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Reason, Purpose and Members – A Critical Discourse Analysis of a Swedish Agricultural Cooperative

*Resonerande, syfte och medlemmar – En kritisk diskursanalys
av ett svenskt jordbrukskooperativ*

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Abstract

The declining number of Swedish farmers and the consolidation of agricultural land has been raised as a future risk for the food security of Sweden. As the Swedish agricultural historically has been characterized by strong agricultural cooperatives, the cooperative movement is of interest to analyze in relation to this trend of decline. In this thesis I critically study a Swedish agricultural cooperative, Lantmännen. Specifically, I study how the purpose of the cooperative has changed over time in relation to agricultural policy. In order to explore how the purpose of Lantmännen has changed, I have utilized the method of Political Discourse Analysis. I have by discourse analysis examined the goals and values, expressed in the internal discussion of the Lantmännen cooperative, through protocols of the administrative board and statements of the president of the organization. The study stretches between 1985 and 2009, a period when the Swedish and later European agricultural policies changed fundamentally. The study shows how the goals and values changes in the argumentation of Lantmännen during the period, as a reaction to the changed agricultural policy. The changes in goals and values, in Lantmännen, were to such an extent, that the purpose of that organization had to be reformulated, which it effectively was during the 2000's. In 1985 discussions in Lantmännen's administrative board was characterized by a multiplicity values to address, concerning solidarity and societal interest, when acting in respect to the changing agricultural policies. In 2009 the president of Lantmännen praised, that the same organization had realized its vision of becoming a thinner, clearer and profit producing; reflecting a transition from a cooperative identity into an investor-owned firm's (IOF). In the early material studied, the study shows how member interest (in its complexity) was the key goal in shaping decision making of Lantmännen; in the later material, it is revealed, member interest was reformulated to simulate the interest of an investor. Thereby, profits and market shares could take the position as fundamental goals of decision making.

Sammanfattning

Den minskande mängden svenska bönder och konsolideringen av jordbruksmark har lyfts fram som potentiella risker för matsäkerhet i Sverige. Då svenskt jordbruk historiskt har karaktäriserats av starka jordbrukskooperativ, är den kooperativa rörelsen relevant att studera i relation till de ovan beskrivna trenderna. Jag har därför kritiskt studerat hur ett jordbrukskooperativ, Lantmännen, utvecklats gällande syfte, i relation till förändringarna som skett under slutet av 1980-talet till och med 2009. För att studera hur syftet med Lantmännen har förändrats över tid, har jag använt mig av "politisk diskursanalys". Jag har genom diskursanalys utvärderat mål och värden som uttrycks i interna diskussioner i Lantmännen, närmare bestämt protokoll från Lantmännens administrativa råd och ordförandens uttalande till årsredovisningen. Studien sträcker sig mellan åren 1985 till år 2009; en period då den svenska och senare europeiska jordbrukspolitiken genomgår stora förändringar. Studien visar hur mål och värden i argumentationen i Lantmännen förändrats, som en reaktion på den förändrade jordbrukspolitiken, till den grad att organisationens syfte var tvunget att förändras. Detta gjordes i realiteten under 2000-talet. Det administrativa rådet diskussioner, under 1985, karaktäriserades av en mångfald i värden att värna, gällande solidaritet och samhällliga intressen, miljöarbete och landsbygdsutveckling, när organisationen skulle agera i relation till den förändrade jordbrukspolitiken. 2009 prisar presidenten att organisationen lyckats nå sin vision om att bli smalare, tydligare och mer lönsam. Utvecklingen indikerar en övergång från en kooperativ identitet till ett investörägt företags identitet. I det tidiga analyserade materialet var medlemsintresset grunden för Lantmännens beslut. I det senare materialet, specifikt mellan 2003 och 2009, omformulerades konceptet "medlemsintresset" för att simulera en investerares intresse. Vinst och marknadsandelar kunde därmed ta platsen som grundläggande syfte för beslut.

Acknowledgments:

I started out this study with an interest in the agricultural infrastructure of Sweden, and the declining number of Swedish farmers. Through revision I ended in a critical study of the agricultural cooperative Lantmännen, a Swedish agricultural institution. My supervisor, Emil Sandström, has a great role in that revision, although he continually has let me be me. My intention, as always, has been to produce academic work with a clear and honest social critique, why a supervisor with a similar interest has been of utmost necessity. In the support of Emil, I've gotten that, and to him I'm grateful.

My work on Lantmännen has been made possible through the availability of the archive of Lantmännen, why I would like to thank the organization for their openness. Hopefully the conclusions of this study will not scare them from keeping that transparency in the future. In direct connection to Lantmännen, I would like to raise attention to the archivist of Centrum för Näringslivshistoria (the Center for Business History), who hosted my visits to the archive of Lantmännen. Their service has been generous and highly professional.

I started planning this thesis in May 2018, as I got confirmed that I during the fall of the same year would become a father. My consciousness has since then been split between two priorities, being a father and being a student (in that order). As this work is finally submitted, I would like to raise my greatest thanks to the mother of my son, whose support made it possible for me to end this study. I now look forward to the coming months of paternal leave, a clear conscience and time with my beloved family.

Abbreviations:

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
ICA	International Cooperative Alliance
IOF	Investor-owned firm
PDA	Political Discourse Analysis
SLR	<i>Svenska Lantmännens Riksförbund</i> (The name of the cooperative federation which in 2001 merged to become Lantmännen)
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

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1. Introduction

Agricultural cooperatives are organizations that gather farmers as their members, in order to promote their economic interests. Since the advent of commercial agriculture in the 19th century, agricultural cooperatives have served as a means for protecting farmers from being price-takers on the market (Ortmann & King 2007; Vásquez-León 2010; Shaffer 1999, pp. 1 & 55). Against dividing competition on the market, cooperatives and agricultural cooperatives specifically have worked for a socialized and collaborative way of coordinating services and goods. In Sweden, agricultural cooperatives hold market shares of more than 50% in fodder (Swedish Board of Agriculture 2011) and dairy markets (Swedish Board of Agriculture 2016). Globally agricultural cooperatives have more than 122 million members; many being small-holders in India and China (UN DESA 2014), making the agricultural cooperative movement an important part of the global social struggle for fairness.

1.1 The development of Swedish agricultural

Swedish agriculture has been characterized by accumulation of land under a declining number of farmers since at least the 1970's. In 1970, farmers owning more than 100 hectares cultivated about 15,4% of the total arable land area in Sweden (Swedish Board of Agriculture 2001), and in 2018 this figure had increased to 58% (Swedish Board of Agriculture 2018). The amount of active farms had in 2016 decreased by 60% since 1970, and this declining trend is most clear among farmers cultivating less than 30 hectares, who in 2016 were only a third as many as they were in 1970 (Swedish Board of Agriculture 2017).

As part of a project to understand the development of Swedish agriculture, Wästfelt & Eriksson (2017) interviewed farmers in Uppsala County, Sweden, on how they have viewed the past 20 years of structural change in agriculture and compared the answers with satellite images of the area. Their study revealed that the diversity within agriculture had decreased during the past 20 years, with bulk production dominating the agrarian landscape. A trend of economic pressure and price taking, for the farmers, had pushed many farmers off their estates. Instead of cultivation, many of the farmers now also earned a majority of their income from other jobs or businesses, making agriculture a side business. (Wästfelt & Eriksson 2017)

Westfelt and Eriksson (2017) raises, that the depicted development of Swedish agriculture stemmed from the policy changes that occurred during the 1990's. Since the 1930's, market conditions for agricultural produce had been negotiated between representatives of the farmers, the state and the consumer (Flygare & Isacson 2003, p. 230). The market was controlled through duties on agricultural imports, and subsidies on the exported agricultural produce in order to protect the Swedish agriculture (Statens pris- och kartellnämnd 1987). The state support program gained traction in the 1980's, as the negotiations between the state and the farmers' unions stalled, on the levels of custom duties and export subsidies (SLR 1985a). Following a series of liberalizations to harmonize the Swedish economic policy with WTO agreements at the end of the 80's (Government of Sweden

1985, pp. 47-48), the Swedish state ended the support programs completely in 1990 (Government of Sweden 1989, p. 3).

1.2 The purpose of the study

While the decline in the number of active farmers and the consolidation of farmland most probably is a result of the changed agricultural policy, as claimed by Westfelt and Eriksson (2017), other factors attributed to changes in the agricultural cooperatives are also possible. Swedish agriculture is characterized by large cooperatives organizations, with great shares in the market of agricultural produce and organizing a majority of Swedish farmers (SOU 1997:25). These cooperative organizations were, prior to the 1990's, shaped by the agricultural protection programs and the state structure (Fregidou-Malama 1996). Following the end of the state protection of agriculture (in 1990), the agricultural cooperatives' forms and strategies inevitably had to change, in order to cope with the new market circumstances. Cooperatives, being large institutions in the agricultural sector, affect the conditions of their member farmers through the decisions they take. Realities of the common farmer would then develop, depending on the response that the cooperative had towards the changed agricultural policies.

In this thesis, I critically review how the purpose of the agricultural cooperative, Lantmännen, has developed over time. Lantmännen is the oldest and largest (concerning amount of active members) agricultural cooperative in Sweden (Kylebäck 1984; Mann 2018). As the cooperative purpose is characterized by multiple goals, stemming from the complexity of the members' interests (Svärdström 1969, p. 139 - 141; Gupta 2014), thorough analysis of the appropriateness of specific decisions is difficult. What can be examined, however, are the intentions for which certain decisions are argued for in a cooperative organization. The purpose of this thesis is then: to examine the development of reasoning and purpose of the agricultural cooperative Lantmännen. The timeline of the thesis is: the period between 1985 and 2009 - before and after the changes of the Swedish agricultural policy in 1990.

1.3 Research questions:

1. *“How has goals and underlying values of Lantmännen changed, between 1985 and 2009?”*
2. *“How has member interest been treated in Lantmännen, between 1985 and 2009?”*

2. Thesis Outline

In *Chapter 3* of the thesis, I outline the development of Lantmännen, the case of the thesis, and describe its history up until the beginning of the study-period. I also summarize the cooperative model upon which Lantmännen is acting and the legal and theoretical reasons for it.

Chapter 4 of the thesis contains the methodological framework of the study. Here I describe the theories and methods of *political discourse analysis* (PDA),

and specifically the methodology of argument reconstruction. I also detail the sampling procedure I deployed, for the texts to analyse.

The results of the study are presented in *Chapter 5*. The results are presented through a chronological review of the material, in order to depict how *goals and underlying values of a Swedish agricultural cooperative have changed* over time. The results are based on arguments, reconstructed from archive material of Lantmännen. Continuously, throughout the text analysis, I discuss how definitions of the cooperative purpose of the organization have discursively developed over time.

In *Chapter 6* the discursive trends, on the purpose of Lantmännen, are summarized. Chapter 6 also contains a discussion on the academic and social relevance of the summarized trends of the material.

3. The Background

In the following chapter I describe the history of Lantmännen (3.1), the case of the thesis, in order to give a background to the results detailed in chapter 6. I continue, in 3.2, by giving a summary of the cooperative model, both legal and theoretical, upon which Lantmännen and other Swedish cooperatives are based. This also, in order to give context to the coming discussions on the developing purpose of Lantmännen.

3.1 Lantmännen - an Agricultural Cooperative

Lantmännen, as an organization, officially dates back to 1905 when the National Association of Swedish Farmers (*Svenska Lantmännens Riksförbund*) was founded. The organization was a federation, comprising both local and regional member-organizations, who all had farmers as their members in turn. The economic activities of these organizations differed in the beginning, but they had a common purpose of being suppliers of agricultural inputs to the farmers, at low cost and with trustworthy qualities. The different organizations varied initially also in associational forms, some being joint stock holdings and others being economic associations (Osterman 1982, ch. 1 & 2).

After a reconstruction of the organizations, following the Great Depression in the 1920's and 30's, the federation pushed all of the local and regional subsidiaries to register as member associations without personal liability (*Utan personligt ansvar*). The federation was supposed to make less risk prone investments, increase the cash payments instead of relying on loans, and increase the member stakes in order to build a larger stock of venture capital. The steps taken to become uniform in organizational form, also made Lantmännen more closely resembling an ordinary cooperative: with decisions taken on a 'one member, one vote' principle, and a financial model that buffered against dependence on external financing and hence external pressure on the decision making. (Osterman 1982, ch 3) From the 1930's the organization started focusing on the marketing of grains, a previously failed project, and the acquisition of storing and milling facilities became important. Through the period between 1930 and the beginning

of the 1970's the organization increased the amount of grain handled, and in 1979 the organization controlled more than 60 % of the milling capacity of Sweden (Osterman 1982, pp. 275 - 286).

In the 1970's the federation had also built up major capacities in supplying farmers with agricultural inputs. At the end of the 1970s, Lantmännen handled 78 % of the fertilizer market of Sweden (1978), 65% of the market of agricultural chemicals (1979), about 70 % of the fodder industry (1977) and 68 % of the seed market (1978) (Osterman, pp. 243 - 252, 1982) . The reasoning of acquiring such large shares of both output and input markets was for Lantmännen to protect farmers from possible cartels and to guard farmers from the uncertainties of a fluctuating market (Ibid.).

During the 1990's and the first years of the 21th century, Lantmännen commenced a process of merging the different local and regional member organizations into a single organization. The explicit reason for the merge, was to handle the changing policy landscape (as depicted in the introduction of the thesis) and the new market circumstances on the European and global level (SLR, 2000a).

3.2 The Cooperative Purpose

Lantmännen was, and still is, registered as an economic association, in accordance with the Swedish law of economic associations¹. The law was first enacted in 1951, in order to enable an alternative associational form, for non-investor-owned firms (Prop. 1986/87:7, pp. 59 - 61). The legal framework is mainly developed in order to make cooperatives legally preserved and protected, although it does not require an economic association to formally call itself a cooperative. The cooperative forms that are protected through the law of economic association are:

1) *the cooperative decision making*, e.g. in that each member of a cooperative has equal voting rights, in the annual meeting of the association - Aligning the economic association governance to the cooperative definition of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA 2015).

2) *the open membership*, e.g. that economic associations are mainly open for new members, sharing the economic activities of the current members - Also in accordance to the definition of cooperatives by ICA (2015).

3. *the cooperative purpose*, e.g. that the economic associations has as their purpose to promote the economic interest of its members - Probably the most obvious cooperative character of the law, aligning the economic association to both historic (e.g. Fairbairn 1994; Fay 1936) and current (USDA 1994; ICA 2015) definitions of the cooperative purpose.

There is an important distinction made, of the cooperative organization, through having the purpose of promoting the members economic interest; as opposed to having a purpose of producing returns on investments (the purpose of the inves-

¹ Lag (2018:672) om ekonomiska föreningar

tor-owned firms). The member of a cooperative organization enters the organization in order to improve his or her economic productivity, through cooperation and coordination with other members. The economic improvement is, in the cooperative idea, happening on the level of the individual member, and the aim of not mainly within the cooperative organization (Svårdström 1975, p. 33 - 38). Through communal investments, the individual cost of the member is minimized. E.g. in an agricultural cooperative; the members of an agricultural cooperative could purchase cheaper and better quality input to their farms collectively, and share the cost among members (increasing the negotiating strength and scrutiny of qualities) (Svårdström 1975, p. 5). The members of the cooperative could also invest in infrastructure for the marketing of their produce, e.g. grain elevators and mills, for the cooperative members to increase their control of the pricing of their produce (Svårdström 1975, pp. 47 - 51). The cooperative organization is hence not measured on its ability to produce monetary returns to its members, but utilities that enhance its members' productivity and profitability independently.

4. The Approach of the Study

In the fourth chapter of the thesis I describe the theoretical and methodological approach of Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) (4.1), as defined by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012). In *section 4.2*, I further describe the concrete method of argument reconstruction, a tool used in PDA, and the actual method of this study. In *section 4.3* I discuss the sampling procedure for the case material to be analyzed.

4.1 Discourse Analysis and the Cooperative

Since the aim of this thesis is to explore the developing purpose and reasoning of an agricultural cooperative, studying the discourse of a cooperative organization is the approach taken. Discourse analysis grants the possibility to analyse the explicitly expressed goals and values of cooperators. Discourse analysis is the study on how language, in a given time and context is stabilized/institutionalized and which knowledge/reality fit into it (Jäger & Maier 2009). In the book *Political Discourse Analysis* (PDA), Isabela and Norman Fairclough (2012) argues for a methodology for analyzing political discourse, which is a specific discursive genre (Collin 2012). They characterize political discourse as: “...*about arriving cooperatively, and through some form of (collective) argumentation (deliberation), at decisions for action on matters of common concern, it is about what to do in response to public disagreement and conflict [...] and in response to circumstances and events*” (Fairclough & Fairclough 2012, p. 34). The discursive genre of political discourse, as analyzed by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012), fits the formal discourse of the cooperative organizations. Lantmännen, as a cooperative, has democratic systems of control (one member, one vote), and by virtue of such governance, decisions are made in a deliberative form, i.e. they are debated on the annual meetings of Lantmännen.

Decisions, being the main feature of political discourse, are handled through argumentation. The method used for analysis, by Fairclough and Fairclough, is argument reconstruction, which will be further described below. As arguments

have been reconstructed, normative critique can be applied to the argument (Fairclough & Fairclough 2012, pp. 51 - 68; Fairclough 2015).

4.2 The Method of Argument Reconstruction

Argument reconstruction is the method of argumentation theory, the study of rational claims and the premises they are based on (Grootendorst & van Eemeren 2004). Traditionally, arguments have been categorized into three different types, depending on the assurance it entails to the conclusion of the premises. *Deductive arguments* are tested on *validity* and *soundness*. Validity ensures that the conclusion follows from the premises of the argument. Soundness relates to the accuracy of premises and conclusion. The second type of argument, *the inductive argument*, is tested on the *inductive strength* (probability) and of soundness. A third type of argument is the *conductive argument*, in which several independent premises are related to the argument, sometimes both positive (in relation to the conclusion) and sometimes negative, measured against each other, to end in a conclusion. In conductive argumentation, different goals can be weighed against each other, as one premise could be positive in relation to one goal, but negative in relation to another. (Fairclough & Fairclough 2012)

Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) argue that political argumentation tends to be of the third type of argumentation, conductive arguments. They further define this type of argumentation as practical reasoning, as being goal oriented. Practical arguments have four types of premises according to Fairclough and Fairclough (2012, p. 45):

1. **Circumstantial premisses** - Stating the situation - e.g. “*We live in a world of darkness*”
2. **Goal premisses** - Stating the future state of affairs in which the values are realized - “*We should be living in a world of light*”
3. **Value premisses** - Stating what the arguer actually is concerned with - “*I want to be able to see*”
4. **Means-goal premisses** - state a hypothesis on an action in which the goal will presumably be realized - “*By lighting a candle we will be living in a world of light*”
5. **Conclusion** - “*We should light a candle*”

Through the use of argument reconstruction of practical arguments, as defined by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012), I have deconstructed and then reconstruct texts; making the texts uniform and comparable. By illuminating the goal premisses and the value premisses of arguments and testing them against the definition of the cooperative purpose, I can understand the specific cooperative organizations relation to the general cooperative idea. By doing such in a time series, changes in the reasoning on goals, values and member interest can be traced and a trend of deviance or adherence, to the cooperative idea, can be stipulated.

4.3 Sampling Method for Material

The time frame for my analysis stretches between 1985 until 2009. During the end of the 1980's and the beginning of 1990's, the Swedish state liberalized the agricultural import and export, practically dismantling the state support to Lantmännen's export. As the purpose of the study is to explore changes in reasoning and purpose of an agricultural cooperative, periods with increased probability for transformation in reasoning are of interest for my study. External changing conditions coupled with organizational stress, is a major factor for drastic internal transformation (DiMaggio & Powell 1983), and the period from 1985 and onwards is thus specifically interesting for my research. The reasoning for deciding to end my research period in 2009 is merely practical, due to the scope of the thesis to enable some level of qualitative analysis.

As I study the cooperative purpose through the approach of discourse analysis (studying the discourse of active cooperators on the purpose of the Lantmännen cooperative) I utilize argumentative texts produced in and on the cooperative of Lantmännen as case material. To establish stringency and accuracy, of the analyzed texts, I have analyzed texts from presidential statements to the annual report of Lantmännen. These are strategic texts authored by the president of the organization, contextualizing the organizations situation and economy, while arguing for the continued actions of the cooperative.

As there were no presidential statements for the years 1985 - 1987, I have for these years analyzed protocols of the administrative board of the cooperative organization; but only one of those (a protocol from 1985) are present in the result section of the thesis, as the protocols of the other years (1986 and 1987) were impossible to analyze because of the way they were written. The administrative board contains representatives of the different regional member organizations of the federation (at the time when the cooperative still was a federation) and they are discussing issues of policy and general member interest.

Lastly, in 2003 Lantmännen, now a single merged organization, initiated a program to discuss the purpose of the organization. I have analyzed parts of this handout-material, as it was apparently important in the internal discourse of purpose of the Lantmännen.

In total, I have analyzed more than 30 different documents (amounting to more than 60 pages), spread through the study period between 1985 until 2009, through using the argument reconstruction of Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) on practical arguments, detailed in chapter 4.2. The analyzed texts have been reconstructed into excerpts with a common form.

5. The Results

In this section of the study I will report the results of the analysis of the argument reconstructions of the sampled texts. The question of the thesis: "*How has the goals and underlying values of Lantmännen changed, between 1985 and 2009?*" is analyzed for the case of Lantmännen, for the years 1985 to 2008. Continuously, throughout the review of the case material, I discuss the relationship between the decision making of Lantmännen and its members in accordance with

my second research question: “*How has member interest been treated in of agricultural cooperatives over time?*” As I present the results of the study, the analysis of the reconstructed arguments, I occasionally quote the material, and this is done through quotation marks and the quoted text in italics. I also, sometimes state premises from the reconstructed arguments (not a quote), and those premises are solely written in italic, without quotation marks.

5.1 Oh, Viability (concerns) (1985 - 1991)

In a meeting with the administrative board of Lantmännen (still *Svenska Lantmännens Riksförbund* at this time) in December of 1985, a discussion is raised on the relationship between the Lantmännen federation and the profitability of agriculture (SLR 1985b). The background to the discussion was that the cost of exporting surplus grains from Swedish farmers, had increased while the state support, for exporting the grains, had decreased. The administrative board (comprising members of the different regional organizations of Lantmännen) discussed what to do in reactions to the economic situation. In that discussion, with the goal of *finding solutions to the increasing export costs for surplus grains*, five values are stated as necessary to address in any solution to the issue of the surplus grains: i) , the organizations within *the federation needs to be united*, to avoid domestic competition; ii), the solution to the surplus production *needs to address the risk of pitting smaller farmers against the larger land owners*, in a competition between them; iii) the organization *should not have an uncontrolled structural transformation*, when implementing decreases in the grain production; iv) the organization should be careful in *not harming the societal interest of environmental protection*, a possible outcome as the organization is trying to increase profits of agriculture; and lastly, v) *to not harm remotely rural businesses*, signaling the importance of caring for members of all areas, not just those who are most easily accessed.

At the time of the meeting, in December 1985, any decision (concerning the whole federation) is a political decision with several interests to be addressed and with a complex frame of values. The rationale of decision making in Lantmännen, at this time, was clearly distinct from that of a company serving profit maximization. The values, against which any means are measured, are multiple, conflicting and political.

The newly appointed president Olle Hakelius is arguing, in his statement to the annual report of Lantmännen in 1988, for the fulfillment of the goal: *becoming a rational organization, with fast communications and a “market orientation”*. Instead of having multiple values and goals, reflecting the heterogeneous member interest as is present in the discourse of the administrative board of 1985, the president is at this point arguing for a clear and sole goal for the coming work of the federation. In order to reach that clear goal, the president is arguing for: the decrease of the previously so important political agency that the federation had, through the system of mediated prices; and the decrease of the protective actions, that the federation previously had, through prices that were stable.

In the following years (between 1989 and 1991), the president state similar goals in the annual reports as to the one stated in 1988: *handle the transformation*

that inevitably will transform agriculture (SLR 1989, pp. 10 - 11); *meeting the demands of the “transformation” of agriculture with efficiency and speed*, (SLR 1990, p. 8); and *to prepare/rationalize Lantmännen for a deregulated market*, (SLR 1991, pp. 3 - 4). I understand the “transformation” raised in the goals of 1989 and 1990 as market liberalization, when reading and analyzing the full statements together.

When analyzing the relationship between stipulated goals and means for reaching the goals as expressed in the annual reports over the period, further understanding of changing direction of Lantmännen can be reached. In the years between 1989 and 1991, the president is arguing for a program of developing energy and fiber cropping; which would substitute grain production. This solution is explained as mainly as a means/solution for the larger landowners:

“For the large estates/areas there are interesting alternatives, e.g. energy and industrial raw materials. Here the willow enters, just as ethanol on the energy market, grass and half-grasses on the fiber market, and oilseeds that can replace petroleum-based oils. But new production and new markets cannot emerge without an active program for change” (SLR 1990, p. 8)

The president also describes, in 1990, that alternative smaller markets will evolve (implicitly for the smaller land owners), but he is not describing those small evolving markets as a responsibility of the federation, but rather as a circumstance (SLR 1990, p. 8). The president also argues for a decrease in the amount of local and regional member organizations of the federation, in order for the federation to decrease its costs and streamline the economy. The goals of 1989 - 1991, can hence be understood as; *to keep the costs of the federation as low as possible, in order to meet the market demands*.

When summarizing how the goals and underlying values of Lantmännen have changed, from the administrative board of 1985 until the presidential statement of 1991, a few themes emerge. Although the same underlying issue/problem, of viability and scale of grain production, was present during the whole time, the way the issue was addressed as a problem has developed. In the beginning, the issue of over production of grains was seen as an economic risk for organization, (costs of exporting the grains were outnumbering the revenues of the federation). And ultimately, the associated costs for the over-production of grains was seen as a risk for the member farmers, as they would be the victims, of decreased prices that the organization would have to pay them. It is clear in 1985 that the representatives of the federation perceived the risk of smaller farmers being affected most severely, by forcing a decrease in the market. Any program for change was therefore required to include an analysis, of the effects on the smaller farmers. It is clear that the representatives, on the administrative board, saw the role of the federation as protecting its members' interest equally; not the absolute turnover of the collective, but the absolute number of members.

In 1991, the grain production is discussed solely as an issue of profitability of the organization. Proscribed changes include means for attaining a competitive organization on the market, and the organization is no longer acting to protect

and promote the majority of members' interest. Rather, smaller farmers (a majority of members) are excluded from the intentions of the reforms of the federation. The president is pushing an agenda, to protect the continuation of growing, through energy and fibre production. A move, as prescribed, with the potential to affect large quantities of land, while not affecting as many farmers. Alternatives, like diversifying the agricultural food market, in order to decrease the surplus, are never fully discussed in these texts, although such actions could have had a larger effect on the smaller peasants.

When reading the statements from the annual reports between 1988 and 1991, it is interesting to see how the president and the leadership of Lantmännen, address agricultural transformation. In the statements, agricultural transformation (market liberalizations) are portrayed as forcing an inevitable agenda. Although the cooperative organization has as their explicit purpose to promote the economic interest of their members, the leadership of Lantmännen at the time believes that the organization lacks agency in mediating the conditions of its member farmers. The vision of the leadership is, adaptation to a "threatening" or "inevitable" agricultural transformation, rather than strategizing on how to fend for the members' interest, in light of the current agricultural liberalization.

5.2 From Here to Brussels (1992 - 1997)

"... to compete on the international market" is the goal, in the presidential statement of the annual report from 1992 (SLR 1992, pp. 4 - 5). The discussions has changed compared to the previous period (1985 - 1991) and the president now clearly state that the main problem to be solved by the federation, is competition on the European market; not just surviving or handling agricultural "transformation". Although the president withholds that the federation should enable as good exchange as possible with the farmers; the main goal of the organization is market competition. In the statements of the president to the annual reports in 1993 - 1996, the president continuously states that the goal is: *becoming competitive on the European market* (SLR 1993, pp. 3 - 4; SLR 1994, pp. 3 - 4; SLR 1995, pp. 3 - 4; SLR 1996, pp. 3 - 4).

In order to reach competitiveness, several means are proposed in the presidential statements between 1992 and 1997. In 1993 the president argues for a relocation of responsibilities and tasks, from the regional to the national organization, in order to reach competitiveness (SLR 1993, pp. 3 - 4). Lantmännen was, in 1993, a web of cooperative organizations, spread across the Swedish landscape, with highly engaged members. The president is in his argument stating that there is a conflict between regional collaboration and the goal of "market orientation", and therefore member interest. National cooperation should be promoted, according to the president; anything less should be seen as only serving individual interests. The route that the president is envisaging for the federation, is competition through benefits of scale and not through complex solutions on the member level. The relationship between members and the cooperative, is during this period moving towards a relationship between a farmer and a bulk trader.

From 1994 and onwards the president is suggesting a new trademark for the produce from the organisation, as means for the cooperative to become more

competitive (SLR 1994, pp. 3 - 4; SLR 1995, pp. 3 - 4; SLR 1996, pp. 3 - 4). The suggested trademarks are supposed to reflect the environmental work that Swedish agriculture is undertaking. In the following periods, environmental work is never raised as an independent value variable (as in 1985), but as a means for value addition in the production; making it apparent that the environmental values that the cooperative had in 1985, now only is seen as a means for increasing income.

From 1994 and onwards the president is referring to the members as “owners” of the cooperative. In 1995 he even asks the members: “*as owners [of the cooperative] to continue to adapt to the demands of the market*” (SLR 1995, pp. 3 - 4), suggesting that the change in term is linked to the new goal of becoming competitive.

The “market orientation” of Lantmännen is reaching a new level 1997. In the annual report from the same year the president states:

“But the European market is not mainly a threat. It is a possibility for new conquests through the Swedish concept, conquests that does not solely compensate for eventual losses on the home market” (SLR 1997, pp. 2 - 3)

While farmers continuously were decreasing in numbers (Swedish Board of Agriculture 2004), Lantmännen saw a bright future in sales on foreign markets. The claim, that Lantmännen sees a possibility to conquer new markets, implies that Lantmännen, perceives trade in agricultural commodities as something positive and independent of the members’ interest in subsistence on such markets.

The period between 1992 and 1997, was characterized by the ongoing liberalization of the Swedish agricultural market, and later on realized inclusion of Sweden into the European Union. As noted by Maria Fregidou-Malama (1996), the Swedish agricultural cooperatives had, prior to the realization of liberalizations (in the wake of the 1990’s), shaped the market tendencies in a relationship with the state. While the relationship with the state had the prospect of hampering the price relationships of the open global markets; the relationship with the state had a side effect of shaping the agricultural cooperatives’ internal hierarchies and values (Fregidou-Malama 1996). In the new reality; where there were no custom duties protecting against European produce; and where no export subsidies helped increase the prices on the domestic market, Lantmännen was forced to reformulate its strategies.

The presidential statements, between 1992 and 1997, present a new visions for Lantmännen, focused on centralization of the cooperative business, streamlining of the administration, making environmental care a trademark and trade through benefits of scale (bulk trade). The new vision is promoted in relation to the new market condition of the agricultural sector. All in order to reach competitiveness. As the president is presenting new visions, of a competitive marketing organization, he reformulates the member driven identity of the organization. The members are during the period asked to act as responsible “owners” rather than members; and as such they should care for the competitiveness of the organization not

the locality of the cooperative office. Through competition against competitors, the “owners” will benefit from the new vision, making Lantmännen resemble an investor-owned firm conquering new market shares. Any potential conflict between the value of being economically useful for a collective of member farmers and being “market oriented”, is not raised in the arguments in general. In 1995 the president actually equates the goal of being competitive on the market and being useful for the members:

“The consciousness is great among farmers, that the market orientation needs to be done fast and that further structural change will be done in order to fulfill the goal: the best possible utility for the owners, the farmers” (SLR 1995, pp. 3 - 4)

Lantmännen, as a cooperative, has at this point secede from trying to protect its members from the market, or influencing the shape of the market. Instead, Lantmännen is pushing the agenda of the supreme and natural market being a corrective instrument.

Although I argue that Lantmännen was changing during the period between 1992 and 1997, one can question whether the material reality of members was actually transformed during the same period. Regional organizations still existed, and their formal power had not changed, as they did in the following periods. The grain silos and mills were still to a large extent intact, making up both an economical, but also a social utility (Helgstrand 2011), and the distribution of input was mainly done through the regional offices, representing closeness.

5.3 The New Swings and Roundabouts (1998 - 2000)

The period, between 1998 and the final merging of all the different regional organizations (which was done in 2001), starts with a reform-oriented statement by the president Hakelius, to the annual report in 1998. Hakelius states in 1998, that the organization should enable “*a strong position for the Swedish agriculture [Lantmännen] on the European and international markets*” (SLR 1998, pp. 2 - 3). For Lantmännen to gain a strong position on the European and international markets, the president proclaims that the *federation* needs *venture capital in order to invest in the “market”*. The venture capital, which the president argue is necessary, is suggested to be acquired by saving the profits of the federation’s companies for reinvestments, and by raising extra venture capital from the “owners” of the federation, which will be repaid with interest. (SLR 1998, pp. 2 - 3)

Two values are raised in the president’s statement of 1998: firstly, *the sole purpose of the organization is to satisfy the farmers’ economic exchange on the market*, and secondly

“The organizations’ companies must be allowed to keep generating profits, which can be reinvested, although the profitability of the farmer is under pressure” (SLR 1998, pp. 2 - 3)

The first value, is a reformulated statement of the purpose of the Lantmännen federation, as stated in the statutes of the federation; hence an obligation for the president. The second value; that the organizations' companies must be able to retain "profits", although member farmers have economic troubles; displays a disconnect between the economy of the members and the economy of the federation. Is the federation a cooperative, made up of member farmers; or is the federation an independent economic entity, who's economic development can exist, independently, from its member base? The second value premise raises questions on the president's adherence to the first value.

In the year 2000, two independent goals have developed in the president's statement to the annual report (SLR 2000b, pp 2 - 3). The address is made in relation to the annual meeting of the federation, where the representatives would decide on the issue of whether or not to merge the different regional organizations of the federation, into a single national organization. The first goal of the statement is that the federation has to *compete on the European market*. The second goal is that the organization has to *be attainable to the heterogeneity of the Swedish agricultural landscape* (being stretched in south / north direction).

Means to fulfill the goal, *to compete on the European market*, are similar to the means described in previous arguments: *streamlining the organizations'* and *investment in trademarks*. On top of the previously raised means of becoming competitive, the president is now arguing that the federation should merge itself into a single organization. According to the president, the cooperative would save money from decreasing duplicate labour, if the regional organizations would fuse into a single entity. This latter means contradicts the second goal, of being attainable to the heterogeneity of Swedish agriculture, why the president states that the new fused organization would keep local offices, with local elected boards and local economic responsibility. Problematically, this does not resolve the inherent goal conflict of streamlining the federation, in order to increase competitiveness, and making the federation attainable to the geographic heterogeneity of the country.

As the only identified value premise of the statement of the year 2000, I found the implicit notion that the federation ought to specifically respect the will/interest of the growing landowners:

"The amount of full time farmers are expected to decrease, while the remaining estates becomes larger. Already now, 12 000 partners in the local organizations represent 80 % of the turnover... Those [the remaining, growing estates] will rightfully make larger demands" (SLR 2000b, pp 2 - 3)

This notion, made by president Hakelius, is interesting for furthering the understanding of the relationship between the cooperative federation and the member interests. The president is paying particular attention to a specific group of members, although the democratic fundament of the federation would suggest equal importance among members.

Prior to 1998, the presidential statements concluded that the organization needed a new agenda based on the concept of “market orientation”. In 1998, that agenda was made concrete, through initiatives for a changed way of financing the organization, and a clarified route to streamlining the federation, fusion. The president also made it clear how members would benefit from these new means: through reimbursement on investments. Members would lose part of the local administration and control, but they would gain profits; swings and roundabouts.

By stating that the subsidiary companies of the cooperative should be able to retain surpluses in the companies for future investments (although members had economic difficulties) signals a divide between the economies of members and cooperative. By stating that the interest of more successful farmers ought to be specifically respected, the president is further signaling a divide between the cooperative and its members; like the relationship between two businesses. The reformed financing of the cooperative, with ideas of new means of making investments in the cooperative entity (rather than financing the cooperative through fees and the joint turnover) further proves this new “business” relationship.

The financing of cooperative organizations has been a key debate in cooperative economic theory, as different means of financing an organization entails different demands of outcomes of the organization. The ordinary way of financing an agricultural cooperative is through the members’ joint turnover, common fees and debt. Surpluses in the ordinary cooperative organization are returned to members, relative to each member’s turnover with the cooperative (Nilsson & Andersson 1994, pp. 97 – 98). Investments in “non-voting stocks” (*förlagsinsatser*), which is the explicit means for acquiring venture capital, has as its purpose to produce returns (in the form of profits) to the investor. When cooperatives are financing their organizations through sources that are not relative to the members’ economies (as “non-voting stocks”) the organization risks becoming independent from its members and distorting its cooperative purpose (Dunn 1988).

5.4 The Project “To own Lantmännen” (2003)

In 2003, Otto Rammel (the new president of the newly merged Lantmännen cooperative) initiates a dialogue project (Lantmännen ek. för. 2003a, pp. 2 - 4). The idea was that the board of the local offices of the cooperative should hold discussions with the members on the purpose of Lantmännen and the businesses handled. The dialogue project started in 2004. I have analyzed the handout material for the project. The third chapter of the program material part concerns: “*The strategic orientation of Lantmännen*” and the fourth chapter is entitled: “*The user and owner role*”. From a discursive point of view, the whole program material can be seen as an argumentative text; containing clear goals, values, circumstances and means-goals premises for claims that are made in the texts.

The third chapter of the program material (Lantmännen ek. för. 2003b), contains a summary of the market development for agricultural produce, on European and global levels. The chapter contains descriptions of the grain commodity markets and argues that market liberalizations will inevitably force Lantmännen to orient itself to the market.

The goal of Lantmännen is described in the text as: “...to promote the economic interest of them [the members]”, stating the statutory purpose of the organization (Lantmännen ek.för. 2018b). The text also defines what it calls the core activity/means for reaching that goal as: “to take care of and refine the produce of members and to supply necessities and services for the produce of members”. These activities, it is stated in the text, would not be enough to compete on the European market, why it is argued in the text that the cooperative should integrate vertically, higher up in the supply chain.

The vertical integration (into refinement of produce) should according to the handout material, be made through subsidiary companies, with a profit maximizing agenda. Vertical integration would enable external financing and know-how to the organization with regards to refinement activities. As the subsidiary companies would have a profit maximizing strategy, it is argued in the text that the operations would be carried out in a rational manner and the members would maximize their returns, as investors. Problematically the subsidiary companies need to maximize profits. If these companies are acting in the same supply chain as the farmers, maybe with bakeries or milling operations; they have an opposite interest from the farmers. The milling operators wants to minimize the cost of input, in the form of grains, in order to make profits out of its product, flour; and the bakery wants to buy as cheap flour as is possible, in order to make profits out of its end product bread.

The text is not just describing a new cooperative enterprise, in its essence, but it is describing a new economic activity for its members. When arguing for these new ways of organizing the cooperative (and the new possibilities in investments that are described). Members in the cooperative have previously benefited from the organization as a cooperative, coordinating the members in trade; supplying the infrastructure of silos and mills; supplying the input and services needed to do farming and informing the farmers of the market demands and opportunities. All of these activities have been done in a common pool, as farmers have shared the same interests. The organization has worked as a collective bargaining power, against other interests and as a common knowledge bank. With a new activity, independent investment, members are also becoming investors of their own organization; creating a conflict between the member who seeks an organization which is promoting his or her economic interest, and the member who seeks an investment with a high return.

In 2003 Lantmännen owned mills and bakeries; which were, and still are, owned in the form of subsidiary joint stock companies, e.g. Lantmännen Cerealia AB and Lantmännen Unibake Sweden AB (see Lanmännen ek.för. 2004, p. 22; Lanmännen ek.för. 2018, p. 55). The ownership of subsidiary companies was hence a fact, but what is new in the material for the “dialogue” project, is the presentation of the activities, done in these companies. In the time prior to my study period, and potentially up until the dialogue project, ownership of mills and other refinement plants were presented as a means for protecting the demand of Swedish agricultural produce (Osterman 1982, pp. 275 - 286). In the handout material for the dialogue project, they are argued to be seen as means for producing benefits in the form of profits.

In the fourth chapter entitled, *“The user and owner role”*, a relationship between the organization and its members (here termed members) is characterized (Lantmännen ek.för. 2003b). It states that cooperatives are organizations that are *“owned and controlled by the same people that also utilizes the cooperatives activities/business”*. It is further stated that: *“This means that members have different roles to execute, as owners of the cooperative and as users of the cooperative”*. The “user” role is understood and realized through taking part in the beneficial prices that are offered by the cooperative, according to the text. The owner role, according to the text, is to be understood as the financial responsibility that members have, to make sure the businesses survive economically, and which takes part in the profits generated by those companies.

It is argued in the text that members tend to only see themselves as users of the cooperative, but that they lack the identity of owners of the cooperative; why it is argued in the text that the dual roles of members ought to be realized. In order to make the “owner” role realized, the text proscribes that the organizations should emit “non-voting stocks” (*förlagsinsatser*). The emission of stocks would lead “owners”/members to become aware of the productivity and efficiency of the cooperative, and at the same time increase the capital base of the organization.

The divide between the members as a “user” and an “owner” of the cooperative, entails a break from the traditional cooperative theories, which are based on the equation of user and member. As earlier discussed (in section 3.2), the cooperative organization has as their main purpose to promote the economic interest of the member; which are users of the same organization. The discourse of the fourth chapter of the program material, *“The user and owner role”*, can be seen a new way of defining the member’s relationship to the organization. The terming of member as “owner” of the cooperative association has been present from at least the 1990’s. What is new in the handout text is an abstraction, that one can separate the member into two distinct roles. The first as the beneficial business partner which grants the member the best prices. The second role grants the member the opportunity and responsibility of a profitable business venture, as an owner of the cooperative. I understand the distinction of the “owner”-role of the cooperative member as an analytical simulation of the relationship between an owner and an investor-owned company. The problem though, is that the member never could be an individual owner of the cooperative, without the cooperative ceasing to exist. Cooperative, as discussed in the chapter 3.2, are communal solutions to the individual member’s interest.

5.5 The Market Ballad (2004 - 2009)

In 2004 the “dialogue” project was implemented throughout the organization and is addressed in the statement of the new president, Thomas Bodén, in the annual report. In the statement Boden argues that Lantmännen should:

- 1) *“become the most efficient [entity] in Europe, in handling supply and grains”*
 - 2) *“be the best option for all sorts of customers”*
 - 3) *“be profitable to be owner of and do business with Lantmännen”*
- (Lantmännen ek.för. 2004, p. 2 - 4).

Three independent goals are thus depicted for the organization. The third goal, to “own” and do business with, is a reformulation of the cooperative principle that Lantmännen historically has adhered to; that Lantmännen should *promote the economic interests of its members*. Instead of fulfilling the purpose of Lantmännen, solely, through beneficial deals with its members specifically, and organizing the interactions, of the members, with the market; Lantmännen can now, according to the presidential statement of 2004, just be profitable for the “owner” and be a good business partner. Members are not specified as “the group” to do good deals with. Rather all possible customers should have Lantmännen as the best option. The president further states in the annual report from 2004 that:

“Unnecessary resources will be dismantled and the remaining resources will be funded by the users of these, so that Lantmännen can become the best option for all sorts of customers”
(Lantmännen ek.för. 2004, p. 2 - 4).

Dismantling of resources, according to the president, would serve dual goals; both helping in streamlining the organization's structure, increasing competitiveness on the European markets; and also, to be able to increase the prices paid to farmers in general. As the organization aims to decrease the amount of processing plants, which I understand as the main intention of the means, farmers will in general gain longer distances to their closest center for leaving their produce. That would lead to an increasing cost of transporting the different grain harvests for the farmers. The collective cost is decreased at the expense of the individual.

In the presidential statement of Bodén, from 2005 (Lantmännen ek. för. 2005, p. 2), two new formulations of the cooperative purpose also appear: firstly, to be “*the Swedish agriculture's best business partner*”; and secondly, “*that Lantmännen should be able to fulfill its obligations to its owners*”. These formulations further dilute the original cooperative purpose of Lantmännen. Two value premises are also made in the text: firstly, that Lantmännen *should especially be the best business partner* for the farmers who are “*good agricultural entrepreneurs and have the basis to adopt and develop their businesses*”. Clearly the president is arguing again, that some of the members in the cooperative are of greater importance than other members, in respect to the agenda of the organizations. The strong members, which can adopt their businesses to the market conditions by their individual force, are favored. The second value premise of the argument is: *that paying “high” returns to the “owners”, through refunds is a good thing*. The argument that the level of returns, independently, is a good thing (not a return on the realized prize of the members produce and consumption) indicates that the president is identifying the cooperative as something other than a market correction or protection; refunds are seen as profits. The argument stated in 2005 is to a large extent similar to the presidential statement of 2006 (Lantmännen ek. för. 2006, p 4 - 6), especially concerning the care for the members that have strong businesses

independently. From a discursive point of view, the tendency is clear. Lantmännen is increasingly focusing on profit generation, as a means of serving its members economic interest.

In the presidential statement of 2007 Thomas Bodén notes something novel, that the general farmer is more satisfied as a customer of Lantmännen, than as an “owner” of the organization (Lantmännen ek.för. 2007 pp. 4 - 5,). The background to this statement was a survey carried out by the cooperative from 2005 that measured the satisfaction of members, as customers and as “owners” of the organization. The president thereby states that the organization *should have more satisfied “owners”*, and the means of reaching this is through: *“increase the role of elected representatives and their engagement”*, by means of developing the information sharing with “owners” concerning *“what Lantmännen is and what we do and not the least why”*. Lantmännen should, according to the president, teach the members what the cooperative is. Instead of asking the members of what they want from the cooperative, the presidential statement from 2007 indicates that Lantmännen is to be seen as an institution, independent of the member base.

In 2009, the last year of this analysis, president Bodén joyfully declares that: *“The corporate group is today thinner, clearer, more outward focused and not the least - more profitable!”* (Lantmännen ek. för. 2009, p. 5). Boden states further that Lantmännen should *be able to continue the development*, and to *increase the profits returned to “owners”*, and that *the cooperative should be more exciting to “own”*. Members should not just benefit the cooperative from an economical point of view; or find the social forum, which the cooperative is supposed to be, developing; but members are now supposed to enjoy the excitement of doing investments through the cooperative.

As a reform to make Lantmännen more exciting to own and also as a move to make Lantmännen more profitable, the president argues that the cooperative should finally begin the emission of “non-voting stocks”;. The debenture reform was also argued for in the “dialogue” project of 2003, as well as in the presidential statement of 1998. In addition, the president argues for opening up for trading “non-voting stocks”, among members. These “non-voting stocks” would hence work as a form of trade in shares in the cooperative; and the members would partly be seen shareholders, strengthening the identity of members as “owners”. The debenture reform, which was implemented in the year of 2009 (Strömberg 2009), can be seen as a shift in how Lantmännen acquired capital, but also in how in a shift in how Lantmännen view their members. In the previous system, members would gain returns, solely based on the turnover they had with Lantmännen. This would have been done by refunds on the direct business made through the organization; or returns on the contribution of capital each member made upon entering the cooperative, a contribution which was calculated on the turnover the member had with the cooperative (see e.g. Lantmännen ek. för. 2009, p. 76).

In the period between 2003 and 2009, Lantmännen was also a period when Lantmännen went through a reorganization. The cooperative closed 58 of the 92 grain processing plants in its possession during this era (Olsson 2012) and reformulated the means of financing the “businesses” that it was taking part in, through

the debenture reform and external funding of the subsidiary companies. The changes, realized during the period between 2003 and 2009, is a continuation of the changed identity of the agricultural cooperative movement, called Lantmännen, since the end of the 1980's. Although the organization goes through a period of material transition, during the 2000's, the goals and values expressed in the period, did not differ radically from the period between 1998 and 2000, but are rather amplified.

5.6 Summary

My study started by analyzing the protocol of the administrative board of Lantmännen in 1985 (at that time a federation). The protocol depicted discussions on the handling of the surplus production of grains. The discussions in the meeting were characterized as internally political, as different parts of the organization argues for the interest of the members of those factions. Central values of the discussions in 1985 were: *unity of the federation*, and *the protection of the smaller farmers*, when handling the surplus grains. The goal of the discussion, handling the surplus production of grains, was clear practical issue of preserving members' interests, as over production risks dumping the price on grains overall. One can see the effect of the electoral system of the cooperative movement (members hold equal power of voting), in the complex goal-frame of Lantmännen in 1985. It is thus clear that there is a difference between the Lantmännen federation and an investor-owned firm, which has as its logic to produce profits, and ought to adhere to the owners of the company in relation to each owner's share in the company's stocks.

During the period, between 1988 and 1991, the president of Lantmännen argued for a more competitive organization and a more competitive agriculture in Sweden, in his statements to the annual reports. He was arguing for decreases in the costs of Lantmännen, through slashing the differentiated geographic prices and general decreases in the administration of the federation. The president is further arguing that the organization should engage in as little regulation of the farmers circumstances as is possible, in order to allow state institutions do that job. Coordination, as a cooperative concept, seems to be on the decline during the period and instead Lantmännen is portrayed as a grain trader, whose "efficiency" is independent from the members' economic development.

In the following period, of 1992 to 1997, a new relationship between the federation, the grains and the members, discursively become apparent. The president was starting to readdress members as "owners", reflecting an implicit change in relationships between members and organization. Further characterizing such a change, the president is arguing in 1997 that the organizations would benefit the "owners" through conquest on the European market, as if it would be natural for cooperators to act in a hostile manner towards their farmer peers, rather than cooperating with them. The president was further arguing for a merger of the Lantmännen federation into manageable business entities, described as necessary for the organizations and the farmers in order to subsist on the market. Rationality and rationalization, were key concepts during the period, further signaling the

necessity of the changes, and the irrationality of preserving what has been, a socially grounded movement. Although changes have clearly occurred, as described during the period of 1992 - 1997, the argument of inevitability during the period, indicates that there is a resistance, in the organizations, against the proscribed actions of transformation.

The arguments of necessity characterizing the period between 1992 and 1997, is in the following periods exchanged for theorizing and visions. From 1998, the president starts arguing for new means of acquiring capital to the cooperative organizations, contradicting the cooperative premise of user-financed activities. This is argued for, in order to realize the new role of “owners” that members are entitled as. It seems as if the management of the federation at this point had stopped acting ad-hoc, in reaction to circumstantial changes of the markets, and instead changed the identity of the cooperative; to see possibilities. Those new possibilities were measured in a single way: profit.

In the program for dialogue, 2003 - 2004, the now fused organization proves the discursive development of theorizing and visions. Members, previously addressed as “owners” of the cooperative, but as such solely seen as users-owners of the cooperative, are now discussed as dual in their roles; the “user” and the “owner”, separately. The transition, which Lantmännen went through in the years between 2003 and 2009, is a tuning of the organization to the perceived “owner” role of members. With the argument that members were unsatisfied with the cooperative, because of a lacking “ownership” monetarily, they pushed an agenda to streamline the entity for the benefits of the investor member; the owner. The simplicity of satisfying member wants, through measurable returns on investments, was the claimed result. Important though, the negative side effects of the development were not raised, i.e.: that members decreased in numbers (see Lantmännen ek. för. 2003, p. 15; Lantmännen ek. för. 2010, p. 1) and that the cooperative solutions (coordination of businesses in the form of grain plants) were closed (See chapter 5, subsection 2003 - 2009).

6. Conclusions and Further Studies

As addressed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, my purpose of research has been to study changing goals and values (the purpose) of an agricultural cooperative in Sweden. Two questions have guided my research design and analysis, namely: i) “*How has goals and underlying values of Lantmännen changed, between 1985 and 2009?*” and ii) “*How has member interest been treated in Lantmännen, between 1985 and 2009?*”

To answer these two questions, I have analyzed the formal discourse on the future prospects of Lantmännen, detailed in texts from that organization have changed between the years 1985 to 2009.

6.1 Conclusions

The review of the reasoning in Lantmännen, as a cooperative organization, between 1985 and 2009, shows how the discourse of governance has changed. The discursive change concerned the purpose of the organization and the relationship

it holds to its members. The organization of Lantmännen started out as a federation, coordinating local and regional associations of farmers. Through the study period, the discourse and practices of the cooperative developed, to such an extent that it ceased to adhere to the interest of the member, as a farmer, but rather as investor owners.

The review finds that the change in reasoning started as a reaction to the changing agricultural policies in Sweden and a tough financial situation for the Lantmännen federation. Initially, the presented goal was to save the cooperative financially, through means of streamlining the organization, orientating the pricing systems to the market fluctuations and programs to decrease the cereal cropping. During the end of the 1990's and the beginning of the 2000's, the goal of saving the entity financially, was exchanged with a goal of economic success, but with the same means as stressed during the initial stage. The discursive development, from economic stress to economic success, was contingent on a change in the purpose of the organization. Only through changing the purpose, away from satisfying the interest of members (through utilities), could there be a positive portrayal of the organization, while the members declined in numbers. The new purpose of profitability exchanged the goal of producing utilities for the members, in order to produce interest on members' and the organization's invested capital.

The road that Lantmännen have been going along, is according to my analysis, a road away from the cooperative purpose of promoting the economic interest of its members. The group of actors making up the membership of Lantmännen, have been retitled as "owners", instead of members. In direct opposition to the legacy of the cooperative purpose, cooperation, the members have been divided by the leadership of the organization, i.e. winners have been separated from losers on the agricultural market, and the organization has refocused the work of the cooperative, to mainly satisfy the interest of the already competitive farmers on the market. The leadership of Lantmännen have promoted "market orientation", an agenda better understood as *market submission*. The beliefs and visions that have developed in Lantmännen during the study period, depict a shift away from cooperation as a means of coordination, towards market coordination. This shift in focus, is however not occurring in Lantmännen in isolation; but is a recurring theme in cooperative studies (see e.g. Bergschöld 2008; Kasmir 2016) and in new public management rhetoric's (e.g. Apple, 2004; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Common for these studies is the move away from qualitative and often complex measures of evaluating purpose and efficiency, towards economic boxes with the clear-cut and quantifiable means of measurement, and a general discourse of the inevitability of the market.

There is an academic trend, mainly centered on the economic discipline, examining the cooperative organizations in comparison to investor-owned firms. These scholars have concluded that cooperatives, often, are inefficient and needs reformation in the direction of more individual ownership of the cooperative organizations (see e.g. Porter & Scully 1987; Nilsson & Björklund 2003; Chaddad et. al. 2005). These scholars explain the development of agricultural cooperatives, similar to the development of Lantmännen, as favorable. They argue that organizations moving towards "profitability", "market orientation" and individual

stakes in the cooperative capital, as evidence of efficient work and success. But I argue the contrary. The cooperatives could not reasonably be compared to investor-owned firms, as they are member based (not owned). They don't have the end purpose of producing profits, but to promote the interest of a certain group of actors, through common utilities. Success is better measured on the number of active members, which in the case of Lantmännen has been dwindling, than through market shares and budgets with surpluses.

If Lantmännen would have been developed in a more cooperative direction, the federation's reactions to the changing agricultural policies of the 1980's and 1990's would begin in critically examining the state of the farming community, the cooperative members. By admitting that the purpose of the organization was and still is: to promote the economic interest of the members, Lantmännen would need to preserve a complex organization, reflecting the complexity of the members' interest (Svärdström 1975). Instead of a president enjoying the thinness of Lantmännen (as was the case in 2009), the president would need to ask what the cooperative could do next, in order to increase the prosperity of members.

In the beginning of the study period, prices of certain crops were too low to enable a livable income for the farming members. The cooperative would then be the best form of governance to coordinate alternative cropping and diversify the markets. Such was only the case for the larger landowners of Lantmännen's member base, but such perspectives (promoting the members' interest through diversifying the alternatives for members) is much more common among worker-cooperatives (e.g. Heras-Saizarbitoria 2014). The security of membership is clearly connected to the security of productivity labour in worker-cooperatives (Bretos & Errasti 2017). To create a security in agriculture, Lantmännen would need to address the actions of the organization from the perspective of the members. For the member farmers, the agricultural produce represented income from labour, and it's not a certain type of agriculture which is to be protected and promoted, but the productivity of the members.

6.2 Further studies

Through shedding light on this specific transformation, I hope that I can contribute to the public debate on the cooperative purpose and an ongoing enquiry into the effects of institutional, specifically cooperative, transformation. The results of the study open up questions for further studies, concerning the cooperative purpose and the agricultural cooperative movement. I will here bellow comment on some of these possibilities:

1) The review has found that the development in reasoning started as Lantmännen was in the middle of two interconnected struggles: financial stress and a changing policy landscape. What seems to have happened, is that the stress and change of policies exhausted the previous agenda of the federation and that the lack of agenda opened the possibility for an essentially different agenda and reasoning. Is such a development a general agricultural cooperative development, and if so, could the original purpose be preserved?

2) As I started conducting this review, much of the academic literature I read on agricultural cooperatives were comparing cooperatives with investor-owned firms, suggesting developments like the actual development of Lantmännen. These links could be arbitrary, but they could also be causal, why research on the relationship between academics and practitioners in agricultural cooperatives is a subject for further inquiry.

3) I have reviewed the discourse of an agricultural cooperative, Lantmännen. The results show the aspirations of the leadership of the organization and details their agenda. But as mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, I have not reviewed the actual decisions, from the perspective of their outcomes. As this review has shown how the goal has changed in Lantmännen, from being satisfying the complex interest of the members, into generating profits; further studies on the actual relationship between the changed reasoning and the outcome for the member base are of interest

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