



Local normative climate shaping agency and agricultural livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa

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My talk today

- I. Paper objective and approach
- II. Sample & methods
- III. Results
 - a. Two case studies
 - b. Cross-case findings
- IV. Concluding reflections

I. PAPER OBJECTIVE AND APPROACH

Introduce and test concept of **local normative climate**, or the prevailing gender norms in a community that are shaping women's and men's perceptions of their capacity to exercise agency and act on opportunities.

Gender norms

“specifically mean differential rules of conduct for women and men, including rules governing interactions *between* women and men.”

(Pearse and Connell, 2016)

Gender norms: Only men are farmers?

“Women are not farmers. They are their husbands’ shadows They support him. They do what he does but she is never considered the main farmer.”

-- Poor women’s focus group, Village of Ethiopia’s Great Rift Valley



Properties of gender norms

Contextual

- Norms operate among individuals who interact frequently -- *and inurnately*.

Relational

- Norms are underpinned by gender power relations and expectations that associate agentic capacities with men and entitle men to control over women.

Fluid

- Men and women uphold, negotiate and alter norms in their day-to-day lives -- as they pursue their interests and move through their life cycle, and as their local institutions and opportunities evolve. Restrictive norms co-exist with relaxed norms. Norms also often vary among social groups in a village.

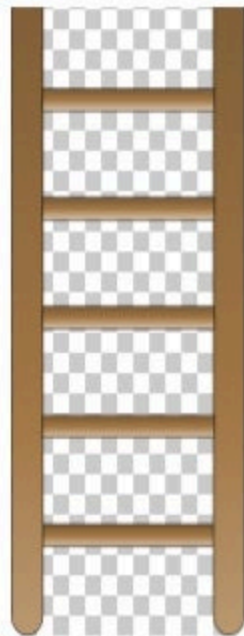
II. SAMPLE AND METHODS

24 GENNOVATE case studies
from sub-Saharan Africa

SSA region	Country	# Case studies
West	Mali	5
	Niger	3
	Nigeria	4
East	Burundi	2
	DR Congo*	1
	Kenya	2
	Rwanda	1
	Tanzania	4
	Uganda	2

Ladder of Power and Freedom:

Valuable entry point for assessing local normative climate



- ✓ A module with **four questions**
- ✓ For two **single-sex focus groups** or semi-structured individual interviews
- ✓ Perceptions of local women's and men's **capacity to take important decisions – now and ten years ago**
- ✓ Generates **numerical and narrative data**



III. RESULTS

TWO CASE STUDIES
CROSS-CASE FINDINGS

Focus of case studies

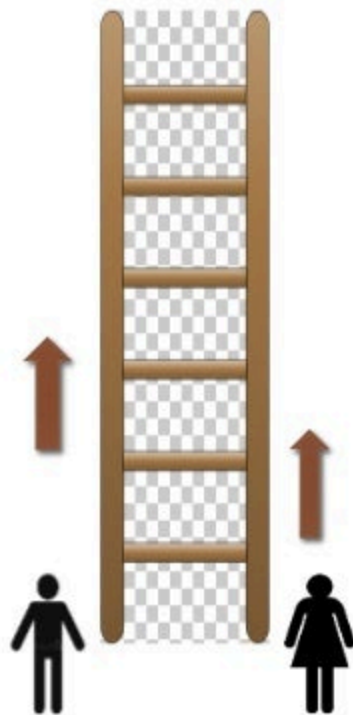
- *How is the local normative climate shaping and being shaped by women's and men's perceptions of their capacity to take major decisions, innovate in their rural livelihoods, and better their lives?*

Ilu Titun — remote Yoruba village of Oyo State, Nigeria

A normative climate where highly patriarchal norms prevail alongside very relaxed norms that enable women to exercise significant economic roles.

- *[A good woman farmer?] “... must know how to process her farm produce such as cassava into garri, maize into pap, and yam into yam flour, and so forth.”*
- *(Gender equality?) “We believe that the women themselves know we can't be equal. They become very rude and disrespectful when they have freedom.”*

(Focus group of poor men)



Amatuma

- peri-urban Luhya village of Vihiga county in western Kenya

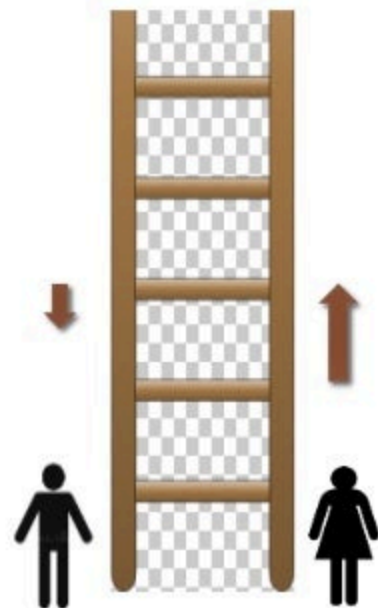
A normative climate where men fear emasculation but norms for women are relaxing as they take on expanded roles in their family and local economy.

- *“Back then women were less informed, but today we attend seminars like this one so you find that [now] women even can keep cattle for milk produce, which gives them cash.”*

Women's middleclass focus group

- *“There is a crisis in this area. Men are dying at a fast rate! Women are then the heads of the home”*

Female key informant, community leader



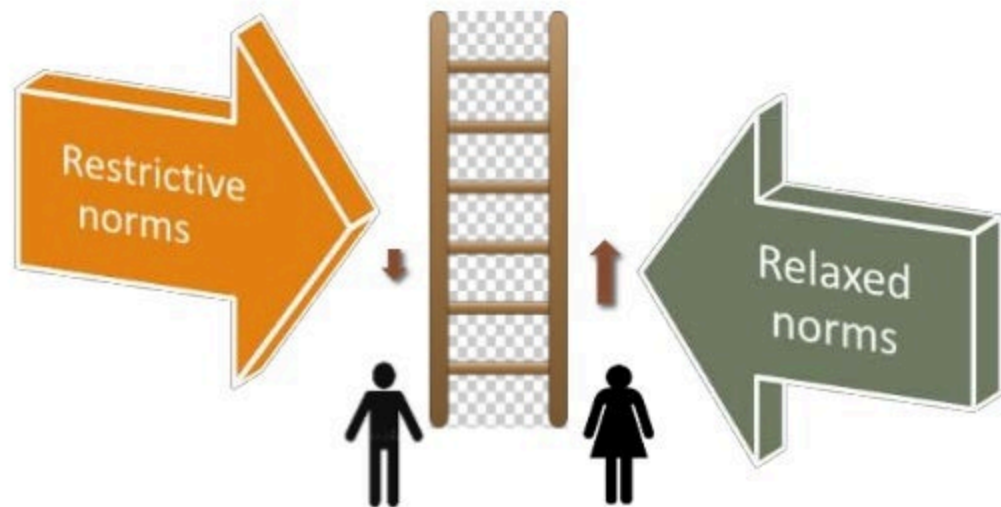
Examples of relational and fluid properties of norms

“Old people did not want to share wealth or their land with their children. Then children started on square one.”

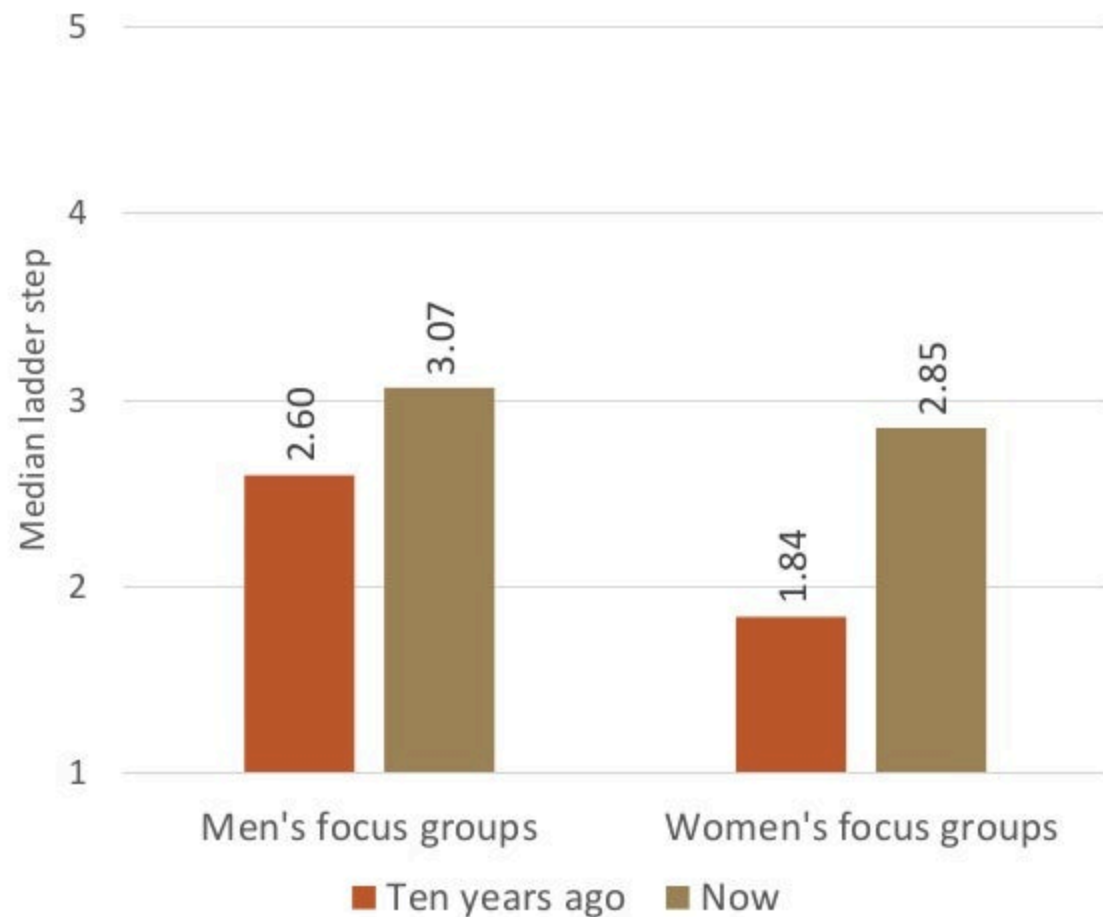
“Girls should be well educated and join women’s groups so they participate in development.”

“[Women] need to understand and accept they are number two, and not the head of the family.”

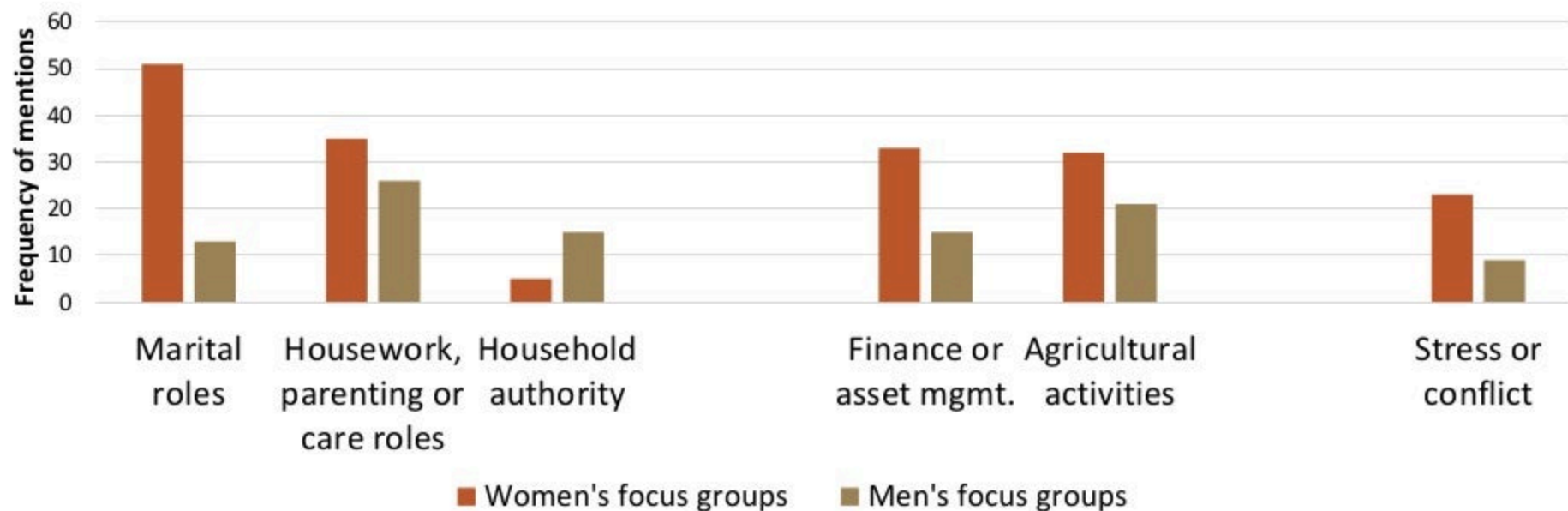
--Men’s middleclass focus group of Amatuma



Ladder of Power & Freedom ratings, 24 case studies



Comparative findings from 24 cases: Men quieter about their agency, rarely mention wives



Common topics in the discourse about village men's and women's positions and movements on their Ladder of Power and Freedom (48 focus groups, GENNOVATE coded dataset)

IV. Concluding reflections:

Local normative climate

The prevailing set of gender norms in a community, and how they are interacting with other dynamics in that context to differentially shape women's and men's sense of agency and opportunities in their lives.

Local normative
climate +
Ladder of
power and
freedom



Cases reveal variable ways that women and men negotiate, uphold and alter norms as they move through their life cycle and as local institutions and opportunities evolve.



Data about perceptions of *change* in agency offer a powerful lens on how women and men often interpret and experience opportunities and barriers very differently.



Norms for women are relaxing while for men have remained more stable, often making for stressful gender relations & impeding normative change.