

Forest Owners' Associations in a Changing Society

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Abstract

In recent decades structural changes in the forestry sector have changed forest owners' characteristics and thus the member base of forest owners' associations. More general social trends have also changed how individuals and organizations interact with each other. A major challenge for the forest owners' associations is thus to adapt their service offers and organizational structures to fit the needs of current and future members. The objective of the project this thesis is based upon was to examine processes that are shaping the future membership of forest owners' associations in Sweden and identify elements that are likely to affect their relationships with members and (hence) their cooperative nature. To meet this objective, the issue was addressed from different angles and organizational levels in studies reported in four appended papers. Paper I showed that renewal of district councils is a slow process in which election committees play a central role. However, they were found to act passively and select candidates from narrow pools, which restrict the councils' representativeness and raises risks of strategic misalignment with members' interests as it severely limits inputs from several user groups in decision-making processes. Paper II showed that in order to meet the changing member needs the organizations are currently focusing their strategic efforts on developing new services to support members' management activities and ownership issues, improve education offers, and become strong political actors. Paper III showed that members who had traded timber with the association displayed significantly higher affective commitment, but not calculative commitment, than both non-members and members who had traded with other organizations. Thus, the findings suggest that the associations should focus on communicating their core values and strengthening members' identification with the organization, as this will have stronger effects on their loyalty than fostering calculative relationships. Paper IV provides support for the findings in Paper II, showing that young adults generally have limited familiarity with forestry activities. Further they rarely discussed forest issues with their parents. Thus they did not feel comfortable in discussing their own future as potential forest owners since they lacked understanding of the personal implications for them in practice.

A key highlighted finding is that the main challenges for the organizations are connected to their democratic governance processes.

Keywords: cooperative, membership, family forest owner, member relationship, reproductive perspective, commitment

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The future is not set. There is no fate but what we make for ourselves.
Terminator 2: Judgment Day

Contents

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| List of Publications | 7 |
| Abbreviations | 9 |
| 1 Introduction | 11 |
| 1.1 FOAs in Sweden | 11 |
| 1.2 Changing society – a new generation of members | 14 |
| 1.2.1 Changing characteristics and values of forest owners | 14 |
| 1.2.2 Changing characteristics of the relationship between people and organizations | 17 |
| 1.3 Summary and Outline | 19 |
| 2 Objectives | 21 |
| 3 Conceptual Framework | 23 |
| 3.1 Cooperative organizations | 23 |
| 3.2 Membership | 27 |
| 3.3 The reproductive perspective on membership | 28 |
| 3.4 Commitment | 31 |
| 4 Materials and Methods | 33 |
| 4.1 Project background | 33 |
| 4.2 Qualitative approaches | 34 |
| 4.2.1 Selection of respondents | 35 |
| 4.2.2 Conducting the interviews and focus groups | 38 |
| 4.2.3 Analysis | 39 |
| 4.3 Quantitative approach | 40 |
| 4.4 Summary | 41 |
| 5 Summary of Papers | 43 |
| 5.1 District council members and the importance of member involvement in organization renewal processes in Swedish forest owners' associations (Paper I) | 43 |
| 5.2 How are Swedish forest owners' associations adapting to the needs of current and future members and their organizations? (Paper II) | 45 |
| 5.3 Family forest owners' commitment to service providers and the effect of association membership on loyalty (Paper III) | 46 |

| | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 5.4 | Elucidation of young adults' relationships to forests in northern Sweden using Forest Story Cards (Paper IV) | 47 |
| 6 | Discussion | 51 |
| 6.1 | Future work | 57 |
| | References | 59 |
| | Acknowledgements | 65 |

List of Publications

This thesis is based on the work contained in the following papers, referred to by Roman numerals in the text:

- I Kronholm, T. & Staal Wästerlund, D. (2013). District council members and the importance of member involvement in organization renewal processes in Swedish forest owners' associations. *Forests* 4, 404-432.
- II Kronholm, T. How are Swedish forest owners' associations adapting to the needs of current and future members and their organizations? (Manuscript)
- III Staal Wästerlund, D. & Kronholm, T. Family forest owners' commitment to service providers and the effect of association membership on loyalty. (Manuscript)
- IV Kronholm, T. & Staal Wästerlund, D. Elucidation of young adults' relationships to forests in northern Sweden using Forest Story Cards. (Manuscript)

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The contribution of Thomas Kronholm to the papers included in this thesis was as follows:

- I Planned the study in cooperation with co-author. Planned and conducted the interviews, analyzed the material and wrote most of the manuscript.
- II Planned the study, conducted the interviews, analyzed the data, and wrote the manuscript
- III Planned the study and developed the questionnaire in cooperation with the co-author, prepared some of the data, and wrote a minor part of the manuscript.
- IV Planned the study in cooperation with the co-author. Conducted the focus group sessions, analyzed the data and wrote most of the manuscript.

Abbreviations

| | |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| FOA | Forest Owners' Associations |
| ICA | International Co-Operative Alliance |
| SBO | Forest Management Area (In Swedish: Skogsbruksområde. District level division of the member-organization) |

1 Introduction

This thesis sets to explore challenges facing forest owners' associations (FOA) as membership organizations posed by current and anticipated societal changes. First, the nature of these organisations is briefly outlined.

1.1 FOAs in Sweden

In Sweden, 50 % of the 23 million hectares of productive forestland is owned by 329 541 non-industrial private forest owners, also commonly referred to as family forest owners (Swedish Forest Agency, 2014). Of these individuals, more than a third (*Table 1*) are members of one of the four major FOAs affiliated with the Federation of Swedish Farmers. There are also a few minor (“independent”) FOAs operating at local levels, for example Nätraälven Skog with 900 members, but the focus in this thesis is on the federative organizations.

Table 1. *Forest owners' associations, memberships, forestland, employees and turnover in 2014. (Norra Skogsägarna, 2015; Skogsägarna Norrskog, 2015; Mellanskog, 2015; Södra, 2015)*

| Association | Members | Forestland (M ha) | Employees | Turnover (MSEK) |
|-------------------------|---------|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Norra Skogsägarna | 16 090 | 1 .10 | 321 | 1 906 |
| Skogsägarna Norrskog | 12 600 | 0.97 | 303 | 1 813 |
| Mellanskog | 32 036 | 1.69 | 231 | 2 842 |
| Södra | 50 227 | 2 .39 | 3 524 | 17 339 |
| Total | 110 953 | 6.15 | 4 379 | 23 900 |

The history of FOAs dates back to the early 20th century. In a historical recap of one of them, Norra Skogsägarna, Wennebro (2008) identifies the economic crises the 1930s as an important driver of the increased cooperation between farmers in both agricultural and forest businesses at this time. The FOA focused initially on collecting and selling members' timber in larger volumes than they could individually, and the work was often done on a voluntary basis by designated members. In this way the farmers were able to improve their bargaining power towards more powerful timber buyers. By introducing commission fees on timber sales they conducted the FOAs were able to further strengthen their capital base and organization. By the end of the 1930s, more than 30 FOAs had been founded, covering all parts of the country (Andersson et al. 1980; Lönnstedt, 2004).

The oil embargos during the Second World War marked a second milestone in the associations' historical development, as they increased domestic demand for wood fuels and offered the FOAs opportunities to increase their business activities. Hence, many associations were both financially and organizationally stronger after the war (Wennebro, 2008).

During the 1950s and 60s the associations' structures and activities started to shift towards modern forms. Forest management areas (SBOs) were introduced to improve forest management and work organization, and spread quickly to associations all over the country. In the SBOs, employed forest inspectors were responsible for supporting members' management activities by giving advice and education, and increasing efficiency by coordinating work and the use of equipment and other resources. During this period the associations also developed their own forestry organizations by investing in equipment and hiring forest workers. In this manner professional harvesting organizations were born. To secure offset for members increasing timber volumes the associations also made significant investments to increase their own industrial capacity. This also led to reductions in numbers but increases in sizes of the FOAs. Thus, their turnover, as well as numbers of members, grew rapidly for some years until a major crisis hit the forest sector in the late 1970s (Andersson et al., 1980). For some FOAs the economic dip ended their operations, while others were forced into series of mergers and restructurings (Wennebro, 2008). Consequently, the number of FOA members also declined quite rapidly, from 130 000 to just above 70 000 in the early 1980s (Lönnstedt, 2004).

Norlin (2012) has recently shown that the declines in numbers of associations (and SBOs) has continued since then. Between 1985 and 2009, 12 associations have merged into four major associations: Norra Skogsägarna, Skogsägarna Norrskog, Mellanskog and Södra (Figure 1). During the same

period, their combined annual turnover has tripled and is currently around 24 billion SEK (or 2.5 billion euro). Regarding memberships, the number has recovered since the dip, but partly as a consequence of a legal change that transferred membership rights from forest properties to each of their individual owners.



Figure 1. Areas covered by forest owners' associations in Sweden (LRF Skogsägarna, 2015).

Normark (1994) has described member-owned companies as hourglass shaped organizations and this is also the case in FOAs, as shown in figure 2. Members are located in the top of the hourglass to symbolize that power (in theory) flows through the organization from individual members, to governing bodies, to the association board and then out in the business organization. At member level, each individual belongs to a SBO in which the democratic rights membership offers can be practiced. Primarily this is in the SBO where the member's forest property is located, but non-resident members may choose to transfer their rights to a SBO closer to their place of residency. However, according to the statutes of Norra Skogsägarna and Skogsägarna Norrskog the member's voting right cannot be transferred. Mellanskog and Södra do not have such a restriction. In the SBO members elect a council of representatives and appoint delegates to the association's annual general meeting whose main task is to elect an association board. Located between the member and board level the associations have various types of work groups, committees and discussion forums. For example chairmen conferences were representatives for all its councils meet to discuss strategic issues and exchange information with the association board and management (described in Paper I).

The FOA's business organization is hierarchically managed with structures similar to other forest companies.

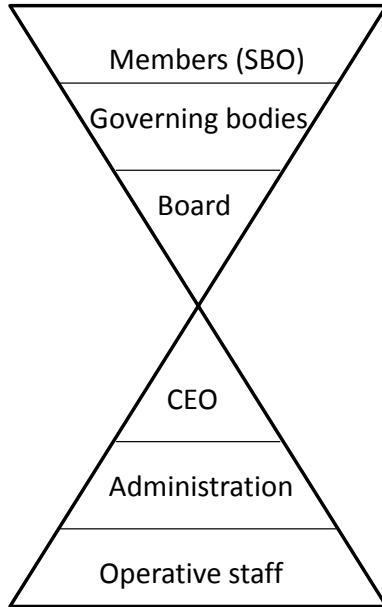


Figure 2. Organizational structure of FOAs.

1.2 Changing society – a new generation of members

Changes in society have altered, and will continue to alter, forest owners' characteristics and thus the future member base of FOAs. This will probably affect their needs, in ways the FOAs will have to understand, and make appropriate adjustments in future business models, as discussed below. Further, some general social trends that are affecting relationships between individuals and member organizations are presented as these emerging ideas and practices may also influence the future FOA membership.

1.2.1 Changing characteristics and values of forest owners

Urbanization, an ageing population, and a decreasing share of the population working in primary production have significantly altered forest ownership structures (Karppinen & Ahlberg, 2008). The share of female ownership also increased substantially during the last decades of the 20th century (Lidestav,

1998), and today 38 % of the family forest owners are females (Swedish Forest Agency, 2014). A change illustrating the weaker connection between farming and forestry is that the share of forestland managed by farm-owners decreased from 70 % in the 1960s to just 30 % by 2000 (Lönstedt, 2004). Furthermore, since the number of active farmers has continued to decrease during the last decade it seems reasonable to assume that the share is even smaller today. A sign of the urbanization is that about a third of the forest properties are today either completely (25%) or partially (7%) owned by non-residents, i.e. owners who live outside the municipality where their forest property is located (Swedish Forest Agency, 2014). However, when considering this group it should be kept in mind that a non-resident owner's physical distance to his or her forest property can vary significantly.

As forest owners' regular income increasingly comes from employment in other sectors, forestry has also come to play a marginal role in most forest-owning households' economies (Törnqvist, 1995). Regarding age, more than a third (36.2%) of forest owners are at least 65 years old (Swedish Forest Agency, 2014). Finally, mechanization and professionalization in forestry have reduced numbers of working hours in small-scale forestry and forest owners' self-performed activities are nowadays mainly focused on silvicultural treatments. Here they still conduct 61 % of the pre-commercial thinning and 36 % of planting, while only 16% of thinning and 9 % of final felling is performed by owners themselves (Swedish Forest Agency, 2014). In addition, Berg Lejon & Lidestav (2007) have shown that male owners perform forest work in their own forest more frequently than female owners.

In shifts connected to the changes described above, the values and objectives of family forest owners have become increasingly diverse and forest values other than economic benefits are becoming increasingly important (Karppinen, 1998; Ingemarson, 2006). For example, Nordlund & Westin (2011) have shown that female owners value recreational and ecological aspects of forests more highly than male owners, and have stronger management attitudes towards environmental and human-centred issues. Further, they found that resident owners are more production-oriented and focused on economic benefits than non-resident owners. Similar findings were made by Häyrinen et al. (2014), who showed females, urban owners and owners with academic education consider conservational and aesthetic values more important than other owner groups. Favada et al. (2007) also found that proportions of forest owners who are unable, or not willing, to discuss objectives of their forest ownership are increasing. This group of "indifferent" forest owners is reportedly often non-resident and has small holdings. These owners and those who value recreation highly were found to harvest lower

timber volumes, raising concerns that in the long-term the changes could pose challenges for the industry's supply of roundwood.

For the FOAs, a shift away from economic forest values may be particularly challenging since Berlin (2006) found that FOA membership seemed to be most common among owners interested in gaining income from their forest property. Increases in the share of forest owners who value non-economic benefits could thus increase the difficulty of recruiting new members, or possibly create a gap between the organizations' and members' goals. Berlin thus argued that it is important for the FOAs to reflect on the type of image they want to communicate to current and potential members. An issue also addressed in Paper I.

That forest organizations have been slow in their adaptation to the increasingly diverging interests of forest owners has been shown by Mattila et al. (2013), who found a mismatch between forest owner needs and the services offered in the market. This has also been found to be the situation within FOAs as members often were looking for other benefits than currently offered by the cooperative (Lidestav & Arvidsson, 2012). In addition differences in attitudes and perceptions on forest management between forest owners and forest officers (service providers) have been found by both Kindstrand et al. (2008) and Asikainen et al. (2014), which could complicate the development and delivery of services that are in line with forest owner expectations. For example, Mattila and Roos (2014) have shown that there either has been unwillingness or inability among forest organizations to embrace the changing demand and come up with new service offers to meet it. The outcome is thus that some forest owner groups are not reached by the organizations. Without further efforts from the organizations to identify these needs and develop offers that can meet them, this gap is likely to increase in coming years. Thus, how the FOAs have identified and started to respond to their members' changing needs is addressed in Paper II.

However, Karppinen & Ahlberg (2008) argue that the value shifts so far have been quite moderate, and that the next significant shift is likely to occur when the large post-war generations of "baby boomers" born in the 1940s transfer their ownership to younger generations. Considering their age, this process can be expected to accelerate in the near future. As yet, few studies have addressed values of future owners and those who have recently taken over a forest property, but there are indications that future owners will generally have a higher education level and more frequently be urban owners than current owners (Karppinen, 2012). In addition, although the type of forest values (e.g. economic, recreational, environmental, etc.) held by future owners will most likely be the same as those of current owners, their relative

importance will probably change over time (Karppinen & Tiainen, 2010). Thus, the objective of the study reported in Paper IV was to increase our understanding of how younger generations relate to forests.

1.2.2 Changing characteristics of the relationship between people and organizations

FOAs are sometimes collectively referred to as the “forest owner movement” (in Swedish: skogsägarrörelsen), with clear connections to “popular movements” (“folkrörelsen”) as they emerged during the same era as responses to the social and economic challenges connected to Sweden’s transformation from an agrarian to an industrialized country in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Thus, this is perceived as the beginning of associational life in Sweden, in which 9 out of 10 Swedes a century later were members of at least one association and often several (Hvenmark, 2008). Many of the characteristics that are typically assigned to popular movements (open membership, promotion of an ideology, mitigating shortcomings in society, affiliation of a certain number of members with nationwide representation through local associations, independence, self-governance based on democracy, and continuity over time; Hvenmark, 2008:31), are thus similar to the foundational cooperative principles and ideals of FOAs (see Chapter 3). Hence, it may also be fruitful to consider how membership and interaction between individuals and civil society organizations have developed.

In recent decades many traditional popular movements have experienced declining numbers of memberships. According to Vogel et al. (2003), associations in Sweden lost 0.5 million members during the 1990’s and the national newspaper Dagens Nyheter recently (August 16, 2015) reported that the Swedish scouts have lost 50 percent of members, and numbers of children attending day-care facilities provided by parent cooperatives are decreasing. The situation was dramatically pictured as a “crisis”, in which “Association-Sweden is fading away” (my translation). According to Papakostas (2011; 2012), the decline in memberships is often interpreted as an outcome of today’s individualistic society, in which people have lost interest in being part of traditional organizations based on collective ideas. However, he advocates another explanation, namely that a rationalization process in civil society is weakening the mutual dependency relationships between individuals and organizations, for several reasons as outlined below.

First, as the possibilities for mass communication and direct vertical communication between members and organization leadership have improved with technological advances, the need for members and members’ representatives to act as intermediaries in communication chains has fallen.

The responsibility for communication has thus often moved from members to professionals (Papakostas 2011). Evidence for such a shift in responsibility in FOAs is presented in Papers I and II. Second, modern organizations have decreased their dependency on member resources by increasingly financing their operations through external sponsors and grants. This shift in funding has been accompanied by increased professionalization of the organizations. Membership, and involvement by active members, is thus becoming increasingly redundant for organizations' survival. Findings presented in Paper II also suggest that FOAs' needs for active members and member representatives in their governance processes are currently decreasing. The consequent concentration of power over time in a minor group of individuals has long been seen as an inevitable process in traditional membership organizations, commonly known as the "iron law of oligarchy" (Michels, 1959), as well as in cooperatives where extensive business operations often increase managerial power (see Chapter 3).

Further, the reduction in numbers of members needed to run modern organizations has also contributed to increasing fragmentation in the organization landscape, i.e. there are more organizations now, but they are more focused on specific issues and each has fewer members (Papakostas, 2011). Thus, people have much more possibility to support organizations that are aligned to their specific interests, and the weak relationship between organizations and members makes it easy to switch if they become more interested in other issues. However, the reductions in dependency and contact with grass-root members also mean that the organizations are often run by ruling elites, who are selling the organization's message or activities to members who can often be regarded merely as customers (Papakostas, 2012). It has also been found that FOA members often perceive that this is how they are viewed by the organization (Lidestav & Arvidsson, 2012).

With particular reference to developments in the football industry Hvenmark (2008) describes this as a commodification process, in which membership constantly needs to be loaded with attractive offers that individuals are prepared to repurchase. For example, leaders and executives of sports clubs often talk about their team, games, or league, in terms of "products". Indications that such views are present in FOAs, to some degree, are presented in Paper II. However, when members are turned into customers or supporters, Einarsson & Hvenmark (2012) argue that self-interest will dominate and guide their actions, and the individuals' sense of being part of a larger collective will diminish. Evidence that forest owners often act like customers in their interactions with forest associations today is reported in Paper III.

Finally, shifts in attitudes towards agricultural cooperatives have also been detected and Richards et al. (1998) argued that cooperatives may face challenges posed by dissatisfaction among younger members as they identify with cooperatives' social values less than older generations. Accordingly, Hakelius (1996) showed that while elder members in agricultural cooperatives highly value solidarity and loyalty to organizations, the younger members value economic aspects more highly and are more prone to trade with other partners than their cooperative. Findings presented in Paper III confirm that many FOA members trade with other forest companies. Further, Hakelius found younger members to be less active in democratic processes as they attended fewer meetings and few had acted (or wanted to act) as trustees. In addition, those who still participated in the democratic process primarily did so for personal economic motives. Thus, Hakelius (2004) claimed that three distinct cooperative ideologies could be distinguished within the modern agricultural sector. These are: a traditional ideology, rooted in the early value-based cooperative models; a modified ideology held by the elder farmer generation, who strongly adhere to many traditional values but accept some deviations from traditional cooperative principles; and a more individualistic ideology held by the younger generation.

1.3 Summary and Outline

Technological development and industrialization were key drivers of organizational change during the second half of the 20th century. In the near future major challenges for FOAs will be to adapt to changes in members' needs and values, to find ways to turn these challenges into opportunities, and respond in manners that enhance future satisfaction of members' needs. A key aim of the project this thesis is based upon was to provide valuable input to facilitate this process. The following chapter presents the overall objective of the project, and the specific objectives of the studies reported in the four appended papers. Chapter 3 then introduces the concepts of cooperative organizations, membership, commitment and the reproductive perspective on membership, which have provided important elements of the conceptual framework of the project. Chapter 4 presents the research design and methods used in the project. Chapter 5 summarizes the main empirical findings presented in each of the appended papers and these are discussed in Chapter 6.

2 Objectives

The objectives of the project this thesis is based upon were to examine processes shaping the future membership of FOAs (in Sweden, unless otherwise stated) and identify critical elements that are likely to affect their relationships with members and (hence) the cooperative nature of their business. These issues were addressed in studies described in four papers, targeting different organizational levels and aspects of member relationships (Figure 3). Paper I addresses key aspects of organization renewal processes at the SBO level, including recruitment practices, roles of member representatives and members' possibilities to provide inputs to decision-making processes. Paper II analyzes how the associations are adapting their strategic business plans in order to meet their members' changing needs and how this is affecting their relationship with members. Paper III focuses on the business relationship between forest owners and service providers, and analyzes the loyalty effects of membership. Finally, Paper IV explores the forest relationships and attitudes of young adults, many of whom may be regarded as potential future members of the association.

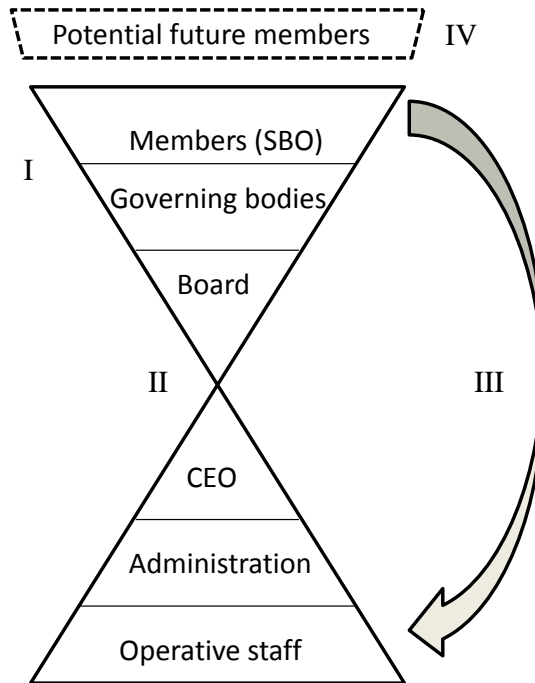


Figure 3. Foci of the four studies reported in Papers I-IV.

The specific objectives of the studies reported in the papers were as follows.

Paper I: To examine the reproduction (organization renewal) process in a FOA and the role of SBO council members in this process.

Paper II: To examine how the FOAs' strategies are adapting to fit identified needs of current and future members, and assess how this affects the organizations' profile and relationship with members.

Paper III: To better understand forest owners' commitment to service providers and effects of FOA membership on loyalty.

Paper IV: To explore young adults' experiences and attitudes to forests and forestry, and increase understanding of their relationship to forests and how their forest values have developed.

3 Conceptual Framework

This chapter presents the concepts of cooperative organizations, membership, the reproductive perspective on membership and commitment.

3.1 Cooperative organizations

FOAs in Sweden are organized as “economic associations”, but are often referred to as cooperatives (cf. Kittredge, 2003; Berlin, 2006). This is reasonable, as much of the legal framework governing economic associations in many parts is adapted to the traditional cooperative ideals, such as democratic governance and open membership, and thus is suitable for member-owned businesses (Normark, 1994). The law also emphasizes the user-service provider relationship as it states that for an organization to be considered an economic association its purpose must be to (my translation) “promote members’ economic interests through economic business activities in which the members participate” (Svensk författningssamling, 1987:667). Members’ participation in this context may refer to purchase or use of products or services the organization provides, suppliers to the organization, contributors of labor, or engagement in any other similar activity. However, Nilsson (1991) argues that one should not automatically consider all economic associations to be cooperatives, because in practice they may not have all the fundamental characteristics of a truly cooperative business.

The International Co-operative Alliance (2015), ICA, states that cooperatives “are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity”. The ICA has also adopted a set of cooperative principles, which are to act as guidance for how to implement these basic values in the cooperative’s business operations. These principles originate from the accomplishments of the Rochdale Pioneers in 1844 (and are thus also known as the Rochdale Principles) who are regarded as having

founded the first modern cooperative in 1844 in Lancashire, England. The principles were first adopted by ICA in 1937 and only minor changes have been made to them since then. The principles guiding cooperative businesses as currently stated are (ICA, 2015):

- Voluntary and Open Membership
- Democratic Member Control
- Members' Economic Participation
- Autonomy and Independence
- Provision of Education, Training and Information
- Co-operation among Co-operatives
- Concern for Community

Normark (1994) has however shown that there have been different views on how to relate to these values and principles when setting up cooperative businesses. Some have been principle-oriented and argued that the principles should have a normative function, acting as rules for running cooperative business, while others have taken a more value-oriented approach, arguing that the principles may be adapted to fit the cooperative's environment as long as the basic values are not violated.

Thus, over time there have been many definitions of cooperative businesses (cf. Nilsson, 1991). Based on the values and principles presented above, ICA (2015) currently defines a cooperative as "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise". However, Nilsson & Björklund (2003) argue that it may be problematic to use definitions constructed by these types of organizations as they often contain political and ideological aspects. Many definitions also only cover certain types of cooperatives. Hence, the cited authors advocate a more general and theoretically based definition which is commonly used in research on agricultural cooperatives, and thus also fits the context of this thesis. This definition is based on three principles regarding relationships between the member and the organization that must co-exist at all times, namely (Nilsson & Björklund, 2003, p. 53):

- The user-owner principle
- The user-control principle
- The user-benefit principle

The user-owner principle implies that in order to use and receive benefits from the cooperative services, members should also own it. The principle of member ownership is important since it assures a dependency relationship between the members and the business (Nilsson, 1991). In FOAs this is applied

by members being obliged to invest capital proportional to the size of forestland they own, up to a maximum level (Kittredge, 2003). However, as shown by Chaddad & Cook (2004), there are also modern cooperative models that have implemented varying degree of external investors. These models have followed from increases in capital needs that members themselves may not have been willing or able to meet, for example in connection to industrialization processes. According to Nilsson & Björklund (2003), such models can still be acceptable as long as the outcomes benefit the members and external investors do not restrict members from receiving benefits from the cooperative.

The user-control principle implies that members who obtain benefits from the cooperative should also be those who govern it (Nilsson & Björklund, 2003). Nilsson (1991) argues that the involvement of members in the governance process is important for the flow of information about member needs from the grass-roots to the strategic levels of the cooperative. Without such information flow the cooperative's business may become strategically misaligned, and irrelevant for members' own business. In line with the democratic values of cooperatives, all members should thus have equal opportunities to influence the cooperative's business. Further, ensuring that every member has equal opportunities is also important to ensure that no groups can gain inequitable benefits by discriminating against other groups. However, if external parties are allowed to invest in a cooperative Nilsson & Björklund (2003) also argue that it might be acceptable for them to get an influence its steering too, as long as it favours the members' interests. In FOAs the one man-one vote principle underlying systems of representative democracy, has thus been used to ensure equality between members and districts. Nevertheless, as shown in Paper I, current organizational structures hinder equality of opportunities for involvement in several ways, and the hindrances may become even more challenging without adaptation to ongoing changes. Paper II provides further indications that members' possibilities for involvement may decrease in the future.

The user-benefit principle Nilsson & Björklund (2003) state is the ultimate condition for a cooperative's existence. That it is user-benefits implies that a cooperative does not exist to merely generate returns on members' capital investment, but that the value of being member is connected to the use of services. Thus, Michelsen (1994) argue that a cooperative's main objective should be to produce such concrete activities that contribute to maximum satisfaction of members' needs. Similarly, Nilsson (1991) emphasizes that the business of a cooperative should aim to meet functional needs of its member groups, as either individuals or business owners. Thus, the study reported in

Paper II explored how FOAs are adapting as members' needs are changing, and if (and if so how) they will be able to uphold this principle in coming years. Further, as long as the benefits are connected to the use of services the distribution of value created in a cooperative's business will also be proportional to each member's contribution to the business. If cooperative principles are followed members should thus only get limited returns on their capital investments. This is because a high interest rate on invested capital would largely benefit members who have historically traded with the cooperative and provide less benefit for those who have contributed to the current years' results. As FOAs have a maximum investment level, a high interest rate on capital would also provide proportionally greater benefits for owners of small holdings who engage in limited trade with the cooperative than for owners of larger holdings who engage in more trade. Thus, the FOAs often distribute their profit in the forms of both interest and extra payments for members' delivered timber volumes. For example, in 2014 Södra paid 6 % interest on members' capital and 8 % on delivered timber (Södra, 2015). However, Nilsson (1991) argues that it may be appropriate for cooperatives to set different terms for different groups if it is economically and socially motivated and justifiable. This is because both strictly equal terms and differentiated terms will be perceived as unfair by some groups, who may become dissatisfied and leave, so the distribution of benefits is thus a balancing act (as confirmed, to some extent, in Paper II).

Over time cooperative businesses tend to lose the characteristics that distinguish them from other companies and organizations, becoming instead more like corporations (Harte, 1997; Hind, 1997; Hind, 1999; Fulton & Hueth, 2009). This is often discussed in terms of cooperative degeneration or cooperative failures. A driver, as shown by Nilsson et al. (2009) is that growth in the size and complexity of a cooperative's business is often challenging for its member relationships. This is because it becomes increasingly difficult for grass-roots members to know and understand the expanding activities. Accordingly, Lidestav & Arvidsson (2012) found that many FOA members lack understanding of their cooperatives' business. In large organizations members are also a heterogeneous group of people with diverse and often conflicting objectives (Nilsson, 1991). Further, members of large cooperatives may rarely meet each other or leaders of the cooperative, which may weaken trust, involvement, satisfaction and democratic processes (Nilsson et al., 2012). Hence, managers will gradually take control over the organization and its decision-making process (Chaves & Sajardo-Moreno, 2004), thereby strengthening the "us versus them" feeling that is often an element of members' relationships with the organization (Lidestav & Arvidsson, 2012).

However, this breaks the user-control principle as members should be in control of a cooperative's business at all times (Nilsson, 1991).

Another challenge for a large cooperative is that members may have limited ability and/or willingness to finance its operations and investments. To meet its capital needs the organization may thus decide to look for capital outside the organization and implement an ownership model that includes external investors (Chaddad & Cook, 2004), which may weaken the user-owner relationship. Further aspects of cooperative degeneration processes discussed by Nilsson (1986) include (for example): increasing focus on individual benefits and short-term gains from the business, increasingly market-oriented relationships between members and the business, and corporatization of the organizational structures. The core of cooperative degeneration is thus that members lose their incentive and ability to steer the cooperative.

3.2 Membership

As presented in section 3.1, a FOA is by law constituted by members. Membership is a form of organizational affiliation that differs in several ways from share ownership, of which a few have been described by Stryjan (1987). Stryjan (1994) argues that three key membership characteristics that are not found in share ownership are: mutual dependence between members, conditional entry into the organization, and members being in a privileged position when dealing with their organization. In the Swedish context, many of the rights and rules related to members' dealings with organizations are decided by each organization, and thus have many forms. However, as membership is conditional many organizations have entry requirements to ensure that members share at least some of the basic characteristics of the organization and the organization statutes can thus have a gate-keeping function (Einarsson, 2012). For example, a forest owner who wishes to join a FOA must own a property in the organization's area of operation (Figure 1). Otherwise he or she could not contribute to the cooperative's business, thus it is also part of the mutual dependency that should be present between the organization and members. Another significant feature of membership, according to Stryjan (1987), is that it should extend over a longer time than a single transaction, hence loyalty to the organization is an important aspect of membership. Further, the members share a common interest in the future outcomes of the organization's activities. Finally, members are assumed to view their organization as better or different than the alternatives and thus worthy of their membership.

From an individual's perspective Einarsson (2008) identified 12 general dimensions of membership (e.g. social status or the possibility to influence on the organization), but there may also be other more organization-specific dimensions. The relative importance of the dimensions will be related to the type of organization involved, and the individual's personal values, motives and situation. Their relative importance may also shift over time as the individual, situation or organization changes. Einarsson describes four basic relationships types between members and the organization within which the different dimensions can be found (p. 54-57):

- Calculative relationships
- Ideal based relationships
- Genuine (social) relationships
- Ownership

The calculative relationship refers to the personal gains that members can obtain from being a member. A forest owner may, for example, want access to the services, activities, discounts or profit-sharing schemes that are offered exclusively to members by the FOA. The ideal based relationship refers to a match between the individual's and the organization's ideas and values. Further, through exchanges with other members or staff genuine social bonds may develop and become an important reason for maintaining a relationship with the organization. Finally, ownership is a very concrete relationship when dealing with cooperatives as members are also share holders, thus they may perceive it as "their" organization. A member's response to organizational problems may depend on his/her type of relationship with the organization (Einarsson, 2008). In Paper III, these dimensions are discussed in terms of calculative commitment and affective commitment, commitment being the individual's desire to maintain a relationship. The concept of commitment is also introduced in section 3.4.

3.3 The reproductive perspective on membership

In the reproductive perspective on membership, introduced by Stryjan (1987; 1994), the individuals that constitute member organizations are in the center of attention. It regards organizational change as a constantly ongoing process in which members affect, and are affected by, their organization through their daily interactions with both the organization and each other. Stryjan pictures this as a loop of reproduction in which members' assumptions shape their decisions, which shape organizational routines and practices, which in turn reshape the members' assumptions. In other words, the FOAs we have today

are products of previous decisions made by all past and current members, and actions taken by current members will determine the organizational development and thus who its future members will be. Thus, all of the papers included in this thesis address aspects of the reproduction process, to varying degrees.

The reproduction process has three basic elements (Stryjan, 1994). The first is replenishment of the organization's corpus of members, because if there is no inflow of new members the organization will eventually have no members left. Further, the individuals who join and leave the organization will determine the organizations' demographic characteristics. Both who will join and who will leave will be partly affected by internal factors, such as the organization's recruitment policies, its attributes and its practices, which will have varying appeal for different groups of individuals. However, it will also depend on the organization's environment. Thus, replenishment includes elements of selectivity and from the organization's perspective it is rational to target groups of individuals that fit its current profile, as it reduces organizational costs if the newly recruited members already have skills and social values that match the organization. As already mentioned, FOAs have certain basic entry requirements. However, increasing the requirements inevitably reduces the pool of potential members. Further, as Stryjan (1987) points out, an organization's recruitment base will usually be determined by its environment and the societal change processes occurring in it. For example, FOAs cannot control the changing demographic characteristics of family forest owners.

The second element of the reproduction process is the members' shared frame of reference (Stryjan, 1994). This refers to the common values and identities embedded in the organizational culture, which guide the members' interpretations of situations, how they define problems and subsequent responses. This frame of reference includes the assumptions mentioned above in connection to the reproduction loop. However, the frame of reference is not static as it is.

The third element consist of the members' possibilities to make inputs to the organization (Stryjan, 1994). Stryjan (1987) describes four types of corrective inputs that the members can contribute. First, members' loyalty to the organization is seen as the baseline for its functionality and members of a FOA need to follow the statutes and regulations set by the organization if they wish to continue being part of it. Loyalty is thus important for steering of the organization, but loyalty alone is not enough for its development as it is often rather passive and therefore described by Stryjan (1994) as a non-creative input. Another non-creative input members may contribute is to leave the

organization, as the exit of dissatisfied members may act as a wake-up call for the organization. The exit of a single member will of course have limited effect on an organization like a FOA that has thousands of members, but if many members with similar characteristics decide to leave it will change the organization's demographic composition. Further, if the category of members leaving the organization is important for the organization's business the effect may be even greater.

Involvement and protest/voice are two creative inputs members may contribute (Stryjan, 1994). Einarsson (2012) showed that members of democratically governed organizations generally cherish the (formal) possibility to exert influence in their organization, but far fewer actively participate in annual meetings, which are among the most important forums for such action. In some FOAs less than 10 % of the members participate in such meetings (Lidestav & Arvidsson, 2012). However, FOA members also raise their voice and try to influence the organization through other formal and informal internal, as well as external, channels of communication and actions (cf. Einarsson & Wijkström, 2015). Tolerance towards members' protests may also vary, depending on the organization and its culture. Tolerant organizations may regard such protest positively as it may enhance their innovation processes and improve the products and services they provide. However, if the tolerance level is low members who make their opinion heard may be viewed as troublemakers. Thus, a protester faces the risk that his only achievement will be isolation, or ultimately exclusion, from the organization (Stryjan, 1987).

Protest is thus viewed as a negative input, while involvement is regarded as a positive form. The difference between protest and involvement is described by Stryjan (1994:68) as: "*rather than patiently suffering or loudly protesting, a member may simply roll up his sleeves and deal with whatever problem he encounters*". Paper I deals with one kind of involvement that members of FOAs may consider in such situations, namely becoming a council/board member and thus taking personal, hands-on responsibility for the organization's development and addressing issues that are considered to be important. However, member involvement may also be seen as problematic by the management and leaders of the organization, because too many individuals wanting to participate in steering processes could lead to a chaotic situation and overload in the organization's daily work.

3.4 Commitment

Commitment is an important element in Stryjan's (1987) reproduction model. Morgan and Hunt (1994) have defined commitment as: "*the committed party believes the relationship is worth working on to ensure that it endures indefinitely*". Further, Gruen et al. (2000) defined membership commitment as "*the degree of membership's psychological attachment to the association*". It thus concerns the relational bonding between two parties and is in a long-term perspective crucial for successful relationships (Han et al. 2008). Positive outcomes of high levels of commitment put forward have for example been a decreased turnover of organization members, more motivated members, and that members are more involved in the organizations internal affairs (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Gruen et al., 2000). The lack of these elements was earlier described (section 3.1) as contributing factors in cooperative degeneration processes.

Fullerton (2003) have argued that commitment can be based on either affective or continuance foundations. Continuance commitment exist when the cost of ending the relationship is perceived to be higher than the cost maintaining it, which is often the case when alternatives are few and switching/termination costs are high. For FOA members alternative associations are currently few, if any, and the alternative would then often be to establish a relationship with a conventional company in the market or to have no relationship at all. A FOA member's switching cost may be moderate since the monetary investment in the association is returned when resigning, but there will still always be some expected costs related to termination of a relationship (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Continuance commitment has also been discussed as calculative commitment since it builds on a rational evaluation of the hard benefits, costs and risks that the relationship offers (Han et al., 2008). Affective commitment is on the other hand characterized by identification, shared values, belongingness and similarity with an organization or individual (Fullerton, 2003). Note here the similarities with the social dimension of membership described in section 3.2 as these are all positive feelings that emotionally attach the member to the organization. However, as earlier described one type of attachment to the organization does not exclude the other one. Both types might be present in a relationship and in weak relationships none of them need to be present.

4 Materials and Methods

This chapter presents and discusses the methodological approaches of the four studies reported in Papers I-IV. The project background is also presented.

4.1 Project background

A couple of years before the research project this thesis is based on started, Norra Skogsägarna's chief communication officer, Erik Jonsson, conducted an environmental scanning and summarized some of the contemporary societal changes that could affect the organization's future business and member relationships (Jonsson, 2009). The conclusion of this scanning was that the organization needs to develop a new strategy to meet the future needs of forest owners, and for this purpose they must increase their understanding about the ongoing changes and their effects on the association. The following year, a master student at SLU conducted a survey among children to members in Norra Skogsägarna and investigated the next owner generation's view on forest ownership and the FOA (Malmqvist, 2010). The supervisor was Dianne Staal Wästerlund, who also has been one of the supervisors for this project. The initiation of this research project was thus to some extent the outcome of the two mentioned investigations and the discussions between Staal Wästerlund and Jonsson during this period.

This also implied that there were preliminary ideas for which topics the research project would deal with when I became involved in the project in 2011. However, since it was not an ongoing project, my own possibilities to influence on the project outline and the design of the individual studies have been significant. My background in business administration and interest in organizational issues has, for example, implied that the organizations' internal processes have received more attention in the project than the initial outline suggested. Paper I took its stance in Stryjan's (1994) notion that it is crucial to

know who the current organization members are in order to understand who might be its future ones, as the members act based on their shared assumptions about the organization. The idea for Paper II was further developed during a national PhD-course in business administration in which the ongoing changes within civil society organizations were discussed. Paper III was developed in parallel with a project funded by Brattåsstiftelsen, dealing with forest owners' business relationships. Finally, Paper IV was inspired by a study visit at Penn State University during which Dr Sanford Smith gave an introduction to the Forest Story Cards he had developed. The initial project outline has thus served as a frame for the project, but the studies have been developed along the way.

During the project, I have every semester had a meeting with a reference group consisting of member representatives and personnel from Norra Skogsägarna. In this forum I have had the opportunity to establish my research ideas and discuss the outcomes of my ongoing work. Keeping the organization informed about the work has been important for me since they were the main sponsor. It has also been valuable for the design of the project and the studies to get inputs from their perspectives. However, although this has been an industry sponsored project the scientific freedom within the project has never been questioned. As an employee of SLU, I have neither been dependent on the organization in my research or had any formal obligation towards the sponsor.

4.2 Qualitative approaches

In two studies (Paper I & II), data collection was conducted through the use of interviews. Interviews are, according to Ritchie & Lewis (2011), a suitable approach when dealing with processes, decisions, personal motivations and experiences, as these are often complex issues and detailed descriptions are needed in order to understand them properly. Thus, interviews were considered appropriate in Paper I, as the aim was to explain why the council members had volunteered, how they perceive their role in the organization and how they view their possibilities to make inputs in the democratic process. Paper II focused on strategy development processes in which it was crucial to understand the reasoning behind the different choices the organizations had made and how its leaders look at the future process. Therefore, interviews were also here considered to be an appropriate method to use.

In Paper IV, data was collected through the use of focus groups (also referred to as group interviews or group discussions). Focus groups offer less detailed information than individual interviews but have been argued to be useful in attitudinal research since the respondents are able to discuss their views with others and refine their accounts along the way as they are

stimulated by the discussion (Bloor et al. 2001; Ritchie & Lewis, 2011). The group interaction can thus help respondents to reflect on issues which in daily life may be taken for granted and which could be hard to describe in an individual interview. Further, if there are differences in opinions between respondents this will also become explicit in the discussions. For these reasons, focus groups were found as an interesting approach to study young adults' relationship to forests.

4.2.1 Selection of respondents

In qualitative studies respondents are deliberately chosen for their ability to provide detailed information that is useful for deepening the understanding of the research question at hand (Ritchie & Lewis (2011). In the studies reported in Papers I, II & IV, criterion-based sampling was used to ensure that respondents were relevant for the objective of each study. However, as will be shown, the sampling processes also contained elements of snowball sampling and convenience sampling. In criterion-based sampling, a set of key characteristics or features that the respondent need to possess in order to be relevant are identified before initiating the search (Ritchie & Lewis, 2011). The use of criteria also ensures that diversity between respondents within the studied population can be obtained. Diversity is important in order to capture different perspectives on the questions studied.

In Paper I, the objective was to examine the organization renewal process in a forest owners' association and the role of SBO council members. Norra Skogsägarna was chosen as the case organization as the accessibility to the organization and the council members was high. Both due to the interest among members for the newly started research project, but also since the organization's geographical location reduced the interviewers travelling time and expenses.

Three criteria were used in the selection of respondents. First, geographical location was considered important in order to capture potential differences in culture or practice between regions and SBOs. At the time of the study, Norra Skogsägarna had 27 SBOs, divided in four regions. Second, it was considered relevant to include both council chairmen and non-chairmen as they, for example, could have different access to information. Their opportunities to make inputs to the organization could also differ, and thereby also their experiences and views on the processes. Finally, to include both female and male respondents was important as earlier research findings have shown that their values and motives may be different. Further, being a minority group among council members (and in the association) was also considered as a factor that possibly could have implications on their experiences. Following the

criteria, candidates to contact were selected from a list including all 170 council members. As the interviews were to be done face-to-face with the respondents, practical issues related to travelling time and costs were to some extent considered in this process. The aim in the interview planning was to conduct two interviews per day when travelling, meaning that respondents should not live more than a 3 hours drive away from each other. After interviewing 15 respondents from 13 different SBO, in all four regions, the consistency between respondents' answers indicated that additional interviews would not have added substantially to the understanding of the research questions. Nine of the respondents were chairmen (both males and females) and six were ordinary council members. Six female respondents participated in the study. If comparing the share of female respondents in the sample with their representation in the councils, the females were overrepresented in the sample. However, the goal of qualitative sampling is not to achieve statistical representation (Ritchie & Lewis, 2011). In this case, the number of female respondents was considered necessary in order to fulfill all criteria. Adding more male respondents was, as mentioned, not seen useful at that point.

Paper II focused on the strategic development in FOAs and the most relevant persons to talk about this issue were considered to be senior managers and chairmen of the association boards. These individuals play key roles in the strategy development processes and their personal views and opinions are also likely to influence on the organization in a significant way. Further, the FOAs' different sizes, geographical locations and type of industrial activity were reason for assuming that there could be different views between them. The aim was thus to include several FOAs in the sample in order to discover potential differences and similarities. It was also an aim to include at least two persons from the same organization. Both since there could be different perspectives within the organization, and as it could contribute to a deeper understanding of each organization's strategic processes. Finally, to include a respondent from the Federation of Swedish Family Forest Owners (LRF Skogsägarna) was seen relevant for the topic since the FOAs collaborate on certain issues through this organization. After interviewing two respondents from Norra Skogsägarna, two from Mellanskog, three from Södra and one from LRF Skogsägarna, it was judged that additional data would not add substantially to the understanding of the problem. As three out of four major FOAs were represented in the sample, these rather few interviews provided a clear picture of the organizations' current ambitions and the leaderships reasoning behind them. Adding additional respondents in any of the FOAs in the sample was neither seen motivated as the respondents expressed shared views on the topic.

In Paper IV, the objective was to study young adults' relationship to forest. In the Swedish context young adults have often been defined as individuals somewhere between 18 and 30 years old (von Essen & Jerkstrand, 2006) and this was thus set as the target interval for the sample. Additional criteria were that both genders and individuals with both rural and urban backgrounds were to be included since this may affect their previous experiences of forests. As this study used focus groups, the sampling process was affected by the considerations made regarding the size of the groups and number of groups. Bloor et al. (2001) has argued that number of groups should be kept to a minimum as recruitment, transcription and analysis processes are labour intensive. Various group sizes have been advocated and their benefits and disadvantages with both small and large groups. As participants were to look at photographs and make selections during the focus group sessions, it was considered important that each participant would have enough time for this and the following discussion. Considerations were also taken to the possibility that some of the respondents would not show up at the scheduled meeting. The aim in the sampling process was therefore to recruit 5 to 8 individuals per group.

A challenge in the selection process was to get access to respondents as no list of suitable candidates was readily available. There was neither any possibility to offer participants remuneration for their participation which decreased the likelihood that magazine advertisement would be successful. Therefore, the recruitment strategy used was to contact individuals and organizations who could help us out with finding potential candidates in their networks. An invitation from a teacher, in Umeå, to present the study to her students resulted in five groups of volunteering students. Local contacts in other municipalities also managed to recruit enough candidates in order to create groups in Boden, Vilhelmina, Norsjö and Örnsköldsvik. The selection of respondents was also made through snowball sampling as some of the respondents were able to bring a friend or colleague to the focus group session. A risk with this kind of sampling procedure is that the diversity of the groups may be limited (Ritchie & Lewis, 2011). Considering that 40% of the participants had urban backgrounds, that the gender distribution was 19 males (39 %) and 30 females (61 %), with an average age of 21 years, our selection criteria can be regarded to have been acceptably fulfilled. The snowball sampling was also often beneficial for the diversity in the groups. However, despite of this there are several limitations with the sample used. First, the geographical spread was rather narrow since most groups were conducted in the county of Västerbotten. Second, the respondents were recruited in specific networks and although the snowball sampling extended the networks to some extent it is very uncertain to what extent our sample is representative for young

adults in general. For example, very few of the participants had foreign backgrounds. Further, the specific topic may have interested certain groups of people with a special interest in the topic. Finally, a limitation in the sampling was also the lack of control over the group compositions.

4.2.2 Conducting the interviews and focus groups

The interviews for Papers I and II were prepared and conducted in similar ways and will therefore be discussed jointly. Before the meetings, interview guides with open ended question were developed based on the literature used and the existing knowledge about the organizational context that was to be studied. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted as face-to-face meetings, as this was considered to offer better possibilities to facilitate the meeting and thereby achieve a better conversation with the respondent (Ritchie & Lewis, 2011). With council members the meetings took place in the respondent's home or workplace, and with managers and chairmen meetings were located at the organization's head office, except for one case that took place at the respondent's workplace.

The focus group sessions with the student groups were conducted as part of their education program and took therefore place at their school. A benefit with this approach was that it was convenient for the respondents to participate. For the focus groups in other municipalities meeting facilities in central locations were arranged. At arrival to the meeting respondents were first asked to fill in a questionnaire covering their personal background, forest ownership, and a couple of questions related to the topics that were to be discussed. This procedure was the same in all groups. In this way, time was more efficiently used, the respondent's had something to do while waiting for other participants to arrive, and their answers were not affected by the group discussions (Bloor et al., 2001). Three main questions were discussed (see section 5.4) and before entering the discussions the participants were asked to look at a set of 49 photographic images and select those three that were most representative for their views or experiences. They also had the possibility to choose a wild card if the image they were looking for could not be found. This tool, called Forest Story Cards, was originally developed by Smith (2010) and for this study it was modified to fit the Swedish context as all original images were not considered representative (see methods section in Paper IV for details on this process).

Both interviews and focus groups were recorded with a digital voice recorder.

4.2.3 Analysis

An important decision in the analysis process was how to transcribe the recorded interviews. As Pointdexter (2002) has shown, different detail levels in the transcripts enables different interpretations of the respondent's story. The decision was to transcribe the material as rough-transcripts; not indicating changes in tone of voice, utterances, or similar as this was considered adequate for a content driven analysis of the data. Thus, the analysis process focused on the interpretation of content and meaning, rather than language and structure, in the respondents' stories (Ritchie & Lewis, 2011). Thematic structuring of the data was performed in all three cases.

In Paper I, the structuring of the interview data was done in accordance with the three constituents of the reproductive perspective on membership (presented in section 3.3) that had been in focus during the interviews. A theoretically driven analysis was then performed where empirical findings were evaluated by comparing them against a model that combined theories on volunteerism with the reproductive perspective (see Figure 2 in Paper I). In Paper II, commonly occurring themes were identified by reading and comparing the interview transcripts. In Paper IV, the data and the photographic images chosen by respondents were structured under each of the three questions that had been focused on in the discussions. Previous use of the Forest Story Cards has indicated that individuals who have many things in common also tend to give similar responses when using the pictures, which Smith (2010) argued was a sign of the tools credibility and reliability. In the study reported in Paper IV, the analysis of the respondents' choices revealed that the five most frequently chosen pictures for each question had, respectively, collected 40.1 % (childhood), 26.5% (present views) and 35.4 % (future hopes) of all choices made. As the choices were rather concentrated (especially for childhood and future) it was judged that presenting the most frequently chosen pictures was the most objective way to fairly present the respondents' views. A weakness in this approach is that it does not take into account the distribution of choices between groups. A considered alternative was therefore to disregard how often the picture had been chosen and only focus on the identified themes in the discussion. In other words, a picture that had been chosen by only one respondent for representing recreational activities (which was a commonly discussed theme) could then have been presented in order to show the diversity of pictures connected to this particular theme. However, the risk of selection bias and misrepresentation was judged to be higher in such an approach.

Descriptive quotes have frequently been used to enable the reader to take part of the respondents' own voices. However, as all interviews were

conducted in Swedish and reporting has been done in English the quotes have been translated by the author(s). Caution has been taken to not change the meaning of the respondents' quotes. The respondents were not offered to read the interview transcript or the quotes that later were used. According to Bryman & Bell (2005) it has been questioned to what extent respondents are able to validate an analysis that primarily is targeting an academic audience. Further, there is also a risk that respondents want to restrict the use of some data. This may especially be the case when, as in Paper II, one is dealing with organizations and people in powerful positions. However, as none of the respondents had made a request to read the transcripts, and the published material was considered to be of such nature that it would not be harmful for the respondent that it is published, it was judged that respondent validation was not to be performed.

4.3 Quantitative approach

In Paper III, a quantitative approach was taken to investigate forest owners' commitment to service providers and the effects FOA membership have on loyalty. Data was collected through a survey among forest owners who in 2011 had notified the Swedish Forest Agency about an intended regeneration felling. To assure that the forest owner had been in a service relationship with a forest company (including FOAs), the sample was restricted to those notifications that had been filed by a company representative on behalf of a forest owner. With this restriction, a random sample was picked by the Swedish Forest Agency and a questionnaire consisting of 60 items was sent out to 973 forest owners in November 2012. The data collection ended in January 2013 and after removal of incomplete cases the final data set analyzed in the study consisted of 390 cases, a response rate of 38 %. Male owners responded more frequently than female owners, and elder owners (65+) responded more frequently than owners in the ages 30-49. A limitation in the data was also that information about property size was missing.

The questions asked about commitment, loyalty and satisfaction were adapted from previous works of Han et al. (2008), Price & Arnould (1999) and Parasuraman et al. (1988). A benefit with using previously used questions is that they already have been tested by others and that the results thereby can be compared with previous studies (Bryman & Bell, 2005). However, all variables that had been used in previous works to measure each construct were not included in the questionnaire as it was considered that more statements could affect the response rate negatively. Consequently, this affected the analysis

process. For example, it complicated the use of structural equation modeling and it was thus decided that generalized linear models were to be used for analyzing the data. Further, as the statements were translated into Swedish there is a possibility that the respondents due to wording or context may have interpreted them differently than if they had been used in their original form. To minimize this risk the questionnaire was discussed with colleagues and forest owners during the construction phase.

In the analysis phase constructs for commitment (affective and calculative), satisfaction, advocacy and loyalty were developed and mean scores for each respondent on these constructs was determined. The internal consistency of the variables used for the constructs was checked with Cronbach alpha coefficient and all constructs exceeded 0.7, which is regarded as minimum level for acceptable consistency.

4.4 Summary

The empirical work in this thesis was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Table 2 summarizes the project's data collection methods, study populations, respondents and period when data was collected.

Table 2. *Overview of methods used, population studied, number of respondents, and period when data was collected.*

| Data collection method | Study population | Respondents | Period of data collection |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Interviews (Paper I) | SBO council members in Norra Skogsägarna | 15 | August, 2011 |
| Interviews (Paper II) | FOAs in Sweden | 8 | May-July, 2014 |
| Survey (Paper III) | Forest owners in Sweden | 390 (analyzed cases) | November 2012- January 2013 |
| Focus Groups (Paper IV) | Youths in Northern Sweden | 9 groups / 49 individuals | January-February, 2014 |

5 Summary of Papers

This chapter summarizes the four studies this thesis is based on, reported in Papers I-IV.

5.1 District council members and the importance of member involvement in organization renewal processes in Swedish forest owners' associations (Paper I)

FOAs have started to reconsider their organizational structures and service offers in order to meet the future challenges posed by a changing member cadre. However, the development of a member organization is highly dependent on the beliefs and actions of its current members (as presented in section 3.3). The objective of the study reported in Paper I was therefore to examine the organization renewal process in a FOA and the role of district (SBO) council members in this process. Specific questions addressed for this purpose were as follows. Who are council members? Why have they volunteered? What are their motivations? How is member involvement in the organization stimulated, and what possibilities do they have to influence the democratic organizational steering process? Fifteen of Norra Skogsägarna's SBO council members were interviewed to answer these questions.

The results showed that the council members were predominantly resident forest owners who were actively managing their own forests and regarded economic issues as highly important. They mentioned diverse motives for volunteering (e.g. access to information, a possibility to influence or feelings of wellbeing by helping other members). Several of their fathers had previously been association members and involved in the council, thus some described the position as an inheritance. However, an important reason for volunteering was that they had been asked to by the election committee as none of the respondents said that they had actively strived to get a position in the council.

Thus, the election committees' role in the renewal process was found to be very important, but quite passive, as they usually recommended re-election of current council members without considering alternative candidates. The renewal of a district council can thus be rather slow. However, the respondents said the election committee for the association's board evaluated the board's work more thoroughly every year.

The organizational identity among council members was found to be very strong, and core attributes linked to the association were honesty, transparent pricing and sustainable forest management. The council members described their own role in the organization as transmitters of information between members, the board and the management. However, since members rarely contacted them the paper questioned the extent to which they actually fulfill this role. The council members' role in recruiting new members was also found to be limited as many of the contacts between the organization and forest owners were made by the forest inspectors.

Regarding the members' possibilities to exert influence the study showed that council members were generally satisfied with current possibilities, although they said that it takes a lot time and hard work to accomplish any major changes. They also expressed a strong belief that the association's board and management always have members' interests at heart in their decision-making. The introduction of chairmen's conferences was said to have increased the legitimacy of the decision-making process as it has improved the dialogue between the districts and central management. It was seen today as one of the most important forums for strategic processes, in some cases more important than the association's annual general meeting. However, due to the hierarchical flow of information that was described, a concern raised in the paper was that limited amounts of information regarding internal affairs are likely to reach the grass-roots members.

The paper shows that in order to facilitate increases in member involvement the association may need to identify and implement new ways to communicate with members and build stronger relationships based on grounds other than solely business transactions. The council members also need to take a more active role in order to prevent the association from becoming exclusively managerially driven. Further, the association's organizational structure was questioned as the growing number of non-resident members will face difficulties in participating and influencing the democratic process. Finally, the election committees were encouraged to become more active and widen their pool of candidates in order to increase the councils' representativeness of the membership.

5.2 How are Swedish forest owners' associations adapting to the needs of current and future members and their organizations? (Paper II)

Paper II focused on the strategic development of FOAs. Like other cooperatives, a primary goal of FOAs should be to meet their members' needs through the activities and services they provide. Consequently, when structural changes in the organization's environment alter members' needs a major challenge will be to identify and adapt to these new needs. However, the relationship between members and the organization may change in such a process, in addition to the organization's activities and business offers. As already mentioned, there have been general increases in professionalization and rationalization in member organizations and their work, which have weakened the mutual dependency relationship that has traditionally been a core element of membership. Instead members' role has often been reduced to that of customers or supporters through reductions in the expectations and needs of their involvement in the organization's governance processes or in funding of the organization. Within the agricultural sector such changes have often been connected to industrialization processes, when increases in complexity of business operations often lead to increases in managerial control and corporatization of the cooperatives. The study presented in Paper II examined how the FOAs' strategies are adapting to fit identified needs of current and future members, and assess how adaptation is affecting the organizations' profile and relationship with members.

The analyzed data consisted of seven interviews with senior managers and board members of the associations Södra, Mellanskog and Norra Skogsägarna, plus a representative of LRF Skogsägarna. The results showed that associations had identified an increasing need among their members for services, as they are often less familiar with forestry today than members have traditionally been. Thus, these members often need assistance and education in order to set up management plans and practically manage their forest ownership. Hence, several associations have introduced new types of economic and advisory types of services, which respondents described as a transition from a one-size-fits-all towards a one-stop-shop business model. In other words, they wanted the ability to offer each member a more customized solution matching his or her personal needs and life situation. Through the advisory services the association also saw potential to sell more management services.

Due to the decreasing knowledge of forestry among members the associations were experiencing increasing demands for education activities and had made efforts to develop their education services. For example, one association had established its own "school", offering A-, B- and C-level

courses to meet needs of members with varying levels of experience. Similar ideas were also found in other associations. From the organizations' perspective, offering education programs was also interesting as they have proven to be efficient tools for influencing members' management objectives.

The study also showed that the organizations consider themselves to have an increasingly important role as protectors of members' forest ownership rights as pressure from media, politicians and environmental NGOs for stricter management regulations were seen to be threatening the current management model and could potentially increase members' costs. However, a concern was that few members understand the value of this service as much of the work has low visibility, and does not exclusively benefit members.

Finally, concerning organizational development, the study showed that restructuring of the member organization and its activities may lead to fewer members being involved in the organizations' governance process in the future. Indeed, numbers of both districts and delegates entitled to participate in the annual general meeting have already decreased in some cases. This trend was expected to continue as a consequence of the organizations' efforts to simplify and reduce costs of the democratic process. Tendencies towards professionalization of the work done by members' representatives were also identified, and ideas that SBOs needed to become more professional, in the sense that their planning and execution of activities may need to become more structured and uniform.

The study concludes that from the managerial perspective the organizations' dependency on members' timber deliveries to its industrial sites is one of the most important drivers of current strategy developments. One of its future challenges will be to uphold the mutual dependency relationship between members and the organizations, and the strategy for accomplishing this seems to rest on aligning members' ownership objectives and interests with those of the organization through service delivery. Whether the services are effective tools for achieving this goal remains to be seen.

5.3 Family forest owners' commitment to service providers and the effect of association membership on loyalty (Paper III)

As competition for timber is increasing it is becoming increasingly important for the forest industry to establish long-term relationships with family forest owners who are willing to supply timber to them. To meet these objectives more knowledge about what forest owners value in their business relationships is required. Thus, the study presented in Paper III aimed to develop better

understanding of forest owners' commitment to their service providers and its effects on loyalty. The effects of FOA membership on loyalty was also examined.

Survey data consisting of 390 cases was analyzed and results showed that forest owners' customer satisfaction and affiliation had a positive effect on forest owners' affective commitment with their service provider. Further, FOA members who had dealt with the FOA also expressed significantly higher affective commitment to their service providers than non-members and members who had dealt with another organization. Customer satisfaction (but not FOA membership) was also found to have a positive effect on forest owners' calculative commitment. Calculative and affective commitment were found to be positively correlated ($r^2=0.68$). Support was also found for the hypotheses that: forest owners' calculative commitment and affective commitment would have a positive effect on their willingness to recommend the service provider to their peers; that both calculative commitment and affective commitment are positively associated with forest owners' loyalty to service providers; and that members who are dealing with their organization express higher levels of loyalty towards their service provider than other forest owners. However, members were not found to be significantly more willing to advocate their business partner to other forest owners. Previous studies have found that age and gender may affect the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty. No such relationship was found in this study, but this may be at least partly due to most of the respondents being elder, male forest owners.

The study supports earlier research findings that loyalty is mediated by commitment and that affective commitment is a stronger mediator than calculative commitment. The findings also endorse associations to invest in well-functioning member democracy processes, as earlier studies have shown that this may contribute to the development of members' commitment with the organization (Gruen et al. 2000; Österberg and Nilsson, 2009).

5.4 Elucidation of young adults' relationships to forests in northern Sweden using Forest Story Cards (Paper IV)

Where we live and what we do as children have well established effects on the values we develop and carry into adulthood (cf. Theodori et al., 1998; Inglehart, 2000; Lohr & Pearson-Mims, 2005; Halder et al., 2011). Therefore, the next major value change within forestry is expected to occur when the large post-war generations born in the 1940s hand over their ownership to younger generations who have been raised under very different circumstances

(Karppinen & Ahlberg, 2008). Thus, the aim of the study reported in Paper IV was to explore current young adults' experiences and attitudes to forests and forestry to increase understanding of their relationship with forests and the development of their forest-related values. Three main questions were explored:

- How do young Swedish adults perceive their childhood relationships with forests?
- What perceptions and thoughts about forests and forestry do they have today?
- What hopes and intentions do they have regarding forests in the future?

Data from nine focus group sessions were analyzed for this purpose. The study revealed that during early childhood years both family members and school had been intimately connected to the youths' experiences of forests, through introducing them to recreational activities such as fishing, berry-picking, hunting and hiking. Forests had also been used as playgrounds and for educational purposes during biology and sports lessons. However, forests had featured more in early than in later stages of their education. There were scant references to participation in activities arranged by associations or professional organizations, except for a group called "Skogsmulle" that organizes activities in forests for 5-7 year olds. The participants had rarely helped their parents with forest work activities during their childhood, although a few had experience of planting and some had piled up firewood at home.

The young adults' thoughts about forests today were in many ways connected to money, and for many respondents the links had become clearer as they had grown older. They had also become particularly evident in connection to certain family events, such as parents' divorces, inheritance processes or planning to buy a property including forest. They also noted that when forest-related issues are discussed, such as forest damage, it is usually from an economic rather than environmental perspective. Pictures of harvesters, wind turbines and timber piles were also discussed in relation to money. However, some differences were identified between student groups in Umeå and the other groups as the students generally had more negative attitudes towards modern forest operations. The students also questioned the wisdom of expanding the city by replacing forest areas with houses rather than building on existing non-forested areas. In addition, they had stronger beliefs about politicians' and governments' responsibility to protect forests while those with a little more familiar with forestry had greater faith in forest owners' ability to manage their forest responsibly without stronger legal restrictions.

The study further showed that the young adults seldom discuss forest issues, and on the rare occasions when they do, it is usually at home with parents or at school/workplace. Very few had ever been in contact with professionals or politicians regarding forest issues. Most also described themselves as passive consumers of forest-related news rather than active followers of, or participants in, public forest debates.

When discussing the future family and environmental issues dominated, and a respondent's reflection that "*I want to have it like it is*" captured much of their thoughts about the future. The respondents often looked back on their own childhood and hoped that their own children would have the chance to experience forests in the same way that they had done. Many students perceived more nature reserves to be a good solution to save forests for this purpose. Other groups viewed nature reserves with some skepticism as they thought active forest management was necessary for several reasons. Wind turbines were also frequently discussed, partly as environmentally friendly energy sources that could provide job opportunities for the rural areas, and partly as a sign of increasing exploitation of forest areas in northern Sweden. Finally, the respondents had difficulties in discussing thoughts about their own future as potential forest owners, frequently due to limited knowledge about implications of being a forest owner and the prospect being so far ahead that they had never considered the issues.

6 Discussion

The four studies underlying this thesis examined some of the key processes that are shaping FOAs' future membership from different perspectives, using different approaches and methods. A core concept throughout the project has been that FOAs are members' organizations. That is, they are there to meet the members' functional needs, and the members are responsible for the organizations' future development through their interactions. This section discusses the main findings from each study and highlights critical elements that are likely to affect the organization's relationships with members.

A critical element in the member organizations' future work is how to include "non-traditional" groups of members in their internal work and democratic governance processes. Paper I showed that renewal in SBO councils is a slow process in which the highly influential election committees were found to be reluctant to actively recommend changes in council members, if not forced to do so by resignations. A consequent risk, as characteristics of general members are changing, is that councils may increasingly fail to represent all members, particularly as they often seem to select recruits from a narrow group of members, and positions are often "inherited". These features seem neither to be unique for the FOA considered in Paper I, as similar recruitment patterns have also been observed in other FOAs (Einarsson & Wijkström, 2015) and farmers' cooperatives (Hakelius, 2004). From the reproductive perspective such a recruitment strategy has justifications, since it makes changes smoother (Stryjan, 1987). However, it makes it considerably harder to uphold the user-control principle that should be maintained in cooperative organizations (Nilsson & Björklund, 2003). This is because favoring a specific group in the recruitment of representatives to councils and to other governing bodies is likely to restrict inputs from other user groups. The current situation thus risks exacerbating an increasing mismatch between members' needs and service offers due to a lack of input from many members.

Increasing gaps between organizations and their members may also erode members' pride in being part of them (Nilsson et al. 2012), which Paper III showed to be highly important for securing loyalty. It may also contribute to the "us versus them" feeling that already seem to exist among some FOA members (Lidestav & Arvidsson, 2012). Further, Hakelius (2004) has argued that it may contribute to reductions in younger members' interest in a cooperative and participation in its democratic processes due to distrust of the organization's governance and lack of faith in their possibilities to exert influence. The distribution of benefits may thus come to favor certain groups who have strong voices in the decision-making process.

Thus, to uphold the user-control principle, Paper I strongly emphasizes that the local election committees should become more active and value other types of competencies than they seem to have done so far. This also applies for the organizations' management and leadership as Paper II showed that traditional forestry knowledge is still considered to be one of the most important resources member representatives should possess in order to have something to offer other members. Otherwise in the long run they may face even greater recruitment challenges as the pool of potential candidates dwindles. The increasing share of non-resident members may pose further challenges for many election committees, especially if the members' democratic rights are attached to the SBO where their forest is located rather than their place of residency, as in the organization considered in Paper I. Participation in council meetings, annual meetings and regular contact with the members that they would be representing may thus be problematic for non-residents. This of course applies to all members, not only council members and their recruitment. A possible way to address such problems, adopted by some FOAs, is to offer members the option to exercise their full democratic rights in the SBO where they live or the one where their forest is located.

Based on the above discussion and the findings presented in Paper II, a more provocative question that could be raised in the organizations is whether the SBO has become an outdated institution after 50+ years of service? For example, the work that was initially coordinated within SBOs is often now handled through other operative structures within the business organization. Furthermore, although council members perceived that they had an important role to play as transmitters of information between members and the board, another important aspect of the user-control principle (Nilsson 1991), the previous study (Paper I) found little support for this perception, as many of them were rarely in contact with members about issues concerning the FOA. Much of the responsibility for member recruitment had also been delegated to the operative staff. In accordance with findings by Einarsson & Wijkström

(2015), members often seem to take concerns directly to the board or other officials now, rather than contacting their local council representatives. This is partly because they think this approach increases chances of putting specific issues on the organization's agenda and obtaining desired outcome. Findings presented in Paper II also suggest that the decline in numbers of SBOs, previously shown by Norlin (2012), may continue. Thus the perception of council representatives (and both the board and management) that they still have a vital role to play is to some extent questionable. Based on these findings, there are clear oligarchic tendencies and a risk that member representation in the organization will become even narrower, and in this respect the FOAs are currently following similar rationalization trends to those described by Papakostas (2011). Thus, if they still find the SBO structure suitable and important for their future organizational structure, further efforts should be made to strengthen the relationship between council representatives and the members they are supposed to represent. Otherwise the previously recorded distrust between members and leaders (Lidestav & Arvidsson, 2012) is likely to increase. As Berlin (2006) and Lidestav & Arvidsson (2012) have already argued, Paper I (and indirectly Paper III) stress the importance of improving communication and increasing awareness of the kinds of organizational attributes and values they want to transmit to members.

Another critical element for the organizations is to uphold the user-benefit principle, stating that cooperatives exist in order to satisfy members' functional needs (Nilsson, 1991; Michelsen, 1994), as the members' needs are changing. Paper II showed that FOAs have been quite intensively addressing this issue recently, and that three focal needs were to widen the available service offers, improve education activities, and strengthen their political voice. Any major reluctance to accept and meet forest owners' changing service demands, as was argued by Mattila & Roos (2014) to have been the case among forest service organization, could thus not be identified among the studied FOAs. The development of new service offers seems to be important as both Lidestav & Arvidsson (2012) and Matilla et al. (2013) found a mismatch between existing needs and those currently offered in the market. Many of the new services are targeting the increasing groups of members who have little familiarity with forestry and thus need more support than previous members in their forest management and addressing ownership issues. This also seems to be a good decision with regards to needs expressed by young adults as recorded in Paper IV. However, as the development and implementation of the new services was still in an early phase at the time of the study, it remains to be seen if they are successful in their efforts.

Further, Paper II identified some similarities with the commodification of membership described by Hvenmark (2008), as well as the forest owners' increasing role as customers of services. The economic focus of the new services also stresses clear calculative elements of the member relationship. These trends were also strongly reflected in a respondent's picture of the future FOA as a one-stop-shop, where you can find what you need in one place. As with other shops, the offers should thus always be loaded with values that will attract members to use them. However, important in the service development will be to ensure that services not only target calculative aspects. This is because if members are treated merely like customer, they are also likely to behave as such (Einarsson & Hvenmark, 2012) and this may negatively affect their willingness to be involved in the organization's democratic processes and work for the collective's greater good (Hakelius, 1996; 2004). Thus, the services should also target other membership dimensions. As Paper III showed that forest owners' frequent use of the organization's services is positively related with affective commitment, the establishment of more regular contacts between the organization and members through the service relationship may be beneficial. Especially if larger proportions of future members decide to harvest less frequently, as forest owners who are less focused on production-oriented values now tend to do (Favada et al. 2007).

The FOA's role as a political actor is another aspect that leaders considered important for the future. However, communicating such efforts to members and convincing them of its value is problematic. Furthermore, due to its nature it is also easy for non-members to free ride on the work. The political service may thus make limited contributions to upholding the user-benefit principle. Previously discussed issues associated with breadth of representation are also relevant in this context. As long as one dominant group is involved in decision-making and governance processes, the problem formulations and actions will also be determined by their and the managements' shared frame of reference, especially since much of FOAs' political work is done by specialists. Thus, without good anchoring of the political program many FOA members are likely to be reduced to consumers of politics, as noted in many other political organizations (Papakostas, 2011).

A widely expressed view by FOAs' board members and senior managers is that it is important to invest in education (Paper II), a core function of traditional cooperatives (ICA, 2015). This may be a viable approach considering that many young adults in Paper IV expressed that they had limited experience and knowledge about forestry. Further, an advantage of education services is that they at the same time they can target several of the membership dimensions described by Einarsson (2008). First, education is not offered by

many other competitors in the market and calculative relationships may thus be developed with members interested in learning more. Second, the findings suggest that education services have been successfully used to communicate the organizations' values to forest owners. For example, after courses they have been found to be more interested in increasing their timber production. However, whether or not the education has also strengthened the members' cooperative values and identification with the organization was not answered by the study. Further, the education may also offer occasions for the members to meet each other and the employees, thus offering possibilities to develop social relationships between them. Finally, education could also contribute to increased understanding of the organization and its business, thereby strengthening the members' sense of ownership.

Findings presented in Paper III confirm that the organizations can benefit from strengthening the personal ties between their staff and members, as members' loyalty to the organizations proved to be more strongly linked to their affective commitment than their calculative commitment. This implies that factors like members' identification with the FOA, solidarity with its personnel, and pride in being a user of its services are more likely to strengthen the relationship than the products and economic benefits offered by the FOA. Thus, these findings confirm that there is value for the FOAs in improving communication of their core cooperative values to members, possibly at least partly because most forest organizations nowadays offer forest owners full-service packages (Mattila et al., 2013) and timber prices offered by different procurers are generally fairly similar. The results further suggest that the members' monetary investments in the FOA do not lead to higher calculative commitment. Considering that the members' value should be connected to their use of service and not their investment, this finding is in line with the user-benefit principle (Nilsson, 1991).

For the FOAs, a critical finding in Paper III was that loyal members did not show higher propensity to give feedback or recommend the FOA's service to other people than users of other forest organizations' services. In other words, the members are not more likely to act as ambassadors of their service partner than others, although it is "their" organization. Earlier findings by Lacey & Morgan (2009) regarding the effects of business-to-business loyalty program membership on advocacy may offer some explanation to these results. According to the cited authors, members' propensity to advocate the firm is often limited if they feel that the decision to become members is determined by the organization, or if all eligible customers are automatically enrolled to the loyalty program. Contrary, if the members feel that they actively have taken the initiative to become a member they will also be more likely to advocate the

organization. The former may apply for FOA membership as forest owners often become members in connection to a timber deal with the organization (which was why council members rarely were engaged in recruitment). Membership could thus to some extent be perceived as part of the timber deal, as it may offer them better economical terms. Thus, the relationship may be relatively weak if membership is solely based on calculative foundation. It is therefore highly important for the FOA to improve communication with new members, introduce them to the member organization, and thereby increase the likelihood that stronger relationships may develop. An issue addressed in Paper I.

Further, that members' who had traded with the FOA did not show higher propensity to give feedback than other groups is consistent with council members' observations that they were rarely contacted by members (Paper I). Earlier studies suggest that willingness to provide feedback to the service provider depends on how the feedback is expected to be given and what the organization will use the feedback for (Liu & Mattila, 2015). Thus, FOAs' should critically evaluate, and amend, how they communicate members' possibilities to provide feedback after using their services.

The findings presented in Paper IV suggest that the FOAs' notion that members' familiarity with forestry is decreasing (revealed in Paper II) is correct. The study showed that young Swedish adults generally have positive views of forests and enjoy using them for recreational purposes. However, some groups were slightly skeptical towards the forest industry. Most of the respondents had limited experience of forestry operations and forest ownership issues in their daily life. Forest issues were found to be rarely discussed with parents and, especially, outside the home environment. Thus, the respondents generally had limited knowledge of how forest owned by parents or other relatives was managed, or their forest-related objectives. The study also indicated that parents have low expectations of their children engaging in these types of issues. Hence, the young adults found it difficult to tell what forest ownership would imply for them and many were not prepared to discuss their feelings about their own prospective future as forest owners.

Thus, the FOAs should consider ways to reach out to young people at early stages and prepare them for a future life as forest owners and members of their organizations. As shown in Paper IV, the young adults were often interested in engaging in forest activities, and many of them considered it important to gain more knowledge in order to uphold the family traditions as forest owners and users. The respondents also said their motivation to go into the forest was higher when they had a purpose to do so, hence the FOAs could find it beneficial to target more forest and education activities towards this group

rather than solely to current members. Another viable approach for the FOAs would be to encourage and support their current members in various ways to engage in discussions about forest ownership issues at home with their children. Such efforts could be linked, for example, to some of the new services described in Paper II, and would be potentially important because children's introduction to forestry roles will affect their subsequent willingness to take over forest ownership (Malmqvist, 2010). For the FOAs, a more proactive approach to this issue would also provide early opportunities to start building the future generations' commitment and identification with the organizations.

In conclusion, this thesis and the underlying studies have shown that some of the main challenges faced by FOAs are connected to their democratic governance processes. To strengthen these processes, both their organizational structures and recruitment of members to governing bodies need to be reconsidered. Communication strategies should further focus on core values rather than calculative dimensions of membership as this may both increase members' loyalty and interest in involvement in the organizations' future development processes.

6.1 Future work

Research on future forest owners is scarce and therefore this project made an effort to add new knowledge to the field by elucidating young Swedish adults' relationships to forests, and shed light on what type of attitudes and experiences they will bring with them into their future roles as forest owners and decision-makers. However, due to the limited sample and narrow geographical focus of the investigation, more studies are needed in order to get a broader picture of how youths in general relate to forest. Conducting the focus groups with more structured groups could also enable deeper understanding of how different sub-groups among youths relate differently. Using the Forest Story Cards in more densely populated areas would probably reveal different experiences, ideas and opinions about forests and forestry than they did in this part of the country, where forestry operations is a common view along the roads. Combined with interviews with their parents a deeper understanding of the influence different parenting practices have had on the youths' attitudes could also potentially be identified.

A limitation of the study presented in Paper II is that it only reveals the managerial view on members' changing needs and how the FOAs are to meet these changes. More efforts are therefore needed to understand how the FOAs

transition towards a more service-oriented and customized approach will affect the members' perception of the organization and how it will change their perceived value of FOA membership. Interviews at the operative level, with forest officers and forest owners who are in a service relationship, could also contribute to our understanding of how different kinds of relationship affect the forest owners' commitment with the organization.

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