The Lived Experiences of Javanese Women in a Context of Rural Transformation

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Statement of Originality

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work and has not been previously submitted, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic degree or other purposes. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself. Some portions of this work have been presented at academic conferences. However, the work has not been previously published in any form.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, and that all assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

All names used in this thesis are pseudonyms to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, with the exception of historical figures and government officials, who are discussed in their public capacity or with their explicit consent.

Software tools such as NVivo and Grammarly were used solely to assist in data organisation and language refinement. These tools did not generate any of the content of this thesis. As English is not my native language, such tools supported clarity and accuracy without influencing the originality or integrity of the work.

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Linda Susilowati

Abstract

Rural women in Indonesia play a significant economic role, yet they continue to face persistent inequality that is deeply rooted in intergenerational cultural norms. This inequality is reflected in Indonesia's high gender inequality index, which ranks among the highest in Southeast Asia, demonstrating how economic development alone has not been sufficient to transform entrenched gender inequities. While rural areas in Indonesia are experiencing transformation that drive economic and social changes, conservative gender norms continue to constrain women's ability to fully benefit from emerging development opportunities. However, as rural areas in Indonesia experience ongoing changes, the cultural norms affecting inequality are also prone to change, potentially leading to different impacts for men and women.

This thesis examines how rural transformation processes reshape gender dynamics in Central Java, Indonesia, through an ethnographic study of two villages in Wonogiri. Drawing on extensive fieldwork with over 200 participants, this study reveals how rural transformation fundamentally reshapes gender roles through changes in livelihood strategies, economic diversification, and intensified rural-urban connections. Women's roles have expanded across multiple domains, granting them unprecedented access to education, formal employment, and leadership positions that were once predominantly held by men. They are increasingly participating in decision-making processes and assuming public responsibilities that challenge traditional gender boundaries. These expanding roles represent a profound shift from historical patterns where women were confined primarily to domestic spheres.

These changes, however, occurred within conservative social structures shaped by religious interpretations and state ideology, creating a contradiction between the reality of women's contributions and the ways these roles are socially perceived and justified. This shift shapes women's lived experiences, revealing a deeper paradox: while they perceive their expanded roles as a form of liberation, they also experience them as an intensification of their workload. Many describe feeling overwhelmed by mounting responsibilities, facing a "triple burden" of productive labour, reproductive duties, and community obligations. In this context, rural transformation does not simply empower women—it also compounds their responsibilities by layering new expectations onto existing ones, as traditional roles remain largely unaltered and unevenly distributed.

Building on these lived experiences, the thesis argues that shifting gender roles represent strategic household adaptations, with women increasingly serving as essential human capital in diversified livelihood portfolios. Women navigate these changes by reinterpreting traditional norms within established cultural frameworks, legitimising their expanded roles while preserving social acceptance and securing vital social capital. Rather than directly challenging traditional beliefs, communities respond to economic shifts by reinterpreting norms from within. This demonstrates that while economic and livelihood changes occur relatively rapidly, social structures and gender ideologies in rural Java evolve more incrementally through processes of strategic adaptation rather than revolutionary change.

Keywords: rural change, gender dynamic, rural livelihood, Central Java, Indonesia

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List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AI	Artificial Intelligence
APM	Angka Partisipasi Murni (Net Enrolment Rate)
ASTARI	Kiat Sejahtera Mandiri (the name of a well-known Wonogiri's meatball sellers' association)
Bansos	Bantuan Sosial (Social Assistance Program)
BKKBN	Badan Kependudukan dan Keluarga Berencana Nasional (National Population and Family Planning Agency)
BLT	Bantuan Langsung Tunai (Direct Cash Assistance)
BOS	Bantuan Operasional Sekolah (School Operational Assistance)
BPS	Badan Pusat Statistik (Central Bureau of Statistics)
BTI	Barisan Tani Indonesia (Indonesian Peasant Front)
CDD	Community-Driven Development
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DFID	Department for International Development
DI Yogyakarta	Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta (Special Region of Yogyakarta)
Disnaker	Dinas Tenaga Kerja (Labour and Employment Office)
DKI Jakarta	Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta (Special Capital Region of Jakarta)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAD	Gender and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
Gerwani	Gerakan Wanita Indonesia (Indonesian Women's Movement)
GPS	Global Positioning System
GRDP	Gross Regional Domestic Product
HR	Human Resources
IDR	Indonesian Rupiah
IDT	Inpres Desa Tertinggal (Backward Village Program)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
Jabodetabek	Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi (Greater Jakarta metropolitan area).

Kadus	Kepala Dusun (Hamlet Head)
KDP	Kecamatan Development Program
MA	Madrasah Aliyah (Islamic senior high schools)
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
Musrenbang	Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan (Development Planning Meeting)
NEI	Netherlands East Indies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PKH	Program Keluarga Harapan (Family Hope Program)
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)
PKK	Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (Family Welfare Movement)
PNPM	Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat (National Program for Community Empowerment)
Posyandu	Pos Pelayanan Terpadu (Integrated health service post at village level)
PPPI	Perikatan Perkumpulan Perempuan Indonesia (Indonesian Women's Association)
Puskesmas	Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat (Community Health Centers)
RT	Rukun Tetangga (Neighbourhood Unit)
RW	Rukun Warga (Residents' association)
SAKERNAS	Survey Angkatan Kerja Nasional (The Indonesia Labour Force Survey)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	Southeast Asia
SLF	Sustainable Livelihood Framework
SMA	Sekolah Menengah Atas (Regular High School)
SMK	Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (Vocational High School)
SRT	Social Reproduction Theory
UMR	Upah Minimum Regional (Regional Minimum Wage)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VOC	Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (United East India Company)
WAD	Women and Development
WCD	Women, Culture, and Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WID	Women in Development

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The morning sun had barely risen when Bu[1] Aminah began preparing breakfast for her family in her village in Wonogiri, Central Java. The food she prepared would be enough for lunch, but she would need to cook again before dinner. "Food tastes best when it's fresh and warm," she explained further during a conversation I conducted to understand women's daily routines and experiences in the village[2]. By 7:00 AM, after sending her children to school, she would head to the farm, where she helped her husband manage their land while contributing her labour. Today was corn harvest day, and with farm workers becoming increasingly scarce, she had to work even harder than usual.

"I used to work in a factory in Jakarta," she said. After completing high school, she worked in the city for a few years. The pay was better there, and she considered taking an employee class in college[3]. However, everything changed after her marriage and the birth of her first child: "My husband insisted that I stay home to raise the kids." She moved back to her parents' house for support as a new mother, and a few years later, her husband quit his job to join her. Her father gave her husband a piece of land to manage and, using his influence in the village, helped her husband get elected as head of the hamlet despite not being originally from the area. She said that if her husband had not been elected, he would probably have continued working in the city, as the income from farming would not be enough for the whole family.

When asked why she did not run for office herself, Bu Aminah explained that a woman's chances of winning the leadership position in the village were much lower than a man. Moreover, she added that her husband did not allow it, stating that a woman's priority should be the family, and earning income is supposed to be the man's responsibility. In a conversation with me, her husband mentioned that by ensuring his wife does not need to work for income, he is proving himself to be a responsible husband. He took pride in it and said that Bu Aminah should be grateful for the privilege of not having to seek employment.[4]

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[1] "Bu" is a shortened form of *Ibu*, which means "mother" in Indonesian. It's also used as a respectful title for adult women, similar to "Mrs." or "Madam" in English.
[2] Interview and observation conducted in Kedunggupit Village, 13 February 2023
[3] A program designed to accommodate working individuals pursuing higher education usually provided on weekends or in evening classes.
[4] Field notes from an informal conversation, Kedunggupit Village, 14 January 2023

Although both Bu Aminah and her husband say that she does not need to contribute to the household financially, Bu Aminah, in fact, regularly helps with farm work. In the village, this type of work is often seen as part of women's role in managing the household or supporting their husbands. While Bu Aminah helps manage the family's small plot of land, major farming decisions remain under her husband's authority. Now in her late thirties, she divides her time between working on the farm, managing family responsibilities, household tasks, and village activities—where she has additional duties as wife of the hamlet head, including leading the women's groups in the village. "I had dreams of pursuing higher education, getting promoted, and becoming a career woman in the city," she recalled with a slight smile that didn't quite reach her eyes. "Sometimes, I still wonder what my life would have been like if I had been allowed to pursue my aspirations."

Stories like Bu Aminah's illustrate a common experience within rural Javanese society, revealing broader patterns in gender dynamics where rapid transformation meets enduring cultural constraints. Growing up in Java, I spent time in rural areas, especially where my grandparents lived. While there, I encountered many women like Bu Aminah—capable and hardworking yet constrained by deeply ingrained cultural expectations. The pressures she faces—from abandoning personal aspirations to conform to traditional roles to navigating farm work within culturally acceptable boundaries to balancing multiple responsibilities—reflect the experiences of countless women across rural Java. Although rural areas are experiencing significant changes through increased access to education, technology, and non-agricultural opportunities, many women remain bound by cultural norms that define their roles as women, wives, and mothers above all else. Her experience reflects fundamental tensions in rural development: while economic and technological changes create new opportunities, deeply rooted gender norms continue to shape women's choices and aspirations, raising essential questions about the nature of rural transformation and its implications for gender equality.

Bu Aminah said that she had witnessed significant changes in her regency since her childhood, from evolving agricultural practices to the diversification of livelihoods, including how circular migration has become a common livelihood survival strategy for households in her village. Agricultural families increasingly depend on multiple income sources, with family members balancing economic opportunities in urban areas while maintaining their cultural ties to their villages. The growth of manufacturing, improved infrastructure, and expanded educational access have also opened new pathways for people in her village, particularly for women, enabling them to contribute more significantly to their household income. She also noted that,

unlike in her youth, every girl now attends school. For Bu Aminah, one of the most significant changes has been the arrival of the internet and mobile phones. “In the old days, people were content with television,” she recalled. Now, with the internet available in the village, a change accelerated by COVID-19’s demands for remote activities, the gap between rural and urban areas is narrowing. “We can easily shop online, accessing the same products available in cities, and watch videos from people everywhere,” she said.

The technological advances might have catalysed profound shifts in gender relations and women’s lives in rural Java; however, they have had contradictory impacts, as evidenced by earlier studies. For example, Hart’s (1986, 2004) longitudinal research in Java provided insights into how technological changes often reinforced existing gender hierarchies rather than transforming them. Women’s traditional agricultural roles were frequently displaced by mechanisation, limiting their economic participation rather than expanding it.

More recent research, such as that by Tickamyer and Kusujiarti (2012), Akter et al. (2017) and Nooteboom (2019), revealed new dimensions of opportunity for women, showing how improved connectivity enables rural women to engage in broader economic networks and documenting their expanded economic participation. However, these studies found that rural Javanese women still have to navigate enduring cultural expectations. For example, women’s expanded roles do not necessarily come with increased decision-making power since their influence remains significantly constrained by traditional norms (Akter et al., 2017).

To deepen the understanding of this dynamic, this thesis examines how such transformations in rural Java affect gender dynamics and women’s lived experiences, with a focus on Wonogiri Regency in Central Java. Java’s selection as the study area is particularly relevant given its position as Indonesia’s most populous island and its profound influence on national cultural and social norms. Moreover, Central Java presents a compelling case of rapid rural transformation alongside deeply embedded traditional gender values, making it an ideal setting for examining the intersection of change and cultural continuity.

Through ethnographic research mainly conducted in two villages, this thesis analyses how women like Bu Aminah navigate a reality where traditional expectations persist amid ongoing rural change. While existing scholars have documented women’s expanding economic roles in rural Java, this research makes a distinct contribution by exploring how women themselves perceive and experience these changes, revealing how they actively develop sophisticated strategies to pursue their aspirations while meeting societal expectations. These negotiations,

however, rarely disrupt fundamental power structures, even as increased economic participation provides women with more decision-making authority and a sense of autonomy. This dynamic creates a paradoxical landscape where women's expanded roles coexist with, rather than transform, traditional gender hierarchies.

1.1. Rural Change and Gender Dynamics

According to the World Bank (2020), nearly 44% of the global population resides in rural areas, where 4 out of 5 people live below the international poverty line. Supporting this, UN (2019) data indicated that 79% of the world's poor are concentrated in rural regions, and further emphasising this disparity, the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2017) reported that both poverty headcount ratios and poverty gaps are consistently higher in rural areas compared to urban centres. These statistics paint a clear picture: rural areas have become the epicentre of global poverty, with a disproportionate concentration of economically disadvantaged populations.

Rural populations experience inequalities that significantly impact their quality of life. The most pressing challenges include limited access to essential public services and widespread discrimination. The UN (2021) reported that rural communities consistently struggle to access basic healthcare services, with many areas lacking medical facilities, trained healthcare professionals, and emergency medical services. Education quality in rural areas often falls below urban standards, with schools facing shortages of qualified teachers, inadequate facilities, and limited learning resources. Beyond these infrastructural challenges, rural populations also face deeply rooted social inequalities. While social class discrimination exists across society, studies of rural areas have documented how it particularly affects low-income farming families who face distinct barriers to social mobility and economic opportunities in agricultural communities (Park & Maffii, 2017). Gender discrimination also remains particularly acute in rural settings, with women often denied equal access to resources, decision-making roles, and economic opportunities (Bieri, 2009; Quisumbing et al., 2014). This discrimination, coupled with gaps in public services and infrastructures, affects access to community resources and social integration, creating barriers that rural households must navigate daily and often reinforcing cycles of poverty and social exclusion.

Given these challenges, rural development has become crucial, particularly for countries like Indonesia, with large rural populations. Effective rural development is essential for addressing

poverty, strengthening local economies, enhancing access to services, and reducing various forms of inequality (UN, 2021). As development progresses, rural areas undergo fundamental, interrelated changes and transformations. These include processes of comprehensive societal change (Berdegué et al. 2013).

According to some modernisation theorists, economic development triggers cultural and social transformations that reshape both society and individual behaviour (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Silbereisen & Tomasik, 2010). As communities modernise and develop economically, they also experience changes in their social fabric and cultural traditions (Berdegué et al., 2013; Briones, 2017; ILO, 2014). In rural communities, dramatic changes occur as residents increasingly seek non-agricultural work, often through migration. In some cases, this shift reduces the number of small-scale and peasant farmers while expanding the urban working class and introducing new lifestyles shaped by diverse economic activities (Bernstein, 2010; Ploeg, 2009; Wise & Veltmeyer, 2016). The expanded connections between rural and urban areas then also blur their traditional boundaries (Berdegué, 2013). What begins as an economic necessity—the search for better opportunities—ultimately catalyses deeper social transformation, fundamentally altering the identities of rural migrants and their communities (Mece, 2018; Oppong, 2013).

However, despite these changes in livelihoods and lifestyles, research suggests that certain cultural values demonstrate remarkable resilience. Inglehart and Baker's (2000) comprehensive study across 65 societies revealed a complex dynamic: while massive cultural changes occur during economic development transformations, distinctive traditional values often persist. Their research confirmed that economic development, particularly the transition from agrarian to urban industrial society, drives changes in social values. Yet, traditional value systems maintain influence, demonstrating notable durability despite broader societal transformations. Their findings suggest that cultural change follows an evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, path, where new values emerge without completely displacing deeply rooted traditional belief systems.

This interplay between transformation and tradition is powerfully illustrated in the domain of gender relations during rural development processes. Rural transformation—characterised by economic diversification beyond agriculture, intensifying rural-urban connections, and technological change—fundamentally reshapes gender dynamics, affecting labour patterns, resource access, and broader social relations between men and women (FAO, 2020; Pattnaik et al., 2018; Razavi, 2009). Women play pivotal roles in rural development through their

participation in agricultural production, non-farm activities, and household management (FAO, 2020; Pattnaik et al., 2018; World Bank, 2018). Rural women's expanding economic participation not only drives household income diversification but also contributes significantly to broader rural economic growth and community development (UN Women, 2018; World Bank, 2018). However, persistent cultural values and gender norms act as invisible barriers, limiting women's ability to fully leverage new economic opportunities or challenge existing power structures (Kosec et al., 2020).

Despite women's crucial contributions to rural development, they continue to face multifaceted inequalities that manifest systematically across various dimensions of rural life. In the agricultural sector, these disparities are particularly pronounced and well-documented. For instance, persistent wage gaps in the agriculture sector consistently favour men, even though women constitute approximately 43% of the global agricultural workforce (Quisumbing, 2014). This gender-based wage discrimination is especially evident in Southeast Asian countries, where women earn less than men even when performing the same tasks (Fontana & Paciello, 2010; Kosec et al., 2020). Women in many regions also encounter systematic barriers to accessing fundamental agricultural resources—including land ownership, production management opportunities, and extension programs—all of which are crucial for economic advancement and autonomy (Akter et al., 2017; Fontana & Paciello, 2010; Kosec et al., 2020).

The constraints on women's economic opportunities extend well beyond agriculture into other livelihood opportunities. Perhaps most telling is the paradox visible in international migration patterns: while women represent approximately 50% of international migrants and typically demonstrate greater financial responsibility by remitting higher proportions of their income, they only have a limited role in migration-related decision-making processes (Bridge, 2005 cited in IOM, 2012; IFAD, 2018; UN Women, 2017). This pattern illuminates a fundamental contradiction in rural transformation: despite women's expanding economic roles and growing financial contributions, traditional power structures continue to limit their agency and decision-making authority, effectively maintaining gender-based power imbalances even as economic structures evolve.

1.2. Rural Women in Indonesia's Development Trajectory

In Indonesia, where approximately 44.6% of the population still lives in rural areas (World Bank, 2020), the country's rural landscape is experiencing processes similar to those occurring

across Southeast Asian countries. These changes are characterised by economic diversification (Thompson et al., 2019; Rigg et al., 2016), intensification of rural-urban linkages driven by factors such as migration (Kelly, 2011; McKay, 2005), the expansion of agricultural production and markets, and improved connectivity and access to education (McGee, 2008; Gibson & Olivia, 2010), all of which contribute to shifting social dynamics. While Indonesia has made remarkable progress in reducing rural poverty rates—from over 20% in 2007 to approximately 9.36% in 2023 (BPS, 2023a)—this progress masks persistent developmental challenges, particularly in the area of gender equality.

Rural women in Indonesia have historically played vital roles in agricultural production and community life (Geertz, 1961; van Nederveen Meerkerk, 2023; White, 2012). According to the ILO's 2017 assessment, women comprised approximately 37% of Indonesia's 39 million agricultural workers (FAO, 2019). Scholars have documented Indonesian rural women's crucial roles in productive activities, particularly in agriculture and household food security, where they are heavily involved in cultivation, harvesting, and post-harvest processing activities (Akter et al., 2017; FAO, 2009; Hart, 2004; Peluso, 2019; Rigg, 2020; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). Rural women's economic participation extends to other sectors such as small-scale trading, home industries and, increasingly, remittances as migrant workers (Affif, 2022; Geertz, 1961; Pardede et al., 2020; Peluso & Purwanto, 2018; Wolf, 1992). Beyond their economic roles, Indonesian rural women are vital contributors to social cohesion and community welfare, actively participating in communal activities, maintaining social networks, and preserving cultural traditions through their involvement in ceremonies and rituals (Brenner, 1998; Geertz, 1961; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). They also shoulder crucial responsibilities in domestic work, managing households, supporting their children's education, and caring for the elderly (Akter, 2017; World Bank, 2020; Doss et al., 2018; FAO, 2011; Grassi et al., 2015).

However, persistent challenges faced by Indonesian rural women include limited access to productive resources, exclusion from decision-making processes, persistent wage disparities compared to men, inadequate educational opportunities, and substantial barriers to employment advancement (Akter et al., 2017; Bennet, 2005; Hart, 2016; Li, 2014; White, 2015). The severity of these challenges is reflected in Indonesia's gender inequality index, which ranks among the highest in Southeast Asia (The Jakarta Post, 2022; UNDP, 2022), indicating a significant disconnect between women's contributions to rural development and their ability to benefit from it. This disparity is particularly evident in areas where traditional norms maintain a strong hold on social life (Blackburn, 2004; Brenner, 2011). For example, some cultural

practices continue to privilege male authority in public decision-making (Akter et al., 2017; Colfer et al., 2020), often limiting women's participation in community governance based on deeply entrenched gender biases (Blackburn, 2004; Hart, 2016; Robinson, 2009; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012).

These gender-based disparities manifest differently across Indonesia's diverse cultural landscapes, with varying intensity depending on local traditions, religious interpretations, and the pace of economic change. In rural Java, for instance, women must navigate an increasingly challenging terrain where traditional expectations of their domestic roles persist and often intensify, even as their economic participation and responsibilities expand (Brenner, 1998; Sullivan, 1994; Hart, 2004; Li, 2014; Nooteboom, 2009; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). This creates challenges for rural Javanese women as they attempt to balance growing economic responsibilities with undiminished domestic and community obligations. Javanese culture historically afforded women economic autonomy, even during the pre-colonial period, especially in market trading and household financial management (Brenner, 1998; Geertz, 1961). However, some religious and state ideological interpretations of gender roles introduced during the New Order period increasingly emphasise women's domestic duties over their economic agency (Brenner, 2011; Robinson, 2009; Suryakusuma, 2011; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012).

Cultural expectations, reinforced through religious interpretations and the state's historical gender policies, create formidable barriers to women's full participation in development initiatives and decision-making processes (Brenner, 2011; Sullivan, 1994; Nooteboom, 2009; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). However, as rural areas experience economic diversification and increased connectivity and traditional power structures and cultural practices become increasingly subject to negotiation and adaptation, these cultural norms that affect inequality issues are also prone to change. Evidence from across Southeast Asia demonstrates how rural transformation can catalyse significant shifts in gender relations, particularly when economic changes intersect with evolving social expectations and increased urban-rural connectivity (Rigg, 2020; Thompson et al., 2019).

The relationship between rural transformation and gender dynamics in Java represents a context where deeply embedded traditional values persist amid accelerating socioeconomic change. This characteristics of rural Java, where rapid development intersects with resilient cultural norms, raise questions about the nature of rural transformation and its implications for

gender equality. How these dynamics unfold, particularly in more traditional rural areas, and their impact on development outcomes remains inadequately understood—a point that will be further examined in the literature review chapter.

1.3. Research Questions and Significance

Despite the long-standing attention to rural transformation in Southeast Asia, research examining its gender dimensions remains surprisingly limited. This gap is particularly evident in major academic publications. For instance, the influential *Agrarian Change and Peasant Studies Book Series*, published in English by Fernwood Books and Practical Action Books[5], has yet to publish a title addressing gender issues and agrarian change. Similarly, the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) 2014 compilation *Gender in Agriculture: Closing the Knowledge Gap*[6] revealed that only 6% of research focused on gender in Southeast Asian countries (Akter et al., 2017). This dearth of gender-focused research is particularly concerning for Indonesia, given its substantial rural population and high gender inequality index ranking.

To move closer to eliminating the gender gap, Rigg (2020, p. 22) argues that scholars must "open the black box of the household to examine changing gender and generational roles and relations, how these then underpin livelihoods and, in turn, shape the very spatial constitution of the household and the practice of farming itself". Responding to both this call and the identified research gap, this study examines how rural transformation processes in Indonesia affect gender dynamics within both households and communities, with a focus on Central Java. The thesis answers three main questions:

1. What are the dominant processes of rural transformation and livelihood change occurring in the case study sites in Central Java?
2. How are the recent processes of rural transformation affecting gender roles and influence within households and community institutions?
3. How are changing gender roles perceived and experienced by women within the community?

These questions capture both the changes occurring in rural Java and their implications for gender relations at multiple levels, while recognising the interaction between economic transformation and cultural continuity. The first question establishes the broader context of

[5] https://practicalactionpublishing.com/book-series/50/agrarian-change-peasant-studies
[6] https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/cb5b4916-5836-4e37-a1f5-58be3415875f/content

rural transformation, examining how economic diversification, technological change, circular migration patterns, and evolving rural-urban linkages manifest in specific village settings. Importantly, this question explores not only what changes are occurring but also how households and individuals strategically adapt their livelihood strategies while maintaining connections to agricultural identity and cultural practices.

The second question explores how these transformative processes reshape gender roles and decision-making authority within households and communities, with particular attention to the drivers of these changes. Rather than assuming linear progression toward gender equality, this question investigates how economic necessity, livelihood pressures, and other institutional factors create conditions where traditional gender boundaries become more fluid. It examines whether changes represent fundamental shifts in gender ideology or pragmatic adaptations to new economic realities, and how communities strategically reinterpret cultural norms to accommodate women's expanding roles.

The third question focuses on women's lived experiences and subjective understandings, seeking to comprehend how rural women themselves interpret, navigate, and strategically manage evolving gender roles within persistent cultural frameworks. This question recognises that women are not passive recipients of change but active agents who develop sophisticated strategies to exercise autonomy while maintaining access to essential social capital. It explores the paradox of empowerment—how women can simultaneously experience liberation through new opportunities and intensification of responsibilities—and examines the cultural concepts and frameworks women use to make sense of their expanding but often contradictory roles.

This research contributes to both academic understanding and practical development efforts in several critical ways. First, it addresses a significant gap in the literature regarding how rural women navigate the complex terrain between expanding economic opportunities and persistent cultural expectations in contexts where traditional norms retain considerable influence. While existing studies in Java have documented women's increasing economic participation (Hart, 1986, 2004; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012; Nooteboom, 2019), they have not fully explored how women themselves experience, interpret, and strategically manage these changes within enduring cultural constraints.

Second, by employing ethnographic methods including photovoice activities and focusing extensively on women's own perspectives and narratives, this study aims to capture the lived reality of gender transformation in rural Java.

The findings demonstrate how women navigate the intersection of traditional expectations and new economic opportunities arising from rural transformation, which is crucial for developing more effective, gender-responsive rural development policies and programs. The women in the case studies embody forms of agency that are often overlooked by conventional empowerment frameworks. This approach demonstrates that while cultural norms can act as constraints, they can also serve as strategic resources—frameworks that women creatively reinterpret to legitimise and expand their roles within their households and communities.

Third, this research contributes to theoretical understanding by demonstrating how gender relations can still evolve through cultural reframing without complete cultural abandonment. The findings show how communities preserve social cohesion while adapting to economic change by strategically reinterpreting traditional concepts—from strict domestic confinement to flexible support roles—rather than rejecting these concepts entirely. This process of institutional evolution through gradual negotiation offers insights into how traditional societies can accommodate change while maintaining cultural identity and social stability.

Fourth, the research reveals critical limitations in conventional livelihood frameworks' tendency to treat households as unified decision-making units with what seems like coherent, collective strategies. In reality, the findings show that women in rural Java—though often excluded from formal positions of authority—play a pivotal role in shaping daily decisions around resource allocation, investment priorities, and household expenditures. Many times, acting as autonomous agents within the household, women negotiate and influence livelihood strategies in ways that reflect their specific needs and aspirations. This form of "hidden" or informal agency, exercised through ongoing micro-negotiations, suggests that assumptions about unified household strategies need to be fundamentally reconsidered through a gendered lens that recognises the differentiated control over assets and decision-making processes within households. The evidence reveals that women often exert substantial, though informal, influence over key livelihood decisions—leading to outcomes that diverge from those predicted by formal power structures.

This research comes at a time when Indonesia is actively pursuing rural development while working to advance gender equality. This commitment is evidenced through various policy initiatives, including both the National Long-Term Development Plan 2005-2025 and its successor for 2025-2045, which note the importance of rural development and gender mainstreaming (Bappenas, 2007; Bappenas, 2024). While these policies have created new

opportunities for women's participation, recent research has suggested that their implementation often falls short of transforming gender relations, especially at the local level. Syukri's (2021) research on gender-related policies and Budianto's (2023) analysis of social protection programs both highlight how deeply embedded social and cultural factors continue to constrain women's empowerment despite formal policy advances.

By exploring how rural transformation processes affect gender dynamics at the household and community levels, and particularly how women experience and perceive these changes, this study contributes to our understanding of how gender relations evolve during periods of rural transformation. This knowledge enhances our understanding of how women navigate between traditional expectations and new opportunities while also revealing how cultural norms adapt or persist amid socioeconomic change.

The research also contributes to understanding how livelihood diversification strategies in rural contexts involve negotiations around cultural identity, including the interpretation of gender roles. Finally, this study enhances understanding of women's agency in contexts where direct challenges to traditional norms may be socially or economically costly. By revealing how women exercise strategic conformity and cultural reframing as forms of resistance and negotiation, the research contributes to feminist scholarship on agency in restrictive contexts while offering practical insights for supporting women's empowerment within culturally traditional settings.

1.4. Thesis Structure

This thesis is organised into eight chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics in rural Java's transformation. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two presents a review of relevant literature examining scholarship on rural transformation and gender issues in Southeast Asia, Indonesia, and Java. The chapter begins by analysing the major drivers of rural transformation in Southeast Asia before examining how households respond through diverse livelihood strategies conceptualised within the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF). It then develops an integrated theoretical approach combining the SLF with gendered analysis and Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) to understand how transformation processes affect gender relations differently across productive, reproductive, and community management domains. The chapter also traces Indonesia's agrarian history from colonial times through the New Order to contemporary rural development, questioning

whether farming remains “a way of life” amid economic diversification. It examines how state policies, religious interpretations, and cultural frameworks continue to shape gender relations in rural Java despite broader socioeconomic changes. The chapter concludes by identifying critical gaps in this literature.

Chapter Three outlines the methodological approach taken in this study. It details the research design, including the rationale for site selection, data collection methods, and the analytical framework employed. This chapter clarifies how the research was conducted and explains why particular approaches were chosen to address the research questions.

Chapter Four provides essential context about the selected study sites located in Wonogiri Regency in Central Java, including about the regency’s history, political system, economy, landscape, society, and culture. The chapter starts from its geographical landscape, which shaped agricultural practices; its historical legacy as part of the Mangkunegaran duchy, which influenced early agricultural development through colonial-era plantation systems; to its progression through state-led rural development initiatives spanning the Sukarno era to present-day village-level governance. The chapter reveals how these conditions have contributed to circular migration activities in Wonogiri while highlighting how the regency has retained its agricultural significance despite economic diversification. This chapter also examines Wonogiri’s traditional practices and the community’s interpretations of Javanese culture, demonstrating how strong cultural values persist alongside economic change. By the end, it introduces the two villages where the data collection was mainly conducted.

The subsequent three chapters present the main findings, each addressing one of the research questions. Chapter Five examines the dominant processes of rural transformation and livelihood change occurring in the case study sites in Central Java. The chapter reveals how state interventions and community adaptations have shaped Wonogiri’s rural transformation over recent decades. It demonstrates that circular migration has become a crucial livelihood strategy that maintains strong connections between rural and urban areas, while off-farm employment opportunities have expanded locally, creating new income sources while transforming traditional labour patterns. The analysis reveals how households develop sophisticated strategies that combine farming with diverse income sources, with agriculture persisting not merely for economic returns, but also as a cultural identity, a means of food security, and a safety net within diversified livelihood portfolios. The chapter further examines how manufacturing expansion creates differentiated outcomes based on spatial location and

social positioning, revealing how rural transformation generates both opportunities and new vulnerabilities. Finally, it demonstrates how these economic transformations catalyse broader sociocultural changes, with communities strategically adapting traditional practices to accommodate new realities while preserving core cultural values through adaptive preservation.

Chapter Six analyses how recent rural transformation processes influence gender roles and power relations within households and community institutions in rural Java. The chapter begins by examining traditional Javanese gender norms and related cultural frameworks that historically confined women to domestic spheres. It then presents findings revealing how women are increasingly taking on roles traditionally held by men, including formal leadership positions, expanded participation in the labour force, and enhanced access to education. The chapter demonstrates that these transformations are driven primarily by economic necessity and household livelihood strategies—rather than by ideological challenges to gender inequality—though other factors also contribute to this iterative social change. As agrarian change triggers shifts in social norms, these evolving norms in turn enable greater female participation in the labour force, which then feeds back into further transformations in agrarian practices. Through a gendered SLF approach, the chapter illustrates how these shifts in gender roles—particularly women's expanding contributions—function as strategic human capital assets within household livelihood portfolios. This helps explain why traditional gender restrictions may be quickly suspended in times of economic necessity, even as deeper structural power dynamics remain largely intact.

Chapter Seven examines how women perceive, experience, and navigate the changing gender roles within the context of rural transformation. The chapter reveals a fundamental paradox: while women feel empowered by unprecedented opportunities in education, employment, and leadership, they simultaneously face intensified burdens as traditional expectations persist alongside expanded responsibilities. The analysis demonstrates how deeply embedded cultural frameworks serve as both constraints and strategic resources that women reinterpret to legitimise their expanding roles. Through detailed ethnographic analysis including photovoice activities, the chapter reveals how women's apparent acceptance of mounting responsibilities often masks sophisticated strategies for exercising agency within cultural constraints. It demonstrates how women understand that challenging gender norms too openly risks their families' access to community support networks, which are essential for rural household

survival, leading them to pursue change through cultural reframing and gradual institutional evolution rather than direct confrontation with traditional hierarchies.

The thesis concludes with Chapter Eight, which synthesises key findings and considers their broader implications. The final chapter reflects on three main contributions: advancing gendered livelihood frameworks that reveal how households strategically develop women's human capital as livelihood assets while relying on their continued reproductive labour; documenting women's sophisticated agency through strategic cultural navigation rather than direct resistance; and connecting local gender dynamics to broader regional demographic transitions across Southeast Asia. The chapter demonstrates how women strategically reframe expanded roles within culturally legitimate boundaries while preserving essential social capital for household survival in rural contexts where community support networks provide critical livelihood security. These findings reveal the paradoxical nature of empowerment where liberation through new opportunities coexists with intensified burdens, enhancing understanding of how gender relations evolve through gradual cultural reinterpretation rather than social upheaval, and offering insights for supporting women's strategic navigation while addressing structural inequalities in rural development contexts.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In their analysis of rural transformation, Berdegué, Rosada, and Bebbington (2013) define rural transformation as a comprehensive process of social change in which rural societies diversify their economies, increase market integration, reorganise spatially from villages to urban centres, and shift toward more urbanised sociocultural patterns. While often discussed alongside rural development, rural transformation specifically refers to fundamental changes in economic structures, social relationships, and cultural practices that gradually blur the boundaries between rural and urban areas. These changes extend far beyond agriculture to include shifts in infrastructure, technology, service access, and livelihood strategies (Berdegué et al., 2013; IFAD, 2016).

Critical agrarian scholars have examined how these transformative processes reshape rural communities through various analytical lenses. The classical agrarian question has provided valuable insights into how capital penetrates rural societies, transforming agricultural production and social relations (Bernstein, 2010; Byres, 1996). Debates in the *Journal of Peasant Studies* have highlighted tensions between different pathways of agrarian change, ranging from de-agrarianization to re-peasantization, and their implications for rural households (Ploeg, 2009; White, 2018). These theoretical perspectives help situate localised changes within broader structural transformations of rural economies and societies.

These transformation processes interact dynamically with existing social relationships and cultural practices, as economic changes both influence and are influenced by how communities organise social life. Gender relations represent a particularly important dimension of these social changes, as transformation processes often affect men and women differently and can reshape power dynamics within households and communities. While scholars have explored gender dynamics in rural contexts (e.g. Hart, 2004; Quisumbing et al., 2014; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012), there are still important dimensions of how these transformative processes reconfigure gender relations that can be explored further, as seen in communities where traditional cultural norms retain significant influence despite broader socioeconomic changes.

This chapter examines these dynamics, beginning with an overview of rural transformation in Southeast Asia and its livelihood implications. It then follows theoretical frameworks that illuminate the gender dimensions of these changes. The chapter then narrows to Indonesia,

particularly Java, before examining existing gender research and identifying gaps in understanding women's lived experiences of transformation.

2.1. Rural Transformation in Southeast Asia: An Overview

Multiple interconnected factors shape rural landscapes, livelihoods and transformation in Southeast Asia. This section provides an overview of the ongoing changes, focusing on two key areas: first, the major driving forces behind rural transformation, and second, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) as an analytical tool for understanding how these forces translate into livelihood strategies. The driving forces of rural transformation include economic globalisation, technological advancement, environmental challenges, and institutional changes, all of which create conditions in rural areas that demand adaptation and innovation, leading to the emergence of diverse approaches to rural livelihoods. Where rural households once relied primarily on farming, they now typically pursue multiple income sources, accessing different forms of capital as conceptualised in the SLF. The diversified livelihood strategies, in turn, represent potential pathways out of poverty for rural residents.

This section very briefly summarises several key forces driving processes of rural transformation, which in turn shape livelihood choices. First, integration into global markets has transformed agricultural production while simultaneously creating non-farm opportunities. Second, technological advancement and improved infrastructure have enabled new forms of rural-urban connection, particularly through migration. Third, rural households have responded by developing increasingly diverse livelihood strategies, combining farming with other income sources while leveraging different types of capital. These patterns provide essential context for understanding Indonesia's rural transformation, particularly how these broader regional forces manifest in Java's specific social and economic landscape.

2.1.1. Drivers of Rural Transformation

Research across Southeast Asia has identified key driving factors of rural transformation, including globalisation, technological advancement, environmental challenges, and policy and institutional elements that collectively reshape rural landscapes and livelihoods (Berdegué et al., 2013; Cramb et al., 2017; Rigg, 2020; Thompson et al., 2019). Economic globalisation, in particular, has emerged as a primary catalyst, fundamentally restructuring how rural communities engage with markets while creating new employment opportunities beyond agriculture. This process operates alongside technological advances that enhance connectivity,

environmental pressures that compel adaptation, and policy interventions that either facilitate or constrain transformation outcomes.

Globalisation

Economic globalisation represents one of the key drivers of rural transformation, integrating rural areas into global value chains, and in many cases, this has fundamentally restructured local agricultural systems and reshaped their economic foundations and livelihood strategies (Berdegué et al., 2013; Cramb et al., 2017; Humphrey & Memedovic, 2006; McMichael, 2013; Reardon & Timmer, 2014; Rigg et al., 2018; Rigg, 2020). Agriculture production decisions are increasingly driven by global demand, which, in turn, reshapes rural livelihoods. Cramb et al. (2017) argue in their study on smallholder inclusion in agricultural commodity chains across Southeast Asia that this integration also presents challenges. Their research found that it also poses risks of marginalisation for smallholders, as they often struggle to meet the strict quality standards and volume requirements of global supply chains, compared to larger-scale producers or well-organised cooperatives, which are better equipped to meet these demands.

While agriculture remains central to rural development, there is growing recognition that it may no longer be the primary source of income for many rural households in many Southeast Asia countries (Christiaensen, 2018; Davis et al., 2010; Haggblade et al., 2010; Reardon et al., 2007; Rigg, 2006). Instead, rural transformation is characterised by the emergence of highly diverse livelihood strategies to improve individual and household well-being, ensure food security, and enhance resilience in the face of global economic challenges (Ellis, 2000; Rigg, 2020; Scoones, 2009).

Rural-Urban Connections and Migration

Rural regions are being transformed through migration to urban areas and the establishment of manufacturing facilities in nearby towns, allowing daily commuting and circular migration (IFAD, 2016). In Southeast Asia, these rural-urban connections contribute to demographic shifts, including aging populations and youth out-migration, which profoundly affect rural labour dynamics and social structures (Rigg et al., 2016), as rural youth increasingly view agriculture as an unattractive career option and seek non-farm employment in urban areas (White, 2012; White, 2020).

The economic impacts of these migration patterns are substantial. Remittances inject new capital into rural economies, altering consumption patterns, stimulating service-sector

employment, and shifting land use practices to accommodate new economic activities (Kelly, 2011; McKay, 2005; Nguyen & Winters, 2011; Rigg et al., 2016). This rural-urban migration and the in-situ transformation of previously rural regions contribute to urbanisation, affecting natural landscapes, agricultural practices, and food systems (Bruin et al., 2021; Holdaway, 2015; Marshall & Randhawa, 2017).

Beyond economic changes, migration creates bidirectional transformation processes. While economic and social changes affect migration patterns, migrations reshape rural communities upon return. Migration introduces new ideas, skills, and capital that can catalyse further transformation (de Haas, 2010; Kelly, 2011; Rigg & Salamanca, 2015). Research by Resurreccion and Elmhirst (2008) reveals how women's movement between rural and urban areas creates innovative forms of household organisation and resource management. These migration experiences often bring new values and practices that reconfigure gender relations and contribute to ongoing rural transformation processes.

Technological Advancement and Infrastructure Development

Technological advancement has become a crucial driver of rural transformation in Southeast Asia (Cramb et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2017; Rigg et al., 2016), as it accelerates and amplifies transformations across various aspects of rural life. In agriculture, the adoption of labour-saving technologies and improved crop varieties revolutionise farming practices, impacting labour requirements and productivity (Rigg et al., 2016; Tey et al., 2017). The widespread adoption of mobile phones and internet connectivity transforms rural communication, access to information, and market participation (Musa et al., 2012; Salemink et al., 2017). Improved transportation infrastructure reduces rural isolation, fostering greater economic integration and mobility (Gibson & Olivia, 2010; Warr, 2008), supports the economic diversification and globalisation processes mentioned earlier and influences migration patterns and remittance flows (Kelly, 2011; Nguyen et al., 2017). These technological advancements facilitate stronger connections between rural and urban areas, enabling the flow of ideas, capital, and opportunities.

Climate Change and Environmental Challenges

Environmental challenges, particularly climate change, are also increasingly driving rural transformation in Southeast Asia (ADB, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2017). Rural livelihoods, which are highly dependent on natural resources, are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as sea-level rise, changing rainfall patterns, and an increased frequency of extreme

weather events (ADB, 2017; Zhuang et al., 2010). These environmental pressures compel rural communities to adapt their agricultural practices, diversify their livelihoods, and, in some cases, migrate to less vulnerable areas (ADB, 2021; Maharjan et al., 2020).

The impacts of climate change are not evenly distributed, with marginalised groups often bearing disproportionate burdens while having the least capacity to adapt (Mason & Rigg, 2019). Consequently, environmental pressures can exacerbate existing social inequalities within rural communities, making the need for climate adaptation strategies an increasingly important factor in shaping the trajectory of rural transformation.

Policy and Institutional Influences

Government policies related to agriculture, rural development, land use, and economic diversification play a pivotal role in either facilitating or hindering rural transformation (Dressler et al., 2016; Nguyen et al., 2017). For instance, countries like Indonesia have implemented extensive social protection programs involving significant cash transfers into rural areas (McCarthy & Robinson, 2016; McCarthy et al., 2014). McCarthy (2019) documented that these programs fundamentally alter rural social relations by reducing household vulnerabilities, transforming traditional support networks, and redefining the role of social capital in rural communities. Cash transfers reduce households' dependence on traditional patron-client relationships and informal support networks, shifting how social capital operates in rural communities.

Along with the government policy, institutional factors such as land tenure systems, access to credit, and agricultural extension services impact the pace and direction of rural transformation (Christoplos, 2010; Faure et al., 2012; Hirsch, 2011; Keovilignavong & Suhardiman, 2020; Pham & Lensink, 2007). At the broadest level, regional and international policies, including trade agreements and development initiatives, have a profound impact on rural areas by shaping market access, commodity prices, and development priorities (Reardon & Timmer, 2014; Varkkey et al., 2018).

Sociocultural Transformation

As rural areas undergo economic diversification, demographic shifts, and increased connectivity, traditional social structures and cultural norms are being reshaped (Berdegué et al., 2013; Thompson et al., 2019). These changes can manifest in evolving identities, shifting social hierarchies, changing gender roles, and reimagining traditional knowledge systems. The

interaction between global influences and local traditions often results in cultural negotiation and adaptation, where new forms of expression and social organisation emerge without completely replacing the existing ones (Inglehart & Baker, 2000).

Rural communities actively engage with new ideas and practices, selectively adopting, adapting, or resisting them. Their value systems are evolving as rural populations are exposed to diverse ideas and lifestyles through increased rural-urban linkages and global connectivity (Berdegué et al., 2013; Bernstein, 2010; Ploeg, 2009). These processes are therefore bidirectional: structural forces drive transformation, but rural people also actively influence outcomes through their adaptive strategies and the new values they acquire, including from migration experiences. The sociocultural transformation, while less tangible than economic or technological changes, is equally important in understanding the comprehensive nature of rural transformation in Southeast Asia.

2.1.2. Rural Livelihood Pathways Through the Sustainable Livelihood Framework

Chambers and Conway (1992, p. 6) defined livelihood as the means to meet basic human needs, comprising "the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required." A sustainable livelihood, as they conceptualised it, is one that demonstrates resilience by withstanding and recuperating from pressures and disruptions, sustains or improves its underlying capacities and resources, ensures viable livelihood prospects for future generations, and produces positive contributions to other livelihoods across various scales, from local to global, and across different timeframes, both immediate and enduring. Livelihoods change when individuals, who are often part of households and communities, seek new ways to fulfil their needs in the face of evolving circumstances.

In poverty-stricken rural areas, livelihood shifts are particularly prevalent compared to more affluent rural areas, as households grapple with meeting their essential needs and developing strategies to escape poverty (Ellis, 2000; Scoones, 2009). These strategies are more than merely responses to immediate needs but represent dynamic processes through which rural households navigate economic uncertainties and opportunities towards enhanced well-being (Barrett et al., 2001; Dercon & Krishnan, 1996).

Scoones (1998) presented these responses as rural livelihood strategies, highlighting agricultural intensification and extensification, livelihood diversification, and migration, or

some combination of these strategies. In its 2008 World Development Report on Agriculture for Development, the World Bank (2007) provides a similar analysis of the main pathways pursued by rural households to escape poverty: farming-based intensification and diversification, non-agricultural employment and income, and migration. As rural areas experience change, rural households adopt diverse strategies to improve their livelihoods—a pursuit that constitutes a crucial dimension of rural transformation. Understanding these livelihood pathways through a context-sensitive analytical lens is essential, as households' choices and strategies collectively shape broader transformation processes.

Rural Livelihood Pathways

Farming remains a vital component of rural poverty reduction strategies despite a decline in its contribution to GDP in several countries (World Bank, 2023a). Many development practitioners continue to view rural life through an agricultural lens, where the primary activities of its people are related to farming, and the sector has primary potential to lift people out of poverty (Rigg, 2006). This perspective is reinforced by previous research, including studies by Christiaensen et al. (2011), Naminse and Zhuang (2018), Cervantes-Godoy and Dewbre (2010), and Sarris et al. (2006), which explore the diverse role of agriculture in poverty alleviation through increased productivity and entrepreneurship. These studies stress that the pathway out of poverty through farming involves more than just boosting production—it requires improved market access, technology adaptation, and agricultural diversification.

The emergence of new non-farm rural labour markets and non-farm economies, however, has diversified income sources and expanded opportunities for rural residents, who actively seek and create opportunities beyond agriculture to improve their livelihoods. Over recent decades, the non-farm sector, a byproduct of increasing industrialisation and improved rural-urban connectivity, has become a significant contributor to improving rural livelihoods (Christiaensen & Todo, 2014; ILO, 2008; Lanjouw & Lanjouw, 2001).

The search for better economic opportunities, furthermore, extends beyond the boundaries of local communities through migration (de Haas, 2007; IFAD, 2016; Naminse & Zhuang, 2018; Ouyyanont, 2016; Ploeg, 2009; Rigg et al., 2016; Rigg, 2020; Rosegrant & Hazell, 2000; Thompson et al., 2019). The decision to migrate from rural to urban areas is often influenced by: environmental issues, such as natural disasters and climate change (FAO IFAD IOM WFP, 2018; IOM, 2020) socio-political factors, including war, discrimination, and inequality in access to public services (Piras, 2021; Browne, 2016); and the search for better economic

opportunities and escaping poverty and food insecurity (Clendenning, 2018; FAO IFAD IOM WFP, 2018; IOM, 2020). Large-scale and long-term migration can negatively affect agricultural production and food security, particularly in regions where farming systems rely heavily on family labour (FAO, 2016). It also raises concerns about the well-being of children left behind by migrating parents (Jacobson et al., 2018) and widening rural-urban inequalities when the most educated and skilled individuals permanently leave rural areas (de Haas, 2010). However, transnational networks formed through migration create new market opportunities for rural products and services, connecting rural communities to broader markets (Vertovec, 2004). In rural development, migration plays a crucial role, such as generating crucial remittances—40% of international remittances are sent to rural areas (according to FAO, 2016), supporting families' daily expenses and food security, and providing access to healthcare and education (Lacroix, 2012; Rigg, 2020; UNESCO, UNDP, IOM, UN, 2018).

These three pathways—farming, non-farm rural economies, and migration—often complement each other in the tapestry of rural livelihoods. The general trend toward diversification in rural economies does not necessarily diminish the continued importance of agriculture but can rather complement it. De Janvry and Sadoulet (2000) refer to this as a "pluriactive path", emphasising intrahousehold diversification. They also introduce another pathway, the "development assistance path", that focuses on leveraging existing development programs to support rural residents in their efforts to escape poverty.

As rural residents pursue pathways out of poverty, they engage not only in economic betterment but also in processes of social and cultural change. The livelihood strategies that households pursue have far-reaching social effects by impacting demographic patterns in both rural and urban areas, reshaping social structures, and influencing cultural norms. Migration, for example, can alter gender roles, with women often taking on men's roles when male family members migrate (Deere, 2005). Returning migrants, as discussed in the previous section, can also introduce new knowledge and values that can affect existing gender-related practices (Deere, 2005; de Haas, 2010; Levitt, 1998).

Understanding Rural Livelihood Pathways Through the Sustainable Livelihood Framework

The pathways outlined above illustrate how contemporary rural livelihoods often rely on a combination of diverse strategies. As households increasingly engage in both farm and non-farm activities, they create a livelihood strategy that often spreads risk across different sectors, potentially boosts their overall income, and fosters a more resilient and dynamic rural

landscape (Ellis, 2000; World Bank, 2008). The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), initially introduced by Chambers and Conway (1992) and subsequently refined by other scholars and development agencies, provides a useful analytical lens for understanding how rural households mobilise various assets, navigate institutional contexts, and pursue these multiple livelihood strategies.

The SLF views livelihoods as composed of combinations of capital—natural, physical, human, financial, and social—that households draw upon within a broader vulnerability context (DFID, 1999; Scoones, 1998). This context includes shocks (like natural disasters or price crashes), trends (such as environmental degradation or demographic shifts), and seasonality. These vulnerability factors correspond to the rural transformation drivers discussed earlier. This alignment means the same forces driving rural transformation constitute the vulnerability context for household decisions. Globalisation, for example, simultaneously integrates farmers into potentially profitable value chains while exposing them to international price fluctuations. Similarly, climate change threatens traditional practices while requiring adaptive strategies, compelling households to diversify across sectors and locations. Within this context, rural households develop what Scoones (1998) described as livelihood portfolios—the mix of activities that evolve over time. Households may diversify seasonally (e.g., through short-term migration), react to specific events (like crop failures), or gradually transition to non-farm work as structural changes unfold.

In Southeast Asia, these diverse portfolios have become common as rapid economic and environmental shifts compel households to continually reconfigure their strategies, often across generations. As Rigg (2016) observed, many rural households in Southeast Asia construct arrangements spanning the rural-urban divide, combining farming with non-farm activities and migration. A typical livelihood portfolio might include farming (self-provisioning or commercial) alongside urban wage labour, with livelihood pathways often reflecting progressive shifts toward non-farm activities as children gain education and infrastructure improves.

The SLF further acknowledges that access to assets and the ability to convert them into livelihood outcomes are mediated by policies, institutions, and processes operating at multiple levels (DFID, 1999; Scoones, 1998). This institutional dimension explains why similar external changes often produce divergent outcomes across different households—some may intensify agriculture with secure tenure and credit, while others with limited assets turn to wage labour

or migration (de Haan, 2012; Rigg et al., 2016). Social networks, educational backgrounds, and political connections also influence the types of opportunities individuals and families can realistically pursue (Ellis, 2000; Scoones, 2009).

The SLF also positions the household as its primary unit of analysis, treating it as the key entity that mobilises assets, pursues livelihood strategies, and experiences outcomes. Chambers and Conway's (1992) original conceptualisation focused on capabilities, assets and activities, but the framework's operationalisation has consistently centred on households as the decision-making units that combine these elements into coherent livelihood approaches. Within the SLF, households are conceptualised as adaptive units that respond to vulnerability contexts by accessing different forms of capital and developing livelihood strategies (DFID, 1999). By focusing on households, the SLF provides a manageable unit of analysis that bridges individual experiences and community-level processes. Households are considered sufficiently large to facilitate collective action and resource pooling, yet small enough to enable detailed analysis of livelihood decisions and outcomes.

However, feminist scholars (i.e, Razavi, 2003) have critiqued the SLF's tendency to present households analytically as unitary decision-making units, arguing that this approach obscures important internal differentiations within households. The framework's focus on household-level strategies often assumes consensus among household members while overlooking how labour allocation, resource access, decision-making power, and livelihood responsibilities are distributed along lines of gender, age, and social position within households. This unitary household assumption couldn't capture how different household members may have varying—and sometimes conflicting—interests, priorities, and capacities to influence household strategies.

Importantly, household strategies emerge from negotiations among members with varying access to resources and opportunities, which are influenced by their gender, age, and social position (Ellis, 2000). These negotiations reveal that households are sites of both cooperation and contestation, where livelihood decisions reflect ongoing power dynamics rather than unified choices. When households adapt strategies, they reorganise not only economic activities but also social relations, power dynamics, and cultural norms (Rigg, 2016). This recognition of internal household differentiation is particularly important in understanding how rural transformation affects different household members in distinct ways, with implications for how livelihood outcomes are distributed within households.

2.2. Understanding Gender Relations during Rural Transformation

While the SLF provides valuable insights into how households construct dynamic livelihood portfolios and pathways in response to rural transformation, a comprehensive understanding of these strategies and their outcomes requires explicit attention to gender dynamics. Rural transformation processes create new economic opportunities, but they simultaneously reshape social relations, power dynamics, and cultural expectations in ways that affect men and women differently. Understanding how gender influences access to assets, shapes livelihood choices, and affects the distribution of benefits is therefore essential for comprehending both the strategies households pursue and the outcomes they achieve.

In many Southeast Asian contexts, women face the particular challenge of engaging with emerging economic possibilities while navigating persistent cultural frameworks that continue to influence gender expectations (Akter et al., 2017; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). When households diversify their livelihoods, women often assume expanded economic roles while continuing to fulfil care responsibilities, creating new forms of time poverty and shifting household power dynamics (Quisumbing et al., 2014). These pressures mean that women's experiences of rural transformation cannot be understood through economic analysis alone; it requires analytical frameworks capable of examining both the structural conditions driving change and the cultural processes through which individuals interpret and respond to transformation.

To address this analytical challenge, this research draws on an integrated theoretical approach that combines the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (applied with a gendered lens) with Social Reproduction Theory. The selection and application of these frameworks also draws upon insights from the evolution of gender and development approaches—from Women in Development (WID) through Gender and Development (GAD) to Women, Culture, and Development (WCD)—which highlight the importance of analysing both structural economic factors and cultural dynamics in understanding women's experiences of change.

2.2.1. Gender and Development Approaches

Existing gender and development approaches, from Women in Development (WID) through Gender and Development (GAD) to Women, Culture, and Development (WCD), demonstrate both the expanding recognition of gender's complexity and the persistent analytical challenges in understanding how gender relations change during processes of economic development. Initially, the WID approach sought to integrate women into existing development models,

primarily emphasising their economic contributions (Moser, 1989; Razavi & Miller, 1995). However, WID was criticised for failing to challenge existing social structures, treating women as a homogeneous group, and neglecting how gender intersects with other power relations (Razavi & Miller, 1995).

Women and Development (WAD) approach, emerging in the late 1970s, shifted attention to the more nuanced relationships between women and development processes, emphasising women's vital contributions to both household and societal maintenance (Rathgeber, 1990). Yet, WAD's tendency to focus primarily on the productive sector often neglected reproductive aspects of women's lives and failed to adequately analyse gender relations within local contexts (Razavi & Miller, 1995). In the 1980s, the Gender and Development (GAD) approach then appeared, seeking to address earlier limitations by examining how underlying gender relations and power dynamics restrict women's access to resources and opportunities (Razavi & Miller, 1995). GAD emphasises the social construction of gender, challenging existing roles and expectations that shape development processes (Moser, 1993; Parpart, 1993). Later, the Women, Culture, and Development (WCD) approach aimed to integrate cultural analysis more fully, recognising culture as a dynamic forces that shape and is shaped by women's actions and identities (Bhavnani et al., 2003; Chua et al., 2000).

While these gender and development approaches have offered valuable insights, scholars have noted significant limitations when applied to rural transformation contexts (Cornwall, 2003; Chua et al., 2000; Razavi & Miller, 1995). These approaches tend to treat cultural norms and gender ideologies as static variables rather than examining how they are actively reproduced, contested, and transformed through material processes. Cornwall (2003), for example, critiques the top-down nature of many GAD practices, which impose culturally specific frameworks and allow limited space for participatory agenda setting or implementation. Therefore, a more integrated approach is needed to understand how structural forces interact with cultural norms to shape diverse outcomes for women. This requires analytical frameworks that can examine how transformation processes shape—and are reshaped by—livelihood strategies, affect—and are affected by—gender roles within households and communities, and capture how women themselves experience these changes.

2.2.2. A Gendered Approach to the Sustainable Livelihood Framework

A gendered livelihoods approach disaggregates household-level analysis to examine how gender relations mediate individual access to resources and shape differential livelihood

outcomes. The widespread adoption of gendered livelihoods approaches across diverse scholarly fields demonstrates their analytical power and practical relevance. Razavi (2003), for instance, demonstrates how economic diversification, technological change, and market integration yield distinctly gendered outcomes that cannot be fully understood without examining power relations. Her work reveals how land reform and agricultural modernisation often consolidate men's control over resources while marginalising women's contributions—insights overlooked in gender-blind analyses. Similarly, Jackson (2003) critiques conventional focus on women's land rights, instead analysing how gendered tenure systems create systematic patterns of inclusion and exclusion in agricultural development.

Other comprehensive research done by Quisumbing et al. (2014) across Asian contexts exemplifies how gendered livelihoods approaches reveal that women's participation in agricultural value chains varies not just due to economic structures, but because market integration interacts with local gender norms, household decision-making, and women's control over resources. Ellis's (2000) foundational work on rural livelihood diversification also demonstrates how gender influences the types of livelihood strategies households can pursue, with women often concentrated in lower-return activities due to constraints on their time, mobility, and access to productive resources.

Pasteur's (2002) framework for gender analysis within SLF demonstrates that men's and women's differing roles, responsibilities, and resource access result in distinct livelihood needs. According to her, a gendered SLF perspective reveals how gender systematically shapes access to the five forms of capital, influences livelihood choices, and affects the distribution of benefits— offering critical insights into the lived experiences of rural transformation. March et al.'s (1999) methodological guide further demonstrates how gendered analysis frameworks can be operationalised within livelihood studies by examining roles, asset access, decision-making power, needs and priorities. Applying a gendered lens is essential for recognising how policies and economic opportunities affect men and women in different ways, leading to divergent livelihood strategies, constraints, and outcomes even within the same economic setting. Kabeer's (2018) comprehensive evaluation of women's economic empowerment demonstrates that interventions often fail to benefit women not due to lack of merit, but because they do not address the ingrained constraints imposed by both informal (family, kinship, community norms) and formal institutions (markets, states) that perpetuate gender biases through their rules and practices.

Understanding development issues in their specific historical, geographical, and cultural contexts allows for a more accurate analysis of gender roles and relations in different Indonesian settings. This analysis is particularly relevant in Indonesian contexts, given the pervasive cultural and religious influences on social life. While gender norms and practices in Indonesia vary across diverse regions due to historical influences and local traditions (Blackburn, 2004), this cultural diversity presents a key challenge for gender and development approaches: translating theoretical frameworks into practical strategies requires addressing the deeply entrenched power structures and cultural norms that shape women's opportunities and constraints within each specific context.

2.2.3. Social Reproduction Theory: When Roles Become Burdens

Within development studies, women's roles are often categorised into three primary domains: productive, reproductive, and community-managing roles (Manandhar, 2008; Moser, 1989; Moser, 1993). These roles are particularly prominent in rural settings, where women perform crucial and diverse community functions through multiple responsibilities, from managing household tasks to pursuing diverse livelihood strategies (FAO, 2011; World Bank, 2012). However, understanding the true scope of rural women's contributions requires examining not only what they do but also how their work is measured, valued, and interconnected across these seemingly distinct domains.

Women's diverse contribution to agricultural work spans livestock management, cultivating food and cash crops, and post-harvest activities (Akter et al., 2017; Doss, 2014; FAO, 2011; Rigg, 2020; Quisumbing, 2014), while their economic contributions also extend beyond agriculture, including labour migration (FAO, 2018; Maharjan et al., 2020; Rigg, 2016). While scholars widely recognise the significant and diverse productive roles of rural women in agriculture and food security, the true extent of rural women's contributions is likely underreported. Much of their labour is undervalued or remains unrecognised in formal economic measures (Doss, 2018; Doss et al., 2018; Razavi, 2009), with many women working longer hours than men and often without identifying themselves as farmers (FAO, 2010). This systematic underreporting means that even substantial figures—such as women contributing to over 50% of the world's food production (FAO, 1995; FAO, 2011) and representing approximately 43% of the agricultural labour force (Akter et al., 2017; Doss, 2014; FAO, 2011; SOFA Team & Doss, 2011)—may actually underestimate women's real contributions.

This undervaluation of women's work becomes even more pronounced when considering how these are often inseparable from reproductive responsibilities. While reproductive work traditionally encompasses the biological processes of human reproduction, such as pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding (Federici, 2004), rural women's reality extends far beyond these functions into what feminist scholars' term "social reproduction work" (Bhattacharya, 2017). This includes the full spectrum of care work essential for family well-being—children's education, nutrition and meal preparation, family health, and elder care (Akter et al., 2017; Doss et al., 2018)—activities that sustain both daily and generational life (Laslett & Brenner, 1989). In rural contexts, this care work even seamlessly connects to women's community management roles, including communal resource management and participation in community groups that generate essential social capital (Doss, 2018; FAO, 2011). Their reproductive labour often remains invisible in formal accounting systems, yet it is indispensable to the functioning of rural economies.

Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), rooted in Marxist feminist thought of the 1970s, offers a framework for understanding the systematic link between productive labour and social reproduction. It examines how societies sustain themselves over time by focusing on the often-invisible labour—such as cooking, cleaning, childcare, eldercare, and emotional support—that maintains both economic systems and social relations (Bhattacharya, 2017; Federici, 2004). SRT contends that capitalism depends not only on producing goods and services but also on the reproduction of the labour force through this essential, largely unpaid work. Contemporary theorist Tithi Bhattacharya (2017) expands this analysis by showing how different groups experience social reproduction differently based on their class, race, and location.

What development scholars conceptualise as women's "triple roles" becomes, through the SRT lens, evidence of how capitalism systematically assigns essential but unpaid work to women. When these roles intensify without adequate support or recognition, they shift from functional responsibilities to what many theorists call the "double burden": women engaging in wage labour while retaining primary responsibility for household care (Hochschild, 1989; Benería & Sen, 1981). In rural contexts, however, scholars such as Moser (1993) argued that this burden even becomes "triple," as women further take on community responsibilities. Bourdieu (2018), meanwhile, highlighted the cultural dimension of women's reproductive labour, the process through which societies transmit cultural norms, values, and practices across generations, thereby maintaining existing social structures. Women's roles in food preparation, religious observances, childcare practices, and community ceremonies represent the embodied

transmission of cultural capital that shapes the next generation's understanding of social roles, expectations, and identities.

Through this lens, SRT helps explain why rural transformation often leads to a multiplication, rather than a redistribution, of women's responsibilities. In their study of women's mobility in Southeast Asia, Resurreccion, and Elmhirst (2008) demonstrate this dynamic by showing how, in response to male out-migration, women assumed the role of coordinators of multi-local households in the absence of men. Women managed remittances and oversaw agricultural production while continuing care work for children and elderly relatives. Women also fulfil cultural obligations that often cannot be outsourced or substituted, requiring women to participate directly regardless of their economic position.

SRT, with an emphasis on cultural reproduction, is particularly significant for analysing women's lived experiences of rural transformation in rural Java. By conceptualising how societies transmit values and practices through women's reproductive labour, SRT reveals that women simultaneously navigate expanding economic opportunities while bearing responsibility for maintaining cultural continuity—a tension that shapes their subjective experiences of transformation. Integrating SRT with the gendered livelihoods approach creates a helpful analytical framework that addresses the limitations of earlier gender and development approaches. While the SLF illuminates how households construct livelihood portfolios and pathways, the gendered lens reveals how gender relations systematically shape access to assets and strategies. SRT complements both by revealing the reproductive dimensions of livelihood strategies, highlighting how care, social obligations, and cultural reproduction are sustained and reshaped amidst rural transformation.

2.3. Processes of Rural and Agrarian Change in Indonesia

Since proclaiming independence in 1945, processes of agrarian change have been a foremost political consideration for Indonesians, given the predominance of smallholders and agricultural workers within the population. White et al. (2022) offer insights into the changing political dynamics of rural society and agrarian movements since independence. They explained that in the 1950s and early 1960s, a powerful left-populist alliance of peasants, plantation workers, and affiliated organisations achieved widespread support for a progressive agrarian agenda under President Sukarno's leadership. This included land reform, where *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI, Indonesian Communist Party) and *Barisan Tani Indonesia* (BTI,

Indonesian Peasant Front) advocated for the confiscation of land from landlords and its redistribution to peasants. Land reform, however, was only partially successful. This alliance was then dismantled during the anti-communist purge and agrarian violence of 1965-66, which marked the rise of Suharto's authoritarian "New Order" regime. Under Suharto's rule, independent peasant organisations were replaced by state-sponsored entities, and the military established a pervasive presence at the village level. At the same time, Suharto prioritised political stability in the countryside through wide-ranging support for rural development, including agricultural subsidies and infrastructure development.

The fall of Suharto in 1998 marked another turning point, ushering in an era of democratisation that enabled the resurgence of local and national agrarian organisations and movements (Peluso et al., 2008; White et al., 2022). During the post-1998 *Reformasi* period, the concerns of rural Indonesians have expanded beyond traditional agrarian issues to include broader economic and social challenges, while poverty eradication remains a central priority. According to the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS, 2023a), the rural poverty rate in Indonesia decreased from 26% in 1999 to 12% in 2023 (but is still higher than the urban poverty rate of 7%). Consequently, eradicating rural poverty continues to be a primary focus of the Indonesian government's development strategy (for example, in the National Long-Term Development Plan 2005-2025). Agricultural and land-related concerns remain central, but national poverty reduction efforts now have a much broader scope.

2.3.1. The Agrarian Nation: Is Farming Still a Way of Life?

Indonesia has long identified itself as an agrarian nation (McCarthy & Obidzinski, 2017; Rakhmat & Saputra, 2016). This agrarian self-image is deeply embedded in its political rhetoric and historical narrative, with food self-sufficiency—especially in rice—considered a matter of national pride and identity (McCarthy & Obidzinski, 2017; Neilson & Wright, 2017). Neilson and Wright (2017, p.134) highlight that national self-sufficiency has long been a cornerstone of the country's ideological framework, with "successive post-colonial leaders projecting food production as a key indicator of prosperity, security, and well-being". President Sukarno first emphasised "food availability for the people" in his speeches, but a similar emphasis has been placed on agrarian nationalism by more recent political leaders, including President Joko Widodo (Novianto, 2022; Purwadi, 2014).

Recent data and trends, however, suggest that this characterisation may no longer accurately reflect the country's economic and social realities. The Indonesian economy is no longer

dominated by agriculture as it was in the 1960s when the sector contributed over 50% of the national GDP (World Bank, 2015, as cited in Neilson, 2016). Since then, agriculture's share of GDP has steadily declined (Figure 1), as has primary employment in agriculture (Figure 2). By March 2022, only 27.97% of the working population aged 15 years and older were primarily employed in the agriculture, forestry, and fishery sectors (BPS, 2024c), reflecting the country's ongoing economic diversification. Given these trends, the idea of Indonesia as an agrarian nation warrants reconsideration. As Indonesia's economy diversifies and urbanisation accelerates, is farming still a way of life for the Indonesian nation?

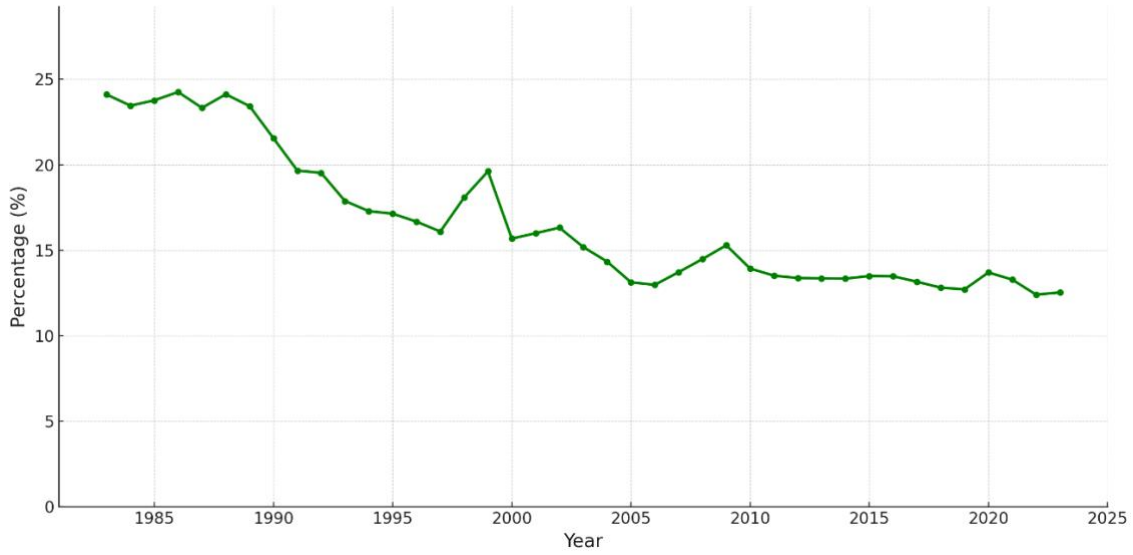

Figure 1: Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added (% of GDP) – Indonesia. Source: World Bank 2024

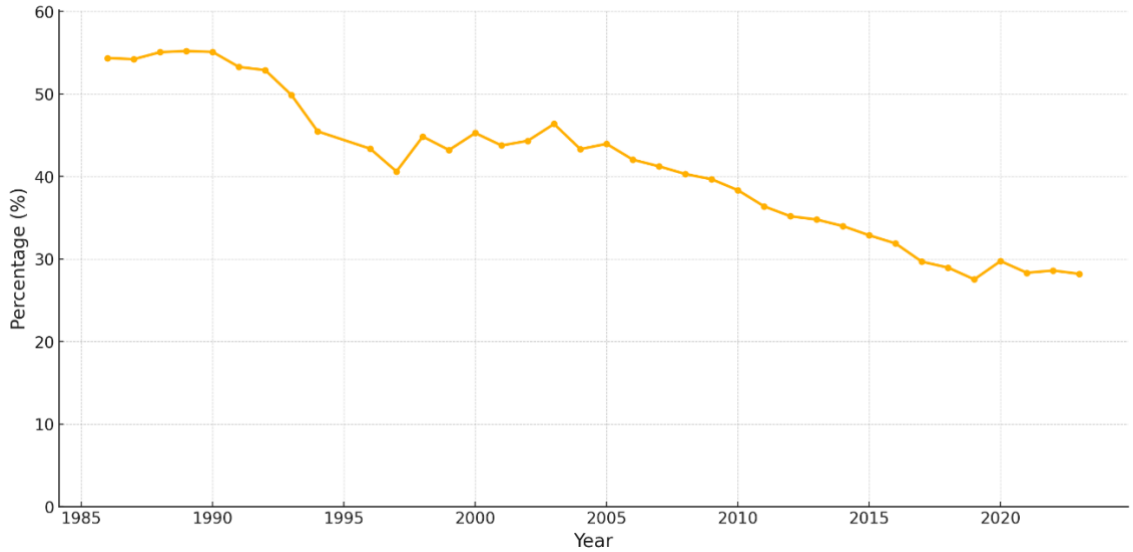

Figure 2: Percentage of People Aged 15 and Over primarily Employed in Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (1986–2023). Source: BPS 2024b

While agriculture may no longer dominate the national economy, its significance, particularly in rural areas, remains substantial. The sector continues to play a crucial role in food security, rural employment, and cultural identity. The importance of agriculture also encompasses social, cultural, and environmental dimensions that statistics alone cannot capture. Indeed, smallholder farmers are a remarkably persistent category in Indonesia, a phenomenon observed across Southeast Asian countries (Gregorio, 2021; Neilson, 2016; Peluso, 2017; Rigg, 2020; Thompson et al., 2019). Of the 28 million agricultural households recorded during the 2023 Agricultural Census, a striking 62% were classified as *Petani Gurem*, meaning that they manage less than 0.5 hectares of land (BPS, 2023c). Despite the challenges inherent in operating on such limited land and amid broader economic shifts, these smallholder farmers demonstrate remarkable resilience in maintaining land access and engaging in agriculture.

Across Southeast Asia, Rigg (2020) observed that rural households often retain their land even when it's insufficient for livelihood needs, alternative jobs exist, agriculture is no longer a major activity in their areas, and when farming is increasingly viewed as low-status work. This persistence partly reflects the cultural significance of farming for rural people, where it represents not just a livelihood but also embodies their sense of belonging, cultural heritage, and social identity. While younger generations increasingly seek off-farm employment and urban opportunities, they often maintain strong emotional and economic ties to their rural origins. This connection manifests in patterns of livelihood diversification that preserve links to farming parents, ancestral lands, and agricultural activities as components of identity and social security (Huijsmans, 2016; Naafs & White, 2012; Rigg, 2019; Rigg et al., 2016; White, 2012).

Neilson (2016) observed that even as Indonesians prioritise non-agricultural income for wealth accumulation and improved quality of life, they still view agriculture as a crucial backup livelihood strategy. Neilson (2025) described this tendency as "fortress farming": a rural livelihood strategy where agricultural land and activities are preserved not primarily for profit maximisation or commercial expansion but as a form of social security and cultural continuity. Households invest minimally in farming while directing their household resources toward non-agricultural pursuits, yet they carefully maintain their agricultural base as a 'fortress' against economic uncertainty.

Remittances from family members who have migrated to urban areas often play a significant role in sustaining and transforming agriculture practices (Peluso & Purwanto, 2018; Rigg et

al., 2016; White, 2022). These remittances sometimes allow landless and poor rural households to invest in agriculture, improving their overall well-being (Kelly, 2011; Peluso & Purwanto, 2018). This flow of capital from the non-farm income becomes another critical factor contributing to the persistence of smallholder farming, as it continues to provide essential financial support for agricultural activities, even as rural economies evolve. The idea of Indonesia as an agrarian nation may no longer be entirely accurate, but smallholders' persistence and their adaptive strategies suggest that agriculture remains a cornerstone of rural livelihoods and identity, as well as a crucial safety net within an increasingly diversified rural economy.

2.3.2. Transformation in Rural Java

Rural transformation in Java follows patterns seen across Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Java is strategically important and has been subjected to various government programs and policies because of its exceptionally high population density and the location of the nation's capital, Jakarta. Over half of Indonesia's population of 270 million (at the most recent population Census in 2020) lives on this relatively small island, and it has a long history of intensive rice cultivation and deep integration into colonial and post-colonial (globalised) economic systems. During the 1950s and 1960s, Java was the focus for the land reform movement (Lucas & Waren, 2013; Soemarjan, 1962; Sutiyo & Maharjan, 2017). Although land reform was limited, the program sparked increased political tension in some regions, particularly between landowners and landless or land-poor farmers (Huizer, 1972), brought crucial attention to land inequality, and set the stage for future agrarian debates (Utrecht, 1969).

Under the Suharto regime, Java once again was the focus of the Green Revolution of the 1970s and 1980s, which introduced new seed varieties, modern farming techniques, and improved irrigation systems, significantly boosting agricultural productivity (Sutiyo & Maharjan, 2017; Wie, 2000). These innovations largely replaced traditional farming methods with more intensive, input-dependent practices, which were enforced through centralised government policies. This shift not only transformed farming practices but also altered labour requirements and had significant environmental impacts (Darmawan et al., 2006; Hart,1986; White & Wiradi, 1989). For example, the adoption of new technologies, such as mechanical threshers and tractors, reduced labour requirements for certain tasks. This particularly affected landless labourers and women in Java, who traditionally performed tasks like hand-threshing (Collier et al., 1973).

In *Power, Labor, and Livelihood: Processes of Change in Rural Java,* Gillian Hart (1986) documented how the New Order regime's agricultural modernisation policies reshaped rural power structures. Her research in 1975-76 revealed that large landowners emerged as favoured state clients who consolidated their control over labour through exclusive arrangements and credit-tied sharecropping. When Hart (2004)[7] later revisited her research sites and observed significant shifts in Java's rural areas, villages had transformed from agricultural communities with elaborate internal labour control mechanisms to ones more integrated with industrial and urban economies, agricultural wages had risen, and traditional patron-client relationships had weakened as village elites lost their ability to control labour through debt and preferential access to work.

As in much of Southeast Asia, rural Java has experienced a significant shift away from agriculture as the primary household income source. Since the mid-20th century, the proportion of rural households solely reliant on farming has declined significantly, with recent reports showing that in Java, 55.33% of agricultural households earn income from non-agricultural activities, and 30.48% of agricultural household heads[8] report their primary occupation as being outside of agriculture (BPS, 2018). Many rural Javanese now engage in diverse income-generating activities, combining small-scale farming with non-farm work, often involving migration to urban areas (Nooteboom, 2019; White, 2018).

Following the fall of Suharto, efforts to decentralise development were introduced through Community Driven Development (CDD) projects, which aimed to empower local communities by giving them more authority in decision-making and resource allocation (Guggenheim et al., 2004; Sutiyo & Maharjan, 2017). One notable example of a CDD project was the *Kecamatan* Development Program (KDP), which allowed villagers to propose and implement their own small-scale infrastructure projects, resulting in the construction of numerous rural roads, bridges, and irrigation systems (Guggenheim et al., 2004). In her 2004 article, Hart, however, observed that the state faced a dilemma between sustaining an increasingly unsustainable system of political patronage and responding to mounting demands for more equitable rural development. After 2014, the Village Fund (*Dana Desa*) program continued this CDD approach by allocating significant funds directly to villages, similarly allowing greater

[7] Hart produced an article in 2004 titled *Power, Labor, and Livelihood: Processes of Change in Rural Java: Notes and Reflections on a Village Revisited* in addition to her research in 1986

[8] Indonesia Marriage Law Number 1 of 1974, Article 31, Clause 3 states that "The husband is the head of the family, and the wife is the homemaker."

community control over development planning and implementation (Sutiyo & Maharjan, 2017; Watts et al., 2019).

Decentralisation initiatives also sought to address social inequalities, including gender issues. While village funds can be allocated for women's empowerment programs, studies reveal that these regulations primarily focus on addressing women's practical needs, such as health and economic welfare, rather than confronting deeper structural issues that could transform traditional gender relations (Kushandajani & Alfirdaus, 2019; Syukri, 2021). Despite Law No. 6/2014 formally recognising gender equality and mandating women's representation in village governance, research indicates limited success in meaningfully changing gender dynamics at the local level (Syukri, 2021). Multiple studies demonstrate that women's participation in community decision-making processes remains constrained (Akter et al., 2017; Kushandajani & Alfirdaus, 2019; Syukri, 2021), highlighting the persistent challenges in achieving gender equality in rural development.

2.4. Gender Dynamics in Rural Indonesia

In recent years, there has been a marked increase in studies exploring gender dynamics, cultural transitions, and behavioural changes within rural contexts (Doss et al., 2018). The historical overview of rural Java's transformation—from land reform policies to the Green Revolution and recent community-driven development initiatives—has hinted at the gendered nature of these changes. The following section undertakes a more focused analysis of how gender roles and relations shape and are shaped by rural transformation processes, including women's roles in development.

2.4.1. State Policy and Gender Issues in Indonesia

Scholars have documented how gender issues in Indonesia reflect state policies, religious interpretations, and cultural traditions that have evolved throughout the nation's history (Blackwood, 2007; Brenner, 1998; Robinson, 2009; Sullivan, 1994). Indonesian women have long faced various challenges related to equality, leading to diverse responses from both government entities and non-governmental organisations.

Muhadjir Darwin (2004), in his paper *Gerakan Perempuan di Indonesia dari Masa ke Masa* (The Women's Movement in Indonesia Through the Ages), highlights women's organisations that have existed in Indonesia since the colonial era were initially driven by the idea of women's emancipation. A pivotal moment came in 1928 when the women's congress in Yogyakarta

brought together various women's groups to address issues such as access to education, the conditions of orphans and widows, child and forced marriages, women's voting rights, and the reform of Islamic marriage laws that disadvantaged women. This congress led to the formation of the Indonesian Women's Association (*Perikatan Perkumpulan Perempuan Indonesia*, PPPI), marking a critical step toward unifying Indonesian women's advocacy efforts.

Darwin mentioned that although in the early independence period under Sukarno, women gained more political recognition, including voting and parliamentary representation, they experienced different challenges. A key example was the failure to abolish polygamy practices, which often reduced wives' financial support, diminished their status within their households, and had lasting implications for women's legal status within Indonesian families (Blackburn, 2004; Nurhidayatuloh et al., 2018; Robinson, 2009), certainly not helped by Sukarno who, himself, practised polygamy. This period was also marked by ideological tensions between different women's movements. *Gerakan Wanita Indonesia* (Gerwani, Indonesian Women's Movement),[9] aligned with the PKI, pushed for radical reforms like land reform and women's economic independence (Wieringa, 2002), while more conservative organisations sought to improve women's status within existing social structures (Blackburn, 2004). Under the New Order regime, leftist women's movements were suppressed and state-sponsored organisations were promoted (Robinson, 2009; Suryakusuma, 2011).

During the Suharto era, new regulations were introduced, such as restricting polygamy for government officials and establishing the Ministry of Women's Affairs aimed to address gender issues (Darwin, 2004). The Ministry of Women's Affairs intended to promote women's roles in development and empowerment and led to the establishment of women's studies centres across Indonesia. However, this ministry became more of a symbolic gesture with the lack of genuine support for women's rights in the public sphere. State-sponsored women's organisations, on the surface, appeared to support women's empowerment. Yet, as other scholars have noted (Brenner, 1998; Robinson, 2009; and Suryakusuma, 2011), they often served as tools to reinforce women's subordination and uphold male dominance rather than genuinely advancing gender equality.

For instance, the New Order reinforced and institutionalised the conservative interpretations of gender roles through the concept of *kodrat* or God's given nature[10] (Brenner, 1998; Robinson,

[9] Gerwani was formed on 4 June 1950

[10] The Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (2024) defines *"kodrat"* as "the power of God; law (nature); original nature; innate nature, meaning what is given by God to human beings."

2009; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). Some scholars mentioned that *kodrat* is derived from the Arabic word *qudrah*, meaning power, position, and provisions, signifying the ability to act within appropriate bounds (Dewi, 2012; Mungawanah, 2022). Others (Syukroni, 2018) suggest it originates from *qadar*, which refers to *takdir* (destiny or divine decree). *Kodrat* in the Indonesian context has evolved to encompass a set of beliefs about divinely ordained natures and destinies, including the biological distinctions between men and women (Brenner, 1998; Robinson, 2009). These distinctions have been used to justify differentiated social roles, where physiological differences are interpreted as naturally leading to separate responsibilities for each gender (Brenner, 1998; Dewi, 2012; Mungawanah, 2022; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). The adaptation of *kodrat* from Islamic teachings illustrates how religious interpretations contributed to gender ideologies in Indonesia, later reinforced and formalised through state policies. The New Order regime developed specific ideological frameworks defining gender roles, emphasising that *kodrat wanita* (women's nature) primarily encompassed motherhood and wifehood, while men were assigned leadership roles and tasks requiring physical strength (Brenner, 1998; Dewi, 2012). This doctrine was formalised through the *Panca Dharma Wanita* (Five Duties of Women) ideology, formally introduced in 1983, which explicitly defined women's roles as: 1) loyal partners to their husbands, 2) procreators for the nation, 3) educators of children, 4) secondary income earners, and 5) citizens of Indonesia (Robinson, 2009; Suryakusuma, 2011; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012).

Throughout the New Order, these doctrines were systematically disseminated through government programs, public service announcements, and particularly the *Pemberdayaan dan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* (PKK, Family Welfare Movement) (Brenner, 1998; Robinson, 2009). The PKK, established as a national women's organisation in 1972, organised women at the village level into groups focused on domestic activities like cooking, childcare, and household management (Brenner, 1998; Robinson, 2009). While these programs claimed to empower women, Brenner (1998) documented that PKK programs focused on domestic skills training and family welfare rather than women's political or economic empowerment. Sullivan's (1994) fieldwork in Java documented how women spent significant unpaid time on PKK activities while having minimal influence in actual community decision-making. The government also promoted policies that required wives of civil servants to join *Dharma Wanita* (effectively a "wives' organisation"), emphasising their supportive roles in their husbands' careers rather than pursuing their own. Suryakusuma's (1996) influential concept of state *ibuism* (motherism),

later developed in her 2011 publication[11], demonstrated how state ideology during the New Order effectively constrained women's identities to domestic spheres while minimising recognition of their broader economic and political agency. Government programs, such us PKK, increased women's workload by adding organisational duties to their existing domestic responsibilities (Suryakusuma, 2011) and often reinforced women's subordinate status by emphasising their roles as supporters rather than leaders (Blackwood, 2007).

Robinson's (2009) book, *Gender, Islam and Democracy in Indonesia,* described the transition from the New Order to the *Reformasi* era, noting that the 1999 election was the first election in which women's issues were actively discussed during a campaign. Female candidates from all three major political parties advocated for increased women's participation in development programs to support gender equity. By the end of the New Order, gender equality had become a central political demand driving calls for democratic reform (Bexley et al., 2023). *Reformasi* was also notable as Megawati Sukarnoputri became Indonesia's first female president in 2001. This development was initially controversial, as some Islamic politicians argued that religious teachings forbid women from assuming leadership roles (Darwin, 2004), demonstrating the pervasive influence of religion on various aspects of Indonesian life, including politics. Despite legislative progress, such as introducing a 30% legislative quota in 2003 aimed at increasing women's representation in parliament, achieving this quota and other outcomes has proven challenging due to the influence of cultural and religious interpretations on society (Darwin, 2004).

Indonesia's democratisation process opened new pathways for advancing women's rights. The establishment of the National Commission on Violence Against Women (*Komnas Perempuan*) in 1998 intended to address gender-based violence, and it has since played a crucial role in advocating for women's safety and rights (Bexley et al., 2023; Komnas Perempuan, 2020; Robinson, 2009). Legislative progress during the *Reformasi* period included introducing the Law on eliminating domestic violence and labour protection, which provides 13 weeks of employer-funded maternity leave (Bexley et al., 2023; Robinson, 2009; Robinson, 2023). Gender mainstreaming was formally integrated into development planning from 2007, and social protection systems gradually evolved to include women-specific programs, notably the Family Hope Program (*Program Keluarga Harapan*), which positions mothers as recipients of conditional cash transfers (Bexley et al., 2023; Budianto, 2023). However, critics (Budianto,

[11] Originally written as a master's thesis at the Institute of Social Sciences in The Hague, Netherlands, and later published in 1988.

2023) argue that these approaches instrumentalise women as tools for family welfare rather than supporting individual empowerment. Conditional cash transfers, for instance, require mothers to ensure children's school attendance and health check-ups, adding to women's care responsibilities.

Even though the *Reformasi* era has brought legislative progress and increased recognition of women's rights at the national level (Darwin, 2004; Robinson, 2018), the convergence of state-imposed gender ideologies, religious beliefs, and local cultural norms still limit women's opportunities (Hart, 1986, 2004; Nooteboom, 2019; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). Religious influences, particularly Islam, continue to shape gender norms in both the public and domestic spheres in Indonesia. While Indigenous belief systems often recognised women's economic and social roles, the growing influence of Islamic interpretations has contributed to more conservative gender ideologies (Brenner, 2011; Robinson, 2009). Contemporary Islamic discourse in Indonesia—though this interpretation is debated among Muslim scholars (e.g. Burhani, 2013; van Doorn-Harder, 2006) —often emphasises complementary but hierarchical gender roles, with men positioned as family leaders and women as their supporters, idealised as devoted wives and good mothers (Blackwood, 2007; Robinson, 2009). The key point being that despite formal policy advances, the persistence of these interconnected ideological frameworks continues to constrain women's practical access to economic opportunities, decision-making authority, and social mobility, creating a gap between legislative rights and lived realities that shapes how women experience rural transformation processes.

A recent volume in the Indonesian Update Series, *Gender Equality and Diversity in Indonesia* (Bexley et al., 2023), highlights that religious influence remains a persistent and, at times, challenging factor in advancing gender equality. Contributors document how traditional gender ideologies continue to limit women's economic participation (Dong & Merdikawati, 2023; Kusumawardhani, 2023; Nisa, 2023; Robinson, 2023; Sigiro, 2023), particularly after marriage and motherhood (Dong & Merdikawati, 2023). These constraints stem from conservative views on marriage, gender stereotypes, and religious norms (Bexley et al., 2023; Budianto, 2023; Dong & Merdikawati, 2023; Robinson, 2023). Together, these cultural and religious factors pose significant obstacles to gender-responsive policy reform.

2.4.2. Culture and Gender Equality in Rural Java

Gender roles are defined and practised in diverse ways across the Indonesian archipelago, as national policies intersect with local customs and religious beliefs. Diverse cultural heritages,

differing interpretations of religion, and varying adherence to state gender ideologies produce distinct gender relations. In Java, gender dynamics reflect a mix of Javanese cultural philosophy, Islamic teachings, and state influence (Brenner, 2011; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). Rural transformation processes further reshape gender relations in rural Java by impacting women's opportunities for education, employment, and leadership roles. However, the pace and extent of change in gender relations are significantly constrained by deeply rooted cultural norms that persist despite broader socioeconomic transformation (Akter et al., 2017; Bennet, 2005; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). From Geertz's work in Java during the 1960s and Brenner's studies in the 1990s to later research Tickamyer and Kusujiarti (2012), religious values have been consistently found to fundamentally structure Java gender roles and social relations.

Persistent cultural norms manifest in many ways, including women's limited access to resources and restricted participation in decision-making processes (FAO, 2010; Kosec et al., 2020). Even as women gain access to formal employment in Java's growing manufacturing sector, their participation remains conditional on continuing to fulfil traditional domestic roles (Nooteboom, 2019). While improved transportation and communication infrastructure enable more women to pursue off-farm work, cultural expectations often require them to obtain permission from male family members and prioritise household responsibilities (Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). Cultural frameworks grounded in traditional gender ideologies are reflected in commonly used terms and concepts to describe gender relations and roles. The state's historical emphasis on *kodrat wanita* and *Panca Dharma Wanita* found fertile ground in rural Java's traditional social structures.

The politicised notion of women as companions to their husbands reflected elite Javanese gender values where wives are still known as *konco wingking*[12] or "background companions" (Robinson, 2009). When Javanese women get married and become wives, they are expected to be partners with their husbands (*konco*) and stand behind them (*wingking*) (Mawaddah et al., 2021), placing wives in a secondary position to their husbands and emphasising domesticity. This cultural positioning is also further reinforced by the persistent ideology of women's roles in the household, such as *macak, manak, masak* (dressing up, bearing children, cooking), which

[12] The word *konco*"s literal meaning is friend or partner while *win*king means in the back or behind. The term *konco wingking* can be interpreted as a friend who stays in the back, a friend behind or a companion in the background.

continues to influence rural Javanese society[13] (Mawaddah et al., 2021; Pirus & Nurahamawati, 2020). Contrary to these apparent cultural constraints, Geertz (1961) argued that historically, women's position in Javanese society had been strong. Women had access to a wide range of occupations, including minor farm labour, petty trade, wholesale buying and selling, small manufacturing, domestic service, and teaching. They were also able to own farmland and oversee its cultivation. Geertz (1961), like Tickamyer and Kusujiarti (2012), documented how Javanese women fulfilled multiple vital roles in society with considerable economic autonomy.

This autonomy and societal influence appear paradoxical when contrasted with women's limited authority under traditional gender hierarchies. Tickamyer and Kusujiarti (2012) help explain this apparent contradiction through their analysis of how Javanese society historically managed tensions between women's economic participation and social subordination. They draw on Sullivan's (1994) "Master and Manager" concept, which, though developed from urban studies, provides insights applicable to rural communities. Sullivan demonstrated that while Javanese men maintained formal authority as household "masters," women exercised significant practical power as "managers," controlling daily operations and resources. This arrangement allowed women considerable economic agency while preserving patriarchal social structures through a system of complementary but hierarchical gender roles.

The impact of cultural norms extends beyond the domestic sphere. The gendered division of labour in rural Java, for instance, is reflected in the division of agricultural tasks, with women typically concentrated in supportive roles. It has been reported (van Nederveen Meerkerk, 2023) that the colonial era saw increased women's participation in agriculture due to men's forced involvement in other development projects. During the Green Revolution, the introduction of new technologies and mechanisation then had detrimental effects on women's agricultural employment (Berninghausen and Kerstan, 1992; Collier et al., 1974). These technological innovations, rather than promoting gender equality, often reinforced traditional hierarchies, with control of new technologies remaining largely in men's hands as the head of the household (Hadiz & Eddyono, 2005; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012).

Hart (1986) observed that this impact was especially pronounced in post-harvest operations, where mechanisation displaced female labour from traditional tasks like hand-threshing,

[13] While Java is home to several ethnic groups, including the Sundanese in West Java and Betawi around Jakarta, these terms and cultural practices are predominantly found in areas where Javanese culture maintains its strongest influence, particularly in Central Java, Yogyakarta and East Java regions. The specific characteristics of the Javanese culture will be explored in detail in the following chapters.

forcing women, especially from landless households, to seek low-wage work outside agriculture. Men dominated tasks like seedbed preparation, land preparation, water control, fertilising, and pesticide application, while women were assigned to tasks such as transplanting, weeding and some participation in harvesting, albeit at lower wages than men. Consequently, women's agricultural work became more seasonally concentrated, and their wages remained consistently lower than men's, subject to wider seasonal variations. This gendered division of agricultural labour persists in contemporary rural Java: recent research by Akter et al. (2017) shows that traditional gender-based task assignments in Java remain largely unchanged. Women also continue to bear the responsibility for preparing and delivering food to hired labourers, a task that further adds to their already substantial domestic workload. Despite the essential nature of these contributions to agricultural production, the work is typically undervalued, classified merely as an extension of household management tasks traditionally assigned to women.

These agricultural labour patterns suggest that women's significant contributions through their triple roles have not necessarily translated into greater autonomy or equality. While women typically manage household finances and make decisions about daily expenditures and savings, their influence rarely extends to farm-level and broader community-level decision-making processes (Akter et al., 2017; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). The implementation of the Village Law of 2014, which mandates women's participation in village governance bodies, has failed to overcome these deeply rooted cultural barriers (Akter et al., 2017; Susilowati & Ismoyo, 2019; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). Women's economic opportunities are also constrained: they often struggle with limited access to formal credit and resources (Akter et al., 2017), are consistently pressured to prioritise their domestic responsibilities over career advancement and face the persistence of gender-based wage disparities (Hart, 2004; Nooteboom, 2019; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). Recent research by Kusumawardhani (2023) mentioned that, even with the advent of new technologies like the internet, women in Indonesia face significant constraints on their time to learn and adapt due to the demands of domestic responsibilities and unpaid caregiving work.

Nooteboom (2019) reveals further tensions between economic transformation and persistent cultural norms in rural Java: while economic diversification intensified labour migration, with more women engaging in non-agricultural sectors, traditional cultural expectations continue to limit their choices and economic mobility, particularly after marriage. Nooteboom found that only a few women in his study were able to work independently after marriage if they had

children, despite many women achieving higher educational levels than men. Young women who previously held jobs in urban areas often feel compelled to return to their villages after becoming mothers, driven by an unspoken cultural expectation. Upon their return, they assume greater domestic responsibilities, such as child-rearing, managing household duties, working small farms, and caring for both their own and their husband's parents.

These patterns demonstrate that despite rural changes in Java and some progress in women's rights in Indonesia, cultural constraints stemming from traditional norms, religious interpretations, and state-sponsored doctrine continue to shape multiple aspects of women's lives in rural Java, affecting women's decision-making power within households, their autonomy in personal choices, and their participation in community governance. Even when women achieve higher education levels, they often face pressure to prioritise family obligations over professional growth. The persistence of traditional family values that position women in a supportive role considerably limits their opportunities and adds burdens. The long-lasting influence of these doctrines continues to shape Indonesia's gender relations today**.**

2.5. Research Gaps and Directions

As across Southeast Asia more broadly, rural transformation in Indonesia extends well beyond agricultural change. Economic diversification, technological advancement, and evolving rural-urban linkages drive this transformation while fundamentally reshaping social structures, cultural frameworks, and gender relations throughout the region. Rural Java presents a case study of communities undergoing rapid social and economic transformation while preserving deep-rooted cultural practices and traditions. As households adapt their livelihood strategies to navigate rural change, they must reconcile economic necessities with deeply embedded cultural values and social expectations.

Rural Java exemplifies the dynamics of transformation occurring across Southeast Asia, where economic diversification proceeds alongside the persistence of traditional social structures. While Javanese villages are experiencing economic diversification and gradually shifting away from purely agrarian livelihoods, smallholder farming remains prevalent, and traditional gender roles demonstrate resilience despite broader livelihood transitions. This creates a paradoxical situation: women's economic roles have expanded significantly as households pursue diverse livelihood strategies, yet their opportunities to benefit from rural development remain constrained by intersecting ideological frameworks—state-imposed gender doctrines,

conservative religious interpretations, and deep-rooted cultural expectations—that continue to position women primarily within domestic and supportive roles rather than as autonomous economic actors.

Substantial research exists on gender dynamics in rural Java and broader Southeast Asia. Influential studies by Geertz (1961), Hart (1986, 2004), Sullivan (1994), Brenner (1998), and more recently Tickamyer and Kusujiarti (2012) and Nooteboom (2019) have documented women's economic roles, cultural constraints, and changing participation in rural economies. Regional studies across Southeast Asia have similarly examined how rural transformation affects women's livelihoods, migration patterns, and household dynamics (Resurreccion & Elmhirst, 2008; Rigg et al., 2016; Quisumbing et al., 2014). Building on this foundation, a gap still exists to deepen understanding of women's lived experiences during rural transformation in several key areas.

First, while existing research has effectively documented structural changes in women's economic participation and formal representation, exploring how women themselves interpret and navigate evolving gender expectations amid transformation processes is important because it reveals the agency and strategic thinking that women employ when facing simultaneously expanding opportunities and persistent constraints.

Second, while scholars acknowledge that culture is dynamic, examining how norms are actively reproduced, contested, and transformed through daily practices is crucial because it moves beyond static analyses of cultural "barriers" to reveal how women participate in cultural change even as they navigate societal expectations. This perspective demonstrates how individual livelihood decisions collectively contribute to broader shifts in gender norms, showing women as cultural actors rather than passive objects of cultural constraints.

Third, while existing frameworks have examined productive and reproductive domains separately, analysing how women integrate multiple responsibilities during rural transformation is essential because it captures the holistic nature of women's livelihood strategies. This integrated approach reveals how women's reproductive work, including care responsibilities and cultural reproduction, both shapes and is shaped by their productive activities, demonstrating how households adapt to transformation through coordinated rather than compartmentalised responses.

Emerging from this theoretical framework and the identified gaps, this research examines how rural transformation processes affect gender dynamics and how Javanese women experience

these changes. I explore the dynamic relationship between structural change and women's agency, investigating how women interpret evolving opportunities and constraints while developing strategies to navigate changing gender expectations, centering on women's subjective experiences of change.

By focusing on Javanese women's lived experiences and adaptive strategies, this research contributes to academic understanding by providing insights into the micro-level processes through which broader transformations unfold in culturally specific contexts. It demonstrates how individual agency operates within particular structural and cultural constraints, like in rural Java, and how women's daily choices collectively influence the trajectory of rural change. While previous studies have documented changes in women's economic participation and formal representation, this research explores how rural women themselves interpret, experience and navigate evolving gender dynamics amid broader processes of rural change. This perspective is crucial for understanding both the challenges women face and the sophisticated strategies they develop to pursue their aspirations while meeting societal expectations.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

This thesis seeks to describe the changing role of women in rural Java under conditions of contemporary agrarian change by conducting ethnographic research in two villages in Wonogiri, Central Java. By conducting a case study of gender dynamics in Wonogiri, this research seeks to understand the dominant processes of agrarian change in Central Java, how rural livelihoods are changing, what this means for women's roles, and how Javanese women experience these changes. The applicability of the ethnographic case study methods for this research will be discussed in this chapter by explaining the data collection process, research procedures, and ethical concerns. The research focuses on the lives of women but also investigates both women and men to understand how gender roles are constructed and reproduced within this Javanese community.

3.1. Ethnographic Case Study Approach

Understanding gender dynamics means understanding interactions and relationships among humans based on gender, including changing roles and how these are affected by sociocultural changes. The study of gender dynamics in rural Java implicates the complexity of the culture of its people, which requires an understanding of social behaviours, beliefs, and perspectives, best achieved using an ethnographic approach that allows researchers to provide a thorough interpretation of the culture they are studying (Geertz, 2000).

Ethnography is generally used to describe a qualitative research approach that delves into the intricacies of a specific group, emphasising an in-depth understanding of the social and cultural practices governing everyday life within that context, and the patterns of behaviour, ideas, and beliefs of that group (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007; Barbour, 2010; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Spradley, 1980). People do not always verbally express what they really believe and their deeply-held perspectives. Sometimes, to understand these deeper convictions, researchers need to interpret their actions, gestures, behaviour in daily activities, and reactions to particular issues. The ethnographic approach allows researchers to focus on learning from participants. Tools include interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) that allow participants to verbally express their perspectives and extend to participant observation, where insights into community and individual attitudes are generated through observations of behaviour and

actions. This data can be recorded through field notes, photography, reflexive notes, memos, and document analysis.

According to Ó Rian (2009), ethnography frequently has a case study characteristic. An ethnographic case study (i.e. a case study that employs an ethnographic method) typically requires long-duration data collection (Armstrong et al., 2019; Schwandt & Gates, 2018). Using the case study as a research approach allows researchers to look out for what is common and particular about the case (Hyett & & Dickson-Swift, 2014). Many scholars consider the case study approach to intersect with qualitative research (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Hay and Cope, 2021). As stated by Stake (2010), qualitative research is appropriate when the study aims to explain a phenomenon by relying on the perception of a person's experience in a given situation. This is particularly relevant to my research since I rely on participants' perceptions and opinions on how the community experiences rural change and what this means for gender dynamics. However, although most case study research is qualitative, I apply a mixed-method approach that also incorporates some quantitative data obtained from secondary sources. In addition to employing multiple research methods such as participant observation, photovoice, village history discussions, life history interviews, in-depth interviews, and short interviews, I also draw upon secondary and archival data sources (see section 3.4-3.5). This approach enables me to explore the case through detailed and in-depth data collection (as suggested by Creswell, 2013).

3.2. Case Selection

In the last three decades, massive changes have occurred in Java, where about 152 million people, or 56.10 % of Indonesia's population, lived in 2020 on a 128,297 km² area (2020 Population Census Results - BPS Indonesia, 2021). Java has the highest population density in Indonesia and is home to the nation's capital, Jakarta. It is here that cities have grown most rapidly and where rural areas have undergone the most thorough transformation process (Handayani, 2013; Mardiansjah et al., 2021; Mulyana, 2014;). Infrastructure development and connectivity between rural and urban areas are well developed in Java, and industrialisation is advanced, attracting labourers from rural areas. Despite these urbanising trends, over 40 million people on Java are still living in rural areas (Table 1; BPS, 2022a), and the island remains a major agricultural producer—including producing 55.43% of the country's rice stocks (BPS, 2024a).

Table 1: Rural Population Census in Java (BPS, 2022a)

Province	Total Population	Rural Population	% Rural
Banten	11,904,562	2,889,464	24.27%
DKI Jakarta	10,576,371	0	0%
West Java	46,497,022	9,611,764	20.67%
Central Java	36,516,035	13,244,975	36.27%
DI Yogyakarta	3,668,719	1,115,723	30.41%
East Java	40,665,696	15,240,702	37.48%
Total Java	**149,828,405**	**42,102,628**	**28.10%**

Of the six provinces in Java (Figure 3), Central Java has the highest percentage of population reduction due to lifetime migration (BPS, 2019). Of the 36 million people living in Central Java in 2022, 36.27% resided in rural areas (Table 1). The Indonesia Labour Force Survey (SAKERNAS, 2024) reported that in 2023, out of the total labour force of 21,069,135 people in Central Java, approximately 46.97% lived in rural areas (BPS Jawa Tengah, 2024). The province has become an important source of migrant workers, from its rural areas to large cities elsewhere in Indonesia and internationally (Central Java Provincial Public Relations official website, 17 September 2018).

Figure 3: Wonogiri District and the Six Provinces of Java: Banten, Special Capital Region Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, Special Region Yogyakarta, and East Java. (Sources: D-maps edited using Canva AI)

Many regencies in Central Java have been supplying migrant workers to other parts of the country, with Wonogiri being historically a significant source of migrant workers (Purnomo, 2009). At a 2022 press conference, a regional government representative reported that

approximately 35% of Wonogiri's registered residents were living and working outside the regency (Solopos, 2022). Many of these are seasonal and circular migrants who maintain strong connections with their home villages while working in urban areas, contributing to high levels of urban-rural connectivity and remittance flows (BPS, 2021b).

The Wonogiri regional economy showed consistent growth before the COVID-19 pandemic, averaging 4.7% annually between 2015-2019. While the pandemic caused a contraction of -0.41% in 2020, the economy began recovering with 3.35% growth in 2021, followed by stronger growth of 5.6% in 2022 and 5.0% in 2023 (BPS 2024). Importantly, manufacturing growth was significant during 2015-2019 (5-year average of 6.8%). While agriculture grew at only 1.9% during that same period, it was a strong-performing sector during the COVID-19 downturn (growing at 4.3% in 2020) before returning to a 3-year average of 1.9% (2021-2023). Manufacturing, meanwhile, recovered to 7.4% growth in 2023, with the number of medium and large manufacturing companies in the regency increasing from 16 in 2016 to 36 in 2023 (BPS 2024). This is the broad-brush context of economic development in Wonogiri regency, where my two village case studies are located.

The selection of the villages for ethnographic study was based on the following criteria:

1. The villages were not classified as wards or urban villages.
2. The land use in the villages was primarily for agriculture (more than 50%).
3. Agriculture was still the most important occupational category in the villages.
4. The villages were within commuting distance to Wonogiri town centre.

The two villages were selected to represent different levels of rurality and accessibility to Wonogiri town, with one village (Kedunggupit) more urbanised than the other (Soco). Kedunggupit, located 15km from Wonogiri town centre with more accessible manufacturing employment and commuting opportunities, represents communities where women have greater access to formal employment that may challenge traditional gender roles. Soco, positioned 30km from the centre with higher agricultural dependence and more limited commuting options, allows examination of how gender dynamics evolve when households rely primarily on circular migration while remaining in agricultural communities. This comparative approach enables analysis of whether proximity to urban centres and diverse economic opportunities create different trajectories for women's roles and decision-making power within rural households.

The selection of villages was based on Wonogiri Regency data from *Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia* (BPS, Central Bureau of Statistics of Indonesia), data available at the village level, and based on discussions with local contacts who assisted this research. According to these local contacts, interviews with government officials, and the Indonesia Migration Survey (2019), migrants from Wonogiri are more likely to choose Greater Jakarta as their destination than other areas in Indonesia. Therefore, data collection was also carried out in Greater Jakarta (Jabodetabek) to track village members working outside Wonogiri as circular migrants.

3.3. Researcher Positionality

3.3.1. Insider and Outsider

A researcher's positionality influences the research process and the way research produces knowledge and presents results. As a researcher, understanding and stating my positionality helps me to be aware of possible biases, perspectives, assumptions, values and beliefs. In this case, I'm trying to understand my position as an insider-outsider of the rural Javanese communities in the study sites, how my background as an individual and researcher, and how my relationship with the participants and the study sites affects the research process.

Bukamal (2022), in her paper on insider-outsider research positionality, explains that profession and educational background could determine research positionality, but other things, such as cultural identity and gender, could also do so. Some see my position in this research as an insider as I was born in one of the villages, have a large extended family there, and visit Wonogiri from time to time. I grew up in Java, fluently speak the language, have conducted several projects involving people in rural Java and witnessed the rural changes with my own eyes. However, having relatives there and growing up in Central Java surrounded by Javanese culture does not necessarily mean the community thinks I am an absolute insider.

As close as I am to the culture, there are still some limits on getting involved with the community in Wonogiri villages because I am a non-Muslim woman, and I have never really lived there to be counted as a local. As Jeremy Menchik (2016) has suggested, religion affects almost every aspect of Indonesian life, and Javanese culture is strongly influenced by Islamic culture. As a non-Muslim, I was an outsider in many community activities and discussions. Many times, during fieldwork, people assumed I understood Islamic culture during the conversation, and sometimes I was asked if I was Muslim before they continued the conversation or spoke on some topics. The same situation also happened when it comes to

gender identity. On many occasions, I found some men were afraid to offend me as a woman when they bluntly shared their opinions related to gender because of their feeling that I am not part of the "men's group". Introducing myself as a researcher added a certain distance (based on social status) from the people in the villages.

How people view themselves as members of particular social groups influences their thoughts and actions toward both their own group and other groups (Leaper, 2011). At times, some community groups saw me as an outsider, while in other situations, they included me as one of their own. Many emotional stories were shared by women, and sometimes they added that I must relate to them since I am a woman growing up in the culture. When I mentioned I was born in Wonogiri and had relatives there, some people changed their tone and shared more stories that they thought I could relate to. I got the impression that most participants have strong emotional ties to their social identity, including their identity as a person from Wonogiri. They became more open to me when they felt we were in the same "group" and shared the same social identity.

Researcher positionality relates to the way participants see researchers as insiders or outsiders, and also the way researchers place themselves. For that reason, the way I feel about my social identity matters to research practice. As a woman growing up in Javanese culture with a connection to Wonogiri, it is impossible to stand as a complete outsider when conducting this research. However, I deliberately maintained some critical distance at times to enable more objective analysis of my observations. I have seen and experienced rural changes, so I'm also trying to contemplate and reflect on that experience. This positionality exposes the research to possible bias; therefore, triangulation is important to lower the risk of bias and maintain reliability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Fusch et al., 2017).

3.3.2. Triangulation

According to Hardwick (2009), one of the most appropriate ways to accomplish reliability and validity when conducting case study research is to use multiple sources of evidence from a multimethod approach that is well-grounded in data triangulation. Triangulation can involve cross-referencing the results obtained by various researchers in a study, employing and aligning multiple theoretical approaches for theory triangulation, and correlating information gathered through various data collection methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Fusch et al., 2017).

This research involved various data collection methods to obtain rich and hopefully reliable data. The same questions were sometimes asked to the same participants in different interviews

with different interviewers; some were asked with different methods—interviews and group discussions, for example. Some stories from participants were checked by asking other participants or their relatives and friends. Data triangulation was conducted by comparing datasets generated from these different methods to validate the results. Data from interviews, FGDs, observation and secondary data were cross-checked. Field notes and memo writing were regularly made throughout the study. Discussions about the findings, data, or notes with the research assistants and supervisor were conducted regularly. These reflective activities also help to minimise bias and aid objectivity throughout the research (Birks & Mills, 2011).

3.4. Research Procedures

Before commencing the fieldwork, approval from the University of Sydney Human Ethics Committee was obtained (Project Number 2022/515). After receiving the ethics approval letter, a formal letter was sent to local administrators to obtain a research permit from the Indonesian government (Permit Number 071/449)[14]. I formally introduced myself, my field assistants, my research topic, and my intention to conduct research with government officials in the subdistrict and village levels.

I recruited Javanese-speaking research assistants to assist with fieldwork, provide insights on certain topics and help address potential bias in data collection. Two male and two female research assistants were selected, not only for gender balance but also to minimise gender bias issues; some participants gave different answers to the same gender-related questions depending on the interviewer's gender. Asking the same questions to the same participants by two different interviewers is also part of data triangulation that helped minimise bias. It also helped to approach and build rapport with specific gender-based groups in the communities and be involved in gender-based activities.

Two of the four assistants were Muslims with a background in Islamic studies, allowing them to participate in religious activities in the villages and helping build rapport with the communities. The two other assistants had backgrounds in information technology and helped coordinate voice, photo, and video recording. All research assistants helped with the logistics for the research, and acted as moderators during Focus Group Discussions, as interviewers for some semi-structured interviews, as note-takers and as transcribers. All research assistants followed ethical procedures and were required to sign a non-disclosure form. Some research

[14] Permit obtained through *Kantor Kesatuan Bangsa dan Politik* (National Unity, Politics, and Community Protection Agency Office), Pemerintah Kabupaten Wonogiri (Wonogiri Regency Government)

participants were also recruited to assist in the fieldwork activities by delivering incentives, arranging meetings, and sometimes moderating the meetings.

To being the research, we had meetings with government officials and initial local contacts and attended community meetings. The government officials and local contacts helped announce recruitment information to their communities during community meetings. Recruitment posters were also placed in the village halls (Appendix B). The information about the research then spread from one to another, and we also received many suggestions from community members to contact certain people who met the criteria in a purposive snowball sampling strategy (Crouse & Lowe, 2018; Longhurst, 2009). Referrals helped the researchers approach potential participants with specific criteria, such as government officials in the related fields or community leaders; it also helped connect with migrants from Wonogiri in Greater Jakarta. The participant information statement sheet and participant consent form (Appendix C) were delivered to all participants prior to the interview or FGD. The researcher also ensured that all the participants involved in this project were over 18 years old and did not demonstrate mental or physical disability. Interviews, FGDs and observations were recorded by notetaking, photo and video taking, and audio recorded, with recorded responses later transcribed and translated.

3.5. Data Collection

For the primary data collection, I conducted short interviews, in-depth interviews, life history interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), village history group discussions, photovoice activities, and participant observation. I visited government offices, private companies and schools in Wonogiri. I spent seven months in ten hamlets across the two villages from early November 2022 until the end of May 2023 for fieldwork. I also visited Greater Jakarta to interview and observe migrants' activities. There were 206 participants (Appendix D) involved in all data collection activities, although some participated in more than one activity; for example, some participants in the photovoice and village history group discussions were also interviewed. Of the total 206 participants, 77 were from the more urbanised village (Kedunggupit), 103 from the more remote village (Soco), and 26 from other villages. The total number of female participants was 108, while the number of male participants was 98.

3.5.1. Interviews

A total of 159 people participated in interviews, comprising 30 participants in in-depth interviews and 12 participants in life-history interviews. Interview participants were local

community members, community leaders, government officials in Wonogiri and migrants from Wonogiri in Greater Jakarta. Participants in Wonogiri were chosen based on their residence in the two villages, their primary source of livelihood, their social role, age, and gender. Their livelihoods varied from farmers, casual workers, factory workers, small to medium entrepreneurs, education and health staff, homemakers, and government staff from various positions from the village to the regency levels. The community leaders who participated in the interviews were religious leaders such as Ustad [15], farmer group leaders, PKK activists, Karang Taruna (youth group) leaders, village and hamlet heads (formally employed by the Regency government), and heads of neighbourhoods. Research participants in Greater Jakarta were migrants from Wonogiri, from construction workers to various kinds of sellers or traders.

The interviews averaged 45 minutes; some interviews took longer or shorter depending on the participant's responses or situations during the interviews. While most interviews were conducted in a single session, some participants provided information across multiple shorter conversations, often while engaged in daily activities like farming or cooking. Since we conducted interviews in a natural setting, sometimes we couldn't avoid other people jumping into the interviews and getting involved in answering the questions. For a deeper understanding women and gender, I developed close relationships with a few women of different ages who were then involved in in-depth interviews and in the life-history interviews. In these cases, repeated interviews were conducted. I also sometimes conducted follow-up interviews on sensitive topics that, in some interview situations, we assumed the participants might not have given their genuine opinion or may have had some bias.

The interview guide (Appendix E) was designed to capture various attitudes and perceptions of the participants towards rural change in Central Java, how rural livelihoods are changing, and what this means for women's roles from the perspectives of both women and men from various backgrounds. The interview guide is also specifically designed to explore the personal experiences of Javanese women when livelihoods in their villages and their gender-based roles are changing. The interviews were semi-structured to allow participants to explore issues they felt were significant and let them explore their perspectives, thoughts, feelings, or beliefs about the research topic (Longhurst, 2009). The interviews began with open-ended questions, starting with a question about participants' stories on rural change in their village, followed by questions about livelihood, gender dynamics in their communities and their opinions about

[15] Ustad (man) or Ustadzah is an Indonesian word absorbed from Arabic and Persian, meaning teacher, and this is specific for Muslim, Islamic or Al-Quran (Holy Bible) teaching.

gender dynamics. There were also many impromptu questions following the participants' answers and follow-up questions to obtain a more detailed and rich understanding of the issues.

The interviews were recorded (audio, video and photos) if participants gave their permission. Most of the time, interviews were conducted with a research assistant to help with notetaking. Memos were also used to capture research thoughts during and after each interview. Each recorded interview was then transcribed with the help of research assistants. The transcripts did not use or mention the actual names of the participants.

3.5.2. Life Histories

The life history interview method was performed for some interviews to collect a series of life histories from older village residents (Figure 4). According to Jackson and Russel (2010), this method is part of a wide range of biographical methods, which include reminiscence and autobiography. This method allowed the researcher to record an individual or participant's biography from the participant's perspective as they evaluate their life experiences. Payne and Payne (2004) described life histories as records of individuals' personal experiences and the connections between them and past events. This type of research is often accomplished through in-depth interviews with individuals about their lives or specific events that occurred during their lifetimes.

Figure 4: An interview with a senior resident, 8 April 2023

I conducted 12 life history interviews with over 60-year-old village residents, five women and seven men. The duration of each interview varied, and more than one interview was conducted for each participant. This method aimed to capture processes of rural change, including livelihood and gender dynamics in the village from the older residents' stories, and investigate both women's and men's perspectives about the changes they've witnessed.

3.5.3. Focus Group Discussions

Many scholars refer to Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as a technique where researchers collect data by gathering a small group of participants to discuss particular issues (Nyumba et al., 2018; Secor, 2009; Cameron, 2005). Since it provides a forum to discuss and debate selected issues, these interactions allow researchers to gather richer data, which contains a range of statements from participants with different perspectives, positions, and relations (Secor, 2009).

In addition to the village history group discussions, two formal focus group discussions were conducted – one in each of the two sub-districts where the case study villages are located. Each discussion involved three students from Vocational schools (*Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan* or SMK) and three from Senior High Public Schools (*Sekolah Menengah Atas* or SMA)[16]. The focus was opinions and experiences from younger generations about current and future rural lives, livelihood and gender roles in two different locations. In addition, we participated in many informal group discussions, mostly during community meetings and social gatherings. These were mostly not recorded, but reflective or daily notes were made after each occasion.

The participant recruitment process for the FGDs started when I asked for suggestions from the communities on how to approach youth in the villages, and the community suggested we go to the high schools nearby. I sent a letter to ask permission, the letter also containing the research information and research permit. I also went to the schools to meet with the teacher in charge and explained the research and FGDs purpose. The schools then announced the participant recruitment information, including the incentive offered for those willing to join the FGD voluntarily. We randomly selected six female and six male students from all registered students who met the age criteria (18+ years old). Each FGD took approximately 60 minutes.

[16] There are two main types of high schools in Wonogiri, vocational school (*Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan* or SMK) and regular high school (*Sekolah Menengah* Atas or SMA)

I moderated the FGDs with research assistants taking notes and photos. The discussions were recorded with all participants' consent and then transcribed and translated.

3.5.4. Village Histories

I conducted village history discussions in the two villages involving 24 elderly residents and community figures or leaders who could share their stories about the history of the villages (Figure 5). Applying village history as a data collection method helped me gain a better understanding of rural change in the study sites. Elsewhere, village archives might help to provide information about village history; however, formal archives were not available. Therefore, oral stories from villagers helped piece together a picture of gender roles and livelihood changes in the villages across time.

According to Given (2008), oral history is often used in qualitative research to elucidate stories or to discuss specific experiences. In the village history interviews, people were asked about important and notable events in the village from the past to the present. Because the stories are based on subjective memories, opinions and perspectives on an event or a series of events from the narrator's perspective, the oral histories are not intended to present a definitive description of events. However, by carrying topics and events into the focus group discussions, I attempted to gather a more comprehensive story of the villages.

Figure 5: Village history group discussion in one of the villages, 7 February 2023

Participant recruitment was assisted by local government officials or village leaders, as well as by snowballing referrals. Men were more commonly recommended and recruited for these discussions. I tried to approach older women to join these discussions, but they politely refused by saying they were not confident enough to be involved in the discussions. Each discussion in each village took approximately 90 minutes, including the break for the provided meals. Compensation for time and transport was provided. I moderated the discussions with logistical support from the research assistants. The discussions were recorded with all participants' consent. The notes from these activities also helped refine interview guides.

3.5.5. Photovoice

Photovoice is a qualitative method used in community-based participatory research to explore social issues by utilising photographs taken and selected by participants (Nykiforuk et al., 2011). By conducting this activity, I tried to understand gender dynamics by picturing the current situation of women in the villages, their experience of change, and exploring what is essential to women in the selected villages. We encouraged participants involved in these activities to use photography to share their stories. Their chosen images reflect reasons, emotions, and experiences. Photovoice helped get a brief and general picture of what is happening to women in the villages through a glimpse of their daily lives. The photos they took helped me to understand what they think is important to them and to tease out opinions that were difficult to discuss directly or even contradictory to statements in interviews.

With the help of women village officials, we announced the recruitment of photovoice participants in the PKK group meetings. The women village officials also assisted us in participant selection and were involved in the photovoice activities. From many PKK members who showed interest, we selected 23 women: 12 women from Kedunggupit and 11 from Soco. Other criteria needed for this activity were access to an appropriate device (mostly camera phones), willingness to operate them to take pictures, and familiarity with picture-taking activities (most women met these criteria). Participants were then asked to attend a briefing session where the project and method were explained, including technical matters and the incentive for their participation.

The guide about the photo-taking activities was prepared before the briefing, and a printed version was provided to participants. Participants were asked to take: pictures to identify and represent issues essential to them; pictures of what they think is necessary for their daily activities as a woman and as an individual; pictures that they believe are related to their role as

a woman in a household and their communities; and pictures reflecting their life aspirations as a woman or individuals and the barriers to achieving them. They were also asked to take photos of things related to or essential for their mothers and grandmothers to see how women's lives in the villages have changed over the last 20 years. We created chat groups to coordinate the photo collection, including further consultation when they needed clarification with the photo-taking guide.

The pictures sent by the participants were then printed and displayed in the group discussion locations (Figure 6). Participants were asked to select a couple of images as a stimulus in group discussions; sometimes, the discussion started with the pictures I selected first. The discussion focused on why the photographs were chosen, what made them meaningful, and what they represented. Other participants were asked about their opinions of pictures sent by another and their comments about other participants' views. Very quickly the discussion became lively, so that participants contributed their opinions about others or added some comments without any prompting. Each discussion took approximately 60 minutes, not including the break for the provided meals. I led discussions with the logistical support of research assistants. Although the discussions were recorded with participant consent and notes were taken, all the responses remain anonymous. The themes and patterns found from these activities informed the interview guides related to gender dynamics in rural communities.

Figure 6: Photovoice activity in one of the villages, 13 February 2023

3.5.6. Participant Observation

During the seven months of fieldwork, I spent time within the communities and working with participants to understand their everyday lived experiences, social practices, values, norms,

relationships, and perceptions. However, the relationship with the people in Wonogiri started long before the fieldwork. Prior to the fieldwork, I approached local contacts and maintained the relationships to build trust among the community members and gain information about social acceptance, local customs, and norms. Although I found no difficulties communicating with the local community members, the assistance of local community members, guidance from village officials and local family connections were essential in guiding me in understanding local customs and preventing any risks.

According to Walsh (2009), when conducting participant observation, the researcher should try to maintain the natural setting of the context but also might inadvertently change the research setting through their participation. My involvement in community activities was vital to gather observational data as naturally as possible and to build rapport with the communities and gain their trust. While staying with the host families, the field assistants and I joined community activities such as PKK gatherings, farmer group meetings, lottery club (regular social gathering) and traditional community events. We participated in many community service activities called *Kerja Bakti* and daily activities such as farming, market selling, and food making.

While engaging in those activities, I was able to observe, take notes, and conduct informal interviews. I was able to observe behaviours and take notes on their comments and conversations. This natural setting helped capture participants' and communities' views expressed through their attitudes that sometimes fit with statements during interviews and sometimes seemed to contradict them. Unlike other qualitative data collection methods that rely on participants' opinions or statements, participant observation examines participants' behaviours, as stated by Walsh (2009, p.77), it is looking for "what people do, rather than only they say or what they say they do".

3.5.7. Secondary Data Collection

Interviews, FGDs, and participant observation were used to collect primary data for the thesis, but secondary data also contributed to my mixed methods approach. Roche (2005) emphasised the importance of reviewing existing literature to understand the context and previous discussions surrounding the research issues. Therefore, secondary sources such as existing literature, statistical data, policy documents, and relevant reports were used to complete the thesis.

Articles, books, and other publications from previous research as well as reports from international organisations such as the World Bank and United Nations agencies related to the research topic were used to identify priority issues and develop research questions. Those background data provided information about rural change, migration, and gender dynamics in Indonesia. Some essential data sets from the Indonesian government, nationally and locally, were used to understand the context of the study site before the data collection fieldwork started—for example, the history of the study sites and their economy, politics, or culture. National level to the regency level reports from Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) and from the National Socioeconomic Survey (Survei Sosial Ekonomi Nasional or Susenas) were also used. Those data sets provided context to the study sites, produced a guideline for the data collection activities and complemented the analysis.

I attempted to obtain data from government departments in Wonogiri regency, sub-district and village levels, such as agriculture departments and village offices. However, it was quite difficult to find valid and reliable statistical data on many specific issues. Data was generally aggregated at the regency level, while data at the sub-district and village levels was often incomplete or contradicted other evidence. For example, the poverty rate in one of the villages reported by the village office differed significantly from what the sub-district government reported. At another time, when I was looking for the data on circular migrant workers still registered as residents of the village, the village data identified just a single household. Based on observation and interviews with many officials and community members, however, it was clear that the actual number was far greater. Many gender-based data, such as the poverty percentage of women in the area or data on land ownership by gender in the village, were also unavailable. As such, I tended to take a cautious approach to the reliability of local secondary data.

3.6. Data Analysis

Following an inductive approach, data analysis started with transcribing all the data from observation and field notes, FGDs, and interviews. Data analysis continued by finding existing patterns and themes and finally drawing conclusions from the findings.

The transcription process started during the fieldwork. During the transcription process, some themes and patterns became evident and so were identified and coded. Coding can prevent the researcher from over-emphasising or missing any issues early in the study and ensure a

thorough analysis of the entire transcripts (Stake, 2010). This strategy was performed to enable me to reflect on the existing data and adjust the questions when needed. Data management was assisted using a qualitative data management and analysis software, NVivo. This software helped categorise the data based on created codes, making it easier to find patterns and themes from the data.

Thematic analysis was used when drawing conclusions from the findings and then presented in narrative form. Narrative form reveals the constructed story of an individual participant from their own perspective, while thematic analysis identifies common themes or patterns that repeatedly appear in the data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Narrative analysis allowed me to capture stories from research participants' perspectives based on their own opinions because it focused on how participants state their views about their experiences and situations (Wiles et al., 2005). Then, thematic analysis was used to identify common patterns and contrast themes between stories.

3.7. Methodological Limitations

While this multi-method approach provided rich data, several limitations should be acknowledged. The seven-month fieldwork period, while substantial, captured only one agricultural cycle. Gender dynamics may vary seasonally with migration patterns. Additionally, as a non-Muslim researcher, my access to certain religious community activities was limited, potentially affecting observations of how Islamic practices intersect with gender roles. The reliance on oral histories for village development trajectories may reflect participants' selective memories rather than comprehensive historical accounts.

Chapter 4: Wonogiri's Geographical Context

Wonogiri's story is one of persistent adaptation between agricultural tradition and modernisation that continues to reshape many rural areas in Indonesia: from its historical roots as part of the Mangkunegaran duchy through the transformative policies of the New Order era to its current position in Indonesia's rapidly changing rural economy. The regency's development has been shaped by its challenging geographical conditions, which influenced farming practices and broader patterns of livelihood diversification, most notably through circular migration. This practice has made Wonogiri renowned throughout Indonesia as the heartland of *Kaum Boro* (circular migrants) (Purnomo & Hasmarini, 2016), and may have slightly higher rates of migration than elsewhere. While agriculture remains an important livelihood activity and contributed about 29% to Wonogiri's regional economy in 2022 (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2023), the region has seen significant growth in other sectors (including manufacturing). This economic diversification, coupled with persistent cultural practices and governance transitions, provides crucial context for understanding how gender relations are being reshaped in contemporary rural Java (Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012).

This chapter outlines Wonogiri's development trajectory to provide a foundation for understanding how rural change shapes gender dynamics. It examines five key contextual aspects: its geographical landscape and environmental challenges; its historical evolution from feudal duchy to modern regency; its experience of state-led rural development; its changing agricultural and economic base; and its cultural practices. The chapter concludes with detailed profiles of the two case study villages (Kedunggupit and Soco) which represent different faces of rural change in contemporary Wonogiri.

4.1. Wonogiri's Geographical Landscape

Kabupaten Wonogiri is a regency in the southeastern part of Central Java Province, covering an area of approximately 182,236 hectares, and is home to approximately 959,490 people (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2019). It is located about 167.9 km from Semarang, the capital city of Central Java, and borders other provinces in Java: East Java and Yogyakarta (Figure 7). The regency consists of 25 subdistricts (*Kecamatan*), 251 villages (*Desa*), and 43 urban villages or

wards (*Kelurahan*), with Wonogiri District serving as the administrative hub of the regency, hosting its regional government offices.

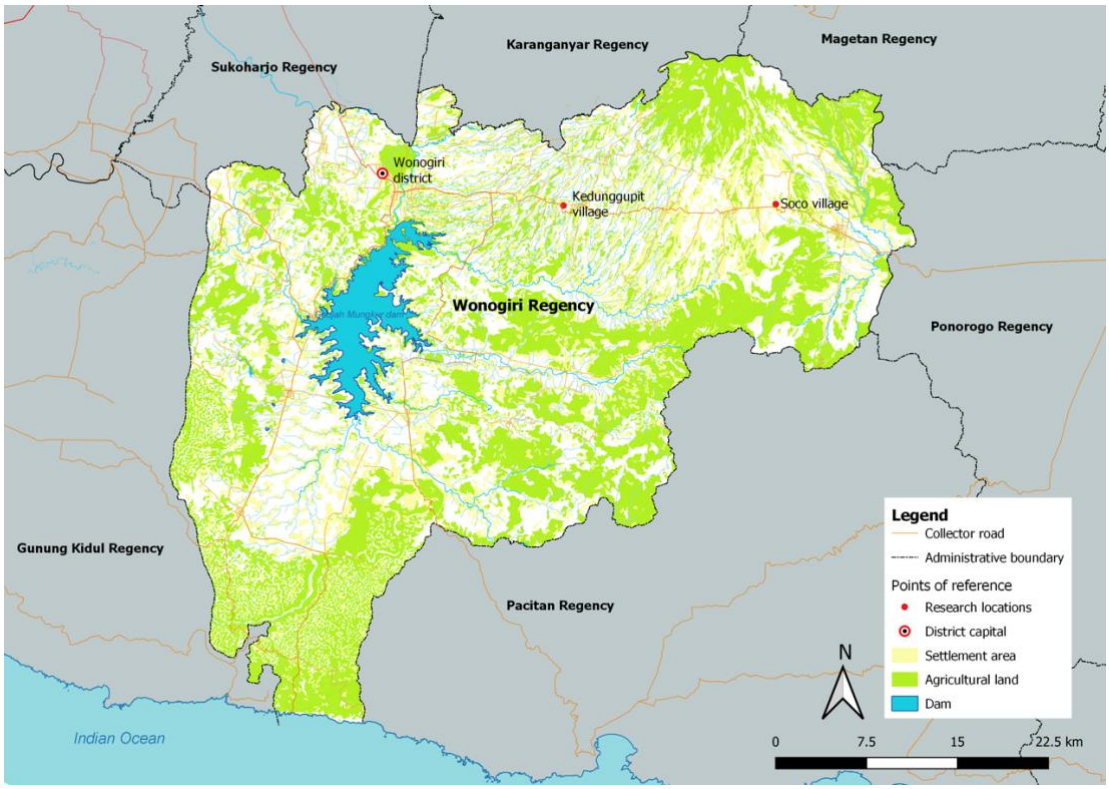

Figure 7: Map of Wonogiri Regency, showing research sites
(Administrative boundaries and land use source: https://tanahair.indonesia.go.id/portal-web. Road network data source: OpenStreetMap, generated using QGIS)

Wonogiri's terrain is characterised by varied topography, from gentle slopes to steeper mountains, with karst or limestone hills accounting for roughly 20% of its area (Bappeda Litbang Wonogiri, 2020). This karst topography, combined with the region's climate patterns, creates challenges for water retention and availability, making the area particularly susceptible to periodic water scarcity. Karst formations are mainly concentrated in the southwest and south, characterised by steep, narrow alleys and rough relief (Ambarwati, 2008; Bappeda Litbang Wonogiri, 2020). Meanwhile, the southern part of Wonogiri Regency is known for its underground caves and rivers, with land use consisting of teak forests, mixed gardens, shrubs, and settlements (Bappeda Litbang, 2020; Isnandar, 2020). The terrain also includes mountains stretching west to east in the south, notably the Sewu Mountains[17] range, which is one of the

[17] It's also called Mountains Seribu. In Indonesia, the name is Pegunungan Seribu or Gunung Sewu.

spring sources of the longest river in Java, Bengawan Solo (Arif et al., 2016; Siddiq, 2019). The overflow water from the river is contained in Central Java's largest reservoir, Gajah Mungkur, which is also located in the regency.

Some folklore surrounding the name Wonogiri suggests a connection to Mount Giri and its renowned teak forest, Alas[18] Donoloyo (Figure 8) (Nugroho, 2018). The story starts with Donoloyo Forest playing a significant role as a teakwood supplier during the Majapahit[19] era (Wahyudi & Suaedy, 2022). Ki Ageng Donoloyo, who managed the area, was first sent to find a new place to cultivate resources for the Majapahit Monarchy (Hastuti, 2020; Nugroho, 2018). During the spread of Islam, Sunan Giri, one of the Wali Songo[20], visited the forest in search of high-quality wood for the construction of the Demak Mosque. Noting that Ki Ageng Donoloyo's area was surrounded by forests and mountains, he suggested naming the region *Wonogiri* (Pemerintah Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2018), derived from the Javanese language, which is influenced by Sanskrit, *wana* and *giri* (Lukman, 2019). The meanings of the words are widely recognised among research participants, particularly among the elderly; who explained, "*Wana* refers to forest or rice fields, while *giri* means mountain."[21]

These geographical characteristics of Wonogiri—its varied topography, challenging karst terrain, periodic water scarcity, and position at the intersection of three provinces—have shaped rural livelihoods and social arrangements. The relatively limited agricultural potential of much of the land, combined with recurring drought, has historically pushed households toward diverse, adaptive livelihood strategies. While these adaptations include the emergence of circular migration patterns (discussed in detail in Section 4.5), the physical landscape also shapes agricultural practices.

Understanding Wonogiri's geographical characteristics is important to analysing how its rural households navigate economic challenges and organise their livelihoods, which in turn affects gender dynamics. The region's difficult terrain and environmental conditions have encouraged migration, and this has shaped gender roles and responsibilities in agricultural households, a

[18] *Alas* means "forest" in Javanese

[19] Majapahit was a Hindu-Buddist empire based in eastern Java (c.1293-1528) (Hall, 2016). The fall of Majapahit was followed by the rise of Demak Sultanate, the first Muslim kingdom in Java (Pigeaud & Graaf, 1976)

[20] The Wali Songo or Wali Sanga are revered saints of Islam in Indonesia because of their historic role in spreading Islam, especially in Java. The word *wali* is Arabic for "trusted one". It is translated as "guardian" in Indonesia and means "friend of God" or "saint" in the Islamic context. Meanwhile, *songo* or *sanga* is number "nine" in Javanese. Wali Songo means the Nine Saints since nine people were considered to have played a historic role in spreading Islam as saints in Java's history.

[21] Village history discussions, 12 January 2023 and 7 February 2023

theme explored further in this chapter. The physical landscape continues to influence farming practices, labour division, and resource management within rural families.

Figure 8: Donoloyo Conservation Teak Forest, 13 April 2023

4.2. Historical Narratives: Wonogiri Under Mangkunegaran

Every May 19, Wonogiri celebrates its anniversary, a date rooted in its story that relates to the history of the Mangkunegara kingdom and its first ruler, Mangkunegara I, once called Raden[22] Mas Said, a prince from the Sultanate of Mataram, a Muslim kingdom in Java (1587-1755). Mas Said was a leader in a rebellion against the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC) or United Dutch East India Company, while also challenging the authority of Pakubuwono (The King of Mataram) (Musthofa et al., 2016; Pambudi & Raharjo, 2018; Ricklefs, 2001). Ricklefs (2001) discussed the conflict between Mas Said and Pakubuwono, which stemmed from issues of succession and authority in Java. The conflict started when Mas Said's father, the eldest son of the former Mataram King, was considered unsuitable as the King's successor due to his perceived opposition to the palace's alliance with the VOC and the throne was given

[22] Raden is a nobility title in Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, and several other regions in Indonesia.

to another prince (Pambudi & Raharjo, 2018; Ricklefs, 2001). Other sources also highlight the role of the VOC's arbitrariness toward the Javanese people and their demands on the Javanese Monarchy, which placed heavy burdens on the people, triggering Mas Said's rebellion (1741-1757) (Musthofa et al., 2016; Pambudi & Raharjo, 2018; Ricklefs, 2001).

When pushed from the palace, Mas Said fled the Mataram Palace, seeking refuge in his grandmother's hamlet, Nglaroh, where he had significant support from his grandmother's influence in the area. There, he established a small reign and initiated his rebellion, laying the foundation for what became Mangkunegaran and later Wonogiri Regency. The inauguration of his reign took place on May 19, 1741, a date that is now celebrated as the establishment of Wonogiri Regency. After Pakubuwono II died in 1749, the Mataram Kingdom fragmented (Figure 9), changing the political landscape of Java. Historical records document how the 1755 Treaty of Giyanti formally divided into two sultanates: Surakarta and Yogyakarta (Ricklefs, 2001). During these negotiations, Raden Mas Said reached an agreement with both Pakubuwono III (who then ruled Surakarta) and the VOC. As part of this settlement, Mas Said was granted control over a portion of Surakarta's territory, establishing the duchy of Mangkunegaran with Wonogiri as one of its key areas.

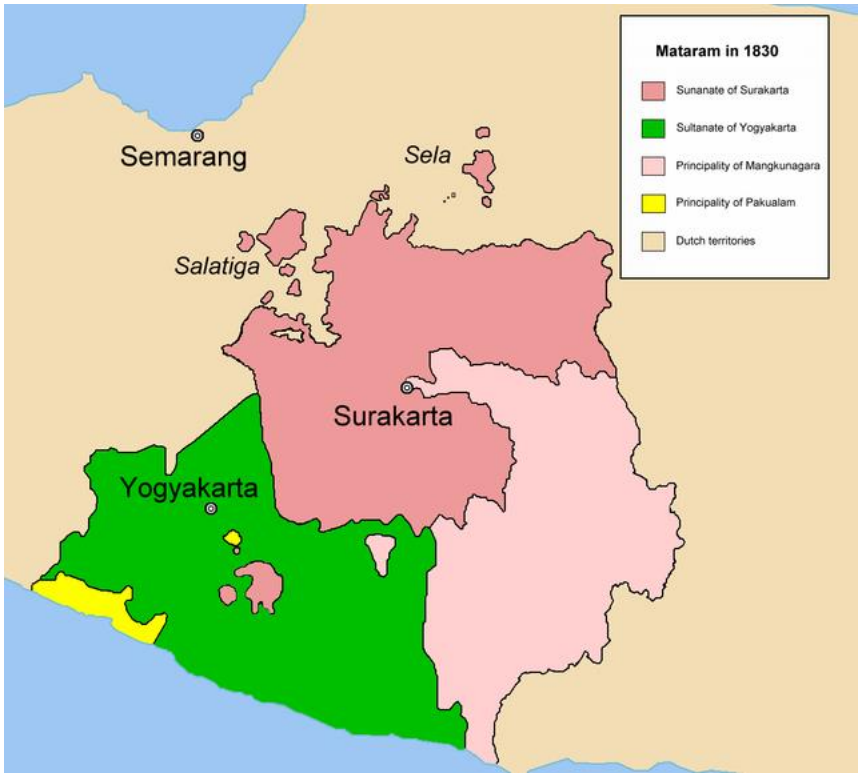

Figure 9: Division of Mataram's territory in 1830.
Source: Robert Cribb (2000), "Historical Atlas of Indonesia', p 114

All parties involved in the negotiations agreed that each territory (Surakarta, Yogyakarta, and Mangkunegaran) would be designated as a *swapraja* or self-governing region. Under this arrangement, the VOC consented to grant the monarchies, including the Mangkunegaran duchy, authority to manage their own royal bureaucracy while the VOC maintained indirect control by placing them under colonial power and influence (Prasadana & Gunawan, 2019). With the establishment of Praja (duchy) Mangkunegaran, Mas Said declared himself as Mangkunegara I.

Although Mangkunegaran held autonomy as a duchy, Mangkunegara I secured his position through an agreement with the VOC and the Surakarta Monarch, which obligated him to repay war debts to the VOC (Mardiati, 2009; Kartodirjo & Suryo, 1991). The VOC maintained a monopoly on the trade of the monarch's agricultural products, requiring Mas Said to share his territory's harvests as debt repayment (Kartodirjo & Suryo, 1991). After Mas Said died in 1795, his son, Mangkunegara II (1796-1835), successfully expanded the duchy's territory while going through a major political transition period, as the VOC was dissolved in 1799, and all its assets and authority were transferred to direct rule by the Dutch colonial government (Ricklefs, 2001). The VOC disbandment led to the nationalisation of its colonial holdings in the Indonesian archipelago by the Dutch Republic as the Netherlands East Indies (NEI). By the time his successor, Mangkunegara III, took power (1835-1853), the duchy's economy had declined, and new debts to the colonial government were accumulated alongside the outstanding debt to the VOC (Mardiati, 2009).

Mangkunegaran's financial situation improved when Mangkunegara IV ascended to power (1853-1881) (Ricklefs, 2001). By this time, the Dutch colonial government had already implemented the Cultivation System (*Cultuurstelsel*) or *Tanam Paksa* (1830-1870), which required Indonesian people to grow export-oriented cash crops for the global market (Vickers, 2005; Ricklefs, 2001). The main feature of this system was the obligation to pay taxes using cash crops (Dell & Olken, 2018; Mardiati, 2009; Kartodirjo & Suryo, 1991).

The colonial government enforced this system through two approaches: directly through state plantations in territories under their immediate control and indirectly through local feudal authorities. However, like other Javanese principalities, Mangkunegaran maintained relative freedom in managing its territory and collecting taxes from its people due to its special autonomous status established in the previous century (Mardiati, 2009). While this arrangement

meant the Cultivation System did not directly control Mangkunegaran's agricultural production, the duchy was nevertheless affected by these broader economic changes.

The Cultivation System drove demand for cash crops, which commanded high prices in global markets (Mardiati, 2009; Primaditya & Saraswati, 2022). Examples of these mandated cash crops included coffee, sugar cane, and indigo, as well as smaller-scale crops of tobacco, pepper, tea, and cinnamon. Responding to these market opportunities, under Mangkunegara IV's direction, the duchy intensified its agricultural production by expanding its plantations, converting previously wild or forested areas into cultivated land (Mardiati, 2009; Primaditya & Saraswati, 2022). Mangkunegara IV established 24 coffee plantations across the Karanganyar and Wonogiri regions (Mardiati, 2009). Through the systematic transformation of forested areas into plantations producing coffee (which earned the highest profit margins), sugar cane (which was in growing demand for European markets), tea (which was gaining popularity), and indigo (valued for textile production), Mangkunegara IV significantly strengthened his duchy's economic position (Aris, 2010; Mardiati, 2009).

Mardiati's (2009) analysis of Mangkunegaran's plantation economy reveals how coffee production first connected Wonogiri to global commodity markets, fundamentally reshaping the region's agricultural landscape. However, unlike private companies that could sell internationally, Mangkunegaran plantations were required to sell through the colonial government at controlled prices, preventing Praja Mangkunegaran from accessing global markets directly. Despite efforts by Mangkunegara IV to increase coffee prices, Dutch government policies prevented this, which led Mangkunegara IV to shift focus from coffee to sugar cane.

The region's vulnerability to global market forces became clear under Mangkunegara V (1881-1896) when multiple crises converged. Disease outbreaks devastated both sugarcane and coffee crops, while, simultaneously, Europe's adoption of sugar beet protectionism in the 1880s severely contracted Java's sugar export markets (Wardhana, 2012; Aris, 2010). Combined with Mangkunegara V's financial mismanagement, these external shocks precipitated a fiscal crisis that would have lasting implications for land use and governance in Wonogiri. The duchy's attempts to respond to these challenges through economic diversification—establishing copra processing, expanding sugar manufacturing, and introducing tobacco cultivation (Aris, 2010)—ultimately led to increased dependence on colonial capital. Mangkunegara V sought loans from both private entities and the NEI government, resulting in a large debt burden, only

worsening the duchy's financial situation (Wardhana, 2012; Aris, 2010). It led to a debt agreement that affected the duchy's autonomy through the formation of a commission[23] able to interfere in all financial matters and the management of businesses owned by Mangkunegaran (Rosyida & Trilaksana, 2017).

Subsequent reforms in the 1890s by Mangkunegara VI (1896-1916) marked a significant shift in the duchy's governance and environmental management. His cost-saving policies—separating the internal duchy's financial management from the Mangkunegaran-owned companies, modernising sugar production technology, and rationalising plantation management (Rosyida & Trilaksana, 2017; Wardhana, 2012; Witasari, 2019)—successfully restored financial stability. By 1899, these reforms had enabled the duchy to repay all debts to the NEI and regain financial autonomy (Rosyida & Trilaksana, 2017; Wardhana, 2012). However, economic expansion from Mangkunegara IV to Mangkunegara VI came at an environmental cost. The establishment and expansion of factories and plantations resulted in deforestation and environmental degradation (Witasari, 2019). This resulted in increased flooding and droughts in the 19th century—environmental challenges that continue to affect Wonogiri's today. The legacy of this resource exploitation led to the designation of Donoloyo Forest as a teak tree conservation area in 1961 (Isnandar, 2020), which was a response to this historical pattern of resource exploitation.

Mangkunegara VII's reign (1916-1944) marked a shift in environmental and administrative governance. Mangkunegara VII's collaboration with Surakarta and the NEI government on infrastructure development—including parks, urban forests, dams, and drainage systems—represented an early attempt to address environmental degradation (Witasari 2019). These efforts at environmental management, however, often conflicted with local communities' forest-dependent livelihoods. Mangkunegara VII also changed the administrative status of certain territories, including Wonogiri, from a *Kawedanan* to a Regency in 1917 (Pemerintah Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2023), which laid the groundwork for modern local government structures. As a result of this change, the Wonogiri area was divided into five sub-districts: Wonogiri, Wuryantoro, Baturetno, Jatisrono, and Purwantoro.

The post-independence period brought transformative changes to Wonogiri's governance. The Anti-Swapraja movement's success in 1945-1946, aimed at opposing the feudal system and the

[23] The commission was named *Raad van Toezicht Belastmet de Regeling van de Mangkoenegorosche Landen en Bezettingen* (Supervisory Council responsible for the regulation of Mangkunegaran lands and possessions)

traditional aristocracy, ended Mangkunegaran control (Prasadana & Gunawan, 2019; Rosiana, 2013). Wonogiri's 1946 integration into the Republic of Indonesia as part of Central Java Province marked the beginning of its current administrative era, though the environmental and economic legacies of the Mangkunegaran period continue to influence regional development (Rosiana, 2013; Pemerintah Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2023). Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview of Wonogiri's political and economic development under Mangkunegaran rule, from its establishment through to its integration into the Republic of Indonesia. Since then, Wonogiri has undergone several administrative divisions and developments under the Indonesian government.

Table 2: Political, Economic, and Environmental Transitions in Mangkunegaran Territory (1741-1946)

Period	Ruler	Political and Administrative Changes	Economic and Environmental Changes	Impact on Wonogiri
1741-1757	Pre-Mangkunegaran (Mas Said's Rebellion)	- Rebellion against VOC and Pakubuwono - May 19, 1741: Base established in Nglaroh, Wonogiri	- Period of conflict and instability	- Foundation of future administrative center - Establishment of regional power base
1757-1795	Mangkunegara I (Raden Mas Said)	- Swapraja status established - Integration into colonial system	- VOC trade monopoly - Agricultural products as debt payment - Initial resource management	- Early agricultural development - Integration into colonial trade system
1796-1835	Mangkunegara II	- Territory expansion - Transition from VOC to Dutch colonial rule (1799)	- Continued agricultural development - New colonial economic arrangements	- Expansion of administered territory - Changed economic relationships
1835-1853	Mangkunegara III	- Full Dutch colonial oversight	- Economic decline - New colonial debt accumulation	- Increased economic pressure
1853-1881	Mangkunegara IV	- Relative economic autonomy	- 24 coffee plantations established - Forest conversion to plantations - Strategic shift to sugar cane - Integration into global markets	- Major land use changes - Agricultural intensification - Environmental transformation
1881-1896	Mangkunegara V	- Loss of financial autonomy - Supervision commission established	- Crop diseases - Sugar market crisis - Failed economic diversification - Increased colonial debt	- Agricultural crisis - Economic instability - Environmental degradation
1896-1916	Mangkunegara VI	- Financial reforms - Regained autonomy (1899)	- Modernised production - Plantation rationalisation - Continued deforestation	- Economic recovery - Continued environmental impacts - Infrastructure development
1916-1944	Mangkunegara VII	- Wonogiri elevated to Regency (1917) - Five sub-districts established	- Environmental management initiatives - Infrastructure development - Urban planning	- Modern administrative structure - Infrastructure improvements
1944-1946	Transition Period	- Indonesian Independence (1945) - Anti-Swapraja movement - Integration into Republic	- Shift from feudal to democratic system - New governance structures - Forest conservation efforts	- End of Mangkunegaran control - Modern administrative integration - Legacy of environmental challenges

The period of Mangkunegaran rule in Wonogiri provides context for understanding the area's economic and social structures. This period was particularly significant in three ways: first, it

established Wonogiri's early integration into global commodity markets, setting patterns of agricultural commercialisation that continue to influence land use today; second, it shaped environmental conditions through extensive deforestation and land conversion that created enduring challenges for agriculture; and third, it established administrative structures and governance patterns that influenced subsequent development interventions. This historical context also laid the groundwork for contemporary patterns of gender division of labour in rural households, a theme that will be explored in subsequent sections and chapters.

4.3. Rural Development Trajectories: Experiencing the Indonesian State in Wonogiri[24]

Following independence (proclaimed in 1945), a crucial turning point in Indonesia's rural development trajectory came when the Sukarno government introduced the Land Reform Policy in 1960, which aimed to redistribute land from wealthy landowners to landless farmers (Lucas & Waren, 2013; Soemarjan, 1962; Sutiyo & Maharjan, 2017). Prior to independence, the traditional land ownership system in many parts of Java granted local leaders and *Priyayi*[25] privileges, even monopolised land ownership, creating a huge economic gap between them and the peasantry (Schiel, 1990; Sutiyo & Maharjan, 2017).

Oral histories from Wonogiri reveal limited local implementation of land redistribution during the Sukarno era. Instead, participants described[26] an earlier land distribution system called *Kopyokan* from the 1920s, which had already divided village land among households. Mbah[27] Sukad, one of the senior residents who participated in the village history discussions, explained:

> The term *kopyokan*, employed to delineate the method by which each household obtained its land location, is determined through the process of *kopyokan* or lottery shuffle.[28]

This system divided the total village land by the number of households in the village. The legacy of this *Kopyokan* system remains visible in current landholding patterns, with varying sizes of each farm plot (*petak sawah*)[29] in each village, typically ranging between 3500 and 5000 square meters. However, as Mbah Sukad explained, this allocation did not imply

[24] This section draws primarily on oral histories collected through village history discussions and interviews, supplemented by historical records and existing research.
[25] Priyayi refers to Java's governing upper class (Sutherland, 1990) or Javanese nobles (Schiel, 1990).
[26] Village history discussions, 12 January 2023 and 7 February 2023
[27] Mbah is an Indonesian honorific for a grandparent, usually used to address someone much older.
[28] Village history discussions, 7 February 2023
[29] How rural people in Indonesia usually measure the land size.

ownership; there existed no tangible evidence of ownership, and households were solely granted the right to manage the land and use it for their livelihood through an arrangement known as *Mager Sari* (when people reside on somebody else's land) under Mangkunegaran[30] authority. This arrangement came with specific fiscal obligations: households had to surrender a portion of their harvest to Mangkunegaran as land tax and provide labour services for various Mangkunegaran projects.

The Sukarno government's 1960 Basic Agrarian Law pursued two interconnected goals: redistributing land to create greater economic equality and establishing a modern system of private property rights (*hak milik*) (Lucas & Warren, 2013; Soemarjan, 1962; Sutiyo & Maharjan, 2017). This law formally recognised individual land ownership rights that could be registered, transferred, and protected by the state, representing a significant departure from both colonial-era arrangements and traditional communal land management systems. Participants in the village history discussion recalled that their first documentation of land ownership was *Petok D* (Letter D), which served as tangible evidence of their land status and ownership. Before the Basic Agrarian Law took effect on December 24, 1960, *Petok D* served as proof of land ownership and held the same value as a land certificate; however, a *Petok D* issued after 1961 only functioned as proof of a Land Tax Payment and no longer served as evidence of ownership (Farida, 1997).

Mbah Sukad, along with other participants in the village history discussions, noted that certain policies implemented during the Sukarno era were not comprehensively understood at the time since people his age were still very young and had limited education and access to knowledge. Despite this opacity, he vividly recalled how village development depended on landowners' contributions. For instance, in the 1960s, Sukarno mandated that every household contribute to road construction by personally gathering stones from rivers and laying them to form a road. He recalled: "You know the stone road in the villages, I built it with my own hands. My brother and I, and my late father. He had to give up some of his land because we couldn't build the road as expected"[31]. He explained that the system (quite possibly influenced by prevailing socialist ideologies) of contributions linked labour obligations directly to land ownership—

[30] Within the Surakarta Sunanate's territory, a Javanese monarchy, there are still residential areas of the *Mager Sari* type, where residents build houses or reside on the Sunnanate-own property

[31] Interview, 9 February 2023

each plot requiring the construction of a 25-meter road section. For Mbah Sukad's family, owning three plots meant responsibility for 75 meters of road, a burden that ultimately forced his father to sell one plot, reducing their obligation to 50 meters.

This story reveals how early development policies, while framed as a collective effort, could disproportionately impact smaller households and reshape local land ownership patterns. When asked about people's willingness to participate despite these hardships, Mbah Sukad's response demonstrates how state development imperatives were internalised and legitimised through traditional concepts of communal obligation, "We just did what we've been told. We must contribute to building and developing our own village; it is called *Gotong Royong*"[32]. The term *Gotong Royong*[33], advocated by Sukarno, foregrounds joint contributions to development (Dewantara, 2016; Nufus et al., 2021). The concept originated from Sukarno's fundamental principles of the state, one of which was Ekasila[34], which emphasises mutual cooperation or *Gotong Royong*. While Ekasila was not ultimately selected as a fundamental principle of the Indonesian state, Sukarno regarded Ekasila as "culture worthy", and its value was considered essential for nurturing a sense of mutual help and unity among the people (Nufus et al., 2021). Mbah Sukad's story shows how collective contributions shaped the rural landscape.

This ethic of collective contribution continues to shape development practices in Wonogiri today; the influence of *Gotong Royong* remains evident in contemporary rural development programs. For instance, as found in the research sites, Village Fund projects typically combine government funding with community contributions through labour, materials, or monetary support. The tradition has adapted to modern challenges; when community members cannot contribute physical labour, they often contribute in different ways, such as financial contributions. During the research period, several infrastructure projects demonstrated this continued practice. For example, road repairs in the villages (Figure 10), which were funded with the village fund, involved households contributing labour, food, and materials.

The Suharto era marked the development trajectory with the initiation of the Green Revolution during the 1970s and 1980s (Sutiyo & Maharjan, 2017; Wie, 2000). Many farmer participants noted the dramatic shift from single to multiple harvests following the introduction of new seed varieties. People in the village were also introduced to modern farming techniques, new high-yielding rice varieties, and improved irrigation systems, fertilisers, and pesticides, which

[32] Interview, 9 February 2023
[33] The word "gotong" in Javanese means "to lift" and "royong" means "together".
[34] The word "eka" means "one", and "sila" means "principle" or "basis".

allowed farmers to boost crop yields. It also deepened farmers' dependence on credit and external inputs such as chemical fertilisers and pesticides. The shift to intensive cultivation also altered traditional labour arrangements, particularly affecting opportunities for landless labourers who had previously found work in more labour-intensive conventional farming methods. This program held particular significance after phases of pest outbreaks followed by severe poverty characterised by famine, malnutrition, and thiamine deficiency among village residents during the late Sukarno era (early 1960s). "We called it *Jaman* (era) *Dekok* (concave) because whenever we push or poke part of our body, it would not be returned or bounced back easily like a normal body. It creates a concave in our body", Mbah Yatno, another village history discussion participant, explained[35].

Figure 10: Road Repair in Soco, 27 February 2023

Despite the environmental challenge for agriculture in the Regency, where more than 65% of Wonogiri's land area is classified as highly susceptible to drought (Reviandy et al., 2021; Balai Litbang Indonesia, 2019), participants noted that the Green Revolution programs helped mitigate some impacts of the dry conditions. Drought-resistant seed varieties were introduced,

[35] Village history discussions, 7 February 2023

and various development initiatives were undertaken by government agencies and the local communities aimed at improving irrigation in Wonogiri.

The Gajah Mungkur Reservoir's construction in 1976 was a monumental development project. The primary purpose of the Reservoir was to regulate overflowing waters during the rainy months and enhance irrigation during the dry season (Gondowarsito, 1990; Tirtosudarmo, 1990). Its development created employment opportunities by involving local residents as construction workers and stimulated economic growth through infrastructure, such as roads. New businesses, including retail stores and food stalls, and various other economic activities, grew alongside the reservoir development. Upon the completion of the reservoir in 1981, it catalysed further economic diversification, facilitating tourism activities, fish farming, and other income-generating ventures. In order to build this 8,800-hectare reservoir, however, the government submerged 51 villages in seven sub-districts and relocated the entire population from the villages with a program called *Bedol Desa* (Gondowarsito, 1990). In Javanese, *bedol* means uprooting, like pulling a plant by its roots, while *desa* means village. Thus, *Bedol Des*a symbolised the entire village relocation process implemented by the government to facilitate the construction of the reservoir.

This program was possibly the largest transmigration scheme ever implemented in Indonesia. Residents were offered the option to relocate outside Java where population densities were lower, thus redistributing the population away from Java (Febriani & Sumarno, 2021; Gondowarsito, 1990). However, in practice, the *Bedol Desa* program gave villagers little choice: accepting a transmigration package to relocate outside Java or receiving minimal compensation to resettle locally on their own. Gondowarsito (1990) recorded that many residents felt pressured to accept transmigration as the compensation offered for local resettlement was insufficient to purchase equivalent land nearby. The program was not limited to residents whose land was used for the reservoir but was open to others in surrounding villages. Mbah Yatno, from a nearby village, recalled that many people without land ownership in his village opted to join the program. He noted, "Many of them were still *Mager Sari*; they resided on somebody else's land and constructed semi-permanent houses. Then they decided to join the program because they were offered land elsewhere."

The construction of Gajah Mungkur Reservoir also altered local ecosystems and traditional farming patterns. While the reservoir improved irrigation for some areas, it disrupted established water management systems in others (Tirtosudarmo, 1990). Studies also

documented how the relocation process fractured longstanding community networks and kinship ties, with some families separated across different transmigration sites (Gondowarsito, 1990; Febriani & Sumarno, 2021). Several elderly participants confirmed those findings, recalling how their extended families were split up when members chose different relocation options.

In addition to the transformative impact of the Green Revolution, many elderly residents[36] mentioned other substantial developments in Wonogiri during the Suharto period, such as the Backward Village Program (*Inpres Desa Tertinggal* or IDT), which was introduced in the 1990s. During a village history discussion, Mbah Yatno provided a vivid account of this transition period, illustrating both the controlling nature of agricultural policies in the 1980s and the subsequent shift toward small enterprise development in the 1990s, which was facilitated through programs like IDT:

> In the 80s, most of the people's businesses were related to agriculture, and even then, prices were monopolised. We were given seeds, like cloves, for example, and obliged to plant them; the price was determined, and we could only sell them to those who were said to be Pak Harto's[37] children's business. Then, in the 90s, other small-scale enterprises began to emerge, most of which were handicrafts, there were business capital loans started at that time.[38]

Many participants' positive recollections of government programs, particularly in agriculture and infrastructure development, likely stem from genuine material improvements experienced during this period. Agricultural subsidies, modern farming techniques, and high-yielding rice varieties marked a significant shift in addressing severe poverty and malnutrition, though these benefits were not uniformly distributed across all communities. For example, while the construction of the Gajah Mungkur Reservoir became a catalyst for broader economic development, the displacement of villages left some residents struggling to rebuild their lives with limited compensation. This period of state-led development produced varied outcomes, creating new opportunities for many while also transforming traditional social and economic relationships in ways that sometimes strained community resilience.

Following Suharto's downfall in 1998, Indonesia witnessed an institutional transition through the Reform Era (*Era Reformasi*). The transition to democracy brought sweeping changes in governance through Law No. 22/1999 on Regional Autonomy, which devolved substantial

[36] Most information here was collected through village history group discussions and life history interviews.
[37] "Pak Harto" is the way people refer to Suharto. "Pak" is a shortened form of "Bapak," which means "father." It is also an Indonesian honorific used for adult men, typically to address older men or to show respect.
[38] Village history discussions, 7 February 2023

administrative and fiscal powers to district governments (Rasyid, 2004; Aspinall & Fealy, 2003). In Wonogiri, this decentralisation reshaped rural governance structures, giving the district government greater authority over development planning and resource allocation. Starting in 1999, the Indonesian government actively endorsed Community Driven Development (CDD) projects as a strategic model for alleviating poverty in rural areas, with the *Kecamatan* (Subdistrict) Development Program (KDP) emerging as the largest CDD initiative in terms of coverage and funding (Sutiyo & Maharjan, 2017; Guggenheim et al., 2004). Under Megawati's presidency (2001-2004), the government initiated the Rice for Poor Households (Raskin) program in 2002, providing subsidised rice to low-income families (Tabor & Sawit, 2001; McCulloch, 2008), and initiating a system of social protection.

When Yudhoyono took office (2004-2014), his administration expanded social protection with the Direct Cash Assistance (*Bantuan Langsung Tunai* or BLT) program in 2005 to help low-income households cope with rising fuel prices (World Bank, 2012). The same year, the School Operational Assistance (*Bantuan Operasional Sekolah* or BOS) program was introduced to support education access (Rosser & Joshi, 2013). These programs were later complemented by the introduction of conditional cash transfers (Program Keluarga Harapan or PKH) in 2007, which assisted low-income households contingent on meeting health and education requirements (Sumarto & Bazzi, 2011; Perdana, 2014). The period also saw experiments with participatory planning through newly established village representative bodies (*Badan Perwakilan Desa*), though their effectiveness varied across communities (Antlöv & Wetterberg, 2011). Despite the rhetoric of community-based planning, research participants noted that decision-making processes often remained centralised, and the implementation of these reforms and programs revealed that democratic aspirations often fell short in practice.

The Village Fund (*Dana Desa*), introduced during the Jokowi administration in 2014, is the latest of Indonesia's post-1998 decentralised development initiatives. Earlier programs like KDP (1998-2008) and its successor PNPM Mandiri (2007-2014) channelled funds through subdistrict mechanisms. The Village Fund marked a shift toward direct village-level fiscal transfers, allocating approximately 1 billion rupiah annually to each village (McCarthy et al., 2016; Antlöv et al., 2016). This change claimed to build on lessons learned from previous community-driven development programs while aiming to strengthen village autonomy under the 2014 Village Law. One village head reflected on the increased local autonomy brought by the Village Fund program:

> Since there is now the Village Fund, we can allocate it directly for this and that. Villages have become more advanced, whereas in the past, everything used to depend on the central decision, and sometimes it took quite some time. We have more authority since the Village Fund program, although we are still coordinating with the higher level to ensure that development programs are aligned. [39]

The allocation of Village Funds operates through established participatory mechanisms, particularly the *Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan* (*Musrenbang*). In these meetings, village representatives continue the participatory planning tradition established by KDP and PNPM but with greater local authority over resource allocation. The program maintains flexibility in funding across sectors—from physical infrastructure to agricultural support, education, and social programs—reflecting the comprehensive development approach pioneered by its predecessors (Lewis, 2015; Vel et al., 2017). Implementation involves various community institutions, including hamlet communities, youth groups (Karang Taruna), and the PKK. However, this continuity with past programs also means that the Village Fund faces similar challenges in ensuring genuine community participation and avoiding elite capture.

This evolution of rural development approaches in Wonogiri, from centralised state control to more participatory governance, has fundamentally reshaped how households engage with development processes, including how gender relations are structured within communities. These changing patterns influence formal opportunities for participation and informal resource management practices within households. The shift from top-down development programs to more decentralised approaches has created new spaces where gender roles are negotiated and contested. For example, the allocation of Village Funds to the PKK has given women direct control over community resources through program budgets, ranging from early childhood education to small business development, and increasing their influence in formal decision-making authority. This dynamic occurs within the historical context, where new institutional frameworks interact with enduring cultural practices to shape how men and women participate in household and community decision-making. The result is neither a simple replacement of traditional gender roles nor their unchanged persistence, but rather an ongoing renegotiation of gendered power relations within evolving institutional structures.

[39] Interview, 24 November 2022

4.4. Agriculture and the Regional Economy

Wonogiri's economic transformation is reflected in its recent growth trends, with overall economic growth recorded at 3.35% in 2021, 5.63% in 2022, and 4.98% in 2023 (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2021, 2022, 2023). While experiencing a gradual decline, agriculture remains a significant sector in Wonogiri. More than 50% of the regency's land is dedicated to agricultural use (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2020), and 40.5% of the workforce is employed primarily in the sector (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2023a). The Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries sectors also contributed 29.38% to the region's Gross Regional Domestic Product in 2021, representing the single most important sectoral contribution. Nonetheless, this sector's contribution has steadily decreased from 36.19% in 2011 (Table 3), a shift that occurred alongside the rise of manufacturing, which grew from 14.51% to 18.13% over the same period, reflecting rural industrialisation in Wonogiri. This shifting economic structure has important implications for how rural households organise their livelihoods and allocate labour between farm and non-farm activities, as traditional agricultural activities coexist with emerging manufacturing and other formal employment sectors.

Table 3: Distribution of Gross Regional Domestic Product Wonogiri (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2022)

Sectors	**Percentage/Year**										
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries	**36.19**	**36.09**	**35.83**	**34.23**	**33.63**	**32.82**	**31.47**	**28.63**	**28.57**	**30.12**	**29.38**
Mining and Quarrying	3.20	3.11	3.13	3.24	3.44	3.41	3.30	3.15	3.15	3.13	3.14
Manufacturing Industry	14.51	14.52	14.39	15.22	15.50	16.00	16.29	16.84	16.85	17.55	18.13
Procurement of Electricity and Gas	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07
Water Supply, Waste Management, Waste and Recycling	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.07
Construction	6.08	6.24	6.24	6.40	6.52	6.52	6.86	7.60	7.60	7.39	7.67
Wholesale Trade, Retail Trade, Car and Motorbike Services	16.86	16.34	16.15	15.80	15.61	15.56	15.66	16.33	16.37	16.18	16.39
Transportation and Warehousing	5.68	5.52	5.49	5.84	5.98	5.90	6.12	6,58	5.58	4.48	4.63
Accommodations, food, and beverages	2.40	2.29	2.27	2.27	2.29	2.34	2.36	2.42	2.42	2.39	2.40
Information and communication	0.79	0.77	0.74	0.75	0.73	0.74	0,84	0.94	0.94	1.10	1.15
Financial and Insurance	2.80	2.93	2.95	2.97	3.01	3.16	3.20	3,22	3.22	3.23	3.23
Real Estate	0.77	0.71	0.71	0.73	0.74	0.74	0.75	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.73
Services Business	0.33	0.33	0.36	0.37	0.38	0.41	0.43	0.46	0.46	0.45	0.45
Government administrative, Mandatory Defense and Social Security	3.08	3.10	3.07	3.04	3.06	3.04	3.05	2.90	2.90	2.88	2.71
Education	4.57	5.41	5.97	6.31	6.28	6.46	6.67	7.07	7.07	7.10	6.79
Health and Social Services	0.79	0.84	0.89	0.93	0.96	0.98	1.02	1.07	1.07	1.20	1.19
Others	1.80	1.63	1.68	1.77	1.73	1.73	1.850.74	1.93	1.93	1.92	1.88

Contemporary patterns of agricultural diversification and economic transformation build on a long history of market integration and state intervention. During the Dutch colonial era, when coffee and sugarcane emerged as key commercial crops, the region's agricultural economy transitioned from subsistence farming focused primarily on rice cultivation to market-oriented production (Dell & Olken, 2018; Silaen, 2006). Commercialisation continued through the New Order period, particularly through the National Clove Intensification program (*Intensifikasi Cengkeh*) in the 1980s, which was managed through a government-established clove support and trading board (Marks, 1996; Thee, 2012). This program required farmers in certain regions to cultivate cloves while establishing a monopoly on clove trading that significantly impacted rural agricultural practices (Manning & van Diermen, 2000), shifting the agricultural production to more diversified market-responsive farming.

Pak Giyat, whose family combined farming with work as *pengepul* (agricultural collector), describes the shift from government-mandated clove production during the New Order era to a more diverse cropping pattern: "We used to buy lots of cloves and dry them in our yard. Now, as you can see, there are no more cloves; we just bought corn because there was just a corn harvest."[40] Besides rice, secondary crops such as corn and cassava, as well as horticultural products like chilli and cashew nuts, now contribute to Wonogiri's diverse agricultural landscape (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2014). Wonogiri has now become Central Java's largest cassava producer, contributing 29.8% of provincial production in 2018 (BPS Provinsi Jawa Tengah, 2023).

Despite the significant scale of agricultural activity in Wonogiri, research participants—farmers and local government stakeholders—consistently identified the region's reputation for water insecurity as a primary agricultural constraint. More than 65% of the Wonogiri Regency area is reported to be highly susceptible to drought (Reviandy et al., 2021; Balai Litbang Indonesia, 2019). This vulnerability exposes Wonogiri to water crises during prolonged dry seasons, which sometimes leads to crop failures and seasonal food shortages in various areas of Wonogiri (Kompas.com, 2024; Solopos, 2024).

During these prolonged dry seasons, existing irrigation facilities are insufficient to meet the high water demands of rice cultivation across Wonogiri (Kompas.com, 2023; Kompas TV, 2023). While some crops like corn, cassava, soybeans, sweet potatoes, and green beans are suitable for dryland farming, water supply challenges sometimes persist even for these more

[40] Interview, 6 February 2023

drought-tolerant crops (Prasetyani & Daeroobi, 2016). The Gajah Mungkur reservoir's water levels also drop significantly during these seasons, affecting not only agriculture but also the livelihoods of local fishing communities (Muamar, 2023; Solopos, 2022; Wawasan.co, 2017).

According to Wonogiri's Agriculture Department[41], farming in the region—mostly carried out by small, family-based units—has adapted to environmental vulnerability by developing supplementary livelihoods, even as these farms remain the primary income source for many households. These patterns of small-scale farming and livelihood diversification operate within a specific institutional context shaped by local inheritance customs that directly contribute to the prevalence of small farming units. A distinctive feature of Wonogiri's inheritance system, compared to some other Muslim-majority areas, is its departure from conservative Islamic law (which typically grants sons larger inheritance shares than daughters). Instead, land inheritance custom in Wonogiri is based on caregiving responsibilities rather than gender. "Those who look after their parents would usually be given half of the land, no matter the gender, and the remaining half would be divided equally among the other children", Pak Giyat explained.[42] Since daughters often take on caregiving roles, women have greater opportunities to inherit larger land shares than would be typical in other areas of Java where conservative Islamic principles are followed.

This relatively egalitarian inheritance system, however, still has a cumulative effect: as inherited land is continuously divided among children across generations, individual land holdings become progressively smaller. This ongoing fragmentation explains why farming in Wonogiri commonly operates through small family units and contributes to the high number of smallholder farmers known as *petani gurem*[43]. The scale of this land fragmentation is evident in recent agricultural statistics. According to the 2023 agricultural census, out of Wonogiri's approximately 250,000 households, 197,508 (about 79%) are classified as agricultural households—defined as those engaged in crop cultivation regardless of land ownership status. Of these agricultural households, 151,265 (77%) are categorised as *petani gurem* (that is, farming less than 0.5 hectares of land). This concentration of very small holdings creates a structural constraint where families cannot generate adequate income from agriculture alone. While some of these smallholder households may supplement their income through off-farm activities, the limited land size poses significant challenges for generating adequate agricultural

[41] Interview, 1 March 2023
[42] Interview, 6 February 2023
[43] Farmers owning less than 0.5 hectares of land (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2023)

income. This structural constraint helps explain why, despite the continued importance of agriculture to the regional economy, farming households make up a substantial portion of Wonogiri's poor population[44].

The combination of limited landholdings and environmental challenges has shaped livelihood strategies in Wonogiri, reflecting broader patterns of rural transformation found throughout Indonesia and Southeast Asia (see Chapter 2). While maintaining their connection to agricultural land, many households actively pursue diversified income sources that span both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. This pattern of livelihood diversification is evident in the region's labour market composition: according to recent statistics, Wonogiri's labour force comprises 713,252 people, with the agricultural sector being the largest employer at 40.50%, followed by the services sector at 32.52% and manufacturing at 26.98% (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2023b). Despite 79% of households being "agricultural", a much smaller share of the workforce is primarily employed in agriculture, hinting at the prevalence of part-time farming and intra-household livelihood diversification.

Like many agricultural regions across Indonesia and Southeast Asia, Wonogiri's agricultural labour structure relies heavily on unpaid family labour. Approximately 24.95% of the agricultural workforce consists of household enterprises relying on non-permanent, casual, or unpaid family workers. Furthermore, 21.33% of agricultural workers are classified as unpaid family workers, indicating a substantial proportion of uncommodified work within the farming sector (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2023b). This unpaid labour is typically performed by wives and other family members who work under the informal arrangement of "assisting" the household's primary farmer. Wives often manage both farm work and household enterprises without formal compensation arrangements, and children or relatives may help with farm tasks or family businesses without fixed salaries or profit-sharing agreements.

In response to these challenges, local government initiatives have focused on creating alternative economic opportunities within the region to reduce dependence on agriculture and migration. The Regent of Wonogiri has emphasised developing off-farm employment to retain the productive workforce locally:

[44] Interview with BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri (10 April 2023) and Wonogiri's regent (16 April 2023). Note that poverty estimates vary considerably based on households' access to non-farm income sources and the tendency of households to report only one source of income in surveys.

> In general, people from Wonogiri tend to migrate, right? A huge portion of our productive age is migrating somewhere. We are famous for our *Kaum Boro*. But we also want something else in Wonogiri so that its residents have options and aren't always forced to leave. [45]

Recent initiatives include regulations supporting Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and manufacturing industries. Currently, there are 24 factories and 467 registered MSMEs in Wonogiri, though interviews suggest many more small businesses operate informally across the regency[46]. The Regent also mentioned efforts to promote growth in the tourism sector in line with central government directives through the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. The Wonogiri Government has announced plans to develop city branding to position Wonogiri as a tourist destination, aiming to diversify the local economy (Solopos, 2023).

Despite these efforts at local economic diversification, migration remains a key livelihood strategy for many household members. As per data from the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (2015, 2017, 2020), at least 100,000 people migrate yearly from Wonogiri—a figure that represents over 10% of the population, yet likely understates the actual scale of migration. Interviews with government officials, including BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, highlight challenges in collecting data that captures the scale of circular migration. For instance, in one village, official records indicated only one family working outside Wonogiri, despite hamlet heads stating that almost 50% of the productive age population has migrated or is doing circular migration activities.

While agriculture remains culturally and economically important in Wonogiri, its limited profitability has necessitated widespread household livelihood diversification with implications for gender relations. This economic pressure has fundamentally reshaped household and community dynamics, with the need for additional income driving widespread migration patterns that reflect broader regional trends. The prevalence of male migration for non-farm employment affects traditional gender-based divisions of labour in Wonogiri, reflecting the gendered impacts of migration documented across Southeast Asia (as discussed in Chapter 2). Similar to broader patterns across Southeast Asia, male out-migration in Wonogiri has led women to take on greater responsibilities in agricultural management while continuing to shoulder domestic duties—a dynamic further explored in later chapters of this

[45] Interview, 16 April 2023
[46] Labour and Employment Office (Disnaker). *Company and business sector employment data for 2023 in Wonogiri* [Unpublished data]

thesis. However, women's expanded responsibilities have not always translated to increased decision-making power over major investments or land use. Understanding these economic patterns provides important insight into how women navigate the gender dynamics amid rural transformation.

4.5. Culture and Traditional Practices: *Nguri-uri Kabudayan Jawi*

Central Java is considered the heartland of Javanese culture due to its historical significance, including as the location for both the early Mataram kingdom (8th to 11th) and the later Mataram Sultanate (16th to 18th century), and its incorporation within the Majapahit empire (13th to 16th century, with its capital in eastern Java). Over the centuries, Javanese culture has been shaped by various religious beliefs that were introduced to the island. Beginning with indigenous animism (probably introduced by Austronesian people), followed by Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, each has left its mark on the social organisation and belief systems of Javanese society, forming a tradition of assimilating and managing diverse beliefs within the culture (Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012).

This historical layering of religious influences eventually reached its expression through Islamic monarchies, whose rule before independence strongly influenced the cultural landscape of regions under their rule, including Wonogiri (Koentjaraningrat, 1989). Today, with a predominantly Muslim population (97.28%, BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2023), Islamic-Javanese cultural traditions continue to exert a strong influence on local society, reinforcing elements of patriarchal order within its cultural framework (Musyafa, 2021). Yet, the expression of Islamic norms varies across regions as processes of cultural acculturation led local communities to adapt and reinterpret religious values in ways that reflect their historical, social, and cultural contexts.

This syncretic tradition means that contemporary Javanese culture retains deep connections to pre-Islamic values alongside Islamic teachings. When conducting research on villages in Central Java, Tickamyer and Kusujiarti (2012) noted that many aspects of Javanese culture that persist today can be traced back to ancient values influenced by beliefs that even predate the adoption of Hinduism. These include how Javanese people perceive the village as a social unit, holding beliefs in spiritual entities or powers beyond the material realm, and emphasising the importance of maintaining harmony between the spiritual and material. This cultural continuity explains why, despite rapid societal changes, Javanese people strive to preserve their culture

and traditions, often expressed as "*nguri-nguri kabudayan Jawi"* (maintaining or caring for Javanese culture).

The term *nguri-nguri* is used for "sowing seeds for farming"—the initial process of the cultivation period that symbolises the beginning of life. The metaphorical richness of this concept reveals much about Javanese cultural values. Mbah Pardi[47], a senior resident in one of the villages, explained that the values that they have to "*nguri-nguri kabudayan Jawi*" have been passed down from the older generation:

> As an expression of gratitude to God Almighty, we are looking after and keeping our cultural traits and traditional practices because we also believe that the culture passed down by our ancestors aims to maintain the village's harmony, protect our people, maintain the unity among our people, and honour our ancestors.

The harmony and unity values that Mbah Pardi described manifest concretely in everyday social interactions and communication patterns. Javanese expressions typically emphasise social harmony and proper positioning within community hierarchies (Nugrahani, 2019; Nadar, 2007; Wahyono & Pratama, 2017). These cultural values also shape communication styles, with expressions often employing indirect approaches, as directness can sometimes be perceived as offensive (Nugrahani, 2019; Nadar, 2007).

In their efforts to preserve their culture, Javanese people strive to uphold their values and traditional practices, passing them down from one generation to the next and adapting them to changes. Traditional cultural practices such as *batik*[48], *wayang kulit* (shadow puppetry), traditional dance, and *gamelan* (traditional music) are still prevalent throughout Java, particularly in rural areas and cultural heritage sites. During my time in the research villages, ceremonies and performances were conducted for various occasions, demonstrating the continued vitality of these cultural forms. This cultural commitment often creates tangible economic pressures for rural households, as maintaining traditions requires time and financial resources. In Wonogiri, for instance, a human resources officer at a major factory expressed concern about employees frequently taking leave to attend ceremonies and social events.[49] More broadly, the financial obligations of cultural participation represent a substantial household expense. Many participants highlighted their significant expenditures on what they called "social activities", such as contributing money for family, friends, neighbours, or the

[47] Interview, 8 February 2023
[48] Traditional textile art involves a dyeing technique where patterns are created on fabric using wax as a resist.
[49] Interview, 10 April 2023

village's special occasions or needs. As they view the village as a social unit, Javanese people tend to feel a sense of obligation and social pressure to provide resources, financial support, or labour for those kinds of activities. Tickamyer and Kusujiarti (2012) noted that those practices are an attempt to maintain order in various aspects of life, manifesting from a pressure to live in conformity with the local norms and fulfil social duties.

This sense of obligation is also evident in intergenerational care arrangements, which create webs of reciprocal responsibility within extended families. There is a strong expectation for children to care for aging parents, often leading to multigenerational households or close proximity living arrangements, as Geertz (1961) documented in *The Javanese Family*. Geertz described the household structure in Javanese communities as typically comprising a nuclear family unit consisting of a husband and wife, with additional adult members, often primary relatives of either spouse. These care expectations operate through the same indirect communication, which involves subtle pressure. Parents in the villages expressed how they never explicitly request financial support from their children once they establish their own families, instead accepting whatever assistance is offered. Adult children, however, expressed a feeling of obligation to provide financial support to their parents, especially if they are unable to earn a living. Wahyu[50], one of the participants, shared an example of how his parents sometimes expressed their needs indirectly:

> For example, a couple of weeks ago, my parents mentioned that their harvest from the last season wasn't very successful, and they were facing financial difficulties. Though they didn't directly request money, I understood that they were hoping for assistance from their children.

These care relationships operate as reciprocal arrangements that distribute responsibilities across generations. Working parents often rely on grandparents for informal childcare, treating it as a natural extension of family obligations. These intergenerational care arrangements, however, create gendered burdens as women typically bear primary responsibility for their coordination, with an additional layer of responsibility for those who are also engaging in economic activities.

These family dynamics reflect cultural patterns of respect and hierarchy that Williams (1991) identified as central to Javanese social organisation. Respecting parents and older people in traditional Javanese culture is also indicative of the value placed on manners. This emphasis on respect exemplifies the wider cultural value placed on proper social conduct, which

[50] Interview, 17 February 2023

manifests in everyday interactions through practices such as using honorifics based on age, status, or relationship. This hierarchical awareness extends to language use, where Javanese people demonstrate respect through linguistic distinctions that extend beyond a simple formal-informal divide. The casual Javanese language is referred to as *ngoko*, while the formal is known as *krama*. However, depending on the context and the person being addressed, both formal and informal languages encompass several different types and levels (Damariswara, 2016; Suherman, 2009; Brakel, 1969).

Tickamyer and Kusujiarti (2012) explained that this linguistic distinction stems from Javanese society's hierarchical social order and high consciousness of social status. Social hierarchy in the Javanese community comprises numerous levels, each with specific duties, expectations, and rights to respect and deference. In social interactions, individuals are expected to act according to the norms based on their position in this hierarchical structure, which includes the use of different speech levels denoting social status. For example, it is generally considered inappropriate for younger people to use informal language when addressing older people because they are expected to show respect to their elders. This same expectation is also implied in various hierarchical contexts, such as when people interact with authority figures like the village head.

While these cultural patterns are broadly Javanese, Wonogiri's position at the intersection of three provinces creates local variations. For instance, the language and accent in areas near East Java differ from those closer to Solo (Surakarta). These regional variations were already formally recognised in traditional characterisations dating to Mangkunegara I, who divided Wonogiri into five regions, each with a stereotyped personality, as documented by Suliyanto (2009) and on the official Wonogiri website. The northern Nglaroh area (closer to Surakarta) is characterised by spiritual and physical strength with communal orientation; the southern Sembuyan area (near the Indian Ocean) by obedience and deference to leadership; the southeastern Wiroko area by communal living but sensitivity to perceived slights; the eastern Keduwang area (where Soco is located) by extravagance but potential for positive development; and the northeastern Honggobayan area (including Kedunggupit) by rough demeanour masking underlying kindness and responsibility.

This brief introduction to cultural practices and traditional values in Wonogiri provides essential context for understanding rural changes and how they are interpreted and negotiated at the household and community levels in the subsequent chapters. Cultural elements are

particularly significant in understanding how gender relations are maintained or transformed in response to economic and social changes.

4.6. The Two Villages

Among the 251 villages in Wonogiri, two villages from distinct sub-districts were selected as study sites to represent different trajectories of rural transformation occurring in Java that may well reflect broader patterns documented across Indonesia and Southeast Asia. This comparative approach allows examination of how broader regional patterns—agricultural intensification, industrial development, and male out-migration—manifest differently depending on local conditions and proximity to economic opportunities. Kedunggupit, located in Sidoharjo District just 16km from the Regency centre, is a more urbanised village where manufacturing growth and improved infrastructure have created new opportunities for women's economic participation. Soco, situated in Slogohomo District, 37km from the centre, offers insights into how gender dynamics evolve in a more traditionally agricultural setting, while also experiencing significant male out-migration. Together, these villages illuminate how the same broader forces of rural transformation—documented throughout Java and beyond—produce different implications for rural landscape and their gender relations depending on local accessibility, economic opportunities, and development trajectories.

Understanding these village contexts required piecing together local histories through community knowledge, as formal documentation proved limited. I searched related records and publications; however, due to the limited availability of literature and records, including those stored in the village office, I gathered community leaders for historical discussions and interviewed older residents to reconstruct the village's development patterns.

Kedunggupit represents the urbanising village trajectory. The village name derives from *kedung*, referring to a relatively deep pool or pit within a river, combined with *gupit*, signifying narrowness or a resemblance of the *kedung* to being pinched by its surroundings.[51] The village reports (2021) mentioned that Kedunggupit covers an area of 383 hectares, comprising 195 hectares of rice fields (wetland), 85 hectares of dryland, 2 hectares allocated for plantations, and 101 hectares designated for other purposes such as settlements (20 hectares) and home gardens (10 hectares). The agricultural area is mostly used for rice cultivation, although there is also a small portion that grows vegetables and teak or silk tree plantations. Among the 298

[51] Village history discussions, 7 February 2023

farming families, 148 own agricultural land, while 150 do not. The size of land ownership in the village, in general, is decreasing as people continue to divide it among their children as inheritance. “In the past, we believed that more children meant more fortune. Most families had many children, leading to the eventual division of their land among them all,” one of Kedunggupit hamlet’s heads explained[52]. According to the same Village Report (2021), Kedunggupit has 3,320 residents across nine hamlets, with balanced gender distribution (1,676 males, 1,644 females) and approximately 2,000 people of working age. However, official employment statistics reveal the limitations of formal data collection in capturing rural economic realities. Records show only 523 people in documented occupations, 318 individuals working as farmers (from 298 farming households), 40 in services, 47 in craftsmanship, and 118 in other fields, representing only about 25% of the working-age population.

This underrepresentation of non-farm livelihoods reflects challenges in documenting rural employment patterns, where individuals often engage in multiple occupations or informal work arrangements. Wonogiri’s government officials[53] acknowledged these data limitations, noting several examples where official records fail to capture economic realities. The gap between official records and observed reality is often striking: village records show no registered entrepreneurs despite clear evidence of small business activities throughout the village; livestock records indicate 1023 households raising chickens and 700 raising goats, failing to capture other common livestock activities, such as cattle rearing, which was frequently observed during fieldwork. Rather than invalidating official data, these inconsistencies show how rural households typically layer multiple income sources, combining farming with informal economic activities that often go unrecorded in official statistics.

Given that reports may not entirely reflect people’s occupations and livelihoods, I sought explanations from local residents. According to participants[54], Kedunggupit’s transformation reflects broader patterns of rural economic diversification occurring across Java. During the 1970s-1980s New Order period, while farming was the primary occupation, the village’s strategic location between Wonogiri’s town centre and its eastern regions established it as an important transportation hub, especially for agricultural trade. Many residents worked as *pengepul* (agricultural collectors), resellers, or merchants alongside their farming activities, creating livelihood diversification that would later facilitate adaptation to industrial

[52] Interview, 8 March 2023
[53]Interview, 8 December 2022, 13 February 2023, 15 February 2023,
[54]Village history discussions, 7 February 2023; Farmer group meeting, 10 February 2023; PKK Meeting 11 February 2023; Interview, 8 March 2023, 11 April 2023.

employment opportunities. Today, more community members combine farming with manufacturing employment, reflecting broader patterns of rural-industrial integration documented throughout Java, Indonesia and even Southeast Asia.

The proximity of industrial development influences contemporary livelihood opportunities in Kedunggupit. During my initial fieldwork, I spotted a central garment manufacturing facility just 4 kilometres from the village, employing over 5,000 workers,[55] and a growing industrial zone that includes several medium-sized factories. This industrial area presents a striking contrast to the surrounding agricultural landscape, featuring modern infrastructure that includes well-built facilities, spacious roads, and urban-style development. These manufacturing facilities have become significant employers, drawing workers from villages throughout Wonogiri.[56] The factories' influence extends beyond direct employment, spurring growth in supporting sectors like transportation services, food stalls, and boarding houses.

This pattern of industrial development has ripple effects on rural communities, including Soco, the second village in the case study. Located 15 kilometres from Kedunggupit and further from these industrial zones, Soco represents a more rural area with different agricultural settings. Yet, even there, several residents commute to factory workers (Figure 11), demonstrating how industrial development creates graduated zones of influence.

Figure 11: Factory workers from Soco getting off the shuttle at the drop-off point, 26 January 2023

[55] Interview with the manager of company's Human Resources Département, 10 April 2023
[56] Interview with Wonogir's Department of Labor and Employment, 30 May 2023

Situated in Slogohimo District, Soco is approximately 37 km away from Wonogiri's central government. According to stories from community figures who participated in discussions, the village, which currently comprises 4 hamlets, derived its name from an unpleasant tale:

> During the kingdom era, there was a plan to establish a royal village in the area due to the presence of a spring. However, when excavation and construction began, workers sent by the kingdom experienced itching on their bodies due to bites from some kind of small insects. Consequently, people sent by the Monarch at the time believed the place was unfavourable if any royal residences were to reside there. In the old Javanese term, it was called Soco, which means defect or flaw.[57]

Spanning 272 hectares, Soco comprises 89 hectares of rice fields (wetland), 43 hectares of dryland, 9 hectares of plantations, and 3 hectares of reservoirs and lakes, with the remainder designated for other purposes (Village Report, 2021). Village-level data on land ownership reveals that out of 1,218 households, approximately 877—or about 72%—are recorded as not owning land assets. However, village-level land ownership data reveals significant inconsistencies that reflect the poor quality of local record-keeping. At the household level, approximately 877 out of 1,218 households (72%) are recorded as landless, yet individual-level records suggest 2,883 out of 3,730 residents (77%) lack land ownership. This discrepancy likely stems from informal land arrangements and the common practice of registering land under a single household member's name, even when multiple family members have use rights or inheritance claims.

Among households recorded as land-owning, the distribution reveals extreme fragmentation: 456 household heads own between 0.1-0.2 hectares, 193 own 0.21-0.3 hectares, 170 own 0.31-0.4 hectares, and 58 own between 0.41-0.9 hectares. These predominantly micro-plots—with 65% of landowners holding less than 0.3 hectares—fall well below the threshold needed for subsistence farming, explaining why even nominally land-owning households must diversify income sources beyond agriculture. This concentration of tiny landholdings reflects the cumulative impact of generational land fragmentation through inheritance practices. Village government officials confirmed that land inherited by individuals who have migrated from Soco is commonly cultivated by family members who remain in the village, creating informal use arrangements that are poorly captured in official records. .

Despite the concentration of small landholdings and landlessness, agriculture remains Soco's economic foundation. Employment data reveals agriculture's continued centrality: of 3,148

[57] Village history discussions, 12 January 2023

working individuals, 1,140 work as farmers and 523 as agricultural laborers, representing over 52% of the workforce. Rice cultivation dominates agricultural production, supplemented by seasonal vegetable growing and other crops. However, the employment profile also demonstrates a notable economic diversification as households increasingly combine farming with other sources of income. The second largest occupational category comprises 325 people working as general entrepreneurs, while other significant employment categories include 242 private company employees, 625 livestock business owners, and various other occupations. From the total village population of 3,730, this employment data suggests a high labour force participation rate. Despite some inconsistencies in official data—another report from the same year shows slightly different population figures—all sources confirm agriculture's central role in village livelihoods. As Soco's village head explained:

> The residents living in Soco were, indeed, mostly farmers, and even if they were not, their activities were mostly still related to agriculture. However, several alternative occupations have emerged because households are looking for additional income, particularly in small business entrepreneurship and business employment, whether in factories or elsewhere.[58]

In Soco, of the working-age population, 934 are recorded as having irregular employment, suggesting they may combine farming with other income-generating activities. Government officials in both villages estimate that around 30% of the working-age population engages in migration or commuting, though several hamlet leaders suggest even higher estimated numbers of circular migrants from their village, particularly during non-farming seasons. This pattern reflects the prevalence of occupational multiplicity, where residents maintain their farming activities while also engaging in circular migration as construction workers, traders, and food vendors. In Kedunggupit, more villagers have now secured formal employment in urban areas. Unlike traditional seasonal migrants who typically returned home during planting and harvest seasons, these workers are bound by more rigid schedules that restrict their ability to participate in agricultural activities in their village. This shift signals a transition toward more permanent or long-term migration, marking a significant departure from the earlier pattern of circular migration that once enabled villagers to remain actively engaged in farming while seeking supplementary income elsewhere.

Kedunggupit and Soco's trajectories demonstrate how global rural transformation processes mediated by local conditions may produce different pathways for livelihood change and gender

[58] Interview, 24 November 2022

relations. While both villages experience the same broader forces documented across Southeast Asia—agricultural intensification, industrial development, male out-migration, and livelihood diversification—their specific outcomes may differ based on proximity to manufacturing centres, educational access, and historical economic roles. Kedunggupit's industrial accessibility has fostered more permanent migration and formal employment for both men and women, while Soco's agricultural focus sustains circular migration patterns that maintain stronger connections to farming.

By reflecting broader patterns of rural transformation, Wonogiri serves as a relatively representative case for examining how women experience and navigate shifting gender roles in a reasonably well-connected, high population density rural region of Southeast Asia. This representativeness means that insights from Wonogiri can illuminate broader processes of gender transformation occurring across rural communities throughout the region. At the same time, Wonogiri retains its own distinctive cultural and historical context, offering a lens into how universal dynamics of rural change are locally mediated, negotiated, and experienced—an issue further explored in the following chapters.

Chapter 5: The Dominant Processes of Rural Change and Livelihood Shifts in Wonogiri

To get to Soco Village in *Kecamatan* (sub-district) Slogohimo, I've been told to take a bus and ask the driver to stop and drop me at *Pasar* Kepuh (Kepuh Market). Although it is a famous drop-off and pick-up location in Soco, no *Pasar* Kepuh is recorded or pinned on Google Maps or other Global Positioning System (GPS) maps of Slogohimo. When I was at the location, there was no market there. The traditional market that I remember once being there was gone entirely. There were only two small street food sellers, and they were relatively quiet. I was told that the emergence of mobile vegetable traders and improved accessibility to Slogohimo Market—the more extensive market in the sub-district centre—had affected the viability of Kepuh Market, which was eventually abandoned around 15 years ago (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Empty stalls at Kepuh Market, 4 January 2023

Pak Yatno, a vegetable seller, recalled:

> I moved here when I married my wife. It was 20 years ago. Only a few people decided to sell vegetables door to door, and I was one of them. Back then, we could make good money selling vegetables door to door instead of bothering our neighbours to exchange vegetables or waiting for the market to open or going to other markets in distant locations.[59]

His wife, Bu Yarti,[60] remembers that the market operated only twice a week according to the Javanese calendar cycle known as *Pasaran Jawa*—a traditional five-day market cycle that was integrated with the Gregorian calendar.[61] Many vendors at Kepuh Market were farmers, either selling agricultural goods or engaging in barter transactions for essential items, mostly vegetables, herbs, and other foods. The non-farmer sellers in Kepuh Market typically travelled between different villages in the region, coordinating their sales with the various opening dates of traditional markets.

Bu Yarti's relatives used to be traders in Kepuh Market but discontinued as they aged. Others moved their businesses to Slogohimo market, while others became mobile traders carrying baskets of vegetables door-to-door (in the 1990s), later upgrading to bicycles, then motorcycles, and eventually cars. Over time, younger family members of Bu Yarti's concluded that selling at Kepuh Market was no longer profitable. With better access to education compared to two decades ago, and with more diverse job opportunities, the younger generation began to favour occupations offering higher or more stable incomes. Many chose to migrate out of the village in pursuit of these prospects.

The adoption of new facilities and technology transformed access to markets and employment, expanding economic opportunities. Simultaneously, improved educational access equipped younger generations with skills for occupations that previous generations could not pursue. The shift from carrying baskets on foot to using motorised transport reflects household capacity to mobilise different forms of capital in pursuit of better livelihood outcomes. These demonstrate the adaptive strategies rural households use to reconfigure their livelihoods in response to evolving circumstances. However, sometimes these adaptive strategies were not experienced uniformly. For instance, while some traders successfully relocated to larger markets or adopted

[59] Interview, 6 April 2023
[60] Interview, 6 April 2023
[61] For example, if a market operated every *Legi* in the Javanese cycle, it might be open twice in one week when *Legi* fell on both Monday and Saturday of that week

mobile commerce, others—particularly older residents lacking access to new technologies or relevant skills—were increasingly marginalised from emerging opportunities.

These uneven outcomes illustrate a fundamental characteristic of rural transformation: institutional change creates winners and losers based on differential access to assets and adaptive capacity. The closure of Kepuh Market exemplifies this dynamic, showing how local changes often mirror broader shifts in rural economic structures. Traditionally, farmers' markets served as vital economic and social hubs, facilitating the exchange of agricultural goods and sustaining rural livelihoods (Lee, 2017; Angmor, 2012). This is one of several reasons why the Indonesian government has launched initiatives to revitalise some traditional markets to support small-scale traders (Kristanti & Karsihan, 2020; Prastyawan et al., 2015). Yet, in the case of Kepuh Market, the response from villagers was largely pragmatic. Out of 103 participants from Soco, only two expressed dismay over the loss of Kepuh Market, mainly out of sentimental attachment. Most were indifferent, as larger markets like Slogohimo remain vibrant. Farmers have adapted by selling produce there, to middlemen or to vegetable vendors like Pak Yatno. As a villager explained, "Now everyone has a motorcycle, so they have no problem going to Slogohimo Market instead of Kepuh".[62]

This transformation illustrates how shifting vulnerability contexts—such as improved infrastructure, greater mobility, resource decline and expanded educational access—create new opportunities while making some traditional livelihood strategies obsolete. Rural households increasingly engage with the market economy in new ways and shift away from solely traditional agriculture-based livelihoods by developing diversified livelihood portfolios that strategically combine various forms of capital to pursue more sustainable outcomes. These patterns of adaptation raise important questions about how rural transformation processes unfold in practice and what they mean for rural communities.

The following analysis in this chapter addresses my first research question: What are the dominant processes of rural transformation and livelihood change occurring in the case study sites in Central Java? Drawing on extensive fieldwork, this chapter identifies several key themes in how rural communities are experiencing and responding to change. First, I examine how participants perceive and navigate rural development, focusing on how changes in infrastructure, education, and economic opportunities over recent decades have altered their

[62] Interview, 26 January 2023

access to different forms of capital and expanded their livelihood options. Second, I analyse the crucial role of migration and off-farm employment in reshaping rural livelihoods as adaptive strategies that enable households to diversify risk and access new income streams. Third, I explore how these changes affect agricultural practices, demonstrating how families maintain farming connections not merely for economic returns but as forms of social, cultural, and financial security within diversified livelihood portfolios. Finally, I investigate the cultural dimensions of these shifts, examining how traditional practices and community relationships evolve in tandem with new social and economic realities.

By identifying and explaining the key processes of rural transformation and livelihood change, I demonstrate how these processes are altering, while simultaneously being shaped by, the economic and social fabric of rural communities. My analysis reveals that while traditional institutions like farmer markets may decline, communities demonstrate remarkable adaptability in developing alternative livelihoods. These adaptations have profound social implications beyond economic changes, as they are reshaping rural demographics, social identities, and cultural practices.

5.1. Wonogiri Then and Now: The Lived Experience of Rural Development in Wonogiri

"It's so much better now,"[63] reflected Mbah Parmin (82) and Mbah Tarmi (72), echoing the sentiments of many elderly participants when reflecting on how their quality of life has changed since their childhood. When asked what had improved, they spoke of many aspects—from basic infrastructure like electricity and roads to their ability to afford things, from proper clothes to electronic products like televisions and mobile phones. "Back then," they recalled, "people only thought about the basic *sandang, pangan, papan* (clothes, food, and shelter)." Today, expectations have expanded to include internet access, education, and other contemporary goods and services. Although they voiced concerns about rising living costs and declining value of agricultural goods, they maintained that overall living conditions have undoubtedly improved. In their view, people in their village now can access more, afford more, and live more easily than ever before.

[63] Interview, 7 January 2023

Many participants pointed to infrastructure as the most visible sign of transformation in the villages. Roads have been widened and paved, electricity is more reliable, electric pump wells now support the water supply, and every home has improved sanitation. Mbah Tarmi recalled a time when the entire village once relied on natural springs. In the 1980s and 1990s, people began digging their own wells, but water still had to be drawn by hand. The introduction of electric pumps then improved the situation: water became easily accessible and led to the integration of toilets within the main house building, eliminating the need for separate structures.

Infrastructure development in Kedunggupit and Soco villages has improved access to essential services in Wonogiri town, including health facilities. Healthcare has expanded, and the regency now has nine hospitals (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2023b) even if these are located in more urbanised areas, resulting in uneven access. While Kedunggupit, which is closer to the central town, only needs to travel ten kilometres to the nearest hospital, residents of Soco must travel 32 kilometres. To address local needs, a decentralised network of 34 *Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat (Puskesmas)* or Community Health Centres has been established across sub-districts, five of which are equipped to provide inpatient services. This public infrastructure is further supported by an expanding network of private clinics, general practitioners, and midwifery services available in nearly every village, enhancing the overall accessibility of primary healthcare.

At the village level, the Integrated Maternal and Infant Health Service (*Pos Layanan Terpadu, Posyandu)*—introduced during the Suharto era—has evolved further over the past two decades,[64] with a major stunting prevention program in 2018. In both villages, midwives have been stationed to promote supervised childbirth, provide basic health services, and actively engage in community health education. In response to the demographics of the aging population, both villages now also operate *Posyandu Lansia* (Elderly Integrated Health Posts). This program, which began to expand in the early 2000s, now operates across all 251 villages in the regency. In Kedunggupit and Soco, these have become vital community institutions, providing free monthly health checks and consultations for older residents and serving as social gathering spaces. This program is significant given Wonogiri's aging population, as many younger residents migrate to urban areas for work, leaving behind elderly parents in the villages.

[64] Interviews with midwives and government officials, discussions during PKK meetings

Participants also emphasised improvement in education, with the expansion of secondary schools from being located only in urban centres to now being available across sub-districts. In Slogohimo sub-district, where Soco village is, a high school was established in 1999, followed by Sidoharjo sub-district, home to Kedunggupit village, in 2005. A crucial turning point in improving access to education was the introduction of the School Operational Assistance (BOS) program in 2005, followed by Government Regulation Number 48 of 2008 on Education Funding, which removed tuition fees in public schools. These policies significantly increased educational participation and attainment, with the number of school graduates continuing to increase over the last decade (Figure 13). The Net Enrolment Rate (*Angka Partisipasi Murni* or APM), which measures the percentage of students attending school at the appropriate age level, rose from 53% in 2005 (Bappeda Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2011) to 74% in 2022 (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2023a).

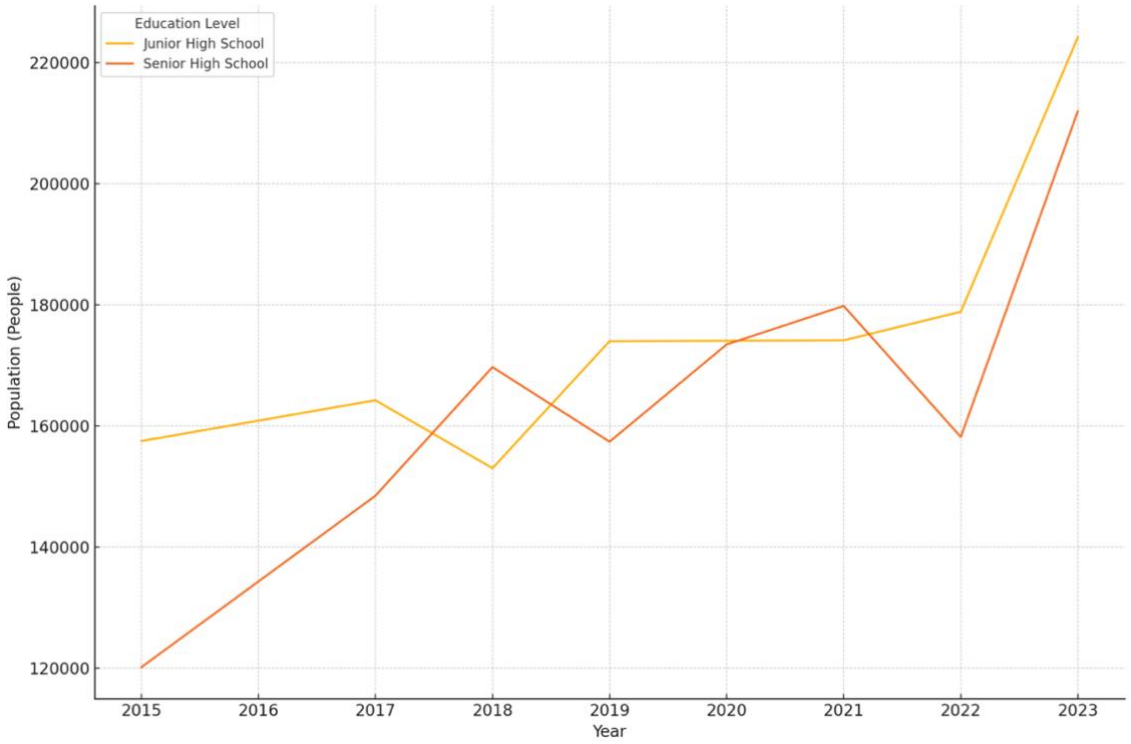

Figure 13: School Graduates Among Residents Aged 15 and Older in Wonogiri (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2023h)

This level of educational attainment reflects a profound generational shift. Mbah Parmin never attended school, while Mbah Tarmi left after just one year, having learned basic literacy until her family asked her to quit. Their children were only able to complete elementary and junior

high school, as the family couldn't afford the fees and needed them to contribute to the household income. Today, their grandchildren are completing high school or vocational school and even pursuing university education.

The expansion of educational access has played a crucial role in diversifying livelihood opportunities while enhancing rural-urban interactions, enabling greater participation in off-farm work, including migratory work. Migration for work is often seen as a 'way out' of poverty for many in Wonogiri. In earlier decades, however, limited education restricted migrants to mostly informal physical labour and service jobs. As Mbah Tarmi, a former migrant, recalled:

> Most of us end up working as construction or domestic workers, taking on casual jobs, or trying to sell something in the cities. Many of us who ventured into business relied on traditional skills passed down through generations, like making and selling jamu (herbal drinks) or food. You might earn good money one day, but the next day, you could suddenly lose your job.[65]

Mbah Parmin's son, a construction worker, noted a growing demand for skilled construction workers, particularly in urban centres, and higher wages for workers from Wonogiri due to their recognised craftsmanship expertise and quality:

> While other construction workers are typically offered around Rp 110,000 to Rp 150,000, people are willing to pay around Rp 120,000 to Rp 200,000 for construction workers from Wonogiri, depending on their skills.[66]

The economic benefits of this improved migration landscape have contributed to broader transformations in rural life itself. Improved quality of life over the past two decades, with remittances from migrants contributing to these changes, has altered the lived experience of rural residents. Villagers' needs and aspirations have expanded to include modern amenities and opportunities. As Mbah Tarni observed:

> Now, every household has at least one motorcycle, a television, and a fridge. Like me, my children bought them for me. In the past, we had to go to wealthy households just to watch television.[67]

The transformation extends beyond material improvements to reshape the social fabric of rural life. These visible changes in household living standards have heightened aspirations for mobility, with migration increasingly viewed as a proven pathway to a better life. However,

[65] Interview, 7 January 2023
[66] Interview, 7 January 2023
[67] Interview, 7 January 2023

the benefits are differentiated—a reality that warrants closer examination of how social position, power relations, and gender dynamics shape who ultimately gains from migration opportunities.

5.2. Leaving Behind for A Better Life

5.2.1. Wonogiri and Circular Migration

The practice of leaving one's village in Wonogiri has historical roots in what locals call *merantau*—the act of leaving one's hometown to relocate to another place, often entailing a prolonged stay or settlement to pursue a livelihood or education. According to Koentjaraningrat (1985), this migratory tradition extends back to the eighteenth century when many Javanese people were either sent as labourers or migrated willingly to various destinations. Mbah Wardi, who is nearly 70 years old, reflected:

> Agricultural conditions in Wonogiri back then [during her childhood] were very challenging; the dry land conditions often hindered productive work. Consequently, many villagers sought opportunities beyond the village boundaries to sustain their livelihoods.[68]

His sentiment, echoed by other elderly participants, reveals how environmental constraints and agricultural challenges have driven mobility patterns in this region of Central Java. These early patterns of movement laid the groundwork for more structured forms of migration during the New Order period, with the state-led transmigration program targeting Java's densely populated regions (Tirtosudarmo, 2009). Among these was the *Bedol Desa* project, which involved relocating entire communities to make way for the dam (see Chapter 4). At the same time, the urban development agenda of the 1970s centred on Jakarta and created unprecedented labour demands through infrastructure development, drawing workers from rural regions like Wonogiri into both formal and informal urban sectors (Munandar, 2022; Pradita, 2015).

Unlike the permanent resettlement envisioned by transmigration, this urban-bound movement gave rise to circular migration patterns. Migrants pursued temporary work in cities while maintaining strong ties to their home villages. Purnomo (2009) documents how this circularity became characteristic of Wonogiri's migration patterns, with many intending to return home eventually. These circular migrants came to be known as *Kaum Boro* (as mentioned in Chapter

[68] Interview, 21 January 2023

4). During my fieldwork, participants consistently used *boro* to reference circular urban migration; the term has become intrinsically linked with Wonogiri.

The extent of circular migration from Wonogiri is difficult to measure accurately (see Chapter 4). In Soco village, for instance, official records listed only one family working outside Wonogiri, yet observations and interviews revealed a different story. Pak Edi, a local hamlet head, estimated:

> In my area alone, I'd estimate that nearly half the households have someone working in Jakarta or other cities. Many families have older siblings who got married and now work in the cities with their spouses. Even I, despite being the hamlet head, run a business in a neighbouring city and spend my weekends there.[69]

The motivations driving contemporary migration have expanded alongside broader economic transformations. While senior research participants attribute the historical difficulty in earning an agricultural income, current circular migrants pointed to a lack of "well-paid" job opportunities in Wonogiri and the relatively low minimum wages. In 2024, Wonogiri's regional minimum wage (*Upah Minimum Regional* or UMR) of IDR 2,047,500 per month (approximately US$125 in 2024) was the second lowest in Central Java. This contrasts with the minimum wages in Greater Jakarta—a primary destination for Wonogiri's migrants—where the UMR was more than double this amount (IDR 4,579,541 per month in Bogor and IDR 5,343,430 per month in Bekasi). Despite some local growth in manufacturing, circular migration remains a preferred livelihood strategy. In focus group discussions with high school and vocational students, all expressed aspirations to work outside Wonogiri. As one student put it, "I aim to work in Jakarta so I can send more money; in Jakarta, IDR 500,000 is considered a small amount, but once sent home, it could be significant."[70]

These wage gaps continue to drive migration. Moreover, migrants now pursue increasingly diversified strategies to capitalise on urban opportunities, shifting away from their one-time dependence as *jamu* and *bakso* (meatball) sellers, construction workers and domestic helpers, towards manufacturing and other sectors. As the Head of Wonogiri's Labour and Employment Department emphasised, "We want to change the past image about Wonogiri that was known as a place to find domestic helpers to a supplier of varied high-skills workers."[71] She highlighted that this expanding opportunity is supported by the government, which collaborates

[69] Interview, 17 February 2023
[70] FGD, 8 February 2023
[71] Interview, 30 May 2023

with the private sector and vocational schools, facilitating direct pathways for students allowing earlier recruitment and immediate employment upon graduation.

Alongside formal educational routes, social networks serve as crucial mechanisms through which migrants navigate economic opportunities and challenges in urban areas. The role of ASTARI, a Wonogiri meatball sellers' association (Figure 14), illustrates how these networks transform into formal institutions that sustain migrant livelihoods. Beginning as a small rotating savings and credit group—locally known as *arisan*[72]—where members contributed to a collective fund through regular meetings, the group provided interest-free capital to fellow migrants unable to secure bank loans. This group evolved into a formal savings and loan cooperative comprising around 1000 members that now extends loans to various small enterprises from Wonogiri, particularly those from members' home villages. Beyond financial support, established vendors also train family members and neighbours in technical skills (such as meatball making) and business management, enabling them to eventually operate their own branches.

Figure 14: ASTARI's Saving and Loan Cooperative Office, Wonogiri, 21 March 2023

[72] *Arisan* is the Indonesian term for a Rotating Savings and Credit Association (ROSCA)—a community-based savings system where members contribute regularly to a fund that rotates among participants through a lottery system.

Migrant communities play a crucial role in sustaining and expanding these networks by assisting newcomers and facilitating access to job opportunities. By leveraging social capital, migrants from Wonogiri create sustainable economic pathways, transforming individual success into collective opportunity by reproducing both financial and human capital within their communities. This highlights the important relationship between migration and rural development. The following section examines how migrants' ongoing connections to their villages of origin, manifested through remittances and other forms of support, contribute to rural transformation in Wonogiri.

5.2.2. Migrants' Contribution to a Better Rural Life

The institutionalised support networks examined above represent only one dimension of how migration transforms rural Wonogiri. As Wonogiri's regent observed, "I believe that without migrants' contribution, the village wouldn't achieve its current [economic] state."[73] The pursuit of better economic opportunities has driven economic diversification at both household and village levels, with households increasingly combining farming with non-farming income, especially through migration. This section examines how migrants contribute to what they describe as a "better life", while questioning whose better life is actually being achieved. By analysing migrants' contributions to their home villages alongside their often-difficult lived experiences in urban areas, I uncover a pattern where individuals frequently endure hardship to prioritise collective benefits, as migrants often sacrifice their own comfort to improve their family's and village's economic conditions.

Bu Sum and Pak Marto are one couple among many who migrated from Wonogiri and eventually returned home to become farmers. When questioned about their income, they expressed dissatisfaction, stating that their earnings as landless farmers are insufficient for a comfortable life. They are even classified as underprivileged people, so they receive regular financial assistance through the government's Social Help Program (*Bantuan Sosial* or Bansos). However, their neighbours do not see them as having an impoverished life since they have children, who people consider quite successful migrants, supporting them. During my visits, Pak Marto proudly described gifts from his children—furniture, electronics, and regular money for daily expenses—while Bu Sum shared how these same children working in Greater Jakarta have built houses and own cars.

[73] Interview, 16 April 2023

Village officers from both study sites observed a similar phenomenon during the Bansos Fund distribution events: residents officially classified as poor frequently arrive in cars or expensive motorcycles driven by family members. Wonogiri's regent emphasised this fundamental measurement issue by expressing his dissatisfaction with remittances not being well-recorded and counted part of the regional income for Wonogiri: "Remittances are a big thing here in Wonogiri, but too bad [for the government] there is no reliable record about it, and it cannot be categorised as regional income."[74] While remittances between spouses are recognised as household income, substantial flows from adult children to parents fall outside administrative frameworks, creating what the regent called a key cause of poor targeting of the Bansos program.

Circular migration involves the remittance of billions of rupiahs by migrant workers to their families in Wonogiri (Purnomo, 2009; Purnomo & Chuzaimah, 2004). The case of Pak Marto and Bu Sum serves as an illustration, demonstrating that farmers without land, who are typically categorised as poor by the government, have improved their lives by receiving remittances. In contrast, Bu Marijem, another farmer without land ownership, described[75] her financial struggles to afford necessities and having to borrow money from neighbours to cover unexpected expenses like medical costs. Her situation differs from Bu Sum and Pak Marto in one crucial aspect: her only son engaged in casual jobs within the village rather than as a migrant. Different financial support from children significantly influences the overall economic situation of the household.

Hidayat (1991) emphasises that remittance-sending has transformed into a cultural norm among *Kaum Boro*, driven by their deep sense of attachment and familial connections to their place of origin. Migrant participants expressed a sense of obligation to support their parents and provide their children—who often stay in the village—with what they could not receive during their childhood, especially for education. They stated that improving their parents' quality of life is their duty as children, and trying their best to provide for their children is their duty as parents. Even those who have started their own families mostly continue to support their parents, though some noted that they might send less money than when they were single.

There is a long-stated belief in Wonogiri that the more money circular migrants send to their families, the more they help their families improve their socioeconomic status in the

[74] Interview, 16 April 2023
[75] Interview, 22 March 23

communities (Hidayat, 1991). This belief manifests in two patterns of spending. First, migrants invest in productive assets and economic security, particularly through land acquisition. For them, purchasing agricultural land serves multiple purposes: it provides a stable asset that can generate farming income, acts as financial security that can be sold if needed, and demonstrates economic capability within the community. Second, migrants engage in conspicuous consumption through visible markers of wealth. When sending money home or returning to the village, migrants often demonstrate their urban success by purchasing the latest electronic appliances, fancy furniture, or luxury vehicles.

As Agus, a migrant in Jakarta, noted, "having a new motorcycle or car shows everyone we are doing well in Jakarta; that's why my uncle once even borrowed money to upgrade the car before returning home at *Idul Fitri* [the Muslim feast at the end of Ramadhan]."[76] While land acquisition builds long-term economic stability, consumer purchases primarily serve to enhance social standing in the village (Julijanto et al., 2016; Purnomo, 2009; Hidayat, 1991). This pattern is evident in the proliferation of large, luxurious houses throughout Wonogiri; many occupied only by elderly parents or grandchildren.

The most striking extreme example of this transformation in Wonogiri is a village known colloquially as *Kampung Milyader*, or Billionaire Village, due to the supposed resemblance of its houses to those typically owned by billionaires (Figure 15). Elaborate multi-story homes are juxtaposed against the rural landscape. Situated in a remote mountainous area without any mass transportation (Figure 16), the village presents a unique demographic picture: teenagers on expensive motorcycles cruise past grand houses where elderly residents gather on ornate terraces (Figure 17). Local residents explained that most properties belonged to migrants earning money in other cities, often working as meatball sellers, leaving their children under the care of their grandparents in the village. While the village has relatively few working-age residents, economic activity is maintained through remittances.

[76] Interview, 9 May 2023

Figure 15: A typical house in Kampung Milyader, 14 January 2023

Figure 16: Landscape view of Kampung Milyader, 14 January 2023

Figure 17: Elderly residents at Kampung Milyader, 14 January 2023

The financial support sent by migrants to their families resulted in an increase in family expenditure, which catalysed the growth of various industries and services in Wonogiri. For instance, increased demand for house construction (and the need to fill these houses with contents) has led to the proliferation of businesses selling building materials and furniture lining the road to the village. In addition, they also support their villages' development by occasionally sending direct financial assistance. Deni, a migrant from Soco, explained:

> We are frequently asked to chip in, sending money for various purposes like road repairs, community events, and other communal needs. This is separate from the funds sent for our family's residence. I think it's normal as our administrative address is still in the village.[77]

Interviews with migrants revealed that they take pride in witnessing the overall improvement in their family's quality of life and their villages' development. I often witnessed migrants generously providing financial support or purchasing gifts for their extended family, neighbours, and friend's children. During the Ramadan[78] period, marked by the return of migrants to the two villages, migrants spent substantial amounts on their families and

[77] Interview, 18 February 2023

[78] Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic calendar, during which Muslims around the world practice fasting and engage in prayer, contemplation, and community activities.

communities, creating significant economic activity in the rural area. There was a surge in customers at stores and food merchants, with some goods being sold out—a phenomenon that does not happen on regular days.

Similar patterns have been identified in other studies on Wonogiri's migrants, indicating that they often extend their financial support to their home villages as long as they still have family members there (Purnomo, 2009). Despite no longer residing in the village for administrative purposes, many participants mentioned that they continue to contribute whenever their relatives or neighbours host a ceremony. In the study sites, I observed that migrants actively participated in social and celebratory events by returning home to assist with labour, purchasing necessities for the ceremonies, or sending monetary contributions when physical attendance was not feasible. These kinds of support serve what they refer to as "social purposes" to maintain good relations with other community members.

This place attachment is also reflected by mobility patterns, preferring temporary stays in urban areas rather than permanent settlement (Julijanto et al., 2016; Purnomo & Hasmarini, 2016), regularly returning to their villages to maintain their attachment to their home village and family. In FGDs[79] with students, they planned their future migrations and emphasised their intention to return home to reunite with their families regularly. Migrant participants also described their home villages as where they plan to spend their retirement years. This explains the frequent back-and-forth travel activities between Wonogiri and urban areas and the vacant houses in villages, which migrant workers' families maintain.

The frequent movement between urban and rural areas, and the associated flow of remittances, has catalysed diverse business growth in Wonogiri. This is reflected in the increasing contribution of the trade and services sector trend to the region's Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP), as seen in Figure 18. Since 2010, the "Total Trade and Services" category share of GRDP has consistently grown, rising from 49.45% to 58.37% in 2023.

[79] 23 January 2023, 8 February 2023

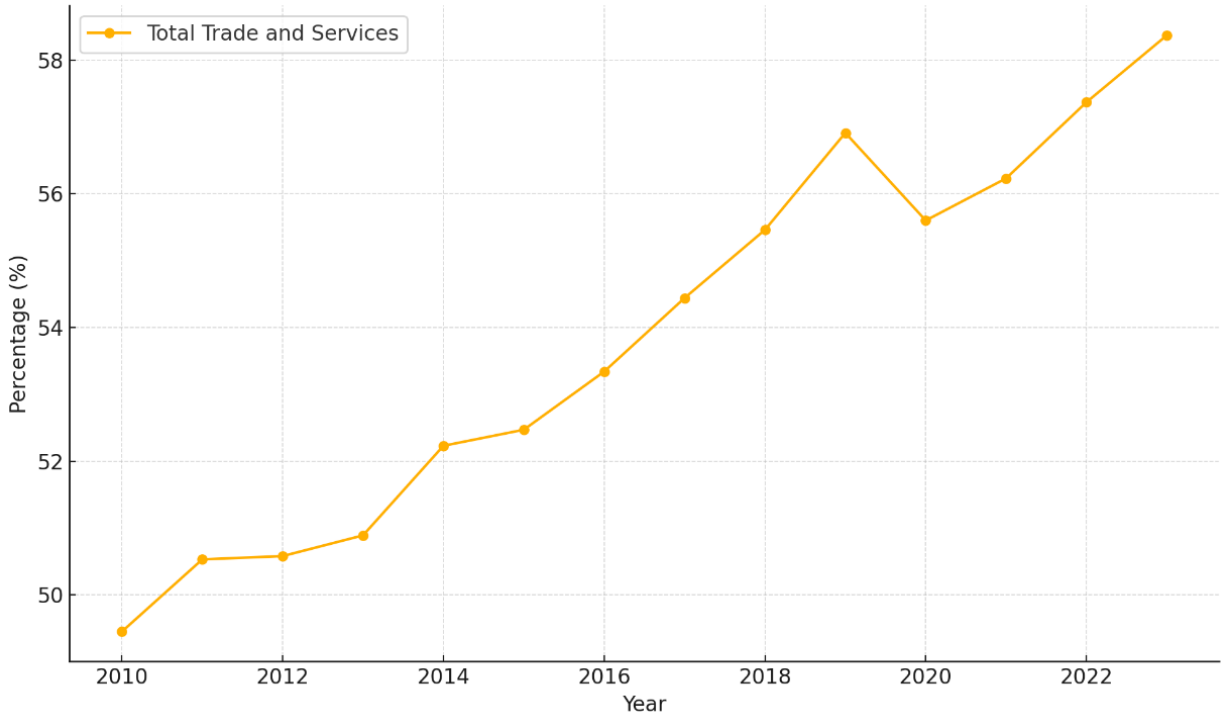

Figure 18: Total trade and services sectors as a percentage of GRDP from 2010 to 2023 (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2023b)

The experiences shared by participants demonstrate the significant role of *boro* activities in shaping patterns of rural development in Wonogiri. The remittances suggest migrants have reached a comfortable standard of living and are capable of sending surplus income home. However, the visible improvements in the villages mask the challenging reality of migrants' living conditions in urban areas. My visits to Greater Jakarta revealed that many migrants lived in extremely poor conditions, despite their financial support and investments in their home villages and their stated intention to pursue a better life. They often reside in cramped places with multiple family members; some even live in their market stalls (Figure 19). This pattern, also documented by Hidayat (1991), suggests that migrants' pursuit of a better life extends beyond their circumstances as individuals; it encompasses the well-being of their families and communities, often with considerable personal sacrifice.

Figure 19: Conditions of Wonogiri Migrants in Greater Jakarta: (Left) A narrow alley where multiple migrants rent small rooms; (Right) A migrant meatball vendor's living quarters, situated behind/in his stall, 20 February 2023.

5.3. The Growth of Off-Farm Rural Work

5.3.1. From Just a Farmer to More Than a Farmer

"If we rely solely on farming, the income is insufficient," was a recurring sentiment among farmer research participants in both study site villages. Despite improvements in irrigation and mechanisation, participants in both villages emphasised how their status as smallholder farmers, combined with low crop prices and rising expenses, created significant challenges in meeting household needs. This insufficiency of farming income, they explained, drives their gradual shift away from agriculture. Historically, limited job opportunities in the village meant that out-migration was often the only viable option. However, the expansion of local employment opportunities now offers alternatives for those choosing to remain in their villages, including families "left behind" by migrants.

Alongside migration, a growing array of off-farm rural employment opportunities has emerged, transforming the rural economic landscape in Wonogiri, following a clear trajectory over time. Before the 1980s, the jobs available were mostly related to agriculture, including jobs such as collectors, input providers or market traders. After the significant circular out-migration activities and the construction of the Mungkur Gajah Reservoir, the transportation and construction material business became more popular, especially in areas closer to the town

centre, such as Kedunggupit. In Soco, situated farther away from the central town, there were fewer businesses, typically on a smaller scale, with transportation service providers hailing from areas closer to the city centre.

The diversification of rural employment opportunities in Wonogiri has been significantly shaped by rural-urban interactions. As McGee (2008) explained, these dynamics often facilitate the transfer of urban practices and knowledge into rural areas. In Wonogiri, the interaction with cities has transformed livelihoods in rural communities, with technological advancements and new business adaptations. During the May 1998 Indonesian civil unrest,[80] for example, many migrants who lost their urban jobs returned to their hometowns to survive while bringing skills they acquired in the city and attempted to establish businesses in their villages.

A former migrant from Soco, for instance, utilised his skills and connections to initiate his own business in the village after losing his job as a gypsum ceiling trim worker in Surakarta due to the unrest. Over time, his gypsum ceiling business flourished, and he now employs around 10 to 15 people in his village (Figure 20). Witnessing his success, other people with similar skills followed suit, leading to a small cluster of at least five gypsum ceiling trim businesses in Soco that have survived over time. A similar trend was observed in Kedunggupit with the establishment of welding businesses.

Figure 20: A worker at a gypsum ceiling trim village factory, 12 January 2023

[80] The May 1998 Indonesia civil unrest (Kerusuhan 1998) was anti-government demonstrations in the Suharto era including incidents of massive violence.

Although numerous off-farm employment opportunities exist, many farmers with alternative income sources still opt for part-time or casual work, allowing them to combine on-farm and off-farm work. Pak Eko, a gypsum ceiling worker, exemplifies this flexible work arrangement, explaining, "I always take time off during planting and harvesting seasons."[81] Being paid daily allows him this flexibility, though his employer must coordinate with other workers—especially those who are also farmers—to ensure continuous production by arranging rotating schedules for their agricultural breaks. Even village-level government officials in both villages typically request time allocation to accommodate their farming responsibilities.

In Soco, flexible working hours are more common, enabling more residents to engage in farming activities. Meanwhile, in Kedunggupit, where several factories are situated, and commuting is easier due to urban proximity, residents often secure long-term employment with fixed hours. Youth participation in farming is also different between the two villages. In Soco, young people are more frequently seen in the fields helping their parents or grandparents than in Kedunggupit. Some young participants mentioned that they view their involvement as occasional assistance, 'helping' their parents or grandparents, rather than full-time farming.

This shift in how younger generations view their relationship to agriculture reflects intergenerational changes in Wonogiri's rural economic identity. Unlike them, older rural residents frequently self-identify as 'farmers' despite further conversations revealing that many have additional sources of income apart from crop sales, and these tend to be higher than farming. This reflects the evolving identity of farmers in Wonogiri as other livelihood options expand into these regions: from just a farmer to more than a farmer. As other scholars have long noted (Ellis, 1998; Ellis, 2000; Rigg, 2004), there has been a shift from rural people's exclusive reliance on agriculture to a more diversified economic base, offering opportunities to engage in varied forms of employment. These expanding options not only support rural economies through direct income generation but also foster broader forms of rural development and potentially social change.

5.3.2. Development of a Modern Manufacturing Sector

"Yes, all the roads were built because a factory was built," noted the hamlet head, emphasising the contribution of a manufacturing company near his village. Notwithstanding the significant environmental impacts, increased inequality and uneven development often associated with

[81] Interview, 4 January 2023

industrial expansion (Behera & Reddy, 2002), it is undeniable that the growing presence of manufacturing companies in rural areas can catalyse rural development by stimulating economic growth, improving infrastructure and improving human capital (Low, 2017).

The Wonogiri Labour and Employment Office (Disnaker Wonogiri, 2023) reported 491 companies currently registered and operating across Wonogiri—with many more unregistered businesses —each employing a minimum of 10 individuals. There were only four large-scale factories (employing over 100 people) in 2016 in Wonogiri (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2018), but this number had risen to 24 by 2023 (Disnaker Wonogiri, 2023). The clothing manufacturing sector is the largest, employing over 5,000 workers. There can also be significant multiplier effects; for instance, the construction of one large factory prompted the establishment of transportation services for employees, parking facilities, food stalls, and boarding houses in the vicinity to cater to the growing workforce.

During an interview with the Wonogiri regent,[82] he emphasised the government's efforts to foster industrial development, aiming to mitigate outmigration by creating job opportunities locally. He highlighted initiatives to promote the establishment of factories, encouraging entrepreneurs to invest in Wonogiri by facilitating access to land for construction purposes. Wonogiri officials acknowledged there are permissive regulations[83] aimed at encouraging construction projects, factory establishments, and the introduction of modern retail stores like franchise mini-markets, as these sectors are viewed as potential labour-absorbing sectors for the local workforce, thereby contributing to rural development. On the other hand, the representative from a garment manufacturing company with foreign investment in Wonogiri claimed[84] that the biggest consideration for building a factory in Wonogiri was its cost-competitiveness, particularly regarding low operational expenses and minimum wage standards for workers. The representative added that Wonogiri's ample non-residential land availability is another consideration. During my visit to the company, the presence of well-constructed roads, internet facilities, and modern stores gave the impression of a small modern city situated within a rural area.

Many participants emphasised how corporate investment by manufacturing companies had helped improve local infrastructure. Pak Kasino, a hamlet head in Kedunggupit, gave an

[82] 16 April 2023
[83] For example, Wonogiri District Regional Regulation Number 5 Of 2022 About Wonogiri Regency Industrial Development Plan 2022-2042.
[84] Interview, 10 April 2023

example of the impact of a multinational clothing factory located in a neighbouring sub-district, "that road was built from CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility); sometimes factories assist in the development of our village, depending on discussions with the community to address our needs."[85] He specifically identified the construction of roads, water supply systems, and internet connectivity infrastructure built through CSR. Indonesia's CSR regulations[86] require companies to address social and environmental impacts alongside their economic activities, thus shaping the development and social fabric of the local communities, even if this often falls well short of offsetting their actual environmental and social impacts.

Community experiences with CSR programs also vary across social groups. While Pak Kasino claimed that people in his hamlet were generally satisfied with these infrastructure projects, other hamlet heads in the village reported their limited involvement in CSR decision-making processes. One hamlet head mentioned that development is not evenly distributed across all hamlets, with benefits concentrated only in the hamlet nearest the factory. Despite these challenges in the distribution of funding, certain CSR initiatives—particularly those focused on basic infrastructure like roads and water systems—have garnered broad community support due to their visible benefits.

In addition to their infrastructure contribution, the aforementioned manufacturing company also offers skill development and free training sessions for residents. Unlike infrastructure development, these opportunities are not restricted to the village where the factory is located but extend to neighbouring areas. The range of skills training offered varies; some are geared towards addressing the company's human resource needs, enabling residents to acquire skills applicable to positions within the company, while others are focused on enhancing local people's livelihoods more broadly. In Kedunggupit, residents receive training in processing residual plastic waste from manufacturing production, with a fee provided for recycling activities. This enables local workers to acquire technical skills and expertise, thereby improving their employability and contributing to the overall development of a skilled workforce.

This case reflects wider trends observed by the OECD (2023), which notes that the manufacturing sector often brings technological innovations to rural areas, helping to disseminate knowledge and skills that boost local productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness.

[85] Interview, 5 February 2023
[86] Law No. 25 of 2007, articles 15 and 34 concerning Investment Regulation. Law Number 40 of 2007 concerning Limited Liability Companies Regulation.

In Wonogiri, this dynamic is further illustrated by the growth of vocational high schools (SMK). Although SMK students are typically required to pay tuition, research participants reported a strong preference for vocational education over regular public schools. Across Wonogiri, 22,057 students were enrolled in SMK in 2018, significantly more than the 10,592 students enrolled in regular high schools (SMA) and Madrasah Aliyah (MA) (BPS, 2018).[87] Discussions and interviews with village youth revealed that SMK enrolments were strongly motivated by perceptions of better job prospects in the manufacturing sector.

This Wonogiri experience illustrates how manufacturing development creates new livelihood opportunities in rural Java. While these enterprises have contributed to infrastructure development and skill enhancement in some areas, the benefits are not uniformly distributed, reflecting how differential access to human and social capital can shape fundamentally different livelihood outcomes and their presence can create new vulnerabilities. Manufacturing expansion introduces new vulnerabilities into rural livelihood systems—particularly dependence on external market forces and employment volatility—as became evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when factory closures in Kedunggupit left workers unemployed. Many laid-off workers returned to farming, demonstrating agriculture's continued function as a crucial fallback asset that buffers households against economic shocks within this changing vulnerability context. However, as manufacturing expansion continues, some of these same agricultural lands face pressure from industrial developers. Notwithstanding such tensions, a village head expressed his hopes for expanding manufacturing investment, even if it meant "sacrificing" rice fields:

> The central government approached us a couple of years ago. I even prepared potential locations—rice fields that could be converted or utilised for the factory. We're not sure what the current issue is. Is it the regulations that investors are facing that are causing them to hold back? We truly hope for this to move forward so the economy can grow.[88]

While manufacturing representatives and government officials emphasise collaborative efforts for inclusive development, evidence suggests more challenging outcomes. The uneven spatial distribution of manufacturing benefits—concentrated near urban centres while remote areas see limited gains—illustrates how vulnerability to economic shocks remains differentiated by geographic and social positioning. The much-touted partnerships between manufacturers and vocational schools primarily work with companies outside Wonogiri. Moreover, when

[87] Islamic senior high schools
[88] Interviews, 14 January 2023

conducted without proper mitigation, the drive for industrial expansion potentially threatens agricultural resilience, raising questions about long-term sustainability. This suggests that, despite their economic promise, current approaches to manufacturing-led rural development in Wonogiri may require more equitable distribution of benefits across rural communities and attention to how industrial growth can reduce vulnerabilities without undermining the diverse asset portfolios that enable rural household resilience.

5.4. Rural Change and Agriculture: Maintaining a Way of Living?

Bu Sum (Figure 21) and her husband, Pak Marto, are farmers who do not own the land they cultivate. They rent less than 0.5 hectares, a type of farmer in Indonesia known as *petani gurem*. The term *gurem*, which refers to a tiny tick often found on poultry, symbolises the precarious scale of their farming operations. During our conversations, Bu Sum and Pak Marto frequently shared, much like other farmers in the village, that their farming income would be insufficient to meet their needs without regular financial support from their children, who work in cities. This support enables them to make improvements to their house, purchase electronics, invest in gold, or even afford simple items like a proper bag or formal clothing. Their story reflects broader patterns of rural transformation observed across Southeast Asia, where smallholder farming persists despite profound economic and social changes (Rigg, 2016; Rigg, 2018).

Figure 21: A smallholder farmer, Bu Sum, works in her rented rice field, 17 April 2023.

This persistence of smallholder farming presents a paradox. It raises an important question: Why do smallholder farmers continue their agricultural practices despite relying on urban remittances and grappling with persistent agrarian challenges, such as low income, labour and fertiliser shortages? Here, I offer some explanatory insights that reveal how agriculture functions within rural livelihood portfolios in my case study sites.

First, for many farmers, agriculture is not just a means of livelihood but a fundamental aspect of their social identity. Even when they were migrating or living elsewhere, as in Bu Sum and Pak Marto's case, they maintained their identity as farmers. When questioned about their reason for continuing to be farmers despite their previous experiences working outside the village, Pak Marto and Bu Sum echoed each other's sentiments, stating, "We are farmers. We were born from a family of farmers, and farming is what we know."[89] Many participants expressed that their upbringing in farming families has deeply ingrained this way of life in them, making it an inseparable part of their identity.

Second, it seems to relate to food security. Participants highlighted the importance of having rice in their house. They stressed that cultivating rice provides a reliable source of sustenance, often expressing *beras itu awet* (rice is durable). By stocking rice in their households, they ensure access to food on a daily basis. Even though, depending on the seasons, farmers supplemented their income with secondary crops (*palawija*) like cassava and corn, they still prioritise rice cultivation to ensure a steady rice supply for daily consumption. They described that, with farming, they can grow their own food and potentially earn some extra income. Most farmers in both villages also allocate a portion of their land or backyard for livestock and growing vegetables like spinach and chilli, primarily to supplement their daily food consumption. In other areas of Wonogiri, agricultural practices vary with environmental conditions—farmers in higher altitude areas like Pracimantoro focus on horticultural crops such as shallots and garlic, while those in Giriwoyo have developed small-scale commercial fruit orchards, particularly durian and rambutan (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2023b).

The third reason for agricultural persistence lies in farming's role as people's backup livelihood. Participants, both farmers and migrants, mentioned that having land or keeping the family's farm serves as a safety net in case they lose their off-farm income. This practice

[89] Interview, 15 January 2023

reflects what Neilson (2025) describes as "fortress farming," wherein agricultural land and activities are maintained not primarily for maximising profits but as a means of ensuring security and preserving cultural heritage, as previously discussed in Chapter 2. From an SLF perspective, fortress farming represents a risk management strategy where agriculture serves multiple capital functions simultaneously: natural capital (land as asset), financial capital (fallback income source), social capital (maintaining community connections), and cultural capital (preserving identity and knowledge systems).

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated this backup function. During this period, numerous companies ceased operations, leading to widespread layoffs. Many circular migrants who lost their jobs returned to the villages and relied on farming for their survival. In Soco, some participants shared stories where families in the village supported urban relatives who were unable to return home due to travel restrictions by sending agricultural products. Similar patterns emerged in Kedunggupit (see section 5.3.2), where laid-off workers from nearby manufacturing operations resumed farming activities. Farming as a backup livelihood is also evident among migrant participants who plan to retire in the village. Some migrants expressed their intention to return home and engage in farming during their old age when finding employment in the cities becomes challenging.[90] This intention also reflects their strong connection to their rural roots and identity as farmers, particularly among migrants who still own land or houses in the village or plan to look after their parent's farm in the future. "My parents are farmers; that's why I will keep the land,"[91] one migrant explained.

However, unlike the migrants who maintain connections to agricultural identity, many village youth[92] could not envision themselves actively engaging in physical agricultural labour later in life. As evidenced by the focus group discussions,[93] the younger generation in Wonogiri rarely views farming as a desirable career path given the array of alternative off-farm employment opportunities. The older generation of farmers also discourages their children or grandchildren from becoming farmers. After all, it is perceived as a low-status job, even if this suggests a contradiction with also valuing farming as a marker of cultural identity. This generational shift reflects what White (2012, 2020) identified across Java, where agricultural disengagement operates through both structural constraints and changing cultural preferences. Structurally, young people face significant barriers: limited land access due to inheritance patterns,

[90] Interviews, 17-22 February 2023, 8-9 May 2023
[91] Interview, 9 May 2023
[92] FGD, 23 January 2023, 8 February 2023
[93] FGDs 23 January 2023, 8 February 2023

insufficient capital for agricultural intensification, and volatile crop prices that make farming financially risky. Nonetheless, many youths still view their farms as assets and express a desire to maintain agricultural operations on their land, mentioning that they would let their parents continue managing the farms or hire labour for this purpose. The connection to farming persists across generations, though its expression is different.

There are substantial challenges for maintaining farming in Wonogiri in the context of rural development. Many Indonesian stakeholders express concerns about the future of farming by highlighting the declining number of farmers across the country (Oktafiani et al., 2021; Susilowati, 2016). Labour shortages were indeed evident in both villages. In Kedunggupit, where off-farm employment options are more prevalent, landowners stressed that they often need to hire workers from other villages or sub-districts. At the same time, participants expressed reluctance to sell their land despite the challenges of finding labourers. Instead, some landowners in Kedunggupit are transitioning their fields from high-intensity rice cultivation to low-maintenance crops like mahogany trees. Meanwhile, in Soco, although many landowners have also expressed concerns about the shortage of agricultural labour, they have not reached the point of needing to hire workers from other sub-districts. Some farmers from Soco mentioned that their children often help their parents in the fields, even if they are migrants.

Income derived from off-farm work supplements household finances, ensuring that other family members can continue managing the farm despite challenging profitability. The story of Bu Sum and Pak Marto, mentioned earlier in this chapter, highlights this case. One of their children consistently returns home during planting and harvest seasons, while others contribute financially to hire labour and assist in renting rice fields. This example reaffirms previous research findings indicating that the expansion of non-agricultural activities in rural regions enables farm households to diversify their sources of income and reduce risk (Rigg, 2004).

The persistence of farming in Wonogiri embodies interactions between cultural identity, food security, and livelihood adaptation. This approach reflects the adaptive capacity that enables rural communities to navigate transformation while preserving valued elements of traditional life. Even as younger generations pursue opportunities in cities and factories, their continued investment in agricultural land and periodic return to farming labour reveals that rural households have crafted resilient strategies that preserve farming traditions while embracing economic transformation. This adaptive approach has enabled agriculture to survive, not as a

relic of the past but as an evolving component of contemporary rural life in Wonogiri, where farming practices may change, but the fundamental connection to agricultural identity endures.

5.5. Impacts of Rural Change on Socio-Cultural Practices

During an interview, Mbah Tarmi, one of the elderly participants, reminisced about a past memory. She recalled a time when people frequently gathered on the village benches to socialise, exchange stories, and strengthen community bonds. As many benches and small stalls in the village served as vibrant hubs, these communal spaces were once bustling with activity, reflecting the social interactions that defined the village community. However, she noted a noticeable change in the community's behaviour, as the benches are now empty.

During my stay, I was involved in many community gatherings. People still gather, but the way they interact and communicate has changed. Bu Sri, Mbah Tarmi's daughter, stated that the rise of smartphones and social media has reshaped the way villagers interact and communicate. Instead of congregating on the benches daily, people of her generation and younger prefer to connect virtually and multitask, engaging in domestic chores, work, or leisure activities while staying connected. This shift reflects a broader transformation in the community's behavioural patterns, driven by technological advancements and changing work dynamics. Many participants mentioned the significance of internet access through smartphones, highlighting how this connectivity provided them with better access to knowledge and information from many places, urban areas and beyond.

The advancement of such technologies has significantly enhanced rural-urban interactions in Wonogiri. These strengthened connections provide rural communities with access to a wider array of information and opportunities, shaping their perspectives and practices in multiple ways. One notable impact is the increased importance of education and exposure to diverse ideas, which in turn influences local attitudes, beliefs, and social practices. The connection between rural and urban areas is reinforced through circular migration patterns. When migrants visit or return home, while they maintain many rural traditions, customs, and way of life, they also introduce new urban practices into village life. This includes changes in lifestyle preferences, fashion choices, and social norms, leading to a gradual incorporation of urban elements into rural life (IOM & SSRC, 2008; McGee, 2008).

The empty benches in villages serve as just one example of how community behaviour is shifting. Some women participants described a shift in attitudes toward domestic labour as

another example of this lifestyle change. While previously, not cooking at home was criticised as laziness, participants now describe buying prepared food occasionally as more accepted as a form of family care, especially when migrants return home, or as a practical choice when all family members are formally employed. This cultural shift is reflected in remarkable business growth: according to BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri (2024), the number of registered food establishments in Wonogiri increased more than eightfold, from 296 in 2020 to 2,430 in 2023 (even if the 2020 number may have been suppressed by COVID).

The emergence of linkages to urban areas prompts a pertinent question: do local communities forsake their traditions in favour of urban practices as a result of modernisation? Through my observations in the two study sites, I discovered that despite the widespread impact of modernisation, many traditional communal activities continue to thrive. Religious ceremonies, cultural performances, and community rituals continue to draw strong participation. In both villages, traditional art forms like *wayang kulit* (shadow puppetry) and *karawitan*[94] performances still attract audiences across generations (Figure 22). Traditional celebrations marking life events—births, marriages, circumcisions, and harvest festivals—continue to unite communities. Nevertheless, adjustments have been made to accommodate the changes, not only to meet the present needs of rural society but also to maintain cultural identity.

Figure 22: Karawitan practice, 14 January 2023

[94] A traditional Javanese art form that combines *sinden* (traditional Javanese singer) and *gamelan* (traditional music).

One of the most significant examples of this adaptive preservation is seen in the evolution of *gotong royong* practices (forms of mutual help). Mbah Warni, a senior resident in Soco, recounted how *gotong royong* was previously applied to house construction projects. When a villager needed to build a house, the entire community was mobilised: each household was expected to send a male representative to participate in construction until completion, while women contributed through food preparation. Workers received no monetary compensation; instead, they were provided meals and sometimes additional food to take home. However, this practice began creating tensions as rural employment patterns shifted. The traditional arrangement particularly burdened working-class villagers, who had to sacrifice their daily wages to help those wealthier neighbours who could afford frequent house construction projects.

With increasing formal employment, the extended commitment of labour became unsustainable as people could not risk their jobs or steady incomes for prolonged periods of unpaid community work. While wealthier residents could more easily manage such commitments or pay others to work in their place, those dependent on daily wages faced difficult choices between community obligations and economic survival. Rather than abandoning this communal practice entirely, communities have adapted it to contemporary circumstances. Now, village members are asked to contribute just one day of labour for house construction, or they can opt to provide a monetary contribution or assist in other ways. Pak Agus, the head of Soco village, explained that these adjustments are intended to preserve the communal spirit of *gotong royong* while also tackling the practical challenges linked to traditional practices.

Similar adjustments are made for other communal activities, like celebratory events, where community members can contribute materially if unable to participate physically. Several ceremonies and traditional performing arts practices have been adapted in terms of timing and execution, with reduced intensity compared to previously. This adjustment demonstrates how rural communities in both villages are adapting to changing circumstances and actively managing them to maintain their traditions and identity. The adjustment of cultural practices and norms has occurred not only at the community level but also within families, affecting values, norms, and perspectives.

5.6. Understanding Rural Change in Wonogiri

The evidence presented in this chapter reveals how profound economic and social transformations are reshaping rural life in Wonogiri through interactions between changing vulnerability contexts, evolving asset portfolios, and adaptive livelihood strategies. Three key patterns emerge from the analysis. First, while agriculture remains culturally and economically significant, households have developed sophisticated livelihood strategies that combine farming with diverse income sources, particularly through circular migration and growing off-farm opportunities. Rather than abandoning agriculture entirely, families maintain connections to farming while adapting to new economic realities. This demonstrates remarkable resilience in navigating change while preserving those aspects of traditional rural life they value.

Second, the growing manufacturing sector and improved infrastructure have altered the vulnerability context within which rural households operate, creating new pathways for economic participation while introducing new form of risks. The expansion of factories near urbanising centres has generated both direct employment and stimulated growth in supporting sectors, enabling households to diversify beyond agricultural dependence. However, integration into global supply chains also exposes rural communities to external market volatilities, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic when factory closures left workers dependent on agricultural fallbacks. Moreover, access to these manufacturing opportunities requires specific forms of human and social capital, creating differentiated outcomes between better-connected households and others who remain marginalised.

Third, infrastructure development, technological advancement, and improved connectivity have enabled "stretched households" spanning rural and urban areas to access a wider range of opportunities. These changes have also strengthened the ties between migrants and their home villages, facilitating more effective flows of resources and knowledge. As a result, urban practices and ideas are being adopted more rapidly in rural areas, while social connections between migrants and their communities of origin remain strong.

These transformations in Wonogiri's rural economy have catalysed broader sociocultural changes. As communities adapt to new economic realities, traditional practices and values are being renegotiated. These shifts provide essential context for understanding changing gender dynamics in subsequent chapters. As households adapt their livelihood strategies, traditional divisions of labour and decision-making patterns are being reorganised. The expansion of off-farm employment, increasing importance of education, and evolving migration patterns create

new spaces where gender roles are being renegotiated. This chapter has presented the dynamic context of rural change occurring in Wonogiri from which I will examine how these broader patterns of rural transformation are intersecting with changing gender roles and how women themselves are experiencing this transformation.

Chapter 6: The Shifting Roles of Women in Rural Java

Mbah Tarmi is a 70-year-old woman living in Soco village. Born and raised in the village, she first migrated following her brother, who worked in construction. In her younger years, she was the only woman among her peers who continued to migrate for work after getting married. Her older brother offered her a rare opportunity to cook for the workers at the construction site, a role she eagerly accepted. Her husband followed her and worked at the construction site as a builder. They left two of their four children with Mbah Tarmi's parents in the village and took the other two to help her at the site. While she allowed her son to attend elementary school, she took her daughter out of school as soon as she deemed her capable of helping with the work; her daughter was ten years old. "In the old times, who would think about education as long as you could make money?"[95] she reflected on her decision. This type of income opportunity was rare for women at the time. Her own education lasted just one year, cut short by Indonesia's political turmoil of the mid-1960s. Even after the situation became more stable, she did not resume her education. Instead, at the age of 13, her parents arranged her marriage to a man chosen based on his diligent efforts in helping with farm work.

Reflecting on the present, Mbah Tarmi saw a world that is different for women than when she was young. Living with some of her children and grandchildren, she felt that today's generation is more fortunate. She pointed to changes, including how women can now drive motorcycles when once only men did so, women's current broader social activities and roles, as well as having the autonomy even to choose their marriage partners. Furthermore, she noted that all teenage girls in the village now attend school and have the opportunity to become community leaders, citing several prominent women in leadership roles as evidence of how women are increasingly stepping into positions traditionally held by men.

Mbah Tarmi's story provides insight into the evolving role of women in rural Java. Her stories and experiences reflect the transformation in women's lives from her generation to the present, revealing a gradual shift in societal attitudes and expanding opportunities for women in rural Javanese society. However, at the same time, Akter et al. (2017) and Kosec et al. (2020) argue that despite increased economic participation, women in rural areas continue to face significant barriers, including limited access to resources and restricted participation in decision-making

[95] Interview, 8 March 2023

processes. Understanding these issues then requires exploring the cultural context of Javanese society and how it shapes gender relations in Wonogiri.

This chapter examines how women's roles in rural Java are being reshaped through the interaction between economic change and cultural continuity, employing an integrated theoretical approach combining the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework with a gendered analysis that recognises intrahousehold difference (as introduced in Chapter 2). Through cross-generational analysis of participants' experiences, this examination reveals how individuals negotiate the maintenance of cultural values while accommodating new economic realities.

The findings demonstrate that, although women have gained unprecedented access to education, employment, and leadership roles, these changes primarily reflect household livelihood strategies rather than direct challenges to traditional gender ideologies. However, it is important to critically examine the "household" as an analytical unit here. While I employ the household framework from the livelihoods approach, the household itself is internally differentiated by gender, age, and power relations (Kabeer, 1994). The apparent strategic decisions about women's expanding roles may mask gendered negotiations, conflicts, and compromises within households. Women's increased participation in education, employment, and leadership may simultaneously represent both strategic household responses to economic pressures and women's own pursuit of individual aspirations and access to opportunities. Such shifts occur within deeply rooted cultural frameworks that continue to shape how gender roles are negotiated and legitimised, though these negotiations themselves may be sites of subtle resistance and incremental change. In this context, rural communities in Wonogiri strategically reinterpret cultural norms to justify women's expanding roles, enabling transformation from within, rather than in opposition to, established traditions.

6.1. *Konco Wingking*: Picture of Traditional Gender Norms in the Javanese Community

During my fieldwork, many participants mentioned Javanese cultural concepts and traditional expressions in conversations, which sometimes they used to illustrate how traditional gender relations operate in daily life within Javanese culture. Even though some of these terms were no longer relevant to current developments, these oft-mentioned gendered expressions might suggest that, despite societal progress, traditional gender values continue to influence contemporary experiences and highlight challenges in navigating and transforming gender

roles within the cultural and religious framework of Javanese society. It is then evident that the evolving roles of women in Wonogiri are not just a departure from traditional norms but also a negotiation between past and present, where historical Javanese cultural concepts intersect with contemporary aspirations for gender equality and empowerment. Therefore, these expressions offer a glimpse into traditional norms and cultural expectations related to gender roles and dynamics.

6.1.1. Javanese Women and the Domestic Sphere

> In the old days, there were no women leaders in this village. The number of women who went outside Wonogiri to work was also rare; they were all looking after their homes and their families, becoming *konco wingking*. [96]

Mbah Yatno, a 79-year-old man who has been the head of a sub-hamlet for 30 years, commented on how his village has changed. Bu Parinah, now in her 60s, recalled experiences that illustrate how women were required to remain "in the back"—both literally and figuratively. She described how her mother-in-law would always "drag" her and other women in their household to stay hidden—usually in the back part of the house—whenever guests visited her husband or father-in-law:

> She always 'shh'-ed everyone in the back so we wouldn't make any noise that might interrupt the conversations between the guests and our father-in-law. [We] quietly prepared drinks and snacks for the guests and left right away when done delivering them to the table. We can only eavesdrop to know what happened and what was discussed.[97]

As discussed in Chapter 2, relegating women to the back or hidden positions, *konco wingking* indicates how traditional norms essentially confined women to the domestic sphere (Robinson, 2009; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). The notion is also reflected in other Javanese terms, such as *macak, manak, masak* (dressing up, bearing children, cooking), and *dapur, sumur, kasur* (kitchen, wells, bed), which have similar meanings and are also frequently cited by participants when they discussed women's roles and limitations. These terms collectively highlight the traditional duties assigned to women, emphasising activities that are inherently domestic and private, thus excluding them from the public sphere (Pirus & Nurahamawati, 2020).

Various Javanese terms also illustrate how women's roles in Javanese society tend to limit their movement and position under their husbands. Terms such as *konco wingking* suggest that women as wives are expected to follow behind their husbands and adjust themselves to

[96] Interview, 6 April 2023
[97] Fieldnotes, 18 March 2023

maintain their position. Women's social status often hinges on their husbands' occupations or reputations, reflecting the patriarchal nature of Javanese society (Pirus & Nurahamawati, 2020). Mbah Sukad, one of the elderly participants, provides a historical perspective and context of husbands' profound influence over their wives' lives and choices, as well as the limitations and challenges women face in traditional Javanese communities. He reminisced:

> In the old days, women had very little power. There's an old saying, *Suwargo Nunut, Neroko Katut*, which suggests that if their husband deserved to go to heaven (*suwargo*), women might have the chance to follow or accompany (*nunut*) them there. Conversely, if their husband went to hell (*neroko*), they would be taken (*katut)* there as well.[98]

As many participants noted, these traditional values, encapsulated in sayings and terms, are influenced by their beliefs, deeply ingrained, and have been passed down through generations. Notably, while the Javanese community is now predominantly Muslim, its gender relations reflect a layered integration of religious values and beliefs. This happens because when a new religion enters a community, it does not entirely replace pre-existing beliefs; it creates layers that shape the community's cultural and social fabric instead (Kunin & Miles-Watson, 2006; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). The influence of Hindu traditions on contemporary Javanese gender roles exemplifies this layering process. As Tickamyer and Kusujiarti (2012) observe, drawing on Reid (1988) and Berninghausen and Kersten (1992), Hindu law and values also profoundly shaped gender hierarchies in Javanese culture that persist today. For instance, Reid documented how Hindu law excluded women from high-ranking positions, institutionalising male authority, while Berninghausen and Kerstan showed that Javanese shadow-puppet theatre (*wayang*), rooted in Hindu epics, reinforced these hierarchies by portraying women as servants and helpers to their husbands. According to Tickamyer and Kusujujiarti, these Hindu-influenced beliefs positioned a husband as the woman's primary deity and defined her main role as producing sons, with personal aspirations being secondary.

When Islam arrived, it introduced additional doctrinal layers rather than replacing these existing gender norms. Consequently, women's status remained constrained due to varied interpretations of Islamic texts and traditions. Despite ongoing scholarly debates regarding Islamic perspectives on gender roles (Adamson, 2007; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012; Van Doorn-Harder, 2006), certain interpretations of Qur'anic passages have been employed to justify male dominance and female subordination (Berninghausen & Kersten, 1992; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). This interreligious belief system contributes to the ideology of

[98] Interview, 18 April 2023

domestication of women, which continues to pose challenges for women in the rural Java community of Wonogiri.

In 1961, Hildred Geertz depicted the traditional Javanese family as one where men typically didn't engage in household tasks or childcare. This traditional expectation persists to some extent. During my fieldwork in the villages, women frequently voiced frustrations about enduring societal norms that consistently prioritise their families' needs over their own. They mentioned that women are expected to excel at cooking (*masak*) and managing domestic work, bear children (*manak*) to continue their husbands' family legacy, and maintain an attractive appearance (*macak*) to please their husbands and uphold their pride and reputation. These roles focus on family and household needs while overlooking the aspirations of women themselves.

Such cultural frameworks continue to influence contemporary gender dynamics, as illustrated by Bu Sutini, a female hamlet head in Kedunggupit. Reflecting on her upbringing, she explained, "Since I was a kid, my mother told me that society had already decided what women must do: work in the kitchen, at the well, and in the bedroom [*dapur, sumur, kasur*]."[99] Her personal experience demonstrates how these traditional boundaries operate in practice. When she later applied for the hamlet head position, she encountered significant cultural resistance rooted in these long-standing beliefs about women's appropriate roles within traditional Javanese society.

These embedded values are also exemplified and symbolised in traditional wedding ceremonies, which serve as powerful cultural rituals that reinforce gender hierarchies within the household. During these ceremonies, the bride must wash her husband's feet after he breaks an egg (Figure 23). In this ritual, the egg symbolises fertility and offspring, while washing the husband's feet represents the wife's devotion and subservience to her husband (Maulida, 2023). Other symbolic rituals include the groom pouring rice and coins into the bride's shawl (Figure 24), symbolising his role as provider and her role as household manager (Latifa et al., 2019). Even the traditional *Temu Manten* (meeting of bride and groom) begins with the bride bowing down to receive her groom (Figure 25), embodying the cultural expectation of feminine submission.

[99] Interview, 13 February 2023

Figure 23: Bride kneels and washes her husband's feet in a wedding ceremony, Wonogiri 4 March 2023

Figure 24: A groom pouring rice and coins into the bride's shawl in a wedding ceremony, Wonogiri 9 March 2023

Figure 25: A bride bowing down to receive her groom in a wedding ceremony, 9 March 2023

The influence of religion on gender roles also intensified during Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's presidency (2004-2014), which saw a growing accommodation of conservative religious agendas in national politics (Mietzner, 2014). This strengthening religious influence manifested in various ways, including changes in women's informal dress codes. In my field sites, some participants noted the growing social pressure to wear hijab. One participant shared:

> Everyone wears it, right? Because I'm Muslim, if I don't wear it, what would people think? But if I'm at home, on the porch, I take it off. Most of us take it easy. But I wear it at a formal event like a PKK meeting because everyone else is wearing it, too.

Indeed, I recall that 10 years ago, it was common to see some women not wearing hijabs during casual community gatherings and preserving traditional hairstyles (*sanggul)* for formal events like weddings. However, this practice has noticeably declined over the past decade as seen in Figures 26 and 27.

Figure 26: PKK group gathering in Kedunggupit, 11 February 2023

Figure 27: A traditional wedding ceremony in Kedunggupit, 9 March 2023

Community leaders in both villages described the increased presence of preachers from *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) over the past 15 years. The practice of sending *santr*i (Islamic boarding school students) from outside Wonogiri for community service internships became a key mechanism for transmitting their religious interpretations—including on gender roles—to rural areas. Some scholars note that the increasing accommodation of conservative religious agendas and the strengthening role of religious institutions in policymaking have had implications for gender equality in Indonesia (Kiss, 2024). This stronger religious influence is

evident during conversations where participants frequently justified current gender arrangements by citing religious teachings, demonstrating the internalisation of these influences.

This interweaving of religious, cultural and state-sponsored gender ideologies creates what Tickamyer and Kusujiarti (2012) describe as a multifaceted landscape of gender norms. Government officials acknowledge the persistence of traditional gender constraints, with the Wonogiri regent, for example, highlighting the need to challenge public perceptions about women's roles and duties:

> For a long time, we [the government] have been trying to understand the root cause of this condition [persistent community mindset perpetuating gender inequalities]. It was mentioned earlier that gender equality cannot thrive in the kitchen, at the well, or on the mattress. Our main problem is how to address poverty—stemming from limited access to education, healthcare, and public spaces, which are dominated by male gender roles. We have been focusing on changing the public mindset through various programs.[100]

This statement at the same time reveals how the government's approach to women's empowerment is primarily driven by economic objectives, a tendency observed by other scholars studying Indonesia, where women's empowerment initiatives often prioritise productivity gains over transforming fundamental gender barriers (Budianto, 2023; Syukri, 2021). Yet acknowledgment of systemic constraints also signals increasing government awareness of the structural nature of gender inequality. This tension between economic instrumentalism and structural recognition points to a broader question about women's agency within these restrictive frameworks: are Javanese women entirely confined to subordinate and powerless roles, or do spaces for resistance and negotiation exist within these constraints? Mbah Sukad concluded his observations on this issue with a nuanced perspective that:

> Nowadays, instead of *katut ning neroko* (taken out to the hell), many women are brave enough to assert themselves and reject their husbands' decisions if they believe it might lead them to "hell".[101]

6.1.2. Javanese Women and Their Indirect Power

"My father fears my mother. If he made decisions that unfavored her, the whole house would suffer,"[102] Yani, an 18-year-old girl, reflected on her household's leadership dynamics. While she initially identified her father as the "official" household head, she revealed that her mother

[100] Interview, 14 April 2023
[101] Interview, 18 April 2023
[102] FGD, 23 January 2023

actually makes most decisions, noting that her father consults her mother before making decisions. Yani's story illustrates a common pattern in Javanese households where women wield significant behind-the-scenes influence despite men's formal authority. This dynamic is particularly seen in household financial management. Pak Mujab, head of a farmer group association, explained the typical arrangement, "In villages in Java, men usually keep a small amount of 'men's money' for themselves and allocate the rest to their wives to manage for the household's needs."[103] Pak Marto echoed this arrangement in relation to remittances. With a chuckle, he explained:

> My children always give the money to their mother. If I need money, I ask my wife, or sometimes she allocates money for my needs. Occasionally, if she decides not to give me money because she thinks I don't need it, then I don't get the money.[104]

Sullivan's (1994) exploration of the "master and manager" concept, where men are typically perceived as "masters" and women are assigned the role of "managers" in Javanese culture (see Chapter 2), helps to understand this power relation. Women's involvement in financial management is seen as their work as "managers" and household duties under men's authority.

One woman participant pointed out that the community often considered it wrong if these "master-manager" roles were reversed, "Our neighbour's husband always goes shopping for vegetables by himself!"[105] While this could be interpreted as a positive shift away from traditional gender norms, she suggested it is a degree of financial mistrust, with another participant adding, "I feel sorry for her; why doesn't he trust his wife to manage the income?"[106] Similar sentiments emerged regarding cooking arrangements, as many women in both villages expressed displeasure when their husbands cooked. They believed they could manage resources more efficiently and minimise waste better than their husband.

While Javanese women appear to play a crucial role in making daily household decisions and actively engaging in financial management, Tickamyer and Kusujiarti (2012) argued that their participation does not necessarily grant them social status or power. Earlier studies, such as Geertz (1961), may have exaggerated Javanese women's economic autonomy, as argued by contemporary scholars who highlight the persistence of patriarchal ideological structures within broader society (Mawaddah et al., 2021; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012; Sullivan, 1994).

[103] Preliminary scooping field notes, 25 November 2021
[104] Interview, 5 February 2023
[105] Photovoice discussion, 13 February 2023
[106] Photovoice discussion, 13 February 2023

Indeed, during focus groups, women still reported exclusion from public meetings or discussions, which are typically intended for the (male) head of the household.

However, the earlier presented cases—from Yani's mother's household authority to Pak Marto's deference to his wife's financial decisions—provoke a question: do rural women truly lack power in Javanese society? The jokes I often heard during the community gatherings reflect women's actual power in the household and community, "Even if [men] agree in the meeting, we know the real decision happens when they discuss with their wives at home."[107] Once, I visited a man who had previously teased his friends for being "afraid" of their wives and deferring to their wishes. I saw that he too carefully negotiated with his wife for permission to go fishing, offering to comply with his wife's wishes and promising to return early. These findings suggest that women in Wonogiri wield considerable indirect influence in decision-making processes within both their households and communities despite ongoing exclusion from public events.

In community affairs, women's informal influence through the PKK and other networks often determines which development projects move forward, even when men hold formal leadership positions. This dynamic was clearly displayed during a *Musrenbang Desa* (village development planning) meeting in Soco, where PKK representatives were included. In the meeting, the village head announced, "Let's wait for the mothers in the PKK groups to finish their discussions. They understand better what projects are needed, and it's risky not to grant their requests—we definitely don't want to upset them."[108] His half-joking tone carried a serious recognition of women's practical power in shaping village development. The findings suggest that the impact of women's indirect power is substantial and concrete as it manifests in multiple ways: through financial management, as seen in how wives like Pak Marto's control household spending; through domestic authority, as illustrated by Yani's mother's influence over family decisions; and through social networks, evident in women's central roles in community events and even in informal village leadership.

Like other aspects of Javanese social interaction where directness can be perceived as disruptive to social harmony (Nadar, 2007; Nugrahani, 2019), women's exercise of power through indirect means allows for significant influence while maintaining traditional social structures. Rather than indicating powerlessness, this indirect approach represents a cultural

[107] Field notes, 8 March 2023
[108] Filed notes, 23 January 2023

strategy for achieving objectives while preserving social harmony, a strategy that women have refined and adapted over generations. The cases of financial management and community development planning demonstrate how women have historically wielded significant influence through these indirect channels, even as the specific mechanisms and spheres of influence have evolved in response to changing social and economic conditions.

6.2. Women's Tales from the Two Villages

As previously discussed, traditional Javanese society relegated women primarily to domestic roles as caregivers, homemakers, and nurturers, thereby limiting their involvement in broader societal affairs. Despite this, fieldwork in Wonogiri reveals that women are increasingly taking on positions and responsibilities once exclusively held by men. I identify three key shifts in gender roles: first, an increase in women assuming leadership positions; second, their expanding participation in formal employment and economic activities beyond agriculture; and third, improved access to education, which has historically favoured men. These changing gender dynamics reflect specific economic pressures facing rural households in Java, particularly the need for dual incomes and the demands of circular migration. While significant, these shifts occur within established cultural frameworks as pragmatic responses to economic conditions rather than as fundamental changes of traditional gender ideologies.

6.2.1. Breaking Barriers: Stepping into Leadership Roles

Bu Sutini made history as the first woman *Kadus* (*Kepala Dusun* or hamlet head) in Kedunggupit, a position that enables her to perform roles in traditional Javanese wedding ceremonies formerly reserved for men, such as serving as the bride's family representative who welcomes the groom and his family (Figure 28). Both Bu Sutini and her husband grew up in farming families. When her husband initially left the village for work but was forced to return to farming during the 1998 financial crisis, their family faced severe economic hardship. During these difficult times, Bu Sutini found inspiration in a historic moment: Megawati Sukarnoputri's appointment as Indonesia's first female president in 2001. The news was everywhere, and for Bu Sutini, it represented a transformative possibility. "If Megawati can be a president, it means all women can be public or community leaders, too,"[109] she reasoned. This conviction became the foundation of her successful campaign to become Hamlet's head in 2003. However, even as she broke new ground, Bu Sutini remained mindful of cultural

[109] Interview, 14 February 2023

expectations—she sought her husband's blessing and obtained her father's approval, recognising his position as a cultural leader in their community.

Figure 28: Bu Sutini (middle) performing a role in a Javanese wedding ceremony, 9 March 2023

At the time, three women were elected as *Kadus* in Kedunggupit village, but only one ultimately decided to serve in the role—Bu Sutini. The others cited significant societal opposition, with many people making condescending remarks, such as *"Wong wedok kok dadi pemimpin!"* (How can women be leaders!). Indeed, in her early years as *Kadus*, Bu Sutini's voice was often disregarded, and she was frequently excluded from village discussions.

By 2023, the village had undergone a remarkable transformation: two female *Kadus* now served alongside numerous women working in the village government office and women holding positions as Ketua RT (neighbourhood head). This represented a significant shift from the past, when no women served as neighbourhood heads because elections were typically based on household heads, who were predominantly men.[110] When I spoke with Bu Lilis, a woman serving as neighbourhood head in Kedunggupit village, I was surprised to learn that she had won through a formal election despite not being considered the head of her household.

[110] Because of Indonesia Marriage Law, see Chapter 2

Her success, like Bu Sutini's, demonstrated that women could now gain leadership positions through democratic processes rather than traditional succession.

Unlike Bu Sutini and Bu Lilis, Bu Narsi's path to leadership in Soco followed a different trajectory. She became the neighbourhood head after her husband, the previous head, passed away. The community readily accepted her appointment, recognising that she had already been assisting her late husband in his duties and was well-prepared to assume the role. Her responsibilities primarily involve coordinating neighbourhood activities, often with assistance from her son, who handles the more technical aspects requiring information technology skills. Despite the neighbourhood's acceptance of her role, she feels intimidated during all-male meetings (Figure 29), where she often defers to other neighbourhood heads who are younger, more educated, and male. "I'm afraid that my suggestions will be rejected, I guess they know better than I,"[111] she explained.

Figure 29: Bu Narsi (middle) discussing with other neighbourhood heads during a village meeting, 25 January 2023

When asked about potential replacements for Bu Narsi's position, community members expressed reluctance to remove her from the role. "How could we take this position away from an elderly widow who needs the income?" one participant explained. "Even though the stipend

[111] Interview, 25 January 2023

is small, it helps her survive." This sentiment was echoed by others, suggesting that the community's acceptance of her leadership was partly motivated by social compassion. The previously voluntary position included a government stipend of 300,000 rupiah per month (in 2022), a relatively small amount considering the workload, as the regional minimum wage was 1,839,043 rupiah per month in the same year (BPS Jawa Tengah, 2023). However, Bu Narsi herself remarked that receiving a small amount of money is preferable to receiving nothing.

The emergence of these female community leaders marks a significant step in the shift from traditional gender roles within rural Javanese communities, with women increasingly receiving recognition for their contributions beyond mere symbolic representation. Evidence from the study sites suggest that women's leadership has contributed to concrete changes in village governance, with an increase in the number of women participating in village planning meetings. Their perspectives on community needs, particularly regarding children's education and healthcare facilities, have shaped development priorities. Bu Sutini's influence, for instance, has created a ripple effect, inspiring other women, such as Bu Lilis, to pursue and successfully win leadership positions as Ketua RT. As one female PKK participant explained, Bu Sutini took a hands-on approach to mobilising women in the community:

> In her early years, she went door-to-door, encouraging women to attend PKK meetings. It was challenging because the women were busy with household responsibilities. Initially, most were reluctant but attended out of guilt after Bu Sutini personally visited them. The PKK committee then ran an *arisan* and a random door prize at each meeting to boost participation. Now, most women enjoy PKK meetings as they provide a platform to voice concerns to the village government, a chance to escape domestic burdens. We even occasionally have fun trips.

While these individual success stories are significant, the broader statistics reveal that this transformation remains partial. In Kedunggupit, women hold only 20% of hamlet head positions, while in Soco, all these positions are still held by men. BPS Central Java (2021a) reported that women comprise just 8.42% of village heads across Wonogiri (24 out of 285) and 7.71% in Central Java overall (643 out of 8,335 positions). These numbers demonstrate that despite notable breakthroughs by pioneers like Bu Sutini and Bu Lilis, women's formal leadership in rural Java remains the exception rather than the norm, and these changes remain contested. However, as part of a broader rural transformation, this change also reflects how traditional norms are gradually being redefined, allowing for greater gender inclusivity in leadership and decision-making processes.

6.2.2. Female Participation in The Formal Labour Force

*"*My daughter bought this furniture for us and rented the rice field for us. She spent quite a lot of money on that curtain; it's very expensive, you know,"[112] Pak Marto proudly shared. His story about his daughter, Nur, exemplifies a shift in the economic participation of rural women in Wonogiri. By migrating to Greater Jakarta and securing employment with a manufacturing company, she earned an income that enabled her to send larger remittances home than her brothers. Her economic independence and contributions played a key role in granting her the autonomy to make decisions that defied traditional expectations. When Nur got married, for example, she chose to stay in the city, breaking the pattern where women typically returned to the village to manage the farm and care for their husbands' families.

Bu Sum, Nur's mother, mentioned that it has become more common for wives to follow their husbands to the city and work alongside them. In the past, married women like herself often stayed in the village, taking care of their families and earning additional income through farming or casual labour. This separation often led to divorce, mainly because the husbands met someone else while away. Now, improved education, transportation, and expanding job opportunities have enabled women like Nur to pursue diverse careers in cities beyond the traditional domestic helper work that once dominated female migration. Marriage patterns have also shifted, with more women continuing to work or live in the city rather than living separately.

The transformation varies between villages based on their proximity to employment opportunities. In Soco, while more women are participating in the workforce, many married women still prefer flexible arrangements, such as casual employment. However, a clear generational divide exists: older women typically remain in farming, while younger women increasingly seek employment in manufacturing. Village records indicate that approximately 100 women from Kedunggupit work at a nearby clothing factory, compared to only 15 from Soco, where longer commuting times create additional barriers. In Kedunggupit, I observed that most younger women work outside the home, temporarily pausing only when they have infants and resuming once they can arrange childcare, typically with grandparents. This pattern in these villages reflects a broader trend across Wonogiri, where women's participation in formal employment increased significantly following Covid disruptions.

[112] Filed notes, 24 November 2022

The head of Wonogiri's Department of Labour and Employment highlighted how local manufacturing companies predominantly hire female workers, viewing garment manufacturing and herbal medicine production as 'women's work.[113] The head of human resources (HR) at a major clothing factory cited women's supposed attention to detail and manual dexterity[114] — qualities that Elson and Pearson (1981) identify as stereotypes commonly used to justify the feminisation of manufacturing labour globally. While she mentioned that overseas client companies include women's employment targets in their contracts, claiming this as their effort to promote women's economic empowerment, scholars such as Standing (1989) and Ong (2010) argue that such practices often mask the exploitation of women as a source of cheap, compliant labour. The HR head's acknowledgment that gender equality and anti-harassment training programs are implemented primarily to secure contracts with their clients suggests that women's empowerment initiatives serve business interests rather than reflecting genuine commitment to gender equality. This aligns with Wright's (2006) critique of how global manufacturing firms often adopt the language of women's empowerment while prioritising profit over substantive changes in gender equality.

These policies have, however, increased formal employment opportunities for village women, enabling them to contribute to household incomes and support agricultural activities. Despite increased formal employment, women's role in agriculture remains significant, though patterns are evolving. For example, traditionally, women performed the manual separation of rice grains from stems through an activity called *ngepyok*. When mechanical tools for this task (*ngerek*) were first introduced, men initially dominated their use, thereby reducing women's opportunities for agricultural work (although an alternative interpretation is that this reduces their work burden and opens up other more lucrative opportunities). Over time, agricultural labour shortages—driven by expanding formal employment opportunities and fewer returning migrants for harvest and planting seasons—have eroded the gendered division of agricultural work, particularly in villages closer to cities where formal employment options are more accessible. As Figure 30 shows, women now commonly operate the *ngerek* tools, reflecting broader shifts in agricultural labour patterns. As one farmer group leader explained, "Now we do not really care whether it is men or women who do (agriculture) work as long as the job is done."[115]

[113] Interview, 30 May 2023
[114] Interview, 10 April 2023
[115] Interview, 17 February 2023

Figure 30: Two women operating "ngerek" tool, 12 March 2023

Many young women who engaged in off-farm work, especially those with casual or flexible jobs, continue to participate in agricultural labour, viewing it as their *bakti*[116] (respectful service) to their parents or parents-in-law. Mbak[117] Titik's daily routine illustrates this dual role: she rises at 3 a.m. to cook for her family, manages her food stall on the village's main road, and still dedicates hours to farm work during planting and harvest seasons. Sometimes, she would close her stall early or take days off to assist with farm work. Her friend, Mbak Innayah, a village elementary school teacher, also performed a similar role. During harvest season, after finishing her official work around 2 p.m., she would return home to help her family with production tasks such as separating corn seeds from their cob or making *gaplek*[118].

These experiences suggest that women's expanding economic roles have not replaced their traditional agricultural obligations but rather may be adding to them. Their off-farm employment exists alongside existing agricultural and domestic duties, which they and others view as fundamental family obligations.[119] This multiplication of women's roles represents a

[116] *Bakti* is an adaptation of Bhakti, influenced by Sanskrit and Hinduism culture means *devotion to*. Bakti, based on KBBI (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, Indonesia Dictionary), means actions that express loyalty, love, or respect.
[117] Mbak is an honorific used in Javanese culture to address a young woman, like "Miss" in English.
[118] Dried cassava, see Chapter 4
[119] Chapter 7 explores the implications of this intensified workload for women's well-being and perception of it.

pragmatic response to economic pressures, where women's increased participation in formal employment helps sustain both agricultural production and household income through an expansion rather than a redistribution of responsibilities. While these changes reflect significant shifts in women's economic participation, they occur within existing frameworks of gender expectations rather than fundamentally altering traditional role divisions.

6.2.3. From Kitchens to Classrooms: Enhanced Educational Access

> In the past, my mother told me that women would eventually "follow" their husbands, so there was no need to pursue higher education. I often heard from other aunties or older women in the neighbourhood that women would end up in the kitchen, so that schooling would be of no use to them.[120]

Nur shared her journey to pursue higher education despite her parents' initial opposition. Her journey illustrates both the challenges women face and the strategies they employ to overcome educational barriers. When her parents resisted her decision to attend vocational high school—her mother wanted her to start working immediately after junior high—Nur strategically sought support from her older brothers, who agreed to fund her vocational education. A sister-in-law from an education-valuing background played a crucial role in convincing the brothers to provide this support.

After graduating and securing a factory job in Greater Jakarta through school connections, Nur discovered undergraduate programs offering weekend classes (*program kelas karyawan*). Without informing her parents, she enrolled while continuing to work and sending regular remittances. To demonstrate success in village terms, she purchased expensive furniture and jewellery for her mother. When she finally revealed her college enrolment, her mother initially repeated familiar remarks about women ultimately becoming wives and suggested investing in more practical assets, such as houses or land.

However, Nur firmly explained her goal of securing a higher position at the factory, which required a degree and promised better income. Since she was financially independent and sought no financial support, her parents had little choice but to accept her decision. To keep them at ease, Nur continued to send them regular remittances. Not long after, Nur noticed her parents proudly boasting about her achievements, emphasising her ability to pursue higher education while managing a job. Her mother's initial scepticism had shifted to humble pride. Nur observed similar transformations in her extended family, noting how her aunt's initial

[120] Interview, 22 April 2023

opposition to her daughter's higher education later became pride over her daughter's academic and financial success.

Educational attitudes vary significantly across generations and locations. In the Sologohimo subdistrict, where Soco (Nur's village) is located, young female participants reported that they still occasionally encounter discouraging comments about women's higher education from their grandparents' generation, though rarely from their parents.[121] Notably, participants reported that resistance to women's education came primarily from older women rather than men. These older women's discouraging comments likely reflect their own experiences of limited opportunities and caregiving burdens. What appears as resistance to change may actually expresses unresolved frustrations and unfulfilled aspirations from their own generation's constraints.

Compared to Soco, the attitudes of older women appear more progressive in the Sidoharjo subdistrict, where Kedunggupit is located. Greater proximity to urban centres, exposure to diverse ideas, and local economic conditions are perhaps the key determinants shaping these perspectives in Kedunggupit. While women over 30 (in Soco) recalled receiving discouraging comments about pursuing education in their youth, and some were even denied opportunities for higher education,[122] younger female participants in Sidoharjo reported receiving support for their education[123]. Their mothers actively encourage their financial independence and the importance of self-reliance, particularly in preparing for unexpected life challenges. "Don't be like me, unable to do anything," was a common refrain among mothers who had missed educational opportunities in their youth. This sentiment was shared by participants who reflected on it both as daughters during the FGD and as mothers during the photovoice sessions.

Bu Eli, a 38-year-old photovoice participant from Kedunggupit, illustrated the generational shift in attitudes toward education and marital constraints. She shared her story of how she abandoned her promising career at a factory in Jakarta after marriage, despite having strong support for education from her influential father. Although her father provided land and helped secure her husband's position as hamlet head in their village, her husband required her to become a full-time housewife once she became pregnant. After her children grew older, Bu Eli's husband did not allow her to return to formal work and instead told her to focus on managing the farm. She frequently imagined what her life could have been like if she had

[121] FGD, 26 January 2023
[122] Photovoice, 13 February
[123] FGD, 8 February 2023

continued her career, contrasting her situation with that of younger women whose husbands supported their professional ambitions. She then channelled her regrets into ensuring her daughter's freedom to pursue her aspirations, saying, "I hope that in the future my daughter won't face the same limitations I did and will be able to follow her dream."[124] Bu Eli's experience resonated with other women in the group. While some achieved financial independence, many shared a sense of constrained aspirations. These mothers now strongly advocate for their daughters' educational and career goals, determined that the next generation should not face the same limitations. Similar views about wanting better opportunities for their daughters emerged among younger married women aged 25-35 in Soco, suggesting a gradual shift in attitudes toward women's professional development.

In both villages, some fathers also demonstrated their support for their daughters' education by conveying pride in their educational achievements. They mostly expressed hopes that their daughters would achieve greater financial stability, viewing education as key to economic mobility. This pragmatic approach is illustrated by Pak Sugiatno, a 52-year-old father from Kedunggupit whose daughters are pursuing university degrees. While he expresses fundamentally conservative and sometimes contradictory views about gender roles, he nonetheless supports his daughters' education. Speaking about his daughter's schooling, he noted:

> Besides financial success, people respect those with better education. When a woman tries to become a community leader in the village, most men won't listen to her. But if that woman is more educated than all of them, she has a better chance of being heard.[125]

Yet, in another conversation, Pak Sugiatno insisted that men make naturally better leaders than women. These kinds of contradictory views are also commonly found across rural Java, where men are more likely to accept educated daughters as representatives of their households in community meetings, rather than their wives (Susilowati & Ismoyo, 2019).

Today, many parents in the villages expressed their belief that their daughters need to receive a better education to compete effectively in the job market and thus generate higher household incomes. In both villages, participants often observed that, unlike in their youth, higher rates of high school completion in Wonogiri (Figure 31) are partly due to the availability of free tuition at public schools. Some families, however, opt for vocational schools—despite their

[124] Interview, 20 February 2023
[125] Interview, 4 April 2023

costs—because of the strong post-graduation employment prospects they offer.[126] While this shift in attitudes is often motivated more by practical economic considerations than by genuine awareness of, or commitment to, gender equality, the growing emphasis on education reflects a broader societal shift toward recognising and supporting women's academic and professional achievements—on par with men's—as well as an increasing acknowledgment of their economic contributions beyond traditional domestic roles.

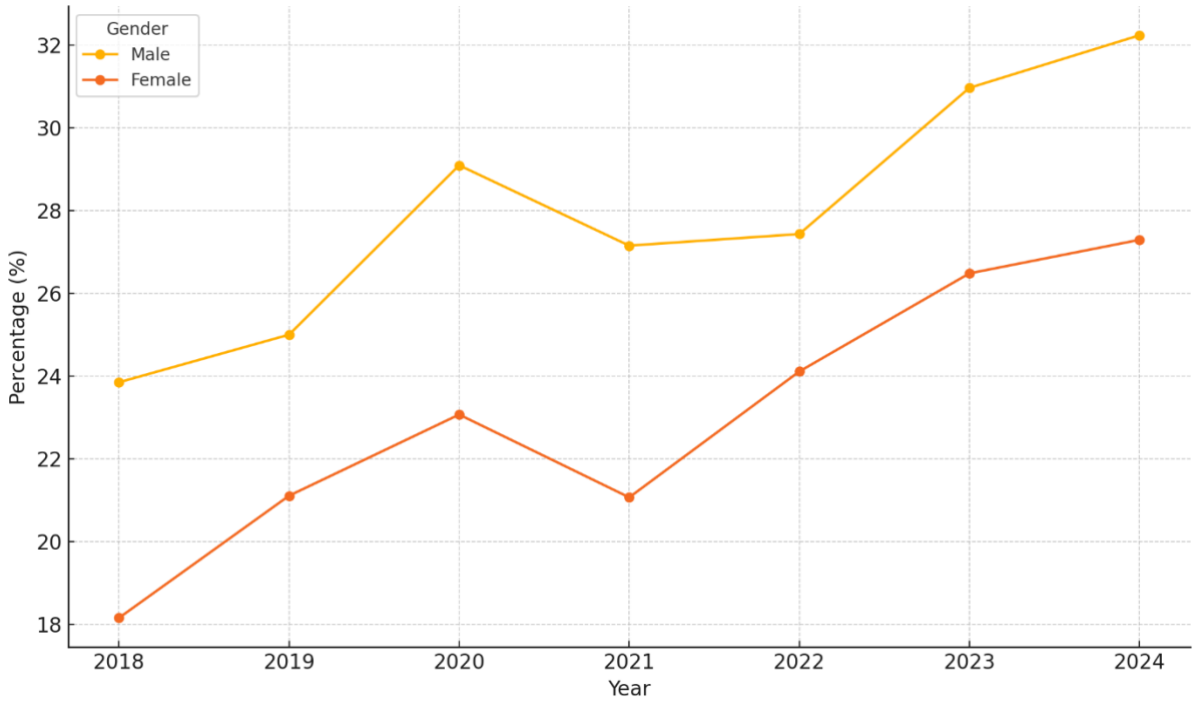

Figure 31: Percentage of population aged 25 and above with senior high school education or higher in Wonogiri (BPS, 2024d)

The cases presented suggest that evolving perspectives within rural Javanese communities about education and workforce participation result from broader rural change processes, as described in Chapter 5. In Kedunggupit, the closer proximity to Wonogiri city provides women with more opportunities for stable employment in manufacturing and services, while maintaining close ties to their natal villages. In contrast, Soco's greater distance from urban centres means fewer formal employment options, resulting in more traditional work patterns. This spatial variation in economic opportunities also influences how families perceive the roles of their daughters.

[126] FGD, 26 January 2023, 8 February 2023

As agricultural returns decline and living costs rise, families increasingly value education and formal employment as pathways to economic security. Many participants noted that daughters with stable jobs contribute more consistently to their parents' household economies compared to sons. This financial contribution connects deeply to their ongoing caregiving roles, which persist even after marriage, as one participant explained, "When a son marries, his primary responsibility shifts to his new family. But a daughter tends to continue caring for her parents."[127]

6.3. Shifting Gender Roles in Household Rural Livelihood Strategies

The preceding sections have documented changes in women's roles in Wonogiri, revealing increased participation in formal leadership alongside expanded economic and educational opportunities. These transformations are particularly striking given Wonogiri's historically entrenched gender hierarchies, where men traditionally engaged in productive labour while women were relegated to domestic and supplementary tasks (Pirus & Nurahamawati, 2020; Prasetyo, 2018). This pattern of change raises a compelling analytical question: How has a traditionally conservative rural society come to accept such profound shifts in gender roles? What underlying forces have enabled this transformation to occur within a context that would seemingly resist such changes? Understanding this puzzle requires examining not merely what has changed, but why these changes became possible and acceptable within Wonogiri's social fabric.

As Chapter 5 detailed, rural transformation in Wonogiri has altered how households organise labour and generate income. Faced with economic pressures from decreasing agricultural returns, rising living costs, and new consumption demands, households have had to adapt traditional divisions of labour. Through the lens of the gendered Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, these adaptations represent livelihood strategies where gendered power dynamics within households and differential access to resources shape how women and men strategically mobilise different forms of capital within existing institutional and cultural constraints.

Such economically driven shifts in gender roles have a deep historical precedent in Java. The Dutch colonial *Cultuurstelsel (*Cultivation System) created unprecedented agricultural labour demands that first reshaped traditional gender divisions (see Chapter 4). As male labour was recruited for infrastructure projects, agricultural production became increasingly reliant on

[127] Field notes, 8 January 2023

women (Meerkerk, 2023; White, 2018). To meet both colonial demands and household needs, women's economic roles expanded beyond farming into trade and domestic industries. This pattern persisted through subsequent transformations. Older Kedunggupit participants recalled women's market involvement emerging during the late Mangkunegaran period's plantation economy. Women's stereotyped bargaining skills and negotiation abilities became valuable assets within household livelihood strategies, making them effective traders. "In the past, if women worked, they would either work as servants or sell goods,"[128] Mbah Parinah explained.

The Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s continued this trajectory. While men typically controlled the new agricultural technologies (with the introduction of new seed varieties, chemical inputs, and mechanisation) and government programs often gendered agrarian roles, reinforcing traditional gender hierarchies (Hadiz & Eddyono, 2005; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012), intensified cultivation paradoxically expanded women's participation in farming due to increased labour demands (Darmawan et al., 2006; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012; White, 2018). Government programs encouraging dual-income households further contributed to shifting gender roles in rural Java (Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012).

Bu Giyat from Kedunggupit, illustrated this continuity, recounting how her parents combined farming with work as agricultural collectors (*pengepul*) and traders in the 1970s-80s:

> While my father travelled to source products, my mother managed storage, accounts, and sales. She ran everything. Many women in our village were economically active at the time, running food stalls, selling traditional herbal medicine (*jamu*), or trading clothes. Some even earned more than their husbands.[129]

Historical patterns of women adapting to male absence continue to shape gender roles in contemporary Wonogiri, particularly due to migration. This situation requires those remaining in the village to assume responsibilities for managing rice fields and household affairs. In more traditional villages like Soco, male migrants often return for crucial farming periods like planting and harvesting. However, in Kedunggupit, these returns are becoming rare. Through the gendered SLF lens, male migration creates both opportunities and constraints for women's access to capitals. Women gain expanded access to natural capital (direct farm management), social capital (participation in farmer groups), and decision-making authority over productive activities. However, this access remains conditional and often temporary, contingent on the male's absence rather than the recognition of women's agricultural capabilities. As patterns in

[128] Interview, 18 March 2023
[129] Interview, 10 February 2023

the division of agricultural tasks between men and women undergo gradual shifts, Wonogiri's households are adapting through a combination of mechanical innovation and more fluid gender roles in agriculture.

The cases presented here also challenge earlier studies that found rural women typically had limited access to assets, credit, technologies, information, services, and training (Kosec et al., 2020; Akter et al., 2017; FAO, 2010; IOM, 2012; Fontana & Paciello, 2010). As discussed in Chapter 4, inheritance practices in Wonogiri often grant a larger share (at least half) of the property to children designated as caregivers, a role commonly fulfilled by daughters. Unlike Islamic inheritance norms in many other parts of Java, where women receive smaller shares (Putra & Anwar, 2024), this local custom has led to distinctive patterns of land ownership. In both study villages, many women owned and actively managed agricultural land. Women's access to natural capital (land ownership) through caregiving arrangements reveals a sophisticated strategic exchange mechanism where social reproduction work converts into economic assets, challenging conventional assumptions that position women as resource-constrained actors. Rather than simply constraining women, this care-land exchange provides a culturally legitimate avenue for accessing natural capital that bypasses male control of inheritance, demonstrating how women strategically leverage their reproductive responsibilities as a calculated strategy for securing economic assets.

Women's participation in farmer groups further demonstrates their integration into agricultural decision-making, resources and knowledge. During farmer meetings I attended, women were present alongside men —a practice that participants indicated had been customary since these groups became formalised under government programs (although this is likely to differ from other parts of Indonesia). This participation emerged primarily because husbands were frequently absent as circular migrants. Where husbands remained home, couples often attended together, as wives were already involved, establishing joint participation as a regular community practice. Women's involvement was often encouraged by husbands seeking to access group loans for agricultural needs. As one female participant noted:

> Men are often hesitant to apply for these loans due to their pride, whereas women are adept at managing finances and may discreetly secure small loans to meet household needs without their husbands' knowledge.[130]

In addition to the absence of men, rising economic demands have created additional opportunities for women's formal employment. Participants perceived an increase in economic

[130] Interview, 18 February 2023

needs due to new demands that had not previously existed. As rural areas become integrated into broader market economies, communities have access to new consumer goods, technologies, and needs—from owning motorcycles for transportation to supporting children's education and replacing traditional practices like wood-burning with gas and electricity, all of which require cash expenditure. These increasing demands have reshaped social structures, transforming leadership roles from culturally designated positions into paid employment. This shift has made women more inclined to take on these roles and men more accepting of their involvement. As Bu Sutini remarked about her position as head of the hamlet:

> This is a job. People see it as an occupation. Because it is a job, people shouldn't see this as gendered, right? As long as they are capable of doing this. I work to get the money for my family.[131]

Bu Sutini's strategic framing reveals a crucial dimension often overlooked in rural transformation studies: women function as human capital assets within household livelihood strategies, and their expanded roles represent strategic capital optimisation (for the internally-differentiated household) rather than explicit gender empowerment. Her emphasis on economic necessity over gender equality demonstrates how women strategically reinterpret traditional concepts to legitimise their access to social capital (leadership positions) and financial capital (stipends)—a strategy that works within rather than against existing (and evolving) cultural frameworks. This perspective explains the remarkable speed with which traditional gender restrictions can be suspended when economic necessity demands it.

While Javanese women have long participated in household economic activities (Geertz, 1961), contemporary changes represent a qualitative shift in how their economic contributions are valued within household livelihood strategies. Their income-generating activities, once viewed as merely supplementary, are now getting more recognition as essential to household survival and prosperity. The gendered SLF analysis reveals that this recognition occurs through economic pragmatism as the household unit values women's capital contributions when these become critical for sustaining diverse livelihood portfolios. These changes have not fundamentally altered traditional gender expectations, as evidenced by the limited changes in domestic labour distribution. Increased male participation in household chores typically occurs only when circumstances leave no alternative. As one participant employed in the formal sector mentioned, "Because I have to work from 9 am to 5 pm, sometimes my husband helps prepare

[131] Field notes, 12 February 2023

lunch for our kids, helps them take a bath, or cleans the house."[132] Other women reported continuing to manage all household chores despite their formal employment, suggesting the persistence of traditional gender expectations within the domestic sphere.

Although these cases illustrate that economic necessity has been the primary driver of changing gender roles, these findings demonstrate that traditional gender norms can gradually shift through indirect pathways. While women's increased access remains mediated through male authority and economic imperatives rather than rights-based empowerment, economic necessity creates space for women to strategically exercise agency within culturally acceptable boundaries. Women pursue change through indirect methods of communication, leveraging economic contributions to expand their influence. This approach aligns with broader patterns observed across rural Java, where communities reinterpret traditional values to accommodate new economic realities rather than abandoning them entirely (Chua et al., 2000; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012; Brenner, 1998).

6.4. *Konco Wingking* in Decision Making

Stories of women in Wonogiri reveal how traditional Javanese gender roles have been subtly but significantly transformed. Traditional Javanese concepts, such as *konco wingking* (background companion), which confined women to domestic duties and subordinate positions, no longer capture the reality of women's roles in contemporary rural Java. As Chapter 5 demonstrated, rural transformation has reshaped Wonogiri's economic landscape through agricultural modernisation, industrial development, circular migration patterns, and integration with broader market economies. These macro-level changes have created new vulnerability contexts that necessitate household-level adaptations and responses, fundamentally altering the way gender roles within the household operate in practice. My analysis through a gendered SLF reveals that rural transformation operates as the primary catalyst, reshaping gender dynamics in Wonogiri. Household-level adaptations and responses necessarily involve reconfiguring traditional gender divisions of labour and decision-making authority to sustain livelihoods. Rural transformation has generated multiple pathways through which gender roles become fluid. For example, the expansion of formal employment opportunities in manufacturing has created demand for women's labour skills, while male circular migration patterns required women to expand their productive roles. Simultaneously, rising living costs

[132] Fieldnotes, 5 March 2023

and new consumption demands have made women's income contributions essential rather than supplementary to household survival. These structural changes mean that rigid adherence to traditional gender boundaries becomes economically unsustainable for many households.

The infrastructure improvements that connect rural areas to urban centres have also enabled women's expanded mobility and access to previously unavailable opportunities. Educational expansion, for instance, has equipped younger generations of women with skills that make them valuable assets in the changing economic landscape. Rural transformation has created both the necessity and the opportunity for gender role adaptation, enabling women in Wonogiri to navigate shifting conditions and expand their access to various forms of capital. Changes in Wonogiri's economy have created demand for women's diverse capabilities—their education, labour skills, financial management abilities, and social networks. This instrumental positioning means that communities see the expanding roles as a strategic investment in women's capabilities when household livelihood portfolios require it.

While this instrumental treatment of women as strategic assets may appear problematic from rights-based gender equality perspectives, it nevertheless reveals fluidity of gender roles within Javanese traditional values and culture when confronted with changing livelihood demands. This suggests that gender boundaries become economically contingent, opening possibilities for further changes as livelihood contexts continue to evolve, potentially creating pathways for more substantive transformation.

While economic necessity provides a compelling explanation for changing gender roles, the SLF framework's institutional dimension reveals that cultural factors function as equally important mediating forces that shape why and how these gender role changes occur within rural transformation contexts. The institutions component of the SLF encompasses not only formal structures but also cultural norms, values, and belief systems that determine how communities can access and deploy different forms of capital. In Wonogiri, women have leveraged new economic, social, and capital access opportunities—from expanded educational access to growing manufacturing employment—while working within cultural frameworks. This approach enables them to expand their roles (Bhavnani et al., 2003; Chua et al., 2000) in farmer groups, village planning, and economic activities, redefining traditional concepts like *konco wingking*.

One clear example of this transformation is the growing participation of women in social and economic networks in Wonogiri. Although some organisations remain male-dominated,

women have achieved notable integration in farmer groups that provide access to capital loans. The Wonogiri agriculture department reports that separate women's farmer groups—originally formed under government women empowerment programs—have largely become redundant as women successfully integrate into regular farmer groups. Women's political engagement has also expanded through government initiatives, such as *Musrenbang Desa* (village development planning) through their PKK groups, where they actively contribute to local planning and development.

The UN's influence on the Indonesian government's policies in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—which include enhancing women's participation and promoting gender equality (KOMPAK et al., 2020)—also appears to be contributing to the increasing involvement of women in political activities within villages. Participants involved in village organisations often cite government regulations mandating women's representation and empowerment in programs as crucial catalysts for understanding their rights and engaging in community decision-making. The SDG agenda on gender equality is also reflected in the initiatives of international agencies and actors operating in Wonogiri. The economic forces reshaping household livelihood strategies (and subsequently gender roles) are thus also embedded with broader processes of cultural and institutional change that also influence the acceptability of evolving gender roles.

The shifting cultural and socio-economic landscape in Wonogiri prompts a reconsideration of the traditional "master and manager" concept in Javanese households, as proposed by Brenner (1998). Women's roles have evolved beyond the conventional position of just household "manager," where they were primarily responsible for executing domestic decisions without real authority. Now, women are increasingly recognised as directing their family's future, actively participating in strategic household decisions that were traditionally the domain of men as household "masters." While social expectations still generally assign primary income-earning responsibilities to husbands and domestic duties to wives, these distinctions have become increasingly fluid in practice. This evolution suggests the reinterpretation of traditional norms to accommodate women's expanding spheres of influence within the household unit. When spouses take on tasks traditionally assigned to their partners, the community often frames this as merely "helping out" with the other's duties, reflecting a small, gradual shift in how families understand and distribute household duties. The integration of women into the economic sphere and their resulting financial independence has also led to shifts in traditional

gender roles and family expectations, fostering a more equitable environment within rural communities.

However, since these transformations in gender roles primarily represent pragmatic adaptations to livelihood challenges—shaped primarily by economic pressures and rural development initiatives—rather than fundamental challenges to gender inequality, a crucial question remains: How do women in Wonogiri perceive these evolving gender dynamics in the rural landscape? Do they perceive these changes as empowerment or an increased burden? How do they navigate cultural expectations while expanding their roles? These questions necessitate examining women's voices and subjective experiences of the gender role changes documented in this chapter. While the structural analysis reveals transformation mechanisms, women's own understandings provide essential insights into the meanings and possibilities they perceive within their evolving roles in rural Javanese society.

Chapter 7: Women's Lived Experiences of Changing Gender Roles in Wonogiri

Bu Rina's alarm doesn't ring at 3:30 AM—her body has learned to wake naturally at this hour. In the pre-dawn darkness of her small house in Kedunggupit, she quietly moves through her morning routine: praying, preparing breakfast for her family, sorting laundry, and checking that everything is ready for her children before they go to school. By 6:00 AM, she has already completed what many would consider a whole morning's work, yet her day as one of only two female hamlet heads in Kedunggupit has barely begun.

At the village office by 8:00 AM, Bu Rina transitions from household manager to community leader. Her morning is filled with administrative paperwork and meetings with villagers who need assistance with government services. Bu Rina finds herself constantly available to her community. "In the village, you're expected to serve whenever people need you," she explains. "While it may seem like we're not in the office after 2 PM sometimes, in reality, we continue working from home—people will come to your house anytime they require assistance."[133]

Unlike her male counterparts, her afternoon sometimes brings her dual role as PKK leader—a responsibility automatically assigned to female hamlet heads while their male colleagues receive support from their wives for this task. Bu Rina must juggle her primary leadership role with organising women's community activities, health programs, and family welfare initiatives. The inequity frustrates her: "I feel it is unfair that we also have to lead the PKK while male hamlet heads do not. Can you imagine the workload?" Yet she approaches this challenge strategically, delegating some responsibilities to the wives of neighbourhood unit (RT) and residents' association (RW) heads within her hamlet, while carefully explaining her reduced PKK meeting attendance to avoid community criticism.

Returning home by evening, Bu Rina's public duties give way to private responsibilities. Dinner must be prepared, household chores completed, and the weekend's farm work attended to. Even after a full day of community leadership, she remains committed to demonstrating that women can successfully balance multiple roles. She explained:

[133] Interview, 4 April 2023

> As a leader, I must set an example for the community. If I were to stop working on the farm, I would fail to demonstrate that women can successfully balance both farm and household responsibilities and not be embarrassed about doing dirty work despite holding higher positions and being well-educated. People often claim that women will neglect their families as an excuse to prevent them from taking roles outside the home. It is crucial to show that we can fulfil our primary duties of family care while also embracing new roles.[134]

Bu Rina's exhaustion is evident, yet so is her pride. She speaks passionately about the opportunities available to today's women—opportunities her grandmother's or even her mother's generation could never have imagined. Her story embodies a profound paradox: the expansion of women's roles in rural Wonogiri has brought both unprecedented liberation and intensified burdens. She feels simultaneously empowered by her career and overwhelmed by the expectation to excel in every domain of life without corresponding support or redistribution of traditional responsibilities.

Bu Rina's experience is shared by many women in contemporary Wonogiri. Across the three villages studied, women consistently described feeling both liberated by new opportunities and exhausted by mounting responsibilities. Building on the analysis in Chapter 5, which documented the dominant processes of rural transformation in Wonogiri, and Chapter 6, which examined how these changes have iteratively reshaped gender roles and expanded women's roles, especially in economic participation, this chapter explores more personal dimensions. It asks: How do women themselves experience and perceive these changing gender roles?

The evidence reveals a nuanced landscape of how women themselves understand, interpret, feel, and navigate these transformations—one where they feel pride but also exhaustion, where their traditional cultural values intersect with modern aspirations, and where women strategically navigate between newfound autonomy and increased burden on a daily basis. Women's expanding roles have created genuine opportunities for economic independence, decision-making power, and public recognition. Yet these same changes have also intensified their workload, creating what many scholars (Griffin, 2017; Intesar & Parvez, 2024; Miranti et al., 2022) describe as a "triple burden" of productive work, reproductive work, and community obligations.

This chapter examines four key dimensions of women's lived experiences: first, the paradox of empowerment itself—how women simultaneously feel liberated and burdened by their

[134] Interview, 4 April 2023

expanding roles; second, how deeply embedded cultural frameworks provide both constraints and strategic resources for navigating change; third, how the preservation of social capital—which may appear as mere acceptance—actually represents informed decision-making about livelihood security; and finally, how these dynamics are creating gradual change through women's strategic navigation of cultural expectations.

7.1. The Paradox of Empowerment

The expansion of women's roles in rural Wonogiri has created unprecedented opportunities alongside intensified responsibilities. Women often describe feeling both liberated by new possibilities and overwhelmed by mounting responsibilities. This paradox arises because rural transformation necessitates women's participation as economic actors, while simultaneously relying on their continued provision of unpaid care work that sustains households and communities. Rather than redistributing reproductive responsibilities, economic development strategies have layered new expectations onto existing ones. Women's success in one domain is seen as a risk of failure in others. This reflects a fundamental contradiction that scholars analysing social reproduction have identified: women's empowerment occurs within systems that structurally depend on their unpaid reproductive labour (Federici, 2012; Fraser, 2016), creating simultaneous experiences of liberation and exhaustion where expanded opportunities come embedded within intensified obligations.

7.1.1. Expressions of Liberation

As the youngest daughter, Nur was traditionally expected to return home to care for her aging parents and their farm, which would have prevented her from marrying an only child with similar obligations. However, through substantial remittances and her status as the family's only college graduate, Nur gained leverage to make independent decisions, including her choice of spouse. While her family initially disapproved of her marriage to an only child, they ultimately accepted her decision—a marked contrast to her cousin, who was less financially independent and was forced to end a similar relationship due to family opposition.

Nur's case illustrates a broader transformation: how economic contributions translate directly into personal autonomy within the household. Economic independence emerges as perhaps the most significant source of liberation for women, representing far more than mere financial gain. For many participants, earning their own income provides more psychological freedom from dependency relationships that constrained previous generations. This liberation manifests in

many cases that previous generations lacked. For example, women describe the relief of making personal purchases without seeking permission, contributing to family decisions from positions of financial strength, and modelling different possibilities for their daughters. One participant captured this generational shift:

> My mother never dared spend money on herself—like cosmetics—unless absolutely necessary. She said she felt morally wrong to use my father's earnings for anything beyond household needs. I don't want to be like her, so I insisted on working.[135]

Women felt that their personal needs, such as self-care and leisure, were not household priorities; therefore, they didn't want to use their husbands' money for such expenses. With money they earn themselves, women also gain moral legitimacy to address their own well-being. This shift represents a fundamental change in how women perceive their right to resources and self-determination. The ability to spend on personal items without guilt or permission becomes a symbol of autonomy.

Educational opportunities represent another significant dimension of liberation. Parents increasingly support daughters' education, recognising its economic value within household livelihood strategies. This shift reflects broader transformations in how families conceptualise human capital investment, moving beyond traditional gender-specific roles toward more flexible approaches that prioritise practical returns over conventional expectations.

Women's expanding participation in public leadership roles provides yet another significant source of empowerment. Female participants describe women leaders, such as Bu Rina, a female hamlet head, as representing outstanding achievements for their communities. They express feeling increased recognition and expanded space for women to influence local development decisions. For them, the presence of women in these positions can challenge traditional assumptions about women's capabilities while creating new role models for younger generations to envision different possibilities for their own futures. Research on women's political participation in Indonesia has documented how these leadership opportunities, while still limited, can create precedents for broader social change (Blackburn, 2004; Robinson, 2009).

The expansion of decision-making power within households represents perhaps the most significant, yet least visible and contested, form of liberation. Female participants expressed that contributing to household income gives them greater bargaining power within families,

[135] Photovoice discussions, 13 February 2023

with higher earning potential enhancing their influence in important decisions. Evidence from Chapter 6 regarding men's increasing (though limited) participation in domestic tasks represents another dimension of progress, though one requiring careful management. Several participants reported that their husbands now contribute more to household chores and childcare than previous generations, though many of them mentioned that they want this support to remain invisible to the community. These changes reflect a transformation in how women in Wonogiri perceive their economic roles.

These multiple dimensions of liberation—economic independence, educational advancement, political participation, expanded household decision-making, and domestic chore-sharing—reinforce one another to create a change in women's lives, although progress sometimes remains uneven. The interconnected nature of these changes means that progress in one area often catalyses advancement in others, creating a cumulative effect that influences household and family dynamics, and sometimes also community expectations. This growing sense of autonomy is affecting how women perceive their roles in productivity. When asked whether they would stop working if their husbands earned enough to support the family, most women said they would continue to work, viewing their jobs not only as sources of household income and freedom to manage their own money, but also as vital sources of autonomy and influence within the household.

The cumulative effect of these changes is a sense of expanded possibilities that participants often articulate through comparisons with their grandmothers' or even their mothers' experiences. Women consistently express gratitude for opportunities to work outside the home, participate in community leadership, and pursue education—often envisioning different, more expansive futures for their daughters. This generational perspective provides a framework for understanding current struggles as temporary challenges within a broader trajectory of positive change, rather than permanent conditions to be endured. As Bu Suryani's assessment captures this generational perspective:

> I believe women's situation has improved significantly. Now, women can be leaders, earn money, and send their daughters to university. When I was young, I couldn't even imagine these things. My mother never went to school. I dreamed of becoming a police officer, but instead, I had to marry young... However, now young women can attend university first, establish their careers before marriage, and pursue their dreams. It is a significant improvement![136]

[136] Photovoice discussions, 13 February 2023

7.1.2. The weight of invisible labour

Despite genuine appreciation for expanded opportunities, women's daily lived experiences reveal another reality behind empowerment narratives. Bu Jumiyati's perspective reflects a widespread gendered experience in the community: that empowerment can, in practice, intensify women's workload. She explains:

> A career woman who is also a wife is still a wife at home. She is responsible for looking after the house, her husband, and her children—dealing with household matters. Women work 24 hours a day. Even though she may be a doctor or, like me, a midwife, she remains a woman, a wife and a mother. In my opinion, being a midwife is just a side job; the most important role, my main job, is being a wife and mother.[137]

Bu Jumiyati's characterisation of professional work as "just a side job" reveals how the central insight from Social Reproduction Theory (SRT, see Bhattacharya, 2017) operates in rural Wonogiri: women's participation in the economy is embedded in structures that rely on their ongoing, unpaid reproductive labour. What development practitioners often celebrate as women's empowerment through economic participation actually represents an intensification, rather than a transformation, of women's workload, as rural transformation depends on women's reproductive labour while simultaneously requiring their productive contributions. The triple roles—productive work, reproductive work, and community management—then become a triple burden for women.

As households diversify their livelihood strategies to navigate rural change, women's unpaid labour becomes more essential, rather than less crucial, to family survival. Their work enables other family members to participate in wage employment, maintains household functioning during economic uncertainty, provides the social and emotional support necessary for navigating changing circumstances, and, crucially, sustains the cultural frameworks that legitimise these changing arrangements. Federici (2012) identified a similar dynamic and proposed an analysis of how capitalism's structural dependence on women's unpaid work sustains broader processes of accumulation and development. Within rural development initiatives that prioritise economic growth, women in Wonogiri appear to bear the social costs of economic change through intensified reproductive labour, thereby enabling development without immediate corresponding public investments in childcare, eldercare, or social services.

The undervalued reality of women's reproductive labour has normalised many forms of labour as natural "obligations" rather than essential work, enabling rural transformation. Over time,

[137] Interview, 2 February 2023

these duties have become invisible—not because women deliberately hide them, but because society views them as inherent aspects of womanhood rather than crucial labour that subsidises household and community adaptation. When women take on additional paid work, existing reproductive responsibilities are rarely reduced or redistributed, creating cumulative pressures that participants describe as unsustainable.

This intensification of women's labour extends beyond households to encompass what Bourdieu (2018) identified as cultural reproduction through women's labour. At the community level, the gendered nature of ceremonial labour reinforces these patterns of invisible work. For instance, while men participate in community events through simpler tasks, such as setting up tents or boiling water, women handle complex food preparation, coordinate childcare, and perform a key role in managing the intricate social dynamics that these events require. One participant expressed frustration:

> "Oh, Miss, life in the village is exhausting. Every time there's a ceremonial event, women have a lot to do—it's been this way forever. Meanwhile, men only set up the tent and boil water for tea."[138]

Time poverty emerges as a persistent consequence of these multiple demands, with many describing schedules allowing little space for rest. The pre-Ramadan period, coinciding with the 2023 harvest season during fieldwork, provided stark examples of temporal pressure. Women described exhaustion from participating in numerous *rewang*[139] (Figure 32)—a Javanese term for mutual assistance that has come to be specifically associated with women's roles in food preparation for community events (Berninghausen & Kerstan, 1992; Horne, 1974; Sullivan, 1994). Participants found themselves constantly moving from one neighbour's house to another while preparing for their own events, managing household duties, farm work, and income generation. One participant explained:

> Almost every week, there is *rewang*. In the village, participating in community activities and supporting others is crucial; otherwise, you risk a bad reputation, and when you need help, no one will be there to assist you. In the city, people often hire others to handle such tasks.[140]

[138] Interview, 8 March 2023
[139] In certain Javanese dialects, the term "rewang" refers to a helper.
[140] Interview, 10 March 2023

Figure 32: (Rewang) A woman caring for her 1-year-old grandchild while preparing food for a ceremony, 6 January 2023.

This unequal distribution of ceremonial responsibilities mirrors patterns observed in domestic arrangements within the household or family. While some participants, particularly younger couples, reported modest increases in spousal support for household tasks, the overwhelming majority of women described feeling burdened by their disproportionate share of both domestic and community work. This persistent inequality is reflected in Wonogiri's labour statistics (Figure 33), which show that women consistently represented a significantly higher proportion of unpaid family workers compared to men.

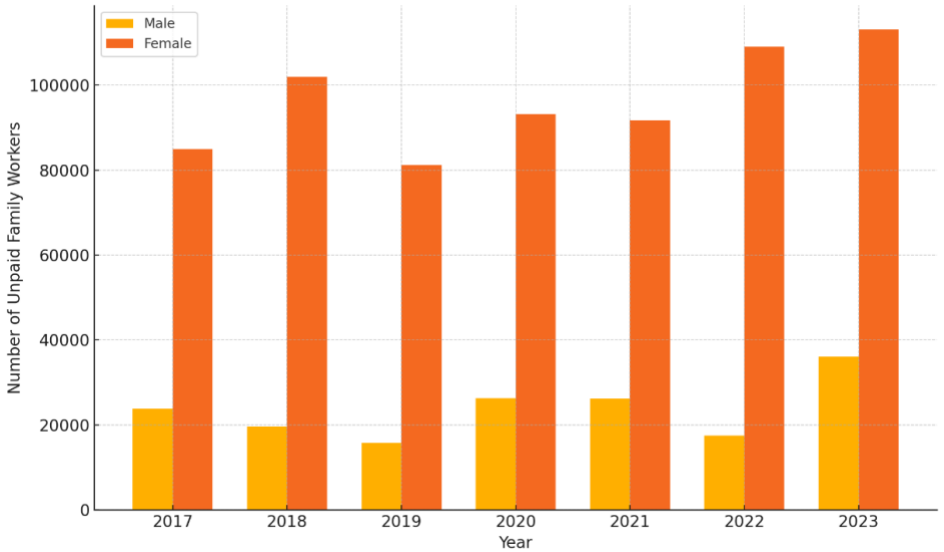

Figure 33: Population aged 15 and above in Wonogiri working as unpaid family workers (BPS Kabupaten Wonogiri, 2023i)

The emotional labour—the effort to regulate both one's own emotions and those of others in order to produce a specific emotional outcome or impression (Hochschild, 1983)—required to maintain social harmony, mediate conflicts, and ensure that emotional needs are met, adds another layer to women's burden in managing multiple roles. This emotional management work, while largely invisible, requires significant energy and contributes to the exhaustion that many women experience:

> Can you imagine that before this wedding, there were two other weddings, and after this, there will be another wedding this month? Women are working nonstop. Most of us are tired but have no option but to continue and make the best out of it. We can't directly say we don't want to. We also can't show our frustration frontally or complain too much because people will think we're not good neighbours or that we don't care about the community.[141]

From an SRT perspective, *rewang* represents essential cultural reproduction work that cannot be avoided—women must participate directly to maintain the social relationships that enable household survival strategies. This reveals how women's social reproduction work extends beyond individual households to encompass community-level obligations that sustain the social capital essential for rural livelihood strategies. SRT illuminates why some of this work cannot be delegated or reduced: it involves the embodied transmission of cultural practices and maintenance of social networks that rural transformation depends upon.

While some wealthier families can contribute financially to reduce direct participation, they still typically take on alternative roles that require less physical labour. For example, while many women engage in intensive cooking in the kitchen, those with higher social status or financial means may instead take on ceremonial roles in wedding traditions or cultural performances that carry social prestige but demand less physical exertion (Figure 34).

[141] Interview, 8 March 2023

Figure 34: Women in pink uniforms eat at the back after serving as guest greeters—a role that involves less physical labour at the front of the wedding ceremony—while others, such as the woman in the red shirt, continue with food preparation

These findings confirmed Federici's (2012) assertion that "the poorer the family the higher the enslavement of the women" (p.18). The class-based variations in women's reproductive labour observed during my fieldwork demonstrate this pattern: families with greater economic resources can purchase prepared food instead of cooking from scratch, employ a helper, or use labour-saving devices like washing machines instead of hand-washing clothes during hectic periods. Nevertheless, complete exemption from reproductive labour remains impossible regardless of economic status, as the social expectations and cultural reproduction functions of women's work transcend simple economic substitution.

Government empowerment programs, while well-intentioned, often exacerbate rather than alleviate these burdens because they operate within the same structural logic that SRT critiques. This reflects broader critiques of women's empowerment approaches that focus on increasing women's participation without addressing the structural conditions that create their disadvantage (Batliwala, 2007; Cornwall, 2003; Kabeer, 2005). In Wonogiri, these programs often operate on assumptions that women have available time and energy for additional activities, failing to recognise the full scope of their existing responsibilities. A PKK activist noted:

> Many training programs from the government are beneficial for capacity building, but we are exhausted. When we return home, the workload remains the same—and the training adds to it.[142]

The photovoice activities conducted with women in the two villages during this research vividly documented the accumulation of responsibilities across women's lives. When asked to share a portrait reflecting their daily lives, participants consistently submitted images related to domestic work—even though many were employed outside the home. Several felt compelled to provide multiple photographs of household tasks, explaining that a single image could not capture the full extent of their daily responsibilities. Some even turned to online illustrations of women juggling multiple domestic chores at once, believing these better represented their lived reality (Figure 35). These visual narratives revealed how traditional work feels heavier when combined with new roles, not only because the tasks themselves have increased, but because they now compete for time and energy with additional responsibilities.

Figure 35: Pictures displayed during photovoice activities, 8 February 2023.

[142] Interview, 26 January 2023

The invisibility of much reproductive labour compounds these burdens by making it difficult for women to receive recognition or support for this work. Household tasks, childcare responsibilities, and community obligations are often taken for granted as natural aspects of women's roles rather than acknowledged as essential labour that enables other economic activities. Bu Sum expressed frustration about her husband's (and men's in general) limited capabilities, which results in women's extra burden:

> As women, we are expected to do everything. We are fully capable of performing many of the tasks traditionally done by men. Yet, there are also many roles that only women can fulfil. Women are required to be versatile and capable in all areas—while men? What is it that only they are expected to do? It is so tiring! [143]

Despite these mounting burdens and their frequent expressions of exhaustion and frustration, women continue to navigate these responsibilities with what they claimed to be acceptance. When directly asked about their workload, women often acknowledge feeling overwhelmed, yet simultaneously assert that they are *ikhlas* (sincere/willing) or "must" be willing to fulfil these duties. They express contradictory feelings—complaining about the relentless nature of their responsibilities while also claiming to accept them as part of their natural obligations. This paradox raises a crucial question: if women recognise the unfairness of their situation, why do they continue to accept these mounting burdens rather than actively resist or redistribute them?

Understanding this contradiction requires examining not just the structural forces that create these burdens, but also the deeply embedded cultural frameworks that shape how women interpret and respond to their circumstances. The answer lies in the cultural concepts of duty, religious obligation, and livelihood strategy that will be explored in the next section.

7.2 *Kodrat* and *Kewajiban*: Cultural Frameworks for Women's "Labour of Love"

Federici (2012) argued that the ideological construction of housework and care work as a "labour of love" serves to naturalise women's unpaid contributions while rendering them invisible as economic activities. This perspective transforms what should be recognised as essential, skilled labour into expressions of natural, feminine caring, making the absence of compensation appear not as exploitation but as appropriate to the loving nature of the work

[143] Field notes, 18 March 2023

itself. Her analysis suggested that first, this ideology naturalises women's capacity for care work, framing it as an innate trait and implying that women are inherently suited for—and fulfilled by—domestic responsibilities. Second, it establishes a moral framework in which seeking recognition or compensation for such labour is viewed as selfish or transactional; according to this logic, true love should be its only reward. Third, it conceals the economic value of reproductive labour by positioning it outside the realm of "real" work, despite its essential role in sustaining and reproducing the labour force. This framework enables economic systems to depend on women's unpaid contributions while avoiding the redistribution of reproductive responsibilities to include men's participation, because this work is framed as inherently women's work.

This belief in women's "destined role" was clearly reflected in the photovoice activities. When asked to capture their roles as women in households and communities, they shared images that showed a wide range of tasks, including earning income, farming, childcare, and community involvement, such as cooking for events (Figure 36). When further questioned about the potential exhaustion from balancing these demanding responsibilities, participants consistently responded that they see their caregiving and domestic work as part of their *kodrat (*God-given nature) and *kewajiban* (obligation or duty) as a woman in the family.

Figure 36: Displayed pictures reflecting women's roles within the household and their communities submitted for Photovoice, 13 February 2023

The terms *kodrat* and *kewajiban* were frequently invoked by participants to justify the gendered division of roles within the household. These terms, laden with emotional, social and spiritual significance, help legitimise the responsibilities placed on women. Such responses reveal how deeply rooted cultural expectations continue to shape participants' perceptions of gender, even as broader societal dynamics shift. Beliefs about inherent roles and obligations strongly influence how people in Wonogiri experience, and negotiate, the tensions between traditional gender norms and the realities of daily life.

Understanding the cultural and religious significance of terms like *kodrat* and *kewajiban* is thus essential for exploring how women in Wonogiri experience and perceive the evolving gender dynamics. These concepts operate within Indonesia's predominantly Islamic context—with 87.2% of the national population and 97.30% in Wonogiri identifying as Muslim (BPS Indonesia, 2024; BPS Jawa Tengah, 2023)—where religious interpretations significantly shape gender roles, household hierarchies, and indeed the lived (psychological) experiences of women. The power of these concepts lies not merely in their religious authority but in how they transform structural labour arrangements into moral obligations that appear divinely ordained rather than socially constructed.

For example, when asked about male leadership in the household, participants consistently cited religious teachings as their primary justification, demonstrating how Islamic interpretations legitimate gender hierarchies. Bu Jumiyati's statement reflects this dynamic: "As a Muslim, I was taught that in Islam, men are the head of the family. I adhere to Islamic principles that women must obey their husbands. This is our *kodrat* and *kewajiban*." Her response reveals how religious discourse provides the moral framework through which women understand their intensified workload as a natural duty, similar to what Federici argues is a broader social tendency to frame women's unpaid reproductive labour as a "labour of love," valued by communities not as work, but as an expression of inherent care.

As Bennett (2005) argues, religious concepts such as *kodrat* and *kewajiban* frame sexuality and gender roles as divine attributes that serve to maintain family honour and community order, demonstrating the influence of religion on gender dynamics in Wonogiri. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the concept *kodrat* (derived from the Arabic *qudrah* and/or *qadar*) encapsulates human natures and destinies, which are often interpreted in biological distinctions between men and women (Brenner, 1998; Robinson, 2009). Meanwhile, *kewajiban* (noun) refers to "obligations," derived from the adjective *wajib*, which in Islamic terminology denotes

something that Allah (God) and His Messenger have commanded to be carried out by a person who is morally and legally responsible (Hapsari, 2020). Interpretations of this concept often emphasise that *wajib* means that adhering to these duties brings divine rewards, while neglecting them may result in spiritual transgression (Fitriani, 2021; Hapsari, 2020).

These obligations are often interpreted through a gendered lens, naturalising specific social responsibilities as predetermined divine mandates. *Kodrat Wanita* (women's God-given nature) then extends beyond biological determinism to function as a powerful social framework that shapes cultural identity and gender expression in Indonesian society. Religious interpretations have reinforced this concept as divinely sanctioned and immutable (Barlas, 2002; Brenner, 1998; Fakih, 2013), creating boundaries around acceptable gender roles and identities. This narrow interpretation of *kodrat* creates a hierarchical framework that not only subordinates women to men but also marginalises those who do not fit within its binary gender construct (Davies, 2010; Wieringa, 2015).

These concepts did not simply persist as timeless traditions—they were strategically appropriated and reinforced by multiple institutions, including the Indonesian state. As discussed in Chapter 2, during the New Order era, the government actively promoted a gender ideology that defined women primarily through their roles as wives and mothers, as outlined in the state doctrine of *Panca Dharma Wanita*. Central to the state's strategy was the framing of these prescribed gender roles as natural and immutable, an extension of women's *kodrat*. The operationalisation of this doctrine occurred through systematic institutional channels: state-sponsored women's organisations like PKK (Family Welfare Movement) disseminated these gender ideologies at the village level, educational curricula embedded these principles in schools, and media campaigns reinforced these messages through newspapers and radio broadcasts (Brenner, 1998; Robinson, 2009). Brenner (1998, p. 247) illustrates how state attitudes were promoted through media propaganda, citing Javanese newspaper headlines such as "Don't Forget Your Destiny as Mother Even If You Have a Career!"

From an SRT perspective, this ideological reinforcement serves key structural functions: by affirming women's reproductive responsibilities as religious and cultural obligations, the state sought to secure their roles and labour as a means of supporting national development. This strategy enabled the state to maintain social cohesion and cultural legitimacy without making immediate or corresponding investments in public services such as childcare, eldercare, or other forms of social support. Comparable critiques from feminist scholars highlight how this

approach domesticated women's roles, confining their contributions to the private sphere while co-opting their labour for state (developmentalist) purposes (Blackburn, 2004; Kusujiarti, 2011; Robinson, 2009; Suryakusuma, 2011; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012; Wieringa, 1992).

While official policies have shifted toward women's economic empowerment since 1998, and the *kodrat* doctrine is no longer explicitly promoted by the state, the legacy of this ideology still influences Indonesian social norms through religious interpretation. The sentiment captured by Brenner in media propaganda from the 1990s is still echoed in the words of many participants in this study: "We cannot forget our destiny as women. Even though we work, our primary duty is to care for our family." During photovoice activities, participants were asked to reflect on any unfulfilled dreams and the obstacles that hindered them. While many had aspired to higher education and careers in midwifery, teaching, or corporate work, their images of husbands, children, and money symbolised the barriers they faced in achieving those aspirations (Figure 37). Most participants noted that their priorities shifted after marriage, redirecting their focus and resources from career ambitions to family care and supporting their children's aspirations.

Figure 37: Photos displayed during a photovoice activity symbolised the barriers women faced in achieving their aspirations, 8 February 2023.

While many husbands (particularly those from low—and middle-income households) were supportive of their wives' participation in the workforce, there remained stubborn expectations that wives should still obey their husbands within marriage. This expectation created profound emotional conflict for women who found themselves more competent than their spouses in business or household management, yet felt obligated to maintain traditional deference. Mbak Neni's experience illustrates this internal struggle. After establishing and successfully managing a small business that her husband later joined, she felt torn between gratitude for his support and frustration about needing to guide his decision-making:

> I know that in my religion, women are expected to obey their husbands and follow their decisions. I respect my husband, but I am just trying to help him make the right choices. Often, people judge me for arguing with him. I disagree not because I am disobedient but because he is often mistaken, and I am just trying to assist him.[144]

In Soco, many young women report frequent criticism from peers when they seem to be "overruling" their husbands, creating anxiety about social judgment even when arrangements work well privately. These compromises are seen as misaligned with deeply ingrained beliefs about the traditional identity and expectations of women as "good wives." Similar to the attitudes toward women's education discussed in Chapter 6, criticism of shared domestic responsibilities predominantly comes from the older generation, while the younger generation shows more acceptance.

While these evolving attitudes suggest that societal norms can evolve, the process is often slow and contradictory. Women are often still blamed for issues involving children, such as those commonly found in *Kampung Milyader* (Billionaire Village), where both parents typically work and leave children in the care of grandparents or send them to *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools). Government officials and community members frequently attributed youth delinquency to mothers' workforce participation rather than parental absence overall. Comments like "because their mothers are also working, so they have no one to supervise them and raise them well"[145] reveal how gendered responsibility plays out in practice—women are held accountable for social reproduction failures even when structural conditions such as economic necessity force them into paid employment.

[144] Field notes, 28 November 2022
[145] 11 April 2023

These accusations created profound emotional responses that varied significantly across generations. Older women often internalised this blame, viewing it as an inevitable consequence of mothers working outside the home. However, younger women are increasingly challenging these assumptions. Ana, an 18-year-old student, argued passionately, "It's unfair to blame only mothers when both parents are working. Women who work often have no choice, and it's not entirely their fault. The husband is also responsible because raising children is a shared responsibility. It's unjust if only men are allowed to pursue careers."[146]

These generational differences in responses reflect varying understandings of the fundamental nature of gender roles—specifically, what constitutes women's 'natural' responsibilities versus social expectations. Among the 206 participants, only a few (mostly young women) understood *kodrat* in its original meaning as an innate biological characteristic. Bu Heri, a PKK activist, mentioned:

> It is difficult to convince and educate other women that *kodrat* is limited to physical traits because there is already a deeply ingrained belief. Even something as simple as cleaning the house is difficult, let alone other matters like contraception. It is also challenging for men to take part in, to the point where the government had to offer one million rupiah for men willing to undergo a vasectomy. Even then, it remains difficult because they believe such responsibility falls on women.[147]

Meanwhile, among the 93 male participants, Pak Supardi was one of the very few who described developing a more precise, biologically focused understanding of the *kodrat* concept during his tenure as a government official, through his participation in "Gender Mainstreaming Programs" alongside other civil servants. He explained:

> A woman's *kodrat* consists of things that are inherent and cannot be represented or replaced by men. These are the 4Ms: *Menstruasi, Mengandung, Melahirkan, Menyusui* (Menstruation, Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Breastfeeding). As long as it pertains to a woman's natural role, which cannot be substituted, then so be it. Anyone can do other tasks. Cooking and washing dishes, for example, are normal activities for men, meaning those are not obligations inherently tied to a woman's natural role.[148]

His experience exemplifies the shifting nature of state intervention in gender dynamics. These initiatives, which gained momentum following the 1998 reforms, aimed to integrate gender equality perspectives into policy development, implementation, and evaluation at all levels of government. The formal implementation of gender mainstreaming began with Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000 (Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, 2018),

[146] FGD, 8 February 2023
[147] Interview, 20 February 2023
[148] Interview, 6 April 2023

representing an ideological shift from the New Order's explicit promotion of women's domestic roles. However, the very fact that Pak Supardi's understanding remained exceptional among participants demonstrates the limited penetration of these official gender equality initiatives into rural communities. Unlike Pak Supardi, a community leader's comment on government programs highlighted how traditional gender dynamics continue to operate—even within initiatives ostensibly aimed at empowering women. He suggested that many vocational programs were necessary "to keep women busy." He stated that it is essential to keep them occupied with activities like batik training classes, as he assumed that when women have spare time, they tend to gossip. "The more active they are, the better it is,"[149] he added. His comment demonstrates how underlying assumptions about women's nature continue to shape institutional approaches—and are, in turn, shaped by community perspectives like his.

Women are expected to constantly manage contradictory realities, reconciling their growing recognition of inequity with their need for social harmony—a form of "invisible" emotional labour that concepts like *kodrat and kewajiban* help make psychologically manageable and appear acceptable.

The resistance to ideological change reflects the deep internalisation of earlier state interventions and religious teachings—women's acceptance of their reproductive roles as natural and religiously ordained was so deeply embedded that alternative interpretations could be seen as threats to community stability. The use of cultural concepts such as *kodrat* and *kewajiban* then serves crucial emotional resources and moral frameworks that transform intensified workloads into expressions of religious devotion and cultural authenticity, enabling women to perceive intensified workloads as meaningful rather than exploitative in otherwise contradictory circumstances.

During a group discussion, when asked if they viewed the inequitable gender division of labour as a burden, they responded firmly, "No, because we do it willingly," and "We are *ikhlas* (sincere/willing) to keep the family harmonious."[150] Even when pressed about the overwhelming nature of their responsibilities, women consistently affirmed that they are *ikhlas* because they viewed it as part of their responsibility and necessary to avoid conflict within the household. Based on their responses, including how they express the need to be willing (*ikhlas*), these attitudes suggest that women's acceptance is not just the result of internalised

[149] Field notes, 7 February 2023
[150] Photovoice discussions, 13 February 2023

oppression—though this is partly true, given how the state, religious institutions, older generations, and cultural traditions have promoted these values about women's traditional roles. These expressions also represent genuine psychological and personal experiences that their actions and attitudes provide authentic sources of meaning, spiritual fulfilment, and moral identity within their lived reality.

While these attitudes may appear to reflect deeply internalised cultural values that serve exploitative structures, women are actively finding purpose and dignity in their labour as acts of devotion and virtue. The persistence of these frameworks cannot be explained by ideological conviction alone. Women's apparent acceptance often masks more strategic calculations about survival and social acceptance, which will be discussed in the following section.

7.3. Social Capital Preservation Through Strategic Conformity

> My husband often helps with housework, but I tell him not to do it when relatives visit. I don't want people saying I'm not a good wife.[151]

The apparent contradiction between women's growing decision-making power and their continued public deference to traditional gender hierarchies is evident in how women in Wonogiri navigate their expanding roles. Generational differences in this negotiation are evident when older women often go to greater lengths to conceal changes in domestic roles, while younger couples are more open but still frame shifting responsibilities as mutual "helping" rather than equal partnership. Women often describe their economic contributions as "helping" their husbands' roles as the primary breadwinner. Similarly, when men participate in domestic work, it is framed as "helping" their wives' role, though this, too, is carefully managed to avoid openly challenging gender norms.

Women's own perspectives on these changes are complex and often contradictory, structured by deeply embedded cultural constructs and internalised societal values about their roles as women. While participants frequently justified their overwhelming workloads through statements like "to be a good wife" and "it's our obligation as women, wives, and mothers," their private conversations revealed more nuanced attitudes about these expectations. During focus group discussions, younger women, in particular, expressed growing tension between their career aspirations and traditional domestic duties. As one participant reflected, "For me,

[151] Interview, 8 April 2023

women have to be strong. We've always been taught that, as women, we must be able to do everything for the family."[152]

Although many women initially explained that they shoulder most care responsibilities due to traditional obligations, their responses revealed more critical perspectives when asked why these duties should fall specifically to women. In one discussion[153], a participant reflected, "In the past, men focused on earning money, so women had to take care of everything at home." Another added, "But now, women also work, so in reality, women today do far more work than men," a statement that drew widespread agreement from the group. This collective acknowledgment contradicted their earlier acceptance of traditional arrangements, revealing an underlying tension between professed beliefs and lived experiences.

A female head of hamlet's action showed this ongoing contradiction as it extends into women's public roles. In a women's group discussion group[154], she confidently stated, "Women now don't want to lose to men. We want to compete; we know we can also do what men can do." Yet in a more formal village meeting, the same leader carefully reframed women's accomplishments within traditional norms: "Even though we know women can do a lot of things, we never forget the husband is still the head of the household—we still respect them. If we argue, it's just like doing our part to manage the household." [155]

This contradiction of perspectives and actions can be understood through theoretical frameworks that examine how social pressures shape individual expression. Tickamyer and Kusujiarti (2012) employ Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemonic ideology in their Java-based research, which explains how contradictions become normalised within Javanese society by presenting dominant group interests as universal concerns. While hegemonic ideology explains the structural forces at play, Asch's (1956) seminal work on social conformity provides additional insight into the psychological mechanisms through which women might publicly accept arrangements they privately question. Conformity theory suggests that individuals often publicly conform to group opinions even when they privately disagree, aligning their public behaviour with group expectations due to both normative social influence (the desire to be accepted) and informational social influence (the belief that others' interpretations are correct) (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004).

[152] Interview, 2 April 2023
[153] Photovoice discussions, 13 February 2023
[154] Photovoice discussions, 13 February 2023
[155] Field notes, 12 April 2023

These contradictions become clearer when examined through the lens of livelihood strategies and social capital preservation. Women's conformity to cultural expectations is not merely about tradition—it is a strategic necessity for maintaining the social relationships essential for household survival in rural contexts. In rural areas like Wonogiri, stepping outside accepted social norms carries consequences. As one participant noted: "If we don't contribute (money or labour) to community activities, when we need help later, no one will come. If they hate us, they won't help us either."[156] During fieldwork, I observed how families experiencing emergencies—sudden medical expenses, agricultural labour, urgent house repairs, or ceremonies—relied entirely on community networks for both labour and financial assistance. Women who had maintained their social standing through consistent participation in community obligations could mobilise significant resources during crises.

The cost of non-conformity can be severe, particularly in rural or remote areas where essential services cannot be easily purchased, directly affecting families' access to critical community support systems. Unlike urban families, which often have more access to domestic help, childcare, or catering for events, rural families rely on social networks to access these same services. Consequently, social sanctions for challenging traditional gender arrangements manifest in ways that threaten household livelihood security. Women who face community criticism risk their family's integration into the mutual aid networks essential for rural survival.

These findings reveal how social capital functions as a critical livelihood asset that rural women cannot afford to jeopardise. The careful management of gender performances—from hiding husbands' domestic work to reframing women's achievements within traditional hierarchies—reflects women's understanding that challenging gender norms too openly risks their families' access to essential community support networks. Their strategic navigation of these competing demands demonstrates the constraints imposed by gendered expectations, but at the same time, the agency women exercise in protecting their households' livelihood security.

This "strategic conformity" operates through multiple mechanisms that preserve women's access to community networks that enable household adaptation. Women's careful performance of traditional gender roles in public settings creates what could be understood as social insurance, an investment in relationships that provide access to labour, financial assistance, and emergency support when formal services are unavailable or unaffordable. However, this preservation strategy requires women to bear disproportionate costs. They must

[156] Field notes, 8 March 2023

expand their economic roles to respond to changing livelihood opportunities while simultaneously maintaining the reproductive work within the existing cultural norm necessary to sustain community relationships. The strategic nature of their conformity—evidenced by the private acknowledgment of unfairness alongside public acceptance of traditional arrangements—reveals women's awareness of both the necessity and the burden of this dual responsibility.

7.4. Institutional Evolution and Strategic Navigation

The gendered dynamics observed among women in Wonogiri exemplify a wider, well-documented phenomenon of rural transformations across the Global South. As rural economies evolve, women face mounting pressure to engage in income-generating activities—both within and beyond agriculture—while simultaneously upholding their traditional responsibilities as caregivers and household managers (Akter et al., 2017; UN Women, 2017; Quisumbing et al., 2015). A crucial question I seek to answer in this chapter, however, is how women themselves perceive and feel about these changes in their daily lives, and to attempt to explain these attitudes.

The evidence presented demonstrated how rural transformation has produced a paradox in gender expectations in Wonogiri, one that women themselves perceive and experience in contradictory ways. While women understand their expanding workload as a necessary trade-off for greater opportunities, they frame this acceptance through traditional concepts of obligation. While economic changes and shifting societal norms have broadened women's roles beyond the domestic sphere, they remain expected to embody traditional ideals of "a good wife, a good mother, and a good woman", thereby fulfilling their *kodrat* and *kewajiban.*

The persistence of cultural concepts in women's own explanations of their roles reveals how deeply embedded cultural frameworks continue to shape their experiences of change. These concepts, which were reinforced through decades of state ideology during the New Order period and sustained through religious interpretations (Bennett, 2005; Brenner, 1998; Robinson, 2009), transform structural labour arrangements into moral obligations that appear divinely ordained rather than socially constructed. These cultural frameworks, however, simultaneously provide both emotional resources and moral justification for managing the contradictions of rapid social change. They transform intensified workloads into expressions of religious devotion and cultural authenticity, similar to what Federici (2012) argued is a

broader social tendency to frame women's unpaid reproductive labour as expressions of inherent care and natural femininity. This cultural framework enables women to find meaning and moral satisfaction in otherwise overwhelming circumstances while simultaneously providing culturally legitimate language for navigating expanding roles without appearing to challenge traditional hierarchies. This helps explain why many women appear to accept the burden: they may not yet be ready to relinquish their social reproductive roles, in part because of the genuine sense of purpose and spiritual fulfilment they provide, and even romanticisation they derive from fulfilling what they perceive as divinely ordained responsibilities.

Previous studies of Javanese communities have documented how women's increasing economic and public roles often coexist with, rather than challenge, traditional gender hierarchies (Brenner, 1998; Sullivan, 1994; Tickamyer & Kusujiarti, 2012). Analysis through SRT and SLF reveals the underlying logic of this pattern: women bear disproportionate responsibility for reproductive work that enables communities to adapt to change while maintaining cultural continuity. This reproductive labour functions as the foundation for rural adaptation strategies, providing the livelihood assets upon which households depend for survival (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Ellis, 2000).

While women's expanded roles (discussed in chapter 6) and the resulting shifts in household divisions of labour constitute livelihood strategies involving human capital reallocation, the way women manage and claim to accept multiple burdens—including their continued reproductive responsibilities—also functions as a mechanism for securing and accumulating social capital within community networks. Though women's claimed acceptance of multiple burdens might be misinterpreted as passive surrender to cultural constraints, this acceptance actually demonstrates strategic agency aimed at securing social capital, and closer examination reveals that women's agency, shaped by gradually transforming institutional frameworks, operates through iterative processes of change that accumulate over time through micro-negotiations and strategic adaptations.

Women's strategic navigation operates across multiple levels, revealing a sophisticated understanding of which transformations their communities can absorb without destabilising essential support systems. At the household level, women's economic contributions translate into genuine bargaining power that reshapes decision-making processes through behind-the-scenes negotiations rather than public challenges to male authority. The reframing strategies observed throughout this research—women presenting their expanding roles as "helping" their

husbands, men's domestic participation framed as "helping" their wives—enable practical redistribution of responsibilities while preserving cultural narratives about appropriate gender roles. This strategic reframing extends to community-level dynamics, where women carefully manage public presentations of change to maintain social acceptance. Such strategies enable them to exercise expanded authority while maintaining access to community support networks essential for household survival.

The preservation of social capital emerges as a critical factor shaping these strategic choices. As rural households depend on mutual aid networks for labour, financial assistance, and emergency support, challenging gender norms too openly risks families' integration into these essential systems. Women's apparent conformity to traditional expectations thus reflects informed calculations about livelihood security rather than passive acceptance of inequality, with their strategic performance of gender roles functioning as social insurance that maintains relationships providing access to resources when formal services are unavailable or unaffordable.

These patterns of strategic navigation and women's agency expose critical limitations in conventional livelihood frameworks' household-level analysis, which may obscure internal power negotiations that determine access to and control over livelihood assets. From a gendered perspective, the SLF's tendency to treat households as unified decision-making units hasn't fully captured how women may exercise informal control over key livelihood resources while being formally excluded from recognised positions of authority. While traditional SLF analysis might assume a unitary household strategy, the evidence reveals that women actually shape day-to-day resource allocation strategies, investment priorities, and expenditure decisions to achieve enhanced gender equity (reflecting their particular needs), despite their formal exclusion from recognised authority. This hidden agency, operating through numerous negotiations, suggests that assumptions about unitary household strategies need to be nuanced with a gendered understanding of actual patterns of asset control and the formulation of livelihood strategies.

Moreover, generational differences provide evidence of the incremental nature of this institutional change, with younger couples demonstrating more openness to flexible gender divisions of labour while older women often go to greater lengths to conceal changes in domestic roles. The presence of female leaders and successful career women—relatively rare in older generations—creates new role models that expand community conceptions of women's

capabilities while carefully demonstrating that expanded roles can coexist with traditional responsibilities. Even community institutions show evidence of adaptive transformation, as women have strategically repurposed PKK activities from burdens into legitimate spaces for respite, networking, capacity building and even leisure.

This transformation operates through multiple interconnected mechanisms. Global influences through development programs have introduced alternative gender concepts, as evidenced by cases like Pak Supardi, whose understanding of *kodrat* shifted from encompassing all domestic responsibilities to focusing solely on biological functions following his participation in government gender mainstreaming training. Simultaneously, economic pressures that necessitate women's income generation increasingly challenge traditional breadwinner models. Additionally, generational exposure through social media, migration experiences, and expanded educational opportunities provide younger women with a broader knowledge base, resulting in new frameworks for imagining alternative arrangements.

This iterative process reveals that institutional evolution occurs through women's apparent conformity to traditional arrangements, which actually masks strategies for expanding their roles within culturally livelihood frameworks. The collective acknowledgment of inequity that emerged during group discussions, despite public acceptance of traditional arrangements, demonstrates how women navigate contradictory realities through strategic performance rather than passive acceptance. Each generation builds incrementally on the strategic gains of the previous one, creating gradual institutional change that preserves cultural continuity while enabling transformation.

Understanding these strategic navigations as a form of agency that works within cultural-acceptable frameworks has crucial implications for rural development. Rather than assuming empowerment requires rejecting traditional frameworks, sustainable change may occur through supporting women's existing strategies for gradual reinterpretation and strategic utilisation of cultural resources. Development practice that recognises and builds upon women's understanding of which changes communities can absorb may prove more effective than approaches that inadvertently undermine the social capital preservation strategies essential for rural household survival.

Chapter 8: Conclusion: Reframing Rural Gender Dynamics in Java—Agency, Strategy, and Gradual Change

Rural Java is undergoing a profound transformation. Improved infrastructure, expanding manufacturing, and intensifying rural-urban connections are reshaping agricultural communities. In Wonogiri, new roads have been paved, factories have emerged, and circular migration has created enduring connections between villages and cities. As households adapt their livelihood strategies to these new economic realities, traditional social structures and cultural practices are being renegotiated—yet some deeply rooted cultural norms about gender roles and responsibilities persist, creating dynamics in understanding of both rural development and gender empowerment.

This persistence creates a fundamental tension at the heart of contemporary (gendered) rural transformation. Some traditional Javanese gender concepts, reinforced by decades of state ideology and religious interpretations, continue to define women primarily through their roles as wives and mothers. Yet agrarian change in Wonogiri increasingly compels women's participation in traditionally male-dominated spheres—from factory work to community leadership to higher education. This creates an iterative process where rural transformation affects social relations, which in turn reshape rural development patterns in an ongoing cycle of influence. Understanding how this tension plays out requires unpacking not only the community but also the household as an analytical unit and examining the internal differentiation, power relations, and gendered negotiations that shape how rural transformation actually affects women's lived experiences.

Through an ethnographic study of two villages in Wonogiri, this thesis explored how rural livelihood changes intersect with evolving gender roles and how women themselves experience and navigate these changes. The findings reveal that while rural change creates opportunities for women's expanded social and economic participation, it primarily functions as a livelihood strategy involving the strategic allocation of human capital rather than a fundamental transformation of gender relations.

Women experience these changes as paradoxical—feeling empowered by their expanded roles, particularly through new economic independence and a heightened sense of autonomy, while simultaneously feeling overwhelmed by intensified workloads, as new responsibilities are layered onto existing domestic and community obligations. They interpret their expanded roles through culturally embedded frameworks that define their responsibilities within the family and society, providing both meaning and justification for their multiple burdens—even as they privately acknowledge the inherent inequities of their circumstances. Yet these contradictory feelings do not diminish women's agency; instead, they underscore how their ability to navigate change is rooted in the strategic negotiation of cultural norms and the preservation of social capital, generating gradual, iterative shifts in household dynamics while maintaining legitimacy within the community.

8.1. Overview of Key Research Findings

8.1.1. The Changing Face of Rural Wonogiri: Livelihood Diversification and Preserving Ways of Life

The first research question examined the dominant processes of rural transformation occurring in Wonogiri, which are documented in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 revealed that agrarian change in Wonogiri involves strategic livelihood diversification driven by declining agricultural profitability, infrastructure development, the growth of off-farm work in rural communities, with intensifying rural-urban connections—particularly through circular migration. This transformation reflects broader patterns of agrarian change across Southeast Asia, where rural households are increasingly combining farming with diverse income sources to maintain viable livelihoods, as documented by scholars such as Rigg (2020), Thompson et al. (2019), and Kelly (2011).

Rural development has fundamentally altered Wonogiri's physical and social landscape through comprehensive infrastructure improvements. These changes are evident in tangible developments—from the construction of secondary schools in sub-districts to the establishment of community health centres such as *Puskesmas*. This infrastructure expansion has not only improved service delivery but also facilitated greater connectivity between rural areas and urban centres, setting the foundation for other transformative processes. Building on this improved connectivity, livelihood diversification through circular migration has emerged as a defining characteristic of Wonogiri's transformation. Extensive networks now connect Wonogiri's villages to urban centres, particularly Greater Jakarta. The institutionalisation of

migrant support through organisations like ASTARI (the meatball sellers' association) demonstrates how individual migration success transforms into collective livelihood opportunities, subsequently becoming valuable social capital for entire communities. This migration pattern creates a continuous flow of people, resources, and ideas between rural and urban spaces.

Complementing these migration flows, the growth of off-farm rural work, especially manufacturing expansion, represents dramatic economic change within Wonogiri itself. This industrial development has created new employment pathways, particularly for women, while generating multiplier effects through supporting services and businesses. Manufacturing has experienced remarkable growth—the number of medium and large industries in Wonogiri expanded dramatically from 16 companies in 2016 to 491 in 2023. However, manufacturing growth also introduces new vulnerabilities, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic when factory closures exposed workers' dependence on industrial employment income.

As more individuals pursue off-farm employment and small business management, agricultural labour availability has decreased, necessitating significant adaptations in farming practices. Unlike some earlier studies that emphasise the adverse effects of agricultural mechanisation—such as reduced labour demand and social disruption (Hart, 1986; Collier et al., 1974)—in the Wonogiri case studies, agricultural mechanisation has become increasingly vital for sustaining farming activities. With a declining agricultural labour force, mechanisation serves as an adaptation strategy that maintains productivity levels rather than displacing workers, allowing agriculture to persist alongside industrial development.

Despite these transformations, communities demonstrate remarkable persistence in maintaining traditional ways of life, particularly their connections to agriculture. Agriculture plays a crucial role in ensuring food security and serving as a safety net. Participants emphasise that cultivating rice provides reliable sustenance and serves as a safety net within diversified livelihood portfolios. When workers lose industrial employment, they often return to farming, revealing agriculture's continued role as backup livelihood. This finding supports Neilson's (2025) argument, which refers to this adaptive function as "fortress farming," highlighting agriculture's defensive capacity in uncertain economic times.

Agricultural identity remains central to community self-perception and cultural belonging. Despite rural transformation and other off-farm opportunities, many participants consistently stated that they are farmers or come from a family of farmers, which makes them part of a

farming family, demonstrating how agricultural connections transcend economic calculations to encompass identity and belonging. This cultural attachment to farming provides continuity amid rapid change, anchoring communities in traditional practices even as they embrace new economic opportunities.

These rural transformations have also catalysed broader social changes that extend beyond economic adaptation to encompass shifting gender roles, generational differences, and evolving cultural practices. Infrastructure development and technological advancement have exposed communities to new ideas and practices, while migration patterns facilitate the flow of "social remittances"—urban practices and perspectives that gradually influence rural norms. This cultural exchange creates dynamic tensions between tradition and modernity within communities.

The economic pressures created by rural transformation—declining agricultural profitability, rising living costs, and new consumption demands—necessitate household adaptations that challenge traditional divisions of labour. As families require diverse income sources to maintain viable livelihoods, rigid adherence to traditional gender boundaries becomes economically unsustainable, creating conditions for the gender role changes examined in Chapters 6 and 7.

8.1.2. Expanding Women's Roles: Gendered Negotiations of Human Capital Within the Household

The second research question asked about how rural transformation processes affect gender roles and influence within households, the workforce and community institutions. Women in Wonogiri are stepping into roles traditionally reserved for, or exclusively allocated to, men. This transformation is most evident in three key domains, as documented in Chapter 6. First, women have gained more access to formal leadership positions. Although this change remains partial—broader statistics reveal the persistence of male dominance in formal leadership, with women comprising only 8.42% of village heads across Wonogiri (BPS Jawa Tengah, 2021)—cases like that of Bu Sutini, the first female hamlet head in Kedunggupit, exemplify how women are navigating cultural barriers to assume positions of authority. While broader regional studies by Robinson (2009) and Blackburn (2004) have observed a rise in women's political participation across Indonesia, this shift has been slower to take hold in rural areas, which continue to lag behind their urban counterparts.

Second, my research documented significant changes in women's economic participation, particularly in formal sector employment. Historically, as documented by Geertz (1961) and White (2012), women in rural Java indeed have always been active contributors to economic activities. However, their contributions were often uncommodified or not formally recognised as income-generating work. Today, their participation in the formal sector—through factory work, entrepreneurship, and professional roles—also represents a marked shift from traditional practices where women's economic activities were largely confined to farming and informal trade. These roles not only provide women with regular wages but also enhance their economic independence and societal recognition. Hart (1986, 2004) also identified the growing importance of women's economic contribution to rural households in other areas in Java, marking a departure from past practices where their contributions, while constant, received less recognition and monetary value.

Third, educational opportunities for women have expanded significantly, marking perhaps a fundamental shift in how society views investment in their daughters' futures. Historically, as documented in Chapter 6, education for women was often seen as unnecessary or even counterproductive, given expectations that they would ultimately become wives and mothers who focus on domestic and care work. However, rural transformation has catalysed changing attitudes toward women's education. Economic diversification and expanding formal employment opportunities have led families to increasingly value education for their daughters as a pathway to better livelihoods. The rising enrolment of young women in vocational schools, despite their costs, demonstrates how families are actively investing in their daughters' economic futures rather than solely preparing them for domestic roles.

The evidence from Wonogiri demonstrates how households strategically develop women's human capital—through education, skills training, and expanded economic roles—as livelihood strategies to improve overall household income. Women's expanded roles emerge through strategic reallocation of human capital within household livelihood portfolios. In leadership roles, women like Bu Sutini strategically frame their position not as a challenge to traditional gender hierarchies, but as an economic necessity requiring competent individuals. In economic participation, women's increasing involvement in the formal sector reflects household strategies to diversify income sources amid declining agricultural returns. As many participants put it, "two incomes are better than one." In education, families are increasingly recognising education as a strategic investment in women's human capital, as educated

daughters have broader opportunities to find jobs, allowing them to contribute more consistently to household economies.

The research demonstrates that practical responses to new economic demands have indirectly led to an evolution in women's aspirations and how society views their potential. As families invest in daughters' education to improve household economic prospects, they simultaneously create opportunities for women to envision and pursue roles beyond traditional domestic spheres. Young women who complete higher levels of education increasingly expect to pursue careers, delay marriage, and participate in decision-making—expectations that would have been unthinkable for their grandmothers' generation. Even when these educated women later marry and have children, many of them continue to maintain professional ambitions and seek ways to balance their career and family responsibilities. As a result, Sullivan's (1994) concept of women as household "managers" working under male authority has evolved. While men retain their formal position as household heads, women have leveraged their managerial roles to exercise greater authority in both domestic and public spheres.

While rural transformation has opened new pathways for women's participation in Wonogiri's economic, education and community life, these changes have moderate effects on dismantling deep-rooted gender inequalities. These strategic human capital investments, however, occur within structures that continue to rely on women's unpaid reproductive labour. The gendered SLF analysis reveals how households strategically develop women's productive capabilities while relying on their continued provision of reproductive work, which sustains both household functioning and community relationships.

8.1.3. Experiencing Change: Women's Perspectives on Shifting Gender Dynamics

The third research question explored how women themselves experience changing gender roles, revealing sophisticated agency that operates through strategic navigation of cultural frameworks and social capital preservation rather than direct resistance to traditional structures. Chapter 7 documented how women's lived experiences involve managing the contradictory pressures of expanded opportunities alongside intensified burdens.

Women's experiences of changing gender roles begin with genuine feelings of liberation through unprecedented opportunities that previous generations could never have imagined. Many express deep gratitude for the ability to pursue education, hold public leadership roles,

earn independent income, make personal purchases without needing permission, and participate meaningfully in family decision-making. Their expanding economic participation has translated into greater authority and autonomy within the household. As women contribute more financially, they gain increased bargaining power, allowing them to play a more influential role in shaping major household decisions and investments.

However, these genuine gains in authority and autonomy come alongside intensified burdens—what many scholars (Griffin, 2017; Intesar & Parvez, 2024; Miranti et al., 2022) describe as a "triple burden" of productive work, reproductive work, and community obligations as agrarian change expands their roles without redistributing traditional responsibilities. This pattern reflects broader dynamics documented in research on rural women's workloads, where economic development strategies layer new expectations onto existing ones rather than fundamentally redistributing care responsibilities (Manandhar, 2008; Moser, 1989; Moser, 1993).

Across Global South countries, the FAO (2011) documented a trend of significant imbalance in household labour distribution, with women contributing 85-90% of the total time dedicated to household chores. More recent studies reveal that women still handle around 76.2% of the total amount of unpaid care work, spending more than three times as much time on these tasks as men (ILO, 2018; UN Women, 2019). This unequal distribution of unpaid care work and their multiple roles restrict women's ability to participate in activities outside their household responsibilities, leading to "time poverty," which limits their access to many life opportunities, including economic advancement (Bardasi & Wodon, 2010; FAO, 2011; Ferrant et al., 2014; ILO, 2018; UN Women, 2019).

However, women's responses to this burden reveal nuanced contradictory dynamics. While experiencing genuine frustration with their overwhelming workloads, women simultaneously find meaning in their intensified responsibilities through cultural frameworks that transform structural labour arrangements into expressions of moral virtue and spiritual fulfilment. Cultural concepts like *kodrat* (God-given nature) and *kewajiban* (obligation) provide frameworks through which women romanticise their burden—finding genuine purpose and dignity in reproductive labour even as it serves an exploitative tendency. Women's claims of being *ikhlas* (sincere/willing) in performing multiple roles represent both internalised acceptance of traditional gender ideologies and authentic sources of meaning within their lived

reality. This romanticisation enables women to maintain psychological well-being and cultural identity while managing otherwise overwhelming circumstances.

This cultural meaning-making, on the other hand, also functions as strategic social capital preservation essential for livelihood security. Women's apparent conformity to traditional gender expectations operates as strategic social capital preservation critical for household livelihood security. In rural contexts where households depend on mutual aid networks for labour exchange during harvest, financial assistance during emergencies, and social support during ceremonies, social capital functions as a critical livelihood asset that families cannot afford to jeopardise. Women's fear of "being different" and losing social capital reflects rational assessment of how non-conformity could undermine their families' integration into essential survival systems. The cost of social exclusion—documented in cases where families unable to participate in community activities lose access to reciprocal support—demonstrates why social capital preservation operates as a livelihood strategy rather than mere cultural conservatism.

Women's maintenance of traditional gender performances then reflects informed calculations about livelihood security in contexts where challenging norms too openly risks families' access to community support networks essential for rural survival. This strategic social capital preservation operates as social insurance, maintaining relationships that provide access to resources when formal services are unavailable or unaffordable. Women's careful management of gender performances—hiding husbands' domestic work, reframing achievements within traditional hierarchies—reflects sophisticated understanding of how to preserve social capital while gradually expanding their influence and accessing new opportunities.

The evidence demonstrates that women exercise constrained but meaningful agency through their strategic cultural navigation. Their responses challenge binary interpretations that position tradition and modernity as opposing forces, revealing instead how women creatively utilise cultural resources to expand their influence while maintaining essential social relationships. These patterns of strategic navigation also expose critical limitations in conventional analytical frameworks that treat households as unified decision-making units. Feminist scholars (e.g. Razavi, 2009) have critiqued livelihood framework approaches that present households analytically as unitary entities where members appear to agree on resource allocation and priorities, while ignoring internal differentiation in labour distribution, decision-making processes, access to resources, and power relations within households.

While traditional livelihood analysis might assume unified household strategies, women actually shape investment priorities, expenditure decisions, and resource allocation patterns through countless micro-negotiations that reflect their particular needs and perspectives. This form of agency, operating through rather than despite cultural constraints, suggests that sustainable change in rural contexts may occur through supporting women's existing strategies for gradual reinterpretation of traditional frameworks rather than approaches that inadvertently undermine the social capital preservation strategies essential for rural household survival.

8.2. Understanding Gender Dynamics in Contexts of Java Rural Change

Rural Wonogiri's transformation provides a compelling lens for understanding how gender dynamics operate within contexts of rapid agrarian change. The research reveals that gender transformation emerges through iterative structural changes between economic necessity, cultural resilience, and strategic adaptation that create both opportunities and constraints, as well as sophisticated individual strategies of cultural navigation and contested household negotiations that reshape domestic power relations.

As rural transformation unfolds—through infrastructure development, manufacturing expansion, and intensifying rural-urban connections—it creates new economic opportunities that require different kinds of labour and skills. Agrarian change causes social change, which then enables greater women's participation in the labour force—further reinforcing and reshaping both agrarian structures and social norms in an ongoing, iterative process. Infrastructure development and economic diversification create conditions requiring women's expanded participation, leading to changes in educational investments and household strategies. These changes gradually shift community expectations and possibilities for the next generation, which then further influence rural development patterns and economic opportunities. Women's increasing economic contributions reshape household power dynamics, which subsequently affects decisions about agricultural practices, migration patterns, and investment priorities, creating ongoing cycles of mutual influence between gender relations and rural transformation.

These changes, however, create a fundamental structural tension: while new opportunities demand women's participation in traditionally male-dominated spheres, persistent institutional structures prevent the reduction of existing gender responsibilities. Deeply embedded cultural

norms about women's duty and social expectations persist even as economic realities demand women's expanded participation. Society simultaneously says that women can work in factories and become leaders while insisting that women must also be perfect mothers, wives, and community members. This creates what participants experience as overwhelming workloads, where new responsibilities are layered onto existing domestic and reproductive obligations rather than replacing them.

Faced with the contradictory pressures of expanded opportunities alongside persistent cultural constraints, women in Wonogiri develop sophisticated strategies of cultural navigation that reveal nuanced forms of agency. Rather than engaging in direct resistance to traditional structures or passively accepting cultural limitations, women exercise strategic approaches that achieve their goals within the cultural framework. Women's strategic agency operates through what appears to be conformity and acceptance, but also functions as calculated social capital preservation, which is essential for livelihood security. When women express that they are willing to perform these multiple roles, this represents both authentic sources of meaning within their lived reality and strategic maintenance of relationships critical for household survival. In rural contexts where families depend on mutual aid networks for labour exchange, financial assistance, and social support, social capital functions as a critical livelihood asset that cannot be risked.

This strategic navigation manifests in multiple domains. Women transform economic participation into culturally legitimate expressions of family support, framing their new roles as "helping their husbands" while using earnings to secure personal autonomy and bargaining power within households. Women also strategically reframe leadership roles within traditional gender hierarchies by presenting their authority as a temporary necessity rather than a challenge to male headship, allowing them to exercise genuine influence while maintaining cultural legitimacy. Women also transform some social obligations into spaces of respite and opportunity. PKK activities, for example, initially representing additional burdens, become legitimate escapes from domestic duties where husbands cannot complain because participation serves community needs. These strategic adaptations are also evident in how women navigate the conditional relationship between care provision and land ownership, positioning themselves as primary caregivers not merely out of cultural obligation, but as a deliberate strategy to access economic assets and offset the structural disadvantage they face

under inheritance systems that traditionally favour men—particularly in Islamic contexts, where males usually receive a larger share.

This pattern of strategic agency challenges Western feminist frameworks that equate empowerment with direct resistance to patriarchal structures and individual autonomy. The evidence from Wonogiri reveals an agency that operates through, rather than against, cultural constraints, suggesting that meaningful social change can emerge through strategic engagement with tradition, rather than its wholesale rejection. Women employ what James Scott (1985) calls "everyday forms of resistance"—subtle strategies that avoid direct confrontation while gradually transforming power relations and expanding possibilities for future generations.

The household emerges as the primary arena where structural forces and individual strategies converge through daily negotiations about labour distribution, resource allocation, and decision-making authority. What appears as unified "household strategies" actually emerges from internal negotiations that reflect differentiated interests, unequal power relations, and contested understandings of rights and responsibilities. This research challenges conventional livelihood analysis that treats households as unified decision-making units, revealing instead how gender dynamics shape every aspect of domestic organisation and resource management.

Women's enhanced economic contributions translate into increased bargaining power within households, but this influence must be carefully navigated within existing gender hierarchies. As women contribute more financially to household economies, they gain greater authority over major decisions regarding children's education, agricultural investments, and migration strategies. However, this expanded influence operates through negotiations that preserve men's formal position as household heads while enabling women's practical authority over resource allocation.

Despite persistent structural constraints, the research documents small but meaningful changes in household gender dynamics, including gradual increases in men's involvement in domestic tasks. These micro-level changes, while limited in scope, represent important indicators of slowly shifting gender relations occurring within private household spaces. Men's participation in cooking, childcare, and household management happens primarily behind closed doors, enabling families to adapt internal labour arrangements while maintaining conventional public

gender performances. This pattern suggests that transformation may be proceeding through internal family negotiations even when external appearances remain traditional.

The household thus functions as a contested space where broader structural changes get worked out through intimate daily negotiations. Understanding these household dynamics proves essential for comprehending how rural transformation actually affects women's lived experiences and how gender change occurs through strategic navigation of cultural constraints.

8.3. Research Contributions

This thesis makes significant contributions to understanding gender dynamics in rural transformation contexts through three interconnected areas: advancing theoretical frameworks for gendered livelihood analysis, providing empirical insights into women's strategic agency, and connecting local gender dynamics to broader regional demographic transitions. These contributions collectively advance scholarship on gender and development while offering practical insights for policy and intervention design.

The research makes its primary theoretical contribution to the gendered Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) that fundamentally challenges conventional livelihood analysis, proving that a gender perspective on livelihood framework is important because it reveals how livelihood strategies are actually shaped by internal power dynamics rather than unified household decisions. This distinction matters because framing household decisions as unified or consensual overlooks critical internal differences in labour distribution, decision-making authority, access to resources, and power dynamics—all of which fundamentally shape livelihood outcomes. Without this gendered lens, development interventions often fail because they miss the reality that different household members experience vastly different constraints, opportunities, and benefits from each livelihood strategy.

The gendered Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) highlights how internal household differentiation operates through the strategic allocation of human capital, which fundamentally depends on women's continued provision of reproductive labour. This often-invisible subsidy underpins seemingly successful livelihood diversification. While households may appear to invest in women's productive capacities—through education and economic participation—such development unfolds within highly asymmetrical labour arrangements. Women disproportionately shoulder domestic responsibilities, including childcare, eldercare, and maintaining social ties, which frees other household members—particularly men—to pursue

livelihoods without comparable domestic obligations. This theoretical framework reveals how the maintenance of certain gender roles functions as a social capital preservation strategy that comes at a significant cost.

This research provides crucial empirical evidence of women's sophisticated exercise of agency through strategic navigation of cultural constraints rather than direct resistance to traditional structures. Women in Wonogiri demonstrate remarkable ability to expand their influence and access new opportunities while simultaneously preserving the social capital essential for household survival, exercising agency that operates through rather than against cultural frameworks by creatively utilising traditional concepts to justify expanded roles and gradually reinterpret gender boundaries.

Women's agency manifests across multiple domains through strategic reframing of expanded roles, framing income-generating activities as extensions of caring responsibilities in economic spheres, presenting authority as responses to practical necessities rather than challenges to gender hierarchies in leadership contexts, and exercising increasing influence over major decisions through enhanced economic contributions while publicly maintaining traditional deference to male headship in household negotiations.

The empirical evidence reveals how power relations within households shape seemingly objective resource allocation decisions, with women's increasing economic contributions translating into greater bargaining power and influence over major household decisions that operate within constraints requiring careful navigation of gender hierarchies. Despite the persistence of structural constraints, the research documents small but meaningful changes at the household level, including gradual increases in men's involvement in domestic chores that represent important indicators of slowly shifting gender dynamics occurring through internal family negotiations even when external appearances remain conventional.

These local findings gain additional significance when placed in broader regional context, as declining marriage and fertility rates across Indonesia and other Asian countries reflect similar demographic transitions occurring throughout rapidly developing Asian economies (Gietel-Basten, 2022; Philippine Statistics Authority, 2022; Young & Jones, 2023), contributing to understanding how the gender dynamics observed in rural transformation connect to these broader regional patterns. In East Asia, for example, the entrenchment of delayed or non-marriage in Japan, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore is closely linked to their ultra-low fertility levels and emerging population declines which began in 2013 in Japan, 2019 in

Singapore, and 2020 in the Republic of Korea and Taiwan (Yeung & Jones, 2023). Registered marriages in Indonesia declined sharply from 2,016,071 in 2018 to 1,577,255 in 2023—a 25.27% drop in just five years (BPS, 2024b). At the same time, the country's total fertility rate fell to its lowest level in four decades—2.18 children per woman in 2020—and is projected to decline further to 1.97 by 2045 (BPS, 2021a; BKKBN, 2024). These patterns point to a growing tendency among women to delay or opt out of the very institutions—marriage and motherhood—that would dramatically increase their care burdens.

This regional comparison highlights how the gender dynamics observed in Wonogiri reflect broader transformations underway across Indonesia and Southeast Asia. The strategic navigation women employ to balance expanding roles with the maintenance of social capital appears to manifest differently in urban contexts, where younger generations are beginning to question, and gradually shift away from, traditional gender arrangements (Young & Jones, 2023).

The research ultimately demonstrates that effective rural development and gender empowerment require approaches that recognise and build upon women's existing strategies for cultural navigation while addressing structural inequalities. Effective interventions should support gradual reinterpretation of traditional frameworks that enable expanded opportunities while maintaining community integration, contributing to development practice by highlighting the importance of culturally grounded approaches that work with rather than against local strategies for social change, while simultaneously revealing how local gender dynamics connect to broader regional demographic and economic transformations.

8.4. Study Limitations and Future Directions

This research provides insights into gender dynamics in rural transformation within the specific context of Wonogiri, Central Java. Several limitations suggest important directions for future research.

First, the focus on two villages limits generalisability to other regions of Indonesia with different cultural, economic, and agricultural contexts. The specific Javanese cultural framework shapes how women navigate changing gender roles in ways that may not be directly applicable to other cultural settings. Future research could examine how the patterns of strategic cultural navigation identified here manifest in different ethnic, religious, and economic contexts across Indonesia.

Second, the generational differences observed in this research suggest that longer-term longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into how gender role changes develop over time. Following families across generations could illuminate whether the gradual changes documented here accelerate or face new constraints as they encounter different life stages and economic conditions. Such longitudinal research could also examine how current investments in daughters' education translate into different gender arrangements for future generations.

Third, the regional patterns in marriage and fertility decline identified in this research indicate a need for comparative studies across different Indonesian provinces and perhaps broader areas in Southeast Asian countries that are experiencing similar demographic transitions. Understanding how rural transformation impacts gender dynamics in diverse cultural and economic contexts can provide valuable insights into the factors that most effectively support sustainable gender equality while maintaining social cohesion.

Fourth, the relationship between women's strategic cultural navigation and long-term social change requires further theoretical and empirical development. Future research could examine whether the gradual reinterpretation strategies documented here eventually lead to more substantial structural changes or whether they primarily serve as adaptation mechanisms that maintain existing inequalities. This question has important implications for understanding the pace and direction of gender transformation in rural development contexts.

Finally, the intersection between rural transformation and broader institutional structures—including land tenure systems, labour regulations, and social protection schemes—deserves further investigation. Understanding how formal institutions interact with informal gender norms to shape women's opportunities would contribute to more effective policy design that supports women's strategic navigation while addressing structural inequalities.

Despite these limitations, the evidence from Wonogiri offers both encouragement and caution for future research and policy development. The research reveals the remarkable resilience and adaptability of rural communities in navigating social change, demonstrating how women have increased their influence within seemingly persistent cultural frameworks. This suggests that meaningful transformation can occur without social upheaval and points toward optimism about the future of gender relations in rural Java, even as it reminds us that lasting change often comes through evolution rather than revolution. Understanding and supporting these processes of gradual transformation may be key to achieving more equitable gender relations while

maintaining social harmony—an insight that holds implications for rural development contexts throughout Southeast Asia and beyond. This strategic approach to change is perhaps best captured in the words of one participant who reflected on women's navigation of changing gender roles: "*Ngalah itu bukan berarti kalah* (yielding does not mean losing), we have to find ways to achieve our goals; we have to find a way, with a clever way."

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Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary of Non-English Words

Alas	Forest in Javanese
Arisan	is the Indonesian term for a Rotating Savings and Credit Association (ROSCA)—a community-based savings system where members contribute regularly to a fund that rotates among participants through a lottery system.
Bakso	Indonesian meatball soup, popular street food
Batik	Traditional Indonesian textile art using wax-resist dyeing
Bedol Desa	Government relocation program, literally meaning "uprooting village," used particularly during the Gajah Mungkur Reservoir construction
Beras	Rice (uncooked)
Beras itu awet	"Rice is durable," expressing rice's importance for food security
Boro/Kaum Boro	Term for circular migrants, particularly from Wonogiri region
Bu	Honorific term for married women in Javanese culture. Short from *Ibu*, which means mother or madam.
Cultuurstelsel	Dutch Cultivation System (1830-1870) requiring Indonesians to grow export crops
Dana Desa	Village Fund: an Indonesian government program that provides direct funding to villages for development and empowerment programs
Dapur, sumur, kasur	Kitchen, wells, bed
Desa	Village (administrative unit in Indonesia)
Dharma Wanita	State-sponsored organisation for wives of civil servants during New Order era, emphasising supportive roles
Dusun	Hamlet. A small settlement or subdivision within a village (administrative unit in rural Java)
Gamelan	Traditional Javanese musical ensemble
Gaplek	Dried cassava, traditional food staple
Gotong Royong	Traditional practice of mutual cooperation and communal work inIndonesian society
Giri	Mountain in Javanese/Sanskrit
Gurem	Tiny tick found on poultry; used metaphorically for very small-scale farmers

Hajatan	A ceremonial gathering or reception held to celebrate a particular event.
Hijab	Islamic head covering for women
Ibuism	Motherism
Ikhlas	Sincerity, genuine acceptance
Jaman Dekok	"Concave era," local term for period of severe malnutrition in early 1960s
Jamu	Traditional herbal medicine or drink
Jawa	Java
Jawa Tengah	Central Java
*Kabupaten/*Regency	Administrative division below the provincial level in Indonesia
Kadus	*Kepala Dusun/*Head of Hamlet
Kampung Milyader	"Billionaire Village," nickname for a village known for its luxurious houses built with migrant remittances
Karang Taruna	Youth organisation/group at village level in Indonesia
Karawitan	Traditional Javanese musical ensemble performance
Kawedanan	Traditional administrative division under Mangkunegaran
Kedung	Deep pool or pit within a river in Javanese
Kerja Bakti	Community service activities; traditional practice of communal work
Kewajiban	Obligation or duty, often used in context of gender roles
Kodrat	An Indonesian Islamic concept referring to women's divinely ordained nature or destiny, often used to define gender roles and expectations
Konco Wingking	Javanese term literally meaning "rear companion," traditionally referring to wives and their expected position behind their husbands, both physically and in decision-making
Kopyokan	Traditional land distribution system through a lottery
Krama	Formal/polite level of Javanese language
Macak, manak, masak	Traditional Javanese concept of women's roles: dressing up, bearing children, cooking
Madrasah Aliyah	Islamic senior high schools
Mager Sari	A Traditional living arrangement where people reside on somebody else's land
Mbah	Javanese honorific term for elderly people or grandparents
Mbak	Javanese honorific term for younger women or older sisters
Melahirkan	Childbirth
Mengandung	Pregnancy

Menstruasi	Menstruation
Menyusui	Breastfeeding
Merantau	Practice of leaving one's hometown to seek opportunities elsewhere
Ngalah	To yield or give way
Ngoko	Informal/casual level of Javanese language
Pak	Honorific term for men in Javanese culture, equivalent to "Mr." or "Sir," used both independently and as a prefix to names
Pak	Honorific term for men, equivalent to "Mr." or "Sir". Short from Bapak means father.
Palawija	Secondary crops grown after rice, such as corn or cassava
Panca Dharma Wanita	Five Duties of Women - New Order ideology defining women's roles as loyal wives, mothers, educators, secondary earners, and citizens
Pasar	Market
Pasaran Jawa	A traditional five-day market cycle that was integrated with the Gregorian calendar.
Pengepul	Agricultural collectors or traders
Pesantren	Islamic boarding school
Petani Gurem	Smallholder farmers with less than 0.5 hectares of land
Praja	Duchy or principality
Priyayi	Javanese aristocratic class
Qadar/*Qudrah*	Arabic terms meaning destiny/divine decree and power/position respectively, roots of *kodrat* concept
Qur'an	The holy book of Islam
Raden	Javanese noble title
Ramadan	Islamic holy month of fasting
Reformasi	Reform era beginning in 1998 after Suharto's fall, marked by democratisation
Rewang	Traditional practice of mutual assistance, particularly in food preparation for community events
Sandang, pangan, papan	Basic necessities (literally: clothing, food, shelter)
Sanggul	Traditional Javanese hairstyle, often worn in formal occasions
Santri	Islamic Boarding School student
Suwargo Nunut, Neroko Katut	"Follow to heaven, taken to hell," traditional saying about wives' fate being tied to husbands'
Swapraja	Self-governing region under colonial rule
Takdir	Destiny or divine decree in Islamic teaching

Tanam Paksa	Indonesian term for Dutch Cultivation System
Ustad	Ustad (man) or Ustadzah is an Indonesian word absorbed from Arabic and Persian, meaning teacher, and this is specific for Muslim, Islamic or Al-Quran (Holy Bible) teaching.
Wali Songo	Nine Islamic saints who spread Islam in Java
Wana	Forest or rice fields in Javanese/Sanskrit
Wayang kulit	Traditional Javanese shadow puppet theatre

Appendix B: Recruitment Poster

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PENGUMUMAN PENELITIAN

Studi Mengenai Dinamika Gender di Area Pedesaan di Indonesia

Peneliti di bawah ini akan melakukan penelitian doktoral untuk memahami: i) proses transformasi pedesaan di Jawa Tengah; ii) bagaimana transformasi ini mempengaruhi peran gender di Jawa Tengah; dan iii) bagaimana perempuan mengalami perubahan tersebut. Lokasi penelitian ini adalah di Wonogiri dan Jabodetabek.

Nama Peneliti	: Linda Susilowati
Kewarganegaraan	: Indonesia
Instansi	: Universitas Satya Wacana, Salatiga
Saat ini terdaftar sebagai mahasiswa di	: University of Sydney, Australia
Pembimbing	: A/Prof Jeffrey Neilson dan Dr Sophie Webber
Durasi penelitian	: November 2022 – Maret 2023

DIBUTUHKAN PARTISIPAN PENELITIAN

Penelitian ini akan melibatkan wawancara, diskusi kelompok, dan observasi atau pengamatan. Para peneliti mengundang Anda untuk berpartisipasi dalam wawancara dan diskusi dalam kelompok untuk membantu mereka lebih memahami kehidupan dan aspirasi anggota masyarakat. Anda harus berusia minimal 18 tahun untuk dapat berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Dengan berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini, Anda akan diminta untuk berbagi mengenai pengalaman, memberikan pendapat dan perspektif Anda tentang proses perubahan di area pedesaan tempat anda tinggal. Silakan hubungi Linda Susilowati di nomor yang tersedia di bawah ini jika Anda bersedia untuk berpartisipasi.

Anda bebas memberikan tanggapan atau pendapat apa pun, dan Anda tidak akan dapat diidentifikasi secara individual dalam publikasi apa pun yang dibuat untuk penelitian ini. Semua tanggapan Anda akan tetap anonim, dan Anda dapat mundur dari kegiatan ini kapan saja. Sebagai apresiasi terhadap waktu yang Anda berikan, akan diberikan kompensasi biaya transportasi jika Anda perlu melakukan perjalanan untuk mencapai lokasi wawancara atau diskusi. Makanan juga akan disediakan selama diskusi kelompok.

Penelitian ini juga akan melibatkan observasi/pengamatan terhadap aktifitas di desa. Peneliti akan tinggal di masyarakat selama sebagian periode penelitian dan berpartisipasi dalam berbagai kegiatan sosial. Anda sama sekali tidak berkewajiban untuk terlibat dalam penelitian ini. Silakan hubungi peneliti secara langsung atau hubungi Kepala Desa jika tidak ingin aktifitas sehari-hari anda di masyarakat dilihat oleh peneliti.

Untuk informasi lebih lanjut mengenai penelitian ini, silahkan hubungi Linda Susilowati (+6285647204600)

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RESEARCH ANNOUNCEMENT

A Study on Gender Dynamics in Rural Indonesia

The below named researcher will be conducting doctoral research to understand: i) the process of rural transformation in Central Java; ii) how this transformation is affecting gender roles; and iii) how women are experiencing this change. Wonogiri and Greater Jakarta are selected as locations for this case study research.

Researcher Name	: Ms Linda Susilowati
Citizenship	: Indonesian
Employer	: Satya Wacana University, Salatiga
Currently enrolled at	: University of Sydney, Australia
Supervisors	: A/Prof Jeffrey Neilson and Dr Sophie Webber
Duration of research	: November 2022 – March 2023

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

The research will involve interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), and observations. The researchers are inviting you to participate in interviews and focus groups to help them better understand the lives and aspirations of community members. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. By participating in this study, you will be asked to share your experiences, give your opinions and perspectives on the process of rural change. Please contact Linda Susilowati at the number provided below if you are willing to participate.

You are free to give any response or opinion, and you will not be individually identifiable in any publications made for this research. All your responses will remain anonymous, and you can withdraw your participation at any time. In appreciation for your time, compensation for transportation costs will be provided if you need to travel to reach the interview location. Food will also be provided during focus group discussions.

The research will also involve participant-observation. The researcher will be living in the community for part of the research period and participating in various social activities. You are under no obligation to be involved in the study. Please contact the researcher directly or contact the Village Head if you do not wish to be observed.

For more information about this study, please contact Linda Susilowati (+6285647204600)

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

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FORMULIR PERSETUJUAN PARTISIPAN

Saya_____ (tulis nama anda dengan huruf KAPITAL memberikan persetujuan saya untuk berpartisipasi dalam proyek penelitian, **yang berjudul: "Dinamika peran gender dalam transformasi pedesaan di Indonesia"**

Dengan persetujuan saya, saya menyatakan bahwa:

1. Peneliti memberikan penjelasan yang baik mengenai waktu, durasi dan pertanyaan-pertanyaan yang disampaikan untuk penelitian ini.
2. Saya telah membaca, atau mendiskusikan isi Pernyataan Informasi Partisipan dan telah diberi kesempatan untuk mengklarifikasi keterlibatan saya dalam penelitian ini.
3. Saya memahami bahwa partisipasi saya dalam penelitian ini sepenuhnya bersifat sukarela - saya tidak berkewajiban untuk berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini.
4. Saya mengerti bahwa keterlibatan dan identitas saya akan dirahasiakan. Saya mengerti bahwa setiap data penelitian yang dikumpulkan untuk penelitian ini mungkin dipublikasikan, tetapi tidak akan ada informasi tentang yang dapat merujuk pada identitas saya yang akan digunakan tanpa persetujuan saya.
5. Saya mengerti bahwa saya dapat mengundurkan diri dari penelitian ini kapan saja, dan hal tersebut tidak akan mempengaruhi hubungan saya dengan peneliti atau University of Sydney pada saat ini maupun di masa depan
6. Saya mengerti bahwa saya dapat menghentikan wawancara kapan saja, dan jika saya membatalkan partisipasi saya dalam penelitian, rekaman suara akan dihapus dan informasi yang telah diberikan tidak akan disertakan dalam penelitian.
7. Saya memberikan persetujuan pada:
   - Rekanaman suara Ya☐ Tidak ☐
   - Pengambilan foto Ya☐ Tidak ☐
   - Menerima umpan balik dari wawancara Ya☐ Tidak ☐

Jika Anda ingin menerima umpan balik dari wawancara, mohon berikan info detail kontak anda disini:

.....

Apakah persetujuan lisan diberikan oleh partisipan? Ya☐ Tidak ☐
Jika ya, siapa nama peneliti yang menerima persetujuan ini?.....
Jika ya, peneliti harus menandatangani di bawah ini.

..... Tanggal (hh/bb/tttt)	..... Tanda tangan partisipan	..... Tanda tangan peneliti

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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I_____ (Write your name with CAPITAL LETTER) give my consent to participate in the research project,

Title: "Gender role dynamics in Indonesia's rural transformation"

With my approval, I admit that:

1. The researcher provides a satisfactory explanation regarding the time and questions delivered for this study.
2. I have read, or discussed the contents of, the Participant Information Statement and have been given an opportunity to clarify my involvement in this research.
3. I understand that my participation in this research is entirely voluntary - I am not obligated to participate in this research.
4. I understand that my involvement will be kept confidential. I understand that any research data gathered for this study may be published, but there will be no information about me that would be used in a way that identifies me without my approval.
5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher or the University of Sydney now or in the future
6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time. If I want to withdraw my participation, audio recordings will be erased and the information that has been provided will not be included in the study.
7. I give my approval on:
   - Audio recordings Yes☐ No ☐
   - Taking photos Yes☐ No ☐
   - Would you like to receive feedback regarding the results of the research: Yes☐ No ☐

If you would like feedback, please provide your contact details here:

.....

Was verbal consent provided by the participant? Yes☐ No ☐
If, yes, what is the name of the researcher who received this consent? .....
If, yes, the researcher should sign below.

.....	.....	.....
Date(dd/mm/yyyy)	Participant Signature	Researcher Signature

Appendix D: List Of Participants

No	Code	Education	Sex	Age	Criteria	Method	Main Occupation	Other Occupations/Positions	Village
1	S1F-I	Highschool	Female	42	Community member	In-depth Interview	Cashew Seller	Family Welfare Empowerment Representatives	Soco
2	S2F-I	Elementary	Female	42	Community member	In-depth Interview	Casual Worker (gypsum)	Tenant Farmer	Soco
3	S3F-I	Highschool	Female	21	Community member	In-depth Interview	Manufacture Worker	Karang Taruna	Soco
4	S4F-I	Highschool	Female	44	Community member	In-depth Interview	Manufacture Worker	Tailor	Soco
5	S5M-I	Elementary	Male	55	Community leader	In-depth Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	Head of Neighbourhood (RT)	Soco
6	S6M-I	Highschool	Male	41	Community member	In-depth Interview	Employee (gypsum production)	Small-Holder Farmer	Soco
7	S7M-I	Elementary	Male	49	Community member	In-depth Interview	Carpenter	Small-Holder Farmer	Soco
8	S8M-I	University	Male	29	Community leader	In-depth Interview	Hamlet Head (Soco)	Non-operating Landowner	Soco
9	S9F-IP	University	Female	21	Community member	In-depth Interview & photovoice	Teacher	Karang Taruna	Soco
10	S10F-IP	Junior high	Female	42	Community member	In-depth Interview & photovoice	Traditional Dance Instructor	Small-Holder Farmer	Soco
11	S11F-IP	Highschool	Female	31	Community member	In-depth Interview & photovoice	Food Seller	Entrepreneur/Business Owner (Yukata Mattress)	Soco
12	S12F-L	Did not complete formal education	Female	64	Community leader	Life History	Food Seller	Head of Neighbourhood (RT)	Soco
13	S13F-L	Elementary	Female	61	Community member	Life History	Tenant Farmer	-	Soco
14	S14F-L	Did not complete formal education	Female	72	Community member	Life History	Small-Holder Farmer	-	Soco
15	S15M-L	Elementary	Male	66	Community member	Life History	Small-Holder Farmer	-	Soco
16	S16M-L	Elementary	Male	82	Community member	Life History	Small-Holder Farmer	-	Soco
17	S17M-LV	Junior high	Male	69	Community member	Life History & Village history	Small-Holder Farmer	Traditional Artist	Soco
18	S18M-V	Elementary	Male	55	Community leader	Village History	Small-Holder Farmer	Head of Neighbourhood (RT)	Soco
19	S19M-V	Elementary	Male	70	Community member	Village History	Small-Holder Farmer	-	Soco

20	S20M-V	Highschool	Male	60	Community leader	Village History	Hamlet Head (Barak)	Small-Holder Farmer	Soco
21	S21M-V	Highschool	Male	56	Community leader	Village History	Hamlet Head	Entrepreneur/Business owner (Gypsum)	Soco
22	S22M-V	University	Male	57	Government staff	Village History	Goverment Staff (Soco)	-	Soco
23	S23M-V	University	Male	60	Government staff	Village History	Goverment Staff (Soco)	-	Soco
24	S24M-V	University	Male	50	Government staff	Village History	Goverment Staff (Soco)	-	Soco
25	S25M-V	Highschool	Male	61	Community leader	Village History	Hamlet Head (Nusupan)	Small-Holder Farmer	Soco
26	S26M-SV	Highschool	Male	58	Community leader	Interview & Village history	Head Village of Soco	Small-Holder Farmer	Soco
27	S27F-P	Junior high	Female	38	Community member	Photovoice	Casual Worker (make-up artist)	-	Soco
28	S28F-P	Junior high	Female	32	Community member	Photovoice	Casual Worker (mainly peeling Melinjo/Gnetum gnemon)	-	Soco
29	S29F-P	University	Female	32	Community member	Photovoice	Teacher	-	Soco
30	S30F-P	Junior high	Female	29	Community member	Photovoice	Laundry	-	Soco
31	S31F-P	Highschool	Female	58	Community leader	Photovoice	Small-Holder Farmer	Head of PKK Soco (Ibu Kades)	Soco
32	S32F-SP	Highschool	Female	22	Community member	Interview & Photovoice	Surveyor/Enumerator	Drink Seller, Karang Taruna	Soco
33	S33F-SP	Junior high	Female	51	Community member	Interview & Photovoice	Food Seller	Family Welfare Empowerment Representatives	Soco
34	S34F-SP	University	Female	32	Government staff	Interview & Photovoice	Government Staff	Landowner	Soco
35	S35M-S	Highschool	Male	51	Community leader	Interview	Construction Foreman	Head of Neighbourhood (RT)	Soco
36	S36M-S	Junior high	Male	46	Community leader	Interview	Cunstruction Worker	Religious Leader	Soco
37	S37M-S	Junior high	Male	54	Community leader	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	Farmer Group Leader and Head of Neighbourhood (RT)	Soco
38	S38M-S	Highschool	Male	55	Community leader	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	Farmer Group Leader	Soco
39	S39M-S	Elementary	Male	64	Community leader	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	Head of Neighbourhood (RT)	Soco
40	S40F-S	Highschool	Female	44	Community member	Interview	Food Seller	-	Soco
41	S41F-S	Highschool	Female	39	Community member	Interview	Tailor	Casual Worker (Kunyit)	Soco

42	S42F-S	Highschool	Female	22	Community member	Interview	Manufacture Worker	Karang Taruna	Soco
43	S43F-S	Junior high	Female	47	Community member	Interview	Vegetable Seller	-	Soco
44	S44F-S	Did not complete formal education	Female	62	Community member	Interview	Sharecropping Farmer	-	Soco
45	S45F-S	Junior high	Female	38	Community member	Interview	Casual Worker (mainly peeling Melinjo/Gnetum gnemon)	-	Soco
46	S46F-S	Elementary	Female	57	Community member	Interview	Tenant Farmer	Farm Labourer	Soco
47	S47F-S	Elementary	Female	50	Community member	Interview	Shaecropping Farmer	-	Soco
48	S48F-S	Highschool	Female	48	Community member	Interview	Casual Worker (mainly peeling Melinjo/Gnetum gnemon)	Grocery Stall	Soco
49	S49F-S	Elementary	Female	50	Community member	Interview	Vegetable Seller	Small-Holder Farmer	Soco
50	S50F-S	Elementary	Female	65	Community member	Interview	Rice Mill	Turmeric Collector	Soco
51	S51F-S	Did not complete formal education	Female	57	Community member	Interview	Crackers Seller	Small-Holder Farmer	Soco
52	S52F-S	Highschool	Female	40	Community member	Interview	Cashew Seller	The Village Consultative Body	Soco
53	S53F-S	University	Female	37	Community member	Interview	Teacher	-	Soco
54	S54F-S	University	Female	39	Government staff	Interview	Midwife	-	Soco
55	S55F-S	Junior high	Female	34	Community member	Interview	Toys and Snacks Seller	Farm Labourer	Soco
56	S56F-S	Elementary	Female	42	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	Qur'an Teacher	Soco
57	S57F-S	Did not complete formal education	Female	67	Community member	Interview	Cashew Seller	Small-Holder Farmer	Soco
58	S58F-S	Elementary	Female	54	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	Housewife	Soco
59	S59F-S	Junior high	Female	50	Community member	Interview	Entrepreneur/Business Owner (gypsum)	Landowner	Soco
60	S60F-S	Highschool	Female	23	Community member	Interview	Surveyor/Enumerator	Private Tutor, Karang Taruna	Soco
61	S61M-S	Highschool	Male	48	Community member	Interview	Gass Station Worker	-	Soco
62	S62M-S	Highschool	Male	31	Government staff	Interview	Government Employee (One-stop Administration Services Office)	Small-Holder Farmer, Karang Taruna	Soco
63	S63M-S	University	Male	51	Government staff	Interview	Subdistrict officer	-	Soco

64	S64M-S	Highschool	Male	47	Community member	Interview	Food Seller	Entrepreneur/Business Owner (transportation service)	Soco
65	S65M-S	Elementary	Male	62	Community member	Interview	Tenant Farmer	Farm laborer	Soco
66	S66M-S	Junior high	Male	41	Community member	Interview	Toys and Snacks Seller	Carpenter, Small-Holder Farmer	Soco
67	S67M-S	Junior high	Male	53	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	Landowner	Soco
68	S68M-S	Elementary	Male	62	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	-	Soco
69	S69M-S	Did not complete formal education	Male	54	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	Hansip member	Soco
70	S70M-S	Junior high	Male	45	Community member	Interview	Construction Worker	Casual Worker (mainly peeling Melinjo/Gnetum gnemon)	Soco
71	S71M-S	Junior high	Male	52	Community member	Interview	Construction Foreman	Handyman	Soco
72	S72M-S	Junior high	Male	47	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	Farmer Labour	Soco
73	S73M-S	Elementary	Male	54	Community member	Interview	Vegetable Seller	-	Soco
74	S74F-S	Highschool	Female	27	Community member	Interview	Drink Seller	Food Seller	Soco
75	S75M-S	Highschool	Male	24	Government staff	Interview	Subdistrict officer	Small-Holder Farmer, Karang Taruna	Soco
76	S76M-S	Elementary	Male	62	Community leader	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	Head of Community Association (RW)	Soco
77	S77M-S	Junior high	Male	47	Community member	Interview	Sharecropping Farmer	Construction Worker	Soco
78	S78M-S	Elementary	Male	52	Community member	Interview	Tenant Farmer	Farm Laborer	Soco
79	S79F-S	Highschool	Female	18	Community member	Interview	Student	Karang Taruna	Soco
80	S80M-S	Elementary	Male	56	Community member	Interview	Construction Worker	Farm Laborer	Soco
81	S81M-S	Highschool	Male	35	Community member	Interview	Gass Station Worker	Small-Holder Farmer	Soco
82	S82M-S	Elementary	Male	57	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	-	Soco
83	K1F-I	Highschool	Female	32	Community member	In-depth Interview	Manufacture Worker	Waste material trader	Kedunggupit
84	K2F-I	Highschool	Female	37	Community member	In-depth Interview	Manufacture Worker	-	Kedunggupit
85	K3F-I	Did not complete formal education	Female	57	Community member	In-depth Interview	Make Up Artist	Landowner	Kedunggupit
86	K4F-I	Junior high	Female	50	Community leader	In-depth Interview	Sharecropping Farmer	Head of Neighbourhood (RT)	Kedunggupit
87	K5M-I	Junior high	Male	52	Community member	In-depth Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	Fertilizer Seller	Kedunggupit

88	K6M-IV	Junior high	Male	54	Community leader	In-depth Interview & Village history	Vegetable Seller	Small-Holder Farmer, Head of Neighbourhood (RT)	Kedunggupit
89	K7M-I	Highschool	Male	55	Community leader	In-depth Interview	Welding Service Owner	Small-Holder Farmer, Head of Neighbourhood (RW)	Kedunggupit
90	K8M-I	Highschool	Male	52	Community leader	In-depth Interview	Landowner	Construction foreman, Head of Neighbourhood (RW)	Kedunggupit
91	K9F-IP	Highschool	Female	46	Government staff	In-depth Interview & photovoice	Goverment Staff	-	Kedunggupit
92	K10F-IP	Highschool	Female	39	Community member	In-depth Interview & photovoice	Small-Holder Farmer	PKK Administrator	Kedunggupit
93	K11F-IP	Highschool	Female	54	Community leader	In-depth Interview & photovoice	Hamlet Head (Ploso)	Small-Holder Farmer	Kedunggupit
94	K12F-IP	University	Female	38	Community leader	In-depth Interview & photovoice	Hamlet Head (Nglebak-Pundung)	Small-Holder Farmer	Kedunggupit
95	K13F-L	Did not complete formal education	Female	65	Community member	Life History	Tenant Farmer	Farm Laborer	Kedunggupit
96	K14F-L	Did not complete formal education	Female	63	Community member	Life History	Small-Holder Farmer	-	Kedunggupit
97	K15F-L	Did not complete formal education	Female	65	Community member	Life History	Sharecropping Farmer	Farm Laborer	Kedunggupit
98	K16M-L	University	Male	60	Community member	Life History	Cafe Owner	Small-Holder Farmer	Kedunggupit
99	K17M-L	Elementary	Male	68	Community member	Life History	Small-Holder Farmer	Farm Laborer	Kedunggupit
100	K18M-LV	Elementary	Male	79	Community member	Life History & Village history	Small-Holder Farmer	Breeder	Kedunggupit
101	K19M-V	Elementary	Male	62	Community leader	Village History	Head of Neighbourhood (RT)	Small-Holder Farmer	Kedunggupit
102	K20M-V	Elementary	Male	70	Community member	Village History	Small-Holder Farmer	-	Kedunggupit
103	K21M-V	Elementary	Male	60	Community member	Village History	Small-Holder Farmer	-	Kedunggupit
104	K22M-V	Elementary	Male	68	Community leader	Village History	Head of Neighbourhood (RT)	Small-Holder Farmer	Kedunggupit
105	K23F-P	University	Female	43	Government staff	Photovoice	Government Staff	-	Kedunggupit
106	K24F-P	Highschool	Female	40	Government staff	Photovoice	Government Staff	-	Kedunggupit

107	K25F-P	Highschool	Female	45	Community member	Photovoice	Housewife	Landowner	Kedunggupit
108	K26F-P	Junior high	Female	40	Community member	Photovoice	Housewife	Grocery Stall	Kedunggupit
109	K27F-P	Junior high	Female	34	Community member	Photovoice	Banana Crackers Seller	-	Kedunggupit
110	K28F-P	Highschool	Female	43	Community member	Photovoice	Surveyor/Enumerator	-	Kedunggupit
111	K29F-SP	University	Female	50	Community leader	Interview & Photovoice	Food Seller	PKK chairman	Kedunggupit
112	K30F-S	Elementary	Female	50	Community member	Interview	Tenant Farmer	Breeder	Kedunggupit
113	K31F-S	Elementary	Female	45	Community member	Interview	Tenant Farmer	Farm Laborer	Kedunggupit
114	K32F-S	Elementary	Female	67	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	-	Kedunggupit
115	K33F-S	Highschool	Female	44	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	-	Kedunggupit
116	K34F-S	University	Female	23	Community member	Interview	Student	Karang Taruna	Kedunggupit
117	K35F-S	Did not complete formal education	Female	80	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	-	Kedunggupit
118	K36F-S	Did not complete formal education	Female	67	Community member	Interview	Landowner	-	Kedunggupit
119	K37F-S	Highschool	Female	43	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	-	Kedunggupit
120	K38F-S	Highschool	Female	38	Community member	Interview	Manufacture Worker	Casual worker (FnB)	Kedunggupit
121	K39F-S	Highschool	Female	32	Community member	Interview	Manufacture Worker	Tenant Farmer	Kedunggupit
122	K40F-S	Highschool	Female	27	Community member	Interview	Manufacture Worker	Karang Taruna	Kedunggupit
123	K41F-S	Highschool	Female	45	Community member	Interview	Grocery Stall	-	Kedunggupit
124	K42F-S	Highschool	Female	54	Community member	Interview	Clothing store Owner	Landowner, Cafe Owner	Kedunggupit
125	K43F-S	Did not complete formal education	Female	60	Community member	Interview	Tofu Meatball Seller	Casual Worker	Kedunggupit
126	K44F-S	Elementary	Female	50	Community member	Interview	Beauty Salon Owner	-	Kedunggupit
127	K45F-S	Junior high	Female	51	Community member	Interview	Food Seller	-	Kedunggupit
128	K46F-S	Did not complete formal education	Female	57	Community member	Interview	Chip Distributor	Farm Labourer	Kedunggupit
129	K47F-S	Junior high	Female	25	Community member	Interview	Jamu Herbs Seller	Karang Taruna	Kedunggupit
130	K48F-S	Elementary	Female	48	Community member	Interview	Employee (FnB)	Household Furniture Seller	Kedunggupit
131	K49F-S	Junior high	Female	37	Community member	Interview	Employee (FnB)	-	Kedunggupit

132	K50F-S	University	Female	47	Community member	Interview	Teacher	Household Furniture Seller	Kedunggupit
133	K51F-S	University	Female	40	Community member	Interview	Headmaster	Garage Admin	Kedunggupit
134	K52F-S	University	Female	44	Community member	Interview	Teacher	Tailor	Kedunggupit
135	K53F-S	Junior high	Female	53	Community member	Interview	Food Seller	Small-Holder Farmer, PKK Administrator	Kedunggupit
136	K54M-S	Elementary	Male	62	Community member	Interview	Sharecropping Farmer	-	Kedunggupit
137	K55M-SV	Elementary	Male	65	Community leader	Interview & Village history	Small-Holder Farmer	Head of Neighbourhood (RT)	Kedunggupit
138	K56M-S	Elementary	Male	72	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	Sharecropping Farmer	Kedunggupit
139	K57M-S	Did not complete formal education	Male	76	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	Sharecropping Farmer	Kedunggupit
140	K58M-S	Elementary	Male	65	Community member	Interview	Sharecropping Farmer	Masseus	Kedunggupit
141	K59M-S	Highschool	Male	38	Community member	Interview	Welding Service Owner	-	Kedunggupit
142	K60M-S	Highschool	Male	52	Community member	Interview	Welding Service Owner	Small-Holder Farmer	Kedunggupit
143	K61F-SP	Highschool	Female	50	Community member	Interview & Photovoice	Housewife	-	Kedunggupit
144	K62M-S	Highschool	Male	47	Community member	Interview	Manufacture Worker	Farm Laborer, Construction Worker	Kedunggupit
145	K63M-S	Junior high	Male	64	Community member	Interview	Tailor	Landowner	Kedunggupit
146	K64M-S	Elementary	Male	57	Community member	Interview	Salt Distributor	-	Kedunggupit
147	K65M-S	Junior high	Male	27	Community member	Interview	Factory Waste Collectors	Household Equipment Producer	Kedunggupit
148	K66M-S	Highschool	Male	60	Community leader	Interview	Head Village of Kedunggupit	Landowner	Kedunggupit
149	K67M-S	Highschool	Male	42	Community leader	Interview	Hamlet Head	Small-Holder Farmer	Kedunggupit
150	K68M-S	Highschool	Male	44	Community leader	Interview	Hamlet Head (Pule)	Landowner	Kedunggupit
151	K69M-S	Highschool	Male	41	Community leader	Interview	Goverment Staff	Religious Leader	Kedunggupit
152	K70M-S	Elementary	Male	70	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	Farmer Group Leader	Kedunggupit
153	K71F-S	University	Female	48	Government staff	Interview	Midwife	-	Kedunggupit

154	K72F-S	Elementary	Female	70	Community member	Interview	Housewife	-	Kedunggupit
155	K73M-S	Junior high	Male	49	Community member	Interview	Driver (bus)	-	Kedunggupit
156	O1M-I	Highschool	Male	22	Migrant	In-depth Interview	Manufaktur Worker	Karang Taruna	Others
157	O2F-S	Elementary	Female	51	Migrant	Interview	Meatball Seller	-	Others
158	O3F-S	Highschool	Female	21	Migrant	Interview	Bookstore Keeper	-	Others
159	O4M-S	Did not complete formal education	Male	62	Migrant	Interview	Meatball Seller	Non-operating Landowner	Others
160	O5M-S	Elementary	Male	40	Migrant	Interview	Construction Worker		Others
161	O6F-S	University	Female	40	Community leader	Interview	Manager HR PT. Nesia Pan Pacific	HR PT Nesia	Others
162	O7M-S	University	Male	60	Community leader	Interview	General Manager (ASTARI)	Head of ASTARi	Others
163	O8M-S	Highschool	Male	49	Community leader	Interview	Regent Wonogiri	Regent of Wonogiri	Others
164	O9F-S	University	Female	50	Government staff	Interview	Government Staff (Disnaker)	Head of Disnaker	Others
165	O10F-Y	Highschool	Female	18	Youth	Youth FGD	Student		Others
166	O11F-Y	Highschool	Female	18	Youth	Youth FGD	Student		Others
167	O12M-Y	Highschool	Male	18	Youth	Youth FGD	Student		Others
168	O13M-Y	Highschool	Male	18	Youth	Youth FGD	Student		Others
169	O14M-Y	Highschool	Male	18	Youth	Youth FGD	Student		Others
170	O15F-Y	Highschool	Female	18	Youth	Youth FGD	Student		Others
171	O16F-Y	Highschool	Female	18	Youth	Youth FGD	Student		Others
172	O17F-Y	Highschool	Female	18	Youth	Youth FGD	Student		Others
173	O18M-Y	Highschool	Male	18	Youth	Youth FGD	Student		Others
174	O19M-Y	Highschool	Male	18	Youth	Youth FGD	Student		Others
175	O20M-Y	Highschool	Male	18	Youth	Youth FGD	Student		Others
176	O21F-Y	Highschool	Female	18	Youth	Youth FGD	Student		Others
177	O22F-S	Did not complete formal education	Female	65	Migrant	Interview	Vegetable Seller	Landowner	Soco

178	O23F-S	Did not complete formal education	Female	60	Migrant	Interview	Vegetable Seller		Soco
179	O24F-S	Highschool	Female	30	Migrant	Interview	Meatball Seller		Soco
180	O25M-S	Elementary	Male	36	Migrant	Interview	Construction Worker		Soco
181	O26M-S	Junior high	Male	33	Migrant	Interview	Construction Worker		Soco
182	O27M-S	Elementary	Male	42	Migrant	Interview	Construction Worker		Soco
183	O28M-S	Elementary	Male	60	Migrant	Interview	Meatball Seller		Soco
184	O29M-S	Elementary	Male	60	Migrant	Interview	Vegetable Seller	Construction worker	Soco
185	O30F-S	Highschool	Female	29	Migrant	Interview	Vegetable Seller	-	Soco
186	O31F-S	Elementary	Female	54	Migrant	Interview	Entrepreneur/Business Owner	-	Soco
187	O32M-S	Elementary	Male	21	Migrant	Interview	Shop Keeper	-	Soco
188	O33F-S	Did not complete formal education	Female	62	Migrant	Interview	Meatball Seller	Non-operating Landowner	Kedunggupit
189	O34F-S	Elementary	Female	62	Migrant	Interview	Jamu Herbs Seller	Masseuse	Kedunggupit
190	O35F-S	Junior high	Female	52	Migrant	Interview	Masseuse	-	Kedunggupit
191	O36M-S	University	Male	43	Community leader	Interview	Government Staff	-	Kedunggupit
192	O37M-S	University	Male	10	Community leader	Interview	Government Staff	-	Others
193	O38M-S	Elementary	Male	40	Migrant	Interview	Construction Worker	-	Others
194	S83F-I	Did not complete formal education	Female	60	Community member	In-depth Interview	Entrepreneur/Business Owner (rice distributor)	-	Soco
195	S84F-I	Highschool	Female	27	Community member	In-depth Interview	Entrepreneur/Business Owner (grocery store)	-	Soco
196	O39M-I	University	Male	52	Government staff	Interview	Government Staff	-	Others
197	O40M-I	University	Male	55	Government staff	Interview	Government Staff	-	Others
198	O41M-I	University	Male	50	Government staff	Interview	Government Staff	-	Others
199	O42M-I	Did not complete formal education	Male	50	Migrant	In-depth Interview	Construction Worker	-	Soco

200	O43F-I	University	Female	26	Migrant	In-depth Interview	Manufacture Worker	-	Soco
201	S85M-S	Junior high	Male	31	Community member	Interview	Food Seller	Small-Holder Farmer, Karang Taruna	Soco
202	S86F-S	Did not complete formal education	Female	68	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	-	Soco
203	S87M-S	Did not complete formal education	Male	77	Community member	Interview	Small-Holder Farmer	-	Soco
204	O44M-S	University	Male	28	Migrant	Interview	Government Staff	Karang Taruna	Soco
205	S88F-I	Elementary	Male	66	Community member	In-depth Interview	Tenant Farmer	Farm Laborer	Soco
206	S89M-I	Elementary	Male	70	Community member	In-depth Interview	Tenant Farmer	Farm Laborer	Soco

Appendix E: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

A. Local community members

1. What are the dominant processes of rural transformation and livelihood change occurring in the case study sites in Central Java?
   - Do you think there are any changes or transformations in your village compared to past conditions for the last couple of decades?
   - What is your opinion about the transformation?
   - What are the current livelihood activities in the village?
   - Do you think there are any changes in livelihood activities in the community compared to the past condition?
   - If there is any change in livelihood activity in the community, what do you think are the reasons or the main drivers for those changes?
   - How do you relate the livelihood changes (if any) with the general transformation that you previously mentioned (if any)?
   - Are there any available alternative livelihood options in your community?
   - If there are alternative livelihood options in your community, what are the main reasons for choosing or not choosing alternative livelihood activities?
   - Have you ever decided to change your livelihood? If you ever decided to change your livelihood, what is the main reason for that decision?
   - Do you want to change your livelihood activities in the future? What are your main reasons if you wish to change your livelihood activities?

2. How are the recent processes of rural transformation affecting gender roles and influence within households and community institutions?
   - In your opinion, how are the roles of men and women divided in the household?
   - In your opinion, how are the roles of men and women divided in the community?
   - Do you think there has been a change in the division of roles between men and women compared to past conditions?
   - If there is any change in gender roles in the household or community, what do you think are the reasons or the main drivers for those changes?
   - Do you think the rural transformation process affects gender roles in your households?
   - Do you think the rural transformation process affects gender roles in your community?
   - How do you think the recent rural transformation processes influence the gender roles in your household and community?

3. How are the changing gender roles perceived and experienced by women (and men?) within the community?
   - What roles do you play as a woman/man in your household?
   - What roles do you play as a woman/man in your community?
   - What is your opinion about the current gender roles in your household and community?
   - What is your opinion about the gender roles in the past?
   - Are you experiencing transformation or change in your role as a woman/man in your household and community?
   - If you are experiencing the transformation or change in your role as a woman/man in your household and community, how do you describe the transformation?
   - If you are not experiencing the transformation or the change in your roles as a woman/man in your household and community, what is your opinion about that?
   - Do you think there is a change or transformation in gender roles in the household or community compared to past conditions? If there is a change or transformation, how do you describe the differences and what is your opinion?

B. Community Leaders or Government staff

1. What are the dominant processes of rural transformation and livelihood change occurring in the case study sites in Central Java?
   - Do you think there are any changes or transformations in your village / district compared to past conditions for the last couple of decades?
   - What is your opinion about the transformation?
   - What are the current livelihood activities in the village?
   - Do you think there are any changes in livelihood activities in the community compared to the past condition?
   - If there is any change in livelihood activity in the community, what do you think are the reasons or the main drivers for those changes?
   - How do you relate the livelihood changes (if any) with the general transformation that you previously mentioned (if any)?
   - Are there any available alternative livelihood options in your community?
   - If there are alternative livelihood options in your community, what are the main reasons for choosing or not choosing alternative livelihood activities?
   - Have you ever seen people in your community decide to change their livelihood? If you have ever seen people change their livelihood, what do you think is the main reason for that decision?

2. How are the recent processes of rural transformation affecting gender roles and influence within households and community institutions?
   - In your opinion, how are the roles of men and women divided in the households in the community?
   - In your opinion, what are the roles of men and women in the community, and how are the roles divided?
   - Do you think there has been a change in the division of roles between men and women compared to past conditions?
   - If there is any change in gender roles in the household or community, what do you think are the reasons or the main drivers for those changes?
   - Do you think the rural transformation process affects gender roles in the households in your community?
   - Do you think the rural transformation process affects gender roles in the social life of your community?
   - How do you think the recent rural transformation processes influence the gender roles in the household and the broader scope of your community?

3. How are the changing gender roles perceived and experienced by women (and men?) within the community?
   - What roles do you play as a woman/man in your community?
   - What is your opinion about the current gender roles in households in your community and the social life of your community?
   - What is your opinion about the gender roles in the past conditions?
   - Are you experiencing transformation or change in your roles as a woman/man in your household and community? If so, how do you describe the transformation?
   - If you are not experiencing the transformation or change in your roles as a woman/man in your household and community, what is your opinion about that?
   - Do you think there is a change or transformation in gender roles in the household or community compared to past conditions? If there is a change or transformation, how do you describe the differences and what is your opinion?

C. Migrants

1. What are the dominant processes of rural transformation and livelihood change occurring in the case study sites in Central Java?
   - Do you think there are any changes or transformations in your village compared to past conditions for the last couple of decades?
   - What is your opinion about the transformation?
   - Do you know what the current livelihood activities in the village are?
   - Do you think there are any changes in livelihood activities in the community compared to the past condition?
   - If there is any change in livelihood activity in the community, what do you think are the reasons or the main drivers for those changes?
   - How do you relate the livelihood changes (if any) with the general transformation that you previously mentioned (if any)?
   - Are there any available alternative livelihood options in the villages you are originally from?
   - If there are alternative livelihood options in your community, what are the main reasons for choosing or not choosing alternative livelihood activities?
   - Have you ever decided to change your livelihood? If you ever decided to change your livelihood, what is the main reason for that decision?
   - Do you think your decision to migrate affects your village and its livelihood activities? If you think so, how do you think it is affecting the activities?
   - Do you want to change your livelihood activities in the future? What are your main reasons if you wish to change your livelihood activities?

2. How are the recent processes of rural transformation affecting gender roles and influence within households and community institutions?
   - In your opinion, how are the roles of men and women divided in the household?
   - In your opinion, how are the roles of men and women divided in the community in your village?
   - In your opinion, how are the roles of men and women divided in the community in your current city?
   - Do you think there has been a change in the division of roles between men and women in your household compared to past conditions?
   - If there is any change in gender roles in your household, what do you think are the reasons or the main drivers for those changes?
   - Do you think there has been a change in the division of roles between men and women in your village compared to past conditions?
   - If there is any change in gender roles in your village community, what do you think are the reasons or the main drivers for those changes?
   - Do you think the rural transformation process affects gender roles in your village community?
   - Do you think your migration activities affect the gender roles in your household or village community?
   - How do you think the recent rural transformation processes influence the gender roles in your household and community?

3. How are the changing gender roles perceived and experienced by women (and men?) within the community?
   - What roles do you play as a woman/man in your household?
   - What roles do/did you play as a woman/man in your village community?
   - What roles do you play as a woman/man in your current community?
   - What is your opinion about the current gender roles in your household, village community and current community?
   - What is your opinion about the gender roles in the past conditions?
   - Are you experiencing transformation or change in your roles as a woman/man in your household and community?

- If you are experiencing the transformation or change in your roles as a woman/man in your household and community, how do you describe the transformation?
- If you are not experiencing the transformation or change in your roles as a woman/man in your household and community, what is your opinion about that?
- Do you think there is a change or transformation in gender roles in the household, your village community and your current community compared to past conditions? If there is a change or transformation, how do you describe the differences and what is your opinion?

Appendix F: Ethics Approval

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Research Integrity & Ethics Administration
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 20 September 2022

Assoc Prof Jeffrey Neilson
Geosciences; Faculty of Science
Email: jeffrey.neilson@sydney.edu.au

Dear Jeffrey,

The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has considered your application.

I am pleased to inform you that after consideration of your response, your project has been approved.

Details of the approval are as follows:

Project No.:	**2022/515**
Project Title:	**Gender dynamics in Indonesia's rural transformation**
Authorised Personnel:	**Neilson Jeffrey; Susilowati Linda; Webber Sophie;**
Approval Period:	**19/09/2022 to 19/09/2026**
First Annual Report Due:	**19/09/2023**

Documents Approved:

Date Uploaded	Version Number	Document Name
02/09/2022	Version 2	Participant Consent Form (with HREC No)
02/09/2022	Version 2	Participant Info Statement (with HREC No)
02/09/2022	Version 2	Safety Protocol
02/09/2022	version 1	Recruitment/Correspondence Letter
02/09/2022	Version 2	Interview Guide (with HREC No)
02/09/2022	Version 1	Advertisement/recruitment letter script
02/09/2022	Version 2	Counterpart Support Letter
08/07/2022	Version 1	FGD questions
08/07/2022	Version 1	Letter for participant recruitment

Special condition of Approval:

It is a condition of approval that certified translations of the public documents are submitted after the English versions have been approved. You can use a certified translator or translations must be certified by a native speaker or someone highly competent in the language using a statutory declaration form. Our website provides more guidance.

Condition/s of Approval

- Research must be conducted according to the approved proposal.
- An annual progress report must be submitted to the Ethics Office on or before the anniversary of approval and on completion of the project.
- You must report as soon as practicable anything that might warrant review of ethical approval of the project including:
  - Serious or unexpected adverse events (which should be reported within 72 hours).
  - Unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

Research Integrity & Ethics Administration
Research Portfolio
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ABN 15 211 513 464
CRICOS 00026A

Appendix G: Research Permit

PEMERINTAH KABUPATEN WONOGIRI
KANTOR KESATUAN BANGSA DAN POLITIK
Jl. Durian, Sanggrahan, Wonogiri 57612
Telepon (0273)325373, Faksimile (0273)325373
Surel : kesbangpolwng@gmail.com, Laman :http://www.kesbangpol.wonogirikab.go.id

Wonogiri, 21 November 2022

Nomor : 071/ 805
Sifat : Biasa
Perihal : Rekomendasi ***Penelitian.***

Kepada:
Yth. 1. Setda Kab.Wonogiri,
2. Kepala DISPERTAN dan Pangan Kab.Wonogiri,
3. Kepala DISDUKCAPIL Kab.Wonogiri,
4. Kepala BPS Kab.Wonogiri,
5. Camat Slogohimo, Kab.Wonogiri,
6. Camat Ngadirojo, Kab.Wonogiri,
7. Camat Sidoharjo, Kab.Wonogiri.

Di -
WONOGIRI

Dalam rangka memperlancar pelaksanaan kegiatan, bersama ini disampaikan rekomendasi Nomor : 071 / 499 ,Tanggal 21 November 2022 Atas nama LINDA SUSILOWATI,M.Si., dengan judul :

Dinamika Gender dalam Transformasi Area Pedesaan Indonesia

untuk dapat dipergunakan sebagaimana mestinya.
Demikian untuk menjadi maklum dan disampaikan terima kasih.

An. BUPATI WONOGIRI
KEPALA KANTOR KESATUAN BANGSA DAN POLITIK

RAHMAT IMAM SANTOSA,S.Sos.,MP.
Pembina Tk. I
NIP. 19681224 199003 1 003

Tembusan, Kepada Yth.
1. Bupati Wonogiri, sebagai laporan;
2. Kepala BAPPEDA dan Litbang Kab.Wonogiri;
3. Kepala Desa Soco, Kec.Slogohimo;
4. Ketua Pusat Studi Pembangunan Berkelanjutan UKSW Salatiga
5. Yang Bersangkutan.

Matrix Correction Summary

Examiners' Comments	Supervisor's Recommendations	Revision
GAD and WD framework treat culture as an independent variable	Reconsider appropriateness of GAD and WCD approach and avoid treating culture and traditional gender roles as independent variables	Replaced WCD framework with an integrated theoretical approach combining Sustainable Livelihood Framework with gendered approach/perspective, and Social Reproduction Theory; this combined framework better captures the dynamic interplay between economic changes and cultural adaptations, avoiding treatment of culture as a static variable (See Chapter 2, 6, & 7)
Limited engagement with critical agrarian change literature	Consider engaging with literature on critical agrarian studies (e.g., in Journal of Peasant Studies) while recognising this may be beyond thesis scope	Incorporated targeted engagement with key critical agrarian studies literature from Journal of Peasant Studies, focusing on works addressing gender dimensions of agrarian change (e.g., White, Bernstein, Razavi); added discussion of how these perspectives inform understanding of Wonogiri's transformation (See Chapter 2)
Doesn't justify why livelihood pathways approach is appropriate for gender questions	Present argument for why livelihood pathways approach is particularly appropriate	Added explicit justification for livelihood approach by demonstrating how it reveals gender-differentiated experiences of rural change; explained how livelihood analysis illuminates women's strategic decision-making within cultural constraints (See Chapter 2)
Claim about limited gender research needs stronger evidence	Revisit claims about lack of previous research on gender issues (which examiners felt were repetitive and questionable)	Reformulated claims about research gaps to focus on specific aspects underexplored in literature rather than making broad statements; provided systematic review of existing research to demonstrate precisely where gaps exist; removed repetitive claims throughout thesis (See chapter 2)
No reflection on limitations of research approach	Add reflection on limitations or shortcomings in the approach and methods adopted	Added comprehensive section on methodological limitations addressing: challenges in accessing certain groups; possible biases in participant selection; timing constraints during fieldwork; language and translation issues; reflexivity regarding researcher positionality; and implications of these limitations for findings (See Chapter 3)

Matrix Correction Summary

Need concluding narrative tying Wonogiri's distinctive character to study aims	Provide conclusion about distinctive characteristics of Wonogiri. Consider extent to which Wonogiri case study is unique vs. consistent with trends elsewhere	Modified the narrative framework in Chapter 4 to address examiner concerns. Shifted from emphasizing the case's uniqueness to presenting it as relatively representative of similar contexts, while maintaining recognition of its particular characteristics that set it apart
Could explore whether young people are unable or unwilling to engage in farming	Consider whether young people are unable or unwilling to engage in farming (reflect on Ben White's work)	Added analysis of youth agricultural disengagement drawing on Ben White's research on Java; distinguished between structural barriers (land access, capital constraints) and preference factors (social status, economic returns); incorporated primary data from youth focus groups to illustrate how young women and men differently perceive agricultural futures
Engage with literature on multi-sited livelihoods	Engage with literature on multi-sited or stretched livelihoods, delocalisation to relate Wonogiri research with debates in other places	Expanded concluding section to engage with literature on multi-sited livelihoods (Ellis, Rigg, Elmhirst); analysed how Wonogiri households' stretched livelihood strategies.
Could engage more with literature on invisible economies of care	Expand discussion on what is 'work' beyond gendered community obligations to include care and caring	Expanded theoretical framework to incorporate feminist literature on care economies; added analysis of how unpaid care work constitutes essential labour despite its invisibility in economic measures; discussed how social reproduction theory helps understand women's triple burden (See Chapter 7)
Examine more gender legacies of the New Order	Develop further gender politics and social engineering during the New Order	Expanded analysis of New Order gender ideology and its continuing influence; discussed how state-sponsored gender doctrines were institutionalized through PKK and education; analysed evidence from fieldwork showing persistence of New Order gender legacies in contemporary attitudes (See Chapter 2 and 7)

Matrix Correction Summary

Consider how women's strategic responses represent both accommodation and resistance	Implied in overall recommendations about nuancing the argument	Enhanced analysis of women's agency to show how strategic accommodation can function as resistance; provided examples from fieldwork of how women navigate constraints by appearing to conform while pursuing their objectives (See Chapter 7)
Missing content in final paragraph on page 186	Fix missing content about "three key findings" on page 186	Corrected incomplete paragraph to properly identify and explain all three key findings; ensured logical flow and comprehensive presentation of research contributions (See Chapter 8)
Could have compared women's education to men's (in Figure 33)	Address limitations in Figure 33 about female education relative to men	Revised Figure 33 (in the latest version changed to Figure 31) to include comparative data on men's and women's educational attainment
Missing reflection on research limitations	Reflect on overall limitations of the research	Added a section on research limitations
Citation practices	Check thesis for spelling and typos; address intext comments	Conducted comprehensive proofreading to eliminate all typographical errors and remove candidate notes left in text; ensured consistent citation formatting throughout. (e.g. fix typos: debtx to debts, privilegesd to privileges)

Subject: FW: Full thesis
Date: Friday 1 August 2025 at 4:47:20 PM Western Indonesia Time
From: Linda Susilowati

From: Jeffrey Neilson <jeffrey.neilson@sydney.edu.au>
Date: Wednesday, 23 July 2025 at 5:58 PM
To: Linda Susilowati <lsus6230@uni.sydney.edu.au>
Subject: RE: Full thesis

Hi Linda,

I have just read through your entire thesis and I am satisfied that you have addressed the issues and concerns raised by the examiners. In my opinion, your thesis is now ready for final submission and placement in the university library.

Congratulations!

Jeff

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List of Publications on Google Scholar
W Jeff's Homepage

Recent Book: *Fortress Farming*, published by Cornell University Press, 2025