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Extrafamilial Farm Succession—Visualized by a Qualitative Model and Examined as an Adaptive Transfer Strategy Contributing to the Renewal of Peasantries

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Abstract

With the attempt of a systematic integration of agrarian and generational studies, this article aims at exposing a so far insufficiently studied issue, the process of extrafamilial farm transmission, bringing together elderly farmers without successors and young aspiring farmers seeking farming opportunity but confronted by different economic, social and cultural barriers to enter into the sector. Drawing on first-hand experiences collected from Austrian smallholder farmers, the extrafamilial farm succession process, generating multigenerational non-familial agrarian partnership, is systematically analysed, and visualized by two, generation-specific qualitative process models interconnected into a complex, multigenerational model, with the aim to expose separate and interlacing, circular and progressive movements and to highlight critical phases. The models are meant to provide practical guidance for future farm transferors and successors to prepare for farm succession with non-kins appropriately. The analysis leads to conclude that, extrafamilial farm succession offers an alternative, prospective mechanism against the decrease of the number of smallholder farms and for the maintenance of small-scale food production, thus improving food security and food sovereignty. It can be regarded as an adaptive strategy contributing to the survival and re-generation of peasantry in the 21th century.

Introduction: Extrafamilial Farm Succession as an Alternative for the transfer of Small Farms

The dominant corporate-driven agricultural system of industrialised countries and the global system of trade and markets seriously affect smaller-scale food provision securing the 70 % of the world's food supply, and shaping the socio-, economic-, and ecological landscape in all countries (HLPE, 2013). Though smallholder farming is the foundation of food security, the survival of the sector is seriously risked by several factors: As recognised at the highest international institutional and scientific levels, 'food and agricultural systems in the world are undergoing dramatic changes, becoming increasingly globalized, concentrated, industrialized and science-intense' (FAO, 2013 [101]). Beside facilitating overall growth and increasing efficiency, the new production practices focusing on the growth of agricultural output ignore the degradation of natural resources and bring genetic uniformity, resulting the loss of biodiversity (Edelman, Borras, 2016). These changes may 'significantly downgrade lifestyles and employment opportunities in rural areas' and create 'competitive barriers for small- and medium producers and processors' (FAO, ibid), leading to a gradual decrease of the number of smallholder farms.

The traditional, intrafamilial form of farm transfer, with the retiring farmer transferring knowledge, skills, managerial control and ownership of the farm business to the next generation (Lobely, et.al, 2010; Heistinger, Klein 2011, Borec et al., 2013), is often thwarted because of the migration from the countryside to towns, the tendency of 'deactivation', the reduction or complete elimination of agricultural activities (Van de Ploeg, 2008, p. 7), and the different career interests of the young generation in the family (Thomas, Vieth 2012). As a result of the above factors, 'in Europe, a farm closes its gates every 25 minutes' (Pérez, 2005, p. 212).

The trend of ageing of the population has contributed an additional, serious problem to the internationally observable decrease of the number of smallholder farms. In Europe, the survival of the agricultural sector itself is endangered by the unfavourable age structure of farmers (33.5 % of the European farm holders are 65 years or older, while only 7.5% of the active farmers are under 35 years in the EU-27, Zagatar, Lostak, 2012).

However, as suggested by the wide ranging conceptual analysis of the key forces and trends affecting current changes in contemporary agriculture, Van der Ploeg, in *The New Peasantries* (2008), states that alongside the processes of agricultural industrialization and deactivation, there is the clear tendency of 're-peasantization' – a quantitative enlargement and a qualitative strengthening of peasant agriculture.

As agrarian and food crises provoked by the industrialization of agriculture, damaging natural resources and environment, the liberalization of food and agricultural markets and the rise of food empires reducing food quality have demonstrated, the re-emerging peasantry and small-scale food production is 'strategic to future world food security' (ibid, 2010, p. 1). It is not only property relations that differentiate entrepreneurial trajectories from peasant-like farming trajectories, but also the different ways in which the production, distribution and appropriation of value are ordered.

The struggle for autonomy against industrialization, central to the 'peasant condition' (ibid, 2009, 23), requires strategies reducing the dependency of the unit of production from centralized markets and linking it to diverse circuits of exchange and markets, including a self-controlled and self-managed resource base, organic co-production with living nature with feed back to the resource base, and dynamic development by innovation and mobilisation of new forms of self-provisioning (also through multifunctionality and/or pluriactivity) integrated with the local traditional knowledge and technologies, material and social resources. This continuity between old and new peasantries and the capability of the peasantry to adapt to new and often adverse conjunctures (ibid, 2010) can safeguard the continuous renewal of peasant agriculture.

In a recent statement underlining the relevance of his critical analysis, Van der Ploeg stresses the necessity to 'defend and strengthen alternative forms of agricultural production, of food production, of food processing and of food marketing', to show 'that alternatives are possible, and very well able to proceed, to progress in an autonomous way' and 'to make these alternatives highly visible' (Van der Ploeg, 2017).

Extrafamilial farm succession, the transmission of a farm between non-kins, is a so far not sufficiently studied and discussed mechanism, which allows the transfer of existing smallholder farming units to the new generations, thus it can contribute to the maintenance of small-food production the survival of smallholder farms resisting the direct dependency on financial capital and the concentration of corporate power in the food system.

The extrafamilial farm succession mechanism establishing a *multigenerational non-familial agrarian collaboration* (Salatin, 2013, p. 13), can bring together elderly farmers without successor and young aspiring farmers seeking farming opportunity but, confronted by the closure of access to land, by the high farm start-up costs, and by different economic, social and cultural barriers, are unable to enter into the sector (White, 2011). Offering an 'unconventional transmission pattern' (Ingram, Kirwan, 2011, p. 919), it can give new answers to the diverse challenges of the agricultural modernisation and transformation of the agricultural society and can be of help with the maintenance of peasantry.

Research aims and methods

This article presents the main results of a PhD research conducted at the University of Vienna with the objective to expose the process of extrafamilial farm transmission as an alternative farm transmission mechanism, by collecting and analysing first-hand experiences from Austrian farmers. Direct experiences of farmers participating in the transmission process revealed how the extrafamilial farm succession mechanism, by creating a multigenerational non-familial agrarian partnership, can contribute to the maintenance of small farming and thus to the 'renewal of peasantries' in the 21st century.

This research attempted to visualize the process by the interconnected generation-specific qualitative model introduced below, with the aim of providing practical guidance for future farm transferors and successors to prepare for the farm succession with non-kins appropriately and to implement the process successfully.

Investigations of the extrafamilial farm succession process in Austria were motivated by the practical initiative of the *Österreichische Bergbauern- und Bäuerinnen Vereinigung, ÖBV- Via Campesina Austria,* the Austrian member organization of the worldwide peasant movement *La Via Campesina,* to set up an extrafamilial farm succession advisory service. The project of ÖBV, is supported by the *Netzwerk Existenzgründung in der Landwirtschaft,* part of the *Farm Succession in Europe E+ Network* (Farm Succession, 2016)

Although Austrian agriculture has traditionally been dominated by small-scale structures and large Alpine areas (Karner, ed., 2010, p.11), it faces growing product standardisation in production and trade, increasingly competitive markets and a reduced public support for agriculture (Glauben, et al, 2004). As in Europe in general, the tendency points towards

larger farms: between 1995 and 2013, the average size of farms increased from 15.3 ha to 19.4 ha (Statistik Austria, 2010, Eurostat, 2015). The number of holdings between 2010-2013 was reduced by 29.60% (Eurostat, 2015). While the lack of successors often drives Austrian farmers to give up farming and sell their holding – according to Vogel (2006) 11.7 % of Austrian full-time (Haupterwerb) farmers and 24.2 % part-time (Nebenerwerb) farmers have not designated their successor (2006) – resulting in a continuous reduction and concentration of farms, there is a rising interest by young aspiring farmers to engage in extrafamilial farm succession. According to a research initiated by *Landjugend Österreich* in 2015, the percentage of extrafamilial farm successions related to the total number of successions in Austria still represents only 1.3 % (Quendler et al, 2015).

The ÖBV initiative sought to rely on the pioneering investigations of the extrafamilial farm succession mechanism by Vieth meant to serve as the basis of his guidelines *Höfe – gründen und bewahren. Ein Leitfaden für außerfamiliäre Hofübergaben und Existenzgründungen in der Landwirtschaft/ [Establishing and preserving farms. Guidelines for extrafamilial farm succession and business start-ups in agriculture]* (Vieth, 2008) for *hofgründer.de*, an advice service for farmers in Germany. It includes an overall analysis of the German legal and financial framework in which the farm succession might take place and the needs, expectations and obstacles actors may face in the process. In his model, Vieth separates 5 stages (want, form, searching, handing/taking over, completion) actors should progress to successfully finalize the process contributing to the maintenance of farming culture and to the further development of rural areas.

Data collection, aiming to explore and understand the extrafamilial farm succession process with the application of qualitative research methods, was conducted by interviewing actors of ten extrafamilial farm succession processes in Vienna and in four regions of Austria (Upper Austria, Lower Austria, Styria, Salzburg). No official database being available about farms transmitted between non-relatives, the identification of the research cases required an intensive search. First contacts to actors involved in extrafamilial farm succession were provided by the Regionale Landwirtschaftskammer (Austrian Regional Agricultural Chambers) and by ÖBV. To extend the number of potential interviewees, the snow-ball sampling technique was applied successfully. The field research (applying semi-structured interviews guiding the data collection) provided me first-hand information and a direct insight into the generation-specific experiences related to the extrafamilial farm succession process at its different stages. To extract relevant information, to structure and organize the collected data, the qualitative data analysis method of 'qualitative content analysis' (Maying, 2000) was applied.

In order to expose the extrafamilial farm succession process stage-by-stage, the outcomes of the data analysis have been visualized through the development of two generation-specific qualitative process models (Przborsi; Wohlrabl, 2009), interconnected into a third, complete, multigenerational model, rendering separate and interlacing, possible circular and progressive movements.

The visualization of the extrafamilial farm succession process by the generation-specific and interconnected qualitative process models introduced below, may provide practical guidance for future farm transferors and successors to prepare for farm succession with non-kins appropriately.

Concerning the legal and economic aspects of the process, a clear legal framework and efficient economic strategy based on the elaborate analysis of relevant economic indicators – falling outside the scope of this paper – are also necessary to implement the process successfully.

The Detailed Process of Extrafamilial Farm Succession

The extrafamilial farm succession process, the transfer of knowledge, labour, skills, management, control and ownership of the farm business from the retiring generation to a non-kin, inevitably affects both the retiring and the successor generations: for the elderly farmers – transferors – succession means the exit from agriculture, while for the new generation – successors – it marks the start of a farming career (Lobely, et al, 2010). Farm succession can, therefore, be considered as a 'twin process' (ibid, p. 51), in which retirement and succession are 'mirror images' (ibid). At the same time, both generations would like to ensure their own well-being on the farm by ensuring its continuity.

Though extrafamilial farm succession is insufficiently discussed in literature so far, academic investigations of the traditional – intrafamilial – form of farm succession mechanism suggest, that the transfer itself is one of the most difficult stages even in the development of family farms (Errington, 2002), the 'major bottleneck in the farm life cycle' (Clais et al., 2008, p.1). The biggest challenge during this period is to bridge the generation gap on the farm, in order to ensure the 'smooth transfer' (Potter, Lobley, 1996, p. 286) of knowledge and managerial control, while securing the well-being of both generations and the survival of the farm itself. The strong interconnection of family, land and business in the agricultural holding sets serious challenges for both the transferors and the successors. The transmission of both tangible and intangible assets from the retiring generation to the generation entering into farming is not to be considered as a single event happening at the signature of the succession contract, rather as a long, complex and 'fraught' process (Potter, Lobley, 1992, p. 317) including different phases, happenings, decisions and careful collaboration between the generations concerned (Lobely, Whitehead, 2010).

Considering that each farm succession occurs in a unique way, similarities between transmission cases were detected and abstracted in order to create an analytical tool. In order to expose the extrafamilial farm succession process stage-by-stage, two process models were developed from the aspects of the transferors and the successors, visualizing all generation-specific steps (Figs. 1, 2). The here presented models are theoretical representations of patterns identified in concrete cases. Structured according to various

stages and as a horizontal flow, they present the chronologic process rendering separate and interlacing, possible circular and progressive movements.

To highlight phases, where trajectories of transferors and successors possibly match, enabling successful collaboration between the two generations along the farm succession process, the two generation-specific process models are interconnected into a third, complex, multigenerational model (Fig.3).

Generation-specific extrafamilial farm succession processes

The extrafamilial farm succession process from the aspect of the elderly generation – transferors

The farm succession trajectory from the aspect of the elderly generation – the transferors –, visualized by the first analytic model (Fig. 1), contains 10 subsequent phases, each one requiring strategic decisions as preconditions of the way forward.

Phases of the process from the aspect of elderly farmers – transferors:

Pre-succession period

1. Managing the family farm

Elderly farmers have been actively working on the farm, usually in full-time occupation for about 40 years. During this pre-succession period they invested time, energy and human and financial resources to maintain and further develop their activities. They are also motivated to maintain the farm, as the family heritage and their home during their old days. Decreasing physical conditions and declining working capacity often make farmers incapable to perform usual farming activities. Lacking appropriate conditions, they are driven to decide for engaging themselves in the succession process.

Succession Period

2. Intrafamilial succession excluded

It is the first stage of the succession period. As elderly farmers, usually wish family members as possible successors of the farm, this stage could incorporate multiple attempts for intrafamilial farm transmission. If they have no children, nephews or nieces can also come into question as potential kins. However, even if there are family members available for taking over the farm, concrete co-working/co-farming may potentially fail due to diverse expectations and notions of the actors.

3. Considering extrafamilial farm succession

If no suitable heir is available in the family, elderly farmers either decide to progressively reduce their farming activity, and sell or lease the farmland hectare-by-hectare, or to maintain the farm, and look for extrafamilial farm succession possibilities. Their health condition and the deterioration of the state of the farm may also enhance their willingness to accept a non-kin successor. In case if none of the potential family heirs decide to continue the family farm, clear decisions are to be taken regarding its future. The farmer and the heirs should agree on the financial and personal consequences of the final decision.

In case elderly farmers decide to engage in extrafamilial farm succession, they might go through the four subsequent phases of the farm succession process (Phases 4, 5, 6, 7) multiple times, and by doing so, their movement may be circular, until finding the suitable successor. Depending on their expectations and preconceptions concerning successors, this period can take longer or shorter. Passing through the upcoming four phases more times can result more realistic expectations.

4. Collecting information

When collecting information about possibilities, and about the financial, legal and personal challenges, requirements and consequences of extrafamilal farm succession, transferors tend to consider different sources. Friends, relatives, the agricultural chamber, state or private advisors might be of help with providing them with recommendations and suggestions regarding the succession process. Several national institutions, and civil society organizations have developed advisory materials including methodologies and useful tools. Other farmers involved in extrafamilial farm succession can share their good and bad experiences regarding the transmission process. Information collected during this stage can be of vital importance in selecting a non-kin successor.

5. Collecting contacts to non-kin successors

At this phase, or in parallel to Phase 4, transferors start looking for an appropriate nonkin person/couple to take over the farm. By seeking through different channels, advertisements in newspapers or following the advice of relatives, friends or neighbours, they collect contacts to interested, 'wana-be' farmers. Often, a first telephone call can serve as a filter. The significance of the personal and social factors should, therefore, be considered from the beginning. In case of negative decision searching and collecting information (Phase 4) goes on.

6. 'Interviewing' potential successors

If the first exchange, often via telephone, looked promising, transferors invite the potential successor(s) for a visit. A personal meeting at the farm obviously allows a detailed discussion between the actors. It can serve as a good opportunity to share and

clarify several issues regarding the future of the farm, even to make preliminary agreements concerning its operation.

If the actors' expectations are incompatible, transferors can return to the previous phases (4, 5). In case, if transferors select an applicant as their successor, probation can start. As interviews revealed, transferors are more likely to choose a young person who was recommended by relatives of friends. Socialisation in a farming family, agricultural education and working experiences also appeared as positively influencing elements.

7. Probation period: teaching and testing the successor

This phase of the succession process incorporates attempts to co-operate and to share living spaces with the successor. If transferors are still actively involved in farming, this stage enables them to get familiar with the successor. Sharing tasks and activities with the newcomer can reveal the real practical capabilities, the managing capacities and the reliability of the future successor. Transferors present the aspiring farmer working practices which they have been applying.

This stage seems to be decisive in terms of better understanding the potentials of intergenerational farming cooperation.

Circular activity (Phases 4, 5, 6, 7) may go on until an appropriate successor is selected. May the collaboration look promising, a succession contract can be signed (see later).

8. Joint operation of the farm

Oral and written arrangements concluded, not only work but everyday life in its total complexity is shared with the successor, the importance of personal and social factors should therefore be highlighted during the whole process.

During the joint operation transferors, while transmitting the locally adapted agricultural knowledge and practices applied for generations, can also benefit from intergenerational learning, from innovations applied by the successor.

9. Reduced influence, transformed activity

After the period of shared farm management with the younger generation, transferors, due to their reduced physical capacities, tend to step back from the main farming activities and reduce their involvement in the management of the business. Instead, they can perform smaller tasks around the farm (e.g. cultivating the garden) or new roles in the newly established multigenerational partnership (e.g. taking care of the children of the successor couple while they work). Active work can contribute to their good health conditions and longevity (Thelin, Holmberg, 2010). They can avoid social isolation (Kolland, 2008, Hernandez-Peck, 2001; Salamon, Lockhart, 1980), and remain part of their rural community.

10.Withdrawal on the farm

Due to the strong interconnection between farming, family and life on small family farms, transferors frequently work until the end ('dying with the booths on', Kickpatrick, 2012). In several cases, however, their physical or mental conditions do not allow them to remain involved in the farming activities. Withdrawing from the management with their mental and physical capacity decreasing, they can follow up the fate of their farm representing their 'lifetime's work (Lebenswerk)' (Korzenszky, et.al, 2013). This way, they can avoid an intensive retirement shock (Rossier, 2012). This multigenerational constellation enables them to live further in their house, within the new familiar context. And to die in their well-known environment, on the farm. Research results suggest that, despite the lack of an intrafamilial successor, the multigenerational partnership developed through the extrafamilial farm succession, offers transferors an alternative strategy to fulfil their expectations.

GENERATION-SPECIFIC MODEL OF THE EXTRAFAMILIAL FARM SUCCESSION – ELDERLY / TRANSFERORS





The extrafamilial farm succession process from the aspect of the young generation – successors

The farm succession trajectory from the aspect the young generation – the successors – (visualized by the second analytic model /Fig. 2/), similarly to that from the aspect of the elderly generation – the transferors, contains 10 subsequent phases, each one requiring strategic decisions as preconditions of the way forward.

Phases of the process from the aspect of young/aspiring farmers – successors:

Pre-succession period

1. A Farming background/ 1. B Non-farming background

In terms of personal background, you can identify two different points of origin, from which young, aspiring farmers can enter into the succession process. The future successor can come from a farming family (1.A), where another brother/sister is the intrafamilial farm successor, or conflicts within the family hinder cooperation. As another possibility, future successors without any farming roots (1.B), can also be interested in enter into agriculture. According to the evidences of the literature, there is an increasing number of young people engaged in different other occupations, willing to settle down on small farms in the countryside.

Motivations driving youth to engage into the succession process can be the growing interest in and awareness of local, healthy food, the increasing interest of being self-sufficient and starting a new life that is connected to nature.

2.A Know-how from the family/ 2.B Agricultural education

Those, with agricultural family background might collect their farming knowledge and agricultural practices by working at the family farm (2.A). (However, it is to be noted, that agricultural socialisation in farming families is not always the case, as some kids never get involved in agricultural activities around the house.)

Potential successors without farming know-how from the family (2.B) usually enter different levels of agricultural education and join agricultural businesses to collect both theoretical knowledge and practical experience.

If young aspiring farmers, indeed, decide on entering into agriculture by cultivating their own farm, they should consider possible solutions with respect to their financial capital and sources.

Succession period

3. Considering extrafamilial farm succession

Possible solutions of possessing a farm can be buying or leasing land, joining to a farming community, or taking over a farm from a non-kin farmer. Extrafamilial farm succession allows young aspiring farmers to enter in agriculture at their own farm without considerable start-up capital.

If young farmers decide to engage in extrafamilial farm succession, they might go through the four subsequent phases of the farm succession process (Phases 4, 5, 6, 7) multiple times, and by doing so, their movement may be circular, until finding the suitable farm with a transferor with whom they can cooperate. Passing through the upcoming four phases more times can result in more realistic expectations concerning available farms, and can provide a successful mode of communication with elderly farmers.

4. Collecting information

When collecting information about the possibility and about the financial, legal and personal challenges, requirements and consequences of extrafamilal farm succession, potential successors tend to consider different sources: Friends, relatives, the agricultural chamber, state or private advisors might be of help with providing them with recommendations and suggestions regarding the succession process. As seen above, several national institutions and civil society organizations have developed advisory materials including methodologies and useful tools. Farmers, involved in extrafamilial farm succession can share their experiences regarding the process. Information collected during this stage can be of vital importance in finding the appropriate farm and transferor.

5. Collecting contacts to transferors

At this phase, or in parallel to Phase 4, potential successors start searching for available farms and potential transferors via different channels (verbal information, newspapers, advertisements, Internet). By gathering information about available farms, they concretize their expectations and fit their image of farming business to reality. Often, a first telephone call can clarify some general issues of the potential farm takeover. In case of negative decision, searching and collecting information (Phase 4) goes on.

6. 'Interview' at the farm

If available information about the farm and the first exchange looked promising, the potential successor check the conditions and meet the transferor. A personal meeting at the farm, allows a detailed discussion between the actors. It can serve as a good opportunity to share and clarify several issues regarding the future of the farm, even to

make preliminary agreements concerning its operation. During this conversation, the personality of the elderly farmer may play a crucial role for the potential successors. It may be of primary significance from the point of view of their positive or negative decision. The significance of the personal and social factor should, therefore, be considered from the beginning. Discussions during the farm visit may bring up elements which might have never been considered by the aspiring farmers.

In case of negative decision, further orientation (Phase 4) and consultation (Phase 5) is needed. If potential successors consider conditions promising and find the farm and the transferor appropriate, probation can start.

7. Probation period: learning, assisting and testing

This phase of the succession process incorporates attempts to co-operate and to share living spaces with the transferor. Potential successors might assist transferors in order to observe and learn about their farming techniques and managing practices. It is the phase of getting familiar with each other. For potential successors, this phase is decisive from the point of view of their final decision for the farm.

Circular movement (Phases 4, 5, 6, 7) may go on until an appropriate farm with a transferor is selected and accepted. May the collaboration look promising, a succession contract can be signed (see later).

8. Joint operation of the farm

Once the contract is signed, joint farm operation can start. Successors, ssimultaneously, share their everyday life (meals, celebrations, etc.) with the elderly farmer. In this sense, the non-kin successor entering into the process necessarily substitutes a kin successor for the transferor, while the transferor can integrate the newcomer into the local community. The importance of the personal and social factors can, therefore never be neglected during the process.

Aspiring farmers entering into farming bring a number of resources– skills, networks, and financial capital, marketing and management practices – gained outside of farming, allowing innovation into the farming sector. This knowledge, however, requires adaptation to and consolidation with the local environmental and socioeconomic conditions. New initiatives can only be implied successfully, if they are well adjusted and carefully matched with the specific local settings and experience the transferor is aware of. Provided by land, equipment, infrastructure, and the possibility of intergenerational learning, new successors are given the opportunity to generate their income while testing their novel ideas in a protected environment. This phase, therefore, serves as a kind of incubator (Winther, 2013).

To increase the reproduction circuit, successors – usually one of the farming couple -- can maintain their previous, usually non-agricultural activities (pluriactivity) or develop multiple activities connected to farming (multifunctionality).

9. Increased influence in management

Farm successors progressively take the managerial control in their hands and increase their responsibilities and decision-making authority on the farm. Along their growing competence they often (re-)shape the farm and its production model according to their initiatives. Exploiting the given (tangible and intangible) farming assets and resources brought from outside, successors can successfully transform and improve the operation of the farm.

10. Managing the (family) farm

If the transferors' physical or mental conditions do not allow them to remain involved in the farming activities, successors become the only actor taking decisions in the farm management. They can create a new unity of home life and work on the farm. While operating the farm, successors provide monetary and non-monetary assistance for the old transferor.

GENERATION-SPECIFIC MODEL OF THE EXTRAFAMILIAL FARM SUCCESSION - YOUTH/ SUCCESSORS



Fig. 2: Generation-specific model of the extrafamilial farm succession process – youth/successor

Interconnection of the generation-specific extrafamilal farm succession processes

Interconnections within the multigenerational process can exposed by interlacing the two generation-specific models (Fig 3). The resulting, complex qualitative model visualises how generations' pathways along the farm succession process can meet, interlace, unite and in the end, be divided. It can serve as a useful tool to identify intertwining, critical, matching and miss-matching phases and to develop an advanced understanding of the challenges and potentials of the farm transmission between non-kin actors.

INTERCONNECTED, MULTIGENERATIONAL MODEL OF EXTRAFAMILIAL FARM SUCCESSION



(Korzenszky, 2017)



The extrafamilial farm succession mechanism can bring together elderly farmers who could otherwise neither maintain their farm nor transmit it to the next generation of small-scale food producers in the family, with young aspiring farmers who would otherwise have no access to land and to all the tangible and intangible assets of farming.

The pathways of the young and the elderly farmers may intertwine for the first time while collecting contacts (Phase 5), with transferors seeking successors, and aspiring young farmers searching for available farms. Evidence, however, shows that the elderly and the young farmers use different channels of advertising and searching (verbal information, newspapers advertisements, Internet), creating serious obstacles for really matching partners finding each other.

The first act of communication (letter or telephone call) outlining their aims and expectations, may serve as a filter, a decisive act favouring or excluding continuation. The significance of the personal and social factor during the whole process cannot be overemphasised. In case of negative decision, actors must keep on collecting contacts (Phase 5) and information (Phase 4).

In case of positive decision a personal encounter can take place (Phase 6). This 'interview' between the actors may provide a better understanding of each other's expectations and possibilities. In case of incompatible expectations, both actors return to the phase of searching (Phase 5). If transferors select an applicant as their successor, and the applicant considers conditions promising and find the farm and the transferor appropriate, probation period (Phase 7) incorporating attempts by the actors to co-operate and to share living spaces can start. If the cooperation does not look promising, circular activity (Phases 4, 5, 6, 7) can go on.

This possibly circular movement while selecting and finding the appropriate partners (Phases 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) necessarily involves uncertainty and emotional stress for both actors until reaching the final decision and signing the contract.

If the probation turns out to be promising, a succession contract specifying obligations of the actors towards each other, including monetary and nonmonetary assistance, can be signed. The most often applied contract form among the farmers interviewed, was the so-called life annuity (Leibrente)¹ contract, the classic and most popular form of extrafamilial farm succession in Austria (Heistinger, Klein, 2011). The life annuity contract between two parties is defined in the Austrian Civil Code, under the paragraphs number 1284, 1285 and 1286. It sets a certain amount of money, or monetary estimated objects/properties, to be paid regularly – mostly monthly – to the end of the transferor's life. The amount of this fee is defined case by case, and is set individually between the actors.

Oral and written arrangements concluded, substantial cooperate work (Phase 8) can start. Research evidences show that the newly established multigenerational

¹ "**5.** Leibrente; § 1284. Wird jemandem für Geld, oder gegen eine für Geld geschätzte Sache auf die Lebensdauer einer gewissen Person eine bestimmte jährliche Entrichtung versprochen; so ist es ein Leibrentenvertrag. / § 1285. Die Dauer der Leibrente kann von dem Leben des einen oder andern Teiles, oder auch eines Dritten abhängen. Sie wird im Zweifel vierteljährig vorhinein entrichtet; und nimmt in allen Fällen mit dem Leben desjenigen, auf dessen Kopf sie beruht, ihr Ende. / § 1286. Weder die Gläubiger, noch die Kinder desjenigen, welcher sich eine Leibrente bedingt, sind berechtigt, den Vertrag umzustoßen. Doch steht den erstern frei, ihre Befriedigung aus den Leibrenten zu suchen; den letztern aber, die Hinterlegung eines entbehrlichen Teiles der Rente zu fordern, um sich den ihnen nach dem Gesetze gebührenden Unterhalt darauf versichern zu lassen." (Civil Code, Austria)

non-family farming community, having control over the main resources, provides the majority of the labour force on the farm. Given its multigenerational features, this non-family farming community can, similarly to natural families, operate successfully, if actors can mutually benefit from the harmonized in- and outflow of generation-specific knowledge (Neumeier, 2011), with the transferor accepting initiatives by the successor and the successor, provided by home, land, equipment, infrastructure and the locally adapted agricultural knowledge and practices applied for generations, transmitted by the transferor adapting his expectations and initiatives to the local environmental, socioeconomic and cultural conditions.

The farm, however, is not only a place of agricultural production (Van der Ploeg 2013). At Phase 8, not only joint farm operation is started but everyday life in its total complexity is shared. Beyond re-organizing the tasks and responsibilities around the agricultural activities, actors involved in the farm succession process have to consider several further aspects of the new situation. The entrance into the process of the non-kin successor substituting a kin successor for the transferor and his acceptance by the transferor, necessarily result in a similar cooperation, that is naturally generated in intrafamilial farm succession processes. With the new generation, potentially a family with children, settling on the farm, the residential situation at the farm house might be reorganized, daily meals are to be shared or taken separately. Celebrations and participating at local events are to be organized carefully. The mutually provided assistance requires continuous readjustments according to the life-stage, and the physical and mental conditions of the transferor and the successor.

The intergenerational relation between the old transferors and the young successor can develop progressively from a hierarchic, 'supervisor' - 'student' relation (Phase 7) through the equal relation of 'co-managers' (Phase 8) to the final, 'helper'-' new manager' relation (Phase 9) with the successor becoming the manager and the transferor becoming a helper at his farm until withdrawing from work. As suggested by the dance metaphor by Handler, the process is similar to connected dance moves: until the former operator has not moved from one stage to the next, the successor cannot move forward (Handler, 1994, p 136). In the core of the procedure, there is the transfer of leadership, decision-making authority and experiences. The extrafamilial farm succession, appears to occur as a mutual role adjustment process between the actors. To enable the succession, the transferor slowly moves out from his/her previous role, and the successor progressively takes over his/her position. In a successful extrafamilal farm succession process, actors continually re-adjust their relation to each other and to the farm: the transferor is gradually disengaged form farming with the successor taking over the management.

Contributions of extrafamilial farm succession, as a multigenerational non-familial agrarian partnership to the 'renewal of peasantries'

By creating the conditions of the transfer of smallholder farms otherwise not maintained – and thus of the continuity of these farms active in small-scale food production – the extrafamilial farm succession mechanism offers a viable alternative from the direct dependency on financial capital and the concentration of corporate power in the food system. Though insufficiently recognised so far, it is evidently worth to be highlighted and made 'highly visible' (Van der Ploeg, 2017).

Patterns of farm transfer from the retiring to the new farmer generation, have significant implications for the future structure of agricultural and rural development (Erington 2002). Extrafamilial farm succession generating a *multigenerational non-familial agrarian partnership*, is a complex, multi-layered transfer mechanism that can offer local solutions to global problems in many ways.

It can bring together elderly farmers, who could otherwise neither maintain their farm nor transmit it to the next generation of small-scale food producers in the family, with young aspiring farmers, who would otherwise have no access to land and to all the tangible and intangible assets of farming. Land, as crucial component of 'peasant identity' (Van der Ploeg, 2016), is of strategic importance in the transmission process for both generations concerned. While transferors interviewed are concerned in the survival of their farm, 'Someone should follow you on the farm to cultivate it! Cultivate! Good will alone is not enough²⁷, successors are consciously aiming at maintaining it as a smallholder farm, 'We also want to show that small farms are still viable:'³ The transmission of land including all natural and social resources it carries by the old transferor, and the access to land and to all the tangible and intangible assets of farming by young aspiring farmers, contributes to the *survival of smallholder farms*. It offers a prospective mechanism *against the decrease of the number of small farms and for the maintenance of the continuity of small-scale food producing*.

The active cooperation of the generations during work and beyond, can *create* important *linkages between past, present and future* (Van der Ploeg, 2013). The multigenerational constellation provides *home, protection and care for the ageing farmers at their own living space – in family setting* if offered by the successor's family. As a transferor outlines his expectations in an interview, '... family contact, perhaps. So that they can somehow take care of me, or that if I'm really sick, I

³ Wir wollen auch zeigen dass noch Kleinlandwirtschaften funktionieren. (case study #5, successor)

² Man will, dass später auch, dass, hinter uns, wer den Hof, bewirtschaften! Bewirtschaftet! Nicht nur wollen, wie sagt man, wollen tut nichts! Bewirtschaftet, das war der Hintergrund bei uns gewesen. (case study #7, transferor)

don't have to go to a retirement home, if I grow old and weak, right? ... My home is here! This is my wish ... a loving family, sharing meals, tea in the morning, you could communicate with, and with whom you are on the same wavelength...⁴. The young farmers and their families, on the other hand, can benefit from the farm providing them with home, income and the realization of their desire to settle down in the country and enter agriculture.

By bringing new living labour into the sector of small-scale food production, extrafamilial farm succession can *counter the tendency of 'deactivation'*, the reduction of agricultural activities,

Furthermore, by providing these, additional young, aspiring farmers opportunity to enter smallholder farming while protecting the ageing farming generation, extrafamilial farm succession facilitating a generational turnover, can contribute a better-balanced share of farmers across age cohorts. It offers *a potential to reverse the increasing age disequilibrium in agriculture, the trend of ageing of farmers' society*.

Extrafamilial farm succession enables young aspiring farmers to enter in agriculture at their own farm without considerable start-up capital, to find their new home and to have access to land and to all the tangible and intangible assets of farming. As a young aspiring farmer said, 'Extrafamilial farm succession ... has many advantages ... if you just don't have enough money to buy a farm, there is a different solution'.⁵ Reconstructions, changes or necessary investments on the farm can be implemented in a progressive manner. Existing structures can serve as a good basis for further development and innovations. The farm provides a possibility for the successors, to learn and practice farming in a potentially protected constellation, under the supervision of the transferor.

As seen above, the harmonized in- and outflow of generation-specific knowledge (Neumeier, 2011) provided by the multigenerational constellation provides an excellent possibility to interconnect, match and, combine the traditional knowledge with new modern ideas and practices. Along the interlacing phases of the extrafamilial farm succession process (Phases 7, 8, 9), a continuous, collaborative action is undertaken by the two farmers' generations, to optimize and improve the farm's settings. 'Yes, at the beginning, we had to get tuned to each other, let's put it that way. There was a transitional phase, and since then we have been working together, we have always been there together all four of us [in the stall]^{'6}.

⁴ ...eventuell, Familienanschluss. Also die mich irgendwie als Pflege oder wenn man wirklich krank ist, dass ich nicht ins Heim gehe, wenn man alt und schwach ist., nein?... ich bin hier zu Hause! Es wäre meine Wunsch...eine Liebevolle Familie, Essen am Tische, Morgen einen Tee, mit denen man kommunizieren kann,

auf mit dem gleichen Wälle ist (case study #3, transferor).

⁵ Ausserfamiliäre Hofübergabe viele Vorteile auch hat, und wenn man gerade sagt, man hat nicht so viel Geld eine ganze Landwirtshaft zu kaufen, und dann macht es irgendwie dann anders. (case study #2, successor).

⁶ Ja, es war so, dass wir am Anfang haben uns eingespielt, sagen wir so. Es gab so eine Einspielphase, dann haben alle miteinander gearbeitet, waren dann immer zu viert da [in dem Stall] (case study#8, successor).

Young aspiring farmers, entering into farming, bring a number of resources gained outside of farming—skills, networks, and financial capital, marketing and management practices—allowing *innovation* into the farming sector (Sutherland, 2015). This knowledge, however, requires *adaptation to and consolidation with the experience accumulated and the knowledge transferred by the elderly farmers and with the local environmental and socioeconomic conditions.*

The knowledge that elderly farmers have collected from their ancestors, in some cases for centuries, is an invaluable heritage of peasantry. It is important to recognise that peasant knowledge holds vital elements and practices for the future of world agriculture, therefore the intergenerational succession of these intangible 'capitals' of farming (in which both young and old generations have their own role and responsibility) is of vital importance (Ferrante et al, 2015, p.76). The knowledge concerning their location-specific crops, soil, animals, weather conditions and the best tools and best courses of action learned and 'meticulously fine-tuned' (Van der Ploeg, 2010, p.13) throughout their lifetime, and the historically accumulated resources (Bohler, Hildebrand, 1997), are indispensable for running the given farm successfully (Eco Ruralis, 2016) and sustainably. As revealed by interviews recorded during my field work, young aspiring farmers are aware of the significance of land as 'ecological capital' (Van der Ploeg 2010, p. 2) and the importance of food production practiced in dynamic 'co-production'(ibid), in a continuous interaction between human actors and nature, an approach, that can increase the reproduction circuit. They were consciously seeking a life strongly engaged and in continuous exchange with nature. 'It is important that you live with nature, not against it. We work with agriculture and with nature. This is our basic principle 7'. The maintenance of agricultural diversity helps ensure sustainable food production.

Continuously reproducing their ecological capital, *reducing their monetary linkages to the mainstream market and developing distance from commodity relations* successors can obtain 'self-provisioning' (Van der Ploeg 2010, p.7), another central feature of peasant farming, and maintain their autonomy. 'The more independent we are, the better'⁸ a successor claimed.

To increase the reproduction circuit, successors, as seen above, often maintain their previous, usually non-farming related activities */pluriactivity* or 'new rurality'/ (Kay, 2008). Generally, only one of the new farming couple gets involved into farming, while the other maintains his/her non-agricultural occupation. Drawing up different income sources contributes to the increased stability of the farming business. 'So, my wife works at the office of the warehouse. It functions very well. She works only 15 hours, otherwise she is at home, where we have also opened a garden planning.'⁹

4

⁷ Es ist wichtig, dass man mit der Natur lebt, und nicht gegen die Natur. Wir arbeiten mit der Landwirtschaft und mit der Natur. Das ist unsere Grundlage (case study #9, successor)

⁸ Je unabhängiger wir sind, desto besser (case study #2, successor)

⁹ Es hat sich gut ergeben. Sie arbeitet nur bis 15 Stunden, und die andere Zeit ist sie Zuhause, wir haben dann eben neben der Landwirtschaft eine garden palanning gegründet (case study #5, successor).

Further possibilities of income diversification are offered by the development of multiple activities 'within the farm gate' (Loughrey, 2013) /multifunctionality/, by diversifying agricultural production or by developing further activities connected to farming (agro-tourism, recreation/sports activities, handicrafts, production of renewable energy, on-farm food processing). As one of the interviewed successors explained, 'And by undertaking horse farming and building, we could extend a bit, so we could gain a certain level of autonomy from them, as we have a second pillar now. We have started on-farm tourism too. They complement each other, because now people can be accommodated after trail riding¹⁰'.

New activities and marketing strategies, introduced by the successors, have high potentials to reduce their monetary linkages to the mainstream market and strengthen and increase connections to the territorial agrofood system and to the local community. 'We take the horses to the farmers' market once a month...We benefit from selling the products and also from that people know that, yes, Wolfgang is coming with the horses, and it is a great attraction not only for the children but for all.. The old take photos with the horses as it is... it is something special¹¹. Developing alternative food distribution networks and short food supply chains, not only enable smallholders to obtain better income for their products, but also allows better linkages between rural and urban areas.

Consciously resisting the globalised food production and distribution system, by sustaining independent resource-based food production, small-scale farms, maintained by the extrafamilal farm succession mechanism, are able to face challenges of international crises caused by the interaction of the industrialization of agriculture, the liberalization of markets and the rise of food empires, and may strongly contribute to food security and food sovereignty. Extrafamilial farm succession can, therefore, be regarded as an adaptive transfer strategy, contributing to re-peasantization, to the maintenance and re-generation of the peasant society.

Summary

Though insufficiently recognised so far, the extrafamilial farm succession mechanism offering an additional, prospective strategy to maintain smallholder farms and small-scale food production, resisting the direct dependency on financial capital and the concentration of corporate power in the food system, it is evidently worth to be highlighted and made 'highly visible' (Van der Ploeg, 2017).

¹⁰ Und die Pferdewirtschaft, mit dem bauen, haben wir so ausgebreitet, dass nicht mehr nur von dem abhängig sind, weil jetzt haben wir eine zweite Standbein. Machen wir auch 'Urlaub aufm Bauernhof', aber das passt gut zusammen, wenn bei Wanderreiten bei Nacht bleiben kann (case study #10, successor). ¹¹ Wir fahren zu den Bauernmarkt mit den Pferden. Es ist einmal im Monat....davon profitieren wir, weil wir dadurch einen markt machen, und weil die Leute natürlich wissen, ja der Wolfgang kommt wieder mit dem Pferden, und es ist für die Kinder und für alle natürlich Attraktion. Die Alten lassen sich mit denen auch fotografieren, weil das ... das ist was Seltenes (case study #5, successor).

The systematic analysis of the extrafamilial farm succession mechanism and its visualization by two, generation-specific qualitative process models interconnected into a complex, multigenerational model, helped to reveal and expose separate and interlacing, circular and progressive movements within the process and highlight its critical phases. This model may provide practical guidance for future farm transferors and successors to prepare for farm succession with non-kins appropriately and to implement the process successfully.

Participants of the extrafamilial farm succession process can benefit from possibilities otherwise not given. Representing a direct unity of work and life, the transferred farms continue providing home, work and living for transferors who would otherwise have to give up farming. The mechanism also provides home, access to land and to all the tangible and intangible assets of farming for new entrants in agriculture: to young aspiring farmers who would otherwise have no access to the peasant way of farming.

By providing additional young, aspiring farmers the opportunity to enter smallholder farming, extrafamilial farm succession can not only counter the reduction of agricultural activities, but it can contribute a better-balanced share of farmers across age cohorts and may have a potential to reverse the increasing age disequilibrium in agriculture, the trend of ageing of farmers' society.

During the transmission of the farm including all natural and social resources it carries by the old transferor, both actors can benefit from intergenerational learning, from the harmonized in- and outflow of generation-specific knowledge. Innovative projects by the young are to be adapted to the experience accumulated and the knowledge transferred by the elderly and to the local environmental and socioeconomic conditions to assist the organic and sustainable development of the farm. Farms transmitted through the extrafamilial farm succession mechanism generating a multigenerational non-familial agrarian partnership, aim at self-provisioning by dynamically and sustainably managing their natural, economic and human resources, consciously moving away from the mainstream market and from commodity relations, entering upon new activities and introducing new, adaptive products and services, distributed through territorial markets, alternative food distribution networks, and short food supply chains.

By creating the conditions of the transfer and thus the continuity of viable agricultural units, extrafamilial farm succession offers a prospective mechanism against the decrease of the number of smallholder farms and for the maintenance of small-scale food production, thus improving food security and food sovereignty. It can be regarded as an adaptive strategy contributing to the survival and re-generation of peasantry.

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