

In the hands of the next generation farmers

– A study of farm succession in Västmanland

Rebecca Almgren



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Supervisor: Cecilia Waldenström, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences,
Department of Urban and Rural Development

Examiner: Örjan Bartholdson, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences,
Department of Urban and Rural Development

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Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Urban and Rural Development

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Abstract

This master thesis in rural development explores how farmers in Västmanland County experience possibilities and difficulties in a generational succession, and how they envision their future. In order to understand the farmer's everyday life, I use a phenomenological approach and central concepts such as lifeworld, farming projects, ontological security and the theory of structuration. These are used to interpret the empirical material, to see what the farmers are striving for in their farming, how they handle opportunities and difficulties, and how they create and maintain ontological security. The result shows that an interest in agriculture is the basis for a generational succession, and it is the interest that drives the process of generational succession. The interest for agriculture shapes how the farmers experience possibilities and difficulties, and it helps the farmers to cope with structural transformations. The interviews show factors that can "hold back" their interest, rather than how the interest can be created. All informants have been involved early on in agriculture and have been well supported. Uncertainty has emerged as an influencing factor, and the successors are exposed to this from several sources. The older generation usually determines the pace of the generational succession process, which creates uncertainty among the younger generation and the interest can decrease. A major concern in Västmanland County is the lack of land, which makes several of the informants dependent on their leases, and difficulties of expanding. The land that reaches the market is expensive and requires a lot of capital. It makes it difficult to enter agriculture and to buy out parents and siblings. Important questions are how the uncertainty can be reduced and how the interest can increase for potential farmers, and ensure that they receive support during the process.

Keywords: Farmers, Generational Succession, Lifeworld, Farming Projects, Ontological Security

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Swedish agricultural landscape is changing, and a big reason for this is that the number of farms in Sweden is steadily declining. Only about 2% of Sweden's economically active population are engaged in agriculture (Swedish Board of Agriculture 2016). The recruitment to bring the young generation into agriculture is slow, and today's farmers are getting older. Every third farmer is now over 65 years (Joosse & Grubbström 2016). However, the problem is not only isolated to Sweden; the European Commission has identified a “steady decline in the number of holdings and farmers in the EU has led to a distressing shortage of new farmers” (DGIP 2012, p. 39). A review of the young farmers in the EU-27 indicates that the EU is facing a dual problem today; the lack of young farmers and the quick ageing of the current farmer population.

Solving this problem requires an increased succession in the agriculture, where the younger generation moves into the driving seat and the older generation moves out. To ensure continuity in agriculture, as the farming business goes from generation to generation, the young farmers need to be encouraged to get involved in agriculture (Lobley et al 2010). This is a major challenge and a current issue in the EU, especially as agriculture is not only synonymous with food and food security. Agriculture is closely linked to the rural areas and the people who live there. The farmers keep the rural areas alive, and many jobs in rural areas are linked to agriculture (EC 2017, p. 4,8). Agriculture plays an important role for several reasons; managing essential natural resources, contributing to socio-economic development of rural areas and guaranteeing food production (Terres et al 2015). In the absence of a young generation, the farms may be forced to shut down, and if both arable land and agricultural units disappear, these districts become almost desolate (Flygare 2011).

The problem with a decreased farmer population is evident in Västmanland County, which has a central location in Sweden and where my study has been conducted. The closure of farms in the central districts of Sweden affect biodiversity, and when the agricultural structure is changed with larger fields and fewer farms, it reduces agriculture's contribution to the biological and genetic diversity of the landscape (Björklund & Milestad 2006). In addition to its impact on biodiversity, land abandonment also affects the ecosystem functions and the supply of ecosystem services, which are different depending on the context; it could for example affect the water balance, wildfire frequency and cultural landscape values

(Terres et al 2015). If the land abandonment continues to increase in Sweden's forested-and central districts, the Swedish agricultural production will only exist in those parts of the country that is dominated by district of plains and large farms. This creates problems at various levels, including the Swedish food security. The issue is acute, and the Swedish government came with a food strategy in January 2017 that focuses on agriculture and aimed to increase Sweden's food supply (Prop. 2016/17:104).

The future of Swedish agriculture is in the hands of the next generation of young farmers. It is a group that has often been neglected and overlooked in previous research (Grubbström et al. 2014), and there are few studies that focus on young potential farmers and their vision for the future (EIP-AGRI 2016). Sweden is facing a generational succession in the agriculture, which means that the younger generation is facing a choice, either to take over the family farm or not, or to start up a new farm. The lack of appropriate research motivates the study of questions such as; how do young farmers in Sweden experience opportunities and obstacles to take over a farm and become a farmer? What opportunities do they see in their production? What are their thoughts about what kind of agriculture they wish to engage in? This has implications the land use and biodiversity. My contribution to this kind of research is therefore to investigate how young farmers experience opportunities and difficulties to take over a farm/start up a farm and to run a farm. My focus is also on the long term issues: how do they view their future?

1.2 Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to explore how farmers in Västmanland County perceive and experience generational succession in the agriculture. I have formulated the following questions:

- How do farmers experience the possibilities and difficulties to take over a farm / start up a farm?
- What kind of production do the farmers see as feasible now and in the future?

I will focus on the young farmers who have recently completed a generational succession, or are facing a generational succession in the near future.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

2.1 Theoretical framework

2.1.1 The farmers' lifeworld

In order to explore the research questions, I will build on phenomenology and Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration. I am interested in how the young farmers experience their situation, therefore this thesis focuses on the study of the daily lives of individuals, and the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants (Cresswell 2014). Which are the young farmers' experiences of a generational succession and how do they look at their future? To understand the young farmers reality of everyday life, I use the concept "lifeworld" as Nitsch (2009) has modified it with inspiration from Habermas. Nitsch states that the context in which we are located in affect how we view ourselves and how we view the world. The farmer's context is an agricultural company, their farm is a place where they both live and work. Rist (2006) has identified 'lifeworlds' as important sources of rules, values and norms of interaction and the most salient space for social learning. The farmers' work and commitment to their business are often closely linked with their own identity, which explains why the farmers' lifeworld is involved in decisions (Schneider et al., 2010). The lifeworld contains the young farmers work environment, work culture and social environment that together create the young farmer's everyday life. It is in the lifeworld that the farmer develops his/hers thought patterns, habit and values (Nitsch 2009). Concerning exogenous factors, Anthony Giddens theory of structuration will be used. I will present his theory later in this chapter.

2.1.2 Farming projects

All farmers have different goals and strive for different things in their farming and in their lives. Waldenström (2001) has used the term "farming project" rather than strategies, to refer to farmer's perceptions of and strivings in farming as an overall task. It is a task in a broad sense, which is existentially meaningful but also relates to the pragmatic and concrete decisions in, for example, crop production. In Waldenström's (2001) study, the farmers stated different goals and they valued agriculture differently. One of her informants clearly stated that his main concern was not in agriculture, but the managing of the farm. Another of her informants wanted to focus on getting to know and develop his two farms, and in the

long-term increase the value for the next generation. The “Farming project” is developed by the farmer in interaction with her or his context. Both personal circumstances and biographical conditions are vital, as well as the cultural and structural preconditions at a specific historical time as experienced from the horizon of their lifeworld. Waldenström (2001) explains why she has chosen to name the term as farming projects instead of farming strategies, as it marks the un-finalised quality of such projects, and is based rather on an existential developmental perspective, than a sociological perspective. There has been a long-standing area of studies and debates in rural sociology, to understand the farmer’s strategies in relation to macro-structural changes in society. In spite of whether farmer’s strategies mostly develop endogenously, or if there are exogenous factors that affect these processes, the individual farmer must deal with exogenous factors as parts of realising the farming project. This leads me to Giddens’ (1984) theory of structure and action. In my study the focus is on structure and agency, rather than what emerges from the farm’s possibilities. What the farmers want and strive for in their farming influences how they perceive their possibilities and their actions. I will therefore explore how the young farmers relate to agriculture as farming projects, rather than strategies.

2.1.3 The theory of structuration

The theory of structuration will be used to show how my informants deal with opportunities and limitations. They have the freedom to shape their lives according to their farming projects and purposes, but structures set the limit for what is possible. Giddens’ (1984) theory of structuration elaborates on the creation and reproduction of social systems. The theory of structuration is about the ability to reflect and control our human actions. According to Anthony Giddens, human daily life and most social practices are built on and characterized by repetitive actions, which become routines and patterns. These actions create structures that consist of what seems to regulate people’s relationships and actions, such as norms, rules, laws and access to resources. The basis of the theory is that the structure contains both limitations and possibilities for the human agency. Some structures are short-lived, others more stable and institutionalized (Giddens 1984). Such types of structures can be called social structures. There is a duality of structure in society, which means that it is not possible to make a dividing line between actors and structure. Social structures are dependent on actions and actions are dependent on structures, the structure forms our actions and is shaped by our actions. This means that if there were no actions, there would be no structure

(Giddens 1984). There is a on-going structural transformation in Swedish agriculture, towards larger units for profitability, and this creates thresholds for those who want to start or take over a farm (Fredriksson 2015). It is against this background that I describe the meeting between policy and local practice, examining how policies change the local conditions for the farmers (see Giddens 1984, Hansen 1998). But, with the rapid pace of change that characterizes modern institutions nothing can be taken for granted anymore. Modern society (including the young generation of potential farmers) is affected by the perceived feeling of ‘ontological security’, which can be described as:

“A person’s fundamental sense of safety in the world includes a basic trust of other people. Obtaining such trust becomes necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-being and avoid existential anxiety” (Giddens 1991, pp. 38–39).

According to Giddens, ontological security is a sense of confidence and trust that the world is what it appears to be, and an essential part of people’s ability to influence their situation. Routines are closely linked to the ontological security, as the everyday events and routines that are predictable, create a close relationship with a sense of security. People become confident of knowing what is going on and what to expect. But this can disappear, when routines are disturbed or broken, and what Giddens calls our sense of ‘ontological security’ breaks down (Giddens 1996). The fear and doubt of choosing the wrong way in the wide selection of choises, offered by the late modern society is mitigated if the ontological security is preserved. It protects against the extreme pressure that the modern society puts on the individual. Future potential farmers will face a number of important decisions, and the theory of ontological security helps me to understand my informants handling possibilites and difficulties in taking over a farm / start up a farm. Since a large part of the human social life consists of routines, people rarely reflect on why they act in different ways. In order to be reflexive, have knowledge and be able to reflect on our own actions, a human consciousness is needed. Giddens suggest that there are two types of consciousness, “discursive” and “practical”. Practial consciusness includes knowledge and memories, these are actions that do not require any reflection on the motives of the actions. When the individual deals with situations that are not routine, she needs to reflect on her actions, that is, using discourse consciousness. The individual then reflects on her actions and becomes aware of them and the motives behind them and may consider different options (Giddens 1984).

2.2 Previous research

2.2.1 *Generational succession*

The succession on a farm is the basis for the farm's continued existence and development. Kerbler (2012) has defined farm succession as both the state of succession on a farm and the process of the farm transfer. When looking for a successor, the family is often the first choice for several reasons, such as lower labour costs and motivated workforce (Grubbström et al 2014). There is a complex process towards a farm succession and inheritance, with many different actors involved. These actors are both family members and professional advisers who provide legal or financial advice (Leonard et al 2015). Succession is a process that takes place over a extended period of time, which involves transferring the management of business assets. It is not a single event (Lobley et al 2010). Gasson & Errington (1993) describe a generation succession in the agriculture as a process that can be planned, monitored and controlled. Effective management of these transitions is as important as the management of agriculture itself. In order to maintain continuity in the farm's operation, even in a generational succession, it requires a combination of ownership and managerial control, and both must be transferred to the next generation. Since the farm succession is very complex, there are many factors that can affect the farm succession, and not just economic factors (Kerbler 2012).

The terms *inheritance*, *succession* and *retirement*, are sometimes used interchangeably and this can cause confusion. Inheritance means the legal transfer of ownership of the business assets (including land), succession can be explained as the transfer of the managerial control over the use of these assets, while retirement means that the current management are leaving the active managerial control and involvement in the farm (Gasson & Errington 1993; Grubbström et al 2014). Retirement and succession are each other's mirrors. When the younger generation enters, the old generation withdraws (Lobley et al 2010; Gasson & Errington 1993). The number of non-family farms transfers in the EU is increasing; therefore, it is important to include non-family farm transfer in the scope of research, and not only family succession (Joosse & Grubbström 2016). In most European countries, the family farm model is still the predominant form of ownership, which means that succession often takes place generationally (Leonard et al 2016). My study focuses on the mangagerial control over the farm, instead of ownership (see for example Joose & Grubbström 2016 for a similar focus), since not all farmers own their farm, and the management form is a better indicator

for how the farm is actually farmed, than ownership. How the farm is transferred, can affect the farm management and the overall development of the farm. The transfer can also have an impact on how the successor chooses to farm (Joosse & Grubbström 2016). In the beginning of the 1990's when Gasson & Errington (1993) made their study, the potential successor in England was identified early in life. They refer to a survey of English farmers where there was at least one son in the family; a quarter of these had identified a successor when the eldest son was ten years. On a farm with only daughters in the family, the identification of a successor took longer time. According to Gasson & Errington (1993) there is evidence that shows that the younger generation tends to be more stressed by the process in a generational succession, than the older generation. The reason for this may be that the younger generation has less control over the situation. The younger generation is also more aware than their parents about the tensions that can arise between the siblings (ibid p. 232). Studies show that the succession-planning among farmers is decreasing, and this affects the younger generation negatively. It creates an uncertainty for the young potential farmers, which in turn makes it difficult to make changes on the farm that benefit a successful business (Grubbström et al 2014).

2.2.2 Farm plans

Previous research also shows that farmers strive for different things and perceive different values in agriculture. Grubbström et al (2014) have interviewed Swedish agricultural pupils between the ages 17-18, at an upper secondary school; interviews show that many of them have already begun thinking about how to succeed as farmers in the future (Grubbström et al 2014). They discuss the size of the farm. A large farm with many hectares and employees, can give the farmers more freedom. But it can also lead to losing control over the farm and the close contact with the employees. When the pupils are analysing the situation, they point out that they have to have a very big farm, or a small farm and carve out a niche. Farm development can include the pursuing of different goals. The most central goals are to achieve a reasonable income and to ensure that the farm can survive over time. A Slovenian study indicates that young potential farmers rarely take over the farm, if they acquire information that the farm is economically incapable of investing in its future development (Kerbler 2012). Different goals can give rise to different strategies (Ploeg et al 2016).

There are many different ways of farming. Table 1 shows 11 different agricultural activity systems. In some of these systems agriculture is the main activity, while in others agriculture is a side activity. Agriculture can be considered essential when it constitutes a major part of a livelihood strategy or a lifestyle. For example, agriculture can be linked to a luxurious lifestyle, or as a pensionable income, household consumption or trade. All of these strategies have been documented in a variety of scientific studies, and all of these are present in Western European agriculture. These strategies are well connected with the country's socio-economic reality. The table also shows that activity systems number 1 to 4 together constitutes 45%, and these include those who are more focused on agriculture and its production. It also shows that these are economically dependent on agriculture. In the activity systems number 1 to 4, 14% of the farmers are younger than 40 years, 25% are between 40-50 years old and 34% are between 50-60 years old. In activity systems number 6 to 11, 43% of the farmers are over 65 years old and only 7% of these farmers are younger than 40 years (Ploeg et al 2016).

Table 1: Farming as part of different activity systems (Laurent et al 1998 in Ploeg et al 2016)

Types of agricultural activities	Main objective of the agricultural activity for the household
1. Employee-run companies (1%)	Income, profit
2. Capitalistic agriculture (3%)	Income, profit
3. Agriculture as a structured profession (20%)	Income, taste for farming
4. Agriculture based on a traditional farmer logic (21%)	Income, self-employing profession
5. Rural enterprises (8%)	Associated income, patrimony
6. Non integrated multi-activity (7%)	Associated income, to keep an inherited family farm
7. Subsistence farming for retired farmers (13%)	Compensation for a low pension, subsistence and barter
8. Qualifying for social welfare coverage/ old age pensions (9%)	Access to social scheme (pension scheme, etc.), subsistence and barter
9. Agricultural activity for home consumption and barter (2%)	Subsistence and barter
10. Luxury agriculture (4%)	Leisure, prestige, patrimony
11. Small scale recreational agriculture (12%)	Leisure, subsistence and barter

2.2.3 The interest in farming

A fundamental criterion for the future of young potential farmers is that they have an interest in agriculture. This appears as an important factor in several studies (Grubbström et al 2014; Flygare 1999; Keating & Little 1997). A motivating interest in agriculture makes it possible for young farmers to adapt to changes and manage adversities. According to Grubbström et al (2014) it also makes them more willing to invest in their farm and be open to new opportunities. Family members can encourage the interest by showing support and trust in the young potential farmers, and let them participate and exert influence (Grubbström et al 2014). Flygare (1999) visited and interviewed 23 farms in Sweden in her doctoral thesis. In 15 of these farms, the interviews indicated that the parents believed they saw an interest for agriculture in one of their children. On five farms, the parents were insecure because of the children's low age. In three farms, the younger generation was completely uninterested in agriculture. In Flygare's study parents saw children's' interest in farming as congenital and not as a result of the parents' influence. In her study, it appears that the term "interest" is created as a template for comparing the siblings. The children who were not interested in agriculture were referred to as "not woken up yet", not caring or not understanding. While the children who show an interest in agriculture are described as acting differently than their siblings.

Flygare (1999) made her study in Sweden in the 1990's, and addresses "interest" as an important and influential factor. This creates also questions such as; do the parents shape the young farmers interest or not? How is the interest of the young generation built? Will the older generation support the interest?

The older generation's actions can affect the outcome and the future of the younger generation. By declaring their role as experts, and not involve the younger generation into the decision-making, the older generation and farmers in general may hold back potential young farmers (Grubbström et al 2014). The younger generation will maybe become interested in farming if they are allowed to work and get a responsibility in some areas, but if the requirements are exaggerated, such as being forced to constantly work on the farm against her or his will, the younger generation can instead be discouraged and "lose" the interest of agriculture. This may be a more apparent obstacle for girls, because of the old tradition of male successors and the gendered distribution of labour, seems to place different

expectations and demands on girls compared to boys. Uncertainty about generational succession can depend on gender. But, recent research indicates that the old tradition of a male successor is being challenged (ibid).

According to Grubbström et al (2014) the situation for some pupils is uncertain. They do not know what is going to happen and they discuss the relational and financial difficulties that the process may imply. There is an anxiety about the generational succession and it causes conflicts within the family, and it appears that an open communication within the family reduces the stress of the successor. A succession plan that is discussed openly reduces the fear of conflict with siblings. Those who become identified as successors must make important decisions very early in life, and that responsibility can cause the successor to feel that the future is predetermined. A “tied up” feeling can inhibit the successor to “think new”, and therefore affect the development of the farm. A succession that implies freedom of choice would be the most optimal for potential young farmers (ibid).

Grubbström et al’s study shows that it is an advantage if the discussion about a generational succession takes place early, since it facilitates future planning. This can also be a disadvantage, because it involves feelings of responsibility. Also the location of the farm is essential for young potential farmers, both in terms of access to resources and markets, and the land prices. High land prices can delay and make it difficult to buy out siblings, which can affect the generational succession process. High land prices can also be seen as a financial security for the future (Grubbström et al 2014).

2.2.4 Strong ties - an unwillingness to sell

A farm can be associated with individual and collective memories, connected to strong emotional ties to the farm and its region. This was evident in a study of 30 young Irish adults, from farming backgrounds attending university (Cassidy & MacGrath 2014). The study shows that the emotional ties can make it difficult for non-successors to sell the farms. Those interviewed did not view the farm as an asset that could be sold and benefit them. The relationship to land and farming is deeply rooted within the family and can provide important insights into the current interpretation of belonging and the succession dynamics and process. The young adults frame the farm as intangible and unsalable. Even those who will not take over the farm management, or are highly unlikely to be farm successors, so-

called “non-successors”, want a continued link to the farm, and therefore keep the land in their possession.

There exists also an unwillingness to sell a farm that has passed on for generations to a third party. The reason for this unwillingness can be all the work that has been invested in the farm by former generations. In Flygare’s (1999) study with Swedish farmers, her informants use words as: “life” and “soul” that is invested in the farm, and not only “work” (see also Nordström Källström 2008:101). If there is no successor to the farm, it is considered better to lease out the farm one generation, and keep the family farm within the family until a new successor emerges. This leads to a stagnation of farmland and farms, since they never reach the market. The most important challenge for young farmers groups is procuring access to farmland. With today's high land value and farmland rental markets, it will be a double challenge for young potential farmers to start up their business and develop successful and profit business (Katchova & Ahearn 2014).

2.2.5 Central concepts

I intend to use the term ‘succession’ to describe the phenomenon in my study. I will use the same term, regardless of whether the successor will take over a family farm or start up a new farm / taking over an existing farm with no personal connection to it. The generational succession process will be investigated further, how it has been, and whether it has affected my informants. I am also curious about the interest in agriculture, how the young farmers experience it. I will look at the farmers' production as “farming projects” that they want to pursue in relation to the world outside; it is an existential dimension that they want to realise over time. How do they view their future? How has the policy affected the living conditions of young potential farmers? I will explore how these concepts affect the young farmers’ lifeworlds in relation to structure and agency.

My definition of the term ‘interest’ in this thesis can be described as activities that people enjoy doing and the subjects that people like to spend time learning about. The term is adequate because it helps me to see how the farmers interest in agriculture shape / affect their lifeworld, and how they experience the opportunities and difficulties to take over a farm / start up a farm, and how they look at future production opportunities. I will also look at what kind of factors that can create ontological insecurity for the younger generation.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1 Study site

Swedish agriculture is facing different challenges depending on where in Sweden the farms are located. A negative trend is evident in the forested- and central districts of Sweden's, while the cultivation in the districts of mid-southern plains in Sweden is very likely to be maintained in the future (Swedish Board of Agriculture 2013). The forested- and central districts in Sweden have naturally inferior conditions for agriculture, and the harvest level are normally lower in these districts than in the southern and mid-Sweden plains (SCB 2004). In the districts of plains, cultivation is intense, and the problem is the high prices and land rental. In the forested- and central districts in Sweden, many farms are closing down, and that affects the public goods that the agricultural production contributes to in the area. The forested and central districts in Sweden are particularly vulnerable and characterized by closures; therefore farm succession becomes all the more important in these areas.

The data for this study has been collected in Västmanland County. Västmanland County is one district in Sweden that belongs to the production area “Forested districts in central Sweden” (Swedish Board of Agriculture 2014), (see area number 6 in Figure 1), which is an area at risk of abandonment of farms. For example; Västmanland County belongs to one of the areas in Sweden where the number of dairy farms decreased the most during the year 2016, more than one in ten farm gave up their dairy production within the area. The number of dairy farms that were closed down in total in Sweden was 275 in 2016. There are now 41 municipalities in Sweden that do not produce any milk at all (Ingvarsson 2017). The arable land in Sweden is steadily decreasing. Over the last 20 years, the arable land has decreased with 1 hectare per hour, in average. The arable land has decreased the most in Upper parts of Norrland with 17% and in the lower parts of Norrland by 14%. In the Forested districts in central Sweden, to which the county of Västmanland belongs, the arable land has decreased with 8% since 1996 (Karlsson 2017).

The average rent for agricultural land has increased. In 2016 and in the region called East Middle Sweden, which contains Stockholm, Uppsala, Södermanlands, Östergötlands, Örebro och Västmanland County, the average rent for agricultural land was 1430 SEK/ha, including rents without payment and excluding rents with entitlements and buildings. It is the third

most expensive region in Sweden. Eastern Middle Sweden is in the top with the most number of holdings that rent agricultural land, and the average rented hectares per holding according to Farm register 2013 is 54,5 hectare in Eastern Middle Sweden. For the moment, Västmanland County has 1675 farms of which 48 per cent cultivate grain, 13 per cent keep animals and 8 per cent of the farms are mixed (Swedish Board of Agriculture, 2016).

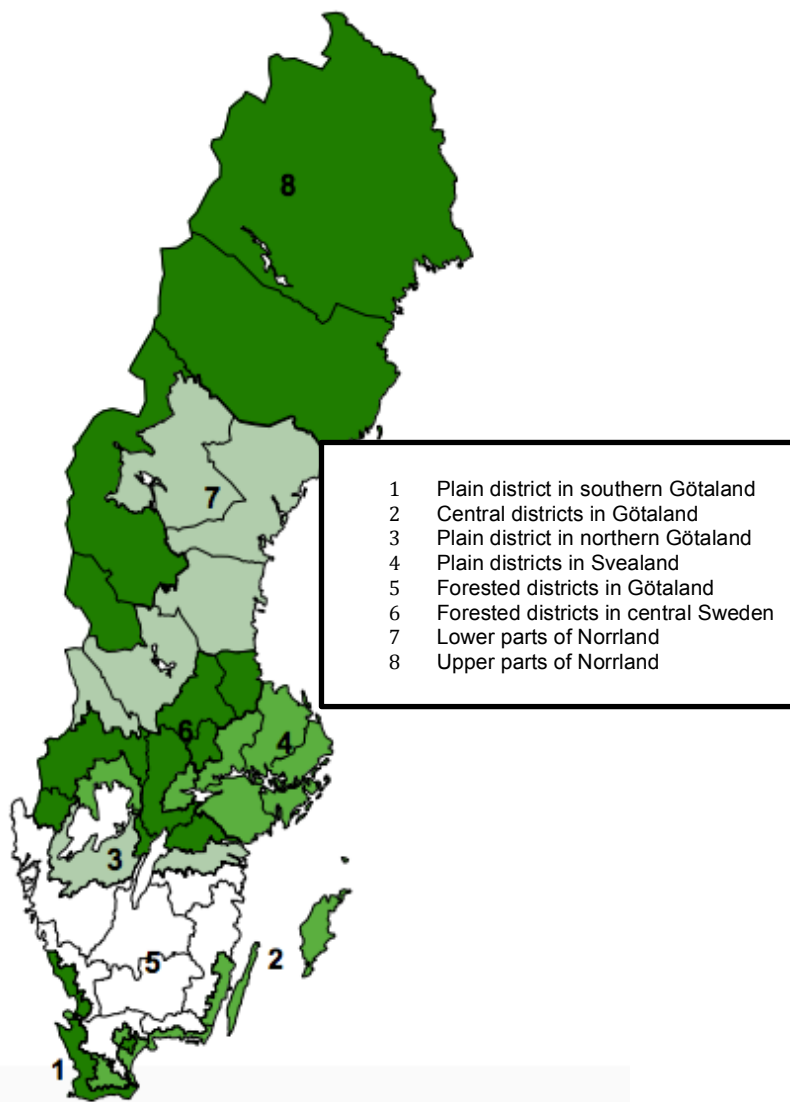


Figure 1: Production areas in Sweden

(SCB 2016, own revision)

3.2 Entrepreneur Centre and Sala municipality

The study has been conducted in cooperation with the Entrepreneur Centre in Sala, which in turn works on behalf of Sala municipality. Entrepreneur Centre in Sala operates a locally based business development and is a driving force to make Sala Municipality a better place to establish and run a business in. Entrepreneur Centre in Sala shall contribute actively to the development of enterprises, entrepreneurs and business environment (Företagarcentrum i Sala n.d). My empirical data has therefore been collected within Västmanland County (see figure 3) and especially in Sala municipality.

Table 2: Number of farm enterprises per municipality in 2013 (Karlsson 2014)



Figure 2: Map over Västmanland County
(Länsstyrelsen Västerås)

Municipality	Quantity
Gotland	1504
Falköping	921
Skellefteå	911
Kristianstad	888
Varberg	855
Norrtälje	853
Uppsala	832
Hässleholm	787
Örebro	688
Falkenberg	686
Vara	670
Örnsköldsvik	648
Laholm	629
Växjö	628
Linköping	622
Enköping	612
Hörby	595
Jönköping	594
Sjöbo	579
Sala	536

Sala municipality is thus located in Västmanland County in central Sweden, and has a population of 22 214 residents (Sala kommun 2016). Sala municipality belongs to Sweden's top 20-list with the highest number of farm enterprises per municipality (see Table 2). Almost half of the local residents live in the rural and peri-urban areas around the city of Sala. The main industries are agriculture, tourism and small scale industry. Sala is characterized by a “small businesses spirit” and is a market and administrative town (ibid).

3.3 The method

This thesis has been based on a consistently qualitative method, as it seeks to understand and discover the meaning individuals or groups assign to a social or human problem (Cresswell 2014, p. 4). In order to study young farmers' experiences related to a generational succession, this master thesis is based on semi- structured lifeworld interviews. This type of interview is similar to a casual conversation, but it has a purpose just like a professional interview and contains a special interview technique (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 43). Semi- structured lifeworld interviews seek to understand themes in the lived everyday lifeworld from the informant's own perspective. My interviews have been conducted on the basis of an interview guide which focuses on certain themes and proposed questions. The interviews have given the informants space to formulate their everyday life world in a relaxed manner.

3.4 The informants

Since this study aims to explore the young farmers lifeworld, there is a need for a definition of 'young' farmers. The EU and its common agricultural policy provide a number of programs aimed to encourage young people to become farmers. The support is available for young farmers who are 40 years or under at the time of applying (EC 2017b), and I therefore had 40 years and under as a benchmark, when I started to contact the informants.

Two different groups of young farmers have been interviewed in this study. The first group (Group 1) includes young farmers who have already gone through a generational succession and the second group (Group 2) includes young farmers that are in a generational succession process. The Entrepreneur Centre in Sala provided me lists of active agricultural enterprises within Sala municipality. Since the list of registered agricultural enterprises in Sala was long, and in order to save time, Entrepreneur Centre in Sala helped me to filter out informants from the lists. The selection of informants has affected the sample as it focused on agricultural production. Two of my informants were not on the list. Instead I got in touch with those through "snowball sampling".

Group 2 was a complicated group to get in touch with. First, it was difficult to find the right person to contact, since the lists only contained the transferor's information. Secondly, many

felt that there was too much uncertainty about the generational succession and therefore did not want to talk about it, and some said it did not concern a third party.

To preserve confidentiality, farmers' names have been replaced by pseudonyms. Yet, information about the farm size, main production type and status of the generational succession process are correctly stated in appendix 1. Despite pseudonyms, I want to convey the contexts. Below is a brief introduction about my informants, which can give the reader a greater understanding.

My informants consist only of men. I tried to find female informants to interview, but I did not succeed. In the contact lists I received from Entrepreneur Center in Sala, there were no women on the lists. But through the snowball effect, I discovered a farm in Västmanland County where two daughters would probably take over the family farm in a generational succession, but they did not want to participate in my study.

Group 1: Farmers who have gone through succession

Robert (male) 36, beef producer

Filip (male) 50, dairy farmer

Lukas (male) 32, grain producer

Kalle (male) 29, beef producer

Group 2: Farmers in a succession process

Victor (male) 39, grain producer

Oscar (male) 41, pig farmer

Thomas (male) 44, pig farmer

Niklas (male) 33, dairy farmer

Rashid (male) 23, organic farmer

3.5 The interviews

Before I got in touch with my informants, I discussed with my supervisor and Entrepreneur Centre in Sala, how I should introduce the study's purpose and myself, to create the best possible platform to work from. The interview questions have been carefully designed and discussed with my supervisor to find suitable formulations and entrance angles (see

appendix 2). In order to facilitate as much as possible for my informants to participate in my study, the interviews has been conducted at their farms, in their staff room or in their private homes and kitchen. Two interviews were conducted by telephone, because the farmers did not have the time to meet, but they were valuable informants for my study. Before each interview, I asked for permission to record, to be able to put a greater focus on the farmers and to ask relevant follow-up-questions. All interviews have therefore been recorded and transcribed, even those over the phone.

4 RESULTS

This chapter aims to describe how the young farmers, from the horizon of their lifeworlds, experience possibilities and difficulties in a generational succession, as well as how their actions are affected, limited and enabled by the structures in society. In the first section of this chapter I intend to answer the first question: *How do farmers experience the possibilities and difficulties to take over a farm / start up a farm?*

The second section of the chapter will focus on the future and answer the other research question: *What kind of production do the farmers see as feasible now and in the future?*

4.1 Presentation of the farmers

Nine farmers have been interviewed and contributed to this study. Here is a brief presentation about each farmer.

Robert

Robert has worked on the family farm throughout his life and he has always been interested in farming. It was decided early that Robert would take over the farm. He has three half-siblings, but none of them have any connection to the farm. His mother thought it was obvious that Robert would inherit the farm; she abandoned her material rights so that Robert could take over the entire farm. In 2006, Robert entered as a partner and took over half the farm. In 2008 he took over the farm completely, then he was 28 years old. When it was decided, the generational succession process went fast. They were assisted by a lawyer and it was completed after a few months. But in fact, Robert wanted the succession to happen earlier, but his father thought he should be retired first. Robert perceives that the profitability is the biggest obstacle; he has had to sell forest to bring it together economically. He also works as part-time fireman in Ransta. His dad helps a lot on the farm with the animals; otherwise it would not work. He experiences now that his profitability has increased, since the price of the animals has risen and because he has gained better control of his own economy.

Filip

Since 2003, Filip has worked full time on the family farm. But before that he has worked 20 years "away" from the farm as a repairer and constructor. When his mother began to fall ill around 2003, his parents wanted Filip to decide about the farm. Filip has a sister who has never been interested in agriculture; she has her own company and works with advertising. Filip's wife Maria was tired of her job at that time, and she wanted to try something else. They therefore decided to take over the farm and they built a house next to Filip's parents. In 2006, they built a new barn, which delayed the generational succession process. The generational succession was completed in the end of 2016/2017. They took help from a company that is focused on generational successions in the agriculture. The company presented a proposal that everyone could read through. Filip thought it was difficult to set a price to buy out his sister from the farm, but she was pleased with the result and accepted it. Since Filip operates a dairy farm, production is around the clock with new challenges every day. There is always something to fix. What he sees as difficulty is if the interest rates increases.

Lukas

Lukas has wanted to take over his family's farm since he was 5 years old. When he was 21 years old, his family began to plan for a generational succession. Lukas's mother interviewed everyone in the family to see who was interested. Three years later, in 2009, Lukas and his brother Samuel had taken over the farm together. The actual takeover felt natural according to Lukas. He and his brother will not continue in their parents' tracks. They had animals. Lukas and his brother would like to expand their contracted services instead. The opportunities that Lukas sees for the future is that fewer companies operate in smaller towns, which means that they get a bigger space for contracted services. This also means a difficulty for the future, he believes, because if people move to urbanized areas there is less development in the smaller towns.

Kalle

Kalle started up a farm with his brother. Kalle has always been interested in agriculture and it has been the red thread through his life. During the summers, Kalle has worked at his uncle's dairy farm, and he has been to agricultural school. After Kalle was done with the compulsory military service, he received a tip that a farm was for sale 40 kilometres from his hometown. No one in Kalle's family has any connection to that farm or that area, but he

describes the area as being more alive and having a better “business spirit” than his hometown. Kalle describes the farm as an optimal animal production farm. His parents helped out to buy the farm for him and his brother. He was only 19 years old when they in 2007 started up the farm. Kalle and his brother have been forced to find their own way to proceed and develop the farm, and it has been both positive and negative. Kalle sees great possibilities with the farm, because it is well placed in a vibrant village, and there is room for expansion.

Victor

Victor is in a generational succession process that has taken place since the early 1990s. At that time, the ownership of the farm was divided into 25% share between Victor, his brother, his father and his mother. The idea was to facilitate a future generational succession. Victor and his brother leased out their parts to their father who ran it as a private company. Since 1997, Victor and his brother have worked on the farm and they have also sold services to other farms. In spring 2012, Victor's father and mother started a limited liability company. In 2013, Victor's mother died, and then his father became 100% owner of the company. Since 2016, Victor, his brother and his father own one-third in the limited liability company. According to Victor, the generational succession goes slowly but surely and he does not feel hindered by the ownership. It has been a matter of course that Victor and his brother will take over the farm and run it. What Victor sees as a major challenge is politics and how Sweden can fight for itself at EU level.

Oscar

Oscar is a pig farmer who will take over his neighbour Börje's farm. The generational succession process started in 2008. The farm is owned by Uppsala University, which means that it is only the management that he will take over. Oscar chose not to take over his own family's farm because the buildings were worn out. That farm was also owned by Uppsala University. In November 2008, Oscar and Börje began to involve lawyers and accountants for the generational succession. None of Börje's children are interested in taking over the company. Oscar has begun to take over the company gradually; at the moment he owns half of the company. Oscar says he has a long way to go because he has not inherited a single crown to start his agricultural life. Therefore, it takes time for Oscar to buy out Börje from the company.

Thomas

In Thomas's case, a generational succession has been discussed but they have never got down to action. Both of Thomas parents have grown up on farms, and today the main production is on Thomas' mother's farm. Thomas has always had the interest for agriculture, but his grandfather who was a farmer, believed that Thomas should do something else than farming. Thomas is an educated construction engineer, and has worked away from the family farm for several years, but he always had the ambition to return to agriculture, despite his grandfather's advice. Thomas, his wife and Thomas' father run a limited liability company, and all are co-partners, that's why the generational succession takes time, according to Thomas. Because the company operates the business, owns the animals and the machines, Thomas parents still own the buildings and the land. What Thomas sees as a difficulty is that if anything happens to him or his wife, they are missing a backup that can help them with the farm.

Niklas

Niklas wants to take over the family farm gradually. He and his parents have discussed this for four years, but it has not been done yet. The idea is that Niklas and his parents should form a limited company and Niklas will take over the farm little bit-by-bit. He has grown up on the farm and has been working on it for nine years. Prior to that, Niklas has worked in other farms and on farms in Australia. It was not obvious that someone within the family would take over the farm, although Niklas was the only one who was interested in agriculture. He wants to take over the farm now because he is dedicated to have dairy cows and drive the farm further. At present, they are planning to make some investments by expanding with more cows and replacing the robots that are getting old.

Rashid

Rashid came to Sweden as an unaccompanied refugee child in 2010. He first arrived in Malmö and then the Swedish Migration Board moved him to Västmanland County. Rashid is from Afghanistan and has grown up on a subsistence farm. They had donkeys, cows and sheep, and cultivated different crops on the farm. Rashid likes to work with animals and agriculture and he got help from the municipality to practice on a farm in Västmanland County in 2011. Rashid worked on the farm for two summers, and then he started working there every weekend and when he was free from school. Karl, who owns the farm, suggested that Rashid should start his own company in 2013. Therefore, Rashid finished school and

bought / took over a part of Karl's production. In 2015, Karl asked if Rashid wanted to take over the farm because no one of Karl's children were interested. Rashid answered yes and at present Rashid leases half the farm and half the farmland. Rashid will gradually take over the whole farm and its production.

To summarize, the farms and their production types are varied. Two farms have beef-production, two are dairy farms, two farms have grain-production, two have pig production (integrated production), and one farm grows organic vegetables. Only two of the nine farmers have agriculture as the sole source of income and no other income. Both these have animal production. The remaining seven farmers have other sources of income, for example Robert is working part-time as a fire-fighter, Kalle works extra on a dairy farm, and Lukas, Victor and Oscar have different kinds of contracted services, which means that they provide and sell services with their machines, such as truck, forest machine and digging machine.

The ages of the farmers also vary, the youngest is 23 and the oldest is 50 years old. For Lukas and Robert, who have completed their generational succession, their processes took less than 3 years. Victor, who is facing a generational succession, his process has been on going since 1992, when he took over a quarter of the ownership of the farm.

An interesting aspect is that there are three pairs of brothers who have taken over the farm/will take over the farm together. It is Kalle who has started a farm together with his brother, Lukas who took over the family farm with his brother, and Victor that is facing a generational succession with his brother. The three pairs of brothers have all clear and distinct roles in their farms. They all describe how they have divided the work between them, and they are responsible for different areas and tasks in the production, but they make decisions together. The following sections in this chapter will tell their stories.

4.2 Interests, norms and values in agriculture

An interest in agriculture has been a red thread through all my interviews with the farmers. An interest in agriculture can be described in this study as a linchpin in a generational succession, and a sort of prerequisite for a generational succession to become applicable. An example of this was when I asked the farmer Victor how it would have felt if neither he nor his brother would take over the farm, and if someone from outside did:

“As I live and feel now, it would have felt very strange. But if I were not interested in this, then it would have been ... I think it had felt good. Then I would have leased out the land, but it is a little bit difficult to answer. It should have worked if I didn't have this interest in agriculture” (Victor, grain producer)

Without the interest, Victor would probably not take over the farm. When I ask the farmer Robert the same question, he answers:

“If I had not been so interested, it wouldn't have mattered. I'd only been glad that the farm was still running” (Robert, beef-production)

Their interest drives them to take over the farm and to start a generational succession process. This interest affects the farmers' understanding of their situation and the choices they make. How is an interest created? What are some of the factors that contribute to an interest in agriculture? What is it that makes my informants find it so interesting and exciting to take over the farm? No one of my informants talk about how their interest in agriculture started; but they talk about how it could disappear. Several of my informant's talk about compulsion and pressure as something that kills the interest in agriculture, which they have not been exposed to. But some of them testify that they know about cases where there has been a great deal of pressure on the younger generation to take over the farm, which has not resulted happily. One of them is the farmer Kalle:

“Being forced and listen to the words “this is what you have to do“ would kill the business spirit of the family company. I have a second cousin and his father behaved just like that and he was a farmer. Today, none [of them] owns that farm and there is no production there at all. It is because he was forced to work there all the time when he was home from school” (Kalle, beef producer)

The young farmers who already have an interest in agriculture have not been pushed, because it was not necessary. An example of this was when I asked the farmer Victor if he had felt any responsibility towards the family or the tradition of continuing to use the family's land:

“No I do not think so. I have been so badly interested all the time so I have not experienced it as such” (Victor, grain producer)

Thomas is a good example of people who create their own path because of their interest. Even though he was discouraged from farming, he would still start working with it.

"Both of my parents have grown up on farms, and my grandfather thought I should do something different than farming. But I've always had an interest." (Thomas, pig farmer)

What is common to all my informants is their early connection with agriculture. Their relation has either been through their family's farm or through a relative's farm. Their interest has been created by participating in the daily work at a farm. By participating in the daily work, they have realised that there is a lot of work required but not dissuasively too much work. Instead their participation seems to reinforce their interests and their choice to work with agriculture. This can also be connected to their ways of talking of this as a freedom to decide their own destiny. The stories the informants tell about relatives who have been pushed, are used to emphasize their own freedom. In the quote below, Robert indirectly tells how his interest has been created and strengthened over time. He has participated in the daily care of the farm since he was a little boy:

"I've been working on the farm my whole life, I have always been there and taking part in different tasks. And I have always been interested. I wanted to take over the farm earlier, but my dad wanted to get retired first" (Robert, beef producer)

Grain producer Victor and his brother have always had the ambition to take over the family farm together. Victor points out that there is a joy in taking care of what his dad has built up. He describes a value in the continuity of developing the farm, and a sense of gratitude towards the older generation. In the quote below, Victor tells us how grateful he is that his dad has built a sustainable business with a solid foundation.

"It is a great advantage that you have grown up with a father who has been technology-interested and followed up in the development and created a sustainable company, which has good conditions. But one have sometimes thought that one should have had a grandfather who had been even more land-hungry; that would have been the cheapest solution" (Victor, grain producer)

An interest in agriculture can thus be something that emerges in an early experience of agriculture and with support, rather than pressure, from parents or society. Among my informants there has been a combination of the two factors. They more or less indirectly claim that norms and values both in the family and in society at large, can limit the younger generation to take up agriculture, so no interest will arise and therefore the recruitment to

agriculture is declining. One of my informants, Kalle who chose to start up a farm, advocates apprentices to bring young farmers into farming and he talks about the importance of being interested in agriculture as a farmer:

"If they get interested, they will strive to become a farmer and they will do a good job. Everything is connected. What you often hear when you are young is a negative attitude towards agriculture, that you can not earn money, it's heavy and you get tied up. Then it's no wonder that nobody wants to apply for such a profession!" (Kalle, beef producer)

The farmer Victor also testifies that what is said about agriculture affects the younger generation's choice:

"There are those who have just heard that it is 'a lot of work and no profitability', and they think it is strange that neither of the children wants to take over" (Victor, grain producer)

When I ask them how they look at the future, I get similar answers from several of them. They want more youth in the agriculture, and that Swedish agriculture attracts more young people. Kalle describe his vision for the future:

"I sincerely hope that we become more younger farmers. It can be the rescue of this profession. If we are too few who keep up and the farms grow bigger, we do not know what we do in the end. I don't think that's the right way. If more farmers disappear and we're just a few, it's the biggest nightmare! We were 33,000 in Lantmännen¹ when we started a few years ago; we are down at 27,000 now in a 10-year period. Imagine how much work and people who have disappeared from these professions in such a short term. But that's the older generation that quitting and no young ones take over. We as farmers must show that this profession exists!" (Kalle, beef producer)

The structural transformation of agriculture is an on-going process, where the farms become fewer but larger; which increases the need of labour to be able to run the farms. Oscar, the pig farmer describes his dream scenario for the future:

"Well, we have stable profitability in agriculture and that the attractiveness to young people persists and increases. Because the recruitment is slow. Good animal keepers are hard to get hold of. And the few that are available are expensive to hire. I want the

¹ Lantmännen is an agricultural cooperative, owned by Swedish farmers (Lantmännen n.d)

younger generation to understand how fun it is to work on a farm. That is the dream scenario. And plenty of good people to hire!” (Oscar, pig farmer)

An emotional interest in agriculture can be considered central since it seems to affect how my informants experience opportunities and limitations in a generational succession.

4.3 The generational succession process

Among my informants, the generational succession processes have varied greatly in time, from when the process began until when the process ended and a generational succession could be completed. In some cases, the process took 3 years, and in other cases the process has lasted for over 25 years and is still not complete. The process of a generational succession involves many different actors; and can be considered as a private matter. In my search for informants, I encountered that there were few who would like to be interviewed when they were in the middle of the process. It was easier to get interviews with young farmers who had completed a generational succession. It shows that the process is often complex and takes energy, and that it is easier to talk about it when the process is completed, than when the process is still in an early phase.

Each generational succession process is unique and varies temporarily. The time is considered to be a factor that matters. Robert, Filip and Lukas have completed a generational succession. Their advice to those who face a generational succession is to let the process take time and communicate with everyone involved. After discussing it within the family, they have all hired professional help to complete the succession. Robert says:

“Think it thru and don’t stress! When I was around 25 years I was in a hurry, I wanted to build and buy things and I thought I’d die tomorrow. I wanted to do everything at once. Instead, let it take a few years and do not anticipate anything. I think so. Just think and calm down. You only live once. Obviously, in some situations you should make quick decisions. I still think it’s worth waiting and take the next train” (Robert, beef producer)

If the young potential farmers allow the process to take time and avoid quick decisions, untenable decisions can be reduced. Time and conversation can create young potential farmers. An example of that are Lukas and his brother. Lukas is raised on a farm together with three brothers. When his parents wanted to start a generational succession, his mother

went to a business course with a focus on generational succession. She made a plan where she interviewed all siblings and their respective. She interviewed everyone together and separately. For Lukas, it was obvious what he would answer; he has wanted to take over the family farm since he was 5 years old. But, for Lukas's brother Samuel, the decision was not as obvious. Lukas tells:

"My brother did not plan to take over the farm. But with all the conversations we had, he understood what was happening, and he did not want to miss the train" (Lukas, grain producer)

The process made Samuel realise what was going to happen, and he changed his mind. The subsequent interviews were therefore more focused on Lukas and Samuel. They had meetings with the farm auditor, where they were discussing various suggestions on how the generational succession would be completed in financial and legal terms. When Lukas and Samuel were satisfied, they accepted the deal. In total, their generational succession process took 3 years.

This example shows how important time is. The succession must take its time. But the process may not take too long either. It must happen before the older generation becomes too old and the younger generation must get involved and feel involved. The time can also affect how the younger generation experiences opportunities and difficulties in a generational succession. The potential young farmers knowledge must be recognised by the older generation. If the younger generation has the chance to get involved in decisions regarding farm management, this provides ambition to work hard and make future plans for the farm (Grubbström et al 2014).

A problem that might arise during a generational succession process and which can cause the younger generation to lose motivation is when the older generation does not let their farm go to the next generation. It may be that the older generation are postponing the succession or that they are still engaged in the farm management. Niklas is a young dairy farmer who wants to take over the family farm, but finds that his parents do not want that to happen, right now:

"It has been a bit back and forth, for 4 years. But mom and dad ... they do not really want to let it go. It has been in periods. "Now we give up this, it's so boring," they say, and then it is getting better economically and then they think it's fun again. (...) I want

to complete a generational succession soon; I have tread water for a long time now”
(Niklas , dairy farmer)

Niklas is aware that his parents are not ready to let go of the farm. Among my other informants who are facing a generational succession, the majority of them have their parents involved in the farm management in some way. They point out that they are not detrimental to the ownership structure. Victor explains:

“It was my father and mother who started up the company. But my mother died in 2013 and at first stage my dad was 100% owner of the company. Since 2016, my brother and I own one-third in the company (...) We have never been hindered by the ownership conditions. We have been involved all the time anyway (Victor, grain producer)

Victor and his brother have been in the generational succession process since 1992, Victor says he is not hindered by the fact that his father is still active in the company. Despite this, his father is a barrier to Victor's and his brother's generational succession. In order for the younger generation to take over, the older generation must retreat. Even if they do not consider themselves limited by the owner structure, their parents are involved in the farm management, and it can be considered as a barrier and complicate the process of generational succession. Victor's situation is not unique; the pig farmer Thomas is in a similar situation:

“We have had the discussion about generational succession but we have not really get down to action. And actually it is on the transferors. It's dad who drives it, he's 75, and so it's getting up to date. We have pushed it to the future. And an argument to that has been that we operate in a limited liability company, and me, my wife and my dad are partners” (Thomas, pig farmer)

Victor's and Thomas' parents remain in the farm management and my informants have arguments and explanations to the situation. In Thomas case, he thinks it is up to the transferors, who are his parents, to arrange the generational succession. His control over the situation is therefore reduced, as it is his parents who determine the pace of the process. This may be a reason why the younger generation, according to research, is more stressed over the process than the older generation (Gasson & Errington 1993). And a big problem among my informants is that the older generation does not let their farm go easily. The older the owner becomes, the more problematic it is to transfer the farm to a successor. As the age of

the older generation increases, there is also an increase in the number of farms where succession will not take place at all (Kerbler 2012).

However, the generational succession process can also take time due to other reasons, and force the older generation to be involved in the farm management. As in Oscar's case, he will take over his neighbour's farm, which is owned by Uppsala University. It is only the management that will be transferred to Oscar. When I ask him about the difficulties he sees with a generational succession, he answers:

"No, but it's really ... I have not inherited a crown. I have begun with a farmhand salary of 90 crowns per hour. I have not inherited any property or received any money elsewhere to start my farming life, or, business. Then you have a damn long way to go" (Oscar, pig farmer)

It takes time to buy out the older generation, just as in Oscar and Rashid's case; they need to build capital first before they can buy out Börje and Karl.

4.4 Capital requirements and land problems

There are two important factors that have a impact on a generational succession process, and that is access to capital and land. These will therefore be discussed separately in this section.

In Västmanland County, there is a complex situation about agricultural land. There is a high level of competition for land, and the land that reaches the market is expensive and requires a lot of capital. It makes it difficult to enter agriculture and to be able to buy land to expand. The farmer Kalle was only 19 years old when he started up a farm with his brother. Since he and his brother were too young, they did not get a loan from the bank. Therefore, their parents bought the farm so that they could lease the farm from them.

"Our happiness was that our parents could buy the farm when we could not do it, and that we could lease it. Otherwise we might have had to wait until now. And start when we would have become 30 years old ". (Kalle, beef producer)

This can contribute to explain why the average age of today's farmers is high. It takes time to build capital to start a farm or to buy out siblings and parents. The federation of Swedish

Farmers (LRF) has summarized statistics on mediated arable land 2016. Statistics show that the pricelist for the most fertile arable land has continued to rise while less-fertile arable land has fallen marginally in price. In 2016, the average market value of the arable land in region 3, to which the county of Västmanland belongs, is SEK 120,000 / hectare, which is an increase of 6% in one year and 10% in five years. According to the LRF, the interest rate is still low, the turnover rate for arable land is low and when closely located arable land becomes available for sale, a lot of nearby property owners who are interested affects the purchase price. There is a low supply and demand is high. These are factors that will keep the demand for fertile arable land still high (LRF 2017). High land prices make it expensive to buy out siblings and may delay a generational succession (Grubbström et al 2014). Large investment is another capital related factor that may delay a generational succession process. The dairy farmer Filip said that his generational succession was completed ten years too late. The succession could not be completed when the liabilities were larger than the assets in the company. Therefore, the process was delayed and Filip was 50 years old when the succession was completed:

"We built a new barn in 2006, and because of that, it became a lot of loans of course. This meant that we could not make a generational succession at that moment. In order for my father to give the farm to me as a gift, the debt must not be greater than the assets. That's why it has been put in front of us all the time, so we could complete the shift now at the turn of the year 2016/2017. In fact, we should have done the generational succession before we built the barn, but we simply did not have those thoughts back then" (Filip, dairy farmer)

It is not only the prices of farmland that have increased in Sweden. Between 1995 and 2011, the average price for land lease in Sweden has doubled (SCB 2016). The majority of my informants lease land (see Appendix 1), and most often they have several smaller leases. This creates some concern, especially for the dairy farmer Filip who is depended on his leases:

"It would feel a lot safer if I had my own land ... (...) But I'm surrounded by big farms, so it's not so easy to get more land. "(Filip, dairy farmer)

Filip also tells me that several of the landowners he leases from, are facing generational succession. He has no idea what the younger generation wants do with the land, and their future plans. But without his leases, it will be hard for him to continue production.

The pig farmer Thomas who is facing a generational succession, also expressed a desire to own land instead of leasing:

"I think it's more interesting to own land than to lease. But land that is not for sale can not be bought. " (Thomas, pig farmer)

The shortage of arable land is a big concern and a real challenge for the young potential farmers in the county of Västmanland. The beef producer Kalle has his own theory about this. He has witnessed several cases where the older generation are using their arable land as pension insurance. There must be a change of attitude, according to Kalle:

"The older generation must change attitude! You may not say this, but they have to DIE goddammit! How else will the farms and the land be able to reach the market? Do people have to die of a natural cause, so the farms and the land can be sold or leased out? But they don't want other people to make money on their fields; it is a little bit of Jante. Some people are thinking like that, I know it because I have met them a couple of times!" (Kalle, beef producer)

Some of the older generation receive funding's for passive use, which means that they do not sell or lease out the land. During 2008, was Sweden producing an estimated 200,000 – 300,000 hectares of grassland more than the actual need, according to the Swedish Board of Agriculture. These areas exist because of the design of some EU support systems that stimulate passive use (LRF 2015).

For young potential farmers, the older farmers constitute a structural barrier, as they retain the land in their possession. But why does the older generation retain its land in its possession? It depends maybe partly, as mentioned above, on how the structure of agricultural subsidies are designed. For the older generation, this structure has opened up their space of actions as it has created opportunities for an income source. For young potential farmers, this structure means that their space of actions is reduced. The design of agricultural subsidies restricts the younger generation of farmers, and is normally conveyed to them via the current users who do not want their land to be sold.

4.5 Visions about the future

Before Robert took over the family farm, he saw many opportunities, he wanted to be the greatest, best and buy up all the nearby farms and expand. The actual takeover of the farm

went well, but nothing was as Robert had thought it would be. He was 28 years old when he took over the farm, and then he realized that he was responsible for the farm and that he was very locked to it. Today he is pleased with the farm size.

Most of my informants have told me that they want to expand in the future or expand some parts of their production. Roberts's example shows that you can have visions when you take over the farm, and then when you get into the practicalities of running it you have to change because there are other factors that affect your plans. This section will address what my informants actually said about their own future and their visions about it.

Niklas, who is in a process of generational succession, believes it may be more lucrative to be a farmer in the future and that it will be better and easier to make money. He believes that because the human population is increasing and the cultivated area in the world will therefore decrease, which means that prices for leasing and land will rise. When I ask Robert how he thinks that agricultural profitability will change, he answers:

"We will see if this food strategy leads somewhere and what the EU will figure out. There are many factors that affect. I'd rather stop importing completely. And just produce here!" (Robert, beef producer)

When I ask Lukas the same question, he answers:

"There can be two different directions. Either, we will start producing more food in Sweden, and now the Swedish government has decided that it is a goal. But it may happen that you import more cheap food and then the need for domestic food will decrease and profitability will deteriorate" (Lukas, grain producer)

In the food strategy that Robert mentioned and that Lukas indirectly mentioned, which the Swedish government released in January 2017, the overarching goal is to increase food production, create economic growth and employment in agriculture and contribute to sustainable development. The strategy, which encompasses the entire food chain, also aims to increase the Swedish food export. The increased food production (both conventional and organic) should respond to the consumer demand (Prop. 2016/17:104). With this as a background, it is important and urgent to explore how young potential farmers look at future production developments. How do they think about working towards a more sustainable food production?

The majority of my informants have noticed that Swedish consumers choose more carefully in the store today, they buy more Swedish-produced goods. *“People have become more conscious what the food contains that I and my children are eating?”* as Kalle the farmer said. This means that the consumers are willing to pay more for Swedish-produced food at present than before.

The organic farmer Rashid has a bright view on the future. At the moment he is leasing half the farm, the idea is that he will soon take over the farm completely. He wants to raise more animals and develop the farm’s meat production. At present, there is such a high demand for their meat boxes that the supply is not enough for the demand:

“In the future, I see that I have taken over the farm. I like sheep and cows the most. I want more ewes. We have 110 ewes at the moment and 190 lambs in our meat production. We only sell the meat at the farm, directly to the customer, and it has such a high demand. It's not enough for everyone”(Rashid, organic farmer)

But it is not only the consumers’ demand that control the farmers’ thoughts about the future. Climate change and the pursuit of sustainable farming is something that everyone mentions in their interviews. When Oscar describes his dream scenario for the future, he says:

“Technology development, this with fossil fuel, and what we produce at the farms. It goes so incredibly fast. I think a lot about electricity, you may not need to drive the tractors on diesel. I think the machinery will switch to electricity, to some extent” (Oscar, pig farmer)

The dairy farmer Filip also sees the electricity as an alternative, but he think it is too expensive at the moment, which makes it difficult to compete with other EU countries. If the electricity development should be successful, the government or politicians must regulate it, he says:

“Electricity is cheap, but all taxes and certificates make electricity cost. That is the problem. Somebody has to put down their foot, the government or the politicians. Otherwise, it's probably a daunting development if we can not produce at the same conditions. You get stomach ulcers every time they call from the authorities before a control” (Filip, dairy farmer)

Considering how the climate changes, my informants have noticed small differences since they started farming. Victor has noticed that the Swedish winters have become more ‘unstable’ in the 25 years he has been active in agriculture. Most often, the older generation

tells the younger generation how the harvest/crop production has changed over the years. Therefore, I asked my informants how they look at future production opportunities. The pig-producer Oscar told me his vision about the growing conditions in Sweden:

“In 200 years, I think it is grass eaters that you should have in Sweden. Is it something that it will be difficult to produce, grass - if you look globally. It will get drier where it's dry today” (Oscar, pig producer)

Kalle, the beef producer answers the same question:

“I think for our part, in this part of Sweden, where the central district turns becomes more forested, there's probably meat and milk I think. For grain production, you have more advantage if you are in the southern parts of Sweden. The base should probably be animal production, and the grain cultivation it involves, as well as collaboration and exchange services between the farmers. There will be ripples on the water of that. It's milk and meat that we should focus on here” (Kalle, beef producer)

Both Oscar and Kalle believe in grass eaters, and Kalle considers that meat and milk should be the basis in the county of Västmanland, since it is hard to compete with southern Sweden's growing conditions. He also believes that farms may begin to exchange more services in a future shared-economy. What is clear among my informants is that cooperation between farmers has an important role to play. It also appears that my informants advocate a development with several smaller farms where they can share services and equipment, rather than fewer and bigger farms. Today, the situation is paradoxical, especially in Västmanland County, where there is a lack of land, and farms have to be dismantled, so that other farms can expand and survive. Land is also used for other purposes, such as housing, and marginal land is taken out of use.

The majority of my informants are conventional farmers and they describe a kind of fear of being “forced” into organic farming. Victor says:

“According to me, the politics are a bigger challenge than the climate change. I think organic farming is great, but I feel that both productions are needed. Sometimes it's very ... with the government's environmental goals, it feels like we are more or less forced into organic farming. And I'm a little afraid that it's too much control (Victor, grain producer)

It is about being able to make one's own choices and decisions. Compulsion and being forced into something has been described in this thesis as something that can "kill" the interest for agriculture and thus affect a generational succession. When I talk to my informants about their future, they refer to compulsion and control as something that can also lead them to quit as a farmer. The beef producer Kalle tells me:

"If the market would say, "everything should be organic" then I do not know if I would like to be a farmer anymore. I would not want to be forced into such a thing. I want to make my own choice (Kalle, beef producer)

Even though the farmers express an uncertainty about their future when it comes to politics, the view on farming in society at large, consumer demand, the decreasing farmer population as well as the Swedish structural transformation of agriculture; their hope and interest for agriculture seems to pervade their concerns. None of them imply that they will stop farming; instead they talk about hope for our future agriculture. It can be described as a meeting between their interest in agriculture and politics. Robert says:

"Some day it will turn for agriculture. But it is once again our dear politicians who decide about it" (Robert, beef producer)

What Robert says can be seen as an experience of powerlessness, vulnerability in relation to political decisions. When I ask the farmers how they look at the future in general, the answers are usually that politicians decide the future of agriculture and its design.

5 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to explore how farmers in Västmanland County perceive and experience generational succession in agriculture. Therefore, this study has taken part of nine farmers' stories and their view on their own generational succession process and their future in agriculture. An interest in agriculture has in this study been described as a linchpin in a generational succession, and a prerequisite for a generational succession to become applicable. How is such an interest in agriculture created? How have the interests of my informants been shaped? All of my informants have had an early connection with agriculture, through their family's farm or through a relative's farm. Their interest has been created by actively participating in the daily work on a farm. The younger generations' interest in agriculture drives the generational succession process forward, while other factors subside or delay it. Uncertainty has a major impact on a generational succession process. Uncertainty has characterized and characterizes the lifeworlds and visions for the future of my informants during a generational succession process. Uncertainty is affected by how the process itself is handled and also depends on the successors position towards her/his parents. The younger generation lives in uncertainty when the older generation won't let their farm and company be transferred.

An example of this is dairy farmer Niklas. He experiences that his parents will not really let go of the farm. They have discussed a generational succession back and forth for four years. During certain periods his parents are ready to let go of the farm, but then after a while they change their minds. For Niklas, it's an uncertain situation, because he does not know how long the process will take. The situation of Lukas and his brother was completely different from Niklas'. Lukas' mother took a course in generational succession and carefully interviewed all the siblings and their significant others. When everyone was satisfied with the result, the generational succession took place. This must have reduced the whole family's uncertainty and the tension that can arise between siblings. Parents who take responsibility and engage in the generational succession reduce uncertainty for the younger generation.

Uncertainty is not only related to the family. Uncertainty is also closely associated with politics, which several of my informants have described as an issue of concern that is central to consider when planning for the future. Access to capital and land also constitutes an

uncertainty. Capital constitutes an obvious difficulty in completing a generational succession. Capital is needed to buy out parents and siblings, and to start a farm like Kalle and his brother did. In Västmanland County where my study has been conducted, there is high competition for land, which also triggers farm prices. The high prices and competition for land also affect the farmers in the long term, as it makes it difficult to buy land and to expand. Some of my informants are therefore dependent on their leases, which also causes uncertainty. When the younger generation cannot rely on their surroundings and their routines are disturbed, it can be linked to what Giddens (1996) describes as ontological insecurity.

So, there are many different factors that can create ontological insecurity for the younger generation. It may be parents who do not want to let go of the farm, and this entails an uncertainty about the process time span. How will siblings react to a generational succession? Will there be capital to buy out siblings and to build up the company? Will it be possible to get more land? Those who own the land, what do they want? How will the agricultural policy develop? Can you rely on laws and regulations? Will these laws and regulations change?

Giddens points out that if the environment or structures in which the actor moves are limiting, or if the individual faces an excessive restriction (coercion) in his or her space of action, the actor feels institutionalized and not motivated to change. An individual's actions can be guided by unconscious norms and values founded on existing institutions, laws and rules of childhood. The individual then acts according to a routine pattern without reflecting on what, how, or why he or she acts in a certain way (Giddens 1984).

My informants point out that what they see as negative values about agriculture influence potential farmers in their actions and the risk of reproducing these structures. The structural conditions of society can support or limit the young potential farmers and their space of actions. The restriction occurs when society or family becomes a negative factor in the context of potential farmers. For example, if the family requires too much of them, or if the bank does not provide a loan.

So, how can we reduce uncertainty and increase interest for young potential farmers?

There needs to be a balance between all uncertainties and the farmers' interest in agriculture, where they trust in their own capacity to pursue their farming projects. How is this adaptable? A reduced uncertainty and an increased interest can facilitate that balance. One example of this is Robert. He could not buy all the nearby farms and expand to be the best and greatest, but he is happy anyway. This is because he has an interest in agriculture and therefore could adapt to the current conditions.

A reduced uncertainty could facilitate generational succession, and perhaps make it more interesting to be a farmer and motivate the younger generation to cope with the generational succession process. Collaboration between farms is also something that could facilitate the situation for young potential farmers. Several of my informants have proposed this and would like to see increased collaboration between farms of some sort in the future. Collaboration has many important features, such as lending machines from each other, buying machines together, exchanging experiences, motivating each other and performing larger jobs together. What is remarkable in my study is that there are three pairs of brothers who together have taken over, or will take over a farm. That may be an expression of wanting to share the burden of being a farmer.

If young potential farmers have an interest in agriculture and support from their surroundings, it becomes easier for them to motivate their own actions and to handle structural transformations in a more creative way. Depending on what is said about agriculture in general and how attractive the profession appears, it can affect how the younger generation of potential farmers choose to act and the decisions they make. Is it attractive to be a farmer? If not, how can we increase the attractiveness?

A decision is based on motives; usually not just one motive, but several motives that interact. According to a study by the Swedish Board of Agriculture (2002), lack of profitability in agriculture is not the only explanation for the on-going process of change in Swedish agriculture, although it is usually listed as a cause. According to the study, the perspective must be broadened and we need to pay attention to the motives that exist for living and working on a farm. After identifying existing motives, one can begin to look at what motives that are missing for farmers to stay in agriculture or for potential farmers to enter agriculture, but also what motives are being met by alternative activities.

What appears among my informants is that they want the opportunity to make their own decisions about their own production; it is also about controlling their own lives. In the lifeworld of my informants, their work, family and life is closely linked, so their farming and farm life must be able to meet all their human needs. An example of this is Filip and his wife Maria, who together decided to take over the farm. The farmer sets up his life and work to satisfy her or his human needs. According to Nordström Källström (2008), the social dimension is central to sustainable development of Swedish agriculture. In order for farmers to stay in farming and to be in good health, social contexts are important. When my informants talk about the future, everyone is set to develop their farms, and they are positive about the future. None of them have said anything about quitting as a farmer, and they have a continuing interest. But they also have anxiety about what they see as negative values about agriculture and how those can spread.

I would like to conclude with a few words directed to the Entrepreneur Center in Sala, which has initiated and suggested the topic of this study. Based on the text above, there are issues to work with to improve the situation of young potential farmers. Namely:

How can Entrepreneur Center in Sala contribute to making the situation less unclear for young potential farmers, in a generational succession?

1. Robert, Filip and Lukas, who have completed a generational succession on their family farms, have all hired professional help to complete the succession. They have done so after discussing a generational succession within the family. What could facilitate and decrease the ontological insecurity for young potential farmers, and also support the rest of the family, is to involve and offer professional help earlier in the process.
2. Since there is a lack of land, is there a way for the municipality to approach large institutional landowners and discuss generational succession? Such as the Church of Sweden or Uppsala University? Does Sala municipality own any land? The land problem needs to be addressed, as there are tendencies that the elderly do not sell the land, and they have other intentions with the land than to engage in food production. For example, those who use the land as a pension income, see Table 1 on page 9.

How can we increase the percentages on the columns in the top of Table 1, where farmers can live off of agriculture?

3. Among my informants there are three who will take over / have taken over farms that do not belong to the family. It is Oscar who will take over his neighbour Börje's farm, Kalle who started a farm with his brother, and Rashid who will take over Karl's farm. To help other potential farmers outside the family, and in order to bring in other families to agriculture, some form of network is needed. Kalle advocates apprenticeships in order to bring young farmers into farming, which is a good example of how a network can be developed. In farms where there are no successors, there will also be no transfer of knowledge from the older generation to the younger. For Rashid it began with an internship, and now he has soon taken over Karl's farm. He gets great knowledge transfer from Karl, which might not have happened without that internship.
4. Since the informants in my study are worried about the spreading of negative values about agriculture, is it possible that the municipality can contribute in raising agriculture as an important part of the business sector? By presenting agriculture as a solution to problems with climate, environment and food production, and not as a part of the problem. How can agriculture take place in the modern business world and not be considered outdated and antiquated? Can the municipality contribute to change the approach, to make agriculture a part of a modern way of life?

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Appendix 1. The farmers interviewed

Anonymous name	Age	Main production type	Own arable land + leasing	Other income sources	Generational succession
Robert	36	Beef production	110 ha + 45 ha	Part time Fire-fighter	Yes, 2008
Filip	50	Dairy	97 ha + 183 ha	None	Yes, 2017
Lukas	32	Grain production	180 ha + 120 ha	Contracted services	Yes, 2009
Kalle	29	Beef production	150 ha	Contracted services and part time at a dairy farm	Yes, started up a farm 2007
Victor	39	Grain production	140 ha + 490 ha	Contracted services	On-going process
Oscar	41	Pig, integrated production	Leases 400 ha	Contracted services	On-going process
Thomas	44	Pig, integrated production	160 ha +240 ha	Contracted services	On-going process
Niklas	33	Dairy	140 ha + 190 ha	Snow removal	On-going process
Rashid	23	Organic cultivation of vegetables	40 ha + 100 ha	Farm shop, beekeeping, meat boxes	On-going process

Appendix 2. Interview questions

Questions to farmers who have gone through succession

The generational succession process

- When did you realize that you would take over the farm?
- Why did you choose to take over the farm?
- How were you prepared for the succession? How did it feel?
- Describe the generational succession process
- Have you worked a lot on the farm?
- Has it been obvious that someone within the family will take over the farm? Was there anyone else interested?
- How do you think your siblings experienced it, that you took over the farm?
- Do you feel a responsibility towards the family and the tradition of running the farm?
- How would you feel if someone from outside would take over the farm / buy the farm?

Production

- What does the farm's operation look like today? (hectare, animals, forests, pastures)
- What is produced and how many people work on the farm? What is the structure of the family?
- Will you continue in your parents' tracks with the same production orientation?
- What kind of production will you continue with?

Challenges

- How much investment are you willing to do to get development?
- What kind of different sources of income is there / planned in addition to agriculture?
- How is the profitability today? How do you think that profitability will change over time?

The future

- Have you had any other professional dreams? If so, which?
- What opportunities do you see with the farm?
- And what difficulties do you see?
- Can it be more lucrative to be a farmer in the future?
- How do you look at the future?
- How do you wish it to be?
- Finally, do you have any advice for those who face a generational succession?

Questions to farmers in a succession process

The generational succession process

- How are your thoughts about a generational succession? What factors influence your choice to take over the farm?
- And what factors make you not want to take over the farm?
- Has it been obvious that someone within the family will take over the farm? Is there anyone else interested?
- Have you worked a lot on the farm?
- Do you have any other professional dreams? If so, which?
- How do you think your siblings will experience it, that you will run the farm?
- How would you feel if someone from outside would take over the farm / buy the farm?
- Do you feel responsible for the family and the tradition of continuing to run the farm?

Production

- What does the farm and operations look like today? (hectare, animals, forests, pastures)
- What kind of production are you going to continue with?
- What different sources of income is there / planned in addition to agriculture?

Challenges

- How much investment are you willing to do to get development?
- How is the profitability today? How do you think that profitability will change over time?

The future

- Can it be more lucrative to be a farmer in the future?
- How do you look at the future?
- How do you wish it to be?