Farming ideals and rural realities

– Swedish agricultural politics in governmental and local context 1948-1950

Abstract
The paper will discuss the usage of different ideals concerning “the rural” and what it should consist of in a period when both the structure of, and the actual farming in Sweden underwent major changes. In order to discuss this, debates regarding land ownership between potential land owners and the local state agency Lantbruksnämnden will be analysed. Who was considered to be the most suitable land owner and why? Was it the most economically efficient landowner that was preferred, as the agricultural policies of the time would suggest, or can other ideals – traced back to family continuity and tradition – be found? Can the changes in rural areas in the post war period be explained merely by state ambitions of efficiency and rationalization, or did local and personal ideas of “the rural” have an equal part in creating the countryside that we see today? In the paper I show that alongside arguments concerning land consolidation and economic viability, arguments related to family was frequently used as reinforcement in debates over acquisition of land. Different perceptions of rurality are also found and indicate that the rationalization of Swedish agrarian structure was not a process entirely run by the rural ideals expressed within the Lantbruksnämnd.

Introduction
In a broad western perspective the agricultural development after the Second World War was quite similar, with decreasing numbers of rural population and workers within agriculture alongside growth in production and surpluses of agricultural commodities. Involvement of the State in agriculture also expanded during this period, with numerous legislations directing both the agricultural market and the agrarian structure. For the countries in Europe, and particularly those connected by the OEEC and EEC, the question of free trade, increased food production and poor living standards of the rural population became the main focus of agrarian policies. After being implemented in 1957, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) functioned as a general regulation of the agricultural market and to some extent the rural structure within the EEC. For example in 1968 a strategy in the CAP was presented with the aim to decrease the number of small holders in

order to increase the acreage in efficient family farms. In comparison with the development in other European countries Swedish agricultural policies were less focused on international trade. Being outside the EEC, the national food supply was taken into consideration and self-sufficiency was to be achieved by farms within the country. Sweden also had one of the most regulated and state involved processes of reshaping the agricultural structure. In the following, this process of restructuring will be analysed from the perspective of the state and its local representation and from the perspective of the rural population. This will be done by looking at competing perceptions of rurality occurring in debates over land transactions taking place between the local governmental representation and the rural population.

The agricultural policies of 1947: background, aims and legislation

In 1947 a new political program concerning the future agricultural development in Sweden was launched and put into practice. The program was the result of a four yearlong investigation started in 1942 by the Committee of agriculture of 1942. The committee had been commissioned to evaluate the Swedish agribusiness and to give a suggestion for future actions. In the late 1940s the agricultural structure in Sweden was characterized by relatively small farms and according to the report given by the Committee if agriculture of 1942 many of these small farms did not have enough economic viability, nor did they meet

---


3 Iréne Flygare et al., Det Svenska Jordbruks Historia. [Bd 5], Jordbruket I Välfärdssamhället : 1945-2000 (Stockholm: Natur och kultur/LT i samarbete med Nordiska museet och Stift. Lagersberg, 2003) 391 s. This was also the case in other parts of Europe – with the food shortages during the two World Wars in mind national self-sufficiency on some of the most important commodities was considered an important part of the national self-defense.

4 Tracy and Tracy, Government and Agriculture in Western Europe, 1880-1988. In the Netherlands however, there was also a large structural change within the agricultural sector during the second half of the 20th century. Through subsidies and specialized loans the state stimulated the rationalization and mechanization of the agribusiness. A major land consolidation project was undertaken beginning in the late 50s and continued until the 80s. Jan Bieleman, Five Centuries of Farming : A Short History of Dutch Agriculture, 1500-2000 (Mansholt Publication Series ;; Wageningen Academic Publishers, 2010) 367 p. at 244-46.

5 Sou, Riktlinjer För Den Framtidiga Jordbrukspolitiken : Betänkande. D. 1 (Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 0375-250x ; 1946:42, 42; Stockholm, 1946).These types of programs and policies was nothing unique for Sweden as numerous agriculture acts were launched in Europe in the decades after WW2, The Agriculture Act of 1947 in UK, 1955 in Western Germany, 1951 in Switzerland to mention some. Tracy and Tracy, Government and Agriculture in Western Europe, 1880-1988 at 221-25.

6 1942 års jordbrukskommitté.
the levels of production since they were using inefficient and old-fashioned means of production.\(^7\) In the report, much effort was put on discussing the economic aspects of the proposed agrarian policy, but the social aspects of the rural future were also taken into consideration, the main concern being the risk of a depopulated countryside with all the related problems such a development would cause regarding social structures like shops, activities and welfare. In the report it was stated that “the well-being in these [rural] regions is reduced” and this well-being aspect could be enough reason to introduce change in a more careful fashion than would have been preferred from a strictly economical point of view.\(^8\)

When the report considered growth in farm production, much praise was given to the Swedish farmers. In many areas the production of crops had, due to modernization and agrarian research, increased in volume and efficiency. But there was still work to be done, particularly concerning the agricultural structure.\(^9\) It was stated that the current land consolidation in many areas made rational farming impossible. A more efficient and suitable rural layout was considered to be one of the key aspects in achieving the goals of the agricultural policy.\(^10\) It was stressed that the money economy had made the old way of living, on a small farm that provided marginally for the family living there, virtually impossible and thus the need for economic efficiency was completely necessary.\(^11\) In order to create a better structured countryside, the report suggested continued and extended legislation regarding acquisition of land which would provide the state with legal instruments in the process of reshaping the countryside – a process that was regarded to be both time consuming, delicate and complicated.\(^12\)

The focal point in the implemented land policies was that the ownership of farm land should stay within the farming population. The aim was also to avoid profit seeking corporations and individuals raising the land prices through speculative buying. To prevent this, the Swedish Land Acquisition act was implemented, first in 1945, and then renewed

---


\(^8\) Sou, Riklinjer För Den Framtida Jordbrukspolitiken : Betänkande. D. 1 at 22.

\(^9\) Ibid., at 27.

\(^10\) Ibid., at 27-29.

\(^11\) Ibid., at 29.

\(^12\) Ibid.
in 1947, 1955, 1965 and 1979. The act stated that all land transactions were to be audited by the State represented by regional state agencies. It was however also possible to be granted as a land owner via a so called simplified certificate issued by the local police superintendent. This procedure caused operational problems as will be shown further on. Within the land acquisition act, one group was exempt from legal trial and that was land transactions being made within the family, who in the act were defined as the seller’s spouse, children, siblings and nephews. The land acquisition act was not intended to affect the agrarian structure directly since you could only approve or decline a prospective buyer’s application. There was no room to earmark farm land in favour of a certain plan of land consolidation.

In addition to the Land Acquisition Act, another policy giving the State pre-emptive right to purchase land put up for sale was written to more directly facilitate the structural changes needed to improve the land consolidation in areas of many smallholdings and due to local traditions areas with inefficient farm structure. Just like in the case with the land acquisition act, transactions made within the family were exempt governmental approval. By using the act of pre-emptive right to purchase, the State could buy land being put up for sale and in turn sell it to the person they considered being appropriate regarding both personal competence and land consolidation.

The State also had the right to expropriate farms if they weren’t properly managed. The possibility of expropriation was strictly regulated in the Land Acquisition Act to prevent misuse. The incentive for carrying out an expropriation was, as in the case with the pre-emption right to purchase, to strengthen other farms in the area. However, the right to expropriate a farm was seldom used.

As guidance in the process of changing the rural structure normative terms, such as basjordbruk – basic farm, were used to define the desired farms. The acreage of the

14 Local police superintendent - Landsfiskal
15 Ann Numhauser-Henning, Rätten Till Fäderneslandet : Om Jordförvärvslagen Och Dess Funktioner Mot Bakgrund Av Jordbruks Utveckling I Det Svenska Samhället (Skrifter Utgivna Av Juridiska Föreningen I Lund.; Lund: Juristförl. : Akademibokh. [distributör], 1988) 167 s. The definition of the family varied throughout the period and was the most inclusive in the legislation of 1965 (SFS 1965:290). The next time the legislation was changed the family had been reduced to only incorporate spouse, children and siblings. (SFS 1979:230) SFS 1947:288; 290; 324: 326; 700; 701.
smallest farm type, the *basjordbruk*, varied throughout the period, starting at 10 hectare in the 1940s and had in the 1970s increased to 30 hectares.\(^{18}\) The management of the viable farms was to be carried out by the family and with the help of machines and technology they would be able to run the everyday work that previously had been performed by farm workers.\(^{19}\) The concept *familjejordbruk* – family farm – was used as a model, both concerning work distribution and social ideals.\(^{20}\)

**The Lantbruksnämnd – the county agricultural board**

To implement the new farm policy a regional state agency called the *Lantbruksnämnd* was created. They were organized by county, 26 in total and consisted of seven members, in part elected by the State (Kungl. Maj:t), and in part by the agricultural society.\(^{21}\) Within each *Lantbruksnämnd* there were also a number of local agents – *ortsombud* – who served as the main contact with the locals.\(^{22}\) In the State directives of 1967 concerning nomination of the local agents, the following instruction was given:

> [...] it is emphasized and of importance to the *Lantbruksnämnd* that the chosen local agents are progressive men in a position of trust, with good knowledge of agriculture, forestry and horticulture, as well as with personal and local knowledge and the willingness to make an active contribution to the *Lantbruksnämnd* activities.\(^{23}\)

---

\(^{18}\) Hans Seyler, *Hur Bonden Blev Lönarbetare : Industrisamhället Och Den Svenska Bondeklassens Omvandling* (Arkiv Avhandlingsserie.; Lund: Arkiv för studier i arbetarrörelsens historia, 1983) 332 s. at chapter 5. One hectare is equivalent to approximately 2.47 acres. By then the term was also changed into *normjordbruk*.

\(^{19}\) As a result of this there was a major increase of tractors used within the agribusiness. At the end of the 1940s there were 20 000 tractors at work and in 1960 the numbers had risen to 150 000 tractors. Ibid., at 198.


\(^{21}\) SFS 1948:348, 26 §.

\(^{22}\) Once again comparisons to the Dutch agricultural policies can be made since there was also a Dutch Agricultural Board that had a great impact on the agricultural changes. The organization of the Dutch Agricultural Board differed from the Swedish. Evert Jan Krajenbrink, *Het Landbouwschap: Zelfgedragen Verantwoordelijkheid in De Land-En Tuinbouw, 1945-2001 [the Agricultural Board 1945-2001]* (Den Haag Eigen beheer, 2005).

The local agents sometimes had an important part to play when the Lantbruksnämnd was to decide whether a person was suitable for buying land or not. In Skaraborg County, one of the main agricultural counties in Sweden, it was common to have the same local agents for several elective periods. This, one can assume, created a well-established relationship between the agents and the Lantbruksnämnd, but also, due to the fact that the agents often were farmers themselves, gave the agents possibilities to give recommendations regarding potential land owners that could be challengeable. Though, when looking at the elections of local agents in Skaraborg between 1968 and 1982 I have not found any indications of the agents being considered biased, but there seem to have been a fair amount of discussions regarding who the most appropriate person was, based on their knowledge, or lack of knowledge, of the family farm and the local preconditions.

In the early years of rationalisation much effort was put into planning and structuring the work of the Lantbruksnämnd. Throughout Sweden agricultural economical surveys were conducted to establish the status of Swedish agribusiness and its development potentials. The regional development plans resulting from these surveys in many cases meant that the rural structure in some areas would need to change, and by doing this also decreasing the number of farmers.

**Operational problems within the land acquisition act: experiences of the County agricultural board during the first years of rationalization**

In 1951, four years after launching the new agricultural program, an investigation initiated by the state was started to evaluate the process so far and with the purpose to give recommendations of whether to renew the land acquisition act or not. After three years of

---

24 Included in Västra Götalands län from 1998.
26 These surveys will be subject for further studies within the dissertation project and presented at ESSC in 2016.
investigations, the results were presented in 1954 in an SOU named *Suggestion for land rationalization act etc.*

The report clearly stated that one aspect of whether to renew the act of acquisition of land or not was its ability to prevent unfavourable land transactions. If the investigation found that this was the case, it was also stated that the relationship between the act of acquisition of land and the act of pre-emptive right to purchase should be analysed. The report pointed out that even though the two policies aimed at slightly different problems, they were closely connected and often used simultaneously. The report accounted for the implementation of the policies and in addition also presented comments from the *Lantbruksnämnd* to illustrate problems experienced in every-day practice.

Overall the *Lantbruksnämnd* considered the land acquisition act and the act of pre-emptive right to purchase to be useful and well-functioning instruments. A general judgement was that the act of acquisition of land had indeed prevented speculative buying of both farm and forestland and that “collective buying of farmland of improper character had been prevented to a great extent.” It was also stated that the land acquisition act had not had a direct effect on the agrarian structure, but indirectly had an influence due to the limited competition on the land market. It was also considered that the policy had given the *Lantbruksnämnd* an ability to interact with the land market, and this was looked upon as a positive development regarding the changing of land consolidation.

According to the *Lantbruksnämnd*, two areas were considered as especially complicated when implementing the policies. Firstly, the possibility of getting a so called simplified certificate via the local police superintendent had sometimes led to, from a land consolidation point of view, unfortunate land transactions. It was mentioned that the local police superintendent had granted applications where the applicant intended to use the land for recreational purposes, a purpose of land acquisition that should not have been granted according to the policy. The overall lacking of knowledge of the local police superintendent in issues concerning agriculture was stated as a recurrent problem and the effect according to the *Lantbruksnämnd* in Göteborg and Bohuslän County was that the

---

27 *Förslag till jordrationaliseringslag m.m* SOU 1954:16.
29 Ibid.
30 Original quotation: “olämpliga samköp av jordbruk hindrats i stor utsträckning.” Ibid., at 50.
31 Ibid., at 50-51.
local police superintendent tended to assess the applicants’ intentions, rather than the property and its appropriateness for the intended purpose.\textsuperscript{32}

The second problem with the land policies put forward by the \textit{Lantbruksnämnd} was the clash between the two policies in regard of the procedure of implementing the act of pre-emptive right to purchase. This could only be done after a land transaction had been made. This meant that the \textit{Lantbruksnämnd} in some cases first granted the applicant right to land acquisition and thereafter announced that they were going to practice their pre-emptive right. According to some of the \textit{Lantbruksnämnds}, it was even more unfortunate when the local police superintendent first had granted acquisition and the \textit{Lantbruksnämnd} thereafter decided to make use of the policy. As mentioned by the \textit{Lantbruksnämnd} in Gävleborg County “In the eyes of the local community, it always seems as if the \textit{Lantbruksnämnd} threw out a family.”\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{Farming ideals and rural realities: law and local practice in comparison}

In \textit{Power and Gender in European Rural Development} Henri Goverde writes: “Competing perceptions of rurality are relevant for explaining success and failures of rural policies in practice. State-centered rural policies, on the one hand, and perceptions of rurality in every day rural practice, on the other hand, form the bandwidth within which power dynamics produce the actual process of rural development.”\textsuperscript{34} One place where such competing perception of rurality becomes visible is in discussions regarding land ownership. Since all land transactions being made outside the family unit were put under governmental supervision, one way of finding these debates would be to look into the records kept by the \textit{Lantbruksnämnd}. However these records, protocols etc., do not contain more detailed information other than if a case of land acquisition was approved or not. One can assume that if everyone agreed there was not much need for discussion, or at least not writing it down. But, if an application for land acquisition was denied, the applicant had the right to file an appeal to the Royal National Board of Agriculture (RNBA) and thereby request a

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[32]{Ibid., at 52.}

\footnotetext[33]{Original quotation: “I bygdens ögon verkar det alltid som om lantbruksnämnden kastade ut en familj.” Ibid., at 53. In the act of land acquisition given in 1955, the act of pre-emptive right to purchase had been incorporated. Which effects this had on the procedure of using the pre-emptive right to purchase is currently under investigation.}

\end{footnotes}
revision of the decision made by the Lantbruksnämnd.\textsuperscript{35} When the appeal was made, both the plaintiff and the Lantbruksnämnd had to motivate their stand to the RNBA and thus making it possible to analyse the discussion further. In the following, these debates between the Lantbruksnämnd and the rural population will be discussed with the starting point of which areas of conflict, in regards to suitable land ownership and land consolidation, can be found.

In 1949 and 1950, 91 respectively 98 appeals regarding acquisition of land can be found in the official register of the RNBA. When looking at what policy they refer to it can be concluded that about twice as many cases refer to the land acquisition act (60 in 1949 and 63 in 1950) as to the act of pre-emptive right to purchase (31 in 1949 and 35 in 1950).\textsuperscript{36}

Out of these, about 11 \% in total, or 22 cases, are preserved in a more extensive matter – that is there are documents from the Lantbruksnämnd explaining why the application was declined, and in most cases there are also letters from the plaintiff in which they give their take on the matter.\textsuperscript{37} These 22 will be analysed in the following.

In regard to the distribution between the two policies it can be noted that when looking at which policy the 22 cases consider, it is a rather different result compared to the total amount of appeals in 1949 and 1950. 19 cases refer to the act of pre-emptive right to purchase whilst only two cases are related to the land acquisition act.\textsuperscript{38} One case can be related to both policies.\textsuperscript{39} The differing in distribution between the two policies in comparison to the total amount of appeals might be related, quite hypothetically, to the problems with the act of pre-emptive right to purchase discussed above – it was a policy with operational problems and perhaps therefore more of these cases were kept in the archives, possibly as educational material for future handlings.

\textsuperscript{35} SFS 1947:324
\textsuperscript{36} KLS: Planläggningsbyrån, 1949, volume C1:1; KLS: Planläggningsbyrån, 1950, volume C1:1, all cases with registration code 2A and 3.
\textsuperscript{37} Why there are so few cases preserved, and why these particular ones have been kept, is a question still under investigation. The RNBA archive has been thinned on several occasions, and this is also the case with the archives of the Lantbruksnämnd. When a cross check between the RNBA archive and the Lantbruksnämnd of Gothenburg and Bohuslän county was conducted, none of the documents that in the RNBA archives were said to been sent back to the Lantbruksnämnd could be found, thinning being the most reasonable explanation also in this case. For reasons of source criticism I hope to get more clarity in why the documents still in the archives were the ones kept.
\textsuperscript{38} KLS: Planläggningsbyrån, 1949, volume C1:1; KLS: Planläggningsbyrån, 1950, volume C1:1, all cases with registration code 2A and 3.
\textsuperscript{39} KLS: Planläggningsbyrån 1950, volume E1:3, recordnumber pl 56.
In my previous research, where I plotted the geographical spread of the appeals, the question of whether the plaintiffs were already established farmers or not was raised but remained unanswered. Was it more common to be a “first time buyer” so to speak, when having your application for acquisition of land declined? When considering if the 22 appeals concerned new or supplementary acquisitions it’s an even distribution with nine cases considering new acquisitions and 12 supplementary ones.\(^{40}\) The majority of the plaintiffs said that they were going to conduct farming.\(^ {41}\) Three of the plaintiffs in 1949 had stated other rural businesses than traditional\(^ {42}\) family farming as the purpose of their acquisition.\(^ {43}\) Erik Olsson, a plaintiff in 1949, wanted to use a part of the land he had purchased as a junk-yard since he owned a junk shop in the nearest town and did not have any possibility to acquire a suitable plot of land within town. According to the *Lantbruksnämnd*, the land would be better combined with another adjacent property, on whose behalf they had used the pre-emptive right to purchase. However, they suggested that Erik Olsson could acquire part of the property he had originally bought to use as junk-yard.\(^ {44}\)

The other two who did not intend to run a traditional family farm were still planning to farm. One of them intended to grow strawberries and the other person, named Olle Christiansson, planned to run a market garden. Christiansson had lodged an appeal with the RNBA in February 1949 on the usage of the act of pre-emptive right to purchase. Christiansson had bought a plot of land in Rasjön parish in Kopparberg County\(^ {45}\) which he had estimated to be ideal for running a market garden. However, according to the *Lantbruksnämnd* in Kopparberg the property bought by Christiansson would be of much better use to the adjoining neighbour Anun Söderlund. Söderlund’s farm was, according to the *Lantbruksnämnd*, non-viable due to lack of land consolidation – some of Söderlund’s fields were located in steep hill and would be better used as pasture land. But if this change was made, Söderlund would be in need of more cropland and for this purpose some of

\(^{40}\) KLS: Planläggningsbyrån, 1949, volume C1:1; KLS: Planläggningsbyrån, 1950, volume C1:1, all cases with recordnumber 2A and 3.


\(^{42}\) The term traditional is of course complicated and could hold a number of different meanings. In this text it is intended as farms with either crops and/or animal production.

\(^{43}\) KLS: Planläggningsbyrån, 1949, volume E1:2, recordnumber pl 22, 48, 191.

\(^{44}\) KLS: Planläggningsbyrån, 1949, volume E1:2, recordnumber pl 22.

\(^{45}\) Named Dalarna from 1997.
Christiansson’s property could be used. In his appeal Christiansson stated that he, and his business-partner, already had put both time and money into their market garden and if they lost the property all of their work would have been for nothing. He also noted that if he, due to the procedure undertaken by the Lantbruksnämnd, was forced to sell his land, this would be a typical example of “pettifogging Sweden”.46

When looking at the arguments put forward by the Lantbruksnämnd in Christiansson’s case, they argue that the property bought by Christiansson was not suitable for a market garden, even though the local garden consultant strongly supported Christiansson’s case. According to the consultant the plot was superb for the type of business Christiansson intended to run and the consultant also emphasized that some parts of the property, due to composition of the soil, would give a much higher return when used as Christiansson suggested than if cultivated in a more traditional crop production. When considered by the RNBA, Christiansson was thought to make the strongest case and the RNBA upheld his appeal. In a memo written by the RNBA regarding Christiansson’s case it was mentioned that the Lantbruksnämnd had argued in a “doubtful fashion” and that the recommendations made by the garden consultant should be considered decisive.47

The most frequent explanation used by the Lantbruksnämnd when an acquisition for land was declined was, quite naturally when looking at the state’s directives and the land acquisition policies, related to land consolidation – the land was thought better combined with another property if the most efficient and rational farm were to be obtained.48 It was also more common to assess the properties in question rather than the persons managing them, only in five cases personal suitability were taken into account.49 Another frequently used argument when arguing for the most rational ownership was family relations. This argument was used both by the plaintiffs and by the Lantbruksnämnd.

The usage of family related arguments are interesting when related to the extensive debate concerning the family farm and its ability to progress and withstand into the capitalized 20th century, a development in strict opposition to the one forecasted by for

example Marx in the late 19th century. It is often stated that the survival of the family farm is due to the farm family itself, its ability to adapt to a changing market and, even more important, the agency of the farmer. This explanation, influenced by the theories developed by Chayanov and further specified by Harriet Friedman in the 1970s and -80s, is commonly referred to in the research concerning the persistence of the family farm.

The discussion concerning the survival of the family farms has been closely linked to the definition of the concept. What in the organization of the farm family business has made it successful in times of industrialization and capitalization of agriculture? Is it a small or large unit? Hired labour or not? A persistent generational succession? The answers have proved to vary depending on the context of the family farm in question and therefore the definition is often quite dynamic and broad, and becomes even vaguer when the family farm as an ideological model is added to the definition.

Recent studies have emphasized the importance of asking questions related to the circumstances of the survival of the family farm. Anton Schuurman points out the necessity of putting agriculture in relation to State and the overall changes in society, and shows – using the Dutch example – how agriculture “lagged behind” the modernization of the rest of the society for a decade in the mid-1900s. Using an “agricultural institutional matrix” – containing “market forces, state bodies (including government) and private

53 Anton Schuurman, 'Agricultural Policy and the Dutch Agricultural Institutional Matrix During the Transition from Organized to Disorganized Capitalism', in Peter Moser and Tony Varley (eds.), Integration through Subordination. The Politics of Agricultural Modernisation in Industrial Europe (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013) at 79. The Dutch agricultural policy was, like the Swedish as we shall see later on, organized around three political aims: “In the first place an adequate food supply at low consumer prices. Secondly, exports had to be increased by stimulating production increases to obtain a positive balance of payments and, thirdly, a reasonable standard of living had to be guaranteed for those who earned their living in the agricultural sector.” Bieleman, Five Centuries of Farming : A Short History of Dutch Agriculture, 1500-2000 at 248.
enterprise” – Schuurman is able to discuss the development of agrarian policies in a broader perspective than studies focused on the organization of the family farms. In a study published in 2007 dealing with the survival of the family farm in an international perspective Harold Brookfield and Helen Parsons state that: “For now, the most significant modern agrarian question, quite simply, is how, and under what conditions, has the family farm survived? The next step is to discuss what might seem obvious and simple, but is not – to define the family farm.”

So, in the argumentation relating to land ownership in Sweden in the mid-1900s, are any favours done for those using family and especially family continuity as an argument for land ownership? In 1949 and 1950 arguments related to family continuity are found in 10 cases. Three out of these are made by the Lantbruksnämnd and five are made by the plaintiffs. There are also two examples where family relations are mentioned as basic information but not given any explanatory value.

When the Lantbruksnämnd uses family as an argument it is in all three cases about appeals in regard to the act of pre-emptive right to purchase and they all concern new acquisitions. The Lantbruksnämnd uses the family-argument to speak for the buyer they consider to be more suitable, and therefore is the reason why they use the pre-emptive right. The family continuity is taken into account both in a historical aspect, by stating that the land in question previously had belonged to the buyer preferred by the Lantbruksnämnd, and in a future perspective. When used as an argument for future farming it is done in a case where the Lantbruksnämnd suggested a buyer whose farm would still be non-viable after the additional land, but would have potential to grow in the future. The case referred to involved Per Sillén, the plaintiff who had stated that he wanted to use the land he had bought to farm strawberries. The Lantbruksnämnd suggested that the land bought by Sillén should be divided into two plots, one of them to be sold to the smallholder Snellman. For Snellman, an addition of the land Sillén wanted to use for his strawberries would not make Snellman’s farm viable according to the aim of efficiency,

54 Brookfield and Parsons, Family Farms : Survival and Prospect : A World-Wide Analysis at 8.
but the Lantbruksnämnd still considered him a good and trustworthy landowner. In addition to Snellman’s good reputation the Lantbruksnämnd also pointed out that Snellman was currently investing in his farm “to be able to provide sufficient housing for him and his wife in their late years and for their adult, married son, who planned to take over the running of the farm in the future.”

When family was used as an argument by the plaintiffs it was used in the same manner as when used by the Lantbruksnämnd, as an argument to indicate belonging to the place, and having done so for hundreds of years, and for future prospects. The 63-year-old Jonas Jonasson filed an appeal with the RNBA in July in 1950 due to the fact that the Lantbruksnämnd had denied using the act of pre-emptive right to purchase to his advantage. Jonasson stated that he wanted to secure the size of his farm for the future and even though he was in his 60s he counted on working on the farm for many more years: “my father and grandfather were working well into their 70s, so I think I’ll manage at least until I’m 70, and after I get tired I have a nephew who is interested in buying the land. You see, it has been in our family for more than 350 years and it is my wish that it will remain within the family also in the future.”

There are also some aspects that has not been taken into consideration in the above, but noticed when reading the material. Firstly, the condition of the buildings at the property in question was almost always evaluated and sometimes used as a crucial aspect. If this is just an effect of assessing the general condition of the property of more closely connected to the part of the agricultural rationalisation programme concerning the inner rationalisation, i.e. the managing and running of each individual farm, is a question for further studies. Secondly, the material speaks of local conflict. Since one of the most common arguments when refusing an application of land acquisition was that the land was better combined with another property, this often meant that two neighbours came into conflict, even if it was via the Lantbruksnämnd. How did this effect the rationalisation of land consolidation is also a question for further studies.

---


Conclusion

In a report given in 1986 by the Lantbruksnämnd in Norrbotten County it was mentioned that the rationalisation was not easily introduced to the rural population, especially regarding the fact that the Lantbruksnämnd suddenly through legislation had more influence over the land market than they had before. The report even stated that the land acquisition policies had done more damage to the process of changing the land consolidation than it had helped the process.\(^{60}\) The report is written by a former chairman of the Lantbruksnämnd and a statement like this needs of course to be put under careful source criticism.

But the material used in this paper shows results that indicate that the usage of the act of land acquisition and the act of pre-emptive right to purchase were not always hazard free. The division of land acts into two, sometimes contradictory, policies caused problems and this was noted both by the Lantbruksnämnd and by the people trying to by farm land. Also the problem with another institution giving out grants for land acquisitions was pointed out as a problem by the Lantbruksnämnd. However, in the appeals analysed in this paper, this particular issue was not frequent. In the act of land acquisition given in 1955 the possibility of getting a simplified certificate was removed, thus giving the Lantbruksnämnd control over al land transactions, provided that they were not made within the family.\(^{61}\)

The main area of conflict in regards to acquisition of land was different perceptions of rationality. The mere fact that appeals were made is in itself an indication that different concepts of rationality occurred. Both the Lantbruksnämnd and the plaintiffs considered their way of distributing and farming the land as most efficient. But when analysing the arguments used in debates over land acquisition, family related arguments also stood out as a frequently occurring category. When used by the Lantbruksnämnd it was with the aim of favouring another buyer than the plaintiff and always in a positive matter. The plaintiffs used family and family continuity connected to the particular geographical spot as reinforcing arguments when trying to convince the RNBA that the Lantbruksnämnd had done a misjudgement. If the family argument had a bigger success rate than other arguments in getting the RNBA to change the decision made by the Lantbruksnämnd is a


\(^{61}\) Numhauser-Henning, Rätten Till Fäderneslandet : Om Jordförvärvslagen Och Dess Funktioner Mot Bakgrund Av Jordbrukets Utveckling I Det Svenska Samhället at 77.
question that the material used in this paper has not been able to answer and will be investigated in further studies. Also it should be noted that the twenty-two cases studied here are not enough to make any well-founded conclusions, especially since they are brought from to adjacent years of the agrarian rationalization, but they give an indication of how different arguments were used. The analyses presented here will therefore be used as a starting point for further studies of material stretching over the whole period of the Lantbruksnämnd activities, 1949-1989.

Finally, what about competing perceptions of rurality? In the paper, examples are given when there seems to have been differentiated opinions between the Lantbruksnämnd and the plaintiffs, i.e. the rural population, of whether a property was to be used as a “traditional” farm or something else. In one case, the superior governmental institution overruled the decision made by the Lantbruksnämnd and upheld the appeal in favour of a plaintiff that wanted to do something else than traditional farming on his land. As mentioned above, making any conclusion based on the very limited material used here is not possible. However, it shows that the discussion about whom and what should figure in the efficient and rational rural Sweden was up for debate.

References

Archives
Riksarkivet [National archives]
Kungl. Lantbruksstyrelsens arkiv [Royal National Board of Agriculture] (KLS)
Planläggningsbyrån
1949 C1:1 Record of received and sent documents
E1:2. Recieved documents
1950 C1:1 Record of received and sent documents
E1:3 Recieved documents

Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland [The County Administrative Board of Västra Götaland]
Länsstyrelsen i Skaraborgs län
Diarieförda handlingar, 02-8, 1967, D1:1;
Diarieförda handlingar 07-8, 1970, D1:15;
Diarieförda handlingar, 01, 1973, D1:38;
Diarieförda handlingar, 01-03, 1976, D1:56;
Diarieförda handlingar 02-03, 1979, D 1: 72
Plenumprotokoll 1974-1976, A1:3;
Published source material and literature

1951 års jordbruksrationaliseringsutredning (1954), Förslag till jordrationaliseringslag m. m (Statens offentliga utredningar; Stockholm: Nordiska bokhandeln) 129 s.


Flygare, Iréne (1999), Generation och kontinuitet : familjefordonsgen i två svenska slätdygdar under 1900-talet (Upplands fornminnesförenings tidskrift, 0347-9714 ; 54; Uppsala: Upplands fornminnesfören. och hembygdsförb. ;).


Gulbrandsen, Odd (1957), Strukturomdelingen i jordbruket (Stockholm,) 252 s.


Hansén, Bengt-Olof and Länsstyrelsen i Norrbottens län (1986), Lantbruksnämnden : jorden och skogen 1948-86 (Rapportserie / Länsstyrelsen i Norrbottens län.; Luleå: Länsstyr. i Norrbottens län) 60 bl.

Hill, Berkeley (1993), 'The 'Myth' of the family farm: Defining the family farm and assessing its importance in the european community', Journal of Rural Studies, 9 (4), 359-70.


Hoyle, R. W., Bavel, Bas J. P. van, and Brakensiek, Stefan (2010), Social relations : property and power (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers).


