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Intergenerational Assistance on Family Farms in Slovenia: Expectations and Practices

Abstract

The ageing in farm population in Slovenia is accompanied by a diminishing interest of the younger generation in farming. Hence, measures for early retirement of farmers and assistance to young farmers were introduced in 2004 and 2005. Some results of two ensuing studies are presented here: the survey Generations and Gender Relations on Slovenian Farms (2007) and ethnographic study on intergenerational solidarity (2009). The survey findings reveal that through intergenerational assistance farm population, especially the beneficiaries of both measures, shows specific characteristics compared to other observed groups (non-farmers): stronger reliance on their own family resources and weaker dependence on state resources. The survey findings are further upgraded by the ethnographic results, explaining more in-depth from a life-course perspective the complex dynamics and background of intergenerational assistance on family farms.

Keywords: family farms, ageing, intergenerational assistance, rural development, policy measures, Slovenia.

Introduction

In the context of agricultural development and global demographic trends, research focus on intergenerational assistance on family farms seems more than relevant. On the one hand, recently voiced predictions that

in the pronounced competitive conditions of the global market economy industrialised farming organised in corporate form would replace family-run farming (Potter and Tilzey 2005) have failed. The evidence shows quite the opposite – development towards family-run enterprises (Hildenbrand and Hennon 2005, Galdeano-Gómez et al. 2010). On the other hand, UN demographic projections show that ensuring global food safety is becoming the priority task. By 2050, the global population will have increased to 9 billion, which means that it is necessary to double the extent of agricultural production to avoid global hunger (Manning 2000).

Slovenia belongs to a group of countries which do not satisfy their own needs for agricultural and food products by domestic production only. Ensuring food safety is one of the most important aims of agricultural development defined by the Resolution on the Strategic Guidelines for the Development of Slovenian Agriculture and Food Industry (RSRSKŽ 2011). Next to production of quality food and food security, the resolution aims at the permanent increase of agricultural competitiveness since family farms in Slovenia are mainly self-sufficient and their economic productivity is low. The latter is also a consequence of unfavourable education and age structure of farmers. Nearly half of the farm operators have no formal education, less than half have vocational or secondary education, and only four per cent of them have completed higher, university or postgraduate education (RSRSKŽ 2011: 6). More than half of the operators are over 55 years old, while the share of operators under 45 is only nineteen per cent (RDP 2008: 23).

When discussing family farming in Slovenia themes related to demography can no longer be avoided. The Rural Development Programme (RDP 2008: 9–10) explicitly warns that the share of old people will increase while the shares of children and labour force will start to decline. The emigration of young people from rural areas (brain-drain) adds to the poor demographic structure in rural regions and has also endangered the continuity of farming.

The measures of Early Retirement of Farmers (2004) and Setting Up of Young Farmers (2005) aimed precisely at improving both agricultural productivity and assuring farming continuity. It became more than obvious that only the transfers of farms to younger farmers can make an important contribution to raised competitiveness of agriculture in Slovenia. But who these two measures actually addressed was the main research question

of two successive research projects: a survey on generational and gender relations on farms in Slovenia (2007–2008), and a follow-up fieldwork on intergenerational assistance in farm families (2009–2011). The ensuing research was designed on the survey's results. By upgrading observations, the ethnographic study sought to provide a more in-depth description of the complex dynamics between genders and generations in every adult member of the farm household selected; the survey indirectly captured the family atmosphere through the view of only one household interviewee.

In this essay, the presentation of results revolves around the question of whether both types of farms, the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, differ in the view of their developmental capacities and intergenerational assistance.

Theoretical Background

The research interest in intergenerational relationships in contemporary farm families is relatively poor considering the topical context of unfavourable demographic trends. On the one hand, the reason may lie in the assumption that the development of the welfare institutions would crowd out the private support within families at the level of the total population (Kohli and Künemund 2003). On the other hand, however, some authors pointed to the biased deeply anchored public image of close and supporting ties among generations in extended farm families compared to weak family bonds in urban settings (Hareven 1996, Melberg 2005, Jong et al 2005).

Similar reflections may have been the main 'culprit' that the *First Global Rural Ageing Conference* was held only a decade ago. The rationale of the conference was, however, the current global demographic evidence, which showed that ageing worldwide was in fact 'rural ageing'; in the majority of countries the share of the elderly was higher in rural than in urban areas. In the introductory essay of the special issue of *Ageing and Society*, Wenger (2001) defines aging in rural areas as a distinctive field of research reviewing the extant literature on the topic and summarizing the main findings of various cases worldwide from the conference (Scharf 2001, Wenger and Burholt 2001, Shenk 2001, Keeling 2001, Bhat in Dhruvarajan 2001, Keasberry 2001). Among other themes the author stresses that in various parts of the world, urbanization and rural depopulation are associated with family diaspora: everywhere, young people are leaving rural areas

for job opportunities in the cities, leaving their elderly parents 'at home'; 'intimacy at a distance' is becoming a practice of intergenerational solidarity almost everywhere in the world and not only in the 'developed countries'; rural family values in a form of feelings of responsibility to old parents and the opposite are identified as stronger in rural areas; family values in terms of commitment of adult children to caring for their elderly parents are often associated with a residence permit on their farm possession. The relationship between rural landholding and family care in old age as well as the housing issue of younger and older generations in rural areas Wenger sees as an important area for further research (ibid.: 542). Finally, the author stresses (ibid.: 544) that intergenerational relationships are recognised as significant in all discussed cases worldwide, and that the goal of intergenerational responsibility as a 'reciprocal norm' was evident in all of them (ibid.: 544).

It is worth mentioning a study on the experiences of intergenerational relationships of fathers and their adult sons in farm households of Iowa (Elder et al 1996). The study shows that mutual support among kin is not so much correlated with the quality of their emotional ties, as with expectations – kin help out because it is expected (ibid.: 50). Elder et al also show that the relationships among generations in rural areas should not be considered either as only supportive or conflicting but as the complex relations including both dimensions. Similarly, some decades old studies show (e.g. Lee and Cassidy 1985) that high frequency of contacts and interactions of members on family farms should be attributed more to economic factors than to commonly believed familialism.

Research carried out in Norway (Melberg 2005) on intergenerational assistance also emphasises the issue of paid and unpaid care of the farm population. The author shows that a very small percentage of the farm population, living in multigenerational families, receives unpaid care or even requires special care. She attributes this result to the availability of public sector services in the region. The case shows that in different generations both providers and receivers of unpaid care perceive this assistance not as a commitment among generations but as their self-evident practice (Melberg 2005: 436). Contrary to expectations, the rate of assistance did not differ between the generations and genders: women spend more time caring for the performance of elderly parents, but also men who provide the care, spend a considerable amount of time doing

so. However, in the case of childcare and more demanding practical help to elderly parents members of both genders and generations rely more on public welfare services. Finally, the study shows that in this field of intergenerational activities, based on the intertwining work and home on the farm, ambivalent feelings are presented among offspring and elderly parents.

Although contemporary farm families are in many aspects similar to families of other professional groups this short literature review shows that researchers of rural ageing are increasingly aware that investigating intergenerational relations in multigenerational farm families is a challenging and ambitious scientific undertaking. Intergenerational relationships mirror a significant part of the social structure and determine the economic functioning of the family farm (Gasson et al 1988, Hennon and Hildenbrand 2005). Therefore, such exploration also has considerable social relevance. The secured successor and his/her relations with the older generation are of vital importance for the survival and maintenance of every farm.

The aim of our study was to assess the intergenerational relationships of farm families who are the beneficiaries of aid for early retirement and young farmers. More precisely, our research interest was to determine whether family farms, the beneficiaries of these two forms of aid indeed show greater development capacities and mutual assistance between generations compared to the non-beneficiaries.

Data and Methods

The survey 'Generations and Gender Relations on Slovenian Farms' was carried out in 2007 in four observed groups of interviewees. The sub-sample of farmers (the first group: 301), the beneficiaries of both types of measures, was formed on the basis of the list of all beneficiaries in the period 2004–2006 in Slovenia.[1] The sample of the second group of farmers, the non-beneficiaries (106), was formed on the basis of Agricultural Census 2000 data. Both groups of farm respondents were additionally compared

[1] There were altogether 529 beneficiaries of the Setting Up of Young Farmers measure of whom 14% were women and 365 beneficiaries of the Early Retirement of Farmers measure of whom 16% were women.

with people who live in the countryside, but were not engaged in farming (the third group: 135) as well as with residents of urban areas (the fourth group: 275). The respondents of both genders were aged from 18 to 83.

The results of the survey were generated on the basis of bivariate statistical analysis, applying the Chi-Square Test. Univariate general linear model (GLM) was applied when analysing the sources of intergenerational assistance.

Due to the methodological design of the survey, which was limited to obtain information about family members of the households from the view of only one household interviewee, these results did not enable broader conclusions on farm family dynamics as understood by their respective members. Therefore, ensuing anthropological fieldwork was carried out in 2009 in Pomurje (NE Slovenia), the region with favourable conditions for farming. The semi-structured interviews with adult members of six multigenerational farm families, the beneficiaries (3) and the non-beneficiaries (3) of both forms of aid, revolved around topics on farm history and organisation of work on the farm and at home from a generation and gender perspective. This presentation refers to their understanding of living in a multigenerational farm family in order to discuss their mutual assistance.

Survey Findings

Developmental Capacities of Farms

Farm holdings managed by the beneficiaries are larger (23 ha on average) compared to holdings owned by the non-beneficiaries (15 ha on average). The first group of farmers more frequently expresses the desire to continue farming and to increase the farm capacities (30%) than the non-beneficiaries (10%). Both groups are livestock-oriented but more so the beneficiaries (65%) than the non-beneficiaries (32%). The farm households of both groups mainly (over 50%) obtain their incomes from occasional or additional agricultural activity which supports the general evidence that in Slovenia, mixed or subsidiary farms prevail.[2] Both groups of farms are

[2] The established socio-economic typology of family farms in Slovenia distinguishes among pure, mixed, subsidiary and aged farms. A pure farm is defined as a farm household with all of its members employed only on the farm; at least one member of a household

similar as to general involvement of their household members in farm work (mainly part-time).

Most farmers in Slovenia have only 'practical experiences' in farming, which is to hinder rapid and effective response to technological changes and developments on the agricultural market. The survey shows, however, that 40% of young farmers, the beneficiaries, have been trained for agricultural or related professions in the process of regular education; among them one-fifth have a university degree in agriculture. Among the non-beneficiaries the situation is the opposite: only 10% of them have been trained in agriculture during their regular education. Both young farmers (29%) and their partners (21%) have achieved a markedly higher proportion of any university degree compared to the non-beneficiaries (12%) and their partners (6%).

In general, the prospects for farm succession are better on the beneficiaries' farms than on the non-beneficiaries' farms. Among young farmers over half have recently taken over the farm while among the non-beneficiaries, this event is more often foreseen after the death of the current farm holder. Farmers, the non-beneficiaries, plan a takeover of a farm at the age of 35 while farmers, the beneficiaries, do so at the age of 31.

The beneficiaries' farms are also 'more viable' in a view of a number of family members. Together with the farms of early retirees, the beneficiaries significantly exceed the number of household members of the other group. The average number of members of households of young farmers is 4.7, early retiree's households have on average 4.4 members, while the households of the non-beneficiaries have 4 members.

Literature (Barbič 1992, Černič Istenič 2006, 2007) quite often mentions that farmers in Slovenia usually live in multigenerational households. In our case this holds true for households of young farmers and early retirees (52%), who usually live in three-generation households. Yet this is not the case of households of the non-beneficiaries where two-generation households prevail (43%).

The vast majority (80%) of farm households are located in villages. Only a minority of farmers live in houses outside the villages. Among the

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is employed on a mixed farm; nobody is employed on a subsidiary farm; people who are over 64 live on an aged farm (Udovč et al 2006).

latter, the households of the beneficiaries of both groups dominate: early retired farmers (19%) followed by young farmers (15%).

To summarise, two forms of aid address those family farms that show better developmental potential in terms of economic and demographic aspects; they have larger estates and even plan to extend their operation, have invested in agricultural education of their members and show greater viability by secured successors and larger number of household members than farm families, the non-beneficiaries.

Intergenerational Relations: Expectations

The respondents' expectations about intergenerational assistance were observed through three sets of statements. The first set pertains to the assessment, whose responsibility it is to care for dependent family members, i.e. preschool and school children, the elderly, and whose responsibility it is to financially support the elderly and young families in need. According to the respondents, the most responsible for the care of preschool and school children is the family (53.8% and 50.2% respectively). Yet society and the family are equally obliged (46.4%) to care for the elderly. However, for the financial support of the elderly and young families in need, society is the most responsible (69.2% and 68.8%). Collating these results by gender, age and social setting, the data show significant differences only among urban-rural-farm settings regarding care for the elderly (χ^2= 33.420; sig.= 0.000) and preschool children (χ^2= 20.758; sig.= 0.002). A considerably greater share of the farm population agrees that the family is responsible for caring for dependent family members compared to their urban or rural counterparts.[3]

[3] Small or even no differences in attitudes about intergenerational assistance between urban and rural populations mirror their professional structure. The Slovenian countryside encompasses several types of profession; farmers account for only a small proportion. Polycentric spatial concepts of development with dispersed industrialization and a vast class of daily commuters from rural to urban centres was a decisive factor in the transformation of rural areas in the second half of the 20th century. By reducing the role of agriculture in the national economy, the countryside was gradually transforming in the area with a modern, flexible economic and social fabric of urban character (Klemenčič 2006).

The second set of statements refers to the assessment[4] of adult children's obligations towards their parents: 'Children should take over the duty to care for their parents in need', 'Children should adjust their work to the needs of their parents', 'Daughters should care for their parents more than sons', 'Children should help their parents when they are in financial difficulties' and 'Parents should move to where their children live when they can no longer care for themselves'. The majority of respondents agree in principle that children are responsible for caring for their parents and providing financial assistance when their parents are in need (70% and 55%). Yet in more specific statements, such as 'Daughters should more care for their parents than sons', 'Children should adjust their work to the needs of their parents', and 'Parents should move to where their children live when they can no longer care for themselves', the shares of disagreement prevail (65%, 41%, and 34%). Comparing these results by gender, age and social setting significant differences are found only in assessing the statement 'Children should adjust their work to the needs of their parents'; the farm population as a whole in greater share than the urban population agree with this statement (χ^2= 33,183; sig.= 0,000).

The third set of statements relates to the assessment of parents' responsibilities towards their children: 'Grandparents should care for their grandchildren when their parents are not able to do so', 'Parents should financially support their adult children in need' and 'Parents should adapt their lives when their children are in need'. The majority of respondents agree with all three statements (52.4%, 52.4% and 44.3% respectively). According to these results, parents are recognised as those who should show greater responsibility towards their adult children than the opposite. Significant differences by social setting, gender and age are found considering obligations of grandparents towards their grandchildren. Women, older respondents and farmers agree with this statement. Significant differences are also found assessing the statement, pertaining to financial support of parents to their adult children. The majority of women agree that parents should assist their adult children when they are in financial difficulties (χ^2 = 7,743; sig. = 0,022), while the older respondents agree with the

[4] In the analysis, a five-level Likert scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' was applied.

statement 'Parents should adapt their lives to their children in need' (χ^2 = 15,876; sig.= 0,003).

These results show that there are no significant differences in attitude regarding intergenerational assistance between the beneficiaries and the non-beneficiaries. Variations in expectations towards intergenerational assistance are not in any substantial correlation with the aid received.

Intergenerational Relationships: Practices

Results on the caring for old household members show no statistically significant differences among urban-rural-farm settings. However, the shares pertaining to applicability of that kind of care indicate that this type of activity is more often carried out in farm households (33% among the beneficiaries and 40% among the non-beneficiaries) and in rural households (32%) compared to urban (28%) ones. Additionally, the care for old and disabled household members seems to be a more frequent activity in farm households than in rural and urban ones. All respondents in the sample (21 of them) whose household members pertain to that group (55 and older) were found in farm households only; but only two of them in the households of the non-beneficiaries. In fact, with mentally or/and physically disabled persons of all ages live 14% of respondents in farm households of the beneficiaries and 12% of respondents in farm households of the non-beneficiaries; rural and urban households corresponding share is only 5%. Moreover, living arrangements of older respondents also indicate that the care for aged family members prevail in farm households. At age 55 and over, living in three-generational households (e.g. with adult children) is more frequent among the beneficiaries (41%) while in other groups the share is considerably lower; 23% in rural households, 13% in the households of the non-beneficiaries, and 6% in urban ones. Comparable values for the respondents aged 65 and over, living in three-generational households, are: 23% in farm households of the beneficiaries, 18% in rural households, 6% in urban households and 7% in farm households of the non-beneficiaries. Further, living alone at age 55 and over is less frequent in farm households (2% among the beneficiaries and 2.5% among the non-beneficiaries) than in rural and urban households (5% and 20%). However, corresponding values for those aged 65 or over living alone are not statistically significant.

In view of the younger generation, data show that in farm households of the beneficiaries the share of those aged between 31 and 50 who live with at least one parent is highest (26%); equivalent shares for the non-beneficiaries is 6% while for rural and urban households the shares are only 4% and 3%. Data also indicates that at this age considerably more men than women live with their parents: 50% of farm men – the beneficiaries and 7% of farm women – the beneficiaries while in the households of the non-beneficiaries 15% of men live with their parents but no women live with them.

Looking from the perspective of living arrangement of parents who do not live with the respondent data show that this situation is more often present in urban settings (among fathers (40%) and even more mothers (66%)) than on farms (31% for fathers and 59% for mothers) and rural settings (25% for fathers and 47% for mothers). The custom of visiting non-residential parents does not differ significantly among the settings. 74% of urban respondents visit their mothers on a weekly basis; the equivalent shares for rural and farm respondents are 75% and 68%.

Considering the care and upbringing of children the results show that regular – institutionalised child care is more frequently practiced in urban and rural settings (48% and 57%) than in farm settings. The lowest share of inclusion of children in child care institutions is found among the beneficiaries of both forms of aid: 27% among the beneficiaries and 33% among the non-beneficiaries. Considering other types of child care arrangements (paid nannies, prolonged stay after regular school hours) no significant differences among groups are found but the tendency indicates that this form of child care is more often practiced in urban and rural settings. Correspondingly, when in need of child care assistance of other people (non-professionals) farm parents, especially the beneficiaries more frequently rely on their relatives and family members.

Due to the low number of cases in the sample the sources of assistance in farm households were analysed for all age groups together. These sources refer to expected assistance from other persons, assistance given to other persons, own feelings entrusted to other persons and being trusted by other persons in the last twelve months. Statistically significant differences among the observed four groups were shown in the case of expected assistance from other persons ($\chi^2 = 43{,}665$; sig. = 0,001), entrusting one's

own feelings to other people (χ^2 = 52,553; sig.= 0,001) and being trusted by other persons (χ^2 = 53,392; sig.= 0,001).

The assistance of others is the most expected in the rural population (98.5%) but the least among their urban counterparts (92%). The assistance from family members and relatives is to the greatest extent expected from the farm population irrespective of type of subsidy (60%) while the comparative shares for the urban and rural populations are 42% and 55%. The greatest share of those expecting assistance from non-family members pertains to the urban population (8%); the comparative shares for the farm population are 1.7% for the beneficiaries and 0.9% for the non-beneficiaries.

In the last twelve months, half of the respondents talked about their feelings and experiences to other people. Among them the most trusting were urban respondents (60%) while the least trusted were the beneficiaries of both forms of aid (40%). When farmers, the beneficiaries talked to someone these were mainly their family members while the respondents from urban settings rely equally on family members and others.

The group of farm beneficiaries were also the least frequently trusted by others (in 60.5% of cases nobody showed trust towards them). The difference among them and the other three groups is 20 percentage points. When someone was trusting towards the farm beneficiaries this was mainly a close family member while in the urban setting the combination of close relatives and others prevailed.

Results of multivariate analysis (GLM) related to the above mentioned sources of assistance respondents received or gave in the last twelve months to other persons show (Table 1) that expectations are the most strongly predicted by the size of the farm: the larger the farm the lower are the expectations of its household members to receiving help from others. Giving assistance to others is predicted by gender: women give more help to others than men. Mutual trust is also most predicted by gender and size of farm: women are more trusting while also being more frequently trusted by others. Yet with farm size this mutual trust decreases. This means that on larger farms farmers are less trusting towards others while others are less trusting towards them. Considering the variable related to two forms of aid the results also show that individuals living in the households of the beneficiaries are less often addressed by others than individuals living in the households of the non-beneficiaries.

Table 1. Social ties (GLM) F statistics

	Has someone from whom he/she can expect help	**He/she offered assistance to someone**	**Talking with someone about his/her feelings**	**Talking to others about his/her feelings**
Model	1.113	1.150	2.544***	2.577***
Intercept	631.571***	3.760*	59.270***	67.667***
Gender	0.033	3.906*	6.648**	5.688**
Age	0.112	0.847	1.211	0.505
Education	0.953	1.500	2.587*	0.817
Labour status	0.757	1.163	2.095*	1.048
Able to make both ends meet	1.655	1.101	0.591	1.929
Receipt of subsidy	0.001	0.989	0.254	2.636*
Income	1.180	0.718	1.896*	2.851*
Farm size	3.480*	0.057	4.879**	3.942**
Levene's test	0.805	0.886	1.641	1.314
R^2	0.085	0.088	0.175	0.117

*** p<0.001 ** p<0.010 * p<0.050

To sum up, in the households of beneficiaries mutual assistance among family members is more strongly accentuated than in the households of other observed groups. At the same time, the results indicate that from the point of view of social ties the farm households of the beneficiaries show their greater social isolation than farm households of the non-beneficiaries which is even more pronounced compared to the rural and urban population.

Fieldwork

The ensuing fieldwork was carried out in three counties close to (each within 10 kilometres) the municipality Murska Sobota in Pomurje region.[5]

[5] Pomurje is a region situated in the northeast of the country bordering Austria, Hungary and Croatia, and its main town is Murska Sobota.

Pomurje is one of Slovenia's least developed regions, with economic activity orientation to the industries producing a lower added value per employed person. On the other hand, the region is clearly agricultural countryside either by the share of agricultural areas or by the share of farm population (20 per cent at the state level). Livestock production is the most important agricultural branch; the most widespread is cattle production followed by pig production and poultry.

Six three-generation farm households were chosen by snowball. The main criterion required at least two generations to co-reside under 'the same roof' and earn at least a share of the family's net income from agricultural activities. To better understand the generation and gender aspect in more or less developed family farms, the cases selected pertain to three farms, the beneficiaries of the measures of Setting Up of Young Farmers (SYF) and Early Retirement (ER), i.e. farms with a secured successor. The other three were not the beneficiaries of the two forms of aid and were without a secured successor during the course of the research.

The older generation belongs to the time of socialism, when agrarian reforms significantly determined the farming structure and strategies in the country. The younger generation of collocutors mainly belongs to post-socialism when Slovenia proclaimed its independence (1991), joined the EU (2004) and adapted to the CAP reforms.

The use of terms 'older' and 'younger generation' pertains merely to the generation sequence, not the chronological age of the family members.

Following the example of the previously established database on generations and gender relations, the collocutors discussed some a priori designed themes related to various transfers, division of labour tasks and assistance among their family members.

Introduction of six family farms

A review of the basic characteristics of the six selected farm families shows that all farms are oriented to livestock–crop production and are 'mixed' family farms. The Cases (1–6) are differentiated by the number of employed family members on and off the farm. The first three Cases (two beneficiaries of the aid of SYF and ER, and one candidate for the aid SYF) have on average at least one member employed outside the farm. The second three

(the non-beneficiaries), however, have one member employed on the farm, usually the operator.

The education of the collocutors does not illustrate a typical pattern among the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of aid. University educated interviewees are found in both groups; however, they are always representatives of the younger generation (three individuals from Cases 1, 3, 4). Among the younger generation, secondary education prevails, and their study programmes are mostly related to regional needs: agriculture and the textile industry. In general, the older generation – the over 60 year-olds have lower education (elementary schooling prevails) compared to the older generation – the under 60 year-olds (vocational schooling prevails).

As a rule, a son stays at home on the family farm. This applies to both the older and the younger generation. A woman is a transferee only when there is no other male heir (Case 6), or in exceptional circumstances.

With one exception only (Case 2), there are two houses on the farm. The new house usually belongs to the younger generation and is some 10 metres away from the old house.

The holding size and the farm equipment vary substantially in view of the time period observed: socialism and post-socialism. The introduced land maximum in 1953 required that no family farm in this time period exceeded 10 hectares of owned farmland. Until the late 1960s, family farms as a rule were not equipped with machinery. However, there is an obvious increase of the size of farmland among the younger generation at the time of taking over the farm, particularly in the beneficiaries of SYF (Cases 1 and 2) compared to their parents' generation: from 7 hectares to 35 hectares (Case 1), from 0.3 hectares to 60 hectares (Case 2). Case 4 was an exception (a non-beneficiary) which was one of the largest in the village during socialist times. The present operator of this farm has also enlarged the size of the farmland compared to his father, i.e. from 10 to 40 hectares. It is worth mentioning the enlarged capacities of the tourist farm in the candidate for the aid SYF (Case 3) compared to the business beginnings of his parents. By the time the younger operator took over the tourist farm in 2003, the guest house had been enlarged from a capacity of three rooms to nine of the first category and the size of agricultural land had slightly increased from 11 to 16 hectares.

All farms substantially improved their equipment with machines after the introduction of tractors in the late 1960s. Unrelated to the aid received and the size of the farmland, each farm has at least one tractor with several attachments. Two cases (1, 3) from the beneficiary group possess two tractors and one case (2) owns three tractors and a combine. Two cases from the non-beneficiary group (5, 6) own one tractor; Case 4 being the exception, with four tractors.

Irrespective of the time period observed, all the cases increased the previous average number of livestock per farm holding. Similarly to the increase of holding size, the significant growth is observed among the beneficiaries of the two forms of aid (SYF and ER) and in Case 4 from the non-beneficiary group. Two farms from the beneficiary group (Case 1 and 2) increased the average number of livestock from 4 to 56, and from zero to 30 breeding pigs and 500 porkers; the old Case 4 farm reared 10 to 15 cattle and now, as a pig farm there are some 40 breeding pigs and 1000 porkers.

Finally, all partners who married on the farm of their husbands or wives stem from multigenerational families and farm settings.

The following analysis is limited to the family members' understanding of living in a multigenerational farm family.

Expectations and Practices of Living in a Multigenerational Farm Family

To avoid the commonly believed myth about close kin ties in multigenerational farm families and to clarify the finding from the 2007 survey about the commitment of the younger generation of the beneficiary farms to provide care for the older generation, the 'fields of dis/agreement' among and within farm families' generations were observed through their assessments of the dis/advantages of living in a multigenerational family. The cases of two types of families (the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of two forms of aid) show no particular difference:

The majority of the older generation believe that living in a multigenerational farm family is more of a benefit than a shortcoming but on condition that all the members get along. Usually they expose secured old age, intergenerational teaching: the younger from the older and vice versa, and a feeling that you always get help when you need it.

For instance, the older couple from Case 2 expects to stay at home in their old age. The older operator (ER) referred to the Contract where it was clearly defined that a retired person stayed in a house (or apartment) and the young transferee had to take care of him either at home or had to pay for his nursing. His wife added that they had already arranged the house properly: lower rooms, without stairs, were set up for the older people.

Grandchildren are as a rule seen more as entertainment than obligation:

> *I cannot describe the joy when children arrive home from school and a baby smiles from his chair. But you have to be more careful with a tractor because kids play everywhere in the yard* (male I, 49, Case 5).

Yet the minority express some criticism. The older couple in Case 3 believes that a common life with various generations may lead to disagreement. The older operator was as a child faced with such a disagreement between his mother and his aged grandmother, his father's mother. His grandmother even moved to his daughter's family in the other village because she could no longer live with his mother. Yet his mother did not get along with his wife either:

> *My mother-in-law was constantly giving orders. Sometimes I couldn't stand her commands and rather without words had done quickly what was necessary. Sometimes my husband supported me, sometimes his mother. Unfortunately he was a mama's boy. He assisted me but he also took time for himself. And when I asked him why he wasn't there, knowing that we had lots of guests, he replied that I was the one who was always at home. I had to prove myself continually* (female I, 66).

This negative experience with a mother-in-law was the main reason that she supported her children 'to live their way of life'. This incident also underlined her desire not to live with her adult children and their families.

The older couple of Case 4 believes that at times, there was much more respect among generations than there is today. Old people were a role model in the house. When she married on her husband's farm, the wife of the older operator had a good relationship with all the family members: she was even taught how to cook with the help of her mother-in-law. As

the only member with a driving licence she regularly drove the parents and grandparents-in-law to the doctor. When her parents-in-law became seriously ill, she automatically provided nursing.

The younger generation sees the advantages of living together primarily in better organised work; each member of the family has only some tasks and not all of the work. The individual is disburdened and expenses per individual are usually lower in such a community. Secured help for children is the advantage in almost all the cases. A candidate for SYF (Case 3) even believes that taking care of children by grandparents and the opposite is a privilege of living together. He and his older sister were looked after by their grandfather. This was his main task as an old member of a family who with one arm only could no longer assist in the fields. Today, the care for his children by his parents is indispensable since the kindergarten is closed at weekends, and that is when there is most work on the tourist farm.

The only female operator (Case 6) admits that her children attended kindergarten for only one year because there was always somebody at home. Even her disabled grandmother, who was confined to a wheelchair for six years, took care of them. Her children did their homework on her bed and she supervised them. The children were also very attached to their great-grandmother.

Considering secured care for the children by grandparents, however, some also defend clear boundaries between the generations. The older son-in-law (Case 4) is not even convinced that intergenerational solidarity is as a rule a good thing:

> *Maybe it is good if possible, but as such it is not automatically good. You cannot just transfer responsibility to someone; for instance, providing care for your children to your parents. This effort is their good will and not an obligation. If conflict appears, that is for sure because of kids. Grandparents are inclined to indulgence because they feel pity for kids. But you know that this is not good for their future life.*

All young farmers from the beneficiary type of farm emphasise as an advantage the assistance of their parents on the farm, either in the fields or in a stable. Yet they also commonly stress as the main field of disagreement arguing with their fathers on how to work, when to work and who will do something:

> *When Father was young there was another way of cultivating the land than there is today. Older people hardly understand what is possible to do with new machinery. They are obsessed with the idea that we should work in the same way as they worked in the past* (female I, 42, Case 1).

Particularly younger in-laws mentioned a hard entry into such a well-connected multigenerational family. At the beginning, a partner of SFY (Case 1) had some difficulties with her partner's older sister. Her partner and his older sister worked together on both farms daily, so the sister was to 'chain' her brother on her. Bad relationships between the brother's partner and his older sister resulted in worse relations with other family members, too. In the course of time, however, they all adapted to each other and now they get along without any problems.

A son-in-law of the older operator (Case 4) had a similar experience when he married into the 'best farm' in the village. He is still convinced that his parents-in-law do not respect him enough, do not trust him. Therefore, he believes that the young and the old cannot live together: the old people follow only themselves and do not listen to young ones as they do not know anything. His wife even prefers a separate life, maintaining contacts with her parents from a distance. She believes that conflicts emerge when two generations do not listen to each other. Her father, for instance, stubbornly sticks to a certain way of work in the field with the argument, if I've worked in such a way up to now, I will continue. She frequently argues with her mother, who is irresistibly convinced that meat must be part of the daily menu, and fat must be a part of the meat. Moreover, when common work begins in autumn, everybody is so nervous that she packs and leaves the house.

In many cases, a separate house in a yard is a sign of a need for more intimacy of the younger generation, which does not deny the same need of an older member of a family. The operator's mother (female I, 73, Case 5) explains that she preferred to live with her partner in the town simply because she did not want to remain a 'pig-maid' at home:

> *I knew that the grandchildren would marry and that I remained alone although they asked me to stay. I've known my partner for a long time and I preferred to live with him. At home we lived a good life. We did not argue. But here, here was simply better* (female I, 73, Case 5).

Practically, in all those cases where certain disagreements were expressed among generations either by the older or the younger members of a family (Case 3, 4, 5), there is also a specific view on ageing on the farm. An old age home is preferred not only due to negative experiences with parents or parents-in-law (as mentioned in Case 2 above) but also in a sense that you do not bother anybody or you are in 'better hands':

> *I would go to an old age home with joy. There you get the appropriate nursing which cannot be provided at home. Everything is clean, nurses are available at any moment, and doctors are there, and good food, there is everything. On the farm, there are already three families! I think the home for the elderly is superb* (female I, 73, Case 5)!

The home for the elderly no longer represents shame in the village. All the collocutors admit that this attitude is changing. However, it is a solution only for those who can financially afford it. In general, farm pensions in Slovenia are too low (app. 400 EUR) for full coverage of expenses of such maintenance. Particularly in the case of long-term care the expenses are twice or three times higher. Yet the majority of collocutors agree that nowadays, when people are also employed off the farm, in case of long-term illness or disability the institutional home is a necessary solution. Working on the farm and as a self-employed person, for instance, the operator's wife (Case 4) could not provide demanding care for her mother who suffered from dementia. The only reasonable solution was institutional care. At first, she condemned herself and her co-villagers condemned her too. But later on she realised that her decision was the right one. Following the example of her grandmother, the operator's wife's older daughter speaks in favour of institutional care while her husband disagrees with her, being convinced that domestic care is the best solution for elderly people. He would also prefer this option if possible.

Considering ageing at home as a preferred option in at least one generation of all the cases and in all generations in three cases (1, 2, 6), there are no differences observed between two types of farms. The majority of the younger generation believe that their parents and in-laws deserve to die at home. Such is the case of the older daughter of the older operator (Case 1) who lived with her father-in-law until his death. She alone took care of him, sometimes assisted by her children and mother:

> *In the morning, we would wash my father-in-law. Then my mother would bring lunch. I would have looked after him even if he hadn't transferred the farm to me. He offered a lot, so he deserved to stay at home until his death. He was not a troublemaker. Resting in bed he listened to the radio and through the window observed people in the street. Children often entertained him* (case 1).

She also expects her children to take care of her when she grows old. She sincerely hopes that they will not allow a home for the elderly to become her resort. Such an institution is a good alternative only in the case of prolonged illness or for elderly people who are alone.

Yet irrespective of generation, the care for the elderly remains and is expected to be the main field of women's work. Strictly speaking, a transferee or the one who stays on the farm is expected to take care of his or her parents. But in practice, this is a woman's concern. Surprisingly, regardless of the male opinion in general, even the younger generation of women is convinced that this is their field of obligation:

> *This work is difficult for a man. In our family this was always taken for granted as being women's work. My great grandmother was at home because there was always somebody at home. Grandmother was physically capable of looking after my great grandmother. My mother and I were at her disposal, too* (female I, 27, Case 1).

Finally, some collocutors stress that caring for the elderly or disabled members bonds them all as a family. Illustrative is the Case 6: the operator (44) and her mother took care of her grandmother who had one leg and was confined to a wheelchair. It never occurred to them to send her to an institution. Her grandmother was not lonely at home and loved to participate in the kitchen. Sometimes she simply cleared the things from the table and carried them to the cupboards, and she washed the dishes until they bought a dishwasher. The parents of the operator did not even send her older sister, who had mental and physical troubles, to a home for the disabled. She stayed at home until she died. Her mother (69) would never put anybody in an institution, especially a disabled child or an elderly person. She is convinced that these people and the care for them bonded them as a family. They always kept together and got along. Therefore, the

life in a multigenerational family is something beautiful and good for her. She also believed that all generations should still live together although today, you hardly find such families.

Conclusion

The results of the survey 'Generations and Gender Relations on Slovenian Farms' clearly show that the measures of Early Retirement of Farmers and Setting Up of Young Farmers encouraged family farms with better developmental capacities in terms of economic characteristics of farms and a number of household members. However, the survey findings did not confirm an initial assumption that the beneficiary farm households differed from the non-beneficiary farm households as to the attitudes towards intergenerational assistance. Both groups of farm households expressed similar views on who should take care of the elderly and dependent family members. In comparison with rural and urban populations, farmers show greater expectations towards a family as a primary provider of care for the elderly and children. Considering financial support for the elderly and adult children, the survey results show no significant differences among the observed groups. All respondents agreed that 'society' is responsible for providing this type of support. When practical intergenerational assistance was taken into account, however, results show that 'a family' is a major source of various types of assistance in farm households of the beneficiaries compared to other observed groups. A general finding of the survey may be shortly summarised in the following way: The beneficiaries, particularly young farmers, are willing to continue farming, live on bigger farms and have higher education and fertility compared to the non-beneficiaries and two other observed groups (urban and rural people). They also expressed greater concern in care giving for the older generation. However, the young farmers as the most likely carriers of agricultural development in Slovenia do not participate in wider social networks; their social networks are still limited to their closer siblings.

Contrary to the survey result, the fieldwork material shows that the operators who are the beneficiaries of both forms of aid do not differ from the non-beneficiary operators in terms of education. In the beneficiary group, all three levels of achieved education are represented from elementary school to a university degree. Education matters only related to generations:

among the younger generation, secondary education prevails, while in the older generation, vocational schooling is prevalent.

The type of farm does not matter either. Livestock-crop production is characteristic for all the farms observed and they all combine a family farm budget with on- and off-farm resources. All the family farms are 'mixed' as to the number of employed family members on and off the farm. Yet the two groups of farms differ depending on the number of family members who work permanently on the farm. In the beneficiary group, at least three family members work full-time on the farm compared to only one who is fully employed on a farm in the non-beneficiary group.

As in the survey, the fieldwork material shows that two measures addressed family farms which had substantially enlarged the size of farmland, the number of livestock and the building capacities at the time the younger operator took over the farm. As a rule, these farms are also better equipped and mechanised compared to the non-beneficiary farms. It seems that this improvement of the farms in the beneficiary group was also motivated by the secured successors on these farms and 'in-time' transfer of the farm to the younger generation. As the young farmers stressed, they would have continued with farming irrespective of the aid received. Therefore, both forms of aid accelerated and did not cause the farm transfer.

Irrespective of the time period observed and the farm type, the care for the elderly and children is the working domain of women. Despite the tacit rule that a son usually takes over the farm and consequently he should be responsible for the elderly parents, practice shows that this is the field of the son's wife or partner. Moreover, women are aware that this is their task, and they take it for granted.

That a multigenerational farm family is also a 'family firm' is proved by the engagement of each and every family member including the disabled or the elderly. In such a community, work is found for everyone who is capable of contributing to the family budget. The retired members work on the farm after retiring, and it seems that age and disability are not obstacles. Younger and older members of both groups predominantly favour a common life in a multigenerational family due to the more evenly distributed tasks and secured care for children and the elderly. The only precondition for a meaningful life in a multigenerational farm family is 'to get along with each other'.

After all, the presented results may be conducive to a rare but increasing number of case studies worldwide on intergenerational bonds in a farm context, explaining more in-depth complex dynamics and background of intergenerational assistance. Quite a general observation from the literature that 'family values' in a form of feeling of responsibility to old parents and the opposite prevail in farm setting is explained within a particular context. Comparing expectations on the issue with its practices provide conclusion on prevailing familialism or close kin ties on farms as too simplistic an observation. Secured successor and 'in-time' transfer of the farm from older to younger operator certainly contribute to farming continuity. Yet intergenerational assistance on farms in Slovenia seems more a practice conditioned by the interrelated work on a farm, where any help contributes to a common endeavour or business on the farm. Poor availability of public services in farm settings and generally low pensions of farmers to afford them does not hinder noticeable increasing beliefs among the farm population that institutional care for children, the elderly and disabled may be an alternative to home care. But this alternative is acceptable only if the farm as a business cannot function properly due to time spent for any type of caring.

Despite some diagnostic common contours or similarities in attitudes on intergenerational assistance in farm population extracted from the survey's results, the field material added some deeper insights of understanding the assistance between generations showing the importance of various family contexts in a life-course perspective. It is hoped that various approaches and methods combined contribute to a more comprehensive picture on the issue of intergenerational relationships in farm population that could be more systematically included in the research agenda worldwide.

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