In Botswana, that women’s lives and circumstances are intertwined with chickens, and likewise men with cattle, is not coincidental. Rather processes of intersectionality and socio-spatial practice shape the relative power each social group possesses, in turn shaping their life circumstances and chances.

Feminist-Posthumanist Intersectionality

Intersectionality explores what is created and experienced at the intersection of two or more axes of subordination. Here gender-species relations in Botswana position women/chickens and men/cattle differently and on unequal terms. Intersectionality occurs through socio-spatial practice. Here women/chickens and men/cattle are associated with particular symbolic realms and located in particular physical locales, shaping their daily lives and interrelations with one another. Such practices (re)produce privileging and/or othering of social groups within dominant gender-species hierarchical arrangements.

Privileging

• Men associated with leadership & public space; more access to education, employment, resources; paired with cattle
• Cattle respected by humans, mark social ‘worth’, preferred foodstuff, drive economy, feature in government policy, shape land use, paired with men

Othering

• Women associated with motherhood & private space; less access to education, employment, resources; paired with chickens
• Chickens disregarded by humans, secondary foodstuff, subsistence oriented, limited policy scope, homestead locales, paired with women

Re-positioning . . .

• New opportunities for women & chickens via agricultural restructuring (state support for poultry production) and urbanization (city offers autonomy and resources)
• Women empowered as individuals (access to land, finances, networks, commercial poultry production)
• Chickens empowered as social group (increased state support, public approval, economic value, social status)

. . . Interrupted

• Only urban entrepreneurial women & commercial broilers transcend ‘masculine’ (productive, urban) space while other women & chickens remain ‘feminine’ (subsistence, rural) & undervalued
• Women as social group remain subordinate to men within commercial urban agriculture sector
• Chickens as individuals disempowered given poor quality of life & ultimate death within factory farms

Methods

In-depth poultry sector analysis via quantitative & qualitative data
Structural trends via key informants, participant observation, secondary documents
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