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Gender and inheritance in Swedish family forestry

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Abstract

Half of the Swedish forest land can be considered as family forestry, owned by some 345 000 individuals on 190 000 different properties. Viewed as a group of owners, it has become more and more heterogeneous. However, there are still some common features based on traditional perceptions of the farm as a project that spans over generations by shared values and a strong desire to preserve family ownership in accordance to a paternal inheritance tradition. In a study of family farming in two Swedish grain-growing districts Flygare (1999) demonstrates that women rarely can inherit a farm if there is a brother/male relative. She characterizes the role of women being a *transitive element* between father and son. In this paper women's inheritance positions in contemporary family forestry in Sweden is examined by using three different sources (i) a national register of all forest owners (ii) an inquiry study and (iii) narrative accounts from female forest owners. These accounts were collected by a call in two major magazines, accompanied by a list of questions. An asymmetric ownership pattern is exposed in the analysis of all three materials. Gender certainly has an impact on *who, what, and how* family owned forest land is transferred from one generation to another. Furthermore, the analysis of the narrative accounts shows that a minority of the women correspond to the concept transitive element, introduced by Flygare (1999). A typology with three additional concepts namely transitive agent, transformative element and transformative agent, was therefore suggested and discussed in relation to present and future management practices.

Keywords: asymmetry, female heir, inheritance positions, management practices