

# Forest governance

gendered institutions, practices, and resource struggles in Burkina Faso

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## Abstract

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This thesis explores the gendered dynamics of forest governance and practices in rural Burkina Faso. Approximately, three billion people worldwide rely on trees for their everyday life. In West Africa, women, are often responsible for collecting tree resources such as firewood, edible leaves, and fruits. Trees also provide valuable income, especially for the poorest. NGOs, supranational organizations, and states have promoted and supported decentralized forest institutions to make local communities manage forests and take a share in the benefits and income. This study asks why institutional forestry frameworks so often provide unexpected and adverse social and ecological outcomes by exploring forest users' navigation and struggles to access firewood and shea.

To meet the objective to analyze the interrelations between institutions, gendered power relations, and forest use, the study develops a theoretical framework for analyzing forest governance. Forest governance is approached as structured by, and structuring, the gendered power relations of subjectivities, divisions of labor, access and control relations, and institutions. With an ethnographic approach, the data have been collected using various methods, such as structured observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus-group discussions, primarily in the villages of Boessen and Tonogo. Overall, this study develops an understanding of how formal forest governance arrangements reinforce gender inequality and marginalization in Boessen and Tonogo. Gendered power relations that are embedded in informal and formal forest institutions form unequal opportunities to access and control firewood and shea. Forest governance arrangements reinforce feminized labor norms of cutting and transporting wood to impede over-harvesting and exclude women in forest management arrangements. The findings show how forest governance arrangements, in combination with the lack of available deadwood, tend to situate women at continuous risk of being punished for illegal forest practices and add extra work burden. The study moreover shows that uneven power relations at the household level and the increased value of shea have increased male harvesting and control of the shea kernel and profits. With that, men challenge the notion of the product as a feminine resource and rearrange masculinity norms.

Keywords: Burkina Faso, forest governance, natural resource management, forest resources, institutions, gender, masculinities, subjectivities, firewood, shea

## Articles

- I. Friman, J. (2020). Gendered woodcutting practices and institutional bricolage processes – The case of woodcutting permits in Burkina Faso. *Forest Policy and Economics*, 111, 102045.
- II. Friman, J. (2022). Challenging shea as a woman's crop – masculinities and resource control in Burkina Faso. *Gender, Place and Culture*, p. 1-20
- III. Friman, J. Gendered complexity in community forestry management in Burkina Faso, (in review).
- IV. Friman, J. Governance, perceptions and practices of contested firewood collection in Burkina Faso