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# **Assessing the Threats Against Rural Sweden**

- An exploration of crimes against Swedish farmers related to animal production

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Master of Science Thesis in Sustainable Urban Planning and Design

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## Abstract

In the discourse of crime and place, the focus has rarely fallen on rural crime. While experiencing comparably lower crime levels than urban counterparts, the common association with rural areas as being symbols of peace and friendly social interaction is not necessarily accurate. One group that often are thought of as inherently rural is farmers, who's workplaces may possess certain unique vulnerabilities to crime compared to other locations.

This thesis aims to obtain a better understanding of the threats against farmers related to animal production in a Swedish context, adding to the knowledge base regarding rural crime and sustainable development of rural and urban areas.

The objectives of the study are:

- to investigate the nature of the victimization of farmers devoted to animal production in Sweden, especially related the situational conditions of farms and rural areas.
- to explore new data that could be used to approximate the scale of the threats against farmers using data from media archives from 2009 to 2019.

This study reports types, frequency, and location of crimes against animal production with a focus on mink, rabbit and pig farms. Geographical Information Systems (GIS) is used to report the geography of these offences at municipal level. The theories of the routine activity approach and situational crime prevention are used to try to explain certain conditions that may facilitate crime on farms, while the offenders are explored using the theory on techniques of neutralization.

The findings of the study show that the experience of the chosen actor's varied greatly, but with crimes such as trespassing, vandalism and theft being common types of offenses across the board. The locations of the crime events were focused in the southern to mid of Sweden. Situational conditions that may have facilitated crime includes: the large size of farms and low population density providing low detection of crime, high value targets, and relatively high accessibility to the farms. From the data, mainly three techniques of neutralization were observed to be utilized: denial of the victim, denial of injury and appeal to higher loyalties. Multiple techniques were observed to be utilized together, while simultaneously exploiting situational conditions to facilitate the neutralization.

**Keywords:** rural crime, farm crime, animal production, sustainable rural development, situational crime prevention, routine activity, techniques of neutralization.

## Sammanfattning

Inom diskursen om brott och plats har fokuset sällan fallit på landsbygdens brott. Fastän den upplevda brottsligheten är lägre än i mer bebyggda stadsområden, är den vanligt förekommande associeringen av landsbygden som en symbol av fridfullhet och vänliga sociala relationer inte nödvändigtvis riktig. En grupp som ofta ses som en typisk del av landsbygden är lantbrukare, och deras gårdar kan besitta unika sårbarheter jämfört andra platser.

Denna avhandling har som syfte att få en bättre förståelse för hoten mot lantbrukare kopplade till djurproduktion i ett svenskt sammanhang, samt att bidra till kunskapsbasen kring en hållbar utveckling av både stad och landsbygd.

Målen med studien är:

- att undersöka naturen av brottsutsattheten hos lantbrukare som ägnar sig åt djurproduktion i Sverige, speciellt kopplad till situationella förhållanden på bondgårdar och landsbygd.
- att undersöka nya data som skulle kunna användas till att uppskatta skalan av hoten mot lantbrukare, med hjälp av data från mediearkiv mellan 2009 och 2019.

Den här studien redogör för typer, frekvens samt geografiska lägen av brott mot djurproduktion med fokus på mink, kanin och svingårdar. Geografiska informationssystem (GIS) används för att visa geografin av brott på kommunal nivå. Rutinaktivitetsteorin och teorin om situationell brottsprevention används för att förklara möjliga faktorer som kan underlätta begåendet av brott på bondgårdar, medan gärningsmännens undersöks med hjälp av teorin om neutralisationstekniker.

Resultatet av studien visar att upplevelserna för de undersökta aktörerna varierar kraftigt, men brottstyper som olaga intrång, skadegörelse samt stöld var relativt vanliga för alla. Brottssevenen var koncentrerade i de sydliga delarna och mitten av Sverige. Situationella faktorer som kan ha underlättat brott inkluderar: storleken på gårdarna och befolkningstäthet, värdefulla brottsoffer samt relativt hög tillgänglighet till gårdar. Främst tre neutralisationstekniker observerades i datauttaget: förnekandet av offret, förnekandet av skada samt åberopande av högre lojaliteter. Flera tekniker observerades kunna användas tillsammans, samtidigt som situationella förhållanden utnyttjades för att underlätta neutraliseringar.

Nyckelord: brott på landsbygd, lantbrukare, djurproduktion, hållbar landsbygdsutveckling, situationell brottsprevention, rutinaktivitetsteorin, neutralisationstekniker

## **Foreword and acknowledgements**

This thesis was written at KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm in partial fulfilment of the master's programme Sustainable Urban Planning and Design, part of the engineering degree programme Energy and Environment at KTH.

I originally had not planned to write about rural areas, as there is such a constant demand and focus on continuing developing our ever-growing urban cities. But my supervisor, Professor Vania Ceccato, who also is one of few who have made extensive research on the subject of rural crime in Sweden, convinced me that it would be both interesting and valuable to walk the path less travelled. With the finished results in hand, I do not regret choosing this subject. It has not only given me insight into the realities of the rural parts of the country, but also taught me more about theories on crime and deepened my interest into more dimensions of the built environment.

I would like to clarify my personal position here, as some themes touched upon in this essay can be controversial. Parts of this thesis will be contributing to a larger study about crime and other threats against farmers in Sweden currently being undertaken by KTH, SLU and LRF. However, with this thesis I do not take any personal stance regarding the morality of meat or fur consumption, nor the current practices of farm- and food industry in general. The only position taken here is that Swedish farmers, whether related to food or fur production, are part of our society as any other and deserves to have their persons and livelihoods protected.

I feel it is necessary to express my gratitude to a number of people who have helped make this thesis happen. I of course need to thank my supervisor Professor Vania Ceccato, for her invaluable guidance, patience, and teachings throughout this whole process. I also offer her and Professor Peter Lundqvist of SLU thanks for involving me in the project. My gratitude also goes to my friend Criss, for helping me proofread this essay and for the friendship throughout our schoolyears. I want to express thanks to my family: Elizabeth, Abraham, Sara, for their continued support and love. Finally, my best friend and partner in life, Rosanna, for the never-ending encouragement and helping me stay on my path when my faith in myself was faltering.

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# 1. Introduction

This section introduces the context, relevance and aim of the study as well as the structure of the report.

## 1.1 Background

Since its inception, the farming industry has been considered a crucial part of any nation's economy and culture. Serving vital functions such as securing food demand, farmers have become an essential component of sustainability. National farming can also serve as a synergetic tool to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals Set by the United Nations, as grazing cattle can strengthen biodiversity; potentially making progress on both the UN Goal 2, No Hunger, and Goal 15, Life on Land (Livsmedelsverket, 2019; United Nations, n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

This is true in Sweden as well, where farmers long have served as the face of the countryside. However, agriculture as a sector, whether related to food or fur, has been in a slow decline since the mid-1960s (SCB, 2016, 2019a). Today only a few percent of the Swedish population take part in the industry. This could be because of many reasons; Swedish farmers face a multitude of challenges, ranging from the effects of and necessary adaption to climate change, and comparably stricter regulations than other European countries (Jordbruksverket, 2019; Livsmedelsverket, 2019). This also includes the increasing difficulty of competing with food distributors abroad, as nearly half of the food consumed in Sweden is imported from other countries (Cederblad, 2018). Additionally, the loss of identity in the face of globalization and other structural changes has put this sector under great duress.

Moreover, despite the common perception of rural areas as a symbol of peaceful living, farmers and other residents are not strangers to victimization of crime. For example, farmers have globally been observed as common targets of fraud and property theft of machines, fuel and other equipment (BRÅ, 2017; Ceccato, Dolmen, 2011; Barclay, Donnermeyer, 2009). In Sweden, LRF, the Swedish Association of Farmers has reported from a survey showing that 4 out of 10 farmers have been victims of crimes in general, either to their person or their property; an increase from older survey results (Sundin, 2019). However, a past problem seems to be on a new rise in Sweden lately, namely militant animal rights activists. Groups under this label have been linked to crimes such as the release and theft of animals, and vandalism of farms but also threats and direct attacks against the farmers themselves.

## 1.2 Aim, objectives, and focus area

In Sweden, the literature about rural crime and crime against farmers and farm production is sparse. In the context of urban and regional planning, this knowledge gap must be closed in order for municipalities and other regional governing bodies to be able to create and maintain safe and secure spaces for all. As such, this thesis aims to obtain a better understanding of the threats against animal production in a Swedish context, and to add to the knowledge base regarding rural crime and sustainable development of rural and urban areas.



To fulfil the aim, the objectives to be completed are:

- to investigate the nature of the victimization of farmers devoted to animal production in Sweden, especially related to situational conditions of farms and rural areas.
- to explore new data that can be used to approximate the scale of the threats against farmers using data from media archives from 2009 to 2019.

This study is part of the research project “Criticism, crime and threats against Swedish animal production – The perspective of Swedish farmers” headed by prof Per Lundqvist, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) in cooperation with KTH Royal Institute of Technology and funded by Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF). This thesis was carried out under supervision of prof. Vania Ceccato.

This study reports types, frequency and location of events of crimes against animal production with focus on mink production, rabbits and pig farms in the country of Sweden. Geographical Information Systems (GIS) is used to present the geography of these offences at municipal level.

### 1.3 Disposition

The report has been structured into six main sections. The first section here introduces the aim, scope and structure of the thesis. The second section presents a theoretical background with a literature study on rural crime, farmer victimization and crime theories chosen for setting up a theoretical framework. The third section introduces the methodological approach and the data source that was used, as well as the limitations of the study. The fourth section presents the results, which is followed by an analysis and discussion of the new information obtained, with attempts to link the theoretical framework to the results. The final section presents the conclusions of the project, as well as a discussion of the direction for future research.

## 2. Theoretical background

This section provides the theoretical framework used throughout the study. First, a look at definitions and previous studies on rural areas in general. Then, a review of two situational crime theories and one on offender behaviour. A third section focuses on farmers as targets of crime, with a framing of the Swedish context. Finally, a tentative conceptual model is described on the basis of previous subsections.

### 2.1 Rural crime

For a long time, the discourse on crime, including in Sweden, has been focused on cities and producing measures against urban crime patterns. This is perhaps not surprisingly due to the empirical evidence of disproportionately higher number and rates of victimization in urban areas, compared to rural ones. Consequently, rural areas have often been associated with peace and friendly social interaction, often used as retreats from urban problems, such as crime (Ceccato, 2016). However, this is not necessarily accurate, with trends pointing at rural areas becoming more criminogenic in certain aspects (Ceccato & Dolmen, 2011). While this topic have largely remained neglected in research, the Routledge International Handbook of Rural Criminology (Donnermeyer, 2016) includes a collection of studies on a number of rural problems, such as organized rural crime groups in United Kingdom (Smith & McElwee, 2016), farm victimisation in Australia (Barclay, 2016) and rural drug production (Weisheit & Brownstein, 2016). Comprehensive research including a Swedish context can be found in e.g. *Rural crime and community safety* (Ceccato, 2016).

While crime in general seems to be decreasing in Sweden, trends show crime of particular types rising in both urban and rural areas (Ceccato, 2016; BRÅ, 2017; Ceccato, Dolmen, 2011). The largest increases are found in violence, criminal damage and some property crime (Ceccato, 2016). The differences in victimisation between urban and rural areas are also decreasing, however, this is thought to also be the result of certain types of crime decreasing in urban areas (BRÅ, 2017). The rural-urban relationship has seen many changes which may be the reason why some rural areas are experiencing more crime today than previously (Ceccato, 2016). Overall, there are trends and signs of transitions of rural areas into becoming more similar to urban areas. Social transformation and urbanization of rural areas, with improvement of infrastructure and increasing value of goods may produce new opportunities for crime, while geographical distance is becoming a less deciding factor in who can be targeted (Barclay, Donnermeyer, 2009; Ceccato, Dolmen, 2011). Certain trends may also create or increase the number of some types of offenders. Inequality in victimisation is also an important subject, with finding showing that repeat victimization is as common in rural areas as urban areas for certain crime types (Ceccato, 2016). Additionally, international findings show conflicting results when it comes to type of crime, which may be due to lack of a universal classification of rural areas (Ceccato & Dolmen, 2011). Even in Sweden there are multiple definitions. BRÅ (National Bureau of Crime Prevention) has divided the 290 Swedish municipalities into four groups: metropolitans, larger cities, smaller cities, and countryside, where countryside municipalities are those with less than 27 000 inhabitants within 30 km radius from its centrum; referring to 19% of all municipalities (BRÅ, 2017). The Swedish National Rural Development Agency (*Glesbygdsverket*) on the other hand has two specific definitions of rural areas, *glesbygd* and *tätortsnära landsbygd*, which has

been translated in Ceccato & Dolmen (2013) as remote rural areas and accessible rural areas, respectively. Remote rural areas are defined as more than 45 minutes away by car from the nearest urban neighbourhood with more than 3000 inhabitants, as well as islands without a fixed land connection, while accessible rural areas are instead 5–45 minutes by car from urban locations with more than 3000 inhabitants (Glesbygdsverket, 2007). In general, there has been a common agreement that a universal definition of rurality may not be possible, and perhaps should not even be attempted (Ceccato, 2016). In either case, the reality of crime being a problem in rural areas is true whichever definition is being used.

## 2.2 Situational crime and offender behaviour

The still differing contexts of urban versus rural areas gives a good reason to investigate what the nuances can mean for rural inhabitants. To describe and explain vulnerabilities prominent in rural areas and farmlands especially, a number of theories on crime can be used. While traditionally the offenders and their motivations have been the focus in mainstream criminology, there are theories that emphasize the importance of a detailed analysis of the crime events and activities themselves (Kleemans, Soudjin & Weenink, 2012). Two situational crime theories, *the routine activity approach* and *situational crime prevention*, are presented below to set a framework for analysing the more location-based targeting of farms and farmers. A third theory, *techniques of neutralization*, discusses offender behaviour and is used to explain more of the nature of the offender and motivational dimensions of farmer victimisation.

### *The Routine Activity Approach & Situational Crime Prevention*

In “Social Change and Crime Rate Trends: A Routine Activity Approach”, Cohen & Felson (1979) presents the idea that any crime event needs the convergence of three elements in time and space: a motivated offender, a suitable target and the absence of a capable guardian. A target may be a person, object or place that can be considered attractive and rewarding by a person of criminal intent. For example, an object can be considered attractive if it displays high value, high visibility and accessibility. An attractive target as such implies something with high profit that can be approached by a criminal with little difficulty. Examples could be a lone individual holding an expensive cell phone in their hand on an empty street, a subway cart that could be vandalized, or an unattended bag. A guardian can be both a physical or symbolic presence of an individual or group that acts as a deterring force against a crime event (Hollis-Peel et al. 2011). Common ideas of guardians may be the presence of police, but Cohen and Felson argues that “guardianship by ordinary citizens of one another and property as they go about routine activities” is heavily neglected in crime research (Felson & Cohen, 1979, p.590). Guardians can also be inanimate features such as lighting, security locks and alarms. However, the mere presence of a guardian is not enough if the guardian is not an effective one; a child acting as a guardian for their parent on an empty street would not be giving enough of a deterring effect for many criminals (Argun, Dağlar, 2016). In the context of rural areas, close-knit communities can especially provide effective guardianship (Barclay, Donnermeyer, 2009).

When a suitable target is unguarded by any capable presence, the final factor necessary for a crime to take place is a motivated offender. The theory in other words argues that as soon as an offender is motivated and identifies a suitable target without any capable guardianship present, the offender will attempt to commit a crime. On the other hand, the absence of either of the three

elements is enough for the prevention of a crime to be successfully committed (Cohen, Felson, 1979). In the context of rural areas, the absence of capable guardianship is perhaps the most obvious and prominent element present. The physical landscape and the low population density may enable offenses to be committed without witnesses, lacking deterring effects and facilitating avoidance of confrontation, as well as escape.

### ROUTINE ACTIVITY THEORY

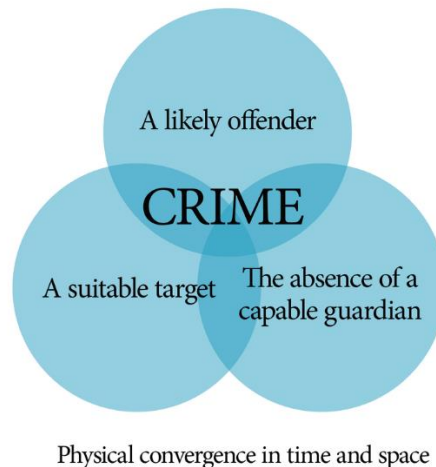


Figure 1. A graphical model of the Routine activity theory (Burton, 2012)

The theory of situational crime prevention (Clarke, 1995) is closely related to the routine activity approach but focuses more on the characteristics of the locations of crime events. It argues among other things that certain locations are more vulnerable to crime due to having characteristics such as physical and social decay. Situational prevention involve opportunity-reducing measures that are aimed at and tailored to very specific types of crimes, efforts to design, manage and change environment in systematic way, as well as creating deterring effects by making crime appear less rewarding or more risky for a wide range of offenders. The theory argues some locations are less likely to experience crime, and vice versa, creating certain hot spots of probability of crime. In the context of this study, certain farms may be more or less vulnerable depending on physical layout, size, and what measures are put in place to deter crime.

Within environmental criminology, the routine activity theory is one of the more popular ways to explain the relation between crime and opportunity. Applications on topics such as safety in transit environments is mentioned in Ceccato & Newton (2015). Together with situational crime prevention it has been attempted to study organized crime activities such as cross-border crime (Kleemans et al, 2010). Similar to the topic of this study, Barclay & Donnermeyer (2009) have used these situational approaches on agricultural security in an Australian context.

#### *Techniques of Neutralization*

Moving back to the more traditional lens in criminology, rural crime and crimes against farmers could be explained by an analysis of the offenders. As described in the routine activity theory,

theft and other crimes can often be opportunistic ventures rather planned out strikes. However, for offenders such as e.g. animal rights activists, the motivations may not be monetary gain nor e.g. vandalism for the sake of vandalism, but what they perceive are good intentions. The crimes committed could be thought of as justified actions as the goal justify the means, while the victim is morally indignant themselves. A theory on delinquent behaviour relevant to this is the techniques of neutralization, also known as the Neutralization theory (Matza, Sykes, 1957). The authors observed that criminals in general are aware of their obligations to the law and do not have a completely inverse sense of morals compared to law-abiding citizens. They however enforce certain techniques in order to neutralize the urges to follow their moral obligations, in order to be able to commit a crime. This was hypothesized as offenders have been observed to experience guilt over an illegal act, have boundaries of who they would target, show respect to law-abiding citizens and follow certain demands of conformity. The methods utilized are defined as five techniques. The first method is denial of responsibility, where the offender suggests that they were forced into committing an illegal act or that it was an “accident”. The second technique is denial of injury, where the offender claims their actions did not cause any harm or damage. An offender can also showcase a denial of the victim, claiming that whatever harm received by the victim was deservedly so. The fourth technique is the condemnation of the condemners, which is when the offenders argues that any condemnation of their action is done to shift blame, claiming hypocrisy. The final technique that can be used is the appeal to higher loyalties, where the offenders justify their actions by claiming they were doing them for a greater good such as protecting a sibling or helping the organization they are in.

The neutralization theory was in the original publication mainly focused on juvenile delinquency, but is used more broadly today; Maruna & Copes (2005) lists a number of neutralization theory studies on issues such as rape, murder, genocide, with especially receptive studies on organizational and white collar crime. Applications on non-criminal behaviour are also included, such as entering young children into beauty pageants, as well as the German youth’s handling of the stigma of the holocaust.

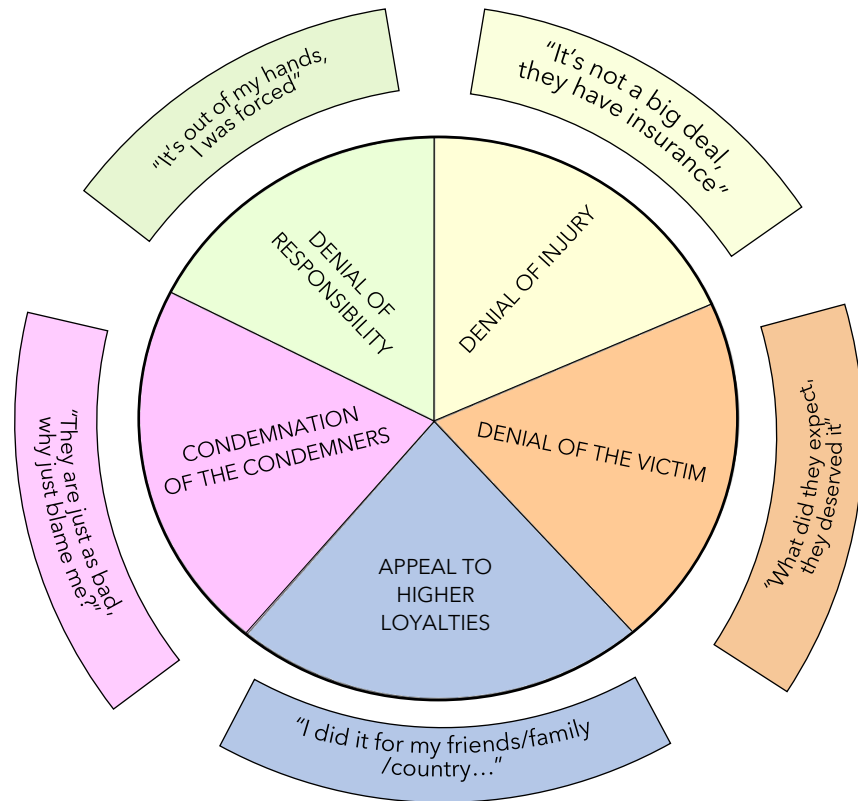


Figure 2: The techniques of neutralization

### *Criticism of the theories*

As described above, situational crime approaches steer away from the traditional outset of explaining criminal behaviour through analysis of the offender. This has however been controversial in criminology discourse, as sociological contexts of criminality and development of criminal disposition are as a result not touched upon (Wortley, 2010). Factors such as life experiences, biological make-up, social disadvantage, and economic disparity are not examined in situational crime analyses. Some critics have also debated how well the model for situational crime approaches fits for the purpose of explaining organized crime. Kleemens et al (2012) reiterates the comments made by Von Lampe (2012), that the routine activity approach may be sufficient to prevent street crime, while offenders of more serious and organized crime can be more resourceful and depend less on opportunity structures defined in space and time. The presentation of the different elements of the routine activity approach may also differ from reality, e.g. a target may not always be present or noticeable in the area of operation of the offender. The deterring effects of a capable guardian, such as the presence of a civilian, may not work under all conditions. Also, there has been criticism that preventive measures may simply be displacing crime to other locations (Wortley, 2010). This has been counterargued as being a flawed criticism, as the fact that if one would remove all crime preventive practices (such as locking doors, not protecting sensitive information) then crime would surely rise (ibid). Thus, routine precautions must prevent rather than displace crime, with signs of even decreasing the displacement of crime through having preventive effects beyond the original target.

There is also criticism of the assumption of the motivated offenders being rational in their decision making, as it can be influenced by intoxication of alcohol and other drugs. Their view may otherwise simply differ from the person implementing the preventive measures (Kitteringham, 2010). In response to criticism regarding the inappropriate use of situational approaches for irrational crime, it is argued that situational factors have been found to be important in many ‘pathological’ behaviours such as suicide, serial murder and drug abuse (Wortley, 2010). Furthermore, situational crime prevention is not only about affecting the cost and benefits of crime but also looks at factors that may provoke crime – such as crowding leading to aggressive behaviour (ibid).

Criticism against the techniques of neutralization include questioning if offenders are performing the neutralization techniques before the illegal act is committed, and the difficulty to collect evidence of this fact (Maruna & Copes, 2005). Others point out that some techniques lack a clear distinction from the others, such as with “denial of the victim” and “denial of injury” often going hand in hand in certain situations (Landsheer, t’Hart, Kox, 1994). Sykes & Matza (1957, pp. 670-671) realized certain limitations with their theory in their original publication, such as “the need for knowledge concerning the differential distribution of techniques of neutralization, as operative patterns of thought, by age, sex, social class, ethnic group, etc“. They also mention the need for a deeper understanding of the internal system of the techniques, and how well certain techniques are adapted to particular illegal acts. Another critique is that a more nuanced understanding of cognition must be developed in the theory; separating techniques that may be associated with continuous criminality (e.g. “This is just who I am”) from those that are “separate from the offenders core self” and associated with likelihood of abstaining from crime (e.g. “It was an accident”) (Maruna & Copes, 2005, p. 227).

### 2.3 Farmers as crime targets in Sweden

As written by Elaine Barclay, “there is nothing more ‘rural’ than those crimes committed against farms and other agricultural industries” (Barclay, 2016, p.107). Farmers may be some of the inhabitants most closely associated with rural areas and some of their more vulnerable groups for experiencing crime. Effects of global transformations such as farming equipment, fuel and supplies increasing in value raises potential security risks, creating more attractive targets for an offender. Farming has become an increasingly larger business globally and more capital intense, with new technology replacing labour for efficiency and increased economic viability (Donnermeyer, Barclay, 2009). This is true in a sense in Sweden as well; while the number of farmers and farms have decreased, the total production output has remained largely the same since the 1960s with more efficient operations, that have also become larger in size (Jordbruksverket, 2017). With improved infrastructure both in terms of transportation and internet access, targeting of farmers has been greatly facilitated. Cattle theft e.g. can be committed more easily with better roads and higher accessibility to highways, which also serves as ways for an easy escape. Crimes such as fraud and unlawful threats are increasingly committed through phone calls and social media, where the offenders also can use the cover of anonymity (Ceccato, 2016). Additionally, societal trends such as consuming less meat and fur due to ethical reasons and climate awareness have become more prominent in Sweden, causing the negative

effects of farming related to animal production to become a more common discussion topic (Jordbruksverket, 2020, Sörbring, 2019).

According to a report in 2013 from the Federation of Swedish farmers (LRF), 3 out of 10 farmers had been victims of crimes during the previous two years (Åhgren, 2013), while a similar study in 2018 showed that this had increased to four in ten farmers (Sundin, 2019). The most usual offenses were theft of fuel, machines and other equipment as well as fraud, but also included threats and vandalism. Half of those who had experienced victimisation had been targeted more than once, which could indicate reoccurring offenders (Ceccato, 2016). Furthermore, militant animal rights activism is a form of crime that is becoming increasingly more common in Sweden. Those involved in the fur trade may previously have experienced the most opposition, but it seems that animal rights activists as offenders have increased their presence and variation in targets in Sweden the last decade. In 2019 it was reported that 200 acts of crimes against various animal farmers were suspected of having been carried out by activists in the past 3 preceding years all over the country (Verdicchio, 2019).

The dimensions of rurality are of course to be present in discussions of farm crimes. Sweden has a comparably low population density than most other European countries, but many Swedish rural areas especially in the southern parts of the country still have relatively good accessibility from and to larger cities, hence the term accessible versus remote rural areas (Ceccato, Dolmen, 2011). As can be expected, northern rural areas with a lower population density and higher share of remote areas are less criminogenic than southern parts of Sweden (Ceccato, 2016).

Furthermore, the southern parts of Sweden are also where most farms can be found. For example, most pig farming operations can be found in the counties of Skåne, Halland and Västra Götaland (SCB, 2019a). In 2005, a third of the mink operations could be found in the area “Listerlandet” in the municipality of Sölvesborg, Blekinge county, while other prominent areas include the counties of Västra Götaland, Skåne and Jönköping (Ds 2005:32).

Detecting crimes at farms may prove difficult, much due to the rural aspect providing absence of capable guardianship and other situational conditions letting offenders move around unnoticed. Lower population and density translate to fewer witnesses and potential guardians. The farm buildings and physical landscape can also provide cover for offenders. Swedish police have expressed concern over the many multiple escape routes available for offenders due to the sprawling Swedish rural road network in many areas of the country (Nilsson, 2014).

Additionally, the differences in sheer size between the southern and northern police regions also showcases an uneven ability to enforce the law (Ceccato, 2016). Detection of certain crime may be impeded by certain farm practices as well. In a report regarding safety precautions on farms by LRF (2020), the difficulty of preventing trespassing into animal pens is discussed, which is explained as largely due to the encouraged practice of leaving the doors unlocked in case of fire. Suggestions to manage this included using lock systems that could be unlocked in a quick manner, e.g. code-based systems, while having one’s phone number displayed so people not affiliated with the farm could gain access to the code.

However, even when the crime is discovered it is often not reported to the police. In surveys many farmers responded to have low willingness to report crime events due to feeling a lack of



support from police (Wallström, 2018). This is not exclusive to Swedish farmers, where for example in Australia, only half of all offences were reported (Barclay, 2016). The reasons for this vary greatly; some farmers may be unsure if there really has been a crime committed while others may want to deal with the problem themselves. Some fear repercussions as they may know the offender personally, living in a small community, while many believe that it is all for naught to report as nothing will be done either way. Still, the fear of victimisation is very present, with one in four Swedish farmers being worried that either their property or family would be victimized in the future (Ceccato, 2016). While the share of crimes against farmers being related to unlawful threats and hate is small, the worries of experiencing this is still very present among farmers (Sundin, 2019). This fear can also sow mistrust in the previously close-knit communities that rural areas often are associated with.

## 2.4 A tentative concept model for crime against farmers in Sweden

Based on the place-based crime theories and the techniques of neutralization, it is expected that there are overlapping motivations for the commission of crimes against farmers.

1. *Farm crimes* - Offenders find farms an easy target to steal from. For example, according to the routine activity approach, a tractor can be easily stolen if unguarded, not locked and visible from the road. Farms are also locations easy to enter and escape unnoticed from. Most of the farms are found in southern municipalities in Sweden and it is expected that most crimes of properties will reflect the location of farms, in other words, southern Sweden.
2. *Crimes against animal production* – Perpetrators utilize the techniques of neutralization to morally justify their crimes. Perpetrators can engage in denial of injury when they trespass or break into farms, damage property and open cages of animals such as minks, pigs or rabbits. In addition, the appeal to higher loyalties and denial of the victim can also offer an explanation as to why perpetrators such as animal rights activists break the law by stealing and releasing animals and making threats against farmers and their families.

This will serve as a hypothesis for what the results will reveal regarding the nature of farmer victimisation.

### 3. Method and limitations

The study was conducted through mainly two methods. First, the literature review setting up the theoretical context and framework presented in the previous section. Second, an analysis of crime events against farmers mentioned in Swedish news media, providing new data.

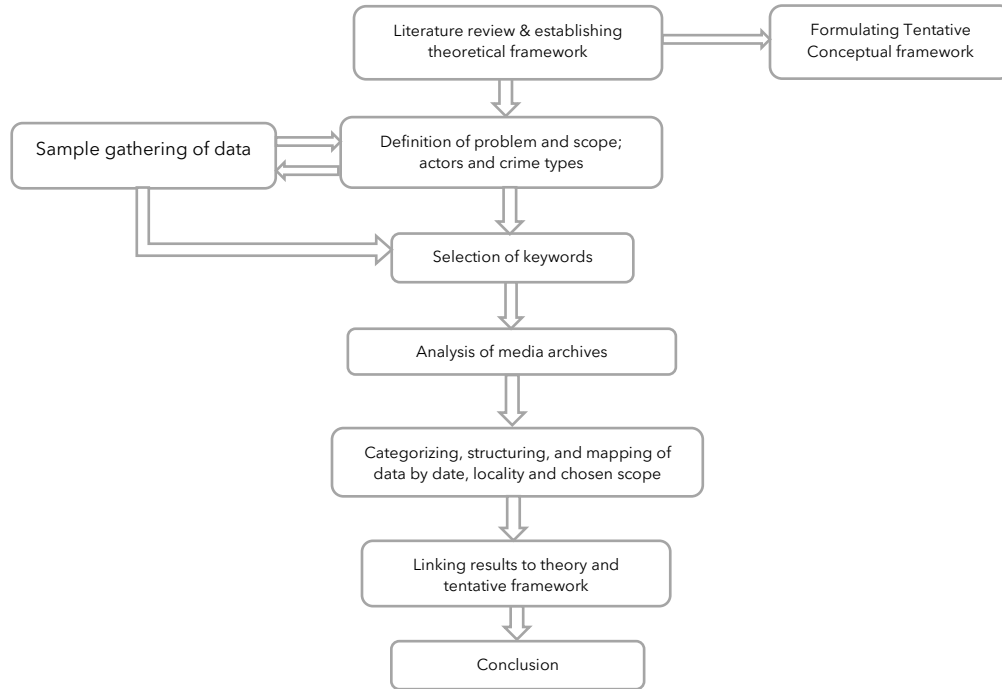


Figure 3: Flowchart model of the methodological framework used in the study.

#### 3.1 Media archives analysis

For this study, the scope was limited to three different types of farmers related to animal production: mink farmers, pig farmers and rabbit farmers. The choice was based on an initial data collection of media coverage for sample purposes where the most frequent type of farmer were chosen, as well as previous knowledge of past and current relevancy of the actors in the theme of this study. Rabbit farming is an exception, which has only been established fairly recently as an industry in Sweden but has caught some media attention in the current rising discourse of farm victimisation. Other types of actors were originally also of interest, such as production related to cow, but were not chosen based on less frequent search results as well as mainly appearances of crimes not within the delimitations of this study.

Data was collected through an analysis of the media coverage of crimes against the chosen farmers with the use of the Swedish national media archives through *Research Mediarkivet*, a resource provided via student access through the library of KTH Royal Institute of Technology. The search results from the media archives comes in the form of embedded text-versions of articles, with the options of PDF-versions and links to the original site when available. The

sources were mainly web and print-based newspapers, but also included links to radio programmes. Radio sources ultimately were not included, as most of the older material was no longer available. The different newspapers included locally and nationally based papers, but also included those with specific target groups (e.g. agriculture-related). Using different combinations of available operators, three different sets of keywords were used to find articles regarding crimes against each actor. The keywords were chosen after the initial sampling of newspaper articles regarding farmers and observing the most common appearances of types of crimes and different wordings of certain offences and actor names (Table 1).

Table 1: Keywords used in media archives analysis

Actor	Keywords
Mink farmer	(minkfarm* OR minkbonde* OR minkuppfödare* OR minkgård*) AND (hot OR misshandel OR sabotage OR mordbrand OR intrång OR hemfridsbrott OR inbrott OR vandalisering OR skadegörelse OR trakasserier OR ofredande OR stulen OR stöld)
Pig farmer	(grisbonde* OR grisgård* OR grisfarm* OR svingård*) AND (hot OR misshandel OR sabotage OR mordbrand OR intrång OR hemfridsbrott OR inbrott OR vandalisering OR skadegörelse OR trakasserier OR ofredande OR stulen OR stöld)
Rabbit farmer	(kaninfarm* OR kaningård* OR kaninuppfödare* OR kaninbonde* OR kaninproducent*) AND (hot OR misshandel OR sabotage OR mordbrand OR intrång OR hemfridsbrott OR inbrott OR vandalisering OR skadegörelse OR trakasserier OR ofredande OR stulen OR stöld)

The time period was set between 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2019. From the three search yields, each article was skimmed through briefly to understand the content and context of it, where non-relevant articles were removed from the list. Non-relevant articles included those that describe an event not located in Sweden, or simply were not related to crimes against farmers but still included the keywords chosen. Using Microsoft Excel, the data was structured and categorized according to a number of dimensions described below. The excel document was later used as the basis to produce the graphs and maps visualizing the results.

First, the articles were divided in three different categories based on the type of content they pertained: first, second and third order (Table 2). These classifications were devised specifically for this study in order to get a more nuanced look at the coverage of the crimes, with the hopes of providing additional information on the nature of farmer victimisation. Articles of the first order are closely related to a specific crime event and place. The first article of this order adds to the total count of unique cases for each respective type of actor. Second order articles are articles that are slightly less connected to the actual event or describe multiple events and/or places. These can be about follow up on the investigations of different cases, compilations of crimes in a region etc. This order was included to provide insight in how far cases were followed through in media and continuously reported on to the public. Articles that are more of general discourse of crimes against farmers fall under the third order. These can be debate articles, general information of the problem and are often on a national level.

As many newspapers could report on the same event, there was a large number of repeated articles. These were still included to showcase the scale of the media coverage, and as some newspapers provided more information than others on the situational conditions and motivational aspects of the events.

Table 2: Articles classified by type and relevance

Type of article	Interpretation
<b>1st order</b>	Refer to a specific case and place
<b>2nd order</b>	Refers to multiple cases/places OR something related to a case (Summaries, trials, follow-ups, result of investigations etc.)
<b>3rd order</b>	Mostly general discourse about crimes against farmers

Secondly, from each unique first order article, the type of crime that was described was noted and tallied for each actor. Seven types of crime are addressed in this study:

- Unlawful threat
- Assault
- Arson
- Theft/Burglary
- Trespassing/ “Hemfridsbrott”
- Vandalism
- Animal Abuse

These were as earlier mentioned chosen in the initial data sampling, based on frequency and relevancy to the study. Two types of crime are a combination of two offenses: Theft/Burglary and Trespassing/”Hemfridsbrott” (the latter can be translated as disturbance of the domiciliary peace). This is because news articles do not always describe enough details to differentiate between the types of each pair. While crimes such fraud have been noted to be a common offense directed at farmers, it is not as explicitly connected to situational conditions of farms and was also not appearing as frequently in media coverage in the initial sampling phase.

Furthermore, the temporal aspect of the media coverage was also addressed. The articles were sorted by publishing date, and the annual number of articles was calculated to enable the viewing of variation and peaks over the chosen time period, as well as the monthly count of unique cases observed. Temporal patterns were included as they could possible reveal additional situational context of crimes against farmers, as well as more details on motivations.

Finally, the location of the cases found in the articles was recorded, by municipality. The municipal data together with data on the offenses was restructured in Microsoft Excel sheets, and later exported into the GIS-based programme ArcMap. The Excel-sheets was joined with a shape-file with municipal data of Sweden, retrieved from ESRI Sweden. The output of this function was new shapefiles, showcasing only affected municipalities. This process was repeated for each actor separately. With this the geographical spread of the articles could be visualized.

### 3.2 Limitations

A number of factors has a limiting effect on the generalizability of the results. For example, using news media archives as a data source has its weaknesses. Articles may merely contain allegations from one party, and not every newspaper follows up these cases with additional information. There is also a potential bias in reporting more sensational news, which could lead to some type of offenses and offenders to be overrepresented. Notable studies using media archives as a source on crime include Davis (1952), which findings showed that the variation of crime news reported in newspapers were independent of the true rates of crime. Other studies such as Ghaffar et al. (2001) have shown that newspapers may both underreport and overreport certain events compared to police records. However, the function of providing benchmarks to analyses of police records have also been reported feasible with news articles. For example, the findings of Sheley & Ashkins (1981) show that newspaper presentation of the relative distribution of crimes approximates police figures more closely than does the television presentation. Originally it was in fact intended to compare the results with official statistics from police records and the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention in this study, similarly to the approach used in the study of environmental and wildlife crime by Ceccato & Uittenbogaard (2013). However, as there is no crime code specifically for crimes against farms, the obtainment of statistics was deemed too time- and resource consuming and complex by respective department. A comparison could therefore not be done, but as a result the importance of studies on Swedish farm victimization is also further emphasized.

Alternative data sources that could have been used includes social media applications such as Twitter. Social media research has gained high interest in academic research in the past decade, and have had applications on mapping public opinion over time (Ahmed, Bath, Demartini, 2017) as well as calculating crime patterns (Malleon, Andresen, 2015). The method was in the end not explored further, as it was thought to perhaps be better suited for a less specific focus than crime related to farms and farmers. Some studies also claim it is more useful in measuring the level of fear of crime rather crime trends (Prieto Curiel et al., 2020). Also, there are ethical challenges associated with social media research, e.g. regarding informed consent of retrieval of user posts (Ahmed et al., 2017). Future projects could however attempt to implement this method.

The use of media archives also provides a relatively easily accessible source of data, but the choice of keywords directly controls the yield. On the one hand, more general and larger numbers of keywords give a too large dataset to analyse. Some crime types such as “threat” may be used in articles in other ways than in a legal context, which adds many non-pertinent articles. On the other hand, highly specific keywords severely limit the amount of data that can be obtained. The fact that news articles may use various words for offenses and actors is a potential source for missing data, which was attempted to be minimized through using multiple versions of words in the keywords. Articles presenting compilations of crimes without details on date, location or number of events also restrict the amount of data that ultimately can be used for analysis.

The tools in the media archives were relatively easy to use, but occasionally seemed to malfunction, e.g. not showing all search results. The manual analysis by a human may also have resulted in errors in data managing and categorization, while on the other hand the results gain a more qualitative property than if it was automatized by a program.

## 4. Results

Presented here is the findings of the media archives analysis. The following subsections present the overall results, followed by actor-specific data and observed situational conditions that could potentially facilitate crime.

### 4.1 Overall national patterns

An analysis of Swedish media archives was conducted, reviewing news media articles published in the time-period 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2019. Three different sets of keywords were used for each actor, with the search yielding a combined total of 5360 hits. After removing the articles of non-pertinence, the total yield was 1971 news articles regarding crimes against farmers related to mink, pig and rabbit.

The articles of relevance were divided into three different categories depending on their content, namely articles of the first, second and third order. Articles of the first order were closely related to a specific crime event and location. Typical headlines of this order where e.g. *“Vandalism at mink farm in Kind”*, *“Stole 33 rabbits in burglary”* or *“30 pigs stolen in Säter”*. The first article of each unique case of this type was added to the total count of identified cases against respective type of actor. 500 articles of the total number were considered to be of the first order, constituting a share of 25%, while 98 articles, were unique and could be considered specific cases. Articles of the second order were less connected to the actual event and may even describe multiple events and/or locations. Headlines of this type included such as *“Request to start mink farm is withdrawn after threats”* and *“She doesn’t see an end to the activists’ harassment”* and *“Appeal is made against pig verdict”*. 886 articles fell under the second order, composing 45% of the total. Texts that are covering more of a general discourse of crimes against farmers fall under the third order. Typical headlines in this case for instance were: *“The politicians ignore the animal activist extremism”*, *“Make punishments harsher for activism”* and *“Mass media condemned innocent pig farmers”*. 585 third order articles were found, making up 30% of the total. The total percentage distribution of article by type is visualized in Figure 4(a).

The first order articles were used in the process of identifying offenses committed against animal farmers. A total of 137 counts of offenses in 98 identified unique first order articles could be found accounting for all three actors. In the total distribution of the different offenses reviewed, trespassing and “hemfridsbrott” make up a majority of the crimes identified, accounting for 34% (Figure 4b, Table 3). Table 4 in the end of this chapter showcases the total number of offenses by actor.

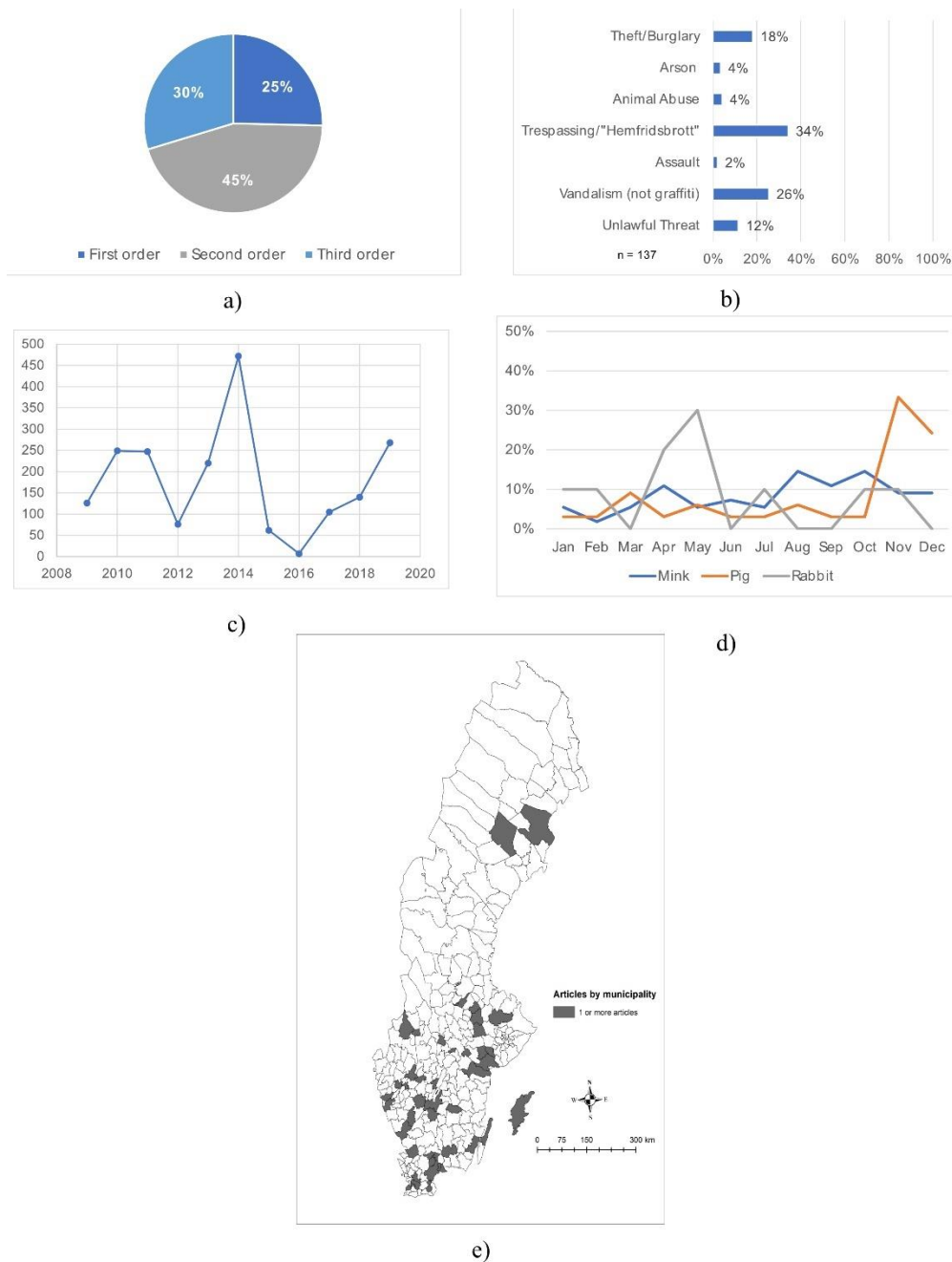


Figure 4: a) Total distribution of articles by type, b) Total distribution of offenses c) Annual variation in total article count, d) Monthly distributional variation in total article count, e) Municipalities with at least one article.

In almost all of the news articles reviewed, animal rights activists were either suspected or confirmed (e.g. through admission of guilt) to be the perpetrators. Many activists were alleged to be connected to specific activist organizations linked to various cases identified in this study, such as Djurrättsalliansen (*The Animal Rights Alliance*). In some cases, such as a few regarding animal abuse and theft of pelts and dead animals it is doubtful that the event was connected to any activist group. However, some identified cases of animal abuse have been related to activists

suspected of freeing animals that later are killed by nearby traffic in the area. Some offenses were not confirmed or were not given any specific crime code or definition but was based on the description in the news article.

Table 3: Total number of each crime type

Type of crime	Unlawful threat	Vandalism	Assault	Trespassing/Hemfridsbrott	Animal Abuse	Arson	Theft/Burglary	<b>Total</b>
Counts of articles	16	35	3	47	6	5	25	137
Percentage (%)	12	26	2	34	4	4	18	100

The coverage seems to have peaked in 2014 with 472 articles published with a sudden drop in the following years, but recently an increase can be seen (Figure 4c). In general, local newspapers and papers related specifically to farming were the earliest reporters of a case, while national media joined in on reporting for cases first if any progress was made in the legal process, or if the crime was of a more serious or sensational nature. There was also quite a difference in the monthly variation of unique cases for each actor (Figure 4d), which is presented further under respective actor subsection. As explained in the methodology, the temporal data was added to allow the possibility of patterns and more information on the situational conditions and motivations of the offenders.

To investigate the geography, articles were linked to the municipalities where the crime took place. In the context of this study the crime locations would mainly be where farms are located in the country, which gave an idea of the preliminary results early on as most farmers in Sweden are found in the mid to southern parts of the country. The rural aspect of farming also implied that smaller municipalities were to be expected to dominate the data. A total of 46 different municipalities were identified to have at least one article related to crimes against animal farmers, with the majority found in mid to southern parts of Sweden (Figure 4e). In Appendix A, Falkenberg can be seen as the municipality with the highest coverage, where a couple were related to pig farmers, while the rest was regarding mink related production. Sölvesborg was the municipality with the second highest number of articles, followed by Hjo and Kumla; all of the articles being related to mink farmers. The locations of the articles have been visualized for each actor in the sections that follows.

## 4.2 Offences by type of actor

### *Mink farmers*

Farmers related to mink production were the actors with the highest counts of articles related to them identified. A total of 1580 articles were related to mink farmers, which described 87 offenses in 55 unique cases (3,5%). Figure 5 (a) shows that the most common offenses identified are vandalism followed by trespassing. Articles regarding theft and burglary, as well as unlawful threats appeared relatively often as well, while the other types of offenses to a much lesser degree.



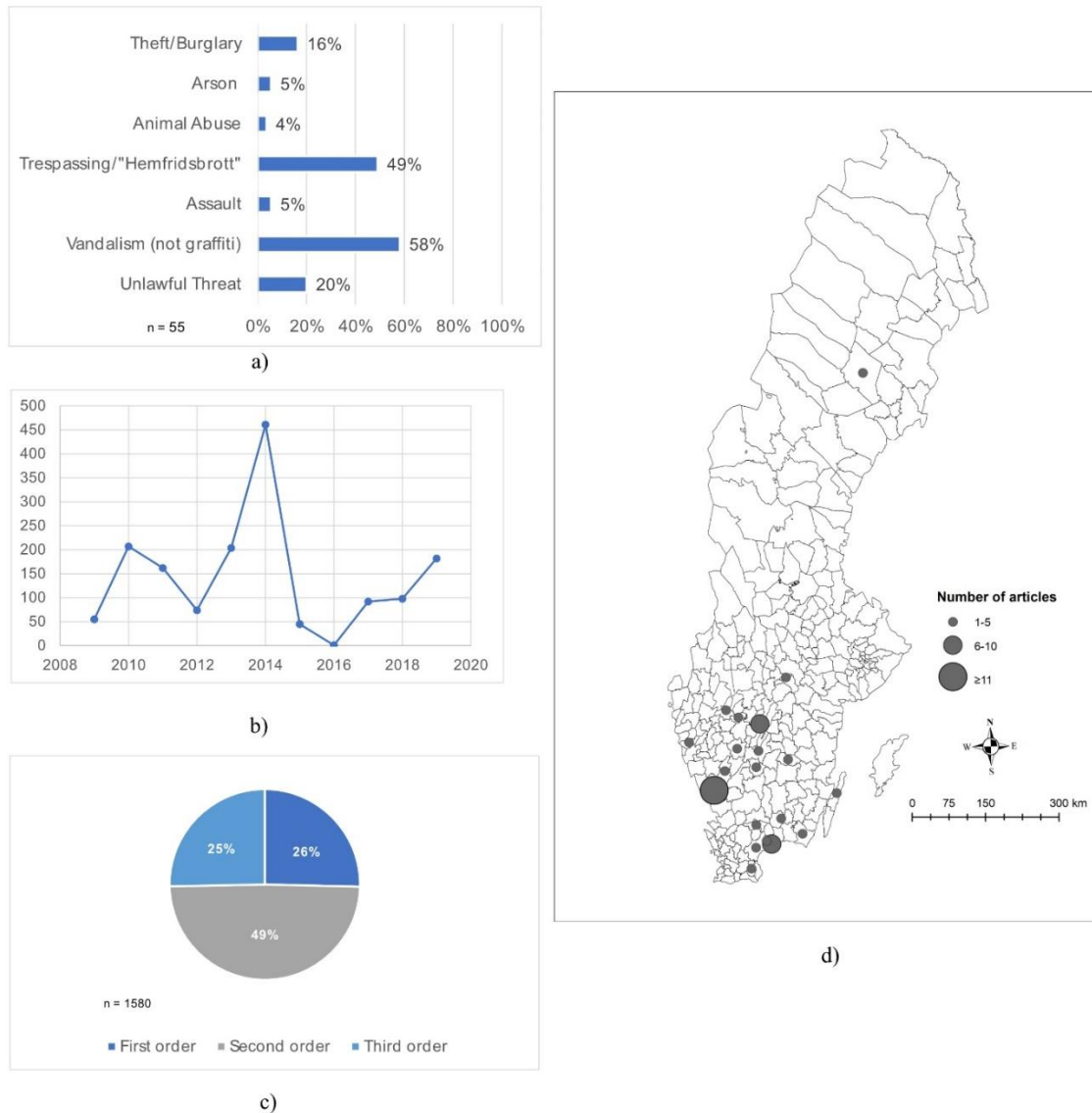


Figure 5: a) Distribution of offenses against mink farms, b) Annual variation of articles related to mink farms, c) Distribution of articles related to mink farms by type, d) Geographical spread of unique 1<sup>st</sup> order articles related to mink farms.

Considering the problem over time, the number of articles per year are presented in figure 5(b), where a cycle-like pattern can be observed. In 2014 an especially high peak can be seen as almost 30% of all articles regarding mink farmers were published that year. The monthly count of unique first order articles related to mink (Figure 4d) was distributed relatively evenly over the year, with slightly higher counts during late summer and autumn. Figure 5(c) shows that 75% of articles are not about specific cases but about the surrounding processes as well as the general discourse around the problem. Second order articles compose nearly half of the total while first and third order articles make up a quarter each.

Furthermore, the geographical spread of the articles can be viewed in Figure 5(d) as well as in Appendix A, where most of the reported events are in the southern parts of Sweden and along the

coasts. The municipalities Falkenberg, Sölvesborg and Hjo had the highest counts of unique articles, in descending order. While not always discernible based on the limited information of the articles, many of the cases seems to be repeat offenses against the same farm, in each of the municipalities.

#### *Situational conditions of crimes against mink farm production*

From the articles certain conditions were observed that may have encouraged crimes against mink farmers. For one, their operation can appear as very attractive target as they handle products of high monetary value. For example, in January 2011 in Vaggeryd municipality, 425 minks recently put to death were stolen, approximated to have a worth of 200 000 SEK (Sveriges Radio, 2011). Furthermore, both in December 2009 (Sveriges Radio Blekinge, 2009) and July 2015 (de Freitas, 2015) in the municipalities Sölvesborg and Skara respectively, pelts worth 1-3 million SEK were stolen each instance, among many other similar cases.

Furthermore, the mink farms are mostly localized relatively close to the more urbanized parts of Sweden. For example, the mink farm in Falkenberg that had the highest number of articles is located in a relatively well-developed area called Glommen and is somewhat close to residential buildings and recreational areas. The most affected municipalities, Falkenberg, Sölvesborg and Kumla are also by Swedish standards larger municipalities and can even be considered urban areas depending on chosen definition. All are also below 40 minutes in travel time to the closest larger city (Halmstad, Kristianstad and Örebro respectively), close to highways and larger roads, which is the case for many of the other municipalities affected as well.

The farms also seem to be places where it is difficult to detect crimes without additional surveillance and security equipment. Of what information was available in the articles, only few people seem to be present at the farm, most often the farmer and family members. Mink operations are also often somewhat large-scale businesses, translating to larger farms. One example where the low detection is observable can be found in the municipality of Skillingaryd in October 2010, when 17 000 minks were released from their cages on a larger farm (Sveriges Radio, 2010). Despite the large number of animals released, the crime was not discovered until the minks were already running onto the car roads nearby. A driver was the one who finally called the police, but no potential suspect could be proposed as the police expressed that they had “not much to work with”, with no one taking responsibility for the attack. The activist group The Animal Rights Alliance had earlier that year protested outside the farm in question. They denied any involvement in the incident but still expressed support for the attack.

Temporal factors also have come into play in order to offend as well as escape unnoticed. Where this could be discerned, a majority of the crimes were described to have happened during night time, especially crimes such as vandalism, arson and theft and burglary. Day time crime events were mostly related to acts such as activist protests outside farms that had led to disturbance of the domiciliary peace or trespassing charges, and in a few cases, assault. Unfortunately, many of the articles did not provide detailed information of the timing of events.

### *Pig farmers*

As many as 295 articles related to pig farmers and pig production were found. Of this total 33 unique cases and 36 offenses were identified, and as such 11% of the articles were regarding unique cases. Trespassing is presented in Figure 6(a) as comprising a strong majority of the found offenses, while other offenses other than theft and burglary did not appear in the news as often. The coverage of crimes in figure 6(b) was the highest in the beginning of the previous decade and peaked with 85 articles in 2011 but quickly dropped to lower numbers in the following years. A third of the articles were reported in November, and nearly a quarter in December (Figure 4d). Almost half of the articles were mainly about general discourse of crime against pig farmers (Figure 6c). The geography of the articles shown in figure 6(d) are of a similar pattern seen in figure 5(d) but with the counts of crime being more evenly distributed over the municipalities, while Gotland having a slightly higher count than the average.



Figure 6: a) Distribution of offenses against pig farms, b) Annual variation of articles related to pig farms, c) Distribution of articles related to pig farms by type, d) Geographical spread of unique 1<sup>st</sup> order articles related to pig farms.

### *Situational conditions of crimes against pig farm production*

From the articles related to pig farms, the lack of detection of crimes seems to be a recurring aspect. Animals farmers in general are prompted to leave their barns and animal pens unlocked, to ease evacuation in case of a fire (LRF, 2020). This seems to have been exploited multiple times especially by animal rights activists, who have been reported of trespassing onto pig farms without detection a large number of occasions. This was shown prominently in the so-called “Pig Scandal” of 2009, where animal rights activists part of the Animal Rights Alliance were suspected of entering pig farms during a 2 year period in order to document the pigs’ living conditions (Efendic, 2009). The farmers affected were not aware of any trespassing until the activists themselves exposed their documentation through national media. Most of these trespassing events were thought to have happened during night. Multiple articles of the third order were related to a debate over if the activists were right or wrong in trespassing to expose supposed animal abuse and neglect, where initially there was a large support for the activists. The activists group argued that that it was necessary for the sake of the animals, and that they “had only entered where the doors were unlocked”, and that they had not interfered in any other way (Kruse, 2009).

Capable guardianship being an effective deterrent can be seen in Sala municipality, where two activists initially targeted a pig farm but changed their mind when they noticed that the farmer was awake (Jaslin, Arvidsson, 2015). However, they decided to later target another pig farm not far away, and later turned themselves in to the police.

The affected pig farms were also located in or close to relatively large municipalities, translating to high accessibility to the farms. The municipalities Arvika, Nyköping and Skellefteå can be considered accessible rural areas to urban municipalities depending on chosen definition. Skellefteå municipality has a relatively large population of roughly 72 000, but the municipality also has a large surface area leading to a very low population density, around 11 individuals/km<sup>2</sup> (SCB, 2019b). However, the area with the highest number of events was the municipality of Gotland, which also is the largest island of Sweden. While home to a relatively high population, the large size results in a low population density and relatively long distances to the only larger city, Visby. The island dimension also minimizes accessibility for offenders from other municipalities.

### *Rabbit farmers*

A total of 96 articles related to rabbit farmers were found, with 10 unique cases and 14 offenses that could be identified, translating to roughly 10% of the articles being concerning a unique case. The distribution show quite a variation compared to mink- and pig farmers, with theft and burglary dominating among the type of offenses (Figure 7a). The coverage of crimes against rabbit farmers (Figure 7b) shows a definitive peak in 2019, with the earlier part of the decade having low number of articles published. The monthly variation of unique first order articles peaks during months of spring, with 30% of the cases being reported in the month of May (Figure 4d). The content in the articles regarding rabbit farmers are evenly distributed between the three degrees, with articles on more general ideas of the subject appeared slightly more often (Figure 7c). The reported offenses are mainly found slightly south of the centre of Sweden (Figure 7d). In

this case the only municipalities that has been offended in more than once is Karlskoga and Avesta, with 2 counts each (Appendix A).

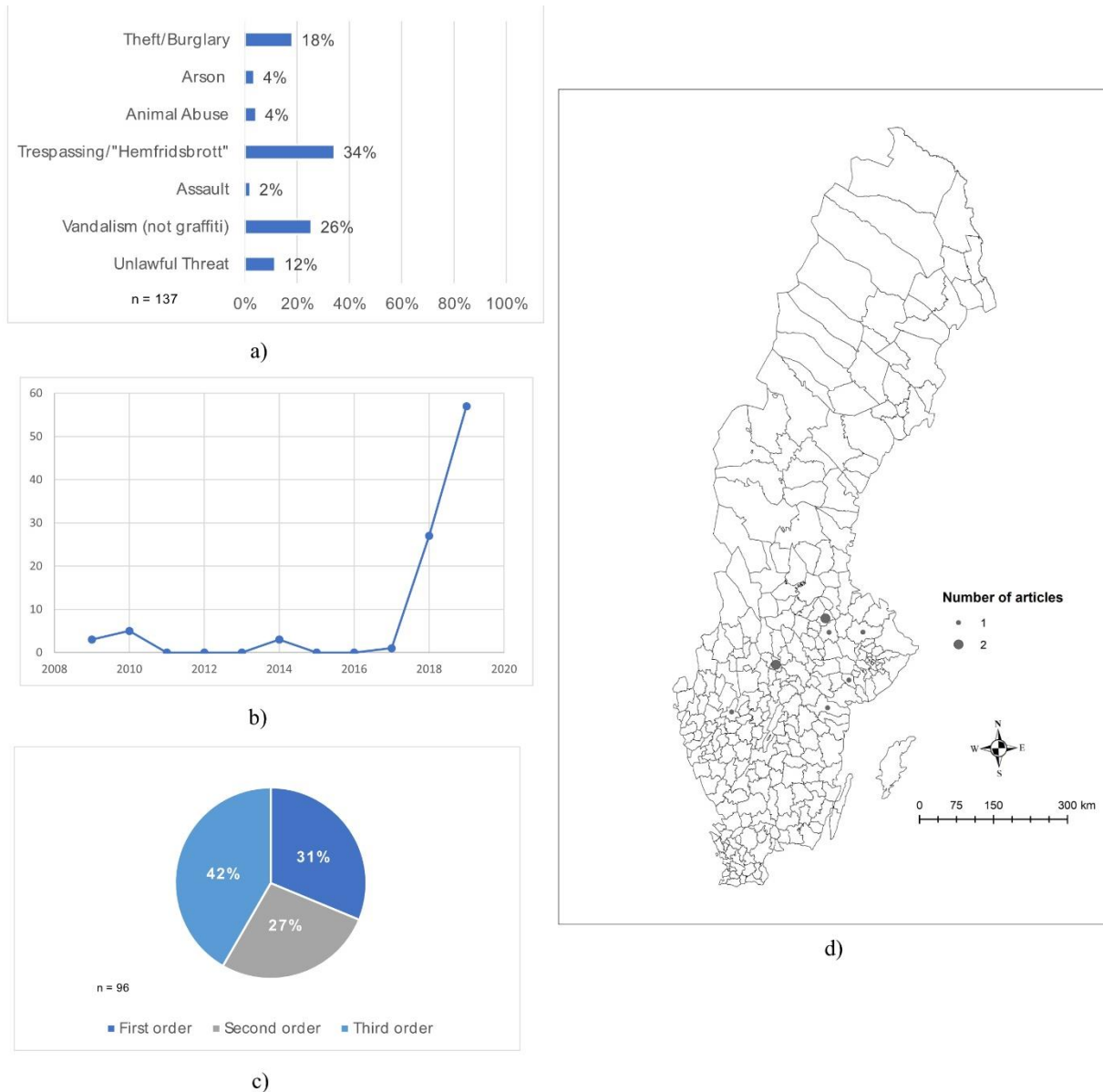


Figure 7: a) Distribution of offenses against rabbit farms, b) Annual variation of articles related to rabbit farms, c) Distribution of articles related to rabbit farms by type, d) Geographical spread of unique 1<sup>st</sup> order articles related to rabbit farms.

#### *Situational conditions of crimes against rabbit farm production*

There are also certain situational conditions observed that may encourage or facilitate crimes against a rabbit farm. Being both raised for fur and meat, rabbits can have a high perceived value and may motivate crimes such as theft and burglary. In some cases, police have given an estimated value of 1000 SEK each (SVD, 2019).

Escaping without detection also seem to be facilitated in the case of crimes against rabbit farmers. In October of 2014 a rabbit farm had 18 of their rabbits stolen (Nylén, 2014). Allegedly, activists had arrived by car during night and used the dark as cover to reach the cages that were separate from any building and took the animals with them. The farmers did not discover the crime until the next day when they went to feed their animals. The activists apparently also posted pictures of the stolen rabbits, seemingly bragging about the incident. Most of the other cases also at least implied that the crime events had happened during night-time, while offenses such as “hemfridsbrott” were mainly committed during daytime.

There seems to be relatively high accessibility in the case of rabbit farms as well. Avesta and Karlskoga had the highest number of unique events and are also municipalities that can be considered urban or accessible rural areas, with Karlskoga being close to the larger city Örebro. This is the case with other municipalities affected such as Uppsala and Gnesta, among others. The population densities in the Avesta and Karlskoga are higher than the national average but can still be considered to be relatively low (SCB, 2019b).

Table 4: Total number of reported offenses experienced by actor

Type of crime	Unlawful threat	Vandalism	Assault	Trespassing/Hemfridsbrott	Animal Abuse	Arson	Theft/Burglary	<b>Total</b>
Mink farmers	11	32	3	27	2	2	9	87
Pig farmers	4	1	0	17	3	2	9	36
Rabbit farmers	1	2	0	3	1	0	7	14

## 5. Discussion

Farmers and their livelihoods are common targets of different kinds of criminals, although within greatly varying degrees depending on the type of operation. While these results alone are not enough to truly represent the rate of victimization, the nature of the crimes and offenders could be studied in detail. The findings of this study also suggest that crimes against farmers related to animal production can be explained using situational crime theories such as the routine activity approach and situational crime prevention, as well as behavioural ones such as techniques of neutralization. The tentative concept model described in section 2.4 also seems to have served well as a general hypothesis.

### 5.1 Statistical findings

Mink farmers were the actor that was clearly dominating in media coverage. However, while pig- and rabbit farmers were not as heavily covered and had fewer cases, they had a higher share of unique events over total articles found than mink farmers. This while the share of first order articles do not differ as much between the actors. This implies that specific cases related to mink farmers and follow-ups were reported on by many more newspapers, creating more repeated first and second order articles. This uneven media attention may be due to the already long history of mink farmers being victimised especially by animal rights activists, but also emphasises the lack

of attention and knowledge of crimes against other types of farmers. On the other hand, Swedish mink farms are fewer in number than pig operations and still had higher number of unique events (SCB, 2019a). Something of important note is that especially in the cases of pig and rabbit farmers some of the articles were sorts of compilations of crimes directed at a farmer or multiple farmers over a long period of time. The articles did either not mention the number of crimes, what specific type of offense was in question or when and where they had happened. Most of this data could not be added as a result and may be the reason why pig and especially rabbit farmers have comparably much lower number of unique cases.

The distribution of the types of offenses also differed greatly among the actors. For example, mink farmers had a higher share of crimes directed at the farmer rather than the animals or the farm itself, such as assault and unlawful threats. This could perhaps be reflecting the more controversial aspect of the fur industry compared to food industry, with offenders harbouring a more malicious intent against farmers related to mink. Burglary and theft is an interesting type as rabbit and pig farmers were noted to have experienced mainly theft of live animals, while mink farmers had dead animals or animal products stolen. Pig farmers experienced the highest share of trespassing of all three actors. This is nearly exclusively due to the previously mentioned Pig Scandal of 2009 with trespassing activists, which also can be seen in the annual variation of number of articles concerning pig farmers that peaks between 2009 and 2011. In a similar way, the peak in 2014 of the annual variation of articles regarding mink farmers can be explained by a case regarding activists having performed multiple attacks against a farmer and his family. The legal process was highly covered in media and constituted the content of almost every article that year. This is also the main reason why mink farmers have such a high share of second order articles.

Additionally, the monthly variation of unique articles of the first order show some patterns that could be of interest. The high concentration of reported events against pig farmers during November and December is partly due to the Pig scandal, but similar patterns could be seen during other years. Some articles mentioned that animal rights activists seem to plan exposures of animal neglect on pig farms right before Christmas, connected to the consumption of Christmas ham (e.g. Kruse, 2009). While not as covered by media as in 2009, similar news patterns and events could be observed in December 2013 (Kilefors, 2013), and as recently as December 2019 (Holstein et al, 2019). From articles of the second order, the follow-ups of the pig scandal showed that no farmers ended up being prosecuted, while two activists were convicted of trespassing.

An important distinction to make is between events and articles. This study is assessing published news articles covering crime events against farmers, and the results must be interpreted as such. This means that e.g. the main temporal aspect that is recorded is when crime events are reported, not necessarily when they happen. This is due to the lack of information in many articles in this regard. However, the annual and monthly variation still provide a look into interesting patterns and may explain certain motivations.

## 5.2 Situational conditions

The first point of the tentative conceptual model referred to the nature of specific to farm crimes, what vulnerabilities present would be exploited by offenders, as well as the geography of the crimes. As shown in the results, the lack of detection of crimes was a repeated issue among all actors, where in some cases the crime was detected the day after the fact. This was implied to be the result of situational conditions such as lack of witnesses, the overall layout and large size of farming operations being used as cover for going about unnoticed, as well as the cover of the night. At least for pig farmers, most events were reported in November and December which is of the darker part of year which could possibly have been exploited. However, as mentioned in the statistical findings, reported events may not necessarily have happened when or even close to the date the news articles in question were published, meaning that the importance of monthly variation can be considered inconclusive when it comes to situational conditions.

The elements of the routine activity approach may be applied quite clearly, even though events related to militant animal rights activism seem to be less based on opportunity and more planned out. Farmers and farms can be considered attractive targets, being in possession of products of high value (rabbits and especially mink pelts), but the possession of animals may also be attractive from the view of ideologies such as militant animal rights activism. Most farms described were observed to lack capable guardianship, as they are also often be tended by only a handful of people: often the farmer and close family. The low population density offers few other possible witnesses. While some of the farms are situated close to residential areas and other buildings, how capable the guardianship that these provide is cannot really be discerned with current information. However, as mentioned in situational conditions related to pig farmers, a single capable guardian have shown to be enough to deter offenders (Jaslin, Arvidsson, 2015). This case also shows that situational approaches may aid in preventing crime events that have been more planned out. On the other hand, this specific case also gave legitimacy to certain criticism of the situational approaches, more specifically the matter of displacing crime. Long reaching deterring effects as such cannot be linked to more temporary-based guardianship (an awake person) in this case. Practices such as keeping barn doors unlocked seem to have greatly facilitated trespassing. This all implies that farms as locations suffer from security issues that are indeed situational, which could possibly be prevented through different pro-active and deterring measures, such as surveillance equipment or security locks and alarms.

When it comes to the geography of the crime, it was as expected concentrated in municipalities situated in the southern parts of Sweden. The comparably higher level of accessibility in these regions than in the north may be an additional reason for the more frequent targeting. Additionally, most of the farms affected were in what can be considered either urban or accessible rural municipalities, close to larger city centres and accessible road networks, while many on the other hand also had relatively low population density. The transformation of rural to urban could be seen here as a potential security issue in the future.

## 5.3 Techniques of neutralization

The second point of the conceptual model referred to the motivations and inner moral conflicts of the offenders of farm crime. There seem to be multiple different goals that motivates offenders



targeting farmers. Monetary gain seems to be a relatively common occurrence, relating to the theft of valuable goods such as mink pelts and rabbits. However, occasionally, sadist behaviour has been observed, with animals killed for no other discernible reason. A few cases were regarding the theft of pigs that were soon slaughtered nearby the farms, all on the Swedish island of Gotland (Skjellborg, 2012). Another case in the municipality of Arvika in May 2017 pertained four pigs that were slashed in their genitals, but otherwise left alone (Swanö, 2017). Rabbit farmers also experienced similar crimes, as in January 2019 in the municipality of Sala, 10 rabbits were found beaten to death outside a farm, with an additional 30 rabbits gone missing (SVD, 2019).

But most of the victimisation of farmers seem to have underlying ideological and self-proclaimed noble intentions, utilizing different techniques of neutralization in order to morally justify the crime for themselves and others. Most prominently three different techniques have been observed especially with suspects linked to militant animal rights activism. There is a denial of the victim, where the offender vilifies the farmer into an oppressor who deserves to be subjected to crime. Then there is the appeal to higher loyalties, when the offender claim that they need to save the animals from the farm, due to personal ethical reasons and perhaps loyalty to their organisation. There is the denial of injury, as when activists argue that they have only entered through unlocked doors and as such had caused no damage to anyone, as with during the “Pig scandal” in 2009.

Multiple techniques can be utilized together in some cases. For instance, many cases were related to the release of animals. On September 4th of 2019 up to 1500 minks were released from a farm in the municipality of Tingsryd, where a police report of trespassing, vandalism and animal abuse was filed (Bengtsson, 2019). An activist group later admitted to the deed in an e-mail sent to SVT (Sweden’s Television). Their intentions were made clear as they wrote: “*We gave [the minks] a helping hand by demounting the fence and opening all the cages.*” and expressed hope that the minks would be able to live free in the forest and bathe in lakes. However, these intentions do not always seem to translate into desirable consequences for either party. The animals were not believed to be able to survive in the wild and would likely attack each other and other animals due to stress, disrupting surrounding ecosystems, as well as themselves being killed by oncoming traffic on roads. Threats and direct attacks against farmers and their families appeared frequently among the articles, with the expressed goal to make the farmer shut down their operation. These cases could be said to showcase the use of both appeal to higher loyalties (“The animals deserve better”) and denial of the victim (“The farmer is holding the animals captive”).

Other examples include a case in the municipality of Hjo in 2013, where a mink farmer, his relatives and accountant received death threats repeatedly. These threats came in the form of symbolic attacks, such as having a tombstone thrown into their yard as well as axes thrown through their window. The attacks continued for several years until the farmer decided to shut down the operation, reportedly partly because of diminished economic viability and partly because of the attacks (Weimar, 2018). In this case direct confrontation was avoided, further weakening the awareness of the victim – potentially easing the denial of victim and injury, which in fact is facilitated with situational conditions mentioned previously. The case mentioned regarding activists avoiding the pig farm with the awake farmer (Jaslin, Arvidsson, 2015), also

showcases this. The multi-use of neutralization techniques can be seen further with activists using protection suits, with the intention of minimizing disease spread while releasing animals (denying injury while appealing to higher loyalties) (Ärlemyr, Söderberg, (2019).

Other techniques of neutralization are not as apparent but may be applicable. Condemning the condemners may be observed in the case of the pig scandal, as in some third order articles people claimed that it was hypocrisy to judge activists trespassing while not talking about the farmers blame in the conditions of their animals. This could bring up an interesting question of how media as a proxy could have neutralizing effects to the moral conflicts of certain offenders.

It is important to note that animal rights activists are not a monolithic offender group: some work in groups, others independently, and with various employed methods and different degrees of violence. Trespassing being the most common offense can be taken as that most are not violent, but mainly disturb the peace and personal integrity of farmers.

## **6. Conclusions and recommendations for future studies**

This study aimed to obtain a better understanding of the current threats against animal production in Sweden. Based on an analysis of media archives between 2009 and 2019, it can be concluded that animal farmers experience multi-layered forms of victimisations, including loss of property, production, profit, as well as integrity and perception of safety. Militant animal rights activists seem to be the offenders that are most covered in media, being linked to various crimes including trespassing, vandalism, theft, unlawful threats, assault, arson and even animal abuse. Of the noted offenders, they most clearly were observed capable of utilizing techniques of neutralization in connection with suspected illegal acts: e.g. ‘denial of injury’ when trespassing into farms, ‘appeal to higher loyalties’ when taking animals from their cages, and ‘denial of the victim’ when attacking and threatening farmers. Multiple techniques could also be utilized at the same time. The results indicate that situational conditions on and near farms were exploited in order to facilitate criminal activity, while also showing that situational approaches have potential in preventing even some forms of (if only loosely) organized crime. Especially offenses such as trespassing could potentially be prevented by changing or improving situational conditions and current farm practices. The situational conditions of the target location and utilized neutralization techniques can work in conjunction, e.g. through minimizing confrontation by avoiding detection and thereby facilitating the denial of injury and the victim. The findings also imply that the media coverage may not necessarily be proportionate to the experienced victimisation for different types of farmers. The study is made with the hope to encourage more research in the subject, especially in a Swedish context, and bring motivation for the necessary measures to be taken in order to provide safe and secure rural communities.

For future research, data permitting, other type of animal farmers should be investigated, and parallels should be drawn to official statistics on crime, in order to investigate the scalability of the results and aid in identifying unrecorded crimes. Case studies on smaller regions or individual farms could be performed as well. With more detailed information on farms, more rigid comparisons could be done to map out farm specific vulnerabilities. The media archives analysis

could be recreated but performed through an automatized program to compare the yield and possibly obtain a larger amount of relevant data.

Potential future research questions that could be investigated more in depth include:

- What measures can be taken at farms specifically to limit crime opportunities?
- What are the implications of experiencing both workplace and domestic crime, with some farmers residing at their farm?
- What are the crime experiences of farmers of certain ethnic minority groups, such as the Sámi people in northern Sweden?
- What new threats comes with the emergence of social media and new technology in the age of information?
- What have the overarching consequences of crimes against farmers meant in terms of monetary, social, and ecological effects?

This thesis has investigated areas not often studied, especially in Sweden. The findings of this study can contribute to both criminology and news media research, but the intention is also for it to add to the field of urban and regional planning. Creating secure and safe spaces is a crucial part of planning and social sustainability. Governing authorities need to be able to produce proper crime prevention measures and policies tailored to a variety of crimes, locations and groups in society. For this to happen, the current understanding of the targeting of farmers and other rural inhabitants must be expanded. This includes understanding what vulnerabilities are brought from the road networks, existing building environment but also non-physical aspects such as the encouraged fire safety practices on farms and the mechanisms behind different offender groups. Doing so will help to protect and improve local economic and social capital, but also achieve social and economic sustainability at a higher level. Further research into this subject call for extensive use of both resources and time, but is ultimately necessary to truly tackle the threats against farmers, who as any group of society deserves to be protected.

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## 8. Appendices

### Appendix A: Total counts of offense by municipality and actor

Municipality	Mink	Pig	Rabbit	Total
Arvika	0	2	0	2
Avesta	0	0	2	3
Borgholm	1	0	0	1
Bromölla	1	0	0	1
Eksjö	3	0	0	3
Eslöv	0	1	0	1
Essunga	0	1	0	1
Falkenberg	10	2	0	12
Flen	0	1	0	1
Gnesta	0	0	1	1
Gotland	0	3	0	3
Göteborg	0	2	0	2
Hjo	5	0	0	5
Jönköping	1	0	0	1
Kalmar	0	1	0	1
Karlskoga	0	0	2	2
Karlskrona	1	0	0	1
Kil	0	1	0	1
Kristianstad	1	1	0	2
Kumla	5	0	0	5
Kungälv	4	0	0	4
Laholm	0	1	0	1
Lidköping	1	0	1	2
Lund	0	1	0	1
Lycksele	1	0	0	1
Malmö	0	1	0	1
Norrköping	0	0	1	1
Nyköping	0	2	0	2
Osby	1	0	0	1
Sala	0	0	1	1
Skara	3	0	0	3
Skellefteå	0	2	0	2
Staffanstorp	0	1	0	1
Svenljunga	2	0	0	2
Säter	0	1	0	1
Sölvesborg	10	0	0	10

Tingsryd	1	0	0	1
Tomelilla	1	0	0	1
Trollhättan	0	1	0	1
Ulricehamn	1	0	0	2
Uppsala	0	0	1	1
Vaggeryd	2	0	0	2
Vingåker	0	1	0	1
Västerås	0	1	0	1
Östra Göinge	0	1	0	1

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