

Giving up the family farm

– An alternative story of the structural change in agriculture in Finland

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ABSTRAKTI. Finland's decision to join the EU in 1995 entailed the conviction to accelerate the structural change in agriculture. We can trace 'the official story' of accelerating structural change, the increasing economic effectiveness of activities and the increasing farm size in agricultural statistics. It is characteristic of the growing farms to emphasize new businesslike management and entrepreneurship. The aim of this article is, however, to trace an alternative story about the structural change offered by farmers who have chosen to give up farming. The ceasing farmers interpret the new socio-economic situation and emerging competitive individualism as antithetical to social solidarity, universalism as well as regional and professional equality: the values usually presented to represent also the Nordic ethos of welfare.

Finland's decision to join the European Union in 1995 entailed the conviction to accelerate the structural change in agriculture. The economic, administrative and political frames for the lives of farmers were turned upside down in one fell swoop. Now, 15 years later, we can read "the official success story" of accelerating structural change, the increasing economic effectiveness of activities and the increasing farm size in agricultural statistics. Some of the farm enterprises have gained remarkable growth rates: revenues and production have even doubled. It is characteristic of the growing farms to emphasize new businesslike management and entrepreneurship. This is the line of development that is also strongly promoted for example by farmer's organisations, extension officials and many researchers too. (e.g. Pro

Agria 2008; Vesala & Rantanen 1999; Vesala & Pyysiäinen 2008.)

At the same time more than every fourth farm has ceased production, almost 50,000 jobs have been lost in agriculture and currently only 3.6% of the employed work in agriculture (Niemi-Ahlstedt 2007: 88). This development corresponds roughly with what had been forecast prior to Finland's EU membership. Of the remaining 68,000 farms a further 20,000 are expected to cease production by the year 2013. Particularly in the sparsely populated countryside of eastern and northern Finland, agriculture and the food industry have been the key sources of livelihood. According to regional statistics (Statistics Finland 2005), the preponderance of agriculture in a subregion indicates a low standard of living, and areas where the economic structure is domi-

nated by agriculture and forestry are not keeping up with the pace of economic growth.

Nevertheless, agriculture is not just about structures, farm sizes and production units. There are still approximately 150,000 members of farmer families living and working on the farms and thousands of them are expected to give up farming in the near future. What must the future look like when you know that the family farm, that has belonged to the family since the 16th century, will not be handed over to the next generation? Or what must it feel like when the small but beloved farm cleared in the wilderness by your grandparents is no longer considered viable? Or when a foreign EU official claims that the most significant role agriculture will play in the future in Finland is as the preserver of the cultural landscape?

In this article my aim is to trace the alternative story about the structural change in food production offered by farmers who have chosen to or are about to give up farming. As a data I shall use the material collected by the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society (FLS) and the Union for Rural Education (URE). The material comes from a writing competition, *From the Heart of the Land*, organized in 1997. For the thematic analysis (Braun–Clarke 2006) I have chosen 20 autobiographical texts dealing with relinquishing agricultural activities, the necessity or the opportunity to do so, and situations, in which external circumstances have become unreasonable from the point of view of the farmer or the potential continuator. For the purpose of this article I define the autobiographical self according to Marianne Gullestad (1996: 18) as a problematic entity, which is continuously attempting to intergrate the various experiences of the individual. In this effort authored narratives are crucial and hence offer a favourable research data.

Listening to an alternative story

Industrial restructuring is a culturally mediated process. Hence economic, political and administrative transitions easily erode cultural scripts

that organize a particular way of life. The commitment to economic growth and the progress it is said to represent are always permeated by ambivalence about the precarious social forms that unlimited growth produces (Dudley 2003). Conflicts pertaining to changing social structures and the direction these changes take are the traditional domain of politics. Therefore, it seems curious that the current change in agricultural structure, which forces tens of thousands of people to abandon their source of livelihood, way of life and often also their home, have generated hardly any topical debate in Finland. It appears that no one sees anything problematic in the direction of the structural change in agriculture but it is rather perceived as a natural process. Therefore, it must be asked why is the cutting back of the agricultural sector perceived as such a normal form of social development?

One of the answers may be the common understanding attained in the course of the normative debate (about normative debate see Douglas 1994, 128–132) over the EU-membership in Finland at the beginning of 1990's. At the time it was agreed that the best way to guarantee the Finnish food production in the EU-conditions was to industrialise agriculture. For the common good the competitiveness of farming should be improved and the means for that were increasing the farm size and the capacity and reducing the number of farms. The gist of the transition was to promote entrepreneurship and the new key actor in agriculture was to be an entrepreneur, who is personally held accountable for the consequences of economic risk-taking. According to Kathryn Marie Dudley (2003) this “entrepreneurial self” is the conceptual linchpin of capitalist culture.

The operation of new socio-economic regime and the promotion of entrepreneurial self actually require speech acts in certain areas of the normative debate and silence in others. For the discursive regime in dominance it is important also to establish a regime of silence in areas which might open up challenges to it. Therefore, silence is a definite part of truth claims and it could be removed by the replacement of one regime of

truth by another or by displacing one discourse and its accompanying silence with an alternative discourse and its silence. (Armstrong 1994.)

Standardized views are often political in character, even though they are articulated in scientific terms (Delphy 1984, Penna et al. 1999). They contain assumptions, value judgments and classifications. These preconceptions, which are even hidden behind theory or method, are already adopted when learning to speak about things in a certain language. Concepts and metaphors describing social development are especially ambiguous. When certain ways to farm have been named, then classifying and sorting becomes possible: traditional/entrepreneurial, past/future, inviable/viable and so forth. While using these concepts and ways of speaking we reproduce and reinforce the taking for granted of certain ideas about a state of affairs. At the same time we participate in defining both what kind of knowledge and whose knowledge are to be seen as rational. After that we localize the knowledge and its producer in the field of social debate (e.g. Haraway 1991). The dominant way of thinking, and its prediction of the direction of social development and its consequences, tend to locate small-scale farmers closing down their businesses in a way that easily renders their message insignificant and their idiom irrational in the fields of current political, economic and social debates (cf. Douglas 1994: 130).

I shall analyze the data from the perspective that opens up to politics. The writing competition material is not as such available for interpretation. The researcher must pick up from the rich and multidimensional data what is essential for the research issues and decode farmers' comments, values and interpretations of politics. Decoding refers to the microanalysis of the data, i.e. closely going through the data line by line, and the preliminary outlining of the themes (Gullestad 1996: 42). The decoding is an active pursuit by the researcher making discoveries from the data and naming them for the purposes of interpretation (Söderqvist 1991). In this way an alternative interpretation to the official story of the structural change in

agriculture can be constructed. The alternative story has been told from the point of view of a political subject, who, for one reason or another, cannot accept the promoted identity of nor the moral position of the entrepreneurial self.

First there was a terrible ruckus and humiliation

The meaning of silence is conditioned by its absence (Armstrong 1994). The current political silence around the ongoing agricultural change must be studied in the light of the debate preceding it. When the advantages and disadvantages of Finland's EU membership were debated before the 1994 referendum, the role of agriculture was significant in the debate. Citizens were practically goaded into voting for EU membership by promising them, for example, reductions in the price of food. Arguments about agricultural subsidies and food prices were heated, and the argumentation took on harsh tones that many farmers took as downright ridicule and humiliation. According to many farmers' interpretations, they were at the time the targets of a large-scale social scapegoat persecution (cf. Girard 1984; Norrman 1996). They were publicly accused of, for example, living off government money, high taxes, expensive food, inefficiency and environmental pollution.

A couple of years later, in 1997, when the Finnish Literature Society (FLS) and the Union for Rural Education (URE), were collecting material for their writing competition From the Heart of the Land *Maan sydämeltä*, the most extreme public reactions had been left behind and everyday life in the EU had begun. However, by that time the private experiences of farmers who were planning to give up farming had matured and crystallized into definite sets of appraisals, arguments and reactions, which echo the epochal rupture. For social scientific purposes this kind of data collected in this particular historical turning point is especially valuable.

In their texts, the farmers continued to express their anxiety over the future. There is a clear sense of defeat emerging and the fore-

most feelings communicated by the farmers are confusion and a sense of having been betrayed. Farmers were haunted by the idea, that some incalculable values will be lost and they feared that the moral foundation of society will be weakened for good during the industrialisation of agriculture (cf. Dudley 2003). In everyday life, as in the farmers' texts, personal events, knowledge and emotions are not always easily separable and chains of events are often out of sync and inexact (Gullestad 1996:18). Since, the dimensions of understanding present in the stories are not clearly independent of each other but intertwining themes run through and parallel to other layers of narration, I have separated and highlighted them in the headings within this analysis. The deception that occurred is described on many levels and a sense of offended understanding seems to have arisen among farmers concerning themselves, their profession, the countryside and the nation in general.

It is difficult to present the logic underlying both the creation of the feeling of deception and its continued intensification even though it is the central theme running through the whole data. I have solved this dilemma by collecting key statements from individual texts into summaries depicting the feeling of disappointment and its origin. Square brackets and three periods [...] are used to denote that the sentences do not follow each other in the original material and to either save space or to get to the point I have left some of the text unquoted. Likewise, I have occasionally added information needed for the understanding of the context of the statement in square brackets [without italics]. Examples from the primary materials have been denoted in the text with the abbreviations FLS, URE and by the page number of the archived material.

I shall first analyze the ceasing farmers' discussion about the relationship of structural change in agriculture and Finnish society; secondly, their views on the effects of the structural change on agriculture in the countryside and the farming profession; and thirdly, farmers' assessments of their personal lives in the new situation.

Deception and confusion – What is going on?

Fatherland

In the 1994 referendum, a total of 57% of Finns voted to join the European Union while 43% were against it (Paloheimo 1994). However, among the farming population, 70% of men and 89% of women opposed Finland's EU membership (Sänkiaho 1994). Interestingly, Finland's decision to join the EU seems to have been a turning point in the political debate on agriculture. Public debate decreased and the strong political charge surrounding agriculture as a source of livelihood was fizzled out.

Complete silence is as effective a form of 'influencing' as loud campaigning. [...] Even now the decision makers are trying to get a tighter grip on things as best as they can to prevent arguments from being expressed that go against their officials aims. (FLS, URE, 348)

The farmers believed that they are no longer regarded as equal discussion partners in political arenas. Their voice was not heard, their points of view were not presented, or if they were, they were labeled as a curiosity in the way of progress. The situation was particularly tough on those who felt that they had been abandoned by their 'own'. Both the Centre Party, traditionally close to rural people, as well as the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners receive a good deal of the criticism. In the mid 90's the backing of the Centre Party in opinion polls fluctuated between 22% and 24%. The proportion of farmers in the overall population was about 4% and their numbers has since constantly decreased. Aiming to be a general party The Centre Party needs the votes of people in population centers. By strongly advocating the cause of the farming population would be politically unwise in these circumstances.

Did it have to be so that the one party that has supposedly always looked after and protected

the countryside used their position in the balance of power to push Finland into the crocodile's mouth of the EU just like that? (FLS, URE, 3847)

Political life and how it is presented to citizens by the media are often felt to be repulsive and downright mocking of normal citizens struggling with their problems. Issues important to the farmers seldom reach the political agenda. The president of their own lobby organization failed to join their demonstration organized to coincide with Finland's Independence Day, while the media circus feasts over deeds of members of parliament and other high-ranking opinion leaders.

Bosses in the agriculture business are brown-nosed. They would rather don tails to celebrate in the Presidential Palace than join the tractors and hicks in front of TV cameras. [Referring to the farmers' demonstration organized in Helsinki on Finland's Independence Day.] (FLS, URE, 3876)

Farmers' comments on decision making at the national level reveal mistrust and disbelief. Decision-makers are seen as having alienated themselves from the everyday life of the common people and many see politicians as immoral and government officials as irresponsible. Particularly people living in the remote countryside have lost their faith in the centralized power. In 2002, over 70% of inhabitants in these regions felt that decision-makers at the highest national level had failed in their task of managing common affairs (Heikkilä et al. 2002, 114). Remote countryside is precisely among the areas where primary production and its ancillary sources of livelihood have offered the central and, to many, the only source of livelihood. In comparison, people in the cities or in the countryside adjoining cities have a neutral attitude to centralized power and its decisions. They think that things have not been handled well but not that badly either (ibid. 114).

After the result of the referendum was an-

nounced, the farmers were right to be concerned for their source of livelihood. However, it must be emphasized that the informants were fully aware of the direction of the long-standing structural change in agriculture and they were under no illusion that if Finland remained outside the EU there would be no pressure to enlarge farms and increase production volume. Despite all this, the farmers felt the rapid acceleration of the structural change brought on by EU membership and its economic, social and human consequences to be unfair and unreasonable.

Society nowadays thinks that changes must occur more quickly than they would naturally. They'd rather have people on the unemployment line in the city than self-sustaining in the countryside. They are trying to end farming as a source of income by all available means. And in these conditions, they will soon succeed. (FLS, URE, 349)

In addition to issues directly relating to source of livelihood, farmers appeared to have considerably differing views from those with a positive EU outlook on Finnish independence, the nature of independence and the possibility of retaining it within the EU as well as the foundations of the Finnish welfare state. At this point an interpretationally interesting whole emerges connecting personal and national independence, food self-sufficiency, and criticism of current decision-makers. In the data, codes Finland, elite, independence and freedom were thematically connected with both farmers' talk on the fatherland and the profession.

It is high time to switch on reverse from all the EU fuss. Leaders' great ideas are destroying the whole nation. Every day, you get to read in the papers that now the EU is commanding this and commanding that. [...] How long can a country called Finland remain independent this way? Finland is sliding under the jurisdiction of Southern Europe. [...] The rich get richer while the poor get poorer. (FLS, URE, 2407)

To farmers, independence and self-sufficiency are not only the cornerstones of the personal but also of national independence and autonomy. Self-sufficiency in food production is seen as an inseparable part of this whole and as such a necessary condition for true national independence. (Alasuutari 1996, 60.) Ceasing farmers feel that the domestic production of food has come under threat with the EU membership and this is impossible for them to understand because giving up domestic food production according to this interpretation also means giving up national independence and throwing oneself at the mercy of others. Farmers tend to think that they are selflessly feeding the nation. Three things are brought forward in defense of Finnish production: food self-sufficiency as a precondition of independence and autonomy that is a value in itself, the better quality of Finnish food when compared to imported food, and global food security.

So far I've justified my choice of profession with the Finns' need for food. [...] But are we needed anymore? [...] The world's grain stores are running out. Finland is shutting down its self-sufficiency and throwing itself at the mercy of others. In food production! (FLS, URE, 5564–5565)

Countryside

Regional disparity in well-being became apparent in Finland in the 1990s. The standard of living in the remote countryside and in the countryside proper has remained at a lower level than those of cities and countryside near the cities. The economically positive cumulative effects of growth centers are significant only in Southern Finland and to an extent in Western Finland. Psychosocial problems have also increased in sparsely populated areas. In addition, the high level of migration has skewed the age and gender structure in the remote regions (Heikkilä et al. 2002, Karvonen–Rintala 2005).

While anticipating the consequences of the acceleration of the structural change in agricul-

ture, farmers pay a reasonable amount of attention to socio-politically significant issues, such as the possible increase in regional disparities in well-being and income as well as to increasing poverty. Many of these alarming assessments of the future development of countryside expressed by farmers in 1997 have in later surveys proved correct (Kainulainen et al. 2001, Heikkilä et al. 2002). Of course, the accelerated structural change in agriculture is not the only factor affecting the growth of regional disparities but the loss of almost 50,000 jobs in agriculture is anything but insignificant.

The situation has become particularly problematic in the remote countryside. On the Finnish scale, the standard of living in these regions has traditionally been low and appears to remain so. Nowadays, various kinds of psycho-social problems seem to be associated with life in such places too. At the national level, this is significant because the remote countryside accounts for half of the area of Finland and there are approximately half a million Finns living there.

Have the decision makers forgotten that Finland continues all the way to Utsjoki? [Utsjoki is the northernmost municipality in Finland.] (FLS, URE, 5816)

Farmers' concern for the fate of the Finnish countryside was most clearly crystallized in their worry over depopulation. It is feared that with the decrease in the number of farms, whole villages and subregions will lose their vitality. The profitability of agriculture-related sources of livelihood is expected to diminish or decline altogether, and consequently not only farmers but also a large number of other rural dwellers will run into difficulties.

It appears that it is not easy to write about depopulation and the possibility of its occurrence. Depopulation refers to the narrowing of opportunities, especially for the future generations. It means the loss of work and income and the exodus of both private and public services from the location. It means a fear of loneliness, emptiness and desolation felt deep in the heart.

Fear of being uprooted from your home and being abandoned and finally fear of being annihilated is ever-present.

Yes, they have told us to think positive, adapt to the EU times and that there is no return to the past. However, house after house is being abandoned. Many schools are shut down due to lack of pupils and stores are closing down. You can't help but wonder whether the milk and butcher's truck will visit either if the functioning farms become even more rare. (FLS, URE, 857)

Depopulation also means empty, decaying houses and reforested fields. It means the disappearance of evidence of your own and your ancestors' work in the environment. It may also mean that the permanent population will move away from the countryside, the reassignment of dwellings for leisure activities, the selling of fields or renting them to growing farms. In any case, it means that the rural landscape will not remain the same.

Reforestation of our fields was brought up as an option but we decided to take a timeout. The danger is that precious traditional landscapes carved by human effort are destroyed by reforestation. These traditional landscapes should still be tended to and protected. We have to remember the old saying that 'the land is not our inheritance but on loan from our children'. (FLS, URE, 5515)

Profession

Finland's decision to join the EU had immediate impact on all farmers in the land. However, decreasing income and 'play-offs' for the farms are only one of the dimensions of the decision. Another one is the 'cold-bloodedness' with which the measures were implemented. After the actual decision-making process, the responsibility for the economic structure seems to have shifted to the farmers themselves, as has the responsibility for its consequences. No significant special

measures have been directed at those closing down their farms. From the perspective of the market economy, it is a question of competition: the survival of the fittest. Expansion and debt financing on personal economic risk are perceived to be the only ways to survive (also Dudley 1996, 2003). From the social, human, and regional perspective it is bewildering to see that a society is prepared to make a conscious decision as a result of which it is known that the livelihoods of tens of thousands of people will wither away, and when this happens there is no one there to help these people.

The amount of hate expressed towards farmers nowadays is inexplicable. [...] Does the Government have a conscious killing strategy? (FLS, URE, 443)

With the joint EU agricultural policy, the control of farmers' activities has tightened. The EU sets a deadline for sowing. New regulations pertaining to environmental protection have come into force. Fields and what at any given time is sown have come under closer scrutiny. There are new regulations pertaining to the size and quality of the produce as well as to their labelling. Inspectors visit farms doing random checks and the operations of farmers are even monitored via satellites. Farmers interpret the increased control as a 'loss of freedom' and a shackling of their autonomy. Attitudes towards control are reserved, even hostile. It is not a question of farms being involved in a great deal of activities that isolate regulations, rather the resentment is caused by the control measures hitting one of the cultural core values of farm life, autonomy and its safeguards (e.g. Katila 2000, Dudley 2003).

The EU wants more cattle, more work, and makes more demands. Ethical issues, nature hazard, nature management, forest management, environment. More accounting, more control – from air, land and sea. A PHONE NUMBER FOR INFORMING ON OTHERS. This is worse than the former SOVIET UNION. (FLS, URE, 397)

Give us back FINNISHNESS, give us back the era of work, honesty and humanity. (FLS, URE, 2407)

As mentioned earlier, farmers closely associate tampering with their professional freedom and autonomy with the weakening of national independence due to EU. Two ways of understanding independence and sovereignty are intertwined in the speech of farmers: national and farmers' independence. Particularly the older generation of farmers invest their own farm land with precisely the same meanings as their fatherland in general. For many descendants of war veterans, the farm is a tangible expression of the land soldiers fought and died for in the second world war.

Farmers feel that the EU with its directives and subsidy practices is placing them under continuous scrutiny. Instead of "honest toil" it is involving them in some kind of skull-duggery and dishonesty that is foreign to them. More rules and control do not bring with them greater trust in the fairness and objectivity of the system, quite the opposite. New rules and practices are not only seen as difficult to implement in practice but also as faceless, long-distance bureaucracy with no human features. According to farmers, many rules are totally nonsensical. The changes have given rise to a new absurd world which has replaced the old understandable environment. This infuriates most of the farmers. However, some find it in themselves to mock it:

You get the best possible yield from your fields, when you set up a really devious system, that is, an EU project. First, you have to switch over to organic farming. That way you secure your income level for the next five years. You must let bushes grow alongside the organic field. It doesn't hurt letting trees grow in the field either. [...] Then you sow this bush land with, for example, durum or maize; they are well subsidized and Finland's arctic climate will take care of the harvesting. Naturally, you can also use the area as a pasture [...] Emus provide the best profit but other suitable animals for Finnish fields include the ostrich,

zebra and shrew-mouse. (FLS, URE, 4472)

It appears then that the decision making on things directly pertaining to farmers' work has not only been physically removed from the Finnish countryside but has also grown apart from the everyday agricultural life and its preconditions. According to farmers' interpretation, the powers that be do not know what they are doing or they have no regard for the consequences of their actions. Only a few of the decision makers have to live within the system they have created. Again, we are brought back to the systematic disregard for farmers' own talk about their lives and its preconditions in decision making.

I consider it a great mistake that planners in the administrative centers are highly educated people with no experience of the majority of people. They are sure to come up with all kinds of ways to destroy small companies while they just continue to fuss over large companies and industry. [...] This is a terrible deception of the common people. (FLS, URE, 2406)

Agricultural policies are nowadays led from Brussels and even regional policies in the EU are based on programs. Neither section of politics appears to hold much interest for either domestic politicians or for the media. Now that the number of farms is decreasing, there is a new group of actors pattering around in the countryside instead of farmers and politicians, which is the icing on the cake of the, at times, surreal individual tale of change:

The land is full of consultants, advisers, training institutes, courses, programs, all kinds of utopians, who while picking society's pockets are carrying water to the empty well of the countryside. (FLS, URE, 4672)

Personal experience

The three aforementioned themes – fatherland, countryside and profession – intertwine in the everyday life of individuals and families. The analysis of

personal experience differs methodologically from the previous coding, thematizing and interpretation. Chopping up the autobiographical pieces into codes is not an analytically feasible solution in this context, because by submitting pieces of an experience to analysis, we simultaneously lose the most distinctive feature of the experience, its comprehensiveness. Therefore, instead of chopping up, I have made a synthesis by abridging two longer texts into shorter stories where, unlike individual quotes, you can read the plot and turning points of the story. At the same time, an individual's time – past, present and future – is placed in the central position in biographical narration. (Gullestad 1996:42.) The abridged stories provide a human context for the previously detached themes and simultaneously offer a window to the everyday life, where these themes get their concrete expression.

Farmers' feelings of having been deceived have not come about overnight. It is rather the suffering and existential pain over the fading hope of continuing your own work and farm looked after through decades of hard work and effort. It is an expression of simmering but powerless rage and grinding disappointment created when, despite immense personal effort, the situation is becoming unbearable for you and your continuator.

In 1968 [change of generation], the farm was like an atom bomb had hit it. There wasn't much else except debt, cockroaches and work. The milk production wasn't enough to pay for food. The storekeeper was on our back, the bank was on our back, the taxman didn't forget us either! The roof of the cow-house was still leaking two days after the rain. How did we get through that? [...]

Of course, we acquired more cattle and worked harder and eventually we got the generation change loan under control. [...] Cattle increased from nine cows to 25–30 cows + the young livestock. All in all, 70–75 head. Farm house, sauna, cow-house, tractor garage, grain silo, trailer shelter, machine storeroom, hay barn, two dairies, three sludge wells and a cottage being built for the parents, and the old cow-house

renovated a couple of times. Good machinery bought through an enormous amount of work. [...] I would like to wipe away 20 years of debts, pain, sorrow and too much work. Particularly now that Finland has joined the EU. [...]

Our son is nineteen and just out of the army. He went to agricultural college, plans on continuing farming. Out of love! He can't bear to watch a farm built by his parents starting to decay. [...] We, the parents, can't decide on the selling prize, that is determined by paper pushers MORE INTELLIGENT than us. One says 250,000. The agricultural center says 500,000 maximum. The taxman says that'll be 137,000 of capital transfer tax. One says, it's at the very least 1 million Finnish marks. How is our son going to pay for the farm?

If I had a chance to start all over again, I wouldn't come to that house [her husband's derelict home farm to which she was married]. But if I was young and pretty, I would sure come to this house [a wholly rebuilt farm center]. [...] Where is our son going to find a hard-working wife to walk the path to the cow-house, when all you get for working in the cow-house is a pile of shit? (FLS, URE, 395–402)

Today, the generation of farmers at the age of transferring their farms to their descendants is the one that survived the crisis that faced agriculture in Finland in the 1960s and '70s. The survivors usually see themselves as winners. Many others had to leave their homes and farms but those who stayed in the farms were not vanquished. For most of them, staying has meant struggling with huge debts and enormous workloads because to survive they have had to continuously make their production more effective. In order to ensure the increase in production, many families opted to specialize and because of that they have for all practical purposes rebuilt the whole farm-yard area of their farms with every conceivable modern production facility. Their faith in the future of agriculture was strong and they did not count their working hours. They really cannot be reproached for lack of enterprise.

At the time the society's promise to farmers was that by making production more effective and scientific, by expanding, streamlining, and specializing, that is by working harder, they would make ends meet the means. The Farmers' Union, for example, was an equal party between labour and employer organisations in the general incomes policy negotiations and farmers were accepted as an eligible party, when the economic wealth of the nation was redistributed. Some of the national agricultural subsidies were also social by nature and it is said that during the period of constructing the welfare-state in the 1970–80's the agricultural policy had social goals too. (Granberg 1989, Alasuutari 1996, 68.) EU's common agricultural policy does not include a same kind of social dimension, and along with the EU-membership farmers lost their position as an established interest group in the general incomes policy setting. (Granberg 1996.) Instead they are compelled to cling to the modern entrepreneurial self and the ethos of market oriented accountability.

On family farms, work has not been done only with a view to one's own benefit but also to guarantee as much as possible the prerequisites for the next farmer generation to continue its work (e.g. Salamon 1992, de Haan 1994, 173, Barlett 2006). The continuity of the family farm remains to this day one of the main goals of farmers' life work. For example, when making decisions on specialization and production lines, the parents have made critical decisions affecting the future options of the continuator. It is typical that farmer families spent all their knowledge, competence, endless hours of work and the money earned from agriculture and forestry and secondary occupations on developing the farm. The persistence and goals reaching beyond generations are part of the reason why the current situation is seen as a large-scale social annulment of the work of this and previous generations and its results, and, what is worse, an effort to deprive future generations of their opportunities.

We believed in the future. I mean, people always have to eat. Farming and farmers have

been put down so long that the day will come when the land and the farmer are appreciated. [...] We didn't own that many hectares but we believed in our own competence, industriousness, profit margin calculations and cheap loans. [...] And there was always outside work to restore the economy. To pay the loans for buying land, movables, underdrains, buying more land, renovation, cars ... I'm the one who fixes everything, has the strength to do everything, knows everything. I'm modest, humble and quiet. Everything everyone always said I should be! [...]

I was tired. I was so tired that I didn't think I could make it from morning to evening. I had two small children. A job, with hours preventing me from getting them to day care, instead we took care of them at home. Then there was my grandma who was starting to lose her memory altogether. We had beef cattle and an inconvenient, old-fashioned cow-house. [...] Parties close to agriculture said we should believe in agriculture, we'll be rising still. 'Vote for me and you'll join in the decision making.' And at the same time, there was the always ongoing debate about agricultural subsidies. Misuse of common funds. Leeches living off society.

[...] Cheating, I say. All a big cheat. [...] We're not investing anymore. We're not going to have an exemplary, competitive model farm [...] We'll try to survive the burdens we were dumb enough to acquire. We were gullible dupes.

The world loves economic thinking, competitiveness, economics, cost awareness, large units and small unit costs. Money on investments, bank accounts and property. And our votes, come election time. That's what everyone wanted from us! [...]

There was no future. No faith in survival. We had lost the ideals, faith and hope of our youth. (FLS, URE, 3521–3523)

The emerging result of radically individualising forces

When writing about their life and work amidst structural change, ceasing farmers present personal interpretations on the sequence of events and their consequences for themselves and their families, and, on a wider scale, for their profession, the Finnish countryside and the whole country. These interpretations address opportunities of survival in a globalizing environment and disclose the compulsions facing them in these circumstances: First, to continue farming people have no other choice but to adopt principles of competitive individualism and the identity of entrepreneurial self. Second, there is no distinct possibility for small, low-investment farming, that is to say, for an alternative way of producing food instead of industrial-intensive farming. Third, given the capital intensive structure of industrialized agriculture and the demanded market oriented moral accountability of personal risk-taking, future farming as a form of work and a way of life will be a highly individualizing endeavour (see Dudley 2003).

However, at the same time, these interpretations are motivated by an alternative vision to that of the hegemonic paradigm. At the national level, farmers' alternative stories defend the fatherland and its independence. The idea of independence and national autonomy are felt to be particularly important in a globalizing world. This does not necessarily imply a withdrawing to the sidelines or being reactionary but keeping the right to decide your own affairs and retaining your autonomy. To the farmers, the self-sufficiency of food is a precondition for autonomy and consequently for national independence as well. In their view, leaving yourself at the mercy of foreign others in an unpredictable and uncertain world would be irresponsible.

Farmers giving up agriculture tend to see themselves as victims of circumstances beyond their powers. The main reasons for giving up are found to be national and international agricultural policy, negative public opinion against agriculture, bad prospects and financial difficulties (Laitalainen et al. 2008). In the ceasing farmers' stories these reasons are connected to the experi-

enced betrayal by the rest of society and their exclusion from the normative and political debate. They are, for example, no longer accepted to be an eligible party, when the wealth of the nation is redistributed. The promotion of the new entrepreneurial self instead means the establishment of a regime of silence in areas which might induce challenges to competitive individualism. Hence, if it is accepted, that silence is part of a truth regime and that it could be removed by displacing one discourse and its accompanying silence with an alternative discourse and its silence (Armstrong 1994), the alternative story told here is an attempt to reveal this "flip side" of the official story of the structural change in agriculture.

Even though agricultural restructuring is basically an economic process, the course of events is also culturally mediated. Economic as well as political and administrative upheavals easily transform cultural scripts that organize a particular mode of life. The most penetrating anxiety farmers express concerns exactly the loss of their prevailing way of life. In the end they seem to interpret the new socio-economic situation and emerging competitive individualism as antithetical to social solidarity (see e.g. Dudley 1996; 2003, Marglin 2008), universalism as well as regional and professional equality – the values usually presented to represent also the Nordic ethos of welfare.

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