Queen Victoria’s reign (1837 to 1901), during which time “most battles were cruelly one-sided,” with few exceptions such as the battles of the British against the Boers, or the Italians against the Abyssinians (Pakenham 1991: xxv). By the time of Victoria’s death in 1901, Britain’s acquisitions in Africa meant that the British empire governed a quarter of the earth’s surface (Huxley 1935/1968 Vol 1: 273).<sup>87</sup> The Conference paved the way for “a relationship of exploitation” (Rodney 1972: 21) to exist between Europeans and Africans and established the boundary lines of what would ultimately become Kenya (Dudiak 2006:725).

### **C. Pre-Colonial Gender Roles**

This exploitive relationship, based on the extraction of land and resources, also created gendered dynamics that entrenched different conditions for African men or women based on sex, gender, and race (Kilonzo & Akallah 2021; Rizzo 2012:9).

Scholars note the paucity of precolonial evidence written about precolonial gender roles (Robertson 1997; Presley 1992; Akyeampong & Fofack 2012:3; Rizzo 2012:11; Guyo 2017:

---

<sup>86</sup> For example, at the Conference of Berlin, Germany took Rwanda as part of its empire. As a result, Rwanda was incorporated into German East Africa in 1899, and German missionaries brought the first coffee plant in 1905.

<sup>87</sup>See Chapter One, note 6, on “tribes”: “the modern African state is a superficial creation: a loose collection of ethnic communities or micro-nations, brought together in a single entity, or micro-nations, by the colonial powers” (Maathai 2009:184). Kenya comprises 42 micro-nations (cf. Kenyatta 1965 and Balaton-Chrimes 2022).

1,14). A notable exception comes from scholarship by Claire Robertson in her 1997 book *Trouble Showed me the Way* (1997b) and a related article “Gender and Trade Relations in Central Kenya in the Late Nineteenth Century” (1997a), both which provide a vital context for the contrast between women’s lives in Kenya before and after British colonial rule, because the author relied upon oral testimony in the 1980s by elderly women as well as colonial records (Robertson 1997a, 1997b). She argues that the role of women in trade networks “has often been obscured rather than illuminated by many of the historical sources available” (Robertson 1997a: 24); coffee was not part of the trade yet.

Feminist scholars take this further, noting the silences of women, especially Indigenous women, in historical records (Mohanty 1998, 2003; Spivak 1988; Odoul 1993:168; Rizzo 2012:10-11), but matriarchal systems in Africa were common. Trade throughout Africa began long before colonialism (Akyeampong & Fofack 2012:3), and while there is “very little precolonial evidence concerning women’s trade,” oral histories reveal a “precolonial complementarity between the genders in the organization of trade” (Robertson 1997b: 277). Women had long-standing trade relationships based on “kin and friendships networks” (Robertson 1997a: 28), both local and beyond that included their leadership in trade caravans and organization of expeditions conducted by women, even as far as 200 kilometers away from their homes (Robertson 1997a: 25). This is not to suggest that the roles of precolonial women were equal to men, or that roles were not gendered: for example, precolonial African “male supervision seems present in most aspects, even in the turning over of profits to men” (Robertson 1997a: 32; cf. also Rizzo 2012), and many parts of society were determined on the basis of sex or gender such as differences between what men and women were allowed to eat (Robertson 1997a:

59-60),<sup>88</sup> or the consequences of adultery in the highly regulated system of polygamy.<sup>89</sup> But women possessed pre-colonial freedoms, especially in the form of movement away from the village, and decision-making in the household (Kilonzo & Akallah 2021). Evidence exists that women were treated as objects and commodities before European men began to “explore” East Africa, and a trade of girls and women in violent ways is documented as early as 1887 (Robertson 1997a: 38). European men would often “keep a native girl, usually a Masai” for sexual services and domestic work (Robertson 1997a: 38).

However, such exploitation of women and girls did not arrive only at the hands of European men. For example, during the “Kamba raids,” male African ivory traders kidnapped Gikuyu girls and women; in precolonial times, Kamba and Masai girls could be pawned and sold to Gikuyu men, but there remains a paucity of recorded data about this kind of inter-tribal slavery (Presley 1992; Robertson 1997a: 37-38; Akyeampong & Fofack 2012).

#### **D. Beginnings of Formal Colonial Rule**

In the 1880s, Britain determined to stake its claim on Africa. In East Africa, German and British colonialism formally began in 1885, with a royal charter granted by the German Emperor designating the territory as “German East Africa”.<sup>90</sup> That same year, the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC), established as a trading company, brought Britain’s presence to the region (Presley 1992:3); by 1890, the IBEAC set up a post within Gikuyu territory at Dagoretti

---

<sup>88</sup> For example, women were only allowed to eat meat rarely and when they did, only certain parts of the animal, which were not the “best” parts of the animal (Robertson 1997a: 59-60).

<sup>89</sup> It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to focus on polygamy, but I would be remiss not to highlight that the entire precolonial economic system of Gikuyu life is based upon polygamy, in which a man may take as many wives as he can economically care for. While now rare in Nairobi, polygamy continues in rural areas of Kenya. When European missionaries focused on monogamy and individualism, they disrupted deep-rooted social, cultural, and religious structures, even as colonial administrators disrupted political, legal, and economic structures.

<sup>90</sup> The next year, the Anglo-German agreement sliced parts of East Africa to be controlled either by Germany or Britain leading to the designation “German East Africa” (Pakenham 1991: 295).



and engineers began to survey the land for the Uganda Railroad. This post became a site of “severe fighting” in 1892 and 1893 as Kikuyu fought back (Leakey 1952: 57).

Rural women were expected to continue their (traditional) roles as “fundamental role as food providers” for the colonial government (e.g., Kamba women supplied food to the outpost at Machakos (Rizzo 2012; Robertson 1997a: 34). That this happened in Kiambu, a key food-producing area for IBEAC officials, is highlighted when, for example, in 1894, one hundred Gikuyu women were employed grinding maize for the IBEAC at the Dagoretti station, outside of what would become Nairobi town (Robertson 1997a: 25, 40). However, African women were far from appreciated for their efforts in providing essential food services to European colonial men as exemplified in one letter: “ ‘There is only one way of improving the Wakikuyu<sup>91</sup> and that is to wipe them out; I should be only too delighted to do so but we have to depend on them for food supplies” (Francis Hall, 1894; cited in Robertson 1997a:40).

By 1894, hundreds of Kamba men worked for the British as porters or couriers (Robertson 1997a: 34), and the company’s finances were in such trouble that its British leader, Sir William MacKinnon, negotiated the transfer of its interests to the British Crown. By then, construction of the Uganda railway had begun, and the British government declared both Kenya and Uganda to be “the East African Protectorate” of the British Empire. By 1895, the land now called ‘Kenya’ became the British East Africa Protectorate, known then as “British East Africa” (often abbreviated as the BEA). The creation of Nairobi town in 1899 brought “escalating violence and banditry” for African women (Robertson 1997a: 41).

During the colonial period, several new laws encouraged land grabbing, “aimed at alienating land and resources from the natives and vesting them on the [European] settlers,”

---

<sup>91</sup> Wakikuyu is one British colonial spelling of “Giyuku” (Kikuyu).

beginning with the Foreign Jurisdiction Act (1890), which facilitated acquisition of land to the Queen, and “empowered the Crown to control and dispose of waste and unoccupied land in protectorates deemed to have no form of settled government” (Kariuki & Ng’etich 2016). Larger alienation of land for farming—by Europeans taking larger blocks of land—took place on in 1902 (Leakey 1952: 9; Kariuki & Ng’etich 2016). After this, Indigenous African women faced added burdens of managing both their own domestic roles and working on cash crops for Europeans’ benefit, as opposed their precolonial focus on farming subsistence crops for themselves and their own families (Kilonzo & Akallah 2021; Robertson 1997a: 25; UN 1985).

Before colonialism, working the land was a collective endeavour where agricultural duties were clearly delineated between men and women and crops were designated as “women’s crops” or “men’s crops” (Kenya 1965: 170; Boserup 1970; Presley 1992: 17). This was not necessarily a discriminatory divide, but one centred on shared household responsibilities (Kilonzo & Akallah 2021). For example, men would be responsible for clearing the soil, cutting big trees, and hoeing; women would “come behind them turning the soil to prepare it for planting” (Kenya 1965: 171). Traditionally, women farmed an array of different beans and millet as their key food crops (Robertson 1997b: 43-4, 58). Once their families satisfied their needs, it became a wife’s prerogative to sell or share any surplus (Kenya 1965: 171). It was also the role of women to carry things, especially fetching and carrying water (Presley 1992: 19).

But the colonial invasion reconfigured agricultural structures, resulting in and responding to the labour demand of coercive cash crop production in a plantation style under British colonial policy (Kilonzo & Akallah 2021; Curtis 2003: 313-15; Rodney 1972; Robertson 1997b: 44), so that women’s roles experienced a “deterioration of women’s roles and status to the advantage of colonial and colonised men” (Rizzo 2012:9). Traditional African subsistence crops were replaced

with crops that favoured European tastes, as maize became the staple food crop (Robertson 1997b: 63), and the colonial state came to benefit from this. “Luxury” crop production belonged to men: sugar, tobacco, and coffee; in colonial Tanganyika, coffee “conformed to the sexual division of labor” as coffee became marked as “a man’s prerogative” (Curtis 2003: 320), and as it came to be that “colonizers only recognized male ‘heads of households’ as legitimate property owners” (Fridell 2007: 121).

In summary, while a gendered division of labour existed in precolonial tribes, under British colonialism in Kenya, patriarchal ideologies created divisions based on racial, ethnic, class, and gendered discriminations, as well as the invisibility of women in the historical records (Rizzo 2012:9-11). Such changes dramatically changed Indigenous people’s lives.

### **3.3 From the British East Africa Protectorate to World War II, 1880s – 1940s**

This section explores the arrival of coffee through missionaries into British East Africa and the systematic nature of the ways in which British colonial leaders exploited native African peoples. However discriminatory this was for African men—and it certainly was—African women faced intensified discriminations based on a bifurcated, gendered division of labour created under a new wage-based society and taxation.

#### **A. Coffee’s Arrival to BEA through Missionaries**

By the 1880s, Brazil had become the world’s largest producer of arabica coffee, fueling the wealth of Portugal through its coffee and sugar exports. Despite Brazil’s independence in 1822 (Government of Brazil 2022; Manchester 1951), coffee production in Brazil continued to rely on the labour of Africans who were enslaved, and who comprised at least one-third of its population by 1883, by some accounts, as many as 4 million (Birmingham 1978: 535;

Pendergrast 2017: 23; Morris 2019: 102; Bourcier 2012).<sup>92</sup> Despite being the last American nation to legally abolish slavery in May 1888 with an urban concentration of at least 40% (Bourcier 2012; ILO 2008), Brazil did not decrease coffee production in 1888 as no losses were recorded in the harvest that year, in contrast to sugar, a crop that experienced a sharp decline (Jacob 1935: 230-1).

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the birthplace of *coffea arabica* is located in Kaffa, southwestern Ethiopia (Koehler 2017: xiv-xv; 5). But despite Ethiopia's geographical proximity to British East Africa, coffee did not arrive there until the end of the nineteenth century and through a circuitous route. Contested and conflicting accounts exist about who first brought coffee into the land now called the Republic of Kenya (Kieran 1969: 51; Eckert 2003: 291).<sup>93</sup>

The British-controlled Imperial East India Company bought arabica seedlings in Aden, Yemen, selling them to French missionaries who were developing French-controlled Bourbon Island (now Réunion); by 1817, the island produced 3,000 tons of coffee a year (Kieran 1969: 52-4; Ogutu 1979: 151; Brock et al., 2005: 11). Throughout East Africa, both Protestant and Catholic missionaries experimented with coffee seedlings (Ogutu 1979: 151; Eckert 2003: 291). For example, Lutheran German missionaries started planting coffee on Mount Meru (Williams 2022:6-7). Perpetually short of funds due to a lack of capital, priests at East African missions needed commercial crops to help finance their missions, along with farming of subsistence crops for their food. Coffee was a key part of this experiment (Nicholls 2002: 4; Eckert 2003: 291), and the Holy Ghost Fathers (known as the “Black Fathers”) of French Catholic Church stations at

---

<sup>92</sup>The coffee economy in Brazil depended on slave labour, according to one 1887 estimate, the number of slaves in Brazil was 145,880 (Pereira de Melo 2003: 377-8). By 1906, Brazil produced a record 20.2 million bags of coffee, 85% of total world output (Morris 2019: 106). Today Brazil remains the largest producer of arabica coffee, as of 2019/20 coffee year, producing a total 58 million arabica bags, a decrease from past years (ICO 2020: 94).

<sup>93</sup> Industry books or websites, from Café Imports in the USA to Java Blend in Kenya, describe Kenya's history with vague sentences like, “seedlings were brought to East Africa in the late 1800s by French and Scottish missionaries” (Brock et al., 2005: 9), but the specific story is far more nuanced.

Réunion Island “brought the Bourbon variety [arabica coffee] to the mountains of Tanzania in 1863” (Brock et al., 2005: 11). Motivated by agricultural experimentation, Father Antoine Horner introduced Bourbon seed to Tanganyika (Tanzania), planting it first in the coastal area of Bagamoyo in 1877; later coffee was planted in Morogoro (inland, west of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania) where all missions adopted it (Eckert 2003: 291).<sup>94</sup>

In the BEA, the first Catholics were employed by the Imperial British East African Company and lived near the coast of Mombasa. The church that started there in the early 1890s remains the oldest Catholic church in Kenya, and it is recorded that its mission experimented with coffee (Kieran 1969; Birmingham 1978: 529). Coffee was first planted in the Teita Hills (now Taita Taveta county) of Kenya, three hours west of Mombasa, at the Bura Mission, which was built by (possibly the first) Christian missionaries to the territory in 1891.<sup>95</sup>

However, Scottish missionaries in Kenya are also part of coffee’s BEA origin story, as they are credited for bringing the “Mocha” seed (*coffea arabica*) from Aden to a different part of Kenya territory in 1893 (Morris et al., 2015; Nicholls 2002: 18). Some say that in 1893, John Patterson “introduced Arabica to Kenya for cultivation at the mission located in Kibwezi” [150 miles southwest of Nairobi], which did not lead to successful harvests (Brock et al., 2005: 15).

The first Nairobi coffee crops, according to the written records, come from the Scottish missionaries in 1896 (Kiernan 1969; Brock et al., 2005: 15). A few years later, in 1899, when

---

<sup>94</sup>As more missions were created in Tanganyika, the fathers brought arabica coffee seedlings with them and planted both Bourbon and Mocha varieties. These were new coffee varieties for East Africa at the time, which became known as “French Mission” coffee (Kieran 1969: 55). As Eckert surmises: “It is not entirely clear how coffee planting spread among Kilimanjaro Africans and what part missionaries played” (2003: 291). Williams also highlight the untold role of missionaries (2022: 6-7).

<sup>95</sup>The 1933 Kenya Land Commission, run by the British colonial government, attempted to resolve native rights for land claimed by the BEA. In one session, Brother Solanus Zipper, a priest who had been stationed at the Bura Mission, gave this oral testimony on 21 February 1933: “I was the first person to introduce coffee into this country, the seed of which I got from Morogoro, where it had been brought from Aden by Father Bauer” (Kenya Land Commission Evidence 1933: 919).

Scottish missionaries started St. Augustine’s mission in Gikuyu lands (in Kenya’s central highlands north of Nairobi), they also cultivated coffee. While I could not locate data to demonstrate specific gender labour dynamics specifically for coffee in the 1890s, based upon Gikuyu’s women’s focus on subsistence food crops and domestic roles (Robertson 1997a; 1997b), it is likely that those who received training at the missions were more likely to be younger Gikuyu men who had converted—or were interested in converting—to Christianity (Presley 1992: 42; Eckert 2003: 291-2; Williams 2022: 6).<sup>96</sup>

Not far from Nairobi, priests at the first Catholic parish of inland Kenya, founded by the Congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers in 1899, also experimented with coffee. Later called St. Austin’s, the mission and church is mentioned in several writings by colonial settlers as the place from which they purchased their coffee seedlings.<sup>97</sup> Kenya’s origin story of coffee is recorded on the old stone plaque in the courtyard garden at St. Austin’s,<sup>98</sup> engraved with these words: “1899-1999: the Coffee Board of Kenya is proud to be associated with the St. Austin Church Centenary Celebrations, which also marks 100 years since the church planted the first coffee tree in Kenya.”<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup>Robertson’s book features the precolonial roles of women in the production of beans (green beans), which were traditionally considered a “woman’s crop.” She barely mentions coffee in her book, but as coffee was new to the region in the 1890s, it is more likely that Europeans hired men to clear and work their land. Louis Leakey mentions in a passing reference that young African women were educated at missions, but he says nothing about what that education entailed or if agriculture was part of it (1952: 60).

<sup>97</sup> Three notable couples include (1) Lord and Lady Delamere: in 1904, the mission sold 3,500 trees to Lady Delamere (Brock et al., 2005: 15); (2) British couple, Jos and Nellie Grant, whose daughter would later become writer Elspeth Huxley, obtained many of their seedlings from the mission after they started planting coffee in early 1914 (Nicholls 2002: 18-19); (3) Swedish Baron Bror Blixen arrived in the BEA in 1913, followed the next year by his Danish fiancé, who would become Baroness Karen Blixen and later write about her life in Kenya in *Out of Africa* (1937) under the pseudonym “Isak Dinesen”. Karen Blixen lived in Kenya for 17 years, from 1913 until 1931, and regularly rode her horse to St. Austin’s to obtain advice about her coffee. Despite *Out of Africa*’s focus on the tribulations of coffee farming, Karen Blixen does not write about the labour of women on her farm; she focuses far more attention on the domestic labourers in her home, which were all men.

<sup>98</sup> I saw the plaque when I visited and talked with a priest in June 2019.

<sup>99</sup> As of 2020, coffee trees surround the church and school grounds. While one source notes that “the original journal of the St. Austin’s mission in Nairobi records that Brother Solanus Zipper brought seed from Morogoro to plant at the Nairobi mission in 1897. One hundred coffee plants from Bura were planted at St. Austin’s a year later, and by

What is the relevance of this story, that coffee came to the BEA through the church? It reveals the long-rooted links between the church and the colonial state, as the political economy of coffee in East Africa relied upon European missionaries, who controlled the buying and development of seeds to support their religious efforts and missions. This link also suggests, as Aime Césaire contended, that the link between civilization and colonialism was “the principal lie which is the source of all the others” (1955:10). For African women in colonial East Africa, the patriarchal impositions of both church and state led to exclusion based on gender for European women and based on race and gender for African women.

For example, one scholarly account stated that the goal of the Holy Ghost Fathers did not seek to unite Christianity with capitalism; rather, they wanted to strengthen African peasants through agricultural training (Kiernan 1969: 52). However, I read no account of any training received by women. From archival research that I could access, coffee seeds were originally farmed only by male priests; I read no evidence that nuns were involved. In addition, I found no evidence that any Indigenous African women were part of any trainings even though by all accounts, women were the chief farmers of food in their communities (Presley 1992: 16; Robertson 1997a: 37).<sup>100</sup> Missions also bifurcated roles between men and women; for example, by regulating women to domestic roles (Okuro 2010; Ogot 1963). No matter which priests first brought *coffea arabica* to British East Africa<sup>101</sup>, coffee became a conduit for colonialism’s “two irreconcilable demands”: to simultaneously make the colony profitable and “uplift the natives” (Jackson 2011: 346-7). In particular, British colonialism’s particular form of forcing Africans to

---

1900, St. Austin’s reported its first flowering crop estimated a less than an acre” (Brock et al., 2005: 13), the priest with whom I spoke did not know of this journal, nor did other priests whom I contacted after this visit.

<sup>100</sup> By 1904, St Austin’s reported 5,000 mature trees (52,000 by 1914) and was winning prizes at Nairobi Agricultural fairs. In 1904, the Director of Agriculture’s government farm had 2,000 seedlings supplied by St. Austin’s, and it was noted that “as regards to growth, healthiness, and bearing qualities” of its coffee had “surpassed” colonial coffee in the West Indies” (Brock et al., 2005:15).

<sup>101</sup>Both the Scottish and the French mission stories may be true since they happened in different parts of the BEA.

enter industrial capitalism affected women in particularly brutal and degrading ways (Muchomba 2014; Mama 1997:53), an idea to which this chapter now turns.

## **B. The ‘Dishonest Equation’ of Colonial Settlers and Coffee**

In the colonial quest, “Profit and Piety combined” as Britain became “inebriated by their civilizing mission” (Elkins 2005: 213; Harlow & Carter 2005: 5, 14, 32). This is what Césaire names as the “dishonest equation”: the European narrative that “paganism equals savagery”, and that “Christianity equals civilization” (Césaire 1955: 11). Perhaps best summarized by the famous British missionary-explorer David Livingston’s “3 Cs” of Colonialism: Commerce, Christianity, and Civilization (Harlow & Carter 2005: 2, 13). Such dishonesty multiplied under a settler colonialism that led to gendered implications for the division of labour.

As early as 1730, Britain had been experimenting with coffee planting in other colonies, such as in Jamaica (as early as 1730) (Morris 2019: 66, 87-8). By the 1860s in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Britain had introduced plantation coffee farming by creating structures that benefited white men<sup>102</sup> (Kurian 2003: 174), which changed traditional patterns of land use and household relationships (Eckert 2003: 287). Britain had also tested its racist ideology on other cash crops, such tea. As a prominent scholar of tea notes, “tea’s commercial empire exerted political power” in Britain (Rappaport 2017:408), accomplished through the marketing of “Empire-Grown Tea”—tea cultivated and manufactured in British colonies—which had profited through successful marketing campaigns in England (Rappaport 2007: 149). Coffee was equally planned as a “tool of empire” in East Africa (Rappaport 2017: 58), labelled with language of “produced in the

---

<sup>102</sup>In British owned-Ceylon, a devastating blight *hemileia vastratrix* (coffee leaf rust) in the 1870s wiped out almost all the coffee on the island to such an extent that 1900 was the last harvest on Ceylon (of 7,000 sacks); the British colonial government replaced coffee with tea on the island (Jacob 1935: 244-5). This may be part of why Britain was so specific about coffee in its quest for emigrants to Kenya, but I have not read any scholarship that denies or supports this link.



Empire” or “imperial commodities,” which applied both for tea and coffee, both so desirable in England (Rappaport 2017: 237-47).

In contrast to the priests and the missions who first brought coffee to Kenya and “encouraged their converts to take up coffee planting on their own” (Curtis 2003: 315), the colonial state aggressively excluded Africans with racist justifications and discriminatory policies from the early 1900s through the 1950s in British East Africa. It is to this history of coffee’s political economy, explored through an intersectional feminist lens, that we now turn.

The completion of the Uganda Railway in 1901 provided further motives for colonial recruitment of European settlers since coffee (and other crops) could more efficiently be transported more than 269 miles from Nairobi to Mombasa for export. But families or couples did not arrive in Kenya to settle until after the Crown Land Ordinance of 1902, when the British Colonial Government took possession of all land that they deemed unoccupied, not only for the Crown, but also to enforce British claim for the sale and use of settlers (Kariuki & Ng’etich: 2016; Youé 1987: 213).

In the two decades that followed, hundreds more European settlers immigrated to the protectorate and the British government viewed settlement as “a crucial part of imperial domination” (Elkins & Pedersen 2005: 1). As Elspeth Huxley reflects upon her own years of growing up in colonial Kenya,<sup>103</sup> the British government did not take over Uganda and the East Africa Protectorate “to develop them” because “in those days a government’s function was to administer and not to develop” (Huxley 1935/1968 vol.1: 55). Instead, the British government recruited settlers who would emigrate to the BEA, not as temporary residents or “transitory

---

<sup>103</sup>To Europeans at the time, five hundred acres was considered a small farm, such as the Grants (the parents of future writer Elspeth Huxley); a farm of 6,000 acres, such the Blixen’s, was exceptionally large with hundreds of acres of coffee (Hussein 2005:2).

planters,” but as families who left England to make Kenya their permanent home (Huxley 1935/1968 vol.1: 235) and to create a settler colonial state (Rodney 1972: 213-14). As such, from Britain’s point of view, the success of the territory relied upon “settler agriculture and enterprise to provide needed imports and foreign exchange alike” (Elkins & Pedersen 2005: 15).

The metropole and the colony were “inextricably linked” (Ghosh 2004:741). By 1910, coffee became an important cash crop to the British colonial government (Hussain et al., 2020:7), and policies designed specifically to benefit Europeans rather than Africans based on the “ideological foundation of racism” were enacted, through “the institutionalization of settler ideology and domination into the structure of the state” (Elkins & Pedersen 2005: 206; cf. also Ghosh 2004:741). Coffee was a means of such colonial domination, as will be explained later in this chapter. Settlers “could not maintain their exclusive socioeconomic status without the power of state support, nor could the state reproduce itself without privileging the needs—particularly the economic needs—of the settlers” (Elkins & Pedersen 2005: 206; cf. also Ghosh 2004:741). These two categories, ideology and institutionalization, are useful to explain how coffee came to be employed as a means of both. Commercial plantation agriculture depended upon the labour of African men on the farms (Huxley 1935/1968 v.1: 70), thereby creating more work for African women in their own homes and farms.

From 1920 onward, Kenya colony was advertised in mythical terms to increase recruitment of white European settlers (Jackson 2011). Coffee was often part of colonial advertisements, highlighting Kenya’s good rainfall, lush soil, and “unoccupied land” (Huxley 1935/1968 vol.1: 78). Coffee became a favoured crop upon which Europeans would come to depend upon (Elkins & Pedersen 2005:21), in part, because it could be intercropped with other

fruits or vegetables (Curtis 2003: 315).<sup>104</sup> The twin promise of the surplus land and cheap labour—both advertised as inexpensive and abundant—enticed “would-be British aristocrats and adventurers to follow the railways into Kenya” (Elkins & Pedersen 2005: 21). Designed to attract capital-rich Europeans,<sup>105</sup> advertisements prominently boasted that British East Africa had the “finest coffee land in the country” (Huxley 1935/1968 vol.1: 248).

The colonial state regulated the production of crops, especially maize, and cash crops like tea and coffee. Africans were specifically and actively restricted from any benefits of cash crops, or from participating in any part of the export market (Shanguhya 2015:27). Africans were excluded from farming, owning, or producing cash crops on their own land (Huxley 1935/1968 vol1: 214; Cooper 2002: 23; Curtis 2003:215; Eckert 2003: 287) until after World War II (Talbot 1990: 114). This gave white settlers “exclusive right to grow and market certain crops” through “openly coercive labor and tax policies” (Elkins & Pedersen 2005: 10) such as the hut tax and poll tax (cf. details later in this chapter). European settlers perceived the agricultural expertise of Gikuyu farmers, then and still Kenya’s largest tribe, as a threat to European economic prosperity (Makana 2009; Elkins 2005: 16). Kenya’s patriarchal colonial society was marked by “pervasive inequalities, usually codified in law” that created categories of discrimination based on race, class, and/or gender (Elkins & Pedersen 2005: 4). Racism became institutionalized through “white privilege, and hence settler authority, in most aspects of life” including the state (Elkins 2005: 204; cf. also Mama 1997). The colonial state became the “largest employer of labour throughout British colonial Africa” (Anderson 2000: 459). Using “racial hierarchies” to

---

<sup>104</sup>In reality, coffee trials had not been conducted on most of the lands. Through the 1920s and 1930s, settlers often complained that the soil was not good for coffee, including the Grants (Huxley’s parents). The Blixen farm rarely made a profit from their coffee, a constant complaint of Karen Blixen in her books and letters (Dinesen 1937; Dinesen & Lasson 1981; Hussein 2005).

<sup>105</sup>While the size of Kenya’s settler population was miniscule compared to other British colonies, they wielded enormous influence through a colonial regime, transforming state and economic structures, created to benefit themselves through a “band-of-brothers exclusivity” in a colonial state (Elkins & Pedersen 2005: 18).

subjugate Africans in a “relationship of domination,” colonialism exploited “Africans as units of labor to exploit by whatever means possible” (Cooper 2002: 17); this idea links back to Owuor’s argument that the human covenant was broken through exploitation (Koss 2021a).

This exploitation was evident in the ways that caste, gender, and racial discrimination “permeated nearly every aspect of the Europeans’ interactions with the indigenous populations” (Elkins & Pedersen 2005: 205) and forced Africans into industrial capitalism through the production of cash crops, which included women and children (Turner & Brownhill 2004:29). The suppression of “labor supply, market conditions, legal codes, and political rights” (Elkins & Pedersen 2005: 135) was specifically pernicious for African women, a point noted by Walter Rodney, when he stated the colonial system led to a “deterioration in the status of [African] women owing to colonial rule” (Rodney 1972: 210). In part, this was because of the ways women became restricted to the domestic sphere, leading to their restricted mobility (Rizzo 2012:9). Another reason was due to what became known as the “male deal” – when African men colluded with European men who were “title holders,” resulting in African “women farmers [who] did the work, but their husbands secured the income in the form of state payments for coffee and tea deliveries” (Turner & Brownhill 2004:28).

In Tanganyika<sup>106</sup>, the German colonial administration forbade Africans from employing other Africans on the same terms as they were employed on European settler farms. A missionary recorded in 1913 an interesting note that guides this chapter’s argument: “There are really industrious cultivators in the area who lay out small coffee plots for themselves and would enlarge these if they had more land and workers. At present [male Africans] are almost entirely dependent on the help of their wives, who have quite sufficient to do without this” (cited in

---

<sup>106</sup>Tanganyika is the colonial east African state that, in 1964, merged with Zanzibar to form the United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, which was later renamed to the United Republic of Tanzania.

Eckert 2003: 293). This statement, recorded in 1913 by a missionary in colonial Tanganika, reveals a colonial example of how the coercive entrance of coffee cultivation added to the already-heavy demands and burdens upon the labour and time of women. As BEA all “actual or potential sources of wealth” were built by the state and state-owned (Huxley 1935/1968 vol.1: 181). The colonial state excluded all women, both European and African, from participation or leadership in all political, legal, and administrative structures (Mama 1997:52-54), which varied by social class. For Indigenous women, such exclusions had a distinctively pernicious affect due to racial discrimination. Both class and racial divides impacted gendered relations due to colonial policies and coercive tactics in three key areas—land, taxes, and labour—which I now turn to, in order to demonstrate some ways that structures of inequality remain in the twenty-first coffee industry (cf. Chapter Four).

### ***Land***

In precolonial Kenya, land was not a commodity to be bought and sold: it was shared and the foundation of all Gikuyu life (Kenyatta 1965: 27; Eckert 2003: 288). As early as 1899, the creation of land laws and ordinances—such as the Land Title Ordinance, allowed British to claim land in Kenya that they deemed uninhabited—and evicted and dispossessed millions of Africans from their own land (Kariuki & Ng’etich 2016; Brownhill et al., 1997; Huxley 1935/1968: 197; 1967: 17). Césaire notes that the “lands confiscated” and taxation schemes turned “the indigenous man into an instrument of production”, and while *Discourse on Colonialism* does not specifically name coffee, other “compulsory crops” such as cotton and olives are noted as being part of “plundering colonialism” and violence (1955:21-2, 33-4).

By 1909, “East African coffee was making a good name for itself in the world” (Huxley 1935/1968 v1: 247; Hussain et al., 2020:7), and good coffee land was being given away by the

government to settlers for as little as £5 an acre (Huxley 1935/1968 v1: 250). Britain needed to pay back its debt and European settlers bought land and used the labour of able-bodied African men to clear forests and cut trees in order to begin coffee planting in lands around Mt. Kenya, especially in Thika and Nyeri (Huxley 1935/1968 v1: 238-9).<sup>107</sup> By 1921, Huxley notes that 1,339 European settler farmers supported the wealth of Kenya colony, while most were barely breaking even on their expenses, and all of whom were debt to banks as each European family unit cultivated an average of 150 acres of land (Huxley 1935/1968 v2: 100). By 1927, five million acres of land were occupied by European farms, much of it, devoted to coffee. Despite the debts, settlers “lived as a vulnerable if privileged minority among the majority populations they had dispossessed” (Elkins & Pedersen 2005: 8).

As explained by Jomo Kenyatta in 1938, decades before he would become the first Prime Minister in 1963 and first President of Kenya in 1964, the importance of land to the Gikuyu cannot be overstated.<sup>108</sup> His 1965 book, *Facing Mt. Kenya*, explained the organization and customs of his Gikuyu tribe of more than one million people. As he explains, “in Gikuyu society the system of land tenure can only be understood by reference to the ties of kinship. It is no more true to say that the land is collectively owned by the tribe than that it is privately owned by the individual” (1965: 299).

Likewise, Wangari Maathai, Nobel Prize winner and one of the first Kenyans to earn a PhD, regularly wrote about the ways that the land suffered under colonial rule, which she, like

---

<sup>107</sup>This railway was intended to be built from Mombasa on the coast to Uganda, but the ‘Lunatic Express,’ as it was called by critics in Britain and the “iron snake” by Indigenous Kenyans, ended with its terminus located in Kisumu, Kenya. It was built primarily by the labour of Indian men, many of whom were brought on ships under slave-like conditions; most either died in Kenya under harsh labour conditions, disease, or by African animals, especially lions, or never returned home to India.

<sup>108</sup> Kenyatta wrote *Facing Mt. Kenya* when he was a student in the 1930s at the London School of Economics. He studied anthropology under Professor Bronislaw Malinowski. The book was originally published in 1938; my edition was published in 1965.

Kenyatta, grew up under. She later wrote that colonial authorities “brought with them a concept of land ownership that was alien to much of the African continent. They insisted that land be controlled by a title deed” (2009: 227). In her analysis, title deeds initiated more problems for women,<sup>109</sup> because:

when such title deeds were bestowed, the authorities would provide them only to ‘the head of the household,’ which was the man. Traditionally, land was owned not by an individual but by the family or the community. The new laws disenfranchised women, who no longer had a right to land but who, instead, accessed land at the pleasure of the father or the husband, whose name was written on the title deed (2009: 227-8).

Ownership in Indigenous communities (see Chapter One, note 6) was gendered: as land passed from male to male (Presley 1992: 26). Farm work was segregated with distinct roles based on sex, but there was a sharing within an interdependent structure based on community customs and household roles (Presley 1992; Robertson 1997; Kenyatta 1965).

In contrast, European enforcements of new land ownership, management, and occupations were based on race and gender, with African women restricted in the domestic sphere and African men restricted to labour on European farms. This increased the domestic and farm work burdens for Indigenous women, because their husbands were forced to find labour elsewhere, sometimes long distances from their homes, to obtain the newly necessary cash (Presley 1992: 23).

Burdens for African women became even heavier after World War I. Because

---

<sup>109</sup>Until the New Constitution of 2010, women were legally prohibited from owning family land, but still, despite the legal right, often custom or culture takes precedence even when a husband dies so that his brother might inherit the land before his widow (Svensson 1992; Turner et al., 1997; cf. Chapter Four in this study).

the BEA bordered German East Africa, BEA's involvement led to long-term implications on men—both East African Indigenous Africans as well as European settlers—as both groups were conscripted to fight in the war in various roles, whether within the BEA and abroad. Because the “railway line ran within 50 miles of Germany territory,” the BEA was in a “very vulnerable position” and as a result, all Germans living in the BEA were arrested after war was declared on 5 August 1914 (Nicholls 2002: 40). Also, the war's shipping crisis negatively affected profits from agricultural exports. Coffee, as a locally unconsumable product, had a particularly negative impact because it could not be exported and therefore “accumulated in the country” (Huxley 1935/1968 v2: 26).

In addition, even more thousands of acres of land became alienated during World War I, with crops dying as both European and African men fighting in the war both in East Africa and abroad (Huxley 1935/1968 v2: 56). Still, by 1917, coffee was considered “essential to the Protectorate's life and development,” as was sisal and flax, two other key colonial crops (Huxley 1935 v1: 26). By the end of the war in 1918, increased demand for colonial commodities such as coffee, led to the Soldier-Settlement scheme. Inaugurated in 1919, the BEA “allocated over a thousand new farms across two million acres of land to British subjects who had given military service during World War One. The result, inevitably, was a marked increase in the colonists' demand for labour, exacerbated by the post-war economic boom” (Jackson 2011: 347).

This demand led to another colonial strategy in British East Africa: the creation of reserves, primarily for the Gikuyu. To further alienated the Gikuyu from their pastoral lands, reserves were “overpopulated and ecologically inhospitable reserves or native land units. From there many migrated either to the mines or urban centers in search of employment” (Elkins 2005: 205). Some Africans lived on the reserves with men travelling daily back and forth, from reserve



to European farms as day-labourers. But many became “squatters,” on European-owned farms, defined as “permanent or seasonal laborers [who lived] on the same soil that their ancestors had once cultivated or pastured” (Elkins 2005: 205). A 1933 British land commission report states that 110,000 Gikuyu peoples lived as squatters (Kenyatta 1965: xv; Youé 2002:505). Squatters were not wage laborers; however, in exchange for living on the land, they were expected to work for a specific number of days per year, which increased over time (Youé 1987: 217; Huxley 1935:19). For example, in 1918, the requirement was 180 days; in 1937, it was 240 days; after World War II, the number increased to 270 days a year (Elkins & Pedersen 2005: 209; Youé 1987: 217).

In 1918, British settlers introduced the first of several “Resident Native Labour Ordinances,” targeting the more than 100,000 Africans who squatters or sharecroppers, with fewer benefits as time passed, but never granting any rights to the land they were cultivating (Youé 1987: 210). Danish settler Karen Blixen, perhaps most famous for her book *Out of Africa*, was against this scheme. There were 153 families living as “squatters” on her coffee plantation, approximately 2,000 people (Lewis 2000: 64). In a letter to her mother, Blixen shared that some “were living here before the land was even allotted to white people and who counted on being able to end their days here and leave their cattle and shambas [Kiswahili for farms] to their children” (Dinesen & Lasson 1981: 421). During the 1933 Kenya Land Commission (KLC) hearing, the Rev. Canon Leakey, one of the first white settlers in BEA in 1902, verbally criticized the colonial government for “the haphazard fashion in which white settlement was allowed to bite into where the Kikuyu were settled” (KLC 1933: 867). While they “once had space enough for all their needs,” Leakey told the court that “today [they are] absolutely landless. Everyone knows that thousands of them are living as squatters as white men’s estates with no security of

tenure whatsoever” (KLC 1933: 869). For many Indigenous women, the squatter structure created more work and less time with their family members in the effort to survive the new system of colonial capitalism. As with other examples from this chapter, the specific gendered implications of these policies for women is difficult to discern, given the silences and omissions in written, historical narratives.

To summarize, what we learn regarding land in Colonial Kenya, is that the British alienation of lands they deemed unoccupied did not only have negative repercussions on the land itself but also at the household level, as gendered relationships became divided into farming systems and duties that would create the conditions for women to be distinctively exploited due to gender, race, and class.

### *Taxes*

In early German or British occupation, native chiefs colluded with white European men to stimulate coffee growing and chiefs acted as “labour recruiters and tax collectors” (Eckert 2003: 290). Collected by the Colonial District Commissioner (Huxley 1967: 125) and “hut counters” (KLCE 1933: 962), two taxes compelled Africans to enter the colonial wage market: the hut tax and the poll tax (Van Zwanenberg 1975: 276; Elkins 2005: 16; Talbot 1990: 115). The hut tax had been introduced in by the Germans in Tanganyika who used chiefs willing to act “as labor recruiters and tax collectors” as early as 1898, both which galvanised coffee growing (Eckert 2003: 290). The hut tax began in 1901 in the East Africa Protectorate, implementing a two or three-rupee tax that began as a tax only to men but later increased to one pound (Huxley 1935 voll: 90; Presley 1992: 46; Dinesen & Lasson 1981: 12).

Taxes were the earliest form of colonial population-counting that “sought to exploit Africans as a labour force, collect hut and poll taxes, and manage anti-colonial unrest by

discouraging pan-African organising. Poll taxes were collected by district commissioners (DCs) who kept district- and location-level tax registers regularly [...] updated by African ‘hut counters’” (Balaton-Chrimes 2021). While “every inhabited hut pays” by 1933, the Kenya Land Commission Evidence mandated that if two women lived in the same hut, they were required to pay twice, except for elderly women, “excused” from the hut tax (KLCE 1933: 962).<sup>110</sup> African women were not taxed until 1934 during the Great Depression (Kilonzo & Akallah 2021), perhaps as part of the British Empire’s attempt to pay its debts.

First and second-hand narratives reveal insights about these egregious taxes, revealing the hardship and suffering they incurred. For example, Mary Njeri Kinyanjui, a senior research fellow at the University of Nairobi’s Institute for Development Studies who earned her PhD from the University of Cambridge, grew up on a small-scale farm in rural Kenya, where most of her family were coffee farmers or pickers. Her book *Coffee Time* (2015) opens with a description of the hard labour of her paternal grandfather, who spent most of his time tending coffee bushes on the *muthungu* (European) farm in Thika among other “workers [who] toiled from morning to evening. The taxes introduced by the *muthungu* government forced them to work so that they could pay tax” (2015: 4). He used his wages “to pay tax, pay his son’s school fees, and to feed his family” and later for his grandchildren (Kinyanjui 2015: 4, 5). Kinyanjui explains “with the job [on the coffee farm], he was able to pay the tax and did not have to play hide and seek to escape arrest”, thus avoiding punishment from police who would hunt for Africans who defaulted on the tax (Kinyanjui 2015: 4).

---

<sup>110</sup>At its beginning, “in kind” payments of fruit, for example, was accepted as payment to cover taxes (Huxley 1935/1968 vol1: 90), but as years passed, payment came out of the wages paid by settlers. Elspeth Huxley notes that by 1909, £110,000 had been collected. Despite her objections, Karen Blixen collected tax from her labourers for the British (Huxley 1935/1968 v2: 59; Dinesen & Lasson 1981).

Likewise, Karen Blixen, in her letters from Kenya to her family in Denmark, consistently expressed outrage toward the British regarding the “native tax”—and as a prolific letter writer during this time, who also managed a large coffee farm, Blixen’s writings are worthy of concentrated analysis here as they give insight into the challenges for – what she called – “native” Africans. The earliest mention of taxes in her letters occurs four months after her arrival to British East Africa in May 1914: “All the white people out here are pressing the government to raise the ‘Hut Tax,’ the tax on natives, from 3 rupees to £1, in order to make them work; I think it is a sorry idea to force an entire nation that is now rich, into poverty in such a way” (Dinesen & Lasson 1981:12). Later that year, she wrote in a different letter: “It is remarkable that all the English agree that the biggest difficulty out here is the labor problem, and then do nothing about it except to shout at the government to tax the natives more heavily” (Dinesen & Lasson 1981: 26).

By 1926, her opposition to increased taxation was vehemently expressed in a letter sent to Denmark to her brother, Thomas Dinesen: “I am so angry with the English because they want to impose higher taxes on [Indigenous Africans], they are talking about a kopftax of 20 shillings; it is disgraceful when you think that the most a man can earn is about 150 shillings a year [. . .] this country is so amazingly outside the bounds of law and justice” (Dinesen & Lasson 1981: 240). The same letter also criticizes the juxtaposition of British wealth compared with poverty of Africans: “the natives can be starving here and dying of starvation, and the Governor is building a new Government House for £80,000, and the champagne flows in torrents at their races and so on.—Lord Delamere recently held a dinner for 250 people at which they drank 600 bottles,—and they just do not *see* it” (Dinesen & Lasson 1981: 240). Combined, the poll and hut tax amounted

to 25 shillings, or two months of labour (Elkins 2005: 216), which was required to be paid in cash (Eckert 2003:314).

The lessons we learn here regarding taxes are that colonial Britain used various forms of racialized economic policies to force Indigenous Africans into a cash-based system. This had gendered implications, both regarding the amount of labour that men or women were permitted to obtain, as well as an embedding a gendered structure of division of labour, since men often migrated away from their rural homes, to earn an income, leaving their wives to care for their farms and families.

### ***Labour***

The forceable introduction of a wage labour system had gendered effects that transformed gendered dynamics within Indigenous communities and households (Mama 1997:51). In colonial Kenya, labour laws and policies comprised “rough justice” according to the British colonial regime to force Africans into a wage economy, including two specifically gendered expressions of colonial violence and humiliation: the *kiboko* and the *kipande*.

Originally added to the BEA statute book in 1906 as the “Master and Servant Ordinance,” these labour laws were enforced until the 1950s (Anderson 2000: 460). Based on medieval and early modern English legislation, they were consistently revised with “progressively more severe with penal sanctions for Africans, especially for Africans who violated their labour contracts (2005: 209). These ordinances were ‘updated’ several times after settlers argued for stricter policies. For example, the 1910 amendment to the Master and Servant Ordinance separated “Arab and Native” workers into racial categories with different policies based on the construction of race (Anderson 2000: 462). Stricter policies applied to Africans, as Europeans

claimed they were “at a less advanced stage of development than Asian or European labour and so needed to be treated differently under the law” (Anderson 2000: 462-3).<sup>111</sup>

What was called “labor recruitment” was hardly benign: for example, one missionary account mentioned that, despite protests, they possessed little power to stop the colonial “man gang” approaches used to round up through violent beatings (Cooper 1980: 100). Africans were forced to work for settlers despite “poor rates of pay and under primitive conditions of work” (Anderson 2000:459). Indigenous women faced added traumas of sexual abuse, violence, and rape, often as part of their employment (Mama 1997: 49-51; Presley 1992: 45).

For all the reasons, precolonial “division[s] of labour according to sex was frequently disrupted” (Rodney 1972: 210), and because coffee was, and remains, such a labour-intensive crop, bifurcated labour effected household and gender dynamics. As Rodney synthesizes: “What happened to African women under colonialism is that the social, religious, constitutional, and political privileges and rights disappeared, while the economic exploitation continued and was often intensified” (Rodney 1972: 210).

That the labour divide was based on race and class is well-known and well-documented: for example, in Nairobi town, the Norfolk Hotel and the Muthaiga Club were both white-only establishments to dine, drink, or sleep. Colonialists created a “color bar” whereby service jobs at both were based both on race and gender: as Nairobi waiters, drivers, and carries of luggage at the train station were jobs only for African men (Elkins & Pedersen 2005: 205) and various forms of transactional sex, including prostitution, for women (Muchomba 2014).

---

<sup>111</sup>None of the former punishments were reduced in the 1910 ordinance, but one was added for Africans: imprisonment with hard labour. And one was added from Europeans: a reduced fine if they withheld wages from workers, which was “a very common practice on Kenya’s European farms at the time” (Anderson 2000: 463).

Labour divides based on race, gender, and class were evident in agriculture as well. As one British administrator wrote to London in 1924, in reference to the Kilimanjaro region: the focus on “Native Coffee Cultivation,” as it was then named, was based upon developing “peasant cultivation, each one working his plot by his own industry with the help of his women and children” (Eckert 2003: 298). The sexism that permeated Kenya’s settler colonialism relied upon a gendered division of labor (Boserup 1970: 54-60) that exploited African women’s bodies and labour in distinctively gendered ways. For example, “in some cash crop areas, males—by virtue of privileged linkages with missionaries, with colonial agricultural agents, or with traders—had privileged roles in the commercialization of agriculture, even if women were essential to food production and even if they relied on women’s labor in export-crop production” (Cooper 2002: 22). In the early colonial period, most wage workers comprised African men, employed in short-term labour assignments (Cooper 2002: 32; Mama 1997: 51): this was the case for coffee day-labourers who would walk to and from their household to coffee plantations. However, this dynamic shifted during World War I, because thousands of African men were conscripted to fight in the war on behalf of Britain, and so colonial “government officials forced women to work on coffee estates owned by European settlers” (Presley 1992: 44).

This changed again, after World War I, when British (men) instituted new directives that restricted the mobility of African women to the roles in their communities and households (Mama 1997:51). One poignant example is from July 1920, when Lord Milner, the Secretary of State of the Colonial Office in London, ordered that “women and children are not [to be] employed away from their homes” (qtd in Huxley 1935 vol.2: 69). Urban areas “were mainly the preserves of Europeans, Asians, African male migrants” (Musoyoki & Orodho 1993: 107) while African women were prescribed to “not move about” as men did (Kenya Land Commission

1933: 963).<sup>112</sup> For this reason, some chiefs and husbands started to use women's labour to meet both the squatter tax quota for work, as well as to increase household earnings. Wives might, for example, spilt their squatter labour with their husbands to make up the required number of days (Youé 1987: 217). The migrant labor system left women, children, and non-working relatives in villages and the migration of men for wage work, including on European coffee estates, forced women to sell their own labour and bodies to pay their taxes, ranging from selling fruits in a market (Williams 2022) to prostitution (Muchomba 2014; Cooper 2002: 33).

Part of “the fig leaf” of Britain's “civilizing mission” was that the “education of Africans into the discipline of labour was something that many colonial administrators and missionaries believed to be an important part of the civilising (sic) mission of colonialism, and punishment could thus be justified as a means toward an end” (Anderson 2011: 496). This was evident through corporal punishment of African farm labourers based on racist understandings of which punishments were “appropriate to the level of civilisation (sic) that the African had achieved” (Anderson 2011: 480). In addition to racism, many colonialists infantilized Africans—both adult men and women—as demonstrated by one colonial letter: “In dealing with natives one is dealing with children, and Solomon's advice on the matter of the rod, still holds good” (cited in Anderson 2011: 491).

As such, flogging became “the rule and not the exception” and the dreaded *kiboko* – a whip made of hippopotamus hide – would be used even for “trivial offenses” (Anderson 2011: 482). White settlers flogged servants in their home and labourers on farms, while the state

---

<sup>112</sup>Domestic service in European homes was also gendered, and the *Registration of Domestic Servants Ordinance of 1926* was created specifically to restrict and monitor movements between European households. As another method of “social control in Nairobi,” it is “estimated that six Africans were seeking work for every job available in domestic service in the town” so this “surplus labour supply ensured that wages remained low and that there was little pressure upon settler employees to improve conditions of work” (Anderson 2000: 466). Domestic work was performed by “houseboys” in colonial BEA, typically younger men in sharp contrast to today when all domestic work is done by women except gardening, which is regularly done by men.



flogged those they deemed “criminals” (Anderson 2011: 496). Flogging was the common method with up to forty lashes or more were not uncommon, even up to 100 lashes, known as “rough justice” (Anderson 2011: 490). In Kenya, this became so severe that, even as early as 1902, in the Colonial Office, Lord Chamberlain reissued a directive that single offenses must be restricted to “24 lashes,” emphasizing that African females were “exempt from any sentence of corporal punishment” (2011: 481).

But there remained a class and racial distinction between white, European women and their African house or farm staff. White women were actively involved in ‘rough justice,’ as they might set the level of severity or the number of the lashes, although they rarely administering the whip themselves. In a 1914 letter, Blixen describes that the first time she ever authorized a punishment of 20 strokes for “her” *totos* (‘houseboys’), accused of “stealing and getting drunk,” (Dinesen 1981: 17). In a later letter, she accused British women as being “the worst,” referring the regular severity with which they beat their “boys” (1981: 26). As Blixen observes from both British men and women, “I think they use torture without much scruple” (Dinesen 1981: 60).

Such tortures took several forms, and the *kipande*, was another method used by the colonial government to force Africans into an exploitive wage economy (Elkins 2005: 209). As a result of the 1915 Registration of Natives Ordinance, all African men over the age of fifteen were required to register their work with a colonial administrator, who would then be given and forced to carry a “certificate of identification” called a *kipande* (Huxley 1935/1968 v2: 61; Anderson 2000: 464). This document recorded their fingerprints, personal details, and labor histories of the man (Anderson 2000:464). Pass laws were commonly used by colonial government throughout Africa as one method of gendered labour restrictions: only “native” men were required to obtain and carry such passes (Barnes 1997). The *kipande* became “one of the most detested symbols of

British colonial power,” that some Africans called *mbugi* (a goat’s bell) evoking the feeling that the pass around their necks was aligned to an animal’s bell (Elkins 2005: 16).

Along with this pass law, “an African also needed the signature of his employer to leave one job for another—without it he was considered a deserter and could be fined or imprisoned” (Elkins 2005: 209). The document was registered centrally; by 1931, two million had been issued (Anderson 2000: 464). Colonial leaders claimed this provided greater job security, making it harder for employers to defraud them of wages. But in practice, the law stirred up a variety of divisions, including between Indigenous Africans (e.g. as chronicled by Blixen, Somali residents, as non-natives to Kenya, were upset when they were also forced to register for a pass [Dinesen 1981: 77, 97]). In addition, the *kipande* was intended to restrict African male’s “freedom of mobility” and restrict the possibility of men working at more than one employer at a time, unless permission was given by both (Anderson 2000: 464; Elkins 2005).<sup>113</sup>

I heard a first-hand experience of one colonial master from a coffee farmer whom I will call Florence (Anonymous, Pseudonym “Florence”, 6 February 2022). Florence is the only person I met during my field work who was old enough to give personal witness to the colonial times when, before independence, “the land was for the white people.” She gave testimony to the existence of the reserves (Elkins 2005) and the *kipande* “from colonial times.” A younger woman, Gladys, translated for me, trying to explain Florence’s meaning, that the *kipande* was “like a rubber stamp around the neck, like a necklace all around you,” as she showed me with her hands. Florence said, “If the stamp was not there, they would beat you.” I asked her if it was the

---

<sup>113</sup>The pass law did not only restrict labour but also young people from movement, such as riding on the train. For example, in his memoir *Dreams in a Time of War* (2010), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o describes the pass law as both restrictive and strict. After he obtained highest honours for his Kenyan Exams and was accepted to the best school at the time, Alliance High School, he forgot his pass and wanted to board the train. The colonial train officer would not allow him to get on the train to attend his first day of school.

same for men and women, and she said that “the men had one kind, it was different than women,” but she was not able to share any further details. Florence vividly remembered other details of her life in colonial Kenya. She said that women only had “one dress and it would become ragged. Children often would not be given any clothes - only millets for food and green vegetables when they found it.”

We discussed the colonial wages that she received. During a typical day, Florence said they would have to pick 60 kilos of coffee with payment received was one shilling per 20 kilos, so for a full day of physical work, they payment would be 3 shillings, the equivalent in the year 2020 to less than 3 cents (USD). She recalled that a dress would cost 3ksh and a cow cost 100ksh. She reminisced that the coin had Queen Elizabeth’s face on it.<sup>114</sup>

When I asked Florence if she could describe where she would carry the coffee, she said, “They had a factory here, but it was far. There was water here for a long time, so when they come with the coffee, to clean the coffee and the white people, the colonial people, are taking the coffee in the car.” She remembers that beatings were a regular occurrence: “If you were late, you would be beaten. If you were found crossing this land, trespassing, or if you don’t come to work in the reserves, they will find you and beat you.” “You are not dying, but you feel like you want to die, they are beating you but you’re not dying.” There was “no school, no education, not even for boys – everyone is working on coffee all day.”

---

<sup>114</sup> Florence only speaks her mother tongue, so a younger woman translated for me and confirmed Florence’s permission that I share this story. Florence does not know her birthday or how old she is, but Gladys said that Florence is at least 80. Assuming that under colonialism, girls might start working on the coffee after age 10, this may mean that Florence as being born sometime in the 1940s, if she was working after 1952, when Queen Elizabeth became Queen. The shilling was introduced in Kenya in 1921 (Mutu 2016). In 1952, Elizabeth was on a honeymoon tour of East Africa, and was in Kenya when her father, King George, died, and she was declared Queen (on 6 February 1952 and reigned until her death on 8 September 2022). By 1953, new notes and coins were minted with her profile on them (Mutu 2016); this could be the coin that Florence remembers receiving. As the longest reigning British monarch, Queen Elizabeth II appeared in 33 different currencies during her reign, more than any other monarch (AP 2022).

Such testimony demonstrates some of the unjust labour restrictions that were instituted and implemented after the Treaty of Versailles, when Germany renounced all rights to all overseas possessions (Huxley 1935/1968 v2: 49). The once entirely separated governments of Kenya and Tanganyika, then became ruled under the British crown. The East African Protectorate then became Crown Colony in 1920, then called ‘Kenya Colony.’<sup>115</sup> As worldwide demand for coffee was growing, more and more land continued to be cleared and ploughed for coffee and other export crops throughout the 1920s (Huxley 1935/1968 v2: 50). Even as settlers continued to both rely upon African labour and complained about labour shortages (Anderson 2011: 495), by 1922, Kenya Colony boasted 36 million coffee trees (Eckert 2003:297). Such export crops were segregated between “African exports” and “European exports”; coffee was considered the later (Talbot 1990: 151n2). Coffee revenues flourished (Brock et al., 2005: 5)<sup>116</sup> to such an extent that by 1930, coffee became the most valuable export crop, “accounting for almost 47% of the total value of all exports from Kenya” (Youé 1987: 214).

But this rise would not last long. The Great Depression led to a plunge in coffee consumption in England and prices in the Kenya Colony.<sup>117</sup> Settlers who stayed experienced a harder time obtaining labour to work on their coffee plantations and there was no credit available (Van Zwanenberg 1975: 284). As a result, many settlers who had relied on coffee for survival

---

<sup>115</sup>This shift caused a currency crisis. Before World War I, East African trade was exchanged with the Indian rupee but after, it changed to the English shillings, which were more valuable in post-war trade from East Africa. This shift sunk commodity prices, including coffee in 1921 (Huxley 1935/1968 v2: 50, 71, 80); coffee and sisal comprised three-fourths of the total export crops out of Kenya that same year (Huxley 1935/1968 v2: 100). Today, Kenya’s currency remains Kenyan shillings.

<sup>116</sup>After World War I and throughout the 1920s, several legal and public battles between London and Nairobi focused on crime and punishment in Kenya, whereby arbitrary punishments few protections for African workers and many forms of punishment for rebelling against such laws. A report from Secretary of State, the Duke of Devonshire, noted that cases “in Kenya have been marked by great brutality” (Anderson 2011: 492) and in 1924, he singled out Kenya’s brutal views of corporal punishment “there is a wide distinction between Kenya and any other tropical Colony in which natives work under the employment of the white man” (Anderson 2011: 493). Van Zwanenberg (1975) also discusses the regularity of flogging without trial.

<sup>117</sup> For a comparative context, Brazil was producing 29 million bags of coffee while all of Africa produced 540,000 sacks (Jacob 1935: 241). Yet, Kenya colony and others, especially Angola, depended on coffee.

abandoned their farms and returned to Europe because they could not afford their mortgages (Van Zwanenberg 1975: 291). Perhaps most famously, Karen Blixen was forced to sell her furniture and leave Kenya in bankruptcy, as the Danish shareholders of Karen Coffee Company Ltd. sold the land and house against her wishes and despite her protests.<sup>118</sup>

Before Karen Blixen left Kenya for good in 1931, she advocated repeatedly to the British colonial office that her squatters might be moved to a reserve together, again disparaging the British government that “has given so little foresight to getting land for these people to live on” (Dinesen & Lasson 1981: 423). After she left, the Kenya Land Commission gathered in 1932 through 1933, appointed under the chairmanship of Sir Morris Carter, with the goal to develop a new system of land tenure. The need for this was growing in importance as the ‘Githaka Question’ of land rights had become a heated debate as Gikuyu elders came to realize that Europeans intended to stay indefinitely, and the fight about private ownership, government rights, and tribal rights rose (Eckert 2003: 288).

Between World Wars I and II, coffee, like several agricultural crops, became further regulated by the colonial government (Talbot 1990: 164, 169). Legislation and new structures were created by the British colonial government to regulate coffee, most notably, the Coffee Board of Kenya (CBK) in 1932, a state marketing board (Talbot 1990: 115; Hussain et al., 2020:7), which “held a legal monopoly on coffee exporting” [this would continue after independence] and “had the power to set the price it paid for coffee considerably lower than the

---

<sup>118</sup>Karen Blixen left Kenya in August 1931 and her farm was liquidated in a forced sale in 1932. The house and part of the land is now among the National Museums of Kenya, and other parts of her land are a country club, golf course, and many homes, including the cottage where I lived during my field work research in 2019-20.

world market price, and to channel the rents it collected to the state to fund other projects” (Talbot 2004: 54).

The Kenya Coffee Board mandated new laws, such as a regulation that small-holder growers were required by law to join a local co-operative [sic] society and send their cherries only to the pulping station of their registered co-operative (Hussain et. al., 2020:7). The Coffee Board claimed that in the early 1930s, “three quarters of the counties coffee growing settlers had a total debt of £1.4 million” (Van Zwanenberg 1975: 283). Monocrops of cash crops dominated Kenyan farms, with 993 European coffee growers recorded, and only the settlers could access credit “to purchase livestock, implements and to maintain coffee until bearing” (Van Zwanenberg 1975: 282, 288-9). In 1934, the Nairobi Coffee Exchange was launched, which remains to this day as the central coffee auction the auction that is the trading floor for coffee in downtown Nairobi (Kenya Coffee Act 2001; Hussain et. al., 2020:7). That same year, through the ‘Native Grown Coffee Rules’ (1934), European opposition against African cash crop farming became further entrenched. Restrictions included 16 trees per farmer with the justification otherwise coffee pests would spread to European farms (Talbot 1990: 118-119); this was another “fig leaf” excuse based on European’s fear of losing their monopoly of profits on coffee farming and exports (Talbot 1990:119, 164).

However, these new policies fueled the creation of the Kenya Planters Cooperative Union (KPCU), founded in 1937 by African smallholder farmers, as a farmer-owned association (Dada 2007: 13; Baka 2013). Its purpose was to provide credit facilities, husbandry services, education, and general support to African coffee farmers. By the 1940s, this meant that in central Kenya, “the combination of accumulation of land by Africans with accumulation of white settlers produced a landless class” (Cooper 2002: 23), which led to growing political unease; it was

during this time that the Kenyan African Union (KAU) formed (Eckert 2003: 298). During World War II, hundreds of thousands of African men fought on the side of the Allied Forces in Asia and North Africa, leading them toward awareness of the “demands for self-determination around the globe” (Elkins 2005: 212). Meanwhile, British administrators continued its coercive tactics to force Indigenous peoples in agricultural areas to produce more coffee and tea to cover the British empire’s war debt (Elkins 2005: 22-3).

After World War II, the Colonial Development and Welfare Act focused on the expansion of raw material production “that would, in turn, help alleviate the sterling crisis and restore Britain’s balance of payments” (Cooper 2002:87). This act continued to shift gender roles as more Kenyans were employed in towns and household dependence upon the male wage economy led to women becoming even more dependent (Mama 1997: 52). This “jeopardized the security of families, [and] made the ‘informal’ income earned by women ever more important to the survival of urban household” (Cooper 2002: 87). In Kenya’s agricultural sector, the Act led to increased support of settler estate production, which had become profitable for the first time as a result of the wartime boom” (Elkins & Pedersen 2005: 210) – but we might accurately describe this as ‘profitable’ only for the Europeans who owned lands and continued to profit from cheap African labour. With £120 million provided, the Act was the first whereby “Great Britain undertook to use metropolitan resources for programs aimed at raising the standard of living of colonized populations. Housing, water, school, and other social projects were the intended focal issues, mostly geared to wage workers, as well as infrastructure and directly productive projects, with the idea that better services would produce a healthier and more efficient workforce” (Cooper 2002: 31).

From political to agricultural spheres, gendered acts of resistance took place, although there are few documented examples. However, in one that applies specifically to the coffee sector: in 1947, a group of women from Kiambu refused to pick coffee because they were underpaid. To ensure solidarity, they threatened “to put a curse on anyone going to pick coffee” – a traditional sanction employed by women to get the attention of leaders (Oduol 1993: 169). Despite these kinds of forms of resistance, Africans were still banned from registering their own co-operatives in Kenya, or even farming their own coffee, until 1951 (Murunga 2007; Hedlund 1992: 14-17; Cooper 2002: 93-6). But pressure was building as low wages continued throughout the 1950s. Independence movements began to create new states in the 1950s, producing newly designated countries. Some in East Africa, including Kenya, began attempts toward collective political action, joining together to discuss ways to improve declining prices (Talbot 2004: 55-7) and fight for independence from colonial rule.

The British colonial government used coffee as a weapon to divide and conquer, creating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices based on race and class that disadvantaged all Africans—and there were additional divisions based on gender. While Rodney affirms that some African women maintained their power even under colonialism, far more suffered because “the social, religious, constitutional, and political privileges and rights disappeared, while the economic exploitation continued and was often intensified” (1972: 275). In addition, the colonial wage economy led to new coffee structures in the 1930s, which added to the already unequal and intensified the division of labor between African men and women. My concern in this chapter has been to showcase ways that colonial British governance restructured and entrenched gendered dynamics between Europeans and Africans, and to show the specific discriminations



faced by African women, through unequal policies of land, taxes, and labour that discriminated specifically on the basis of race, class, and gender.

### **3.4 From Mau Mau to the Republic of Kenya, 1950s - 1963**

During the 1950s, the Mau Mau movement was contested as a legitimate fight for land and freedom by the Gikuyu people, while the British characterized it as a “reign of terror” (Rajbhandari 2019). However, it was Africans who were collectively terrorized, as British administrators forced almost the entire Gikuyu population of 1.5 million into detention camps, where they were tortured under Nazi-concentration-camp conditions or held securitized villages, with untold numbers murdered (Elkins 2005: xiv). Ultimately, the Mau Mau movement led to the independence of Kenya.

#### *Background*

Dozens of countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America secured their independence from colonial rule in the 1960s. Such freedom did not go gently into the good night of freedom from brutal colonial regimes; it was fought for with violent revolt and active will. Political revolutions fueled the legal and political quest of peoples oppressed under colonial rule, although Indigenous peoples had regularly protested in linguistic and cultural ways. Timing, willpower, inequality, and access to weapons fueled various rebellions in many coffee producing countries, from Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) (Kurian 2003) to the insurrection by El Salvadoran coffee ‘peasants’ in 1932 (Sedgewick 2020).

In October 1952, Britain declared a “state of emergency” in Kenya after a Gikuyu chief was assassinated, a designation that would last until December 1959. The groundswell of revolution continued throughout the 1950s when a resistance movement formed, often called “the Mau Mau rebellion,” and waged war against the colonial government and African

collaborators. This period of protest was called many things depending on one's point of view. Walter Rodney names it "the Mau Mau war for land and liberation" (1972: 252). Ngugi wa Thiong'o calls it "the Movement" (1967). Scholars have used various names: "the Mau Mau War," "the Mau Mau liberation struggle," the "Mau Mau insurrection," or the "Mau Mau Emergency" (Odoul 1993:171; Turner & Brownhill 2004). The motives of "Mau Mau" have been contested, both during its time and after. Even Jomo Kenyatta, who was leader during the 1950s, called people "Mau Mau insurgents" (Shaw 1995) after he became President. I will simply call it here, the "Mau Mau movement."

For Indigenous Africans, the Mau Mau "loyalty oath" was a key part of the avowals to fight for land and *uhuru* (Kiswahili for freedom) but meant different things to different peoples. The oath was first introduced by the Kikuyu Central Association, which was banned in 1940. This later became the Kenyan African Union (KAU), led by Jomo Kenyatta, and "sought to develop a political movement to unite all Kenyans under a nationalist agenda" (Rajbhandari 2019: 162). As time passed, Mau Mau developed as a radical arm of the KAU, gaining momentum after the British colonial government began to arrest and imprison some leaders of the KAU, including Kenyatta.<sup>119</sup> Thousands of Gikuyu were detained, imprisoned, and tortured before confessing that they took the oath (Rajbhandari 2019: 164). The belief was that a confession of taking the oath would bring death. [(As Owour's narrator in *Dust* states, "if I speak, may the oath kill me" (2014: 83)]. In the attempt to persuade detainees to confess to taking the oath, torture was often gendered: men might be castrated, while women were raped

---

<sup>119</sup> Kenyatta wanted to separate himself from the violence of Mau Mau, which several scholars state is one reason, as independence for Kenya became closer, he denounced Mau Mau as "a disease which had been eradicated, and must never be remembered again" (Elkins 2005: 361; Rajbhandari 2019:175). Rajbhandari (2019) notes that "those who refused to listen were sent to detention without trial. Among them was Ngũgĩ himself, who wrote a personal account of his detention in *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1981)" (2019:176 n16).

and might be poisoned by with instruments that were forcibly placed in vaginas, leading to painful rashes and wounds for which there would be no cure (Presley 1992).

Motives that fueled the Mau Mau movement varied, but a key basis was the desire for independence and to reclaim land from settlers “*ithaka na wiyathi*, or land and freedom” (Elkins 2005; Rajbhandari 2019; Shaw 1995). One of the most important leaders, Dedan Kimanthi, wrote that the Mau Mau movement’s “principle aim” was “to gain independence for the whole of Kenya, not for Central Province alone” (Kimathi 1986: 32).<sup>120</sup> The Mau Mau movement grew out of years of discontent from the Gikuyu people due to colonial policies that dispossessed them of some of the best land in Kenya<sup>121</sup> and forced them to work as labourers on large European owned farms—many with a primary cash crop of coffee or tea.

During the 1950s, British newspapers—featuring British colonial officials, both in and out of Kenya—declared Mau Mau as “primitive, violent rebellion against order and progress” (Cooper 2002: 71; cf. also Shaw 1995). Media coverage “refused to acknowledge that the rebels had any legitimate reasons for the guerilla war,” or that British colonial policies had led to the conflict (Rajbhandari 2019:163). As Harvard professor Caroline Elkins explains, the British portrayed Mau Mau “as a barbaric, anti-European, and anti-Christian sect that had reverted to tactics of primitive terror to interrupt the British civilizing mission in Kenya” (2005: xi). Propaganda within England portrayed Gikuyu “as criminals, not freedom fighters;” as a result, many archives and records were censored or later burned (Elkins 2005: xi).

---

<sup>120</sup> However, Dedan Kimanthi also notes that the movement was filled with “disunity, disorganization, and, above all, lack of discipline” (1986: 32) as well as a lack of resources such as communication and transportation.

<sup>121</sup> An area that came to be known as “the White Highlands,” where a minority of aristocratic Europeans took a monopoly of the land ownership and created an area only for themselves; this was among Kenya’s best land due to the soil and altitude (cf. Elkins 2005: 16).

Violence to white farmers and their property was regularly featured on 1950s newsreels. Ultimately 95 Europeans died. Meanwhile, the British responded by “detaining and torturing thousands of Africans and by bombing their forest hideaways” (Dudziak 2006). Among those captured, with many tortured or beaten, were nearly 2,000 “loyalist” Africans,<sup>122</sup> with official figures naming 11,503 rebels and 30,000 Gikuyu captured (Cooper 2002:73).<sup>123</sup>

While there is a scarcity of literature that features African women during the 1950s, it is clear that they were essential to the Mau Mau movement (Turner & Brownhill 2004: 29; Odoul 1993: 172-3). By some accounts, women were “the backbone of the resistance movement during the struggle for independence” (Odoul 1993:170), sometimes using specifically gendered means of non-violent resistance. At times, Gikuyu women used acts of nakedness in moments to try – often successfully – to stop police attacks or the murder of a family member (Turner & Brownhill 2004: 29). As one scholarly article notes, Indigenous women have long acted upon the idea that women’s “only strength that a woman has is her nakedness as a last resort and the Kikuyu idea that if you beat a woman in her nakedness, you will be cursed” (Turner & Brownhill 2004: 29-30). Women were also important in transportation and communication during the Mau Mau years; for example, they “were highly visible and active in the smuggling network, as soldiers, and as residents of the forest camps,” and as a result, the British established specific camps for women, separating them from men (Presley 1992: 5). Women obtained and delivered

---

<sup>122</sup> The British colonial government used many tactics of torture and abuse to (try to) get Africans to turn from Mau Mau or against their family or ethnic groups. The term “loyalist” refers to those Kenyans who sided with the British and were rewarded with financial benefits and freedom from detention facilities in exchange for information.

<sup>123</sup> However, Caroline Elkins, after spending decades researching this period of history, conducting interviews, and reading through previously unexplored archives, suspects the number of murdered Kenyans is far higher. She found an archived 1953 memo that revealed that Kenya’s detention facilities to be “reminiscent of conditions in Nazi Germany” (Elkins 2005:xi); she estimates that thousands more were killed, tortured, or maimed than is recorded.

food for soldiers, judged oath-taking ceremonies, and there is even one example of a warrior who led Mau Mau warriors to battle (Odoul 1993:171).

In hindsight, British colonial officials questioned if Mau Mau could have been avoided if the 1951 and 1952 requests for African elected representation had been granted, if reform of the White Highlands—the fertile area of land that became reserved exclusively for four thousand European farmers and from which Africans were excluded, except as exploited workers on their farms, or if Kenyan leaders had not been forcibly accused and imprisoned (Kenya White Highlands 1958: section 1378).<sup>124</sup>

By 1958, Kenya took drastic action to limit its coffee surpluses when Oginga Odinga, then Acting Minister of Agriculture, announced that all new planting would be prohibited until the following year. He promised that owners of nurseries would be compensated for destruction of seedlings (Kenya High Commission 1958). It is not clear from the literature precisely how this policy affected the end of Mau Mau, or how many Mau Mau fighters were labourers specifically on European coffee farms. But it is likely that many labourers were Indigenous men who had been exploited in the wage economy created by Britain. From the literature reviewed in my study, the specific effect on Indigenous women could not be discerned.

But what is clear: coffee negotiations paralleled demands for freedom in the late 1950s and 1960s, as anticolonial movements swept through African and Asian colonies (such as India's

---

<sup>124</sup>Later, some colonial British leaders regretted their decisions during the Mau Mau movement; for example, they admitted they could have used money spent on fighting Mau Mau to pay “labourers decent wages,” a fact brought up during British proceedings to solidify the “Kenya Independence Bill” (1963). During these proceedings, coffee was mentioned several times, with the most attention and detail given by one Member of the Colonial Parliament Mr. John Stonehouse. As Stonehouse spoke out vehemently in 1958 during one Parliamentary session, “Mau Mau arose directly as a result of the rejection of the reasonable requests for African elected representation and for the opening up of the White Highlands because of land hunger in Kenya” and that “The tragedy of Mau Mau was a direct result of the blunders and mismanagement of the [British] Government” (Kenya High Commission 1958: section 1378). Few Members of Parliament took the level of responsibility that Stonehouse did for Britain’s actions that led to Mau Mau in the first place (Kenya High Commission 1958; Kenya Independence Bill 1963).

independence in 1947 and Ghana's in 1957). By the mid-1950s, the global coffee market was "characterized by chronic overproduction, the accumulation of burdensome stocks, pronounced market instability, and continuing price decline" (Talbot 2004:58). Still, coffee was considered "the favourite cash crop among Kenyans and accounts for one-third of African farm revenue although only one-quarter of the coffee planted on African farms is yet in bearing" (Kenya High Commission 1958). At the time, coffee was considered "the most important export crop in Kenya," worth £10 million pounds, and representing 25% of the total exports of Kenya (Kenya High Commission 1958).

As formal global coffee discussions began, such as the UN-organized Coffee Study Group in 1958, European colonial powers continued to exert control over coffee production in their African colonies. The continued dependence upon cash crops like coffee, during the transition toward independence, was evident as British Parliamentary leaders debated if newly independent Kenya would be able to sell coffee on the world market (Kenya Commission 1958) and the European official remained the representative in attendance at global proceedings.

But such control was a ticking bomb, soon to permanently shift. In the year 1960, what would come to be known as the "Year of Africa," seventeen African nations became independent. Continued "economic problems, in part caused by vicissitudes of low coffee prices in their colonies, led European colonial powers to become open toward negotiating an international economic treaty, even as decolonialization efforts gained momentum" (Talbot 2004: 58).

Still, despite the advancement on matters of race and ethnicity during Kenya's decolonialization process, gender was hardly a topic on the table during the colonial-era legislative council. For this, the colonial governor chose one Kenyan woman, Priscilla Ingasiani Abwao, to attend as part of the delegation (Nzomo 2018; Omari 2018). Very little is know about

her life, or about her contribution to the constitutional negotiations, except that she was the first woman present. An all-male parliament created the 1963 independence constitution of Kenya, which “provided for and legitimized patriarchy and discrimination against women in favour of personal laws” – for example, in section 82 (4) discrimination continued to be legal in areas such as marriage, divorce, and property ownership (Nzomo 2018). As one scholar summarizes: “Save Abwao’s presence at the constitutional negotiation process of 1962, women of Kenya were completely excluded from the entire first constitutional making and negotiation process,” and Abwao’s presence did not secure any rights for women in the 1963 Constitution (Nzomo 2018).

Still, on 1 June 1963, Kenya took the leap toward decolonialization, and the country attained self-governance status with Jomo Kenyatta named as the first Prime Minister. On 12 December 1963, Kenya obtained independence. One year later, on 12 December 1964, Kenya became a republic (“the Republic of Kenya”), with Jomo Kenyatta as its first President.<sup>125</sup>

However celebratory, Independence for Kenya changed little about coffee production or gender roles. As Talbot summarized, decolonialization “did not significantly change the way that coffee was being produced in most countries, but it did change the management of the coffee sectors in these producing regions” (Talbot 2004: 52). In Kenya, coffee would continue to be a political crop both before and after Independence. Neither did Independence bring a public change to women’s political representation and Kenyatta’s new government did not include women in any public, official roles—despite all their acts of resistance before and during the Mau Mau movement (Odoul 1993:173). It would take far more effort to include any meaningful

---

<sup>125</sup>In 1958, while independence was being debated, Kenya’s population comprised some six million Africans, compared with 64,000 Europeans, 165,000 Asians and 35,000 Arabs (Kenya High Commission 1958).

inclusion of Kenyan woman in a constitution. As one scholar summarizes, “all nationalisms are gendered, all are invented” (Mama 1997:53).

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrated various ways that British colonialism used coffee as a means to exploit Indigenous Africans to fuel wealth in the British Empire and in England (Cooper 2002; Elkins 2005), leading to a gendered division of labour that affected women in different ways than men. Understanding this history from a feminist intersectional lens matters because colonialism was not only a system that divided on the basis of race and class, but also was “conceived of as a system in which gender became a crucial domain of power,” even as “virulent confrontations between competing cultures of masculinity and femininity and intensified tensions within African societies, particularly in the domain of gender relations” (Rizzo 2012:9).

Several lessons may be learned from this chapter.

First, patriarchal systems of power, rooted in racism, classism, and sexism, worked together to entrench unjust divisions of labour whereby African women experienced different and gendered layers of discrimination compared to African men. Differences in socio-economic status or class intensified these divisions, in areas of land, labour, or taxation. The cash-based economy created under British colonialism ruptured human relations between Europe and Africa, as well as between African households.

Second, while women have played essential roles throughout history, their contributions—both in coffee and during the Mau Mau movement—have been underrepresented and under researched.



Third, the embedded, historical gendered divisions of labour, in the areas of land ownership, taxes, and labour, were factors of colonial capitalism's pernicious effects on household relations.

Even today in Kenya, colonial hangovers remain evident when it comes to coffee. Whether it comes to deciding whether to keep or uproot one's coffee (Sammy Langat, personal interview, 6 Feb 2022), or to brew and drink coffee compared to tea (Esther Otieno, personal interview, 31 Jan 2022). Such lessons set the stage for Chapter Four, which will demonstrate that despite the legal and formal end of colonialism in Kenya, coffee's global value chain continued to alienate women and, at the time of this writing, continues to reflect a gendered coffee paradox. Chapter Four demonstrates that, despite many improvements on the legal and political rights of women in 1963, Kenya's coffee sub-sector continues with large gender gaps on land, labour, and time. The ways in which coffee is traded and transported has largely remained the same despite Kenya's 1963 independence, the era of the International Coffee Agreement (1963-1989), and despite the significant achievement of gender equality in Kenya's new 2010 Constitution. While much has changed for Kenyan woman since colonialism, yet gendered constraints remain deeply embedded in structures of injustice in the similar arenas that began under colonial rule: land, income, and time. Gender gaps continue to exist for women, upon whose labour coffee depends, reflecting the ongoing gendered coffee paradox.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### ‘Coffee Belongs to the Man’:

#### Post-independence Gendered Challenges for Women in Kenyan Coffee

##### 4.1 Introduction

Walking past a coffee plantation near Nairobi in August 2020 was the first time that I had ever read a large wooden sign declaring “No discrimination due to gender orientation,” articulated on a list of other human rights issues (such as “no child labour”) in Kenya. Since then, I have seen similar signs more frequently, usually posted near the entrance gate at coffee cooperatives that participate in global certifications such as Fair Trade or Rainforest Alliance. While from one point of view, the very addition of such a public declaration against gender discrimination is evidence of some progress of awareness – such signs could hardly have been imagined in 1994 when I first visited Kenya—the truth is that it will take far more deliberate attention from governments and other coffee stakeholders to abolish gendered inequities for all women working in Kenya’s coffee sector. In January 2020, one smallholder female farmer told me in Nandi, “coffee belongs to the man,” succinctly summarizes the gendered landscape of coffee in Kenya, but subsequently, this exact phrase was repeated by several male and female participants of this study.

To examine key global and national gender gaps for women, Chapter Four is divided into two major parts. In part one, “A New Era for Kenya Coffee?”, I review several key moments of Kenya’s coffee global and national history since Kenya’s independence (1963). Here I reflect upon some ways that the gendered coffee paradox is evident through the United Nations Coffee Conference (1962), the International Coffee Agreement (1963-1989), Structural Adjustment programmes, and Kenya’s 2001 Coffee Act. In each of these examples, women are absent from

attendance and participation. This, also, is here revealed as an ongoing aspect of the gendered coffee paradox: the obfuscation of women's voices in the formation of policies that directly and daily impact women's lives. Yet even as women have not been part of creating or weighing into policies that affect them, so have women performed the bulk of the farm labour while failing to reap the benefits of coffee production. As a result, part one of this chapter demonstrates that despite Kenya's legal declarations of women's equality in Kenya in the 2010 Constitution that the coffee industry has a long way to go before genuine "women's empowerment" is achieved for women in Kenya's coffee sector.

In part two, I consider a case study of one coffee estate in western Kenya, Chepsangor Hills Coffee Estate, directed and managed by Rosebella Langat to demonstrate that, despite the proliferation of empowerment rhetoric in the twenty-first century, key gender gaps remain evident at the farm level of Kenya's coffee sector: land ownership, income disparity, and time pressures (the double burden). In these ways, the gendered coffee paradox is evident: despite the reality that "coffee depends upon women" in Kenya, coffee also continues to "belong to" and be "for" men.

#### **4.2 A New Era for Kenyan Coffee?: Examining Coffee History from Independence to the Coffee Act**

This section argues that Kenya's coffee industry remains patriarchal, continuing a discriminatory gendered division of labour, despite the end of colonialism in 1963 and the 2010 new Constitution (Kamau 2018:15-17). The gendered coffee paradox remains evident through the policies enacted and supported by all four of Kenya's first four (male) Presidents—the International Coffee Agreement, which formed in parallel to the year of Kenya's independence in December 1963 under Jomo Kenyatta (1964-78); Structural Adjustment and the Coffee Act of

2001 under Daniel arap Moi (1978-2002); The New Constitution of the Republic of Kenya (2010) under President Mwai Kibaki (2002-13); and the anticipation of Coffee Reform and Revitalization under President Uhuru Kenyatta (2013-2022).<sup>126</sup> Exploring this history matters because it provides the foundation for gendered inequities and the continued invisibility of female labour that remain embedded in Kenya’s coffee industry into the twenty-first century.

**A. ‘A Just and Equitable Coffee Agreement’?: The ICA and Independence under Jomo Kenyatta (1964-78)**

On 1 June 1963, the country attained self-governance status with Jomo Kenyatta as Prime Minister. On 12 December 1963, Kenya gained independence and one year later, 12 December 1964, it became a republic with Jomo Kenyatta as first President (who served in that role until his death in 1978). During these years, even as Kenya transitioned from colonial rule to self-rule, a transformative shift in global “coffee statecraft” – to utilize a phrase created by Gavin Fridell (2014a:8) – was in process even as Kenyans were celebrating independence. However, these structural trade shifts continued to maintain the gendered division of labour in coffee, created under colonialism, and the subaltern voices of women continued to be silent on the global stage despite coffee’s ostensible role in global development, even after the shift in land ownership from European settlers leaving Kenya to African farmers.

In 1962, the desire for “a Just and Equitable Coffee Agreement”—stated by Colombia’s representative, Mr. Sanz de Santamaria at The United Nations Coffee Conference (UNCC)—reflected the trade aspirations of many exporting coffee country leaders who met in New York from 9 July to 25 August 1962 to debate the creation of an International Coffee Agreement

---

<sup>126</sup>As noted in Chapter One, given that most of my research took place in 2019-2020, this study does not consider any changes of coffee policy or practice under Kenyan President William Ruto, inaugurated in September 2022.

(UNCC 1962: 21).<sup>127</sup> On 28 September 1962 the language of the agreement was approved and adopted. The five-year agreement was then open to the governments of all those invited to the Conference for signature of 30 November 1962.

By 1962, wholesale coffee prices were less than half that in 1954. This market deterioration resulted in a major foreign exchange loss to producing countries, disrupting their development plans and threatening broader economic dislocation” (Bilder 1963: 889). For years, Latin American countries had been trying to solve the problems of coffee’s supply and demand among themselves but to no avail. As the Guatemala representative complained: “The price of coffee had fallen by nearly 35 per cent during a period in which the price of imported goods had rise by 20 per cent” which worsened economic and social conditions in coffee producing countries (UNCC 1962: 33). This mattered because some countries were earning up to 80 percent of their total foreign exchange earnings from coffee exports (UNCC 1962: 1).

This was one reason U.S. President John F. Kennedy believed that there is “no single measure which can make a greater contribution to the cause of development than effective stabilization of the price of coffee.” The overdependence on coffee for Latin America’s foreign exchange<sup>128</sup> worried President Kennedy, because, without an International Coffee Agreement, “we are going to find an increasingly dangerous situation in the coffee producing countries [...] and would threaten, in my opinion, the security of the entire hemisphere” (Kennedy 1962b).<sup>129</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup>In 2018, I conducted archival research at the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library in the New York headquarters. The United Nations Coffee Conference (UNCC), 1962 “Summary of Proceedings” reference number is E/CONF.42/8, from which I read all the original, physical typed manuscripts, from which this section derives, which is the reason for citation style. I make the distinction between the 1962 UNCC (notes, minutes, and drafts), and the first International Coffee Agreement (ICA) that was entered into force in 1963. I also conducted research in the archives at the J.F. Kennedy Museum in Boston, Massachusetts, reading original or photocopied printed documents before they became digitized during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

<sup>128</sup> As Bilder explains, in the early 1960s, even “a 1 cent per pound decline in coffee prices has been estimated to mean a yearly foreign exchange loss to Latin America of about 50 million dollars” (Bilder 1963: 889, n3).

<sup>129</sup> Ultimately, the ICA may be considered among the only successes of the Alliance for Progress.

While dependence on coffee in Latin America was Kennedy's geographical focus, a similar dependence continued throughout Africa as well. Between 1957 and 1962, African coffee exports grew from 21.9 percent to 27.9 per cent, and African states desired an expansion of coffee's market access (Fisher 1972: 46, 47).<sup>130</sup> In 1960, sixteen newly independent states were admitted into the United Nations, with many more to enter throughout the decade, as states earned or claimed independence. Newly independent African nations were fearful that coffee's perpetual price volatility, especially in periods of price decline, would keep them dependent upon raw materials and export cash crops such as coffee (Fisher 1972: 47).

By the time of the United Nations Coffee Conference (UNCC) in 1962, coffee prices were still so volatile that 34 nations were ready to negotiate a long-term international coffee agreement among. As a result, that summer, 58 exporting and importing countries sent delegations to the UN headquarters in New York city, with thirteen other groups present "by observation," including special organizations such as the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (now the World Bank).<sup>131</sup> (UNCC 1962: 2).

It was a historic gathering: representatives from 71 exporting and importing countries and the observing representatives, which had never happened before for coffee. Among the countries attendance were 32 countries representing 95.1 per cent of world exports and 22 countries representing 94.7 per cent of world imports (UNCC 1962: 2).<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> The increase can be attributed to African Robusta coffee production, used to meet a growing demand for instant coffee in the 1950s and early 1960s (Fisher 1972: 46).

<sup>131</sup> Brubeck signed Memorandum 24 September 1962; TA1654/FO9/FG 1-3/IT61 from JFK Museum.

<sup>132</sup> Such single commodity conferences took place in the early 1960s governed by the quest to solve "international commodity problems in general" (UNCC 1962:1), by uniting trade and development interests. Other such conferences were olive oil (1956), sugar (1958) and wheat (1962) and more than a dozen individual commodity agreements established between 1963 and 1989, but 1962 was the first-ever for coffee (Brubeck, signed Memorandum 24 September 1962; TA1654/FO9/FG 1-3/IT61 from JFK Museum).

Among the 32 exporting nations present at the UNCC, thirteen were independent delegations representing the African continent.<sup>133</sup> In addition, the UK exporting territories delegation, led by Mr. Ngobi from Uganda, who spoke for Kenya as well. Every African representative who spoke publicly at the UNCC expressed their support and desire to sign an agreement, as long as it would remain “flexible” and “equitable” – the most repeated refrain by leaders of the exporting countries. The conference was the first time that representatives from both coffee growing and coffee drinking countries joined together from all regions of the world.

While the Conference successfully joined nations together, it failed to consider gender equality in any form. Twelve plenary meetings took place during the UNCC, without a single representative from any country or organization was a woman, and women’s role(s) in coffee remained invisible and unnamed during the lengthy sessions. Also absent was any consensus about the number of farmers being represented from around the world.<sup>134</sup> Entirely overlooked in the ICA sessions was the gendered division of labour in coffee, or anything about the intersectional challenges for farmers, based on factors such as education, gender, race, or class. Absent was any mention of colonialism—which was an ongoing reality in 1962—or its exploitative violence enacted through agriculture, even though by 1962, a global division of

---

<sup>133</sup> Thirteen other African nations at the UNCC represented themselves (I am not counting UK Exporting Territories, Uganda, and Kenya): Burundi, Cameroun (sic), Central African Republic, Congo (Leopoldville), Ethiopia, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanganyika, and Togo.

<sup>134</sup> There was not an absence of consensus among representatives about the number of coffee farmers they all represented, even during the negotiations. For example, Italy said “19 million persons in thirty-five countries were involved in the production of coffee” and he includes those who make fertilizer and construct agricultural machinery (UNCC 1962: 28); FAO representative says “to a great many countries and to some 200 million people” (UNCC 1962: 30); rep from Guatemala Mr. Rodriguez Paul may have started the now-famous rumor of 25 million coffee farmers: “Coffee was produced in fifty-eight countries and consumed in 118, and producers and consumers together represented 65 per cent of the world’s population, so that throughout the world more than 25 million workers were employed in the coffee trade” (UNCC 1962: 33). None of these statistics were aggregated by gender. “Coffee is the leading agricultural commodity in world trade, with an export value in many years of over two billion dollars. It is grown in some 35 countries of Latin America, Africa, and Asia, and provides a means of livelihood for nearly twenty million people” (Bilder 1963: 889). Talbot surmises that there are 10 million small farmers and 25 million people who depend on coffee (Talbot 2004: 128).

labour between “producing” and “consuming” countries had become “firmly locked in during the period of U.S. hegemony” and the colonial era (Talbot 2004: 54).

Still, the desire for “equity and justice in terms of trade” was articulated by a few representatives from producing countries, such as Mr. Sanz de Santamaria from Colombia, who stated that equitable trade policies “would contribute to the peace and well-being of millions of human beings who lived and worked in different regions of the world” (UNCC 1962: 22). The stated ICA goal was to “to correct the difficult situation of the prime commodity producing countries that were subject to the free play of the law of supply and demand,” because “coffee producing countries were gradually losing their purchasing power” giving them “virtually nothing with which to pursue policies for economic development and the improvement of living conditions at a time of increasing population growth” (Mr. Santamaria, Colombia) (UNCC 1962: 21). In other words, price instability “produced a fall in coffee prices which had profoundly disturbed the economies of the producing countries without bringing any real benefit to the economies of the consumer countries,” according to the French representative (UNCC 1962:22). But during the rigorous debates on price,<sup>135</sup> the delegate from France was the first person to mention women, however generally, when he concluded in his remarks that finding “common ground” in their International Coffee Agreement would be essential because “millions of men and women engaged in the production of coffee depended” on coffee for their living conditions (UNCC 1962: 22). However, no women were in attendance as part of any delegation; therefore, no woman are recorded as speaking in any of the minutes in the conference proceedings.

---

<sup>135</sup>France argued that “prices of agricultural products were too low both in the temperate and in the tropical regions” and that “the world’s current economic difficulties could not be solved until a systematic policy for the progressive raising of price levels had been worked out and put into effect” (UNCC 1962:22).



Kenya's representation at the UNCC is complicated. At the time of the conference, both Kenya and Uganda were legally still colonies of the United Kingdom, but the independence of both was known to be imminent. By the summer of 1962, the first Constitution of Kenya had been created and the Colonial Office was in the process of transferring its government to a majority African government, led by Jomo Kenyatta. I found no evidence that any Kenyan women participated in the forming of this Constitution. The "Kenya Independence Bill" would be confirmed by British Parliament in November 1963, which legalized Kenya's independence on 12 December 1963, but kept them as members of the Commonwealth under Queen Elizabeth but with a Prime Minister as leader—who would come to be Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya Independence Bill 1963). As a result, Kenya and Uganda were represented together under a separate delegation from the United Kingdom, so named in the documents as "the United Kingdom exporting territories of Uganda and Kenya" – the only territories so represented. The representative of the UK delegation, Mr. Locke, stated the motive for including them in a public statement during the conference:

As a great trading nation, the United Kingdom wished to see coffee enjoy a healthy and stable position. Moreover, the United Kingdom was a consumer of coffee and at the same time still responsible for many territories throughout the world which produced and exported coffee. Indeed, so vital was coffee to the economies of Uganda and Kenya that arrangements had been made for those territories to have a separate delegation at the Conference so they might present their views directly" (UNCC 1962: 23).

But only the head of the delegations were permitted to speak, and so the spokesperson for "The United Kingdom Exporting Territories (Uganda and Kenya)" took place by Mr. M. M. Ngobi, Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives in Uganda, with Deputy Representative Mr. R. S.

Wollen, C. B. E. in Kenya, as well as two other men from Uganda and two from Kenya. Uganda was one of the largest producers of Robusta; Kenya “a relatively small producer of high quality Arabica” (UNCC 1962: 26).

During the fourth plenary meeting, Mr. Ngobi “stressed the importance which those two producing countries attached to the Conference and voiced their hope for a workable agreement. He affirmed that “the stability of the coffee market as vital for the two Territories, whose economic development, only recently begun, depended on agricultural production and particularly on the production of coffee. When Uganda and then Kenya attained independence in the near future, their coffee exports would be the principal source of the foreign exchange necessary to meet their foreign payments” (UNCC 1962: 26). According to him, the “fundamental dilemma” of the world’s coffee problems was because, “on the one hand, the producing countries had to maintain their foreign earnings and consequently also their prices; on the other hand, price reduction was the traditional device used to expand consumption and to limit production. There was a still a wide gap, however, between the price paid to the local producer and that paid by the individual consumer” (UNCC 1962: 26). On the subject of aid vs. trade, Mr. Ngobi stated that while many consuming countries “expressed their intention to give generous assistance to the developing countries” that the “best means of assisting the economically weaker countries was to reduce that gap in prices” so that both producer and consumer could benefit together (UNCC 1962: 26).<sup>136</sup>

The ICA was signed in November 1962, ratified in December 1962. By 1963, the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) was considered, overall, as a success as it was the first truly global conference for coffee, bringing together leaders from coffee producing countries and

---

<sup>136</sup>These statements spoken by 1962 could have just as easily been said last year. The fundamental dilemma he expressed remains with us still in the year 2022.

coffee consuming countries for the first time and leading to an actual agreement<sup>137</sup> that some representatives believed could “inspire the negotiation of other agreements on tropical commodities” (UNCC 1962: 22). Bilder argues that the cooperation among importing countries also showed a “growing international recognition of the fact that no one nation or group of nations can effectively insulate itself from the poverty and problems of others, and that in this interdependent modern world, the solution of such major problems has very much become every country’s business and responsibility” (Bilder 1963: 891).

### **Outcomes of the International Coffee Agreement**

The ICA had several outcomes, including some new coffee structures; here I highlight three that experienced “relative success” (Daviron & Ponte 2005:87). First, the key change was the creation of a quota system designed to regulate coffee by stabilizing world coffee prices through avoid oversupply (Fridell 2014: 18-19; Gressler 2002:16; Daviron & Ponte 2005). In the first 1962 quota allotments, Brazil was given the highest quota for the world: 18 million bags (60-kilogramme bags), which was 39.1 percentage of world’s coffee total. All of Africa’s quota was 6,030,920, which countries receiving their own specific allotment. The highest was Ivory Coast, allotted 5.047 total percentage or 2,324,278 bags; Uganda gained the highest quota allotment for East Africa with 1,887,737 bags (4.1 percentage of total). Kenya’s quota allotment was 1.123 percentage of the total (516,835 bags) (Fisher 1972: 56; ICA 1963).

Second, the treaty obligated importing countries to enforce the quota system by “requiring a certificate of origin for every import shipment” – imports without a proper certificate could be barred (ICA 1963). This mattered because it allowed countries to stamp their

---

<sup>137</sup>Despite ICA successes, regional divisions formed, and fierce fights ensued. For example, divides between a desire for flexibility from African countries and a demand for higher quotas from Latin American countries threatened to cripple the possibility of a final agreement. Negotiation verged on failure until last moments (Bilder 1963: 889).

claim on coffee bags and would result in movement toward greater transparency (Daviron & Ponte 2005; Bates 1999:140, 154).

Third, the ICA created the International Coffee Council, comprising a representative of each country that signed the Agreement with equal voting rights, and which be headquartered in London and became the International Coffee Organization (UNCC 1962: 2). These are just three of the key measures that, at times, boosted several coffee producing countries through the 1960s and 1970s, including Kenya, as international quotas regulated coffee exports and imports and controlling supply and demand (Daviron & Ponte 2005: 88-90).

After Independence in 1963, several things shifted in Kenya's coffee sector, even as women continued to be excluded. The structures of production began to change, hastened by government interventions that had been gaining momentum. For example, while the "Million-Acre Settlement Scheme," was initiated in 1961, it took several years to implement as a "massive program of land transfer" of "some 1.2 million acres of formerly European-owned, large-scale farms and ranches" to some 35,000 Kenyan families. This scheme was intended to meet the "economic demands of colonial Kenya's white settler society," as well as the land complaints of Kenya's Indigenous people, from whom land had been stolen under British colonialism, as noted in Chapter Three (Leo 1981:201). It was a multi-faceted program that subdivided, distributed, and settled small-holder Kenyan farmers (Swamy 1994: 40, 62; Ikiara et al., 1999: 88-89; Leo 1981:201). Still, this was only a quarter of Kenya's best land and benefited at most 1/20<sup>th</sup> of the population and ownership of large-scale, formerly European-owned plantations were not subdivided and "passed almost entirely to the post-independence elite" (Ikiara et al., 1999: 89; cf. also Leo 1981). The extent to which the scheme benefited rural women who were not part of Kenya's elite remains debatable and would be an area for further research, especially give the

contested nature of land settlement schemes in Kenya did not necessarily protect all women, especially those with loans and the argument that such schemes contributed to the formation of contemporary slums (Kareithi 2020).

However, in contrast to the colonial era, the Million Dollar Acre Scheme encouraged African farmers to cultivate cash crops of tea and coffee and retain the profits, whereby production “increased from practically nothing in 1955 to 40 and 70 percent respectively in the early 1980s” (Swamy 1994: 7). Influential Africans began to buy large farms from Europeans departing Kenya for good during a time when the “prices paid for major export crops” including coffee “were near world prices and crop development support was extensive” as high as 90 percent for some farmers (Swamy 1994: 8, 62).

Between the 1960s and 1980s, in some countries, “coffee production was a reasonably profitable undertaking. Small coffee growers, while they were not getting rich, were able to live, support their families, and enjoy a standard of living better than many other Third World agriculturalists” (Talbot 2004:192). In Kenya, many of my older research participants consider this period of Kenya’s coffee history as the “golden age of Coffee,” many whose parents used the profits from coffee to send them to school, and who themselves used profits to send their children to school, even up to university. One county leader poetically described that in her county of Kiambu, during the 1980s in particular, “coffee used to be gold” (personal interview, 6 November 2019). In addition to higher levels of farmer prosperity during the ICA period, “coffee producing states received revenues from coffee exports that allowed them to provide important services to the growers, and have some money left over to devote to other projects” (Talbot 2004: 192).

## **B. ‘The Farmer Became a Slave’: Structural Adjustment under Daniel arap Moi (1978-2002)**

This golden period of coffee did not last. Despite this “coffee boom” period (Swamy 1994: 11, 17; Ikiara et al., 88), not long after Daniel arap Moi became president in 1978, “Kenya's fortunes declined sharply” (Barkan 2004). Even as Kenyatta favoured his ethnic group, the Kikuyu, Moi pursued “a set of redistributive policies that favored his own ethnic group – the Kalenjin – and other disadvantaged tribes in the Rift valley. Although these policies were initially popular, they triggered a failed coup attempt in 1982, after which Moi became increasingly repressive” (Barkan 2004). One of my research participants, Michael Muriuki, co-owner and co-manager of Kianjuri Estate with his wife Purity, vividly remembers when, coffee was being uprooted; Michael went so far to describe this reality as “the farmer became a slave, because we had a product we could not control” (personal interview, 9 October 2019).

While it is not the intention of this dissertation to address the ongoing debates around Moi’s presidential legacy, it is widely understood that Moi’s failures in economic reform “created a 70% to 100% inflation rate and \$6.8 billion in foreign debt” (Economist 1993). Specifically for coffee: between 1975 and 1989, I found five coffee projects under the World Bank,<sup>138</sup> where the loan went to the Cooperative Bank of Kenya, Ltd., which focused on export crop privatization and export crop expansion. Two main structural adjustment loans in agriculture were given to Kenya: the first in the general categories of an “agricultural sector adjustment loan” (Swamy 1994: 4,13); the second wave of loans were more specific in sector groupings, such as the “coffee project” in 1989 or 1990 that included “performance contracts” for

---

<sup>138</sup> For example, “Coffee Project 02” PP1325 total project cost US \$46.80 million total project cost; project ran 12 September 1989 to 30 June 1998.

accountability and evaluation. Other loans were given in other categories including industry, education, and export development between 1986-1991. But as “each loan was fettered with too many conditions” (Swamy 1994: 3) and “fund programs were not adhered to” in the face of “growing financial undiscipline” (Swamy 1994:4).

Among the arguments for such loans was that export cash crops would help to enhance food security (Brownhill et al., 1997: 40), but in reality, “World Bank policies aimed at farmer empowerment” often did the opposite, as the rhetorical benefits of the policies did not reach small-holder farmers (Pflaeger 2013), especially women, who, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, played “a significant role” that was overlooked in SAPs (Mehra 1991: 1440-41).

In 1986, the Kenyan government, then under the leadership of President Moi, accepted an International Monetary Fund (IMF) program focused on export crop privatization and export crop expansion (Brownhill et al., 1997: 40). However, a group of women farmers in Maragua intentionally rejected and resisted the pressure to expand coffee farming, instead choosing to plant bananas and beans to feed their families. At the time, it was illegal to intercrop with coffee (Brownhill et al., 1997: 42). This is just one example of a way that “the losers [of the SAPs] were those deprived of land, built space and housing plots. Most of those dispossessed by enclosures and commodification were women and their dependents” (Turner & Brownhill 2004). In order to support the “full commercialization” of export crops, the IMF loaned 12 billion Kenyan shillings (USD \$218m) in 1996, but according to scholars very little of it reached women, who needed the money for food and to pay for school fees for their children (Brownhill et al., 1997; Mehra 1991; Turner & Brownhill 2004). Instead, and “corrupt government officials and husbands appropriated most of the coffee money” (Brownhill et al., 1997: 43).<sup>139</sup>

---

<sup>139</sup>Further details about are not clarified in this article, and there is very little feminist scholarship focused on coffee during this period as noted by Mehra 1991.

But some rural women resisted. Between 1986 and 1996, northwest of Nairobi in Maragua, husbands owned most of the farms and where women, in practice, “customarily had the right to work on their husbands’ farms and control the use of foodstuffs they themselves produced” (Brownhill et al., 1997: 41). But when “women threatened to stop caring for their husbands’ coffee,” some men said in response that “they would chase the women away from their farms.” As a result, “government chiefs intervened to mediate between embattled wives and husbands. The chiefs sought to preserve both the marriages and the coffee production” so they would continue to receive coffee profits (Brownhill et. al, 1997: 41). This dichotomy between male coffee farm owners and women coffee farm workers contributed to declining coffee production in the 1980s (Brownhill et. al, 1997: 41).

Conditional loans were given to the state to increase coffee production. The state would then remit coffee payments to men, because they were the landowners; therefore, despite women’s labour on coffee, they did not receive wages (Brownhill et al., 1997: 42). As a result, some wives, in the county of Maranga and elsewhere in Kenya, “took drastic action,” to resist these international policies and uprooted coffee trees, using them for firewood, although “the penalty for damaging a coffee tree was imprisonment for seven years” (Brownhill et al., 1997:42). Motivated by the ways in which both “husbands and state officials stood in the way of women’s needs to produce food and secure cash income,” by late 1986, “most women farmers in Maranga had planted bananas and vegetables for home consumption and local trade instead of coffee for export” (Brownhill et al., 1997: 42).

Giving landownership and title land deeds to men, while denying access to women for land and income, is one neoliberal mechanism by which the state regulates women’s bodies and labour (Brownhill et al., 1997: 42). But SAPs that centred on increased cash crop export and



privatization did not “empower” women; instead, they contributed to “throw[ing] small-scale farmers, who are overwhelmingly women, up against an array of class enemies” (Brownhill et al., 1997: 43).

It is against this backdrop that we can identify yet another aspect of the gendered coffee paradox through rural women’s resistance to discriminatory policies based on gender, class, and education. A key expression of this was known as the “male deal”: this combined “foreign agro-industrial capital, especially in tea and coffee [...], and state functionaries, along with male title holders to land on which these export crops were produced. Women farmers did the work, but their husbands secured the income in the form of state payments for coffee and tea deliveries” (Turner & Brownhill 2004: 25). Another expression of this male deal was “the arrangement between the state and foreign capital around land alienation and privatization,” which resulted in “hundreds of thousands of landless women had become squatters after independence in 1963 (Turner & Brownhill 2004:28). However, women did not stay silent: they resisted in various ways, including in public political protests during which their demands included collective land titles, the cancellation of World Bank-imposed fees for social services, the end of genetically modified food, the release of political prisoners, and an end to sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, and rape (Turner & Brownhill 2004: 31).

### **Collapse of the ICA in 1989**

The breakdown of the ICA, the end of the “quota regime” (Talbot 2004: 165), deepened the fissures of global inequality. The ICA collapse instigated a tank of world prices in the early 1990s, leading to “extremely low prices, mass layoffs, bankruptcy, migration and hunger for tens of thousands of poor coffee farmers and workers worldwide” (Fridell 2014b: 408). Considering the debt-ridden fiscal situation of Moi’s government (Economist 1993, 1997, 2000), the 1989

collapse of the ICA had a particularly deleterious effect on the Kenyan coffee sector, leading to abject poverty for farmers (Cooper 2002: 93-6, 176; Kieyah et. al., 2016: 37; Talbot 2004: 115).

Up to the mid-1980s, coffee “was the single most important foreign exchange earner” in Kenya (KCD 2023), but after the 1989 ICA collapse, coffee yields fell as much as 848 kg to 540 kg per hectare on smallholder farms and the price of unroasted coffee “fell from KSh. 41.60 per kg. in 1986 to KSh. 38.60 in 1990 (Ikiara et al., 1999: 82). As a result, by 1990, “coffee had dropped to third place” after tourism and tea (Ikiara et al., 1999: 82), as coffee flooded onto the market, “producers panicked and liquidated their reserves,” which contributed to the plummeting price (Pflaeger 2013:345). Looking back, it can be argued that the group of people whom the collapse “empowered” was traders and roasters, since under the ICA, their “control” was limited to the quota system. Roasters were able to build up their stockpiles of coffee at cheap prices, and cemented coffee as a ‘buyer-driven’ chain (Pflaeger 2013:345; Talbot 2004; Ponte 2002), which solidified the “coffee paradox,” articulated by Daviron and Ponte (2005) that was discussed earlier in this study.

By the summer of 1992, the ICO indicator price for coffee fell below 50 cents (USD), meaning that globally, “the price of coffee was lower than it had been since the 1930s” (Talbot 2004: 116). As Talbot recounts, “Total coffee earnings of all producing countries fell from \$92 billion in coffee year 1988/89 to \$6.7 billion in coffee year 1989/90, a 27 percent decline in earnings despite a 13 percent increase in the volume of exports” (Talbot 2004: 115). Less than three years after the collapse, estimates suggest that “producing countries lost a total of \$10-12 billion in export earnings because of low prices” (Talbot 2004: 116). This resulted in years of widespread suffering of coffee-farming families who lived and worked in coffee-dependent economies (Hoffman 2014: 183; Bates 1997: 5), especially East African coffee farmers, such as

in Rwanda (Talbot 2004: 118; Kamola 2007: 64), where coffee was still the most valuable export.<sup>140</sup>

Through the 1990s, Talbot observes that “Producing states received very little revenue, if any, from coffee; indeed, some states were subsidizing their growers to keep them on their land”, who were “at best, barely surviving: many were being driven out of business and off their land” (Talbot 2004: 192-3). Talbot identified the “old inequalities,” based on control over production of coffee and other cash crop commodities under what he calls, “the old colonial division of labor.” However, Talbot notices that “the newer international division of labor established during the development project, or the period of material expansion” as a “new form of inequality just increases the overall degree of inequality in the world” because it is “based on control over financial capital and closely related flows of information” (Talbot 2004: 102).

Although two decades have passed since the publication of his book, *Grounds for Agreement*, political economist John Talbot believes that “a return to a regulated market is urgently needed” (Talbot 2004:2), arguing that the answer is coffee’s ongoing trade inequities would be to “reestablish a politically regulated market” (Talbot 2004:66). But, as Gavin Fridell observes, after the ICA collapse, the coffee industry “did not mark the end of state involvement in the global coffee market, but rather a shift in interstate relations among coffee exporters from one based on a degree of collective action to one marked by intensified competition” (Fridell 2014b: 421-22).

---

<sup>140</sup>By 1990, more than 90% of Rwandans were engaged in agriculture with about 70% dependent on coffee for their subsistence even as coffee “accounted for about 80% of Rwanda’s export earnings and state revenues” (Hoffman 2014: 143; Talbot 2004: 118; Koss 2016).

Through the 1990s and 2000s, states began “receding ever further into the background” in the global coffee value chain, while “the market” became even more central, even as it is also a key “cause of underdevelopment” (Fridell 2014b: 408). This is among the reasons why for rural women coffee growers, both old and new inequalities of the gendered coffee paradox are just that: new forms of patriarchal systems, none of which were designed with their “empowerment” as a priority.

Particularly in Kenya, as liberalization began in the early 1990s, the role of civil society, the growing relationship between donors and NGOs, and the strengthening private sector capacities all increased in Kenya’s coffee sector (Pflaeger 2013: 337). A higher level of competition among buyers took place and cooperatives were weakened (Daviron & Ponte 2005:153-4). Combined, all these forces led to a decrease state responsibility, encouraging an assumption that “the market” would be empowering for rural farmers—and this begins the decade when a spotlight on women’s equality becomes a global phenomenon, especially the “proliferation of empowerment” rhetoric (Pflaeger 2013: 332). As Kanyinga notes, the results of liberalisation policies, coffee production has not increased despite the licensing of new commercial millers (2007:277). Furthermore, liberalisation resulted in a deleterious effect on coffee quality from the cooperative societies, due to the weakening of government coffee agencies, which, before 1992, “had a role in enforcing quality controls” for coffee (Kanyinga 2007:275-77).

These are among the reasons why neoliberal empowerment is a constructed fantasy when it is “synonymous with market participation” (Pflaeger 2013: 337)—and this shift remains evident through the ever-widening gender gap, the continued gendered international and national

division of labours, and the ways in which women's labour continue to be invisible in the global coffee value chain.

### **C. Kenya's Coffee Act 2001**

After the ICA collapse, the process of coffee liberalization began in Kenya in 1992, which ultimately restructured many aspects of the coffee sector (Pflaeger 2013:342-3). The weakening of the cooperative system, which formerly had offered some services to farmers, now only paid farmers once a year as it contributed to increased cooperative and farmer debt, and the need for more credit (Pflaeger 2013:344; Kanyinya 2007: 277f.). Unequal global power relations are expressed through coffee, revealing an example of "inequality as embedded in the social relations of production that shape people's lives" (Pflaeger 2013: 334), evident in the way coffee continued to be produced in Global South low-income countries with green coffee being exported to the Global North to be roasted and consumed. For women in particular, neoliberal market-driven changes continued to ignore intersectional challenges faced by women due to marital status and socio-economic situation – as mothers, widows, or single women – as well as other identities including ethnicity, race, or religion.

In Kenya, the 2001 Coffee Act established "the Coffee Board of Kenya as a body corporate and the Coffee Development Fund, and provides for control of the processing and marketing of coffee in Kenya and the international trade in Kenyan coffee" (Coffee Act 2001). It is "an Act of Parliament, to provide for the development, regulation and promotion of the coffee industry, and for connected purposes" and brought several changes to Kenya's coffee industry (Kenya Coffee Act 2001). From permits to timing requirements, the Coffee Act is rife with legislative and mandatory paperwork requirements, and members of Kenya's coffee supply

chain – both cooperatives and estate owners – must follow all that is outlined in this detailed and regulated system by the government.

The Act states that: “No person shall: (a) buy, sell, mill, warehouse, export or otherwise deal in or transact any business in coffee unless (s)he is a holder of a licence issued by the Board; (b) transport or have in his or her possession any coffee unless (s)he is licensed to do any of the things specified in paragraph (a) and is the holder of a movement permit issued by the Board.

The Act defines and provides with respect to: a coffee dealers licence; a coffee miller’s licence; a marketing agent’s licence; a warehouseman’s licence; and a pulping station licence. The Act also provides for registration of various actors of the coffee industry and provides that every smallholder grower must register with the cooperative society to which (s)he delivers coffee, and that a coffee plantation grower must register with the Board.”

Among many other policies and regulations, the Coffee Act 2001 articulates regulations based on “how to buy or deal in clean coffee produced in Kenya or to import clean coffee from outside Kenya, and to process, in Kenya for local sale or export, coffee of any country of origin” and how to “deal in roasting, blending and packaging coffee for local sale or export.” The Act also restricts the “purchase and sale of coffee” with language such as “no grower shall roast coffee for sale, sell to any other person or purchase coffee from any other person”; “no person shall purchase coffee from any grower”; and “no person, other than a grower shall market clean coffee at the auction unless he is the holder of a marketing agent’s licence issued by the Board under section 17” (Coffee Act 2001). The first renewal of the act in 2006 allowed for “direct sales,” becoming executed for the first time in Kenya coffee history. This is important because it then allowed for the possibility of “a contractual agreement between the grower and his or its marketing agent and a buyer located outside Kenya for the sale of clean coffee based on mutually

accepted terms and conditions enforceable in law and registered with the Board” (see Chapter One and Four). The Coffee Act define the roles of the key stakeholders in Kenya’s supply chain, from growers (farmers), marketing agents, the warehouse, and exporters and importers—but the glaring omission, like all the other global agreements and national documents up to this point in coffee—is that women are entirely omitted, both as active participants in forming the policies, and nothing is stated within the Coffee Act itself about women’s roles or contributions in the coffee sector. Despite my efforts, I did not find any evidence that any Kenyan women participated in the creation or formation of the Coffee Act, either in its original or revised formations.

### **Conclusion**

This brief overview of contemporary coffee history demonstrates that coffee remained an internationally political crop for Kenya even after its 1963 independence through to the twenty-first century’s creation of the Coffee Act(s). My study found no evidence that women were represented in any form in the formation of the ICA, the acceptance of the Structural Adjustment programmers, or the creation of the 2001 Coffee Act. Nor do the ICA or Coffee Act documents demonstrate any concern for gender-related challenges, gaps, or solutions. Women are wholly invisible in these political documents, and yet the effects and implementation of these policies has affected many women’s lives. In this sense, the newer structures for coffee demonstrates that “the state [...] is not just one player among others in a particular ‘node’ of a chain, fighting for its share of the economic pie, but plays a key role in reproducing the very social relations that underpin the entire chain” (Fridell 2014b: 411). Even as structures of the coffee chain become adjusted, they have not considered the specific needs of women and reproduce historic discriminations.

### **4.3 ‘Coffee is Better than Anything We Have’: Contemporary Context under the New Constitution under President Mwai Kibaki (2002-13) and Coffee Revitalization goals under President Uhuru Kenyatta (2013-2022)**

Despite all their hard, physical labour in coffee, when I asked women farmers if they planned to stop farming coffee, many reacted with an immediate, often physical reaction, the negative, “Of course not!” When I followed up this question with a “why not?” to a widow older than 80 years old named Hellen Ngetung, her response offers a frame for this section of Chapter Four: “Coffee is better than anything we have.” That this remains true despite the varied structural and practical gendered challenges for women is revealing as to the continued dependence that women experience for cash crops such as coffee.

While the first global international women’s conference in Nairobi promised a sea change for women and the desire was growing for the Republic of Kenya to create its first postcolonial Constitution. This was ratified in 2010, and it focused, for the first time, on women’s rights. For example, the new Constitution legally gives women the right to jointly own land with their husbands and Article 60 clearly advocates for the “elimination of gender discrimination in law, customs and practices related to land and property,” the reality is that in rural areas, cultural and traditional customary law often prevail—men own the land and therefore have access to all the rights that come with such ownership, including the right to collect money for crops and obtain credit (ROK 2010).<sup>141</sup> While this was an admirable advance forward toward gender parity for the Republic of Kenya, the Constitution is not sufficient to ensure gender equitable practices as a

---

<sup>141</sup>As stated in the National Constitution of Kenya, Article 60: “(1) Land in Kenya shall be held, used and managed in a manner that is equitable, efficient, productive and sustainable, and in accordance with the following principles—(a) equitable access to land; (b) security of land rights; [...] (f) elimination of gender discrimination in law, customs and practices related to land and property in land; and (2) These principles shall be implemented through a national land policy developed and reviewed regularly by the national government and through legislation” (ROK 2010).



reality in rural areas. However vital this legislation was and may continue to be, the Republic of Kenya continues as a patriarchal country whereby men are the key beneficiaries of coffee as a “man’s crop”—as demonstrated through the ongoing gendered coffee paradox. As such, women face specifically gendered challenges in the quest to become full beneficiaries in coffee. As mentioned in Chapter One, coffee is among the key agricultural pillars for revitalization in Kenya (Kenyatta 2020), yet a national agenda in Kenya that specifically considers women’s challenges in coffee does not currently exist as of this writing (March 2024).

Since at least four dozen pairs of human hands are involved in the creation and production of a single cup of coffee, and since many are the hands of women, Part Two of Chapter Four considers what empowerment looks like in the rural context of one coffee estate. This section addresses some questions that I asked my research participants regarding the challenges that women face; the key gendered barriers that still exist for women in Kenya; and the biggest gaps they wish would change from the farmer and grower perspectives.

These questions were not asked by a government coffee task force that conducted thorough research in Kenya’s coffee sub-sector with the publicly stated goal to revitalize the coffee sector. Kenya’s export dollar has declined for coffee since 1995 (Kieyah et. al., 2016). This downward spiral awakened Kenya’s political leaders under former President Uhuru Kenyatta –during which time I conducted most of my field work (2019-2020)– to the severity of the issues as farmers continued to uproot their coffee or switch to other crops.

In spring 2016, the Republic of Kenya created two significant policy documents commissioned by then-President Uhuru Kenyatta: the National Framework on Climate Change Policy (NFCCP) (Republic of Kenya 2016) and the report from the National Task Force of Coffee Sub-Sector Reforms (CSSR) (Kieyah et al., 2016). Despite the CSSR’s insight—that the

existing laws that govern coffee value chain have not been realigned with the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and other laws (Kieyah et al., 2016: 1)—and its intrepid rewriting of many of these existing laws, the report makes only one brief reference to gender in the entire 75-page report (2016:41), listing climate change as the top threat to the coffee sector (Kieyah et al., 2016: 11). The only mention of “gender” occurs enumerated with other issues: “the subsector should also address cross cutting issues related to gender, environment, climate change, carbon trading and coffee theft” (Kieyah et al., 2016: 41). The report does not describe any details regarding the “cross cutting issues related to gender.” The committee did not abide by the two-third gender rule, as only one Kenyan woman is noted as participating on the committee that comprised more than a dozen Kenyan men and the nature of her involvement is not articulated in the document. The report omitted any gender analysis: there was no articulation of the challenges or barriers that women experience, nor any gender-specific solutions.

If the Republic of Kenya wishes to truly “revitalize” its coffee sector, and if International Development agencies and the coffee industry wish to “empower” women, then both must work together to transform three challenges of systemic inequities for Kenyan women including land ownership, wage disparity, and the time burden. As described in Chapter One of this study, Kenyan coffee policies make it harder for farmers to thrive in the sector than it otherwise might be, especially considering such a long and complex supply chain that often delays coffee payments. Given the continuation of some colonial coffee structures, both formally and informally, and the alienation of labour under neoliberal capitalism, women experience specifically gendered inequalities and constraints in coffee.

As noted throughout this study, the gendered coffee paradox remains evident in Kenya’s coffee sub-sector. Kenya, as a state, depends on coffee. Women depend on coffee. Yet to varying

degrees within the sector, often based on an individual or family’s socio-economic status and educational opportunities, Kenyan women face disproportional barriers compared to Kenyan men. Genuine “empowerment” for women will only take place when these systemic structural barriers are transformed in ways that will address the intersectional and multi-dimensional needs of women in three areas:

1. Land ownership
2. Wage disparity
3. Time poverty

Through my field work, these challenges for women were articulated most frequently as among the key gender gaps in coffee, both by female estate owners and female smallholder farmers or growers, as well as by men throughout Kenya. This list is hardly exhaustive, but these three issues represent those named most consistently as ongoing concerns in the coffee sector. While the rest of this chapter provides a case study of one coffee estate in western Kenya, Chepsangor Hills Coffee Estate, as well as other farmers who work on farms surrounding this estate, these three concerns were also articulated as key inequities, both by men and women, throughout Kenya, both in counties far from away from Nairobi, such as those near Mount Kenya central Kenya (Nyeri, Meru, Embu) and in western Kenya (Nandi, Trans-Nzoia, Kericho), as well as in the coffee counties that border Nairobi (Kiambu and Machakos).

#### **A. A Case Study of Chepsangor Hills Coffee Estate in Nandi, Kenya**

In January 2020, at a terminal in Nairobi’s Wilson airport, I can enjoy some of Kenya’s best coffee at the Spring Valley Coffee Café—something that was not possible when I first came to Kenya in 1994—while I wait to board my one-hour flight from Nairobi to El Doret. As we take off from urban Nairobi to western Kenya, I can look out the plane’s window to see tin

rooftops sprinkled throughout the brown and green farmland in every hue of brown and every shade of green. As the plane descends in western Kenya, as far as my eyes can see, all I can see is maize, realizing this is why this area is known as the “breadbasket” of Kenya.

Nandi county is known for its lush green hills that generate prized gems of tea and coffee. While not completely unknown to specialty coffee connoisseurs, Nandi’s coffee remains mostly unfamiliar, even to specialty coffee drinkers in the Global North, who are far more likely to see single-origin coffee bags that bear the name Nyeri, one of the counties surrounding Mount Kenya, one area where British colonial settlers cleared land to plant coffee for export during the early decades of the twentieth century. In the last few years, Nandi’s luscious soil is being re-imagined for its potential in coffee—and Rosebella Langat and her husband, Sammy, are part of this effort.

When my plane lands on the small airstrip in El Doret, Rosebella’s driver greets me. During the entire hour’s drive from the airstrip to Chepsangor Hills Coffee Estate, the curving roads twist like a snake. On the way to Rosebella’s home and farm, I see this flourishing land up close for the first time. Both sides of the road boast verdant plantations, most with neatly lined rows of maize, sugarcane, and especially tea.

Thanks to Nandi’s fertile soil and high altitude (1750-2000 masl),<sup>142</sup> this is among Kenya’s top tea-producing counties. For decades, tea has been Kenya’s top agricultural export—but Rosebella is convinced that the land can once again be fruitful for coffee. “It’s my dream to drive all around and see the coffee everywhere around Nandi,” she tells me. Coffee was a lucrative crop back in the 1950s, but after independence in 1963, most coffee ceased to be cared for. In part, the uprooting of the coffee is due to all the uprooting that happened after colonialism

---

<sup>142</sup> Metres above sea level.

ended (Sammy Langat, personal interview, 6 February 2022).<sup>143</sup> Some plots are now less than two acres, even as small as half an acre. After independence, British colonizers sold or left land plots ranging from 2,000 to 6,000 acres, leaving them to local chiefs. Over time, these chiefs—many with as many as 20 children—spilt their land into 100-acre plots. Now those children are doing the same with *their* children—so land keeps getting sub-divided further and further.

Rosebella was born after this, in Lessos, another part of Nandi, but she did not grow up farming coffee. Still, despite her retirement, she's committed to using her business expertise to make coffee sustainable for her community. "Mine is a business with a mission," she often tells me—and that mission centers on long-term sustainability for women.<sup>144</sup>

Her rural area is filled with women who never had the opportunity to finish secondary school or learn to read. Most women have never travelled beyond walking distance from their homes, and many women have eight to ten children. Despite Kenya's new Constitution in 2010 that gives women the legal right to jointly own land with their husbands, in rural areas, traditional customs prevail—men own the land and, no matter who works to harvest the crops or who sells the bounty in the market, the money goes to, indeed, *belongs to*, men. (In some cases, widows are the primary beneficiaries of this law.) Most women here have never had money of their own, although they work both subsistence food crops and cash crops, such as tea or coffee, while caring for their children, their homes, and their families.

After I arrive at her home and we greet each other, Rosebella takes my hand and leads me around her house to meet her baby coffee trees. Although I know this has taken the hard work of

---

<sup>143</sup> All subsequent quotes from Sammy Langat are from our interview at the Langat home and farm in Nandi, which is when I first met him, on 6 February 2022. We have had several informal conversations and interactions in Nairobi or Nandi since then.

<sup>144</sup> All quotes from Rosebella Langat derive from two formal in-person one-on-one interviews in Nandi (12 January 2020 and 6 February 2022) and two formal follow-up interviews via Zoom on 1 December 2023 and 20 April 2024. We have had dozens of interactions and conversations since our first meeting in November 2019 in Nairobi and Nandi. I have visited Chepsangor Hills Coffee Estate in Nandi four times since January 2020.

Rosebella and her team to restore the land around her house, it feels idyllic—luscious hills surround us and dozens of neatly lined rows with arabica coffee trees about one foot tall. The trees here were planted last year with the certified seedlings. Hundreds more grow on another plot of land in the hills nearby.

We walk up to the highest point on her estate, sitting on a bench under a small grass hut, the only place on her property where Wi-Fi unpredictably signals. Here we are elevated 1850 meters above sea level. North of the equator, I feel cool winds blowing up the Nandi hills from Lake Victoria. Enormously tall indigenous trees provide shade all around us, and we hear the gurgling river that runs along her farm and house. The abundant rainfall and volcanic soil are exceptionally good for the arabica coffee varieties here—SL28, SL34, Ruiru II, Batian—all four Kenya-approved varieties that researchers created especially for thriving in Kenya.<sup>145</sup> These are the beans that will create the bright, clear, fruity acidity in the cup that coffee aficionados adore. By 2016, most of the coffee was planted, starting with 5,000 coffee trees. The year after that, they planted 2,000 more. In the first two years, many trees died, so they had to plant again.

Rosebella is not a typical coffee farmer. When we first met, she was 52 years old; then and still, she sees her business in Nandi as her retirement project, and she is hardly slowing down. She grew up in a “typical African family” (when I first interviewed her, her mother was 94 years old; she passed away before Christmas in 2022)—but what is *not* typical is that Rosebella holds a PhD in business (she conducted research at the household level in maize) and had a career in marketing—a venerable achievement for any woman, but even more if she tells you the story of how much her mother – who grew up in extreme poverty – sacrificed in order to give her

---

<sup>145</sup> See note in Chapter One that explains varieties.

daughter the education that she never had. Rosebella and her husband, Sammy Langat, now have two homes: one in Nairobi and their more recently purchased house and land in Nandi.

Why did Rosebella want to get her PhD? Because she wanted to use her skills and talents to inspire other women both local and global, she tells me. Now that her adult children are both working out of Kenya, she can devote her “retirement” to her new business venture: Chepsangor Hills Coffee with its coffee brand called “Tulon Coffee” – named after the Nandi hills surrounding her farm. When I asked her why she chose coffee, as opposed to other crops, she says it is because “coffee is a crop that gives you friends.” Rosebella believes that coffee is the best crop that is “scalable for impact,” because it can “accommodate everyone” – in particular, she is motivated to impact local women around her farm, some who still live in extreme income poverty.

On my first trip to Nandi in January 2020, Rosebella’s husband, Sammy, was not there: he was still working full-time in his finance career in Nairobi. At that time, Sammy was not as involved with the coffee estate, with Rosebella entirely in charge of leadership and decision-making. But by my return visit in February 2022, Sammy had retired and was happily learning more about coffee farming and coffee tasting.

Among the benefits of Chepsangor Hills is that, as an estate with all the licensing requirements, they can sell directly to specialty coffee buyers, thus obtaining higher prices than many cooperatives, who must sell to the auction (cf. Chapter One). As an estate, they can also use a variety of processing methods, including experimental methods at the request of specific buyers. The business reason for this goal links to differentiation: since most Kenyan coffee is processed in the washed (wet) processing method (cf. Chapter One). Since I first met Rosebella in fall 2019, Chepsangor Hills Coffee Estate has been focusing more on the natural processing

method – coffee that is not “washed” and dried with its skin – because they can obtain higher prices for their natural or honey processed coffees. Since this is rare in Kenya, it is increasingly desired by some specialty coffee roasters in North America and Europe.

Chepsangor has also been experimenting with, and having some success with another kind of processing, called ‘anaerobic fermentation,’ a special processing that closes off all oxygen during the fermentation process, and can create a distinctively pleasing taste in the coffee cup. In recent years, this method has been growing in popularity from some specialty buyers; at times, these can fetch even higher prices than natural or honey processed coffees. Last year, almost 80% of all Chepsangor’s coffees on order were either natural or anaerobic processed.

Aside from the profitability, Chepsangor conducts all these experiments due to their sustainability mission. Natural, honey, and anaerobic processed coffees require far less water than the washed method, and so not only do they save money on electricity and other processing expenses, but now Rosebella tells me, thanks to the Eco pulper, “We are hardly using any water at all.” This is only one reason why this Eco pulper is so important to this coffee estate, and why Sammy and she invested so much time and money to get this specific one from Brazil. But there are important implications for social sustainability, as well.

When Rosebella launched the pulping station (“the factory”) in 2019—and still to the time of this writing—she believes it to be the only Eco pulper in their Nandi region. Even as an estate, for their first harvest in 2018, Rosebella and Sammy took their harvested cherries to their local cooperative. In 2019, they tried sending a few bags to the auction. But things changed in 2020 – their first full harvest season when the Eco pulper was running and they were able to process their first full harvest themselves. At that point, they no longer needed to depend on either the cooperative or the auction: they could sell directly to buyers themselves.



This brings us to the topic of labour, which Rosebella describes “permanent vs. temporary,” and both categories apply to those work on the “factory” or the “farm.” By the factory, she refers to the nursery, the washing station, the Eco pulper, and all parts of the processing, such as sorting and drying, of which she employs four full-time staff, year-round. The coffee harvest season is one long block that begins in July, with a peak in September and October, that then starts to decline in November and ends in December. From July to December, farm labour includes two full-time men who serve as supervisor and manager year-round, as well as up to 100 or more people employed at various points of the harvest season to plant, prune, pick, and carry coffee, and around 80% of these are women. Whether permanent or seasonal, they are not overworked and there is no forced labour of any kind.

It is important to note that, especially for the women employed seasonally, many of these women did not have work before Chepsangor’s farm and factory; of those women who did have employment, for many it was work on neighbouring tea plantations. Compared to coffee, tea is back-breaking work, as women must bend, hunched all day over short tea bushes that, in Nandi, are usually lower than one’s knees. Tea baskets are larger than coffee bags, with more tea leaves required to fill a basket, so picking a full basket of tea leaves can take longer than picking a bag of coffee. While I do not wish to idealize the physically strenuous labour that picking both tea and coffee require, female smallholder farmers, both those who work for or around Chepsangor, told me that coffee gets higher prices than crops such as tea, maize, and green beans. These farmers also encourage diversification of crops – no one thinks reliance on coffee alone is an economically savvy choice.

Many female smallholder farmers told me that the wages for tea are at least one-third less than for coffee – and in many cases, women expressed their enjoyment of picking coffee more

than tea, perhaps in part because of the flexibility of time based both on the harvest season and on Rosebella's flexible policies. For example, during the tea harvest, picking one kilo of tea leaves, can earn a woman can earn 7ksh (7 cents in 2020). If they pick the whole basket of 20 kilos in a day, their earnings will be 140ksh for the entire basket (approximately \$1 USD). Coffee is desirable, in part, because it can bring more shillings per kilo than other crops, which fluctuates by region; Chepsangor Hills Coffee pays a competitive wage.<sup>146</sup>

Since they have now experienced several years of harvests, one evidence that Chepsangor is paying good wages, and has dignified working conditions, is that many seasonal workers return and express their desire for more work.<sup>147</sup> As Rosabella reflects upon other changes since 2016: “Now I'm seeing the colour of the cherries is really improving. The women are really learning. At the beginning, they did not know how to pick, and we incurred a lot of loss when they'd pick unripe cherries. Pickers are critical, as are the sorters, because even after pulping, we sort again. They have to learn what to look for”—including visual coffee defects and any sign of coffee diseases such as *la broca* (Spanish, coffee berry beetle).

For those who choose to work seasonally for Chepsangor and have their own coffee trees, learning about high quality coffee at Chepsangor has influenced their ability to produce better coffee, and therefore earn better wages, on their own farms. It is important to note that many of these are very small farms; over the course of three trips to Nandi<sup>148</sup> to visit Chepsangor, I also visited eight different small farms, at the invitation of the female head of household. In some

---

<sup>146</sup> Understandably, Rosebella has not shared this number with me.

<sup>147</sup> In the context of visiting a women's home or farm for the first time, it is not culturally appropriate for me to directly ask how wages compare to other possible labour options. There is no minimum wage rate in Kenya for agriculture. Generally, a good day's rate might earn between 300-500 ksh, but this depends on the crop and the region in Kenya. To my knowledge, there is no “living wage” study for coffee in Kenya, although there is an in-depth living wage report on the horticulture (cf. Anker 2016).

<sup>148</sup> Earlier in this study, I said that I have been to Chepsangor four times; on my fourth visit, I did not visit other small farms from the women in coffee that work with Rosebella.

cases, their land was jointly owned; in other cases, husbands had “given” their wives their own coffee trees and “use” of these home plots (cf. discussion later in this Chapter). Usually, coffee was one of many crops, as fruits and vegetables were farmed for household food consumption.

As coffee requires so much attention throughout the year (cf. Chapter One), in all these visits, farmers, their families, or their workers were often engaged in various forms of labour – from digging holes for new coffee trees, to adding fertilizer or compost at the bottom of coffee trees, to pruning, to picking ripe cherries. In some cases, I witnessed husbands or adult sons helping the woman who invited me. In a few cases, my visit afforded the chance to eat lunch or drink tea (never was I served coffee) in rural homes (local farmers live in their own homes surrounding Chepsangor). Always, we would walk together around their coffee farms: some with five coffee trees, some with a few hundred. In all cases, these visits were punctuated with rejoicing for Rosebella’s factory, with pride for their coffee trees whatever the number. Smallholder farmers expressed desire to earn more money to purchase more coffee seedlings, and their gratitude that I came to visit and would be welcome to visit again.

This same spirit of hospitality is evident in Rosebella’s relationships with the women who live around her, some who choose to bring their coffee to pulp at her factory. In this way, the Eco pulper is more than just a machine that is important for Chepsangor Hills Coffee as private estate. It has become, as Rosebella shared with me, “like a case study, because people are coming around to see if it’s actually possible to do different processing methods, since Kenya is mostly using the washed process of coffee.” Many private estates do not welcome local farmers to visit so openly. Rosebella and Sammy are the opposite, as they have chosen to use the Eco pulper as one method to help uplift their local community.

Because of its size and the speed of processing, the Eco pulper can process more cherries, faster, and cleaner. “Most importantly, this is social sustainability: people bring their coffee, and we pulp it for them, and we can help the community more.” This is a genuine service because of the myriad of hills and the distance it takes just to walk from one farm to the next. As I have witnessed and as she described, “Bringing the process closer to them has been a game changer because women before had to walk 20 or 30 kilometres, one way. Several women would go through that ordeal: 30 kilometres carrying cherries on their back, and 30 kilometres back to their home.” This required so many hours of walking that, as Rosebella has observed, “they were not around to care for their children properly. Having the Eco pulper here has saved them on time to do more things or to just have or just have time with their families.” The farmers who bring cherries to Chepsangor do not “work” for Rosebella by doing so; as she emphasized to me, they “work for themselves, they come by their choice and desire, to earn their own profits from their own sweat.”

Recall in Chapter One: small holder farmers must be part of a cooperative to bring their cherries to a specific washing station for processing. But this region is so vast with hills and rivers, that it is a long journey from the very small farms to that one washing station in the region. Women farmers, who already carry cherries very long distances, simply cannot afford to send their cherries by motorcycle or another means of transport. They rely on the strength of their own bodies to carry whatever they pick to the washing station. Rosebella and I once carried a bag of cherries together, and we both remembered that experience: “Can you imagine carrying that heavy load that far? And then you come back, and you have to do the household work. Those heavy burdens have a toll on their physical health and well-being.”

Rosebella has chosen to help her community carry these burdens, by opening the service of using her Eco pulper. She is certainly not mandated to do so: Chepsangor is neither an NGO nor a cooperative (cf. Chapter One). But Rosebella sees it as part of her “service to humanity” to be part of “empowering” her community. What I see is a woman who consciously wants to use her own socio-economic and educational opportunities to uplift other women, even as the sacrifices of her mother, and other family members, made it possible for her to obtain the highest levels of university education.

For the use of the Eco pulper, Chepsangor charges a minimum service fee, which is managed through local community-based groups (these are not cooperatives). But neither Rosebella nor Sammy charge a fee for the marketing services they provide; there is no way to measure the value that in dollars. For example, because these coffees are separated, when Rosebella meets buyers outside of Nandi, or when buyers come to visit Chepsangor, they are not only learning about Rosebella and Sammy’s coffee. Buyers are also exposed to the community coffee, and Rosebella, once again, encourages this inclusivity and transparency.

In addition, Chepsangor attracts visitors who are buyers and roasters, which bring exposure to local farmers about the international market and best practices, but also agronomy experts who are hired by Rosebella to train both her seasonal and permanent staff. However, there has never been a training that I have witnessed, or participated in, that did not attract dozens of very small holder farmers. While many estates would close their gate during such trainings, to keep non-employees out, Rosebella, quite literally, keeps her large gate, open.

Why does Rosebella go to all this effort, not charging farmers for trainings, or for all this unquantifiable education received from visitors? As she shared with me, “When the women are educated, they will be empowered. Then they have all information to decide and choose.” From

her perspective, the key to their empowerment is focused on economic benefits – especially through education and marketing access – which is why she is keen to include local farmers, whether they choose to pulp at her factory, or they work seasonally at Chepsangor.

Despite all her inclusivity, running a coffee estate has been a steep learning curve for Rosebella. When I asked her about the difficulties of buying Kenyan coffee, she confirms: “Yes, it’s tough for the buyers and it’s tough for us. I am a farmer, and I need to be with the harvest! But there is a lot of paperwork and forms and shipments.” Since I first met Rosebella, Chepsangor has increased its number of buyers: some are from the USA and Kenya, but most from Europe – mostly in Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, Spain, and UK. The benefits of being able to export directly compared to going through the auction are many, as Rosabella highlights a few benefits:

First, with direct buyers, we are able to get the direct feedback about our coffee and areas to improve, or what we did well. We enjoy customer feedback. Second, therefore, this creates a relationship, and we can even experiment together. Third, pricing, because we can agree on prices beforehand so we can be able to plan and manage expectations on both sides. The market is so volatile, you can never be sure what the auction may offer.”

As a result, Chepsangor can earn more compared to when they had to take coffee to the auction (see Chapter One). She continues: “Direct sales are very good for us, especially because we are keen on innovation, and we work closely with our buyers. They’ll say, can you try this, when buyers come, we can sit together and see how we can achieve a specific cup. We can agree on the whole experiment, the price, everything, and it’s very exciting. But we can only do this if we have a relationship.”

In the case of Chepsangor Hills, running a coffee estate, while a privately-owned business, is hardly a private matter. It requires respectful relationships on both “sides” – from the seasonal and permanent employees that Rosebella hires, to the buyers and roasters who work with her, she rightly predicated that “coffee is a crop that brings many friends.” For many friends, the positive changes are evident over these years. Since my first trip in January 2020 to my fourth in January 2023, local women who either work for Chepsangor or who choose to bring their coffee for pulping, have changed in visible ways, even in their dresses or their hairstyles. As Rosabella explains the social impact of the coffee: “Children are now going to school, women can treat themselves, and those women – you have seen them – they are changed now from the first time you saw them.” But perhaps the more enduring change is an unquantifiable confidence behind their smiles – the coffee has transformed households and even the community spirit, demonstrating a clear example of the “power within” that Rowlands also saw in Honduras (cf. Chapter Two). Also, since many local farmers did not have a place to take whatever little coffee they had to the cooperative, many families did not have any coffee trees. Now, more people are planting coffee, especially women, because they can process their coffee at Chepsangor, or they can find employment during the harvest season as temporary labourers.

When I asked Rosebella about her view on women’s empowerment and social sustainability, especially if changes in land, wages, or time poverty are goals for her business, she confirmed: “Wages and time, we think about, and we know we have solved that problem of time to some extent. But land ownership is far-fetched, and we have to be realistic.” While these issues are a reality for women in Nandi (and beyond), I see that one of challenges under neoliberalism that is the coffee industry’s admirable goals toward sustainability and gender equity rely too much on the benevolence of small businesses like Sammy and Rosebella Langat.

But without greater supports from government, private sector, or nonprofit organizations, there is only so much that any one business can do. Why does specialty coffee put so much pressure on the goodwill of businesses like Chepsangor, who are already doing so much to advance coffee quality in Kenya? As one of my anonymous research participants confirmed: “specialty coffee, in particular, leverages existing power dynamics, especially when it comes to who can, and cannot, enter the market” (8 October 2019).

Partly for this reason, I can accept the paradox of a private estate as a development model. While cooperatives are, in theory, mandated to share profits and consider workers’ voices, as noted in Chapter One, and while a critic might say that neither Rosebella nor Sammy are required by law to officially “share profits” or seek out opinions of their employees, I witness their open-hearted hospitality is as a way of sharing knowledge and experiences – indeed, I go so far as to name their approach as accompaniment (cf. Chapter Five), although they would not name it as such. They choose to be inclusive, supportive, and encouraging, going far beyond what other business owners would choose.

In this sense, the unofficial and unpaid labour that Chepsangor is doing in their community cannot be quantified. Before, farmers had never tasted coffee. Before, no buyers, roasters, or cuppers travelled to this remote area – but now Chepsangor has many visitors since they are able to export their coffee directly to the USA and Europe. Before, neither Kenyan nor international trainers were coming to teach better practices.

Together, Rosabella and I set up the meeting where 42 female farmers attended in-person, featured in this chapter. That day in January 2020, as each woman walks toward the gazebo-like porch connected to Rosebella’s house, we greet her with *karibu sana* (you’re very welcome to be here), a handshake and kisses on each cheek. We ask them to sign the guest book and take some



tea or coffee. For most women, this will be their first time, ever, to drink coffee. Many have walked dozens of kilometers to join us on this Sunday afternoon.

The first women to arrive are two friends, Esther and Zipporah, both single mothers, each with five children and many coffee trees. They tell me that without a husband, they are “free to work for ourselves and our children.”

“Coffee is gold,” Esther tells me.

“Gold? Even with all the challenges – the coffee diseases, the coffee rust, the volatile price?” I inquire.

“Yes,” Zipporah confirms. “We are most happy when it is raining so the coffee can grow.”

When it is time to begin the meeting, somehow, we have all squeezed together on Rosebella’s porch-without-walls. Stackable, white plastic chairs form a three-rowed circle with a table in the middle of our circle with green coffee on top of it.

Tied on a string nearby, a goat bleats. The wind whistles, the river murmurs, the birds babble—as if all living creatures know something magical will happen today. Women farmers of all ages are here, a few in their twenties and a few over 70, most are around Rosebella’s and my ages. Some are friends or related to each other; some are from nearby communities or neighboring counties. Some women wear colourful headdresses that fully cover their hair, and others use scarves as head-coverings until they are seated, revealing short, buzzcut-styled hair cuts, or intricate patterns of plaited braids. Most older women wear traditional kitenge skirts with bright patterns of rainbowed geometrical shapes. Younger women dress in fashionable skirts and blouses that I might wear to a job interview back in Canada. One woman wears a LA Dodgers

jersey and a neon pink pencil skirt, and she laughs when I tell her that her shirt promotes the baseball team of my hometown, and where my parents still live.

Rosebella introduces me, and then says, “Now we will go around the circle. Each of you, tell us your name and please share if you are single or married, the number of children you have, and the number of your coffee trees. Some of you do not have any coffee trees and that is very okay. You are welcome here.”

Each woman stands before she speaks.

An older woman to my right begins: “I am a widow with six children, and I want to plant coffee.”

“I have 160 coffee trees, four children, and I am married.”

“I have 1,000 coffee trees. I am divorced and have five children. I am the one who stands for my children,” Zipporah says.

A younger woman with a red headscarf, wearing an indigo business suit, looks right at me: “I am called Sarah. I have 600 coffee trees and 1 child. I am married.”

“I am called Helen. I am a widow with 250 trees and 10 children.”

“Married, 9 children 50 trees.”

“Married, 2 children, 600 trees.”

The roll call continues. Most are married with four to six children. The eldest widow here, Hellen, has the most children with the number 10. I am surprised to learn that almost half of the women do not own any coffee trees, but they wanted to join this women’s meeting. Only six women have more than 500 coffee trees. Of these six, only two have 1,000 trees. To have this many trees is indeed rare; most small-holder coffee farmers in Kenya own less than three hectares of land and, at most, a few hundred coffee trees.

The final woman to speak is an older woman. When she stands up, she says with a wide grin: “I have 150 trees, seven children, and I am married. So, I have 8 children because my husband is a child.”

We all laugh together at this, in recognition of its truth.

## **B. Three Gendered Challenges for Women in Kenyan Coffee**

### **1. Land ownership: “We Need the Goodwill of Men to Give Us the Land”**

The next day, Rosebella and I pick up Hellen, a widow who doesn’t know her exact age (“around 80” she tells me) with 10 children and small-holder coffee farmer, on the way to Sarah’s farm, Hellen asks about my research. She enthusiastically asks me if I’ll write about her, repeatedly asking me if I’ll include her name.

“What do you want me to tell people who drink coffee in North America?” I ask Hellen.

She pauses for a moment to consider. “Tell them, it is hard work picking, processing, all the way up to when we wait for the money. Tell them all the facts. Tell them everything you will see today with us. Tell them we women are willing to work hard, and we do.”

As I’m taking notes, she adds, “But we need the goodwill of men to give us land.”

“What keeps you working in coffee?” I inquire.

“The money. We want to eradicate poverty not to go begging. You can see the difference between who has coffee and who does not” (personal interview 13 January 2020).

As we pull up to an unmarked dirt road, our van is forced to stop: the potholes are overflowing with water and the mud is too deep to pass through from the night’s downpour of rain. We all get out of the van, to walk down the road by foot. Eventually, we see Sarah in the distance—she’s a younger small-holder farmer, maybe around 30 years old, married, with one

daughter. She runs to greet us, not paying any attention to the muddy dirt road or all the splashes of muddy water getting on her long, navy-blue skirt. She's beaming with joy that we came.

She greets me with a warm hug and a big smile.

"You're the first *mzungu* [white person] to ever visit my farm," she says to me.

This surprises me. When I met her the day before, she told me that once worked with a large non-profit trade organization that created a multi-year coffee initiative. During those years, a revolving group of Europeans visited Nandi farms, training farmers, and helping to build up the coffee cooperative.

"None of the European technical experts ever came to visit you?" I ask.

"No, they were always on a tight schedule. I'm too far away out here."

She's right. The ninety-minute drive from Chepsangor Hills Coffee was long, despite smooth tarmac roads that snaked uphill.

Sarah grew up in a different county in Kenya, farming coffee as a girl with her parents. When she moved to Nandi with her husband, she describes the difficulty to persuade him to give her "a little land for coffee."

"What happened?"

"At first, I didn't ask my husband for the good lands. I asked him for the bad lands. I kept asking him gently, 'give me the worst land,' and I can make coffee profitable."

She thought if she could prove her ability to make coffee profitable with the worst land, how much better could she do with the good? He gave her one acre.

Her first year, she harvested 70 kilos of coffee; the second year, 350 kilos—far more than what many small-holder farmers would typically harvest after only two years in her area, one that has the perfect altitude for quality coffee and frequent rains.

“My harvest is so good that now, he gives me good lands,” she says with a proud smile (personal interview 13 January 2020).

Sarah’s husband is an exception: he was open-minded to his wife’s ideas and when he saw the result of her labours, he changed his mind.

When I was conducting interviews with women farmers, whether small-holder farmers or estate managers, and asked, “what is the number one challenge for women in coffee,” the immediate response of women was “land.” The level of discrimination in this vital issue was confirmed when I heard a respected female leader in the Kenya coffee sector, Nancy Cheryiot, state publicly at Nairobi workshop focused on African coffee, in a room primarily filled with African and ex-pat men who work in the Kenyan coffee sector, “Yes, in our culture, the father had the title. Women cannot own land, based on the mindset of men. Our New Constitution recognizes our daughters as equal,” giving an example when “some women took their brothers to court and now women recently are inheriting some acres.” She declared boldly, “our minds need to change” (cf. Appendix II, IACO: 5 Nov 2019).

Similar insights were shared with me by interview participants. For example, an authorized coffee trainer shared, “even if on paper women can own the land, in reality it is often otherwise” (Regine Guion-Firmin, personal interview, 15 January 2020). A Kenyan woman in her 20s, who grew up on her mother’s coffee farm told me, “Some African men will NOT part their land; they are killing each other for land” (Cynthia Nkirote Muthuri, personal interview, 23 May 2019). In the context of a discussion that I had about the 2010 Constitution, one woman in Kenyan coffee leadership told me that “wives are begging for 50 or 100 trees” from their husbands, and she acknowledged that the Constitution’s aspirations fail to be applied in rural areas (“Deborah,” duo interview, 10 December 2020).

This is also a distinction here between cooperatives and estates. Several women explained that Kenya's ongoing cooperative policies make land ownership particularly challenging for women. To provide one example, in an interview with two small-holder female coffee farmers, Ruth told me: "the by-laws are not friendly for women" because "to join a cooperative, a farmer needs to own five acres of land, and this is only possible if a husband gives this to his wife." As she said this, Deborah nodded vigorously in agreement (Anonymous II.D, duo interview in Nairobi, 10 December 2020).

### **Global Data on Land**

These ongoing challenges for women with land ownership is confirmed by global data. A key gendered constraint faced by women in agricultural sectors is that a majority of land in continues to be owned by men. The benefits of land ownership to advance gender equity has been clearly established by studies on women in agriculture and in coffee (Bacon 2010:64; Agarwal 1994). Yet, it remains the case that women across all developing regions are consistently less likely to own or operate land; they are less likely to have access to rented land, and the land to which they do have access is often of poorer quality and in smaller plots (FAO 2011:24; Beneria et al., 2016; FAO 2018), a statistic that remains true in many coffee producing countries including Brazil, India, Nicaragua, and Kenya (Arzabe et al., 2018; De Vita & Soares 2022; Agarwal et al., 2021; Dore 2003; Morris et al., 2015: 83). The International Women in Coffee Alliance claims that women who produce more than 50% of the world's food yet own less than 2% of the land (IWCA, n.d.).<sup>149</sup>

Women face varied experiences with land ownership based on their age and marital status. For example, widows, single, married (some married women may not know where their

---

<sup>149</sup>Despite the slim gendered disaggregated data on land ownership for coffee farms, statistics like these are common in coffee reports and websites, rarely with specific data about how these numbers are obtained.

husbands are). Women only have the possibility to receive land only via inheritance after a husband's death and only if his brothers allow; in this way, women are treated similar to youth because likewise, youth only have the possibility of receiving land through inheritance after an owner's death (Morris et al., 2015: 83).

Regine confirmed this in our interview, as she teaches many courses working with small-holder farmers and estates: "Women run the *shamba* [Kiswahili for farm], but the husband owns the land. She does not own the land if her husband is still alive. It can be hers only when husband passes away," but even then, sometimes it's not the case. Regine shared an example from the story of a widow she works with: "its only because her husband is dead that she can do anything with the land." She also gave another example that sometimes "if the father of a wife's husband is already dead, the land will go FIRST to her husband's *mother*, the wife's mother-in-law. If she's still living, she'll own her son's land" (Guion-Firmin, personal interview, 15 January 2020).

Younger women face greater constraints than young men in accessing resources and services require land ownership (FAO 2016:10-11; Eissler & Brennan 2015:10).<sup>150</sup> A study from Ethiopia reported that 21 per cent of youth and only 3 percent of women involved in agriculture were reported as landowners, even though Ethiopian land laws provide equal land acquisition and use rights to male and female citizens (Bezu & Holden 2014). Older generations are reluctant to transfer their control of land over to the next generation. Even in some cases when they are not farming coffee themselves, they will not still sell their land to their youth (Morris et

---

<sup>150</sup> Often "women" and "youth" are grouped together in similar studies; hence the reason I focus on both categories in this section. More research needs to be conducted to further investigate the similarities and the distinctions and to clearly separate the needs and desires of "women" from "youth." In the "youth" category, further research also needs to separate the needs and barriers for young men, as distinct from those of younger women in coffee.

al., 2015: 84; Leavy & Hossain 2014: 31)<sup>151</sup>. If inheritance customs in Kenya—despite changes of law—make the transfer of land to young men difficult, then for young women, this remains almost impossible (Byamugisha & Ansu, 2017; Morris et al., 2015; Wairegi et al., 2018; White 2012:12).

In addition, the sub-dividing land remains a consistent challenge with land in Kenya. After a family patriarch dies, lands are divided or sub-divided among his sons into smaller units. Over time, this has led to smaller and smaller plots of land that are often too small for farming or in poor locations (Asciutti et al., 2016; FAO 2016: 11). Often, after a father dies, if the land goes to the brothers, they do not necessarily share this land with their sister, as the expectation is that her husband will provide land for her. This was the experience of Gloria Wamaiwa, who grew up on a coffee farm in the 1970s. After her father died, she did not inherit any land. Her father had ten wives, and Gloria was one of ten siblings from *her* mother. After her father's death, as is the custom, her brothers inherited all the land, divided it among themselves, not including any of the sisters. Gloria later moved to Nairobi and met her future husband, Jarmo Gummerus, during the time she was in school. Years later after they raised their children, they bought the land that is now of Sakami Ranches Ltd. and Sakami Coffee Estate in Trans Nzoia (personal interviews on 13-14 November 2019).

Why is it so important for women not to own her own land? Regine explains: “because then that money does not come to her but to the husband. But the wife is taking care of all the land. And this wife is doing all this work for land that is not hers” (Guion-Firmin, personal interview, 15 January 2020)—an apt example of the gendered coffee paradox.

---

<sup>151</sup> See the footnote on “youth” in Chapter One.



### **Gender, not education, remains a key variable for land ownership in Kenya**

As true under British colonialism, in contemporary Kenya, working on a particular piece of land does not entitle the worker to ownership. No matter who works to harvest the crops or who sells the bounty in the market – woman, youth, or children, money goes to, indeed, *belongs to*, the owner of the land. In the case of twenty-first century Kenya, this is often the male head of household. As Ruth told me directly, “everything is for the man, including the chickens and the goats” (Anonymous II.D, duo interview in Nairobi, 10 December 2020), meaning that while women do the work with either crops or animals, it is done “for” the man and not “for” her.

This is a reality faced, not only by rural women farmers who often have, at most, a secondary school diploma, but also by Kenyan women with advanced graduate degrees, even doctoral degrees, and who hold leadership positions in the coffee industry. For example, Dr. Cecilia Kathurima, a coffee scientist with a PhD in Food Science & technology, works full-time at Kenya Coffee Research Institute (KCRI) and has been a respected coffee scientist in Kenya for more than a decade. She is passionate about the positive impact coffee can make: “What makes Kenyan coffee special to me is that it provides a livelihood for over 600,000 Kenyans. It is not just a beverage, but a source of income that supports families and communities across our country” (Kathurima, personal interview, 23 February 2019). When I accepted her invitation to visit the Research Centre, we talked in the sensory coffee lab, where she holds “cuppings” for herself, her staff, Kenyan coffee professionals, and sometimes for international guests. We walked through her “coffee museum” of trees, grown to test different Kenyan varieties for cherry volume and quality. Cecilia also has her own coffee trees distinctive to those she takes care of at the KCRI. She is a leader who is well-known and well-respected, as a pioneer in Kenya’s coffee sector.

What still strikes me is that, despite her career and success in coffee, and despite her comment to me that women “are empowered by going to school”, Cecilia’s 89-year-old father will not give her the title for the land. Her brothers want the coffee trees (Kathurima, personal interview, 23 February 2019). Despite her distinguished expertise in coffee, she also faces constraints from customary laws. When I gave a talk about my PhD field work at the University of Nairobi in June 2019, Cecilia attended and during the discussion period, she stated openly that in the past, when she was growing up and for many farmers, “Coffee was a punishment.” However, she said that now “it depends” on the context of the woman’s experiences, because “some women are becoming more independent” (Kathurima, 6 June 2019).

But independence in terms of land may be a “far-fetched issue” for some rural areas to address, according to Rosebella, even as she acknowledges its importance for long-term sustainability and gender equity: “The way this will come is over time, when women become more economically empowered from the coffee, they can buy their own land.” When I visited Chepsangor in October 2022, I was invited to visit the farm of a woman whose husband was once so adamantly against coffee farming that he uprooted the trees she had planted on their land. But over time, she was able to persuade him that coffee could bring them much-needed cash and he relented. When I arrived at their farm, I witnessed both of them working on their coffee trees, doing different tasks.

Rosebella told me about another woman who once told her that the priority was to own the coffee trees, so that they could pulp the coffee in their own names. As she said, “if we are allowed to own the trees, it is fine. We don’t need to own the land and carry the title deed.” It is a big step for women in rural Nandi if they own the trees. In this sense, as Rosebella explains to me, “These coffee trees are very important in their empowerment.” When I ask her what she

means by this, specifically: “Because it’s empowerment. It matters to both husband and wife. It matters to the man, that he owns the land, and no one is asking for it, so that no one can take the land, that if he wants to sell, he can sell. It matters to the women, so that they can harvest and make money in their own name, through their own coffee trees in their own name.”

Since the meeting in January 2020, some women have gone beyond the coffee trees, and started bee hives, because the bees are coming to pollinate the coffee. It is not a priority for every woman to fight for land ownership. As Rosebella summarizes, their view with their husbands is, “Allow us to do our coffee, sell the coffee, take it in our name. This is the beauty of having the pulping station with us: we put the coffee in THEIR name. But, of course, women bring the money back to their husbands or households, but it is part of their own independence: they want to do coffee in their own names.”

Chepsangor also registers coffee in the name of the husbands as well, and this is part of what Rosebella tells me is the importance of women’s independence, because the money is separated: “she has hers, he has his, so the issue of the land is not a big deal for women here: they want the money.”

## **2. Wage Disparity: “Coffee Used to be Gold”**

During my interview with Sarah, I questioned, “What keeps you motivated to keep doing coffee?” She immediately replied, “Coffee is money. That means women can pay school fees and care for our families” (Sarah Cherioch, personal interview, Nandi, 13 January 2020).

But global coffee prices are volatile and unpredictable. Kenyan growers and pickers are paid in shillings: 100 Kenyan shillings (ksh) equals approximately \$1 US dollar. In the late 1990s, Sarah recalls that she received as little as 2ksh for 1 kilo of coffee. In the year 2000, this

went up to 80ksh for the same amount of picked coffee cherries. In 2018, it was 45ksh, and in 2019, the price jerked down again, this time to 28ksh.

This price volatility and slow payments are among the reasons why so many Kenyans regard picking coffee as synonymous with punishment: one uber driver who regularly drove me to nearby coffee farms for interviews would visibly grimace as he would share unpleasant memories when his schoolteachers would send miscreant children to pick coffee cherries for classroom misdemeanors (anonymous, personal interview, 1 May 2019). When I asked a Kenyan woman who grew up on her mother's coffee farm and was, at the time of our interview, working on her master's degree at University of Nairobi, "Would you ever be a coffee farmer now?" Immediately she replied, "Oh no! Coffee has no money. It's not worth it. I want to invest in something that is sure to have a good return" (Cynthia Nkirote Muthuri, personal interview, 23 May 2019). An older Kenyan woman – now a respected professor at a Kenyan agricultural university – described that, as a young girl, growing up on a coffee farm in rural Kenya meant that she was expected to carry coffee to the factory. Back then, "I hated coffee," she told me. "When it was time to pick coffee, I would run away from home, because my father would take the money. Only years later did he give my mother trees so she could be registered, and then sell coffee under her own name" – meaning that only then could her mother receive her own money from the labour of her hands (Dr. Regina Mwangi, personal interview in Nairobi, 5 July 2019).

Many Kenyans were quick to describe the challenges of coffee's volatile prices and the delays for coffee wages:

- "I am yet to see that a farmer is happy [with prices] and can sustain coffee" even in speciality coffee market. But when she was growing up, "I think it had value at that

- time” and “coffee took me to school,” says a woman who asked to remain anonymous but has worked as a leader in Kenya’s coffee industry for 20 years (17 May 2019).
- “The prices are really low, and you cannot break even when 1 kilo of cherry gives between 30-50 ksh. You need at least 3x that to be comfortable,” says an older male coffee farmer who employs dozens of women to harvest his coffee (Nyage, personal interview, 5 October 2019).
  - “Women provide labour but do not receive the money” On payday, “men are first to reach the bank, then he might disappear for a week, drinking or other things” (Cynthia Nkirote Muthuri, personal interview, 23 May 2019).
  - “The prices in coffee can be really bad, and payments come faster in other crops than coffee, so the short term is better to many people. Also, the buni [lower quality coffee] is not worth the price of labour, especially when labour is already hard to find.” Government taxes and the high cost of fertilizer, fuel, agrochemicals also make coffee difficult. “People are leaving cash crops and going to horticulture, says one coffee estate co-owner (Purity Muriuki, personal interview, 9 October 2019).
  - Regarding the laws and policies that pertain to financing and credit for women, a female farmer expressed that “the talk is so sweet, but the action is not there”: this is why “women have to be creating opportunities for themselves” (“Deborah”, duo interview, 10 December 2020).

Amir Esmail Hamza, the chairman of the Tanzania Coffee Board, told me that “less than 2% of the value paid by the consumer goes back to African coffee farmers: so, it’s less than the price of a cup of coffee” (personal interview, 6 Nov. 2019). And as mentioned earlier in this chapter, I heard many stories of the joy coffee brought in the 1970s and 1980s “golden days of coffee”

when coffee income was plentiful, enough to “even” send all the girls to school, and in some cases, this remains true.

During the focus group I conducted with 42 women farmers in Nandi county, a significant amount of challenging, gendered social and household dynamics were shared. One younger wife says, “Coffee belongs to the man. Single mothers are lucky because they can keep the money and use it for whatever they need. But when you are married, everything is for the man.” As she said that, women start clapping, their passion rising, with more women gesturing to speak next.

The conversation in this meeting often focuses on children’s education. Often in Kenya, coffee farmers are only paid once, at most, twice, a year. One woman stated a reality I have heard from many others, that the paucity of cash, or delays in wages, hinders payment for children’s school fees or required school uniforms. Many women express frustration that it is “their” coffee money that sends their children to school, and that is why children need to understand where their education comes from: “Show your children after you get the money. Let the coffee money speak, so your children know,” says one mother. In some cases, even when the cash finally comes, some men then use it for beer or other pleasures rather than his family’s needs. Another female farmer says, “At the end of the year the money comes. The husband goes to get the money but stays in town.” She implies that since no one gets paid for coffee when they bring cherries to the mill, men will later go to pick up the cash, and women may never be able to access it. Another woman asks: “And what will you do for the children and their school fees when the man says there is no money?” The fact that school fees exist at all is another lingering effect of British colonialism, which instituted fees for Kenyan children to attend colonial schools. A middle-aged woman complains passionately, “The coffee money from us is taking the children to university, not the men.” This is among the reasons why women want their own financial

“independence” through their own coffee trees, registered in their name, so they can obtain their own wages from coffee.

Despite these realities, even women who came with cash to this meeting will not have the freedom to decide if she wants to buy certified coffee seedlings from Rosebella’s nursery today. First, they’ll need to go home and obtain permission from their husbands, and then return if he agrees. Sarah advises that this request must be done gently: “Buy coffee seedlings. Ask your husband gently, ‘just give me a little space,’ because you are buying it for him.” From one perspective, this is wise: too many farmers are duped by inauthentic products or hustlers. Some husbands worry about protecting family income. But too often, such control speaks to the social relations between men and women in cash crops, and is an example of one way that “long-standing socio-cultural attitudes [are] lagging behind” (Mitullah 2020: 174).

Later, after all the women have left, Rosebella and I sat by her fireplace. I ask her, “Since coffee brings the income, where would these farmers be without the coffee?” as I think of all the women who depend upon coffee income for their children’s education and their family’s daily bread. “Nowhere,” she tells me. “Coffee gives them independence. Coffee can be used to bring social change, and you can teach more productive farming methods. And we can mobilize. The women are up to the challenge.”

Rosebella provided specifics from 2019 when one pound of coffee had the potential to bring 60 Kenya shillings (ksh) per bag (60 cents USD), while the same amount of tea brought 20ksh (about 20 cents USD). “Why farmers keep doing coffee although it’s so time-consuming and hard?” I ask. “Coffee is scalable. It’s not as perishable as other crops. People say coffee is hard, but what is easy?”

Still, Kenyan despite new laws, traditional and customary policies make it harder than it needs to be for women, which may be another link back to coffee's history of colonialism with its racist and sexist impositions (cf. Chapter Three).

Under current neoliberalism, even when laws support women's legal equality with land or income, such as Kenya's 2010 constitution that clearly gives women the right to own land, cultural practices and customs continue to impede some women's rights. This matters because, in Kenya, land ownership is regularly a prerequisite for access to financial services, from owning a bank account to acquiring loans or credit, women may lack access to their own wages from farm labour (ICO 2018: 16-17). For this reason, "women are particularly disadvantaged as land ownership structures often prevent them from holding titles to land. This makes it more difficult for them to obtain credit" (Gressler 2002:35). In Kenya, "The making of the women and children to be the ones carrying out the farm work makes it look a punishment venture especially when the final income is not equally enjoyed by the husband who only participate actively at an advance stage of the value chain" (Ngeywo et al., 2016: 211).

Women face greater constraints than men in accessing financial services, such as legal restrictions, high transaction costs, lack of collateral, and an assumption of high risk as a result of their age and sector. Female youth face even more challenges in obtaining agricultural finance than their male counterparts (FAO 2011; AGRA 2015; Filmer and Fox 2014; Morris et al., 2015: 18). A 2015 study demonstrates that while "land and coffee are in the hands of male household heads" yet "coffee is a crop for the whole family"—and women and youth are the people who do the harvest work, assumed under the category of unpaid family labour, because "coffee is household activity" (Morris et al., 2015: 84).



These inequities are exposed through the gender gap in both paid and unpaid labour. In Africa and Asia, women still earn less than 23% than men do, on average. The World Bank (2012) defines jobs or employment as “activities that generate actual or imputed income, monetary or in kind, formal or informal.” By this definition, few women in coffee have secure work. As a widow, Hellen told me that if she picks coffee from morning to evening, she will receive 200ksh (\$2 USD) (Ngetung, personal interview, 6 February 2022).

As with my interviews, the literature also confirms that “coffee farming [is] as a form of punishment,” not only for youth, but also for women (Morris et al., 2015: 84). Corroborated with the life experiences narrated in the book *Coffee Time*, Mary Njeri Kinyanjui explains that “according to custom, a woman works on her husband’s farm if married or her father’s farm if unmarried” (Kinyanjui 2015: 6)—all as unpaid labour. Many rural women are forbidden to make decisions about their household’s income, even when spend so much time labouring for a crop like coffee. Many have never had money of their own, although they work long hours, farming both subsistence and cash crops—again, ongoing effects of the gendered coffee paradox.

Kenyan policies have made it exceptionally difficult for farmers, both men and women to be paid consistently, reliably, and swiftly. Stephen Vick, head coffee buyer and roaster at Nairobi’s African Coffee Roasters, explains this to me: “Kenya is one of the only coffee producing countries in the world that does not allow its farmers to sign forward contracts against coffee that has yet to be produced. Further, farmers cannot be legally paid for coffee cherries upon delivery at the coffee factories (washing stations)” (Vick, personal interview, 26 February 2020). Before any payment is made to a farmer, coffee must be first be milled, graded, and sold; farmers do not legally receive any money until after all these steps have taken place, which sometimes can take as long as a year. All these factors increase the difficulty for long-term direct

business relationships to exist between farmers and roasters. This is particularly problematic for women, who might never get paid at all.

Income disparity and low wages may affect the future of coffee production in Kenya—and I wonder who will be the next generation of farmers in the current situation? Many parents encourage their young adult children to leave agriculture in general, and particularly, not to stay in coffee. Ironically, it is profits from coffee itself that makes the education of youth possible, even sending many children to university. While the number of “youth” who actively choose to withdraw from coffee due to low prices is undocumented, many reports cite youth who attribute coffee’s infrequent pay, their inability to save income, and the uncertainty of the future (Leavy & Hossain 2014:19) as constraints. Is it any surprise that youth who have grown up as witnesses of their parents’ struggles to provide for their household due to an erratic, unpredictable market (Leavy & Hossain 2014:3) do not wish to remain in coffee—even as my younger adult participants told me (e.g. Cynthia Nkirote Muthuri, personal interview, 23 May 2019, and David Maguta, personal interview, 16 December 2019)? As the price of coffee continues to drop (Grabs 2019), women and youth may continue to turn to alternative, more profitable, and less laborious crops to grow, or they may renounce farming altogether or migrate for other employment opportunities. One study shared that “escaping a life as a subsistence farmer or farmer’s wife” motivates some young women to leave agriculture (Leavy & Hussain 2014:3). Given this, both women and youth engage “in alternative enterprises to earn income for their daily household livelihoods” besides coffee (Morris et al., 2015: 84).

Given this reality, Rosabella confirms this is why “for us, for now, the key is to be realistic: we want women to have enough money to feed their children and time to do their own things. Wages, for sure, we are addressing. They have an income now, I can assure you, they

shine, as you have seen. For them, earning 500 or a 1,000 is a big deal. They don't need a lot of cash flow; their main expenses are school fees and coal."

### **3. Time poverty: 'Coffee Pulls You in a Hundred Directions'**

Even if women are recompensated equitably, as one female estate manager-farmer told me, "Coffee Pulls You in a Hundred Directions' (Eva Muthuri, personal interview in Nairobi, 12 Dec 2019) – a challenge articulated by several research participants in this study.

From the focus group in Nandi Hills, a common refrain of many women was: "The wife has to do everything," showing a distinction between women who are wives compared to those who are single or widows. One female farmer laments that "We carry the burden of coffee, like giving birth. We are the ones who are doing the coffee so that the men come and rest and take a nap, while we are working up to 11 in the night."

This is not an exaggeration. Women farmer-mothers will begin working at 5am in the morning, first collecting firewood or gathering water, which they often do by foot. They are responsible for all domestic care: the cooking, cleaning the home, washing clothes by hand, and all the care of their children—and all the farm work. The farm is often—but not always—next to the home. Women are so busy with domestic duties that one woman summarizes, "We cannot even sit down to eat properly." Sarah confirms, "If you want coffee, you must show your husband you can manage the farm and the household together."

This challenge of gendered assigned roles, and time poverty, are linked. A female government official in Kenya, who focuses much of her work on coffee, confirmed the continued gender division of labour: "African men do not do manual work." She talked with me about what is expected for married women: "If the coffee and children don't do well, it's HER responsibility" and "if a family member is sick, she will also have the burden of caring for them"

(Anonymous, personal interview, 6 Nov 2019). As another female leader shared, “Some women have the responsibility of many children and fertility rates are very high. Women never have enough resources, due to the double burden. As a woman, you have no options and no support, because he [the husband] is not doing the housework. Women are living under the constant threat of doing something wrong” (Teopista Nakkungu, personal interview, 13 Feb 2020).

While financial poverty remains a challenge for many farmers, time poverty may be an even greater burden for women who are both farmers and mothers. The root causes of women’s “disempowerment” may have less to do with access to credit or training opportunities, and far more to do with time poverty and the triple burden of too much labour. Women bear the weight both of productive and reproductive labour, many more hours of unpaid labour than men do globally, bearing responsibility for work both in and outside of the home. While the exact difference in hours varies between countries, in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is estimated that women provide an average of four to six more hours of unpaid labour daily (Coffey et al., 2020). As a result, this lack of time may be one of the most significant barriers to women’s “empowerment.”

This challenge of women’s added time-burden has different names, but all indicating the same gendered challenge. For example, this was named “time poverty,” in a 2015 FAO report that articulated that women’s limited access to “labor-saving technologies, services and infrastructure, and in many regions, they also face mobility constraints” (Lyon et al., 2017: 318; Grassi et al., 2015). In a 2018 e-book, seventeen Brazilian authors note the “two shifts” that women face, or “double shift” of domestic tasks and professional jobs (Arzabe et al., 2018, Chapter 2). These authors cite a Portuguese text (Del Priore 2007) when they say that their book “argues that this has been the case for women since colonial times, in the sugar-cane and coffee plantations of the Brazilian Republican period” and that Brazilian women, on average, work 7.5

more hours per week than men (Arzabe et al., 2018, Chapter 2). Other studies confirm that the “double burden of care” faced by women globally continues in the twenty-first century (Himmelweit 2002; Lyon et al., 2017; Lyon 2011; ICO 2018; UN 1985), or in other studies called the “double workload” (Pineda et al., 2018:72).

One common phrase used in feminist studies is the “double burden,” which describes the tensions between paid labour outside the home (“productive labor”) and unpaid domestic labour (“reproductive labor”) within the home (Lyon et al., 2017:318) . This applies to women in agriculture who bear “a disproportionate share of domestic labor obligations” and “women often have less time to devote to agricultural production due to cultural expectations surrounding motherhood and their domestic labor obligations” (Lyon et al., 2017: 317), which may also include caring for sick or aging parents or in-laws.

Despite some global gains for women’s livelihoods, labour remains segregated at the household level by gender, and wage labour is not necessarily “offset by decreases in women’s domestic/caring work” leading women to spend more time devoted to domestic work, including care work (Lyon et al.,2017: 319). In contrast to men, women as mothers also experience a “reproductive tax” highlighted by feminist scholars (Kabeer 2015; Palmer 1995).

In most African societies, women work more hours than men because they take care of the household in addition to other labour market commitments (WB 2007); this was also confirmed by two different studies on different Indonesia islands, one which was a coffee study (Sumarti 2015; Imron & Satrya 2019). Another study shows that women in rural communities in Colombia, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, face inequality of care work and supervision of dependents, as compared to men (Rost et al., 2015), especially in rural contexts, which may include care for many children, elderly parents, or in-laws; some may be sick or

disabled (Svensson 1992: 150-61; UNESCO 2018). Under neoliberal feminism, paid work for cash remains the emphasis, while there remains less support for the gendered unpaid work that women do for their families in the domestic sphere, or community members. Care work continues to prevent female youth, compared to male youth, to staying in school from primary to secondary schools; girls face greater expectations to help their mother with caring for younger siblings and other household duties (Warner 2012).

Another layer of inequity with time is faced when the demands of productive and reproductive labour are combined with a third kind of labour: expectations of organizational governance and leadership expectations. Sarah Lyon, Tad Mutersbaugh, and Holly Worthen (2013) call this the “triple burden” for women farmers. While this term is not one that I heard used during my field work in Kenya, the concept is an appropriate summary of one negative effect of women-centred initiatives. This triple burden leads to “time poverty,” for in addition to women’s productive (often, underpaid) and reproductive (unpaid) responsibilities, women now have (unpaid) leadership responsibilities (Lyon et al., 2019: 318). This is a problem because these increases in organizational leadership are “often used as proxy measures for the somewhat intangible idea of empowerment” (Lyon et al., 2019: 43). This issue also reveals a class issue, because in the coffee sector, women who take leadership roles have higher socio-economic status based on their education or marriage with a husband who considers them as partners and equals, compared to many rural women who may not be married or have had the opportunity to finish primary or secondary schools based on factors including lack of money for school fees, care responsibilities within their parents home, or early pregnancy. As in Latin America, one study in Kenya corroborated: women only held 15% of leadership positions in coffee cooperatives although they had better repayment rate on loans than men (Morris et al., 2015: 78).

Gender-differentiated patterns of time also occurred as “women described themselves as having a significant degree of agency within their households. However, we found this does not translate into active participation in organizational governance” (Lyon et al., 2017: 324). Even at meetings themselves, women may not always feel comfortable voicing their opinions or speaking during meetings (Lyon et al., 2017: 324). In the study by Lyon et al., 2017, a female participant confessed that: “the women have more work and this isn’t taken into account. When the men rest they are all day in the hammock, we’re all day in the kitchen” (2017: 325). During one study of Mexico, when women were asked separately from men, they said they were in charge of coffee processing tasks (Lyon et al., 2017: 325). But when the researchers asked the men, they also reported “that they themselves performed this labor” (Lyon et al., 2017: 325). This is consistent with my field work in Kenya, where I would sometimes receive contradictory answers to the same question, depending on whom I asked, and if husbands were present.

These scholarly assessments were reinforced through my interviews with women who have worked with Kenyan coffee communities. For example, one non-profit founder and director in the USA, whose organization focuses on coffee communities, shared in our interview: “I see that what tends to happen is that [Global North] solutions for women completely ignore the burdens of women’s time and the double or triple burdens, even when the project is to give loans. But women don’t have time. During what hour of the day do women have time to start a business? Let’s just give them more labour for their labour! We try to increase women’s participation in the cooperation and other organizations, but are these just supposed to tick boxes for coffee buyers?” (Anonymous, personal interview, 8 Oct 2020).

When I asked Bridget Carrington, who served as the manager of specialty coffee exports and operations at C. Dorman Ltd.<sup>152</sup> in Kenya from 1992 until 2020, and who worked on Dorman's first "gender in coffee" projects, she confirmed that:

gender has been a pillar of most projects for the last ten years [2010-2020]. My first gender workshop was financed by Nestlé. It was all very political. The gender related projects had various components; ten years ago, the focus was on financial literacy and giving jobs to youth. The project also funded motorbikes and tried to set up nurseries. There was the goal for women's empowerment, for women to be more self-confident and try to get women to be more forceful. At that point the [Kenya] government had the new gender rule; they legalized the idea that 30% of the committees should be women. But women did not want to be on the cooperative committees! I do not know if that has changed, I think there are some women now [in 2020] on the committees. [...] But from all my travels around Kenya, women managers or women chairpersons of cooperatives, is still a minority. I see a lot of young people leaving cooperatives and trying to set things up as small estates" (Carrington, interview in Mombasa, 13 Feb 2020).

I asked Bridget, "Why would women not want to join the committees?" To summarize her detailed response, she explained that "A lot of the reason was self-confidence of women. Also, women do not have time generally. The committees would sit and ruminate all day. Even me, I have better things to do with my time than [to sit on committees]. Women felt they were

---

<sup>152</sup> C. Dormans is one of the earliest and biggest roasters and exporters in Kenya, now serving all East Africa through the Ecom Group. They now have a School of Coffee, which trains baristas and improve coffee service in Kenya's hospitality industry.



invisible but also, it's a male dominated society and women's place in the home and its still a culture of men spending money on beer that is earned by women." Bridget and I continued to talk about what has changed, and what has not changed, since the 1990s for women in Kenya. As we ended our interview, she asked me, "You have seen women carrying all the heavy loads? I have been in Kenya for 30 years now, and that really has not changed" (Carrington, personal interview in Mombasa, 13 Feb 2020).

As mentioned earlier in this section, having a processing station that is in the neighborhood and easily accessible to small-holder farmers, is essential but rare in Kenya. This is why Chepsangor pulping station—and its available for the community to access and use—is such an important shift. As Rosebella explained, "Sometimes women harvest their own coffee in morning and then they come and harvest ours in the afternoon." This addresses the issue of time also, to some extent, also addresses part of the challenge for wages (1 December 2023), because women no longer have to walk so far to carrying their cherries, giving more time to spend with their families.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The three gender gaps discussed in this chapter do not only exist in Kenya's coffee sector; they are evident throughout the coffee producing countries (setting the stage for the key implications explained in the Conclusion).

For example, on the issue of land: Teopista shared that in Uganda, "Land belongs to the men, and this is from the cultural values that focus on the boychild. You do not inherit as a girl or girlchild. Ladies do not have ownership. In some cases, it can be worse for married women. They don't have a say; they can be battered and sometimes there is no resource sharing. Even for some female headed, when a woman becomes a widow, some families grab the land. We have

so many cases where widows have been abused by relatives grabbing the land, but there are those widows who are in the other circumstances and have their land. Initially colonial regimes did not help to bring the women out” (Nakkungu, personal interview, 13 Feb 2020).

This isn't just a challenge in East Africa. Even in Brazil, coffee's largest producing country, gender inequity is an issue. As de Vita notes, “According to the latest census, 13% of coffee farms are female-owned. Now, considering the planted area, it is 9% of coffee production” (De Vita & Soares 2022). The gender gap in income distribution is also evident elsewhere. Even in Brazil, which remains responsible for at least 30% of the world's coffee, approximately 130 million (60 kg) bags of coffee, exporting more than 30 million of these, generating more than US \$2 billion per year, a study focused on women's livelihoods reveals that one-third of women in coffee earn the minimum wage or less (Arzabe et al., 2018).

As Teopista expressed, not only about her country of Uganda but in her work on gender equity throughout East Africa, “We need to appreciate that women have challenges of decision making in households. Because some have limited education, they are not always aware of their rights. So, in many cases they limited with no rewards and men take the proceeds.” These are among the reasons why “investments focusing on household income, without attention to its distribution within the household, are ineffective” (Anunu 2015:10). Empowerment initiatives in coffee need to focus beyond neoliberal market-led solutions and address deeply rooted political and cultural constraints in land, income, and time for women coffee growers, pickers, and producers at the farm level.

In Kenya, women can fight exploitation in various ways, but the perpetual need for women to resist is ironic given the global focus on gender equality, equity, and empowerment. It is against this backdrop that we see that despite empowerment rhetoric in the coffee industry,

women's labour in Kenya continues to be invisible or underpaid despite Kenya's reliance upon their labour and upon coffee itself. In Chapter Four, my field work has demonstrated what has *not* changed for women, because gendered constraints and discrimination remain deeply embedded in structures of injustice in gender gaps revealed through land, income, and time. These remain key barriers to "women's empowerment" and ongoing evidence of the gendered coffee paradox: that while "coffee depends on women," it still "belongs to the man." Given the systemic nature of these three challenges, neoliberal development "solutions" that ignore the lingering hangover of the colonial past will fail to close gender gaps. Solutions must address women's desires and needs by transforming the ongoing discriminatory structures of the coffee industry, both international, national, and local in the twenty-first century. While this Chapter has examined some challenges, it is now time to turn to Chapter Five, and the question of solutions: what is being done to address the gendered coffee paradox?

\

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### ‘Who are You Without a Group?’:

#### Women-Centred Initiatives that Address the Gendered Coffee Paradox

##### 5.1 Introduction

When postcolonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak asked, in her now-famous essay, “Can the subaltern speak?” (1988; 2010), she interrogated the ways in which people from former colonies – especially those with intersecting layers of barriers such as racialized women – are silenced in literary works and literary criticism. However, her argument about the ways that women do, or do not, speak out, and the ways that women are silenced in global discourse, can be applied to the ongoing challenges of the gendered coffee paradox, and the ways that many women working in the coffee industry have been excluded from equal benefits and participation in coffee’s patriarchal global value chain.

As I considered solutions that address the gendered coffee paradox, I recalled an insight from smallholder coffee farmer Hellen Ngetung: “We have to share the burden! Everything is done only by teamwork. Who are you without a group?” (Ngetung, personal interview, 13 Jan 2020). Considering all the gendered challenges discussed in Chapter Four – land, labour, and time – coffee remains the agricultural crop in Kenya with the potential to bring the most cash to smallholder Kenyan farmers – more than subsistence crops from maize to mangoes, as well as other beverage crops like tea. This is one reason why the private sector and several international non-profits focus on a coffee as a means of ‘empowerment’ for rural women. Furthermore, despite the bitter and violent colonial history, as discussed in Chapter Three, coffee can bring people together in mutually beneficial and enjoyable relationships, including international partnerships of solidarity, as I will demonstrate in this Chapter. While coffee can even bring

more “independence” to rural women at the household level, women do not work or act alone. In the examples provided in this chapter, women have come joined together internationally, throughout Kenya’s coffee supply chain, and through their communities. In some cases, I have observed throughout East Africa, coffee is the subject of joyful songs and a means of local transformation (Hellen Ngetung, personal interview, 6 February 2022; Rosebella Langat, personal interview, January 2020, December 2023).

Since governments have failed to address gendered inequities with actionable transformation in the coffee sub-sector, others have sought to fill some gaps. I see evidence in Kenya of ways that international NGOs, researchers, and business owners have followed Kabeer’s emphasis on empowerment as “the ability to make strategic life choices by those who were previously denied such an ability” (2015:406). These solutions showcase Rowlands’ distinctions of “power within” (psychological strength and personal self-confidence), “power with” (“the collective process of empowerment that necessitates support of peers and organizations”) and “power to” (individual agency to carry out decisions) as more equitable ways of doing business (Rowlands 1995, 1997; Lombardini et al., 2017: 16). In this Chapter, I demonstrate some ways Kenyan women have been, and continue to, use global and national opportunities to effect their own empowerment and the empowerment of other women. My field work reveals evidence of this through women’s global platforms, international initiatives, feminist methodologies, and local businesses that have focused on addressing the global gendered coffee paradox (although they do not call it by this phrase). In this Chapter, I examine three specific examples: (1) the International Women’s Coffee Alliance; (2) Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology; and (3) Point Zero Café in Nairobi.

I agree with Kabeer, who prefers “gender justice” as a more robust phrase than “women’s empowerment” (2012:217; cf. Chapter Two), in part, because “empowerment” seems to offer an “allure of optimism” as well as “normative power” (Cornwall & Brock 2005:1044). Empowerment interventions too often “presume[s] a set of hierarchical and oppositional relationships between men and women” (Cornwall & Rivas 2015:403), which is a key reason why I argue that “accompaniment” may be a more sustainable approach to address the complexities of the gendered coffee paradox, especially for Global North coffee non-profit organizations and businesses who wish to work with and buy from female coffee producers.

Although the first two initiatives featured in this chapter were not created by Kenyan women, my research participants do not regard the leadership or programs as evidence as top-down impositions. To the contrary: in both cases, participants stated that sufficient flexibility is built into the initiatives that provide participants options about the ways they wish to engage within the larger structures, or to make desirable applications according to their diverse situations. I witness Kenyan women using these platforms and opportunities to network and create change for themselves and their communities—both men and women, boys and girls. While changes in land ownership or at the policy level will take more time and concentrated effort (Rosebella Langat, personal interview, 1 December 2023; Wangeci Gitobu, personal interview, 4 December 2023), collectively these three initiatives are positive agents of change for women in various parts of Kenya’s coffee sub-sector.

Certainly, neoliberal elements, methods, or goals are evident in these initiatives to varying extents, appropriated and incorporated the rhetoric of ‘women’s empowerment.’ This leads me to consider that however beneficial these have been and may continue to be, a key challenge remains. None of these programs—as currently conceived—dismantle the drivers of

structural or political inequalities (Lyon et al., 2019: 45; Hickel 2014:1368) that created and contribute to the gendered coffee paradox. As feminist scholars have been asserting for decades, women farmers face challenges that are “deeply rooted and structural and need to be addressed through the redistribution of productive assets, such as land and inputs, and by the redirection of state services to cater better to the needs of women farmers” (Lyon et al., 2019: 45; cf. also Boserup 1970; Agarwal 2014; Kanyamurwa et al., 2013). In addition, as Jason Hickel observes in the context of neoliberal globalization, too often “policies justified on the basis of women’s empowerment – such as expanding access to the labour market and to credit – often end up placing women in new forms of subservience as workers, consumers and debtors” (Hickel 2014:1356; cf. my Chapter Two).

Despite the tensions and continued challenges, the point that I hope will come through this chapter is ways that some Kenyan women, including rural smallholder farmers and small business owners, are using coffee as a medium through which they exercise their agency for collective change, both with other female stakeholders in the Kenyan coffee sector, as well as in international networks of “women in coffee.” My field work demonstrates that Kenyan women are not waiting for governments or international development organizations to effect their empowerment. Kenyan women have been using the momentum of these platforms to speak up, and out, to “actively exercise choice,” as Kabeer suggests is necessary (2005:14). Time will tell if these household and community efforts will lead to changes in Kenya’s national policy, or to international transformation of coffee’s unjust trading structures, as discussed throughout this study.

## 5.2 The International Women's Coffee Alliance and women's networks

I begin by examining the International Women's Coffee Alliance, because as a global non-profit and international network, it reflects Hellen's insight: "We have to share the burden! Everything is done only by teamwork. Who are you without a group?" (Hellen Ngetung, personal interview, 13 Jan 2020). From the global perspective in coffee, such teamwork is taking place through the International Women's Coffee Alliance, a non-profit organization that organizes women in coffee-producing countries into a network of independent organizations, called IWCA Chapters, of which there are now 33 chapters representing 33 countries around the world, and more than 16,000 women (IWCA n.d.). The IWCA is an example of encouraging "power within," encouraging women's personal self-confidence, and "power with" as "the collective process of empowerment that necessitates support of peers and organizations" (Rowlands 1997; Lombardini et al., 2017: 16).

The truth of Hellen's observation for rural women ("we have to share the burden") has been long proven by feminist scholars. The possibility for future social change lies in engagement of so-called "third-world women" with women's movements around the world, which, according to Mohanty, are particularly strong in the Global South and can lead to transformative changes (Mohanty 2003:11). In *Globalizing Women: Transnational Feminist Networks*, Valentine Moghadam's suggestions for future change include the creation of strong partnerships and solidarity between movements, such as "one between feminism and labor—that is, between the social movement of women and social movement unionism—along with other elements of the global justice movement" (205: 197).

As Kenyan scholar Winnie Mitullah observes, women's networks are essential for women who "largely remain marginalized from decision making institutions and processes" (Mitullah



2020: 175). This was reflected during my focus group in Nandi county, and several times in my interviews, from Kenyan women in coffee across intersectional differences of age, geography, class, or marital status. Particularly in rural areas, the roots of “a patriarchal culture and associated practices” run deeper and “a large percentage of the population [are] unaware of the many policies, legislation, and structural changes” taking place in urban centres of Kenya (Mitullah 2020: 175).

The IWCA began in 2003, in the last decade, it has been gaining momentum in its global reach to promote “women in coffee.” What started as a trip to Nicaragua and Costa Rica by two female, American coffee professionals, Karen Cebreros and Kimberly Easson, led them become co-founders of a global, grassroots organization centred on the possibility for women in coffee-producing countries to organize with other women from within and beyond their own countries. Although since 2004, the IWCA is a registered 501C(3) non-profit, incorporated in California, USA, it does not impose requirements or restrictions upon each country chapter regarding their goals and activities. In 2005, the first official chapter in Costa Rica quickly sparked other central American women in coffee to create their own chapters, which later led expanded to South America, Africa, and Asia.

In each case, coffee-producing women formed their own groups, led by their own local leaders. In Brazil, for example, as the world’s largest coffee producing country, the creation of the IWCA chapter in 2011 fueled Brazilian women create a chapter that would pioneer significant advances regarding promotion of gender equity in the coffee chain, which included the first ever eBook focused on Brazilian women in coffee, published in Portuguese and English. Titled “Women in Coffee in Brazil” (2017), the book was written by 13 authors and more than forty Brazilian researchers, comprising mostly women, all who volunteered their time and

writing, from 17 institutions (Arzabe et al., 2018). This is an example of the ways that local IWCA chapters create a network from within their national and local contexts, of their own country's women leaders, who work together to address their specific concerns and can gather significant collective resources or data that they could not have accomplished independently.

As time passed and the global network grew to more than two dozen chapters, the IWCA moved to a staffed organization and hired its first Executive Director in 2019. Now with a board, staff, and a strategic plan, in 2023, IWCA celebrated 20 years of networking and coalition building with 33 chapters representing 33 countries around the world. Each chapter maintains its own independent vision and goals, and they are all women-led, "united by the shared mission to empower women across the global coffee industry" (IWCA n.d.).

Despite IWCA's advancement of women-led networks, the organization has a long way to go in its mission to achieve challenges for women in coffee "through education and advocacy to ensure an equitable coffee industry" (IWCA 2023: 1). "Empowerment" is a popular word in their 2023-27 strategic plan, their marketing materials, and prominent on their website's homepage: "When women are empowered, communities thrive" (IWCA n.d.). One of their seven key values is "empowerment" stating that "the IWCA supports actions that strengthen women to realize their full potential," but there is no discussion of what this means. Nor are intersectional challenges addressed on their website and considering that most of the chapters are formed in, what the World Bank still calls "least-developed countries" where the gender index is lower, this is a glaring omission (World Bank, n.d.). Still, however vaguely "empowerment" may be for the IWCA, they have been actively involved in global conferences<sup>153</sup>, building awareness of the

---

<sup>153</sup> In many of the conferences I attended (see Appendix Two), IWCA leadership or staff have been present. For several of the conferences held in Kenya, women had a booth as a means of connection and as a place to give away samples of green or roasted coffee to potential buyers.

gender gaps for women in coffee, and creating partnerships with respected intragovernmental organizations like the International Coffee Organization or specialty coffee organizations like the Cup of Excellence.

I now turn to specifically look at the case of Kenya’s IWCA chapter, and the newly formed chapter that has renamed themselves as the “Association of Women in Coffee Industry” (AWCI), listed as the 32<sup>nd</sup> country to join the IWCA global chapter network.<sup>154</sup> The AWCI has more than 40 members with women in leadership from various parts throughout Kenya’s coffee supply chain (IWCA 2022b).<sup>155</sup> This was a conscious decision on the part of the organizing committee, as the president of AWCI Josphine Njoki shared with me:

We wanted to harness all the synergies as opposed to just saying, it's only for farmers, because then you're just in your own world of farming, without realizing what happens elsewhere [in the coffee chain]. When you bring all these women together, it's really quite a powerhouse.

The purpose of this “powerhouse” is to share information and networking opportunities.

Josphine used her own context as an example: “There's so much information that needs to be shared across by the women because, for example, I’m trying to break into the trade world as an exporter, and I need a lot of support from other people. So that’s when someone like Nancy [in finance] comes in, or the women who work in logistics” (Josphine Njoki, personal interview, 6 December 2023).<sup>156</sup> I asked her about the importance she puts on being women, as opposed to other intersectional identities, to which she replied: “The challenges that we face as women are

---

<sup>154</sup>Previously, there was another IWCA Kenya chapter, but that former group was abolished and the AWCI has taken its place.

<sup>155</sup>Founding members included several women that I had interviewed before the chapter was formed in February 2022, including Rosebella Langat, Gloria Wamaiwa Gummerus, Cecilia W. Kathurima, Eva Muthuuri, and others.

<sup>156</sup>All quotes from Josphine Njoki in this Chapter derive from our personal interview (6 December 2023).

quite different than men. As you know in Africa, we are a patriarchal society. A lot of things go the male way in terms of the decision making, in terms of the ownership in terms of finances. But women, again, support each other very much. In the process of sharing their stories and sharing their experiences, there's a lot of learning that takes place.”

The new Kenya chapter is young, with the mission to “take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of coffee value chain” (AWIC 2023), so it remains to be seen how they will achieve their goals. However, one way that both the IWCA and the AWCI addresses the gendered coffee paradox is by making visible the women whose work and contributions are the backbone of the coffee supply chain in Kenya. One of Josphine’s roles as president is to advocate for women’s contributions in several other contexts within Kenya and in online webinars; for example, she gave a public talk during the leadership summit at the IWCA conference in Ethiopia, which highlighted some ways that the chapter is bringing women together from various parts of Kenya’s coffee supply chain (October 2023; cf. Appendix II).

AWCI has identified several strategic objectives to guide their efforts: market access and logistics; facilitating industry connections and knowledge sharing; and access to financing. What is notable about their three goals are the ways in which they seek first to capture value through neoliberal mechanisms of market access and finance. I asked Josphine about this, after listening to her presentation in Ethiopia (Appendix II), inquiring why all the Kenya’s chapter solutions focused on economic issues such as access to the market, credit, income? Is this is strategic and intentional? Josphine’s answer was revealing, especially considering its consistency with neoliberal solutions represented in the coffee literature (cf. Chapter Two):

For a very long time, women just provided the labour to the coffee value chain; they really never get to enjoy the fruits of that labour. Our idea is to have them

obtain more ownership. If we have more empowered women, especially financially, it really lifts the family. Then you can be assured of the kids getting food and education—and it's important that financially, women are able to take care of ourselves.

I also asked Josphine if she believes IWCA is a top-down organization. Her reply was an immediate “no,” and she expanded with this insight:

Our AWCI founders decided that we would be an “association,” because yes, we are part of IWCA, but we are also our *own* organization: the Association of Women in the Coffee Industry, Kenya. For us, this is not only that we're a ‘branch’ of the global. Even within our members, some of them might not know about IWCA Global, because our activities are focused on our local people. Maybe 80% comes from the ground and the activities that we do among ourselves. Our activities are local. If IWCA were a top-down organization, it would not really survive. Because all of us [women around the world] are coming from very different perspectives. For AWIC, we formed ourselves first, even before we connect to the to the to the globe.

Josphine's perspective on the ways that Kenya focuses its attention offers one point of view; it would be a fascinating analysis to interview the 32 other chapter leaders and consider the challenges and solutions of IWCA's structure.

From my analysis of IWCA global, three gaps emerge. First, there is no internal funding for the labour and leadership of coffee-producing women who organize and convene each local chapter (organized by titles such as President, Vice President, Secretary) thus promoting an example of Lyon's “triple burden” (Lyon et al., 2017). Chapters must raise their own external

funding for program activities or staffing support, which varies by country chapter. With few exceptions such as Honduras, governments and private sector funding, despite all the claims of support for “women’s empowerment,” have not, to my knowledge, supported salaries or labour of local leaders. The global organization and the national leadership takes time and equity-building skills. Chapter funding depends on the work of individual staff members, most who are volunteers without financial remuneration, thereby again putting a neoliberal emphasis on women to individually find their own funding sources. While such organizing and networking are essential elements to the work of the IWCA both international and national, leadership should be compensated for their time and expertise in building equitable supply chains (cf. Lyon et al., 2017). Despite the active attempts of IWCA global leadership and full-time work of dozens of women, this work continues as unpaid labour, thus perpetuating Waring’s idea that unpaid labour remains outside of economic frameworks (Waring 1988) and Lyon et al.’s argument that leadership and volunteer work may be a “triple burden” for women (Lyon et al., 2017). While the specialty coffee industry gives some level of financial support through breakfast fundraising event during annual conferences, there is need for consistently reliable financial support for this network of women leaders.

Second, a challenge of the network rests in the very question of which women have access to this network, whether in the local or national context, and especially in the international context. For both gaps, this is why intersectionality is an important dimension to consider. Despite advances as women throughout Africa, Latin America, and Asia who have used this network to advance women’s contribution to the coffee industry, it is questionable if less educated and lower-class rural coffee picking-women, migrant women, and single women who are head of households, have time, knowledge, access, or childcare, have equal access to the

network. In both producing or consuming countries, can lower class, rural women access this network to the same extent of middle or upper-class, educated women? This answer will differ according to country-context, but it is a possible gap for the IWCA to examine.

Third, there is no global funding for gender-based research. Formerly, there existed an IWCA “Research Alliance” of members who worked – again unpaid work on a volunteer basis – toward increased awareness and funding for much-needed research regarding gender and coffee. Formerly, one data-gathering initiative of the IWCA, focused on three coffee-producing countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Rwanda), which estimates more than 135,000 female coffee producers in these three countries. As already noted in this dissertation (cf. Chapter One), scant gender-aggregated data remains a problem for coffee-producing countries. In October 2023, I confirmed at the IWCA conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, that there is no funding mechanism planned to address these research gaps, although IWCA lists research as one of their strategic goals in their 2023-27 vision (IWCA 2022a), as I confirmed in a private conversation with an IWCA global leader. Neither the Kenyan Coffee Board, nor the Kenyan chapter, has produced or sought to organize any such funded, data-gathering or women-centred research initiatives.

Still, if women’s participation in leadership is necessary for women to benefit from membership in organizations and promote business skills, there may be a positive domino effect as more women take leadership positions, because they “may be more likely to develop and maintain programs and policies that enhance gender equity which, in turn, could help reduce the gender agricultural gap” (Lyon et al., 2017: 317-8).

### **5.3 Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology**

Even as IWCA highlights the need for global advocacy and networks, there is also need for mutually beneficial relations within the household (Millard 2017; Anunu 2015). If we want to take seriously the idea of “women’s voice” as one way to think about transforming the discourse of “women’s empowerment,” then the household level is a key place to start.

One methodology that addresses the family unit is the Gender Action Learning System, abbreviated as GALS, co-developed by sociologist Linda Mayoux, and inspired by the Participatory Action Learning Methods from International Development (Mayoux & Mackie 2007; Mayoux 2012). GALS is a household methodology that promotes and supports agricultural families working in a variety of supply chains. Since so many small holder farmers – especially female farmers – never had the chance to finish primary or secondary school, Mayoux’s methodology has been particularly distinctive and effective. It employs a pictorial strategy to help adult farmers articulate their goals and create budgets through pictures instead of words. Current programs or methods that bifurcate men and women may hinder the advancement of women by pitting them against men, with whom she needs to work with, not against, for transformative change. Given the sensitive and personal relationships within rural households and communities, there is need for “gender in coffee” programs not only to focus on “women in coffee” but on families and on ways to address the underlying power imbalances between men and women (ICO 2018:28). Development programs may put women in difficult positions if her intersectional vulnerabilities and household relations are not respected.

While the GALS methodology was not created by African women, it was created with the participation of rural actors in a variety of contexts and household power dynamics (Mayoux 2012). According to Mayoux, GALS became systematized as a way to promote women’s rights,



in 2007 funded under Oxfam Novib's Women's Employment Mainstreaming and Networking (WEMAN) programme (Mayoux 2012:322). As the author explains, "GALS was then adapted specifically for mainstreaming gender justice in value chain development from August 2009 as part of a joint IFAD and Oxfam Novib (ON) pilot project in Uganda, focusing on coffee, maize, fruits, and beans" (Mayoux 2012:322). While some may criticize GALS for using language of governance feminism (such as "gender mainstreaming"), the methodology is created and designed for change to take place from the individual and household level first.

Among its strengths is its adaptability to different contexts and household arrangements, and it has become a popularly used method among dozens of coffee cooperatives and groups in East Africa. In fact, a large coffee cooperative in western Uganda, named Bukonzo Joint Cooperative (BJ), was one of the GALS pilot sites (Mayoux 2012). When I visited BJ in 2015 before I began my PhD studies, I learned that Mayoux and BJ leaders had co-created the GALS approach to be adapted and applied to small-holder coffee farmer households. Its transformative method has empowered adult women in patriarchal rural agricultural communities and families. This is among the reasons why GALS has been well-regarded in specialty coffee, and BJ has won international awards for its gender equity and sustainability practices.<sup>157</sup> In 2015, I witnessed the application of GALS at BJ from a female coffee farmer, Grace, and a GALS champion, Annette; on a 2016 trip to Rwanda, I observed the full training and again saw the ways that farmers could adapt and implemented its teachings within different rural contexts.

---

<sup>157</sup>Bukonzo Joint Cooperative (BJ) is member-managed coffee cooperative. "As part of the IFAD/ON value chain project it focused on coffee and maize chains. In July 2012 BJ had 3,237 members: 2,399 women and 838 men, all of whom were using GALS in some form. BJ has organizational regulations on gender balance in senior as well as other positions on the staff and the member board. It also gives preferential conditions to women members in share dividends and savings and credit" (Mayoux 2012: 323). In 2015, I attended the award ceremony in Seattle, WA, USA, when they won the Specialty Coffee Associations' international "sustainability award."

However, during my PhD field work in Kenya, despite my efforts in 2019-2020, I was unable to find out if GALS had been used in Kenya, and if it had, was it as effective as a tool for transformation that I had seen in Uganda and Rwanda?

Thanks to a networking event at a coffee conference in Rwanda 2023, I met the Kenyan man responsible for bringing GALS to Kenya, Peter Ndambiri. He invited me to visit Meru county, a rural county about 225 kilometres northwest of Nairobi, to meet farmers who are “GALS Champions,” or leaders who had been trained themselves and now train others. There I met Johnson Muriuki Mugira, Doreen Gaichugi Arimi, Rhoda Gakii Muthuuri, three smallholder coffee farmers and GALS champions, who welcomed me and told me their stories of transformation due to the methodology.

We gathered in a small room that functions as an office and meeting place on Johnson’s property. Bringing a set of papers from another room, Johnson started by showing me his “Vision,” a picture of a wide road that moves upward, with steps that remind me of Jacob’s ladder. “This is my Vision Journey,” he shared, and articulated in each picture all the past challenges, the present reality, and the future goals, all of which he narrated in specific detail. “We need something bright to represent your vision, so here we draw the sun. It’s so bright that can illuminate to everybody!”

He continued, with the fervour of preaching a sermon: “Now let us come now to the real thing. Before you have the vision, you have a place where you start, your current situation. For me, my vision is I want to have a good house, and educate my children, within a certain period of time.” As Johnson pointed to the bottom of the page, he said, “This is now the current situation, where I was before I started the vision.” On top of the page, he showed his drawing: “here are the things we have that can give us a chance to achieve the vision; we call them opportunities.”

Then, pointing to the bottom of the page, he noted: “here we have the challenges [under the journey], and from there, we have the milestones so that we can reach our vision. At the beginning, I had coffee, a small house, one cow, a banana tree, a few chickens. We have to look at all the opportunities around us: we have sun, rain, we don’t lack rain here; we have tap water; when rain falls, I can do the irrigation; I have the [coffee] factory, and I can take my coffee there. I have a farm; I have family; I have stones [for the house].” During this speech, he pointed to each picture as he described the ways he can utilize what he has to help him, and his family achieve their vision. Before GALS, Johnson said that he never involved his five daughters in coffee. Then, through the training, he realized that he is growing older, and “what if I can’t keep up with the coffee?” As a result, he now involves them, using the coffee profits to send them to school.

On the next page, Johnson shows a picture of a “Gender Balance Tree,” another pictorial tool in the methodology. The picture shows a large tree, with two people as individuals the husband and wife, forming a more solid tree trunk when they contribute equally to the health of their tree. Johnson explained, “In GALS, we teach about equity, and through the topic of gender balance, we will learn and train people on realizing the potential women has in the family success. We have realized, before, women were not taken seriously. People thought women were for the kitchen, but now we realize women have potential to do what men can do and even better. Through Gender Balance Tree, and we can help people understand this.”

Some critics may view GALS as liberal or neoliberal feminist impositions from the Global North, but in every case that I have witnessed – throughout Rwanda, in Uganda at BJ, and now in Kenya – that is not the experience shared by my research participants. Given the high rate of domestic violence within African households in general and in Kenya households in particular

(Wado 2021), the main aim of the GALS process is gender justice and women's human rights as stated in CEDAW, rather than improved quality or productivity of crops per se (Mayoux 2012:329). It is a flexible but “structured community-led empowerment methodology” that works first with women and men as individuals and then moves forward with them in households or communities, based upon Participatory Action Learning System (PALS), developed from 2002 by the author for livelihood development and participatory impact assessment” in rural Uganda (Mayoux 2012:322). While the methodology has been adopted by many international development agencies such as Oxfam (Empower@Scale 2023) or Solidaridad (Solidaridad 2022), and intragovernmental agencies from the World Bank (Jerneck & Rallo 2020) to the United Nations (Mayoux & IFAD 2020; CIGAR 2023), the adaptability and flexibility of its methodology is perhaps what continues to lead to its transformation in rural households, like the ones I have witnessed.

From what I have seen from my field work, the methodology's encouragement to promote dialogue between couples is another key part of the possibility for long-lasting transformations. As Doreen confirmed, “the Tree helps you understand the current situation and work together with your husband. It is about the dialogue, you discuss, and you draw your household goals together.” Doreen continued, remembering that in 2019, the situation in her family “wasn't good,” and thanks to GALS:

Together with my spouse, we decided to form a vision journey. We decided to sit together, and we analyzed our current situation. We had various visions. You can have many visions, but you give them priorities. We had two children by that point, and my husband and I had never had a conversation about our goals. We decided to put our target on a good house. We had a cow and an incubator to wash

the chicks and we used that to start saving. Now we have a new home, and our children are in school.

When I asked if she would be able to send her children to school without the coffee, she immediately replied, “No, coffee is what sends them all to school, coffee is good! We are replanting old trees and hope to have more.”

Turning another page on his paper board, Johnson showed the final pictorial tool, ‘the Multi-lane Highway,’ and said, “This marks the progress of my goals thus far. Each goal is in its own lane, marked with circles.” The lane and the circles remind me of a bowling alley with organized lanes moving upward on the page. As Johnson, Rhoda, and Doreen in turn tell me about their “highways,” they all wore proud grins, sharing highlights of how both coffee and the GALS methodology have combined to transform, not only their household and family dynamics, but also the productivity of their coffee farms. Rhoda smiled when she told me that her husband was watching their child, even cooking dinner, so that she could join our meeting today. This is something he never would have done in the past, as she declared, “GALS has really changed us!”

This group’s passion for education for themselves and their community feels palpable, especially through their focus on their children’s education. Johnson, Rhoda, and Doreen all expressed the goal that their younger children will finish primary school children and continue to finish secondary school, or for secondary school children to go on to earn university degrees. For Johnson, this was already in progress, as his three older daughters are attending, or have already finished university, while his younger two daughters are in primary school.

Doreen expressed that her life also improved for the better because now she has, for the first time, a savings account in her name: “GALS transformed my relationship with my husband:

now he even is drinking less,”<sup>158</sup> an outcome also expressed in the literature about BJ (Mayoux 2012). As Doreen said with a smile, “And the money from our coffee trees goes toward our shared goals expressed on the Gender Balance Tree.” It is evident that her short and long-term goals are clear, measurable, ambitious—all told in the story of the pictures –designed to improve their personal lives, their family life, and their farms. As Rhoda shared, “The ones who are not going with GALS in this area, you can see the difference.” Doreen agreed, “we are spreading the gospel of GALS so that everyone can benefit as we have.” So many farmers I interviewed shared a similar goal—how to use coffee to make their, and their children’s lives, better?

In this way, GALS addresses the gendered coffee paradox, because it seeks to address an underlying, systemic household imbalance between husbands and wives, not by dictating a particular outcome, but by its focus on facilitating conversations that can lead to shared transformations between husbands and wives, together. The methodology supports the family and community goals, not by isolating one leader or one household member as a problem, but instead finding shared solutions toward advancing a united vision. For this reason, even though GALS was created by a scholar from the Global North, it is a methodology that focuses, not on the individual as do other neoliberal ‘solutions,’ but upon empowering farmers from the bottom-up within the context of household and community-led development.

#### **5.4 Point Zero Café in Nairobi**

As a final example for Chapter Five, I offer a local example, one that connects women in coffee from farm to cup, and this is Point Zero Café, co-founded and co-owned by two Kenyan women, Andrea Moraa and Wangeci Gitobu. When I first interviewed them in early 2020, Point Zero had

---

<sup>158</sup> Mayoux confirms (2012) this as a repeated experience of women among rural East African households that have engaged in the GALS methodology.

two locations (Moraa, personal interview, 4 February and 12 March 2020; Gitobu, personal interview 12 March 2020).<sup>159</sup>

As former schoolmates in Kenya's schools, Andrea and Wangeci first met in Kenya's standard grade 5, ultimately completely secondary school together. Wangeci told me that as she grew up during the "coffee boom" of the 1980s, it was thanks to the coffee profits from her parents' coffee farm that enabled her parents to send her to school. The two women lost touch after secondary school graduation but reunited years later after both had finished university and started different careers. Andrea was living in England, working as an assistant manager at Starbucks and at a travel agency. Wangeci had studied law and been working as an insurance broker for 17 years in Kenya.

After Andrea returned to Kenya in 2009, she was invited to give a coffee-focused session at the Worlds of Indian Ocean Festival, where different countries boasted various "treasures" from Africa. Coffee was featured as one such treasure, and Andrea gave a presentation that centred on the aromas of coffee, serving coffee that many Kenyans drank that day for the first time. By this point, Wangeci had resigned from her corporate job. After Wangeci and Andrea reconnected, they talked about how "Kenyans need to drink coffee," and what role they could play in the coffee sector. As Wangeci narrated to me, "I considered, wait, I am from a coffee producing country and why is no one focused on local consumption? Andrea was so good at it, so we thought, why can't we do this here in Kenya?" Andrea wanted to "pass on the passion" in Kenya, which she had witnessed at Starbucks in England, when, in the 1990s, Kenyan coffee beans would "fly off the shelf."

---

<sup>159</sup> This section is based on my interviews with Moora and Gitobu, as well as dozens of personal interactions at their café, workshops, and formal meetings in Nairobi, after I first met them in fall 2019. These include formal interviews as cited in my appendix, as well as several meetings, planned and unplanned, that include interactions at their café from fall 2019 to December 2023.

In 2011, they received a phone call from a man who wanted to restore the Nairobi Art Gallery as a center point for Nairobi culture. Despite its concentration of insufferable traffic and inadequate parking, he wanted to include a coffee shop there for Museum guests, and Wangeci thought since this is a government institution that it was “time to take the plunge.” They wrote a proposal and eventually received approval. As Andrea reflects in hindsight, “it was a miracle! We were nobodies, and we didn’t have deep pockets.”

When they registered the business as “Point Zero” in 2013, Wangeci said, “No women we knew were running a coffee business.” Andrea confirmed, “We wanted to share coffee and make an impact on coffee quality and coffee drinking in Kenya.” Wangeci continued, “It wasn’t that we locked men out. We saw that in the UK, people would rave about Kenyan coffee, yet Kenyans didn’t have any sense of pride about our own coffee. This comes from not consuming quality coffee.” Wangeci knew that “people will say, coffee is too expensive for Kenyans; they won’t pay for it,” Wangeci continued. “But I really don’t believe that it is true. Alcohol is more expensive, yet Kenyans drink it.” In 2015, their café finally materialized at the National Gallery in centre of downtown Nairobi, adjacent to Nyayo House, an always-bustling, crowded immigration centre.

“Even at that time, you couldn’t make money in coffee,” Andrea remembered. “I kept thinking, why don’t farmers get recognized?” They decided to purchase, roast, and sell only Kenyan coffee, deciding to name each coffee according to its estate. “That wasn’t being done at the time in Kenya,” Andrea confirmed for me, “and that provided something that we would do different, to have that level of traceability and storytelling. After all, all coffee is from somewhere! We want to give it their due name.” Wangeci explained further: “We have a board [in the café] of tasting notes and very often people are coming in, reading the board, and seeing



that the coffee is from where they or their family members are from. So many Kenyans have coffee memories, and it's very exciting when we say, 'this cup is grown from Nyeri,' and someone says, 'wow, that is where my grandfather lived.' ”

Still, a plethora of challenges emerged for these two Kenyan small business co-owners, mostly in the areas of finances: challenges with the banks, trying to obtain credit, lack of sufficient profits to keep themselves and their staff afloat. In 2019, they received some encouragement when invited to attend a workshop in Meru county, hosted by SWITCH Africa Green, a programme developed and funded by the European Union, implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), coordinated in each country by a national technical committee, with the goal to promote sustainable development in Africa.

The Point Zero co-owners decided that Wangeci would attend on their behalf, and it was there that she met Rosebella Langat, who at that time, was still relatively new to coffee farming. For Point Zero, the chance to buy coffee from Rosebella was far more than just a transactional business opportunity: it gave them “something possible for us to realize that we can tell stories of the coffee and have more transparency in Kenyan communities,” as Andrea summarized. Wangeci believes that “through Tulon Coffee, we can help open people's eyes,” to the possibility of Kenyan coffee.

COVID provided perhaps the biggest challenge, since both the Museum and Immigration offices shut down indefinitely, forcing Point Zero to shut down, too. Since the lease was up at the other café, COVID provided an added reason to permanently close. Selling roasted coffee to a few loyal corporate clients helped to keep Point Zero afloat during the 18 months of COVID-19 closures in Kenya. Once the hospitality sector started to reopen again in 2021, Andrea and Wangeci turned their attention to a new location that would be economically better for them,

desiring a location with more consistent tourists, with better parking, less traffic, and could attract local customers. After many months of persevering through logistical challenges, Point Zero was able to transfer its lease successfully from the National Gallery to a different national museum: the Karen Blixen House Museum. Their new café opened the summer of 2022 and remains open at the time of this writing (March 2024).

Andrea believes that it is a “happy coincidence” that their new café is established on a former coffee farm. Despite the complexities of Karen Blixen’s role during the British colonial era, Wangeci reflects that Karen Blixen was a “strong woman with grit” who “tried her level best and yet was never successful in coffee.” But she left her mark: “she did some good for the locales around her, by establishing a school, giving them some land and some health care” (Gitobu, personal interview, 4 December 2023). Rosebella confirms that now with the Point Zero café at the Karen Blixen Museum, “I was sorry about their closure during COVID at the National Gallery, but it’s a blessing in disguise, because now I can refer more people to her café,” because of its better location (Langat, personal interview, 4 December 2023).<sup>160</sup>

Point Zero has consistently offered both roasted whole bean coffee and brewed coffee for sale in their cafés – always from Kenya. One of their first direct sales was from Rosebella Langat at Chepsangor Hills Coffee Estate. Wangeci proudly praises Chepsangor: “We promote Rosebella’s coffee with good cause. It’s probably our best coffee to date of all the coffee we sell, and it keeps getting better and better, as she’s refining her process. We’re always proud to tell the story of Chepsangor” (4 December 2023). Though a relatively small amount of coffee, all three women expressed to me in separate interviews that their relationship is important and distinctive, compared with other roasters or farmers. Both parties expressed the element of trust regarding

---

<sup>160</sup> All quotes from Wangeci Gitobu and Rosebella Langat from this point forward derive from my individual interviews with them on 4 December 2023 and 1 December 2023, respectively.

financial credit, one that Wangeci said “we don’t get from anyone else,” as well as the honesty of their deliveries and business transactions: “Rosebella’s true to her word, and from day one, she said, I will always support you and we feel the same about her.”

This kind of relationship goes far beyond neoliberal market transactions, and it has turned into something deeper. When I asked Rosebella about her perspective of the relationship with Point Zero, she replied, “We really do help each other, because even the terms of trade, I know Wangeci, she’s a woman, and we were both beneficiaries of the Switch Africa project. I will give her the coffee, and she will pay me later. Same thing, she will trust me. It has become a relationship. One thing I know: I’m helping her build her business, and she’s helping me build my business. I don’t know if men think this way. It’s not a lot of coffee but it’s very important to us because it’s local consumption, so it has become to me a relationship that I know she’s supporting me and I’m supporting her, as a woman. Period.”

In this sense, Wangeci sees their relationship beyond an economic transaction: “Who knows? Beyond any of us becoming wealthy, what if our work can impact other women around Kenya?” It is this kind of spirit that, despite all my research and interviews, is unique compared to others in Kenya. As Wangeci thought about the future: “If the coffee industry is going to grow and be sustained, it would be amazing to see 100 little Point Zeros around the city and country. Kenyans in coffee growing areas also need to drink coffee, and even a small café could change things around. Younger Kenyans need more jobs. And Kenyan needs to consume more coffee and stop being so reliant on foreign markets.”

Point Zero is a small business, and given their past challenges, both Andrea and Wangeci hold other jobs as well. That these hard-working women cannot support their own families or employees from the café alone – reflecting another example of the ways that capitalism extracts

the maximum amount of labour from women. As Wangeci explains about Point Zero, “It becomes a bit humbling, because you have to deal with banks, and licensing boards, and the county, and you take a hit, because you see, ‘wait, I can’t do what?’ But I have a support system, so when I think I can’t do this anymore, someone will say, no, this is part of it, deal with it, and Andrea and I have just kept going.”

With a total of nine staff (including the two co-owners) that comprise six women and three men, I asked Wangeci about the reason for more women:

Women tend to have more staying power and won’t jump from one job to another as much as men. In the interviews, the tendency is that women come out stronger in their commitment to want to be part of a team. But, man or woman, our intention is to uplift whoever is on our team. Our current manager started off as a barista! We want to see them grow with us; hopefully they’ll go on and start their own businesses. We do this by sharing everything, including the budget, the revenue, the expenses, the income, so they know the legal, the accounting fees, the license fees: we’re teaching them how to run a business. We want to develop entrepreneurs.

When I asked Wangeci about Point Zero’s future goals, she replied, “We could create something powerful, but we would need support from government and others and to think about the box a little bit.” Despite all the ways this business supports women, Point Zero is also an example of the ways that the coffee sector needs to support female-led small businesses to empower women from farm to cup.

## 5.5 Accompaniment as an Alternative to Neoliberal Feminist “Empowerment”

Let us now turn to a potential alternative to “empowerment” for consideration among Global North importers, roasters, as well as intergovernmental and nonprofit development organizations with coffee projects. I advocate that “accompaniment” is a more robust alternative than “empowerment,” especially for international actors. The reason is because “accompaniment” is a more relational way forward to work together with women in coffee.

The principle of “Accompaniment,” rooted in Liberation Theory (Gutiérrez 1973), literally means “to walk beside or alongside another,”<sup>161</sup> and focuses on long-term relationships based upon mutual, empathetic action. The principle of accompaniment is growing in awareness due to its potential to inform service and advocacy with marginalized populations. The shift toward accompaniment is a move from “paternalistic, top-down charity to a more egalitarian, mutually respectful form of social and interpersonal engagement” (Pope 2019:147). While the practice of accompaniment has a history among faith traditions, especially Catholic and Jesuit contexts in Latin America,<sup>162</sup> I have not seen any studies that seek to apply accompaniment within the coffee industry in East Africa.

For example, in my hometown of Los Angeles, where racial and class divides lead some to join gangs, a Jesuit priest, Greg Boyle, began “Homeboy Industries,” which expresses the principles of accompaniment: “We stand with the demonized so that the demonizing will stop” (Boyle 2010: 190).<sup>163</sup> Other examples from the literature include Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), an organization founded in 1980 to address the challenges of refugees, such as those who fled

---

<sup>161</sup>“Accompany, v.” OED Online. December 2020. Oxford University Press.

<sup>162</sup> This partly grew from the context of the Pope Francis and his articulation of the ways in which accompaniment may provide context for service and advocacy during his address in July 2015 in Bolivia; cf. also the focus on what Catholics call “Integral Humanism” (Maritain 1973; Pope Francis 2015; Pope, S. 2019).

<sup>163</sup> My familiarity with Homeboy Ministries and a visit to their headquarters may be the first time I saw the principle of ‘accompaniment’ in action.

from Viet Nam, by “welcoming asylum seekers, listening to their stories, forming friendships with them when possible, and helping them to apply for refugee status,” or in Cambodia, where they focus on “vocational training for people damaged by landmines and cluster bombs, rural development projects for the poor, and the programs for peace and reconciliation” (Pope 2019:137-8).

In all these examples a focus on listening is central, as summarized by Stephen Pope, a professor at Boston College who has written about the history and characteristics of accompaniment. These examples suggest that “accompaniment begins with forming relationships of mutual trust based on equal dignity and then moves to a shared commitment to promoting the agency of community members” (Pope 2019: 138). In his words, “Accompaniment is marked by the sharing of stories, articulating grievances and expressing aspirations, forming plans of action, and engaging in concrete collective action to achieve common goals. It is a form of long-term companionship advanced by physical proximity and a willingness to engage in open and honest dialogue in a spirit of mutual respect” (Pope 2019: 136). In these ways, accompaniment inverts the standard model of development. Rather than “a helper ‘doing for’ the helped,” accompaniment is “a reciprocal giving and taking, a mutual “doing with” one another rather than one party “doing for” the other” (Pope 2019: 136). Relationships are envisioned as “horizontal or circular,” rather than the vertical engagements that too often characterize “empowerment” initiatives: “accompaniment conceives of effective agency as partnership rather than trusteeship” (Pope 2019:136).

A concrete example from the literature, one that integrates social work and public health principles in their accompaniment, is evident from an organization called Taller de Jose (TDJ),

founded in 2008 to serve a Latinx<sup>164</sup> community in Chicago, a group that often experiences discrimination or disrespect when interacting with mainstream social and health services, due to language, immigration status, and more (Sosa et al., 2018:1). At TDJ, they are actively “challenging social structures to be more inclusive and just, seek system change, and create consciousness about the inherent worth in each person” (Sosa et al., 2018:2). They are a unique organization in that they explicitly state they are providing “accompaniment services” as a social service, which can range from a “compañera”<sup>165</sup> sitting with a “service participant” during court for multiple days, or by providing translation in order to access a service (2018:2). It is far more than typical translation service, or “patient” based referrals: it is going and leaving a situation together (such as court), and active listening. The vision in every setting is for the relationship between the service participant and the *compañera* to be “grounded in values of dignity, unity, mutuality, love, and respect” (2018:4). In this sense, accompaniment is viewed also as a process of “restoring hope” or “bearing witness” (2018:5, 15), especially as many of the service participants experience daily discrimination and threats of deportation (2018:15-6). Service participants have reported that they “felt respected, empowered, and reported less isolation and stress” (2018:18).

Accompaniment offers “more,” which is hard to define and quantify. As in the study of TDJ, many ‘benefits’ are not tangible resources, but non-quantifiable values such as advancing self-esteem, treating others with dignity and respect, and listening. In fact, the importance of

---

<sup>164</sup>As articulated by Sosa et al., “Latinx is a gender inclusive alternative to Latino, Latina, and Latin@. Scholars, activists, and an increasing number of journalists are increasingly using the term as a way to be more inclusive of individuals who do not identify with a heteronormative or binary gender identity” (Sosa et al., 2018:19 n1).

<sup>165</sup>As Sosa et al. explain: “*Compañera/o* is Spanish for companion [and] because accompaniment comes from a Latin American context, the agency staff refer to themselves as *compañeras* and *compañeros* [...] There is not an adequate English word that captures the relationship and meaning of *compañera/o*.” (2018:19 n5). The chosen phrase the authors use for the person needing to be accompanied in this context is “service participant.”

listening was articulated in an opinion article published during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, by none other than Nobel-prize winner, Amartya Sen, as the need for “listening as governance” (Sen 2020). As he observed, in war times, even democratic leaders use their “top-down power to order everyone to do what the leader wants—with no need for consultation. In contrast, what is needed for dealing with a social calamity is participatory governance and alert public discussion.” Sen goes on to argue that “listening is central in the government’s task of preventing social calamity — hearing what the problems are, where exactly they have hit, and how they affect the victims. Rather than muzzling the media and threatening dissenters with punitive measures (and remaining politically unchallenged), governance can be greatly helped by informed public discussion” (2020).

Even as Sen promotes the concept, if not the word choice of “accompaniment,” the term itself may have been most popularly applied in the public health and medical work of medical anthropologist and doctor, Paul Farmer, after he first learned about “accompaniment” in Haiti in 1982. As he said, “accompaniment” is harder to implement because “there’s no one-size-fits-all approach to accompaniment” (Farmer 2013: 235). The basic principles of this “elastic concept,” according to Farmer, is a movement away from aid, instead based on mutuality, self-determination, and shared listening (Farmer 2013: 235). As Farmer summarizes: To accompany someone means “to break bread together, to be present on a journey [...] . There’s an element of mystery, of openness, of trust, in accompaniment. The companion, the *accompagneur*, says: ‘I’ll go with you and support you on your journey wherever it leads. I’ll share your fate for a while’—and by ‘a while,’ I don’t mean a little while. Accompaniment is about sticking with a task until it’s deemed completed—not by the *accompagneur*, but by the person being accompanied” (Farmer 2013: 234).



This concept is gaining some attention in IDS and business, in examples such as a participants' and trainers' manual for a United Nations Disaster Management Training Programme (Galtung 2000) and in the United States, with the social enterprise, Acumen, led by founder and CEO, Jacqueline Novogratz. In her 2020 book, *Manifesto*, Novogratz notes the failures of twenty-first century capitalism to meet Global South needs, because, as she explains, capitalism “rewards money, power, and fame, not the immeasurable impact we have on a person’s confidence, their courage, or their ability to, say, remain in school or even to make it through another day [...] by rewarding only what we can measure, we perpetuate systems that fail to honor that which we value most—and the price we pay is nothing less than our collective soul” (Novogratz 2020: 193).

Like Paul Farmer, she notes that “accompaniment is a Jesuit idea, meaning to ‘live and walk’ alongside those you serve. It is the willingness to encounter another, to make someone feel valued and seen, bettered for knowing you, never belittled” . . . it includes a “disciplined resolve to show up repeatedly with no expectation of thanks in return” and the “patience to listen to others’ stories without judgment, to offer skills and solutions without imposition” (Novogratz 2020:187). She argues that in accompaniment, “with those you aim to serve or lead, your job is to be interested, to help make another person shine, not demonstrate how smart or good or capable you yourself are” (Novogratz 2020:187). The priorities of accompaniment cannot be measured on an international development measurement index, but it may be that “the simple act of showing up and connecting with another’s humanity can help a person rekindle hope in ways they may not otherwise have dreamed of doing” (187).

While putting these principles into practice takes more critical reflection and more time, they can be applied to the human actors in the coffee value chain, providing one alternative for a

more inclusive path where all women can flourish, rather than the deficit-based rhetoric of empowerment. As applied to coffee, accompaniment can address the gendered coffee paradox because it avoids the idea of the Global North as having the answers to development or empowerment.

Instead, it focuses on the relationship between two groups and the burdens that might be shared along a complex journey that takes time and devotion, rather than quick solutions. In this sense, accompaniment offers the possibility for solidarity, even while acknowledging intersectional differences in class, gender, race, or ethnicity (to name a few), while also recognizing our need for human connection that goes beyond neoliberal transactions that characterize capitalist relations<sup>166</sup> (cf. Dabiri 2021; Lorde 1984). Even as Spivak acknowledged, “patterns of domination” are, in some cases, “determined mainly by gender rather than class” (1988; Morris & Spivak 2010). Josphine Njoki focused on gender as a key unifier for solidarity: “As women, we are brought together by the unique challenges that we face. The strength of women is that when we come together, in our unity as women, we’re able to accomplish so much. When you bring us together, it’s the power we have, and the spirit of sharing. It makes the journey easier” (Ndikwe, personal interview, 6 December 2023).

While neither Josphine nor Rosebella ever named “accompaniment,” nor did we discuss the concept during our interviews, as I reflect upon the unpaid work that both of them – and others – do as “women in coffee” – accompaniment is a fitting description. In particular, because she is living within a community of female farmers, I see Rosebella as a woman who uses own

---

<sup>166</sup> The ongoing exploitative relations in capitalism, as revealed in the coffee industry, is another topic for my future analysis, as Emma Dabiri says, “capitalism has colonized the most intimate quarters of human experience” (2021: 76). She argues that “in many ways, race and capitalism are siblings” because one of the primary motivations for the construction of “race” was to “justify the exploitation of one group of people for the material benefit of another as part of a larger system called capitalism” (2021: 71). As Audre Lorde and many other feminists have pointed out, capitalism promotes sexism and racism (1984).

education and socio-economic status not only to benefit herself and her family, as a neoliberal model might promote, but to uplift others, who would otherwise be without income or education.

While I do not know if this means that estates are necessarily a preferable “development model,” in her case, Rosebella is “taking the responsibility and burden,” as she put it, “allowing people to be on our wings” for a period of time so eventually, “they will be on their own wings,” then being “able to fly like powerful eagles who can fly through the eye of a storm.”

## 5.6 Conclusion

Chapter Five has demonstrated that many women in Kenya are speaking out to share their stories, even using neoliberal solutions to empower themselves and to uplift other women. While Spivak’s question, can the subaltern speak, remains evident in the comprehensive picture of the global coffee industry’s continued racisms and sexism, especially in the international division of labour. But within Kenya’s coffee sector, many women are far from “invisible”, and some women, and men, use their visibility to promote those that remain less so.<sup>167</sup>

In Chapter Five, I have examined this idea by looking at two women-centred global initiatives and one women-run business in Kenya that – despite the international complexities and contradictions – begin to address the gendered coffee paradox for the twenty-first century coffee industry: the International Women’s Coffee Alliance, the GALS methodology, and Point Zero Café. Despite gender advances made in all three, I suggest that Accompaniment may be a more “empowering” way forward, because it offers a more relational possibility for supply chain actors and international actors to work together with Kenyan women in coffee.

At present, given the embedded inequalities and the patriarchal nature of “coffee statecraft” evident throughout the global supply chain (Fridell 2014a; 2014b), there remains no

---

<sup>167</sup>Of course, the critique of “invisibility” is one of perspective. As Professor Winnie Mitullah told me in a recent conversation, women are not invisible to themselves, only to those on the outside.

silver bullet to dismantle unjust structures, policies, and international trade regulations that render women invisible. In fact, I would go so far to say that one conclusion of this chapter showcases that while Kenyan women *are* creating and utilizing solutions for themselves, the major weaknesses of all these initiatives and ideas is that they fail to systematically or deeply address the gendered structures that I discuss in Chapter Four, including both national laws or customary policies including land ownership, division of labour, unequal or low wages, taxes, the double and triple burdens of time, among the ongoing gender gaps of the coffee sector. Even as Rosebella Langat considers with challenges of land ownership, a single coffee estate can only do so much and must be realistic in terms of the kinds of policy effects they might affect (personal interview 1 December 2023). As Wangeci Gitobu observes, unjust structures “will take time and intentional efforts to shift, perhaps even generations” (Gitobu, personal interview, December 4, 2023).

As mentioned in Chapter One, my study focused on the period between 2019-2022, when President Uhuru Kenyatta was President. During those years, little attention was given to women in coffee, to human rights policies in coffee, or to the value women bring to Kenya’s coffee sector as leaders. When I asked Josphine if she was familiar with the “Report of the National Task Force on Coffee Sub-Sector Reforms” commissioned by the former President (cf. Chapter Four), she replied, “The sad part is that we really didn’t have female representation, and no one was specifically speaking about women issues for that particular report.” But at the time of our interview (December 2023), Josphine expressed feeling some encouragement knowing that “now we have four women on policymaking tables” as she described two different decision-making organizations involved in coffee policy. Perhaps these four female representatives will be able to create and promote equitable policies in Kenya’s coffee sub-sector.

While critics may claim that aspects of this Chapter's solutions support elements of top-down neoliberal market-driven approaches, it is also true that I witnessed ways that Kenyan women have adapted and created strategies to advance their own empowerment within these structures. Genuine efforts to enhance "women's empowerment," as reflected in Chapter Five, may use some language of feminist governance, but even in the process of conducting my field work and writing this dissertation, I have learned that part of the decolonizing feminist project should be that women's stories are heard, believed, and represented as they wish to be presented. As is demonstrated within each section, women should be taken at their word, when considering if a solution works for them and their families. To dismiss their chosen solutions as transformative is disrespectful and opposite of what 'accompaniment' encourages as a practice.

These three examples show different contexts through which Kenya women, with various intersectional challenges, do and are utilizing frameworks to speak out more directly, both as producers of coffee at the farm-level and through roasters to consumers at a global level. The deeper problem of the gendered coffee paradox, globally, is not merely that women are obscured or invisible, but that too often, women are obstructed from speaking for themselves (Spivak 1988). From this point of view, I acknowledge yet another gendered coffee paradox embedded in my entire dissertation project: I am a white woman from the United States of America who is living in Kenya and who received joyful permission from a diverse range of Kenyan women (and men), who enthusiastically and, at times, repeatedly, shared parts of their coffee stories with me, so that I could retell them here in this dissertation document, a requirement for me to earn my doctoral degree from Canada. It is my good fortune that I met so many women and men, both within and outside of Kenya, who were willing to trust me to share parts of their stories.

Several lessons can be learned from this chapter. From the IWCA, it is evident that while the IWCA is intersectional in practice by virtue of its coalition of 33 chapters that are primarily in the Global South, the non-profit organization would benefit from utilizing a directly intersectional approach and by focusing fundraising efforts on gender-in-coffee research. From the GALS methodology, we witness an example that top-down institutions might seek to emulate, for if solutions derive from the Global North (such as GALS), they should have flexibility to adapt to different contexts and household arrangements. Whatever the methodology, Global South actors—in this case smallholder farmers—should be the drivers for changes they wish to make. Point Zero Café provides a model of Kenyan women supporting Kenyan women based on a relationship-driven approach from Chepsangor Hills Coffee Estate in Nandi to a small café in Nairobi. While Point Zero remains ambitious in its possibility for expansion, if governments and the private sector offered more support to small women business owners, could this model be replicable in other spaces in Kenya or adopted by others?

All three examples seek to use coffee as an agent for good. Yet, I do not wish to convey an idyllic portrait of these solutions: not all women in Kenya show support to each other. There are several examples of rifts between women, both Kenyan women and expat women, and of women whose rhetorical stance on empowerment may not translate into solidarity for other women with different socio-economic, racial, or ethnic identities. No one whom I interviewed, who is participating in the three solutions highlighted in this chapter, regards these as perfect transformations for everyone. But these are examples of women supporting women in ways available to them, based on context and opportunity.

Ultimately, my contention is not with the ways such solutions employ neoliberal solutions, but with a global political economic system, which continues to uphold patriarchal

structures that neither respect nor advance women's goals. Despite all the rhetoric promising to promote "women's empowerment" in specialty coffee, there remains a long way to go if real "empowerment" is desirable for women in coffee. This may be why Kenyan women often focus their efforts on economic empowerment. Whether in rural or urban areas, too many women still need two or more jobs outside of the home to make ends meet; gender gaps in areas of land ownership, income, and time poverty remain among the top gendered challenges; and women's domestic labour inside the home, and leadership roles in the public space, remain unpaid and often unappreciated.

May Kenyan women continue to use the language of 'empowerment' if it is useful for them, but may they also become more critical of the structures that capture, while simultaneously de-valuing women's labour. To move toward a coffee industry that truly honours and respects all women will take far more than specialty coffee reports suggesting the same market-driven solutions as a decade ago: to repeat the way one smallholder woman synthesized these problems: "the talk is so sweet, but the action is not there" (cf. Chapter Two). For the "action" to be there, governments—and the collective effort of many coffee partners both in the Global North and Global South—must create and apply new trade policies and practices, and new supply chain interventions, that will consider women's needs and desires, thereby addressing the ongoing complexities of the gendered coffee paradox.

## CONCLUSION:

### “You Have the Gold in Your House”

“But” said Alice, “if the world has absolutely no sense, who's stopping us from inventing one?” (Carroll 1992).

Even as Alice travelled through the looking glass to a paradoxical world called “Wonderland,” so have I travelled throughout Africa, Europe, central America, and North America thanks to coffee – ever-mindful that this global industry is also a paradoxical place of ever-changing rules and endless possibility. Much of Alice’s fictional journey centred on her quest to make sense of the way those in power defined words. Likewise, the twenty-first century international development community and the coffee industry need more robust definitions and applications of words like “empowerment,” expanding beyond binary gender divisions and beyond the dichotomies of the Global North as “consumers” and the Global South as “producers.”

When Daviron & Ponte named the “coffee paradox,” and talked about the difference between material, symbolic, and in-person aspects of coffee (2005), there was little attention given to women in coffee either from academic or industry sources. Much has changed since that time, both for women globally, as well as those who work in coffee. Women’s empowerment in specialty coffee has advanced since then, but not enough – and this is why attention to the gendered coffee paradox may help illuminate the continued gender gaps and promote equitable solutions for all genders.

Amid neoliberal capitalism, Kenyan women are embarking upon these efforts in full consciousness and determination that their work is part of building new structures in coffee for the future. I perceive this as part of the strength, determination, resilience, and creativity of



Kenyan women in both urban and rural areas who are part of this study. Since Spivak first observed the oppressed subaltern who is repeatedly silenced (1988), there has been a visible shift to the global, national, and local ways that some Kenyan women voice their perspectives and join together in genuine relationships of solidarity and accompaniment. But perhaps there is only so much women can do under global neoliberalism, within a buyer-driven global commodity such as coffee, that still seeks to render their labour invisible within unjust international trade systems.

This, then, leads precisely to a key tension in this dissertation study: while I have spent many pages lamenting the infiltration of neoliberal empowerment, there may be a limited amount of “good” that even admirable business such as Chepsangor Hills Coffee Estate or Point Zero Café can do to effect social change. Small businesses, like private coffee estates and cafés, are fulfilling roles that governments, industry actors, or NGOs are not currently playing, addressing inequities in the best ways they can. Too often these fall back on economic empowerment “solutions”—many of them addressing the same market-driven solutions that coffee industry reports suggest (cf. Chapter Two)—to address gendered inequities.

The answers to “empowering women” do not fit neatly into a tidy box of solutions. This study has explored multiple paradoxes at the centre of the global coffee industry. From the political and social relations of the international global coffee chain that Benoit Daviron and Stefano Ponte (2005) named as the “coffee paradox,” to the “gendered coffee paradox,” that I have named throughout this study, there are certainly many other paradoxes in the global coffee trade.

In fact, a kaleidoscope of related paradoxes exist. For example, how do I reconcile different theories political economy, post-colonial feminist, and intersectionality? Radical

theorists such as Rodney, Mohanty, or Spivak were most likely not imagining that a privately-owned estate could be a model for development. But then, I wonder if, as they were writing their seminal works in the 1970s and 80s, could they have imagined the global possibilities of an agricultural commodity such as coffee to have the possibility of transformation from a colonial bitter crop of woe to one that could also be a means of accompaniment? Could they have imagined, that, despite its violent history, that “coffee is a treasure” as Andrea Moora put it (personal interview, 4 February 2020)? Why is it that, despite liberalization of Kenya’s coffee industry in the 1990s, that the Kenyan state remains so involved in coffee’s export and foreign exchange, yet gives so little attention to the very bodies of rural women, which make this coffee possible? Such questions remain, and I acknowledge that these, and other, ongoing tensions may provide fruitful ongoing research questions either for myself or other scholars.

Despite the paradoxes throughout the Wonderland of coffee, perhaps my study may awaken the coffee industry to the historical and contemporary complexities of coffee’s ongoing inequities, seeking to discover and create solutions that are led, decided upon, and enacted by women. To the extent women wish to advance either their collective or individual empowerment, I hope my study may contribute a warning: to beware that neoliberal logic may “inflict new modes of domination over women in the guise of emancipation” even as it has “been absorbed into development discourse that aims to empower women in the Global South” (Lauri & Bäckström 2018: 3). This very absorption remains at the centre of the gendered coffee paradox.

### **Women-Produced Coffee**

In a full-length study critiquing the “empowerment” of women in coffee, I would be remiss not to mention a rising phenomena in specialty coffee, of “women-produced coffee.”

Therefore, I conclude this study with some thoughts about this debatable neoliberal market “solution.”

Highlighting “women-produced coffee” was documented as a solution toward women’s empowerment, perhaps for the first time, in “The Way Forward” Report (PGE 2015; cf. Chapter 2). Since then, it has become even more common for exporters, importers, and roasters to include phrases on some roasted coffee bags, such as “women-produced coffee” or “coffee produced by women,” most common among North American and European specialty roasters. As mentioned in Chapter Five, one way the IWCA creates more space for women is to promote coffee that is produced by women, or by women’s groups, stating that this enhances women’s “market access.” In addition, an increasing number of coffee marketing campaigns utilize the discourse of development and “women’s empowerment” to sell coffee to Global North consumers, claiming they can “do good” by using their dollars and choosing a brand of “women’s” coffee. This shows an entwined goal of promote one’s ethical values while drinking quality coffee—a clear example of conscious consumerism as a goal enacted in specialty coffee.

On the surface, such focus seems to address the problem of women’s invisibility. But such marketing assumes that “women” are a constituted whole, promoting the perception of a constructed, unified category of ‘women’ (Mohanty 1988). But does this emerging focus on coffee “produced by women” equitably advance “empowerment” for the women it claims to “empower”? For example, is equal compensation for this coffee making its way back to the very women farmers who are picking and sorting these coffee cherries at the farm level? Research shows the results are mixed. Feminist coffee literature shows that such projects do not necessarily lead to increased economic benefit for the women they intend to support. I did not witness an adoption of this specific strategy in Kenya during my field work, although I am aware

that some cooperatives may have participated in such marketing in the past.<sup>168</sup> This conclusion therefore considers three such ‘women in coffee’ initiatives: two from the literature (Lyon 2008 & Lyon et al., 2019; Lauri & Bäckström 2018) and one that did emerge from my research (Girls Who Grind Coffee).

I begin this discussion with an example from the literature, with a study led by Sarah Lyon, in southern Mexico, comparing one fair trade cooperative’s “women’s coffee” with four other non-fair-trade cooperatives. Lyon and her co-authors interrogates “Women Produced Coffee” and the instrumental approaches that view women, quite literally, as producers (of coffee) and reproducers of “a marketable, economic ‘quality’ used to sell products, such as coffee” (Lyon et al., 2019: 35). Women were actively recruited to participate in a branded ‘women-produced’ coffee that would be marketed as such (2019: 36). The researchers describe that “this visibility was enacted” by tagging this “women’s coffee” separate to “men’s coffee” and put into different stacks at the parchment stage, before going onto the processing plant (2019: 38).<sup>169</sup>

In the case study, women’s coffee scored higher on the specialty coffee grading scale, based on 100 points<sup>170</sup> (Lyon et al., 2019). The rationale for this high score? Women’s greater attention to “caring” compared to men. This idea of nurturing coffee and seeds is akin to ways women “care” for those in domestic sphere. Women are caring for their children, homes, farms: producing and reproducing both coffee and children. Yet if women face such discriminatory

---

<sup>168</sup> As mentioned in Chapter One, this dissertation study was not intended as an analysis of Kenyan cooperatives and so while I am familiar with some attempts of women’s produced coffee in Kenya, this did not come up as a topic in any of my interviews.

<sup>169</sup> This is the very strategy that the Chepsangor Women in Coffee community-based group seeks to implement, once they have enough coffee to process in this manner, and I have seen this done in Rwanda and in Uganda as well.

<sup>170</sup> As mentioned in Chapter One, both the Specialty Coffee Association and the Coffee Quality Institute used a globally recognized “Q grading” score, where coffee quality is determined by a 100-point scale, as evaluated by Quality graders, known as “Q graders.” While there are many differences, a coffee Q grader can be somewhat compared to the wine industry’s sommeliers.

constraints (such as those featured in Chapter Four), how are they able to produce such “high-quality coffee deserving recognition” (Lyon et al., 2019: 36)? And if it is such high quality, why does this coffee’s quality fail to translate into higher income for women—yet another layer of the gendered coffee paradox? If the coffee quality is so high, and the specialty coffee market brings “more value” (Fischer 2021), why must women continue to rely on other sources of income to supplement their family’s needs<sup>171</sup> (2019: 38)? In part, this is because specialty coffee is not addressing the structures of women’s inequities or their intersectional barriers to the market.

This case study shows an example of how, under capitalism, global value chains – even in specialty coffee – successfully “capture women’s underpaid and unpaid labours in household community spheres” (Lyon et al., 2019: 37). As a result, “women’s participatory empowerment” (Lyon et al., 2019:43) may be in name only. After the coffee was sold and premiums were received, the researchers could not discern any noticeable decrease in the gender gaps: partly because the premiums were used to fund the salary of a women’s program director and partly because the actual premiums were so small that larger women’s programs were impossible to fund (Lyon et al., 2019: 40). Some women confessed they received the same price for their “women-produced coffee” as before the label existed (Lyon et al., 2019: 41). Surprisingly, even the female program director honestly described: “In truth, it’s not a great [financial] impact” (Lyon et al., 2019: 42). As a result, the researchers conclude: “the profits may not be, and in the present case do not appear to be, returned to women farmers” (Lyon et al.,2019: 45); therefore, the program fails in its stated program goals to enhance “women’s economic self-sufficiency” (Lyon et al., 2019: 36).

---

<sup>171</sup> For example, Lyon shows that 63% of women in cooperatives in Oaxaca, Mexico relied on coffee for “half or more of their total household income” but still supplement with subsistence agricultural (Lyon et al.,2019: 38).

“Women-produced coffee” also shows a continued feature of the gendered coffee paradox, as Spivak observes: “Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the ‘third-world woman’ caught between tradition and modernization, culturalism and development” (Morris & Spivak 2010: 61). This tension is evident in the literature from an example from Kenyan and Rwandan coffee that is sold through a marketing campaign focused on selling Nestlé’s Swedish coffee brands, Zoégas. This “women-friendly” coffee brand targets Swedish female consumers who wish to use their buying power both empower women and secure their own enjoyment while drinking quality coffee. The consumer is led to believe they are engaging in a “win-win solution” through a “fantasy of global sisterhood” embedded in a “symbolic intersection between feminism, ethics, and consumption” (Lauri & Bäckström 2018: 2, 18, 3).

The co-authors seek to “understand the forces that make intelligible the entanglements of feminism, ethics, and consumption” (Lauri & Bäckström 2018: 5), and doing so, offer a scathing review of neoliberal capitalism as the solution for social change, rejecting neoliberalism as the means for “development and freedom” for women (Lauri & Bäckström 2018: 16). The coffee marketing campaign claims to have offered education to farmers in Kenya and Rwanda since 2011, with an emphasize on providing leadership training and opportunities to women coffee farmers (Lauri & Bäckström 2018: 6-7).

In business sectors, this perspective is problematic because such endorsement “typically encompass[es] an essentialist understanding of gender, with little regard for structural explanations of inequality or poverty” (Lauri & Bäckström 2018: 4). Lauri & Bäckström argue that this frame is based on Žižek’s idea of “fantasmatic logic”: that “the risk of a *lack* of coffee

can be solved through an *increased consumption* of that same commodity” (2018: 9). The Swedish marketing manager promotes the program as a “win-win” even as the work of these producers secures the Swedish roaster’s access to a supply of coffee beans amid the growing threat of climate change (Lauri & Bäckström 2018: 11).

Key to their analysis is the work of Nancy Fraser that shows the influence of white middle-class women’s liberal feminism, which views “women’s liberation becoming intimately connected with capitalist growth,” and what Eisenstein (2009) calls “hegemonic feminism” that is hidden under a mask of “capitalist exploitation” (Lauri & Bäckström 2018: 3, 17; Fraser 2013; Eisenstein 2009). In other words, “this colonial fantasy of what ‘our’ economic growth can offer ‘them’ is made legitimate” through staged videos and web stories offering “an imagined equality between producer and consumer” (Lauri & Bäckström 2018: 11). This fantasy—“the opportunity to ‘save’ both the (female) coffee farmers and the consumer’s own future enjoyment of coffee”—is pernicious because “the campaign effectively obscures the structural relationship between the coffee farmers, the company and the coffee consumers, as well as the uneven global distribution of climate effects” (Lauri & Bäckström 2018: 11). As a result, the campaign fails to deliver on its promise of emancipation; instead, promoting women to remain in the coffee industry as a smallholder farmer, perhaps making a higher income, perhaps with a future hope to leave their farm to their children. But such assumptions – without further understanding of specific women’s desires or goals – are limiting and disempowering (Lauri & Bäckström 2018: 10-11).

Whatever oversights and weaknesses these two examples reveal from the literature (Lyon et al 2019; Lauri & Bäckström 2018), it may also be that a focus on “women’s coffee” can bring some positive impacts. These may mostly be intangible: for example, in Mexico, it was reported that women’s self-sufficiency was promoted in positive ways (Lyon et al., 2019: 36, 42).

Another intangible benefit may be the ways in which organized leadership or participation may “inspire women to express a sense of empowerment, although this is paradoxically balanced against women’s continuing discomfort in speaking in assemblies and lack of personal security” (Lyon et al., 2019: 36).

But the dilemma remains: even if income gaps decrease for the community, is this happening at the expense of some women’s individual lives? As the program director confirmed: “Before men did everything, and now women do everything, move everything, feels the pressure” (sic) (Lyon et al., 2019: 44). The time debt that increases some women’s roles in leadership are not necessarily improving. That most of this work remains unpaid is another reason why global neoliberal market-driven “solutions” may be unsustainable for poor, rural women. Part of the failure is also that current “women-produced coffee” initiatives fail to acknowledge that gender is not the only variable of discrimination – so are class, race, education, marital status, age, and others – and this is why intersectional approaches are required for such strategies to enhance women’s economic empowerment.

Another issue exists as well. Do such labels on coffee bags objectify women, relegating her to neoliberal market schemes that rarely take her individual struggles or identities into consideration? It depends.

In the United Kingdom, one company, “Girls Who Grind Coffee” (GWGC), created in 2017 by two women with the goal to address the rampant invisibility of women in the global coffee industry – not just as producers, but also as green coffee buyers and roasters.<sup>172</sup> I interviewed one of the co-founders, Casey LaLonde, who confirmed, “the coffee industry as a

---

<sup>172</sup>Casey LaLonde and I also discussed the discrimination faced by women in coffee in the UK: “There are not many roasteries who are owned by women, even in the UK. You can find women who are roasters, but it’s rare to find any that are women-owned. It’s a very hard industry to get into especially as a woman. I’m not sure that any other roastery is buying 100% women-produced coffee.”



whole is male dominated, so we created GWGC to bring attention to this issue” (Casey LaLonde, personal interview, 5 July 2023).<sup>173</sup> One way they accomplish this goal is that, as an all-female coffee roastery, they source 100% of its green coffee only from female producers from several coffee producing countries.<sup>174</sup> When GWGC began, the co-founders were told this couldn’t be done, because it hadn’t been done before. They were even told there wouldn’t be enough coffee. But as Casey told me: “There are so many women to buy coffee from!”

As a for-profit business, GWGC seeks to celebrate the work of women coffee producers by ensuring representation and visibility. As Casey explained, “One of the ways we wanted to set ourselves apart is by redefining the word ‘quality.’ We don’t like the divide between quality in the cup and the human quality behind the cup. First, we search for producers to work with, then, we taste the coffee. We don’t taste blindly. Working toward social justice and mutual relationships, this is all part of quality” (Casey LaLonde, personal interview, 5 July 2023).

As of this writing (March 2024), there is no set of industry guidelines of what qualifies a roaster to write “women-produced” on a coffee bag. Currently, any exporter, importer, or roaster in charge of marketing, or the writing, on a bag of coffee can declare their coffee is “woman produced.” When I asked Casey about this, she replied, “As an industry, we need to examine this and ask, ‘who is women produced coffee for’ in terms of it being marketed and sold? As GWGC, we put our coffee on shelves, and people buy it. I do think customers think they are helping a female producer in the world. But we need to examine whether this is really happening, not only as businesses but also in sustainability projects.” This is why Casey believes that the coffee industry “needs a set of guidelines for working with ‘women-produced coffee’ that

---

<sup>173</sup>All quotations from this section derive from our conversations that began in person at World of Coffee Athens (June 2023) and led to a formal interview by Zoom on 5 July 2023.

<sup>174</sup> The list of their sourcing countries shifts from time to time, but as of this interview (2023) included Brazil, Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Rwanda.

incorporates intersectionalities of producers, research-based findings, and voices from female coffee producers.”

After my interview with Casey, I asked Rosebella to share for her point of view about this question of “women-produced coffee.” She agreed that it is an industry-problem not to have a global standard of what it means to declare one’s coffee as “women-produced coffee,” and Rosebella suggests that one solution could be for IWCA to create a certification. While Chepsangor Coffee does not currently market themselves as “women-produced,” some of their specialty coffee buyers or roasters have added this to their coffee bags.<sup>175</sup> Rosebella supports this appellation: in her view, if it helps her buyers sell her coffee, then it ultimately helps her, too. When I asked her if she regards Chepsangor as “woman-produced coffee,” she answered in the affirmative: “Yes, I can say our coffee is women-produced because of me! I do most of the work. Sammy [her husband] puts his effort in the managing the finances and helping with construction or other projects. But most of the decisions of the business, or on the farm, the workers refer to me.” As we discussed this further, she also noted that their coffee can also be considered “women-produced” since the labour on her farm is more than 80% done by women. These are two examples of how to define “woman-produced”—based on a female director/manager, or on a majority of women workers.

This is among the reasons why Casey LaLonde is currently in a self-reflexive process of analyzing GWGC’s business model, marketing language, sourcing policies, and its sustainability initiative called Cheek to Cheek (C2C), which ‘give back’ to female producers by sending 10% of its online retail sales directly back to producers: “We see this 10% as compensation for the use of a woman’s name and her story.” This extra remuneration, beyond what women receive as

---

<sup>175</sup> One example is from This Side Up an example that while not initiated by Rosebella, she is supportive, since, according to her buyers, it helps them sell her coffee.

payment for their coffee from GWGC, is unique compared to any other roasters I interviewed. Casey explained further: “We intentionally don’t ask what women do with this 10% cheque, and we say that. We feel that with money being donated, if you put a stipulation on what someone does with that money, then it’s for us [in Global North]. No one asks me what I do with my paycheck! So why would I ask producers what they do with their money? Sometimes women want to tell us, but we never ask.”

Casey is in a process of examining the financial impact of this ten percent, motivated by her desire to “know if the business I helped to create is truly helping women in the way I think it is. As she summarizes, “I don’t want selling women’s coffee just to be a marketing tool: I want it to work for everyone. Relationships need to be mutually beneficial, and I think producers need more reassurance that roasters are practicing what we preach. For us, the accountability is really important. No one is checking up on us, but I want to do what’s right.”

One recent change for Casey is a shift in her perspective on the ways the rhetoric of empowerment maintains the hierarchies between Global North and Global South relations. At the time of our interview, the GWGC website included language of “empowerment,” such as: We are “sourcing our coffees specifically and exclusively from women producers, seeking out those coffees that are creating positive change through the empowerment of women.” As she reflected,

How we view empowerment has changed since we started the business. We’re always in a process of learning and growing and being open to change. In 2017 when we started, we put the word ‘empowerment’ all over the place. We said that ‘we want to empower female producers by buying their coffee,’ and we were using that phrase a lot in our marketing. As years have passed, my relationship with this word has completely changed. When you use it like that, in a top-down

way, it is really harmful. We shouldn't be putting any expectations on anyone else. In coffee, too often, it's the Global North doing things for the Global South, instead of a conversation. At GWGC, we want to work *together*, we want to *collaborate*. Now, I don't see us as 'empowering anyone,' because it's not our job.

For Kenya, however, there remains a structural challenge – and this is one reason why I include GWGC in this conclusion. Formerly, they bought coffee from Kenya in 2017-18, and as Casey LaLonde explains, “this is one of those instances when we need a clear definition of what defines ‘women-produced coffee.’ We were told about six months later that the female Kenyan producer had passed away, and for at least a year, it was being sold by her sons. This surprised us – and encouraged us then to try even harder to form better relationships with people we were buying from, especially in a country like Kenya, where it's really hard to know where and who your coffee is coming from.” Casey shared that as much as she wants to continue to buy coffee from Kenya, the challenges are just too complicated based on the complexity of the supply chain and its lack of direct access to producers (cf. Chapter One): “When I compare with other origins, Kenya is less transparent, so we're not buying from them anymore.”

Whatever the coffee's origin, the gendered coffee paradox within “women-produced coffee” will only be addressed if women are asked how they wish to be represented, both in word or image, on Global North packaging and marketing materials. Global North buyers and roasters should give women the opportunity to see and give feedback on the material ways their images and stories are being used to sell coffee – on coffee bags, posters, email marketing, or social media – ensuring that this marketing is mutually beneficial to both parties, rather than perpetuating a power dynamic where the Global North may be extracting information without one's knowledge or consent.

The example of Girls Who Grind Coffee demonstrates that Global North roasters *can* move from relationships of “power over” to “power with” (Rowlands 1995; 1997), advancing new ways to engage with Global South coffee producers. Perhaps “women-produced coffee” might be one avenue for some women’s groups to advance their empowerment – especially if focusing on mutually beneficial relationships becomes more than a trend, but a vital aspect of sustainability and equity within specialty coffee (Koss 2023; SCA 2021).<sup>176</sup>

### **Key Implications for this Study**

Some key implications of my study may include the global coffee industry, as well as Kenya’s coffee sub-sector. In the spirit of the paradoxes of this study, I frame these as questions for consideration by global and Kenyan coffee partners.

#### ***Global***

1. Might the gender coffee paradox be evident in other countries, not only Kenya?
2. Might there be an investment of research to consider intersectional appraisals of what “women’s empowerment” looks like in various and specific cultural and geographical contexts?
3. Might it be time to refocus attention from the “market” and transactional relationships and move toward “accompaniment” as one model for mutually beneficial connections based on respect?

#### ***Kenya***

1. If the Kenya Coffee Directorate can invest in research on domestic consumption of coffee, and create some successes in increasing coffee culture at Kenyan universities, can there not be an investment and research specifically to obtain data about how many women are working in

---

<sup>176</sup> The Specialty Coffee Value Assessment tool is a new way to evaluate coffee that considers intangible, non-sensory aspects such as sustainability or gender equity (2021).

coffee, and to learn more about the specific needs of women, considering their specific challenges and desired solutions?

2. Are there further considerations of ways that British colonial structures discriminated against women, and which ones remain? How do future policy revisions and business practices need to account for historic (and contemporary) discriminations against women in patriarchal Kenya?
3. As the report indicated (Kieyah et al., 2016), might Kenyan coffee laws and policies be realigned with the 2010 Constitution to support and implement the two-thirds gender rule?
4. Businesses/NGOs have made progress in closing some gender gaps, but what structural transformations are needed to address ongoing women's barriers in areas of land, wages, time?
5. How might supply chain interventions address the ongoing division of labour, especially low wages for women (especially rural women at the farm level)? Might there be further investment in ways more Kenyan women can access other parts of coffee's supply chain, including drinking their own coffee and quality analysis?

The coffee industry remains a paradoxical place of ever-changing rules and endless possibility. As we slouch through the twenty-first century, we need more robust definitions and applications of social sustainability that go beyond binary divisions of two genders and that think beyond the unequal dynamics of the Global North as “consumers” and the Global South as “producers.” The reality for everyone on both sides of the equator is more complicated. Addressing Daviron and Ponte's original coffee paradox will require attention to the gendered coffee paradox through an intersectional lens so that all “women in coffee” will experience more than just fair trade or a living wage.

In thinking through how to best encourage gender parity in coffee, it is imperative that we prioritize female smallholder coffee farmers, rather than relying upon individual consumer habits

in North America or Europe to purchase “women-produced coffee.” Wider transformation and structural change will require the united efforts of governments, the public and private sectors, and non-governmental organizations. Ultimately, closing coffee’s gender gaps will take more than neoliberal marketing schemes focused primarily on economic empowerment, but also upon political and social empowerment, so that all women, men, and children, can flourish. True empowerment for all genders will take thoughtfulness, open-mindedness, and humility. It will require learning and un-learning by those with privilege and power. But to do otherwise risks the possibility for a future with coffee for us all.

## REFERENCES

- Achebe & Robertson, C. C., eds. (2019). *Holding the world together : African women in changing perspective*. The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Addison, L., Schnurr, M. A., Gore, C., Bawa, S., & Mugabi-Mujuzi, S. (2021). Women's Empowerment in Africa: Critical Reflections on the Abbreviated Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (A-WEAI). *African Studies Review*, 64(2), 276–291.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.33>.
- Adichie, C.N. (2014). *We should all be feminists*. London: Fourth Estate: Imprint of HarperCollins.
- Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre (n.d.) "Sex in Africa is More Diverse than Gay-or-Straight." Accessed 10 January 2023: <http://www.arsrc.org/features/sex-in-africa-is-more-diverse-than-gay-or-straight.html>.
- African Union. (2020) AU 38180 Assembly Report. Addis Ababa [online]: Available at: [https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/38180-assembly\\_au\\_dec\\_749-795\\_xxxiii\\_e.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/38180-assembly_au_dec_749-795_xxxiii_e.pdf).
- African Union Commission (2006) *African Youth Charter*. Addis Ababa. [online] Available at: [http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/african\\_youth\\_charter\\_2006.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/african_youth_charter_2006.pdf) [Accessed 27 June 2018].
- Agarwal, B. (1994). *A field of one's own : gender and land rights in South Asia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Agarwal, B. (2011) *Food crises and gender inequality*. DESA Working Paper No. 107. Delhi [online] Available at: [http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2011/wp107\\_2011.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2011/wp107_2011.pdf)
- Agarwal, B. (2014). Food sovereignty, food security and democratic choice: critical contradictions, difficult conciliations. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41(6), 1247–1268.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2013.876996>.
- Agarwal, B; Anthwal, P. & Mahesh, M. (2021) How Many and Which Women Own Land in India? Inter-gender and Intra-gender Gaps, *The Journal of Development Studies*, 57:11, 1807-1829, DOI: [10.1080/00220388.2021.1887478](https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2021.1887478)
- Alexander, M. J., & Mohanty, C. T. (1997). *Feminist genealogies, colonial legacies, democratic futures*. Routledge.
- Alegria, D.C. (2019) Branding of an Ethical Development Narrative: Fair Trade, Gender, and Peru's Café Femenino. In *Handbook of the Changing World Language Map* (pp. 4001–4015). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02438-3\\_163](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02438-3_163).



- Alkire, S. (2008) "Concepts and Measures of Agency." Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI). Working Paper 10. Oxford, United Kingdom: Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford.
- Alkire, S. and Foster, J. (2011) 'Counting and multidimensional poverty measurement', *Journal of Public Economics*, 95(7/8), pp. 476-487.
- Alkire, S., Meinzen-Dick, R., Peterman, A., Quisumbing, A., Seymour, G., & Vaz, A. (2013). The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index. *World Development*, 52, 71–91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2013.06.007>
- Allende, I. (2021). *The Soul of a Woman*. NY: Ballentine Books.
- Alvarez, S. E. (2009). Beyond NGO-ization?: Reflections from Latin America. *Development (Society for International Development)*, 52(2), 175–184. <https://doi.org/10.1057/dev.2009.23>.
- Alvarez, S.E. (1999) "Advocating feminism: The Latin American Feminist NGO 'Boom'", in *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 1:2, 1999, p.182
- Akinbobola, Y. (2019). Neoliberal Feminism in Africa. *Soundings (London, England)*, 71(71), 50–61. <https://doi.org/10.3898/SOUN.71.04.2019>.
- Akyeampong, E.; Hippolyte Fofack. (2012). "The Contribution of African Women to Economic Growth and Development: Historical Perspectives and Policy Implications Part I: The Pre-Colonial and Colonial Periods." Policy Research Working Papers (April). doi:10.1596/1813-9450-6051.
- Anderson, B. (1983, 2006) *Imagined Communities*, revised edition. London/NY: Verso.
- Anderson, D. M. (2000). "Master and Servant in Colonial Kenya, 1895–1939." *Journal of African History* 41.3: 459-85.
- Anderson, D. M. (2011). "Punishment, Race and 'The Raw Native': Settler Society and Kenya's Flogging Scandals, 1895-1930." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37.3 (2011): 479-97. Web.
- Anker, R. (2017). Living Wage Report Kenya with a focus on rural Mount Kenya Area: Context Provided in Horticulture Industry. Series 1, Report 10. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322403051\\_Living\\_Wage\\_Report\\_Kenya\\_with\\_a\\_focus\\_on\\_rural\\_Mount\\_Kenya\\_area\\_and\\_context\\_provided\\_in\\_horticulture\\_industry](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322403051_Living_Wage_Report_Kenya_with_a_focus_on_rural_Mount_Kenya_area_and_context_provided_in_horticulture_industry).
- Anunu, C. (2015) *Toward a gender inclusive coffee value chain: a review and synthesis of relevant literature on gender equity in agriculture and supply chain development*. A consultancy report for the Coffee Quality Institute's Partnership for Gender Equity. MPS International Development, Cornell University.
- AP. (20222) "Queen Elizabeth is featured on currencies. What next?" The Standard 10 September 2022. Accessed on 1 December 2023:

<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/entertainment/lifestyle/article/2001455344/queen-elizabeth-is-featured-on-several-currencies-what-next>

Apuoyo, B. (2019) “Strategies to Promote Domestic Coffee Consumption in Africa, Case Study.” Kenya,” public talk given at the African Fine Coffee Association Conference, Zanzibar, TZ.

Arévalo Zurita, M., Expósito García, E., García Arroyo, F. M., & Pineda Vila, M. (2022). The challenge of gender equity in coffee cooperatives. *Cooperativismo Y Desarrollo*, 10(2), 430–449. Retrieved from <https://coodes.upr.edu.cu/index.php/coodes/article/view/531>

Arzabe, Cristina, et al. (2018) *Women in Coffee in Brazil*. eBook. Brasilia, DF: Embrapa. Translated from Portuguese (*Mulheres dos cafés no Brasil*) by Julia Spatuzzi Felmanas and Henrik Carbonnier.

AWCI (Association of Women in Coffee Industry), IWCA Kenya (2023), printed pamphlet obtained at IWCA conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, October 2023

Bacon, C. (2010). A Spot of Coffee in Crisis: Nicaraguan Smallholder Cooperatives, Fair Trade Networks, and Gendered Empowerment. *Latin American Perspectives*, 37(2), 50-71.

Balaton-Chrimes, S. (2022) “Making Minorities,” Online Research Talk at University of Nairobi, October 2022.

Balaton-Chrimes, S. (2021). Who are Kenya’s 42(+) tribes? The census and the political utility of magical uncertainty. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 15(1), 43–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2020.1863642>

Baka, L. O. (2013) “The Challenges Facing Co-operative societies in Kenya, A Case Study: Kenya Planter Co-operative Union (KPCU).” *Public Policy and Administration Research*, Vol 3, No. 11.

Bakker, I. (1998). Unpaid Work and Macroeconomics: New Discussions, New Tools for Action. Ottawa: Status of Women Canada's Policy Research Fund.

Bakker, I. (1989) The Political Economy of Gender. Clement, W., & Williams, G. eds. *New Canadian Political Economy* (pp. 99–115). MQUP. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780773561830-008>.

Bakker, I. (2007). Social Reproduction and the Constitution of a Gendered Political Economy. *New Political Economy*, 12(4), 541–556. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563460701661561>.

Barkan, J. D. (2004). Kenya after Moi. *Foreign Affairs*, 83(1), 87–100. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20033831>.

Barnes, T. (1997) ‘Am I A Man?’: Gender and the Pass Laws in Urban Colonial Zimbabwe, 1930-80. *African Studies Review* 40.1 (1997): 59-81.

Barrientos, S., Kabeer, N., Hossain, N. (2004). The Gender Dimensions of Globalization of Production. May 2004. ILO Working Paper No. 17, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=908162> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.908162>.

Bates, R. H. (1997). *Open-economy politics : the political economy of the world coffee trade*. Princeton University Press.

Bates, R. H. (2014). *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies* (1st ed.). University of California Press.

Bellwether Coffee (2021). Introducing Verified Living Income: A New Green Coffee Pricing Model for Sustainable Sourcing.” Online: <https://www.bellwethercoffee.com/introducing-verified-living-income-a-new-green-coffee-pricing-model-for-sustainable-sourcing/>.

Benería, L. & Roldán, M. (1987). *The crossroads of class & gender : industrial homework, subcontracting, and household dynamics in Mexico City*. University of Chicago Press.

Benería, L., Berik, G., & Floro, M. S. (2016). *Gender, development, and globalization : economics as if all people mattered* (Second edition.). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Beneria, L. (1999). The Enduring Debate Over Unpaid Labour. *International Labour Review* 138 (3), 290-291.

Benezra, K. (1998). Starbucks goes with girl power. *Brandweek*, 39(11), 4. Retrieved from: <https://login.library.smu.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/starbucks-goes-with-girl-power/docview/218085015/se-2>. Retrieved 11Sept2023.

Beoku-Betts, J., & Njambi, W. N. (2005). African Feminist Scholars in Women’s Studies: "Negotiating Spaces of Dislocation and Transformation in the Study of Women. *Meridians (Middletown, Conn.)*, 6(1), 113–132. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mer.2005.0017>

Berger, N. (2020). “The Real Deal.” 25: *The Magazine of the Specialty Coffee Association*. 25 Issue 12. <https://sca.coffee/sca-news/25/issue-12/the-real-deal>.

Bilder, R. B. (1963) “The International Coffee Agreement, 1962.” *The American Journal of International Law*. Vol 57, No. 4, pp. 888-92.

Bilfield, A., Seal, D., & Rose, D. (2020). From agency to empowerment: women farmers’ experiences of a fairtrade coffee cooperative in Guatemala. *Journal of Gender, Agriculture and Food Safety*, 5(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.22004/ag.econ.338763>.

Birmingham, D. (1978) The Coffee Barons of Cazengo. *Journal of African History* 19.4: 523-38.

Boserup, E. (1970) *Women’s Role in Economic Development*. Earthscan Publications.

- Bourcier, N. (2012) "Brazil comes to terms with its slave trading past." *The Guardian*. 12 October 2012. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/23/brazil-struggle-ethnic-racial-identity>.
- Boyle, G. (2010). *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*. New York: Free.
- Brock, J. and Pearson, R. with C. Tomlinson. (2005) *Kahawa: Kenya's Black Gold*. Published by C. Dorman's Ltd.
- Brownhill, L.S., Kaara, W.M., and Turner, T.E. (1997) "Gender Relations and Sustainable Agriculture: Rural Women's Resistance to Structural Adjustment in Kenya," *Canadian Woman Studies*, 17(2), 40. Retrieved from: <https://login.library.smu.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/gender-relations-sustainable-agriculture-rural/docview/217453068/se-2>. PP. 40-4.
- Brundtland, G. (1987). Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future. United Nations General Assembly document A/42/427.
- Bryman, H. (2023) "Going, Going, Uganda: A Specialty Coffee Powerhouse Ready to Make Its Mark." *Roast Magazine*, May/June 2023, pp. 93-112.
- Bunn, C., Läderach, P., Pérez Jimenez, J.G., Montagnon, C., Schilling, T. (2015). "Multiclass Classification of Agro-Ecological Zones for Arabica Coffee: An Improved Understanding of the Impacts of Climate Change." *PLoS ONE* 10(10): e0140490. Online.
- Burhardt, M. (2011). *Coffee Story: Ethiopia*. Wisconsin: Ninety Plus Books.
- Carrington, B. (2020) "More from the Cup" Better returns for East African Coffee Farmers" an ITC Report, published by ITC, Geneva, Switzerland. Accessed online 1 September 2023: <https://intracen.org/resources/publications/more-from-the-cup-better-returns-for-east-african-coffee-producers>.
- Carroll, L. (1865/1992). *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland; Through the Looking-Glass*. New York, Norton Critical Edition.
- Catholic Relief Services (CRS). (2016) "Farmworker Protections and Labor Conditions in Brazil." Published by Catholic Relief Services. Report. Baltimore, MD <https://coffeelands.crs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/CRS-Policy-Brief-Farmworker-Protections-and-Labor-Conditions-in-Brazil%E2%80%99s-Coffee-Sector.pdf>. Accessed 1 Aug. 2019.
- Césaire, A. (1955/1972) Discourse on Colonialism (Originally published in French as *Discours sur le colonialisme*). New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Chen, J. (2016) "On Gender and Racial Equity in the Coffee Industry" *The Coffee Magazine* <https://magazine.crema.co/on-gender-and-racial-equity-in-the-coffee-industry-2f951a843b98>.

Cho, S., Crenshaw, K.W., and McCall, L. (2013). “Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis.” *Signs*.

Choo, H.Y. and Ferree, M.M. (2010). “Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research: A Critical Analysis of Inclusions, Interactions, and Institutions in the Study of Inequalities,” *Sociological Theory*, 28(2).

CIGAR (2023). “Raising Social Equity Indigenous Peoples Contributions.”  
<https://www.cgjar.org/news-events/news/raising-social-equity-indigenous-peoples-contributions-to-advancing-sustainable-agriculture-in-kenya/>.

Clarence-Smith, W.G. and Topik, S, eds. (2003). *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500–1989*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Clarke, G. E. (2014). Zanzibar: A Meditation on Slavery. *Windsor Review*, 47(1), 14.

Coburn, E. (2016) “Alternatives: Theorizing colonialism and Indigenous liberation: contemporary Indigenous scholarship from lands claimed by Canada.” *Studies in Political Economy* 97 (3), pp. 285-307.

Coffee Act 2001, the Republic of Kenya. Downloaded 1 August 2023:  
[https://leap.unep.org/countries/ke/national-legislation/coffee-act-2001-cap-333#:~:text=333\).,-Country&text=This%20Act%20provides%20for%20the,international%20trade%20in%20Kenyan%20coffee.](https://leap.unep.org/countries/ke/national-legislation/coffee-act-2001-cap-333#:~:text=333).,-Country&text=This%20Act%20provides%20for%20the,international%20trade%20in%20Kenyan%20coffee.)

Coffey, C., Revollo, P.E., Rowan, H., Lawson, M., Butt, A.P., Piaget, K., Sarosi, D., Thekkudan, J. (2020). “Time to Care: Unpaid and Underpaid Care Work and the Global Equity Crisis.” Published by Oxfam GB for Oxfam International. January 2020. DOI: 10.21201/2020.5419.  
<https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/time-care>.

CQI Coffee Quality Institute (2022) “Q Grader.”  
<https://www.coffeeinstitute.org/certification/people/q-graders>.

Conrad, J. & Armstrong, P. B. (1899/2005). *Heart of darkness : an authoritative text, backgrounds and contexts, criticism* (4th ed.). W.W. Norton.

Connell, R., & Dados, N. (2014). Where in the world does neoliberalism come from?: The market agenda in southern perspective. *Theory and Society*, 43(2), 117–138.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-014-9212-9>.

Cooper. F. (2002). *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present*. Cambridge UP.

Cooper, F. (2005). *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. Berkeley, University of California Press.

Cornwall, A. (2016). Women's Empowerment: What Works? *Journal of International Development*, 28(3), 342-359.

Cornwall, A. (2005). *Readings in gender in Africa*. Indiana University Press.

Cornwall, A., ed. (2011) *The Participation Reader*. "Whose voices? Whose choices? Reflections on gender and participatory development." London: Zed Books. 203-23.

Cornwall, A. (2007). Buzzwords and fuzzwords: Deconstructing development discourse. *Development in Practice*, 17(4-5), 471-484.

Cornwall, A., & Brock, K. (2005). What do buzzwords do for development policy? a critical look at 'participation', 'empowerment' and 'poverty reduction'. *Third World Quarterly*, 26(7), 1043-1060.

Cornwall, A., & Rivas, A. (2015). From 'gender equality and 'women's empowerment' to global justice: Reclaiming a transformative agenda for gender and development. *Third World Quarterly*, 36(2), 396-415.

Cowen, B. (2005). *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeeshouse*. Yale University Press.

Cramer, C., Johnston, D., Oya, C., and Sender, J. (2014). "Fairtrade, Employment and Poverty Reduction in Ethiopia and Uganda: Final Report to DFID." London: SOAS, University of London. Available from <http://ftepr.org/wp-content/uploads/FTEPR-Final-Report-19-May-2014-FINAL.pdf>.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299. doi:10.2307/1229039.

Curtis, K. (2003). "Smaller Is Better: A Consensus of Peasants and Bureaucrats in Colonial Tanganyika". In *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500–1989*. Eds. Clarence-Smith, William G., and Steven Topik. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 312-334.

Dabiri, E. (2021). *What White People Can Do Next: From Allyship to Coalition*. NY: Penguin.

Dada, L. (2007). The African export industry: What happened and how can it be revived? Case study on the Kenyan coffee sector, FAO Working Paper 18, Agricultural Management, Marketing and Finance Service (AGSF) Rural Infrastructure and Agro-Industries Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome.

Daviron, B. and Ponte, S. (2005). *The Coffee Paradox: Global Markets, Commodity Trade and the Elusive Promise of Development*. London: Zed Books.

Davis, A.P; Gole, T.W., Baena, S., Moat, J. (2012). “The Impact of Climate Change on Indigenous Arabica Coffee (*Coffea arabica*): Predicting Future Trends and Identifying Priorities.” *PLoS ONE* 7(11): e47981. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0047981.

Davis, A. P., Wilkinson, T., Challa, Z. K., Williams, J., Baena, S., Gole, T.W., and Moat, J. (2020). *Coffee Atlas of Ethiopia*. UK: Gomer Press Limited.

Davis, A. (2018). The Coffee Atlas (MAPPING Ethiopian Coffee). *Geographical*, 90(7).

Davis, A. (1983). *Women, Race, & Class*. NY: Vintage Press.

Davis, A. (1990). *Women, Culture & Politics*. NY: Vintage Press.

Daymond, M. (2003). *Women writing Africa. The southern region* (1st ed., The Women writing Africa project ; v. 1). New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York. Chapter: “Tobacco, Sugar, Alcohol, and Coffee: These Things Have Turned Us into Slaves.”

Denton, F. (2002). "Climate change vulnerability, impacts, and adaptation: Why does gender matter?" *Gender & Development*, 10(2), 10-20.

De Vita & Soares (2022). Interview conducted by Grao Special, online <https://graoespecial.com.br/en/gender-inequality-in-brazilian-coffee-production/>. Accessed 1 June 2023.

Dicum, Gregory. (2003). Colony in a Cup. *Gastronomica*, 3(2), 71-77.

Dietz, T., Estrella Chong, A., Font Gilabert, P., & Grabs, J. (2018). Women's empowerment in rural Honduras and its determinants: Insights from coffee communities in Ocotepeque and Copan. *Development in Practice*, 28(1), 33-50.

Dinesen, I. (1937). *Out of Africa*. New York: Random House.

Dinesen, I., & Lasson, Frans. (1981). *Letters from Africa, 1914-1931*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dogra, N. (2011). “The Mixed Metaphor of 'Third World Woman': gendered representations by international development NGOs.” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.32 (2).

Dolan, C. (2001). The 'Good Wife': Struggles over Resources in the Kenyan Horticultural Sector. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 37(3), 39-70.

Dolan, C. (1999). Conflict and compliance: Christianity and the occult in horticultural exporting. *Gender and Development*, 7(1), 23-30. On gendered division of labour in a county I also focus on (not sure if coffee is in her study) – Kenya focus, Meru County

Dolan, C., & Gordon, C. (2019). Worker, businessman, entrepreneur?: Kenya's shifting labouring subject. *Critical African Studies*, 11(3), 301-321.

Dore, E. (2003). "Patriarchy from Above, Patriarchy from Below: Debt Peonage on Nicaraguan Coffee Estates, 1870-1930." In *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500–1989*. Eds. Clarence-Smith, William G., and Steven Topik. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 209-35.

Dudziak, M. (2006). "Working Toward Democracy: Thurgood Marshall and the Constitution of Kenya." *Duke Law Journal*, 56: 3.

Eckert, A. (2003). "Comparing Coffee Production in Cameroon and Tanganyika, c. 1900 to 1960s: Land, Labor, and Politics." In *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500–1989*. Eds. Clarence-Smith, William G., and Steven Topik. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pages 286-31.

The Economist (1993). How not to seek approval: Kenya. (country's deteriorating economic condition). (*London*) (Vol. 327, Issue 7808, pp. 43-). Economist Intelligence Unit N.A. Incorporated. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A13683592/AONE?u=hali76546&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=bb2a5d23>

The Economist (1997). The big squeeze: Kenya. (*London*) (Vol. 344, Issue 8029, pp. 38-). Economist Intelligence Unit N.A. Incorporated. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A19657581/AONE?u=hali76546&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=8ffff7a1>.

The Economist (2000). International: Dancing in Kenya to the donors' tune. (*London*) (Vol. 356, Issue 8182, pp. 43-). The Economist Intelligence Unit N.A., Incorporated

The Economist (2001, February 10). "Moi, the juggler; Kenya; Juggling with Kenya's constitution." 358(8208),4. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A70190037/AONE?u=hali76546&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=0e1dbdd0>.

Elkins, C. (2005). *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya*. New York: Henry Holt & Company.

Elkins, C. & Pedersen, S. (2005). *Settler colonialism in the twentieth century: Projects, practices, legacies*. New York: Routledge.

"Empowerment." (n.d.) *Oxford English Dictionary* online. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from: <http://www.oed.com.library.smu.ca:2048/view/Entry/163619?redirectedFrom=resilience&>. Accessed 1 February 2021.

Enveritas (2018). How many coffee farmers are there? Global coffee farm study.

Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering Development*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.



Escobar, A. (2011). “Sustainability: Design for the Pluriverse.” *Development* 54, no. 2: 137–140.

Escobar, A. (2015). “Degrowth, Postdevelopment, and Transitions: A Preliminary Conversation.” *Sustainability Science* 10, no. 3: 451–462.

Eyben, R., & Napier-Moore, R. (2009). “Choosing Words with Care? Shifting meanings of women's empowerment in international development.” *Third World Quarterly*, Mar2009, Vol. 30, Is. 2.

Fairtrade International (2016). “Gender strategy 2016–2020: Transforming equal opportunity, access and benefits for all.” Available online at: <https://www.fairtrade.net/library/gender-strategy-2016-2020>. Downloaded 28 May 2022.

Fair Trade USA (FT USA). (2021). “Gender Equity and Women’s Empowerment” Report. <https://www.fairtradecertified.org/why-fair-trade/issues/gender-equity/>. Downloaded 28 August 2023.

Farmer, P. (2013). “Accompaniment as Policy.” *To Repair the World: Paul Farmer Speaks to the New Generation*, ed. Jonathan Weigel. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Ferretti, S. (2016). “Café Project Final Evaluation.” Lutheran World Relief Report received through personal correspondence, July 2018. Baltimore, MD.

Fisher, B. S. (1972). *The International Coffee Agreement: A Study in Coffee Diplomacy*. NY and London: Praeger Publishers.

Fischer, E. (2021). Quality and inequality: creating value worlds with Third Wave coffee. *Socio-Economic Review*, 19(1), 111–131. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwz044>.

Folbre, N. (2011) “The Invisible Heart: care and the global economy.” *The Women, Gender and Development Reader* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition p.41-42. Fernwood Publishing & Zed Books.

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) (2011). *The State of Food and Agriculture: Women in Agriculture, Closing the Gap for Development*. Rome: FAO. <http://www.fao.org/3/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>.

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) (2018). “Gender Gap in Land Rights” <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en?details=I8796EN>. Downloaded 1 August 2023.

Fowler-Salamini, H. (2013). *Working Women, Entrepreneurs, and the Mexican Revolution* (The Mexican Experience). Lincoln: Nebraska Paperback.

Fowler-Salamini, H. (1994) “Gender, Work, and Coffee in Córdoba, Veracruz, 1850–1910.” In *Women of the Mexican Countryside, 1850–1980: Creating Spaces, Shaping Transitions*, edited

by Heather Fowler-Salamini and Mary Kay Vaughan, 51–73. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Fowler-Salamini, H. (2003) “Gender, Work, and Working-Class Women’s Culture in the Veracruz Coffee Export Industry.” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 63: 102–21.

Foxwell, D. (2016) “Women and the next generation of coffee farmers”, In *Coffee and Cocoa International*. March 2016:4 Print. Siemex International Ltd. Emigsville.

Francis, Pope. (2015). “Address of the Holy Father, Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia) (9 July 2015) Second World Meeting of Popular Movements.” [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/july/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150709\\_bolivia-movimenti-popolari.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/july/documents/papa-francesco_20150709_bolivia-movimenti-popolari.html).

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Fraser, N and Gordon, L. (1994). “Genealogy of Dependency. Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State.” *Signs*, 19(2): 309-36.

Fridell, G. (2014a). *Coffee*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Fridell, G. (2014b). “Coffee Statecraft: Rethinking the Global Coffee Crisis, 1998-2002.” *New Political Economy*, 19.3, 407-46.

Fridell, G. (2007). *Fair Trade Coffee: The Prospects and Pitfalls of Market-Driven Social Justice*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Fridell, G., & Koss, E. (2019). “Let’s Get a Coffee.” *Power and Everyday Practices, Second Edition*. Brock, Martin, A., Raby, R., & Thomas, M. (eds). University of Toronto Press. 309-26.

Galtung, J. (2000). 'Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means (The Transcend Method)', participants' and trainers' manual, United Nations Disaster Management Training Programme, Geneva.

Gervase Clarence-Smith, W., and Topik, S. eds. *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500–1989*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Grier, B. (1992). Pawns, Porters, and Petty Traders: Women in the Transition to Cash Crop Agriculture in Colonial Ghana. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 17(2), 304–328. <https://doi.org/10.1086/494732>.

Ghosh, D. (2005). Who Counts as “Native?”: Gender, Race, and Subjectivity in Colonial India. *Journal of Colonialism & Colonial History*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.1353/cch.2006.0007>

Ghosh, D. (2004). “Gender and Colonialism: Expansion or Marginalization?” *The Historical Journal*, 47(3), 737–755. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X04003930>.

- Gibbon, P., & Ponte, S. (2005). *Trading Down: Africa, Value Chains, And the Global Economy*. Temple University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt14bs8v1>
- Gichuru, E.K., Ithiru, J.M., Silva, M.C., Pereira, A.P., & Varzea, V.M.P. (2012). "Additional physiological races of coffee leaf rust (*Hemileia vastatrix*) identified in Kenya." *Tropical Plant Pathology*, (6), 424-427.
- Gisaro Ca-Madeberi, Y.-B., Lebailly, P., Burny, P., & Mbonyinkebe, D. (2013). Role of KOPAKAMA in promoting socio-economic development of coffee farmers. *International NGO Journal*, 8(3), 61–67. <https://doi.org/10.5897/INGOJ2013.0268>.
- Global Coffee Platform (n.d.) Kenya Country Profile <https://www.globalcoffeeplatform.org/country-platforms/kenya/>. Accessed 22 September 2023.
- Government of Brazil. (2022) “In 2022, Brazil celebrates the 200th year of her Independence.” Retrieved from <https://www.gov.br/en/government-of-brazil/latest-news/2022/in-2022-brazil-celebrates-the-200th-year-of-her-independence>.
- Grabs, J. (2019). Can We Tame the C Market? *25 Magazine*, Issue 8. <https://scanews.coffee/25-magazine/issue-7/english/can-we-tame-the-c-market>.
- Grant, S.G. (2017). “Why the Social Sciences Matter,” *Standart* Issue 10, December 2017.
- Grant, S.G. (2019). “Café Creatives : Coffee Entrepreneurs in Viêt Nam.” *Education About Asia*. Vol 24 (2). 45-9.
- Greene, B. (1998). The Institution of Woman-Marriage in Africa: A Cross-Cultural Analysis. *Ethnology*, 37(4), 395–412. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3773789>.
- Great Britain Colonial Office. (1954) Report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by the Parliamentary Delegation to Kenya, January 1954. Her Majesty’s Stationary Office.
- Gresser, C., and Tickell, S. (2002). Mugged: Poverty in your Coffee Cup. Oxfam International. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/mugged-poverty-in-our-coffee-cup-112445/>.
- Grozanick, R. (2016). “The Way Forward: Unpacking The Coffee Quality Institute’s Partnership For Gender Equity Report .” *Sprudge* online: 16 Jan. 2016. Available at: <https://sprudge.com/gender-equity-report-90475.html>.
- Gudmundson, L. (2021). *Costa Rica After Coffee: The Co-op Era in History and Memory*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- Guenther, K. M. (2011). The Possibilities and Pitfalls of NGO Feminism: Insights from Postsocialist Eastern Europe. *Sigms*, 36(4), 863–887. <https://doi.org/10.1086/658504>.

- Gutiérrez, G. (1973). *A Theology of Liberation*. Rev Ed, Tr. Sister Caridad Inda & John Eagleson. NY: Orbis Books.
- Guyo, F. B. (2017). Colonial and post-colonial changes and impact on pastoral women's roles and status. *Pastoralism: Research, Policy and Practice*, 7(1), 1–19.  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13570-017-0076-2>.
- Halley, J. ed. (2018). *Governance Feminism: An Introduction*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Harlow, B., and Carter, M., eds. (2003). *Archives of Empire, Volume I: From the East India company to the Suez Canal*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Harlow, B, and Carter, M., eds. (2005). *Archives of Empire. Volume II: The Scramble for Africa*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Harrison, E., & Chiroro, C. (2017). “Differentiated legitimacy, differentiated resilience: Beyond the natural in ‘natural disasters’”. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 44(5), 1022-1042.
- Hearn, J. "The 'NGO-isation' of Kenyan society: USAID & the restructuring of health care", in *Review of African Political Economy*, No: 75:89-100, ROAPE Publications Ltd., 1998, p.98
- Hedlund, H. (1992). *Coffee, Co-operatives and Culture: An Anthropological Study of a Coffee Cooperative in Kenya*. Nairobi: Oxford UP.
- Heiliger, E. (2013) “Coffee 'Tied With a Pink Ribbon': Transgender Phenomena and Transnational Feminisms in Twenty-First Century Ethical Consumer Movements.” *Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture*. Vol. 13 Issue 2, p3-31.
- Hickel, J. (2018). *The divide : Global inequality from conquest to free markets* (First American ed.). New York: W.W. Norton & Company
- Hickel, J. (2017). Is global inequality getting better or worse? A critique of the World Bank's convergence narrative. *Third World Quarterly*, 38(10), 2208-2222.
- Hickel, J. (2014). The 'girl effect': Liberalism, empowerment and the contradictions of development. *Third World Quarterly*, 35(8), 1355-1373.
- Hochschild, A. (2005) *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves*. NY: Houghton Mifflin.
- Hoffman, J. (2016) *The World Atlas of Coffee: From Beans to Brewing – Coffees Explored, Explained, and Enjoyed*. Buffalo, NY: Firefly Books.
- hooks, b. (2015) *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Routledge.
- hooks, b. (2000/2015) *Feminism is for Everybody, Passionate Politics*. NY: Routledge.

Hussain, L.A.S., Inzoli, F., Golinucci, N., Stevanato, N., Rocco, M.V., and Colombo, E. (2020). “FEEM Approach to Supply Chain Analysis The coffee Sector in Kenya” (July 24, 2020). FEEM Report No. 07-2020, Available at: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3733699> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3733699>.

Hussein, T. (2005) *The Karen Blixen Museum Nairobi*. Published by National Museums of Kenya. Reprinted 2007, 2011. ISBN 9966-9628-1-6.

Huxley, E. (1967). *The Flame Trees of Thika: Memories of an African Childhood*. Middlesex: Penguin.

Huxley, E. (1935 original; reprinted 1968). *White Man's Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya*. Volumes 1 and 2. New York: Praeger.

Hyden, G. (2006). *African Politics in Comparative Perspective African Politics in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge UP.

Ibrahim, S., & Alkire, S. (2007). Agency and Empowerment: A Proposal for Internationally Comparable Indicators. *Oxford Development Studies*, 35(4), 379–403. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600810701701897>.

Ikiara, G. K.; Ndung'u, N.S. (1999). “Employment and labour markets during adjustment: Kenya”, in Willem van der Geest; Rolph van der Hoeven (eds.): *Adjustment, employment and missing institutions in Africa - the experience in Eastern and Southern Africa*, Geneva, ILO, James Curry, Oxford.

International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) (n.d.) ‘What is a Cooperative?’. Available online at: <http://ica.coop/en/what-co-operative>.

International Coffee Organization (ICO). (1963) “International Coffee Agreement.” [https://www.ico.org/show\\_faq.asp?show=4](https://www.ico.org/show_faq.asp?show=4). Accessed 18 October 2022.

International Coffee Organization (ICO). (2020). *Coffee Development Report 2020 “The value of coffee – Sustainability, Inclusiveness and Resilience of the Coffee Global Value Chain.”* ICO FR/01/19E. International Coffee Organization: London, UK.

International Coffee Organization (ICO). (2019a). *Coffee Development Report 2019 “Growing for Prosperity – Economic Viability as the Catalyst for a Sustainable Coffee Sector”*. ICO FR-01-19e, International Coffee Organization: London, UK.

International Coffee Organization (ICO). (2019b). *Country Coffee Profile: Vietnam*. ICC-124-9, International Coffee Organization: London.

International Coffee Organization (ICO). (2018.) “Gender Equality in the Coffee Sector: An insight report from the ICO.” ICC-122-11. London. <http://www.ico.org/documents/cy2017-18/icc-122-11e-gender-equality.pdf>.

International Coffee Organization (ICO) (2019.) ICC 124-7 “The Kenya Country Coffee Profile.” Published London. <http://www.ico.org/documents/cy2018-19/icc-124-7e-profile-kenya.pdf>. Downloaded 20 February 2021.

International Coffee Organization (ICO). (2015) *Sustainability in the coffee sector in Africa*. Milan [online] Available at: <http://www.ico.org/documents/cy2014-15/icc-114-5-r1e-overview-coffee-sector-africa.pdf> [Accessed 27 June 2020]

International Coffee Organization (ICO). (2021a) World Coffee Production data (2017-21). Available online : <http://www.ico.org/prices/po-production.pdf>. Downloaded 1 July 2023.

International Coffee Organization (ICO). (2021b) World Coffee Consumption data (2017-21). Available online: <http://www.ico.org/prices/new-consumption-table.pdf>. Downloaded 1 July 2023.

International Coffee Organization (ICO) (2021c) Monthly Trade Statistics Imports by Selected Importing Countries from All Sources. <https://www.ico.org/prices/m4-imports.pdf>.

International Labour Organization. (2008). “Forced labour in Brazil: 120 years after the abolition of slavery, the fight goes on.” ILO news 13 May 2008. Retrieved from [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/mission-and-objectives/features/WCMS\\_092663/lang-en/index.htm#:~:text=On%20May%2013th%201888%2C%20Brazil,in%20this%20South%20American%20country.](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/mission-and-objectives/features/WCMS_092663/lang-en/index.htm#:~:text=On%20May%2013th%201888%2C%20Brazil,in%20this%20South%20American%20country.)

International Labour Organization (ILO). 2016. “Empowering Women in the Rural Economy.” [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_dialogue/---sector/documents/publication/wcms\\_601071.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/publication/wcms_601071.pdf).

International Labour Organization (ILO). (2016). *Women at Work: Trends 2016* (Geneva, 2016); ILOSTAT, 201. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_457317.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_457317.pdf). Accessed 15 September 2020.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2014) Summary for policymakers. Published for the IPCC. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

International Trade Forum (ITC) (2008). Online, Issue 3-4/2008 Women in Coffee (tradeforum.org) Website – no author.

International Trade Centre (2021). *The Coffee Guide*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. ITC, Geneva, Switzerland.

IWCA Website (n.d.). Accessed 1 July 2023: <https://www.womenincoffee.org/>

IWCA (2022a) “Strategic Plan 2023-2027: Building a More Equitable Future for Women in Coffee,” Print Handout by IWCA, obtained at conference in Addis.

IWCA (2022b) “IWCA Welcomes Kenya Chapter.” Website Press Release, 18 July 2022. Accessed 1 September 2023: <https://www.womenincoffee.org/blog/2022/7/18/iwca-welcomes-kenya-chapter>.

IWCA (n.d.) “Research Alliance Data Table.” Accessed 15 September 2023: <https://www.womenincoffee.org/research>.

International Women in Coffee Alliance (IWCA) (2022). “Global Connections, Local Impact Activity Summary June-September 2022.” Accessed online 1 September 2023: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51d3052de4b001d5c138c4f7/t/639b538852b37014f4592d4e/1671123854892/Activity+Report+June-Sept+2022.pdf>.

Jackson, W. (2011) White Man’s Country: Kenya Colony and the Making of a Myth. *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 5(2): 344-368.

Jacob, H.E. (1935) *Coffee: The Epic of a Commodity*. Tr. Eden & Cedar Paul. Skyhorse Pub.

Jaffee, D. (2007). *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability, and Survival*. Berkeley, CA: UC Press.

Jaramillo, J., Setamou, M., Muchugu, E., Chabi-Olaye, A., Jaramillo, A., et. al. (2013) “Climate Change or Urbanization? Impacts on a Traditional Coffee Production System in East Africa over the Last 80 Years.” *PLoS ONE* 8(1): e51815. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0051815. Accessed 6 June 2018.

Jaramillo, J., Muchugu, E., Vega, F., Davis, A., Borgemeister, C., Chabi-Olaye, A., & Thrush, S. (2011). “Some Like It Hot: The Influence and Implications of Climate Change on Coffee Berry Borer (*Hypothenemus hampei*) and Coffee Production in East Africa (Climate Change, Coffee and the Coffee Berry Borer).” *PLoS ONE*, 6(9), E24528.

Jena, P. R., & Grote, U. (2017). Fairtrade Certification and Livelihood Impacts on Small-scale Coffee Producers in a Tribal Community of India. *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, 39(1), 87–110. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aep/ppw006>.

Kabeer, N. (2012) Empowerment, Citizenship and Gender Justice: A Contribution to Locally Grounded Theories of Change in Women's Lives. *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 6(3), 216-232.

Kabeer, N. (2011) Between Affiliation and Autonomy: Navigating Pathways of Women's Empowerment and Gender Justice in Rural Bangladesh. *Development and Change*, 42(2), 499-528.

Kabeer, N. (2005) Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third millennium development goal 1, *Gender & Development*, 13:1, 13-24, DOI: 10.1080/13552070512331332273.

Kabira, W. M., and E. A. Nzioki. (1993). *Celebrating Women's Resistance*. Nairobi: African Women's Perspective.

Kabira, W. M.; Mbote, P.K.; Kabira, N.; and Meroka A. (2018) *Changing the Mainstream: Celebrating Women's Resistance*. Published by the African Women Studies Centre, University of Nairobi, Kenya. Available at: <https://www.ielrc.org/content/w1801.pdf>. Accessed 1 December 2023.

Kabira, W.M. (2018) "The Next Season of Harvest" Chapter One in *Changing the Mainstream: Celebrating Women's Resistance*. Kabira, W. M.; Mbote, P.K.; Kabira, N.; and Meroka A. eds. Published by the African Women Studies Centre, University of Nairobi, Kenya.

Kabira, N. and Kameri-Mbote, P. (2018) "Woman of Law: Kenya Women's Triumph in the Constitution of Kenya 2010" Chapter Two in *Changing the Mainstream: Celebrating Women's Resistance*. Kabira, W. M.; Mbote, P.K.; Kabira, N.; and Meroka A. eds. Published by the African Women Studies Centre, University of Nairobi, Kenya.

Kameri-Mbote, P. (2002). Gender dimensions of law, colonialism and inheritance in East Africa: Kenyan women's experiences. *Verfassung Und Recht in Übersee*, 35(ii), 373–398. <https://doi.org/info:doi/>.

Kamwilu E, Minang PA, Tanui J, Hoan DT. (2021). Vietnam's coffee story: lessons for African countries. In: Minang PA, Duguma LA, van Noordwijk M, eds. 2021. *Tree commodities and resilient green economies in Africa*. Nairobi, Kenya: World Agroforestry (ICRAF).

Kamau, N. (2010) "Women and Political Leadership in Kenya: Ten Case Studies." Published by Heinrich Böll Foundation.

Kamola, Isaac. A. 2008. "Coffee and Genocide." *Transition*, (99), 54–72. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20204261>. Accessed 1 May 2016.

---.2007. "The Global Coffee Economy and the Production of Genocide in Rwanda." *Third World Quarterly*, 28(3), 571–592. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20454947>. Accessed 1 May 2016.

Kangile, J. R., Kadigi, R. M. J., Mgeni, C. P., Munishi, B. P., Kashaigili, J., & Munishi, P. K. T. (2021). The Role of Coffee Production and Trade on Gender Equity and Livelihood Improvement in Tanzania. *Sustainability (Basel, Switzerland)*, 13(18), 10191-. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su131810191>.

Kanyinga, K. (2007). "Steaming Cups! Policy Reforms and Problems in the Coffee Trade in Kenya." *Business in Kenya: Institutions and Interactions*. Eds: McCormick, D., Alila, P. O., & Omosa, M. University of Nairobi Press.



Kanyinga, K. and Mitullah, W.V. (2007). *The Non-Profit Sector in Kenya: What we know and what we don't know – Popular Version*. University of Nairobi, IDS – ISBN: 986 – 9966-786-000-7 2007.

Kapoor, I. (2020) *Confronting desire: Psychoanalysis and international development*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Kapoor, I. (2005) 'Participatory Development, Complicity and Desire.' *Third World Quarterly* 26 (8): pp. 1203-1220.

Kareithi, A. (2020) "Ambitious Scheme that Gave Rise to Slums Millions of Squatter Families." *The Standard Media*. Accessed 15 Feb 2024:  
<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/kenya/article/2001331013/ambitious-scheme-that-gave-rise-to-slums-millions-of-squatter-families>.

Karanja, A. M., Kuyvenhoven, A., & Moll, H. A. J. (2003). Economic Reforms and Evolution of Producer Prices in Kenya: An ARCH-M Approach. *African Development Review*, 15(2–3), 271–296. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8268.2003.00074.x>.

Karen Blixen Museum (n.d.) <https://www.museums.or.ke/karen-blixen/>. Accessed 22 October 2021.

Kariuki, F., & Ng'etich, R. (2016). Land Grabbing, Tenure Security and Livelihoods in Kenya. *African Journal of Legal Studies*, 9(2), 79-99. <https://doi.org/10.1163/17087384-12340004>.

Kennedy, J. F. (1962a) "Address on the first anniversary of the Alliance for Progress, 13 March 1962" <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/037/JFKPOF-037-026>.

Kennedy, J. F. (1962b) "Statement by the President on the Signing of the International Coffee Agreement." (28 September 1962) Available Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American President Project*. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-the-president-the-signing-the-international-coffee-agreement>.

Kenya Coffee Act (2001) Revised Edition 2012. Published by the National Council for Law Reporting with the Authority of the Attorney-General. [Act No. 9 of 2001, L.N. 43/2002, Act No. 6 of 2005, Act No. 17 of 2006, Act No. 5 of 2007, Act No. 8 of 2009.] [www.kenyalaw.org](http://www.kenyalaw.org)

Kenya Coffee Directorate Website (n.d.) "International destinations for coffee exports 2018/19." Accessed 1 December 2023:  
<https://coffee.agricultureauthority.go.ke/index.php/statistics/statistics>.

Kenya Coffee Directorate (2023). *Coffee Year Book 2021-22*. Government Printer.

Kenya Coffee Platform Website (2023) [www.sautiyakahawa.org](http://www.sautiyakahawa.org) Accessed 22 September 2023.

Kenya Land Alliance (2023). “Audit of the gender responsiveness of Land Inventories submitted for unregistered Community Land in Kenya.”

Kenya Land Commission Evidence. (1933). Kenya: Government Printer.

Kenya Independence Bill (1963) HC Deb 22 November 1963 vol 684 cc1329-400 (Web: Accessed February 2022: <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1963/nov/22/kenya-independence-bill>).

Kenya Parliament website (n.d.) Available at : <http://www.parliament.go.ke/the-national-assembly/mps>.

Kenya High Commission (1958) “Kenya (White Highlands).” HC Deb 30 October 1958 vol 594 cc463-74. Downloaded at: <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1958/oct/30/kenya-white-highlands>; 22 February 2022.

Kenyatta, J. (1965) *Facing Mt. Kenya*. NY: Penguin Press.

Kenyatta, U. (2020) Speech, January 2020. Watched live in Kenya.

Kessy, A. (2020). Neoliberalism, Economic Crisis, and Domestic Coffee Marketing in Tanzania. In *The Palgrave Handbook of African Political Economy* (pp. 399–412). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38922-2\\_21](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38922-2_21).

Kerry, V., Binagwaho, A., Weigel, J., Farmer, P. (2014). “From Aid to Accompaniment: Rules of the Road for Development Assistance,” in Garrett W. Brown, Gavin Yamey and Sarah Wamala (eds), *Handbook of Global Health Policy*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 483–504.

Kieran, J. A. (1969). “The Origins of Commercial Arabica Coffee Production in East Africa.” *African Historical Studies*, 2(1), 51-67.

Kieyah, J.; Lesiyampe, R. eds. (2016) “Report of the National Task Force on Coffee Sub-Sector Reforms.” Republic of Kenya.

Kilonzo, S.M., Akallah, J.A. (2021). Women in Colonial East Africa. In: Yacob-Haliso, O., Falola, T. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28099-4\\_127](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28099-4_127).

Kimathi, D. (1986) *Kimathi’s Letters: A Profile of Patriotic Courage*. Ed. Maina wa Kinyatti. Zed Books.

Kinyanjui, M. N. (2015). *Coffee Time*. Oxford: Langaa RPCIG.

Kinyanjui, M. N. (2018) Feminine Utu, Chapter 12, in *Changing the Mainstream: Celebrating Women’s Resistance*. Kabira, W. M.; Mbote, P.K.; Kabira, N.; and Meroka A. eds. Published by the African Women Studies Centre, University of Nairobi, Kenya. Available at: <https://www.ielrc.org/content/w1801.pdf>. Accessed 1 December 2023. pp. 255-66.

Koehler, J. (2017). *Where the wild coffee grows : The untold story of coffee from the cloud forests of Ethiopia to your cup*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury USA.

Korieh, C. J. (2001). The Invisible Farmer? Women, Gender, and Colonial Agricultural Policy in the Igbo Region of Nigeria, c. 1913-1954. *African Economic History*, 29(29), 117–162. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3601709>.

Kormelinck, A. G. (2014) “Bargaining Positions and Trust in Ethiopian Coffee Cooperatives: A Gender Perspective.” *Development and equity : an interdisciplinary exploration by ten scholars from Africa, Asia and Latin America* (D. Foeken, Ed.; 1st ed.). Brill.

Koss, E. (2016). “Does Coffee Matter?: Women in Development in Rwanda.” Master’s Thesis, Northeastern University, MA in Political Science. August 2016.

Koss, E. (2019). Bouncing Back: Resiliency in Specialty Coffee. *25 Magazine*: Issue 10. <https://scanews.coffee/25-magazine/issue-10/english/bouncing-back-resiliency-in-specialty-coffee-25-magazine-issue-10/>.

Koss, E. (2021a) “A God Who Wails and Dances: A Conversation with Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor.” *IMAGE*, Issue 109. Seattle, WA: Center for Religious Humanism. June 2021.

Koss, E. (2021b). Tasting Notes. *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, 97(4), 10–11. Available at: <https://www.vqronline.org/articles/2021/12/tasting-notes>.

Koss, E. (2021c). “‘The Limits of ‘Empowerment’: Towards Justice and Accompaniment,” *25 Magazine*, Issue 14. Available online: <https://sca.coffee/sca-news/25/issue-14/the-limits-of-empowerment-towards-justice-and-accompaniment#:~:text=ERIKA%20KOSS%20explores%20the%20nuances,to%20our%20vocabulary%20is%20required>

Koss, E. (2021d) “A Business with a Mission: Chepsangor Coffee in Nandi, Kenya.” Biocaf online. 1 April 2021: <https://www.biocaf.com/post/a-business-with-a-mission-chepsangor-coffee-in-nandi-kenya>

Koss, E (2022a). “From Sea to Shining Sea: Coffee’s Transport and Expanding our Definition of ‘the Middle People’” *25 Magazine*: Issue 17. Available online: <https://sca.coffee/sca-news/25/issue-17/from-sea-to-shining-sea-coffees-transport-and-expanding-our-definition-of-the-middle-people>.

Koss, E. (2022b) “Coffee Through the Looking Glass: A Call for Intersectionality Sustainability.” *The Coffee Magazine: South Africa’s Coffee Magazine*, 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition, Issue 40, Durban, South Africa.

Koss, E. (2023) “Tackling Market Jitters: Algrano Market Trends Report 2023.” Published by Algrano in Switzerland.

- Kristof, N.D. & WuDunn, S. (2009). *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. New York: Vintage.
- Kuguru, P. N., Jaensson, J.E., & Nganga, K. (2022). Influence of marketing innovation on the performance of coffee cooperatives in Kenya. *International Journal of Business Ecosystem & Strategy*, 4(4), 83–88. <https://doi.org/10.36096/ijbes.v4i4.366>.
- Kurian, R. (2003). “Labor, Race, and Gender on the Coffee Plantations in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), 1834-1880.” In *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500–1989*. Eds. Clarence-Smith, William G., and Steven Topik. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 173-90.
- Lang, S. (1997). “The NGO-Ization of Feminism.” In *Transitions, Environments, Translations: Feminisms in International Politics*, edited by J. W. Scott, C. Kaplan, and D. Keates, 101–120. New York: Routledge.
- Lauri, J. & Bäckström, H. (2019). Coffee by women: The 'duty of ethical enjoyment'. *Cultural Studies (London, England)*, 33(5), 866-887.
- Leaky, L. (1952). *The Mau Mau and the Kikuyu*. Routledge.
- Leo, C. (1981). Who Benefited from the Million-Acre Scheme? Toward a Class Analysis of Kenya's Transition to Independence. *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines*, 15(2), 201–222. <https://doi.org/10.2307/484409>.
- Lewin, G. (2004) “Coffee Markets: New Paradigms in Global Supply and Demand.”
- Lewis, S. (2000). Culture, Cultivation, and Colonialism in "Out of Africa" and beyond. *Research in African Literatures*, 31(1), 63-79.
- Lincoln, D.(1994) Women mini-farmers in the South African tea industry, *Development Southern Africa*, 11:4, 573-586, DOI: [10.1080/03768359408439773](https://doi.org/10.1080/03768359408439773).
- Lindqvist, S. (1997). *Exterminate all the brutes*. London: Granta.
- Lombardini, S, Bowman, K, Garwood, R. (2017) *A 'How to Guide' to Measuring Women's Empowerment*. Publisher: Oxfam GB. DOI 10.21201/2017.9750.
- Long Soldier, L. (2017). *Whereas*. Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press.
- Lorde, A. (1984) “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference.” *Sister Outsider*. Berkeley: Crossing Press.
- Luxton, M. & Maroney, H.J. (1987). *Feminism and political economy: women's work, women's struggles*. Methuen.

Lyon, S. (2019). Business Anthropology's Lens into Gender Equity: Assessing the Impact of "Smart Economics" in the Coffee Sector. *International Journal of Business Anthropology*, 9(2), 33–50. <https://doi.org/10.33423/ijba.v9i2.2581>.

----. (2008). "We Want To Be Equal to Them: Fair-trade Coffee Certification and Gender Equity within Organizations." *Human Organization*, 67(3), 258-268.

----. (2011). *Coffee and Community: Maya farmers and fair-trade markets*. Boulder, Colo.: University Press of Colorado.

----. (2014). The GoodGuide to "Good" Coffee. *Gastronomica*, 14(4), 60–68. <https://doi.org/10.1525/gfc.2014.14.4.60>.

Lyon, S., Mutersbaugh, T., & Worthen, H. (2017). The triple burden: The impact of time poverty on women's participation in coffee producer organizational governance in Mexico. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 34(2), 317-331.

Lyon, S., Mutersbaugh, T., & Worthen, H. (2019). Constructing the female coffee farmer: Do corporate smart-economic initiatives promote gender equity within agricultural value chains?: Constructing the Female Coffee Farmer. *Economic Anthropology*, 6(1), 34–47. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sea2.12129>.

Lyon, S., Bezaury, J. A., & Mutersbaugh, T. (2010). Gender equity in fairtrade–organic coffee producer organizations: Cases from Mesoamerica. *Geoforum*, 41(1), 93–103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2009.04.006>.

Lyon, S., & Moberg, Mark. (2010). *Fair trade and social justice : Global ethnographies*. New York: New York University Press.

Maathai, W. (2010). *Replenishing the Earth: Spiritual Values for Healing Ourselves and the World*. New York: Doubleday.

----. (2009). *The Challenge for Africa* (1st ed.). New York: Pantheon Books.

MacDonald, F. & Dobrowolsky, A, eds. (2020) *Turbulent Times: Transformational Possibilities? Gender and Politics Today and Tomorrow*. U of Toronto Press.

Manchester, A. K. (1951). The Recognition of Brazilian Independence. *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 31(1), 80–96. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2509132>.

Mayoux, L. (2012) Gender mainstreaming in value chain development: Experience with Gender Action Learning System in Uganda. *Enterprise Development and Microfinance* Vol. 23 No. 4 doi: 10.3362/1755-1986.2012.031.

Mayoux, L. & G. Mackie (2007), Making the strongest links. A practical guide to mainstreaming gender analysis in value chain development. Geneva: International Labour Organization (ILO).

- Mackenzie, A.F.D. (1998). *Land, Ecology and Resistance in Kenya, 1880-1952*. International African Library. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP.
- Mama, A. (1997) "Sheroes and Villains: Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence Against Women in Africa." *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. Eds. M. J. Alexander and C. Talpade Mohanty. New York: Routledge, pp. 46-62.
- Maritain, J. (1973). *Integral Humanism*, trans. Joseph W. Evans. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Meemken, E., Veettil, P., & Qaim, M. (2017). Toward Improving the Design of Sustainability Standards—A Gendered Analysis of Farmers' Preferences. *World Development*, 99, 285-298.
- Mehra, R. (1991). "Can Structural Adjustment Work for Women Farmers." *American Agricultural Economics Association*. Vol. 73. No. 5. Pp. 1440-1447. Oxford UP. Downloaded 11 Sept 2020. 140.184.72.37.
- Meier zu Selhausen, F. (2016). What Determines Women's Participation in Collective Action? Evidence from a Western Ugandan Coffee Cooperative. *Feminist Economics*, 22(1), 130–157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701.2015.1088960>.
- Mies, M., & Federici, S. (2014). *Patriarchy and accumulation on a world scale: Women in the international division of labour* (3rd ed., Vol. 54064). NBN International.
- Mikkelsen, B. (2005). *Methods for development work and research: a new guide for practitioners*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. L.A. Sage Publications.
- Mintz, S. (1986). *Sweetness and power: The place of sugar in modern history*. NY: Penguin.
- Mitullah, W. V. (2020) "Gender Mainstreaming and the Campaign for Equality." *The Oxford Handbook of Kenyan Politics*. Eds. Cheeseman, N., Kanyinga, K., & Lynch, G.
- Mitullah, W. (2017). 'Kenyan's see gains in gender equality, but support for women's empowerment still uneven'. Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 170 – [www.Afrobarometer.org](http://www.Afrobarometer.org)
- Mitullah W.V. & Lilian A. Owiti, 'Women and Politics of Transition' in Wanyande, P, Omosa, M and Ludeki Chweya (eds) *Governance and Transition Politics in Kenya*. Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press
- Moghadam, V. M. (2005). *Globalizing women transnational feminist networks*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Mohanty, C.T. (2003). *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham & London: Duke UP.

Mohanty, C.T. (1988). "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Feminist Review* 30:61-88.

Morgan, R. and Wieringa, S. (2005) *Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men, and Ancestral Wives: Female Same-Sex Practices in Africa*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd. Loop

Morris, A., Boateng D., Agwanda C., (2015) Mainstreaming gender and Youth in Smallholder Sustainable Coffee Supply Chain in Kenya. In: *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, Vol 6, No 18. Pp 76-87.

Morris, J. (2019). *Coffee : A global history* (Edible). London: Reaktion Books.

Morris, R. C., & Spivak, G. C. (2010). *Can the subaltern speak? : reflections on the history of an idea* (R. C. Morris, Ed.). Columbia University Press.

Muchomba, F. M. (2014). Colonial Policies and the Rise of Transactional Sex in Kenya. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 15(2), 80-93. Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol15/iss2/6>.

Mude, A. G. (2006). Weaknesses in Institutional Organization: Explaining the Dismal Performance of Kenya's Coffee Cooperatives. *IDEAS Working Paper Series from RePEc*.

Mungeam, G.H. ed (1978) "Extracts from the Crowns Land Ordinance 1915." Kenya, Select Historical Documents, 1884-1923, East African Publishing House, pp.344-56.

Musoyoki, A. & Orodho, J.A. (1993) "Urbank Women Workers in the Informal Sector and Economic Change in Kenya in the 1980s." *Social Change and Economic Reform in Kenya*. pp.106-33.

Mutu, K. (2016). "A History of Currency in East Africa from 1895." *The Star Kenya*. 1 November 2016. <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/big-read/2016-11-01-a-history-of-currency-in-east-africa-from-1895/>. Accessed 1 December 2023.

Nairobi Coffee Exchange website (n.d.) Kenya. Available at: [https://nairobicoffeexchange.co.ke/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=17:nce-background](https://nairobicoffeexchange.co.ke/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=17:nce-background).

Ndirangu, W. (2020). Government Launches Coffee Revitalization Project. Retrieved from [https:// www.kenyanews.go.ke/government-launches-coffeerevitalization-project/](https://www.kenyanews.go.ke/government-launches-coffeerevitalization-project/). Accessed 1 December 2023.

Nestlé (n.d.) "Understanding and Promoting Gender Equality." Web site article : <https://nestle-nespresso.com/news/understanding-and-promoting-gender-equality-in-coffee-farming..> Accessed 1 December 2023.

Neuman, W.L. (2006) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Pearson.

- Newman, S. A. (2009). Financialization and Changes in the Social Relations along Commodity Chains: The Case of Coffee. *The Review of Radical Political Economics*, 41(4), 539–559. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0486613409341454>
- Newman, J. and White, L. (2012). *Women, Politics, and Public Policy*, 2nd edition, Oxford UP.
- Ngeywo, J., Egesah, O., Biwott, T., & Waliaula, J. (2016). Gender based determinants of coffee consumption for management of coffee production in Kenya. *International Journal of Innovative Science, Engineering & Technology*, Vol. 3 Issue 1.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o. (1965/1990). *The River Between*. Heinemann.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o. (2010). *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*. Pantheon Books.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o. (2009) *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance*. (Originally published in English, Basic Civitas Books)
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o. (1986). *Decolonising the mind : The politics of language in African literature*. London : Portsmouth, N.H.: J. Currey ; Heinemann.
- Nicholls, C.S. (1971). *The Swahili coast: politics, diplomacy and trade on the East African littoral, 1798-1856*. Africana Pub.
- Nicholls, C.S. (2002). *Elspeth Huxley: A Biography*. HarperCollins.
- Njurge, G. (2020). “Farmers Uproot Coffee Trees to Protest Sh14 Pay.” *The Standard* online. [https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001375951/farmers-uproot-coffee-trees-to-protest-sh14-pay-per-kilo?utm\\_source=CCS+Coffee+News&utm\\_campaign=68e95772e2-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2017\\_03\\_28\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_d948c478db-68e95772e2-94983485](https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001375951/farmers-uproot-coffee-trees-to-protest-sh14-pay-per-kilo?utm_source=CCS+Coffee+News&utm_campaign=68e95772e2-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_03_28_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d948c478db-68e95772e2-94983485). Accessed 8 August 2022.
- Nnaemeka, O. (2005) “Mapping African Feminisms.” *Readings in Gender in Africa*, ed. Cornwall, A. Bloomington, Indiana UP. Pp.31-41.
- Novogratz, J. (2020) *Manifesto*. St. Martin’s Press.
- Nunes, A., Zylbersztajn, D., Giordano, S., Vita, C., Menezes, R., Macieira, J. (2022) *Cadernos Da Universidade Do Café Brasil*. VOL.12. 2022. DOI. 10.13140/RG.2.2.15696.79364.
- Nzomo, M. (2018) “Gender and Governance in Kenya: Women’s Journey Beyond Numbers.” IN THE RESILIENCE BOOK published by U of N.
- Oboler, R. S. (1980). Is the Female Husband a Man? Woman/Woman Marriage among the Nandi of Kenya. *Ethnology*, 19(1), 69–88. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3773320>.



- Oduol, W. A. (1993). "Kenyan Women in Politics: An Analysis of Past and Present Trends." *Transafrican Journal of History*, 22, 166–181.
- Ogechi, N. (2019). Ethnicity, Language, and Identity in Kenya. *Modern Africa: Politics, History and Society*, 7(1), 111–135. <https://doi.org/10.26806/modafr.v7i1.265>.
- Ogot, B.A. (1963). Kenya Under the British: 1895 to 1963. In B.A. Ogot (ed.), *Zamani: A Survey of East African History*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968.
- Ogot, B.A.(2003). "Mau Mau and Nationhood: The Untold Story." *Mau Mau & Nationhood*, ed. E.S. Atieno Odhiambo and John Lonsdale, Ohio UP. PP. 8-36.
- Ogot, B. A., & Ochieng', W. R. (1995). *Decolonization and independence in Kenya, 1940-93*. J. Currey.
- Ogutu, M. (1979). "Dualism and the Development of Coffee in Meru, Kenya, in 1930s." *Transafrican Journal of History*, 8(1/2), 140-159.
- Okia, O. (2019). "Skinny Scarecrows": Forced Labor in Kenya Before the Forced Labour Convention. In *Labor in Colonial Kenya after the Forced Labor Convention, 1930–1963* (pp. 25–47). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17608-2\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17608-2_2).
- Okuro, S. (2010). Our Women Must Return Home: Institutionalized Patriarchy in Colonial Central Nyanza District, 1945-1963. *Journal of Asian and African Studies (Leiden)*, 45(5), 522-533.
- Omari, E. (2018). "Long walk to gender Bill, 'flower girls' and fighters." *The Nation* (24 November 2018). Available online: [https://nation.africa/kenya/news/politics/long-walk-to-gender-bill-flower-girls-and-fighters-112530#google\\_vignette](https://nation.africa/kenya/news/politics/long-walk-to-gender-bill-flower-girls-and-fighters-112530#google_vignette).
- Orloff, A. S. (2005). "Farewell to Maternalism? State Policies and Mothers' Employment." IPR Working Paper 05-10 (Northwestern University).
- Owour, Y.A. (2013) *Dust*. NY : Penguin Books.
- Pakenham, T. (1991). *The Scramble for Africa, 1876-1916*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.
- Panhuysen, S., & Pierrot, J. (2018). *Coffee Barometer 2018*. Arlington, VA, US: Conservation International, Den Haag, The Netherlands: Hivos, Gent, Belgium: Oxfam-Wereldwinkels, Utrecht, The Netherlands: Solidaridad. Retrieved August 8, 2021, from <https://coffeebarometer.org/>.
- Panhuysen, S., & Pierrot, J. (2020). *Coffee Barometer 2020*. Arlington, VA, US: Conservation International, Den Haag, The Netherlands: Hivos, Gent, Belgium: Oxfam-Wereldwinkels, Utrecht, The Netherlands: Solidaridad. Retrieved August 8, 2021, from <https://coffeebarometer.org/>.

Paterson, S. & Scala, F. (2020). “Feminist Government or Governance Feminism?: Exploring Feminist Policy Analysis in the Trudeau Era.” *Turbulent Times: Transformational Possibilities? Gender and Politics Today and Tomorrow*. MacDonald, F. & Dobrowolsky, A, eds. U of Toronto Press.

Paterson, S. (2010). “What's the Problem with Gender-Based Analysis? Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Practice in Canada.” Vol 53. *Canadian Public Administration*. 53(3):395 – 416.

Partnership for Gender Equity (PGE) (2015) *The Way Forward, Accelerating Gender Equity in Coffee Value chains*. Coffee Quality Institute Aliso Viejo, California. Available online on <https://www.genderincoffee.org/gep>. Access on 05/20/2021.

Partnership for Gender Equity (PGE) (2021). A Common Measurement Framework for Gender Equity in the Coffee Sector. Available online on: <https://the-partnership-for-gender-equity.mykajabi.com/opt-in-b222a8a4-5f24-42a5-99bf-2925e8132f86>. Access on June 10, 2021.

Pedersen, D and Backer, J. (2019) “Strategy Handbook: Living Income Task Force.” Published by The Sustainable Trade Initiative. [Task-Force-for-Coffee-Living-Income-Report\\_TCLI-Report-Summary.pdf](https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/reports/task-force-for-coffee-living-income-report-tcli-report-summary.pdf) ([idhsustainabletrade.com](https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com)). Accessed 1 August 2021.

Pereira de Melo, H. (2003) “Coffee and Development of the Rio de Janeiro Economy, 1888-1920.” In *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500–1989*. Eds. Clarence-Smith, W.G. and Topik, S. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 360-84.

Pendergrast, M. (2010). *Uncommon grounds: The history of coffee and how it transformed our world* (Rev. ed.). New York: Basic Books.

Pflaeger, Z. (2013). Decaf empowerment? Post-Washington consensus development policy, fair trade and Kenya’s coffee industry. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 16(3), 331-357. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1057/jird.2012.17>.

Pineda, J., Piniero, M., & Ramirez, A. (2019). Coffee Production and Women's Empowerment in Colombia. *Human Organization*, 78(1), 64-74.

Pindeo Caro, J. (2020) “Wages and working conditions in the coffee sector: the case of Costa Rica, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia and Viet Nam Background note.” Geneva: International Labour Office, December 2020.

Ponte, S. (2002). The “Latte Revolution”? Regulation, Markets and Consumption in the Global Coffee Chain. *World Development*., 30(7), 1099–1122. <https://doi.org/info:doi/>.

Pope, S. (2019). “Integral Human Development: From Paternalism to Accompaniment,” *Theological Studies* 80(1): 123–47, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563918819798>.

Presley, C. (1992). *Kikuyu women, the Mau Mau Rebellion, and social change in Kenya*. Westview Press.

- Rafael, V. E. (2020) "A Business Case to Increase Specialty Coffee Consumption in Producing Countries." Specialty Coffee Association Report, published by SCA.
- Rajbhandari, K. (2019). Beyond the Ethics of Nationalism and Betrayal: Silence, Secrecy, and the Subaltern in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*. *Research in African Literatures* 50(2), 158-176. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/742403>.
- Raman, K. R. (2020). Can the Dalit woman speak? How "intersectionality" helps advance postcolonial organization studies. *Organization (London, England)*, 27(2), 272–290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508419888899>.
- Rappaport, E. (2017). *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Republic of Kenya (ROK) (2010). *Constitution of the Republic of Kenya*. Nairobi: Government Printer. <http://www.kenyalaw.org/lex/actview.xql?actid=Const2010>.
- Republic of Kenya (ROK) (2016). National Framework on Climate Change Policy (NFCCP).
- Reynolds, T. (2020) "Eliud Kipchoge: The humble home life in rural Kenya behind remarkable athletic success." BBC Online. 22 April 2020 <https://www.bbc.com/sport/athletics/52354320>.
- Rich, A. (1978). "Cartographies of Silence." *The Dream of a Common Language: Poems, 1974–1977*. New York: Norton.
- Rist, G. (2014) *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. London, Zed Books.
- Rizzo, L. (2012). *Gender and colonialism: a history of Kaoko in north-western Namibia, 1870s-1950s*. Basler Afrika Bibliographien.
- Roberts, P. & Trewick, C. (2020). Specialty Coffee Transaction Guide. <https://www.transac-tionguide.coffee/en/2020>.
- Robertson, C. (1997a). "Gender and Trade Relations in Central Kenya in the Late Nineteenth Century." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*. Vol 30, No. 1, pp. 23-47.
- Robertson, C. (1997b). *Trouble showed the way : women, men, and trade in the Nairobi area, 1890-1990*. Indiana University Press.
- Rodney, W. (1972) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publications, Ltd.
- Rodríguez, T.D., & Adomako A.A. (2015). *Transatlantic feminisms : women and gender studies in Africa and the diaspora*. Lexington Books.

- Rojas, C. (2001). "Development": What's in a Word? Views from the Paradigms. *Revue Canadienne D'études Du Développement*, 22(3), 571-596.
- Rostow, W.W. (1956) "The Takeoff Into Sustained Growth." *The Economic Journal*, 66: 261, pp. 25-48.
- Rowlands, J. (1995) 'Empowerment Examined', *Development in Practice* 5.2: 101–7
- Rowlands, J. (1997) *Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras*, Oxford: Oxfam GB
- Rowlands, J. (2016) "Power in Practice: Bringing Understandings and Analysis of Power into Development Action in Oxfam." *IDS Bulletin*. Vol. 46, No. 5. Available online at: <https://bulletin.ids.ac.uk/index.php/idsbo/article/view/2796/ONLINE%20ARTICLE>.
- Sachs, J. (2005) *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*. New York & London: Penguin.
- Sachs, J. et al. (2019). Ensuring Economic Viability and Sustainability of Coffee Production. Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment. <http://ccsi.columbia.edu/files/2020/08/Ensuring-Economic-Viability-Sustainability-of-Coffee-Production.pdf>.
- Sachs, W. (2010) *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: Zed Books.
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage. [Preface, 2003].
- Samper, L., Giovannucci, D. & Marques Vieira, L. (2017a). The powerful role of intangibles in the coffee value chain. Economic research paper No. 39. WIPO. <https://www.wipo.int/publications/en/details.jsp?id=4229&plang=EN>.
- Samper, L, & Quiñones-Ruiz, X. (2017b). Towards a Balanced Sustainability Vision for the Coffee Industry, *Resources*, 6.2: 17–28 <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/resources6020017>.
- Sandberg, M., & Tienari, J. (Eds.). (2022). *Transformative action for sustainable outcomes : responsible organising* (Ser. Routledge advances in sociology ser). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003229728>.
- Sarirahayu, K., & Aprianingsih, A. (2018). Strategy to Improving Smallholder Coffee Farmers Productivity. *The Asian Journal of Technology Management*, 11(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.12695/ajtm.2017.11.1.1>.
- Sawer, M., Banaszak, L., True, J., and Kantola, J.; eds. (2023) *The Handbook of Feminist Governance*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

SCA. (Specialty Coffee Association) (2021). "Towards a Definition of Specialty Coffee: A Conception Based on Attributes." © 2021 the Specialty Coffee Association.

SCA. (Specialty Coffee Association) (2018). "Gender Equality and Coffee: Minimizing the Gender Gap in Agriculture." <https://www.scanews.coffee/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Gender-Equality-and-Coffee-Minimizing-the-Gender-Gap-in-Agriculture-redirect.pdf>. Specialty Coffee Association. Accessed 1 September 2021.

SCA (Specialty Coffee Association) (n.d.) "Trainers: How it Works." <https://education.sca.coffee/trainers-how-it-works>. Specialty Coffee Association Website.

SCAA (Specialty Coffee Association of America). (2015). "A Blueprint for Gender Equality in the Coffeelands." A White Paper published by the SCAA. <https://www.scaa.org/PDF/scaa-white-paper-gender-equality.pdf>. Accessed 1 September 2021.

SCAA (Specialty Coffee Association of America) (2016). A Blueprint for Farmworker Inclusion. A White Paper published by SCAA. <https://www.scanews.coffee/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/SCAA-WP-TheFarmWorker-April2016.pdf>. Accessed 1 Sept. 2021.

Scholer, M. (2008). "Women in Coffee." *International Trade Forum*, 3/4, 32–33.

Scott, G. & Garner, R. (2013). *Doing Qualitative Research: Designs, methods, and techniques*. Boston: Pearson.

Sedgewick, A. (2020) *Coffeeland: One Man's Dark Empire and the Making of Our Favorite Drug*. New York: Penguin Books.

Sen, A. (2000). *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor.

Sen, A. (2020). "Listening as Governance," *Indian Express*, 8 April 2020, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/coronavirus-india-lockdown-amartya-sen-economy-migrants-6352132/>. Accessed 9 April 2024.

Shanguhya, M. (2015) *Population, Tradition, and Environmental Control in Colonial Kenya*. U of Rochester Press, Rochester, NY.

Silvestri, S., Bryan, E., Ringler, C., Herrero, M., & Okoba, B. (2012). "Climate change perception and adaptation of agro-pastoral communities in Kenya." *Regional Environmental Change*, 12(4), 791-802.

Smith, A. (1776/2020). *The Wealth of Nations*. Vintage Classics.

Smith, E., & Loker, W. M. (2012). "We Know Our Worth": Lessons from a Fair Trade Coffee Cooperative in Honduras. *Human Organization*, 71(1), 87–98. <https://doi.org/10.17730/humo.71.1.u80732m27115x967>.

Smyth, I. (2010). "Talking of gender: words and meanings in development organisations." *Deconstructing Development Discourse: Buzzwords and Fuzzwords*. Eds: Andrea Cornwall and Deborah Eade. London: Oxfam GB.

Solidaridad (2023). "Coffee Sustainability: Kenya's Looming Crisis Amidst the Soaring Cost of Production." Website news. [https://www.solidaridadnetwork.org/news/coffee-sustainability-kenyas-looming-crisis-amidst-the-soaring-cost-of-production/#:~:text=As%20at%202019%2C%20an%20estimated,\(Coffee%20Directorate%2C%202019\)](https://www.solidaridadnetwork.org/news/coffee-sustainability-kenyas-looming-crisis-amidst-the-soaring-cost-of-production/#:~:text=As%20at%202019%2C%20an%20estimated,(Coffee%20Directorate%2C%202019).). Accessed 1 August 2023.

Sorensen, A., & von Bülow, D. (1993). Gender and contract farming: tea outgrower schemes in Kenya. *Review of African Political Economy*, 20(56), 38–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056249308703984>.

Sosa, L. V. and Diaz, S. (2018). "Accompaniment in a Mexican Immigrant Community: Conceptualization and Identification of Biopsychosocial Outcomes."

Spivak, G.C. (1988). "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg. U of Illinois Press. pp. 271-316.

Statista (June 2022). "Coffee - Worldwide: Statista Market Forecast." Accessed 1 August 2023: <https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/hot-drinks/coffee/worldwide>.

Stolcke, V. (1988). *Coffee planters, workers, and wives : Class conflict and gender relations on São Paulo plantations, 1850-1980*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Svensson, B. (1992). "Women and the Co-Operative." *Coffee, Co-operatives and Culture: An Anthropological Study of a Coffee Cooperative in Kenya*, ed. by H. Hedlund. Nairobi: Oxford UP.

Swamy, G. (1994) World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 1238: "Kenya: Structural Adjustment in the 1980s." Washington, DC: World Bank Publications.

Swynnerton, R. J. M. (1954). *A plan to intensify the development of African agriculture in Kenya*, Nairobi, Government Printer.

Synder, M and Gitonga, K (2023) USDA: Coffee Annual Report, Kenya, Report Number: KE2023-0004. Available online: [https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/Report/DownloadReportByFileName?fileName=Coffee%20Annual\\_Nairobi\\_Kenya\\_KE2023-0004.pdf](https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/Report/DownloadReportByFileName?fileName=Coffee%20Annual_Nairobi_Kenya_KE2023-0004.pdf). Downloaded 1 July 2023.

Tallontire, A; Dolan, C; Smith, S; and Barrientos, S. (2005). "Reaching the Marginalised? Gender Value Chains and Ethical Trade in African Horticulture." *Development in Practice*. 15 (3/4): 559-71.

TechnoServe (2017). *The Future of coffee, a quick scan on improving the economic viability of Coffee Farming*. Global Coffee Platform. [online] Accessed 1 July 2021: [https://www.globalcoffeeplatform.org/assets/files/Resources/Global-Exec.-Summ.\\_vSent.pdf](https://www.globalcoffeeplatform.org/assets/files/Resources/Global-Exec.-Summ._vSent.pdf).

Thomas-Slayter, B. and Rocheleau, D. (1995). *Gender, Environment, and Development in Kenya*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers

Topik, S. (2003). “The Integration of the World Coffee Market.” In *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500–1989*. Gervase Clarence-Smith, William, and Steven Topik, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. PP 21-49.

Townsend-Bell, E. (2023). “Seeking Intersectionality in Feminist Governance.” *The Handbook of Feminist Governance*, eds. M. Sawyer, L.A. Banaszak, J. True, J. Kantola. Edward Elgar Pub.

Townsend-Bell, E. (2016). Women in their complexity. *Politics, Groups & Identities*, 4(4), 690–694. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2016.1211940>

Townsend-Bell, E. (2012). Writing the Way to Feminism. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(1), 127–152. <https://doi.org/10.1086/665806>.

Tripp, A. M. (2003). Women in Movement Transformations in African Political Landscapes. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 5(2), 233–255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461674032000080585>.

Trouillot, M. (2015). *Silencing the past: power and the production of history*. Retrieved from <https://hdl-handle-net.library.smu.ca/2027/heb.04595>.

Turner, T.E. & Brownhill, L.S. (2004). We want our land back: gendered class analysis, the second contradiction of capitalism and social movement theory, *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 15:4, 21-40, DOI: 10.1080/1045575042000287307

Turner, T.E. & Brownhill, L.S. (2001). “African Jubilee: Mau Mau Resurgence and the Fight for Fertility in Kenya,” *Gender, Feminism and the Civil Commons*, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*.

Tuth, K. (2015) “Coffee Varieties” *Standard*. Issue 3.

TWIN and Twin Trading Report. (2017) “Coffee and Climate Change: Moving from Adaptation to Resilience.” Published in London by Twin. Accessed 13 July 2021.

TWIN and Twin Trading Report. (2013) “Empowering Women Farmers in Agricultural Value Chains” Published in London by TWIN. Accessed 13 July 2022.

Ukers, W. (1922). *All about coffee, by William H. Ukers*. The Tea and Coffee Trade Journal Company.

UNESCO (2018) *What do we mean by youth?* Geneva [online] Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-definition/> Accessed 19 June 2020.

United Nations. (1985) “The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.” Report of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development, and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication).

United Nations. (1995). Beijing Platform for Action. <http://www.un-documents.net/bpa-4-i.htm>. Accessed 19 June 2020.

United Nations. (2020). Beijing Quote in Intro. Source no author: <https://www.un.org/pga/75/event/high-level-meeting-on-the-twenty-fifth-anniversary-of-the-fourth-world-conference-on-women/>). Accessed 19 June 2022.

United Nations (2010) Every Woman, Every Child. Briefing Memo: <https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/EveryWomanEveryChild.pdf>. Accessed 19 June 2022.

United Nations. (2008). *Women 2000 and Beyond: Rural Women in a Changing World: Opportunities and Challenges*. New York: United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

United Nations Coffee Conference (1962) “Summary of Proceedings” E/CONF.42/8. New York.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2020). Online: <https://www.ke.undp.org/content/kenya/en/home/presscenter/articles/2020/AnnualNGOSectorReportLaunch201819.html>. Accessed 19 June 2021.

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for the Advancement of Women (2009). “2009 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development Women’s Control over Economic Resources and Access to Financial Resources” ST/ESA/326. Published by the United Nations. [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/WorldSurvey2009.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/WorldSurvey2009.pdf). Accessed 1 Dec. 2022.

USAID (2022) “Kenya: Women’s Economic Empowerment Initiative Fact Sheet and Website” Accessed 1 October 2023: [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/Womens\\_Economic\\_Empowerment\\_Kenya\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/Womens_Economic_Empowerment_Kenya_Fact_Sheet_.pdf) and <https://www.usaid.gov/kenya/document/womens-economic-empowerment-initiative>. Accessed 1 December 2022.

Upadhyay, N. (2013). Pernicious Continuities: Un/settling violence, race and colonialism. *Sikh Formations*, 9(2), 263–268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17448727.2013.822141>

Van Zwanenberg, P. (1975). Kenya's Primitive Colonial Capitalism The Economic Weakness of Kenya's Settlers Up to 1940. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 9(2), 277-292.



Vega, F. E. (2008). The Rise of Coffee. *American Scientist*, 96(2), 138.  
<https://doi.org/10.1511/2008.70.3640>.

Visvanathan, N., Duggan, L., Wiegersma, N, and Nisonoff, L. (2011). *The women, gender and development reader* (N. Visvanathan, Ed.; 2nd edition.). Fernwood.

Vo, C. S. (2019). Between the local and the global: An analysis of economic tensions in cooperatives' practices. *International Social Work*, 62(1), 212–223.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872817717321>.

Vorlaufer, M., Wollni, M., & Mithofer, D. (2012). Determinants of collective marketing performance: Evidence from Kenya's coffee cooperatives. *IDEAS Working Paper Series from RePEc*.

Wado, Y. D. (2021). Violence against women in Kenya: data provides a glimpse into a grim situation. "The Conversation". Accessed 1 August 2023:  
<https://theconversation.com/violence-against-women-in-kenya-data-provides-a-glimpse-into-a-grim-situation-170109>.

Wairegi, L. W. I., Bennett, M., Nziguheba, G., Mawanda, A., Rios, C. de los, Ampaire, E., Jassogne, L., Pali, P., Mukasa, D., & van Asten, P. J. A. (2018). Sustainably improving Kenya's coffee production needs more participation of younger farmers with diversified income. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 63, 190–199. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.07.009>

Waring, M. (1988). *If women counted : A new feminist economics*. UK/New York, NY: Harper & Row. [published as "Counting for Nothing: What Men Value and What Women are Worth". Wellington, Allen, and Unwin,

Waring, M. (2004). "Unpaid Workers: the Absence of Rights." *Canadian Woman Studies*, 23 (34).

Wendoh, S., and Wallace, T. (2005). "Re-Thinking Gender Mainstreaming in African NGOs and Communities." *Gender & Development* 13 (2): 70–79.

Wesseling, H. (1996). *Divide and rule: The partition of Africa, 1880-1914*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

West, P. (2012.) *From Modern Production to Imagined Primitive: The Social World of Coffee from Papua New Guinea*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Wheatley, A. (2015). "People in Economics: True Calling: Sabina Alkire is passionate about measuring and eradicating poverty." Interview with Alkire. *Finance and Development*, Vol. 52, Issue 003. Published by the International Monetary Fund.  
 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5089/97814843725>

White, B. (2012). Agriculture, and the Generation Problem: Rural Youth, employment and the future of farming, alternative models. *IDS Bulletin*, volume 43, issue 6. Brighton [online] Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2012.00375.x> Accessed 27 June 2018.

Williams, B. (2022). “Bananas are for Women, Coffee is for Men”: Gendered Narratives of Agricultural Histories on Mount Meru, Tanzania. *African Studies Review*. Vol. 65, No. 1.143-165

Wilson, K. (2015). *Towards a radical re-appropriation: gender, development and neoliberal feminism*. *Development and Change*, 46 (4). pp. 803-832. ISSN 0012-155X

Wilson, K. (2011). “Race”, Gender and Neoliberalism: Changing Visual Representations in Development’, *Third World Quarterly* 32(2): 315–31.

World Bank (2022a) Kenya, male population. Total population and age/sex distributions of the United Nations Population Division’s World Population Prospects (2022 revision). World Bank Group Archives, Washington, D.C., United States. Accessed 16 January 2024: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.MA.IN?locations=KE>.

World Bank (2022b) Kenya, female population. Total population and age/sex distributions of the United Nations Population Division’s World Population Prospects (2022 revision). World Bank Group Archives, Washington, D.C., United States. Accessed 16 January 2024: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.IN?locations=KE>.

World Bank (2022c). “Female labor force participation.” Accessed 3 March 2022: <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/data-stories/flfp-data-story/>.

World Bank. Kenya - Second Coffee Improvement Project (English). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group. Accessed 16 January 2021: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/429231468283489544/Kenya-Second-Coffee-Improvement-Project>.

World Bank. Conformed Copy - C2062 - Second Coffee Improvement Project - Development Credit Agreement (English). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group. Accessed 16 January 2022: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/439751468271864862/Conformed-Copy-C2062-Second-Coffee-Improvement-Project-Development-Credit-Agreement>.

World Bank Index (n.d.)

World Bank. (2017). “Women in Agriculture: the Agents of Change for the Global Food System.” 7 March 2017. *Washington, DC*. Accessed 16 January 2021: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/03/07/women-in-agriculture-the-agents-of-change-for-the-food-system>.

World Bank (2014a) *For up to 800 Million Rural Poor, a Strong World Bank commitment to agriculture*. The World Bank, Washington DC. [online] [Accessed 11 Jan 2021: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2014/11/12/for-up-to-800-million-rural-poor-a-strong-world-bank-commitment-to-agriculture>.

World Bank. (2012). World Development Report 2012 : Gender Equality and Development. World Bank. © World Bank. Accessed 11 Jan 2021:  
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/4391> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

World Bank (2006). *Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Accessed 11 Jan 2021:  
[https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/wshops/India%20Aug07/Background\\_WB\\_ActionPlan.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/wshops/India%20Aug07/Background_WB_ActionPlan.pdf).

World Bank database population statistics for Kenya. Accessed 15 Feb 2021:  
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.MA.ZS>.

World Coffee Research (WCR). (n.d.) “Batian.” Online Resource. Accessed 15 Feb 2024:  
<https://varieties.worldcoffeeresearch.org/varieties/batian>.

World Coffee Research (WCR). (n.d.) “Ruiru 11.” Online Resource. Accessed 15 Feb 2024:  
<https://varieties.worldcoffeeresearch.org/varieties/ruiru-11>.

World Coffee Research (WCR). (n.d.) “SL34.” Online Resource. Accessed 15 Feb 2024:  
<https://varieties.worldcoffeeresearch.org/varieties/sl34>.

World Coffee Research (WCR). (n.d.) “SL28” Online Resource. Accessed 15 Feb 2024:  
<https://varieties.worldcoffeeresearch.org/varieties/sl28>

World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987) “Our Common Future.” Oxford: Oxford University Press.

World Economic Forum (2019) Global Gender Gap Report: “Mind the Gap.” Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality>. Accessed 11 Jan 2021.

World Economic Forum (2022). Global Gender Gap Report. Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum. Available at: [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf). Accessed 1 December 2023.

Youé, C. (1987). "A delicate balance": Resident labour on settler farms in Kenya, until mau-mau. *Canadian Journal of History/Annales Canadiennes d'Histoire*, 22(2), 209.

Young, K. (1993). *Planning development with women : making a world of difference*. St. Martin’s Press.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). “Intersectionality and Feminist Politics.” *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 13: 193-209.

## **APPENDIX I:**

### **Interviews**

Canada REB File #19-024

Kenya Research License: National Commission Science, Technology & Innovation, #15Y6228458

#### **I. One-on-one Interviews**

##### **A. Coffee owners, directors, leaders of coffee estates or cooperatives in Kenya**

- Samuel Njue Nyaga, M, Coordinator, Agronomist, Coffee Farmer, Embu Coffee Estates Co. Ltd, Nairobi, Kenya, October 5, 2019.
- Purity Muriuki, F, Kenyan Coffee Owner, Manager, Farmer, Kianjiru Estates, Meru, Kenya, October 9, 2019.
- Michael Muriuki, M, Kenyan Coffee Owner, Manager, and Farmer, Kianjiru Estates, Meru, Kenya, October 9, 2019.
- Gloria Wamaiwa Gummerus, F, Owner and Director of Sakami Ranches Ltd. and Sakami Coffee Estate, Member of Alliance of Women in Coffee, Kenya, Coffee Farmer, Trans Nzoia, Kenya, November 13 and 14, 2019.
- Jarmo Gummerus, M, Owner and Director of Sakami Ranches Ltd. and Sakami Coffee Estate, Trans Nzoia, Kenya, November 13, 2019.
- Eva Muthuuri, F, Director of Eva's Coffee, Member of Alliance of Women in Coffee, Kenya, Coffee Farmer, Nairobi, December 12, 2019.
- David Maguta, M, Maguta Coffee Estates Owner & Manager, Nyeri, Kenya, December 16, 2019.
- Dr. Rosebella Langat, F, Director of Chepsangor Coffee Estates and Coffee Farmer, (brand name Tulon Coffee), Member of Alliance of Women in Coffee, Kenya, Nandi, Kenya, in-person on January 12, 2020, February 6, 2022, and several other follow-up conversations, final interview via Zoom on December 1, 2023.
- Sammy Langat, Chepsangor Coffee Estates and Coffee Farmer in Nandi, February 6, 2022
- Matha Ndichu, F, Director, Wapa Farm Coffee and Coffee Farmer, Kiambu, Kenya, December 13, 2019.
- Rita Mukundi, F, Manager and Coffee Farmer, Privam Estate, Meru, December 23, 2019.
- Anonymous (Pseudonym "Paul"), M, Leader of a Coffee Cooperative Union, western Kenya, February 26, 2020.

##### **B. Coffee Growers and Processors**

- Hellen Ngetung, F, Kenyan Smallholder Coffee Grower, Nandi, Kenya, January 13, 2020, and February 6, 2022.
- Sarah Cheroich, F, Kenyan Smallholder Coffee Grower, Nandi, Kenya, January 13, 2020, and February 6, 2022.
- Anonymous, F, Kenyan Smallholder Coffee Grower, Nandi, Kenya, January 13, 2020.

- Geoffery Kipngetich, M, Kenyan Processing Manager, Chepsangor Coffee, Nandi, Kenya, January 13, 2020, and February 6, 2022.
- Anonymous (Pseudonym “Florence”), F, Kenyan Smallholder Coffee Grower, Nandi, Kenya, October 10, 2022.
- Anonymous, M, Kenyan Smallholder Coffee Grower, Member of Cooperative, Kericho, Kenya, February 26, 2020.
- Anonymous, F, Kenyan Smallholder Coffee Grower, Member of Cooperative, Kericho, Kenya, February 26, 2020.
- Caroline Jemeli, F, Chairwoman, Chepsangor Women in Coffee and Kenyan Smallholder Coffee Farmer, Nandi, Kenya, February 6 and October 10, 2022.

### **C. Government officials, leaders, and full-time professionals in Kenyan coffee industry**

- Dr. Cecilia W. Kathurima, F, Coffee Quality Manager, Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO), Coffee Research Institute, February 23 and June 6, 2019.
- Cynthia W. Kamau, F, Kenya Port Authority, June 17, 2019.
- Sheila Agida, F, Head of Coffee Quality and the Lab, Kenya Agriculture and Food Authority, Coffee Directorate, Nairobi, May 10, 2019, and March 22, 2024.
- Daniel Mbithi, M, Director of Nairobi Coffee Exchange, May 14 & November 21, 2019.
- Anonymous, F, Kenyan Official, Kiambu County Government, November 6, 2019.
- Anonymous, M, Kenyan Official, Nairobi, Kenya, January 2020.
- Javen Ngeywo Chemiat, M, Coffee Advisory Officer, Agriculture and Food Authority, North Rift Region, Kitale, Kenya, August 23, 2019.
- Dr. David Muge, M, Chief Executive Officer, Great Rift Coffee Limited, coffee mill in Eldoret, Kenya, November 13, 2019.
- Peter Ndambiri, M, Kenyan marketing agent, June 7, 2023.
- Josphine Njoki Ndikwe, President, Association of Women in Coffee Industry; Managing Director, Jotim Coffee Limited, December 6, 2023.
- Dr. Benson Apuoyo, Acting Director, Kenya Coffee Directorate, February 24, 2024.

### **D. Non-governmental Coffee Professionals who grew up on coffee farms**

- Anonymous, M, Kenyan, Entrepreneur in Kenya coffee, May 1, 2019.
- Anonymous, F, Kenyan Manager, Logistics Company in Kenya, May 17, 2019.
- Anonymous, F, Kenyan Coffee Trader, in Nairobi, Kenya, May 17, 2019.
- Cynthia Nkirote Muthuri, F, Entrepreneur, Graduate student at University of Nairobi, daughter of coffee farmer who grew up on Meru farm, Nairobi, Kenya, May 23, 2019.
- Anonymous, F, Kenyan Finance Leader, Nairobi, Kenya, November 6, 2019.
- Anonymous, M, Kenyan Embassy Administrator, Nairobi, Kenya, November 9, 2019.
- Anonymous, M, Kenyan Entrepreneur in Kenya coffee, Nairobi, Kenya, February 21, 2020.
- Anonymous, M, Kenyan Financial Advisor for Nairobi Coffee Cafés, February 5, 2020.

### **E. Baristas in Nairobi**

- Hillary Mugasitsi, M, Kenyan Barista Champion and Bartender, Nairobi, Kenya, May 1, June 6, November 27, 2019.
- Ann Njuguna, F, Kenyan Barista, Nairobi, Kenya, September 14, 2019; February 5, 2020.
- Anonymous, F, Kenyan Barista and Student training to become Coffee Educator, Nairobi, Kenya, November 28, 2019.

### **F. Roasters or Café Owners in Nairobi**

- Chris Hwang, M, Director, Connect Coffee Roasters, with four cafes and the Coffee Empowerment Centre, Nairobi, Kenya, December 13, 2019.
- Andrea Moora, F, co-owner of Point Zero Coffee Cafes in Nairobi, Kenya, February 4 and March 12, 2020.
- Wangeci Gitobu, F, co-owner Point Zero Coffee Cafes, Nairobi, Kenya, March 12, 2020, and December 4, 2023.
- Ritesh Doshi, M, Owner and Director, Spring Valley Coffee, roasters and cafés, Nairobi, Kenya, January 9, 2020.
- Soraiya Ladek, F, Owner and Managing Director, The Wine Shop, Nairobi, Kenya, January 2020.

### **G. Educators, Researchers, Priests, Tour Guides in various full-time roles**

- Anonymous, F, Kenyan Coffee Entrepreneur, Nairobi, Kenya, February 27 and May 1, 2019.
- Anonymous, M, Kenyan Researcher, interview in Nairobi, May 1, 2019.
- Anonymous, M, priest, Holy Ghost Fathers, Nairobi, June 7, 2019.
- Mbeo Ogeya, M, Research Fellow, Stockholm Environmental Institute, Working on Coffee Research in Kenya, June 26, 2019.
- Anonymous, F, Educator & Quality Cupper in Kenya, June 28, 2019.
- Dr. Regina Mwangi, F, Coffee Specialist, School of Business Management and Economics at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology in Kenya, one of the only women with a doctoral degree in coffee in Kenya, July 5, 2019.
- Catherine Njoki, F, Kenyan Driver, December 11, 2019, and many informal conversations.
- Shadrack Kaimenyi, M, Tour Guide & Driver, African Horizons and Safaris in Nairobi, February 27 and 28, 2019 and many informal conversations.
- Anonymous, F, Kenyan Coffee Researcher and Writer, March 9, 2020.
- Esther Otieno, F, Founder & Owner, Barista Pro, Nairobi, Kenya, January 31, 2022.

#### **H. National Museums of Kenya, Karen Blixen Museum staff, all interviews conducted at the Karen Blixen Museum in Nairobi, Kenya**

- Joyce Kinyanjui, F, Senior Curator, Karen Blixen Museum, National Museums of Kenya, May 26 and November 21, 2019.
- Sally Kagendo Njeru, F, Associate Curator, Karen Blixen Museum, National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi, May 26 and November 7, 2019.
- Charles Thige, M, Agronomist, Karen Blixen Museum, National Museums of Kenya, May 26 and November 7, 2019.
- Anonymous, F, Kenyan Tour Guide, Karen Blixen Museum, National Museums of Kenya, May 26, 2019.

#### **I. Non-governmental organizations working in Kenya**

- World Coffee Research  
Sam Thuo Mungai, M, Agricultural Contractor, in Nairobi, Kenya, October 5, 2019.
- Fair Trade Africa  
Anonymous, M, Kenyan staff member, Nairobi, Kenya, February 22, 2019.
- E4 Impact  
Isabella Tenai, F, Nairobi Centre Manager, E4Impact Foundation, Nairobi, Kenya, March 3, 2020.
- Rainforest Alliance  
Anonymous, M, Kenyan, Rainforest Alliance Staff, Nairobi, Kenya, November 27, 2019.

#### **J. Expats who live and work in Kenya full-time**

- Stephen Vick, M, Head of Procurement, Production and Quality Control, African Coffee Roasters, Athi River, Kenya, May 17 and December 13, 2019, February 26, 2020, and many informal conversations.
- Jonas Brunnsnaes, M, Head of Sales, African Coffee Roasters, May 17, 2019.
- Régine Léonie Guion-Firmin, F, Karibu Kahawa Camps, coffee business based in Kenya, SCA Authorized Coffee Trainer, January 15, 2020, and many informal conversations.
- Bridget Carrington, F, Manager of specialty coffee exporting operations for 27 years, Dormans Coffee Limited, Nairobi, Kenya, February 13, 2020.
- Rafael Prime, M, Founder, East African School of Coffee & Quality Director Louis Dreyfus, Nairobi, Kenya, February 28, 2021.

#### **K. Coffee buyers, roasters, coffee trainers, coffee agronomists, or other coffee experts who visit and work with Kenya's coffee sector**

- Anonymous, F, Executive Director of a Global Coffee NGO, interview conducted online, October 8, 2019.
- Sjoerd Melsert, M, Netherlands, International Agricultural Financial Specialist for East Africa, Oikocredit, interview conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, December 14, 2019.

- Ashlee Tuttleman, F, Coffee Program Manager, the Sustainable Trade Initiative, in the Netherlands, interview conducted in Mombasa, Kenya, February 12, 2020.
- Mary Allen Lindeman, F, Owner and Director of Coffee by Design in Portland, Maine, buyer and roaster of East African coffees, including Kenya, interview conducted in Mombasa, Kenya, February 11, 2020.
- Dr. Anneke Fermont, F, Regional Sustainability Manager for Kyagalanyi Coffee Ltd in Kamala, Uganda, interview conducted in Mombasa, Kenya, February 11, 2020.
- Anonymous, F, Representative, International Women’s Coffee Alliance, interview conducted in Mombasa, Kenya, February 21, 2020.
- Anonymous, M, USA coffee business, interview conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, February 15, 2020.
- Anonymous, M, Brazilian Agronomist and Coffee Farmer, interview conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, February 22, 2020.
- Hans Gill, M, German businessman, interview conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, February 9, 2020.
- Teresa Labriola, F, Denmark, Director of Ndovu Cooperative Coffee in Meru, Kenya, interview conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, March 2, 2020.
- Anonymous, F, Trader and Exporter in USA, interview conducted online, May 5, 2020.
- Anonymous, M, American Specialty Coffee Roaster who has been buying Kenyan coffee for more than 25 years, interview conducted online, July 21, 2021.
- Kimberly Easson, F, Founder of the Partnership for Gender Equity, Founder and CEO of Equal Origins, interview conducted in Kigali, Rwanda, February 17, 2023.
- Casey Lalonde, F, co-owner and roaster, Girls Who Grind Coffee, interview conducted online, July 5, 2023.
- Per Nordby, M, Owner and Director of Kafferäven in Göteborg, Sweden, buyer and roaster of East African coffee, including Kenya, interview conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, February 3, 2020.
- Kristopher Schackman, M, Co-Founder and Managing Director, Five Elephant Coffee, Berlin, Germany, buyer and roaster of East African coffees, including Kenya, interview conducted in Kericho, Kenya, February 26, 2020.

#### **L. East African coffee professionals or farmers**

- Teopista Nakkungu, F, Chief Coordinator, International Women’s Coffee Alliance Uganda, interview conducted in Mombasa, Kenya, February 13, 2020.
- Anonymous, M, Rwandan, Staff member at Kenya Port Authority, February 17, 2019.
- Emmanuel Gatara, M, Rwandan Country Director, Land of a Thousand Hills Coffee Company and Coffee Farmer, interview conducted in Kigali, Rwanda, February 17, 2019.
- Perpetue Mukamusinga, F, Training Manager, Question Coffee, interview conducted in Kigali, Rwanda, 2019.
- Christine Condo, F, Executive Director, Sustainable Harvest, Kigali, Rwanda, interview conducted in Nairobi, July 24, 2019.



- Amir H. Esmail, M, Chairman, Amir Hamza LTD and Chairman, Tanzania Coffee Board, interview conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, November 6, 2019.
- Angelique Karekezi, F, Managing Director, Rwashoscco Coffee Producers and Exporters of Rwanda coffee in Rwanda, interview conducted in Zanzibar, Tanzania, November 1, 2019.
- Tony Mugoya, M, Executive Director, Uganda Coffee Farmers Alliance in Kamala, Uganda, interview conducted in Nairobi, November 5, 2019.
- Anonymous, M, Ethiopian Manager of Coffee Corporation, interview conducted in Mombasa, Kenya, February 11, 2020.

## **II. Interviews in Duos or Trios**

1. Edwin Kamau Chege (M) and Mary Kabura Kamua (F), Husband and Wife, Directors of Edmax Coffee, Nyeri, Kenya, February 27, 2019.
2. Joseh Njau (M) Manager and Sister Mary (F), Nyeri Hill Farm, Nyeri, Kenya, February 27, 2019.
3. Anonymous (M, F), Kenyan Coffee Sales Representatives for Coffee Roastery in Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya, May 4, 2019.
4. Anonymous (F, F), (Pseudonyms “Deborah” and “Ruth”) two Kenyan Smallholder Coffee Farmers, from Kiambu, interview in Nairobi, Kenya, December 10, 2020.
5. Patrick Mukundi Mbogo (M), Managing Director, Privam nuts and Coffee Farmer, with his father (M), Kenyan Coffee Farmer, Embu, Kenya, December 21, 2019.
6. Anonymous (F, F), two Kenyan Smallholder Coffee Farmers Coffee Farmers, Nandi, Kenya, January 12, 2020.
7. Anonymous (M, M), two Kenyan Smallholder Coffee Farmers Coffee Farmers, Kericho, Kenya. February 27, 2020.
8. Anonymous (M, M), two American Coffee Buyers, Mombasa, Kenya, February 13, 2020.
9. Anonymous (F, F), two Kenyan Smallholder Coffee Farmers Coffee Farmers, Trans Nzoia, Kenya, November 13, 2019.
10. Anonymous (F, F, F), three Kenyan Smallholder Coffee Farmers Coffee Farmers, Nandi, Kenya, January 12, 2020.
11. Anonymous (M, M) two Kenyan Smallholder Coffee Farmers Coffee Farmers, Meru, Kenya.
12. Johnson Muriuki Mugira, Doreen Gaichugi Arimi, Rhoda Gakii Muthuuri (M, F, F) Kenyan Smallholder Coffee Farmers, GALs Champions, Meru, Kenya, June 7, 2023.

## **III. Focus Group Meeting**

- 42 Female Farmers, Meeting at Chepsangaor Hills Coffee Estate, Nandi, Kenya, January 12, 2020.

## APPENDIX II:

### Participant Observation at Conferences and Workshops

#### *Conferences, more than 258 hours*

- African Fine Coffee Association, Kigali, Rwanda, February 13-14, 2019, with pre-conference ‘Rainforest Alliance Sustainability Day,’ February 12, 2019.
- Global Coffee Expo, Specialty Coffee Association (SCA), Boston, Massachusetts, USA, April 11-14, 2019.
- Let’s Talk Coffee, Sustainable Harvest, Kigali, Rwanda, June 17 - 19, 2019.
- African Fine Coffee Association, Zanzibar, Tanzania, October 30 to 31, 2020.
- African Fine Coffee Association, Mombasa, Kenya, February 12-14, 2020, with pre-conference meeting ‘Rainforest Alliance Sustainability Day,’ February 11, 2020.
- International Publishers Association Seminar, Nairobi, Keynote by acclaimed Kenyan writer, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, June 15, 2019.
- African Fine Coffee Association, Kigali, Rwanda, February 12-14, 2023.
- World of Coffee Global Conference, Athens, Greece, June 21-24, 2023.
- International Women in Coffee Association Conference, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, October 16-19, 2023.

#### *Invited Participant in Official Meetings and Workshops, more than 124 hours*

- University of Nairobi Research Seminar series, biweekly live, May 2019 to Feb. 2020.
- University of Nairobi and Roskilde University, Denmark, Industrial Development and the Floriculture Industry in Kenya, Nairobi, May 16, 2019.
- Policy and Innovation Forum, Theme, Environmental Governance and Diplomacy in the Post Globalization Era, Green to Grow Initiative, SWITCH Africa, World Agroforestry Center, Nairobi, Kenya, October 15, 2019.
- ACF Donors and Partners Conference, The Africa Coffee Facility, Ole Sereni Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya, November 5, 2019.
- Coffee Business & Quality Assessment Training, She Trades Project, International Trade Centre, Kitale, Kenya, November 13 and 14, 2019.
- Inter African Coffee Organization, Annual Meeting, Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya, November 25 to 29, 2019.

- SEI Africa, Stockholm Environmental Institute Forum, World Agroforestry Center, Nairobi, Kenya, December 1, 2019.
- E4Impact Foundation, Nairobi, Kenya with visit by EU Ambassador, March 2, 2020.
- Kenya Coffee Platform Webinar Online, September 2023.