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APPROACHING MULTIFUNCTIONALITY BY A 'NORMATIVE VIEW': FINNISH FARMERS' VISIONS ON CONTEMPORARY AGRICULTURE

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Abstract: Productivity alone is not the most important defining character of contemporary agriculture. On the grounds of the dominant models of market liberalization and multifunctionality, farmers have been urged to take new roles beyond food production. By deploying a 'normative' view of multifunctionality, based on the acknowledgment of spatial heterogeneity, and on an actor-oriented explanation of agricultural change, this paper investigates Finnish farmers' visions on the redefined and redefining role of contemporary agriculture. From a review and analysis of sixteen qualitative semi-structured interviews, it emerges that such visions — through their components of identity, opponent, and project — are constructed upon three factors which are linked to each other to a various extent: 1) farming contingent conditions (as location, climate, terrain); 2) externalities (including international policy environment, and market liberalization); 3) farmers' personal views on profitability and risk. In a policy context dominated by uncertainty, decision-making has shifted mainly from the national to the international level, and the collected data supports the dominance of productivist actions and thoughts. On one hand, farmers still tend to prioritize the continuity of production, which contribute both to resistance identity, and to the identification of a variety of opponents. Yet on the other hand, farmers are, to an embryonic stage, upgrading themselves to meet the challenges faced by contemporary agriculture.

Key words: multifunctionality, normative view, vision, territorial expression, productivism, non-productivism, resistance identity

1. Introduction

Over the last two decades, a variety of theoretical debates concerning the nature, changes, and future trajectories of agricultural and rural systems has emerged. Such debates include economic, social, political, and environmental points of views (Wilson 2009; Burton and Wilson 2006), and against the backdrop of globalization, they are often justified on the grounds of an accelerating pace of rural change. Both policy-makers and academics have called for a redefinition of the role of agriculture within the countryside (see e.g. Marsden 1998; Darnhofer 2005; Vesala and Vesala 2010). Darnhofer (2005, 308) for instance, claims that "*there is*

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considerable public and scientific interest in redefining the role of agriculture in Europe. The consensus is that agriculture can no longer be reduced to the mere production of raw materials for the food industry". Agricultural production has to feed a growing population; yet, its global environmental impacts should be minimized (Seufert et al., 2012). Furthermore, in recent times there has been an increased consumer demand for price convenience, food quality and safety, animal welfare and environmental considerations; thus leading to a rise in demand for locally produced agriculture, especially farmers' markets, community gardens, and community-supported agriculture (Rickard 2004; Macias 2008; Marsden 1998; Spilková et al., 2013).

The structure of farming is constantly evolving, and the adjustments seen are often the result of changes in the conditions faced by farmers (Evans 2009). Among such changes (including changing technologies, changing environmental attitudes, changing food markets and consumer demand [Wilson 2007]), one key condition is the policy setting. As a consequence of oversupply, escalating costs, and environmental degradation, starting from the early 1990s the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has experienced multiple reforms, which have taken into account wider processes of agricultural trade liberalization. What is more, these reforms have raised the status of rural development, leading to the conception of agriculture as a producer of multiple commodity and non-commodity outputs, so fulfilling the principle of multifunctionality² (Lowe et al., 2002, 1). Multifunctional agriculture has become a key pillar of European agricultural and rural policy; this in spite of the continuing debate on what multifunctionality is, and how it may be recognized in practice (Morgan et al., 2010, 116).

Market liberalization and multifunctionality are developments upon which farmers have been encouraged *"to take on new and multiple roles, channelling some of their effort from food production towards acting as environmental and countryside managers, and as rural entrepreneurs"* (Atterton and Ward 2007, 15; Morgan et al., 2010). Recently, this is reflected in the growing literature that focuses on the interaction dynamics between farming and entrepreneurship (to name a few, see for instance Seuneke et al., 2013, Alsos and Carter 2006, McElwee and Bosworth 2008, Morgan et al., 2010, Vesala and Vesala 2010). At the same time, research by Burton and Wilson (2006) and Gorton et al., (2008) has shown that farmers' identities still retain a productivist mindset; little evidence suggests that farmers have adopted the multifunctional 'ethos' promoted by the CAP. Reliance on CAP subsidies may in fact prevent farmers' inclination to look at wider diversification activities, rather than reduce dependency on agricultural production (Woods 2005).

Within this context, this paper investigates Finnish farmers' visions on the redefined and redefining role of contemporary agriculture at three different levels, which, to a high degree, are deeply interconnected to each other: agricultural lobbying, policy-making, and livelihood. The hypothesis is that, regardless of the geographical context, farmers are to a large extent favourable to non-productivist actions and thoughts. From the analysis of sixteen farmers' semi-structured interviews drawn from a variety of Finnish farming contexts, the following research questions are addressed:

- what are the farmers' visions on agricultural lobbying, agricultural and rural policy (specifically the support schemes of the CAP, and the LEADER approach), and livelihood?
- what are the farmers' visions on economic diversification³ at the farm level?

² While commodity outputs include food and fiber, and other marketable products such as tourism, non-commodity outputs consist for example of food security/safety, the rural way of life, and the protection of the environment, biodiversity, and landscape (Van Huylbroeck and Durand 2003, 4).

³ For the purpose of this paper, diversification is defined both in terms of observed practices, and in terms of its rationale. As for the former, the definition provided by Ilbery (1992, 102) is employed; according to this scholar, farm diversification is "the development of non-traditional (alternative) enterprises on the farm". Thus, it includes new activities that are both agricultural and non-agricultural in nature, including organic farming, local food, bio-energy production, and agri-tourism. As for the latter, Woods (2005, 55) states that "farm diversification seeks to reduce dependency of farm households on agricultural production so that farms remain viable as an economic and social unit even as production is decreased". On the basis of this definition, the key goal is keep farms viable as economic and social units; diversification is interpreted as "the exploitation of income-generating activities that can support the income of the farm household, and in turn the viability of the agricultural business" (McElwee and Bosworth 2010, 822).

The overall aim of the paper is to enrich the debate on the contemporary changes of agricultural systems, emphasizing their spatial heterogeneity, and, above all, the “*role of farmers’ knowledge(s) in the current and future management of the countryside*” (Riley and Harvey, 2007). Farmers’ own experience and local practices not only actively contribute on how the new and multiple roles promoted by the current policy trends are constructed (see for instance Burton et al., 2008), but also strengthen the theorization of agriculture, which is often interpreted as one of the arenas of capitalist development (Spencer and Stewart, 1973; Page 1996). Last, but not least, such experience — grounded in well-defined geographical settings — can be useful to improve agricultural and rural policies and politics to better address farmers’ specific needs (Boonstra et al., 2011).

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section two reveals the theoretical background necessary to inform the analysis of the data. Section three discusses the farming areas investigated, as well as the data and the methodology utilized. Section four deals with the visions expressed by Finnish farmers concerning lobbying, policy making, and livelihood. Section five deals with their visions on economic diversification, while section six tackles the final discussion and conclusions.

2. Theoretical background

The theoretical background of the paper consists in approaching multifunctionality by a ‘normative view’ (Wilson 2009), or, in other words, as a “spatially and socially differentiated action and activity” (Winter 2005, 613) that is anchored within the policy paradigms of productivism and non-productivism (Figure 1). According to such view, multifunctionality is interpreted as a normative process that explains current agricultural trends as a territorial expression (Wilson 2009). This allows to have a tangible expression of the farmed landscape in specific localities: “*most agricultural processes are strongly rooted in a specific locality based on their dependence on a geographically well-defined land base of production*” (Wilson 2009, 271). The land has always been the place of many agricultures, of many and diversified systems of cultivation linked to the characteristics of the soil, of the climate, of the environment, of the community, and of traditions (Magnaghi 2010, 193). Thus, agricultural systems need to be interpreted as complex, and multi-dimensional realities (Feola and Binder 2010).

What is more, a normative view of multifunctionality unravels actions and thoughts of the key decision-maker at the farm level: the farmer. As the focus of rural-based research has increasingly shifted away from agricultural production to the so-called ‘consumption countryside’ (see for instance Baldock et al., 2001; Muilu and Rosenqvist 2006; Woods 2009; Halfacree 2010), it is often the case that farmers are considered as a homogenous cultural enclave among

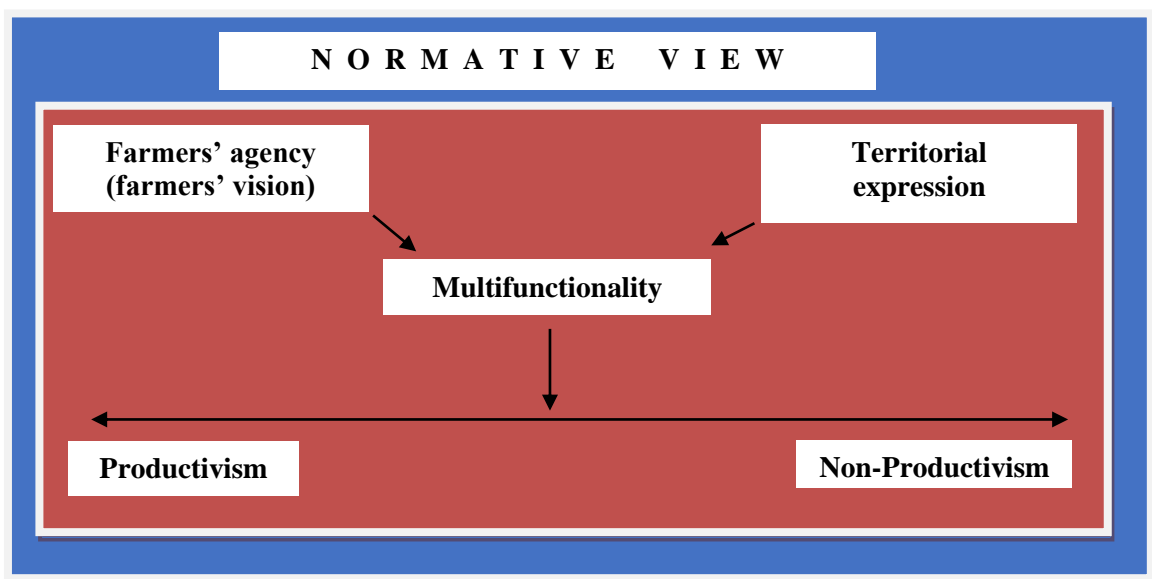


Fig 1. Envisaging multi-functionality as a spatially and socially differentiated action and activity.

other groups or actors (Morris and Evans 2004). In the Finnish context for instance, Kietäväinen (2014) claims that, according to the dominant story-line of the development of society in rural areas after World War II, the individual farmers' own experience and opinions about their position and how they act on the farms have been disregarded.

In contrast, this paper conceives farmers “*not only as recipients of policy and market signals but as actors within policy and market networks, as members too of rural communities, and as occupants of roles within households*” (Winter 2003, 509-510). Farmers' agency is explained through the concept of vision, borrowed from Gundelach (2005), who adapts the social movement approach by *Touraine* to investigate the Danish Agricultural Council. A vision consists of three components: identity, opponent, and project. Within a contingent geographical context, the farmer as an individual agent develops an identity by relating himself/herself to an opponent/interlocutor. As well, “*the actor has a project – a perception of the kind of society the actor wishes to establish and an interpretation of the character of society as such*” (Gundelach 2005, 249). In this case, the concept of project can be interpreted at the farm level, in terms of the activities that the farmer undertakes in his/her farm, and at the policy level, by identifying the most convenient policy environment in which the farmers wish to act and live. An actor-oriented explanation of agricultural change is suited to the purpose of this paper, as it is illustrative of the social construction of agri-environments, and therefore it strengthens the theorization of agriculture beyond being a mere political and economic endeavour (Evans et al., 2002; Burton and Wilson, 2006). At the same time, farmers' agency is strictly connected with the physical geography of the farming landscape (territorial expression). The potential decision of a farmer to diversify depends on a complex variety of factors, which may include not only the farmer himself, but also and especially the characteristics of the farm, its location, and surrounding regional characteristics (Groenfeldt 2009, 4).

Within the context of a lively academic debate which envisages different approaches to agricultural change — *in primis* the productivism/post-productivism dichotomy⁴ (see for instance Ilbery and Bowler (1998); Wilson (2001); Evans et al. (2002); Mather et al. (2006); and recently neo-productivism⁵ (see for instance Almås and Campbell, 2012; Burton and Wilson (2012); Wilson and Burton (2015) — in this paper multifunctionality is anchored within a spectrum of agricultural and rural decision-making pathways whose extreme ends are the policy paradigms of productivism and non-productivism (Wilson 2007; Wilson 2009). Productivism is defined as the commitment to production by protecting agriculture through tariffs, subsidies and quotas; the emphasis is on quantity over quality, and on the rationale ‘the bigger the better’: bigger farms, bigger machinery, more technology, and at the same time less farmers and less farms (Almås and Campbell, 2012). The definition of non-productivism instead contains many ‘indicators’ used to conceptualize post-productivism including high environmental sustainability, and high degree of diversification (quality over quantity); however, it differentiates, and, above all, it is theoretically stronger than post-productivism since there is not a temporally linear movement towards such action and thought over time (Wilson 2007; Wilson and Burton, 2015). The advantage of using the non-productivism concept is that it is a neutral term, since there may be virtually no action and thought affecting agricultural and rural areas that is entirely considered as productivist or non-productivist (Wilson 2007, 175). As well, it allows “*for hybrid, parallel, and simultaneous productivist and non-productivist pathways*” (Wilson and Burton, 2015, 53). To summarize, approaching multifunctionality by a normative view acknowledges the spatial heterogeneity, and, above all, the inconsistency of agricultural action and thought (Wilson 2007, 175), whereas a variety of policy-driven pathways are possible. At the same time,

⁴ In spite of the fact that Mather et al. (2006) argue that post-productivism is a useful concept to understand land-use change that does not exclusively include agriculture but also forestry, the use of the dualism productivism *versus* post-productivism is rather arguable; many scholars as Haraway 1991, Sayer 1991, Massey 1996 and Murdoch 1997 have rejected it (in Evans et al. 2002), by pointing out that a simplistic dichotomous transition ignores spatial variability and the complexities of the restructuring process (Burton and Wilson, 2012).

⁵ The concept of ‘neo-productivism’ on the one hand recognizes that productivism still exists, and on the other hand, it also includes a return to agro-ecological approaches with an emphasis on small farms and increased self-sufficiency (Burton and Wilson, 2012). Although this term allows to have a new dimension on the complex structural changes of agriculture, it is debatable whether another ‘ism’ may confuse, rather than help stakeholders in their achievement of improved sustainability and stronger multifunctionality (Wilson and Burton 2015, 63).

it cannot be forgotten that spatial variation cannot be detached by global decision-making pathways that affect national, regional, and local development levels (Wilson 2009, 276).

3. Farming context, empirical data, and methodology

The geographical context chosen for addressing the proposed research questions has included farms located within the three categories of rural areas defined by the Finnish Rural Policy Committee (2009): remote rural areas, rural heartland areas, and urban-adjacent rural areas. The main rationale behind the farms' selection was to choose farming areas as different as possible from each other to capture whether or not physical geography matters in farmers' visions. Figure 2 shows the location of the municipalities and respective regions where the farms have been selected.



Fig 2. Location of study areas.

The farms investigated included six dairy farms (one of them also undertook fur farming), five meat farms, and three crop farms. Their extension varied from 25 hectares (a dairy farm located in North Savo), to 250 hectares (a crop farm located in Uusimaa). Within remote rural areas, farms have been chosen in the municipality of Kaavi, in the region of North Savo (in the villages of Niinivaara and Kortteinen), and in the municipalities of Juuka and Valtimo, in the region of North Karelia. In these areas, agricultural fields are often relatively small and fragmented in comparison to those of western and southern Finland, and to a large extent, geographical conditions are not well suited for farming. Especially in the cases of the farms located in Kaavi and Juuka, these were characterized by hilly patches, and stony terrain. For the rural heartland areas which are dominated by primary production, farms have been selected in the municipalities of Liperi and Tohmajärvi in North Karelia, and in the municipality of Pukkila, in the region of Uusimaa. In regards to urban-adjacent rural areas located close to the major Finnish urban poles, farms have been selected in the municipalities of Kirkkonummi (in the village of Lapinkylä), and Nurmijärvi in Uusimaa, and in Hammaslahti, located near the city of Joensuu in North Karelia. In the latter cases (rural heartland areas, and urban-adjacent areas) farming conditions are relatively better than in the remote rural areas.

Looking at the broader perspective of the regions in which the farms are located (whose key characteristics are presented in Table 1), in terms of climate and soils Uusimaa is one of the best farming regions in Finland; its location is within easy reach of a large market close to consumers, 80% of whom live in urban areas. Agricultural activity in the region is strongly oriented towards crop farming (as it is usually the case in south-west Finland); however, there

are a few municipalities in which livestock farming covers a key role (Uudenmaan TE-keskus 2012). In North Karelia and in North Savo in turn, dairy husbandry are most important; this is reflected in the fact that in both regions milk production is the most relevant sector within agriculture (Pohjois-Savon ELY Keskus, (2013); Pohjois-Karjalan TE-keskus (2007)). Other differences which are worth to be remarked are the average forest area of farms, which is higher in North Savo and North Karelia than in Uusimaa, and the average size of arable land which is higher in Uusimaa, and in general in southern Finland.

	Finland	North Karelia	North Savo	Uusimaa
Number of inhabitants	5 500 000	165 000	248 000	1 600 000
Inhabitants per km²	18	9	15	174
Unemployment rate	11 %	16 %	12 %	9%
Forest Land	67 %	82%	80%	58%
Number of farms	54 000	2 200	3 800	3 500
Average size of farm (hectares)	42	39	38	51
Average forest area of farms (hectares)	52	59	64	44
Number of diversified farms	16 802	664	1134	1409

Tab 1. Key characteristics of North Savo, North Karelia, and Uusimaa (population and unemployment data (31.12.2013)); farm and forest data (2013 Census). Source: Statistical Yearbook Finland (2014)

As for the diversified farms (agricultural and horticultural holdings that run some business activity beyond farming, horticulture and forestry), their proportion is highest in and around major urban poles, as well as in sparsely populated regions. The smallest proportion is located in regions that have traditionally been the strongest primary production areas in the country. Diversified activities tend to be closely related to the agricultural activities of the farm and this is the case of as much of 87% of all diversified farms. What is more, farms' diversified activities are often small-scale, both in terms of turnover and in terms of person-years worked. Almost 40% of the diversified farms have an annual turnover of less than 10,000 euros per year. Services (Table 2) account for most of the diversified activities at every level of turnover, but this share decreases as turnover rises (Natural Resources Institute Finland, 2014).

Number of diversified farms by main line of business (2013)	Finland	Uusimaa	North Savo	North Karelia
PRIMARY PRODUCTION	808	1.4%	2%	1.2%
INDUSTRY	2 245	5.4%	4.5%	2.4%
CONSTRUCTION	344	19.4%	7%	4.7%
TRADE	986	8.3%	3.3%	6.5%
SERVICES	12 419	9.0%	7.8%	4.2%
TOTAL	16 802	8.4%	6.8%	4.0%

Tab 2. Diversified farms and main line of business (2013). Source: Natural Resource Institute Finland

Within the discussed farming context, the core data has been collected by the means of sixteen qualitative semi-structured interviews, collected in the year 2009 (7), and 2012 (9) (Table 3). At

the time of the interview, eleven of the farmers were regional board representatives of *MTK*⁶, while three of them were involved in such farming organization as ordinary members. One interview has been conducted with a representative of *Pro Agria*⁷. Thirteen of the farmers interviewed were full-time conventional farmers, while two of them were covering full-time positions as high-ranking officers in this organization (one of the two a few years before the interview was also a full-time farmer).

Interview	Position of interviewee	Topic of the interview	Date of the Interview
1	Representative of MTK (North Karelia)	policy-making; lobbying	2009
2	Representative of MTK (North Karelia)	policy-making; lobbying	2009
3	Representative of MTK (North Karelia)	policy-making; lobbying	2009
4	Representative of MTK (North Karelia)	policy-making; lobbying	2009
5	Representative of MTK (North Karelia)	policy-making; lobbying	2009
6	Representative of MTK (North Karelia)	policy-making; lobbying	2009
7	Representative of Pro Agria (North Karelia)	policy-making; lobbying	2009
8	Representative of MTK (North Savo)	diversification; lobbying; policy-making	2012
9	MTK Ordinary member (North Savo)	diversification; lobbying; policy-making	2012
10	MTK Ordinary member (North Savo)	diversification; lobbying; policy-making	2012
11	Representative of MTK (Uusimaa)	diversification; lobbying; policy-making	2012
12	Representative of MTK (Uusimaa)	diversification; lobbying; policy-making	2012
13	Representative of MTK (Uusimaa)	diversification; lobbying; policy-making	2012
14	Representative of MTK (Central level)	diversification; lobbying; policy-making	2012
15	Representative of MTK (North Karelia)	diversification; lobbying; policy-making	2012
16	MTK Ordinary member (North Karelia)	diversification; lobbying; policy-making	2012

Tab 3. Semi-structured interviews: position of the interviewee, topic and date of the interview.

⁶ *MTK* stands for *Maa- ja metsätaloustuottajain Keskusliitto* (Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners), and it is the Finnish-speaking interest organization for farmers (about 90% of Finnish farmers belong to some interest organization, including both the Finnish, and the Swedish-speaking groups; the latter has its own interest organization, *Svenska lantbruksproducenternas centralförbund*); as for the remaining 10%, an *MTK* representative argues that it consists most likely of either very small farms (1 to 2 hectares), whose owners have their main source of income somewhere else, or very large farms (manor houses or *kartanot* in Finnish). In the latter case, he speculates that they do not belong to any interest organization because they think that they can supervise their benefits by themselves, and for instance, they may be able to negotiate by themselves the selling of the products from their farm.

⁷ *Pro Agria* is an advisory organization for farm development. Expertise for instance focuses on farm investments, business and financial managements, R&D, production, and the environment (Pro Agria 2014).

The content of the interviews conducted in 2009 as part of my doctoral study (Rizzo 2012) has been analyzed in the article in relation to farmers' visions on livelihood and lobbying, while the ones collected in 2012 have also included visions on economic diversification. The main criteria for the selection of the respondents was their expertise in the lobbying, politics, and policy of agriculture. The interview data is supported by secondary literature, policy evaluations and reports in the Finnish and international context.

Similarly to Jokinen et al. (2009), in this paper the results drawn from the empirical data have been extracted through qualitative thematic analysis (Fairclough 2004). This has meant identifying the key themes of the research, then organizing and presenting them into narratives (done in a similar manner by Gundelach 2005), and last but not least finding patterns in farmers' visions. The thematic analysis has involved a linguistic analysis of the text (analysis of macro-propositions and coding key words); firstly, the so-called 'descriptive codes' have been identified; secondly, 'interpretative coding' has been undertaken by grouping together 'descriptive codes' which share common interpretations; thirdly, the 'overarching themes' of the interviews have been abstracted in order to link them to the theoretical framework centered on the normative view of multifunctionality. In the following section (section four), a figure shows the various steps of the thematic analysis, from the descriptive codes identified in the text to the interpretive codes, up to the overarching themes. Some direct quotes from the interviews have been extracted in order to illustrate the interpretations that have been made.

4. Farmers' visions on agricultural lobbying, agricultural and rural policy, and livelihood

Changes in agricultural policies and in farming structures — from the local up to the international level⁸ — have both caused strong challenges, and at the same time have resulted in a variety of options for a reorientation of farmers' visions (see Gundelach 2005). Contemporary farmers have to conform to a variety of regulations regarding environmentally friendly production, they have to have a thorough knowledge of the bureaucracy, market dynamics and the potential activity in which they are venturing into, and they have to struggle to gain a fair price for their agricultural products. Such challenges and options emerge from the three main interlinked themes that have been abstracted from the thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews (Figure 3): dominance of productivism, uncertainty, and resistance identity.

The interview data reveal that before EU accession, in Finland *MTK* had major societal and political influence, and above all, it had concrete decision-making power. This farming organization could negotiate the price of products with the Finnish ministry of finance year by year; decisions about agriculture were made exclusively in Finland, and what is more, any decision regarding farmers' income required *MTK* approval. At the local level there used to be more social activities (such as parties and events) than occur today. To some extent, EU membership has led farmers to have a critical attitude towards *MTK* and its abilities to really affect their lives in positive way. A farmer from North Savo claims that "*MTK should be on the farmers' side. Farmers should have the same opportunities; however, bigger farms are getting more opportunities*". This statement is in line with the broader picture of international and national agricultural policy, which seems to encourage farms' enlargement and economic efficiency, rather than the diversity of the farming landscape.

⁸ In Finland, as in the other EU Member States, the 1990s have implied relevant changes in agricultural policies and farming structures. Before Finland became a member of the European Union, the Finnish agricultural policy was characterized by a protected market, with high prices and a subsidy system with definite regional policy objectives. If Finland had not joined the EU, changes in the countryside would not have been as deep; the CAP has had a larger impact on the Finnish countryside than national agricultural policies (Vihinen 2006, 217-223).

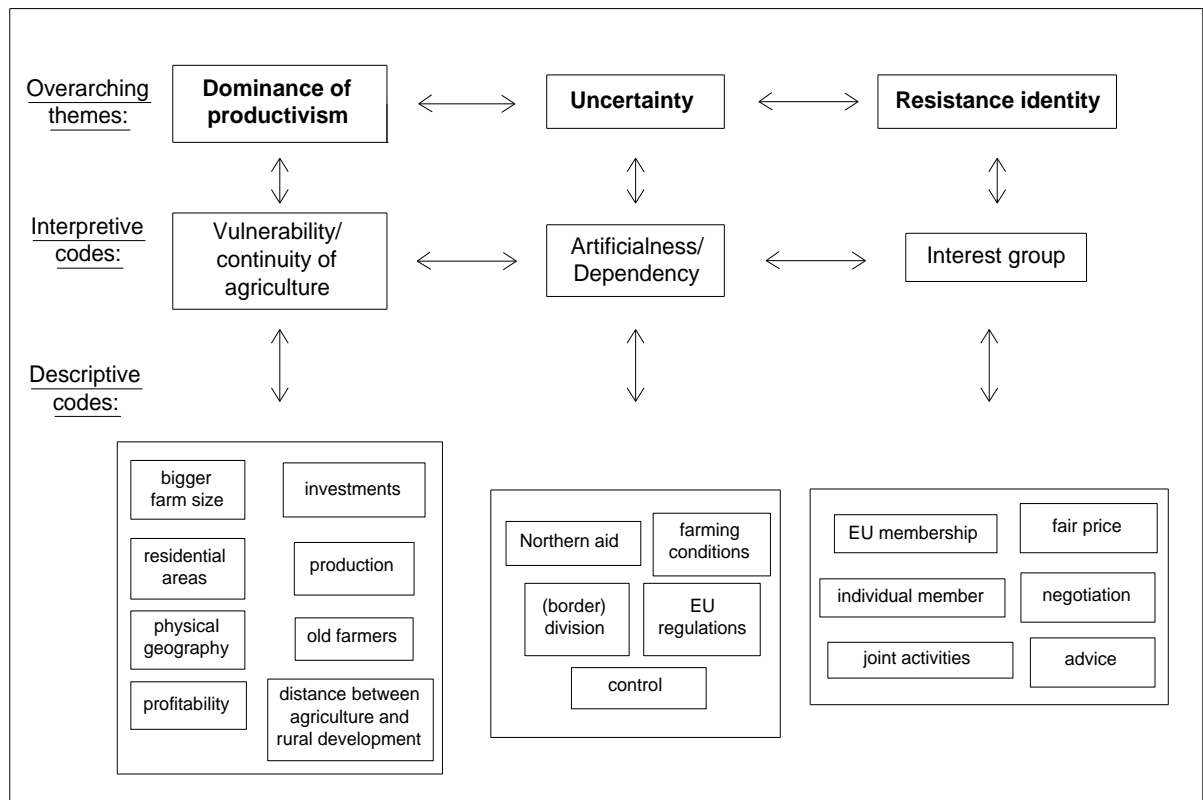


Fig 3. The key themes extracted from the analysis of the interviews.

Further, another farmer from North Karelia argues that *MTK* does not have as much influence as it should; such argument comes from his personal experience where he did not get much help concerning a wood selling project. Nowadays, *MTK* is an interest organization and its scope of action reflects the changed role of contemporary agriculture: it aims at improving farmers' benefits by for instance influencing legislation concerning the social security and tax systems, it gives information and advice about EU subsidies and bureaucracy to Finnish farmers, and last but not least, it increasingly takes into account the consumers' point of view by promoting local and organic food. To summarize, the main emphasis of this farming organization has gradually moved towards Brussels, where *MTK* is also present with its own office facilities.

Another relevant issue raised by the interviewees concerns the artificial nature of the boundaries which characterize the CAP support system by geographical area⁹. The layout of the boundaries of the support system is not entirely fair, because there could be for instance two neighboring municipalities that have the same farming opportunities but different levels of support. Additionally, farms from the same municipality may have the same support, but a different landscape, or the location of a farm in a specific municipality is characterized by a micro-climate which is more similar to that of a nearby municipality located in a different support area. A farmer from Kesälahti has suggested that a good divide in Finland would be from north-west (Oulu) to south-west (Lappeenranta), since such a divide would better capture similar farming conditions in the country.

Most farmers interviewed refer to the current economic and policy environment as being the most important reason for the impossibility of long-term planning and investment, which should be vital traits of farming enterprises. Such "uncertainty" is also reflected in the farm report by Pro Agria Pohjois-Karjala (2013): in spite of the fact that farmers have the willingness

⁹ The country is divided into seven agricultural support areas and the more northern the area, the higher the amount of the support it receives (Voutilainen 2012). The Accession Treaty of Finland (similarly to Austria and Sweden) includes some special measures that take into account many country-specific characteristics and disadvantages, particularly its northern location (Niemi and Kola 2005).

to carry on their job and keep most of their land for farming purposes, the plans of their heirs who might continue the farming activities are not certain. On one hand, expenses such as gasoline and food for animals are constantly increasing, on the other hand incomes from production do not, and every year the profitability of farming enterprises becomes smaller and smaller - one needs to do more and more work to maintain the same income. Many farmers have turned to "virtual farming"; this means that they are trying to maximize the subsidies and think what would be the best crop to plant on a year-to-year basis. This once again highlights both the artificialness, and the dependency effect created by agricultural policies, which seem to be detached from the characteristics of the territory.

Since farmers' income does not come straight from their own work, it is easier for them to quit farming whenever a better work opportunity becomes available. The below quotation from a dairy farmer from North Savo best summarizes how farmers' decision-making related to the continuity of farming is heavily constrained:

"Of course I want my children to continue, but only if there could be chances for a smaller farm to succeed. Because of these regulations and bureaucracy, farming can be considered a short-term activity. But farming should be thought in the longer term perspective because of the big investments. If you were to build a new cow shed, it could be that the following day you have to stop farming".

At the same time, a well-off crop farmer from Liperi claims that, in spite of the fact that almost all farmers would like to get income from the markets, the importance of the income support from the CAP should not be underestimated, because it balances the farmers' income regardless of the quality and quantity of the harvest.¹⁰ Thus, *"the biggest challenge [for the farmers] is to get valuable prices for the products from the market so that they could cover all the expenses, and farming would be worth doing. The support system for sure will be smaller. If we could decide, there wouldn't be [a need for] this support system, if you get a reasonable price from the markets"* (MTK representative from Nurmijärvi).

The interview data reveals that the vulnerability of agriculture is caused by a variety of factors, including an agricultural policy that favors larger farms at the expense of the smaller farms, as well as concentration processes led by the food processing industry, aging farmers, and urban encroachment. According to an EU funded research project (EUROLAN) on rural marginalization in Finland, 10% of agricultural land is either marginalized or under the threat of marginalization, mostly in Eastern and Northern Finland: *"the heavy regional concentration of dairy farming in a few areas and arable farming in others pose the greatest threat to soil quality, biodiversity, and landscape"* (Vihinen 2006, 225). Regarding urban encroachment, in the municipality of Liperi (North Karelia), it has been found that cattle farms perceive the potential expansion of residential areas in proximity to farms as a threat, since it is often the case that many people who move to the countryside do not understand agriculture: *"when moving to the countryside, new residents should be aware of the conditions necessary for agricultural production; residents should adapt to agriculture and not vice versa"*. Furthermore, the fragmentation of farmland into small plots, as well as the loss of farmland to other land-use purposes is also feared (Pro Agria Pohjois-Karjala 2013, 9).

In turn, farmers' dependency on the subsidy system, and their willingness to secure production (the latter being a relevant sign of resistance identity) exacerbate to a various extent the tension, and the lack of a proper integration between agriculture and rural development, which are both funded by the CAP. Such tension often leads to different views being held between actors in rural areas (Rizzo 2012). It is claimed that if one wants to maintain basic agriculture, funds should not be allocated to any other activities, except for agriculture itself. Most of the interviewed farmers have never been involved in the LEADER rural programme, which can be considered as the key contemporary approach to rural development/diversification

¹⁰ In the future, a possible termination of the CAP income support would more than likely have more impact in northern and eastern Finland, rather than southern and western Finland, where job opportunities are more readily available. According to an MTK representative in North Karelia, *"the end of the income support would mean the end of production [in this region]"*.

in the EU. Within the context of the assessment of the LEADER approach in South-West Finland, research has shown that stakeholders involved in projects concerning agro-environmental support were not so familiar with the LEADER initiative (Kahila 2010). At the same time, it is acknowledged by a few interviewed farmers that LEADER is a good way of supplementing rural/agricultural policy. Involving farmers in the LEADER process has not always been easy, and many farmers conceive rural development initiatives as being in competition with agriculture (see e.g. Carnegie Trust, 2010; Shortall, 2008). As a matter of fact LEADER does not fit a productivist agriculture; rather, it would work much better with an agriculture which would lean more towards the non-productivist spectrum of multifunctionality.

5. Farmers' visions on economic diversification

The dominance of productivist over non-productivist actions and thoughts is not only seen in relation to farmers' visions on livelihood, policy-making, and lobbying, but it is also revealed within their every-day farming activities. In the light of farmers' expected 'new' role in the contemporary countryside, the data collected suggests that it is debatable as to what extent they can or are willing to consider economic diversification within their farms. Organic farming is sometimes seen as a panacea for addressing the environmental, animal welfare and food safety concerns driving CAP adjustments (Darnhofer 2005, 308). Whether it is possible to shift to organic production¹¹ is governed by a series of complex factors. These include the characteristics of the terrain (which maybe stony, or contain weed or clay), geographical location (for instance the presence of lakes and hills, which pushes farmers to rent agricultural land as far as 40–50 km away from their farm), the type of cultivation/farm (for instance whether or not the farm has animals), as well as economic and policy externalities. The latter may be related to the strategies of food processing companies, and/or of the farmer himself/herself – a dairy farmer from North Savo has claimed that the milk company *Valio* would not be very likely to come and collect their organic milk, because they have a small farm. Furthermore, although growing organic produce offers the opportunity of a better price for the agricultural products, it requires major investment; for example, in the case of milk production, a specific cow shed devoted to organic production would have to be built.

Also concerning agri-tourism farmers' visions are driven by the interaction dynamics between farmers as rural agents and multifunctionality as a territorial expression. Farmers considering such activity have different perspectives on risk and profitability, which may be dependent on the resources at their disposal and/or a variety of external factors. According to a few interviewees, agri-tourism is feasible only in areas served by a good transportation infrastructure, and above all, where there are nearby water bodies such as lakes and rivers which can attract tourists. One farmer from Liperi argued that this economic activity could be implemented on his farm, however this step would require major investment, which according to him, would greatly exceed the actual profitability. In southern Finland, in those farms where interviews were collected in urban-adjacent areas, agri-tourism is not considered a feasible alternative because of their closeness to the urban areas (it is probably assumed that tourists would be more attracted to an agri-tourism in a more remote location than in an urban area).

Similar to organic production and agri-tourism, selling local food directly to consumers is also a debated issue as to whether or not it may represent a potentially beneficial economic activity. For example, a meat farmer from North Savo would like to see more local production for schools, but it is often the case that cheaper food is bought from abroad. Another farmer from North Karelia argues that local food selling also depends on the type of farm; since he owns a dairy farm, he does not see any possibilities but in contrast, a meat or crop farm would offer potential. Local food selling may be also influenced by the geographical location of the farm: for instance, a farmer from North Savo claims that is not worth selling milk directly from the farm because of its distance from the major urban poles and transportation infrastructure. In fact,

¹¹ Seufert et al. (2012, 229) research has shown that “overall, organic yields are typically lower than conventional yields”; however, yields differences are highly dependent on context, and under certain conditions (including management practices, growing conditions, and particular crop types), organic production could nearly match conventional production.

most of Finnish farms that sell milk directly to consumers are located in southern Finland, which has the critical mass in terms of population to support such economic activity. Another issue is that the concept of 'local' food is still quite ambiguous; as a farmer from Uusimaa notices, the source of local food could span from a few kilometers, or it could include national food or even food produced in a nearby country. Last but not least, when discussing renewable energy production, wood energy and cow waste are seen in principle as potentially important for the economic development of the farm. For some of the farmers interviewed, bio-energy production (in particular cow waste) is used for heating purposes within the farm. The decision to produce bio-energy is influenced by a variety of factors, including the amount of forest owned, the type of farm (especially if there are cows or not), and diverse perspectives on economic profit and a farmer's knowledge about such economic activity.

An example of how productivist and non-productivist action and thought may co-exist to a varying degree, and not necessarily exclude each other (as it is the discussed case of LEADER on the one hand, and productivism on the other) is given by a farm in the municipality of Kesälahti, which is partially organic (the fields are organic, whilst the animals are not). In addition to organic grass, the farm also has some organic grain that it is sold to an organic mushroom farm as a growing substrate. It is stressed that that the choice of shifting the fields to organic is due to the fact that *"cultivating organic grass does not require much investment and although the crops are a bit smaller, it is financially wise because the EU pays more subsidies for organic cultivation. On the other hand, the animals are not organic because they would require new cattle shed and all the calves should be organic, which is difficult in practice: all their feed should be organic, in practice it is almost impossible to do all of that"*.

6. Discussion and conclusions

This paper has been inspired both by Gundelach's (2005) study of the Danish Agricultural Council by borrowing his concept of vision, and by Kietäväinen (2014), who has given voice to the individual position of farmers in relation to the structural changes in agriculture challenging the dominant, somewhat top-down, and mono-dimensional story of the Finnish countryside after World War II.

On the basis of a normative view of multifunctionality, the results of this paper have emphasized how farmers' visions (in the components of identity, opponent, and project), and its inter-relation with the farm level as an important scale for investigation of agricultural processes/changes (Wilson 2009), are key when dealing with the redefinition of the role of contemporary agriculture. The paper shows how, in line with Kietäväinen results (2014, 67), farmers are to be regarded as individual agents: *"if we set the viewpoint from top to bottom, we can lose the diversity of societal changes and the difference in timescales in which people are forced to react to changes either in urban or rural areas"*. As well, the data extracted from the thematic analysis suggest that, in a similar manner found by Gundelach (2005), Burton and Wilson (2006), and Gorton et al., (2008), farmers tend to defend their 'productivist' position. As a consequence, farmers have what Castells (1997 in Gundelach 2005) defines as resistance identity, which results in having a pessimistic view of the future, especially when it comes to the policy and economic environment: *"the productivist worldview derives from the present and the past. It is a continuation of existing ways of producing and of maintaining farmers' position in society"* (Gundelach 2005, 251). A resistance identity has involved the construction of opponents, which, directly and/or indirectly have been mentioned by the interviewed farmers. These include the artificialness of CAP support schemes, the tension with rural development, the bureaucratization of their lobbying organization, urban encroachment, urban dwellers' perspectives, dependency on the subsidies, and last but not least, the power of the food processing industry, and of very large farms.

In contrast, a project identity (another concept borrowed by Gundelach 2005 from Castells 1997), which would boost the non-productivist spectrum of multifunctionality, is still at its embryonic stages. The empirical data suggests that farmers are aware both that Finnish agriculture has potential, and at the same time, they are aware of those rural development instruments which would allow them to combine also non-productivist actions and thoughts in their visions.

From the review and analysis of primary and secondary research, it emerges that farmers' visions are constructed upon three factors, which are to a various extent connected to each other: 1) farming contingent conditions, which may represent a challenge or an opportunity for farmers to support their income beyond the production of food and fibre; these conditions include all the factors that characterize a territory as a physical system, such as climate, ecosystem, terrain, topography and morphology; 2) externalities, such as international policy making, and market liberalization; farmers are not independent agents in their decision-making; rather, they are severely constrained and influenced by homogenous and homogenizing policy-making structures. Striking examples of this are the changed role of the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners after Finland joined the EU, and the pervasive role of the CAP support schemes in influencing farmers' agricultural and non-agricultural activities; 3) farmers' personal views on profitability and risk. Although the qualitative data analysed in this study is restricted to specific types of Finnish rural areas, a normative view of multifunctionality is well applicable to any other rural area. In spite of the fact that the balance between productivism and non-productivism may understandably vary (as well as the dualism between resistance identity and project identity) — depending on different farming structures and/or farming policies — the link between farmers' agency and spatial expression is key to discover what is happening on the ground, and how is happening (Wilson 2009).

The overarching themes of the paper — dominance of productivism, uncertainty, and resistance identity — in turn highlight the tension and the lack of integration between agriculture and rural development. In this regard, Almås and Campbell (2012, 297) claim that *"the concept of a European model of multifunctional agriculture is primarily valid on a rhetorical level, while farmers and even policy makers on the ground apply different and often contradictory strategies and practices"*. To counterbalance the rhetorical approach to multifunctionality, Seufert et al. (2012) suggest that the achievement of a sustainable food security and a balanced food chain (thus, including both the consumers and farmers' points of view) needs many different actions, including organic, conventional, and possible 'hybrid' systems, as it has also been emphasized by the results of this paper. Thus, further research should focus on how to bridge the gap between farmers and rural developers; especially important is to increase mutual learning and develop new activities so that farmers are able to expand their own networks not only with other farmers, but also with other interest groups. This in turn may help farmers in having a more favourable position towards non-productivism, and rural developers in understanding that the needs of farmers depend both on their vision, and on the concept of land as the place of many agricultures.

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