

Comparative analysis of patterns in farm succession in Austria and Japan from a gender perspective

Eine vergleichende Analyse der Hofnachfolge in Österreich und Japan aus Geschlechterperspektive

Yukiko OTOMO and Theresia OEDL-WIESER

Summary

Both Austria and Japan have a small-scaled agricultural structure and a high share of farms managed part-time. Family farming is the predominant form of agricultural production. Until recently the family farm was handed over in patri-linear tradition from father to son. Nowadays this patriarchal system of farm succession has become fragile for a range of reasons. This paper analyses the effects of the patri-linear farm succession on the position of women in agriculture. The focus is on current changes and on a comparison between the two countries. While in Austria in recent years more women are entering the management of farms and in many regions daughters are increasingly becoming farm successors, in Japan the patriarchal farm succession pattern is still in place.

Keywords: farm succession, gender inequality, life course

Zusammenfassung

Sowohl Österreich als auch Japan weisen eine kleinstrukturierte Landwirtschaft mit einem hohen Anteil an Nebenerwerbsbetrieben auf. Die Betriebe werden überwiegend von bäuerlichen Familien bewirtschaftet. War bis in jüngster Zeit in beiden Ländern die patri-lineare Hofübergabe, also die Übergabe vom Vater auf den Sohn, vorherrschend, so zeigen sich zusehends Veränderungen dieser patriarchalen Praxis.

In diesem Beitrag sollen die Auswirkungen der patri-linearen Übergabepaxis in der Landwirtschaft auf die Stellung der Frauen im Agrarbereich sowie deren Veränderungen analysiert werden. Auch wird die Übergabepaxis in den beiden Ländern aus Geschlechterperspektive verglichen. Während in Österreich in den letzten Jahren die Zahl der Betriebsleiterinnen auf landwirtschaftlichen Betrieben zunimmt und in manchen Regionen Töchter vermehrt die Höfe übernehmen, bleibt in Japan das patriarchale Hofübergabemuster aufrecht.

Schlagworte: Hofnachfolge, Geschlechterungleichheit, Lebenszyklen

1. Introduction

Austria and Japan are highly developed countries with a small percentage of persons employed in agriculture (Austria 5.1%, Japan 4.8%) and a low share of agriculture in the gross value added (Austria 1.7%, Japan 1.2%). The agricultural structure is small scaled (Austria 18.8 ha, Japan 1.36 ha) and the share of part-time farming and pluri-active farm families is very high. Despite these figures agriculture still plays an important role. In Austria, mountain farming has a key role in safeguarding the sensitive ecosystem, the multifunctional landscape and the general living and working space. In Japan, paddy fields, farms and rural communities have also multiple roles in human life, such as preservation of the natural environment, food security, cultural heritage. The external effects of agriculture are important factors for the regional economies in both countries. Economic and social changes have influenced the situation of family farms in the last decades, such as declining incomes in agriculture, higher educational level, job opportunities outside the farms, commuting to (regional) centres. According to these options it becomes more difficult to recruit successors for family farms in rural areas because farming is losing its attractiveness for young people. In both countries farm succession was following for a long time patri-linear patterns which are becoming more fragile.

A comparative study on farm succession in Austria and Northern Germany indicated that Austrian farmers have distinct traditional attitudes in farming which are likely for disadvantaged areas (GLAUBEN et al., 2004). These findings are useful for interpreting Japanese farm-family succession because Japanese farming families also have

traditional and institutional tendencies in their family life and farm management. In this paper the farm succession processes and patterns in Austria and Japan will be analysed and compared from a gender-sensitive perspective. It will reveal if, and how, they are deviating from patriarchal institutions.

2. Methods

To analyse the traditional patriarchal farm succession patterns in Austria and Japan and current changes, a multilevel research design was chosen. To explore the life course selection of family members and the designation of the farm successor, the 'life course approach' was applied. This approach is based on a concept of human development which considers individuals developing throughout their lives (MORIOKA, 1982). Therefore in-depth-interviews with farm families in Austria and Japan were conducted. The interview partners in Austria (Burgenland, Lower Austria and Salzburg) were identified by snowball sampling and represent the variety of farm types (wine, grain, dairy, livestock and holiday apartments). The interviews in Japan were carried out with farm families who are executing the "Family Management Agreement," which represents a working and living "contract" among the farm family members (orchards, flowers, horticulture, tea leaves, lotus root and grain). Furthermore expert interviews with farm succession experts of the Chambers of Agriculture in the Austrian provinces were carried out [E1 - E9]. The main questions were (i) changes in the sex of the farm successor, (ii) changes in the contents of "farm transfer contracts", (iii) arrangements concerning households of the old and young generation. In analysing and comparing the results of the different surveys, the status quo, changes and challenges of farm succession will be identified under a gender-sensitive perspective.

3. Farm succession in Austria

In 2005 39% of the Austrian farmers are full-time farmers and 56% are part-time farmers (ÖSTAT 2006, 27). The life approaches of farm family members and the shaping of the CAP are decisive factors in this process. Vogel (2007) has reported that full-time farmers have higher rates of identified successors than part-time farmers. One remarkable

characteristic of the Austrian agriculture is the high percentage of women managing farms (30%) and more than 50% female family members working on the farms. The increasing number of female farm managers is due, to some extent, to social insurance law and subsidy considerations. However, these figures reflect the real working relations on Austrian farms and make women's work more visible (OEDL-WIESER, 2006). The legal status of the farm manager does not automatically mean that the female farm managers also own the farm property.

3.1 Traditional farm succession patterns in Austria

On account of the topography, different kinds of agricultural settlement have been developed in the Alps (Central and Western Austria) and in the Pannonian lowland in the east. Therefore also different inheritance and succession patterns have been established (KRETSCHMER, 1980, 84). In most parts of Austria the "Anerbensitte" - was practised, which means that the whole farm property was passed over to one heir ("closed" succession of a farm). In Vorarlberg and Burgenland the "Freiteilbarkeit" or "Realteilung" was prevailing, which means, that the land was split up between the children. Within the regions where the "Anerbensitte" was practised, the successor was the eldest (Majorat) or the youngest (Minorat) son of the farm family. In most cases the eldest son was preferred (KRETSCHMER, 1980, 89). All these practises of farm succession and inheritance have in common, that the farms were transferred patri-linearly, from the father to the son, and that daughters were only succeeding the farm in exceptional cases.

In Austria the statutory succession of farms and agricultural property is rather the exception. In most cases the farm is handed over by a "farm transfer contract" which is signed by the farmer/farm couple and the heir (BÄCK, 2005, 543). The siblings have to sign a disclaimer and get their share in form of money or plots of land. With this contract the family farm is handed over through "anticipated succession". The heir has to take care of the parents through the "Ausgedinge". In times, when the old-age pension did not yet exist, the purpose of the "Ausgedinge" was to supply the parents with food, money and health care. Nowadays the living and working conditions on family farms have changed tremendously. In many cases one member of the young

farm couple - in some cases both partners - is working part-time or fulltime outside the farm and is not able and willing to fulfil the extensive commitments included in a farm transfer contract.

Farm succession is still an issue of power which includes leaving, handing over and gaining power (MELBERG, 2008). So far the patrilinear nature of farm-transfer throughout Europe has preserved the current power divisions within farm families. Farm successors still tend to be identified early and enter a long period of socialisation. Thus the successors develop a personality and attitudes to farm life and acquire basic farm skills. Parents have in most cases gender-specific expectations and boys' interest in agriculture is more strongly encouraged than girls' (ROSSIER and WYSS, 2008, 211). So it seems that farm succession is an area where relations of male dominance are reproduced through informal rules and cultural codes, despite the recent implementation of formally gender neutral laws.

3.2 Changes in farm succession patterns in Austria

The changes in agricultural structure and trends towards individualism are challenging the traditional patriarchal succession patterns. In the following the views of farm succession experts from the chambers of agriculture (E1 - E9) will be discussed. The high rate of part-time farming, a rising employment rate of women in rural areas, the pension and health care system have all contributed to reduce the role and content of the farm transfer contracts.

The typical „Farm transfer contract“ doesn't exist anymore. 30, 40 years ago they were very detailed but times and conditions on the farms have changed very massively. [E7, 5]

In the last few years the trend can be observed that „Ausgedingeleistungen“ are not anymore part of the „Farm transfer contracts. [E4]

Important changes can also be observed concerning the selection of the farm successor. In a growing number of cases the child with the biggest interest is taking over the farm, irrespective of whether it is the eldest or youngest child or whether it is a son or a daughter.

Nowadays it is not anymore compulsory, that the eldest son is the successor. The child with the strongest interest in farming is selected. And it must not be the son, increasingly the daughters are succeeding the farms. [E4, 3]

The tendency is very clear in V., that the farm goes to the child which is most interested in the farm. [E1, 1]

The co-ownership of the farm by women, which was the norm in some provinces (Upper and Lower Austria, Styria) is also changing. In general, the young farm successors share farm property rights with their wife only if she is working full-time on the farm.

In former times it was automatically that the farm wife got the half of the farm because they worked both full-time on the farm. And people said, this is the custom and this is o.k. The wife would not be happy to work all the day on the farm and have no property right. In those times divorce was not an issue on farms but nowadays it is also reality. [E2, 1]

The farm succession process is not only an economic process but also related with big emotions. In the past many conflicts on the farms were caused by two or more generations living together in one household. In the meantime the older and younger generation have in most cases separated households.

It is important to build two different households on the farm - one flat on the ground floor and one on the first floor. It is necessary so that all family members have space to withdraw. [E4, 11]

4. Farm succession patterns in Japan

4.1 Traditional stem-family system in Japan

Japan's traditional family institution, the "Ie", maintained and passed on material and spiritual family properties such as land and equipment. In modern Japan, the institution was modified as a sector dependent on the emperor and enhanced to a national ideology by the Meiji Civil Code in 1898 (KAWASHIMA, 1957). The Ie ideology, with its stem-family household structure, designated the eldest son as heir, expecting his family to live together with his parents. The successor was to assume headship and therefore the responsibility of caring for his aged parents, as his wife was expected to be a proper daughter-in-law. According to national statistical data (Comprehensive Survey of the People in Health and Welfare), living in three-generation family households was common for the elderly until 1995. The traditional patri-linear stem-family system was dominant in Japanese society until

recently. The complicated relationship between mother- and daughter-in-law has been a classic topic of family studies (SATO, 2007).

4.2 Post-war agricultural policy and family farm succession

After World War II, the current Civil Code abandoned the *Ie* institution. The inheritance system was changed from a solo-favouring to an even-favouring system. Therefore, the institutional background guaranteeing generational family-farm succession was abolished (MORIOKA et al., 1993). However, to avoid subdividing farmlands, the Agricultural Land Law was enacted in 1952 and transferring and converting the use of agricultural land was strictly controlled by the National Chamber of Agriculture. The Basic Law on Agriculture of 1961 contributed to the improvement of modernized independent farming families (SUGIOKA, 2007). Nevertheless, during the period of high economic growth from 1955 to 1973, the number of family farms decreased dramatically because of industrialization and urbanization. From 1964 onwards, the Family Farming Agreement was a characteristic measure to keep young successors involved in family farms. Although Family Agreements were father-son contracts seeking democratic family relationships and modernizing farm management, such contracts among family members did not suit the traditional farming family and fell from use, except in some rural communities (GOJO, 2003, 2f.; KAWATE, 2006, 19f.).

4.3 Gender equality and family farm succession

Amid trends such as side-business farming, aging of farmers and feminizing of the agricultural sector, the Basic Law on Agriculture was revised in 1999. In the same year, the Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society also went into effect. These new policies have been adopted because of the feminizing of the agricultural sector since around 1990. Indeed, the majority of agricultural labour has been provided by women. The ratio of females was 53.3% of the total population mainly engaged in farming in 2005 (Census of Agriculture and Forestry in Japan). In 1992, the "Goals for Rural Women in the 21st Century and Mid- to Long-term Vision for Achieving These Goals" was formulated. Following this vision, in 1995 the Family Agreement was revived as the Family Management Agreement (FMA) (GOJO, 2003, 7; KAWATE, 2006,

31). In 2007, 37,721 farm households (2.9% of the commercial farm households¹) had implemented such agreements. The FMA aims to improve the technical and management skills of farmers, as well as to achieve a partnership within farming families and to empower farming women under the gender-equal policy (NAKAMICHI, 2000). Each FMA is composed of several articles covering farm management and family life, such as ways of decision-making in farm management, working hours, remuneration for farm work, roles of farm work and housework for each family member, and parents' post-retirement life (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan). In 2003, the Japanese government introduced a system of certifying farmers to receive subsidies. If farming women sign the FMA, they can become certified farmers along with their husbands (KAWATE, 2006, 32f.).

5. Comparison of Farm Succession in Austria and Japan

Farm succession patterns in Austria and Japan were compared using the life course approach. One's life course is a chain of events dependent on age and determined by when and what events one experiences. Each life stage has a characteristic developmental task. This study compares farm successors' developmental tasks for three consecutive life stages, i.e. (i) occupational selection and educational course, (ii) family formation, and (iii) inheritance and parents' retirement (TSUTSUMI, 1999).

5.1 Occupational selection and educational course

Austrian and Japanese educational systems differ, and therefore the timing of initial engagement in vocational training and occupational selection is also different. In Austria, farm successors choose their occupation according to their own interests, guided by their parents, in their early teens. Their main educational course is as follows: after four years of primary and four years of secondary education, they take vocational training for three to five years. Thus, they choose their

¹ A commercial farm household is defined as a farming household with cultivated land of at least 30 ares, or with annual sales of agricultural products of at least 500,000 yen (Census of Agriculture and Forestry in Japan).

occupation before 14 years of age. Parents place their hopes on a child interested in farming, regardless of sex or birth order. Emotional factors in occupational selection, such as interest, give females a chance to become successors. In many Austrian regions patriarchal succession patterns have changed, and daughters are increasingly designated farm successors.

A wine producer (born 1967) has three children, a 10 year-old son and daughters 8 and 7 years old. They hope the elder daughter will succeed because she is interested in the cellar and the kitchen of the family restaurant. [A10, February 2008]

In Japan, however, students generally choose their occupation by themselves in their late teens. Following compulsory education for nine years, most go to upper secondary school, i.e. high school, and currently half enter college. Education received in agricultural high schools is insufficient for managing profitable farms at present. After graduating from high school, many farm successors go through vocational training at an agricultural college for two or four years or a farmer's academy administered by the local government for two years. In 1968 a national farmer's academy was founded to provide special training for elite young farmers. In 38 years there have been only 36 females among the 1,238 graduates. Female successors usually have no brothers (J4, J13). Conventional factors play an initial role in the occupational selection of farm successors in Japan. However, the number of brotherless daughters is increasing because of the declining birth rate, making farm succession insecure.

5.2 Family formation

In Japan, marriage is common and children usually are born between legally married parents. On the other hand, in Austria, children may often be born to an unmarried couple. The child of a single mother receives medical and social insurance from the government. It is not unusual that the order of life events is childbirth, marriage and co-habitation (A6, A8).

A wife (born 1969) is from a neighbouring town. While living with her parents, she gave birth to a daughter in 1995, got married in 1998, gave birth to a son in 1999, and began to live with her husband and his family in their current residence in 2000. She postponed co-habitation with her husband because she did not want to live with her in-laws. In 2000, the

residence was separated, the first floor for the son's family and the second for the parents' family. Shortly after that she began to engage in farming. [A8, January 2008]

In Austria, although the husband's parents live on the same farm, each couple lives independently. This new life style helps to relieve the strain in the mother- and daughter-in-law dyad.

In Japan, arranged marriages for farm successors were prevalent in the former generation, those aged 50 and over in 2005 (Japanese National Census). However, given the current preference for the Western ideal of a love match, male farm successors face difficulty in forming a family. Farm work and family life in a stem-family household discourage marriage to male successors. The two generations live more separately nowadays, but farm work needs to appear more glamorous to women than other jobs. Farm successor's wives in many cases have been engaged in other industries before marriage and begin to engage in farming after raising children (J2, J7). Farming families executing FMA show farming to be a challenging career.

A farm manager's wife advised her daughter-in-law to make and sell box lunches using organic vegetables she herself had cultivated. This new small business generated personal income. Now, the daughter-in-law teaches in a local cooking school, and this has built her self-confidence. [J2, February 2007]

5.3 Inheritance and parents' retirement

Because of the patriarchal *Ie* ideology, female farmland owners are exceptional in Japan. Although some daughters are engaged in family farming as successors, farmland is inherited by a man adopted as the daughter's husband (J13). On the contrary, in Austria a female successor owns the farmland, and it is not unusual that husband's and wife's farms are combined through their marriage (A1, A2, A3, A4, A9). Co-ownership and co-management between husband and wife or parent and child are also common, giving greater opportunity for women to achieve status as farmland owners and farm managers.

A wife (born 1951), the second oldest of four sisters, inherited her parents' vineyard. Her father died at 46, when she was 16 years old and already dating her current husband (b.1949). He was helping her family with farming and was also the successor of his family farm. The two were co-owners of their farm until the husband began receiving his

pension in 2007. They have two daughters, and the eldest (b.1973) is involved in farming. Currently the wife and this daughter are co-owners. [A1, January 2008]

In Austria, the farmland is transferred to the successor by signing a farm transfer contract when the manager begins to receive a pension. The Chambers of Agriculture, licensed tax accountants and notary publics advise transferring farmland rights from husband to wife and/or making the wife co-owner (A1, A8, A9).

However, in Japan, the landowner's name is changed from the father's directly to his eldest son's after the father's death. Therefore the widow has no chance of inheriting family properties, although widows inherit them in urban areas. Before the father's death, only the right of farm management is transferred to the successor. In an aging society like Japan, generational change of stem-family household is slow. FMA can ensure the welfare of the elderly and expedite transfer of farm management rights to the younger generation².

Furthermore the FMA is useful for adjusting role allocations among stem-family members, and this is helpful for women in establishing their personal position in family farming, although younger women still tend to be responsible for general household duties.

The document stated that overall farm labour and accounting are allotted to the eldest son's wife and that while raising her children, she was required to pack vegetables on the premise. [J12, February 2007]

The agreement provides that all family members cooperate in child care although the eldest son's wife is the main person in charge. She will engage in farming again after her children enter a day nursery. [J1, September 2006]

² In Japan, farmers had a disadvantage in pension, even though public pensions were established in the 1950s. Thus, a voluntary Farmers' Pension was established in 1970 (Law No.78 of 1970). However, because of the aging of society, the pension system changed in 2002 from pay-as-you-go financing to a personal type of defined contribution pension (Farmers' Pension Fund of Japan).

6. Conclusions

In Austria, the patriarchal farm succession pattern is changing slowly. Nowadays a major determinant of succession is interest in farming. Emotional factors such as interest give daughters more chances to become farm successors. Thanks to the development of old-age pension and health security systems, aged parents and their successors are able to live independently, which helps to relieve the generational conflicts and to pass farmland to the next generation more smoothly.

On the other hand in Japan, the patriarchal farm succession pattern is still alive because of the traditional *Ie* ideology. Farmland ownership is generally inherited by the eldest son after his father's death. Prolonged life expectancy delays the timing of inheritance and extends the duration of two generations living together. The relationship between mother- and daughter-in-law is complicated. Farm work and family life in a stem-family household discourage marriage to male successors. Young women's satisfaction in family farming is a keyword for secure farm succession.

In recent years more women are entering the management of family farms in Austria, and in many regions, daughters are increasingly becoming farm successors. In Japan the patriarchal farm succession pattern is still alive. If there is no male heir the family farm is closed down rather than have a daughter become successor.

Acknowledgements

Support for these interviews was provided by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science and their 2005 and 2006 Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research.

References

- BÄCK, E. (2005): Anerben- und Höferecht (farm succession laws). In: NORER, R. (Hrsg.): *Handbuch des Agrarrechts*. Wien: Springer, pp. 530-543.
- GLAUBEN, T., TIETJE, H. und VOGEL S. (2004): Farm succession patterns in Northern Germany and Austria: a survey comparison. <http://www.irsa-world.org/prior/XI/papers/18-3.pdf>
- GOJO, M. (2003): *Kazoku-keiei-kyoutei no tenkai* (Development of the Family Management Agreement) Tokyo: Tsukuba-Shobo.
- KAWASHIMA, T. (1957): *Ideorogii toshite no kazoku-seido* (Family institution as an ideology) Tokyo: Iwanami-Shoten.
- KAWATE, T. (2006): *Gendai no kazoku-keiei-kyoutei* (Contemporary Family Management Agreement) Tokyo: Tsukuba-Shobou.

- KRETSCHMER, I. (1980): Verbreitung und Bedeutung der bäuerlichen Erbsitten (Spread and importance of farm succession practices). In: DWORSKY, A., SCHIDER, H. (Hrsg.): Die EHRE Erbhof. Analyse einer jungen Tradition. Salzburg: Residenzverlag, pp. 83-90.
- MELBERG, K. (2008): Succession patterns in Norwegian farm generations: Gendered responses to modernity. In: ASZTALOS MORELL, I., BOCK, B. (Eds.): Gender Regimes, Citizen Participation and Rural Restructuring. Research in Rural Sociology and Development, Vol. 13. Amsterdam: Elsevier, pp. 217-238.
- MORIOKA, K. (1982): Life course teki shiten to sono chousen (Challenge of the Life-Course Perspective), *Kazoku Kenkyuu Nempou* (Annals of Family Studies) 8, pp. 1-3.
- MORIOKA, K., SHIOBARA, T. und HONMA, K. (Ed.) (1993): *Shin shakaigaku jiten* (New encyclopedia of sociology) Tokyo: Yuuhikaku.
- NAKAMICHI, H. (2000): Current issues on women's policy in rural areas: The establishment of partnerships in farm families and in the rural community. In: Tsutsumi, M. (Ed.). *Women and families in rural Japan*. Tokyo: Tsukuba-Shobou, pp. 13-37.
- OEDL-WIESER, T. (2006): *Frauen und Politik am Land* (Women and politics in rural areas). Forschungsbericht Nr. 56. Wien: Bundesanstalt für Bergbauernfragen.
- ÖSTAT (2006): *Agrarstrukturerhebung 2005*. Wien: Statistik Austria.
- ROSSIER, R. und WYSS, B. (2008): Gendered interest and motivation of the younger generation in agriculture and farm succession. In: ASZTALOS MORELL, I., BOCK, B. (Eds.): *Gender Regimes, Citizen Participation and Rural Restructuring*. Research in Rural Sociology and Development, Vol. 13. Amsterdam: Elsevier, pp. 193-216.
- SATO, H. (2007): *Kazoku no hensen josei no henka* (Trends in families and changes for women) Tokyo: Nipponhyoronsha.
- SUGIOKA, N. (2007): *Nouka-seikatsu to nouson-shakai no hendou* (Change in the lives of farm families and rural communities). In: Hasumi, O. (Ed.). *Kouza-shakaigaku 3: Sonraku to chiiki* (Lectures on sociology 3: Rural communities) Tokyo: University Tokyo Press, pp. 29-61.
- TSUTUMI, M. (1999): A lifecourse study of stem family women in rural Japan: A comparison of the changes over three generations. *International Journal of Japanese Sociology* 8, pp. 117-140.
- VOGEL, S. (2007): *Hofnachfolge in Österreich – eine Re.Vision von Haushaltsstrategien im Haupt- und Nebenerwerb*. In: OEDL-WIESER, T. (Ed.): *Zeitreisen(de) im ländlichen Raum. Diskurse – Re.Visionen*. Forschungsbericht Nr. 57. Wien: Bundesanstalt für Bergbauernfragen, pp. 137-149.

Affiliation

*Yukiko Otomo
Jumonji University
2-1-28 Sugasawa, Niiza, Saitama, 352-8510, Japan
Tel.: +81 48 477 0557 - 651
eMail: y-otomo@jumonji-u.ac.jp*

*Mag. DI Dr. Theresia Oedl-Wieser
Bundesanstalt für Bergbauernfragen
Marxerg. 2/Mezz., 1030 Wien, Österreich
Tel.: +43 1 504 88 69 - 18
eMail: theresia.oedl-Wieser@berggebiete.at*