Rethinking family business succession
From a problem to solve to an ongoing practice

KAJSA HAAG

As the title denotes, I suggest we think differently about family business succession. I propose to rethink succession from a problem to a practice. This means that succession is not a problem to solve but something people do in family business; it is ongoing, it is integrated and it is ordinary. It poses an alternative to the common view of succession as something problematic, separate and extraordinary to handle in order to carry on with the business.

To view succession as a practice opens up new understanding of succession as a continuing flow of activities embedded in the everyday life of business families instead of a problem to overcome through succession planning. This notion is philosophically inspired by sociology of practice, theoretically based in a practice perspective of strategy, and empirically explored in a case of succession at Karl Andersson & Söner. Three conceptions are developed that aid the analysis of succession, framing it as originating from socialization, included in everyday routines and progressing without design.

The study shows how succession evolves as family members are socialized, engaged and trained through the durée of daily life. Beyond that, it shows how succession is not just about handing the business over from one generation to the next. It is also about working together in the moment, developing the business while preserving its essence. Engaging in the family business to be part of developing it is fundamentally different from joining because transfer of leadership and/or ownership is needed. It questions the idea of succession as a purpose in itself and suggests a shift from “taking over” to “being part”.

Jönköping International Business School
Jönköping University

JIBS Dissertation Series No. 082 • 2012

ISSN 1403-0470    ISBN 978-91-86345-35-8
Rethinking family business succession
From a problem to solve to an ongoing practice

KAJSA HAAG

As the title denotes, I suggest we think differently about family business succession. I propose to rethink succession from a problem to a practice. This means that succession is not a problem to solve but something people do in family business; it is ongoing, it is integrated and it is ordinary. It poses an alternative to the common view of succession as something problematic, separate and extraordinary to handle in order to carry on with the business.

To view succession as a practice opens up new understanding of succession as a continuing flow of activities embedded in the everyday life of business families instead of a problem to overcome through succession planning. This notion is philosophically inspired by sociology of practice, theoretically based in a practice perspective of strategy, and empirically explored in a case of succession at Karl Andersson & Söner. Three conceptions are developed that aid the analysis of succession, framing it as originating from socialization, included in everyday routines and progressing without design.

The study shows how succession evolves as family members are socialized, engaged and trained through the durée of daily life. Beyond that, it shows how succession is not just about handing the business over from one generation to the next. It is also about working together in the moment, developing the business while preserving its essence. Engaging in the family business to be part of developing it is fundamentally different from joining because transfer of leadership and/or ownership is needed. It questions the idea of succession as a purpose in itself and suggests a shift from “taking over” to “being part”.

KAJSA HAAG
Rethinking family business succession

From a problem to solve to an ongoing practice

KAJSA HAAG
Acknowledgement

This is the beginning of the book but demarcates the end of the dissertation. For that I feel happy, proud, relieved and a little sad. There are so many I wish to thank. I begin with my supervisors Leif Melin, Anders Melander and Robin Holt.

Leif, your sense of combining freedom and guidance have made me feel both independent and cared for. Thank you for initiating our family business center (CeFEO) and letting me be part of enriching projects. Thank you for sharing your grate knowledge and experience. I feel truly privileged to be one of your doctoral students.

Anders, although you so talently play the devil’s advocate with your endless questioning, your kindness and support is highly valued. Besides your tutoring of the dissertation you have taught me about teaching. The strategy class has been my teaching school and the interaction with our students keeps me constantly learning new things.

Robin, your writing is utterly important for my understanding of strategy and your comments gave me new insights and the courage to continue my pursuit of succession without planning. Having you on-board was both challenging and reassuring. Thank you for lighting up new ways of seeing.

Carlo Salvato, thank you for being the opponent at my final seminar, posing critical questions yet in your lovely way, making the seminar a pleasure. Annika Hall, Anna Larsson and Mattias Nordqvist, thank you for important feedback in various stages. Ethel Brundin and Anna Blombäck, your job as discussants at my research proposal seminar is much appreciated and the continued support even more so.

Ladies of the Hat Order, Benedikte Borgström, Lisa Bäckvall, Jenny Helin, Anette Johansson, Maria Norbäck and Elena Raviola, the advice, joy and support you provide is of a special kind. Thinking of future possibilities of joint efforts is a pure source of inspiration. Jean-Charles Languilaire, although we no longer share office-space, your place in my heart makes us eternal room-mates. People of ESOL/EMM, CeFEO, JIBS; dear colleagues, current and former ones, I hope that you can feel my gratitude. I think of the 6th floor as a special place, made up of its people, physically located there or not. When I was a master student at JIBS you seemed to have so much fun up there. Getting to join the 6th floor was one of my motives to pursue the doctorate. I was also drawn to the complexity of exploring phenomenon without any right answers that my master courses spurred. The travel from engineering to business was mind-blowing. I am so glad that I fell down the rabbit hole and arrived here.

People of Karl Andersson & Söner, especially Ingvar, Maria, Sara and Andreas, thank you for your openhearted sharing. You have taught me invaluable things about family business management.
My family, Mamma, Pappa and Gustaf, Farmor, Mormor and Morfar, I love you. Your love and support is what make things like writing a dissertation possible. Thank you for guiding me in life and helping me out with the big and the small things.

Mathias and Albin, mina killar, you are my everything. I love you so much that it hurts.

JIBS, 6th floor, 29 June 2012

Kajsa Haag
Abstract

As the title denotes, I suggest we think differently about family business succession. I propose to rethink succession from a problem to a practice. This means that succession is not a problem to solve but something people do in family business; it is ongoing, it is integrated and it is ordinary. It poses an alternative to the common view of succession as something problematic, separate and extraordinary to handle in order to carry on with the business. To view succession as a practice opens up new understanding of succession as a continuing flow of activities embedded in the everyday life of business families instead of a problem to overcome through succession planning. This notion is philosophically inspired by sociology of practice, theoretically based in a practice perspective of strategy, and empirically explored in a case of succession at Karl Andersson & Söner. Three conceptions are developed that aid the analysis of succession, framing it as originating from socialization, included in everyday routines and progressing without design. The study shows how succession evolves as family members are socialized, engaged and trained through the durée of daily life. Beyond that, it shows how succession is not just about handing the business over from one generation to the next. It is also about working together in the moment, developing the business while preserving its essence. Engaging in the family business to be part of developing it is fundamentally different from joining because transfer of leadership and/or ownership is needed. It questions the idea of succession as a purpose in itself and suggests a shift from “taking over” to “being part”.

Contents

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 13
   1.1 Problems of family business succession ....................................................... 13
   1.2 Possibilities of a practice perspective ............................................................ 16
   1.3 Purpose .............................................................................................................. 18
   1.4 Structure of the thesis ...................................................................................... 19

2. Current research on family business succession ........................................... 20
   2.1 Family and socialization .................................................................................. 20
   2.2 Family business succession – the received view ............................................ 24
      Family business ............................................................................................................. 24
      Family business succession ............................................................................................. 27
      Management succession ............................................................................................... 35
   2.3 Addressing challenges with (research on) family business succession .......... 37

3. A practice perspective ....................................................................................... 40
   3.1 The practice turn (or practice as theory) ...................................................... 40
      The objectivism/subjectivism duality and the place of the social ......................... 42
      The nature of practice ................................................................................................. 44
      The relational acting of individuals ............................................................................. 45
      An attempt to put pieces together .............................................................................. 47
   3.2 Practice in strategy research ............................................................................ 48
      From content via process to practice ........................................................................ 49
      Strategy as practice ...................................................................................................... 50

4. Suggestions for succession as practice ............................................................ 60
   4.1 A promising match........................................................................................... 60
   4.2 Seven characteristics of strategy as practice in relation to family business research ................................................................................................................ 61
   4.3 Central concepts for succession as practice ................................................. 62
      Succession through socialization .............................................................................. 63
      Succession in everyday routines ................................................................................ 64
      Succession without design ......................................................................................... 65
   4.4 Concluding remarks so far .............................................................................. 66
5. A bricolage for understanding succession as practice
5.1 Implications of a practice ontology: studying everyday life
5.2 Researcher as bricoleur
5.3 A case study in the bricolage
   The case of succession
5.4 Generating empirical material
   Interviewing
   Observations through participative activities
   Observations through shadowing
   Archival material
5.5 Analysis
   Analysis in practice
5.6 A query of quality
6. Succession in practice
6.1 The succession landscape of a Swedish region
   Karl Andersson & Söner
   Karl Andersson himself – from a one man show to a whole factory
   The sons of Karl Andersson and the design revolution of the 1950s
   Ingar Wadskog – back to basic and beyond
   The new millennium and the current succession
      ...as of 2004
      ...as of 2006
      ...as of 2008
      ...as of 2010
      A "semi-ad hoc strategy meeting"
      ... and after the formal change of CEO (autumn 2010)
7. An understanding of succession as practice at KA
   7.1 The practice of joint family management at KA
      Group leadership
      Getting along amongst family
      Managing by constant conversation
      Working united with individual roles
      There is both family and business in family business practice
      “Hurry slowly” through quick and long-term thinking
      Preparing gradually and appreciating what is now
   7.2 The practice of the “new KA”
More is more ............................................................................................................... 152
Old business – new furniture ...................................................................................... 154
Simplicity with a twist.................................................................................................. 155
Small by Karl Andersson & Söner ............................................................................ 158
Developing together................................................................................................... 160
7.3 The practice of preserving the essence of KA .......................................... 162
Doing their thing better and better ........................................................................... 162
Knowing quality and caring for details ....................................................................... 163
Freedom flexibility and fairness .................................................................................. 166
Preserving a culture that embraces renewal ............................................................... 166
8. Conceptualizing succession as practice ............................................................. 171
8.1 Succession as practice through joint family management .......................... 171
Succession is embedded in daily practice .................................................................. 172
Succession proceeds when family members manage together .................................... 172
Succession is an ordinary and on-going part of family business life ...................... 174
Putting pieces together ............................................................................................... 176
8.2 Succession as practice through business development ............................ 177
Family members managing together can expand the business .................................. 177
Family members managing together can evolve the business .................................... 178
When developing the business together, also succession progresses .................... 178
Putting pieces together ............................................................................................... 180
8.3 Succession as practice through preservation of the family business essence .......................................................... 181
Preserving the essence of the family business includes succession, just as succession includes preserving the essence of the family business .......................................................... 181
Succession is invisible in most family business practices, yet to some extent part of all ........................................................................................................................... 182
Putting pieces together ............................................................................................... 183
8.4 Concluding summary of exploring succession as practice ...................... 184
9. Implications of rethinking succession as practice ........................................ 186
9.1 Themes of succession research revisited ......................................................... 186
9.2 What is professional management? ................................................................. 189
9.3 Strategy as practice revisited ............................................................................. 191
The place of strategy? ............................................................................................... 191
Strategy as practiced in most businesses? ................................................................... 193
9.4 Contrasting problem orientation ...................................................................... 194
9.5 Methodological implications ............................................................................. 195
The need for flexibility and variety .......................................................... 195
The strength of studying one small family business .......................... 196
9.6 A concluding comment on contribution ........................................ 197

References ................................................................................................................. 199
Appendix 1: Genogram focused on Ingvar’s branch of the family ....... 217
Appendix 2: Two examples of interview guides ........................................... 218
Appendix 3: Summary of employee survey ..................................................... 221
Appendix 4: Sample passages from the shadowing stories written to illustrate practice of everyday family business life ...................................... 225

JIBS Dissertation Series ......................................................................................... 231

Tables

Table 5-1 Interviews .......................................................................................... 80
Table 5-2 Participative activities ........................................................................ 82
Table 5-3 Shadowing schedule ......................................................................... 85
Table 6-1 Majority owner’s role in the business (Melin et al., 2004: 28) ....  97
Table 6-2 Majority owners’ perceived likelihood of ownership succession (Melin et al., 2004: 37) ................................................................. 98
Table 6-3 Majority owners’ perceived likelihood of CEO succession (Melin et al., 2004: 42) ................................................................. 99
Table 6-4 An overview of KA generations ....................................................... 137
Table 8-1 Succession as practice through joint family management .......... 176
Table 8-2 Succession as practice through business development ............. 180
Table 8-3 Succession as practice through preserving the family business essence ... 183
Table 8-4 Conceptualization of succession as practice in summary .......... 185
Figures

Figure 2-1 The three-circle model (Gersick et al., 1999: 287)......................... 25
Figure 2-2 Phases of succession adopted from Cadieux et al. 2002: 24........... 29
Figure 3-1 Synthesis of practice concepts ..................................................... 47
Figure 5-1 Initial presentation of the family business ..................................... 77
Figure 6-1 Sweden and the region of Jönköping .......................................... 95
Figure 6-2 Ownership structure in the region of Jönköping (Melin et al., 2004: 27) 96
Figure 6-3 Ownership concentration (Melin et al., 2004: 31) ....................... 97
Figure 6-4 Age distribution of owners (Melin et al., 2004: 39) ................. 98
Figure 6-5 Owners’ opinions of the importance of board work in their business (Melin et al., 2004: 36) ................................................................. 99
Figure 6-6 Type of preparations made for CEO succession (Melin et al., 2004: 65). 100
Figure 6-7 Type of preparations made for ownership succession (Melin et al., 2004: 40)......................................................................... 101
Figure 6-8 Use of counselors regarding succession (Melin et al., 2004: 68) .... 102
Figure 6-9 Bureau made by Karl Andersson .................................................. 105
Figure 6-10 Princess Tuvstarr and the fishpond by John Bauer, 1913 ....... 106
Figure 6-11 The four sons of Karl Andersson & Sons: Göran, Lennart, Börje and Yngve .......................................................... 108
Figure 6-12 The company logo and an Öresund cabinet, both designed by Börje Mogensen .............................................................. 109
Figure 6-13 KA72 designed by Göran Malmwall, 1972 ............................... 110
Figure 6-14 Ingvar on the KA terrace .............................................................. 114
Figure 6-15 The fourth generation; Sara, Andreas and Maria (seated) ........... 119
Figure 7-1 Evolution of operating revenue (turnover) 2001–2010, Amadeus database ................................................................. 153
Figure 7-2 Evolution of profit/loss before tax 2001–2010, Amadeus database ... 154
Figure 7-3 Bookshelf ‘Sign’ as example of KA’s simplicity with a twist ........ 156
Figure 7-4 Poster for the FORMEX fair 2010 .............................................. 160
Figure 7-5 Thinner by Karl Andersson & Söner. Designed by Tobias Berneth (www.karl-andersson.se) .................................................. 170
1. Introduction

This is a dissertation about family business succession, in which I propose an alternative way of thinking where succession is embedded in everyday practice. This notion of succession is inspired by sociology of practice and a practice perspective of strategy. In this chapter I introduce my approach to family business succession. Current problems are addressed and alternatives are introduced. The aim of the research is discussed, arriving at the purpose and disposition of the thesis.

1.1 Problems of family business succession

All businesses undergo succession of different kinds as time goes by. Succession of ownership and management in family business follows a different logic and different processes from non-family business (Brundin, Florin Samuelsson & Melin, 2008). Reasons for this are the overlapping of family and business, creating multiple roles (Hall, 2003) where family issues profoundly impact business issues (Fletcher, 2000) and where ownership and leadership are tightly intertwined (Brundin et al., 2008).

How to handle succession in family business is a highly topical issue of research interest (Zahra & Sharma, 2004) as well as societal interest (NUTEK, 2004). Scholars have stressed the complexity of the process. Politicians have changed law and tax regulations to ease shifts in ownership financially, while newspapers have spread terrifying headlines and figures on predicted job losses due to succession failures. The societal impact of family business is high given family firms’ large contribution to both Gross World Product and employment (Astrachan, 2010). And given the characteristics often assigned to family businesses maybe their importance extends beyond numbers? In the aftermath of the recent financial crisis and corporate scandals like Lehman Brothers and Enron, voices are raised in criticism of managerial behavior (Chia & Holt, 2009: x; Ghoshal, 2005). In relevance to this debate, family business is pointed out as an important form of business for its characteristic focus on long-term sustainability and socially responsible ownership (Dyer & Whetten, 2006). Berrone, Cruz, Gomez-Mejia and Larraza-Kintana (2010) have for example found family-controlled firms to pollute less than their non-family counterparts. From that perspective, family businesses have a special role to play in society and inevitable for their survival is succession.
In the research literature (a review is presented in the following chapter), succession is viewed as a complex and difficult issue that takes a long time to go through. Succession is widely described as a sequential process of several phases. Getting started with planning is considered to be a major hurdle since succession is a sensitive topic entangled with issues of mortality, identity and family relations. Advice on how to handle these different phases is plentiful. A common denominator is to bring forth the need for preparation and planning as the answer to the succession problem: “One piece of advice that is found in all related literatures and agreed upon by scholars from early times (e.g. Weber, 1947; Christiensen, 1953) is that succession planning is vital to a succession process” (Sharma, 1997: 43), and “although scholars agree that a strong succession plan is best for a smooth transition, a number of factors can interfere.” (Shepherd & Zacharakis, 2000: 25). Such interfering factors should then be minimized so as to not disturb the plan. On the same note, “succession failure” is attributed to lack of planning (Sharma, Chrisman and Chua, 2003a). There is however a puzzling dilemma pointed out by Handler (1994: 133): “despite the importance of planning, research has found that succession planning is often not done by family firms”. Could it be that research on family business succession is too much focused on how succession should be planned for?

During 2003/2004 I participated in a commissioned research project investigating company owners’ opinions on succession and transfer of ownership (Melin, Bjuggren, Ericsson, Hall, Haag & Nordqvist, 2004). That report, to be presented in 6.1, is based on 1398 telephone interviews, 866 mail questionnaires and 13 cases. I thus had the opportunity to listen to many family business persons. It turns out that over 90% of the interviewed owners are CEOs of their companies and that very little planning and preparation is formally undertaken regarding succession. So whilst the family business literature tends to stress the need for succession planning, members of family businesses appear to focus on the ongoing activities of running a business. The importance assigned to careful planning is understandable in theory. To prescribe “planning in advance” of such a complex phenomenon can however be fundamentally questioned (Chia & Holt, 2009: 189). It presumes a rational and analytic approach which leads to a delimiting focus on that which can be known and controlled for, while disregarding the informal, implicit and indirect aspects of succession. To go beyond the planning paradigm challenges our taken-for-granted assumptions and points towards a need for new ways of thinking about succession. Hence, I identify the preoccupation with succession planning as a problem in current family business research that I will address in this study.

Succession is furthermore largely treated as a problem; it is about “knowing the early warning signs of problematic successions and combating them quickly and directly” (Miller, Steier & Le Breton Miller, 2006: 371). Consider the following example: Today people are generally living longer and working longer
Introduction

which means that family members from several generations can be involved simultaneously in a family business to a larger extent than ever. To Green (2011: x) this results in: “chaos, conflict and not surprisingly, poor business performance, along with disrupted relationships”. Green (2011: xi) continues by comparing this “generational stack-up” with a medical disorder in need of treatment. The use of analogies from warfare and medical diseases by family business scholars let us know the severity of the succession problem. This can be contrasted with practitioners’ views of running a business together with family:

Dad thought it was even more fun when Andreas and Maria [his children] also joined, that is obvious, I mean, he does not want to retire. And we do not want him to either. He really enjoys it that is easy to see. All of us enjoy it. But towards your loved ones it is also important to try to separate between when you are working and when you are not, although it is a way of life. (Sara, fourth-generation family owner-manager)

It is no big deal; if I am CEO or if Ingvar is CEO. It does not matter for our customers. They have more contact with our salespersons or Sara anyway. And I think they see us as a team because that is what we are really. (Andreas, fourth-generation family owner-manager)

Hence, the received view of succession as something inherently problematic and filled with conflict does not fit with the experiences of family business practitioners I encounter. They do express occasional challenges and dilemmas but only as parts of succession. Similar experience is found in other in-depth case studies where conflict is expected but strong cooperation is found between family members (Carter & Justis, 2009). I have come to believe that an important problem lies in treating succession as a problem. This is also noticed by Dyck, Mauws, Starke and Mischke (2002: 145), pointing out a negative bias towards succession among succession researchers “with succession almost always being presented as if it were a crisis to be overcome”. In Ghoshal’s (2006) explanation such a focus would be only natural given that the “negative problem” has been dominating research in psychology, economics and management for the last 50 years. Interestingly, this dominance is now increasingly challenged and nascent efforts are made to propose a positive perspective (Ghoshal, 2006). Could it be that research on family business succession is too problem-oriented at the expense of acknowledging succession opportunities? Talking about the opportunities of succession can open up new possibilities. Hence, the negative bias of focusing on succession problems is
also identified as a problem\(^1\) that I will address in this study.

Reading about family business succession, on the one hand, and talking about it with people involved in family businesses, on the other, gives me two very different pictures of the same motive. It raises questions like: Why do researchers focus on the problems of succession? What are the business opportunities? Why is planning insisted upon in theory but not practiced by business families? And above all: Since businesses constantly undergo succession anyway, how do they actually go about it?

There seems to be an unfortunate discrepancy between how to handle succession in theory and what practitioners actually do. What people do is however the focal point in a “practice turn” of social science. I will rely on this practice turn to study succession from a new perspective. It involves understanding succession as activities carried out in the day-to-day life of business families and is grounded in practice ontology. The next section introduces the possibilities of such a practice perspective on succession.

1.2 Possibilities of a practice perspective

A practice perspective entails studying succession through the micro details of ordinary family business life. Studying seemingly trivial aspects of day-to-day social life is relevant for two reasons (Giddens, 1993). First, the routines of daily life make up the bulk of our social activities. From these routines we can learn a great deal about social life. And second, studying social interaction in everyday life sheds light on larger social systems and institutions. Hence, from micro details we can learn more about the larger contexts of which they are part. According to practice philosophy, of which I so far have said little but soon (chapter 3) will discuss, the world is produced by social practice (Orlikowski, 2010). So why a practice study? – Because in the absence of succession planning, practice philosophy has the potential to further our understanding of succession as inherent part of family business life.

Henry Mintzberg’s seminal work in the late 1960s and early 1970s explored what managers do. What managers actually do, not just in terms of words like coordinating, planning and organizing, but what those words meant in the context of actual activity (Mintzberg, 1970; 1971). Mintzberg’s findings show managerial work as high paced, varied, fragmented and ad hoc. Furthermore, managers are subject to frequent interruptions and surrounded by a diverse web of contacts from within and around the organization (Mintzberg, 1971). Family

---

\(^1\) In everyday life, a “problem” is a matter or situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful and needing to be dealt with and overcome (www.oxford dictionary.com). A “research problem” is used to describe an area in need of attention since it covers something of which our current understanding is insufficient, for example noticed through a discrepancy between new observations and previous knowledge (Wallén, 1996). Regarding family business research on succession there are problems of both kinds to be addressed.
Introduction

Business succession is a topic in need of similar scrutiny and practice theory offers a framework for doing so. For the application of practice theory in a business context I rely on the developments within strategic management and organization studies. I view the running of family businesses during succession as a strategic endeavor where strategy is part of what people do when they run businesses. This is, although shared with several others\(^2\), not the common perception of strategy. The strategy field has, during its relatively short history, been preoccupied with strategy as the formulation of more or less rational plans (Chia & Holt, 2009: ix). Family businesses have however shown themselves not to rely much on formal planning (Handler, 1994; Melin et al., 2004; Gibbons & O’Connor, 2005). Most management theories are developed within the scientific rationality framework making them ill-fitting for trying to capture the logic of practice (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011). The taken-for-granted meaning of strategy is still too much influenced by the content of strategy and the rational design of long-term plans (Chia & Holt, 2009: ix; Adcroft & Willis, 2008). There is however an important stream of research within the strategy field that advocates research focused on the process of strategy and acknowledging its complex nature (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand & Lampel, 1998; Whittington, 2001; Pettigrew, Thomas & Whittington, 2002). Lately some scholars have taken this perspective even a step further, focusing on the activities carried out; a practice perspective of strategy (Johnson, Melin & Whittington, 2003). Strategy as practice is concerned with “the detailed processes and practices which constitute the day-to-day activities of organizational life and which relates to strategic outcomes” (Johnson et al., 2003: 14). Acknowledging the performative power of practice and the duality of actors and structure, this perspective is concerned with the every-day reality of people. In so doing, strategy as practice also acknowledges the actual\(^3\) beyond the formal. I embrace the practice perspective on strategy for its interest in practice and activities on the micro-level, sensitive also to its implicit and non-deliberate nature. Translating the definition of strategy proposed by Johnson et al. (2003) to my topic, family business succession would consist of the detailed processes and practices which constitute the day-to-day activities of family business life and which relate to succession outcomes. On what that entails, current family business research has little to offer.

Four major potential benefits of strategy as practice research are put forward by Johnson et al. (2007) which are just as relevant for succession as practice: The first is that researchers will address what people actually do. The second is that from engaging in practice deeper explanations for complex social

\(^2\) See, for example, Johnson, Melin and Whittington (2003), Johnson, Langley, Melin and Whittington (2007), Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009), Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Scidl and Vaara (2010a), and Vaara and Whittington (2012) for an overview of seminal writing on strategy as practice.

\(^3\) I will use the word “actual” to signal that something is practiced regardless of being informal, implicit or unconsciously done – not to be mistaken for a claim of catching what happens “out there” as existing in a representational reality.
issues can be offered. Third, strategy as practice provides an integrating mechanism in connecting micro level activities with macro level structures. The fourth benefit lies in the embedded pluralism that allows a rich research agenda that above all re-invites practitioners as co-creators rather than research objects. Chia and Holt (2006, 2009) and Tsoukas (2010) add the important mode of non-deliberate action in which strategy as well as succession emerges through everyday coping. This practice approach to strategy can shed new light on what happens in family businesses during succession.

The literature on family business is to a large extent occupied with the problems of the succession process, and how planning should be used to avoid them, but rarely goes deep into how succession is practiced in everyday life. The striking figures on succession failure, reported by Kets de Vries in 1993, where only three out of ten family businesses make it through the second generation and only one in ten through the third, continues to influence the succession discourse. Sharma et al., (2003a) are concerned that failure in succession due to lack of planning will have a negative effect on the economy at large and claim that more research on the succession planning process is needed. I agree with their concern but question whether planning is the only way. The succession literature is largely focused on the transition from one generation to the next instead of paying attention to what the multi-generational family business can accomplish. Succession is ongoing in businesses; still we know little of its details. Few studies have explored succession, from within, attentive to daily routines; my study aim at new understanding for succession as practice.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore succession as practice in everyday family business life.

From this exploration of succession as practice, I aim for new understanding and to contribute by offering new ways to conceptualize what succession can be and how it can work. This practice approach to succession can shed new light on what goes on during succession; attentive also to informal and implicit activities as well as activities with an indirect, and therefore unintentional, bearing on succession. Rethinking succession from a problem to a practice is not about going from one thing to another but going beyond a limiting view of succession as a problem and open up to explore its practice.
1.4 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 has introduced the overall topic of succession in family business and identified two major problem areas in current research; a preoccupation with planning and a negative bias of viewing succession as a problem. New approaches in succession research are therefore needed amongst which I suggest a practice perspective focusing on how succession is practiced in the daily life of family business persons.

Chapter 2 further discusses family business succession. It starts by elaborating on the meaning of family before moving on to families in business. A literature review describes how family business succession is depicted in research. From the review emerges a view that succession is a problem to be solved by planning. This view is criticized and a need for rethinking succession is argued for.

Chapter 3 describes sociology of practice, practice theory and a practice perspective on strategy. It elaborates on practice as an analytical framework and discusses how new understanding of phenomena such as succession can emerge by studying mundane everyday activities.

Chapter 4 continues to outline my practice perspective directed towards the special case of family business succession. It further deliberates on the link between succession and everyday family business life. Three central conceptions are developed to aid analysis of the mostly invisible yet ever present succession, framing it as; originating from socialization, included in everyday routines, and progressing without design.

Chapter 5 outlines the methodological standpoints and methods deployed in the thesis. It describes how studying everyday life by a case of succession practice can create a new understanding of succession. A methodological bricolage is suggested to allow for flexibility and learning along the way.

Chapter 6 is an empirical chapter on succession. It begins with an overview from a large research project on company owners’ views on succession. Thereafter it follows the case of succession practice at Karl Andersson & Söner (KA). It is a story spanning more than a century of business based on six years of case study research.

Chapter 7 further interprets succession at Karl Andersson & Söner structured around three practices through which their succession unfolds over time; the practice of joint family management, the practice of “the new KA”, and the practice of preserving the essence of KA.

Chapter 8 mirrors chapter 7 but leaves the particularity of Karl Andersson & Söner and conceptualizes succession as practice in general terms. From the three succession practices described in the previous chapter, inspired by practice theory and family business literature, a new view on succession is outlined.

Chapter 9 reflects on succession as practice and revisits themes of family business succession, strategy as practice and methodology to discuss implications of rethinking succession from a problem to a practice in relation to those themes.
2. Current research on family business succession

This chapter is built up of three parts. A section on the meaning of family starts this chapter (2.1) before moving on to families in business. The second part (2.2) reviews how succession is generally portrayed in family business literature; the received view. The chapter ends with an assessment of the succession problem (2.3) where future challenges are identified and a need for rethinking succession is argued for.

2.1 Family and socialization

Families do differ from other groups of people (Copeland & White, 1991). A family business is made up of both family and business; still the meaning of family is not adequately dealt with in the family business literature (Litz, 1997; Dyer, 2003; Rogoff & Heck, 2003; Dyer Jr., 2006; Litz et al., 2011). This neglect of the family dimension is strange given that researching a family business inherently also means researching a family (Handler, 1989). The current status of the family business field shows a narrowing focus on questions regarding the effects of family on business outcomes and a growing disregard of the effects of business on family outcomes (James, Jennings & Breitkreuz, 2012). Thus, although “family effects” on performance has been measured (e.g. Dyer, 2006) we know much less about any “business effects” on the family.

To broaden my understanding of the family concept I try to tap into the knowledge in other disciplines. Family science offers a broad range of family theories of which systems theory, structural functionalism and symbolic interactionism are among the most enduring and commonly used (James et al., 2012). To match my practice perspective (to be further discussed in chapter 3) I draw primarily on sociology but also find some useful insight from family psychology. In sociology “family” is one of the main social institutions of interest. “A family is a group of persons directly linked by kin connections, the adult members of which assume responsibility for caring for children” (Giddens, 1993: 390). Two adults living together in a household with their children is commonly known as the nuclear family, whereas an extended family is defined as a group of three or more generations living together within the same dwelling or in close proximity to each other (Giddens, 1993). The arrangement of family business may in many cases resemble the extended family although the family members share the workplace rather than the household. From a legal perspective the following is a useful definition of
Current research on family business succession

family: “A family is constituted by husband and wife, or cohabitees, and their descendants, including adopted or stepchildren and officially recognized foster children” (Sund, Runhede & Haag, 2010:102).

Within psychology, three basic family characteristics are acknowledged (Copeland & White, 1991): (1) A family has a shared history that goes back several generations and involves ethnic and religious values. When a family is studied each member has expectations of the others based on extensive prior experiences. (2) But a family also has a shared future. For better and for worse, family members are pretty much stuck with each other, this must be acknowledged since it influences their behavior. This complicates family business where if a family member quits the business they do not “quit” the family. (3) Some of the family members even share biology. Even though the inheritance of traits is uncertain the potential for biological bias is greater in families than in other kinds of groups. Furthermore, families have a built-in power hierarchy that may or may not fit with the hierarchy of an organization. For my research topic it has a large impact when the family and the business are intertwined and roles are supposed to change through succession.

Family therapy is often based on general systems theory stating that families (like many other groups of people) are systems with characteristics where the whole is more than the sum of its parts (Copeland & White, 1991). All parts (family members) are interdependent on each other and have their own role and place in the hierarchy. The system is self-preserving through stabilizing feedback loops, and it adapts through interaction within and between the system and its environment. This systems approach has developed treatments of psychological problems in contrast to the traditional methods based on the individual. For me, this stresses the importance of understanding the new CEO as a part of the family system, the family as part of the family business, and the business as part of its environment. Although I disagree with a systemic divide between individual and group, as well as system and environment, and instead see them as inherent parts of each other, it stresses the importance of understanding succession in context.

Three levels of constructs, individual, dyadic and family system, are to be considered when studying families (Copeland & White, 1991). The successor and the predecessor constitute an interesting dyad. Who to count as a member of the family is quite a delicate matter, however. People that marry into the family become family members but how far should one extend the “extended family”? In family businesses some employees are treated as if they were family members and members of their family might have been employed at the company for several generations (Kets de Vries, 1996).

Traditionally, research on family psychology has relied heavily on observations. Experiments can be devised where family members are asked to solve certain tasks under observation of the researcher. Observations are good for studying behavior but are poor at capturing feelings, perceptions, opinions and beliefs (Copeland & White, 1991). Self-reporting measures are increasingly
used and are found appropriate in capturing those subjective conditions. Although people will be affected when writing self-reports or being observed it is mostly the proportions that change, not the fundamental beliefs and actions. When studying families it is important to combine data generating methods based on different individuals' perceptions with methods where interactions between members are studied. That could, for example, mean interviewing family members individually and taking part in group activities. For me, that would result in deeper understanding of succession in a family business. Among the challenges for family researchers Copeland and White (1991: 103) stress the importance of using the family as unit of analysis instead of the individual, for that “qualitative approaches have the potential to supplement and reorient our current understanding of family complexity”.

A central concept in sociology is that of socialization. For the study of family business, where family life and business life are inseparable, it seems especially appropriate: “Socialization is the process whereby the helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, skilled in the ways of the culture into which she or he is born” (Giddens, 1993: 60). The individual is not born a member of society; she/he becomes a member of society through socialization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). It begins with the individual “taking over” the world in which others already live, Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain. These others are the family members with whom the child interacts. The “taking over” is a creative process where we not only live in the same world but also participate in each other's being. Socialization connects different generations to one another. A child alters the lives of its parents so that they also undergo new learning experiences. Adults remain parents also after they become grandparents and the learning and adjustment goes on throughout the whole life-cycle. If the family is intertwined with a business, the business is part of socialization as well. “The family is the main socializing agency of the child during infancy. But at later stages of an individual’s life many other socializing agencies come into play” (Giddens, 1993: 76). The difference is primary and secondary socialization:

Primary socialization is the first socialization an individual undergoes in childhood, through which he becomes a member of society. Secondary socialization is any subsequent process that includes an already socialized individual into new sectors of the objective world of his society. (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 150)

In the life of business families, both primary and secondary socialization includes dimensions of the family business. Secondary socialization is, simply put, the acquisition of role-specific knowledge where the roles are rooted in division of labor (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This makes family businesses special because the division between primary and secondary socialization is blurred. I have found very few pieces of research where socialization is used to understand family business succession. Iannarelli (1992) in her dissertation
Current research on family business succession

explores the socialization of leaders in family business from a gender perspective. Her findings show that family firms offer a unique setting where family and business socialization coincide and constitute lifelong learning processes. Learning the business culture and values starts in early childhood. None of the thirty children in Iannarelli’s study had any planned type of training but learned the trade by “just being around”. Different expectations were however put on the children depending on their sex. Sons generally got to spend more time at the business developing “natural abilities” and were seen as leadership material while daughters were expected to take on more domestic chores and prepare for family life (Iannarelli, 1992).

García-Álvarez, López-Sintas and Saldana Gonzalvo (2002) translate the two phases of primary and secondary socialization to the family business context as “family socialization” and “business socialization”. They conclude that the outcome of succession can be understood from how well the primary/family and secondary/business socialization of the successor matches. One could however question how much the two can (and should) be separated regarding families in business. Hall (2003) applies and develops socialization in the context of family business although her interest is primarily on strategic renewal and not succession. She elaborates on the dual need of both belonging to and separating oneself from one’s family. In the family business context this extends to the business as a means to create your own thing within the business (separation) but at the same time the business is an extension of the family and its core values (belonging). Uhlane (2006) draws on team literature to describe a business family as a special type of team. A business family team is effective when its members share values and norms, have clear roles and procedures, and are able to resolve conflicts (Uhlane, 2006: 125). Unlike families in general a business family is considered to be a team when members share the goal of running a business together. In a recent publication, Farrington Venter and Boshoff (2011) study sibling teams in business and interestingly find that role clarity and competence is not as important as previously assumed. They conclude that family teams differ from other teams, which is why established theories in team literature should be used with care. Viewing a family business as a hybrid of family and business implies handling of family matters in the business arena as well as dealing with business matters in the family arena.

The fact that from birth to death we are involved in interaction with others certainly conditions our personalities, the values we hold, and the behavior in which we engage. Yet socialization is also at the origin of our very individuality and freedom. In the course of socialization each of us develops a sense of self-identity and the capacity for independent thoughts and action. (Giddens, 1993: 87)

Hence, socialization in one’s family means learning the doing of business the “family way” as well as, from that, creating one’s own individual way. This knowledge is not just gained, however, but is constantly used; it is present in
each moment of everyday practice. Based on our socialization we make sense of our lives even if we cannot spell out exactly what that involves; it constitutes our background coping skills on which we unconsciously draw to deal with novel situations (Chia, 2004). Through socialization we also develop strong emotional attachments to our significant others, making a family a special group of people.

In sum, this part has addressed how in business families new generations are learning about the family business, through socialization, from the day they are born. This permits new ways of viewing when succession begins and how successors are trained.

2.2 Family business succession – the received view

Family business

The history of enterprising families is as ancient as the occurrence of trade, yet family business as an academic field started to emerge no earlier than the 1980s. Interest in family business research is increasing and can be considered to have evolved into a separate discipline during the 1990s (Bird, Welsch, Astrachan & Pistrui, 2002). Some argue strongly that family business is unique, while others question the particularity of the family business context. On the one hand, all businesses are different, not just family businesses. On the other hand, businesses can be sorted into different groupings because they have certain things in common. A family business is here defined as a business where family members control ownership, are involved in management and perceive their business to be a “family business”, which is a frequently used definition (Hall, Melin & Nordqvist, 2001; Westhead, Cowling & Howorth, 2001; Sonfield & Lussier, 2004). A family business can be viewed as a hybrid of family and business (Foreman & Whetten, 2002). The key feature distinguishing this type of organization from others is this intertwined and reciprocal relationship between the family and the business they own (Sharma, 2004). The intertwining of family and business leads to an aim for both financial and non-financial goals of a family business where success is a combination of a profitable business and family harmony (Sharma, 2004). To understand this hybrid of family and business, theories are borrowed from many other disciplines such as psychology, sociology, economics, law, and family systems theory (Wortman, 1994, in Zahra & Sharma, 2004). The majority of scholars of family business, however, come from the management area, with a preference for theories of strategy and organizational behavior (Dyer & Sánchez, 1998, in Zahra & Sharma, 2004). Early research on family business was most often
Current research on family business succession

based on the researcher’s daily association with family business practice and focused on managerial advice on how to run the business in a successful way (Helin, 2011). Thereafter more rigorous research based on sophisticated testing of theory-driven models has been called for (Sharma, 2004). The field is now dominated by quantitative research methods, although some argue for more qualitative and interpretative approaches to complement current knowledge on the specific complexity and dynamics unique to family businesses (Nordqvist, Hall & Melin, 2009). A recent review finds a strategic management perspective on family business fruitful as long as the involvement, non-economic goals, visions and culture of the family in the firm is acknowledged (Chrisman, Kellermanns, Chan & Liano, 2010). The question is how well all those criteria are considered in each piece of research.

The different constellations of ownership, management and family members are often visualized by “the three-circle model” of three overlapping circles (Tagiuri & Davis, 1996; Gersick et al., 1999).

![Figure 2-1 The three-circle model (Gersick et al., 1999: 287)](attachment:image)

The three-circle model illustrates the multiple roles that can exist in a family business compared with the governance chain in a typical publicly held organization. In family business one person can belong to the family without working for the business or owning shares but still have involvement through the family ties. Another person might be an employee without family ties or shares. A third person might own shares but have no other formal involvement, while a fourth person might be an in-law who works for the business, thus being in two circles. The complexity increases when, for example, the CEO is married to the majority owner, who is chairman of the board, and her cousin who owns 30% of the shares is production manager, with her two sons employed in the business and so on and so forth. This situation with multiple roles adds both complexity and excitement to family
business as a research topic, especially so with a micro-level unit of analysis where social interactions are central. The work of an owner-manager can certainly be all but specialized:

In addition to the hard work, frustration and obligation to always be there, owner-managers not only have to deal with day-to-day product/market/employee/growth/marketing/training issues that all managers face, but also they have to carefully manage and negotiate a complex set of social and emotional relationships involving family and non-family members who have different expectations and motivation for involvement in the family business. (Fletcher, 2002a: 4)

These complex roles of persons in family business are even further complicated during succession when formal roles in the business and ownership circles are supposed to change without any formal changes in the family circle. Your mother is still your mother even if you have replaced her as CEO of the business.

According to the Swedish Companies Act it rests upon the board of directors to appoint a CEO. For privately owned businesses, appointing a CEO is optional while for publicly held businesses it is mandatory. The task cannot be delegated to any other body and there can, by law, only be one CEO. The task of a CEO is to manage operations in accordance with guidelines formulated by the board of directors. The CEO shall furthermore ensure that the accounts are kept in accordance with the legal requirements and that the finances of the business are properly monitored. However, in family businesses the separation between principal and agent is often blurred when members of the same family, or even the same person, control both ownership and management (Chrisman, Chua & Litz, 2004). For some research topics it might not be relevant to treat family business separately but regarding succession of ownership and leadership it does. By singling out family businesses from other types of businesses you however end up with the largest number of firms with vast internal variation. Family businesses are a very heterogeneous group from the smallest local company to the huge conglomerate with business in many different industries (Hoy & Sharma, 2010). Advantages of family business are related to long-term orientation, independence, culture, commitment, flexibility and knowledgability, while commonly reported disadvantages concern limited access to capital markets, confusing organization, nepotism, paternalistic/autocratic, conflicts and succession drama (Kets de Vries, 1993). From the intertwinement of family, ownership and leadership they represent complex cases where informal

---

4 The Swedish Companies Act: Aktiebolagslagen (SFS 2005:551)
5 Recently, access to capital markets is opening up to family businesses since the importance of responsible ownership has become highly rated – a characteristic often attributed to family owners.
Current research on family business succession

Zahra and Sharma (2004) review the evolution of the family business field and find that the same topics have been dominating over the past twenty years; succession, performance and governance, in that order. Despite the preoccupation with succession, they find that key issues related to effective management of family business, such as strategy formulation, innovation and professionalization, paradoxically have been ignored or understudied. In her review, Sharma (2004) highlights the topics of attention on four levels of analysis; individual, interpersonal/group, organizational, and societal. On the individual level, researchers have taken the perspective of different stakeholders of family business such as the founders, the next generation, women, and non-family employees. Since a family is a group of people much attention is devoted to research on the interpersonal/group level of analysis. The nature of contractual agreement is of interest since the applicability of agency theory is questioned when there is no clear separation of ownership and management (Sharma, 2004). Another area of interest on the group level of analysis is conflicts. Studies have reported on family business conflicts of different types as well as outcomes of them (Sharma, 2004). Certainly, conflicts seem to be a prominent part of the everyday life in business families. The third group level topic singled out by Sharma (2004) as one of the most topical in family business research is the succession issue. On the organizational level of analysis attention is directed at identification and management of the unique resources in family business, other topics of interest are the role of culture and beliefs (Sharma, 2004). Internal financing is furthermore found to be the preferred source of finance. Research conducted with a societal level of analysis has mainly focused on establishing the economic importance of family business (Sharma, 2004). In the United States there are 24.2 million family firms⁶ employing 62% of the workforce and contributing 64% of the national GDP (Sharma, 2004). Regardless of which definition one relies on, family business constitutes a significant part of most nations’ economies which makes its long-term prosperity of societal interest. Key to such endurance is succession.

Family business succession

Succession is one of the most frequent topics in family business research. It is depicted as a difficult process requiring careful preparations. However research also shows that most owners of family businesses are not at all well prepared for what to do with their companies when they retire (Lansberg, 1988; Handler, 1994; Gersick, Davis, Hampton & Lansberg, 1997). It turns out to be a

---

⁶ When defining a family firm as a firm where the family retain voting control over the strategic direction of the firm.
question that is easily forgotten in the hectic day-to-day activities of running a business or a sensitive issue that seems better left untouched.

The character of family businesses means not only a rich variety of business but also a rich variety in succession processes. In owner-led companies the owner-manager becomes highly influential and plays a very important role in succession. Brockhaus (2004) found that it is in the very nature of founders to be reluctant to give up on their own creations. There might be several owners; they can furthermore be involved in the daily running of the business to various degrees. A succession can have been carefully planned for several years or be suddenly imposed. Successors can be recruited both internally and externally and managerial roles can be given to both family and non-family members. After transitions there will still be strong influences from previous leaders, founders and owner managers in particular, regardless of how the succession process unfolded. Furthermore there might be several members from the new generation present in the business among whom one was appointed CEO.

The financial and legal aspects of owner- and leadership transition belongs to the formal side of succession and is found to be easier for practitioners to deal with once the first hurdle of raising the question is overcome. Emotions, relations, values and knowledge are examples of areas more indirectly linked to succession and belong more to its informal side. These areas cannot be planned in the same manner as, for example, tax issues that are regulated by law and where a consultant can be hired to estimate different alternatives (Melin, Brundin, Haag, Hall, Nordqvist & Wigrén, 2007). Steps have been taken to understand better some of the factors influencing the transfer from one generation to the next but further research on the matter is needed (Le Breton-Miller, Miller & Steier, 2004; Sharma, 2004).

The following is an overview7 of the literature on family business succession. The review is structured into five themes that emerged as the review progressed and illustrates how I find succession to be depicted. The themes are complementary and overlapping but indicate what has occupied scholars on the topic of family business succession.

Theme 1: The importance of the topic of succession

In the literature on family business the attention and importance given to succession is striking. Chua, Chrisman and Sharma (2003) found succession to be the primary concern of top executives in family firms, and Ibrahim et al. (2001) argue that it is the most critical issue facing family business. Although family business succession is linked to financial performance, both positive and negative effects are found (Molly, Laveren & Deoof, 2010). Some claim the succession process to pose danger to the survival of the business (Shepherd &

---

7 In general management journals the topic of family business succession is given quite modest attention. When it comes to the Family Business Review (FBR), however, the topic is instead one of the most frequently addressed.
Current research on family business succession

Zacharakis, 2000). A recent survey of past achievements and future challenges of family business research showed that succession is a topic on which scholars now believe to have a good understanding (Litz, Pearson & Litchfield, 2011). Some voices in the study were even raised claiming that “succession issues have been studied to death”. Instead the family side to family business was found to be least understood so far and in need of further study. This concerns me. If we have insufficient understanding of the family dimension, how can we claim to understand succession? Most scholars do agree, however, that succession is an issue of great importance to family businesses. If so, why are so many family businesses found unprepared for the matter? Maybe some light can be shed on the question by looking further into the characteristics of family business succession.

Theme 2: Characteristics and features of succession

Succession in family business is about the “actions, events, and organizational mechanisms by which leadership at the top of the firm, and often ownership, are transferred” (Le Breton-Miller, et al., 2004: 305). “It includes the dynamics preceding the actual transition as well as the aftermath of the transition” (Shepherd & Zacharakis, 2000: 25). A characteristic feature is that the process is not primarily governed by market values but the relationships within the business and the family (Churchill & Hatten, 1997). Succession entails a mutual role adjustment between the incumbent(s) and next generation family member(s) (Handler, 1990).

Most often, succession is described as a complex long-term process (Handler, 1994; Gersick et al., 1997; Sharma, 2004). This process is commonly described as consisting of several phases that most often contain elements of; initiation/preparation phase, integration phase, joint management phase and finally retirement of the predecessor (Cadieux, Lorrain & Hugron, 2002; Murray, 2003).

Figure 2-2 Phases of succession adopted from Cadieux et al. 2002: 24

The four phases of succession is proposed by Cadieux et al. (2002) as a summarizing model of how they have found the process described in family business research. Succession is depicted as starting when the successor begins to show an interest in the business and the owner implicitly chooses his or her descendant. The second phase is when the successor starts to work for the business. In the third phase the successor and the predecessor work in parallel for transfer of responsibilities and authority. Finally, in the fourth phase, the
predecessor retires and the transfer is completed. It is this last phase that traditionally has attracted the most research attention (Gersick et al., 1997). The incumbent–successor relationship especially is most often in focus (Ibrahim et al., 2001; Dyer & Handler, 1994). Furthermore, founders do generally manage this process badly which is harmful to themselves, their businesses and their families (Dyer & Handler, 1994). Metaphors such as “passing the baton” are frequently used to illustrate the handing over of management from one generation to the next (Osborne, 1991; Aronoff, 1998; Dyck et al., 2002; Santora, 2004). Some do however question the appropriateness of such analogies since succession involves much more than the transition of a successor and an incumbent (Aronoff, 1998; Westhead, Howorth & Cowling, 2002).

The life-cycle of ownership succession is depicted as evolving from controlling owner (first generation) to sibling partnership (second generation) to cousin consortium (third generation) (Gersick et al., 1997). And, through “pruning of the family tree”, succession can move back into simpler forms where, for example, one branch of the family takes over, moving from a cousin consortium into a sibling partnership in the fourth generation (Lanbrecht & Lievens, 2008). Kaye (1996) however questions the focus on intergenerational succession by stressing that family success does not necessarily include retaining ownership of a business. There are occasions where selling the family business is better than carrying on at all costs. There are surely several alternative routes to inter-generational transitions such as sale, management buyout (MBO)/management buyin (MBI), public quotation or liquidation, although they are seldom studied. An exception is offered by Howorth, Westhead and Wright (2004) in exploring MBO/MBIs as succession alternatives and the problems of information asymmetry it causes. Finally, Howorth and Assaraf Ali (2001) raise an important issue in questioning the Anglo-American culture as the basis of most succession research. We know less of succession in other parts of the world with different views of both family and business.

Theme 3: Preparation and planning of succession

All the literature related to family business succession is said to stress succession planning as vital to the succession process (Sharma, 1997). Such strong statements signal the perceived view of the importance of planning. Succession planning can be defined as “the deliberate and formal process that facilitates the transfer of management control from one family member to another” (Sharma et al., 2003a: 1). The best way to secure a smooth succession is to conduct a strong succession plan (Shepherd & Zacharakis, 2000). The succession planning process commonly consists of (1) selecting and training a successor, (2) developing a vision or strategic plan for the company after succession, (3) defining the role of the departing incumbent and (4) communicating the decision to key stakeholders (Sharma et al., 2003a). In their thorough review of thirty years of family business research, Le Breton-Miller et
al. (2004) find succession planning amongst the most treated topics. They however question the tendency of scholars to focus on specific parts of the succession “elephant” instead of approaching the problem holistically. Business-owning families need to be made aware of how time consuming succession really is so that preparations are not postponed until it is too late (Dunn, 1999). Thus, most succession literature starts from the idea that succession should be planned for and continues on how that should be done.

An important part of preparations and planning is to secure that the unique features of family business, the “familiness” (Habbershon & Williams, 1999) are passed on to the next generation. Those qualities are often the base of a business’s competitive advantage. These skills are found to be partly possessed by within-family successors from socialization and experience gained from lower-level positions during their upbringing (Santiago, 2000). Level of preparedness has been found to positively influence the next generation’s performance (Trow, 1961; Goldberg, 1996; Morris, Williams, Allen & Avila, 1997, in Sharma 2004). The transfer of tacit embedded knowledge to the next generation is identified as a major concern, however further research on how to actually accomplish this is needed (Sharma, 2004). To prepare successors Mazzola, Marchisio and Astrachan (2008) suggest including them in strategic planning processes of the management team where they learn both process and content related aspects of strategy work. Experience from working for the family business prior to occupying a managerial position is a success factor but at the same time findings point to the importance of outside work experience for family members (Le Breton-Miller et al., 2004). Perhaps this means that family successors are in need of general business experience while non-family successors need family (business) specific experience. This raises important questions on the skills required by family business managers; formal versus experiential, managerial versus cultural? We know little of the balance between these qualities in practitioners (Whittington, 2003).

Many family business consultants and researchers advise on how to avoid succession problems. One example is Driscoll's (2011) “Ten ways your succession plan can go wrong”. The ten points of advice are all sound but my main concern is the overall basic assumption that there is (or should be) a plan to begin with. Studies that investigate if any succession planning is carried out in fact find rather low evidence of such, especially in small businesses (Brown & Coverley, 1999; Melin et al., 2004). Aronoff (1998:181) claims that the common report that “only 30% of family businesses survive the second generation for lack of planning” is old wisdom in need of revision. The general lack of planning for succession should not be mistaken for signs of ignorance but instead shows the complexity of the matter according to Sharma et al. (2003b).

In conclusion, we seem to know a lot about how succession should be planned but in practice lack of planning is prevalent. How well the succession was prepared in terms of issues like successor training and transferring of tacit
knowledge will certainly have a large impact on the family business as well as
the business family. While the importance of planning is preached by most
scholars interested in family business succession, a remaining question is how
that can be fruitfully accomplished.

**Theme 4: Barriers and problems of succession**

“Of the many problems associated with family firms, the most insidious center
on the question of succession” (Kets de Vries, 1993:67). So, succession is
highly problematic for family businesses and high failure rates are reported.
Even though planning is conceived to be important, evidence of explicit
planning of succession is rare (Handler, 1990; 1994). De Massis, Chua and
Chrisman (2008) discuss twenty-eight reasons preventing intra-family
succession that are grouped into individual factors, relation factors, financial
factors, context factors and process factors. Lansberg (1988) identifies lack of
succession planning as the main reason why so many (70%) first-generation
family businesses do not make it to the second generation. We seem to lack
sufficient knowledge about why succession is not planned for, although some
important indicators are reported. Both Lansberg (1988) and Handler and
Kram (1988) address several hindering factors, mainly associated with emotions
and/or the different interests of stakeholders. Others identify psycho-social
factors related to family-relations and self-identity (Dunn, 1999; Hubler, 1999)
expressed in feelings of mortality, conflict, change and power (Kets de Vries,
1993).

Many problems arise from not dealing with succession holistically. The
“soft” issues such as values, emotions, relations and knowledge cannot be
systematically planned for in the same way as financial and legal aspects and are
therefore easily neglected (Melin et al., 2007). Conflict across generations is a
common source of problems (Kets de Vries, 1993). Especially problematic is
when previous generations, founders in particular, cast their shadow over the
organization (Davis & Harveston, 1999). The founders have a very special role
with a strong influence on culture, values and performance both during and
after their tenure which generally lasts long and is hard to end (Sharma, 2004).
Conflict was found to be significantly higher in cases where the founders were
still present after succession than when they were absent. Conflicts can grow
among members of the succeeding generation as well. Selecting the successor
among a group of siblings is problematic; “resentment, jockeying for position,
overt and covert sabotage all hinder smooth succession” (Shepherd &
Zacharakis, 2000: 26). Harvey and Evans (1995) stress the importance of also
dealing with post-succession issues to avoid remaining conflicts. The
succeeding generation is however far less researched (Ibrahim et al., 2001). A
problem that is intensifying nowadays, as people generally live longer and work
longer, is what Green (2011) calls “generational stack-up”. This refers to
clashes between people working together from different generations because of
their discrepant values, mindset and approaches. In Green’s (2011: x) words,
the result is “chaos, conflict and, not surprisingly, poor business performance, along with disrupted relationships”. Although this surely has been experienced by some enterprising families it is not a very encouraging message. Surely there are also benefits to a multi-generational team?

Of increasing interest in family business literature is the role of women (Curimbaba, 2002). In succession processes female family members have in some cases been bypassed despite their competences (Iannarelli, 1992; Ibrahim et al., 2001). Other findings point to the opposite (Cole, 1997) while some fail to find any difference (Cardieux, Lorrain & Hugron, 2002). Chrisman, Chua and Sharma (1998) found birth order and gender rated as least important successor attributes. The role of women in family business seems to have evolved over the years. The classical “widow chairperson”, the supportive “keeper of the books” or the behind-the-scenes “chief emotional officer” have given way to a trend of women instead being active in a wider range of roles (Aronoff, 1998). Still, a recent review of women in family business shows that there are factors hindering daughters from progressing professionally and important work remains in changing the implicit rules keeping women in the background (Jimenez, 2009).

A concern of outside shareholders in family controlled business is that family interests may be prioritized at the expense of firm performance. Smith and Amoako-Adu (1999) compare three types of successors; family member, non-family insider and outsider. Businesses with several family members in top management positions are more likely to appoint a within-family successor. However in periods of poor financial performance it is a trend to appoint non-family insiders or outsiders as successors, and this is found to lead to improvement of performance. Succession is not only an emotionally stressful transition but one must also consider the financial and legal side since they too set barriers for the viability of different succession options (Ayres, 1998; Bjuggren & Sund, 2001). A problem identified by Melin et al. (2004) is the lack of help with the succession process available to business families, as most consultants specialize in one or a few aspects (for example, the legal issues) rather than taking a holistic approach.

All in all, succession is often portrayed as a problem. It is about “knowing the early warning signs of problematic successions and combating them quickly and directly” (Miller et al., 2006: 371).

**Theme 5: Success factors in succession**

Alongside advice on how to plan for succession is advice on how to accomplish it successfully. Predictors of a successful succession process are found to be dependent on the incumbent’s willingness to step aside, the successor’s willingness to take over, consensus among family members on how to carry on, and succession planning (Sharma, 1997; Sharma, Chrisman & Chua, 2003b). Important success factors are “fit” and “timing”; a fit between the successor’s competencies and the requirements of the business which is also related to the
timing of when that occurs in relation to when that is needed (Harvey & Evans, 1994). Several researchers have stressed the importance of the relationship between incumbent and successor as well as successor-training as important success factors for the outcome of the succession process (Le Breton-Miller et al., 2004).

The literature commonly mentions transfer of social capital and tacit knowledge as a factor in success (Cabrera-Suárez, De Saá-Pérez & García-Almeida, 2001; Perricone, Earle & Taplin; 2001). Competitive advantage often turns on tacit, ambiguous things – transferring such things between generations causes trouble to the succession process and, consequently, the knowledge base of the business. Others instead focus on explicit forms of knowledge and claim that informal control is not enough during succession but needs to be complemented by formal systems as management accounting, thereby pointing out “professionalization” as a success factor in succession (Giovanni, Maraghini & Riccaboni, 2011). “The quest for objectivity and rationality in the family firms has led authors to recommend the formation of an outside board” (Sharma, 1997: 46). Hall and Nordqvist (2008), however, criticize the tendency to separate between professional management and family management because it signals that family members are unprofessional. They argue that professional management in family business requires cultural competence. Cultural competence means understanding of the particular family business in question regarding the values, norms and meanings of the owner family. This implies that a successful successor should hold both formal and cultural competencies; both general and company specific. Successors that combine business-specific human capital with general human capital, developed through education and other work experience, are more successful in recognizing entrepreneurial opportunities that are important for the longevity of their family business (Sardeshmukh & Corbett, 2011). Family successors are to be preferred over non-family external successors for their business-specific tacit kind of knowledge and should not be overlooked in fear of nepotism or a misguided striving towards professionalization (Royer, Simons, Boyd & Rafferty, 2008).

On a similar note, García-Álvarez et al. (2002) draw on Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) theory of socialization to conclude on the importance of matching “family socialization” and “business socialization” for successors to be successful. Another important success factor is how the next generation can handle the business network (Steier, 2001; Tidåsen, 2009). Social capital embeds relationships with other actors and organizations, and its transfer between generations is thus highly relevant to succession. In the case of several successors, the possession of a cooperative spirit is a success factor (Carter & Justis, 2009).

Taken together, the successfulness of succession is a complex mixture of different stakeholders’ perception of satisfaction with the process and firm performance.
To sum up…

…family business succession is portrayed as a complex, time-consuming process. The issue is emotionally loaded and failures on several levels are reported. Planning is stressed in the literature but generally not done by practitioners. Succession is described as management succession and its intertwining with ownership is seldom mentioned. How to pass on things such as values, tacit knowledge, relationships and power is highly complicated yet is considered decisive for a successful succession. Successors need both company-specific and general (business) knowledge to succeed. Then there are issues such as family relations, self-identity and different stakeholder interests to consider, and whether the incumbent is ready to leave at the same time as a capable and willing successor is ready to take over. Early family business research was tightly intertwined with practice, as many family business scholars worked closely with practitioners as consultants and external advisors of different sorts (Helin, 2011). In the quest to refine the scientific status of the field it has since then been moved towards more sophisticated methods aimed at knowledge accumulation. For that, succession is mostly delimited to measurable variables. Although there is no shortage of publications on succession, providing an important knowledge base, very few studies are conducted with a micro perspective on the activities carried out by practitioners in their everyday lives. Hence, there is still much to explore when it comes to the details of succession practice.

Management succession

Leaving the particular case of succession in family business, there is the research conducted on management succession in business. This section is devoted to that topic. What do we know about management succession in general? What results are useful to understand succession in family business better and how applicable are those findings? This section briefly reports on the literature on management succession in general contrasted with my understanding of the family business context.

Bass (1990) concludes that succession is the process of replacing one leader with another. Such a process is a political one, associated with transfer of power followed by major changes in the organization and its strategy. The main goal of succession is hence to achieve organizational and strategic renewal. Furthermore, Bass (1990) finds the average CEO tenure to be just above five years. In contrast, management succession in family business is often forced upon the family due to the need for retirement and the successor is often selected with the purpose of continuing the family tradition rather than changing it (Churchill & Hatten, 1997). Family CEO tenure is also generally much longer, a Swedish study found the average to be fifteen years (Melin et al., 2004).
Reports on the consequences of management succession show quite ambiguous results (Bass, 1990; Brown, 1982; Pecotich, Chee Tshung & Caroll, 1998; Shen & Cannella, 2003). One difficulty lies in separating the effect of succession from other factors. Haverman’s (1993) own study supports the succession-crisis hypothesis of negative effect, the succession-adaptation hypothesis stating positive effect, and the null hypothesis of no relationship between succession and performance. Haverman’s (1993) own study supports the succession-crisis model although the negative effect decreases over time.

One reason for managerial succession is “scapegoating” during performance slopes to mask other weaknesses (Brown, 1982). Put in a family business context, known for its long-term focus, and where the CEO is often a major owner, that reason for management succession seems less viable, unless an external CEO have been hired.

The pros and cons of an insider or outsider as successor are often treated in management succession literature (Bass, 1990; Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2004). An inside successor makes less organizational changes than an outside successor (Helmich & Brown, 1972) and the tenure of insiders tends to be longer (Brady, Fulmer & Helmich, 1982). In family business, the CEO can be considered internal or external both to the family and the firm, which mean four types of actors instead of two (Nordqvist, 2005). Allen and Panian (1982) study power, performance and succession in large corporations where ownership and control is separated. They determined CEO power by the person’s relationship with owners represented on the board and found managerial power was directly related to tenure and longevity. In family business the distance between management and ownership is very close or they are not separated at all.

An important topic is what qualities to look for in a successor that match the needs of the organization (Santora, 2004). Successor attributes are related to behavior in informing the selection of a new CEO. Externally promoted CEOs are, for example, found to exhibit task-oriented leadership styles (Helmich, 1977). Smith and White (1987) found that new CEOs are selected on the basis of having similar specialization to the predecessor. The dominant coalition is in that way selecting CEOs to fit the corporate strategy. In family business successors also tend to be similar to their predecessors but not only on their area of specialization, rather because they are related to each other. I suspect that the selection criteria in family business are more a matter of “who do we have?” instead of “what do we need?” Management succession does furthermore seem more clear-cut in businesses other than in family business, at least if the definition of succession is considered. Smith and White (1987: 273), for example, define succession as: “occurring when the successor was given the title of CEO”. In family business research succession is instead most often regarded as a long and complex process (both regarding management and ownership).
Another topic is stockholder reaction to management succession. Friedman and Singh (1989) for example found stockholder reactions to be negative when pre-succession performance was good although most successions were customary retirements without any particular stockholder reaction. In family business the stockholders are likely to be familiar with both the predecessor and the successor; in fact, one of them can even be the majority owner him- or herself. For those reasons, family business CEOs have more power regarding their own succession. Farrell and Whidbee’s (2000) study on consequences of forced management succession is not very applicable when the CEO is one of the main owners, as in many family businesses. The study of the succession landscape in a Swedish region (to be presented in 6.1) showed that over 90% of the majority owners were CEOs of their companies.

From this brief review it seems that management succession in non-family business is quite different from management succession in family business. One major difference is the intertwining of ownership and control in family business that leads to a different logic. The level of analysis regarding general management studies is mostly the firm from a shareholder perspective. In family business studies the level of analysis is more often the family or the individual level taking the perspective of one of the key actors. Furthermore, CEO succession in family business often coincides with ownership succession, or at least, is tightly intertwined with ownership issues. The topic of management succession is geared towards large, publicly listed firms and separated from ownership succession. In sum, there is literature on management succession that does not consider family businesses. The mechanisms behind succession in this literature seem to differ greatly from the mechanisms behind family business succession.

### 2.3 Addressing challenges with (research on) family business succession

In this part I address problems of succession, identify future challenges and argue for an alternative view to rethink succession as a practice. The issues to be brought forward are based on my reading of the literature on family, family business and succession and my experience from collaborations with family business practitioners.

From the literature review I learn that succession is one of the most important issues for family business researchers as well as family business practitioners. The issue of family business succession impacts society at large due to the contribution of family businesses to Gross World Product and employment. Succession is a complex issue that takes a long time. It is viewed as a sequential process of several phases. Different authors divide the phases slightly differently and view linearity and overlapping with different sternness.
Simply put, there is a period of no succession, a pre-succession period, succession, post-succession period and then again the business is without succession. Getting started with succession planning is the first hurdle since succession is a sensitive issue filled with conflict. Advice on how to handle these different phases is plentiful. Most advice circles around how succession should be planned for and carried through so that the business can go back to normal. Definitions state that succession planning is: “the deliberate and formal process that facilitates the transfer of management control from one family member to another” (Sharma et al., 2003a: 1). But why only consider deliberate and formal activities? The importance of careful planning is understandable in theory; also the many problems that succession can produce. However, I question the focus on how complex and difficult succession is; a view that does not fit with the family business practitioners I encounter. They do express occasional challenges and dilemmas but only as parts of the succession process rather than regarding the issue of succession itself as inherently problematic. Similar results are found in other in-depth studies where strong cooperation is found instead of the expected conflicts (Carter & Justis, 2009). After contrasting literature on succession to what family business practitioners tell me I have come to believe that a limitation stems from treating succession as a problem. There is a negative bias towards succession among succession researchers, treating succession as a crisis to be overcome (Dyck et al., 2002). Such a problem orientation naturally leads to problem-solving advice. Furthermore, it is most often the succession between the first and second generation that is considered, or more precisely, the succession from the founder to one of the children, focused at the CEO position. The third generation is called “cousin consortium” but further than that is seldom mentioned. Why not learn from those families that have a history of five successions, or nine? Broadly speaking, succession is commonly viewed as a critical phase in the history of the business where the solution to the succession problem is careful planning. Although that is an overly simplified statement of a rich research tradition, this tendency is problematic for several reasons. To further our already extensive knowledge base with new ideas I try to approach succession differently. From the review I identify eight problems of the received view to which I want to contribute: To prescribe formal planning of succession holds assumptions of (1) a rational and linear view. Literature on how to plan for succession is furthermore not very helpful if (2) practitioners do not plan. And considering how succession is prescribed to be planned, it is (3) delimited to the deliberate and formal aspects of succession. Such definitions of succession planning are useful because they make the process measurable, but they will capture only a small part of succession. As pointed out by Sandberg and Tsoukas (2011: 338), “most management theories are unable to capture the logic of practice because they are developed within the framework of scientific rationality”. The advice put forward also holds assumptions concerning business routines that seem to take the existence of functional boards,
management meetings, middle management etc. for granted. This implies that (4) large(r) companies are the norm which is problematic given that most businesses are small. Lately, voices are also raised in question of treating the family business as one category of business (Melin & Nordqvist, 2010). This is especially problematic if the norm reflects a minority of family firms.

Portraying succession as a difficult problem instead of a means for families to work together is perhaps not the most encouraging way to get family business people to raise the issue. Focusing on the problems of succession means that (5) the opportunities of succession are neglected. When succession is treated as a problem it also seems like something to solve and get over; it leads to a focus on handing over the business from one generation to the next instead of acknowledging what a multi-generational business can accomplish. The successor is furthermore often referred to in singular form – (6) “the successor” implies one person while a family constitutes several. Furthermore, the interplay of ownership succession and management succession is seldom taken into account. When describing succession the implicit meaning is rather management succession. While ownership succession and leadership succession are two different but, in family business, tightly intertwined processes, (7) the role of ownership is seldom considered. Lastly, succession is (8) treated like an extraordinary disruption instead of something ongoing in family business. If socialization is taken into account; is there a beginning and an end to succession in practice?

Succession must be ongoing in many businesses; still we know little of its details. This leads to the question: How is succession part of the durée of family business life? I propose to complement our understanding of family business succession by approaching it in a way that also acknowledges its ongoing, “invisible” nature. Hence, the purpose of this dissertation is to explore family business succession as practice and thereby integrated in day-to-day activities. Current literature on succession tends to argue for formalization and professionalization of the succession process. I propose to explore its informal, indirect and relational aspects. Those are much less researched and can therefore contribute to our current understanding of family business succession. Few studies have explored succession, from within, attentive to daily routines, in a small business. To do so, the following chapter outlines such a practice perspective and elaborates on practice in theory.
3.  A practice perspective

This is a theory chapter on practice. It draws on “practice theory” in general and a practice turn in strategic management in particular to understand succession as an ordinary part of everyday life in business families. Viewing succession as practice offers an alternative to the more common approach of treating succession as an extraordinary problem to tackle and get over with. The strategy part starts with a brief historical account on how strategy as a research field has developed and continues with a description of strategy as practice. The chapter ends with a discussion of the relation between strategy and succession.

3.1 The practice turn (or practice as theory)

We are all engaged in practice, it is what constitutes everyday life. In research, practice is classically portrayed as the opposite to theory, which stems from Aristotle’s separation of theoria as the inquiry of philosophers and praxis as the work of ordinary men (Tsoukas & Chia, 2011). In this thesis, practice has a deeper meaning; it is a theory as well as a philosophy of science, and according that philosophy of science, practice has the power to produce the world. This means that theory also is a derivative of practice (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011). And all social systems, no matter how grand, both express and are expressed in the routines of daily social life (Giddens, 1984). Simply put, practice can be defined as “ongoing series of practical activities” (Giddens, 1976: 81) or “organized human activities” (Schatzki, 2005: 471). Notable inspiration of contemporary practice theorists comes from Heidegger and partly also Wittgenstein (Schatzki, 1996).

In social science a practice turn is progressing from field to field. It is rooted in a sociology stream called “practice theory”8. In the field of strategy a strategy-as-practice perspective is rapidly growing and sister movements in other fields are emerging (see, for example, Araujo, Källberg and Spencer (2008) in marketing and Borgström (2010) in supply chain).

---

A practice perspective

Orlikowski (2010: 7) distinguishes three types of practice research:

1) Practice as a phenomenon: study of actual practice (researchers claim a gap between theory and practice that closer scrutiny of practice can help to fill)
2) Practice as a perspective: study of actual practice while drawing on practice-centered theory
3) Practice as a philosophy (ontology): practice as a constitutive of all social reality; actors and agency as product of their practices

The three are not mutually exclusive but entail different assumptions about the power of practice to produce the world. The first type is focused on empirical studies of what people do in practice. A key contribution of a practice perspective (type 2) is the claim that “practices shape reality”. The third mode takes on a practice ontology and claim that practices are reality. Thus, studies of organizations must be grounded ontologically, theoretically and empirically in lived practice (Orlikowski, 2010). This notion is heavily indebted to the seminal work of Martin Heidegger that provides a foundation for how our being-in-the-world necessitates an inseparable entwinement with that world (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011). Schatzki’s (2002) social ontology build on Heidegger’s view of entwinement and goes beyond individualism and societism. This ontological entanglement posits that there are no independently existing entities with inherent characteristics. People that draw on the third type, a practice ontology, “believe in the primacy of practices in constituting social life, and will thus necessarily engage with practice through all three modes – philosophically, theoretically (practice as a perspective) and empirically (practice as a phenomenon)" (Orlikowski, 2010: 23). To embrace practice ontology, and thus a performative epistemology can challenge the established institution of organizational research that is based on a representational epistemology (Orlikowski, 2010). The practice turn in social science advocates that understanding of the “stability” and “objectivity” of “reality” is created in mundane activities, situated actions and local practices.

The field of family business research was very much founded on studies of actual family business practice (type 1) although not based on practice theory or rooted in practice ontology. In this dissertation I continue on the phenomenon of family business succession where succession is viewed from a practice perspective and a philosophy of practice, soon to be explained further, is embraced. A practice perspective is particularly well positioned to address phenomena that are relational9, dynamic and emergent (Orlikowski, 2010) and family business succession is certainly such a phenomenon.

---

9 From a practice perspective, relational means not just interpersonal but that no phenomenon can be taken to be independent of other phenomena (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011)
The *objectivism/subjectivism duality and the place of the social*

Practice theory is a form of social theory that understands action and social order by symbolic and cognitive structures and their social construction of reality (Reckwitz, 2002; Grand, Rügg-Strüm & von Arx, 2010). Practice theory is also a form of cultural theory. However, it situates the social in a different realm than other branches of cultural theory. Practice theory places the social in “practices”, not in mental qualities, discourse or interaction (Reckwitz, 2002). Schatzki (2005: 467) proposes his ‘site ontology’ as alternative to societism and individualism:

Site ontologies maintain that social life, by which I mean human coexistence, is inherently tied to a kind of context in which it transpires. The type of context involved – called ‘sites’ – comprises contexts of which some of what occurs or exists in them are inherently parts. The thrust of site ontology, consequently, is that human coexistence inherently transpires a part of a context of a particular sort. This thesis, in turn, implies that a certain type of context is central to analyzing and explaining social phenomena. (Schatzki, 2005: 467).

According to Schatzki (2003; 2005), social ontology has traditionally been sharply divided into two camps; individualists (e.g. Weber) and societists (e.g. Foucault). In this division he views site ontology as a new form of social ontology that goes beyond the individualism/societism dichotomy. “Ontological individualists maintain that social phenomena are either constructions out of or constructions of individual people and – on some versions – their relations” (Schatzki 2005: 466). He continues to explain that individualists share a “conviction that all there is, in the end, to social phenomena are individuals and their relations” (Schatzki, 2005: 467). In the societist camp Schatzki sees greater variety but the common ground is that:

[I]t is not true that all social phenomena are constructions of or out of individuals and their relations […] societism holds that there are social phenomena, and that analyzing and explaining many social affairs refers to phenomena, that are something other than features of individual people or groups thereof. (Schatzki, 2005: 467)

Site ontology is inspired by Heidegger in viewing sites as spaces of being-intelligibility; spaces in which things are meaningful as such and such (Schatzki, 2003). So a site is a context, but with a different meaning than the context in individualism or societism. Sites are a particularly interesting sort of context. “What makes them interesting is that context and contextualized entity constitute one another” (Schatzki, 2005: 468). This means that they are not just related but parts of each other so that “a site is inseparable from that of which it is a site” (Schatzki, 2005: 468).

Giddens (1979) use the vocabulary of action and structure joined through the duality of structure where the reflexive monitoring of action both draws
A practice perspective

upon and reconstitutes the institutional organization of society. “Agency cannot be explicated without structure” (Giddens, 1979: 255). Structuration theory was formed with an ambition to end the empire-building endeavors between societists and individualists (Giddens, 1984:2). Structuration theory is based on the premise that the dualism between objectivism and subjectivism has to be re-conceptualized as a duality (Giddens, 1984). Structures are recursively produced, reproduced and changed in social practices (Giddens, 1984). This necessarily implies that structures are temporary. The everyday crisis of routines poses the breaking and shifting of structures (Reckwitz, 2002).

Systems are reproduced relations between actors organized as regular social practices (Giddens, 1984). Structuration is the conditions governing the continuity of structures and therefore also the reproduction of social systems. Agents and structures represent a duality which means that structure is not external to agents but they are inherent parts of each other. An important thesis of Giddens’ (1984) is that structures are both constraining and enabling, whereas structure otherwise is most often viewed as only constraining. Actors do not create social systems, they reproduce them, remaking what is already made in the continuity of praxis. There is no distinctive type of structural explanation in social science; all explanations will involve reference both to the purposive agent and to its intersection with constraining and enabling features of social structure (Giddens, 1984).

The properties of social systems are not “social products” constructed by actors because actors and structures are concurrently reproduced together. All social systems, no matter how grand, both express and are expressed in the routines of daily social life. While the life of the individual is both finite and irreversible, the events and routines of daily life do not have a one-way flow to them; they are reproduced and formed in the intersection of the passing, but continually returning, days and seasons in a reversible manner. Every entity has meaning although it might be multiple, unstable and constantly changing. Its meaning is a reflection of its relations and its relations reflect its meaning (Schatzki, 2002: 19). Entities of artefacts, other living organisms and things are as much determinants of social life as are people (Schatzki, 2002). Social orders are thus the arrangements of people, artefacts10, organisms and things through which social life transpires, in which these entities relate, occupy positions and possess meanings.

Arrangements are not inherently regular or inherently stable since the relations, positions and meanings of which arrangements are composed are all phenomena in flux. Arrangements however have dimensions of order that can give arrangements characteristics of regularity/pattern, stability, and interdependence (Schatzki, 2004). Schatzki (1996) describes practice theory as a collection of accounts that promote practice as the fundamental social phenomenon and which oppose either/or explanations of the social.

10 Schatzki (2002) distinguish between artefacts which are products of human action and things which are entities whose being is not the result of human activity.
Hence, a first pillar of practice theory is to go beyond the objectivism/subjectivism divide and acknowledge individuals and societies as inherent parts of each other.

**The nature of practice**

The site of the social, according to Schatzki (2005), is composed of practices and material arrangements. He refers to practice as “organized human activities” (Schatzki, 2005: 471) and takes cooking practices and education practices (such as marking student reports) as examples. A practice is furthermore composed of several activities organized by three phenomenon; (1) understanding of how to do things, (2) rules, principles and instructions, and (3) teleoaffective structure11 embracing ends, projects, tasks purposes, beliefs, emotions and moods (Schatzki, 1996: 89). Schatzki regards a focus on activities as essential in all social sciences. He writes that “it is no exaggeration to say that the key task for the social disciplines is to comprehend the activity-sociality nexus and what bears on it” (Schatzki, 2007: 98). Activities relates to practice in the way that “the activities are moments of the practice; one cannot exist without the other” (Tsoukas, 2010: 50).

Material arrangements have four types of entities; human beings, artefacts, other organisms and things (Schatzki, 2005, 2006). The notion of non-humans as active components, part of shaping activity, is significant for site ontology. Practices and material arrangements are meshed into practice-arrangement bundles. These practice-arrangement bundles tie into other “practice-arrangement bundles” creating nets that link and overlaps with other nets, composing one gigantic overall practice-order web. In this way, an organization is a bundle of practices and material arrangement, just like any other social phenomenon (Schatzki, 2006). Giddens (1979: 114) too points to this connectedness by claiming that “any and every change in a social system logically implicates the totality”.

Routine is integral to structuration both for continuity of the agent in her daily activities and to the continuous reproduction of institutions in society (Giddens, 1984). The durée of daily life is a continuous flow of activity for each person. This durée of activities is bracketed by the opening and closing of encounters and by the reflexive moment that occurs when someone is asked to explicate a reason for his or her activity. Social practice consists of both bodily and mental activities (Reckwitz, 2002). There is no separation between body and mind but both are necessary components of the social. The role of humans in practice theory is both to “carry” and “carry out” social practices. The world is populated by social practices carried by agents. This gives humans a central role but even more central is not that they are but what they do – the practice.

---

11A teleoaffective structure is what is acceptable or prescribed behavior for practitioners in practice in terms of ends, projects, uses (of things), and emotions (Schatzki, 2005).
Chia and Holt (2006) draw on Schatzki (2005) to remind us that practices are however not just what people do but rather practices are social sites in which actors and activities compose one another. Practices are difficult to observe since they are largely hidden, tacit, and often linguistically inexpressible (Gherardi, 2009). Understanding of a phenomenon as family business succession therefore necessitates engaging in the durée of everyday routines of family business persons.

A second pillar of practice theory is the world as produced by *practice* and practice as core for understanding the embeddedness of individual action and social systems.

**The relational acting of individuals**

Structuration is about social practices ordered across space and time (Giddens, 1984). Time can never be excluded from social theory; social structure thus includes elements of both relations of actors and the continuity of interaction in time (Giddens 1979: 62). Continuity of practices presumes reflexivity but reflexivity is in turn only possible because of the continuity of practices. Reflexivity is a chronic feature in the ongoing flow of social life. We constantly monitor the flow of our own, as well as others’, everyday action. In Giddens’ (1984:5) stratification model of the acting self, reflexive monitoring, rationalization and motivation of action are embedded sets of processes. The mutual knowledge incorporated in encounters is mostly practical in character and not directly accessible to the consciousness of the actors. Knowledgeability is described by Giddens (1984) as the ability to go on in everyday social life. Practitioners are knowledgeable about their practice. Intention and motivation are however distinctly different as most actions are intentionally carried out while actions are governed by motivation only in unusual circumstances which break with the routine. To pick up the cup of coffee in front of you is intentionally done although the intentionality is carried on in a taken-for-granted fashion. The intention is integrated with the act to the extent that no division is noticed. Much of our day-to-day conduct is therefore not directly motivated. Actors can, if asked, most often report on their intention but not necessarily for their motives. This has to do with *unconscious* motivation as a significant feature of human conduct.

Most activities are carried out in a routinized fashion grounded in *practical consciousness*. Practical consciousness can be described as “tacit stocks of knowledge” which actors draw upon in the constitution of social activity” (Giddens, 1979: 5). Discursive consciousness involves knowledge which actors are able to express through discourse (Giddens, 1979: 5). There is no rigid

---

12 Giddens is cautious about the validity claims implied in the term “knowledge”. His view of knowledge is inspired by Wittgenstein, for whom to know a form of life is to be able in principle to participate in it (Giddens, 1979: 5).
division between practical consciousness and discursive consciousness; there is only the difference between what can be said and what is characteristically simply done. There is however a distinct barrier between discursive consciousness and the unconscious. Giddens (1984) points out that in every context of activity there is far more going on than what the actor attends to; much goes by unnoticed. While we perceive everything around us much of what is perceived is “blocked off”. A person’s awareness cannot be fixed at a particular point in time.

Discursive consciousness connotes those forms of recall that an actor can express verbally. Practical consciousness involves recall to which the agent has access in the durée of action without being able to express what he or she thereby knows. The unconscious refers to modes of recall to which the agent does not have direct access. (Giddens, 1984: 49)

This means that practice entails all activities but only a fraction is possible to grasp and explain in words. This is worth reflecting on in relation to research methodology, to which I will return later.

People do act with intention but acts also have unintended consequences and they feed back as unacknowledged conditions of further acts (Giddens, 1984). Giddens (1984) objects to that human agency can only be defined in terms of intentions. Agency refers to doing. Picking up a cup of coffee is an intentional act. The consequence might be spilled coffee caused by the intentional act as an unintended consequence. The consequences of what actors do, intentionally or unintentionally, are events which would not have happened if that actor had behaved differently; an act counts regardless of its intentionality. Furthermore, “a seemingly trivial act may trigger events far removed from it in time and space” (Giddens, 1984: 11).

Acting inevitably transpires in time-space arrangements where the particularity of a certain context matters for our behavior. In contexts of co-presence people deploy a reflexive control of the body in self-monitoring of gesture, bodily movement and posture in a mutual co-ordination of interaction through tact and respect for others (Goffman, in Giddens 1984: 78). This monitoring of action demands a sort of controlled alertness. This control can to some degree be relaxed in contexts where people are less expected to express a certain role, described by Goffman (1969) as the difference between back and front regions. The metaphor is inspired by the fundamental difference in behavior of an actor on stage, in the role, and backstage, out of the spotlight. In family business these regions are difficult to separate when family life and business life are blurred.

Social systems are organized as regularized social practices, sustained in encounters dispersed across time and space (Giddens, 1984). All actors are positioned in time-space as well as relationally according the social position involving the actor’s identity. Positioning in the time-space path of day-to-day life is also a positioning within the life cycle for each individual (e.g. childhood).
A practice perspective

What positioning gets at is that all social interaction is situated in space and time. The concept of time-geography (originally formulated by Hägerstrand) points to the fact that routines are recurrent both in terms of time and space (Giddens, 1984). Two persons might meet for coffee once a month in different cafés, they might meet randomly but always in the same café and they might meet once a month in the same café, creating different patterns of time-geography. Coupled with structuration theory, time-geography is concerned with constraints that shape the routines of daily life and share its focus on practical activities. The concept of time-geography has bearing on the arenas of succession strategizing. The when and where of practice leads to different actors taking part and different activities taking place.

In sum, acts have intention but rarely motive and many intentional activities have unintentional consequences (as in the example of the spilled coffee). Our activities are relational and carried out in space and time. And most often we act on our practical consciousness – things are simply just done.

A third pillar of practice theory is practice as relational and performative yet mostly unnoticed in our daily life.

An attempt to put pieces together

Trying to simplify that which is far from simple is a dangerous endeavour. Nevertheless, some form of synthesis of the main concept previously discussed can serve as a clarifying overview. The following outline is a simplification in which sociology of practice by no means should be limited to only that which is included in a summarizing sketch. Furthermore, the site of the social is in constant flux and never static as a snapshot picture may deceptively show. With these caveats in mind, I present the following synthesis.

![Overall practice-order web](image)

Figure 3-1 Synthesis of practice concepts

Practices are flows of activities, carried by actors and things (material arrangements) transpiring in a social site of which they are inherently part. The activities are organized by social rules and structures creating routines around different practices. Practices and material arrangements are meshed into practice-arrangement bundles (e.g. an organization) that create nets with other practice-arrangement bundles tying into each other into one gigantic practice-order web. This means that everything is connected and in constant flux so that
context and contextualized entity are inherent parts of each other (relationality). Actors and activities are produced by social practice (performative); when doing a practice, the practice does something to us. Social life can be viewed as made up of a series of episodes where an episode is made up of groups of activities making activities moments of practice. Each episode in the durée of daily life is implicitly constrained and enabled by the social structures of which we are part, making us mostly act in a routinized fashion grounded in practical consciousness.

Finally, an important remark from Giddens on how to use his (and others) writing:

There is, of course, no obligation for anyone doing detailed empirical research, in a given localized setting, to take on board an array of abstract notions that would merely clutter up what could otherwise be described with economy and in ordinary language. The concepts of structuration theory, as with any competing theoretical perspective, should for many research purposes be regarded as sensitizing devices, nothing more. That is to say, they may be useful for thinking about research problems and the interpretation of research results. (Giddens, 1984: 326)

This is how I use practice theory, inspiring me in how to research, analyze and understand the practice of succession. Although my writing is both theoretically and empirically grounded I try to discuss succession in ordinary family business language to avoid the cluttering up pointed out by Giddens in the above quote. The risk is scholars finding my storyline atheoretical but to me it is important not to separate writing for practitioners of family business from practitioners of research. Also, the phrase “practice theory” is somewhat misleading. To me it includes ontological standpoints of the power of practice to produce the world as well as epistemological implications for how to develop knowledge rather than theoretical models and concepts to be explicitly applied. The operationalization of practice theory closest to my area of interest is that in strategic management, which is where the practice turn now takes us.

### 3.2 Practice in strategy research

This section continues on the topic of practice theory but focuses on the practice turn in strategy research. While sociology of practice spans all sorts of social practices, like marriage and crime (Giddens, 1993), practice-scholars in management and organization studies are my choice to relate to about the practice of running a family business over generations. Conceptualizing the practice of doing strategy is both an old and a new endeavor. Strategy has been a research topic in management since the early 1960s although the interest in
actual practice influenced by practice philosophy, with few exceptions, is a quite recent development.

**From content via process to practice**

Although strategy is an ancient military term for planning manoeuvres on the battlefield one can argue that strategy took form as a research field of its own during the early 1960s through the seminal work of scholars like Chandler and Ansoff (Whittington, 2001). The early contributors characterize strategy as an analytical and deliberate undertaking focused on profit maximization by implementation of carefully outlined plans. Strategy was in the beginning heavily influenced by economics and based on assumptions of the “rational economic man”. With the market as battlefield and the competitors as the enemy the war metaphor is continued. The focus on the content of strategy was however soon questioned and attention turned towards the process of strategy work. This process perspective on strategy started to emerge during the 1970s influenced by contributions in behavioral theory acknowledging humans as subjective and social beings (Simon, 1945/1997). This belief implies that organizations can have plural goals and that the strategy process is not necessarily planned but can emerge over time (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). Common for the early writers of the process view is an epistemological shift opposing the foundations of the dominating rational planning paradigm (Normann, 1985; Pettigrew, 1985; Starbuck, 1985). The process perspective is based on fundamentally different assumptions introduced to the strategy field by the Carnegie School, in particular Simon, Cyert and March. March (1978) describes the difference as one prescriptive school, with the purpose of prescribing optimal behavior and their school, descriptive, with the purpose of describing actual behavior. The goal of an organization, within the behavioral approach, is believed to be determined by a politicking process, weighing different interests leading to a goal of ‘satisficing’ (March & Simon, 1958; March, 1976). Previous research on strategic change is criticized for focusing on content and ignoring history, process and context (Pettigrew, 1985: 274). A common aim with the process perspective of strategy is to provide a framework that reveals the actual dynamics of the process by empirically driven descriptions. To get at the complexity of the strategy process there is a need for a different research methodology and to gain understanding, interpretative research is needed to grapple with the dynamics of strategy. With the process perspective social aspects of human nature come into focus and thereby other concepts gain in interest. Culture and political systems are seen as important governing forces that must be taken into consideration (Johnson, 1987). The development of a process school of strategy has offered an important alternative to the classical strategy content school (Mintzberg et al., 1998; Whittington, 2001). As a continuation of strategy process research, a new stream of strategy research has taken form – strategy as practice.
**Strategy as practice**

**A short history**

The strategy-as-practice approach started to gain momentum during the first years of the new millennium although its theoretical and philosophical roots (strategy process and sociology of practice) date back much further. This part will communicate what strategy as practice is about, based on literature that has been influential in its development. After a more general description of the core ideas, its roots and current developments, I will discuss how strategy as practice can further our understanding of family business in general and succession in particular.

Turning to practice in the field of strategy means turning to what people do when they are managing; an interest in the actual means embracing the everyday life of people in all its sticky and mundane moments. A micro perspective is called for to come close enough to capture these actual activities in practice. It also means adjusting the meaning of the strategy concept from something organizations have to the activities carried out. This shift is fundamental; it is also a grammatical one, making strategy both a noun and a verb. It started with a growing dissatisfaction with the direction the strategy field had taken during recent decades: “While people do strategy, strategy theory is populated by multivariate analyses of firm or industry-level effects upon firm performance” (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009: 69). On a similar note, Chia (2004: 33) wonders “why, despite the volumes of research that have been done and literature written, do we still find ourselves unable to satisfactory answer the question: How is the work of strategizing actually carried out in practice?” A possible answer is that:

strategy-in-practice answers to a different logic of engagement from that that the academic world is more comfortable with: a practical logic that, while internally coherent and plausible to the world of practitioners, is often misrepresented and force-fitted into an academic logic of rationality. (Chia, 2004: 33)

To that end, human actors, their actions and interactions, are taken seriously in the strategy as practice community (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). The practice turn in strategy research is part of the wider practice turn in social science. In this wider sense, the turn “aims to respect both the efforts of individual actors

---

13 What is now most commonly known as strategy-as-practice (SAP) is also called strategizing and the activity-based view. The term activity-based view was initially used to stress the importance of what people do in contrast to what organizations have, as in the resource-based view. The term strategizing also emphasizes activity in contrast to strategy which is a static word, a rhetoric influenced by Karl Weick while strategy-as-practice is the term that most clearly signals the link to practice theory.
A practice perspective

and the working of the social” (Whittington, 2006: 614) hence closing the macro/micro divide.

Strategy research has largely been based on the micro-economic tradition à la Michael Porter (Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007). Consequently, research has stayed too much on an aggregated level with little sight of human beings. Those influences have furthermore led to research informed by more rationalist views. And that is not just an old relic; a thorough review of strategy research published between 2002 and 2006 shows that most strategy research is still framed within a positivist tradition, especially in the highest ranked journals (Adcroft & Willis, 2008). Indeed there have always been occasional interruptions in mainstream strategy discourse by metaphors of muddling through (Lindblom, 1959), garbage cans (Cohen, March & Olsen, 1972) and ghost myths (Jönsson, Lundin & Sjöberg, 1977) to mention but a few. Most commonly, however, strategy-making is still typically treated as a deliberate and planned undertaking (Chia & Holt, 2009). Strategy as practice challenges this taken-for-granted view. To understand human agency in the construction and enactment of strategy a re-focus on the practitioners of strategy is called for (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). However, turning solely to the micro will not do the trick. Micro-phenomena need to be understood in the wider social context of which they are part (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).

The special issue of the Journal of Management Studies (JMS) edited by Johnson, Melin and Whittington (2003) is one of the first recognitions of a practice turn in management research. These scholars propose that the activity-based view holds new benefits, disadvantages and challenges for strategy research. They identify three main drivers for a micro approach to strategy: (1) Fluid resource markets – sustainable advantage must lie in micro assets that are hard to discern and awkward to trade. (2) Hyper competition – speed, surprise and innovation require decentralized organizations that allow strategizing in the periphery. (3) A gap between theory and practice – pressure to adjust the meaning of the strategy concept taught in classrooms so that it matches what strategists do in practice.

Strategy is conducted by humans, rather than being the product of rational planning. Strategy is furthermore done by many people and through myriad activities in both formal and informal arenas. The early challenges for strategy as practice identified by Johnson et al. (2003) evolved around what an activity-based view was trying to explain if not firm performance (solely). How should research be designed in order to go from the specifics and theorize from findings? Somehow the view of the researcher and the participating practitioners must develop. A practice perspective on strategists goes beyond strategy-making as a deliberate, top-down process exclusive to top management (Regnér, 2003; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Strategists can be everyone and no one. This does not mean that top management are unimportant, it rather means that strategists of importance can be found everywhere, both within and outside the organization. Top management still matter but they are not the only
ones that matter, and the work they perform is far less ordered than was previously acknowledged. The influence from actors outside the firm is, although not less important, less addressed in research (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). How to identify those actors as strategists becomes a delicate task for the researcher, especially since these people might not be considered as strategists, either by themselves or others. There is plenty of strategy work left to explore when rethinking who the strategists are.

Whittington (2007) offers four themes that help to define the core concepts of strategy as practice. The four themes build on the three parameter framework earlier developed by Whittington (2006) and Jarzabkowski et al. (2007). The previous three Ps of praxis, practices and practitioners, are accompanied by a fourth P for profession:

Praxis is about the activities of strategy. These activities can be both well planned formal ones and small insignificant things, recognized as influential only in retrospect. The interest in praxis is shared with the strategy process researchers in describing how strategies come about. The close attention to the micro activities of strategizing has contributed to new insights of the content in rather vague processual concepts such as decision-making. There is also acknowledgement of non-activities; the activities not carried out can tell a lot if we pay attention to them (Carter, Clegg & Kornberger, 2008).

Practices refer to the routines and norms of strategy work. This includes daily routines and more extraordinary ones, such as strategy away-days, but also tools such as Gantt charts and computers. In strategy as practice, the performance of practices in themselves becomes interesting not just firm-level performance (Whittington, 2007).

Practitioners of strategy come in all shapes and sizes. They can be part of top management teams, as in conventional strategy research, but also peripheral or even external to the organization. While strategy research commonly focuses on practitioners’ organizational role and purposes, practice research sees practitioners as people with their own purposes not just members of the organization.

Profession deals with strategy as a profession. It includes the work of consultants, researchers and teachers. This is strategy as an institutional field of consultancy firms, business schools, academic journals and so forth. Hence, as researchers we are part of shaping the very phenomenon we study, and as Zundel and Kokkalis (2010) so aptly remind us; researchers are practitioners too. Although the framework seemingly consists of distinct components; practice philosophy (as previously discussed) posits that they are inherent parts of each other and should not be viewed as separable entities. The components are distinguishable though, but only as parts of the system.

Johnson et al. (2007) see four major benefits to strategy-as-practice research. The first is that researchers will address what people do. The second is that from engaging in practice deeper explanations for strategic issues can be offered. Third, strategy as practice provides an integrating mechanism on the
strategy field by connecting micro level activities with macro level structures. The fourth benefit lies in the embedded pluralism allowing a rich research agenda that above all re-invites practitioner as co-creators rather than research objects. From this it follows that strategy work involves more people and more frequent activities on a more detailed level than was previously acknowledged. It places human interaction center stage and draws on different ontology than does mainstream strategy research (Johnson et al., 2007). Acknowledging the performative power of practice and the duality of actors and structure, strategy as practice concerns the everyday reality of people. In so doing, strategy as practice acknowledges also the actual beyond the formal. An excellent example is the work of Orlikowski (2000) that illustrates how new practices are built and how structuration theory helps to identify “in use” practice rather than just settling for the prescribed use, in her case, of a certain technology.

Whittington (2010) reviews the use of Giddens in empirical strategy as practice research. A clear theme that emerges is the attention to middle managers. I do agree with acknowledging middle managers in contrast to only caring for top management but I am missing a focus on the largest group of business – small business that do not even have middle management. A second theme is the close engagement with practice through qualitative methods like observations, shadowing, ethnographies and self-reporting. The third theme is theoretical pluralism. Most studies use additional theory besides structuration theory, which is more of a broad orientation than a precise theory. Strategy as practice is more of an orientation to be filled with content, Whittington (2010) concludes. In my case this means using a strategy as practice approach to shed new light on succession in family business.

Strategy as practice is a movement on the move. Apart from the numerous articles published, there are several special issues, books and reviews. There is also vivid activity on the conference tracks devoted to strategy as practice in different forms. This rapid growth means development in different directions. Common for research questions framed within a strategy-as-practice framework is that they pay attention to everyday details but aims to understand those as embedded in a wider context. This approach to strategy that is close to actual practice is difficult to study. The alternative; a simplified view on strategy, measurable but fabricated, is however far less appealing. This dilemma has caused a method debate where new takes on research design are called for to match the new view of strategy. “Strategizing research cannot advance significantly without reconceptualizing frequently taken-for-granted assumptions about the way to do research,” state Balogun, Huff and Johnson (2003: 197). They particularly suggest three methods as promising for strategy

---

14 In selection, European Management Review (McKiernan and Carter, 2004); Human Relations (Balogun et al., 2007); Long Range Planning (Cailluet and Whittington, 2008); Journal of Management Studies (Johnson et al., 2003)
15 In selection, Jarzabkowski (2005), Johnson et al. (2007), Golsorkhi et al. (2010).
16 See Vaara and Whittington (2012) for a most recent review
as practice; interactive discussion groups, self-report methods as diaries, and practitioner research. Rasche and Chia (2009) propose ethnographic studies for their potential to uncover hidden characteristics of strategy-making. Deep process organization studies have long advocated plural method approaches (Pettigrew, 1997; Langley, 1999). In that vein I suggest a bricolage method (to be outlined in chapter 5) that contains a dynamic mix of conversations, participations and reflections over time that keeps evolving as the research proceeds allowing flexibility and learning along the way.

**Practice philosophy in strategy – dwelling and coping**

Recently, several scholars have argued for strategy as practice research to consider more deeply its philosophical heredity and explore the meaning of strategy practice informed by practice ontologies (Rache & Chia, 2009; Golsorkhi, et al., 2010; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Chia and Holt (2009: 125) suggest that while strategy-as-practice research is claimed to embrace the practice turn in social science, “what is being researched remains the deliberate ‘doings’ of intentional agents rather than practices, which are constitutive of the agents themselves”. A consequence of this rationalist attitude is strategy practice limited to deliberate, tangible routines and observable practice, although Bourdieu follows the lead of Heidegger in insisting that most practices take place without conscious planning or deliberate action (Chia, 2004). Such limitation is trapped in a strong methodological individualism that breaks open the micro/macro divide once set out to close. The aim of these critics of strategy-as-practice research is not to oppose its basic ideas but to take its philosophical roots even more seriously. Grand et al. (2010) argue that serious strategy as practice research needs constructivist epistemologies focused on the creation, construction, translation and transformation of strategy concepts and strategizing practices. Chia (2004), Chia and Holt (2006; 2009) and Chia and Rasche (2010) elaborate on a dwelling worldview and its epistemological consequences in contrast to the more common building mode in traditional strategy research:

In the building mode the agent-strategist is presumed to construct mental representations of the world prior to any practical engagement with it. The dwelling mode of engagement, on the other hand, consists of local adaptation and ingenuity in everyday practical coping, which constitute the kind of micro-strategizing associated with the practice approach to strategy. (Chia & Holt, 2009: 159)

The dwelling mode opens new ways of explaining how strategy emerges non-deliberately through everyday practical coping (Chia & Holt, 2006). It directs attention to a ‘strategyless strategy’ (Chia, 2004). This contrasts the widely held set of epistemological premises of the ‘building worldview’ that builds on two core assumptions: (1) each individual is a discrete bounded entity relating
A practice perspective

externally to its social environment; hence a methodological individualism is presupposed, and (2) a Cartesian split between mental and physical realms; people act on prior thought-out intentions and act purposefully to attain pre-specified goals. Studying strategy in this vein assumes actions to be deliberate, purposeful and goal directed (Chia & Holt, 2009: 133). Instead, the alternative of dwelling is where there is no “presupposed prior distinction between individual and society, no dualism between mind and matter and no prior distance between thought and action: these are deemed to be secondary distinctions generated through social practice themselves” (Chia & Rasche, 2010: 53). The dwelling mode acknowledges that individuals are so constituted by everyday social practice that most activities are carried out in a spontaneous manner so as to solve immediate problems without any conscious consideration or pause to design a plan for how to proceed (Chia & Rasche, 2010). According the “building worldview” thinking is separated and prior to action. In dwelling, the activity of thinking is integrated just as everything is.

Far from being a Cartesian separation, thinking is the experience of being amid the things of life in their enigmatic and untouchable nearness, a placing and sustaining of our own lives in the flow of events and things that are both with us and yet constantly turning away, withdrawing, moving on. (Chia & Holt, 2009: 151)

Dwelling is about local adaptation and purposive action (Chia & Holt, 2009: 134). Epistemological implication is knowledge as grown and re-grown through social practice, instead of knowledge as a representational commodity. When strategizing is limited to a purposeful encapsulation of the world into small, law-governed variables, something in the strategist’s self, the self of others and things are lost (Chia & Holt, 2009: 153). In the quest to configure resources in order to maximize and sustain revenue streams there is no time to let things emerge from current circumstances.

Acknowledging the unconscious parts of strategizing does not mean that all strategizing is non-deliberate but that much of it is which is excluded from traditional strategy research and not adequately recognized in strategy-as-practice literature (Chia & Holt, 2006). And to do so, opens up new ways of thinking about strategy emergence. Through purposive action, people relate to the situation at hand which is different from purposeful action which is a product of deliberate intention with motive expressed beforehand (Chia & Holt, 2009: 92). This distinction clarifies how people act intentionally without a specific intention in mind; purposive but without a pre-defined motive and most often resulting in unintended consequences. The agent is indivisible from his or her context and does not generally have the capacity to stand outside circumstances to analyze and design purposeful plans for how to act prior to actually intervening with these circumstances (Chia & Holt, 2009: 108). There are occasions when such detached deliberate evaluation is attempted but by and large agents act from within their own absorbed circumstances. Despite the lack
of a consciously coordinated plan, spontaneous actions still display some degree of coherence and consistency because of our socio-cultural conditioning. Our actions are prone to form patterns as we purposively act in ways that are socially acceptable in situations familiar to us, learned through the process of socialization (Chia & Holt, 2009: 141). By describing strategy from a dwelling worldview, Chia and Holt (2009: 112) offers an alternative view on the meaning of acting strategically:

In understanding economic activities such as trade and entities such as markets and prices, therefore, we ought to recognize them as socially organized, complex and open-ended institutional facts. Within such an environment, strategic action is not about an observer gathering information concerning an external environment in order to manage resources so as to occupy an advantageous position (a niche market, a rare capability, a competitive opportunity) but about attaining and sustaining a set of organized relationships nested within wider systems in order to experience the possibility of doing things differently and, potentially, better.

Since our existence necessitates being in the world, can we strategize other than from within? A dwelling worldview acknowledges also the tacit dimension of practices such as strategy work (Chia & Rasche, 2010). This gets at how strategies emerge without any deliberate strategic intent (Chia & Holt, 2009: 141). It has made me think about family business succession in dwelling terms. Can this help to describe all those cases where there is succession but no succession plan? Can it give new ideas on how to approach succession all together?

Tsoukas (2010) also adheres to an ontology that posits practice as constitutive of social reality and further elaborates on the concept of ‘coping’, inspired by Heideggerian vocabulary. Tsoukas (2010) describes three types of action dependent on the involved form and degree of intentionality:

1) ‘practical coping’: tacit understanding and non-deliberate action
2) ‘deliberate coping’: explicit awareness
3) ‘detached coping’: thematic awareness, the most deliberate form

When actors just get on with their task at hand, “business as usual”, they do not pay explicit attention to what they do (or why they do it). When acting non-deliberately they respond to circumstances in order to get on with their task at hand. They do what makes sense to them, but what makes sense to them is teleologically structured. In that sense agents act purposively without having a purpose in mind. This non-deliberate acting is practical coping. When actors, during practical coping, run into trouble they become aware of what they do because what they were trying to accomplish do not occur. Hence, they start acting deliberately – deliberate coping. Thus, when interrupted in practical coping, deliberate coping comes into play. If then the actor takes a step back, detaching
A practice perspective

her- or himself from the specific situation, and reflects on the problem in general terms, the agent can develop thematic awareness, i.e., detached coping. One kind of thematic awareness is theoretical understanding. When interpreting practice empirically it is my job to reflect and develop a theoretical understanding about succession from the practical and deliberate coping observed in my case study. For example, actors do not necessarily have the sense that they strategize – this is usually attributed by the researcher (Tsoukas, 2010). Strategy is often formulated through retrospective framing of non-deliberate actions. Strategy-making is often about articulating or reinterpreting what has already been done for a while, when it is realized as something, and a new initiative cannot be assessed except in retrospect. As rightfully pointed out by Tsoukas (2010), a mundane change today may turn out to be important later on. This is a research challenge that calls for both in-depth and longitudinal elements in the same study. And although practice unfolds in the moment, history plays an important part. Strategizing is a matter of history and all the present and future actions are in an endless relation with the past as they are influenced by what was done, said and thought (Ericson & Melin, 2010). To understand succession in a particular family business the history of the family and the business is important. Understanding of actions in the present call for a dialogical openness to the past (Ericsson & Melin, 2010).

The relationship between practice and process research

Strategy as practice might seem very similar to what is known as strategy process research and there are indeed similarities. There are also differences. Many of the tensions in the process/practice relationship stem from the heterogeneity within both process and practice studies. Common to the early writers of the process view of strategy is a philosophical shift opposing the dominating rational planning paradigm. The strategy process writers started the quest to explore the dynamics of strategic change processes in their fullest complexity. Strategy as practice generally builds on the strengths of the process perspective on strategy, rather than the foundation of the content school, but tries to avoid its weaknesses. The weaknesses of strategy process research mainly concern that process is not micro enough; process research is too often concerned with development over time on the organizational level (Johnson et al., 2003). When studied through interviews with top managers it only gives a narrow view based on retrospective sensemaking of assumed strategists (Johnson et al., 2003). Micro processes of strategizing are not trapped within organizational borders, but are found deep inside as well as across and outside organizations (Johnson et al., 2003). The phenomenon is however a social one which implies certain ontological assumptions on humans as social beings which might be why similar theoretical perspectives can be useful for both practice and process research. Tsoukas summarizes the critique of the process school of strategy posed by strategy as practice scholars and interestingly notes that “even if some, or all, of these criticisms are accepted, there is nothing
inherent in the process approach that would stop it from taking them on board” (Tsoukas, 2010: 47). In this view, strategy as practice and process research is really closely related but the strategy-as-practice movement resisted how process research (sometimes) is practiced, it does not really object to its basic ideas. The same can be said about strategy-as-practice research where there are different traditions evolving, among which I prefer those rooted in practice ontology over those that are based on methodological individualism.

A processual take on practice reconciling the two

To talk about a single process school is a huge simplification of a long and rich tradition. It also fails to cover recent developments in process research of the kind that embrace the practice turn in social science. However, to clarify my point about strategy as practice’s heritage I refer to “the process school of strategy” as a broad definition in line with the process/content divide of the strategy field (Whittington, 2001). There is process research carried out that is not at all guilty of any of the weaknesses previously pointed out. In fact, there are overlaps, where writers sometimes frame their work as process studies and sometimes as practice studies based on the same ontological assumptions. A branch of “Process Organization Studies” (Langley & Tsoukas, 2010), or the “new process studies” perspective (Vaara & Whittingtin, 2012), is interesting for its closeness to the type of practice studies I embrace. It represents an understanding of the world as in flux, continually in the process of becoming. An excellent example is Helin’s (2011) process study of family meetings from a dialogical becoming perspective.

Strategy practice from a dwelling worldview can be described as a process of “wayfinding”. The dwelling mode and wayfinding metaphor suggested by Chia and Holt (2006; 2009) is another interesting contribution where practice and process overlap. In wayfinding, strategy is understood as a relational process where people find out what to do as they move on in their current circumstances (Chia & Holt, 2009). “Here strategy-making is about reaching out into the unknown and developing an incomplete but practically sufficient comprehension of the situation in order to cope effectively with it” (Chia & Holt, 2009: 159). Wayfinding is about finding an orientation on the move, through engagement with the world and with experience of “otherness”, where the appropriate next step unfolds from within current circumstances. De Cetreau talks of this active engagement as “bricolage”. Bricoleurs “use what they find as vistas and transitions arise; there is no planning because there is no way of knowing what will become ready to hand, and what will break down” (Chia & Holt, 2009: 172). It questions the taken-for-granted view of strategy-making as deliberate, planned and purposeful activity. A fundamental shift in thinking, from “knowing before we go” to “knowing as we go” offers alternatives to the prescription that organizations should plan ahead. Instead of locating positions using pre-established reference points, strategy practice becomes an evolving and self-referential process of discovery and self-clarification that is never
A practice perspective

complete because all things flow (Chia & Holt, 2009: 164). “Wayfinding is about the experience of living in an organizational territory and apprehending situations in terms of their potential rather than their positions” (Chia & Holt, 2009: 172). “The strategic impress is not about a narrowing focus but a widening reach, a creative willingness to tolerate ambiguity and to cope with the frustrations of not being in full control” (Chia & Holt, 2009: 173).

In my view, there are no benefits from separating practice research from process research as such but instead look at the match of underlying assumptions. In that regard some process studies, for example that described as “process organization studies”, are closer to the practice study I undertake than the kind of practice studies that study the phenomenon of a certain practice without acknowledging practice either as a perspective or a philosophy. A process study based on assumptions compatible with practice ontology has more to offer me than a practice study where practice is equated with the activities deliberately performed by individuals. Simply put, some researchers treat process very similar to the way others treat practice. I see no point in choosing between them for the sake of terminology in use. Instead I am open to learn from both.

The link between strategy and succession

Applying a strategy-as-practice perspective on family business succession means that this dissertation is concerned with daily activities of doing business which relates to both succession and strategy. Although strategy is not as much mentioned in the other chapters, succession is studied and discussed in a way that it is closely entangled with strategy. I draw on how strategy is approached as a practice to explore another business practice, that of succession. From a practice perspective both strategy and succession are practices that are embedded and mostly invisible in the daily activities of family business life (Giddens, 1984). Whether one particular activity relates more to strategy or to succession is mostly impossible to know in the moment and is more in the eyes of the beholder to decide retrospectively. In that sense, practice of strategy is practice of succession. On that note, the next chapter continues on the practice perspective but focused on the special case of family business succession.
4. Suggestions for succession as practice

This fourth chapter brings together the previous chapters by elaborating on family business succession as practice. It continues to outline my practice perspective and further deliberates on the link between succession and everyday family business life. It starts out by acknowledging the first thrust of scholars applying a strategy as practice perspective in family business research. Thereafter I synthesize distinguishing characteristics of the strategy as practice approach and further discuss their implication which serves as important input to my field study. I move on to elaborate on my analytical framework where I have struggled to find ways to grapple with informal and implicit practice with indirect, and therefore unintentional, bearing on succession. For that three conceptions are developed that aid my analysis of succession framing it as originating from socialization, included in everyday routines and progressing without design. The chapter closes with concluding remarks on the discussion so far and specifies three questions through which the explorative purpose is to be pursued.

4.1 A promising match

As previously addressed, a practice perspective offers new ways to approach succession so as to explore its embeddedness in day-to-day family business life. Some scholars have already linked strategy as practice to family business. Hall, Melin and Nordqvist find a practice perspective on strategy highly useful to further our understanding on strategy work in family business “especially for its special attention to social actors and their interaction” (2006: 253). They furthermore find existing research on strategy in family business too distant from the actual strategic activities in most cases. This would be balanced by the strategy as practice perspective. Hall (2003) uses strategy as practice to explore family businesses development in how everyday family interactions shape strategic outcomes. She elaborates on the role of genuine relations for sustained strategic renewal and concludes that it is dependent on the paradox of identity (separation/belonging) and requires handling of role transitions. Nordqvist (2005) focuses on the role of ownership in family business strategizing. He elaborates on how ownership is enacted through the everyday activities of family business and conceptualizes strategizing in family firms in terms of actors and arenas. Family business strategists can be both family and non-family as well as both internal and external to the firm. Strategic arenas in family
Suggestions for succession as practice

business can be both formal and informal as well as within both family context and business context. Although not framed as a strategy as practice study, Salvato (2006) go to depth with micro level activities in a family business and relate those to strategic outcome by exploring the micro-foundations of organizational adaptation over generations. Salvato and Melin (2008) argue that the competitive advantage of family business lies deep in how controlling family members perform the daily practice of strategy and that we lack detailed understanding of the specificities of those practices. Both Nordqvist and Melin (2010) and Brundin and Melin (2012) further stress the promise of a strategy as practice approach to develop rich and relevant knowledge about family business management. To achieve this, future research should especially study actual practice. Those are inspiring contributions that my work builds on, however, none of them focus primarily on succession.

4.2 Seven characteristics of strategy as practice in relation to family business research

This section synthesizes the distinguishing features of the strategy as practice approach and further discusses their implication for family business research. From the literature on strategy as practice I deduce seven characteristics that I particularly want to bring forward in relation to the family business context.

One of the most prominent characteristics is the (1) fundamental inversion of the strategy concept (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008), meaning that strategy is something people do, not something organizations have. Adjusting the meaning of strategy to what people actually do (or think of, or don’t do), regardless of it being formulated in a plan or simply just done, have high relevance for family business research; integrating theory and practice. (2) Decentering of the organization (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008) means to go beyond the organization as unit of analysis. A family business is a practice arrangement bundle (Schatzki, 2006) that transpires on family and business arenas which makes the organization an ill fitted unit of analysis. (3) Outcome beyond firm performance broadens the meaning of performance. It can mean a research interest in the performance of activities in themselves (Whittington, 2007). This justifies embracing the plural goals of a family business in balancing interests of family and business. (4) Strategists can be everyone and no one. Strategy work is embedded in daily activities, formally planned or not. Strategizing in family business is not bound to the firm’s premises and some of the key strategists might not be working for the business at all. A classic example is formally retired patriarchs. Although this is well known to family business researchers, traditional management literature largely fails to capture
this. In family business research it is common to view the family business as a hybrid of family and business and hence also to acknowledge the family arena to be of strategic importance (Nordqvist, 2005). Therefore the conceptualization of the strategist in the strategy-as-practice approach holds great potential to further our understanding of strategy making in family business. (5) Deterring the micro/macro divide by focusing on micro activities but understanding them as an inherent part of their macro settings influenced by a social ontology that steers a path between individualism and societism (Giddens, 1984). Understanding family business issues especially calls for acknowledgement of the embeddedness of single events. Embracing (6) pluralism in both theory and method fits well with a field that is formed around an empirical phenomenon like family business. Sharma (2004) states that to improve the functioning of family firms is the ultimate goal of the family business field. As I see it, that calls for scrutiny of family business from a wide variety of angles but with an approach that is close to actual practice, which takes us to the last point. (7) Taking practitioners seriously. As pointed out by Getz and Petersen (2004), few businesses are inherited even though much research is devoted to succession issues. A research approach that takes practitioners seriously, views them as experts at what they do, and encourages co-creation of research has the potential to reach results of relevance to practitioners and be close to how they work in their daily family business life.

4.3 Central concepts for succession as practice

Bringing a practice perspective to family business research opens new ways of approaching family business topics of all kinds. The remaining parts of this chapter are devoted to further development of an analytical framework for understanding succession as practice in everyday family business life. When writing about succession in that way, the depictions have little resemblance to succession as it is described in traditional literature on the topic. When succession is viewed from my practice perspective, it is rather present in each moment. The concepts to be discussed all contribute to clarifying the relation between daily mundane activities and succession. Three central conceptions are developed to aid analysis of the mostly invisible yet ever present succession, framing\textsuperscript{17} it as; originating from socialization, included in everyday routines and progressing without design.

\textsuperscript{17} Although presented before the empirics in the dissertation, this framing emerged from iteration between fieldwork and theory and was further developed as the fieldwork progressed.
Succession through socialization

Through socialization the helpless infant becomes a member of society by taking over the world of the persons that raise him/her (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Giddens, 1993). There is both family and business in business families hence socialization concerns family matters as well as business matters. For that, socialization in the context of family business is central. It helps to understand the invisible preparation and training of successors. A new generation of family members engaging in the family business has to some extent learned about it since they were born. This learning is mostly indirect and unintended although also occasionally intentional. Two major implications of this notion is that it opens new ways of viewing when succession begins and how successors are trained. It points to the taken-for-granted nature of family business practice. Values, routines and traditions learned through socialization since childhood are largely taken for granted as the ‘normal’ way of being (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In family business this creates a special kind of knowing in family members and a special kind of understanding among them. It can also cause confusion, from taking things for granted, or difficulties in understanding why externals cannot see what is obvious to you and other family members.

The secondary socialization, when an already socialized person enters new sectors of society as school and work, is special in the context of family business. This is usually the process when new socializing agents influence the person to develop role-specific knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In family business, the people that run your workplace can be the same persons that raised you. In this way, family business is a special case where primary and secondary socializing agents can be the same persons. Of course not the only persons but surely important ones. The blurring of primary and secondary socialization also plays a role when family hierarchy and business hierarchy are intertwined; especially when the business hierarchy is to change through succession. Socialization can help to understand the complex task of taking over a leadership role from a parent. Hall's (2003) study of strategic renewal in family businesses found family members struggling with their dual need of individuation and belonging. For that reason it is important for family members to be able to develop “their own thing” within the business. Education and work experience from other organizations can be helpful for the individuation process of family business persons. This external inspiration can also enrich the business. Through socialization we learn what constitutes appropriate behavior in our social context. In business families this includes how to do business the way the family does it. Learning important business aspects, necessary for being part of, and eventually taking over, the family business is continuing throughout the family lifecycle. Regardless of situation, socialization is not an option to choose because it is already ongoing. In family business, for reasons outlined here and in section 2.1, socialization is particularly present in succession but
invisible in a taken-for-granted fashion. In turn, the taken-for-granted nature of things we do as a result of our socialization can help to unfold invisible aspects of succession. Hence, to explore succession as practice I pay attention to how members of a business family are socialized.

**Succession in everyday routines**

Actors do not have definite goals consciously held in mind during the course of most activities. Instead, the knowledge employed by actors in social encounters is usually unknown to those actors in an explicit form (Giddens, 1979: 58). The learning of social rules is primarily an unconscious doing which links back to the role of socialization for our practice, in particular time-space arrangements. The indication of successions without succession planning points to a need for acknowledging activities with unintentional bearing on succession. A central notion of structuration theory is that an act counts as an instance of agency regardless of its intentionality (Giddens, 1984: 9). Through practical consciousness, what we do is carried out in a routinized fashion. This means that most things we do are simply just done without any notable consideration. Furthermore, an activity that seems trivial in the moment might turn out to have far from trivial consequences (Giddens, 1984: 11). A practice perspective on succession therefore has implications for what activities to consider as instances of succession practice. The intention with an act might have nothing to do with succession even if its consequence turns out to do so. The morning coffee routine might turn out to generate new business ideas involving the next generation or the passing on of how to deal with suppliers. The intention is to drink coffee; the consequences are unknown in the moment but might in retrospect be regarded as practice of succession. From this perspective, succession can be ongoing also without a motive to deal with succession.

Most studies of family business succession are based on surveys and interviews which only get at retrospective recapturing of the actors’ discursive consciousness. What actors do without motive is ignored and thereby most of what is done is excluded. The concept of practical consciousness can help to shed light on hitherto neglected aspects of succession. The type of activities carried out based on practical consciousness can be described as practical coping (previously presented in section 3.2). Much of what matters in succession is hidden in tacit understanding of how to do things, to which family business persons unknowingly have access through socialization and experience. Explicating such activities is only partially possible but trying to can lead to new insights. When interrupted in practical coping the deliberate coping comes into play (Tsoukas, 2010). By observing practical coping in the moment and over time as an outsider, I can gain understanding of others ways of doing. I can also ask questions through which some of their tacit understanding can be explicated when the persons who are experts in what they do try to explain it to me. Practical coping proceeds until there is some form of breakdown when
Suggestions for succession as practice

what was expected does not occur (Tsoukas, 2010). This causes the actor to become aware of what she or he is doing because the routine is disrupted and action other than the ordinary is needed. In a similar manner we can create awareness by my questions of what they are doing regarding things that otherwise would be so self-evident to them they would pass by unnoticed. To explore succession as practice I pay attention to how family members cope practically with daily matters and together with them, through detached coping, create a thematic awareness of succession that is sensitive also to its tacit elements. Hence, exploring how succession is ongoing in daily routines through practical coping – included in what is simply just done.

Succession without design

How can there be succession without a purposeful plan for it to be so? Chia and Holt (2009: 24) elaborate on ‘strategy without design’, which they describe as: “a latent and retrospectively identifiable consistency in the pattern of actions taken that produces desirable outcomes even though no one had intended or deliberately planned for it to be so”. By exploring succession without design I strive to approach it in a way that can give new insights into succession without (or besides18) succession planning. A concept helpful in describing indirect aspects of succession is that of purposive action. As previously explained, purposive action is different from purposeful in that it lacks a deliberate intention with a motive expressed beforehand (Chia & Holt, 2009: 92). It relates to the dwelling mode of engagement through wayfinding, consisting of local adaptation and resourcefulness in everyday practical coping (Chia & Holt, 2009: 159). “The underlying spirit of wayfinding is a sense of the positivity of incompleteness: one is under way, and in being under way the ends of one’s actions emerge as one goes along” (Chia & Holt, 2009: 186). There is however a detectable purposiveness in our stream of actions without us necessarily following purposeful plans. In family business a group of closely related persons embark on this journey together. Without a pre-decided destination they follow each other towards fulfilling their shared purpose. Chia and Holt (2009: 109) explain this unintended coherence in action as emanating partly from the internalized dispositions of an individual acquired through the process of socialization. The group I am following is associated with the same nuclear family and business which makes their actions an interesting case of shared wayfinding emanating to a large extent from a situated family rather than individuals. Through socialization, family members working together can share

18 As pointed out by Chia and Holt (2009: 209), strategy without design is unattainable; we use design all the time, for example, by structuring a book by chapters. The idea is not to avoid all design but to go about it differently, from within, and acknowledge other possibilities than formal planning.
history and future aspirations to a larger extent than most other groups of people.

The wayfinding metaphor draws attention to the indirect and emergent sides to succession that are difficult to grasp but ever so important. Besides, “confining the world to events and things that can be articulated as means linked to desirable outcomes is neither universally accepted nor the only possible mode of strategic engagement available” (Chia & Holt, 2009: 190). Indeed, spectacular forms of intervention aimed at generating desired outcomes, like succession planning, often unintentionally generate negative consequences. Fletcher’s (2002b) workplace ethnography is a case in point, where a professional manager is hired to revitalize the company only to learn the hard way that imposing a top-down approach to this business had the opposite effect. Still, our view of what it means to be ‘professional’ is so deeply rooted (most prominently in the western world of business) that other approaches are regarded as unprofessional or failed attempts to design and implement plans. “We still build without acknowledging how we might better dwell” (Chia & Holt, 2009: 189). Not planning for succession can actually be a better way to deal with succession than planning for it in the traditional sense. And even when planning is practiced it can only constitute a small part of the activities carried out in the durée of daily life; succession proceeds with or without a purposeful plan designed by a strategic actor. Most of succession cannot be formally taught; it is lived. Dwelling and purposive acting can help explain succession as an act of wayfinding and further entangle its endeavors. Hence, to explore succession as practice I pay attention to how succession progresses without a deliberate plan for it to be so.

4.4 Concluding remarks so far

At this point I will conclude on the theoretical chapters behind us and look towards the study to be. The introductory chapter argued for studying succession to explore more of its informal, relational and indirect nature in everyday family business life. To do so a practice perspective was suggested. The second chapter looked further into current family business research and concluded that although we already know plenty about succession most research is based on a ‘building worldview’ focused on planning as the professional way of avoiding succession problems. Therefore new complementary insights can emerge from a practice study embracing a dwelling mode of engagement. Such a practice perspective was outlined in chapter three.

In this chapter strategy as practice and practice philosophy has been further developed in relation to the special case of family business succession. Taken together, a practice perspective is fruitful to further our understanding of the many complex areas of family business. There is much left to explore in terms of actual activities of family business life. Leaving the
Suggestions for succession as practice

organizational boundaries as the unit of analysis and instead seeing where the actors take you can shed new light on issues such as decision-making and successor training. There is indication of important family business activities in arenas far from the firm and by actors without formal positions in the business. Strategy as practice can help to enhance our knowledge in new ways. There are several obvious and less obvious strategists in succession – this is acknowledged by a re-conceptualization of the strategist that goes beyond top management. And there are many obvious and less obvious activities carried out during succession, such activities can be better understood by a practice perspective attentive to the everyday routines of social life. Succession is furthermore inseparable from its wider context; practice philosophy offers a relational view where everything is entangled through social practice. Conceptions such as purposive action, practical consciousness and socialization are helpful to grapple with also the ‘invisible’ aspects of family business succession. Exploring what goes on during succession in a family business can result in alternatives to thinking of succession as a problem to solve as well as to alternatives of formal planning as the only way to treat succession professionally. Viewing succession in the light of practice philosophy makes new questions emerge, especially being attentive to how things are done in the flow of everyday work, and not deciding beforehand on which parameters to include, but to dwell with the mundane as well as the exceptional can light up new ways of seeing. To meet the overall purpose of exploring succession as practice in everyday family business life the following questions will be empirically explored: How are members of a business family socialized? How is succession included in what is simply just done in everyday routines? And, how does succession progress without a deliberate plan for it to be so? Exploring family business succession as practice in everyday family business life is to think about it differently so that new insights can emerge. Before turning to the field study of succession in the business of Karl Andersson & Söner, the next chapter deals with methodology.
5. A bricolage for understanding succession as practice

This thesis merges practice theory and strategy as practice with the phenomenon of family business succession in order to rethink succession from a problem to solve to an ongoing practice. Being attentive to daily activities of a long-term process poses methodological challenges. As called for by Balogun, Huff and Johnson (2003); there is a need for complementary methods to the study of actual practice. I want to join that conversation by suggesting a methodological bricolage. The aim is to understand a complex social phenomenon in context both over long periods of time, so that family business succession can be studied, and close enough to interpret what people do in their everyday life. My methodological bricolage includes interviews, shadowing and observations carried out in collaboration with one business family. The bricolage is not fixed but symbolizes something under making – something that keeps transforming in line with a dwelling mode of engagement. It entails a longitudinal case study but with emphasis on the researcher as bricoleur, open to new methods as the research proceeds. Above all, this chapter aims to convey my methods of exploring family business succession.

5.1 Implications of a practice ontology: studying everyday life

The practice ontology outlined in chapter three posits that practice is a constituent of social reality where actors and agency are products of their practice (Orlikowski, 2010). All social systems both express and are expressed in the routines of daily life (Giddens, 1984). Exploring family business succession therefore necessitates scrutiny of everyday family business life. Since the meaning of practice as perspective and philosophy is already discussed elsewhere in this dissertation this methodology chapter at hand will deal less with philosophy of science and more with methods. I do however feel that some more framing of my work is in order before we get to the method parts.

Taking practice philosophy seriously calls for a reorientation of research: There is no clear cut separation between research and practice since researchers and practitioners are both a by-product of social practice (Chia & Holt, 2009: 129). The world is produced by practice from actors and structures in duality (Giddens, 1984). Therefore there are no independently existing entities with inherent characteristics (Schatzki, 2002). This affects how research can be
A bricolage for understanding succession as practice

carried out and what conclusions to draw from the research conducted. The reality of everyday life, as described by Berger and Luckmann (1966), provide guidelines to understand how people socially construct their reality as objective facts derived from subjective meaning. This construction is concurrent and automatic; for each person, reality appears already objectified. Hence, “this reality of everyday life is taken for granted at reality” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 37). The social constructionist ideas have a lot in common with structuration theory for its interest in both agency and structure whereas social constructivism is more concerned with how individuals mentally construct their world (Fletcher, 2006).

People have routines for how to handle what is common in their everyday life and thus find those things unproblematic. Such activities are based in practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984) and carried out through practical coping (Tsoukas, 2010). But our everyday life is full of ambiguous things; this is where the need for interpretation comes in. When something new appears, a person is faced with problems not yet routinized. At the occurrence of something unexpected, explicit awareness is needed and our coping becomes deliberate (Tsoukas, 2010). When dealing with this new problem, based on what is currently known, the person’s everyday life is enriched as those activities are incorporated into reality as well. If a person is confronted with something so new that she fails to incorporate it into her reality it is rejected because it “transcends the boundaries of the reality of everyday life and points to an altogether different reality” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 39). Our uncertainty regarding any kind of change is natural considering our way of understanding things by fitting them in with what we already know and take for granted. This makes us reluctant to change and generally suspicious towards anything that challenges our current understanding (Weick, 1979).

Practice theory works as a sensitizing framework for empirical research; it offers certain ways of seeing social phenomena (Reckwitz, 2002). According to structuration theory (Giddens, 1984), each production of action is also a reproduction of the day-to-day enactment of social life. In so being, all competent members of society are expert sociologists and the knowledge they possess are integral to the persistent patterning of social life. This ought to affect researchers’ attitude towards the people they study; we learn from engaging with practitioners, they are the experts at what they are doing. Even if studying practice means learning from practitioners it is still valuable for practitioners for several reasons. It can offer a reflective arena. It can help disseminate learning from one setting to another, and it can help in explicating the implicit: “Studying practical consciousness means investigating what agents already know, but by defining it is normally illuminating to them if this is expressed discursively, in the metalanguage of social science” (Giddens, 1984: 328).

All persons are knowledgeable agents. Knowledgability embedded in practical consciousness is a complexity left unexplored by most research
approaches, especially those associated with objectivism (Giddens, 1984: 281). This stresses the value of including real-time elements in a study. Actors can most often discursively describe what they are doing if asked. Such questions are normally posed only when the activity stands out from the ordinary day-to-day behavior. In my study much of what is taken for granted by the family members working together is for me to find out. The knowledgeable of actors is bounded both by the unconscious and by the unintended consequences of action. While actions are intentional their consequences might not be. Study of ordinary day-to-day life is integral to understanding of institutionalized practices. “All social life can be represented as a series of episodes” (Giddens, 1984: xxix). Daily activities are however not the foundation upon which structures are formed but in line with the duality of structure they are inseparable and reproduced continually. Most day-to-day activities are routines. Most daily practices are therefore not motivated but simply just done. This makes exploring change in routines over time relevant in relation to understanding succession. Thus, also longitudinal elements are important in my research design. The study of context is inevitable since context and contextualized entity constitute each other so that a context is inseparable from that of which it is a context (Schatzki, 2005). Therefore it makes sense to do a longitudinal case study incorporating contextualization with the real-time and the long-term. The positions of actors in the virtual time-space of structure makes up their social identity which is associated with normative rights, obligations and sanctions which, within specific collectivities, form roles (Giddens, 1984: 282). In a family business the role of the father and the role of the business manager depend on the co-presence of actors in a certain space-time arrangement. Succession is relational and to study it calls for methods that are sensitive to how people interact. Methods of participatory nature are helpful in that regard. To get at that, I use a shadowing technique as well as taking part in events.

From an ethnographic study of a group of people within a restricted context contributions can be made to the social system of which they are part. Succession in one case is part of and thereby influences and is influenced by the social system/institution of succession. Study of that one case of succession can thereby inform theory on succession. We interpret a thing as something based on selected aspects, and by interpreting the thing as something we do at the same time consent that it could be interpreted as something else (Ödman, 1994). What is true is constructed which makes the truth local and relative to culture and power (Geertz, 1973; Crotty, 1998; Gergen & Gergen, 2003). Inspired by Bergson's writing, Chia and Holt (2009: 126) describe truth not as “a representation of reality but the manner by which we go about inserting ourselves into reality; of creating pathways and finding our way around”. From this it follows that “meaning is the continually renewed product of enquiries into how new and potentially antagonistic experiences can be satisfactorily reintegrated with an established stock of tradition” (Chia & Holt, 2009: 127).
The interest of this dissertation is on the social reality of everyday life. What I aim for is new insights on family business succession. The implications of practice theory in terms of its philosophical underpinning results in a different kind of theory. Studies conducted in the light of practice ontology naturally include a more reflective form of theorizing (Shotter & Tsoukas, 2011). This theorizing invites practitioners to reflect on their own actions: “Reflective theory works to draw their attention to aspects of people’s interactions in organizations not usually noted, to bring to awareness unconscious habits, confusions, prejudices and pictures that hold practitioners captive, and, furthermore, to point out other continuations of them than those routinely followed are possible” (Shotter & Tsoukas, 2011: 312). For my work with family business succession, I strive to contribute with reflective theory by offering new ways to think about succession where especially the invisible aspects of succession are in need of further exploration. What I can offer is an account of my understanding of succession as practice and a discussion of its relevance. The remaining sections of this chapter are devoted to describing how that is pursued.

5.2 Researcher as bricoleur

The practice turn in management studies is well underway now and with it an interest in what people do when they run businesses. But an interest in the actual has indeed put new requirements on research design. We need to be creative in our methods to come close enough to activities. At the same time the micro-level unit of analysis risks analysis being trapped in the particular without linking to strategic outcomes (Johnson et al., 2003). There is certainly some inspired research carried out in this spirit but many challenges remain. The merging of strategy as practice and family business succession is a delicate dilemma; my challenge lies in understanding the daily practice of a long-term phenomenon in a way that is sensitive also to what is unintended and tacit. I cannot limit my scope to actors’ intentions and look to identify pre-existing characters and procedures; instead I shall try to get at the embodied, doing and coping of beings-in-the-world (Chia & Holt, 2009: 125). Study of practice therefore demands a perspective that situates the agent in active engagement with his or her surroundings. The organizing of field study research is tricky; it is dependent on pragmatism, luck and moral sensibility, where knowledge of a variety of techniques is helpful coupled with a will to be innovative (Czarniawska, 2008). A case study is a good start since it acknowledges the strategists and their activities within context, as called for by Balogun, Huff and Johnson (2003). But in line with their further reasoning, there is a need for complementary methods. I want to join that conversation by suggesting a methodological bricolage. The bricolage approach involves the process of employing different methodological strategies as they are found to be needed in
the unfolding context of the research situation (Kincheloe, 2005). A researcher’s interaction with the phenomenon under study in any social inquiry is always unpredictable and complex; such conditions negate the practice of planning research strategies in advance (Kincheloe, 2005). (In many regards similar to why succession can only be planned in advance to a limited extent.) My bricolage starts with a case study but is built up of different methods decided upon over the course of the project. The main ingredients turned out to be recurrent interviews, observations of key actors in the form of shadowing and me participating in various activities. I use the term bricolage in accordance with the description of Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 4):

The interpretative bricoleur produces a bricolage – that is, a pieced together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation. “The solution [bricolage] which is the result of the bricoleur’s method is an [emergent] construction” (Weinstein & Weinstein, 1991 p. 161) that changes and takes new forms as different tools, methods, and techniques of representation and interpretation are added.

Here, I suggest a methodological bricolage in order to interpret in-the-moment activities of a long-term phenomenon. Avoiding imposing methods that are already fixed is a way to expand beyond the reductionist knowledge embedded in a rationalistic quest for order and certainty (Kincheloe, 2005). Just as succession evolves over time, so does my method. Although bricolage has received quite some scholarly attention in the social sciences, to my knowledge it has, not been specifically focused in the strategy-as-practice community or in family business research.

The word bricoleur is French and generally describes a handyman making use of the tools available to complete a task (Kincheloe, 2001). It also includes some quite negative connotations of trickery and cunning. Those connotations are of course not what I seek to imply. Instead being a bricoleur in research has a different meaning. Levi-Strauss was an early user of the term in the 1960s to illustrate that fieldwork is a far less systematic process than is commonly reported (Lincoln, 2001). Giddens (1993) gives a similar description of fieldwork: Fieldwork (which he equates to participant observation) has the possibility of providing rich information about social life and gives the investigator more flexibility than other methods. The researcher has the opportunity to adjust to unexpected circumstances and to follow up leads that develop during the process of the research itself. Giddens (1993) sees two main limitations with fieldwork: only fairly small groups can be studied, and it is very much dependent on the researcher gaining the confidence of the individuals involved. I have overcome one of these hurdles in enjoying great access to and confidence from the people involved in my study. The study of a small group has some disadvantages but also advantages in terms of depth, which is essential for my study.
Lincoln and Denzin (2000: 1061) describe the interpretative bricoleur as more than simply jack-of-all-trades but rather as inventor in the best sense of the word: “Bricoleurs know that they have few tools, and little by way of appropriate parts, and so become inventors. They invent ways of repairing; they recycle fabric and cloth into beautiful quilts”. I interpret that as a person who makes the most of what is at hand, open to trying new ways that are found during the journey instead of sticking to the original plan. This method allows you to find your way as you go along in line with the dwelling mode of engagement. But as pointed out in the quote, it is also about recycling. I will now describe the main parts in the quilt and as you will see they are mainly old acquaintances. However these familiar pieces are woven together into a bricolage where a unique custom-made pattern is emerging over time as the research proceeds.

5.3 A case study in the bricolage

Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances. (Stake, 1995: xi)

To explore the case of family business succession as practice I study activities of a family doing business. According to practice ontology, context and contextualized entity constitute each other so that a context is inseparable from that of which it is a context (Schatzki, 2005). The case study approach enables this idea by aiming to understand a specific contextualized phenomenon in depth (Merriam, 2002). The nature of the research question is an important determinant of the research design. The case study approach is especially appropriate for the “why” and “how” questions, which fits with my quest to explore how succession is practiced in family business. Before going into detail on this specific case study I will discuss the benefits of case study methodology more broadly. There are several reasons to step into the field (Czarniawska, 2007): It is in the field that the actual production of accounts can be studied. It is where the action is. And in the information overload of today, with new contributions occurring on the internet constantly, going to the field can actually also be a way of limiting the research material. It is a way to let practitioners guide what material to select from what is relevant to them. And too much material can be just as problematic as too little. Regarding the role of the researcher in the field, Czarniawska (2007) states that an observer can never know better than an actor; the stranger cannot say more than a native. What the observer/stranger can see are different things. It is therefore risking condescension toward practitioners to give advice or establish “best practice” for them. Learning from them, together with them, and theorizing from that increased understanding is
however beneficial for all parties, potentially. To view participants as research partners rather than passive informants is crucial for strategizing research to advance, according to Balogun, Huff and Johnson (2003). An important aim of case studies is to unfold the complexity of the phenomenon under study, rather than simplifying it. The case study approach therefore leads to rich empirical investigations aiming at deep understanding. Merriam (2001: 29) proposes that case study is about “interpretation in context” while Pettigrew (1990: 268) uses the elegant expression “catching reality in flight”. Merriam (2000) characterizes the case study approach as particularistic, descriptive and heuristic. The particularistic nature leads to studies that examine a specific instance but illuminate a general problem. From insights into one successor’s situation we will know more about the everyday life of successors. The descriptive nature leads to illustration of the complexity of a situation uninhibited by a limited number of factors. The description furthermore allows us to take the time dimension into account – processes can be unfolded and history’s effect on the present can be considered. The heuristic aspect adds the quality to explain reasons for a problem, to explore underlying meanings and discuss alternatives to the chosen path.

To Pettigrew (1990) contextualism describes the essence of the case study approach. His three-dimensional framework includes the vertical interdependences between higher and lower level of analysis as well as the horizontal interconnectedness in historical, present and future time. The third dimension captures the interrelatedness of context and action which relates to the duality of structure in structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). Altogether contextualism through the case study approach leads to a holistic and multifaceted understanding where causation is neither linear nor singular.

A tricky question – especially in the world of case studies – is the “to be or not to be” of preparatory reading. I sympathize with Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their quest to develop methods for generating theory from practice. However I diverge from their view on preunderstanding. According to the original version of grounded theory, one should ignore the literature to keep an open mind and to meet the world with new eyes (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). Interpretations are limited to take place within the interpreter’s “horizons of understanding”; this horizon can however expand throughout the act of interpretation from experience and insights (Ödman, 1994). Therefore it seems preferable to broaden one’s mind with readings on different viewpoints of the phenomena under study as well as related topics to extend the possibilities for how to make sense of what is studied. From that the primary purpose, themes and questions are deductively driven (Pettigrew, 1997). I have relied on an iterative process of going back and forth between reading and fieldwork throughout the research project which the longitudinal nature of my case study lends itself to. Orton (1997) describes that iteration as “iterative grounded theory” where different possible theoretical approaches are experimented with throughout an empirically driven study. This iteration is however challenging to
A bricolage for understanding succession as practice

describe in the research outlet where some reconstructive logic is unavoidable to make the text readable. For example, I did not know in advance which theoretical concepts would turn out to be central for my analysis.

The case study approach also struggles against prejudices, one major objection being its subjective nature. And yes, qualitative inquiry is subjective, that is not a weakness to be minimized, however, but an essential element of understanding (Stake, 1995). Furthermore, when only one or a few cases are studied they are studied at length. Certain activities and issues will reoccur frequently so that generalizations regarding the case under study can be made (Stake, 1995).

The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself. (Stake, 1995: 8)

Except, as clarified by Sandelowski (1996:527), “the type of generalization that is drawn from and about particulars”. Social ontology applies to social life in general and by relying on a few examples one can enjoy the benefit of exploring those in great detail (Schatzki, 2002). My example of succession in one family business includes institutions like family and business which entail much of our life today. Schatzki (2002) use the ‘Shaker’\(^{19}\) example because social life is highly complex and any simplification permits fundamentals to show more clearly. My example is based on a relatively small family running a relatively small and simply structured business. This is helpful in displaying basic features of succession practice. The next section goes into the specifics of my case of succession.

The case of succession

How will the case study be carried out in this piece of research? How can we explore succession in family business and create an understanding of succession as practice through a case study design? I have chosen to study successions where the business stays in the family. With my interest in practice the daily running of the business is central therefore succession of management will be in focus although succession of ownership is an important contextual factor. This means that I study the case of intergenerational succession from one generation of owner management to yet another generation of owner management. To single out one succession in a family business I will focus on

\(^{19}\) The shakers are a religious sect organized in small villages of which Schatzki (2002) draws on the village of New Lebanon, New York, in the 1850s. He uses the example of the Shakers as Shaker life was simpler in many regards than the contemporary social life of society outside their village and simpler than social life today.
the period when the next generation is actively involved in the business – the
dual regime. That is however a fabricated delimitation of what is in fact a
gradual transition of both formal and informal preparations but it serves a
practical purpose.

The selection of cases is furthermore based on conceptual sampling. By that
I mean that I contacted businesses where I knew that two generations of a
family worked side by side with the intention of eventually handing the
business over to the younger generation. Accessibility is an important factor
both to have initial agreement and continuous contact (Gummesson, 1991).
Initially I found two families willing to work with me, of which both had taken
part in the regional study (to be presented in section 6.1). However, one of
them later decided to withdraw due to tough times during the recent global
recession. At that point I had to choose whether to engage with a new case or
to focus on the one I had. The type of results aimed at are not dependent on
the number of cases and hence a "sample of one" is sufficient (Stake, 1995). A
different cases could have been helpful for the analysis and to put critics of
qualitative methods at least a little more at ease, but would have decreased the
focus on each. As it is I am focusing on one case, as in the original idea of the
case study approach, with the opportunity to learn as the primary concern
(Stake, 1995). Gerry Johnson, in his dissertation, comments on the issue in
relation to his case study in an edifying way that I gladly borrow:

First it should be clear that there is no claim here that these companies, or these
managers, are somehow representative for all companies or all managers. Nor
was it the view that by carrying out the research in a few more organizations, the
data would somehow become representative of all organizations. […] To
conceive of one case as a methodological problem is to slip back into positivistic
notions of ‘the organization’, of eliciting social facts for proof and so on.
(Johnson, 1987: 68)

My focus is on the practice during succession but, to understand the succession
at hand, it is important to have a good insight into what happened during
previous generations. My initial intention was to participate before, during and
after the formal CEO succession. As will be described in detail in the empirical
part, their intention to shift the CEO position “soon” lasted for several years.
This is why the real-time part of the case mainly covers practice before the
formal transfer of the CEO position, although a wide time span is included in
our dialogues. Furthermore, during the research journey I came to dislike the
idea of dividing succession into phases altogether.

The case criteria in this study constitute the business being owner-managed
and that running the business involves several family members with a long-term
aim of continuing the family business. This means a focus on inter-generational
succession. Central to the case is the current and succeeding CEO. The
boundaries, on the other hand, are a delicate matter. According to the strategy-
as-practice perspective all actors can be strategists of importance, no matter
how peripheral to top management. This has implications for how to define and frame the case. The case is one of succession as practice but beforehand it is difficult to know what that will look like. I started by regarding the practice of the CEO as core and decided to see where that took me through a snowballing technique. My study turned out to have four main characters. The box below contains a first brief presentation of the family business which is at center of attention in chapters six and seven. For more details on their family ties, see the genogram in Appendix 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>AB KARL ANDERSSON &amp; SÖNER</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Line of business:</strong> designer furniture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Founder:</strong> Karl Andersson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inception:</strong> 1898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current family owner-managers:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingyar Wadskog, 3rd generation, ownership share 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria, Sara &amp; Andreas Wadskog, 4th generation, joint ownership share 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Turnover (2010):</strong> 30,909,000 SEK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of employees (2010):</strong> 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophy:</strong> Working with renowned designers and using wood as our principal material, our ambition is to develop high-class furniture with a strong identity and a unique character that outlives fleeting trends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Handmade in Huskvarna since 1898</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5-1: Initial presentation of the family business

From my analysis of activities, the actors that carry them out and their reasons for doing so, I aim to explore succession in family business and to create an understanding of succession as practice. The following parts go further into the specifics of how I carried it out.

### 5.4 Generating empirical material

Indeed, research is no linear process. This study is explorative; hence I cannot know beforehand what will be more central to my understanding. This is inevitable since I am both producer and product of the text through the iterative process of creative analytical practice (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005). I concur with Stake (1995) that there is no particular moment when data gathering begins because it had already started before the particular case study began in the form of back-grounding, acquaintance with other cases, and first
impressions. Likewise, there is no particular moment when analysis begins; analysis gives meaning to first impressions just as well as final manuscripts (Stake, 1995). This is connected to my belief that there is no data to “go and get” but data to be created and made sense of; the creation of the new is interwoven with experiences of the old. The generation of empirical material consists of several techniques that contribute to the bricolage in different ways. It can be broadly divided into historical data collected through documents and retrospective interviews and current data collected in real-time (Langley, 1999). The historical data focuses on memorable moments and broad trends externalized to be communicated while the current data is richer but messier and more implicitly linked to the research topic. A way of understanding practice is to pay attention to episodes because ineffable, tacit expertise can be conveyed in fragmented form by drawing attention to salient features in episodes where the ineffable is performed (Weick, 2010). These fragments form a collage where, by adding similar episodes, practice can be made sense of. “Thus, an ineffable practice is conveyed piecemeal by drawing attention to smaller, effable, abridged episodes associated with a larger set of tacit subsidiary sensitivities” (Weick, 2010: 103). Through my different methods I end up with many pieces of practice. A challenging part is how to put those pieces together. The puzzling metaphor does have its limits, however, since there is no complete picture to arrive at; the pieces are in flow and the whole is elusive. The bricolage I am crafting has no definite endpoint but its process allows for insights to emerge. Analysis is an ongoing process intertwined with the generation of data. I see this entanglement as a strength because it allows for learning as I go. It furthermore allows adjustments both between and within techniques, for example, to probe emerging themes. Flexibility in data generating methods is legitimate since the aim is to understand as much as possible about the individual case (Eisenhardt, 1989). Emerging themes can furthermore lead me towards certain theoretical perspectives. As the fieldwork proceeds I should thus put my increased understanding to use. That is what I strive for with a combination of interviews, observations, shadowing and archival material. To view participants as research partners rather than passive informants is crucial for strategizing research to advance (Balogun, Huff & Johnson, 2003). By paying attention to details of activities and actors I aim to describe succession practice as well as gaining understanding of its content and whereabouts.

The investigation of credibility criteria, in respect of discursively formulated beliefs at any rate, usually depends upon making clear the following items: who expresses them, in what circumstances, in what discursive style (literal description, metaphor, irony etc.) and with what motives. (Giddens, 1984: 339)

This calls for a sensitivity to nuances that requires close engagement with practitioners. Goffman (1969, in Giddens, 1993) suggests that much of social life can be divided up into front and back regions. The front regions are the
occasions where people act out formal or stylized roles. *Back regions* resemble occasions where people feel safe “behind the scenes”. In the back regions people can relax and give vent to feelings and styles of behavior they keep in check when on front stage. Extreme examples are the difference between on-camera and off-camera, or an actor on stage in her role compared with backstage preparing for her next performance in the play. But also during ordinary days people go in and out of front and back regions. In my empirical encounters I feel that the planned interviews resemble more of a front region while the shadowing gives room for more of back region interaction. With this comparison I want to argue for the benefit of combining different types of inquiries. In the following, more details on the methods deployed in the bricolage.

**Interviewing**

One of my sources to create empirical material is interviews. Interviews are good at capturing things that cannot be observed; they invite us to visit the other person’s perspective (Merriam, 2001). They give opportunities to discuss not only current events but also history as well as the future. Knowing about a person’s history helps the understanding of their present actions and future aspirations (Ericson & Melin, 2010). The main drawbacks I see with interviews are the huge difference between what a person knows and what that person can convey about it in dialogue. “Because of the necessarily embedded nature of internalized skill, having expertise in a particular field of activity in no way presupposes the ability to articulate what it is that one is actually able to do” (Chia & Holt, 2009: 131). From this it follows that to press actors for explanations makes them answer in a simplified form, making what they actually know, but only have partial access to in discursive form, into something it is not. Awareness of this limitation led me to add other methods besides interviews. It also led me to reflect about what questions to ask and how to pose questions. For that I am inspired by what Helin (2011: 198) describes as “questioning softly”. Questioning softly is not about the generalized, decontextualized questions prepared beforehand to cover pre-decided aspects in order to map out a totality. Instead it is about the small questions; the questions that arise intuitively from what is experienced in the moment, letting the conversation itself lead the way. I did however compose interview guides to prepare and have something to get us going. Those became less and less detailed for each interview. Two interview guides are attached in Appendix 2 as examples of what I prepared although we did not necessarily stick to them.

During the interview my intention is to create a dialogue where the meaning-making process can unfold (Holstain & Gubrium, 2002). These qualitative interviews can be explained as “conversation with a purpose” (Burgess, 1984, in Mason, 1996: 38). Regarding the issue of interaction by the interviewer I fully agree with Mason (1996: 40) that: “It is better to try to
understand the complexities of the interaction, rather than to pretend that key dimensions can be controlled for”. Holstain and Gubrium (2002) describe “active interviewing” as the style of interviewing in line with social construction of knowledge. Interviews are illustrated as conversations where meaning is not only conveyed but built through cooperation between the participants. This means that the interview and its participants are under constant development, which is why I find it important to carry out several interviews with the same person to allow for the learning process to grow. The interviews furthermore enable relationships to develop which allows for other forms of inquiry of a more casual nature like e-mail correspondence, visits and phone calls.

To identify key actors of the case I started with the CEO and then added persons as they were identified. For a comprehensive understanding it is important to listen to several voices. The formal interviews were conducted as shown in Table 5-1:

Table 5-1 Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Manager</th>
<th>Employee</th>
<th>Family member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingvar</td>
<td>2004-08-16</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006-12-19</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2008-05-29</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009-05-29</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010-11-04</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>2006-12-12</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2008-05-29</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009-05-18</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010-11-05</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>2006-12-19</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2008-05-30</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009-05-18</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010-11-05</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>2006-12-12</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2008-05-30</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009-05-08</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010-11-04</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klas</td>
<td>2008-06-26</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunnell</td>
<td>2009-06-24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>2010-05-11</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>10X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>2010-05-12</td>
<td></td>
<td>8X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews listed in Table 5-1 are those that were pre-planned. The first nineteen were long interviews (1 – 3 hours) where I had prepared themes to talk about, but just as readily let the other person steer the conversation and bring up what they want. An example of questions/themes during an initial interview is: “Tell me about your history in the business”. During their answer I would fill in with follow-up questions. I recorded and transcribed these interviews (apart from one and a half that were lost due to a broken recorder).
also made notes after the interviews, where I wrote down my impressions from our meeting. All the interviews took place in the business arena and involved other interesting encounters as well.

The latter 18 interviews were short (about 20 minutes) and served as a personnel survey. I spent two afternoons in the workshop interviewing employees at their workplace. At these occasions I had twelve questions prepared and took notes of the answers. It is important to me to hear employees’ perspectives on their work and the succession. When at the plant I would always try to take in the atmosphere, and I would take the opportunity to interact during coffee breaks and such like. Since the workers spoke freely about their employer, their answers were mostly used to inform my understanding and not reported in a way that opinions of individual employees are pointed out. The systematic personnel survey is therefore only reported as a short summary to represent a broad employee perspective. The interviews took place near their different workstations, but if and when that became too noisy, we moved to a quiet corner. The employee survey was welcomed by the family and they encouraged employees to participate. There are eighteen respondents because I had time to speak with eighteen people during the two days when I did the systematic interviews, no one declined to participate. Apart from formal interviews there were many spontaneous conversations that are important for my understanding but in a more indirect way. Those are not reported on as interviews but matter never-the-less. A summary of the employee responses in the survey is presented in Appendix 3. My gain from those encounters is however far beyond what appears from that short summary.

Observations through participative activities

While interviews are good for talking about practice it takes the practice out of context. An important part of my bricolage is therefore different kinds of observations. Observations in the form of sitting in on meetings or tagging along on ordinary days are important to include actors’ behavior on group/family level. They are also important for their real-time character where things are simply just done instead of retold in a structured sequential manner where there is a selection of what matters enough to report on. Not only does this allow me to see what my key persons do and how they interact with each other but it is also interesting to see how they communicate with other internal and external stakeholders. One could call this both observation and participation. I choose to call it observation since I am not performing the same activities as the practitioners. However it is important to clarify that “all direct observation is indeed participatory” (Czarniawska, 2007:55). Being present means being part. The point is not to make oneself invisible but to behave like a responsible adult, showing respect and sympathy, Czarniawska (2007) advises.
Studying the case in real time is good to grasp activities on a micro level but also to do so over a longer time period to get an idea of routines and changes thereof. Some sort of self-reporting is a way of collecting real-time accounts over a longer time period. Brundin (2002) successfully uses diaries of strategic leaders to understand emotions in strategic change processes. Inspired by her work I was influenced to try something similar. The widely spread and frequent use of e-mail communication has led to a development of a personal and informal medium that in some ways is equivalent to face-to-face communication (Wakkee, Englis & During, 2007). I decided together with my participants that they should send me frequent reflections by e-mail. Besides, self-reports can give opportunities for the actors to reflect on the process. A reflexive arena would be a valuable contribution to the method. We tried that for a while but it did not suit us. The participants played along politely but it did not take off in the way I had hoped. I did receive some interesting but short accounts, often after sending reminders, so we decided to quit and use other ways instead. In theory it was a great idea but since it turned out not to suit us I did not stick with it. This type of trialing is an example of how my bricolage evolves.

Table 5-2 Participative activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006-11-30</td>
<td>Me, Ingvar, Maria, Sara,</td>
<td>A meeting to discuss my research and their role in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 July</td>
<td>Ingvar</td>
<td>Round of e-mail reflections with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 July</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Round of e-mail reflections with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 July</td>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Round of e-mail reflections with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 July</td>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>Round of e-mail reflections with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 September</td>
<td>Ingvar</td>
<td>Round of e-mail reflections with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 September</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Round of e-mail reflections with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 September</td>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Round of e-mail reflections with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 September</td>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>Round of e-mail reflections with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 December</td>
<td>Ingvar</td>
<td>Round of e-mail reflections with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 December</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Round of e-mail reflections with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 December</td>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Round of e-mail reflections with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 December</td>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>Round of e-mail reflections with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-02-10</td>
<td>Thousands at the fair and</td>
<td>Visited Stockholm furniture fair during the day a cocktail party at Studio B3 in the evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>around 100 at the party</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-04-28</td>
<td>Me, Sara, Hilkka (KA sales</td>
<td>Customer event for a group of Finnish architects and clients at Studio B3 in Stockholm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>person) and a group of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>architects and clients (about</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 people)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-05-10</td>
<td>Me, Ingvar, Maria, Sara,</td>
<td>Strategy meeting about new products (4 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-09-14</td>
<td>Ingvar</td>
<td>Phone meeting about my writing; feedback and approval to publish from Ingvar, Maria, Sara and Andreas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2012</td>
<td>Me, Ingvar, Maria, Sara,</td>
<td>Phone calls, e-mail correspondence, coffee breaks, tours of premises, small talk and spontaneous conversations etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concurrently and</td>
<td>Andreas, employees, relatives,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unscheduled</td>
<td>business associates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observations through shadowing

One particular form of observation that I use is shadowing. “Shadowing is a research technique which involves a researcher closely following a member of an organization over an extended period of time” (McDonald, 1995: 456). The researcher shadows a person from the moment they arrive at work until they leave for home. Shadowing can be done both over consecutive and non-consecutive periods from one day to several months. Studies can focus on one role in several companies or, as I do, a number of roles in one company. During the shadowing the researcher asks questions for clarification and explanation when appropriate. McDonald (1995) considers shadowing different from other forms of qualitative research both regarding the level of analysis and the unit of analysis. The material generated is more detailed and is created through first-hand and real-time interaction. My shadowing is written up in a documentary-like mode, trying to capture how people are on their way in their practice (Chia & Holt, 2009: 132). Also, in this way that which is mundane or difficult to articulate is included. This is important for understanding succession as practice since most activities are simply just done as we act on our practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984), or through practical coping (Tsoukas, 2010). While an interview recreates selected events through dialogue, shadowing reveals more of the fragmented, varied and messy nature of organizational life where several things happen at once. This is important for succession as practice since we cannot know beforehand which of the mundane activities carried out today will turn out to matter for succession later on. The unit of analysis of individual/group level is not uncommon in other qualitative techniques but shadowing accentuates the contextualization of actions. And as stated by Chia and Holt (2009: 125), “Practice without context is not a practice but a series of primitive actions”. Shadowing examines individuals in a holistic way which includes both their behaviour, through observation, and their opinion, through conversation. The organization is viewed from the perspective of the person shadowed and from the interaction this person encounters during the day. McDonald (2005) claims that shadowing is different from other techniques, which does not mean better, but rather that it can provide different insights. I feel that shadowing allows me to experience real-time practice, a good complement to interviews.

Apart from its many advantages for understanding practice, shadowing also has its problems. Czarniawska (2007) points out how others who use shadowing have found it necessary to defend themselves from the expected criticism that their documentation of managerial behaviour could not lead to a general theory of managerial work. She reflects, and I agree, that: “The dream of a universal, general theory dies hard” (Czarniawska, 2007: 28). More importantly, the persons shadowed must agree to be really generous with access. Managing the relationship with the shadowed can be difficult too. In the beginning there is a settling down period of varying length (McDonald, 2005).
A good piece of advice from McDonald (2005: 460) is “never go in cold”. This means to spend time getting to know the organization and the person beforehand. For example, if as researcher you do not know the names of relevant products and persons, your notes will make little sense, or if you disturb the person with questions that you could have dealt with on your own you might alienate them. For me, the order of things solved this. I had already interviewed the persons several times and attended some of their events over the previous years. This also led to a very short settling down period during the actual shadowing. They already felt comfortable with me and I knew plenty about them and the business so we just had to figure out the practical parts of the shadowing.

Similarities between researcher and practitioner can both hamper and facilitate access (Czarniawska, 2007). To me it seems that what one can do is to reflect on the issue for each case. How different am I to the people I shadow? Compared with the anthropologists who need time to learn the language of the tribe they are studying I am quite similar to the “tribe” in my study. We are native Swedish speakers living in the same part of Sweden. Several more similarities can be noted. But there are also differences. They belong to the same family of which I do not. They run their own family business of which I know only a little, as an outsider, in an industry to which I am also an outsider. Compared with studying something completely alien, the similarities do shorten the time needed to reach an understanding. According to Czarniawska (2007), the day when everything said at a meeting is fully understandable is the day to return to one’s office. I suspect that the statement is not to be taken too literally. From previous research projects I have pre-understanding of family business management and succession. From our previous activities I also knew quite a lot about the participants. After some days of shadowing each person, I felt like I understood quite well how their usual routines work in practice. The people I shadowed were so welcoming and helpful during my presence that it felt very important not to abuse their hospitality. When reading others’ accounts of shadowing, see for example Czarniawska (2007) and Raviola (2010), I realize that this is a privilege.

McDonald’s (2005) review of shadowing revealed that the largest group of studies using the term shadowing in organizational research treated the method as a quantitative tool to record behaviour against a set of predetermined categories. A smaller group of studies took a qualitative stance and can be further divided in two groups; those using shadowing to gain first-hand experience of a role for its own sake and those using shadowing to gain an individual’s perspective of organizational roles (McDonald, 2005). The quantitative approach is deductive in its use of predetermined categories while qualitative shadowing is grounded in the activities taking place. Hence, shadowing is used as a technique and concept in both positivist and interpretative research, my work belonging to the latter. McDonald (2005) concludes his review of qualitative shadowing by stating that it is under-utilized.
A bricolage for understanding succession as practice

in the study of organizations and he especially identifies the growing field of strategy as practice as extra appropriate for shadowing methods.

Mintzberg (1970) used structured observation as a method to study managerial work. Drawbacks of the diary method, questionnaires and interviews are that the researcher must first know what managers do before she/he can design the forms, questions etc. And “then all he will learn is the distribution of activities he already believes the manager is doing” (Mintzberg, 1970: 88). Just as we knew little about the work of managers – apart from Fayol’s non-descriptive categories – before Mintzberg’s first thrust, we also need to know more about how succession is actually practiced. One area of contribution from such an account is that more relevant categories and questions for surveys and the like can be developed. My main purpose in shadowing is to get better insights into the everyday practice of the participants; to converse about succession and other strategic issues such as the fairs, product development and internationalization in their normal setting, to experience the atmosphere, climate and culture, and to see how my initial analysis compares with my impression from being there on ordinary days.

The set up was that I asked Ingvar, Maria, Sara and Andreas in a group e-mail if I could be there and tag along with them for a couple of days each. Please bear in mind that this question was posed in 2010 after I had conducted several interviews and other activities together with them over a period of six years. In other circumstances, I would have asked about it differently. They responded the same day that I was welcome. I sent them all dates I was available in April and they picked two days each. It turned out to be a couple of days per week over a period of five weeks. Due to the ash-cloud from Iceland that resulted in closed airports in 2010 we rescheduled some dates from April to May (in practice a lot of things happens that are not planned for).

Table 5-3 Shadowing schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person shadowed</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingvar</td>
<td>2010-04-07, 2010-04-08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>2010-04-12, 2010-04-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>2010-04-28, 2010-04-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>2010-05-11, 2010-05-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The procedure was that I would turn up in the morning when they started and follow the person in question throughout the day. I would carry a notebook and occasionally make notes when it was suitable. At 12 o clock I would go home for lunch for an hour, when I would clear my head and make additional notes. It turned out to be an exhausting activity to take in so many impressions, so the pause in the middle of the day I can really recommend. We would meet up again and proceed until they finished work for the day. I would sit with them in the office and walk with them around the plant. I told them that they should work as normal but there was no need to pretend I was not there. On
the contrary, they were welcome to tell me now and then what they are doing and how they are reasoning about that. The day was a mix of them tending to business as usual and conversing with me about what they were doing. We talked about the rationale behind activities and anything else on their mind, big and small. Sometimes I asked questions as well. In the evening I made additional notes. Finally I wrote a story about each day. I played with the idea of including whole days to illustrate their practice of everyday life on ordinary days. The stories show how an ordinary day is mundane, fragmented and full of routine and surprise at the same time. These narratives did get very long, however so I finally decided not to include them intact but instead use excerpts to illustrate themes and issues. These illustrations are to be found in chapter seven. My experience of doing the shadowing is however present throughout since it proved very important for my understanding of their practice. To give an idea of the level of detail in the shadowing stories used as basis for the excerpts, I attach some passages in Appendix 4.

Archival material

Archival materials of various kinds aided my understanding. The book published for the 100th anniversary of Karl Andersson & Söner contains information about the history of the business along with interesting pictures of people, furniture and premises. Annual reports have facts and figures. From customer letters, articles and interviews in television, radio, newspapers and magazines, and advertisements, I follow events and see how Karl Andersson & Söner is presented and how they present themselves in their communication with external stakeholders. The catalogues and website have information about their products and are yet another media for their communication. The company in question is small and run by people that share a dislike of bureaucracy so there are few internal documents like meeting protocols for me to study.

5.5 Analysis

Analysis starts from the beginning of a project and goes on throughout; it cannot be switched on or off. At times it takes a more systematic form and other times it is ideas that pop up while tending to other business. As the fieldwork proceeds my understanding develops. Structuration theory has several implications for interpretation in social research (Giddens, 1984). To begin with, social research has a cultural, ethnographic or anthropological aspect to it. The researcher tries to get to know what the actors under study already need to know to go on in the activities of their everyday life. Therefore the concepts invented by the researcher are second-order concepts that can
become first-order concepts if appropriated within social life itself. (Studying succession in one family business, inventing concepts about succession that can be appropriated to succession as practice.) Giddens calls this double hermeneutics because of the double process of interpretation involved. The task of researchers’ descriptions is to mediate frames of meaning (Giddens, 1984 influenced by Goffman) within which actors orient their conduct. Such social analysis demands various considerations. Literary style is important in conveying a milieu to those unfamiliar with it. This points to the delicate task of writing a thick and colorful case description; describing episodes as they were perceived with the five senses and conveying that feeling in plain text. The researcher is introducing frames of meaning associated with certain contexts of social life to those in others. It further points to the importance of also acknowledging activities of a mundane character as they too are an important part of social systems. Second, time-space relations cannot be pulled out of social analysis. Any social analysis should include the contextual features of locales through which actors move in their daily path. This means being sensitive not only to what is going on but when and where, which point to the importance of the arenas for succession. There are empirical implications of structuration theory in the role of the individual actor’s effect on institutional practices. The actors under study know a great deal, discursively and tacitly, about the environment of which they are part and should be treated accordingly. The discursive expressions of actors include humor, sarcasm and irony which in many research methods is missed out or rendered uninteresting but can tell a great deal of actors’ complex understanding.

Understanding is developed through the act of interpretation which is by no means a straightforward activity. Elementary interpretation (Ödman, 1994) is the automatic interpretation that we constantly do without having to bother much about it because it concerns things of which we already have a good understanding of: “it is warm in here – let’s open a window” or “we’re soon out of white paint – let’s order more of that”. In this way actions are preceded by interpretations although, when of elementary nature, hardly noticed as an interpretation, just as the “everyday reality” is taken for granted as reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and most activities are simply just done (Giddens, 1984). But when for example we listen to a story or read an article we must make more of an effort because of the higher level of abstraction (Ödman, 1994). That would be the case of my interpretation of interviews, especially since what is mentioned is only a fragment of the everyday reality. When viewing a painting we automatically interpret the elementary things about the painting like its size and colours but are more active or conscious about interpreting what it portrays (Ödman, 1994). This second order of interpretation results in a kind of story that is constructed from trying to understand more complicated things. My case description will be such a story. The third order of interpretation is conceptual when deeper understanding is aimed for by carefully interpreting aspects as something from certain
perspectives (Ödman, 1994). With the painting, this would be to interpret what it tells us – the meaning of what it portrays. The researcher should furthermore acknowledge that there are different interpretations depending on the aspects under consideration and from which perspective something is viewed. “Although early identification of the research question and possible constructs is helpful, it is equally important to recognize that both are tentative in this type of research” (Eisenhardt, 1989:536). When I choose to interpret succession as a practice it puts certain aspects in focus. For example, it means viewing every actor as a potential strategist, both within and beyond the organizational boarders. In short, there is a hierarchy that goes from elementary to stories to conceptual interpretations. Then there is the dimension of specific and structural interpretations (Ödman, 1994) that leads to comprehensive understanding. From the structuring of stories of specific activities, patterns can be detected which lead to a holistic understanding. In that way I can theorize from my findings. Hence, through interpretation of the empires from a practice perspective in the light of practice theory I am exploring succession in family business and creating an understanding of succession as practice. Could other methods have been used? Most likely yes, but there are implications inherited in my basic beliefs, the perspectives applied and the kind of knowledge searched for.

Analysis in practice

Analysis is one of those topics in research where the most rudimentary practical aspects are little described in books (at least for qualitative studies). Therefore I add this section of how I do it, which is not easy. When one lives with a study for several years there are themes emerging in respect of which one can hardly tell exactly when and how they emerged. Some aspects grew out of an increasing frustration when reading family business research like, “Why do they threat succession as a problem?”. Other ideas came from inspiring literature or inspiring interaction with peers like: If strategy is what people do – a practice among all other practices – the same could be said about succession”. Many insights came from the repeated contact with the people of my case. Analytical insights or breakthroughs come sneaking up on you now and then, often when you least expect it. One thing is certain; the case has been on my mind constantly but only sometimes consciously.

I was advised by a colleague to keep a log of the fieldwork. In that log I entered dates, activities, reflections, ideas and things to follow. This was good advice. Analysis is an ongoing process that is impossible to turn off and on. For that reason I created a folder named ‘analysis’ early in the process, where I collected bits and pieces that emerged now and then. But apart from important and unavoidable rumination I also analyzed my material systematically. When writing the case description many interpretations came about. Some were
written into the description and later on moved to analysis, other thoughts were 
immediately stored in the ‘analysis’ folder.

I put all my notes and transcripts into one document so that I can search for 
words and see what is said in total about certain issues. I also make different 
sorting’s, like grouping the interviews by person to see what one person said at 
different times. In this way changes over time really stand out. To compare 
transcripts with the same person in 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010 in a row allows 
interesting insights into how some aspects are rather stable while others change. 
It also allows the detection of things that happen so gradually that you forget 
that it was not always so. In the transcripts I have frequently marked times so 
that I can return to the recording and listen to episodes. And I read my notes 
and transcripts over and over again. Making marks and comments. Write little 
summaries and reflections, discovering new things as well as revisiting old 
thoughts. The duration of my study is a result of that I have worked part-time. 
That was not planned in advance but resulted in that I could follow my case 
over more years than normally possible within a doctorate. In accordance with 
my bricolage I made the most of the situation at hand and turned that into an 
advantage.

Also writing the text is an analytic adventure (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005). 
Things happen from the activity of writing. Trying to convey meanings, moods 
and doings in written language and in a language other than my mother tongue 
is certainly challenging. Important for the analysis of my case is the conference 
papers, articles and reports I have written in parallel. Almost all of them are on 
the topic of family business, most of them concern succession and seven 
contain partial analysis of the study of Karl Andersson & Söner. This process 
of writing and presenting has really furthered my thoughts on the overall study, 
both the exercise of formulating my thoughts at different points in time and the 
valuable activity of presenting to peers and receiving their feedback. Also 
listening and reading others’ work in progress helps develop one’s own 
thoughts. For that, JIBS  is a fantastic place. There is both the family business 
centre (CeFEO), and the business administration section filled with 
researchers of various kinds, all of them helpful in their own ways. Research 
seminars are regularly held in house. JIBS is constantly visited by internationally 
renowned scholars, teachers and business representatives. And we are 
encouraged to participate in various research conferences and workshops all 
over the world. Sometimes pursuing a PhD is lonely work, but not as often as I 
had imagined.

---

20 Jönköping International Business School, www.jibs.hj.se
21 Centre for Family Enterprise and Ownership, www.cefeos.se
5.6 A query of quality

A central criterion for evaluating good research is its ability to create new perspectives on what we take for granted (Weick, 1989, in Grand et al., 2010). In that vein, I try to think differently about family business succession. I would like the quality of my work to be evaluated on criteria of trustworthiness, relevance and novelty: Trustworthy because I retell my story in a confessional and reflective style where the reader can follow what I have done and why. Also because I have benefitted from ready access to my case study and have previous experience of family business research. Relevant since I explore the important and extensive phenomenon of family business succession in a way that adds to our current understanding. And novel since my study opens up new ways of thinking about succession that brings new possibilities to the topic.

Ethics is certainly an important issue in naturalistic inquiry; both toward the reader and the people that take part in the study. A case writer can, if unethical, select data so that virtually anything can come out of the case with low transparency for others to detect that. Even if I have nothing to hide it is a delicate task to handle all what is experienced and convey that in plain text. And I feel a great responsibility towards the people that take part in my study. What processes do I trigger by being there asking questions? For me it has been helpful not to keep my participants anonymous. Thus, when writing about them I have felt as though I was talking to them face to face, which is sensitizing. They have also read and commented on the material. Still, you can never know how others will react. Hopefully, by trying to behave like an emphatic, mature adult, as requested by Czarniawska (2007), I will not cause any harm.

The text is utterly important in a qualitative study such as mine. “Unlike quantitative work that can carry its meaning in its tables and summaries, qualitative work carries its meaning in its entire text” (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005: 960). The text cannot be equated with its meaning; it is not a portable property that can transport meaning from one person to another (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005). This poses special requirements on social scientific writing and I will rely on the four criteria used by Laurel Richardson (2005: 964) to reflect on my text: Do I make a substantive contribution from a social scientific perspective? My practice perspective grounded in practice philosophy leads to viewing family business succession in a new way opening up for new insights. I believe the topic is of importance given its effect on family business persons and the role they have to play in society as responsible owners with a long-term perspective. Does my text have aesthetic merit? For the aesthetic, Richardson (2005) include if the text is artistically shaped, satisfying, complex, not boring, and if it invites interpretative responses. To meet those criteria I have tried to balance my narrative so as to stick to the point yet allow enough fine grained illustrations for the reader to make their own sense of what I present. Hence I have used a combination of modes, such as literature reviews, stories and
A bricolage for understanding succession as practice

layered texts. Believe it or not, I have also edited the text several times with the intent to tighten the plot and increase readability. What the family members of the case study have offered me to build on by their open-hearted sharing is exciting life stories. Whether I, in turn, have avoided being boring in crafting the text I dare not judge. Do I show reflexivity; is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgments? To this point I would hold my confessional style of describing my research practice where I have tried to convey my muddling through rather than presenting a synthetically arranged version. Also my interest for the philosophical roots of concepts I use can be viewed as an attempt at consciousness. Finally, does this piece have any impact on the reader, emotionally or intellectually? Given the overall theme of rethinking family business succession from a problem to a practice – oh, how I hope so. It does challenge the received view of both succession and strategy making and thereby has the potential to inspire new thought or to irritate those who disagree.

Trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiries, such as mine, must be based on different criteria than those in use for studies rooted in the tradition of naïve realism (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Instead of validity and reliability, trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry is more appropriately discussed in terms of credibility and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I deem my findings credible on the condition of prolonged engagement both through the pre-understanding of previous studies and the duration of my case study. I also strive for credibility through relying on multiple sources and multiple methods. My respondents have read and commented on the text, both to give input and to decide if they will allow the material to be used publicly without disguising any information. Their approval has been concurrently renewed for each paper and presentation including their case. Finally they read and approved the finalized story and pointed out some factual mistakes. Transferability is sought by providing thick descriptions that makes transferability judgments possible for the reader. Through several steps my discussion moves from case specific to general in such a way that the reader can follow the interpretations I suggest as well as form their own opinions based on my presentation. This means that I will offer the insights I gained during the study but hopefully also inspire the reader to make their own. The reader might have different questions answered by the text than the ones I am posing, how can I then know where in the text that will happen? Consequently, I am a bit hesitant to narrow it down to main contributions at the end signaling that I am to choose what was most important to the reader. Hence, simplifying is not all good:

Something essential may be lost by this summarizing – the possibility to understand virtuoso social acting, which, as Bourdieu has shown, cannot be distilled into theoretical formulae – and it is precisely their fear of losing this ‘something’ which makes case researchers cautious about summarizing their studies. (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 85)
Abstractions and summarizing tables will be provided too but sometimes the answer might be found elsewhere and sometimes “the narrative in itself is the answer” (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 86). The study aims for new understanding of family business succession, since succession as practice is intertwined with all other practices of family business life, there are also possibilities of new insights on management. When theorizing from fieldwork we shall not ask whether the theory is true or false but when and under what circumstances it works (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For what and to whom does the knowledge gained about succession apply? The conclusions I offer are naturalistic in nature; intuitive, empirical, based on personal direct and vicarious experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 120).

Practice theory holds possibilities of relevance for organization and management studies, particularly to lighten up new ways of seeing (Zundel & Kokkalis, 2010). My suggested rethinking of succession is very much inspired by the work of the family business persons that I have had the opportunity to learn from. And it is the business persons themselves that possess a rich store of tacit knowledge about their businesses. But, from a pragmatic perspective, my effort to uncover some of it and render it explicit can, in return, be enlightening to practitioners (Langley, 2010). Given the type of study undertaken and its philosophical underpinnings I am hesitant to give managerial advices. What I aim to offer is instead a form of theorizing that invites practitioners to reflect on their own actions (Shotter and Tsoukas, 2011). By studying succession at Karl Andersson & Söner from a practice perspective, new ideas on succession have emerged. The outcome of my study is a new way to think about succession; thereby not claimed to be the only way but an alternative way. My explorative approach to research surely resembles wayfinding more than following a pre-decided plan. I am in a sense studying wayfinding through wayfinding. A variety of understandings may legitimately emerge from the same material (Langley, 1999). I commend Helin (2011: 209) for reasoning that “the academic text can be regarded as an offering of potentialities and should, therefore, be evaluated in the face of what kind of potentialities it might offer when engaging with it”. Through my practice perspective I aim to offer novel ways of thinking about and, consequently, treating succession.

According to Davis (1971: 309), “interesting contributions are those which deny certain assumptions of their audience, while non-interesting contributions are those which affirm certain assumptions of their audience”. An interesting proposition, therefore, is one which denies some aspects of the assumption-ground of its audience (Davis, 1971: 327). If it does not at all, it is just obvious – if it totally does, it is just absurd, and, if it is unrelated to the audience’s assumptions, it is regarded as irrelevant. This complicates matters since it implies that a proposition is interesting or non-interesting only in relation to the assumption-ground of some audience which is not necessarily a uniform group. In chapter eight, my insights on succession will be presented in proposition-like
A bricolage for understanding succession as practice

statements. If you find them interesting, it implies that I have managed to present something that partly relates to, and partly objects, and thereby adds to, your current understanding of succession.
6. Succession in practice

This chapter illustrates succession in practice. Before turning to the case illustration of succession at Karl Andersson & Söner, an overview of succession in the region of Jönköping, Sweden, is presented. The chapter contains two main parts. First (6.1), the study that outlines the succession landscape in the Swedish region through which the case company was identified, second (6.2), the case story of succession at Karl Andersson & Söner follows. It is a case description structured around the four generations of family members that have run the business, providing a historical overview as well as description of current developments.

6.1 The succession landscape of a Swedish region

This section is based on a research project (Melin et al., 2004) in which I took part in 2003/2004 commissioned by the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) together with other government authorities and business federations22. The case company of this dissertation (of which so far I have said little but soon will say plenty) is located in this region and was identified through that project. Here I want to report on some of our findings for three major reasons: (1) It contrasts the view of succession from the literature review, (2) it shows in what ways my selected case company is representational for family businesses in general, and (3) it constitutes an important part of my pre-understanding.

The research group consisted of Leif Melin (project leader), Per-Olof Bjuggren, Anders Ericsson, Annika Hall, Mattias Nordqvist and myself, all of us from the Centre for Family Enterprise and Ownership (CeFEO) at Jönköping International Business School (JIBS). Our mission was to examine what will happen to the companies that face generational shifts and transfer of ownership. The background is previous reports on major problems expected with imminent successions due to the low degree of preparatory work undertaken by company owners and, as an effect, also considerable job losses due to the many company closures that can be expected to follow from

22 Tillväxtverket (previously named NUTEK), ALMI (a governmental organization for business support), Sparbanksstiftelsen Alfa (the Swedish savings bank foundation Alfa), Landstinget (the county council), Länsstyrelsen (the County Administrative Board) and Svenskt Näringsliv (the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise).
succession failure. A gloomy portrayal. But is that all there is to it; what do practitioners have to say on the matter?

The Region of Jönköping (Jönköpings Län) in Sweden is marked on the map of Sweden in Figure 6-1. The region constitutes an area of 10,475 km² and has a population of 337,013 (SCB, 2011). The report is based on a study of 1,398 company owners and their opinions on a large number of issues concerning succession. The respondents represent all the privately owned companies in the county of Jönköping, Sweden, with at least four employees with a response rate close to 80%. The study has a three-stage design consisting of an initial telephone interview with all company owners, followed by a mail questionnaire to all participants of the first stage, and finally an in-depth study of thirteen cases selected to cover a wide variety of succession situations more closely. I took part in all stages of the project from planning to interviewing, to reporting and thus learned a lot both about the succession issue as well as the craft of the research trade. Especially carrying out six of the in-depth cases and a large portion of the telephone interviews gave me a good insight into the practical matters of the family business owners. As it turned out, their experiences painted a different picture from the one I had composed from my literature review on family business succession.

In the Region of Jönköping the privately owned businesses are in a vast majority both regarding turnover and number of employees (see Figure 6-2), in total 95% of all businesses are privately owned. Out of the privately owned businesses, 41% are owned by two or more family members, 31% are owned by one private person, and 23% are owned by two or more business partners. In all three categories there are businesses that view themselves as family businesses although not all of them would currently be a family business by definition depending on the involvement of other family members besides the listed owners.
In the privately owned businesses, ownership is furthermore concentrated to a few persons (see Figure 6-3), 31% of the companies are owned by one sole owner. Two owners is the largest category, at 36%. In 16% of the businesses there are three owners while fewer than 1% have more than ten owners.

---

23 The tables and figures from Melin et al. (2004) are translated from Swedish.
Apart from high owner concentration the businesses in the region of Jönköping also have a very high proportion of active owners. The role of the majority owner can be seen in Table 6-1.

Table 6-1 Majority owner’s role in the business (Melin et al., 2004: 28)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>90.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman of the board</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of the board</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other operative function</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No role</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The businesses of the region are relatively small and old. They have on average 20 employees and only just above 2 % have more than 100 employees. Over half of the businesses were founded prior to 1985 while only 3 % were founded after 2002. The average tenure of the CEO was found to be 13 years, while 25 % of the businesses had a current CEO who had held the position for more than 20 years. The age distribution among owners can be seen in Figure 6-4.
Considering the age of the owners and the fact that over 90% of the majority owners are CEOs, there are many businesses approaching both transfer of ownership and transfer of leadership in close proximity. But what time horizon do the majority owners themselves have regarding shift of ownership and leadership respectively?

Table 6-2 Majority owners’ perceived likelihood of ownership succession (Melin et al., 2004: 37)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probability of ownership succession</th>
<th>Percentage within</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>77.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-35</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-65</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-95</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96-100</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average in percentage</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The probability is high (if we regard 66 - 100% as high) that 10% of the businesses will undergo succession of ownership within a year. Over a three-year period the proportion increases to 21% while as many as 60% foresee a high probability of ownership succession within ten years. The same question regarding CEO succession gave the result displayed in Table 6-3:
Succession in practice

Table 6-3 Majority owners’ perceived likelihood of CEO succession (Melin et al., 2004: 42)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probability of CEO succession</th>
<th>Percentage within</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>83.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-35</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-65</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-95</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96-100</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average in percentage</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures on CEO succession are similar to but slightly lower than the figures on ownership succession, which could indicate that owner managers intend to stay in charge for a while after transfer of ownership.

Since the board is considered an important strategic arena we wanted to survey the majority owners’ views on the importance of board work in their company (Figure 6-5).

Figure 6-5 Owners’ opinions of the importance of board work in their business (Melin et al., 2004: 36)
Over half of the majority owners regard board work as very or rather unimportant. It cannot be equated to a lack of strategy practice but indicates that strategic issues are to a large extent dealt with elsewhere. It rather points to practice of a different kind that is not captured in a questionnaire.

How had the owners prepared for succession, if at all? We asked if they had engaged in any of the seven examples of preparing for CEO succession presented in Figure 6-6.

![Figure 6-6 Type of preparations made for CEO succession (Melin et al., 2004: 65)](image)

The preparations for CEO succession conducted, among the examples given, are foremost discussions with close persons. More than half of the respondents had talked about CEO succession with their family, their board (which can consist of family members) and/or their accountant. Regarding ownership succession the following preparations were made:
In preparing for ownership succession two options were most common; discussing it with family and with the accountant. Just about 30% knew who the future owner would be. However 17% of the owners had made no preparations whatsoever, not even talked about it with anyone. But when in need of advice on succession matters, who do they turn to?
The accountant is the person to whom most people turn for advice on succession issues. One can question if that is an appropriate role for the accountant. The second most common is to turn to someone in your social network. The results show that people tend to discuss succession with people they already know, not necessarily people with specific competence on succession.

The involvement of children was captured through questions of ownership and employment which only includes that type of formal engagement. Anyhow, it showed that 92% of the respondents have children (of unknown age) among which 50% work for the family business and 33% are part owners. More than 50% of the current family business owners reported that they intended a within-family succession of some sort. Questions were posed on which factors affected succession. Among them, age was the biggest reason for succession, at 65%. The biggest obstacle to succession reported, 37%, was that the work is so much fun that they want to continue. Other important inhibiting factors were the absence of suitable family successors or concern for employees; either they will have to leave because of high age or they will need to stay because next generation is still too young. Disagreements among the owners were seen as the least likely obstacle to succession.

From the in-depth study of thirteen cases the following insights were made (in summary). The number of owners, the distribution of shares between them and the relations between persons affect succession. Family ties among owners.
Succession in practice

add complexity to the process. Successions resulting in a combination of both old and new owners and managers depend on shared values and consensus on the strategic direction and government of the business.

Succession has both formal and informal sides to it. Whereas organizational positions and ownership shares are formally distributed, informal power structures might not match the formal version. Previous owner managers can, for example, have a huge informal influence on strategic decisions while no longer formally involved in the business. In other cases the bearer of the CEO title might no longer be actively involved in the daily running of the business.

Successions can lead to a positive development of the business from the infusion of new knowledge, energy and motivation. The development is dependent on the nature of the person’s relationship being characterized by collaboration or internal competition. Succession does not necessarily lead to business development; sometimes there is a need to expand the managerial resources beyond the succession.

The process of preparing successors to step up is important but so is the process of preparing the predecessors to step down. The role transition of going from CEO to something ill-defined is very difficult. It is helpful if there is a clear new role for the predecessor to enter. This can be a new role within the business (chairman of the board, R&D) or a new role in another context (business angel, golfer). There are many advantages when the predecessor stays in the business as long as one can avoid power struggles that such arrangements can result in. The financial state of a business in transition affects the alternatives available both in terms of how to finance a purchase and how attractive it is to take over as well as finding a fair solution among a group of siblings.

Succession influences a wide group of stakeholders and is thereby of interest to more people than the immediately affected actors. When in need of advice related to succession, people turn to those with whom they have a good relationship rather than unknown experts. Both knowledge and trust are central aspects. The accountant is for that reason consulted on succession issues beyond their professional qualification. There is a need for deeper knowledge and various counseling options regarding succession. Family business practitioners furthermore have little knowledge of what services that is available and what actors to turn to for different matters.

Each succession is unique but still includes many generic questions. It is the answers to those questions that vary. There is no one right way to strive for. Understanding of both the particularity and general aspects of a succession process is central for advisors.

To sum up and conclude, this depicts a region of relatively small and old owner-managed businesses. Many of them are close to ownership and leadership transfer. The type of preparations made, if any, concern talking about succession with family members and other persons the business owner knows well. The most common intended solution is succession within the
The joy of running the family business is what is keeping the current owner managers involved, and old age is what drives them away. Succession is complex, processual and relational. It includes challenges and opportunities. Careful preparations and considerations regarding the whole process are preferable, but is it really done in practice? In the following, we continue with a detailed examination of succession in one of the family businesses; Karl Andersson & Söner.

6.2 Karl Andersson & Söner

If it is to be done – it can just as well look good too

(A favorite expression of Ingvar)

This is a story about a family and their business. The business dates back to 1898. The tale is long, hence I will be selective. The history of the business is briefly described up until the fourth generation enters and the joint management that is the focus of this dissertation begins. From then on there are more details. The tale is mine, however, created together with its main characters and archival materials.

Karl Andersson himself – from a one man show to a whole factory

It all started with an entrepreneurial individual who was born in 1871. In those days, the term entrepreneurship was not yet in use but Karl Andersson was a resourceful handyman. He went to Stockholm to gain a master craftsman’s certificate in carpentry. When he returned to Berghem in the outskirts of Huskvarna he started to make furniture in a room at his parents’ house. Right from the start he promised to always make “only well-made and durable carpentry”. He soon earned the reputation of being the best, albeit the most expensive, carpenter in the county. From his work for the nearby castle of Lyckäs, the reputation of Karl Andersson travelled far beyond the local market. His furniture was carried to the nearest railway station and from there continued to be acquired by prominent people in Stockholm and other places.

---

24 One important source of information on the two first generations is the book about KA that was compiled for the 100th anniversary in 1989, referred to as the 100 year book.
Thus, Karl Andersson was a skilled handyman but he was also an entrepreneur. He realized the need for more efficient production without abandoning his belief in highest quality. His parents’ house was built on a windy hill on the slopes of the great lake Vättern. In 1906 he had a windmill built and a factory started to grow around it. Calm days did however cause uneven production so in 1911 he bought the first kerosene engine and production could run smoothly. When World War One caused a shortage of fuel Karl Andersson was quick to invest in electricity. This was spectacular in the tiny village of Berghem: “I can see how they can get the electricity to run down in the valley but you will never get it all the way up the hill to Berghem” says an old women who thought the wires would contain kerosene (the 100 year book).

Over the years the factory was modernized and started to produce rustic household pieces, primarily in pinewood. The surroundings offered pine trees in abundance which can be seen in the work of a local painter of that time.

25 All photographs belong to Karl Anderson & Söner and are printed with their permission.
Karl Andersson and his wife Ida had five sons, six daughters and later also a foster son. The sons were involved in the business from early days and it took 25 years before the first person was hired that was not related to the immediate family.

They were a religious family with strong Christian values, a Protestant inspired moral of modesty, solidarity and strong work ethic. Four of the children did missionary work in developing countries and so have several of the grandchildren. This has also affected the business. In Karl Andersson’s days there were frequent services at the plant. Caring for the employees and people at large has always been valued. For example, there were different forms of staff recreation from the early days, like a sauna available for all employees. And if there were drifters wanting to spend the night in the warehouse the heat was cranked up for their comfort. Another example is a shipment of chairs to a school in Palestine as early as in the 1920s. To this day, pieces of Karl Andersson furniture turn up all over the world, where least expected, since missionaries were helped, gladly, in furnishing their establishments.

A particularly moving story is about when Filip (one of the sons) tried to adopt 26 children. Ingvar’s uncle travelled to China as a missionary and started an orphanage. When all the foreigners were thrown out of Mongolia he tried to adopt all the children in the orphanage as an attempt to bring them with him. His rescue operation failed and heart-breaking goodbyes were made in haste. He did his best to send them money when possible and in that way helped them.

26 See the genogram in Appendix 1.
through school. The descendants of these children are considered relatives; some of them still keep in touch and have visited Huskvarna. Engagement in social projects of various kinds has occurred throughout the history of the business. In the 1980s the business was involved in a Sida project where a furniture factory was built in Tanzania and people were trained at Karl Andersson & Söner in Huskvarna.

The recession of the 1930s was hard on Karl Andersson & Söner. The business was close to bankruptcy but they managed to survive on the produce of the small farm surrounding the factory managed by Karl's wife Ida. Ida was also a driven person; she did a remarkable job in supporting the large family on what the little farm could offer. Before marrying Karl she had travelled to America where she spent several years. There she learned to both speak and write in English, skills she kept for her entire life. Another skill learned in America, well remembered by her children, was how to make ice cream.

When Karl passed away in 1938 his sons, already involved in the business, carried on together. “Stick together boys and you will do well” was Karl’s advice to his sons. In 1944 four of the brothers formed the limited company AB Karl Andersson & Söner and a new era began.

The sons of Karl Andersson and the design revolution of the 1950s

When the nearby railway station closed down in the 1940s a new location with better logistics was desired. In 1945 new land in central Huskvarna (15 kilometers away) was bought and a new factory was built. Now the preparation of timber was performed at the old plant in Berghem and the furniture was finished and shipped from the Huskvarna location. The four brothers did as their father had told them; they ran the business together. Yngve was the salesperson and the leader, Börje managed production in Huskvarna, Göran managed the plant in Berghem but was also involved in design. Lennart was the technician, constantly improving the machines and inventing new technical solutions. The below photograph was taken in 1948 at the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the business.

---

27 Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.
Other family members remained important for the business as well. During the Second World War, when the men served in the military, the business was kept by their sister Rut. The women in the KA history are described as strong and resourceful.

Since the family members grew up with the business they carry many memories. Many of the employees also grew up nearby and spent their whole working life at Karl Andersson & Söner, in some cases even their parents had worked there. One of the fascinating stories is when a table had been ordered by Princess Sibylla at Haga Castle. The day before the delivery there was a power failure but the polishing remained to be done. Lennart attached the polishing machine to the truck in the yard and the table was polished to perfection by the truck engine out in the freezing cold weather and shipped off to the castle. The table was never seen again but often talked about. There are also tales of horror. Working with the early machines without safety equipment was no walk in the park. The machines chewed through wood with ease and now and then a finger or two.

With the two modernized production facilities in place by the late 1940s, Karl Andersson & Söner was ready for new challenges. The furniture was now traditional and well-made but quite anonymous in design. In those days furniture producers generally designed their own furniture. Karl Andersson & Söner had however initiated cooperation with Carl Malmsten, a renowned
Swedish designer. His task was to refine their current repertoire, which resulted in two beautiful but still traditional lines for Swedish homes.

The 1950s were optimistic times in Scandinavia, households were better off than ever and there was room for fashion. This is when Yngve sent out letters to Danish designers. One of the most prominent replied that he might be interested and so a visit from Börje Mogensen was scheduled. After he had inspected and approved of their skills and facilities, a long-term collaboration began, and with it a turning point for KA. Ingvar keeps the binder with those letters in his office. When we read through the letters he tells me about what these characters were like, how Börje Mogensen constantly smoked cigars and carried large rolls of sketches under his arm. The first Mogensen collection for KA, Öresund, was launched in 1955 and is still produced to this very day.

The signature pieces are the cabinet and chairs with seats in hand-woven sea grass. Öresund was no immediate success, however. It was first produced in pine which turned out not to be stylish enough. Öresund was redressed in Japanese oak and displayed at a Mogensen exhibition in Stockholm. It has been in demand ever since. Mogensen played an important part in forming the brand of KA. He designed the logotype that is still used and was also involved in the design of KA’s catalogues in the 1950s as well as the office facilities in Huskvarna. There were many businesses making furniture in this region at this time. It was however rare to cooperate with internationally renowned designers. Since the fruitful first collaboration with Carl Malmsten, the collaboration with talented designers has continued and is still an important part of KA’s way of working. The region is still a furniture cluster of Sweden with many furniture companies, IKEA being the most well known. Nowadays it is very rare for those companies to produce the furniture locally because of high production.

28 The two collections by Carl Malmsten are ‘Vapensmeden’ and ‘Visingsö’.
29 ‘KA’ [kɑ:] is how Karl Andersson & Söner is most often referred to in spoken language.
costs; KA is one of few exceptions. Another rather unusual investment is the showroom in Stockholm, ‘Studio B3’, which was set up as early as 1962 and is still in use.

Göran Malmwall, one of the sons, worked closely with Börje Mogensen and was inspired to take up design himself. The KA72 cabinet, designed in 1972 by Göran, is still one of the company’s signature pieces. Nowadays it is made in a great variety of sizes, colors and sorts of wood and can be found at several embassies amongst other places.

The 1970s saw a dip in the market and the brothers were growing old. The company was mainly owned by them but the other children also had shares since the first succession. The four brothers gradually started to exit the business during the 1970s. They had trouble making up their minds on how to handle succession and they did not get any younger. Should one of them take over? One of the brothers in particular had a strong will but did not know what he wanted. Finally an external CEO was hired. A cousin was also involved in the business. When an owner passed away their shares were inherited. All of them were blessed with many children and the number of owners started to grow. At this point ownership was shared between over forty siblings and cousins. One of Karl Andersson’s grandchildren, Ingvar, had worked full time for the business since 1960 with his four uncles. During the 1980s Ingvar started to buy shares from cousins who were not involved in the business. He was very happy with the external CEO who sorted out many things and developed the business in a good way. Unfortunately the CEO had to leave for family reasons in 1985 and Ingvar took over as CEO after 25 years of
Succession in practice

employment. In 1988 KA was courted by an investment group that was building a group of a small number of handpicked furniture companies.

They came with a bid that took my breath away. Oj oj oj, do they want to pay this much? What do you do with such an offer, what will the other say? I could never pay this much to the other owners for their shares, it was just not doable. (Ingvar)

The other owners who were not directly involved in the business liked the bid and Ingvar could not match it. When it was decided that Ingvar would stay as CEO and run the business with a large influence he started to believe in the idea. The other businesses that were already involved were well known and respectable so maybe this would be a chance for development, to learn new things and get out in the world? He thought about it for a couple of weeks. If he should say no, what would the others do? He could not buy them out so there were not really any options. Maybe this could turn out to be good? And getting a lot of money could not hurt either. He went for it and now he ran “his” business for someone else.

It was not that bad. I learned a lot about how big corporations work. There were reports to be sent to the headquarters about all sorts of things. What is this nonsense for? this is not what brings in money, I told them several times. They understood where I was coming from so they were patient with me but I still had to do it. (Ingvar)

It started out well but for different reasons the group got into financial trouble. The CEO of the business group was fired for misconduct and one by one the businesses were sold off. A new person was in charge and he asked Ingvar if he wanted to buy Karl Andersson & Söner back or if it should be liquidated. And, to make matters worse, they demanded the same price as it originally sold for.

But surely you understand that it is impossible, I asked him. At least the company was left intact so there was nothing to do but to go to the bank and tell them that we wanted to buy it, me and Gunnel. We put in our money and borrowed enough to get Karl Andersson & Söner back. I talked to the accountant and he thought it would work out okay. So now it was just to go ahead. Back again. (Ingvar)

Ingvar Wadskog – back to basic and beyond

After a few turbulent years, in 1992 Karl Andersson & Söner was now back with its original descendants both regarding ownership and leadership. The family tree was now trimmed down to one branch and a simple corporate governance structure. Ingvar’s history in the business does however date back much further. Like most of the family, Ingvar grew up with the business as a
natural part of life. It had always been there and his father and many other relatives worked there. Ingvar describes his childhood memories of the business:

I pretty much grew up there, we lived close by. I remember it so well, the people that worked there. The factory was like our back yard. There were a couple of us; my younger brother and cousins that also lived close by. We helped out with little things like sweeping the floor. From about 5 years old and above we were there. It was always exciting, it was hard work of course but we hang out there and talked to the men.

A particularly vivid memory is the big fire in 1946:

It was early morning; our house was a bit higher up the slope so we had a good view over the factory. I saw huge flames, it had completely caught fire [...] It was dramatic. We could not even get to school; I was in second grade so I must have been nine years old. There were fire trucks, snow on the ground and lots of people. It was exciting. Later, when we got to school, half a kilometer away, everyone had to write an essay about the event. [...] I remember that I wrote, “Charles lunch box went up in flames and so did the whole backpack”. I mean, we could not grasp the severity of the situation. (Ingvar)

The big fire was a remarkable happening for the whole village and remembered both by people who were there in person and by the stories that are passed on. Wooden buildings filled with more wood made a spectacular fire. I ask Ingvar if it has made them extra careful in any way, but to him it is only natural that this type of facility catches fire sooner or later.

As a teenager Ingvar spent time in the new factory as often as he could. It was exciting to see the production and sometimes he got to work a bit. He has been interested in carpentry for as long as he can remember. At school woodcraft lessons were his favorite subject. He went on to study engineering with a specialization in wood at senior high school in Jönköping. This was advanced education at this time and not for everyone. Ingvar did like school, however, and had a good head for study, so his parents thought it was a good thing for him to pursue. After graduation he worked at NKs Verkstäder in Nyköping since he had a year to spare before doing his military service. NKs Verkstäder was a producer of high quality furniture for the prestigious NK (Nordiska Kompaniet) store in Stockholm. It was a good learning opportunity.

After the obligatory year of military training Ingvar went to work for a large furniture manufacturer in Germany for a year as well. He wanted the experience and also realized that it was very good in this industry to master the German language.

Ingvar returned home in 1960 to work for Karl Andersson. At this time the Mogensen designs were booming and production was running as fast as possible. A level of demand one was unprepared for:
Succession in practice

I had a feeling that it will be Karl Andersson for me from now on. The Öresund collection was a big hit then. There was no administration or planning systems. Sometimes one piece of furniture ended up with both two and three buyers [laughing]. So I started to structure everything; to plan production and install a proper order system. [...] So I started 1960 and what a start it was! (Ingvar)

There was no one to teach him about administration at Karl Andersson & Söner and there were no computers to keep track of things as there are nowadays. Ingvar’s education and experience from the two other larger factories really came in handy. He built up all administrative functions and adjusted them to fit the way of working at Karl Andersson & Söner. It was important to make a system that really fitted them without the unnecessary bureaucracy of large organizations. Just keeping it nice and simple but in good order.

1960 was also the year Ingvar and Gunnel met:

Ingvar and I met in 1960 and got married in 1963. I came from Eksjö so I moved here. In Eksjö I had worked within healthcare but when I came here I did not do that so much. I went back to Eksjö to work a bit in the beginning but then Maria was born in 1964. In those days you were to stay home with children. Then we had Sara and Andreas too and I was home when they were little, until Andreas was seven years old. I also took on day-care children. (Gunnel)

Ingvar worked hard to organize the company in a more effective way. He started with the coordination between production and sales and later he also took on planning of production. Gunnel knew from the start that Karl Andersson & Söner was more than a job to Ingvar.

I have never put any demands on Ingvar to be home on a certain time or so. It must take the time it takes [...] maybe it was a bit more regulated in the very beginning than how it developed but we have always lived with it. (Gunnel)

When the uncles’ retirement finally resulted in an external CEO, Ingvar liked the development and the order this person contributed. They worked well together and learned from each other’s experience.

In the mid-1980s Ingvar initiated a new strategic direction for Karl Andersson & Söner; furniture for public spaces. New products were targeted towards businesses, public sectors, embassies and the like. Since then the company has served both the private and public market. Several lines of office furniture were produced alongside pieces for the home environment. For a while they also tried school benches. They were quite successful but in the long run it did not match their schedule since the schools wanted to order new furniture during summer so that everything was in place when school started, but at Karl Andersson & Söner the whole company closes for a summer
holiday. The diversification into school equipment was divested but the dual focus on both private homes and public spaces remains, so does the summer closedown. Some issues remain important while other things change. The dislike for bureaucracy seems to be stable and passed on over generations.

Gunnel has always played an important role behind the scenes but never formally worked at KA. When the children got older she worked as a chef at a pre-school.

I have never worked at the business on a daily basis. There was so many from the family working there already so when Ingvar asked if I wanted to I thought that it was nice not to work here, me too. It felt too much if both of us should work here, in the relation to employees and such. But I have been involved in other ways, at fairs, helped out, and fixed things here and there. There are always things to be done. I have always tended to things like that. (Gunnel)

She handles certain tasks at KA that have become company tradition. At events and when the company has guests Gunnel serves her homemade curd-cake. And when guests are treated to curd-cake so are all the employees.

As previously described, Ingvar and Gunnel acquired the business in 1992 after some turbulent years of, first, scattered family ownership and then external
ownership. Now the business is back to basics but has also developed into several markets. The common denominator is highest quality, whether it is a dining table for a home or a conference table for an office. The collaboration with interesting designers continues and by the end of the last century the fourth generation was re-entering by formally engaging in the business.

The new millennium and the current succession…

All three children of Ingvar and Gunnel now work for KA. They grew up with the business as part of their everyday life and spent time at the plant now and then as children. As teenagers they earned their pocket money from helping out after school and during the holidays. Their childhood memories are probably similar to the memories of many in business families. Compared with people without family business background it is however rather special to have memories of your current workplace going back as far as you can remember anything. From their descriptions it is evident that the business always has been an inherent part of their life, included in what is ‘normal’.

I’ve always been here a whole lot. It was not always that fun in the beginning. We were going now and then if something needed to be done. But when I got a little older, like in intermediate school or so, I actually worked here. I filled in for the secretary answering the phone and tending to such business […] I also cut wood samples and helped out with inventory, counting stuff and other simple tasks. And we have always been at the exhibitions and in Stockholm and so on. I have always been there in one way or another. (Maria)

Her very first recollection of the business is not any particular event but the scent of the facilities:

It is something about this smell when you enter the building, I don’t know if you thought about it but it smells of wood and oil. […] I will always have that smell. And the old ones, like Dad’s cousins, say so too, it smells like it always has smelled. I have had that smell in me since I was a child because it has always been like that. And why it smells like it does I don’t know. (Maria)

Sara’s first memory of KA is from when she was about five years old:

I remember when I went to see Dad in his office, it didn’t look the same then. His office was next to the workshop and he sat there with his typewriter and lots of papers. […] And we grew up here in Huskvarna, Mum and Dad live here close by so we were here a lot. I remember Yngve, Göran, Börje and Lennart, the sons of Karl Andersson. I remember them well, what they did and what they looked like. (Sara)

There is no shortage of happenings coming to mind:
Once when I was cutting samples I almost lost my pinky. There was this big metal thing to hit on to get the sample out and I slipped and hit my finger so the whole nail came off. [...] And things like dressing up like Santa’s little helpers singing carols at the annual Christmas coffee. It was special; the whole staff was gathered, about 40 to 50 people. And I remember in third grade we came here on a fieldtrip with the whole class. We looked at production, how the seats of the Öresund chairs were braided. That is the type of things you remember. And how it looked; one building was added in the ‘60s and another in the ‘80s and another was tarred down, we ran around here at the construction site. There are lots of memories. (Sara)

Sara also explains that she enjoyed earning her own money:

I have always worked here in the afternoons after school and such. Especially in high school, whenever there were things for me to do, like sorting papers, fixing wood samples and office chores. If there were brochures or pricelists to be sent out. [...] It has always been like that in our family, you had to earn your own money if there was something you wanted, to take trips or go shopping for clothes. I have always liked clothes. And it was not only at KA, I also had summer jobs at other places when I was in school. (Sara)

Andreas describes his childhood memories of the business:

Well, I remember eventually realizing that it was something different; Dad was always working longer in the evenings while my friends’ fathers came home at five. [...] I remember the buildings, how it looked, and the people. People that I had fun with when I was there, played tricks on, when I was really little I mean. [...] It was fun, not for too long though; then it got boring. [...] It has sort of always been the base, I took it for granted.

When I ask Andreas about his first memory he ponders:

What could that have been… well, I do remember that there was a cooler with soda in it. And every time we walked by it I suddenly got very thirsty. And occasionally, very seldom, I got to have a soda and that was festive!

When they try to put their memories into words it becomes a mix of events, people and spaces as experienced by all five senses. The business has always been part of their lives to the extent of being so familiar that it is hard to describe. But all of them have also been away from the business and the hometown. Ingvar stresses that it is good that the children have followed their own paths and then chosen to return:

It is very important that they get to see the big world out there. They can bring that with them back to the business where you need to know so many different things. You need to be an expert on many things, almost everything actually. It is finance and handling employee issues and then it is sales, technology,
Succession in practice

production... It is so much you must master, it is a constant learning process and that is what makes it so exciting.

Even though they are individual persons with their own experience and expertise, engaging in the family business has to be approached as a whole and from within. They care for the totality of their family business. It is a whole that does not lend itself to being divided.

Sara was the first among the siblings that returned to work for KA.

I started here in 1996 so it has been ten years now. Before that I had lived in Stockholm and worked with interior design there so now I have some sixteen years of experience from this industry – phew, that is a long time! I was the first among us siblings to start. Dad called me and asked if I wanted to move back here since one of the sales persons was retiring. He has never forced any one of us to work here; it has just grown on us I think. It felt like I was done with Stockholm so I quit my job. I have had good use of those years, I got a great network of both customers and suppliers and I understand what it is like working with the end customers. (Sara)

Thus, Sara took a sales position but she soon also started to build up a marketing function that up to then was close to non-existent. I ask her if there is something in particular that she has contributed:

Yes I think so. I have done a whole lot to make us more visible. I have arranged for journalists to come here and different trips for architects. Really worked on us to show a clear and structured face of the company to the market. This includes everything from photos, all brochures, our graphic material and to get it into papers and magazines. More events too. Not to brag but some customers say, “Since you came here things have really started to happen”. But I do not count the first three years [laughing], because then nothing happened! And it was not really until the product development got going that things really started to happen.

In 2000 Andreas held an engineering position at a company in Gothenburg but felt ready for new challenges:

I felt really tired of that place actually. There was politics in everything. The business was not that big but very international, lots of politicking and everything was slow. So when I got the question I thought it would be great; be more active and try out my own ideas. [...] I think it was when we were on the phone once. He [Ingvar] said, “Gillis is leaving, would you like to come here?” First I felt some anxiety. I really wanted it but how could it be arranged? We liked it so much in Gothenburg. (Andreas)

From this description Andreas seemed to see opportunities rather than threats to his individuation by committing to the family business instead of working
elsewhere. For Maria there were several contributing factors, especially knowing
that the other siblings were on board.

Yes, it was several contributing factors [laughing]. To begin with I had already
left Stockholm by then. We moved back here and had kids and so on. At first I
was still working in Stockholm, and then I switched to the Gothenburg office.
But about that time Dad had started to ask us how we wanted to do. Andreas
had been working a year then. “Do you want to take over the business or what
do you want?” And if they [Sara and Andreas] wanted to, I felt that I wanted it
too. There was nothing special keeping me, I mean, the computer industry, I
was getting tired of that. [...] So the timing was right, it made sense. And maybe
I have had this question in the back of my head: What to do with the business?

Maria joined in 2001. She came in when Andreas had built up a new computer
system.

There was somewhat of a state chaos when I came in because we had so much
to do. And, how was it now? Andreas was working in the workshop but had
done my job before that. [...] so I was thrown into the office and Andreas ran
back and forth to get me started and manage production at the same time.

Since everyone was so busy she says she pretty much had to figure things out
herself: I do not think that is how one would do it with an unknown person
(Maria).

Since 2001 there is a family of four running the business. The three children
of the fourth generation are all committed to the family history of furniture
making continuing into the future.
It is special for family members to work together; it is also part of their driving forces.

To share work with your family, your siblings. These years have been nothing but good news, then it is easy. When harder times come, as it always does, then we will be put to the test. But it gives you strength, you can share everything. (Andreas)
To run a family business is more than a job:

Dad thought it was even more fun when Andreas and Maria also joined, that is obvious, I mean, he does not want to retire. And we do not want him to either. He really enjoys it, that is easy to see. All of us enjoy it. But towards your loved ones it is also important to try to separate between when you are working and when you are not, although it is a way of life. And it does not just effect us, I mean, it effects Andreas’ family, Maria’s family and my boyfriend, everyone is effected [laughing]. Everyone gets to carry furniture sometime or make a delivery somewhere. That’s the way it is. We are lucky to have such understanding spouses, but even so. (Sara)

Compared with their previous employment they all appreciate the freedom and challenge of working for themselves: “I appreciate that what you do is what gets done, if you do not do anything nothing happens, it is entirely up to you” (Sara). And working with family members has many advantages. It is only positive! We feel that it is great to work together. You get really strong as a family, we are really strong together. Sometimes it feels like we have a tendency to gang up against everyone else though [laughing]. We can even be too strong sometimes. (Maria)

Sharing ups and downs with your closest relatives on a daily basis gives a lot of strengths and encouragement. At times it is also challenging. One downside is that they tend to be treated as one person instead of four individuals:

Sometimes customers believe that just because we are siblings we know exactly what the others are doing. As if we shared one brain or something! I try not to interfere with the others’ areas. If someone is looking for Maria and she is busy they want to speak with me instead but then I tell them that it is better if they talk to her if they had spoken with her before so you know what you decided last time. (Sara)

I ask Sara if that is something they have learned by experience and she continues:

Yes, I think so. Always go to the source. And I have told the other that if I am not here when someone looks for me you must tell them to call me on my mobile phone because you should not interfere with that. Let it go when it is not your thing, I must do my things otherwise it would be a mess. I think this is so typical for family business. (Sara)

Naturally, they do not always stick to that. Answering for someone else is sometimes a quick and easy solution and other times it causes trouble. Another source of frustration is that you treat each other differently when you are not just colleagues but also family:
Succession in practice

Sometimes it can be a problem for the four of us to decide on things. Maybe it is typically Swedish too, that everyone should agree all the time. Sometimes it would be nice if someone just said: Now we do like this and that is final! We are more about: Let’s think about that. Let’s wait and see. Let’s do that some other time. That can be really frustrating. (Andreas)

And with family you argue in a different way too:

We have our conflicts that can pop up suddenly. That is just the way it is some days. Maria and I always get along but maybe that is because she is the oldest and I am the youngest? Sara and I can really quarrel sometimes, so can me and Dad. Then you know that you better let some days go by... And sometimes it is obvious when you see each other that today is not a good day to deal with this or that [laughing]. (Andreas)

Sara describes it in a similar way:

We try not to argue when other people can hear us, but that happens too sometimes, instead it can be at the kitchen table. And some days I can see in the morning that Dad gets really irritated for nothing, I can be like that too, it is the kind of temper we have. You know better than to approach Andreas just before 12 o’clock when he is really hungry, you have no reason to deal with problematic issues at that instant. But I think it is me that has the worst temper. I have always been the one that when I get irritated I let them know that this and that is no good! Maybe in a not so nice way, I mean, you can say things in different ways, but at such times you go into your private family role, so to speak. (Sara)

Maybe allowing for disagreement is an important part of sustaining family harmony? Or maybe it is the other way around, that not being afraid to disagree is an outcome of a harmonious family situation? Either way, the family members have very strong ties and are very aligned on the big issues like where they are heading but they can quarrel over small things along the way.

Up until 2002 KA had two plants; Huskvarna and Siringe. The Huskvarna location was added in the 1940s. For decades there has been an idea to expand in Huskvarna in order to divest the really old facilities in Siringe. In 2002 the idea was finally put into action. Maria explains the decision:

I remember it so well; it was one of the usual lunches. It was just Mum, Dad, Andreas and I, Sara was not even there. We were talking about this and that. Dad had bought the land for it a long time ago so we had the space and there was also some initial blueprints made at some point. In some sense there were quite extensive plans made but it is this thing with pushing the ‘go’ button. Andreas said something like, “We must do this while you are still in the business, Dad”. Then we said, let’s do it now then. It was during a recession which made it really cheap to build. (Maria)
The timing was good because prices went up again a couple of years later. The production of today had not been possible the old way with two separate units that were not really up to standard. The fact that the fourth generation was now determined to continue running the business in the future was an important factor. It worked like an energy injection: “Yes, I think so, I was really in favor of getting the renovation going and when we were at it I also suggested a computerized milling cutter and more modern things like that” (Andreas). The new facilities meant larger production capacity and new possibilities to grow. Since then their turnover has more than doubled. “It was so right for us; it is incredible that we pulled it off!” (Maria).

...as of 2004

When I first meet them, in 2004, the ownership is shared between Ingvar (50 %) and the other half is split between the children. They have consulted their accountant on how to plan for ownership transfer in a tax-efficient way. Ingvar tells me that they have a plan for how to transfer his shares equally to the children and that “it will probably be done during the coming year”.

Their roles in 2004 mean that Ingvar is the CEO. Sara works with sales but is also building up their marketing function. Andreas manages production and Maria handles customer services. Ingvar sees improvements from the children’s involvement:

I can already now see that we have become more active with marketing and exhibitions. We are finding more ways of marketing ourselves to the sides, so to speak. At the Stockholm fair we are present in a new way than we were before. Maybe the reason is that the market is tougher now also. You need to constantly make yourself visible. (Ingvar)

Some loosely articulated plans are in the making. All three siblings are committed to keep running the business jointly in the future. Andreas will probably take over as CEO but first they need to find someone to fill his current role in production. Another factor to deal with is how to manage accounting, finance and some parts of administration that Ingvar now does but none of the children knows how to do. Their main concern, however, is furniture design, not designing plans for succession.

...as of 2006

The ownership structure is unchanged, Ingvar remains CEO and no meetings have been held on the topic. This is where the story about 2006 would end if I was only interested in succession from a formal perspective. Instead I pay

---

30 In this regard ‘no meeting’ refers to no gathering with an outspoken aim to discuss succession.
Succession in practice

attention to how succession progresses over time without a deliberate plan for it to be so. Andreas’ role is changing and at the moment he is between roles, or has several, depending on how you view it. They have found a person who is promising for the task of managing production and he works in parallel with Andreas.

With Klas it was the idea when we hired him that he can take over my job, if he is the right person, and he certainly is! So when he is up and running I can take over more of what dad is doing (Andreas).

In the meantime Andreas put extra effort into product development and there are more new products than ever. So there is a transition of roles going on.

It is not like we have a certain plan or so, that I cannot claim, but it is started. Andreas has started to take over some things [from Ingvar] and Klas has started with Andreas’ tasks. In this way Andreas will take over more and more of Dad’s things, it is natural to do it that way. (Maria).

What is considered ‘natural’ is for things to sort themselves out gradually; to attend to business and manage together in the way they find convenient in the moment. Maria’s role is basically the same as in 2004. Sara still works partly with sales but more with marketing. She furthermore works to increase their exports: “Our exporting has been a constant challenge and now I feel that I would really like to focus more on it to really get it to take off.” (Sara).

When I ask Ingvar about the CEO position he says:

We have not decided exactly when but at least next year. I mean, it is just at paper to be written and handing over the shares. It is just that I am thinking about when it would be the best time. And, we do say that principally it can be done any day now. Maybe we even do it this year. We will see if there is any time left for it. (Ingvar)

Now it is clearly decided that Andreas will be CEO after Ingvar but the current arrangement with some sort of joint management is what they all like so there is no hurry. And Andreas’ family situation, the proud father of twins, make the timing bad for him to take on any extra work.

It is important to realize that they put little value on the CEO title. To them it is a bureaucratic requirement that one person’s name must be on the paper. Andreas was the one that accepted and since then it is the plan. If anything, it is considered a burden because this person needs to do boring paperwork.

Keeping track of electricity bills, banks and accountants – No thanks, it’s not my thing! I’m not that analytical either. (Sara).
And Maria is of the same opinion: “I sure don’t want to and I think Andreas is best suited for it”. One preparation they are planning is to write proper legal contracts between the siblings on how to handle the shares in the future. They think it is a good thing to do beforehand. As long as Ingvar is working they think he should keep his shares as well. Owners should be involved in running their business:

They are the ones that see to that it develops in a good way. You can see colleagues [competitors in the industry] where the family owns the business at a distance. They own it but are not CEO or part of management. How hard that must be! (Ingvar).

Maybe that is a lesson from the succession between the second and third generation where ownership became too scattered and the company almost lost before the family tree was trimmed down to Ingvar’s branch.

...as of 2008

The ownership structure is unchanged, Ingvar remains CEO, and no meetings have been held on the topic. Again, from a traditional perspective of family business succession, there would not be more to it apart from detecting explanations to why the succession is not completed. Instead I want to know about their daily routines.

Andreas was working part-time, on paternity leave, last year but is now back full time. With Klas managing production Andreas’ role has more and more been focused on product development. This is really starting to pay off.

We have had a fantastic increase in sales and our turnover has doubled over the last three years. [...] The product development and all the fairs we been part of. This year was our big breakthrough at the Milan fair. We could really feel that we had more people and better interest. It gave us several orders. (Sara)

When I ask Ingvar about his feelings regarding retirement he tells me that:

It is not appealing. Well, maybe to take a day off now and then. But, as I use to say; what can I do that is more fun than this? There is no reason. (Ingvar)

A hindering factor is still monitoring of the financial side of the business. Andreas is not keen on taking it on and his work with product development has contributed so much that it would be detrimental for him to give that up. But as long as Ingvar keeps working everything is fine. The upswing is however making Maria’s job really hectic. “It has been like that now for a while; Maria has been really overloaded with the incoming orders.” (Sara)

Sara’s role is basically unchanged but she is putting extra effort into their internationalization.
Succession in practice

I was in Holland last week and, as I told Andreas and Maria, to get the export going one must have some carefully selected stores that are specialized on Scandinavian design but to do only that will not get the volumes up. We must also reach the architects, which is where the volume is. Then the dilemma is that it will be occasional big projects instead of continuity. And the freights are quite expensive. We must work both sides [private and public market] also abroad. (Sara)

Even though they want to keep the current situation there are succession preparations going on.

I found this article in a paper about this so I made copies and told them to read it through carefully and start to think about those aspects [...] It often appears in the business press, this with succession, what to think about. I use to read those articles and think about it – ah is it this aspect too – and so on. There is a lot about it. (Ingvar)

Examples like that make me think that succession is still important to them and not avoided. One could wonder if Ingvar was the one postponing this succession but he is rather taking initiatives now and then to make them more prepared. Andreas is also thinking about possible solutions.

We had a third baby two month ago so I do not work any overtime on weekends and so, except on fairs of course. I feel that I would need to work some more but there is not much room for that now; no room to do extra things like take business classes. An alternative that I see is to find a good product developer to hire. Not that I would let go of that function but there are some activities in the process that are time-consuming and not that fun. Like doing the CAD[31] and things like that. But not give up the creative parts. (Andreas)

...as of 2010

The ownership structure is unchanged, Ingvar remains CEO, and no meetings have been held on the topic. It is both convenient and pleasant to keep the current situation.

Well, that will work out, we keep putting it off. And it is largely up to Ingvar really. He has to say, “Now I do not want to do this any longer”. It is just so good the way it is now. (Andreas)

[31] Computer-aided design (CAD) is the use of computer technology for the design of objects, real or virtual. CAD often involves more than just shapes. As in the manual drafting of technical and engineering drawings, the output of CAD must often convey also symbolic information such as materials, processes, dimensions, and tolerances, according to application-specific conventions. (www.wikipedia.org)
And in some ways the shift to the fourth generation is already completed. Many tasks are run by them and also suppliers and buyers are mainly dealing with them now. “Since we have worked here so long one could say that this succession is already done in that sense” (Andreas). This idea challenges the received view of succession. If the persons involved consider it done, is it so even if the formal aspects such as CEO titles and ownership distribution points to the opposite? If so, succession is dealt with without explicit management or strategic planning.

Ingvar is anyhow less and less involved in the daily operations. He still works full time and formally he is the CEO, but in practice things are changing. He is more mentoring or consulting the other when needed and tending to things that need to be done but are more of side-projects. To me this became clear when I was shown this year’s catalogue. On the first page there are some words from the family and a photo, but Ingvar is not in it. I asked Sara why it was just Andreas, Maria and herself in the picture. She then told me that when they took the picture at the summerhouse Ingvar told them that they could do it themselves now. This made me think that the actual succession might be preceding the formal one.

The last part is up to them now [Andreas and Ingvar], how they want to do, how they should work and organize it. We will of course help out and be supportive. And it can imply changes for me too. Maybe I should let someone else take over Gothenburg which is my sales area now so that I have more time for other things. In some way we must… I mean, we are so slow when it comes to these things. But there are thousands of other things all the time that is more important. [...] But, on the other hand, Ingvar has less to do with the daily work now. (Sara)

So even if the succession can seem to be stuck if one only considers formal aspects, the fourth generation is well prepared.

I mean, our accountant is involved but that only concerns ownership. Other than him there is no external person involved. I mean, it [succession] does not feel like a problem. We have no schism or anything; it is pretty simple in our case. We have our areas that we are working with so it does not feel like a big thing for us. (Maria)

Ingvar is however valuable for the business in many ways. He has a tremendous feeling for furniture design. He has an extraordinary experience of their business as well as the industry at large. Apart from that he is very important for his understanding of the financial side of the business of which the siblings know much less. Even if some tasks can be outsourced they think it is very important that the family can monitor their finances. Someone in the family must have an overview. For now, the timing is not right to put this on Andreas.
“Andreas does have three small children, which must really be taken into consideration” (Sara). An important step in the direction of solving some of Ingvar’s tasks is the hiring of a clerk. This person, Mats, is now taking on the books and some other of Ingvar’s administrative chores. Mats can also help Maria out when she is drowning in paperwork. So, even if ownership and leadership are formally unchanged, their practice is far from the status quo.

A “semi-ad hoc strategy meeting”\textsuperscript{32}

On 29 April I am at KA to follow Sara for the day. Sara and Andreas talk about how there are a large number of issues in need of attention regarding new products. They never find the time to discuss it properly on ordinary days because the phone is always ringing or other things turn up that need their attention. Andreas suggests that they decide on a time to deal with it. They compare their calendars and decide on a date. I ask if I can come and they say: sure, if you want to.

So on 10 May at 3pm, we gather in the conference room, Ingvar, Sara, Maria, Andreas and I. They hook up a computer to the projector and tell Mats and Catharina to take all phone calls and not disturb them for the rest of the day. Before Ingvar and Maria arrived I asked who was attending the meeting and if they often hold this kind of meeting. Andreas tells me that it is very seldom, usually they deal with these kinds of issues concurrently but now they had piled up and decisions are needed, so not even once every year. When all four have taken their places I ask if I can record the meeting and they don’t mind.

Andreas starts by suggesting that he show the proposals from his files and that we later lay them all out on the dining table and make selections. He starts to show sketches and pictures of prototypes from different designers. Usually the files contain stylish PowerPoint’s with nice pictures and drawings with details and props. They are sorted by type of furniture, so first we look at storage then tables and finally seating.

Most proposals have been sent to them during spring, others were found in ‘the Greenhouse’ at the Stockholm fair or in Milan. Some of them have been discussed before and are already extra interesting, others are new to everyone but Andreas who makes the first screening. Some prospects are immediately

\textsuperscript{32} As discussed in chapter three, what can be explained in an interview is limited to our discursive consciousness while most things are carried out through practical coping, which led me to add observations through participative activities and through shadowing to my bricolage. This section describes a passage from one of those activities. The idea behind this account is to illustrate their way of doing things together. It is an attempt to communicate their micro-level practice of running the business as I have experienced it by being there.
rejected by all of them in chorus. Other designs are debated a bit more. Some are considered nice but not for them for various reasons. It may be out of their style or range of material or too similar to something else. Some might be good if this or that can be changed into this and that and so on and so forth:

Sara: Have we seen something like this, have this been done before?
Andreas: Not really, well, I have another one here that is rather similar. [shows a picture]

They compare the two and discuss different construction and production technicalities. Then they move on to the next prospect. It is a type of cube that has a special 3D effect. They discuss how traditional bookshelves are being replaced more and more by small modules that the customer can arrange and rearrange themselves:

You buy the sections and then build your own bookshelf, then you get to be your own interior designer and that seems to be everyone’s dream; to be their own designer. (Andreas)

The others laugh and agree. Andreas likes this cube, Sara agrees that it is interesting: “It has this visual effect”. They have another prospect from the same designer, Andreas says that that one is not interesting but shows it anyway. The others take a careful look and turn it down. I ask why and they explain that it does not feel right. Its function is unclear, how should it be used and where should it be placed? It takes too much space.

The next one is “so very Italian”, Andreas says. The others immediately agree. It is a cabinet that they all think is very stylish but terrible unpractical to produce.

Maria: Then customers should not be allowed to buy less than three at once.
Sara: I think it is fun.
Ingvar: It is one thing to sketch it like that but it does not work to build it with that construction.

They continue to discuss alternative ways of building it. It is clear to me that there is a lot of tacit knowledge and experience behind their reasoning. To them, something being ‘Italian’ means specific things apart from being from Italy. A lot of things are immediately obvious to them but not at all to me. Sometimes I ask for clarifications. They explain that important parameters are, besides overall style, things like materials, functionality, lines and proportions, production technicalities, fit with current lines, originality and their previous experience of the designer.

Finally we have been through all the suggestions and arrived at quite a big pile of “maybes”. Now we move to the lunchroom to make decisions. There is
sandwiches and coffee for everyone and a smorgasbord of prospects spread out at the big (30-person) dining table.

Everyone eats and walks around the table for closer looks at the pictures.

Again there are discussions.

To me it is interesting to see the role play. Is someone taking the lead? Is someone's opinion more valued than others? I find it interesting that it seems so open. Everyone has their say. I was curious to see Ingvar's role, if he was going to take the lead, but he is instead more in the background. He is rather commenting on the discussion than leading it. Sometimes his expertise and experience is needed but he is not taking decisions. The decisions are made in consensus and, if any, Andreas and Sara are the ones most lively in the discussion.

There is lots of scrutiny and all sorts of comments. There is also joking and laughing. Again there are many parameters taken into consideration. How durable is this construction? That leg has a weakness here. This one can become too expensive.

Lots of nodding and mumbling.

Some questions will be forwarded to the designers. Some prospects will be turned into prototypes for further considerations.

They make a first selection and take a new round with the ones that made it to the second cut. Now it becomes more difficult. Which ones do they want the most and which ones would sell? One bookshelf is taken out because it is so big that they question if people would be able to fit it into their homes. A series of tables are cut because they are made entirely out of turned metal and not really fitting with their other products, regardless of how beautiful they are.

One chair causes some disagreement. Ingvar and Andreas seem to like it but Sara thinks it is too busy and difficult to clean. Maria thinks it give her associations of a chair from another designer. After some debate this chair is cut also. Now there are about fifteen prospects left. The discussion turns into which ones they would like to have for next year's fair and which ones to save in a “maybe later pile”. Sara mentions that she would like to display one wall with just hangers at the 2011 fair.

Andreas: Maybe there were too many tables on display this year, our exhibition felt a bit cluttered.

Sara: Yes, but that is how it gets when we are to show all our new stuff.

Ingvar: This is another question than what we are discussing now.

A more focused selection continues.
After a while a heated discussion, mainly between Sara and Andreas, starts. How many new products are reasonable to have each year? And must every product displayed at the fair be brand new or can one bring a few items that are quite new and promote them too so that they are remembered as well?

Sara questions how many new products they can handle.

Andreas: We do not need to do anything; we can show only old stuff then. [Rolls his eyes]
Sara: Now you are just going to extremes. [Irritated]

They start talking over each other. Ingvar cuts in and asks: “what is your suggestion then Sara?”.

Also Maria asks: “what do you mean, I do not follow?”

Sara: Do we really need…, now we have one, two, [counting their selections on the table] three, four, five, six, we have six new this year too, is that what we should have, do we need to have six to seven new products each year?

Ingvar: New products are what people ask for.
Sara: I think that two to three new [products] each year is plenty.
Andreas: If so we must terminate the small products, that we must do, they do not bring in the money, or do they?
Sara: I don’t know.
Andreas: I ask seriously, you need to answer as well, you just pose a lot of questions, but what do you think?
Sara: I don’t know any longer, are we talking about 2010 or in general?
Maria: This list cannot be carved in stone, we do not know if something even better will come in tomorrow, then we need to reevaluate.
Sara: Well then that is another story.
Andreas: Of course! I do not suggest that we should do 15 new things for next year, we are just discussing now.
Sara: Yes, but at the same time you need to have decisions ready to give to the designers, isn’t that what we need to arrive at today?

Andreas explains that he does not need to give any firm answers to the designers at this point but keep a dialogue about the ones they are interested in. And to others he can reply that we are not interested at the moment but save it for later. Ingvar concurs that this is how it works. Maria fills in that sometimes there are prototypes and everything before they have turned down a prospect.

Andreas: You [to Sara] are giving me mixed signals, first you want this one and this one and so on and then you do not want more than two or three?
[Rolls his eyes]
Sara: Yes, but now we are planning and you all must also think of how it is to market and sell the products, sometimes it feels like you do not get that!
Succession in practice

Ingvar: Yes Sara, do not jump to conclusions, now we are to decide together, we must discuss this in peace and quiet and think about what is best.

Sara: Well, forget about that then, excuse me for thinking about the fair; I can book 150 m² for next year’s fair then so that there is room for everything. We must be able to display what we have! [Irritated]

Some arguing continues but soon they agree that it is important and difficult to handle both new products and the current lines in the best way. The discussion turns to how they could better utilize their permanent showrooms and the exhibitions at the fair. Maybe they can get more space at the showrooms? Then one could keep the exhibitions at the fair streamlined with new products to work on strengthening their brand. Then a larger selection could be displayed at the showrooms. (An annual tradition is to host a huge cocktail party in the showrooms at B3 during the Stockholm furniture fair.) Everyone seems excited with that idea and starts discussing how they can best present themselves at the exhibitions.

Sara asks Andreas which of the prospects he thinks he would have time to develop for next year. Now the discussion is calm again and they all discuss in a productive manner. What options are there with the prospects they like the most? Different materials and construction options are evaluated. Which ones can be saved for later and which ones are more urgent? The light atmosphere is back and the rest of the meeting proceeds on a good note. I am thinking about our interviews, where they all have told me about how they can argue sometimes and now I got to see that in action.

They put more prospects in the maybe-later-pile. After some more scrutiny everyone seems happy with the outcome. They decide that Andreas will contact the designers and take it to the next step. We leave at 7, quite exhausted, at least I am.

Experiencing their way of working

The family did not have a routine for this procedure because they usually do not take these decisions at such a focused meeting; instead they usually decide these things concurrently. But when they felt the need, they gathered to attend to it and figured out how to do it as they went along.

All of them are knowledgeable about everything from style to production technicalities. For them all those aspects are automatically weighed in when they evaluate. What they do is to feel if it is ‘KA’. When I ask them to explain it to me they can specify a number of criteria; materials, functionality, lines, proportions, production technicalities, fit, originality, experience, clarity, size etc. etc. But it cannot be exactly explained because there is more to it than what they have discursive access to. They have a common idea of what is ‘KA’ so they mainly agree in their judgments of the prospects. When they do not, they are not hesitant to say so. Ingvar is formally the CEO but in practice it is a team
of four doing this together. In that way succession has progressed further in practice than on paper. I presumed that Ingvar’s role was more central than what I experienced by being there. They really do manage the business as a group effort. Yes, they do have their areas of expertise but many things can pretty much be handled by any one of them. All of them think of the whole rather than “their areas”. Their family business does not lend itself to being divided into parts. It is a whole of which they are part. Running this venture includes long-term ambitions of what is best both from a business and a family perspective.

Many of the things we had talked about in interviews were confirmed and further nuanced through my shadowing activities. For example, their way of deciding things together when needed instead of holding formal meetings was clearly demonstrated during my days there. The constantly ongoing conversation about everything is hard to describe but easy to experience. The saying “a picture says a thousand words” comes to mind. I get to observe things that to them are too evident to mention in their everyday coping with practical issues. And I get to experience things that are more of a tacit nature and therefore difficult to describe in an interview. Those things are also difficult to pinpoint in this text and I make no claim to understand and report a representational view. The experience in total is important for my interpretation and through this tale and the episodes used as illustrations in the following chapter I hope the reader can form an idea of their way of working as well.

… and after the formal change of CEO (autumn 2010)

Even though the family members have repeatedly and patiently explained to me that the CEO title is unimportant to them and has little practical meaning I have had a hard time to take that in. Initially I could not help wondering if there were some issues “holding them back” from completing the formal part of this succession that I had missed. If it could be done anytime why did nothing happen – why wait? But over the years I realized that they really are happy the way things are and therefore see no need to change. And why should they? To please the researcher and other outsiders wondering if it is not time soon? The type of change they are interested in revolves around furniture design. I think it is from those insights that I started to formulate my ideas on succession as something ongoing – a normal state – instead of something to “solve and get over with”.

Gradually I came to terms with the idea that there were none of the specific problems that the extant literature on succession had told me to look for. And even if nothing happened formally there were lots of things happening in practice. The two generations were working together and the formal shift of CEO was a formality that could be done whenever. And it turned out to be just that:
One day in the autumn of 2010 I entered a business database for some statistics on KA and suddenly noticed that the date of birth of the CEO was “too low”. At a closer look there was a change in CEO, registered on 1 July 2010, from senior to junior. Father and son are both named Andreas Wadskog and they were born in 1937 and 1973, respectively, so on paper it is easily overlooked.

I had met with Ingvar and Andreas just recently at an event and we talked about product development and how there was lots of things to do, as usual. The shift of CEO was nothing they thought of mentioning. I had not planned to gather any more empirical material for my thesis but of course I now returned once more to follow up on this, to me, surprising turn. We booked a round of interviews in November where we could talk about the recent development. I wanted to know in detail how the formal CEO succession had proceeded after so many years of doing it “soon”. It turned out to be something so insignificant to them that they hardly remembered when it was done. Apparently, when writing up the protocol of the annual meeting and finalizing the closing of the books, the CEO was changed in the report.

When we were to send in the annual report Dad said let’s make the change while we’re at it and I said, fine by me. It was not at all dramatic. (Andreas)

When I ask Maria how she learned about it she laughs and explain:

My husband told me! I mean, it has been decided since so long so in that way it was nothing new. I know that the staff were informed during one of the Monday gatherings but I had run off to answer the phone so I missed it. I guess I was the last to know.

When I ask Ingvar he is not sure about the time:

Hm, let me think, when did we decide that? It was after the summer vacation sometime I guess…or maybe it was before… well it does not matter.

Sara is not sure either about when she got to know of it:

It was at this staff meeting, or I’m not sure, they had probably talked about it before at lunch when I was not home. No, it was there at the meeting, I can’t remember that they had told me before.

The ownership structure was not changed and they have not signaled the shift of CEO externally. In the contact list on the KA website it says CEO after Andreas’s name now, so it is not a secret, but it has not been mentioned in their customer letter or elsewhere.
It is no big deal; if I am CEO or if Ingvar is CEO. It does not matter for our customers. They have more contact with our salespersons or Sara anyway. And I think they see us as a team because that is what we are really. (Andreas)

I ask them about how it feels to have done the formal CEO shift. And they point out once more that it is a formality, not an important issue, so it feels good but nothing major. If anything it feels good that customers, clients and colleagues of the industry can stop wondering about it. Within the family it was already decided so long ago that it was a ‘non-issue’. Why now? I wanted to know, since several annual reports had been written since I first met them. It felt like a good time, I was told. Andreas is back full time from paternity leave and Mats is up and running with much of the paperwork that Ingvar used to do.

So, what has changed then? I wondered. But the daily work changed very little from changing a name on paper (or in their case changing the order of the 3 and the 7). The changes are instead the gradual change in practice over the years.

In a company like this ‘CEO’ means nothing. We talk about everything together and that we will continue to do. We have our areas and then we talk. We do not interfere in everything; we mainly stick to our areas. Maria and Sara do not interfere in the selection of a new machine but everyone is informed about it and kept updated. It is the same regarding customers and fairs, there is a lot going on but you know what the others are doing. (Ingvar)

For now it is four people managing together but eventually it will be three. Therefore I ask them about Ingvar’s role and future changes. Ingvar is still working full time but thinking of slowing down gradually. An important new project of his is to make a proper register of all their previous products and designers over the years.

We get questions on a daily basis like: we bought this 30 years ago, who designed it? Those questions are often easy for me but the others cannot know all of it. And sometimes even I don’t know. Then I have to do some detective work and ask around. Some of the men have been here almost as long as I have. But Andreas, Sara and Maria have told me that I really must try to write it all down on paper. What designer did what model what year and so on. (Ingvar)

Long term changes were initiated somewhere around the year 2000 and they intend to follow along that path. This means to purposefully continue product development in line with what is “KA”. They want to keep their premium segment which allows volumes that can be handled at the Huskvarna site. They want to keep developing but not out of proportion:
Succession in practice

If you would like to be a big company with mass production that would imply many other changes in terms of facilities, markets and products. We don’t want that. Bigger volume and lower quality, it is not our thing. (Maria)

There is however room for further organic growth although future changes will depend on increase in sales and other things rather than on succession in itself.

It depends on things as exports, if that continues to increase, then we might hire someone that does parts of my job and so on. Those changes have little to do with the shift of CEO. (Sara)

The developments over the last decade have resulted in higher turnover, profit and export. Those are the factors determining investments and recruitments. So the formal part of succession has little practical implication, the actual changes have been ongoing long since. Included in those changes are issues related to succession in terms of the increasing involvement of the fourth generation.

I see two main reasons why the formal change of CEO went by unnoticed. First, they put little importance to the CEO title as such since they practice joint leadership. Second, the actual succession had progressed further than the formal articulation of it, so when the formal parts were changed it made very little difference in practical terms. The strategic direction of the business is already taken out and will also be followed by the new CEO who was already part of creating that direction. The CEO succession is however a marker that something is not exactly as before. I ask Sara how she thinks of Ingvar’s role now when he is no longer CEO:

Yesterday, for example, Dad and I went to Gothenburg to do an exhibition. It is fantastic that he can be part of those things, and a great help because he is so experienced and knowledgeable and thorough. There are so many things… like when I am formulating a letter I always go to him to have him read it through. It is things like that I will really miss the day he is not around anymore… oh [tears appearing] it is so important with how to formulate letters and such and it is not the same to go to Andreas or Maria with that. Oh, now I’m getting moved. (Sara)

Even if shifting the CEO title is totally un-dramatic to them it is still a reminder that Ingvar will not be around forever and therefore evokes feelings. In the example of the letter there is more to it than proofreading; perhaps it is also about security and confirmation? Ingvar not being CEO any longer is unimportant; it is his other roles that matter.

Some things are planned to change though. They have decided that the three siblings are to hold regular meetings. To me that would be a big change of routine since they hardly ever hold any preplanned meetings. They do, however, intend to hold these strategy meetings once every fifth year so with that frequency most days will still follow the same practice. The big change is
that they have decided to have this first new meeting without Ingvar. They believe it is good to practice without him while he is still involved. Since he has been the natural middle ground, the anchor, and of course the father, they figure it is good to start doing this on their own now, so does Ingvar. I ask about the dynamic between the siblings when they are on their own. They say that they cannot know that yet but since they have had plenty of time to establish their way of working there are good signs for continuing in a similar way – joint family management of three instead of four.

The future will tell.

So far Ingvar is working fulltime and most things are the same.

I am curious to know more about why it works so well to run the business as a team.

I think it boils down to how you are as a person. We are all very un-prestigious. There is never anyone saying, “It’s my way or the highway”. No one has ever said, “This is mine”. I don’t know what it is really; maybe it is because we have lunch at Mum’s everyday [laughing]. (Andreas)

And it is not a burden for them to work together, it is their way of being, they appreciate the opportunity to do so.

We like it this way; working together [...] maybe the age difference is helpful? I don’t know. We have never felt any rivalry anyhow. We have had friends of our own and been in different schools and so on. I don’t know. There has never been any competition; we complement each other pretty well. Maria and I are alike and Sara is more temperamental. (Andreas)

They are also secure in the purpose of the business: “If you have a solid foundation and your business model figured out and agree on where you want to go, then there are no major issues to deal with; nothing life defining to disagree on” (Maria). I ask Sara about the hierarchy when Andreas is CEO instead of Ingvar. Will she let Andreas decide if they disagree?

That is difficult to answer because it depends on the topic and the situation. And we have so different personalities. If I have been thinking about something and present my idea to them I want them to love it right away. Don’t they get it? Are they slow? It’s a great idea! [laughing]. And then it might turn out that I had forgotten to consider some aspects… The one thing we must agree on is that it must be “KA”, that is priority number one. That means that all of us must give in now and then. It would be terrible if KA disappeared, that would be truly horrible. (Sara)

Strong affinity is in their culture. Kinship has been valued over generations and is part of what is considered as ‘normal’. Working harmoniously together is also taken for granted: “It has to be that way; it is no good to have one person in charge that tells everyone else what to do. That would not work would it?”
Succession in practice

(Ingvar). Table 6-4 presents an overview of the different eras. It shows the family involvement from the inception of the business to the present day.

Table 6-4 An overview of KA generations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation/Era</th>
<th>Family mgmt.</th>
<th>CEO</th>
<th>Owner(s)</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Karl Andersson</td>
<td>Founder 1898-1938</td>
<td>Karl Andersson 1898–1938</td>
<td>From a craft to a company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Börje, Göran, Yngve, Lennart (4 of the 12 children)</td>
<td>Yngve 1938 –1980</td>
<td>Many relatives through inheritance 1938–1989</td>
<td>The four sons and the design revolution of the 1950s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>period of external control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ingvar &amp; his three children Maria Sara Andreas</td>
<td>Andreas 2010–</td>
<td>Ingvar &amp; his three children Maria Sara Andreas 2001–</td>
<td>The current succession &amp; enhancement of the KA style</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The transitions between the eras are not as clean-cut as a table portrays, however. Especially the rows in the family management column are very overlapping. Ingvar has worked fulltime for KA in a managerial position since 1960 although he became CEO in 1985. And although Ingvar has been the majority owner since 1992, he was a minority owner from 1968 to 1989. The four sons of Karl Anderson did gradually start to run the business together with their father long before they formally took over after Karl’s death in 1938. The joint family management seems to repeat itself. The four sons of the second generation did run the business together, first with their father and then the four of them, in a similar manner as the third and fourth generation are doing today and as the three siblings will continue to do in the future.

Patterns are also repeating themselves when it comes to the children. When I wonder about the fifth generation they first tell me that it is way too early to know.

But if any of them wanted to take over that would be great. Of course one would encourage that. No one can be forced into it though. Carl is my oldest and he is 13. Andreas’ children are even younger. But they are here now and then and some of them show interest in certain areas. And they work here sometimes. (Maria)
I remind her that it is how she and her siblings started out and the same goes for Ingvar and his uncles too for that matter.

At the topic of the fifth generation the tale is arriving at the present time. I continue by interpreting their succession in light of my practice perspective to develop the relation between succession and everyday family business life.
7. An understanding of succession as practice at KA

In this chapter practices of succession are construed from the practice of everyday life in Karl Andersson & Söner. To meet the overall purpose of exploring succession as practice I have been guided by three overarching questions: How are members of a business family socialized? How is succession included what is simply just done in everyday routines? And, how does succession progress without a deliberate plan for it to be so? In practice there is no clear-cut separation of different practices; they are all enmeshed but some are more explicit in daily routines than others where succession is largely implicitly practiced through other practices. A ‘layered text’ (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005) is presented where my elaboration is illustrated with empirical excerpts and episodes. To give an idea of the accounts of shadowing from which the episodes are picked, I have presented sample passages of them in Appendix 4. As discussed in section 3.1, drawing attention to effable, abridged episodes is a way to make sense of ineffable practice (Weick, 2010). In that way I have abstracted three overarching practices to structure their daily practice around. Those are practices through which their hardly visible yet always present succession can be demonstrated: the practice of joint family management (7.1), business development (7.2) and preservation of the essence (7.3).

7.1 The practice of joint family management at KA

Group leadership

In a company like this ‘CEO’ means nothing. We talk about everything together and that we will continue to do. We have our areas and then we talk. (Ingvar)

There is a CEO at Karl Andersson & Söner. Between 1985 and 2010 it was Ingvar, thereafter it is Andreas. In practice, today four family members manage the business as a team effort. When Ingvar retires there will be joint leadership of three instead of four. Ownership is concentrated to the four family members running the business which gives them freedom to act as they please, avoid all forms of bureaucracy they can, and stick to the ‘step by step’ way of working.
that they prefer. This is how they like it and their business model is constructed accordingly, and they have a great deal of experience to rely on. Their current way of working has emerged since 1996 when the members of the fourth generation started to re-enter. It is not new for KA, however. The founder did run the business jointly with four of his children, hence the name of the business, Karl Andersson and sons. Later the four sons of the second generation carried on together in a similar manner. Between the second and third generations, ownership was spread among some forty relatives and management issues were problematic when the sons of the founder retired. A short period of both external owners and managers followed although Ingvar remained involved the entire time. Ever since Ingvar regained ownership control of the business he has been firmly convinced that the business should be owned solely by the people that are involved in running it. He therefore intends to transfer his shares to his three children when he retires. If the fifth generation should become involved later on there is again a possibility of a ‘cousin consortium’ that might be difficult to handle. The future will tell. Joint family management among close family members has so far served them well throughout the business’s history. Looking back there have been different constellations of people running the business but succession has not been primarily tied to titles and ownership shares. The overlap between generations working for the business has been the normal state and succession has rather followed the gradual flow of the family lifecycle.

Their priority is to develop their furniture and thereby also the business. The label ‘joint family management’ is my doing; they are not interested in any type of bureaucracy like titles, organization charts or quarterly statements that in their view add no value. Their work certainly matters no less without being labeled. As pointed out by Tsoukas (2010), actors do not necessarily have the sense that they are strategizing. They focus on what matters; developing the business along the ‘KA way’. As will be further discussed later, succession is implicitly included in that work.

**Getting along amongst family**

The four persons now running KA are members of the same family and are socialized into viewing family harmony as the natural and normal state. It is a harmony that allows for everyone to speak their mind and express their feelings. And they share a common goal of genuinely wanting what is best for their family business to guide them.

Even when talking to them individually, posing my questions in singular form, they often answer in terms of ‘we’. The ‘we’ is the four of them. In the beginning I often asked to be sure but I soon learned that the business is run by ‘them’ and ‘they’ do things together. Maria explains what she thinks about working with family members:
An understanding of succession as practice at KA

It is only positive! We feel that it is great to work together. You get really strong as a family, we are really strong together. Sometimes it feels like we have a tendency to gang up against everyone else though [laughing]. We can even be too strong sometimes.

Although they really appreciate working together they do not get along all the time. With family you tend to act differently than with colleagues. Knowing each other so well makes it both easier and more difficult. You might be more stubborn and impolite with family but problems can surface and be dealt with from those encounters. In the following, two episodes to illustrate how they handle their differences.

**Speaking your mind, losing your temper and getting it back with new ideas**

Talking about what prospects to develop into next year’s new products:

Andreas: You [to Sara] are giving me mixed signals, first you want this one and this one and so on and then you do not want more than two or three? [Rolls his eyes]

Sara: Yes, but now we are planning and you all must also think of how it is to market and sell the products, sometimes it feels like you do not get that!

Ingvar: Yes Sara, do not jump to conclusions, now we are to decide together, we must discuss this in peace and quiet and think about what is best.

Sara: Well, forget about that then, excuse me for thinking about the fair; I can book 150 m² for next year’s fair then so that there is room for everything. We must be able to display what we have! [Irritated]

Some agitated arguing continues but soon they agree that it is important and difficult to handle both new products and the current lines in the best way. The discussion turns to how they could better utilize their permanent showrooms and the exhibitions at the fair. Maybe they can get more space at the showrooms? Then one could keep the exhibitions at the fair streamlined with new products to work on strengthening their brand and a larger selection could be displayed at the showrooms. Everyone seems excited about that idea and starts to discuss how they can better present themselves at the exhibitions.

As an outsider it felt like a black cloud suddenly appeared on the blue sky, shot out its thunder, gave some rain and then disappeared, leaving the sun to shine on the freshly watered ground. If someone entered now they could never guess that these enthusiastic people were arguing just five minutes ago.

**Agree to disagree**

Sara tells me that they want to renovate the office (designed by Börje Mogensen in the 1960s) but are disagreeing about how. She wants it done already but Andreas and Ingvar are so practical (rolls her eyes) and want to think carefully about the heating system, ventilation and all those things that there is never time for, so they are stuck. Stubbornness and sulkiness are family traits we all share, she says with a smirk.
Family harmony is not about avoiding conflicts but dealing with them in a healthy manner. From disagreements productive results can emerge. They have their own areas as well as a shared responsibility for the whole. They have also had time to grow into their roles and develop them. In our conversations they describe their similarities and differences with humor and affection. They have a strong sense of unity making them work together instead of competing internally. After all, they do want the same thing; what is best for the business and the family in the long run. As expressed by Maria in an earlier quote, they feel like they have a solid foundation to depart from and agrees on the important issues so that there is nothing life defining to disagree on. That common aim works as a guiding star. Working jointly is also taken for granted to the point that it is so self-evident that my questions about it seem surprising: “It has to be that way; it is no good to have one person in charge that tells everyone else what to do. That would not work, would it?” (Ingvar).

Managing by constant conversation

There is no routine of formal meetings at Karl Anderson & Söner apart from the required board meeting once a year. There is however no shortage of occasions when they meet and simply deal with issues as they go along. For example, they meet in the office, at the lunch table, in the car, at fairs, during business trips and while travelling to such meetings. Furthermore the whole family (including the families of the three children and an uncle) lives together during summer in the family’s summer house. Many of these places do however exclude non-family actors. The role of Gunnel, the wife/mother, is both central and peripheral. She does not have a formal role in the business but one of the most important strategic arenas is her kitchen. Every working day the father and the three children come home for lunch that she prepares. The children have homes and families of their own nowadays but the lunch arrangement remains. It is a pleasant tradition but it also serves as a meeting to discuss what is going on at the firm. The strategic importance of family arenas is also identified by Nordqvist (2005) in his case studies of strategy work in family business. Gunnel, with no formal role in the business, is part of many strategic discussions due to the fact that her kitchen is one of the most frequently used strategic arenas of the business. Klas, the production manager, on the other hand, has no part of that arrangement although he has a very important role in the business.

Spending time at KA soon made me realize that their communication works as one big ongoing conversation. Issues appear, disappear and reappear. Some people tune in and out while others are rather constantly “logged on”. The most common channels are daily encounters, phone (internal line, external line and mobile), e-mail, and talk across the corridor and through the wall.
An understanding of succession as practice at KA

Decision-making conversations
Ingvar checks his e-mail and tells me that there is a request from an interior designer on 28 thinner tables for a building he is decorating in Russia. He talks with Maria about it the next time we walk by her office: They decide to hand the contact over to Hilkka. (She is handling sales in Finland.) That could be a good order but it takes time to build 28 of those.

Conversations on the go
Catharina (secretary) has worked here for 25 years, as she tells me one of the times she drops by Ingvar’s office when I am there shadowing him. Her office is next to Ingvar’s. Sometimes they speak to each other through the wall or they get up and go into each other’s offices. All office doors are open and people come in and out, saying something, picking up or dropping off something, or doing several of the things mentioned. Ingvar does it too, we run up and down the stairs to see Klas or go to the photocopier in Andreas’ room or something else. Andreas is not in today though; he is on paternity leave. To me, most conversations seem already to have started at an earlier occasion and are continuing now and then. When we go along the corridor we get short updates on things as we pass by: Did you hear about the order from Russia?

Closeness regardless of whereabouts
Andreas mobile phone rings; it is Sara calling from Milan where they are setting up their show-case for the fair. The inner wall from the exhibition case next to theirs is higher so its back is visible in their show-case… They are painting it to make it fit in better but it was an unpleasant surprise. So typical of the Italian style of organizing… She also asks Maria to bring more stickers and promises to send pictures (MMS) of the wall before they hang up.

Practical means of communication
Ingvar calls Andreas from his office (one story above us) to mention that he has spotted KA at “Architonic”. It is a gigantic German internet site for designer furniture. We go to the site to have a look and there they are; a broad selection of KA products. Both Andreas and Ingvar (on the phone in front of his own computer upstairs in his office) are surprised. None of them knew that they were represented here. Must be Sara’s doing. Nice! They hang up. Andreas shows me some items on this website. He compares and explains; this site is good to get an overview on the current supply. He sometimes goes here to see if new prospects sent to them have similarities with already existing products on this site. It is a good place to keep track of.

Being informed by being around
Ingvar and I take a walk in the workshop. We stroll around and say hello to people. Now and then something catches his eye and is inspected. The atmosphere feels nice and calm; everyone is methodically doing their tasks; they appear to all have the rightknacks. We pass by a girl (one of the few female workers here) who sits on the floor putting wooden plugs in place on a table in a handicraft manner. Ingvar asks her if it is uncomfortable to sit on the floor but she thinks this is the best way to do this task. The men who wrap up the furniture before shipping talk to us about ‘HV’. – How will we do tonight? (HV71 is the local hockey team that is now in the playoffs and tonight is a
(One of them is not from this region so he and Ingvar squabble a bit about HV versus Brynäs.

**Conversing over coffee**

At three we go for coffee in the lunchroom. The lunchroom has only one table but it is a really long one so that everyone can sit together. They, mostly Andreas and Ingvar, discuss the FORMEX fair. It is a large fair in Stockholm for “small stuff.” Interior design items, hangers and the like, but no furniture. FORMEX is new to them but now they have several smaller items like Piniwini, Chess and Strip, that makes the fair interesting. But how do they want to present themselves in such a fair? What items are relevant to take there and how to display them?

**Instant conversation**

Maria reads an e-mail from Hilkka; she wonders about the delivery time on an order of Front. Maria asks Klas through the wall about it and he answers back that he already replied to Hilkka’s e-mail because it was sent to both of them which Maria now sees.

**Conversing around the photocopier**

When I am shadowing Andreas I soon realize that there is plenty of traffic in his office, both when he is there and when he is not. Now and then Ingvar, Catharina or someone else comes by to use the photocopier. Then there is small talk which is also a way to follow up on things. – Did you see the order from Russia…?

According to my survey of the employees, accessible owners that you meet daily and can talk to easily is for them a significant aspect of KA being a family business. Frequent interaction is a constant source of updating and sharing. It is effective and quick but also has its downsides. It is assumed that everyone knows everything so there is little formal information. Therefore things are also missed, forgotten and misunderstood now and then. When Sara tells Andreas on the phone that Maria needs to bring more stickers to Milan, is that meant as information to Andreas or a request that he should ask Maria to do it? This might have been obvious to Andreas but it was not to me as an observer.

All this shared time-geography leads to opportunities to interact and learn things from each other that are important for the business. When several generations of family members take part in the practical coping with daily matters it is also important for succession. The copy machine in Andreas’ office is a case in point that leads to lots of interactions. And from what I have experienced over the years I would say that they are routinely working ad hoc. It is a well-functioning system that however is hard to learn in other ways than to participate.

**Working united with individual roles**

Running the company together but with their own areas is how they work. But it is naturally difficult to just stick to “your” tasks, especially since they share
the responsibility for the business in total and are quite knowledgeable about the other’s areas too. Customers tend to treat all the family members as interchangeable in communication. They try to stick to their own areas but sometimes it is convenient to just solve things immediately instead of passing it forward. Although they have their areas they always look at the company as a whole. Many things, big and small, need to be done which is more important than who carries them out. Some episodes illustrating how they simply get things done are presented in the box below.

Answering for each other
Klas asks Maria where Andreas is today and if he can be disturbed. “Andreas is in Gothenburg but try the mobile phone, if he picks it up he picks it up” Maria replies. Like this, family members work as channels for each other in a very convenient way. On occasion I guess this could cause problems as well when they are treated as one entity but obviously are separate persons.

Backstage practice (after front stage practice of event for Finnish architects)
When the guests have left we (Sara, Hilkka and I) rest a bit and eat the rest of the canapés. We talk about the event. They seemed happy, didn’t they? Hilkka and Sara also take the opportunity to update each other on customer visits, potential projects and such. Hilkka tells about an order for 100 Ponoq hangers in a custom-made purple color for a school. She needs more brochures for two of the products. Sara takes note of that in her planner. They talk about the brochures for the new products. Some ideas on how to photograph them are discussed. They must have them ready soon.

Sara and Hilkka plan the architect event that will take place at B3 next week. They have to finish quickly because it is time for Hilkka to catch her train. Sara and I decide to take a walk in Stockholm. It could be nice with a walk before our three hour train ride. We walk through town making small talk. Sara tells me about the time she used to live here (for six years).

Tending to things directly
Ingvar notices that the clock in the corridor shows the wrong time so he takes it down and we look for new batteries in the mail room. He changes the batteries and puts it back. “Better to do it right away.”

Walk the talk
A potential customer calls Andreas and asks about the strengths of the Newton table. She is interested in it but has small children, so how stable is it? With the caller still on the portable phone we pass by the mail room to pick up scales and run up to the Newton table in the exhibition hall on the third floor. Andreas, with some help from me, weighs the tabletop and reports on the phone that the glass weighs about 13 kilos. Furthermore he can lean on it with about 8 to 9 kilos of pressure before it starts to move so it is quite stable he explains on the phone. On the other hand, it is a glass table so it is not meant for people to jump on. When they hang up we talk about our own children. His children understand not to stand on a glass table, Andreas says.
A trip to the shipment area and down memory lane on the way back

We (Maria and I) go to the shipment area of the workshop to give Suad the last papers and walk around a bit. Maria shows me the foreman’s office. From the look of it, it is hardly ever used. It is filled with stuff and dust. Maria recalls when her father managed production, before he was CEO. Then he was located in the workshop with a big desk filled with piles of papers…

Knowledgeable in general

Someone calls Maria about the breadth of a table. Can you get it even wider? Maria explains that the measurements can be customized but changing the breadth takes longer and is more expensive than changing the length due to production technicalities. But everything is possible…

I think to myself that this seemed like Andreas’ area but maybe it was such a self-evident question to them that it was the easiest solution for Maria to answer right away.

Furnishing the terrace

On the roof of the workshop there is a big terrace with access from the lunch area. Ingvar and I go out on the terrace and take measurements. The plan is to build benches all the way around the fence so that everyone can fit there during breaks. I am holding one side of the measuring-rod; finally I am a bit useful. Ingvar makes a blueprint. He tells me that this is a great place in the summer season. And it is good to have long benches so that people can lie down after lunch if they feel like. This is considered in the design. So is the shape of the parts. They must be comfortable both to rest the body and the eyes on. This is the kind of side-projects that Ingvar now has time for. Kalle, Ingvar’s brother, will come to help out with building them. We admire the view of Huskvarna a while and then go back inside.

The CEO of this firm immediately fixes a thing like changing batteries, directly when he sees that it needs to be done. And in these accounts I try to illustrate what ordinary days are like which also includes the mundane. Inspired by Mintzberg’s studies on the nature of managerial work I also think that we have too few accounts of what managers actually do. On another occasion the CEO furnishes a terrace for his employees together with a retired manager. Or, depending on how you view it, it was two brothers spending time together, having fun and being useful. When asked, they say that they do not hold strategy meetings but by being there I notice how strategizing is naturally immersed in their joint coping with everyday matters, like Sara and Hilkka creating new ideas for the brochures while winding down after an architect event.

Being knowledgeable about most parts of the business besides your own area is a strength but can also cause difficulties in division of labor. All four family owner-managers have their own roles but they have changed over the years. The job held by Klas (the only non-family manager) as production manager was previously held by Andreas and further back also by Ingvar. This helps Klas in his work, he tells me, because his employers know production and understand his needs, which was not the case in a previous employment he
An understanding of succession as practice at KA

held. Having your own area is a way of allowing for individuation for a family member in a family business while sharing responsibility for the whole allows belongingness (Hall, 2003). To create your own thing as well as your part of the whole in the family business is an ongoing process that is part of succession. And since family members are already part of the business they cannot take it over because that would presume that they could be separate from it and coming ‘in’ while succession in this case emerges from a deeply sensed feeling of belonging.

There is both family and business in family business practice

Karl Andersson & Söner is a family business. This means that traditional family matters are dealt with at the firm or during work hours. It also means that traditional business matters are dealt with at home, in evenings and during weekends. The lunch arrangements previously described, for example, leads to important strategizing in Mum’s kitchen. Family business simply concerns both family and business.

Tending to urgent business

Some minutes past 12 Ingvar says “Let’s take a break for lunch and meet again at 13”. He and Maria go home to Gunnel for lunch, as always. (Sara is in Switzerland and Andreas is on paternity leave today otherwise they would come too). After lunch Ingvar returns alone. Hannes’ hamster had injured his leg so Maria is at the animal hospital with three boys and one beloved pet. (Hannes is one of Maria’s children and since they have Easter break from school this week they were spending the day with grandma.) Maria soon returns and “Sotis” will make it so the emergency is over. It turned out to be an expensive hamster though.

Practical solutions

Just after 5 o’clock Gunnel comes by to pick up Ingvar. She used Ingvar’s car in the afternoon since Klas (non-family production manager) borrowed her car to go to Italy. I think it is a rather peculiar arrangement. They think it is normal to do what is needed to get things done in a smooth and simple way.

More practical solutions

On the train ride back from Stockholm Gunnel (mother) calls on the phone and wonders about Sara’s car. Shall they pick her up at the station? I offer to drop her off so they decide to leave a car by Sara’s apartment so that she can drive to work tomorrow. When they hang up, Sara comments on her mother’s role: it is important, she thinks of everything!

Fifth generation cameos

At nine Andreas and I go for coffee with all employees in the lunchroom. Maria’s oldest son, Carl, has no school today so he is here working. He is in sixth grade, he tells me. Carl seems well acquainted with everyone. There is small talk and newspaper reading. Many people eat breakfast.
**Meeting more family in the business**
When I follow Maria to pick up some consignment notes in the printer we meet a cousin in the mail room. She puts in some extra work during school breaks and such. Now she is arranging packages with brochures in binders that will be sent out to their sales persons. As a student it is great to earn some extra money like this, she tells me.

**Vacations with obligatory store inspections**
Andreas tells me during one of our conversations that he has realized how he now takes after his father in several of his behaviors. For example, when travelling with his family he must always locate all furniture stores and ‘drag’ his children there, just as Ingvar always did with them when they were little.

The rationale behind their way of coping might be unclear to an outsider but is clear to the family. It is habituated to the point where trying to impose strategic business plans that break with the routine would not stand a chance. A case in point is the aforementioned deal of producing school benches during summer that was terminated for reasons beyond the earning of economic rent. It is however a rational decision in light of their family business routines.

**“Hurry slowly” through quick and long-term thinking**
I am fascinated by their ways of taking quick decisions that have been thought about for ages. Over the years I got to follow ideas that were put into action when the timing was right or when an opportunity emerged or when they simply just got around to it. Talking about things now and then, sometimes for several years, makes them ready to take “quick” decisions when needed. For a person only present when a decision is made it can seem like a hasty decision made on the spot. Often issues resurface several times before suddenly turning into action though. Other times issues can be decided instantly because the persons needed to take decisions are already gathered.

**The big expansion**
The Huskvarna plant was built in the 1940s. Since then it has been an idea to expand sometimes in Huskvarna in order to divest the really old facilities in Siringe some kilometers away. An idea drifting around almost since the 1940s was now and then taking more concrete form. Additional land was bought at the Huskvarna location. Blueprints were initiated. After the fourth generation entered the idea was fuelled and finally, in conjunction with a timely recession, given a “go” decision during one of the usual lunches.

**Recruitment example**
At ten we take a coffee break. Mats is new to me and started at KA in December. He helps out with paperwork. We take coffee from the coffee machine. Ingvar checks out the drawer with biscuit tins and realizes that it is time to fill it up again. There should always be biscuits for everyone. At the break there is your normal small talk about the
news, the weather and so on. Afterwards I ask Ingvar about Mats. As I know they have talked about hiring someone that can do some of Ingvar’s tasks in the office for several years now it was interesting to see that the idea was now turned into action. “We got good recommendations about Mats and that he was available so we took the opportunity since we had talked about it for long”, Ingvar explains.

Andreas about his ‘hurry slowly’ philosophy
I comment to Andreas that I see them as good at both renewing and preserving the company simultaneously. Andreas agrees in that description. He talks about how they like to “hurry slowly” which he describes as liking to try new things but carefully, in small steps, one by one. Not just regarding product development but with everything really. To reflect on things for a while, think about it some more, and then carefully try it out stepwise. Like with recruitments: Mats (newly hired clerk) is stepwise taking over more and more tasks from Ingvar. And before he was even hired they had thought about it for a long time; several years. Also Klas was first hired for a less central position and then gradually took on the role he has now even though the idea was there from the beginning. Andreas sees it as a family business advantage; they can act long-term and take the time they want.

Being part of the family means being involved in the type of conversations such as the one about the expansion and serves as non-deliberate preparation. This type of involvement through practical coping (Tsoukas, 2010) is a way of preparing younger generations for running the business in the future and is in that way part of succession. Their way of doing things carefully in small steps and letting it evolve over time extends to succession as well. They like how they work – to dwell with things – and feel in no hurry to change.

Preparing gradually and appreciating what is now
From our interaction it is evident that the issue of succession is not formally ‘on the agenda’\(^3\). Although they work closely side-by-side and discuss both family and business matters daily they rarely talk about succession. Initially I wondered if the subject was taboo but it is rather a non-issue. When talking to them individually, asking about succession, it is however clear that they have a common understanding of what the succession is supposed to arrive at. All of them say that Andreas is to hold the CEO title after Ingvar and the three siblings are to own and run the company together.\(^34\) But regarding how and when, they know little and have no plans for how to proceed other than to carry on business as usual and deal with succession issues “soon”.

It will be a big thing when Dad cuts down on his work later on. It is a major thing. But I do not think he will quit totally. No… that I do not think… It is difficult, he

---

\(^3\) On the agenda is figuratively speaking, since they do not use written agendas for anything really.

\(^34\) Ingvar was CEO from 1985 to 2010 so Andreas was not yet CEO during most of our talks.
has so much knowledge. On the other hand we need to be a bit prepared and so…

(Maria)

In an e-mail reflection Sara once wrote to me:

At the [annual] board meeting this Friday when dad reported on the closing of the books I found myself thinking: I wonder if Andreas will do this procedure next year?? And if he will manage with all the technicalities??

From the reflections it is evident that they sometimes think about succession. And looking back at how the process has emerged over the last years they are also preparing, although not in a formal planning manner. Based on tacit understanding they cope practically with their everyday life. They tell me things like: “Nothing is new, just business as usual; we have so much to do with the daily matters that there is no time for anything extra.” As an outsider I can see differences over time and when I ask about it they realize that: “yes that is true, this and that have changed”.

Without formal planning they still have a common goal and now and then there are new pieces of the puzzle that fall into place. For example, hiring Klas to, possibly, take over Andreas’ role as production manager enabling Andreas to be free to take on the role as CEO. This was necessary for the succession to progress because when Andreas was tied up by production it was impossible for him to move on before they had solved the issue of his replacement. For this business, production is core since much of their competitiveness lies in outstanding quality and craftsmanship of their products. This task was therefore gradually handed over from Andreas to Klas over a one year period.

With Klas in place as production manager it could seem a good time to change CEO. Ingvar is, after all, a few years past 70. However, now the family dimension of family business played in and Andreas instead had the opportunity to be on paternity leave. He was not totally absent from the firm during his paternity leave but the timing for him to take over as CEO was wrong. Running their family business means combining what is best for the business with what is best for the family. Now Andreas is back full time and the gradual shift continues. Individually they tell me that “we need to sit down and discuss how to proceed” but so far this has not happened. They show awareness of how succession is prescribed to be handled in the business press and by policymakers, industry associations and other external actors. It has made them express the opinion that they probably should handle succession differently in a more formal and structured way. But on the other hand their disbelief in the value of formal procedures and bureaucratic arrangements of things in general seem to be stronger than this notion of how they might be supposed to act in accordance with some norm. Adopting strategic planning because that is how one should act professionally might even jeopardize their feeling of common endeavor so that planning for succession hampers its current development.
They have reached a point where they all feel responsible for the business and run it together but with their own specialties. They put little value on the CEO title. To them it is merely a requirement that one person’s name should be on the paper. None of the siblings was eager but finally Andreas agreed to take it on eventually. If anything, it is considered a burden because this person needs to do boring paperwork. In practice, there is a joint leadership of KA, and they intend to keep it that way after Invar retires. And since they all like the current arrangement, there is no hurry to proceed.

What is planned at KA are daily operations and product development in relation to the annual furniture fairs. Those issues are strategic and also concern succession because those are the things successors must master. There is however no explicit planning of strategy or planning of succession. When following them over the years I have noticed how closely they operate and how they are also similar in many ways. In the following, three separate episodes illustrating similarity:

*Ingvar acting ‘Smålandish’*
Ingvar gets a proposal from a business specializing in checking electricity bills. If they find that too much has been charged at some time during the past six years they collect that money and split it with you. If they don’t find anything it is for free. This sounds appealing to Ingvar; “Smålänning” as he is”, he tells me. He locates the electricity bills and we go down to Andreas’ office to make copies. Since it sounds like a good deal he does the same for B3. In Andreas’ office Ingvar shows me a prototype from the same designer that made Newton. It is a butler’s tray that is easily disassembled and can be hung on the wall. This could be something!

*Andreas acting ‘Smålandish’*
Johan, one of the persons handling the new machine, comes by Andreas’ office and wonders if he can buy a new piece of equipment. It is a new tool that has certain advantages and that will save money in the long run. Andreas asks some questions about it and agrees that it is a good idea. On the way out Andreas reminds him to bargain on the price. Both of them seem to know the supplier and comment that the supplier is used to that and would expect nothing else from them.

*Maria acting ‘Smålandish’*
Maria calls a delivery firm regarding a shipment to Finland. If it is sent on Monday, when will it arrive? What do they charge for 7 m³ weighting 100 kg divided on 10 packages? That much, huh…

She checks the price with another one; they charge 9000 (SEK). What about Schenker? She sends a request to them too. After a while someone from Schenker calls to ask about KA’s client number. Maria informs them. Later that day Schenker returns on the phone with a price of 6363 (SEK) – Much better, it’s a deal!

---

35 Smålänning means being from Småland. People from the region of Småland have the reputation of holding on to their money and being proud of it. (Another Smålänning, in all senses of the word, is Ingvar Kamprad, the founder of IKEA.)
The time they spend working together, both generations, naturally prepares the younger generation to continue on their own eventually. Their reason for joining was however to join, not to take over. They realize that changes are inevitable in the future but instead of proceeding by ‘passing the baton’ as business transfer is sometimes described they are enjoying the current arrangements; appreciating that which is now and finding the way forward as they go, letting their way of being guide them.

7.2 The practice of the “new KA”

More is more

The current situation means five managers instead of two. Before the younger generation started to work for the business Ingvar’s brother managed the site in Seringe and Ingvar pretty much managed everything else. Now, besides Ingvar, there is the hired production manager but also Sara on marketing, Maria on customer services and Andreas on product development. Naturally there is more marketing activity, product development and a better structure to deal with orders. The company is represented at more fairs with more new products to display and activities of internationalization are increasing rapidly.

In letter to customers, January 2004
We want to thank our customers for a good 2003.
As usual, the year started with Stockholm furniture fair where we showed two new products – MoKa and Pastillo.
In April we participated in Sione Internazionale del Mobile in Milan – Italy’s biggest furniture fair. There we shared a show-case with four other Swedish businesses and gained many new international contacts as well as concrete orders.
In July we finalized the new addition to our factory and are very happy about our new and improved production facilities.
During the year we have been visited by 20 architects who were shown our skills, tradition and progress.

In letter to customers, January 2008
In 2007 we participated in three major fairs. As usual it started in Stockholm where we showed no less than five new products. For Milan in April we added yet another one – “Thinner”, our 6 mm-thick table that got a lot of attention. In the autumn, Habitat in Helsinki was visited by 90,000 people.
The export is increasing and two new countries was added during 2007; Spain and Australia.
During last year we were visited by some 60 architects and took the opportunity to educate them on the qualities of wood and furniture construction and showed our skills, tradition and progress.
An understanding of succession as practice at KA

Since 2003 our turnover has more than doubled and we have welcomed seven new coworkers.

**Increased exports**

Sara wants to develop their exporting further. She reminds me that they see their three markets as home, public and export, where export can be both home and public.

Nowadays the split is approximately 55% to public market, 30% to private persons via furniture dealers, and 15% is exported. If they could have a third of their sales in each of those groups they would spread the risks in a good way. It is a difficult challenge but she is working on it.

According to Weick (1974), managerial work is an undermanned setting and more people should share it. In this case, this can be part of explaining the benefit from four family members running the business instead of one. Since 2001 all four have been gathered. During that time period they have doubled their turnover (Figure 7-1). The profit (Figure 7-2) was steadily increasing until the global financial crisis with its recession started in 2007. They are now starting to recover from that and actually managed relatively well considering that they could avoid both lay-offs and red tape. Others did not do so well though which have led to some restructuring of the industry.

![Figure 7-1 Evolution of operating revenue (turnover) 2001–2010, Amadeus database](image-url)
Old business – new furniture

The practices around product development have especially changed since there are now several family members jointly evaluating what to go for. Until a few years ago Ingvar was receiving all suggestions from designers. He picked the ones he liked but time and capacity constraints limited the number of new products. Now Andreas instead is the gatekeeper and selects the ideas he find promising (since about 2007). Thereafter he discusses the options with the other three and they decide together which ones to develop further as was illustrated in the meeting episode (in section 6.2). The number of new products developed each year has increased. The numbers of suggestions coming in from designers have exploded in the last few years as well. One reason being the increased visibility at fairs and exhibitions and the many prizes the business has been awarded lately\[36\]. It is a positive spiral of more/new activities and more attention. Change is present in this description. However, they also show caution and reflection of every new step. All family members tell me about the importance of sticking to what is “KA”. That is the measurement they use to judge new ideas. “Is this KA?” they say. When I ask them to describe what that means it goes back to their history of quality and craftsmanship and style that stands above current trends. Andreas puts it this way:

\[36\] In selection: Furniture of the Year 2010 by Elle Interior, the Nordic Design Award 2009, and the Swedish Design Award 2008.
For each product we are careful to ask ourselves: Is this KA? And: What is KA? It is something we have grown up with, it is our values. It should not be knick-knacks but things that last for a long time, both to look at and regarding the quality. It also has details that are hard to copy because it is difficult to manufacture.

The design awards they have been receiving, however, tells that this style is also regarded as contemporary – a fortunate mix.

They talk about the “old KA” which is somewhere before year 2000 when they were considered as a more traditional brand. So something has happened. When I ask the new generation about this they do not take credit, they claim that this route was already mapped out by Ingvar when they joined.

We can only thank Dad for being so progressive and not clinging to the past.
He was really the one initiating it. (Andreas)

However the extra capacity created by their engagements in the business might have been what really got it started.

Since we joined there are more resources. Before that, Dad had to do everything on his own and that is impossible; develop new products, put them in new brochures, market them… along-side of everything else. (Sara)

Ingvar confirms that: ”it was started, new designers were involved already but it was not until Andreas got to focus on it that it was given enough time to take off – it has developed really well”.

Their reasoning about developing new products but staying true to their old values extends to their succession as well. To them it is important to let things take their course; there is no need to force things but let them develop through joint practice in line with their way of being. It is a mix of curiosity and caution driven by commitment to their heritage of furniture design and quality.

**Simplicity with a twist**

The new KA is in many regards the same as the old KA in terms of values, quality and market position. But it is expressed in a new way that preserves the core of KA and intensifies its identity. The “simplicity with a twist” that they are known for is taken to a new level; before the twist was mainly built into how a product was constructed, which meant a challenge in production technique. This twist is more and more taken a step further to also include surprising features of the furniture that the customer can play with on their own. An example is the bookshelf ‘Sign’ with turnable dividing walls which gives it a flexible and organic twist (see Figure 7-3). The customer can change the shelves and thereby the function when they want and as they want. The more shelves that are turned the more it becomes a room divider than a
bookshelf. Its overall design is however as clean and simple as all KA furniture. Also here there is a careful balancing act. The finesse and simplicity must still be there, the twist should not be too obvious.

![Figure 7-3 Bookshelf ‘Sign’ as example of KA’s simplicity with a twist](image)

It has always been part of KA but maybe even more so now. Our product shall be hard to copy because it has certain finesse to it. They are not obvious or intrusive. It is something subtle yet clever, something extra in a special detail or so that gives it that extra feeling. This special element has always been part of KA, with Göran Malmvall and the brothers and Dad, but in some furniture more than others […] and I can see that Andreas has a lot of it in him, because this is something you have in you. (Sara)

When talking to Andreas his enthusiasm for product development is evident and our conversations often drift into that subject during interviews:

Take this table, [that we are sitting at] it has such clean lines but is unique in its construction. And that cabinet; there the corners look like they have been folded and serve as the handles. And this I must show you too [we go to the other end of the exhibition] this one folds into the wall when it is not used! And this one behind you; here you can twist and turn the shelves as you like! (Andreas)

Also Andreas confirms that this surprising twist to the furniture is increasing more and more now. But he is also careful to point out that it should not be too obvious: “It is when you come close to it, take a closer look and touch it; then something should happen, some functionality or so” (Andreas). They have also noticed that more young new designers are approaching them:
We have put the old KA somewhat behind us now but of course we still have some of the old lines left like these ones [points] and I think they are really good too. These tables here are also old; the classics. (Andreas)

I comment that to me those look modern too. From spending time at KA I realize that although external designers are used the family is very much involved in all steps from choosing between prospects to turning them in to parts of the regular assortment. In the following, some glimpses of development practice:

### Prototyping with Andreas
We go out to “his place” in the workshop where he works on product development. It is a big area but quite crowded with piles of prototypes and half-finished things everywhere. There are also lots of boxes piled here and there. He experiments on the ‘Strip’ prototype. It is their new hanger that will be launched at the Milan fair next week. It is not finalized for production yet so he fine tunes the construction on the ones that will be displayed at the fair. There is a steel band that will not stay in place. Maybe some magnets can hold it in? He tries out different versions. Where should one place the magnets so that they are hidden but still strong enough…

### Improving on existing models
Andreas works on a new version of Ridå. He explains that he is trying to make it less expensive by developing it further. Ridå is a product for sound absorption in public places. This new model, if he gets it right, will have higher capacity and cost less both for them and their customers. We talk about the development of new materials. This one has a certain fabric that looks good and absorbs noise. The parts he had ordered do not really fit though. He measures and carves the edges, measure again and then carves some more until they fit. This new construction uses some parts that are standard on some of their other furniture which means that some activities can be cut from the production process.

After lunch Andreas makes CAD drawings of the new Ridå prototype. I sit next to him and he shows me how the computer program works. Other things emerge at the same time that he attends to meanwhile. There are many smart things this program can do. Andreas explains and shows me as his drawing progresses. He also tells me that unfortunately he is the only one at KA who knows CAD programming and each little piece needs to be put in so he spends quite some time doing this. When the CAD is finished Andreas uses it to calculate the cost of the new version. It turns out to be over 1000 (SEK) cheaper; good! On Wednesday we can start to test-build it. Andreas tells me about the aspects he considers when he constructs new products. It is good if standard parts can be used in constructions. Each step that can be cut from the process saves time and money. Of course it is also about figuring out what customers would want. And durability; the pieces are built to last. Price should also be considered, within the segment that is. How will it fit with their other furniture lines? And so on. When he thinks about it in order to explain it to me it becomes obvious that there are many aspects considered. For him, much of it is done automatically though. I had not realized how much he is actively part of developing a prototype and turning it into a finished product.
Invar on design matters
Going through the mail Ingvar shows me a prospect of different barstools sent in by a designer they have worked with before. He goes through it and gives me his opinion of the different models:
This one just does not look good; the lines are too busy. (Turns the page)
These ones are not stackable. (Turns the page)
This one has potential! It can be altered a bit to get even better lines – like this (shows me) (Turns the page)
This one is good but too similar to someone else’s.
We talk a bit on the difficulty of picking the right ones. You can never know in advance which ones will turn out to be well received on the market. But knowledge and experience is helpful.

Always combining function and aesthetics
Hilkka gathers the group of visitors for a presentation of the new products. She presents one at a time and shows how they are to be used and altered. The “Bridge” is folded and unfolded to show how easily it is done. The interior designer next to me comments to me that there is a lack of good foldable tables in the market. Most of them are too ugly to use so he really likes this one that is both beautiful and foldable.

I view the creation of the new KA as an example of development enabled by the overlapping of generations; Ingvar could not do it on his own and I doubt that the younger generation could have done it themselves. Due to the gradual handover they however have good prerequisites to keep doing it in the future. The family members are the ones in title of deciding what to count as “KA”. The challenge is to keep recreating a KA that is popular with customers as well. One part of doing so is managing the succession by allowing both generations to be involved.

Small by Karl Andersson & Söner
One explicit new outcome is the “small products”. Those are a new line that is easier to sell, package and export. They are considered to be a good complement. In an economic recession it is good to market items that can be bought without the careful considerations required for a larger investment. They are also small in size and can thereby be a nicely packaged carrier of the brand. A conference table is just wrapped for protection but a small item like ‘Chess’ comes in a nice box. The smaller items can help spread the KA brand to new customers, creating awareness that might lead to orders for larger items later on. This development is now a new strategy but started without a deliberate plan. The success of Piniwini (one of their first small items) and the success of competitors’ smaller items during the recession led to new investments in small products. KA found themselves with a whole range of small products that needed separate treatment. Below, some episodes of strategizing around ‘small by Karl Andersson & Söner’.
**An understanding of succession as practice at KA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sara shows caution about the small items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>While eating (Sara and I on the train back from Studio B3 in Stockholm) we talk about their new line of small things and its special fair. What stores does one want to be represented in? These are important choices. It must be the right kind of stores and the right amount of stores. Sara mentions a designer that in her opinion totally diluted her brand by appearing “everywhere”. They will not be interested in that type of development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Andreas shows caution about the small items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is a new strategy and must be handled carefully. It is a very important balance that must be kept regarding these small items. They too must be ‘KA’. As an example he shows me a prospective candlestick he likes and explains how it has a certain twist to it. It has somewhat of an optical illusion in its construction that makes it look straight in some angles but there is a silhouette of a traditional candlestick hidden inside. He asks me if I like it, and I do. He continues to reflect on the strategy with the small stuff. They should not have too much of that but a few carefully selected items would be good to have. These types of product have their own market which is new to KA and where the KA brand could be helpful. But the small items could also be a marketing tool on their current markets. They could be used to attract new customers that, through the small stuff, come to recognize the larger KA furniture. Maybe one starts with a candlestick, that takes little consideration, and the next time one is looking for a piece of furniture one knows about KA. It is very important that the small stuff also is up to their standard. They cannot risk harming their brand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above episodes also illustrate how they think of the whole and not just their area. Andreas’ reasoning on this occasion is even more about marketing than his area of product development. Things are considered in relation to KA as a whole. A line of small items were introduced at the Stockholm furniture fair in 2010 and a new strategy around it took form. A combination of deliberate and emergent activities finally realized as a new strategy, to use the classic rhetoric of Mintzberg and Waters (1985). At the FORMEX fair in Stockholm 2010 the line was launched under the name “small by Karl Andersson & Söner”.

---

159
New routines are formed around the small products as they are kept in stock, retailed in other stores and require design considerations in packaging and display. Small by Karl Andersson & Söner is one component of what constitutes the new KA.

Developing together

The chance of being part of developing the business is what made the fourth generation join to begin with, not a need for succession. Working together and creating the furniture is their driving force. That is what it all revolves around. Since the fourth generation joined there have been changes in routines over time without planning for it to be so.

Informal changes

Sara shows me the catalogue for 2010. It is stylish in black with the white logo in the middle. The paper feels thick and classy. We talk about their decision to add “since 1898” in the logotype. On the first page the reader is welcomed by the family. I react that it is only Sara, Maria and Andreas on the picture. I ask about Ingvar. Sara tells me that when they took the picture, in Bunn (the place of their summerhouse), he said, “You can do it yourselves now”. To me that was a sign of him stepping back. He is still
formally the CEO though. I ponder if this means that the succession has progressed further informally than it has formally.

**Changes in book-keeping routine**
At three o’clock we go to the lunchroom for coffee. So does Mats, Catharina, Klas and two accountants from PWC that are there working on the closing of the books. This is the first year Ingvar is not the one sitting down with the accountants. We talk about this and that. Ingvar read in the paper this weekend about a company that made billions on the stock market by using computers to do very many and very quick deals. One of the accountants graduated from JIBS quite recently so we talk about the school. They ask me about what classes I teach so we talk about strategy as well. Klas remembers what my dissertation is about and asks how it is coming along. Later, one of the accountants comes by Ingvar’s office with some questions but most things are taken care of by Catharina and Mats this year.

**The new KA**
When Sara and I sit down for coffee at B3 in 2010 I ask her to reflect on the “new KA”. Sara thinks it is a result of some years of purposeful work that was fuelled when the three of them all decided to join. But it also has to do with a changing market. There has been a huge boom for interior design. There are tons of TV shows and magazines about how to renovate and decorate your home. This has created awareness about furniture styles and brands more than ever. Now people are aware and knowledgeable at large. Before, this was just among a few enthusiasts. Websites are important too. Now everyone can compare things easily over the web. A good website is essential. But most of all Sara thinks that their success lies in their work to systematically show a good range of news every year at the fairs. To show up at the fair one year with exciting new furniture is one thing but to keep doing it year after year is what makes a difference in people’s opinion.

Although the four family members technically own Karl Andersson & Söner, it is so much more than a thing to be owned; they are rather part of KA than in possession of it. The new KA is a result of the family working creatively together. That which is new is however in relation to the past. The values are the same but expressed in new ways. And openness to the unknown is part of their tradition, wheatear the new is electricity or CAD programming. Trusting the ability of the others is an important part in their business development. It involves mutual learning, not the old teaching the new about how to run the business or the new teaching the old about what the modern society has to offer. It is about learning together. In this joint developing of the business also succession evolves.
7.3 The practice of preserving the essence of KA

How can a family business not only survive but also prosper over more than 110 years? Getting along well is not enough if you keep producing the best typewriter when all your competitors are selling computers. On the other hand, at KA much of their success comes from preserving their heritage. The guiding star is to stick to what is “KA”. They cherish the values of the founder and will not give up on keeping production in-house. Still, what comes out of old values is contemporary furniture. Being both old-fashioned and in fashion. I have come to think of it as managing the duality of preservation and renewal. What to preserve is elusive and can therefore not be precisely defined. It evolves around the essence of the family business, without which it would not be the same. Knowledgability about the essence of KA is embodied in the family members of which KA has been part their entire life. This knowledgability is largely grounded in practical consciousness that they have access to in the durée of action without being able to fully express what it is they thereby know (Giddens, 1984: 49). They simply just know if it feels like “KA” or not.

Doing their thing better and better

One important aspect in preserving the essence is for family members to stay in control of the business. Therefore they prefer family control over growth:

Then you can have things as you want it and use quick and simple decision-making. You have to deal with both ups and downs, there is no one else to blame but yourselves. (Ingvar)

It includes knowing their place in the market and sticking to it:

If you would like to be a big company with mass production that would imply many other changes in terms of facilities, markets and products. We don’t want that. Bigger volume and lower quality is not our thing. (Maria)

Sara tells me about how they do not want to grow out of control but instead:

Keep developing in terms of quality. With the products there is so much more to do. Put in even more effort maybe, I don’t know. Raise the prices maybe? Anyhow it is about increasing profitability. We have a good profitability now but one must keep it up. Large turnover says little if the profitability is low. That is the point. Increase in profitability is more important than increase in turnover.

37 The essence is the intrinsic nature or indispensable quality of something, especially something abstract, which determines its character (www.oxforddictionaries.com)
We'll see what the profit will be this year. Profitability might not increase just because our turnover increases. We strive to increase our profitability with sustained turnover. That is a really big goal. That is a challenge if anything.

(Sara)

I want to know if there are things that should never change.

Nothing needs to be forever really. But wood is our main material. And one cannot change our backbone; making high quality and durable furniture that is not something one should change. If we compromise with that we are soon out of the picture. (Andreas)

And the Öresund line that was designed by Börje Mogensen 1955 and still is produced is, with laughter, mentioned as sacred.

Preserving their place
Their segment of designer furniture of highest quality is extremely important to uphold regardless of market, Sara explains. The retailers that do not get that are not right for us. If they nag about high prices and cannot understand the difference in quality we terminate our collaboration with them. If they cannot understand the difference, they are not right for us to work with!

Andreas on growth
We do not want to grow too big or out of control. We want to keep production in Huskvarna and prosper here within the right scale. Be successful at what we do within our niche and develop, but in the right proportion.

Sticking with routines that work
Maria is writing consignment notes and prepares them in bundles with other papers, according to the usual routine. Everything is put in the same order all the time. This procedure reduces mistakes. Suad calls on the internal line to inform Maria that there will be no more lists today so she can finalize the things she has there. (She waits for that call to order the freights to see how it is best coordinated.)

Creating the new cannot be done at the expense of harming their core. The new KA they are creating must still be representational of the KA way, this requires the family members to stay in control. It is, for example, unthinkable to hire an external person to handle product development as many colleagues in the industry have done. Maybe they must hire someone to do some of the CAD programming to reduce Andreas’ workload a bit but he must still lead the process.

Knowing quality and caring for details
All family members know a lot about both their production and their products; it is more than a job to them. It is their way of being. This knowledgability is
developed through socialization and joint practice over generations. Growing up in this family includes visiting all furniture stores you come by and attending the big furniture fairs and being surrounded by talk about furniture, catalogues and prototypes. Their sense of quality and care for details is one of the aspects significant to their family business practice that is passed on through succession.

**How to decide on the shade of the color black**

Ingvar gets a phone call from a supplier asking about the stickers they have ordered. Apparently they are semi-glossy instead of glossy due to a mix-up in production. Now she wants to know if that is fine by them or if they want to wait for new ones. Ingvar asks her to send a sample for them to look at. He explains to me that the stickers are important because they show the company name and logo and are put on the furniture (underneath or at the back where they are out of sight). Before, they have used metal plaques but they can cause scratches when the furniture is handled so they are switching to stickers instead. In the old days they branded the furniture directly on the wood but that was difficult and easily got too dark or uneven.

The next day he gets a brown envelope with the new stickers. They are about five centimeters long and black with white text. But is it the right black? Do these ones look better? He shows me and to me they are… black. When we speak with Maria on another errand Ingvar shows her the stickers. They look fine to her. The next day when Andreas comes by Ingvar’s office, he shows him the new stickers. Andreas says that they look too matte. Will they be as durable then? Later Andreas comes back and now he has put the old sticker next to the sample one. Now even I can see a difference. The new suggestion is less glossy. But is that better or worse? Ingvar thinks the less glossy looks good but, again, are they as durable? They examine them carefully, hold them up in different lighting and scratch and rub the surface to see if it wears out. After all, they are supposed to stay on a piece of furniture for at least 20 years, Ingvar says. Andreas prefers the glossiest one. Ingvar says, “Let’s go for that then”. I think about what Sara would have preferred, she is out of office the entire week so she did not get to see them.

Later in the afternoon we pass by a vintage Öresund chair in the corridor. It has been handed in for restoration of the seat. Maria asks Ingvar from her room how old he thinks it is. He takes a closer look and since the branding underneath is a round golden sticker it must be from the 1960s. We comment on how the stickers can matter for several things…

**Training apprentices**

The apprentice from the design school is located in the office next to Andreas’ and is working on new instruction sheets. The sheets come with the furniture to the end customer so it is important that they are easy to follow and look neat. Andreas instructs her to mainly use pictures and as little text as possible. He has to help out with the computer program sometimes. We check on her now and then or she comes by and shows the ones that are finished. Or they talk through the wall if it is just small things. We proofread them and she makes small adjustments until Andreas is happy with all the details. He is very particular with text size, fonts and what not. All of them must have the same structure and layout to give a coherent impression.
Perfection goes without saying
Maria calls about a table ordered in Uppsala. Their choice of color is unclear; do they want a brown stain or mahogany? “You wrote no. 40 which is natural mahogany without staining” Maria says. The woman explains that the table is to fit with some old cabinets so they decide that the customer will send in a sample of the cabinets and they have their lacquering people at KA take a look and decide on what is best. Maria explains to the woman that oak is often best for staining. Oak or ash. They both have the long venations which look good. Birch, on the other hand, can look a bit sloppy. I’m impressed by the procedure but to Maria it seems natural – of course you would want a perfect match.

Presenting KA to a group of Finnish architects
Sara speaks (in English) about the history and tradition of KA. How everything was started by her great grandfather Karl Andersson and is now continued by her and her two siblings; the fourth generation. She speaks freely about their values, the quality and the craft-like production in Huskvarna. She also shows a sample of their raw material to explain the difference in quality between real wood and the chip-boards that many other businesses use to save money. She explains that the difference does not show so much at first but that the shelves and tabletops are much more durable and will not bend over the years. The quality should also be experienced. When you run your hand across a KA table, you can feel the quality.

Caring for the products
A customer in Lund ordered the wrong shelves so they are to be sent back. They have thrown away the packaging though, so how should they be sent to arrive without any damage? Maria wants to use her favorite shipping agent that she knows she can trust to handle it with care. She calls Kaj but he cannot make it until Friday, but the store is closed this Friday so it will not work out. She calls another one, he is going in that direction on Thursday but then it is a bit late… She decides to use Kaj next week instead and e-mails the customer about that.

The above episode about the stickers illustrates a decision that was both carefully considered and yet quickly decided. It also serves as an example of how careful they are with every detail. To me both stickers were black. To them it was an important issue up for scrutiny. The eye for detail is important in their line of business and something that is passed on to new generations through socialization and experience. Succession is part of doing together since it involves learning the trade as well as passing on values. It is not thought of in that way, however, during a single event as deciding on the color of a sticker. The quest for quality and care for details is not limited to the family members only; it is also shared in the organization. Employees are proud to tell me about KA. They are proud of its history and reputation and the quality of the furniture for which they all feel responsible. When asked about their area of responsibility they all answered “quality”. Quality is not to be split up but must be constantly present in everything by everyone. They know that it is rare to
build this kind of furniture in Sweden nowadays so for a trained carpenter there are not so many opportunities to work like this.

**Freedom flexibility and fairness**

Keeping a way of organizing that allows flexibility is highly valued. It is also a competitive advantage. Since they are in control and knowledgeable about all the steps of their value chain they can offer custom-made services. It also means that they are free to do as they want. In that sense, being in control means being free. The following episodes illustrate their practice of how to handle customer requests:

---

**The spoiled Chamfer table**

A woman calls Andreas about her Chamfer table; she wants to have it re-lacquered. The store where she bought it suggested she call KA. The tabletop is ruined from colored coasters that stained it. It retails for about 34,000 (SEK) so he understands that she would like to restore it properly even if it will be quite costly. Andreas will look into it and get back to her. He discusses it with Maria and she has been in contact with the person too. Insurance will cover the cost for the customer. Andreas estimates their cost of labor hours and material and get back to the customer. He tells me that they try to help out when they can. They want to provide good customer service. Sometimes they decline though, when it is obvious that the customer caused the damage themselves by being overly reckless.

**The lock on the Stow**

Andreas gets a phone call from someone asking if it is possible to get the cabinet ‘Stow’ with a lock on it. Andreas thinks so but promises to check it and get back to them. We go directly out to the workshop and discuss it with a person in assembly. They reason about a few different solutions and do some measurements. Together they decide on a solution. Back at the office Andreas makes some calculations on how much extra to charge for them. About 20 minutes after the phone call the customer gets an e-mail saying that it can be done, how long it will take and what it will cost.

**The re-braiding of Öresund**

One day there is an old Öresund chair in the corridor. I am told that it is handed in for re-braiding. Öresund chairs are classics that tend to undergo succession too. Since some of them are as old as 50 years the seaweed seats are in need of reconditioning now and then. They can be handed in to KA for re-braiding and used by new generations. It is nice to repair things properly with original parts, Ingvar tells me.

**The lost rings**

Klas comes by Maria (and me) in her office to inform that a customer managed to throw out a part of an order with the packaging. The customer says that the rings to the hangers are missing but since it was a special order with a customized color, they are sure to have added them. Painting every single one of them in purple is not easily forgotten. They decide to make new ones immediately but the customer will have to
pay for them. The bad thing is that they now are painting rings that were meant for other orders so it sets them back a bit. The next day Klas gets a phone call from the customer that the lost rings are found again but now the new ones are already on their way. The customer promise to send the new batch back as soon as it arrives. When he hangs up he tells Maria about it and they say that it is good to get them back but just so typical to have to repaint them again.

**Tailor-made customization**

Ingvar and I go downstairs to check on Helena, an apprentice from a design school. How is the blueprint coming along? She is helping out with a special order of a cabinet for the Alf Henrikson\textsuperscript{38} society. It will be used for the new Alf Henrikson exhibition in the public library and will display some of his belongings. Ingvar likes this poet so they are happy to contribute. They discuss the height of a doctoral hat; will it really fit on the shelf? They ask me how high they are but I don’t know exactly. When we get back to the office Ingvar calls the person who ordered the cabinet to ask about that. The person returns later with the measurement and it turns out that the hat is too tall so the blueprint must be slightly redone.

Custom-made services like the above examples are dependent on keeping production in-house and in the right scale. It is a deeply rooted desire to always offer well made furniture and serve customers well that has been part of their ways since the very beginning. Through working together, it is passed on over generations.

An important value is fair and just behavior, in all regards. This is not an outspoken value but it shines through in their behavior. They are in this line of business because they like it. For example, they refer to their competitors as their colleagues in the industry. They engage in industry associations and schools with carpenter educations to actively share their view of furniture making and design and to learn new things themselves. A recent example is Sara’s engagement in a group working to improve legislation against pirate copying of designer furniture. When receiving a survey on attitudes towards child labor, Ingvar tells me that it is sad that they even have to ask. But then again, he continues with a smirk, he has his kids working here…

To value fair behavior further means to act against things they find wrong. Their values are not outspoken as values but a detectable consistency in their actions.

**The copied product causing charity donation**

Ingvar tells me about an incident where he came to know that another company was copying one of their products. Ingvar called the owner who confessed that it was so. He was regretful and wondered if there was something he could do. They agreed that a donation to an organization supporting an orphanage in Rumania was a good way to make up for the wrongdoing. And of course terminate production of the copied

---

\textsuperscript{38} Alf Henrikson was a poet, author and translator from Huskvarna (1905-1995). Apart from his poems, he was known for his interest in language and for his broad general knowledge. Alf Henrikson was made honorary doctor by Stockholm University in 1980. ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org))
product, Ingvar also followed up on the donation to make sure it was of reasonable proportion.

The mistreatment of Öresund by Sköna Hem
Ingvar comes into Andreas’ office with the latest issue of Sköna Hem (a magazine about interior design). There is a large picture of a room with a table-setting and the chairs around it are Öresund chairs. The text says that the chairs are from Karl Andersson & Söner and was a bargain from an antique shop. But what it does not say is that they are redone and the seaweed braded seats are replaced by saddle-girth “in an annoyingly amateurish way”. Both Ingvar and Andreas are upset by this disrespectful handling and argue that they would not take a painting and add some doodle themselves without mentioning it. Ingvar has attached a post-it note on the page where he has written “cheating!”.

Not tolerating disrespectful behavior is a matter of principle. As the above episodes illustrate, it goes for both small and large issues. ‘Right should be right’ as a Swedish expression goes.

Some of the furniture has been manufactured since the 1950s and some employees have spent their whole career with them. There is great pride in the craftsmanship of the production. The pride is also shared by employees. They are eager to show the production processes to visitors. It is very rare nowadays for a furniture company to have this type of production in Sweden because of the higher costs associated with that. At KA it is their way of working; they are not interested in any other way. It is also a competitive advantage because it allows great flexibility towards customers. Employees must share the feeling for quality and perfection. Every employee is important. In times of recession layoffs are avoided as far as possible. During this last recession they tell me with relief that they are coping well because they could handle it without firing anyone.

Preserving a culture that embraces renewal
Sara explains why they have been able to balance preservation and renewal:

When it is something new, a new product, we always ask ourselves: is this a KA-product? From all aspects, price, design, cleverness, identity. And we are well aware of other market offers out there. (Sara)

We further discuss the difficulty it would be to teach an external person what “KA” really means; how they are the ones that know if something is “KA” or not. They seem to be searching for “KA” prospects out there. In my view they rather create and recreate “KA” through their actions. They know intuitively what a KA product is without having to explain. Indeed, putting it into words rather diminishes it into something it is not. It cannot be fully explained, which makes it very difficult and time-consuming to teach someone external to the
family even to a basic level. So it is largely up to them, but an important part of that is to be open to influences from others. Knowing what is KA also concerns knowing about the larger systems of which KA is part. Some of the important sources of inspiration are the designers they collaborate with, the furniture fairs, industry organizations, colleagues/competitors, customers and design schools. Being open to new things are part of their tradition.

**Interest in new technology**

Ingvar shows me a new machine that arrived last week. It is a two million (SEK) investment. We talk to the guys at the new machine. They are getting training from a consultant on how to manage all its functions. Everyone is impressed by the machine. It has five axis; the old one only had three. Five is remarkable; it can do so many more tasks on one drive. They discuss the many advantages and explain them to me as well. The old machine is kept too so this investment is both an increase in what they can do and at what speed. It also seems to add joy and excitement.

**Old values that still work**

Many relatives of Karl Andersson were missionaries and KA furniture surfaces in the strangest places since he helped out by sending furniture to their locations all over the world. Sara tells me about their religious upbringing. She is not active in their church now but cherishes the fellowship and values. Some values, like mutual respect, remain important in the business to this day. Responsibility is another important value. To give responsibility to employees makes them grow. She has learned from Ingvar that if you want something to change you should come with an alternative suggestion, not just complain about what is but suggest how it can be.

Their family-way is present in their way of doing business, their products and their succession process. I also ask them if there are things in need of change. Andreas has been thinking about advantages of holding proper meetings.

That is something I think we could develop much further, the board work. It is very… we don’t work very structured in my opinion. We tried a while to have management meetings where we should gather and discuss things. It seemed great at first but then it was like: when shall we have the next meeting? We booked it but it was the least sacred appointment. We pushed that date for anything, haircuts, you name it. We could not get to it. […] To really benefit from board meetings they should take place more frequently. There should also be external members of the board to make use of outsiders’ opinions and experiences. That should be the reason for board meetings in a family business. Then it is up to us to decide in the end anyway but to have other people’s opinion as input and inspiration. I can’t say that our board works like that today.

(Andreas)

Again, awareness of how things are supposed to be done is expressed yet still not turned into action. Before studying them I had an idea that wanting to change would be mainly attributed to the younger generation and striving for preservation would be prioritized by the old generation. This is not the case at
KA. I find all four of them equally open for both preserving the essence of and creating the new KA. An example of how they are successful in communicating both preservation and renewal is the jury opinion in the award of the Design S/Swedish Design Award 2008 for the table “Thinner”:

The jury statement evokes this meeting between traditional handiwork and advanced techniques with current design. Finding ways of handling both preservation and renewal is important for the longevity of Karl Andersson & Söner, and doing so includes succession. The continuous commitment by family members means opportunity for both continuity and development. All in all, succession does include transfer of shares and positions but what really makes the family business last is their focus on developing it together in a way that preserves its essence. It is not about taking over a business but continuing a tradition of which they are part.
8. Conceptualizing succession as practice

Leaving the particular case of succession at Karl Andersson & Söner, what have I learned about succession in general, and how do I make sense of that informed by practice theory and family business literature? The suggested move from problem to practice perceptually reorients the meaning of succession. As a practice, succession is integrated in everyday life, which includes problems as well as opportunities and which can be only marginally dealt with through formal planning. By theoretically framing succession as originating from socialization, included in everyday routines and progressing without design, I have found succession to be practiced when family members do things together to develop the business in a way that simultaneously preserves its essence. In this chapter I go from empirical descriptions to a theoretical discussion of succession in joint family management (8.1), business development (8.2) and preservation of the family business essence (8.3). The view of succession I offer is described through how it transpires in those practices. While chapter seven treated a particular case of succession as practice quite at length, I will now provide a version in which my insights are theoretically developed and expressed in a condensed form. I offer my insights along the lines of what Shotter and Tsoukas (2011: 314) call reflective theory: “perceptually reorienting rather than as cognitively explaining”. Although my work carries its meaning in its entire text (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), I have chosen here to offer my insights through arguing for nine statements. The reason for this is that I want to provoke new ways to think about succession, opening a space for new developments, not put forward the idea that I have a finalized model of succession to prescribe. Each statement is presented as the header of a section where that insight is discussed.

8.1 Succession as practice through joint family management

Succession is embedded in daily practice

The focus on handing over the business from one generation to the next, as in most succession literature, is over-exaggerated at the expense of appreciating working together in the moment. In joint family management the guiding star is what is best for the business and the family in the long run, and working jointly
towards that. There is, however, no one answer to what that is and no recipe showing how to do that, apart from focusing on what works well and doing more of that (Hammond, 1998; Cooperrider & Avital, 2004) in a stepwise manner (Chia & Holt, 2006, 2009). This wayfinding is not about moving towards a pre-decided destination but about moving together with shared aspiration. Not to be mistaken for an unprofessional drifting around, but based on knowledgability embedded in practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984). This type of knowing is habituated and mostly automatically drawn upon to do what makes sense in the moment. It is a purposive response to the situation at hand to carry on with the daily business activities (Chia & Holt, 2009: 92). When family members are managing together, succession can proceed purposively from current circumstances and thereby progress without a deliberate plan for it to be so. In this sense, succession does not take place separately but is part of running a family business. Just as any other practice, succession transpires in social sites from which it is inseparable (Shatzki, 2002). This relational view is by no means a new idea or exclusive to the succession topic; it is a basic condition of our existence: “The notion of being-in-the-world stipulates that our most basic form of being is entwinement” (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011: 343). This is however seldom shown in family business research, where succession tends to be treated in isolation. The embeddedness of succession in daily practice implies an integrated and relational view. It is about moving forward together rather than one person’s entrance at the point of another person’s exit.

**Succession proceeds when family members manage together**

Taking practice philosophy seriously and exploring family business practice from within opens up for development of complimentary management models. Textbook models of corporate governance do not always fit with family business logic. Instead of a hierarchical separation between principle and agent there is an overlapping of family, ownership and management (the three-circle model, Figure 2-1). That we already know. I would however like to blur the boundaries even further and suggest what I have come to think of as “joint family management”. Inherent in the meaning of family is a special bond between its members (Giddens, 1993). Based on genuine relations and common aspirations it is not necessarily important what title or percentage of shares an individual holds; what matters is what the family does (and has) together. In Schatzki’s (2005, 2006) explanation, an organization is a bundle of practices and material arrangements that ties into one practice-order web where context and contextualized entity are inherent parts of each other. This makes it irrelevant to make definite distinctions between family, business and ownership. And strategy making is bound not to specific positions but to people’s actions, according to the strategy as practice perspective, which further complicates putting people in pre-labeled circles. It has been suggested that a fourth circle
of ‘the individual’ should be added to the three-circle model (Casillas, Acedo & Moreno, 2007). I would however prefer to loosen the boundaries and think about relationality in a practice-order web instead of adding on more clear-cut parts. A family team can let practically viable ways to cope emerge as they go along instead of trying to impose pre-designed ways of working.

The leadership literature has long been dominated by a conception of focused leadership, one leader, with a quite recent increase in interest for a broadened unit of analysis (Gronn, 2002). Different forms of shared leadership are now suggested with the common denominator of shifting attention from individual to group (Gronn, 2002). Co-leadership is known to emerge over time when two or more organizational members rely on each other and develop a close working relationship (Gronn, 2002). Such intuitive working relations are comparable to intimate interpersonal relations and very dependent on trust. Therefore, shared leadership should correspond well with the family business context.

The trend towards managing family businesses as a team effort was spotted by Aronoff in 1998; I have encountered it in practice. The success of sibling teams has recently been studied where both role clarity and competence were found to be unimportant (Farrington et al., 2011). A possible explanation to that finding could be that “a general absence of governance structures has been identified in family businesses (Dunn, 1999; Maas, 1999), and several studies have not found a relationship between governance structures and family business success (Cowie, 2007; Farrington, 2009; Venter, 2003)” (Farrington et al., 2011: 9). Joint family management is about taking responsibility for the business together, running it jointly, but appreciating individuality in perspectives and competence. The Swedish legal system prevents the appointment of more than one CEO (Swedish Companies Act, 8 Ch. 27§). The requirement to use the CEO position is however limited to publicly held businesses39 (Swedish Companies Act, 8 Ch. 50§). Although joint family management can be practiced when one person is CEO; family businesses that are privately held have the option to refrain from using the CEO title. That can be a way to formally signal joint management. With or without a CEO, joint family management is a way to share governance of the business in a way that prepares successors. When a family team is organically composed of people from different generations it can provide for mutual learning and a natural phasing in and out of members. In this way, running a business as a group effort among family members includes succession.

---

39 The convention is for all incorporated businesses to have a CEO, even if the act only stipulates it for the publicly held ones.
Succession is an ordinary and on-going part of family business life

A group of family members differ from other groups of people. In a family, people, to various degrees share a history, a future and biology (Copeland & White, 1991). Different generations are connected through socialization, where the people we interact with affect our personality, values and behaviour (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Giddens, 1993). Those values and behaviours extend to the business, so that in a business family, also the doing of business is part of socialization. Growing up in a business family includes business matters as a natural part of everyday life. In this way succession is on-going in the life-cycle of business families. The intergenerational succession of a family business is intimately related to the life course of its family members. In the statistical study reported in 6.1, family managers’ reasons for leaving were most often forced by old age. That study furthermore showed that more than half of the family businesses employed children of the majority owner, supporting Green’s (2011) claim of the wide existence of multi-generational family businesses. Those children are already explicitly part of the business, while other children’s involvement is more implicit. When a member of the younger generation works for the business they might only do so temporarily. Yet, again, the intended motive for action might not coincide with the eventual practical developments (Tsoukas, 2010). If 30 years later this person is the CEO and majority owner of the business, the early employment may in retrospect be seen as crucial for succession developments, even if that was not originally intended. In that sense succession is conveyed through retrospective framing of non-deliberate action, similar to how Tsoukas (2010) explain strategy making.

Socialization is always on-going but continues in new ways when the extended family share a workplace. Through engaging in the business, succession proceeds as people’s roles gradually change over time (Handler, 1990). The younger generation is gradually prepared to take over, not necessarily through formal planning of succession but through being part of the daily running of the business. Besides, a detached individual taking over a business is problematic with regard to the practice ontology discussed in 3.1. Since family members are already part of the business, they cannot take it over, because that would presume that they could be separate from it and coming ‘in’; rather, succession from this perspective emerges from within, based on a deeply sensed feeling of belonging. In this sense family business enterprising is a case of shared wayfinding by a family group through which succession proceeds over time. The point of the journey is continuing on it together, not to reach a destination.

Joint family management is based on respect, trust and unity. It does not mean absence of conflicts, but a basic will to find ways to go on together even when conflicts and difficulties arise (Helin, 2011). The common aim of wanting what is best for the family and the business in the long run is helpful as a
guiding star. It does not mean sameness on each issue, or even striving for sameness, but valuing the perspective of each person. Socialization is the source of learning your worldview from the people who raise you – which extends to business values – but it is also the source from which a person’s individuality develops (Giddens, 1993). Giving room for individuation is an important part of succession. Through genuine relations the family business can provide family members with means for the dual need of both separation (developing their own thing within the business) and belonging (being part of jointly continuing the family tradition) (Hall, 2003). In the practice of joint family management people learn to work jointly as well as to develop their individual self within that unity.

There are several advantages of doing things as a group effort, as long as the group can work creatively together. Joint family management will not work for all families. Not all family members desire to work together in the first place. Family management consists of a group of family members, not necessarily all family members (of age), with a desire to be part of running the business. Lambrecht and Lievens (2008) put forward the positive effects of ‘pruning the family tree’ as a means to renew and recreate the family group. Family members who do not wish to engage in the family business must be allowed to pursue their own dreams without being viewed as deserters or failures.

Lastly, families can suffer from all sorts of dysfunctions; then joint management will be difficult, but so will most things. But for families who do run a business together the alternative of joint family management exists in practice, and succession is part of it. It is a way to run a family business that gradually prepares successors. This implies shared responsibility and valued individuality instead of shifting from one person to another. If age differences allow, the team can stay constantly multi-generational. Managing together includes learning things that are important to continue managing the business after retirement of the older generation and continue when (if) yet another generation joins. This learning to a large extent automatically proceed when a business is managed by a multi-generational family team. Through socialization, people raised in a business family embody knowledge about their family’s way of being, which extends to the doing of business.
Putting pieces together

Succession is not (just) about handing the business over from one generation to the next; it is also about working together in the moment. Succession as practice of joint family management is abridged in Table 8-1. The putting of things in boxes must not be taken as violation of their relationality but should be viewed as a simplified summary that serves as an overview. There is no clear cut separation to be made in practice.

Table 8-1 Succession as practice through joint family management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insight</th>
<th>Underlying principle</th>
<th>Example from Karl Andersson &amp; Söner</th>
<th>Theoretical influence/concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Succession is embedded in daily practice.</td>
<td>Succession transpires in everyday routines, not separately in isolation from the doing of business.</td>
<td>In processes like product development, their ‘KA-way’ is recreated and passed on to new members. Their way of doing things with an eye for details and quality is for example embedded in discussing ‘the right shade of black’.</td>
<td>Site ontology Schatzki (2002) Wayfinding Chia &amp; Holt (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succession proceeds when family members manage together.</td>
<td>Being part inevitably includes learning things of importance for succession, although mostly not identified as such in the moment.</td>
<td>Running KA as a team effort allows gradual role transitions over time. Their focus is on developing the business together, not shifting a CEO title. “In a company like this ‘CEO’ means nothing. We talk about everything and that we will continue to do.” (Ingvar)</td>
<td>The meaning of family Giddens (1984, 1993) Team management Aronoff (1998) Organization as practice-order web Schatzki (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succession is an ordinary and on-going part of family business life.</td>
<td>Through socialization, succession is an ordinary part of family business life, on-going throughout the family life cycle - not an extraordinary disruption</td>
<td>Four generations of children of the family have grown up with the business as part of their ordinary life: The business being discussed at home, playing and helping out at the business and tagging along to business related events such as the fairs.</td>
<td>Socialization Berger &amp; Luckmann (1966) Genuine relations Hall (2003)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.2 Succession as practice through business development

Family members managing together can expand the business

A negative bias towards succession can be found in family business literature (Dyck et al., 2002). Warnings, problems, conflicts and difficulties can be read about in research and popular outlets. The lack of positive issues documented inspired me to bring forth succession opportunities. By treating succession as a crisis to be overcome, opportunities are overlooked. A new generation joining the business without the old generation leaving holds opportunities for business development. Scholars have long pointed to the importance of managerial slack for firm growth (Penrose, 1959). In Weick’s (1974) review of Mintzberg (1973), he reflects on Mintzberg’s finding that managers are constantly interrupted and hence act in a superficial manner.

Satisficing may be forced upon people, not because of their inherent limits, but rather by interruptions that make it impossible for them to carry through the extended sequences of actions that are necessary to generate optimal rather than satisfactory solutions. (Weick, 1974: 116)

From that, Weick (1974) concludes that managerial work is an undermanned setting and more people should share it. In joint family management, they do.

Increased capacity means functions can be added to the business that were not possible before. The increased capacity can be used to pursue various growth aspirations, making succession a means for business growth. This effect might be stronger in small firms, but not necessarily. There are big firms where development is held back because family members want to stay in control (Brundin et al., 2008), refusing to delegate regardless of their financial means to do so. And the type of growth to pursue can differ from ease to ease as the meaning of growth tends to differ between different practitioners (Achtenhagen, Naldi & Melin, 2010). Interestingly, Achtenhagen et al. (2010) find that practitioners point to internal development as one of the most important aspects of growth, while researchers tend to focus on numerical forms of growth. In entrepreneurship research the growth process is neglected on behalf of measuring growth outcomes (Davidsson, Achtenhagen & Naldi, 2010). In family business literature it is instead the problems of family members working together that has received most attention, at the expense of exploring succession opportunities, for example in relation to growth. Again the constraining side is prioritized over the enabling (Giddens, 1984). A growth opportunity is however created when multiple-generation family managers engage in the family business simultaneously.
Family members managing together can evolve the business

When family members are running their business together they can, in addition to the increased capacity, benefit from each other’s otherness. Issues can be scrutinized from a greater number of perspectives and ideas can emerge through mutual learning. And the point is mutual learning – not the old teaching the new how to take over, but learning how to proceed together. Doing so includes succession, although succession is not the prime focus. The knowledge employed by family members in the daily running of the business is usually unknown to them in an explicit form (Giddens, 1979: 58). The practical coping that constitutes most actions is tacit and therefore conveyed through doing things together. Through practice both daily activities and structures are reproduced continually (Giddens, 1984) so that working together on, for example, product development includes the learning of social rules, which extends to succession.

Through practical coping, people do what makes sense to them to get on with their tasks (Tsoukas, 2010). When what was expected does not occur, people become aware of what they are doing and start acting deliberately (Chia & Holt, 2006; Tsoukas, 2010). In so doing, activities are altered and changes in routines occur. Also, the challenge of practicing together triggers the need to explicate tacit understanding. When practicing alone no one questions what you do or why you do things the way you do. Adding people to an arena alters the social site (Schatzki, 2005). The task of explaining what you do to others partly transforms practical coping into discursive coping (Tsoukas, 2010). Such practice is performative and can lead to new, potentially better, ways of doing things. Family members from different generations working creatively together is a great way to develop the business, since it holds potential for not only changing, but changing in such a way that the valuable parts of the business are preserved, developed and expressed in new ways. New family members’ engagement in the business adds new perspectives, new ideas and new practice. Therefore succession offers opportunities for business development.

When developing the business together, also succession progresses

Engaging in the family business to be part of developing it is a different approach than joining because leadership and/or ownership transfer is needed. This notion steps away from succession as a purpose in itself. It is a shift from “taking over” to “being part” that is focused on the practical doing of business rather than the formal requirements of titles and structures. It is a way of engaging that makes sense from a dwelling worldview where the path emerges non-deliberately through everyday practical coping (Chia & Holt, 2006). Acting strategically from a dwelling worldview is about attaining and sustaining a set of organized relationships in order to experience the possibility of doing things
Conceptualizing succession as practice
differently (Chia & Holt, 2009: 112). To dwell with things is to let them develop from within. Rather than taking over something of which you are already an inherent part, it is an always changing presence. Family members coming together to develop their business can find their way together as they go along. This type of endeavour is driven by the family members’ habituated sense of belonging and care for the family business. The wayfinding is about apprehending situations in terms of their potential and developing a practically sufficient comprehension so as to sufficiently cope with them (Chia & Holt, 2009: 159). There is no need for planning since there is no way of knowing what will become ready to hand. It is an acceptance of an unknown future guided by past experience. Instead of trying to plan for what cannot be governed, the joint way of managing a family business allows for flexibility and for things to be dealt with when needed or desired: To let things emerge from current circumstances (Chia & Holt, 2009: 153). In this way, business families can carry on together and now and then adjust the formal articulation of things to what they already have been doing for a while. Their way of practically coping with things in general extends to succession as well. It evolves gradually through the practice of developing the business together.

The chance to work together is seldom acknowledged as a driving force in itself. When current succession literature acknowledges opportunities of succession at all, those opportunities are rather to be reached after succession is completed: Opportunities to strategic renewal rest with what the new CEO implements while in power, say Gersick et al. (1999). Also, when considering the steps of succession planning prescribed, the development is proposed to be planned during succession and implemented afterwards: (1) selecting and training a successor, (2) developing a vision or strategic plan for the company after succession, (3) defining the role of the departing incumbent and (4) communicating the decision to key stakeholders (Sharma et al., 2003a). The view of succession that I suggest means acknowledging what family members can accomplish together instead of one by one sequentially over generations. It means that while working together, succession becomes part through individuals’ change in roles over time. Working to develop the business together is a way for succession to progress in the flow of daily activities, proceeding through the silent efficacy of indirect action (Chia & Holt, 2009). In daily practice the focus is on things related to production, suppliers and customers, not on making formal succession plans. Working together, however, includes succession, although mainly through indirect action.
Putting pieces together

Succession is not (just) about handing the business over from one generation to the next; it is also about developing the business together. Succession as practice of business development is abridged in Table 8-2.

Table 8-2 Succession as practice through business development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insight</th>
<th>Underlying principle</th>
<th>Example from Karl Andersson &amp; Söner</th>
<th>Theoretical influence/concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family members managing together can expand the business.</td>
<td>Doing more together</td>
<td>When the 4th generation took employment in the business three functions was added that previously had been incorporated into the tasks of one busy CEO: Sara on marketing, Andreas on product development, and Maria on customer services. “We have had a fantastic increase in sales and our turnover has doubled over the last three years” (Sara)</td>
<td>Growth enabled by managerial slack Penrose (1959) Succession opportunities as reaction to problem orientation i.e. Kets de Vries (1993); Miller et al. (2006); Green (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members managing together can evolve the business.</td>
<td>Doing different together</td>
<td>Four family members from two generations join their different perspectives and learn from each other concurrently developing their new designs. Although Andreas manages the product development process, many activities are carried out jointly and decisions are taken together. Example of outcome: ‘Small by KA’ (6.2), the new line with its new market.</td>
<td>Practical coping Tsoukas (2010) Joint reproduction of action and structure Giddens (1979, 1984)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When developing the business together, also succession progresses.</td>
<td>Succession through indirect action. Working together as a driving force; a shift from “taking over” to “being part”.</td>
<td>The opportunity to work with family is a driving force in itself. Continuing their tradition together is highly valued. As expressed by Maria: “It is only positive! We feel that it is great to work together. You get really strong as a family, we are really strong together.”</td>
<td>Wayfinding, indirect action Chia &amp; Holt (2009) Dwelling Chia &amp; Holt (2006, 2009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.3 Succession as practice through preservation of the family business essence

Preserving the essence of the family business includes succession, just as succession includes preserving the essence of the family business.

So far I have discussed succession through practices of managing jointly and developing the business. I have found that successfully changing an old family business in a durable way means practicing preservation and renewal concurrently. It means preserving the essence of the family business while expressing it in new ways, not changing for the sake of changing or clinging to the past for the sake of security or nostalgia. It turns out that the family businesses which combine a progressive attitude with their core foundational values are the ones that manage to stay entrepreneurial over generations (Hoy & Sharma, 2010). A case in point is the Falck Group, which was established in 1906 and has managed to preserve its institutional identity and entrepreneurial spirit of the family while renewing its line of business from one industry to another (Salvato, Chirico & Sharma, 2010). Preserving what is worth preserving is logical; knowing what that comprises is the challenge. Letting what is worth preserving be decided by family members from different generations jointly is a way to secure the identity of the business while valuing different perspectives on the matter. This is possible as long as the family is in control but stays open to change and external inspiration. Family members together practicing preservation and renewal is an important part of succession in achieving long-term prosperity of the family business. Being part of that practice teaches new generations how to preserve their legacy yet develop it for the future. When family members continue to engage in the business it continues the alignment of the history of the family with the future of the business, where all present and future actions are in endless relation with the past (Ericsson & Melin, 2010).

What to preserve differs in each family business, but is likely to evolve around values, knowledge, traditions and culture. These things are learned through socialization since childhood and largely taken for granted as the ‘normal’ way of being (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). It creates a special kind of knowing in family members and a special kind of understanding among them. Most of this knowledge is embedded in practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984) and therefore difficult to share with others. What to renew is, rather, a matter of giving new expression and outlets to that which is worth preserving. In the case of KA, the essence of their signature style in furniture design is...
preserved but constantly renewed through new lines of furniture. The knowledge involved in those design decisions is largely embodied by the family members: they know if something feels right, although they can only partly express what it is that they thereby know (Giddens, 1984: 49). If knowledgability in production is core, that should probably be preserved, but through renewal of its technology. If openness to change is part of the family business culture that should be preserved, which would lead to continuous renewal. I have come to think of preservation and renewal as a duality. Tending to one means tending to the other. Preserving a family business is fundamentally intertwined with succession, but also dependent on renewal.

**Succession is invisible in most family business practices, yet to some extent part of all**

Through the practice of preservation and renewal, the family business brings its history into the future. What is happening in the here and now is embedded in a time-space arrangement both enabling and constraining the ongoing flow of social life (Giddens, 1984). A person’s time-space path is also a positioning within the person’s lifecycle (Giddens, 1984). If the new generation family members take part in the practice of preservation and renewal of the family business, they can eventually continue to do that on their own until yet another generation is ready to engage.

The wayfinding metaphor (Chia & Holt, 2009) helps to explain how daily life unfolds in an unconditional way, still within certain conditions. Wayfinding describes development without planning – not a mindless drifting but a strategizing from within, in the present. In managing the duality of preservation and renewal not just anyone is part of the practice and not just any step is taken. The family members share history, and the history they embody unites them even if it is differently perceived. They are inseparable from their history (Ericson & Melin, 2010). Even if there is no answer to what is best for the family and the business in the long run, it works as a unifying basis. With this unspecified goal in common, moving on together and deciding on one step at a time is a strategic alternative to a linear approach of analyzing, planning and implementing in sequence. Implicitly, succession is always on-going, and sometimes succession is also explicitly expressed through formal changes. Most often, however, the link between daily activities and succession are unknown in the moment but still matter in the long run. This is so because “a seemingly trivial act may trigger events far removed from it in time and space” (Giddens, 1984: 11). Family business succession is largely embedded in practical coping, with everyday matters performed relationally by family business persons. Working together includes non-deliberate successor training. Therefore succession is often invisible. It is invisible in the sense that it transpires in other
Conceptualizing succession as practice

practices where the link to succession is unnoticed, at least at the time of the event.

Putting pieces together

Succession is not (just) about handing the business over from one generation to the next; it is also about managing to preserve the essence of the family business, yet recreating it in new ways. Succession as practice of preserving the family business essence is abridged in Table 8-3.

Table 8-3 Succession as practice through preserving the family business essence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insight</th>
<th>Underlying principle</th>
<th>Example from Karl Andersson &amp; Söner</th>
<th>Theoretical influence/concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preserving the essence of the family business includes succession, just as succession includes preserving the essence of the family business.</td>
<td>Preserving the essence of the family business while expressing it in new ways. Difficult to describe but embodied in family members. Both in the moment and long-term.</td>
<td>Sticking to what is ‘KA’: “It is something subtle yet clever, something extra in a special detail or so that gives it that extra feeling. This special element has always been part of KA, with Göran Malmvall and the brothers and dad, but in some furniture more than others […] and I can see that Andreas has a lot of it in him, because this is something you have in you.” (Sara)</td>
<td>Present-future-past relationality Ericson &amp; Melin (2010) Practical consciousness Giddens (1984) Socialization Berger &amp; Luckmann (1966)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succession is invisible in most family business practices, yet to some extent part of all.</td>
<td>Being together includes non-deliberate successor training. Succession largely transpires in other practices where the link to succession is unnoticed in the moment. The formal and deliberate activities are only a fraction of all that is succession.</td>
<td>Between 2001 and 2010 there has been no change in ownership composition or of the CEO title, but in practice succession proceeds anyway. “Since we have worked here so long one could say that this succession is already done in that sense”. (Andreas)</td>
<td>Time-space path Giddens (1984) Without design through indirect action Chia &amp; Holt (2009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.4 Concluding summary of exploring succession as practice

Family business succession is an ongoing practice. This practice can at times involve problems, but it can also involve opportunities, joy and creativity, amongst other things. Basically, succession is practiced by family members in continuing the business over time in a way that it develops without harming its essence. Included in succession practice are activities of planning and the occasional transfer of ownership and business positions, although those activities constitute only a minor part. Too much focus has previously been given to the deliberate and formal sides of succession and problems related to handling those. Framing succession as originating from socialization, included in everyday routines and progressing without design has led to new insights:

Succession unfolds in daily routines; it is a practice embedded in other practices rather than a separate issue to deal with. Succession is an ordinary and on-going part of family business life. It is not an extraordinary event but an ordinary intertwined normality. Through socialization, succession is on-going in the family life-cycle, where there is no start and end but cyclical movement of different persons taking the lead during different eras.

Succession proceeds through practical coping when family members work together or in other ways interact. Joint family management is a way to run a family business that gradually prepares successors. Early involvement of new generations allows development of tacit knowledge and cultural competences, reproducing the family business over time. In practice, successors are prepared through socialization and experience, and only marginally through formal planning. By purposively responding to the situation at hand, family members can find their way forward as they go, guided by their habituated sense for their family business. Through this wayfinding, they can produce desirable outcomes without deliberate planning.

Succession is furthermore an opportunity for business development. Several generations of family members managing together can expand the business through the extra capacity that new people bring. It can also evolve the business through the different perspectives that new people add. The chance to work together can be a driving force in itself. Family members working creatively together to develop the business inevitably include succession aspects in their practice, even if that is not their motive for action in the moment. Development is however a delicate matter in relation to preserving the essence of the family business. Managing the duality of preservation and renewal is an important part of succession. It is the practice of protecting the core of the business and at the same time expressing it in new ways. Through that practice, succession evolves. Through the durée of family business life, succession transpires in everyday activities, where the link to succession can be both un-
Conceptualizing succession as practice

intentional and unnoticed in the moment. Succession is hence invisible in most family business practices, yet to some extent part of all.

The initial theoretical framing of succession can be further nuanced in light of the new insights. The role of socialization is central to succession since it is the basis for lifecycle movements in a family. It is through socialization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Giddens, 1993), the taking over of values and behaviors originate and hence also the creation of new family business leaders. Activities of succession are included in daily practice of family business life. Practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984) and practical coping (Tsoukas, 2010) describes how most of what we do is simply just done based on non-deliberate actions and tacit understanding. Practice theory therefore clarifies how succession is included in everyday routines. The dwelling mode of engagement illuminates how succession unfolds through wayfinding with or without instances of deliberate planning (Chia & Holt, 2006; 2009; Chia & Rasche, 2010). Taken together succession is originating from family and business socialization, included in everyday routines and progresses through shared wayfinding. Succession is not (just) about handing the business over from one generation to the next. It is about working together in the moment, developing the family business and preserving its essence. In sum, it is not a problem to solve but an ongoing practice. My conceptualization of succession as practice is summarized in Table 8-4:

Table 8-4 Conceptualization of succession as practice in summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical framing of succession</th>
<th>Succession practice</th>
<th>Perceptual reorientation / rethinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Originating from family business socialization, included in everyday routines, and progressing without design through shared wayfinding</td>
<td>Joint family management (7.1, 8.1)</td>
<td>Succession is embedded in daily practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business development (7.2, 8.2)</td>
<td>Family members managing together can expand the business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation of the essence (7.3, 8.3)</td>
<td>Preserving the essence of the family business includes succession, just as succession includes preserving the essence of the family business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succession is invisible in most family business practices, yet to some extent part of all.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Succession proceeds when family members manage together.

Succession is an ordinary and on-going part of family business life.

Family members managing together can evolve the business.

When developing the business together, also succession progresses.

Preservation of the essence of the family business includes succession, just as succession includes preserving the essence of the family business.
9. Implications of rethinking succession as practice

Through exploring succession as practice I have illustrated how succession is not an extraordinary event but is ongoing in the daily flow of activities. I argue that very few activities are explicit succession activities; instead, succession is implicitly embedded in other activities. The link to succession is seldom evident in a single activity, but rather in the changes of routines that series of events make up over time. Much of our day-to-day conduct is not directly motivated (Giddens, 1984), therefore dealing with succession is seldom practitioners' motive for action. Instead most things are simply just done through the silent efficacy of indirect action (Chia & Holt, 2009). In a family business where several generations are involved in the running of the business, succession is mostly invisible, yet constantly present and hard to distinguish from other practices of which it is part. Thinking of succession in this way implies talking about it differently, studying it differently, advising about it differently and theorizing about it differently. It suggests that family members acknowledge succession as part of the on-going flow of everyday life by working together, managing jointly and appreciating individuality. In this chapter I will offer some suggestions on how succession as practice can inform previous knowledge on family business succession and management.

9.1 Themes of succession research revisited

Chapter two includes five themes deduced from my literature review on family business succession. This part discusses what rethinking succession from a problem to a practice can mean in relation to those themes.

**Theme 1: The importance of the succession topic**

From a practice perspective, succession is still as important. But viewing succession as an ordinary and ongoing part of family business life might lessen the drama. The way I propose to think about succession views it as important for business development and family traditions, not primarily to avoid failure. Rethinking succession from a problem to a practice opens up new research opportunities as well as new approaches to family business consulting.

The importance of succession for the business families is obvious. The importance of family businesses for their collective contribution to society in terms of GWP and employment is also often stressed in the literature
Implications of rethinking succession as practice

(Astrachan, 2010). In my view, family businesses, with their active and visible ownership, local anchoring and long-term goals (Brundin et al., 2008), are important to preserve for reasons beyond their own interest and economic activity. Speaking in general terms about such a diverse group is of course dangerous, but there is something appealing about the closeness of ownership and management and genuine care for their line of business often found in family businesses. A case in point is the pride and passion with which the people of Karl Andersson & Söner speak about their furniture, the business and the industry. And studies have shown that family firms are more socially responsible than non-family firms on several dimensions (Dyer & Whetten, 2006), such as environmental performance (Berrone et al., 2010). Family business longevity is, however, dependent on succession, making it one of the most important topics in business. There is much more to learn from family business management, although it is largely hidden in tacit forms of knowledgability. Therefore further explorations of how it is practiced in the daily lives of business families are welcomed.

Theme 2: Characteristics and features of succession

The biggest difference that arises from rethinking succession as a practice is perhaps the implications for what succession is. In family business, succession is ongoing. It is there, to some extent, in everything. It is not a phase to get through and over with until next time. It is included in everyday life and evolves inevitably through socialization throughout the family lifecycle. Sometimes there are both formal and explicit succession activities, like appointing a new CEO. Most activities are informal and implicit, though, like the unintended preparations embedded in daily activities. Furthermore, socialization during a child’s upbringing plays an important role in passing on (business) values. To view succession as starting when a successor begins to show an interest in the business is therefore inadequate. Although many have described succession as a process and not just legal and financial transactions, the process has most often been depicted as a delimited, extraordinary time in a family business. Moreover, succession has mostly been limited to its deliberate and visible aspects. Alluding to the practice definition of strategy proposed by Johnson et al. (2003), succession can be defined as the detailed processes and practices which constitute the day-to-day activities of family business life and which relate to succession outcomes. This connection to succession outcomes is however largely indirect and unnoticed in the moment.

The focus on the dyad of successor/predecessor needs to be broadened; succession concerns a far greater number of people. The roles of successor and predecessor can furthermore be held by several persons jointly. In the case of KA there are for example currently one predecessor and three successors.

Viewing succession as practice calls for new metaphors signaling its relational and ongoing character. Metaphors describing succession such as ‘passing the baton’ are not relevant to succession as practice. In this regard Litz
and Kleysen’s (2001) study of how a family of jazz musicians work creatively together is an interesting example, as is the wayfinding metaphor developed by Chia and Holt (2009).

**Theme 3: Preparation and planning of succession**

The practice of a family running a business together includes successor training even if that is not an outspoken aim. Early engagement means plenty of learning opportunities for both the old and the new generation. Explicating such practices is an important step in furthering our understanding of succession. Embracing that succession is embedded in everyday activities, always ongoing and mostly invisible, further stresses the limitations of pre-planning. Socialization of a family’s infants can be planned only in a very limited manner. Teaching successors things that are embedded in practical consciousness is furthermore difficult to do in other ways than to practice together in the moment.

There are indeed useful elements of succession planning, like tending to legal and financial issues in aid of professionals in those areas. The point is not that no planning exists or that all planning is bad, but rather that what can be planned through formal planning is a very small fraction of all that succession involves. In management literature, assumptions are often made about the existence of an active board, a top management team, middle management, family councils and other routinized structural bodies where the suggested planning is supposed to take place. This is not applicable in many (indeed, most) family businesses. Instead of a linear and detached approach of planning, I suggest stepwise strategizing on the go. This does not mean that decisions should be hasty; it means that they should be flexible and relationally shaped in the moment. It is about acting purposively to deal with immediate concerns in habituated ways that are consistent with one’s own sense of identity (Chia & Holt, 2009: 159). Letting a new generation take part in the everyday practice of running a business is a useful way to allow for succession to progress through the silent efficacy of indirect action.

**Theme 4: Barriers and problems of succession**

In rethinking succession from a problem to a practice, I suggest an alternative approach that is less problem-oriented, which is not the same as being without problems. Viewing succession as practice does not take away all difficulties. There are family businesses sold or terminated as well as successions with miserable persons. There is however much to gain from putting forward the positive aspects. It is a shift in focus from overcoming barriers and problems to finding ways of working creatively together which includes succession practice, among other practices. Such a shift is endorsed by research in psychology showing the superiority of thinking about what one does well and trying to do more of that, compared to focusing on what is bad and trying to do less of that (Hammond, 1998).
Implications of rethinking succession as practice

Since the strategy as practice perspective entails taking more than just top management into consideration in studies of succession the role of women can be further explored and possibly strengthened. For example, there is much left to know about the role of mothers in succession. The barriers to getting started with succession planning are lessened when succession is understood as always ongoing. A major challenge is to stop treating succession as a problem to be solved by formal planning, and open up for alternative possibilities.

Theme 5: Success factors in succession

When succession is perceived as always ongoing, there is little point measuring it in relation to the financial performance of the business. I think of succession as successful when family members of new generations continue to engage in the family business and the business develop in line with what the family wants. Sufficient finances to support such development are needed, but more as a prerequisite than as an outcome of success. And yes, some families might want the business to develop in a way that prioritizes high profit. Profit maximization in its original, theoretical sense is however irrelevant, since it requires the business to be run by the rational economic man – a fictive character not to be found in any actual business.

Successful qualities in successors would evolve around a genuine commitment to engage in the business and from that develop an appropriate role that allows both being part and individual development. The overlapping of generations facilitates several opportunities related to mutual learning and emergent developments.

I find two aspects focal for family business succession: first, a family harmony that allows family members to work creatively together while appreciating individuality; second, managing the duality of preservation and renewal so that the essence of the business is preserved, yet expressed in new ways.

9.2 What is professional management?

In-depth studies have found contra-productive effects of trying to enact professionalization in family businesses of the type often espoused in management education, courses and seminars (Fletcher, 2002b). My case study depicts a family business which is successful without such management. Hall and Nordqvist (2008) make an important point in objecting to ‘family management’ being used as the opposite to ‘professional management’. Surely both family and non-family managers can be professional (as well as unprofessional). The intriguing question is what professional management means in the context of family business. The dominant view of professional management downplays particularities of social, cultural and contextual nature.
Hall and Nordqvist (2008) bring forth the need for both cultural and formal competence in a family business leader. Formal competence concerns aspects such as formal training and education, while cultural competence concerns dimensions such as values, norms and meanings of the owner family. I want to continue along that line with my suggestion of joint family management. Through joint family management, cultural competences can be disseminated and developed. A family successor has been socialized with the values, norms and meanings of the owner-family since infancy. Those are competences that cannot be learned other than from within, over time, while formal business training can be obtained in many ways. Hence, family members have the prerequisites to be the most professional alternative for their family business.

Another dimension in professional management is the underlying assumption that being professional means being objective and rational. Acting professionally from a dwelling perspective is fundamentally different. According to Chia and Holt (2009: 112), “acting strategically is as much an instinctual, habitual and unthought response to experience as it is a deliberate, planned effort”. Wayfinding is a relational process where the appropriate next step unfolds from within current circumstances. Wayfinding, consequently, “implies progressing tentatively and incrementally reaching out from one’s situated circumstance, using oneself, and not some independent external point, as the basis of reference” (Chia & Holt, 2009: 166).

The joint family management described in Karl Andersson & Söner allows mutual learning and stepwise movement without the rational approach of planning beforehand. Instead, experience and a shared will to proceed together based on common values leads the way. Joint family management moves away from the ‘CEO’ being one person to a form of management where a group of persons jointly share that responsibility. It extends the meaning of professional management in line with the call for acknowledging both formal and cultural competences in (family) managers.

Chia and Holt (2009: 151) exemplify the fundamental difference between a building and a dwelling worldview by comparing the practice of a rational strategist with Heidegger’s example of a cabinet maker. The cabinet maker continually answers and responds (purposively) to different kinds of wood beyond the skilled use of tools, instructions and training. She or he regards the often disoriented and surprising experience of being under way amongst the things without requiring them to entirely conform. This contrasts the common view of appropriate strategic behavior which has instead come to rely on a building worldview where “the strategic aim is to get clear and comprehensive views of everything, which is realized by viewing everything from a distance, and in an identical way” (Chia & Holt, 2009: 153). In Karl Andersson & Söner, there are no strategists of that kind to be found but indeed there are cabinet makers, in both the philosophical and the practical sense. The people of KA do not design strategies, nor do they make succession plans – they make furniture. In that making, however, both strategy and succession are included, although
mainly in an indirect and unintended manner. Does that make them less professional? On the contrary, I think that such family businesses have a lot to teach us. Their long-term aims and genuine interest in their line of business surpasses the mere earning of economic rent and may pave the way for new takes on what constitutes meaningful commercial behavior. The increased call for ethics and sustainability in business, as well as business education (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006; Knights & O’Leary, 2006; Ghosal, 2005), consequently imply that family business might have a special role to play in society. Their longevity is intimately entwined with succession.

9.3 Strategy as practice revisited

First of all, when relationality in practice ontology is taken seriously it is impossible to single out one practice as purely regarding succession and another practice as purely product development, and so forth. The duality of agency and structure furthermore means that most practice is composed of practical coping. This in turn implies that the practices carried out by family members running a business together are practices of succession as well as practices of strategy, although they are most often perceived as neither. In family business, practice is succession is strategizing. Through detached coping (Tsoukas, 2010) I separate some outcomes of practice into succession outcomes and strategic outcomes, although there is no separation of the two in practice. Although the prime focus of the dissertation is family business succession, I have relied on strategy as practice literature to understand succession as practice. Therefore there are also some thoughts on strategy that I want to share in my study of succession.

The place of strategy?

Bringing the strategy as practice approach to the context of family business succession shed light on the importance of where the activities are carried out – its social site. At Karl Andersson & Söner, the kitchen of Ingvar and Gunnel is an important strategic arena, not just metaphorically but literally: it is a place where the family members running the business meet most weekdays for lunch and conversation about the business, among other things. The family business context further strengthens the idea that strategists are not necessarily localized by a chart of the organizational structure. Actual strategists are sometimes members of a top management team and sometimes neither employed by nor an owner of the business in question.

Considering the 4P framework (Praxis, Practice, Practitioners and Profession) suggested by Whittington (2007) I cannot see where the concept of strategic arena would fit in. My case study, as well as Nordqvist’s (2005), clearly
shows that the place of strategizing matters. Especially in family business, activities of strategic importance are undertaken in arenas outside of the firm premises. Furthermore, studies show that the board and hence also the boardroom is of little importance to many business families (Melin et al., 2004). This implies that the actual whereabouts of strategic work is unknown in many cases and needs further research attention. The philosophical roots of strategy as practice from social ontology certainly also emphasize the context of where people act (see for example Schatzki’s (2003, 2005) notion of ‘site’). I am not arguing that the importance of context has been ignored in family business research, or in strategy as practice, but it has not been given a clear role in the conceptual framework that is developing. Neither has the meaning of context as inseparable from contextualized entity been adequately elaborated. The place of strategizing should consider the physical room of action and its location, but also relate to practices as an inherent part of context, in line with social ontology. Where strategizing comes about might seem trivial but can be decisive for strategic outcomes, particularly in family business. It is a question of who is there and what the contextual features of that place are. Research questions, apart from the first step of identifying the places, can for example consider: What is the meaning of a certain place? Are there strategic family arenas that include family members without formal roles in the business, but exclude key actors in the business that lack blood relation to the owner family? And are there strategic business arenas that will do the opposite? How are interaction and power relations between actors affected by place? Actors with access to both kinds of arenas will seemingly have the upper hand over actors who are excluded from one or the other (or both!). Furthermore, this does not have to be about purposeful exclusion or inclusion, but rather a matter of who happens to be there when activities that turns out to matter for strategic outcomes take place. If that place is the kitchen of the retired founder, the shop floor or the board room, the persons who are there will differ, and so, in turn, will the strategic outcome. When the strategic issue is succession, the places of succession strategizing will affect the outcome of succession and the future of the business. Since strategy as practice views strategy as what people do, where they do it cannot be ignored.

The physical room and its psychological meaning matter for strategic outcomes; they matter in terms of both who the participants will be and how they interact in a certain context of a particular place that is part of the interaction itself. This notion is not new to practice philosophy, but has gained less attention in strategy as practice research. The strategic arena refers to the social setting and venue in which strategy process work is communicated (Melander, Melin & Nordqvist, 2010). By combining the work on strategic arenas of Melander et al. (2010), Nordqvist (2005), and others with the view on relationality in social ontology by Giddens (1984), Schatzki (2002) and others, I suggest that the current conceptual framework of Praxis, Practices, Practitioners and Profession should be accompanied by a 5th P for Place.
Implications of rethinking succession as practice

Strategy as practiced in most businesses?

This dissertation has focused on the work of one small family business. However, most businesses are family businesses and most family businesses are small. With that in mind I would like to see more management research diverging from the taken-for-granted view of a business as a big business with departments, middle managers, formal meetings, strategy away days and so on. These types of businesses should also be studied, but they have already been given a disproportionate amount of attention. I think there is much to learn from people performing strategy work without bothering much about the perceived view of how it is supposed to be done ‘professionally’. Johansson (1997) discuss critically the interesting paradox that small firms are said to be in greater need of professional consultancy services than big firms although they use these services to much lesser extent than larger firms, even when it is offered free of charge through governmental subventions. The strategy as practice approach is well equipped to conceptualize strategy work of the kind that is embedded in what is simply just done in everyday business life. This includes formal planning, but only marginally so. And it depends on where and how you look for it.

Concerns have been raised that research on boards of directors in family business tends to focus on large, publicly listed companies and offer agency-based prescriptions of large, external, diverse and active boards, regardless of family business characteristics (Corbetta & Salvato, 2004). Explorations of strategy practice in small family businesses can shed new light on board work. At Karl Andersson & Söner they strategize through constant conversation. They have either one or more than 200 board meetings each year, depending on how you define a board meeting. In the absence of formal structures and routinized meetings, they tend to things together as they go along. Taking small steps forward with careful consideration of how they fit with previous steps is a way of both preserving and renewing the family business. Doing it together through joint family management is effective, fulfilling and a way to include different viewpoints. They have a shared overall aim as a guiding star and appreciate the chance of working together in the moment. Running their family business together includes practice of both strategy and succession. The invisible, unintentional sides to strategy work need more attention to further our knowledge on strategy as practice. It requires a heightened sensitivity and perceptual awareness of the essential incompleteness and open-endedness contained in social practice (Chia & Holt, 2009: 131). This includes exploration of knowledgability embedded in practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984: 281), salient features in episodes where the ineffable is performed (Weik, 2010) and un-designed strategies progressing through non-deliberate purposive action (Chia & Holt, 2009: 133).
9.4 Contrasting problem orientation

Early in my readings on family business literature I reacted to the negative bias towards succession. The emphasis on the problems was striking and I got a feeling that there was something wrong with focusing so forcefully on the negative aspects. Throughout my study I have therefore tried to also acknowledge the positive aspects of succession. Finally I came across an intriguing concept against problem orientation, Appreciative Inquiry, that further fuelled my convictions about what I am trying to do.

Appreciative Inquiry is a philosophy about how to accomplish changes. It is, simply put, based on the idea that to progress one should think of what one does well and do more of that, instead of focusing on what is bad and trying to do less of that. Appreciative Inquiry was first conceptualized in relation to organizational work by Cooperrider and Srivasta in 1987. Lately a movement of ‘positive organizational scholarship’ (POS) has gained momentum (Cooperrider & Avital, 2004). It is “concerned primarily with the study of especially positive outcomes, processes and attributes of organizations and their members” (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003: 4). Parallel movements can be seen in other fields, including the shift from antibiotic to probiotic in medicine and the shift from analysis of dysfunctions to examination of human strengths in psychology (Cooperrider & Avital, 2004). It has been described as a positive revolution where “change has become much less about detection of error, analysis of chronic problem, or exclusive treatment of the deficient, the broken, and the problematic” (Cooperrider & Avital, 2004: xi). Ghoshal (2006) however points out that although major steps forward have been taken, management theory has been dominated by a gloomy vision for the past 50 years, posing great challenges to the progression of a positive perspective and calling for much to be done by many. This dominant paradigm is rooted in radical individualism and relates to what Chia and Holt (2009: 133) describe as the building worldview.

“Appreciative Inquiry adds an enormously important element to the transformative potentials of dialogue”, say Gergen, Gergen and Barrett (2004: 3). Compared to other visioning methods (for example those commonly used by athletes), Appreciative Inquiry is grounded in history and tradition rather than in visions of future achievements. It is, furthermore, a well-established method for change processes. Getting to know that there are parallel streams of extensive academic thinking supporting my suspicion gives me confidence in continuing to pursue the idea of succession as a practice instead of a problem. Talking about the opportunities of succession opens up new possibilities.

40 Lisen Kebbe, a researcher of family psychology, sent me a book after reading one of my conference papers in 2010. She recognized my concern for the overwhelming focus on problems in family business research and thought the concept of “Appreciative Inquiry” might interest me; it surely did.
Implications of rethinking succession as practice

Consider the following: “If an organization keeps hearing how ill it is and how much it has to fix itself, members will behave as if the organization were ill” (Hammond, 1998: 26). I feel that this is how we often approach family business succession: beware, it is difficult, it takes a long time and it is filled with conflict! This view does not fit with the family business practitioners I encounter. Yes, there are difficulties, and in some families also tragedies, but there are also so many positive aspects. I am overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and pride with which most family business persons speak of their business and their family. Also by how openheartedly they have shared moments of failure, disappointment and frustration that family business life also contains. It is however beneficial to explore all sides of succession and not just zoom in on the problems and how to plan to avoid those. A multi-generational family business offers possibilities of mutual learning that can lead to opportunities of business development, not just problems to solve and get over with.

Structuration theory holds that structures are both constraining and enabling on social life. Giddens (1984) is very clear in his criticism of structures as only constraining. This is an interesting parallel to my criticism of succession literature as being overly problem oriented, while succession as a social practice has structural properties of both constraining and enabling characters. Previous research has mainly focused on the constraints of family business succession; much is left to explore regarding its enabling characters. Recently, Appreciative Inquiry has been spotted as a promising new idea to be considered in strategy as practice research (Huff, Neyer & Möslin, 2010). I suggest that also family business scholars should consider what the growing body of work in positive organizational scholarship has to offer.

9.5 Methodological implications

The need for flexibility and variety

Viewing succession as mostly invisible, yet part of everything poses several methodological challenges. Methods that capture measurable, formal aspects of succession can report only on a very small fraction of succession practice. A bricolage can help to escape the limitations of monologic knowledge and provide forms of research that transcends reductionism (Kincheloe, 2005). My family business practitioners started our interviews in 2006, 2008 and 2010 claiming that “it is business as usual here, nothing new really” – and formally, there was no change in ownership and no change of CEO. In practice, however, there were changes. For them things often changed so gradually that they did not notice. To me, changes were evident when looking at their daily routines over time. Since I feel that different methods show different sides of succession, I try to use several. Both over time and in the present, through both
“talking about” and “taking part”. I started out with a case study approach and booked an initial meeting. Then we took it from there, deciding jointly on how to proceed: adding on methods, trying them out and sticking to the ones we liked. The advantage of this is that the study can emerge in a way that allows for adjustment and learning by doing. The disadvantage is uncertainty and vulnerability, not knowing what one will end up with and relying on the participants to continue their generous sharing. My bricolage approach is one way to incorporate flexibility and variety into the study of a complex phenomenon.

The strength of studying one small family business

At first I felt obliged not only to argue for my ‘sample of one’ method as expected, but to also defend my particular choice of that one case. Others arguing for their single case studies define several within cases, or choose an organization so big and complex that its richness is more than enough. On the contrary, my case covers one small family business, run by one family branch, making both family and business structure relatively simple in those terms. But given that the phenomenon of succession that I study is far from simple, I instead started to view the ‘simplicity’ of my case to be advantageous. It made it possible to repeatedly talk to all current owners, all current managers and a vast majority of the employees. It also made it easier to take an overview on the case and compare experienced episodes with retrospective sensemaking. Furthermore, the business is old, making the case rich in succession practice. And why should research interest on a detailed level only be given to big businesses, especially when most businesses are small? Similar concerns have lately been voiced by Nilsson, Westberg and Häckner (2012: 264), who question why most research on managerial work is oriented towards the large firm when small and medium-sized (‘SMEs’) ones are such an important part of our economy. So I will stop arguing that one case and one small family business is not inadequate, and instead argue that one case and one small family business is preferable for an exploration of the practice of succession. Considering the statistical study of the succession landscape (6.1), my case company is a typical family business along several parameters, but offers unique succession insights. When I have presented parts of my case at seminars and conferences, researchers have questioned if everything is as “warm and cozy” as I depict. Have I not missed out on some family disputes, tragedies or failures? Again, we are used to focusing on problems to such a degree that we feel suspicious of descriptions which lack them. When I finally came across the concept of Appreciative Inquiry (Hammond, 1998; Cooperrider & Avital, 2004) I felt even more confident that what I was trying to do was worthwhile. According to Appreciative Inquiry it is important to learn from successful cases as an inspiration for how things can be, instead of focusing on what to avoid. This further justifies the case of succession under study in this dissertation, where
Implications of rethinking succession as practice

longevity over generations is obtained in a way that aligns family harmony and business development. It stresses the importance of learning from practice in businesses like Karl Andersson & Söner.

9.6 A concluding comment on contribution

According to Whetten (1989), the task of a theoretical contribution is to challenge and extend existing knowledge (Whetten, 1989). A theoretical contribution should help the reader to see different things or to see things in a new light (Davis, 1971 in Reay & Whetten, 2011). The aim of my work has been to rethink succession in a way that offers things to be seen differently and for new things to be seen. Most contributions to family business theory are based on variance theory, answering to questions of “why is it?” whereas questions of “how is it?” based on process theories are much more rare (Reay & Whetten, 2011). In this regard my practice perspective have lead me to explore how questions about succession.

Starting to engage in family business research projects, such as the one reported on in section 6.1, and, at the same time, reading the family business literature, spurred a curiosity for what is going on during succession processes in terms of actual activities. From iterating between fieldwork and theory a new view of succession emerged. The practice philosophy outlined in chapter three led to a framing of succession as originating from socialization, included in everyday routines and progressing without design. Chapter six and seven further explored how that unfolds in practice through joint family management, business development and preservation of the family business essence. Chapter eight, thereafter, offered a generalized discussion of my insights. A generalizing proposition claims that what seems to be a local phenomenon is actually a general phenomenon (Davis, 1971). Not of the kind that holds for all humanity but shows that some behavioral characterization holds for some groups, but not for others (Davis, 1971). In this vein I claim to have learned things about one family business that is relevant for family businesses in general. To what extent, and in which ways, must be reflected upon for each case. Succession in Karl Andersson & Söner might have more in common with other cases of succession in small, Swedish, manufacturers in niche markets. On the other hand, what is central here is the profound impact of family on business in family business, which is not bound to any particular type of family business, but grounded in the strength of the family institution. An interesting proposition is one that offers a negation of an accepted one (Davis, 1971). My study shows how letting succession emerge without a purposeful plan for it to be so is a viable alternative to the so often prescribed succession planning.

From embracing a practice philosophy, and applying theories of practice to family business succession, new perceptions emerged. Framing succession as originating from socialization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Giddens, 1993) helps
entangle how family members acquire the skills needed to manage the family business. Since socialization starts at birth it led me to question succession having a particular starting point and instead conceptualize it as ongoing through the family lifecycle which contrasts the common view of succession as an extraordinary event. Practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984) and practical coping (Tsoukas, 2010) offers explanation to how succession is included in what is simply just done in the daily routines of family business life. Dwelling, wayfinding and purposive acting (Chia & Holt, 2006; 2009; Chia & Rasche, 2010) illuminates an alternative approach to change than the type based on design prior to action. My contribution to family business succession therefore lies in my alternative description of succession as practice.

According to Chia and Holt (2009: 125), strategy as practice research has mainly researched the deliberate ‘doings’ of intentional agents. My work includes descriptions of how practice takes place without conscious planning or deliberate action, as called for by Chia (2004), and is therefore also contributing to strategy practice literature through empirical illustration. The bricolage method developed to get at practice with indirect and unintentional bearing on succession, offers a way to further explore other kinds of complex social phenomenon.
References


References


References


References


References


References


209


References


References


SCB Statistics Sweden. Retrieved 31 May 2011, from [http://www.scb.se/Pages/TableAndChart____228187.aspx](http://www.scb.se/Pages/TableAndChart____228187.aspx)


References


Appendix 1: Genogram focused on Ingvar’s branch of the family
Appendix 2: Two examples of interview guides

A more structured first interview
(Translated from Swedish to English)

Three areas:
A. Your history in the business
B. Your current role
C. Your future role

A.
How do you remember the business from your childhood?
- first memory
- particular events

When did you start to engage in the business?
- in what way
- tasks
- on whose initiative
- how did you learn and by whom

How come you decided to work for the business?
- when was that decided and who took part
- considerations
- alternatives

How did you experience your ‘entry’ into the business?
- who helped you to get going?
- what reactions did you get from:
  Family
  Employees
  Suppliers
  Customers
  Others (designers)

What different roles have you had in the business so far?
- why changes?
- how has this changed?

What problems have you encountered?
- solutions
Appendix

What conflicts have emerged?
- among whom?
- about what?
- how are they dealt with?

What is most fun?
- particular events

B. What is your current role?
- why
- how long
- alternatives

Describe your daily tasks

Are you involved in management?
- who else
- how do you work (board meetings, family council etc.)
- how are decisions made
- who decides what
- big issues / cross roads
- current issues

Are you an owner?
- ownership structure

C. How do you envision the business in the future?
- what plans are there
- who are involved

Where are you in the succession process?
- how do you work on the succession (ownership and leadership)
- what is decided upon
- how would you want it to be
- how do you think it will turn out
- who is driving the process
- is something / someone holding you back
- any counselors (if so who)
- how will your role change
- what other roles will change
What must stay the same after succession?
-why
-how
-any “sacred cows”

What would you like to change?
-why
-how
-when

What challenges and difficulties do you foresee?

A fourth interview with the same person
(translated from Swedish to English)

About current affairs

Last time we met was in May. What is going on now?
Any strategic changes?
If so, how did they emerge?

About succession

What is going on regarding succession?
How has your role changed?
The roles of the others?
Have any preparations been made? (for example the training of Klas)
Have you talked about succession?
Routines around succession?
  Board
  Mgmt. group
  Family council
  Counselors (accountant, mentor, other, ‘Young management’)
Has the topic come up during conversation? (Where, when, who)
How does it feel that the succession is before you? (Status quo, nice, stressful…)
What is the next step?

If you are to hold a meeting about this, could I participate or talk to you in connection to that?

Who are key persons for KA?
Can I conduct an employee survey?
Appendix 3: Summary of employee survey

Summary of employee survey at Karl Andersson & Söner 11–12 May 2010

How did you come to work here?
Several heard through word of mouth that this was a good place that makes good furniture. Several people had been here for internships during their education. Others got their positions through contacts in the industry or by being recommended by current or former employees.

For how long have you worked here?
This turned out to vary from the whole of their working life to just a short while. Quite a big group had started during the last years due to retirements and expansion. I felt it was good to know how long they had been there in relation to coming questions regarding succession and current developments.

What other employments have you held?
This question was asked to know a bit about what they compare KA with. Many had previous experience in the industry as well as from working in family businesses. There was also previous experience from large organizations, other industries and governmental agencies. Some people started at KA right after their carpenter education since this is one of the few opportunities if one wants to really build furniture.

What is the best thing about working at KA? What are the advantages?
The colleagues; good atmosphere, good camaraderie, personal and close cooperation between workers and management.
The tasks; real craftsmanship, flexible, independent, good tasks and good working hours (no weekends)
The security; fair, long-term, stable, you know how things work around here. Leaders that listen.
What stood out most often among the answers was the good atmosphere and that it seemed easy for everyone to come up with positive things to say.

What is the worst thing about KA? What are the disadvantages?
Stressful at times
The pay is quite low; it is low in this line of work in general and on the lower side at KA.
A little old fashioned in some areas. Some machines are old
Someone suggests longer breaks so that there is time to rest while others suggest shorter breaks so one can go home earlier.
Sometimes it is limiting to work at a small family business. Resources and career possibilities are limited. It can feel like double signals when they want to keep the old and change at the same time.

To sum up, it seemed harder to come up with downsides but most often mentioned was the stress factor and low salary.

**In what ways can you tell that this is a family business?**
- A familiar atmosphere
- Management works extra hard and in good harmony
- The family is in charge
- Management is accessible; you meet them daily and can easily talk to them.
- Hard to describe because it is more something you feel.
- The special history
- The family is committed, joint activities
- Everyone knows everyone
- “Smålandish economy” – they hold on to the money and save on things when possible. Investments are carefully considered but when purchases are made they go for long lasting quality.

In sum, what most people mention is the closeness to management and their engagement in the daily work.

**How is communication working? (Who to turn to?)**
- Communication is generally good. It is easy to bring up things if you want to.
- The production meetings each Monday are appreciated by most people while some think it is a waste of time. Others requested more general information apart from the production plan of the week.
- Sometimes they forget to inform about things and then it can create problems.
- You turn to your foreman or someone in management. It depends on the nature of the issue.
- Sometimes there are visitors that you do not know about.

**Would you like more or less responsibility?**
- Most people think they have the right amount of responsibility since they feel that they can influence things.
- Everyone, regardless of position, say that they are responsible for the quality.
- Some people want more responsibility, to learn more and be more part of decision making.
- Some suggest more rotation of work.
Appendix

It is brought up that the foreman that has worked there for ages has a lot of important knowledge in his head so they are very dependent on him. This became evident when he got stuck at the Milan fair this year.

In sum it was clear that they care for the business in feeling responsible for overall quality and concern for weak spots.

*How can you tell that the business is in succession?*

All four now run it together

Ingvar have started to delegate some of his old tasks

Many think that it does not show. On the other hand, those that started some years ago came here after the fourth generation was already involved so to them it is less of a change. Some people mention that they cannot tell since it was already started when they arrived.

There have been investments in new machines and new products and more fairs.

More modern.

New types of products which are simpler and smaller

Overall I got the feeling that the succession proceeds so gradually and slowly that it is hardly considered at all.

*What are the big changes over the last years?*

Many new products

Better organized and structured

There has been a change into younger employees and newer machines.

Some people had worked here for too short a time to answer this question.

*Do you get the right amount of information?*

Many feel that the Monday meetings are enough.

It is good because if you want to know something you can always just ask.

Some people would like more overall information from management regarding fairs, product development and such.

*What is the company culture like?*

Quality is the guiding star

Always had the reputation of being a good employer and to make good furniture.

Old, genuine and long-term oriented

Strict and thorough

Nice atmosphere, respectful and sound values

*Anything else?*

Most people had no further comment

Some stressed again that they really like it here.

They are understanding and give you time off if you need it.
Someone requested a health check-up
Someone suggested more social activities like kick-off, bowling or a trip to the fair
Some old machines need to be replaced

My overall reflection from talking with employees and being around the workshop is that for a workshop it seems calm and friendly. Above all I feel like they are proud to tell me about KA. They are proud about its history and reputation and the quality of the furniture for which they all feel responsible. They know that it is rare to build this kind of furniture in Sweden nowadays so for a trained carpenter there are not so many opportunities to work like this. It was very interesting to hear them, one by one, tell me that their area of responsibility is quality. It show how also employees share the concern for overall quality and the understanding of how quality cannot be split up but must be the concern of everyone all the time.

Although there are noisy machines, the atmosphere is calm. There is no shouting and running around. Everyone is concentrated at working with their things. Some small-talk now and then and a radio here and there on low volume. During breaks they have lunch and coffee together. Some play cards and some solve crosswords. From the chitchat they seem to know each other pretty well. As far as I can tell it is quite a diverse group; some are fresh out of school, others are close to retirement. Some wear piercings and heavy metal t-shirts, others look tidy in the blue KA shirt, everyone wears work-pants and work shoes apart from the few that work in the office who wear casual clothes and comfortable shoes. Some people are of foreign background and some are women but most employees are men of Swedish origin.

For me, spending time with employees goes beyond the questions of the survey and the total experience is important part of my understanding. It gave me the opportunity to discuss my view with them and I could also confirm many of my ideas about how things work from the employees.
Appendix 4: Sample passages from the shadowing stories written to illustrate practice of everyday family business life

Ingvar 2010-04-07

I park outside the building and buzz the doorbell on the main door. Catharina’s voice soon appears in the speaker; I tell her it is me and she buzzes me in. Maria meets me in the entrance and explains that Ingvar will arrive soon; he is just dropping his car off to have the tyres changed from winter to summer tyres. I take a seat in the entrance and Ingvar arrives in 5 minutes. We go up to his room. I am offered the visitor’s chair opposite him by the desk. I explain that he should work as usual but there is no need to pretend that I am not there. On the contrary it is good if he tells me what he is doing now and then.

He starts by checking his mail and e-mail. He complains to me about all the junk mail they get all the time. And now when they are going to Milan next week [to do the annual furniture fair] they even get Italian junk mail. Ingvar goes through both his e-mail and the general company e-mail. Some of them he forwards to Andreas and others.

When receiving a survey on attitude towards child labor Ingvar tell me that it is sad that they even have to ask. But then again, he continues with a smirk, he has his kids working here.

While Ingvar reads his mail I look around the office from my position in the visitor’s chair. All furniture seem to be KA’s, I would have been surprised if they were not. Most of them are from old collections though. I have been here before several times and it looks the same as I remember it. There is the oil painting of Karl Andersson on the wall, in his 40s or 50s I am guessing, looking at us with serious eyes and well-combed hair. There is a lot of storage with rows of binders neatly marked and lots of books, brochures and samples. It is crowded but tidy.

We start to talk about designers. Ingvar tells me about Carl Malmsten and Börje Mogensen. Carl Malmsten was somewhat of a bohemian; sometimes he lay down under a table to take a nap. Börje constantly smoked his cigars. Ingvar pulls down an old binder from one of the many shelves. It contains letters from the early 1950s. It is the correspondence between Yngve, his uncle, and several prominent Nordic designers. It is really exciting to read the old letters, knowing that they resulted in activities profoundly affecting the development of KA. I
had heard that the long-term collaboration with Börje Mogensen started from Yngve’s letters so reading those actual letters over 50 years later feels special.

I ask whether their competitors work with designers in the same way and Ingvar tells me that most of them do. At least nowadays, when they started it was most common that the many furniture manufacturers in Småland put together the models themselves. Now everyone works with designers. He tells me about certain designers being tied up to certain competitors and so on. He reflects on that KA has been successful in picking up new designers early in their careers. To him the product is more important than the name; “It does not need to be only Wegner or Mathsson all the time”, Ingvar states [two of the most famous Scandinavian designers of furniture].

The phone rings…

**Andreas 2010-04-12**

Andreas sits behind his computer when I arrive in the morning. He sees me through his window and lets me in. He wonders if this will really give me anything since he mostly runs around the whole day. We joke about that I will be his tail. I tell him that I hope I will not be bothering him too much and that I would appreciate if he tells me about what he is doing now and then.

We go out to “his place” in the workshop where he works on product development. It is a big area but quite crowded with piles of prototypes and half-finished things everywhere. There are also lots of boxes piled here and there. He experiments on the ‘Strip’ prototype. It is their new hanger that will be launched at the Milan fair next week. It is not finalized for production yet so he fine tunes the construction on the ones that will be displayed at the fair. There is a steel band that will not stay in place. Maybe some magnets can hold it in? He tries out different versions. Where should one place the magnets so that they are hidden but still strong enough? Now and then he needs something that we go out and borrow from people at the shop-floor. When he is satisfied with the construction we go back to his office.

Andreas continues to go through e-mail and mail. We start to talk about new products since propositions come in by e-mail too. He tells me about two suggestions of butler’s trays from different designers that they are interested in when Ingvar stops by and asks if Andreas have checked them in on their flight. [They are going to Milan on Friday for the fair]. No, not yet since Andreas did not get his passport back yet. Ingvar teases him a bit for that. Apparently Andreas managed to send his passport with the car that Sara took to Italy. Luckily Klas and Martin are there now to build up the exhibition case and will return home before Andreas leaves on Friday. So what is the problem? Ingvar also takes part in the butler’s tray’s discussion before he leaves. Andreas starts to attend to some paperwork when a woman calls about her Chamfer-table…
Appendix

**Sara 2010-04-28**

I take the morning train to Stockholm. Sara was originally booked on the same train but she was delayed in Paris and took a direct flight to Stockholm yesterday instead. On the train I receive a text message from Sara saying that she and Hilkka are going to a client meeting in the morning and will be back at Studio B3 around 10.40 when I arrive so we should meet at Studio B3, their showroom.

I go to B3 and the hostess lets me in. I have been there before, at the cocktail party they organize each year during Stockholm furniture fair. Sara and Hilkka arrive shortly after. We are in Stockholm to meet a group of Finnish designers that are making a visit organized by Martela, KA’s retailer in Finland. They will arrive in the afternoon so we spend the morning fine-tuning the exhibition. Sara and Hilkka refurbish a bit and discuss what items to display the most. Some are carried away and others are added. Thereafter everything is dusted and polished. With the duster in her hand Sara ironically comments that being in this industry is “so glamorous”.

While they are working Sara tells me about the ideas behind the placement of things and so on. They find that a table has a little mark on it. It has been lent out for some event and they must have placed it upside-down. So typical, they should charge rent or something when they let people borrow their furniture. Not everyone understands to handle them with care. On the other hand, it is good PR when their stuff turns up in public events. They are selective though, they carefully consider the context. They did, for example, turn down the opportunity to air their furniture in the Big Brother TV-show.

I also get to talk some more to Hilkka. We briefly met once before at the Stockholm furniture fair. She has worked for KA for ten years now. She handles sales in Stockholm and Finland. She tells me how the work of getting KA renowned on the Finnish market finally is starting to pay off.

While polishing Sara and Hilkka prepare for the meeting. They talk about how to present the furniture. Sara asks Hilkka for her opinion on things and vice versa. The top of a table is a bit wobbly. They better tighten the screws. But how is it done on this model? Sara knows. First you remove the top and then you tighten the screws from the inside... When they feel pleased with the exhibition we go for lunch. It is a sunny spring day so Hilkka suggests a place nearby where we can eat outside. At lunch Hilkka asks me about my dissertation so we talk about family business and strategy. They ask me more about strategy and we talk about emergent strategies and path dependence… […]

We go to the storage in the basement to fetch a black “Bridge” (a foldable table that is named bridge after its bridge-like design). I hold the doors while Sara and Hilkka carry the table. When we get back the guests have just arrived in the entrance 30 minutes early. Hilkka welcomes them in Finnish. Neither Sara nor I understand Finnish but we understand that we are presented. I think she explains that Sara represents the company and that I am a researcher.
least she speaks and points to us. The guests nod appreciatively towards me and I smile and nod back. It is a strange feeling. Sara whispers a comment to me that tells me that she has a similar feeling. After a while Hilkkka says in English that Sara will present the company further.

Sara takes over and continues in English. She speaks about the history and tradition of KA. How everything was started by her great grandfather Karl Andersson and now is continued by her and her two siblings; the fourth generation. She speaks freely about their values, the quality and the craft-like production in Huskvarna. She also shows a sample of their raw material to explain the difference in quality between real wood and chip-boards that many other businesses use to save money. She explains the difference does not show so much at first but that the shelves and tabletops are much more durable and will not bend over the years. The quality should also be experienced. When you run your hand across a KA table, you can feel the quality. She ends by inviting the guests to do so; walk around, feel the furniture and have some champagne and canapés…

Maria 2010-05-12

When I arrive in the morning Maria is finishing some orders she started with at home yesterday evening. She tells me about the procedure: All orders they get, from architects, external salespersons and furniture stores, are first registered in the computer as “assembly lists”. These lists are then proofread by Andreas, Catharina and Klas before they continue to the workshop for production. It is super important to get it right from the beginning, hence all the safeguarding. And it works well; all of them tend to react to different aspects when they look at an order. The finished goods are listed by Suad and given to Maria who uses that list to arrange for freighting and prepare the consignment notes. The consignment notes goes back to Suad who handles the shipment and Catharina takes care of invoicing. They follow the same routine all the time, down to how the papers are stapled, to avoid mistakes.

Maria prints out some consignment notes and we meet a cousin in the mail room. She puts in some extra work during school breaks and such. Now she is putting together brochures in binders that will be sent out to their sales persons.

Back at the office Maria calls Pia (external sales person) to ask about the discount level of a certain customer.

Mats comes by to ask about the enamel on “Mrs. Bill”; can you get it in two colors, one on the outside and another on the inside? He is practicing to take orders and other paperwork to be able to help out more when needed. Yes, you can have two colors. It looks astonishing because you see a glimpse of the inside in the folded corners even when the cabinet is closed. But sadly most people order it in one color anyway… Maybe they do not know about this option?
Appendix

Mats leaves and Klas enters. He informs about a mishap in the workshop that will cause a week’s delay on half of an order. They decide that Klas will call the customer and have them decide if they prefer to have half the delivery now and the rest a week later or if they should wait a week and send it all at once.

At the same time Sara also joins us.

She comes with a draft of a memo regarding “exhibition discount”.

Klas leaves. [Their offices are small so when four people are there at once it is really crowded.] Sara and Maria discuss the wording and make some changes. The thing is that you want the retailer to have a KA exhibition on display in their store, for that they get a special discount on those items of furniture. However, this is misused by some dealers that claim that everything is for the exhibition and therefore they want both that discount and the discount for volume, for all items all the time. Therefore they are now putting together this memo with guidelines for what to count as an exhibition and also to formulate it so that you will not have both types of discounts for the same furniture.

Maria asks Klas through the wall if he got hold of the customer. He has and we should send the first part now…
JIBS Dissertation Series

No. 001 Melander, Anders: Industrial wisdom and strategic change – The Swedish pulp and paper industry 1945-1990, 1997 (Business Administration)

No. 002 Marmefelt, Thomas: Bank-industry networks and economic evolution – An institutional-evolutionary approach, 1998 (Economics)

No. 003 Wiklund, Johan: Small firm growth and performance – Entrepreneurship and beyond, 1998 (Business Administration)

No. 004 Braunerhjelm, Pontus: Knowledge capital, firm performance and network production, 1999 (Economics)

No. 005 Frankelius, Per: Företagande över tid – Kontextuellt perspektiv och visuellt beskrivningsspråk, 1999 (Business Administration)

No. 006 Klaesson, Johan: A study of localisation economies and the transport sector, 2001 (Economics)

No. 007 Hatemi-J, Abdulnasser: Time-series Econometrics Applied to Macroeconomic Issues, 2001 (Economics)

No. 008 Alhager, Eleonor: Mervärdesskatt vid omstruktureringar, Iustus förlag AB, 2001 (Commercial Law)

No. 009 Hugoson, Peter: Interregional Business Travel and the Economics of Business Interaction, 2001 (Economics)

No. 010 Pettersson, Lars: Location, Housing and Premises in a Dynamic Perspective, 2002 (Economics)


No. 012 Brundin, Ethel: Emotions in Motion – The Strategic Leader in a Radical Change Process, 2002 (Business Administration)

No. 013 Wiklund, Hans: Arenas for Democratic Deliberation – Decision-making in an Infrastructure Project in Sweden, 2002 (Political Science)

No. 014 Florin Samuelsson, Emilia: Accountability and Family Business Contexts - An Interpretive Approach to Accounting and Control Practices, 2002 (Business Administration)

No. 015 Ahl, Helene J.: The Making of the Female Entrepreneur – A Discourse Analysis of Research Texts on Women’s Entrepreneurship, 2002 (Business Administration)

No. 016 Olsson, Michael: Studies of Commuting and Labour Market Integration, 2002 (Economics)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>017</td>
<td>Wigren, Caroline</td>
<td>The Spirit of Gnosjö – The Grand Narrative and Beyond</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>018</td>
<td>Hall, Annika</td>
<td>Strategising in the context of genuine relations: An interpretative study of strategic renewal through family interactions</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>019</td>
<td>Nilsson, Ulf</td>
<td>Product costing in interorganizational relationships – A supplier’s perspective</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>020</td>
<td>Samuelsson, Mikael</td>
<td>Creating new ventures: A longitudinal investigation of the nascent venturing process</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>021</td>
<td>Bruns, Volker</td>
<td>Who receives bank loans? A study of lending officers’ assessments of loans to growing small and medium-sized enterprises</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>022</td>
<td>Gustafsson, Veronica</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial Decision-Making: Individuals, tasks and cognitions</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>023</td>
<td>Agndal, Henrik</td>
<td>Internationalisation as a Process of Strategy and Change – A Study of 16 Swedish Industrial SMEs</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>024</td>
<td>Ejermo, Olof</td>
<td>Perspectives on Regional and Industrial Dynamics of Innovation</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>025</td>
<td>Barenfeld, Jesper</td>
<td>Taxation of Cross-Border Partnerships: Double-Tax Relief in Hybrid and Reverse Hybrid Situations</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>026</td>
<td>Hilling, Maria</td>
<td>Free Movement and Tax Treaties in the Internal Market</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>027</td>
<td>Brunninge, Olof</td>
<td>Organisational self-understanding and the strategy process</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>028</td>
<td>Blombäck, Anna</td>
<td>Supplier brand image – a catalyst for choice: Expanding the B2B brand discourse by studying the role corporate brand image plays in the selection of subcontractors</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>029</td>
<td>Nordqvist, Mattias</td>
<td>Understanding the role of ownership in strategizing: a study of family firms</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>030</td>
<td>Karlsson, Tomas</td>
<td>Business Plans in New Ventures: An Institutional Perspective</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>031</td>
<td>Johnson, Andreas</td>
<td>Host Country Effects of Foreign Direct Investment: The Case of Developing and Transition Economies</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>032</td>
<td>Nyström, Kristina</td>
<td>Entry and Exit in Swedish Industrial Sectors</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 034</td>
<td>Gräsjö, Urban: Spatial Spillovers of Knowledge Production – An Accessibility Approach, 2006 (Economics)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 036</td>
<td>Andersson, Martin: Disentangling Trade Flows – firms, geography and technology, 2007 (Economics)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 037</td>
<td>Nilsson, Désirée: Essays on Trade Flows, Demand Structure and Income Distribution, 2007 (Economics)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 038</td>
<td>McKelvie, Alexander: Innovation in New Firms: Examining the role of knowledge and growth willingness, 2007 (Business Administration)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 039</td>
<td>Garvi, Miriam: Venture Capital for the Future - Implications of Founding Visions in the Venture Capital Setting, 2007 (Business Administration)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 040</td>
<td>Rosander, Ulrika: Generalklausul mot skatteflykt, 2007 (Law)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 041</td>
<td>Hultman, Jens: Rethinking adoption – Information and communications technology interaction processes within the Swedish automobile industry, 2007 (Business Administration)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 043</td>
<td>Sjölander, Pär: Simulation-Based Approaches in Financial Econometrics, 2007 (Economics)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 044</td>
<td>Hang, Min: Media Business Venturing: A Study on the Choice of Organizational Mode, 2007 (Business Administration)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 045</td>
<td>Lövstål, Eva: Management Control Systems in Entrepreneurial Organisations – A Balancing Challenge, 2008 (Business Administration)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 046</td>
<td>Fridriksson, Helgi-Valur: Learning processes in an inter-organizational context – A study of krAft project, 2008 (Business Administration)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 047</td>
<td>Naldi, Lucia: Growth through Internationalization: a Knowledge Perspective on SMEs, 2008 (Business Administration)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 048</td>
<td>Wiberg, Daniel: Institutional Ownership - the Anonymous Capital: Corporate Governance and Investment Performance, 2008 (Economics)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 049</td>
<td>Eklund Johan E.: Corporate Governance, Private Property and Investment, 2008 (Economics)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 050</td>
<td>Glemdal, Michael: Gubben på kullen - Om den smärtsamma skillnaden mellan politiska intentioner och praktiska resultat, 2008 (Political Science)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
No. 051  Bohman, Helena: Trade, Knowledge and Income Distribution, 2008 (Economics)


No. 053  Mellander, Charlotta: The Wealth of Urban Regions - On the Location of Creative Individuals and Firms, 2008 (Economics)

No. 054  Johansson, Monica: Organizing Policy - A Policy Analysis starting from SMEs in Tuscany and the County of Jönköping, 2008 (Political Science)


No. 056  Hellerstedt, Karin: The Composition of New Venture Teams: Its Dynamics and Consequences, 2009 (Business Administration)

No. 057  Hunter, Erik: Celebrity Entrepreneurship and Celebrity Endorsement: Similarities, differences and the effect of deeper engagement, 2009 (Business Administration)

No. 058  Gerson, Anna: Compensation of Losses in Foreign Subsidiaries within the EU: A Comparative Study of the Unilateral Loss-Compensation Mechanisms in Austria and Denmark, 2009 (Law)

No. 059  Dahlström, Tobias: Causes of corruption, 2009 (Economics)

No. 060  Languilaire, Jean-Charles: Experiencing work/non-work - Theorising individuals' process of integrating and segmenting work, family, social and private, 2009 (Business Administration)

No. 061  Nguyen Tan, Phat: Transfer Pricing: The Vietnamese System in the Light of the OECD Guidelines and the Systems in certain Developed and Developing Countries, 2009 (Law)

No. 062  Karlsson, Ann Britt: Institutionalisering av ansvar i kommunal revision – Lärande organisering, 2009 (Political Science)

No. 063  Johansson, Sara: Knowledge, Product Differentiation and Trade, 2010 (Economics)

No. 064  Ots, Mart: Understanding value formation - A study of marketing communications practices at the food retailer ICA, 2010 (Business Administration)

No. 065  Raviola, Elena: Paper meets Web: How the institution of news production works on paper and online, 2010 (Business Administration)

No. 066  Palmberg, Johanna: Family Ownership and Investment Performance, 2010 (Economics)

No. 067  Borgström, Benedikte: Supply chain strategising: Integration in practice, 2010 (Business Administration)
JIBS Dissertation Series

No. 068 Wikner, Sarah: Value co-creation as practice: On a supplier's capabilities in the value generation process, 2010 (Business Administration)

No. 069 Karlsson, Peter: Issues of Incompleteness, Outliers and Asymptotics in High-Dimensional Data, 2011, 2011 (Statistics)

No. 070 Helin, Jenny: Living moments in family meetings: A process study in the family business context, 2011 (Business Administration)

No. 071 Markowska, Magdalena: Entrepreneurial Competence Development: Triggers, Processes & Consequences, 2011 (Business Administration)

No. 072 Cui, Lianguang: Innovation and network development of logistics firms, 2011 (Business Administration)

No. 073 Norbäck, Maria: Making Public Service Television: A study of institutional work in collaborative TV production, 2011 (Business Administration)

No. 074 Dzansi, James: Essays on Financing and Returns on Investment, 2011 (Economics)

No. 075 Månsson, Kristofer: Issues of multicollinearity and conditional heteroscedasticity in time series econometrics, 2012 (Statistics)

No. 076 Balkow, Jenny: In the Middle: On Sourcing from China and the Role of the Intermediary, 2012 (Business Administration)

No. 077 Karlsson, Hyunjoo Kim: Dynamics of macroeconomic and financial variables in different time horizons, 2012 (Economics)

No. 078 Bjerke, Lina: Knowledge flows across space and firms, 2012 (Economics)

No. 079 Högborg, Andreas: Corporate Governance, Legal Origin and Firm Performance: An Asian Perspective, 2012 (Economics)

No. 080 Wictor, Ingemar: Born Globals: Rapid International Growth in New Ventures, 2012 (Business Administration)

No. 081 Skoglund, Per: Sourcing decisions for military logistics in Peace Support Operations: A case study of the Swedish armed forces, 2012 (Business Administration)

No. 082 Haag, Kajsa: Rethinking family business succession: From a problem to solve to an ongoing practice, 2012 (Business Administration)