

**“They Call it ‘Progress’”: The Consolidation, Financialization, and Deterritorialization of  
Saskatchewan Farmland**

By Melissa Davidson

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Environment and Geography

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Copyright © 2021 by Melissa Davidson

## ABSTRACT

Across the province of Saskatchewan, where more than 40% of Canada's agricultural land is located, patterns of farmland tenure are shifting and farmers claim that much is at stake. Based on both qualitative and quantitative research, this thesis analyzes two processes taking place in Saskatchewan: the ongoing consolidation of farmland and increasing financially-motivated farmland ownership. In addition to discussing the ways in which these shifts are transforming agriculture, the environment, and rural societies, this work provides insights into the locally-specific nature of these trends, the frameworks in which they are understood, and the grounds on which they are being accepted and facilitated by farmers. Situated within discussions of land and its meanings, I argue that as farmland is further consolidated and owned in greater proportions by absentee landowners and non-farmers, land is increasingly being oriented towards its productive and financial value, thereby displacing many of its social, cultural, and ecological meanings—what is commonly referred to as deterritorialization. Although treating land this way has allowed some Saskatchewan farmers to continue farming, farmland consolidation and increasing investor land ownership are pursued at the expense of the livelihoods of many farmers, the erosion of rural communities, and ecological degradation.

*Keywords:* farmland, land ownership, land consolidation, financialization, deterritorialization, absentee land ownership, investor land ownership

## **DEDICATION**

To my family and friends in Saskatchewan.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work has taken a village and I'd like to especially thank:

My supervisor, Annette Desmarais, for inviting me onto this team of brilliantly caring and collaborative researchers and for ultimately giving me the opportunity to conduct research on a topic I care so deeply about in the part of the world I call home! Thank you for your endless support, thorough feedback, and for everything I've learned from you throughout this process.

My co-supervisor, Jono Peyton, for your insightful comments and suggestions and for encouraging me to deeply consider "what is land?"

My committee members, André Magnan and Bruce Erickson, for your guidance and thoughtful criticism.

All of the research participants who graciously offered their time to make this work possible. Thank you for letting me into your homes, for all the cups of coffee, and for sharing your knowledge and experience with me.

My family, for not asking me how writing is going and for keeping me grounded throughout this process.

My friends and co-conspirators: Hannah, Kat, Laura, and Naomi. It was such a joy and privilege to explore these questions alongside you all. I am thankful for your friendship, support, and for our lengthy chats which helped me organize my ideas.

My friends who kept me sane through the ups and downs of writing this thesis during Covid lockdowns. I am hesitant to name names, but thank you Taryn, James, Levi, Emily, Renee, Chelsey, Elliot, Emma, Arlene, Stephanie, Mitch, Liam, and Chloe. And a special shout-out to Wednesday Pub quizzers, Casual Tuesdays, bike club, and book club.

And the University of Manitoba and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, for recognizing the importance of this work and correspondingly, financially-supporting it.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS</b> .....	<b>viii</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Situating the Research.....	2
<i>Land Tenure, Farmland Consolidation, and the Financialization of Farmland</i> .....	2
<i>Land as Shifting Social Construct and Deterritorialization</i> .....	6
<i>Saskatchewan: Historical, Political, and Economic Context</i> .....	9
1.2 Overview of Chapters.....	11
2.1 Methodological Approach.....	13
2.2 Unit of Analysis and Selecting RMs .....	14
2.3 Data Collection Strategies .....	17
2.4 Participants .....	19
2.5 Interviews .....	23
2.6 Data Analysis .....	24
2.7 Additional Sources .....	25
<b>CHAPTER 3: FARMLAND CONSOLIDATION IN SASKATCHEWAN</b> .....	<b>26</b>
3.1 Fewer, Larger, and “Second” Farms .....	26
3.2 Gains and Losses .....	36
3.3 The Unfortunate Inevitability of “Progress” .....	45
3.4 Land as a Place for Agricultural Production .....	48
<b>CHAPTER 4: THE FINANCIALIZATION OF FARMLAND IN SASKATCHEWAN</b> <b>51</b>	
4.1 Absence, Socio-Economic Detachment, and Financial Motivations: The Nature of Outside Farmland Ownership .....	51
4.2 Investors, Small-scale Investors, and Grandkids: Key Outside Landowners .....	55
4.3 Gains and Losses.....	60

4.4 Land as an Investment.....	72
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>74</b>
5.1 What we Know and What Remains to be Known.....	74
5.2 The High Cost of the Consolidation, Financialization, and Deterritorialization of Saskatchewan Farmland.....	77
5.3 Final Thoughts: Re-imagining, Reclaiming, and Reterritorializing Farmland .....	80
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>101</b>
<i>Appendix A Short Interview Guide with Farm Leaders and Farm Organization Staff, Rural Municipal Officials/Staff, Journalists .....</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>Appendix B Long Interview Guide (RM staff and officials).....</i>	<i>104</i>
<i>Appendix C Long Interview Guide with Farmers .....</i>	<i>107</i>

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1: RM Locations .....	16
Figure 2: RM Demographics .....	17
Figure 3: Farmer Interviews.....	20
Figure 4: Number of Agricultural Operations, Saskatchewan, 1921-2016 .....	27
Figure 5: Farms Classified by Size: Historical Data, Saskatchewan .....	29
Figure 6: Saskatchewan Farms by Size, 1996-2016 .....	30
Figure 7: Individual Entities with More than 10,000 acres of Owned Farmland .....	33
Figure 8: Monette Farms Farm Sites Across Saskatchewan and Montana, USA.....	35
Figure 9: Saskatchewan Farm Debt Outstanding, Total .....	42
Figure 10: Major Investors 2014 – 2018.....	55
Figure 11: Investor Acres by RM, 2018 .....	56
Figure 12: Andjelic Land Lease Holdings Across Saskatchewan .....	56
Figure 13: Annual % change in Farmland Values: Saskatchewan .....	64
Figure 14: Tenure of land owned, leased, rented in Saskatchewan, 2011-2016.....	68

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CPPIB	Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board
FCC	Farm Credit Canada
FLSB	Farm Land Security Board
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
LLD	Legal Land Description
LTR	Land Titles Registry
HCI	Hokanson Capital Inc
ILC	International Land Coalition
ISC	Information Services Corporation
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
NDP	New Democratic Party
PSP	Prairie Shelterbelt Program
RM	Rural Municipality
SAMA	Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency
SCIC	Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation
SINP	Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program
SFSA	Saskatchewan Farm Security Act
SSHRC	The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
UN	United Nations
WB	World Bank



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Across the province of Saskatchewan, where more than 40% of Canada's agricultural land is located (Statistics Canada, 2017a), patterns of farmland tenure are shifting and farmers claim that much is at stake. Based on both qualitative and quantitative research, this thesis discusses two processes taking place in Saskatchewan: the ongoing consolidation of farmland and increasing financially-motivated farmland ownership. In addition to discussing the ways in which these shifts are transforming agriculture, the environment and rural societies, this work provides insights into the locally-specific nature of these trends, the frameworks in which they are understood, and the grounds on which they are being accepted and facilitated by farmers. Situated within discussions of land and its meanings, I argue that as farmland is further consolidated and owned in greater proportions by absentee landowners and non-farmers, land is increasingly being oriented towards its productive and financial value, thereby displacing many of its social, cultural, and ecological meanings—what is commonly referred to as deterritorialization. Although treating land this way has allowed some Saskatchewan farmers to continue farming, farmland consolidation and investor land ownership are pursued at the expense of the livelihoods of many farmers, the erosion of rural communities, and ecological degradation.

The main purpose of this study is to better understand how shifting patterns of farmland tenure in Saskatchewan are affecting farming, rural communities, and the environment. Investigating this question is important since patterns of land tenure have long been recognized to have far-reaching socio-economic, political and environmental implications (International Land Coalition, 2020). According to Desmarais et al. (2015), land ownership continues to be an important determinant of economic and political power despite economic diversification and urbanization in Saskatchewan. Understanding the nature of shifting patterns and their impacts is even more crucial since a significant amount of agricultural land is expected to change hands in Saskatchewan in the near future (Statistics Canada, 2016), potentially intensifying these trends and their impacts.

## **1.1 Situating the Research**

This investigation into shifting patterns of land tenure and their impacts is informed by existing literature on farmland tenure, conceptions of land, and the specific history of farmland tenure in Saskatchewan. To better understand the importance of this research and what is at stake, the following briefly introduces the ongoing discussions with which this work is in conversation.

### ***Land Tenure, Farmland Consolidation, and the Financialization of Farmland***

The concept of land tenure refers to the manner in which rights to land are held. Patterns of land tenure are not static; they are constantly evolving, responding to changing social and economic conditions. When monitoring changes in farmland tenure, several dimensions are commonly considered, including farmland ownership arrangements (individual, joint, cooperative, corporate, institutional, or state-owned), owning versus renting or leasing farmland, the characteristics of the landowner (sex, age-group, ethnicity, resident versus non-resident, owner-operator versus non-farmer, education, and marital status), the method of acquiring land, duration of ownership, and the scale and distribution of land ownership (Zhang & Sawadgo, 2018). Relevant data concerning these dimensions can be found in a variety of sources including, among others, agricultural censuses, land ownership surveys, cadastres, and land titles registries. In many contexts, the ability to monitor and measure changing patterns of land tenure and their impacts has been limited, hindered by the absence of comprehensive and accurate data or the inaccessibility or illegibility of relevant data. This, however, is largely not the case in Saskatchewan as a significant amount of data regarding land tenure, including the Saskatchewan Land Titles Registry, is available, greatly aiding this research.

As previously mentioned, examining changing patterns of land tenure is important since patterns of land tenure have long been understood to be at the center of various social, political, and economic outcomes. While early considerations focused on the ways in which patterns of land tenure impact the productivity and efficiency of land use, awareness has expanded over time to consider the ways in which patterns of land tenure affect the environment and the sustainability of land use, the well-being of societies (including social and political equality and inclusion, employment, food security, and contributions towards food sovereignty), and the fulfillment of rights. Important debates within the field have centered around determining which patterns of land tenure best facilitate which desired outcomes and correspondingly, how patterns

of land tenure, when understood to be driving unwanted outcomes, can best be altered (Courville & Patel, 2006).

Though access to land, its use, and its histories vary across the globe, and concerns and priorities regarding land differ, current questions involve better understanding the locally-specific nature and impacts of broader trends of shifting patterns of farmland tenure. Farmland consolidation is one such trend that, while not new, continues to intensify globally, commanding further attention and investigation. According to the International Land Coalition (2020), since 1980, a consistent pattern of increasing land consolidation can be seen across the globe with land concentration increasing significantly in North America, Europe, Asia and the Pacific and decreasing trends reversing in Africa and Latin America. In global terms, most recent estimates suggest that the largest 1% of farms in the world operate more than 70% of the world's farmland (Lowder et al., 2019). Though we know farmland consolidation is increasing globally, numerous questions remain regarding the extent, locally-specific nature and impacts, and forces driving this process in Saskatchewan.

Just as farmland consolidation is not new, neither are the debates surrounding it. In the mid-twentieth century, a prevailing view saw farmland consolidation as an important indication of “progress” towards a modern, economic society from a traditional one (Rostow, 1960). More recently, farmland consolidation has been supported as a way for farmers to achieve “economies of scale” and remain competitive (Standing Committee on Forestry and Agriculture, 2018). Through this economic lens, consolidation is often considered “progress” as well as a necessity, allowing for continued viability. Others argue that farmland consolidation and concentration are major drivers of social and political inequality, unemployment, migration, environmental degradation, and violence (International Land Coalition, 2020). Often missing from these discussions are the perspectives of those caught in the middle of these debates—farmers. Chapter 3 focuses on deepening our understanding of the complexity of farmland consolidation in Saskatchewan by drawing heavily upon farmers perspectives on and lived-experience with farmland consolidation.

Another trend, garnering substantial attention in the field, is the financialization of farmland. Financialization is best summarised by Epstein (2005) as “the increasing role of financial motives, financial markets, financial actors, and financial institutions in the operation of domestic and international economies” (p. 3). The financialization of farmland, therefore,

involves increasing investor ownership of large amounts of agricultural land, not only for its productive value but also, and more importantly, for its financial value. Fairbairn (2014) elaborates on this distinction when she explains that land generates wealth in two principle ways: first, through its ability to produce agricultural commodities – often characterized as the productive or ‘real’ value of land; and second, through its ability to generate wealth through financial activities such as capital gains, rents, derivatives, and dividends – the financial value of land. In the process of financialization, the value once placed on land for its material production evolves to include and prioritize the ways in which land ownership generates financial wealth (Savills, 2014). In doing so, a new financial lens is applied and land is reconceptualized and transformed into something which has both productive and financial value: “gold with a coupon” or “gold with yield” (Fairbairn, 2014). This conceptual shift in what land is and how it generates wealth has also remade agricultural land into something it never was before, a financial investment for financial actors who, up until recently, were largely uninterested and uninvolved in farmland ownership.

Though there is some debate as to whether or not the financialization of farmland is a new phenomenon, many argue that the increase in size and clout of investors (Engelen, 2003), prioritization of financial profits over productive profits (Krippner, 2011), and the growing acceptance of financial investment in land as a morally legitimate activity (Fairbairn, 2015) all make the current wave of financial expansion unique (Clapp & Isakson, 2018). For this reason, the term financialization has also been used to describe a newer iteration of capitalism (financial capitalism), marking a move from a production-based system to one dominated by finance (Lawrence and Smith, 2018).

In theorizing this recent shift, scholars have pointed to the ways in which the financialization of farmland works to “sop up” excess capital in response to the systemic problem of capital overaccumulation (Harvey, 2010). In effect, it is argued that buying farmland is being used as an alternative and more-secure investment strategy following the 2008 financial crisis. Financialization has also been legitimated as a “spatial fix” to the food, energy, and climate crises by bringing “new land” and labour into production (Desmarais et al., 2017; White et al., 2014). Driven by these factors and by taking advantage of loosened farmland ownership regulations, free trade agreements, and newly titled-land, investors have been able to rapidly accumulate large amounts of land across the globe (Sommerville, 2018).

The extent to which financially-motivated land purchases are occurring is, to some degree, unclear since many of these transactions are typically shrouded in secrecy. Yet, academics agree that the phenomenon is significant and growing (White et al., 2012). Although these figures are now somewhat dated, most recent estimates suggest that the total area of financially-motivated land deals vary from 43 million ha (World Bank, 2010) to 80 million ha (International Land Coalition, 2011), and 227 million ha (Oxfam, 2011) world-wide (White et al., 2012). In Saskatchewan, the acquisition of farmland by investors increased sixteen-fold between 2002 and 2014 (Desmarais et al., 2017). The intensifying speed at which large-scale land transfers have been occurring has led academics to characterize this trend as a “global land grab” or the contemporary land rush (Clapp & Isakson, 2018).

Many scholars argue that the financialization of farmland is deeply problematic. Experience from the Global South has demonstrated that the financialization of farmland has contributed to increased land prices, land concentration, inequality, unemployment, and poverty (Li, 2011; Geisler, 2015; White et al., 2012). These studies provide important insight into the dynamics of the financialization of land in the Global South (Van der Ploeg et al., 2015), but much remains to be understood regarding the impacts of investor land ownership in Canada, and specifically, Saskatchewan. Because investment in land typically requires the purchasing of large amounts of land, investor land ownership has been recognized as contributing to the further consolidation of land (Lawrence and Smith, 2018), as has been the case in Europe (van der Ploeg et al., 2015). Clapp and Isakson (2018), in their recent and thorough exploration of the phenomenon, argue that financialization compromises socio-ecological resilience by prioritizing shareholder value and profits, impeding collective action by involving everyone in the financializing of everyday life, and leading to commodity price volatility, thereby raising food prices and causing hunger (Clapp & Isakson, 2018). Importantly, there is also significant concern from proponents of land sovereignty<sup>1</sup> that the financialization of land is contributing to further political and economic inequality in our agricultural systems and societies.

Though these characterizations of large-scale, financially-motivated land purchases are certainly critical, there is support for the financialization of farmland. Often, those in favour of

---

<sup>1</sup> Land Sovereignty is defined as is the right of working peoples to have effective access to, use of, and control over land and the benefits of its use and occupation, where land is understood as resource, territory, and landscape. See Borras & Franco (2012) for a complete definition.

large-scale land ownership appeal to the belief that large-scale farming improves agricultural productivity and efficiencies through economies of scale (White et. al, 2012). This argument is based on the idea that prior forms of land ownership, such as public ownership or small-scale ownership “underutilize” land (Li, 2011). Other narratives make the case that large-scale land ownership is a service to the public that helps feed the world (Clapp & Isakson, 2018) and bring capital to the countryside, contributing to improved infrastructure, access to new technologies, and additional taxation (White et., al, 2012). The World Bank (WB), has even argued that aspects of the financialization of farmland contribute to economic growth and poverty reduction (2011).

One of the main criticisms of the theory of financialization is that it can be nebulous and overly abstract (Lawrence & Smith, 2018), For instance, existing literature on financialization has mainly theorized the ways in which financial rationalities, justifications, and actors have worked to conceptually separate agriculture and land-ownership from its productive, cultural, societal, and ecological values (Ouma, 2014; Clapp & Isakson, 2018). Constructing this conceptualization, according to Li (2014), has required a great deal of complex cultural work. Another critique of this theory is that key scholarly discussions regarding financialization have mainly taken place on the macro-level. According to Ouma (2014), these approaches often privilege the abstract, global, and structural over the concrete, local, and practical aspects of finance, and effectively lose sight of the more technical, everyday dimensions of this process. Indeed, less is understood about how this new conception of farmland and patterns of land ownership are materially affecting societal relationships and the environment (Ouma, 2014). More recently, scholars have been working to uncover the everyday realities of the financialization of farmland by exploring how financial logics and rationales are not only affecting the economic sphere, but also altering other areas of society, such as the daily lives of people and the social construction of norms and values (Sippel et al., 2017). My research is informed by these discussions and seeks to respond to some of the outstanding questions within the field.

### ***Land as Shifting Social Construct and Deterritorialization***

In addition to considering the theoretical literature and debates discussed above, my research is informed by a particular conceptual framework – that of land as a shifting social construct. When examining the ways in which farmland tenure is changing and how these

changes are affecting land use and society's relationship with land, it is important to recognize that what is meant by "land" and "farmland" is not self-evident. Land is a complex, cultural creation that changes over time, is often vociferously contested, and varies from person to person. Within the field of geography, land can be considered as a "place," or a location or space that holds meaning (Agnew, 1987). Land can also hold multiple meanings simultaneously, what Li (2014) describes as an "assemblage" that may have various social, material, ecological, economic and/or cultural dimensions. Differences in conceptions of land are often located in different relationships with land. For instance, as Li (2014) points out, what land is for a farmer is not the same thing as it is for a tax collector. To some, land can be considered natural, supernatural, social or any combination of these. Examples of material conceptions of land include land as a landscape, a physical site for production, or a place for a home (Cronon, 1996). Symbolically, land can also be a site where certain rights or states of being can be enacted or experienced, such as "freedom," for example (Cronon, 1996). Culturally speaking, land may be seen as a space for preserving heritage and the environment, a home for spirits, or a place for recreation (Hall et al., 2004). Land is often regarded as having both inherent values as well as being something from which humans can derive benefits. Inherent values of land include land's recognized contribution to biodiversity and ability to preserve wildlife, whereas benefits afforded to humans by land may include the capacity to sustain human life or supply resources and minerals (Li, 2014).

In many ways, conceptions of land were radically reduced when land was made into a commodity. Blomley (2003) explains that while we should be careful when identifying specific historical turning points, the intensified erosion of common rights and a shift towards a commodified land market marked a transformative change in how land was conceived. The idea of land as a commodity came to dominate, becoming hegemonic (Blomley, 2003) thus effectively making land into something that could be bought and sold as well as owned through rights and legal claims (Ribot and Peluso, 2003). The legal right to land is now commonly referred to as "property," which Rose (1994) describes as a "regime of persuasive sociality and shared understandings."

Historical changes in conceptions and productions of land can be explained by a number of gradual processes and transformative events. Some of these were the result of enlightenment thinking and modernity (Cronon, 1996; Latour, 1991) including standardization of measurements

and simplification (Scott, 1995), innovation and increased mobility (Relph, 1976), and technical advancements such as maps and surveys (Blomley, 2019).

Geographers have developed many useful concepts, over the years, for thinking about shifting perceptions of, and relationships with, land. Deterritorialization is one concept that is particularly relevant for helping capture and understand the shifts in patterns of farmland tenure in Saskatchewan and their impacts. Although deterritorialization, as a concept, has a long and complex history within the field of geography, for the purpose of this research, it is broadly defined as the detachment of an environment from any local reference (Kearney, 1995). This process, facilitated by globalization and neoliberalism, has been theorized to supplant “places” and their many meanings (Cresswell, 2015) with “hyperspaces,” or environments that have homogeneous and universal qualities (Kearney, 1995). Commonly discussed examples of hyperspaces include shopping malls and airports, but I propose that by considering changing farmland tenure and its impacts through the lens of deterritorialization, we may also see that farmland in Saskatchewan is also becoming somewhat of a hyperspace. Relph (1976), has also called this phenomenon creeping “placelessness.”

It is important to recognize that a dominant conception of land or a shift in conceptions of land are never natural, neutral, or inevitable; instead, these are the result of deliberate decisions and prevail because they have been legitimated through discourse and/or propped-up and justified by disciplinary mechanisms, violence, and the law (Blomley, 2003). This privileging of a certain conception comes at the expense of others. And while appearing accidental, and even normal, how land is conceptualized says much about society as they are laden with moral values and cultural symbols. Notions of land can be imbued with fantasies about who the authors believe they are (Latour, 1991), but also be projections of who they want to be (Cronon, 1996).

Not only do conceptions of land affect how land is valued and used, they *remake* land and our relationships surrounding land. What land conveys ideas around who should control it, how it should be distributed and used, and who should benefit. New considerations of land can remake land into something that can benefit from or requires this new consideration, thus reinforcing the conceptual shift. And through its new construction and expression, the same values that underpin changes in understandings of land and its meanings are reproduced. That is



to say that land is both a product of conceptual and material work, but it is also something which does work (Mitchell, 2001).

Ultimately, widespread conceptual shifts regarding land have and continue to reconfigure our environments and societies, both materially and discursively. By considering land and its meanings as a shifting social construct and by utilizing the concept of deterritorialization, we can better analyze the ways in which perceptions of land, land itself, and relationships with land are changing as a result of farmland consolidation and the financialization of farmland in Saskatchewan.

This research is also situated within a particular historical and present context. According to Pritchard et al. (2012), current patterns of land ownership are, in part, artifacts of past decisions and processes. We must, therefore, take a closer look at some key historical processes and moments which have shaped the present patterns that this research examines.

### ***Saskatchewan: Historical, Political, and Economic Context***

Patterns of farmland tenure have evolved throughout Saskatchewan's history. Prior to colonization, Indigenous peoples were engaged in agricultural activities across, what is now, Saskatchewan. Yet during colonization, Indigenous peoples, were removed from the prairies and confined onto reserves where their agricultural activities were deliberately suppressed and their histories as skilled agriculturalists erased (Carter, 2013). Displacing First Nations physically and discursively from the land was undertaken to make way for the settlement of white Europeans, who through The Dominion Lands Act and Homestead Act of 1872, were given a quarter section, or 160 acres of land, for a filing fee of \$10.00 (although the land was not owned outright until after first five and later three years of occupancy and cultivation) (Carter, 2013). Women and those defined as "Indian" were specifically prohibited from the right to homestead.

The goal of the homesteading scheme was to quickly re-populate the prairies by replacing First Nations with settlers of European descent. Establishing this settler society was underpinned by racial superiority, but also by particular constructions of land, suitable land owners, and how land should be used—an intentional and purposeful story depicting First Nations people as incapable, disinterested, and unwilling farmers (Carter, 2013). Today in Saskatchewan, the colonial power structures which displaced First Nations and redistributed land to white settlers persist and continue to govern control over land, despite their growing contestation.

Following the displacement of First Nations peoples, small settler homesteads proliferated across the prairie region. In 1905, Saskatchewan became a province and during the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Saskatchewan was the fastest growing province in Canada, with over 303,000 homesteads (Olfert, 2005). In 1936, family farming was at its peak, with 142,391 farms. Since then, however, the number of farms in Saskatchewan has gradually declined. By 1971, the total number of farms in Saskatchewan was 76,970 (Statistics Canada, 2020e) and since then, farm numbers have declined at an accelerating rate (Magnan, 2012). According to Canada's most recent Agricultural Census, there were 34,523 active farms in Saskatchewan in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Of these remaining farms, many are owned and operated by the great-great-grandchildren of the original homesteaders who received land grants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In Saskatchewan, farms that have been farmed or ranched continuously for 100 years or more by members of the same family are called "Centennial Farms," and are awarded the "ISC Century Family Farm Award" from the Information Service Corporation (ISC). Since 2007, nearly 4,500 farm families have received the Century Family Farm Award in Saskatchewan (ISC, 2019) and many more family farms will continue to receive this award in the coming years.

In response to the ongoing decline of farms in Saskatchewan, several key decisions were made to help preserve the family farm and keep farmland in the hands of Saskatchewan residents. The Land Bank, for example, was introduced by the province's social democratic government in 1972, and allowed retiring farmers to sell their land to the government which would then lease the same land back, often to the children of retiring farmers. The main objective of this program was to facilitate the transfer of land to the next generation and build viable communities (Gidluck, 1995). At its peak, the Land Bank was responsible for 1.3 million acres, representing 2% of the agricultural land base in Saskatchewan (Beingessner, 2013). Though many farming families participated in and benefited from the program, the Progressive Conservative Party ended the Land Bank program in 1982, stating that the government had no business in land ownership (Desmarais et al., 2017). Today, although the Land Bank program no longer exists, it continues to hold 181,370 acres of farmland that are leased to farmers (Saskatchewan Land Titles Registry, 2018). Many of the farmers interviewed for this research indicated that a portion of their land base was land they had either purchased from the Land Bank or continue to lease from the Bank (FV9a; TR10; FV1; FV6; G1).

Another important decision that shaped farmland ownership patterns in Saskatchewan was the 1974 Saskatchewan Farm Ownership Act. This act prohibited the purchase of more than 10 acres of farmland by non-Saskatchewan residents (Lawley, 2018), thereby weighing what Desmarais et al., (2017) called social investment—living in, and contributing to, Saskatchewan communities—over capital investment. Legislating ownership restrictions, during this period, according to Lawley (2018) and Desmarais et al. (2017), was an attempt to prevent “outsiders” from bidding up land values beyond the reach of local family farms and mitigate fears about absentee control of food production and farmland stewardship.

This restriction remained in place until 2002, when the Saskatchewan Farm Security Act was amended to allow Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and 100% Canadian-owned corporations (not publicly traded) to own Saskatchewan farmland (Government of Saskatchewan, 2015a). In analyzing this legislation, Desmarais et al. (2015) explain that this restriction was intended to send the message to all Canadians that “Saskatchewan is open to outside investment.” This policy change triggered a great deal of investor interest in Saskatchewan farmland (Hursh, 2010), and in 2013, The Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board’s (CPPIB) purchased 115,000 acres of Saskatchewan farmland. (Desmarais et al., 2017). This purchase raised concerns among Saskatchewan residents and called into question the desirability of such land market liberalization. As the controversy gained momentum, the government of Saskatchewan launched a review of the legislation governing farmland ownership in 2015. After consulting the public and interested stakeholders, the government introduced a temporary ban on farmland purchases by pension plans and investment trusts (Government of Saskatchewan, 2015a). The following research of current patterns of land ownership and their impacts is situated within and informed by this historical and political context.

## **1.2 Overview of Chapters**

Before moving onto the findings of this research, the subsequent chapter outlines the methodology and methods undertaken. Next, Chapters 3 and 4 each examine a specific and shifting pattern in land tenure taking place in Saskatchewan. Both of these chapters extend and deepen what we already know about the extent of and nature of these trends by drawing heavily upon interviews with farmers. These discussions not only provide insight into the nature of change and its impact, they also tell us much about Saskatchewan farmers, their values, and their ways of seeing the world. Chapter 3 explores the gradual decline of family farms in

Saskatchewan, the growing size of farms, and the resulting consolidation of farmland. The chapter considers how the changing scale, distribution, and concentration of land ownership are affecting farmers, rural communities and the environment. In Chapter 4, I discuss the increasing proportion of Saskatchewan farmland owned by what farmers call “outside landowners”—what I believe is their way of putting words to the increasing financialization of farmland. This chapter explores the ways in which the changing demographic composition of those who own farmland in Saskatchewan is affecting farmers, rural communities, and the environment. In doing so, I consider the dimensions of absence, social and economic detachment, and financial motives in farmland ownership. Finally, in Chapter 5, I synthesize my discussion of farmland consolidation and the financialization of farmland in Saskatchewan by considering these shifts and their impacts through the lens of deterritorialization. I then conclude by pointing out the broader implications of these shifts, presenting ideas for how we might proceed, and discussing what research still remains.

## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

This research was designed together with my supervisor Dr. Annette Desmarais, committee member Dr. André Magnan, research team member Dr. Mengistu Wendimu, and fellow graduate students examining changing farmland tenure across the prairie provinces. Together, we developed our research objectives so that, in addition to our own individual research, we, as graduate students, would be able to bring our results together and discuss broader trends in changing farmland tenure and their impacts across all three prairie provinces. My research, therefore, draws upon the same overarching questions and interview guides as my fellow graduate students. Yet due to different contexts, local specificities, and available sources, our research designs vary to some extent.

### **2.1 Methodological Approach**

In seeking a response to my primary research questions, I used a qualitative methodological approach that places emphasis and value on the human, interpretative aspects of knowing about the social world (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This approach proved to be particularly useful for gaining insight into the nature of the changing farmland tenure in Saskatchewan and how those most affected and involved as land owners understand and communicate these changes. The thesis draws primarily upon 36 qualitative interviews that I conducted between November 2019 and January 2020. In attempts to better understand the ways in which farmland tenure is changing, I reached out to farmers, as well as those close to land-related issues such as farmland realtors, municipal officials and staff, and farming organization leaders.

This research focused primarily on farmers' perspectives on changing farmland tenure because farmers have an important and unique contribution to make towards our understanding of these phenomena. Family farmers often live physically near to and are in direct, daily contact with their farmland; because of this, they are well-situated to witness and experience changes in farmland tenure and the impacts of these shifts. This research drew upon non-probability samples (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013) of deliberately-selected participants based on their shared characteristics of farming within the RMs (Rural Municipalities) which have some of the highest

levels of recent investor farmland ownership. According to Ritchie & Lewis (2013), this sampling method, called purposive sampling, is particularly well-suited to small-scale, in-depth studies, similar to the one that I conducted.

## **2.2 Unit of Analysis and Selecting RMs**

Rural Saskatchewan is currently subdivided into 296 RMs of varying sizes and each RM is assigned a unique name and number. I chose to conduct this research at the scale of the RM for several reasons. First, for farmers, the organizing level of RM is quite important: RMs provide farmers and other rural residents with local governance while also providing and maintaining services which are essential to farmers and their families (e.g. roads, utilities, and recreational facilities). Second, useful data on rural Saskatchewan are often organized at the level of the RM. This includes land ownership maps that are available to anyone for purchase from RM offices, data from the Land Titles Registry, and the Agricultural Census. Recent research was also particularly useful in shedding light on the significance of using the RM as a level of analysis to better understand the dynamics of increasing investor land ownership in Saskatchewan (Desmarais et al., 2015; Magnan and Sunley, 2017).

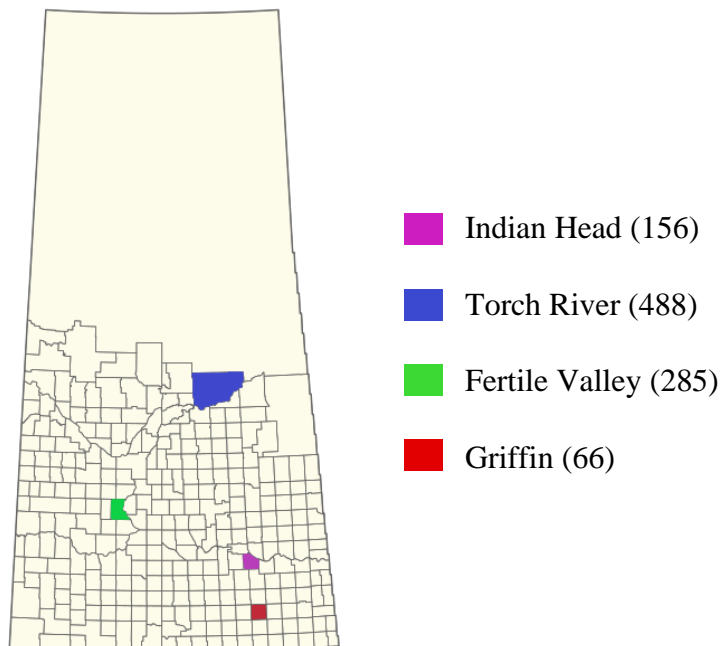
To select the four RMs in which I would conduct research, I employed the same methods used by Desmarais et al. (2017). I reviewed and analyzed land titles records for the entire province of Saskatchewan, located in what is called the Saskatchewan Land Titles Registry. This registry is managed by ISC, a private company that is based in Regina. Information contained in this registry includes details on all parcels of land registered in Saskatchewan; it is a living dataset that is constantly evolving and updated. What I examined was, therefore, a snapshot of land ownership in Saskatchewan, provided by ISC in September 2018. This snapshot provided information such as: “Title Holder,” “Parcel Number,” “Legal Land Description” (LLD), size of the parcel of land, and the “RM” in which a parcel of land is located. With this data, I then calculated the total number of hectares owned by all entities in Saskatchewan, using functions within Excel. Following this, I converted hectares into acres and organized land ownership in Saskatchewan in order from title holders with the most land to title holders with the least amount of land. I then isolated all individual entities that owned more than 10,000 acres of land in Saskatchewan. In 2018, there were 150 individual entities that owned over 10,000 acres of land. Next, I reviewed the top 150 landowners and eliminated utility companies, public entities, conservation organizations, cooperatives, treaty land entitlements,

and Hutterite colonies. After these exclusions, I reviewed remaining entities with over 10,000 acres of land, looking for any data input errors which would skew total land ownership calculations. A small number of spelling errors, abbreviation errors, and punctuation inconsistencies did exist in the data, which in turn affected calculations. I manually edited these errors and recalculated the total acres owned by these remaining title holders. The next step involved examining the remaining title holders using the Corporate Registry and Google to determine whether or not the remaining land-owning entities with over 10,000 acres of land were large family farms or investors, either individual investors or institutional investors. I have adopted the definition of investors established by the prairie-wide research project that defines investors as individuals or corporate entities that acquire a portfolio of farmland primarily for the purpose of generating financial returns on the land, rather than for the primary purpose of engaging in agricultural production (Desmarais et al., 2017). While it can be difficult to determine the motivations behind farmland purchases, company webpages, news and media sources, and the corporate registry have made identifying large-scale investors in Saskatchewan possible.

Large family farms, on the other hand, were more difficult to identify in Saskatchewan since family farmers often hold their land under various title holder or entity names (this is discussed in further detail in Chapter 3). Consequently, determining the total acres owned by large family farmers using the Land Titles Registry and the Corporate Registry, alone, is not possible. Still, because some individual family-farming entities do own over 10,000 acres, I was able to accurately identify several large farms in Saskatchewan by using the Land Titles Registry.

I then sent a spreadsheet containing all relevant data to a Geographic Information System (GIS) specialist who mapped the distribution of large farms and investor land ownership in Saskatchewan. This map revealed several RMs with high levels of investor land ownership and large farms. From this group of RMs, I chose the following four RMs in which to conduct this research: Indian Head (156), Fertile Valley (285), Torch River (488), and Griffin (66). Figure 1, below, depicts the location of these four RMs in Saskatchewan.

**Figure 1: RM Locations**



Rural Saskatchewan is not homogeneous and the four chosen RMs differ in many ways. These RMs have different soil types, growing seasons, land values, and histories. Some RMs like Indian Head still have a prosperous town with many services, while the RM of Griffin, for example, has only the hamlet of Griffin. Each of these RMs differ in their distance to larger, more populous centers. The town of Indian Head, for example, in the RM of Indian Head is a popular commuter town for those working in Regina and many residents of the RM of Fertile Valley travel to Saskatoon for work, as well. Griffin was the only RM with substantial drilling for oil and gas, while Indian Head was the only RM with considerable Treaty Land Entitlements.<sup>2</sup> Data from Statistics Canada also reveals that each of the RMs vary with regard to their population; the percentage of labour force involved in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; the total area of agricultural land; the number of farms; number of larger farms; and the

---

<sup>2</sup> “The Treaty Land Entitlement process is intended to settle land debts owed to Canadian First Nations who did not receive all the land they were entitled to under treaties signed by the Crown. Treaty Land Entitlement agreements are negotiated among First Nations, Canada’s federal government, and provincial and territorial governments. Crown land is transferred and/or money is provided so that a First Nation can purchase federal, provincial or territorial, or private land to settle the land debt.” (Desmarais et al., 2017, p.157-158)



proportion of agricultural land rented versus owned (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: RM Demographics**

<b>RM</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>% of Labour Force in Agriculture Forestry, Fishing and Hunting</b>	<b>Total Farm Area (Acres)</b>	<b>Total # of Farms</b>	<b># of Farms &lt;3,520</b>	<b>% of Land Owned vs Rented/Leased</b>
Indian Head	336	29%	167,323	91	13	64%
Fertile Valley	539	35%	267,146	135	17	77%
Torch River	1,471	39%	346,651	275	24	56%
Griffin	438	56%	191,803	92	16	73%

Source: Statistics Canada Agricultural Census 2016<sup>3</sup>

Although Torch River is not an RM with one of the highest proportions of investor land ownership in Saskatchewan, it does have the highest (identifiable) acres owned by large-scale investors (20,408 acres in 2018). Interestingly, this RM also has the highest proportion of rented land in the four RMs examined. But a high percentage of rented land is not always indicative of high investor land ownership as it can also be the result of large amounts of crown land, treaty land, and large farms which are entirely rented from retired farmers.

### **2.3 Data Collection Strategies**

Before heading into these RMs to speak directly with farmers, I conducted contextual interviews with four leaders of farm organizations and two real estate agents. These interviews gave me a broad sense of what changes in land ownership were occurring across Saskatchewan. Five of these interviews were conducted over the phone and one was conducted in person. Following these contextual interviews, I then called RM offices to introduce myself and speak with the administrator(s) about the research I wished to conduct in their RM. Having an

<sup>3</sup> Compiled using data from: Statistics Canada (2016b) Table 32-10-0404-01 Farms classified by total farm area; Statistics Canada (2016c) Table 32-10-0407-01 Tenure of land owned, leased, rented, crop-shared, used through other arrangements or used by others; and Statistics Canada (2017b; 2017d; 2017e; 2017f) *Census Profile*. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001.

interested and enthusiastic RM office was absolutely crucial in spreading the word of this research. All RM administrators from the four chosen RMs agreed to share information about this research to their rate payers, on my behalf. One administrator sent out an e-mail to all farmers in the RM, while others shared news of this research on the RM's social media accounts and by physically displaying a poster in their offices

To generate interest in this research, I also shared announcements on my personal social media accounts and asked friends and family members to share these announcements as a way of recruiting research participants. This, in combination with help from RM administrators proved very effective and meant that once I arrived to each of the RMs, many farmers had already heard about the research, thereby granting me some legitimacy. When possible, speaking at RM council meetings (as I was able to do in the RM of Torch River) was extremely useful in spreading awareness of this research and recruiting participants since most RM council members are, in fact, farmers themselves. After seeing these announcements or meeting me in person at council meetings or RM offices, a number of farmers voluntarily called or e-mailed offering to participate in this research.

I also utilized RM maps and the local phonebooks to recruit farmers. Cold calling was less effective than hoped since landowners are not always local and therefore not in the local phonebooks. Additionally, phonebooks mostly display landline numbers as opposed to cell phone numbers, and younger farmers especially, rarely have landlines anymore. For this reason, the phonebook mostly directed me to older farmers who were less likely to have heard about my research via social media and were accustomed to being bothered by various companies and organizations requesting their participation in studies. One farmer, for example, indicated that, "We used to do those surveys over the phone, but now we don't. It makes me apprehensive. You don't know who these people are (FV9)."

After spreading the word about this research, I spent roughly a week in each RM, remaining within the communities as much as possible. This allowed me to meet local residents while spending time in local coffee shops, restaurants, and gas stations. I also brought my curling shoes along in case I would stumble upon a farmers' curling league or bonspiel. I was picked up for one such bonspiel in the RM of Griffin and, at this event, met several local farmers who subsequently volunteered to be interviewed for this research.

## **2.4 Participants**

In total, I conducted 36 interviews with 38 participants. Six of these interviews were contextual interviews, as previously discussed. Four interviews were conducted with RM administrators. And the rest of the 26 interviews were conducted with 28 farmers. The following discusses key characteristics of the farmers interviewed as summarized in Figure 3, below. These characteristics are important and will be drawn upon in later discussions.

**Figure 3: Farmer Interviews**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Stage</b>	<b>Generation of Farm</b>	<b>Farm Type</b>	<b>Size (Acres)</b>	<b>% of Rented Land</b>
Man	Established	1st	Grain	20,000	
Man	Early	3rd	Grain	2,400	30%
Man	<65 years of age	3rd	Grain	800	0%
Man	Established	5th	Mixed	5,000	40%
Woman	Established	2nd	Grain	5,900	40%
Woman	Established	2nd	Grain	30,000**	55%
Man	<65 years of age		Cattle	1,280	20%
Man	<65 years of age	3rd	Grain	1,500	10%
Woman	Established	2nd	Grain	2,300*	
Woman	Retired	3rd	Grain	4,000	
Man	<65 years of age	3rd	Mixed	4,800	30%
Woman	Early	3rd	Cattle		
Man and Women	<65 years of age	2nd	Grain	1,500	10%
Man	Established	3rd	Grain	8,300**	30%
Man	<65 years of age	2nd	Grain	2,500*	
Man	Established	3rd	Grain	2,000*	40%
Man	Established	3rd	Grain	2,400*	50%
Man	<65 years of age	2nd	Grain	2,900*	50%
Woman	Established	2nd	Grain	960	
Woman	Established	3rd	Cattle		
Man	Established	2nd	Grain	2,500*	60%
Man and Man	Established	3rd	Mixed	8,500**	50%
Woman	Early	3rd	Mixed	2,000*	50%
Woman	<65 years of age	2nd	Mixed	4,000*	10%
Man	Established		Mixed	14,000**	5%
Man	Established		Grain	21,000**	10%

\* Part of a larger, Multiple Household Family Farm

\*\* Combined acres of a Multiple Household Family Farm

Eighteen of the farmers I interviewed were men and 10 were women. I interviewed one retired farmer, but nine farmers were over age 65. Fifteen farmers were established and three were early-stage farmers. I defined an “established farmer” as having more than 10 years of farming experience (keeping in mind that many farmers who were interviewed began farming in their teens, meaning that farmers in their twenties and thirties are established farmers), and an “early-stage farmer” as having less than 10 years of experience. I originally intended to categorize farmers above the age of 65 as “near retirement,” until I was informed by one farmer that, “farmers don’t retire. They die” (TR8). The majority of the farmers I interviewed (18) were conventional grain farmers, seven were mixed farmers, and three were cattle ranchers. The size of farms operated by farmers I interviewed ranged from 800 to 30,000 acres.

Many interviewees who participated in this research explicitly referred to themselves as a family farmer or to their farms as a family farm. Family farms are very common in Saskatchewan. In 2016 nearly 98% of the total number of farms in Saskatchewan were family farms (Statistics Canada, 2016a). While the definition of family farming varies widely depending on country, context, author, and political motivation, according to Statistics Canada, a family farm is strictly, a type of family-operating arrangement that is defined in contrast to non-family corporations, and other non-family operating arrangements. That is to say, all family-operated farms, regardless of size, business models, sources of labour, and agricultural practices, are considered family farms in Saskatchewan.

Every farmer I interviewed grew up on a family farm or married into long-time farming families. No farmer I interviewed was the first person in their family to farm. Many research participants were operating family farms which had remained in the ownership of their family over a number of generations (IH3; IH5; IH4; FV6; FV4). Roughly half of the farmers I interviewed were farming “individually, but together,” with other members of their family, in what has been called, a “multiple household family farm” (Moreno & Lobley, 2015) As an RM administrator explained to me, “On the map, people still own land individually, but they farm together (G3).” According to those interviewed, multiple household family farming operations are becoming more common in Saskatchewan. One established farmer explained that:

You don’t have as many of your single-family farms. You had a dad and 3 brothers and each one of their own farms. Now you have families farming together. Everyone is farming together. It’s not I’m farming my land and you’re farming your land. (G3)

It is important to distinguish (as I have done in Figure 3) between single and multiple household family farms since multiple household family farms support multiple families and are, therefore, generally larger than single family farms. Farmers explained to me that they are increasingly farming together with their extended families to share their labour, spread their risk, increase their borrowing capacity, and reduce their expenses in response to increasing costs and smaller margins (G1; TR3; TR4; G5). Here, two farmers explain in their own words why they farm as part of a multiple household family farm:

There's a lot of benefits to farming in a family farm unit. Obviously, the sharing of expensive equipment, the sharing of labour. For instance, just as an example, if we farm separately...we own one sprayer, but it would mean you have to own 2 sprayers which are expensive. Some stuff could be more easily divided, but there's definitely benefits to trying to stay farming as a family-unit. (G4)

We all have our own farm property and we all have our own corporations so effectively it'll help us one day when we do split, because it's a when, not if. So, we keep land ownership separate. We share in all our crop's success and failures, or hail for example, grain quality. It's all a melting pot and we share in our success. (G5)

One family farmer even explained that farming with their extended family was the only way they could afford to farm:

The only reason we're farming right now is because we all can take on different loans for equipment. We all have a little bit of borrowing power. [My Husband's] parents obviously do more because they've been in the game longer, but if [my husband] and I want to go on our own with what we just have now, which could have been a fair-sized farm years ago, would a financial institution lend me money to get a combine, a sprayer, a seeder, and so forth? No. (G1)

Among the farmers I interviewed who were members of larger multiple household family farms, it was common for each individual family to be responsible for roughly 2,000-3,500 acres each. These findings are important because they reveal that although there may still be many census farms in any given RM in Saskatchewan (Figure 2), there are, in fact, far fewer independent farming operations and separate, unrelated farms than the statistic of number of farms seems to suggest.

Nearly all of the farmers I interviewed had received secondary education, often related to agriculture, having studied at nearby institutions known for their agricultural programs such as: the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Manitoba, the University of Guelph, and Olds College. Farmers had studied agronomy, agricultural business, agricultural economics,

marketing, animal science or were trained in fields such as engineering and mechanics. Many also had a significant amount of agricultural experience off of the farm, working for, among others, chemical companies, Farm Credit Canada (FCC), the Ministry of Agriculture, various universities, grain elevator companies, the Co-op, and the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC).

The great majority of those I interviewed were also fully engaged with agricultural news and markets, other farmers, and their communities. Often during interviews farmers would bring out recent newspapers with relevant articles for me to read. Many farmers that I spoke with were also involved in a variety of agricultural organizations such as the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, the National Farmers Union, and conservation organizations. In addition, many have taken a leading role in their communities serving in local government, as board members of their local co-ops and banks, and volunteer their time and energy with various clubs and organizations (e.g., 4H, recreational centers, children's sports teams, and community theatre).

## **2.5 Interviews**

With each of the individuals who agreed to participate in this research, I conducted a semi-structured, 30 to 60-minute interview. I used one of the following three interview guides: one for farm leaders and real estate agents (Appendix A), another for RM staff and officials (Appendix B), and one for farmers (Appendix C). Farmers and RM staff were all interviewed in person. These interviews were casual and conversational, often taking place in farmers' homes around their kitchen tables or in a private room in an RM office. All interviews consisted of introductory questions, follow-up questions, direct and indirect questions, and clarification questions. The questions were drafted and agreed-upon by the broader research team so that all masters students conducting interviews in the prairie provinces were asking similar questions. Many of the interview questions were open-ended, allowing for flexibility and interpretation. I recorded each interview with an audio recording device as well as took notes by hand. These field notes included reflections on my own reactions, the context of the interview, non-verbal cues from the informant, and preliminary analytical ideas.

Before I began each interview, participants often wanted to know who I was, where I was from, and how I was connected to agriculture. I spoke about my upbringing, family members who farmed and continue to farm, my experience working on farms and working at the

University of Saskatchewan Research Farm. Often, we quickly discovered people we knew in common. These connections and my rural upbringing helped establish my legitimacy and gain trust. In several cases, I had learned from farmers that we had mutual friends who had (unbeknownst to me) vouched for my character, and encouraged their friends to participate in the research. Such references proved to be absolutely essential in successfully recruiting participants.

Interviewees participated in this research for a variety of reasons: many felt strongly about the importance of volunteering while some participants had children in university and believed in the importance of contributing to research and education (FV5). Others participated because they wanted to tell their story, as this one participant explained: “I feel that we have a responsibility to tell our story and try to have people understand us” (G2a). Many female farmers, in particular, shared that they were happy to be asked about their farming history and their perspectives on where farming and rural Saskatchewan are headed.

## **2.6 Data Analysis**

In analyzing the qualitative data, I began by transcribing each of the interviews. Doing this allowed me to become more familiar with the content of the interviews and initiate my analytical process. I conducted multiple and successive “readings” (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008), what Timmerman and Tavory (2012) call revisiting, which forced me to rethink the mundane and habitual contents of the interviews. I coded interviews manually using a grounded, open approach, reflecting the content of the interviews. These codes relied on participants’ own words or phrasing to describe their own experiences (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). I also relied heavily on a conceptual framework of land as a social construct when considering the implications of changing farmland tenure, by asking how shifting patterns of land tenure are affecting the conceptual, material, and social dimensions of farmland.

Because I was also interested in what logics were influencing farmers’ interpretation of their experiences, I also noted assumptions (Ryan & Bernard, 2000), attitudes, beliefs, values, and sentiments (Luborsky, 1994) embedded in informants’ construction of their experiences. For example, while reading the transcripts, I asked myself specific questions of the accounts provided by participants such as: what outside influences, logics, and rationales do I see in these interviews? And what ideologies and values are being drawn-upon by the informant? This stage involved using narrative and discourse analysis to analyze narrative construction and ideological and power relations involved in the informant’s language and rationale (Taylor, 1997). The



codes I chose to represent logics, influences, and ideologies were, therefore, more conceptual and reflected my own interpretation of the data.

When piecing together themes from the 38 interviews, I aggregated and compiled similar content while also looking for variations, contrasting or conflicting points of view, and exceptions to patterns (Morse, 1994). Perspectives among farmers on topics discussed were not unanimous. As one farmer put it, “Everybody’s got a different story. It’s because it depends on where you were and where you started and what you had” (FV6). From these stories, I then constructed my own interpretation and situated my interpretation within the wider literature and historical context. In sum, through the process of selectively collecting appropriate data, aggregating data which I deemed relevant, analyzing and interpretation the data, and lastly, constructing my own interpretation, I have created the following story.

## **2.7 Additional Sources**

As mentioned previously, my qualitative research was also informed and guided by existing literature, a particular understanding of history, as well as supplementary data. This latter data includes the Land Titles and Corporate Registries in Saskatchewan, the 2016 Agricultural Census from Statistics Canada, the Comparable Land Sales Database, data from the Farm Land Security Board (FLSB), the FCC and SCIC, as well as farm listings, and news articles. I used supplementary data to triangulate, contextualize, and situate the experiences presented by the 38 participants. Triangulation, according to Tracy (2010) is the process by which conclusions are situated among varying types of data, frameworks, and researchers by way of making conclusions more credible or valid. Using triangulation and complimentary data in my research, has therefore, helped to create a fuller and richer story.

The following two chapters, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, present my empirical findings as established by means of the methodological, conceptual, and analytical approaches discussed thus far.

## CHAPTER 3: FARMLAND CONSOLIDATION IN SASKATCHEWAN

*“[Large Farms] have destroyed the small towns. But there’s nothing you can do about it. It’s what they call ‘progress’ I guess.” (FV4)*

One of the most important shifts in farmland tenure taking place in Saskatchewan is the ongoing consolidation of agricultural land. Since the 1940s, family farms in Saskatchewan have become fewer in number and, on average, much larger in size. To those familiar with the history of Saskatchewan, the continued decline in the total number of farms is, certainly, not new information. Yet, the fact that farmers repeatedly raised this issue demonstrates that the consolidation of agricultural land continues to be a significant shift in farmland ownership. Furthermore, the exact nature of this shift and its locally-specific impacts remain to be fully understood. This chapter explores the nature of farmland consolidation in Saskatchewan, how it is understood by farmers, as well as how it is affecting the day-to-day lives of family farmers, rural communities, and the environment.

Farmland consolidation is a common trend seen across the globe, but its specific nature and driving forces are not universal. By drawing upon interviews with farmers, an analysis of the Land Titles Registry, and supplementary data, the following subsection discusses the local nature of this evolving and intensifying trend in Saskatchewan.

### 3.1 Fewer, Larger, and “Second” Farms

When asked what have been the most important changes in land ownership in their communities, farmers highlighted the transition to fewer and larger farms. For example, respondents indicated that:

A lot of farmers have gotten really big. And the smaller farmers are getting weeded-out almost. (TR1)

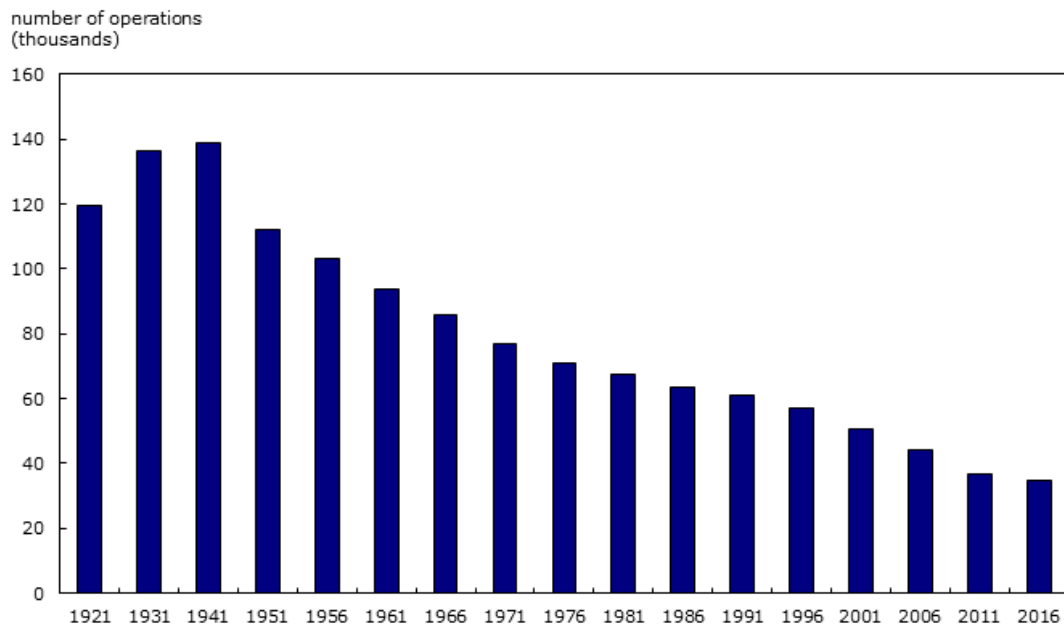
Fewer people own the land. And fewer people farm it. It’s been a big change. (FV1)

Family farms are dwindling, unfortunately. There isn’t near as many as there used to be. (TR1)

To put this into perspective, there are currently fewer than half of the number of farms in Saskatchewan that many established farmers would have remembered when they were children (Figure 4). One farmer explained that:

There used to be . . . a different family on every quarter, back in the old days. We've got an old map downstairs that you could see probably. And now you just see the same name... here and here... that's all one family. (FV4)

**Figure 4: Number of Agricultural Operations, Saskatchewan, 1921-2016**



Source: Statistics Canada, (2017a), “Saskatchewan Remains the Breadbasket of Canada.” <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/95-640-x/2016001/article/14807-eng.htm>.

In addition to fewer farms, interviewees also emphasized that existing farms, on the whole, are increasing in size. For example, several farmers observed that:

Probably the biggest thing we've seen is farm sizes increasing. They've increased quite significantly in the last 10 years. A lot of farms have doubled in size in the last 10 years. That's probably the biggest thing that we've seen. (TR10)

Farms are getting bigger and they're buying more land. (FV5)

Even people who maintain family farms, to maintain them, they're also getting bigger and bigger. So that's the biggest change. Land ownership, the land base is bigger per entity. (FV1)

An important aspect of farmland consolidation in Saskatchewan is that much of the farmland is being consolidated by family farmers, including some research participants, themselves. This means that when interviewees speak about farmland consolidation, they are often doing so as farmers who have engaged in and benefited from consolidation or have seen their long-time neighbours and friends engage in this process. It is important to keep this in mind as I discuss farmers' perspectives regarding farmland consolidation throughout this chapter.

According to the most recent agricultural census (2016), the average farm size—which refers to the amount of land a farmer or corporation owns and rents—in Saskatchewan grew to 1,784 acres, an increase of roughly 7.0%, since the 2011 census (Statistics Canada, 2017a). When Statistics Canada refers to a “farm” or “agricultural operation,” they are referring to all operations that grow or produce any agricultural product for sale, regardless of farm size or revenue (Statistics Canada, 2020a).<sup>4</sup> Effectively, as shown in Figure 5, small-scale farms, that also include hobby farms, work to lower the province's average farm size statistic. If farm size data were to be broken down into different farming categories, the average grain, oilseed, or mixed-farming operation (types of farming operations which typically require substantial land base) would be larger than 1,784 acres. Though a valuable statistic, it is important to acknowledge that “Saskatchewan's average farm size” does not accurately reflect the average size of farms this research is examining (grain and mixed-farming operations) and neither does it provide detailed information about land ownership. However, data classified by farm size (Figure 5), does indicate that 4,495 farms larger than 3,520 acres accounted for 13% of the total number of farms in Saskatchewan in 2016. At the absolute minimum, these farms operated over

---

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada defines an “agricultural operation” or “census farm,” as “a farm, ranch or other agricultural operation that produces at least one of the following products intended for sale: crops, livestock, poultry, animal products, greenhouse or nursery products, Christmas trees, mushrooms, sod, honey or bees, and maple syrup products. Also included are feedlots, greenhouses, mushroom houses and nurseries; farms producing Christmas trees, fur, game (animals and birds), sod, maple syrup, or fruit and berries; beekeeping and poultry hatchery operations; operations with alternative livestock (bison, deer, elk, llamas, alpacas, wild boars, etc.) or alternative poultry (ostriches, emus, etc.), when the animal or derived products are intended for sale; backyard gardens if agricultural products are intended for sale; and operations involved in boarding horses, riding stables, and stables for housing or training horses, even if no agricultural products are sold. Sales in the previous 12 months are not required, but there must be the intention to sell (Statistics Canada, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2020a).” Farms with very low farm revenue, often called, “hobby farms” are also included as “farms.” Data reporting on the total number of farms or agricultural operations in Saskatchewan, therefore refers to all farms, which is broader and more inclusive than often recognized.

40% of Saskatchewan farmland in 2016.<sup>5</sup> It is important to emphasize that farm size (both rented and owned acres under operation) is not the same thing as farmland ownership. Both farmland consolidation and land ownership concentration, however, warrant consideration.

**Figure 5: Farms Classified by Size: Historical Data, Saskatchewan**

<b>Farm Size</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2016</b>
	Number				
<b>Total number of farms</b>	56,995	50,598	44,329	36,952	34,523
<b>Under 10 acres</b>	482	422	431	345	334
<b>10 to 69 acres</b>	1,418	1,218	1,254	967	1,069
<b>70 to 129 acres</b>	1,144	1,100	1,084	975	1,008
<b>130 to 179 acres</b>	5,969	5,529	4,447	3,780	3,722
<b>180 to 239 acres</b>	673	698	732	632	668
<b>240 to 399 acres</b>	6,431	5,633	4,698	3,969	3,664
<b>400 to 559 acres</b>	4,870	4,210	3,542	2,755	2,501
<b>560 to 759 acres</b>	5,632	4,565	3,668	2,808	2,580
<b>760 to 1,119 acres</b>	8,977	7,132	5,448	4,066	3,521
<b>1,120 to 1,599 acres</b>	8,671	7,107	5,589	4,146	3,490
<b>1,600 to 2,239 acres</b>	6,425	5,610	5,103	4,152	3,516
<b>2,240 to 2,879 acres</b>	2,776	2,908	2,946	2,521	2,360
<b>2,880 to 3,519 acres</b>	1,472	1,647	1,795	1,724	1,595
<b>3,520 acres and above</b>	2,055	2,819	3,592	4,112	4,495

Source: Statistics Canada, (2020b) “Table 32-10-0156-01 Farms classified by size, historical data.” <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3210015601>.

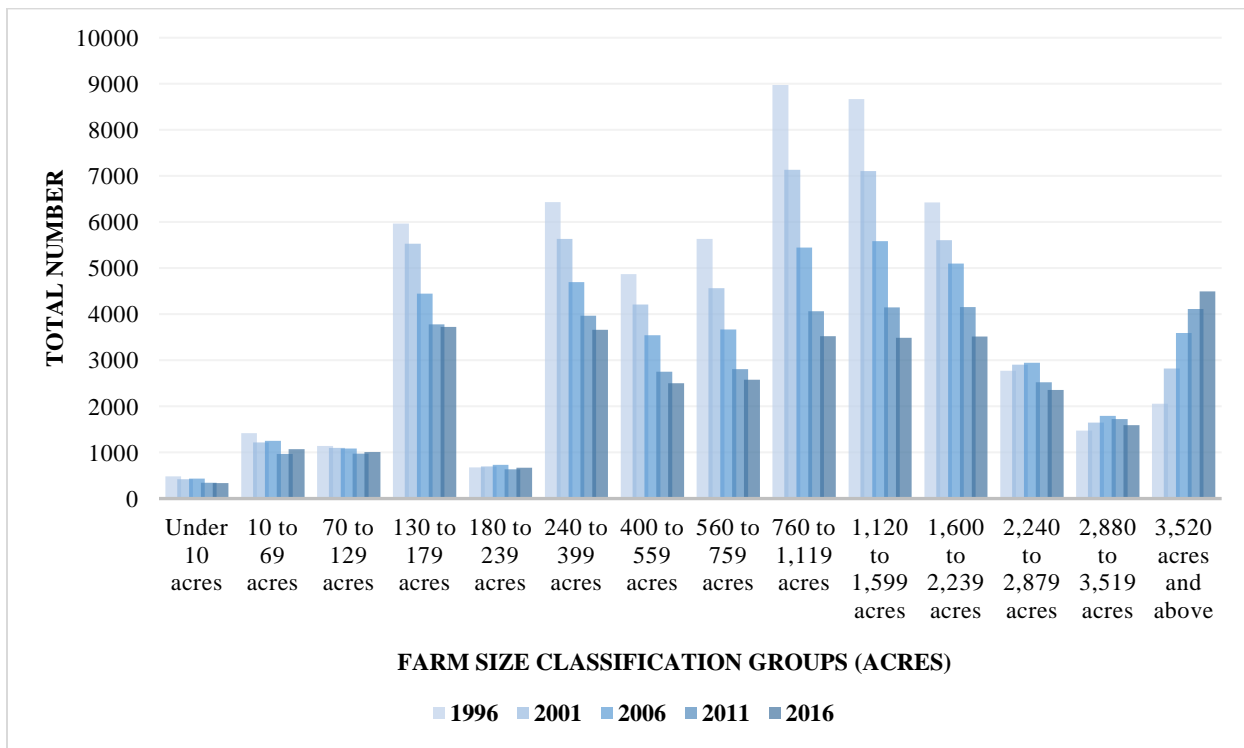
Figures 5 and 6 also indicate that the total number of farms within nearly all, but the largest category of farm-size, are declining. Though we cannot say what exactly constitutes a medium-sized grain or mixed-farming operation in Saskatchewan, this data suggests that the phenomenon known as the “disappearing middle,” is occurring in Saskatchewan (Mandryk et al.,

<sup>5</sup> Calculation made using data from Statistics Canada (2020b; 2017a).

2012; Buttel and LaRamee, 1991). This erasure of mid-size farms by larger farmers is exactly how farmers rationalize what they are seeing around them. One farmer put it this way:

Almost always, farmland is just going to be absorbed by an existing entity around it. You know, like either a farmer wanting to get bigger, a corporation expanding, or Hutterites expanding... . . . Those farms are getting purchased by existing farms so these farm sales aren't always bringing new people into the community either... We'll just be absorbed, if and when, we decide to quit. Our place will just be absorbed by neighbors or... they're won't be another family who moves in. It just doesn't happen anymore. (FV1)

**Figure 6: Saskatchewan Farms by Size, 1996-2016**



Source: Statistics Canada, (2020b) “Table 32-10-0156-01 Farms classified by size, historical data.” <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3210015601>.

Public data on farm size from Statistics Canada does not tell us exactly how large Saskatchewan farms are becoming. Because Statistics Canada has not published a farm size classification group larger than 3,520 acres in the data it makes available free of charge, it seems to suggest that not many Saskatchewan farms greatly exceed 3,520 acres in size. But this is not the case. During the course of my research, I observed farm listings in Saskatchewan which provided further insight into the various sizes of grain and mixed-farming operations across the

province. For example, a farm of roughly 5,000 acres in the RM of Loreburn (Hammond Realty, 2020), a 10,000-acre farm in the RM of Milden (Hammond Realty, 2019), and another farm of 15,000 acres (4,490.86 acres deeded, 9,689.13 acres crown leased) in the RM of Chesterfield (Farm Real Estate, 2019) were all listed during the course of this research. In each of the four RMs where I conducted research, there were also, at a minimum, two farms in the 20,000-acre range. Furthermore, Qualman et. al (2020) published a detailed analysis of farm sizes in Saskatchewan based on a custom tabulation they obtained from Statistics Canada. According to the more specific data they received, Saskatchewan has over 50 farms (made up of owned and rented land) that are larger than 30,000 acres and 13 farms (including owned and rented land) that are larger than 50,000 acres. This recent research is eye-opening and speaks to the importance of monitoring both farmland consolidation and concentration of farmland ownership.

While the Agricultural Census provides us with information on farmland consolidation, the Saskatchewan Land Titles Registry provides us with data regarding farmland ownership. One major obstacle in using the Land Titles Registry is that the land base for one farming operation in Saskatchewan is often titled under various, unique titles (which can be difficult, as a researcher, to locate and attribute to the same farming operation) as these farmers explain:

Some people will title their land in sole proprietorship. Like I own some land in sole proprietorship status and I own some under my farming corporation status. (TR2)

We've got land, personal. We've got land in a corporation. Our son has land, personal, and then we're operating under a partnership that doesn't own any land. (IH6)

You'll see one company will have a name and you'll say, 'oh that's so and so, because I recognize the initials.' And they'll have two sections. And then their sibling will have a different company and they'll have two sections. And Grandpa and Grandma turned into a company in the 70s and they'll have two sections. And then the other sibling, they'd had money come from elsewhere, outside money, from their family, part of that transfer of wealth, so they've bought two sections. So, you'll see a family [farm], that's actually four families and they farm 10 sections of land under different entities. (FV3)

According to research participants, the land base for one farming operation is often distributed across sole, joint, and corporate ownership for various taxation reasons associated with expansion or transferring land to the next generation (TR2; G4; IH6; FV3). And because the Land Titles Registry does not aggregate uniquely-titled parcels of land held by the same

individuals or corporation, an analysis of the Land Titles Registry provides only a partial picture of concentrated farmland ownership by farmers in Saskatchewan.

Despite the complexities in farmland ownership arrangements, my examination of the Land Titles Registry in 2018 did indicate that 150 entities owned over 10,000 acres of Saskatchewan farmland. After eliminating utility companies, public entities, conservation organizations, cooperatives, treaty land entitlements, Hutterite colonies, and investor land owners, there were 32 individual farming entities that owned over 10,000 acres of land (Figure 7). In addition to their owned land base, the majority of these farmers would have more land under production which is rented. For example, Kevin Hruska, owner and operator of Hruska farms, was registered as owning 21,878 acres of farmland in 2018. However, in an interview in 2018, Hruska, explained that he farmed a 45,000-acre operation (Bacque, 2018). Another large farm in Saskatchewan, Kambeitz Farms, stated on their webpage that they operated a 50,000-acre farm (Kambeitz Farms, 2020). In late 2018, I was able to attribute 19,357 owned-acres to this farm using the Land Titles Registry (although it is possible, they own more acres under titles I could not recognize and attribute to the operation). These farms, are therefore, two examples of farming operations with large land bases made up of both owned and rented farmland. Large farms are also emerging in Saskatchewan whose land base is highly, if not, almost entirely rented. One 40,000-acre organic farm in eastern Saskatchewan, for example, appears to be situated almost entirely on rented land owned Andjelic Land Inc. (Western Producer, 2018).



**Figure 7: Individual Entities with More than 10,000 acres of Owned Farmland<sup>6</sup>**

<b>Title Holder</b>	<b>Acres Owned</b>
DUGDALE FARMS LTD.	23,814
Hruska, Kevin, George	21,878
1592581 ALBERTA LTD. C2 FARMS LTD.	21,026
T.I.C.A. HOLDINGS LTD.	20,584
TAPPAUF, EDWIN TAPPAUF, GARY TAPPAUF, KARL TAPPAUF, WALTER	20,240
NCC NYKOLAISHEN FARMS INC.	19,901
HUNTER FARMS LTD.	19,063
MORSAN FARMS LTD.	19,063
NUVISTA FARMS LTD.	17,872
Forrester, Duane, Tony	17,396
RAY THORING FARMS LTD.	15,240
Alexander, Graham, John Alexander, Patricia, Ann	15,920
J.C.P. Farms Ltd.	13,762
COLLEGE FARMS LTD.	13,713
SASKALTA FARMS LTD.	13,125
101156541 SASKATCHEWAN LTD.	13,072
CENTER FORK RANCH INC.	13,060
T & E VENTURES INC.	12,799
KOWAL BROTHERS FARMS INC.	12,001
Oberle Farms Ltd.	11,890
JOHNER FARMS LTD.	11,821
RBD MCKIM HOLDINGS INC.	11,508
REAL'S WESTERN FARMS LTD.	11,320
TSM WINNY AG. LTD.	11,066
HILLCREST ENTERPRISES LTD.	10,989
RAPTOR ENTERPRISES INC.	10,779
HEWSON FARM CORP.	10,404
BUFFALO PLAINS CATTLE CO. LTD.	10,363
DIMLER, JULIE DIMLER, KENNETH, RICHARD Dimler, Marcia, Clare Dimler, Mark, Allan Dimler, Richard, John DIMLER, SHAUNA, RIANNE	10,237
HILLSIDE FARMS CO. LTD.	10,174
CRAWFORD ACRES LTD.	10,142
NAMAKA FARMS INC.	10,033

Source: Saskatchewan Land Titles Registry, September 2018.

In what appears to be a newer trend in Saskatchewan, farms are expanding by purchasing and/or renting additional, and sometimes distant, farm sites—what I call “second farms”. A real estate agent, interviewed as part of my contextual interviews affirmed this, saying that his

---

<sup>6</sup> Capitalization of entities is as appears in the Land Titles Registry.

biggest clientele were, in fact, Albertan farmers wanting to buy second farms in Saskatchewan (C2). In a 2019 interview with the Saskatoon Star Phoenix, Ted Cawkwell, a prominent Agricultural Real Estate Specialist, explained that he was fielding daily phone calls from Albertan farmers looking for Saskatchewan land (Star Phoenix, 2019). In the same interview, Cawkwell explained that farmers were finding it impossible to expand in Alberta where the average price of land per acre is much higher than in Saskatchewan.<sup>7</sup> Saskatchewan farmers interviewed for this research also spoke of Albertan farmers coming to their area to farm their second farms. In the words of one farmer:

I became friends with this guy... He had tried to expand just outside of Calgary. And he wanted to expand his farm and land there was selling for \$1,000,000 a quarter. And it just wasn't in the cards. He had farmed there with his dad, but was wanting to get bigger. So, he started looking around Saskatchewan and he came up with, there was a parcel of land here for sale and he decided to purchase it. And for the last 10, 11 years, he's been farming both places and driving back and forth. (IH3)

Saskatchewan farmers are also expanding their operations by purchasing second farms, as another research participant explained:

And what's happening, there's also two different [Saskatchewan] farm[er]s that have come up and taken on 10,000+ acres just to farm here as well as keep their farms in other areas. (TR2)

When farming operations expand through the purchasing of second farms, these can often be located in the Land Titles Registry. But when second farms are established on rented land, we are left to rely upon self-reported figures of second farms by farmers themselves, to tell us just how large their farms may be and where exactly their second farms are located. Andjelic Land Inc., Saskatchewan's largest landowner and investor landowner calls second farms "satellite operations" and promotes their many rental packages as a great way for farmers to geographically spread out their farming sites to reduce the risks associated rainfall, drought, and frost (Andjelic Land, 2021b). In 2021, Andjelic Land Inc. was accepting bids on several rental

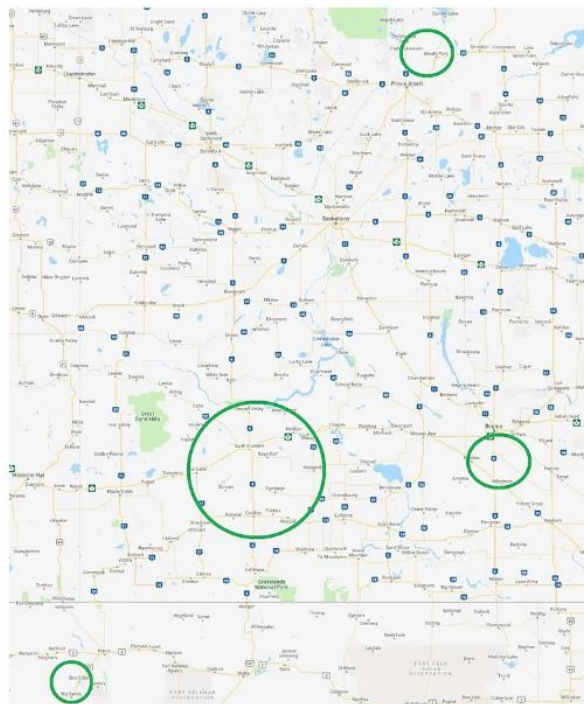
---

<sup>7</sup> Average price of farmland per acre in Alberta in 2018 averaged \$2,229 per acre in the, on average, least expensive region in Alberta, the Northern Peace Region of Alberta and \$6,157 per acre in the most expensive Southern region of Alberta. Whereas in Saskatchewan, for example, in 2018 the average price of land per acre ranged between \$1500 per acre to \$2000 per acre, across the province (Farm Credit Canada, 2018).

packages in the 5,000 to 6,000-acre range and one package that was 21,000 acres (Andjelic Land, 2021).

Monette Farms, is one such example of a farming operation that has expanded through additional farm sites that are both rented and purchased. In 2018, Monette Farms was registered as owning 62,808 acres of farmland across Saskatchewan. According to their website, Monette Farms has three farms in Saskatchewan; their headquarters is near Swift Current, with additional farms north of Prince Albert, south of Regina, and one farm in Montana, USA. Below (Figure 8), is a screenshot taken from Monette Farms' farm webpage, depicting the geographical location and distribution of their four farm sites.

**Figure 8: Monette Farms Farm Sites Across Saskatchewan and Montana, USA**



Source: Monette Farms, "Where We Are," <https://www.monettefarms.ca/where-we-are>. (Accessed June 30, 2020).

CanMar Farms, previously Hokanson Capital Inc (HCI), is another example of a large farming operation with several farm sites spread across Saskatchewan. According to their website, they have a farm at Indian Head that stretches over 12,000 acres, two other conventional grain operations located near Lang, Saskatchewan and another farm in Russell, Manitoba, covering approximately 5,000 acres (Canmar Foods, 2020). Nil-Ray Farms, a farming operation

based out of Alberta, similarly owns several farm sites across Saskatchewan totaling 13,260 acres according to the Land Titles Registry (2018).

In sum, qualitative and quantitative research highlight the fact that one of the most important and persistent trends in changing farmland tenure is that the number of grain and mixed-farming operations across Saskatchewan is declining, while those remaining are becoming much larger and even expanding through additional, distant farming sites. The following subsection explores what becomes of land, relationships with land, rural communities and the environment as landowners continue to consolidate their land holdings.

### **3.2 Gains and Losses**

Discussions with farmers reveal that as land becomes consolidated, ideas about what land means, how it is used, and who benefits, changes considerably. With farmland consolidation, land's social, cultural, and ecological meanings are increasingly displaced by the productive and economic meanings allocated to land. While consolidation has allowed some farmers to improve their efficiencies and remain viable, the reformulation of the meanings ascribed to land is having important consequences for farmers, rural communities, and local environments, resulting in the loss of livelihoods, erosion of rural services, environmental degradation, and growing inequality among farmers. By considering the nature of farmland consolidation through the question of "what is land?" we can better analyse the dynamics of the shifts taking place and consider what is being gained and lost in this ongoing and evolving process.

As farmland is consolidated, it is becoming further detached from society. As mentioned previously, within the last generation, as the total number of farming operations have been halved in Saskatchewan (National Farmers Union, 2019), the province's population switched from being majority rural to majority urban. According to most recent data, 35% of Saskatchewan's total population is currently rural (Statistics Canada, 2017d). "There's getting to be less and less people in the countryside," lamented an established farmer (G4). In several of the RMs where I conducted research, farmers explained that the declining number of farms has also led to the abandonment or demolition of unused homes and farm sites. Two farmers, from different RMs had this to say:

With the bigger farmers... If they purchased land that had a farm site on them, often it would just be torn down, because they had no use for it. But you know the chances of a family moving on there are now gone. (FV7)

The [country] road I take to go home, there's a half a dozen houses with no one living in them anymore. And I live 15 miles from here so, yeah... it kind of makes me sad driving by yard after yard. (TR7)

According to research participants, when this occurs, homes, livelihoods, ways of life, and identities are lost not only for exiting farming families, but also future generations. This was clearly reflected in the ways that farmers talked about what farming means to them:

I think when you grow up [farming], it just becomes a part of who you are... I think when you're raised on the farm, it becomes an intricate part of your identity. (TR8)

[Farming] is a passion and something you like to do—a way of life eh. (FV6)

We continue to grow to set a foundation for our next generation. My kids are still pretty young, but we want to make sure that there's a farm there and a way of life there that is pretty solid if they so choose to take that in life. (TR2)

Our farm, we're 4<sup>th</sup> heading on 5<sup>th</sup> generation. I want to farm for a while, hopefully some of the kids want to. So, the way I look at it is, more of a livelihood. (G4)

We farm because we love the land. We love the livestock. Our goal is to pass our farm onto our kids so it's sustainable for our grandkids and our great grandkids. (G2)

[Farming] is a good lifestyle. There's a lot of values I learnt. And as a kid I didn't realize I was learning and gaining life skills. And I want to make sure my kids can capture as much of what I did when I was kid like there's a basket of eggs sitting over there. It does not pay for us to have laying hens, but my daughter really, really likes stuff like that and I wanted my kids to see chickens start off and see eggs coming out the bank and understand that farm animals are destined to become table fare and understanding the circle of life and everything. I really wanted to raise a family in the environment I was raised in. (TR4)

For many rural areas, the decline of family farming has meant that “the whole community dies” (G2). As the number of farms across Saskatchewan become fewer and the rural population dwindles, land and its ownership have become less connected to, and something which supports and sustains, rural communities. Towns and villages have lost and continue to lose the rural population needed to support the services farming families and rural inhabitants rely on. Farmers voiced these losses in a variety of ways:

We really got rid of a lot of the small farmers, so we don't have the people in the town. It really affects your town and your surrounding area, your whole community, for kids eh. It isn't there. There aren't any kids around. (FV9)

The towns have been decimated. You lost your elevators. You lost your credit unions. (FV4)

At one time there was even two grocery stores, two restaurants, a bar, a school, a rink, a hardware store, a lumber yard. So, I've seen it all disappear. (FV5)

Everything from local schools close to rec centres are having trouble staying open. (G4)

There's no schools and businesses left in small towns. (FV6)

There isn't [sic] the people here to support the towns anymore, as the farms get bigger... Some of them smaller businesses... like we had a hotel in town that's closed, the stores, the hardware store. You know, we had quite a few businesses that went. There's just not the support. (FV2)

The degree of rural depopulation, however, has not been equal across the four RMs I examined. In two of the RMs, rural yard sites have been re-filled by non-farming families wishing to live in the country on smaller, parcelled-off pieces of land called acreages. Often, as the following farmers explain, this occurs when a yard site is located near a city or other nearby employment opportunities:

The elementary school population has just exploded, because there are families moving out of the city and the parents are commuting, because the parents wanted to be out of the city. (IH1)

It's special that we have so many neighbors with young families on acreages. They're populated and it's pretty cool to me. I'm sure it has a lot to do with our proximity to [the city] and things of that nature. So even though, they aren't actively farming. A lot of these yards aren't actively farming, but they live there and they're part of the community and the part of the rural lifestyle. (IH7)

We still have the same number of neighbors because people are living on the yard sites, but there are fewer active farmers. (IH5)

Though there are some exceptions, by and large, as demonstrated by province-wide data on the declining number of farms and rural depopulation, farmland is no longer providing Saskatchewan residents with the homes, ways of life, and livelihoods that it once did.

Rural depopulation has also been seriously compromising the formal and informal networks of mutual aid and volunteerism that have traditionally created a sense of community and facilitated the viability of individual family farms. Two farmers, below talk about this:

Service groups, not only get smaller, they die out. Things like Royal Purple, Masons, even the Legion is struggling with membership and those are all... they were important groups in communities. You know they did a lot of service work, fundraising, you know things like that. And that, in the smaller communities, that

doesn't happen anymore. It's missed, by us old folks and it's just part of the way it is now. There's just fewer and fewer people do that kind of stuff and it just doesn't happen anymore. (FV1)

The smaller farmers, they have that sense of community that sense of neighbors helping neighbors and being involved in all the small things. But when you're a corporation, "whoop de doo!" You give a couple of bucks. I don't think there's the community respect about what's going on, because you don't have to be involved. You can give money and there you go. There's no pride in helping neighbors. (TR8)

Families continuing to farm in these circumstances are increasingly underserved, left without their circles of support and having to drive farther distances for school, groceries and supplies, medical visits, and social activities. As one farmer put it, "Like this Co-op we have down here, they can't stock everything that you need. So, where do you go? You go to Saskatoon [which is nearly an hour away]" (FV9). Many small towns no longer even have a coffee shop where farmers have traditionally met, at what Saskatchewan residents call "coffee row." In one of the RMs visited, in what was perhaps one of the more showing images of rural decline that I encountered, coffee row now takes place in a closed-down school (FV5).

Another impact of farmland consolidation has been the growing loss of biodiversity and wildlife habitat. Specifically, farmers spoke at great lengths about the increased removal of shelterbelts from farmland across the prairies. Shelterbelts are lines of trees and shrubs bordering farms and fields which were originally planted to shield soil from the wind and protect it from erosion. Today, shelterbelts are also recognized for their ability to off-set agricultural carbon emissions. From 1925 to 2013, millions of shelterbelt trees were provided to farmers free of charge (Mayrinck et al., 2019) and planted through the Prairie Shelterbelt Program (Amichev et al., 2015). But as crop production methods like no tilling became more common (Rempel et al., 2017) and as farms and farming equipment increased in size, views towards shelterbelts have changed. For example, Saskatchewan's largest landowner, Andjelic Land Inc., frames shelterbelts as "obstacles" which once removed, "unlock new efficiencies," by allowing equipment to pass over several quarter sections of land before making a turn (Andjelic Land, 2018). Although not all large-scale farmers remove shelterbelts (FV5), between 2008 and 2016 alone, over 2,491 km of planted shelterbelts were removed across Saskatchewan (Amichev et al., 2020).

With the increased removal of shelterbelts by the large landholders, Saskatchewan farmland has been losing more of its environmental features and the meanings that have been

derived from the “natural” characteristics of family farms. Below, two farmers from different parts of the province explain the ways in which farmland is being transformed as farms expand in size:

There’s a lot tearing them [shelterbelts] up now, because... well the bigger land ownership, they need to keep going and they don’t need to be going around trees or whatever. It’s kind of sad to see that, because the wildlife, I think, has changed as a result of [farmland consolidation]. They don’t have a place to take shelter in anymore. They maybe have to travel farther to find a shelterbelt or row of trees. And I don’t know if it’s affected the birds and that kind of stuff too. When you’re pulling out a row of trees, you’re pulling out someone’s home too... I don’t know if you call it progress, but the tree rows are just not wide enough or they’re in the wrong place for trying to get machinery around and lot of them might have been planted in between the sections too. If a farmer owns a whole section, he just wants to go. You set your GPS and go instead of having to go around trees. (FV7)

From the biodiversity end of it, invariably, when a quarter changes hands from a smaller operator to a bigger one, everything is cleared, broken, even the shelter belts in the yard site and everything... Small guys keep the habitat there. He grew up with it, she or he, grew up with it.... Maybe it’s because they’re too poor to break up the sloughs, or drain them or whatever or they appreciate the wildlife because they grew up there and they know what was there when they were a kid and they want to see it... I like my farm because on each corner there’s about 25-33% of the land that is still made of habitat: wetland, bush, trees, grass. It’s great for wildlife. Unfortunately, I’m becoming more of an island as everything around me gets bulldozed, cleared, and drained. But I got lots of wildlife on the farm: moose, deer, coyotes, owls, hawks, smaller birds, bluebirds, and whatever... (IH4)

The removal of shelterbelts has also resulted in the physical erasure of histories and identities embedded in farmland. For example, Conquest, a village located in the RM of Fertile Valley, is known and embraced by many locals as the “Caragana Capital of Canada” because of the many rows of caragana shelterbelts surrounding the community. Many long-time residents of this area are the ancestors of those who manually planted and cared for these trees, thereby transforming the landscape with which so many, still identify. One participant explained that:

My dad always told me that when he was growing up, when he was in his teenage years, that [planting caraganas] was one of his first jobs... He made maybe 80 cents a day at one time. He worked 12 hours a day planting trees by hand [laughs]. (FV5)

After several large-scale farmers in the area removed a significant number of trees from their farmland, one research participant cautiously and diplomatically indicated that, “there were a lot of people that were upset” (FV7).



As a result of increased pressure to expand their operations, farmers' perspectives about farming and the land have shifted whereby land is becoming almost entirely a place for agricultural production. Though this has come with many social and environmental losses, farmers explain that farmland consolidation is necessary to continue to farm, allowing farmers to achieve economies of scale:

Farms have gotten bigger, because they need more land to make a living. (FV4)

With the cost of inputs too. It's hard to stay small... And the price of grain is the same that it is. But fertilizer and fuel have all gone up. (FV1)

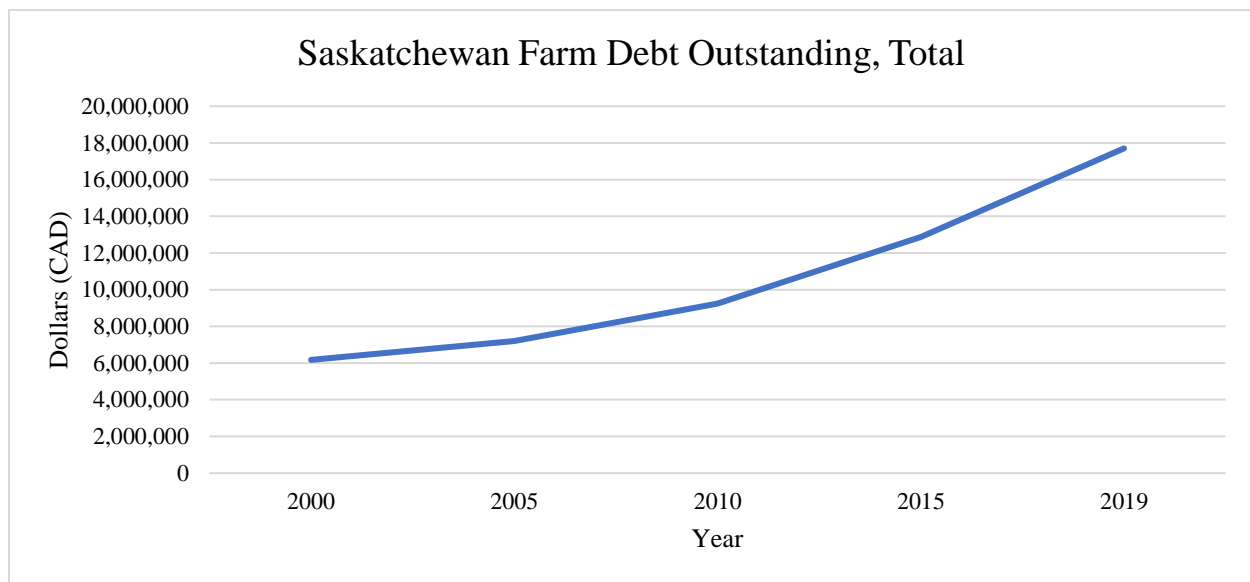
To continue [farming], you have to have the land base in order to pay for what equipment is now. (G1)

Economies of scale and improved efficiencies are extremely important to farmers, because, as this farmer explained, margins in farming are very small:

It's a fine margin. Even at \$150,000 quarter, add up the price of our land, the machinery, the inputs... it's millions of dollars. If we were making 10%, we'd be lucky. And you look at depreciation. (TR3)

In addition to poor margins, farmers explained that they are carrying enormous levels of debt. "We've all got a debt load that could choke a horse," explained an established farmer (G2). "The farm debt now-a-days is very, very, very high as opposed to any time before in history," explained another (TR6). Indeed, Statistics Canada confirms that outstanding farm debt in Saskatchewan continues to grow and is the highest it has ever been (Figure 9).

**Figure 9: Saskatchewan Farm Debt Outstanding, Total**



Source: Statistics Canada, (2020c). Table 32-10-0051-01 Farm Debt Outstanding, classified by lender (x 1,000). <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3210005101>.

Expansion, in this context, was viewed as an absolute necessity by most of the farmers interviewed. “I feel pressure to expand, because we don’t make enough money off of what we have,” admitted a young farmer (FV8). Those who cannot expand are faced with the difficult decision whether to exit farming altogether. During the course of this research, I met farming families from different RMs who had recently made the decision to phase-out of farming.

Below, one of these farmers explained his considerations:

It was very iffy, if I could make it. So, I thought if I quit my job to farm when I’m 45 and I didn’t make it, in 10 years I’d have to go back to work. So, I thought I better keep my job where the pension is. (FV2)

Across the four RMs involved in this research, farmers said that they are less and less able to afford to treat farming (and, by extension, their land) as anything other than a business.

Below, are some examples of such sentiments shared by farmers:

It’s no longer just a family thing. The family is still involved with it and runs it, but it has to be treated like a business. It’s gotten more and more important to treat it that way. The risk is too high. (TR10b)

I think [farming has] become more of business; it certainly has. It’s become more business-like. It’s not a love of a lifestyle anymore. I mean there’s a few left that really do enjoy it for that reason and I know some families that are still maintaining

that [the love of the lifestyle], and god bless them, but basically, it's become a business—a big business. (FV1)

It's a business and you need to treat it that way. The minute that you don't, you're going to struggle with it. It's a way of life, yes. It's a great and we enjoy what we're doing, but at the end of the day, you have to treat it as dollars and cents. (TR10a)

While providing increased efficiencies and economies of scale for some, farmland consolidation is also creating further inequality among farmers and ultimately undermining smaller family-farming operations. As some farms become larger, their ability to outbid smaller farmers increases, making it more difficult for small farmers to acquire new land to rent or buy, as these farmers described:

I know there's a guy just outside of town, a father who has been farming for quite a while. He's got a full-time job. Farming is sort of his second job. Well the son now wants to carry it on. Well, they can't compete. If land comes up for rent now, well there's the big guys who get it all. I sort of feel sorry for the small family guy a little bit. (IH2)

Probably about three years ago a farmer, I don't know, he probably had 2 or 3 sections, he sold out. . . [A]nd some of it sold for \$3,300 an acre, which is the highest, I think its been in the RM. Again, a little farmer wouldn't have a hope in getting it. Again, bigger farmers bought it and competed with each other to get it. (IH4)

Farmers also explained that as agricultural land becomes more consolidated, “the small chunks are getting hard to find” (IH5); nowadays farmland is being rented or sold in entire packages, at a scale and price-point well beyond what many farmers want or can afford. Here, another farmer elaborates:

More and more we're finding it's not just one quarter that comes up for rent. It's the whole farm so these are 3, 4, 5,000-acre chunks that are coming up at one go. So, when you asked about things that are changing: whereas in the past, we would have rented one field from this family and maybe you know, four fields from this [other] family, . . . now it's like 5,000 acres at a go. (IH7)

Such decreasing farmland accessibility (caused by farmland consolidation) has the additional effect of forcing those who cannot expand to improve their efficiencies in other ways; for example, by further eliminating the social and ecological features of land to allow greater productivity, as this farmer explained:

People want to maximize because there isn't more land, right. So, if you can't buy more, you need to maximize what you have, which means clearing bush, and leveling, and getting rid of sloughs and waterways and things like that. So, for sure, it has an impact, because they need to get the most workable acres out of the land they have. (IH1)

Not only does farmland consolidation increase inequality among farmers, but it also creates additional barriers for those wishing to enter farming and, in this way, reinforces inequality. "Other than family, there's no new farmers starting out," explained a farmer (IH4). Even for young adults coming from farming families, consolidation is creating barriers, as this other farmer stated:

If you're starting out at 18 or 20 years old, it doesn't matter really what kind of family backing you have, you're probably not geared up to borrow 10 million to 50 million dollars for a [consolidated chunk of land hitting the market]. (IH5)

A number of research participants feared that the existing inequalities between small- and large-scale farmers will only continue to escalate. Two farmers voiced their concerns as follows:

There's always been the, "this guy's getting big." It's mostly been family and smaller farms up until now. When a farm decides to sell, even if they were on the large size, it either got split up or you know... maybe 3 neighbors would buy out a farm. But now we're on the scale where a 30,000-acre farm in the RM... ... What happens when they're ready to retire? Is it going to be... will they piece it off and sell it? Or is it sold as one? And now it's going in blocks and then that's also one of the concerns is with the outside investors. A section farm isn't that intriguing to an investor, but if here's a \$10,000,000 [piece of property] and they can buy a chunk. That changes the whole dynamic. (IH5)

It's had a very big impact because now, there's large chunks of land that is grouped together, that will never be broken up... ... But when you have [The Canadian Pension Plan] having 9 quarters of land. That's a big bite. Financially, if you had 20 years to prepare, you could make a move on it. If that is sold again, and it could be rented out to local farmers. But if it is sold again, it won't be sold to local people around here. It will be sold to another investment company... it's not going to be listed by the quarter. It's going to be listed as parcel for millions of dollars. Farmers around here won't own it. Farmers around here might be able to rent it at some point in time if big farming becomes less viable. (TR4)

Overall, farmers feel the outcomes of farmland consolidation have been mixed: it has allowed some farmers to continue (including themselves), but at a heavy social, cultural, and ecological cost. On the whole, farmers' assessment of farmland consolidation is best captured in

the words of this one farmer: “The land is not looked after as well as it could be. Communities aren’t doing as well as they could be” (TR5).

### **3.3 The Unfortunate Inevitability of “Progress”**

When discussing the decline of family farms and the consolidation of farmland in Saskatchewan, farmers often offered their own explanation for these trends. Among those interviewed, there seemed to be a shared everyday understanding that despite all the negative consequences experienced, farmland consolidation is necessary and inevitable. The following section reflects on farmers’ understandings of, and responses to this process.

In addition to ever-increasing economies of scale, farmers attributed the current situation to Saskatchewan’s aging farming population and the decreasing affordability of farming. Currently, the majority of farmers in Saskatchewan are older and nearing retirement; in 2016, for example, over 55% of farm operators were over the age of 55 (Statistics Canada, 2017a). This suggests that many farmers will be transferring or selling their land, in the not too distant future. Nowhere was this reality more evident than when farmers spoke about their neighbors:

One neighbor is 65 years old. My other neighbor is 71, another neighbor is 50. She’s packing it in. Another neighbor is 74 and I mean, we’re all 1 to 2 section owners and obviously we won’t be here in 20 years, so those smaller farms will be gobbled up too. (IH4)

Well, the older farmers are getting older... I’ve lost most of my neighbors around here. They moved into town or they’ve passed away or their husbands have passed away. This farm here [points to map], he had a stroke and a heart attack. This guy over here [points to map] had a stroke and a heart attack... This fella here committed suicide. You got all those things to worry about too. We’ve had a few of those. (FV4)

Not only do these quotes speak to the increasing age of farmers, they also point to the increasing physical and mental health pressures farmers are experiencing in this new dynamic.

Farmers believe that an aging farming population is contributing to the consolidation of farmland, because many retiring farmers do not have successors. In 2016, only 8.8% of Saskatchewan farms had a written succession plan (Statistics Canada, 2017a). As one farmer explained, “The family sizes have decreased too, so it lessens your chance of having somebody to take over the farm” (FV1). Indeed, early in Saskatchewan’s history, it was common for farming families to have six or more children, whereas since the 1980s it has been more likely for Saskatchewan farming families to have one or two children (Hay, 2006).

Even when successors do exist, interviewees explained that a career in farming does not necessarily appeal to the next generation. Many established farmers I spoke with felt that part of the reason why there are fewer farms is that farming no longer seems to be an attractive profession and lifestyle for the younger generation. As one farmer put it, “Between the modern world and technology and all of those things, small community agriculture has almost no appeal to [the younger] generation” (FV1). This lack of interest was often explained to be the result of the younger generations’ desire for a higher standard of living. As many farmers indicated, “There just isn’t enough money in it.” Other farmers had this to say:

I’ve been married for 43 years to my wife. We have two boys. They’re not into farming. They like the farm, but there’s just not enough money in it. They don’t want to work hard for nothing. (FV6)

It’s changed quite a bit since we started. . . . [W]e just figured they’d [our children] naturally take over and farm, but there’s no way. They gotta keep their jobs. There just isn’t enough money in farming. (FV9)

Agriculture is a lot of work for not a very lucrative lifestyle. My dad, he retired a long time ago and he said, “You live poor and retire rich.” That’s the way agriculture is. And in this day and age, people don’t want to live poor anymore. And you know, we can’t. The world has changed so much that you can’t survive anymore with a milk cow and a couple of chickens, that kind of thing. It just doesn’t work. (FV1)

There just isn’t a lot of money in it. It’s changed a lot... The price for grain has not kept up with the price of everything else... When the Hutterites tell you they can’t afford it, like they were telling me... That they can’t afford to farm the way they’re farming either. (FV8)

Many research participants believed that farming is no longer a viable option for the next generation: “It’s to the point, where everybody has to work [off-farm]” (TR1). The rising cost of inputs and technological advancements figured prominently in farmers’ explanations as to why small farms are disappearing. Farmers discussed improved technology in both a positive and negative light, saying it has both allowed increasing farm size, but also pressured farmers to expand:

John Deere are bringing a combine out, they don’t know what its going to cost yet, it’s very new, but I bet you it’s going to be in excess of \$1,000,000 dollars, for a machine. That’s ridiculous. I mean we have tractors now where the starting price is \$740,000 dollars, before discounts. I mean, that’s crazy, you know. And so, unfortunately, it’s only the big boys who can afford it. (IH2)

We have the equipment now to farm larger acres. Before we didn't have that. We had to have multiple pieces that farm the same acres. Now we have bigger equipment to farm more acres. (TR10)

But the challenge is that stuff costs a lot of money so you need the acres or the cash coming from somewhere to invest in that type of technology. So, I would say those are the things that allow [farmland consolidation] and push it. It's this never ending... this technology costs more so we need more land. It's a cycle. (IH7)

So, you know for us, if our equipment payments weren't so much, we wouldn't feel so pressured to expand. And the solution isn't to run older equipment, because you can run some decent second-hand equipment, but they're also comes a point if you're always fixing stuff and you're always broken down, then you're not really efficient. So, we run nice enough equipment, we need to make sure we have the maximum amount of head we can with that machinery. (FV8)

Despite the variety of explanations provided by farmers for farmland consolidation, the common thread is that research participants believed that the decline of the family farm is inevitable, meaning that farmers, like those quoted below, believe this trend will continue:

There's a multiplier effect where people just go, "It's inevitable." There might be some tension if... like that big advertisement about that huge amount of land that was going to be sold in Manitoba. Even that, everybody is just sort of standing back and watching it. (FV3)

You can resist all you want. I can say, "yes" and you can say, "no." What's it gunna do? I don't see nothing changing. (FV6)

It used to be a farmer in every quarter section and then that went away, to every half section, to every section... it just the way she's goin'...It's goin' this way. (FV6)

When you look at a lot of people who are farming, there's going to be a lot of people 20 years from now who won't be farming. I myself can only take on so much without getting overwhelmed with debt. We're going to have to see corporate farms takeover farming, because there's just not going to be enough young people to do it. (TR5)

Farms are just going to continue to get bigger... It is a shame. And things aren't going to change. (IH2)

The majority of farmers I interviewed were also unsure how anything could be any different. For example, as one farmer put it, "I don't think it will ever be reversed. It's progress, or whatever you want to call it. I don't think our communities will ever be able to improve or grow again based on agriculture" (FV1). Noticing this wide-spread attitude, one established farmer explained to me that, "[Farmers] are sorry the population is decreasing, but they don't see it as a fixable problem (FV3)." Those interviewed did not seem to recognize any human

involvement in farmland consolidation. They were, therefore, unsure where to place responsibility. More than that, those interviewed defended deregulation, market liberalization, and individualism, at all costs. One farmer, for example, said:

It's obvious that only the biggest enterprises are going to get this land. How are we going to get in the way of that without over-regulating? Because philosophically, we don't like regulation. We're rural people. (FV3)

Ultimately, most farmers I spoke to perceived the consolidation of farmland as a market problem. And when really pressed for potential solutions, farmers could only come up with market solutions, hoping for improved commodity prices, changing interest rates, or a recession. This was reflected in a number of the interviews, as follows:

But we need the price of grain to go up considerably. And we need the price of everything else to go down, which is not going to happen. Nothing is going to go down. So, it won't change a lot. Farms will just get bigger and bigger and all we'll have is corporate farms...What we need to change is the price of the grain. We're not getting as much for wheat now as we were when we first started farming... We're growing more, producing more, but don't get as much for it. (FV9)

I think what we need is a recession or a depression to straighten this out (TR3).

But now that they're here, I don't know what it would take for it to shift. It would take a significant downturn for them to shift their investments away from farmland. But that wouldn't necessarily be good for me, because my income is dependent on farming. So, a downturn in farming would adversely affect my bottom line, so I kind of hope that doesn't happen. (TR4)

For nearly a century, the trend towards fewer and larger farms in Saskatchewan has been intensifying and evolving. And though farmland consolidation is creating additional challenges for farmers and contributing to the erosion of rural communities and the environment, there is a powerful and common-sense belief that consolidation is unfortunately necessary and inevitable.

### **3.4 Land as a Place for Agricultural Production**

Interviews with farmers demonstrate that as farmland is consolidated into the hands of fewer individuals, land and its meanings are being reduced, homogenized, and deterritorialized. Whereas farmland was once something which provided livelihoods for many Saskatchewan residents and farming was a "way of life," fewer people continue to be directly connected to and supported by agricultural land. "They call it progress, but we don't see it as progress, because we're losing our way of life. And there's gotta be something to be said for that, you know,"



expressed a retired female farmer (FV4). Instead of being an intricate part of people's identities, a livelihood to preserve for future generations, and something which supports ecological diversity, land and its many meanings are being superseded by land as a place only for agriculture, whose treatment and use, is seen through the lens of its agricultural productivity, efficiency of use, and ultimately, dollars and cents.

Though farmers are aware of land's many values, increasingly they are being pushed to reorient their relationship with land to prioritize land's immediate economic value. That means acquiring more land and expanding their agricultural production to improve their efficiencies and achieve economies of scale. When unable to expand, farmers are intensifying their agricultural production by demolishing all remaining features of farmland which are perceived to take away from land's productive value. Land is being cleared of bush and drained of water which support wildlife and biodiversity, pasture land is being broken-up and turned into crop land, and abandoned farmyards where families once lived are being flattened to make more agricultural land available. Farmland consolidation, while allowing some farmers to continue farming, is also disproportionately harming smaller-scale farmers by creating further inequality among farmers and making access to land for smaller-scale producers more difficult and essentially impossible to afford.

While consolidating farmland and treating it more exclusively as a place for agricultural production is considered a necessity, it has come at a high social and ecological cost. Many farmers are being squeezed out of farming, the social and economic foundations of rural communities are eroding due to depopulation, and the local environment is being degraded to prioritize maximum agricultural productivity and efficiency, above all else. Though seen as unfortunate, farmers largely characterise this shift as blameless, inevitable, and irreversible, demonstrating the extent to which neoliberal logics have become internalized by Saskatchewan farmers. More than that, the deterritorialization of farmland caused by farmland consolidation has sent the message to farmers that only large-scale farmers are suited to control land and benefit from it, in many ways legitimizing the decline of the family farm. In the context of increasing costs and reliance on inputs, higher debt loads, declining commodity prices, increasing land values, and smaller margins, treating land as a cost of production and as a commodity whose consolidation has allowed for economies of scale, has come to be viewed as a

legitimate path to continued viability and consolidation and its societal and environmental consequences a simple and unfortunate inevitability.

## CHAPTER 4: THE FINANCIALIZATION OF FARMLAND IN SASKATCHEWAN

*Some people see [land] as an investment and what it really is, is something which sustains our life (IH5).*

A second significant shift in land tenure raised by farmers concerns the changing characteristics and motivations of those who own Saskatchewan farmland. For generations now, much of Saskatchewan's farmland has been owned and operated by local farmers. As one farmer put it, "It used to be, everyone of those squares [quarter sections on an RM map] had a house on it and every section had somebody that was farming it" (IH5). But today, farmers explain that farmland in Saskatchewan is increasingly owned by non-farmers who are absent from the land and communities in which their farmland is located. Research participants believe that these non-farmer landowners are motivated by the financial benefits rather than for the productive value associated with farmland ownership and farming. While this trend is commonly referred to as the financialization of farmland, research participants characterized this trend as increasing "outside" land ownership. The following chapter takes a closer look at the nature of outside farmland ownership, as characterized by farmers, and the key financially-motivated actors in farmland ownership in Saskatchewan. By positioning this trend within the framework of financialization as well as within a broader understanding of conceptual shifts in land, we see that through increased outside land ownership, characterized by absence, economic and social detachment, and financial motives, land and its meanings are being reduced to that of an investment, further transforming how land is being considered and used.

### **4.1 Absence, Socio-Economic Detachment, and Financial Motivations: The Nature of Outside Farmland Ownership**

As the following quotes demonstrate, research participants believe that "outsiders" are increasingly purchasing land in their local areas:

People coming in from outside the province to buy... that's the biggest thing. (FV4)

There's been investors from outside the area that have invested in blocks of land. (TR1)

We have outsiders comin' in and buying land. (TR10)

A lot of out-of-province came in and bought land. (FV5)

More outside ag investment, which makes it tough to compete with that as a producer. For instance, there's an investment company and the Ontario teachers' pension fund or whatever. (IH5)

According to farmers, outsiders differ from local, owner-operators in several ways. One farmer explained it like this:

Basically, everyone that owns land here, farms here, and lives here, they're part of the community. They buy their groceries locally; they buy their crop inputs relatively locally. So, I consider that local. But once you have somebody who comes in from outside, all of sudden, you know, they're not necessarily buying anything here...(IH5)

For research participants, outsiders are those who do not reside locally—what many call “absentee landowners.” Outside farmland owners may reside at varying distances from the land they own; they may live out-of-province, for example, or as near as the ambiguously-defined “out-of-area.” Because outside landowners do not live locally, they often do not have strong connections to the communities in which their land is located. Outside landowners are seldom known to the residents of local communities at all, sometimes purchasing farmland they have never physically seen. Ted Cawkwell, a prominent real estate agent in Saskatchewan, says that his team completes most farmland sales without physically showing the land to its purchaser. According to him, only 20% of their farmland listings require showings and these are typically parcels of farmland with houses and buildings (Farms.com, 2020). In each of the four RM offices I visited, administrators told me that they have farmland owners they have never met (G3; TR1; FV7; IH1). Here, several farmers and RM administrators talk about some of the landowners in their areas whom they do not know:

I have landowners that send their tax payments in, but I've never met them. I have landowners right out to the coast. (FV7)

There are landowners in this RM that I have never met in 8 years and those are the investors. (G3)

There's a numbered company in Ontario that bought a bunch of land here. I have no idea who owns it or nothing... Another one of my neighbors sold land to an investor group and I said, “well who bought it?” “Don't know, never met him.” (IH4)

Very rarely you ever meet face to face with any of [the investors]. In fact, some of the land auctions I've been at, they either bid online, or they're on the telephone with the auction companies, so you really never have the opportunity to meet the people who are buying the land. (G4)

Though outside landowners do not reside locally, their tenants, however, often do, as this farmer explained:

Typically, when investment money bought the land, investment funds, or corporations, whatever you want to call them, they rent it out for a profit; and they rent back to, of course, the local landowners. (G4)

Yet, as outside landowners acquire larger chunks of land across the province, farmers are seeing that this farmland is not always being rented back to local farmers. One established farmer explained that when:

someone from far away buys [land] it can have more of a negative impact because not only is the landlord not present, the tenant isn't present either. Let's say their farm is in Manitoba. They'll truck the equipment over and then take it back. But Manitoba will still be their home base. So that's starting to become more common, as well. (IH7)

When family farmers are looking for land to rent or purchase, the location of land is one of the most important factors: "Proximity is important to us. We don't want to be travelling a lot of miles to get to pieces of land," explained a research participant (IH6). "We haven't chased far out of our area. We don't go more than 8 or 9 miles to farm our land base," explained another (TR2). But outside landowners are not constrained by geography in the same ways as owner-operators and are willing to purchase land almost anywhere. As larger chunks of land are being consolidated by absent, financially-motivated land owners, farmers have been more willing to travel out of, what farmers call, their "traditional areas" to establish second farms (Chapter 3), as this farmer pointed out:

... Now [investors] have a chunk, so it makes it much more intriguing for somebody out-of-the-area because they can pick up a 4-section block, where before it used to be that it was spread out. Lots of people aren't going to drive two hours out of their way to rent a half section. But if you can pick up 5 sections, it makes the trip worth it. So, you're competing with more outside influence. (IH5)

Not only are out-of-area farmers enticed into far-off regions by larger chunks of land, but research participants indicated that investors are also actively bringing in out-of-area farmers to far-off regions:

[This investor] had a relationship with a fairly big farm from the out of area. Now because of that relationship, they've had that investment company ask that farmer if they'd be interested in coming to this area to farm that land. So, it wasn't local renters. It was farms from completely out-of-the-area that have expanded in non-traditional ways, I guess you would say, by coming to the area to farm. (TR2)

In addition to being physically absent from the land they own, outside landowners, and increasingly their tenants, are socially and economically detached from the rural communities in which their land is located. As these farmers explained:

When landowners don't live here, they aren't involved in the community. (IH7)

If you're not living in the community, you don't have any vested interest in the community. You really don't care. (G2)

If investors are coming in, you're not going to have that foot traffic going in supporting their activities. (G3)

Outside landowners are also perceived to not have the same long-standing connection to farmland that many local, owner-operators have. Because of this, outside landowners are perceived to be primarily motivated by the financial returns associated with owning farmland, including rents and the appreciation of land over time. As two farmers explained:

I wouldn't really want to part with our land, because my dad farmed it, my grandfather farmed it. These guys are in a different position. It's just solely an investment. (G4)

Basically, my feeling is, when you don't live on the land and you have no attachment, the almighty dollar is what counts. (IH4)

Financial motives in farmland ownership are an important part of what underpins the financialization of farmland. And what research participants' responses suggest is that outside land ownership is inherently financially-motivated because outside landowners are absent and therefore, non-farming. As previously mentioned, farmers' observance of increased outside land ownership is the language they use to describe the increasing financialization of farmland. Throughout this chapter, it will become clearer how increasing outside farmland ownership and its impacts can be understood as part of what others conceptualize as the financialization of

farmland. The following subsection introduces key categories of outside landowners who are increasing their share of land in the four RMs examined, according to interviewees.

#### 4.2 Investors, Small-scale Investors, and Grandkids: Key Outside Landowners

Research participants labelled many different types of landowners, “outsiders”. One major type of outside landowner discussed by farmers was the investor landowner. When I asked one farmer to clarify what he meant by “outside investors,” he said:

There’s the Chinese. So foreign investors... And then there’s the pension funds and those things that are buying land. That’s happening. And then you just have oil companies. For instance, there’s one group and they’re great guys. But they’ve made their business in the oil business [in Alberta] and they’re looking for something to diversify their money with so they’ve bought land and they were renting the land.  
(IH5)

There are many different investors and types of investors in the RMs in which I conducted research. Recently, Desmarais et al.’s (2017) work on the extent of investor land ownership in Saskatchewan concluded that the acquisition of farmland by investors increased sixteen-fold between 2002 and 2014, amounting to 837,019 acres. The study pointed to investors, including Andjelic Land Inc. and the CPPIB as among the largest landowners and investor landowners in the province. With access to more recent land titles data, I was able to update their findings concerning the largest farmland investors in Saskatchewan. Figure 10 depicts the recent changes in farmland ownership by large-scale investors present in the RMs I examined.

**Figure 10: Major Investors 2014 – 2018**

Title Holders	Area in Acres 2014	Area in Acres 2018
ANDJELIC LAND INC. and Robert Andjelic	160,858	198,987
101138678 SASKATCHEWAN LTD.*	113,867	157,008
HCI VENTURES LTD.	113,723	40,469
Cor Van Raay; VAN RAA Y LAND INC.	33,730	32,923
Agcapita GP	29,228	62,282
AVENUE LIVING AGRICULTURAL LAND GP LTD	**	19,381

Source: Saskatchewan Land Titles Registry 2014 and 2018

\* 101138678 SASKATCHEWAN LTD. is the CPPIB

\*\* not recorded in 2014

Figure 11 presents the total acres and proportion of land owned by large-scale investors in the same RMs.

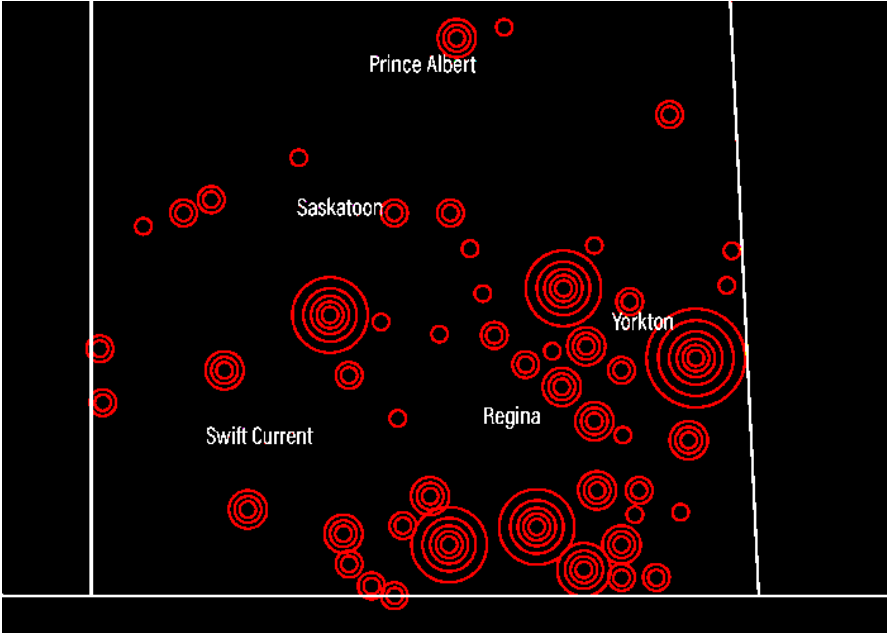
**Figure 11: Investor Acres by RM, 2018**

RM	Total acres of farmland owned by investor landowners*	Proportion of farmland owned by investors within the RM
Torch River	26,185	1.10%
Griffin	15,173	5.22%
Indian Head	18,373	7.55%
Fertile Valley	20,408	8.36%

Source: Calculated using the Land Titles Registry, 2018  
 \*Acres identified

Andjelic Land Inc., Saskatchewan’s largest landowner and investor landowner owned land in three out of the four RMs in which I conducted research (Torch River, Indian Head, and Griffin). Below is a map showing the extent and geographical distribution Andjelic Land’s lease holdings across Saskatchewan, as displayed on their webpage in 2017 (Figure 12).<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 12: Andjelic Land Lease Holdings Across Saskatchewan**



Source: Andjelic Land (2017a), “Lease Holdings,” <https://andjelic.ca/about#team> (Accessed on March 15, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Andjelic Land Inc.’s farmland holdings may have changed since I located this map in 2018.



In addition to these larger-scale investors owning a greater proportion of land, research participants explained that small-scale investors (non-farmers with no connection to the area who have purchased only a parcel or two of land to rent to farmers) are also increasing their share of farmland:

We rent from the Canadian Pension Plan and then other investors of varying sizes and number of acres. (IH7)

I don't know if you ever heard of that Andjelic Group. I rent 5 quarters from them. And then I rent from smaller guys that are from Alberta, also. I rent from 2 other people that have land here and live in Alberta. (TR9)

We do rent from a couple of guys who are more investor-type people. One lives in Calgary and the other lives in Ottawa right now. (G1)

From an ownership perspective, yeah, we are renting a block of land from a Calgary investment firm and that's never happened before. (G4)

Recognizing that regular people are increasingly purchasing farmland as part of their personal investment strategy is an important contribution to our understanding of the financialization of farmland in Saskatchewan. These findings also speak to the strengths of mixed-methods research, since the significance of small-scale investor land ownership only became apparent when speaking to farmers directly.

A common category of outsiders raised by research participants were residents of the neighboring province of Alberta. While a number of large-scale investor landowners are currently based in Alberta (Andjelic Land, AG Capita, HCI, and Avenue Living), farmers also noted that they, themselves, are increasingly renting land from smaller-scale investors, who also reside in Alberta (G4; G1; TR9; F2; G2). Though we cannot say definitively how much Saskatchewan land is owned by Albertans, annual reports published by the FLSB provide some sense of how much land has recently been retitled to those from outside of Saskatchewan following the liberalization of farmland ownership regulations in 2002. According to the FLSB, from 2001-2009, roughly 6 -7% of all Saskatchewan acres transferred each year were transferred to Canadians with a non-Saskatchewan addresses (Farmland Security Board, 2001-2002; 2003; 2004-2005; 2008-2009). This data, however, is not necessarily an indication of new ownership,

since land titles are often transferred or retitled within the same farming operation.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, the data provides some insight into the extent to which the ownership of Saskatchewan land was being retitled to those out-of-province for a brief period.<sup>10</sup>

Those interviewed also indicated that Albertan interest in Saskatchewan farmland likely exceeds the extent to which Saskatchewan land has already been transferred to Albertans. For instance, one farmer and ex-politician explained:

We lobbied long and hard on the community-pastures, both federal and provincial and we ended up with an agreement that only the patrons could buy the pasture. The minister said that an investor from Alberta said he wanted to buy them all which would have been 3.5 million acres of federal pastures... over a half a billion dollars. And he pretty proudly had the money. To the government's credit, they said no, because we want to support our patrons, so the agreement was only the patrons could buy the pasture. (IH4)

Although this farmer is referring to a wealthy Albertan's interest in Saskatchewan pasture land, the story speaks to the extent to which Saskatchewan farmers have been confronted by out-of-province wealth and interest in Saskatchewan farmland. Another farmer explained that he has felt Albertan interest in Saskatchewan farmland on social media:

So, somebody just asked me on Twitter, "What are your land values?" And this was a tweet from Alberta and a lot of us chimed in and I had some of the lowest numbers and thankfully some other guys chimed in, because I don't want to attract people to the area. (G5)

As previously seen (and an issue that I observed throughout my research), farmers are concerned over what they perceive to be increasing foreign land ownership, and particularly Chinese farmland ownership (IH3; IH5; G4; TR2; TR3; G2). This perception has provoked anxiety and fear among farmers and, at times, has resulted in some reactionary, exclusionary, and xenophobic attitudes. Legally, in Saskatchewan, only Canadian residents and 100% Canadian-owned entities are allowed to own more than 10 acres of Saskatchewan farmland (Government of Saskatchewan, 2015). Yet some research participants were still unaware of this restriction. Given Saskatchewan's land ownership regulations, it must be recognized that farmers'

---

<sup>9</sup> The data includes title changes such as registrations of joint ownership, corporate name changes and interim transfers to estates. Therefore, the total transfers do not equate to "new ownership" but reflect "title activity".

<sup>10</sup> Following the 2008-2009 annual report, this data was no longer published by the FLSB

discussions regarding “foreign ownership” are probably mis-labelled, as this farmer explained: “You had small farms or medium farm[er]s who were all upset about foreign ownership. Well it turned out, they’re from Calgary, they’re not foreign. They may be Chinese, but they’re from Calgary. Get over it” (FV3).

Chinese-Canadian landowners are, indeed, purchasing small amounts of land in Saskatchewan like other small-scale investors. Some Chinese families have also recently arrived to Saskatchewan from China to become Canadian citizens and farm in rural areas. A few of these families have been featured on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), documentary, “My Farmland,” broadcasted nationally in 2019, likely feeding into this concern that “Chinese ownership” of Saskatchewan land is occurring. Non-Canadians can also legally apply to farm in Saskatchewan and become citizens through the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP). According to most recent data, Americans were the largest group of immigrant farmers coming to Saskatchewan to farm, constituting 20.1% of all immigrant farmers in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2018). This data seems to suggest that research participants’ claims and concerns are exaggerated or misplaced.

The third category of outside landowner that appears to be increasing in Saskatchewan are the descendants of retired or deceased farmers who have inherited farmland. Though these landowners are not necessarily purchasing land, they are acquiring a larger share of Saskatchewan land by retaining and renting-out farmland that has been transferred to them. Though there is no supplemental data to suggest to what extent this is occurring in Saskatchewan, most research participants, from all four RMs, explained that they rented land from those who have inherited farmland from their families, but do not farm themselves. Below, several farmers talk about this trend:

The reason I call [a few of my landlords] investors is because they’ve never lived here, but they had family that lived here and farmed and when that uncle passed, they inherited the land. It’s only one quarter each so it’s not like they’re big corporations taking up the whole RM. But their understanding on how much they should be making on that land is not reasonable in a farming context. (G1)

We rent from a variety of people like local neighbors. And that would probably still constitute the majority of the acres. And you know, a lot of them, maybe aren’t neighbors anymore, because it could be their kids now that own the land. So, the dynamic is changing as the original owners pass on and then we are now working with their kids. (IH7)

And there are some of that where, you know, the family retires, they move on or pass on, and the son or daughter or even a grandchild whose lived in Vancouver their whole life and haven't been back to the farm since Christmas of 1980 or whatever. [They just say] "You're grandpas' neighbor and you've always been there and we'll just rent it to you." (IH5)

According to many of the farmers I interviewed, these "outsiders" (investors, small-scale investors, and grandkids) are increasing their share of Saskatchewan farmland.

### **4.3 Gains and Losses**

Interviews with farmers indicate that increased outside land ownership has brought about significant changes to parts of rural Saskatchewan, changing how farmland is being considered, used, and how the benefits of farmland ownership are being distributed. In many ways, increased outside land ownership or the financialization of farmland is further contributing to farmland consolidation and its resulting consequences. These consequences include: the erosion of rural communities, farmland concentration, and inequality among farmers. But just like farmland consolidation, the effects of outside land ownership are not clear-cut, with some farmers welcoming and even facilitating the entrance of outside landowners under certain conditions. The following subsection explores the outcomes associated with increased outside land ownership and demonstrates that while benefitting the few, outside land ownership is further reducing land to an investment, creating further challenges for family farmers, rural communities, and the environment.

Local land ownership is important to local owner-operators, for several reasons. As previously discussed in Chapter 3, the physical presence of farmland owners is crucial to the survival of rural communities. When farmland is owned and farmed by a family that lives in the area, this family spends time, energy, and earnings in their local communities. But when landowners do not live locally, just as with farmland consolidation, there are fewer residents to sustain local services and social activities. One farmer from the RM of Griffin explained:

When I was alluding to investors owning land, we rent land from people who have been removed from farming for 30-40 years and they live in [the nearby city] or Alberta and they don't want to sell their land, because it was in their family for a generation or two and that's fine, but we don't have those people in our local community... We've seen everything from local schools close to rec centres that are having trouble staying open. (G4)

Local family farmers say that the increase of outside landowners is problematic, because absent landowners (and their tenants from out-of-area) do not contribute sufficiently to the local economy. Two farmers from different RMs voiced their concerns as follows:

They don't live here. They work here and [then] they're gone kind of thing. So, of course, that's harder on your stores. It's good for your store in the summer time for a few months, but then they're gone... They buy their fuel bulk, they don't buy it at our local co-op. A lot of that stuff is all bought in bulk because they're big and they get their... everything in bulk. (FV8)

Once you have somebody who comes in from outside, if all of sudden, you know, somebody that say farms in Red Deere and they buy a chunk here. They'll get custom people to farm it. They're not necessarily buying anything here... their car at the local car dealership. Their fertilizer may or may not come from around here. It may be where they get the best deal or it might even come from where they're from. So, it doesn't help the local communities, I don't think. (IH5)

Interviewees expressed that they believe that local, owner-operators of farmland are more committed to the socio-economic wellbeing of rural communities, because their own wellbeing is so intertwined with the wellbeing of their communities. When I asked about what difference it makes when land is bought by an investor, an absentee landlord, or a local farmer in their communities, farmers explained that they believed that local land ownership is best:

I'd personally like to see some local buy it or purchase it that's going to contribute to our community and live here and send their kids to school here. (IH6)

If someone local buys it, then that person is still in the community. That person will be at the curling rink, they'll be shopping locally. (G2)

In addition to rural depopulation and its impacts, farmers stated that outside land ownership has the added consequence of farmland rental profits leaving the local community, thereby changing the ways in which the benefits of farmland ownership are circulated. In the words of one farmer:

That money doesn't stay in the province or the RM. The rental money from that land, it leaves with investor groups... There's other land that's owned from people in Germany and stuff like that... and there's no benefit to the local economy from that, that I can see. (IH3)

Increased outside land ownership, according to farmers, has also dramatically changed the local land market. One farmer from the RM of Torch River explained that:

Before it was when land came up for sale or rent, for that matter, you know, it was mostly neighbors within 20 miles that you were competing against. Whereas now,

there's a disruptor from right out of the area... or right out of the country at times, that have bought land. ... So, I guess that would be the biggest change. When land comes available now, it's not your traditional people buying it. (TR2)

"It's made the land market more national versus regional," remarked another farmer (G5); and this has brought increased challenges for local farmers, as this farmer explained:

Now, it would be very difficult to expand. Not like what it used to be. You have investors buying land that maybe don't even live in this country or never had dirt under their fingernails. It's a different world now. And consequentially for the local farmers, it makes it difficult for families and sons and daughters to expand, because you have the competition out there. (TR6)

In the past, when the local land market was more regional, in the words of one research participant, it meant that everyone was:

on the same playing field. Everybody in this area was growing basically the same yield in canola, and selling it for the same dollar, and had the same land costs, so everybody... we were on the same playing field. (IH5)

Whereas today, farmers explained that due to the entry of outsiders, local farmers are now competing with those who have greater access to capital. Many farmers I interviewed felt this competition to be "unfair". While what constituted "unfair competition" differed from farmer to farmer, many argued that competing with what they perceived to be the "government," pension plans, and wealthy corporations, was particularly "unfair," as the following quotes demonstrate:

I don't think it's fair that I'm trying to compete to buy land with the Ontario government. That's not a level playing field when you're competing with. (IH5)

I'm an active farmer so I wasn't really happy with the idea of opening it up to foreign ownership or the investment funds where anybody in the cities can put money in and they'll just go out and they can buy large tracts of land. It's just like an oil company generating revenue to drill. They generate revenue to buy large tracts of land and it's pretty tough to compete with that. (G4)

Now . . . Canada Pension Plan owns, how many thousand acres. Canada Pension Plan doesn't need to own land in Saskatchewan, but they do. And there's different people who are farming but have investors that are buying things for them. And it's pretty hard to compete with them if you're just a regular guy trying to farm. (G2)

The laws of the land here are allowing outside money to compete with family farms or a company farm or whatever. Now we're competing with Chinese money, oil money. (TR3)

While some of these claims regarding foreign competition are not accurate, the concern is still important: farmers believe that outside landowners with greater access to capital have been making it more difficult for local, family farmers to afford and access land.

Farmers claim that land has become increasingly unaffordable as a result of increased competition for land from outside (absent, non-farmer, financially-motivated) interests:

[Investors have] inflated the price of land around. What it's really done is inflated the poor-quality land which in turn drives the price of good land up. Cause they'll buy anything. They'll pay large dollars for land that's not very good or poor quality. So, then it's a scale. Local people know the value of land and the people around do, so the ones that are in the area they don't pay that, but it drives up the price of the land beside it. (TR10)

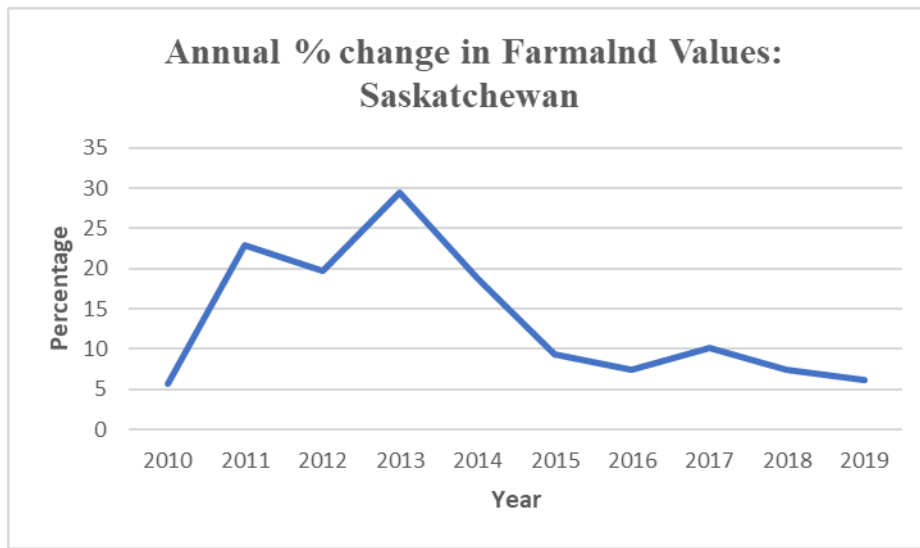
In addition to increased competition, farmers believe that the price of land has shot up due to investors' perceived lack of farming knowledge and their "bottomless pockets" (TR6) which has allowed them to overpay for land. In the words of two research participants:

You'll always have competition, but when you have outside competition comin' in without having the knowledge to the land values, 'cause assessment isn't always the true meaning of the land. So, if you have outsiders comin' in and buying land in the middle of winter... it's the poorest quality of land around, but the assessed value shows that it's not that bad of ground, but it's coming in way over price. (TR10)

They have ample money and ample backing so they're not really concerned if they're buying it as an investment, it doesn't matter if the land price was at \$2500 an acre... here's \$3000. So now all of a sudden, the bar just got raised. So, if one guy just sold for \$3,000, the other guy isn't going to sell for \$2,000. It used to be a very gradual increase. I found the rents were gradual. The dollars per acre, were gradual. And they jumped really fast. There was no... in some cases, it was like \$2,000 acres last year, and now in good dirt were in the \$3,500 an acre, which I guess compared to some places, it's still cheap, but you still gotta pay for it. (IH5)

Indeed, there is evidence to substantiate what farmers are saying. In Saskatchewan, the value of land has consistently been increasing with the most pronounced increases occurring between 2011 and 2015 (Farm Credit Canada, 2020a). Today, the price of land in Saskatchewan continues to increase, but at a lower rate (Figure 13).

**Figure 13: Annual % change in Farmland Values: Saskatchewan**



Source: Farm Credit Canada (2020b), “2019 FCC Farmland Values Report.” <https://www.fcc-fac.ca/fcc/resources/2019-farmland-values-report-e.pdf>.

According to an examination of farmland transactions in Saskatchewan between 2003 and 2014, investors paid more per acre for farmland than other buyers in high-activity regions of the province. In 2009, for example, investors paid, on average, \$892/acre, while non-investors paid \$507/acre. And in 2012, the average price paid by investors was nearly double the amount that was paid by non-investors (Magnan & Sunley, 2017).

With the value of farmland increasing steadily in recent years, land has very quickly doubled and even tripled in value, as an RM administrator explained to me:

Every four years SAMA [Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency] does a revaluation. They did it in 2017 and at that time, we got all new values and a lot of my assessments doubled in those four years... But I’ve found even after a year of having the new values, people are still paying 1.4 times this value for a piece of land. (FV7)

A younger farmer, who continues to hold an off-farm job shared that:

It’s sickening to look at the assessed value of land. I think this quarter right here [points to quarter on map] which is the quarter that my mom and dad own with my brother... And it’s listed at just over \$100,000... but I think they bought it, not that many years ago, for like half or something like that, maybe even \$30,000. It’s ridiculous. What they paid for it, is what I put for a down payment on this quarter. And to think that, that was purchased. (FV8)



But not all farmers characterized increased outside land ownership as a problem. Different factors including the specific location of a farmer's land and its proximity to land owned by outside landowners, stage of farming career, size of farm, and farming model, all affected the extent to which farmers have been impacted by this shift. One farmer, who has largely been unaffected by increased investor land ownership, told me that:

I would definitely have different views if the investors were buying land in my backyard, I think it would be a little different. If I was trying to expand my farm in those areas, I'm not sure you'd feel the same about it. (IH3)

For example, some farmers, especially those near retirement, are benefitting from increased demand for farmland from outsiders:

When [this large farmer from Alberta] came in and started buying land, it had a huge impact. There was a lot of not really old farmers, but you know, nearing retirement, not seeing other generation taking over that saw that as a great opportunity. (FV1)

[Once the investors were in town], other people, like my Dad or whatever, in the area, they heard what they were paying and there's lots that put their land up too. (FV2)

But active farmers whose net worth has gone up, have not all benefitted in the same way. Here several farmers explain why:

Because I had bought all of that land back then. I paid this much money, but now it makes we worth this much money so on paper, it looks like I have all this money when in reality it's money that I've never actually seen. It makes me look like I'm worth a lot, but I've never actually seen it. (TR5)

We're not worth something until we leave and you know I'm not there yet. I don't plan on selling my farm. (FV6)

My accountant I have, we're talking about if we were to ever sell land, and talking about how land values have gone way up. And he said, "Well it doesn't matter to you. I tease you that you wouldn't be smart enough to sell land at whatever price." That's because our farm, we're 4<sup>th</sup> heading on 5<sup>th</sup> generation. I want to farm for a while, hopefully some of the kids want to. So, the way I look at it is, more of a livelihood, not what it's worth if I sold it. (G4)

The majority of farmers I spoke with felt that because of the rising price of land, few could afford land anymore. "It's just gone up. Young guys and established guys just can't afford to buy it," explained an established farmer (FV9). Some farmers even felt that the value of land has now increased beyond its productive capacity. Here, three farmers elaborate:

10-12 years ago, we had a corporate farm start up in this area and contrary to what propaganda that they put out as to why they were doing what they were doing, they only had one goal in mind and that was to flip the land and make a profit. It certainly hasn't done anything for the local community or the local farmers because ... Yes, they've employed a few people, but they've certainly driven up the price of land, probably past the economic threshold where the land will actually pay for itself. (TR3)

And now, you can't make your payments with what that land produces, in this area. You couldn't feed cows or grow a grain crop that well in this area to pay for a \$240,000 piece of land. Something else has to help pay for that land. The land is not going to make the payments on its own. (G1)

The investment companies have increased land values to the point where the land is going to take a long time to pay for itself. And how long should an acre take to pay for itself? What is that number? (TR3)

At current land prices, one farmer emphasized that if anything were to change, for example: drops in commodity prices, interest rate increases, or poor weather, farmers would not be able to make payments on land (TR4). Purchasing land at current prices has therefore, become very risky for smaller, family farms with farmers remaining cautious if not refraining from purchasing land entirely. "It's getting more and more difficult to justify the price that land is being sold for," confessed a farmer (TR4). Another farmer expanded on this point:

So being a little older, I'm probably a little more cautious. I've borrowed money and I know what it's like when you can't make payments. Nobody loves you. Banks treat you like it's your problem... I'm not going to buy. Why would I jeopardize what we've struggled to create? Accumulating more debt isn't going to make me enough. No matter how you pencil it in, it isn't going to make enough... And any young farmer, even for me, I can't justify buying land. Who can justify today's price for land with what you gotta' put in? (FV6)

In response to the rapid increase in land prices, farmers are adapting in several ways. One strategy, as the following quotes demonstrate, has been to approach investors directly, asking them to purchase land with the condition that the farmer will rent it back for a guaranteed price for a certain number of years, in what is called a "conditional purchase":

We bid what we thought was a fair bid [for some land]. Kind of in the range that land was selling for. Another farmer bid on it, but was bidding for an investment company. The investment company bought it and they were the high bidder. So, this farmer he made a deal with them. I don't know exact numbers, but like, fairly high rent and he pay the taxes. (TR3)

They didn't have the capital to expand as fast as they wanted to... [so they] had a deal [with an investor] to buy land and rent from them. (TR4)

Farmers are also offering to directly sell their land to investors so that they can pay off their debts and continue to farm by leasing the same land back from investors. Below, three farmers from various RMs described this phenomenon happening in their area:

There's certainly been some people in bad financial shape who have sold to investors. There's been people who are farming who have sold some of their land to investment corps, negotiating a lease agreement to rent it, back, and they're still farming it. (G4)

Well this guy... he was going through a divorce, had to write his wife a big cheque, sold the land [to investors] and committed to rent it for so many years as part of the sale. (G5)

So, they took the land that they did have and they sold it to the investor company to pay for the mistakes that they made along the way. So, now they're not farming for themselves anymore. They're managing it for the corporation. So, you're seeing a lot of that transition take place too. (TR10)

These stories shared by farmers are especially important as they speak to the constraints under which farmers are operating. Not only is outside land ownership causing challenges for farmers, but selling to outside landowners has also become the only solution for farmers who are struggling in the current agricultural climate.

Another way that farmers are adapting to the high price of land is by changing their farming models to include a higher proportion of rented land, as these two farmers explained:

And a lot of people rent that land, because they want to expand their farms and they're not able to buy that land. (GV4)

Where now there's the attitude where a lot of younger farmers are trying to rent land as much as they can, because right now, your rental payments per acre are a lot less than payments for land ownership, which is getting quite high. So, there's a tendency for a certain amount of people looking for land to rent as opposed to buying—much more economical, cheaper. (TR6)

Indeed, the renting of farmland in Saskatchewan is increasing (Figure 14). Between 2011 and 2016, the amount of farmland rented in Saskatchewan rose by 15.8% to 17 million acres (Statistics Canada, 2017a). During this same period, land leased from governments decreased by roughly 500,000 acres, while land rented or leased from “others” increased by 1.7 million acres. According to Statistics Canada (2017a), Saskatchewan's increase in acres rented was the largest

increase in Canada and accounted for almost three-quarters of the gain in rented agricultural land at the national level. Currently, over 40% of Saskatchewan’s total farm area is rented as opposed to owned and farmed by owner-operators.

**Figure 14: Tenure of land owned, leased, rented in Saskatchewan, 2011-2016**

<b>Land tenure</b>	<b>Unit of measure</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2016</b>
Total farm area	Number of farms reporting	36,952	34,523
	Acres	61,628,148	61,585,788
Area owned	Number of farms reporting	35,314	32,353
	Acres	39,620,980	37,876,666
Area leased from governments	Number of farms reporting	6,270	5,333
	Acres	8,170,094	7,520,435
Area rented or leased from others	Number of farms reporting	15,641	15,270
	Acres	14,668,947	16,986,053

Source: Statistics Canada, (2016c), Table 32-10-0407-01 Tenure of land owned, leased, rented, crop-shared, used through other arrangements or used by others.  
<https://doi.org/10.25318/3210040701-eng>.

Though there are a number of complex issues to consider when renting farmland, those interviewed did not necessarily consider renting land to be problematic for their operations, their communities, or for the treatment of farmland. As previously mentioned, renting often helps farmers make payments on their mortgaged land (IH7). “When you’re in growth mode,” explained a farmer, “you need a mix [of both owned and rented land]” (IH7). Not only that, but renting is often considered by farmers to be a “gateway to purchase” (IH7). Renting land helps to build relationships with landlords so that when land does come up for sale, tenants are often the first to know. Most of the farmers I interviewed explained that they gradually acquired their land-base for their farming operations by first renting land from others:

I started farming in 2000. That was my grade 11 year. That was my first crop that was rented land and I continued to rent land for about four years from that period of time long before I was able to purchase my first quarter in about 2004. (TR2)

My first land I rented, then I bought land. The first land I bought in 1978. I bought more in 1979 and throughout the years I guess I probably bought 12 quarter of land. (TR3)

Farmers explained that when good landlord/tenant relationships exist, renting farmland can be a necessary and relatively secure aspect of their operation. These farmers go on to explain that:

It's important to know that rented land is also important too... and we have a first right of refusal written into our [rental] agreements that increase our comfort. (IH7)

Some of [our rental agreements] have been very long-term. Some of them have been 20+ years. We feel very secure with those relationships. If we thought there was a chance of losing it or not being able to buy it at some point, we'd maybe think differently or act differently. In our present situation, we feel like our land base is pretty secure. (TR2)

[My landlord], he stopped farming, but he wasn't ready to sell. He is quite reasonable and he understands how farming in this area works. (G2)

But with outside land ownership, the nature of renting is changing in ways that have made farming more difficult for local owner-operators. Farmers often explained that absent, non-farming, landowners do not understand farming. Furthermore, farmers I interviewed believed that outside landowners often desire a particular return on their investment, resulting in higher and often unreasonable rents for farmers. As one farmer bluntly stated, "[investors] think that there is a lot more money in farming – it's perceived that way" (TR10). Below, farmers from different RMs explain their perspectives on outside landowners and their impact on land rents:

Especially if [investors] don't understand where our markets are at. Sometimes they're maybe willing to pay more or wanting more rent because that investor group wants a turnaround on their investment so they're only willing to rent for x amount of dollars because they want to make 6, 7, 8% on their investment. It's more of a numbers thing. (IH6)

When I say the land rent has gone up quite high, [investors] are the ones that have been paying these astronomical numbers. The numbers that I've heard they're asking for rent are so high that I know what you grow around here and you can't make a living, or make a profit, on what I've heard they're paying for rent. Whether it will continue or not, I don't know. (TR5)

When you rent from these likes Andjelic Corp, they don't know. They don't realize that, right? [All] they look at is the assessment of the land. So, like say 3 years ago or four when SAMA does the reassessment, most of our land values up around home doubled. Some of my land that say was \$119,000 prior is now assessed at \$210-

220,000. So, when that happens, they figure the rent should go up as well. It's the same farmland we farmed the year before. (TR9)

In recent years, there have been several investment companies come in and buy land and it has had somewhat of an impact. Mostly it's on rented. All of a sudden, one of our landlords will be at the coffee shop and say, "I heard this new outfit is willing to pay x amount for dirt. Are you able to make that?" (TR2)

When outside landowners request rents that are deemed too high for local farmers, many farmers have simply refused to enter into an agreement with these landlords. For example,

We've had the opportunities [to rent from investors], but the figures have never made sense. You're not making very much if you're paying too much for rent. (TR4)

I guess there have been other people that have had land that have approached us. I don't necessarily trust them to just continue on year to year. And I kinda just refused to rent from them. (TR5)

But for those farmers surrounded by investors, renting from investors who are charging high rents has become the only option if they wish to continue farming:

It doesn't matter to them [the investors]. The rent just goes up. They kind of got you.... If I can afford to not be renting the land, I won't. The only thing is, it's the logistics. [The land the investor owns] is right there [across from my land]. (TR9)

The high cost of land and rents is not only putting increased pressures on farmers, in some cases, it is forcing farmers to put intense pressure on the environment. "So, when these guys start comin' in and driving the price of your land up higher, it gets to be, there's no money in it hardly," explained a farmer (TR9). The increased cost of land means thinner margins. And again, as discussed in Chapter 3, this farmer explains that there is no room for thinner margins in farming:

Every time you have to spend money on something, it's something else you gotta take out of somewhere else. (IH5)

This cost-price squeeze is also important in the context of rented land. Many farmers explained that renting farmland does not change the way they farm:

You can't [farm rented land differently]. You need each field to be extremely productive. And that means you have to treat it like it needs to be treated. You can't short it because every acre needs to be extremely productive. (IH7)

We farm rented land like we own it. If we see a stone, we'll pick it. We look after it, because someday we might buy it. (TR6)

But when farmland rents rise substantially without commodity price increases, farmers find themselves forced to displace the cost-price squeeze imposed on them, onto their land. Many family farmers have been pushed by increasing rent costs to prioritize short-term economic gains at the expense of the sustainability of their rented land, as these two farmers explain:

[High rent] comes right from your profit. Once your crop yield peaks... its an increasing cost of production... And you need to find a way to re-capture that. (TR10)

[This investor] says that the sustainability of the land is important to him, but when he starts raising the rent up so high, you can't really afford to farm the way you should farm. Like at \$45 dollars an acre, I can run a three-crop rotation. But at \$65 dollars an acre, I won't be able to. When he puts the squeeze on you, can you afford to do it? (TR9)

One of the main strategies farmers are using to recuperate the increased cost of rented land is to tighten their crop rotations to include a higher frequency of more profitable crops. Here, several farmers from different RMs discuss this occurring in their areas:

And these guys... a lot of the guys are doing Canola, Wheat, Canola, Wheat, Canola, Oats... every second crop right. And in my opinion, that's not a good thing right. You should have at least a 3-crop rotation. But this [investor, after increasing my rent]. I don't think I will. I think I'll tighten my rotation. I might do a 3-crop rotation and then a 2-crop rotation. (TR9)

We only grow canola once every four years. Some of the neighbors have shortened it down. They're getting disease and pests or whatever, because they're not good stewards, but they're renting it for \$70 and acre so...(G1)

Like I've heard of some very high rents happening here, like double what rent had been going for in the last 2 or 3 years. And unless you were just growing canola, oats, canola, oats, I don't know what you'd do to be able to afford the rent. (TR5)

Though there is little data on crop rotations in Saskatchewan, one recent small-scale survey conducted by SCIC (DeKay, 2020) shows that crop rotations are increasingly being tightened in parts of Saskatchewan. According to the results of their 2019 survey, which analyzed what crops were grown on 115,000 quarters of land between 2008 and 2015, more than 70% of the northwestern part of Saskatchewan was rotating between wheat and canola and several northwestern producers grew canola on the same field for five years in a row. This is problematic since tight crop rotations leads to increased incidence and severity of diseases and soil depletion.

In sum, the impacts of increased distant land ownership have been mixed, with retiring farmers and outside landowners benefitting most and active farmers having been left with increasing costs of farmland and increased rent. In response, farmers have been pressed to assume more debt, increase their proportion of rented land, or compromise the long-term sustainability of their land for short-term economic gains. Meanwhile, rural communities continue to dwindle as more farmland moves into distant hands.

#### **4.4 Land as an Investment**

More and more, Saskatchewan farmland is being held by financially-motivated, non-farmers living out-of-province or out-of-area. By taking advantage of loosened farmland ownership regulations and an aging farming population, investors, small-scale investors, and non-farming inheritors of land have been increasing their share of farmland ownership in Saskatchewan. Indeed, existing research already indicates that investor land ownership is increasing in Saskatchewan. But as my research indicates, large-scale investor land ownership is only a part the financialization of farmland in Saskatchewan since small-scale investors and non-farming inheritors of land relate to land, rural communities, and the environment in very similar ways as large-scale investors, according to research participants. Though the full extent of this shift is unclear, an examination of farmers' perspectives and supplementary data deepens our understanding of the nature of outside land ownership and how landowners' and farmers' relationships with farmland are changing as a result of farmland owners who are physically absent, socially and economically detached, and financially-motivated.

This chapter has demonstrated that the financialization of farmland is contributing to the further deterritorialization of farmland—the loss of many social, material, ecological, and/or cultural meanings that people take from or associate with the land. As a greater proportion of landowners and tenants reside away from the farmland they own, farmland is decreasingly a place of residence and something which firmly and physically connects people to community. Farmland is becoming more abstract, financially fungible and detached from its local surroundings. Instead of being a primary source of livelihood and financial or social security for owner-operators and their families, land is being leveraged as an additional source of financial income by non-farming investors and grandkids of retired farmers. Because of this, farmers are saying that land is increasingly being treated as an investment.



This shift presents an enormous tension for Saskatchewan farmers since some farmers are welcoming and facilitating outside land ownership, while others are being priced-out or displaced by it. For those faced with the prospect of selling out to outside landowners, they are confronted by the option that farmers would not prefer, but one they feel they must make:

Unfortunately, money really speaks loudly. And some like [investors] they've got lots of money. And eventually, you know, when you've spent your entire life working on a family farm. And there is nobody else to pass it on to. I mean you don't want to give it away either. (FV1)

I like the idea of selling to someone local, so they can expand their family farm as opposed to... but ultimately, we have to take care of ourselves too right. But I would hate to sell to some nameless corporation or I mean they'd have a name. Faceless corporation, I should say. (FV7)

For those continuing to farm in the context of increasing outside land ownership, the insertion of financial logics and actors into the land market, according to interviewees, has driven up the price of land and effectively undermined the family farming model by making access to land more competitive, insecure, and costly. Though farmers say that renting is not inherently problematic, it is becoming more so as a result of financially-motivated land ownership, characterized by the corporate dynamics of faceless relationships and higher rents. Farming is becoming even more precarious for family farmers. Communities and regional economies are eroding and farmers are being forced to make decisions that undermine the ecological sustainability of their land, and ultimately, their operations. Market liberalization and financialization has increased the reach of financial actors and their logics into rural land markets where they can exercise their financial power, contribute to the displacement of land's many social, cultural, and ecological meanings, foster further economic inequality, and effectively entrench to the further consolidation of land in corporate hands.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In this final chapter, I highlight what we now know, what we still do not know, and what questions remain. I discuss how this examination of changing patterns of farmland tenure contributes not only to a better understanding of the specific changes occurring in Saskatchewan, but also to broader discussions of farmland consolidation and the financialization of farmland. I suggest how considering increasing farmland consolidation and financialization through the lens of deterritorialization can help us better recognize and understand the impacts of shifting farmland tenure on farmers, rural communities, and the environment. Lastly, I suggest how we might apply reterritorialization and land sovereignty as a conceptual framework to imagine a new future—a progress for everyone.

### **5.1 What we Know and What Remains to be Known**

Interviews with farmers and analyses of the Agricultural Census and the Saskatchewan Land Titles Registry all indicate that farmland consolidation and the financialization of farmland are increasing in Saskatchewan, just as they are across the globe (International Land Coalition, 2020; White et al., 2012). This research has also illuminated much about the shifting dynamics of the nature of farmland consolidation and the financialization of farmland in Saskatchewan. Contributing to a better understanding of the locally-specific nature of consolidation and financialization helps to improve the measurement and monitoring of these trends so as to better inform policy decisions. These improved understandings may also contribute to broader discussions of the changing land dynamics in other contexts.

Farmland consolidation in Saskatchewan has, thus far, been a process primarily carried out by farmers. Nevertheless, the drivers of farmland consolidation continue to evolve and compound and now include, as in other places (Lawrence and Smith, 2018; van der Ploeg et al., 2015; Sommerville, 2018), large-scale financial actors who have rapidly accumulated large tracts of land. Family farmers are also increasingly working together as larger, multiple household family farms, shifting the ways in which farmers are organizing and relating to farmland. This shifting dynamic requires further analysis and ought to also be examined in relation to farmland consolidation and the concentration of land ownership.

Recently, farmland consolidation has taken a new form in Saskatchewan with family and corporate farms both expanding through additional, and often distant, farm sites—what I have called “second farms” or satellite farms. This trend also warrants further analysis as these second farms often exist at the intersection between farmland consolidation and the financialization of farmland, providing a locus for examining the relations between farmers, financial actors, the changing associations of property and ownership of land.

By exploring the everyday experiences of farmers, this research indicates that, in addition to large-scale investors, other actors are increasingly applying financial logics to farmland ownership. According to farmers, both non-farming individuals who have purchased smaller parcels of farmland as an investment and non-farming inheritors of farmland behave in a similar manner to large-scale investors in terms of how they relate to their land, tenants, and rural communities. These outside landowners, like large-scale and institutional investors, are demanding higher rents from farmers in pursuit of financial returns on the farmland they own but with which they are unlikely to have physical contact or connection beyond their financial interest. These findings, underscore both Fairbairn’s (2015) and Clapp & Isakson’s (2018) assertion that there is a growing acceptance that financial investment in land is morally legitimate and that the current wave of financial expansion is unique. Though smaller-scale investors and non-farming inheritors of farmland do not seem to own large chunks of land individually, interviews with farmers suggest that the aggregate total of land owned by such individuals could be significant. By not including such non-farming landowners into investor landowner calculations, the full extent of the financialization of farmland in Saskatchewan may be significantly under-represented. If data were collected on non-operator and absentee farmland ownership, as is currently done in Iowa for example, we might be able to produce a fuller understanding of the extent of the financialization of farmland in Saskatchewan (again with some limitations). In 2017, the Iowa Farmland Ownership and Tenure Survey, concluded that 20% of the agricultural land in Iowa was owned by non-residents and in 2012, 34% of the state’s agricultural land was owned by someone who said they have never farmed (Zhang & Sawadgo, 2018). Indeed, such information regarding land ownership in Saskatchewan, would certainly help fill some important gaps.

Interviews with farmers also emphasized that financial motives and logics are not the only dimensions of financialization that are negatively impacting farmers, rural communities,

and the environment. According to farmers, absentee landlordism as well as social and economic detachment from rural areas are characteristics that commonly accompany financially-motivated farmland ownership. Though these dimensions of landownership and their impacts have long been recognized (Rasmussen, 1994; Veblen, 1924), they have, at times, been overshadowed by the significance of financial logics within conversations regarding the financialization of farmland. This research has sought to highlight the nature and impact of several important dimensions of financial land ownership since, according to interviewees, absentee landownership and social and economic detached land ownership are equally problematic for farmers, rural communities, and the environment, as are the insertion of financial logics into farmland ownership. This research also contributes to understandings of absentee land ownership to recognize that, importantly, those who rent farmland from absentee landlords are also becoming increasingly absent and detached from local communities and local economies in Saskatchewan as tenants expand their operations through the rental of additional and non-contiguous farm sites.

Lastly, my analysis demonstrates the need for on-going and detailed monitoring of farmland ownership in Saskatchewan so as to better inform land policy development in the province. Currently, data collected on farmland tenure in Saskatchewan is insufficient. Even with land titling data and an agricultural census, the full extent of farmland consolidation, concentration, and the financialization of farmland in Saskatchewan remains unclear. Given what my research indicates about the impacts of these processes (as discussed in the next subsection), the demographic shifts that will soon reshape patterns of land tenure, and the false assumptions that exist, in part, due to a lack of data, there is a strong case for annual monitoring and the sharing of information regarding farmland ownership in Saskatchewan. Additional dimensions of measurement, which ought to be considered, include: the extent of non-farming land ownership, out-of-province absentee land ownership, in-province absentee landownership, and farmland concentration by farmers (and perhaps farming families).

In addition to these key findings regarding the extent and nature of the consolidation and financialization of farmland, I have identified the following consequences of these shifts, as considered through the lens of deterritorialization.

## **5.2 The High Cost of the Consolidation, Financialization, and Deterritorialization of Saskatchewan Farmland**

My research demonstrates that the impacts of the consolidation and financialization of farmland are significant, especially when considering the ways in which land, its use, and relationships to land are changing as a result of these processes. Conceptualizing these shifts and their impacts through the lens of deterritorialization sheds light on the ways in which these processes work to separate farmland from its many cultural, social, and ecological meanings, and supplant strictly productive and financial meanings of farmland in their place, thereby re-making farmland into somewhat of a hyperspace.

With increasing farmland consolidation and financialization particular conceptions of land are being privileged. Similar to other studies, my research demonstrates that large-scale farmers are increasingly prioritizing land's productive value, and financially-motivated land owners focus on land's financial value (Ouma, 2014; Clapp and Isakson, 2018; Fairbairn, 2014; Savills, 2014). Large-scale farmers in particular are being forced to reduce their farmland to a space for agricultural production. And as a result of the increasing dominance and application of financial logics, absent and non-farming landowners are leveraging farmland as an additional source of financial income and treating land as an investment. Though the deterritorialization of farmland is not a new process, it has recently accelerated in Saskatchewan as a result of the liberalization of Saskatchewan's land market and increasing economies of scale coupled with the broader process of financialization that have extended financial logics into the realm of farmland ownership.

In response to the critique that discussions of financialization are often nebulous and overly abstract (Lawrence & Smith; 2018), my research demonstrates that the imposition of financial logics are placing very real and additional pressures on farmers to further divorce farmland from any local (Kearney, 1995) and non-market meanings—that is, to deterritorialize farmland. To accommodate the increasing prioritization of productive and financial objectives, social, cultural, and ecological features are being further removed from land. Farm sites are being flattened, bush is being cleared, and water is being drained to make more acres available for production, improve efficiencies, and to be able to afford higher rents. As these trends continue, farmland's "assemblage" (Li, 2014) of meanings are erased and farmland and its meanings are becoming more homogeneous (Kearney, 1995).

In accordance with others (International Land Coalition, 2020; Li, 2011; Geisler, 2015; White et al., 2012), I found that the consolidation and financialization of farmland in Saskatchewan are contributing to the further concentration of land-based wealth and to greater inequality among farmers. Specifically, for farmers, farmland consolidation and the recent addition of financial logics in farmland ownership, makes access to farmland more competitive, costly, and insecure. Many active farmers continue to be priced-out of farming, livelihoods are being lost, rural communities are eroding, and the environment is increasingly being destroyed in an effort to recoup the cost of increased rents, driven by the need for higher financial returns on land. Although farmers did not explicitly state that “inequality” was undermining their operations and communities, their responses certainly suggested that equality, or in their words, “being on the same playing field,” (IH5) means that farmland is more accessible, more people are farming, and more people are present and able to contribute to and sustain a healthy, rural community. Furthermore, participant responses indicated that inequality, in the form of inequitable access to capital exercised through farmland consolidation and financially-motivated land ownership, allows only a few to benefit. Not only is farmland consolidation and the financialization of farmland a consequence of growing inequality, but they are causing further inequality by consolidating farmland into larger chunks that fewer can afford, thereby excluding more from farmland ownership. Farmland consolidation and the financialization of farmland are, therefore, both self-perpetuating cycles, creating negative feedback loops that undermine the social and ecological functions of local farming landscapes.

In addition to altering the physical and economic sphere, farmland consolidation and financialization are affecting the social and cultural spheres, transforming relationships, identities, and ways of life surrounding land. Farmland consolidation and financialization are creating further distance between society and land, between farming neighbors, as well as between farmers and their landlords. As farmland is consolidated and landowners are increasingly absent from the land they own, fewer and fewer people in Saskatchewan continue to be directly exposed, connected to, and supported by agriculture. Farmland and farming is decreasingly a means of livelihood and a home for Saskatchewan residents. Instead of being an intricate part of people’s identities and ways of life, rural histories and farming identities are being erased as land is being reconfigured to meet landowners’ productive and financial objectives.

Although much has been lost as a result of these shifts in land tenure, McMichael (2008) reminds us that these shifts also represent the dispossession and foreclosure of alternative practices and futures, or what Cresswell (2015) describes as “ways of seeing the world”. As demonstrated in this thesis, the vast majority of participants believe these shifts are inevitable, because they have been inculcated with the idea that the consolidation and the financialization of farmland is what “progress” looks like. Indeed, as others have highlighted (Harvey, 2019) some do benefit from these externally-driven shifts. For example, some farmers who have recently retired as well as those who own larger operations have capitalized on these processes, while still others have acquired farmland with the help of investors. The stage of farming, scale of operation, and proximity to these trends (since farmland consolidation and investor land ownership occur unevenly across Saskatchewan and even within RMs) were the most important factors that correlated with farmers’ perceptions of and experiences with these trends. It must also be noted, that as the number of farmers continue to decline, farmers’ perspectives may also become more homogenized, if those who remain are beneficiaries of these ongoing shifts.

Due to farmland consolidation, increasing financialization, and the resulting deterritorialization of farmland, Saskatchewan is being left with a smaller farming population who have less control over how they farm. Meanwhile socio-economic conditions are deteriorating and communities that provide essential services to rural residents are being eroded. To continue farming, farmers are assuming more debt, relying more heavily on renting land, and displacing the problem of decreasing farming viability on to their environments as a temporary solution. This re-orientation of farmers’ relationship with land, however, is not a permanent solution to the increasing costs and decreasing viability of farming; it is a short-term displacement of the problem which has relieved only a few. Furthermore, treating land this way is compromising the long-term sustainability of the environment and therefore, family farming, as this farmer explained:

Agriculture cannot come down to the almighty dollar. You are going to wreck stuff if that’s all it is. Cause you’re not looking forward. You’re not looking after it to have it for years to come. That’s a use and abuse system. (TR8)

Farmland consolidation, financialization and the resulting deterritorialization of farmland is not only a problem because it is causing challenges for farmers; shifts in land tenure affect us all—the wellbeing of our societies, as a whole, and our environment. And as land shifts into

fewer, absentee, and non-farming hands, our societies and our environments are paying the price so that only a few may benefit.

### **5.3 Final Thoughts: Re-imagining, Reclaiming, and Reterritorializing Farmland**

In Saskatchewan, farmland consolidation and the financialization of farmland are increasing, contributing to the further deterritorialization of farmland. When considered through this lens, we see how these two processes erase farmland's many social, cultural, and ecological meanings and features, thereby transforming Saskatchewan farmland, rural societies, and relationships with farmland. Farmland is not the many things it once was in Saskatchewan. Instead, farmland is becoming strictly a place for agricultural productivity and an investment.

An analysis of the everyday realities of those who are farming in the context of these processes reveals how increased farmland consolidation and investor land ownership displace farming families, create further inequality among farmers, erode rural Saskatchewan, and place additional pressures on the environment. Though the industry, governments and some farmers stress that these shifts and their outcomes are signs of "progress," not all farmers agree. Still, many farmers feel powerless and have come to reluctantly believe these shifts are inevitable, unsure of where to place responsibility. But as Massey (2009) suggests, if feelings of powerlessness are part of the problem, then the issue is partly addressable, because attitudes can shift.

Furthermore, contrary to what research participants believe, patterns of farmland tenure are, in fact, not natural or inevitable. Farmland that has been consolidated and is increasingly treated as a financial asset, like any landscape, is a product of work (Mitchell, 2001), what Pritchard et al. (2012) call artifacts of past decisions, or what I argue, is the direct consequence of deliberate decisions, including the federal government's colonial land policies, the province's liberalization of land ownership regulations, and the lack of protections for farmers against increasing economies of scale and speculation on farmland. In addition to recognizing that these shifts are not inevitable, we must also question the Saskatchewan government's commitment to neoliberal agricultural and land policies that are compromising the wellbeing of the province, its land, and its people. The fact that these shifts have not generated greater opposition speaks to the extent to which neoliberal rationales have been internalized by farmers. Overcoming these



hegemonic, ideological constraints will be a massive challenge, but recognizing that these shifts are the product of work and thus they are not inevitable, is a good place to start.

Though farmers' main reference point for comparing shifts in farmland tenure has been previous iterations of the family farm, defending the lost Saskatchewan family farm is not what this research proposes since these early patterns of land distribution and the harmful narratives that sustain them were and continue to be exclusionary and discriminatory. We ought to reject the insider/outsider framework so often utilized to characterize shifts in farmland tenure and instead of being self-enclosing or in defence of a lost world, we could, as *la Vía Campesina* suggests, strive for a world to gain (McMichael, 2008).

Striving for a world to gain requires re-imagining land and our relationships with land as well as our relationships with one another. It also requires interrogating the stories we have been told about what land is, who should control it, and how it is best (whatever best means) utilized. This is not just a technical question, but also a moral one. In the context of Saskatchewan, it means interrogating the grand narratives of modernism and inevitable progress and recognize them, instead, as powerful tools which, in the case of farmland, have served to justify exploitation and growing displacement of people from land. It involves expanding and democratizing who is part of the conversation, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples who were first dispossessed from the land and continue to be excluded from control over land, and reconsidering land as a rich and complicated interplay of people and the environment –a place. This, according to Cresswell, (2015) will “free us from thinking of [land] as facts and figures” (p.18).

Concerns over the impacts of deterritorialization and the imposition of hegemonic and mostly capitalist conceptions of land have led marginalized groups to challenge this discourse with alternative views. Social movements such as *La Via Campesina* have been working to reframe land as a right, stressing the importance of allowing locally-defined and culturally-appropriate conceptions of land (Borras et al., 2016). Cultural geographers have also described this process as the reterritorialization of place. Reterritorialization, according to Masumi (1992) is a bottom-up, conceptual and material intervention that reconnects society and its surroundings. This concept also has much in common with the notion of land sovereignty which is defined as:

the right of working peoples to have effective access to, use of, and control over land and the benefits of its use and occupation, where land is understood as resource,

territory, and landscape. (Borras & Franco, 2012, p. 600)

Though re-thinking land and what we want it to be may seem abstract, it has proven to be a concrete first step in establishing better policies which support societies and the environment. In Scotland, a land reform movement is currently underway that is rooted in explicit concerns with fairness, equality, and the fulfillment of human rights. The Scottish strategy is to re-think land and re-orient land ownership and its use in ways that are fair, responsible and productive (Scottish Land Commission, 2020a). According to the Scottish Land Commission:

Land ownership is fundamental to realising the opportunities for delivering the healthy and dynamic environments, economies and communities Scotland wants... We are working to modernise the pattern of land ownership in Scotland to address the concentration of power, safeguarding the public interest and improving the accountability of land use decision making. (Scottish Land Commission, 2020b)

Prioritizing livelihoods, communities, and the environment over a commitment to the false promises of neoliberalism is not as radical as one would think. If we look to other countries, we find various examples of policy options that place people before profits. In Hungary and Germany, for example, governments have prevented speculation on farmland by introducing price controls on land sales that far exceed the value of the land. Other examples include: France requires authorization for land sales for farms that exceed a certain size; Scotland has tax disincentives to discourage land hoarding and land concentration; Switzerland introduced legislation whereby farmland can only be purchased by those who farm the land themselves; and France and Belgium enforce rental ceilings (Nyéléni Europe & Central Asia, 2021). Indeed, the consolidation, financialization, and deterritorialization of Saskatchewan farmland are not inevitable processes and sitting back and watching these shifts take place is not the only option. Though farmers are understandably discouraged and constrained by a commitment to deregulation, an alternative future is possible.

Farmers are not society's only gatekeepers of farmland, what it means, and how it should best be used, but they remind us that farmland is more than a place for agricultural production and an investment. They also remind us that treating farmland as such is nothing more than a temporary fix to the larger problem of decreasing farming viability. Already in Saskatchewan, a vast amount of farmland has shifted into the hands of fewer individuals. In the coming years, as over half of Saskatchewan's farming operators retire, an even larger proportion of Saskatchewan

farmland will be changing hands. What happens to this farmland and all farmland will be key to a just, liveable future.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amichev, B., Bentham, M., Cerkowniak, D., Kort, J., Kulshreshtha, S., Laroque, C., Piwowar, J., & Van Rees, K. (2015). Mapping and quantification of planted tree and shrub shelterbelts in Saskatchewan, Canada. *Agroforestry Systems*, 89(1), 49–65.
- Amichev, B. Y., Laroque, C. P., & Van Rees, K. C. J. (2020). Shelterbelt Removals in Saskatchewan, Canada: Implications for Long-Term Carbon Sequestration. *Agroforestry Systems* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10457-020-00484-8>
- Andjelic Land. (2021a). *Available Farmland for Rent*. <https://andjelic.ca/available-land> (Accessed April 15, 2021).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2021b) *Large Package Near Melville*. <https://andjelic.ca/yorkton-package> (Accessed on April 15, 2021)
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2017a). <https://andjelic.ca/about#team> (Accessed on March 15, 2019).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2017b). *Land Practice*. <https://andjelic.ca/land-practice>. (Accessed on March 15, 2019).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2017c). *Our Story*. <https://andjelic.ca/our-story>. (Accessed on March 15, 2019).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2017d). *Premium Sustainable Land*. <https://andjelic.ca/?gclid=CjwKCAjw1KLkBRBZEiwARzyE75I0DLx3KeaSBffT3S>. (Accessed on March 15, 2019).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2017e). *The Andjelic Farmer*. Retrieved from <https://andjelic.ca/partnerships>. (Accessed on March 15, 2019).
- Association of Saskatchewan Realtors. (2015). *Farmland Ownership in Saskatchewan: a presentation to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture*. <http://publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/20/108373-Assoc%20of%20SK%20Realtors.pdf>. (Accessed on March 10, 2019).
- Atkins, E. (2013, December 12). CPPIB buys Saskatchewan farms in \$128-million deal. In *The Globe and Mail*. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/cppib-buys-saskatchewan-farms-in-128-million-deal/article15910970/>. (Accessed on March 9, 2019).

- Bacque, C. (2018 September 3). Self-Made Man. In *Farming for Tomorrow*  
<https://farmingfortomorrow.ca/featured/self-made-man/> (Accessed September 19, 2019).
- Beingessner, N. (2013). Alternative land tenure: A path towards food sovereignty in Saskatchewan? Masters thesis, Department of Justice Studies. Regina, Canada: University of Regina.  
[http://ourspace.uregina.ca/bitstream/handle/10294/3831/Beingessner\\_Naomi\\_196401062\\_MA\\_JUST\\_Spring2012.pdf?sequence=1](http://ourspace.uregina.ca/bitstream/handle/10294/3831/Beingessner_Naomi_196401062_MA_JUST_Spring2012.pdf?sequence=1).
- Blomley, N. (2003). Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence: The Frontier, the Survey, and the Grid. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 9(1):121-141.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2019). The territorialization of property in land: space, power and practice. *Territory, Politics, Governance* 7(2): 233-249
- Borras, S. M. J., & Franco, J. (2013). Global land grabbing and political reactions from below. *Third World Quarterly* 34(9):1723–1747.
- Borras, S. M. J., & Franco, J. (2012). “A ‘Land Sovereignty’ Alternative? Towards a Peoples’ Counter-Enclosure.” The Trans National Institute. <https://www.tni.org/en/publication/a-land-sovereignty-alternative-0>.
- Borras, S.M., Franco, J. C., Gómez, S., Kay, C., & Spoor, M. (2012). Land grabbing in Latin America and the Caribbean. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 39(3-4): 845-872.
- Borras, S. M., Franco, J. C., & Suarez, S. M. (2016). Land and food sovereignty. *Third World Quarterly* 36(3): 600-617.
- Buttel, F.H., & LaRamee, P. (1991). The “disappearing middle”: A sociological perspective. In *Towards a new political economy of agriculture*. Ed. W.H. Friedland, L. Busch, F.H. Buttel, and A.P. Rudy (151–169). Boulder: Westview Press.
- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (1972). “Banking Land in Saskatchewan.”  
<https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/banking-land-in-saskatchewan> (Accessed August 5, 2020).

- \_\_\_\_\_. (2019). *My Farmland*. Documentary. <https://gem.cbc.ca/media/cbc-docs-pov/season-2/episode-15/38e815a-01092cee484>
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2012). Sask. government to partially privatize ISC. November 9, 2012. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/sask-government-to-partially-privatize-isc-1.1214057>. (Accessed April 29, 2019).
- Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board. (2015a). Benefits of CPPIB Investment in Saskatchewan: CPPIB Presentation to Saskatchewan Government Caucus May 28, 2015. <http://publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/20/108381-CPPIB%20Presentation.pdf>. (Accessed on March 9, 2019).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2015b). CPPIB Statement About the Saskatchewan Government's Farmland Decision. April 13, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.cppib.com/en/public-media/headlines/2015/cppib-sask-statement/>. (Accessed on March 15, 2019).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2019). Our Mandate. <http://www.cppib.com/en/who-we-are/our-mandate/>. (Accessed on March 8, 2019).
- Canmar Foods. (2020). About Us: Our Farms. <https://canmarfoods.com/about-us/our-farms/> (Accessed August 15, 2020).
- Carter, S. (2013). Erasing and Replacing: Property and Homestead Rights of First Nations Famers of Manitoba and the Northwest, 1870s-1920s. In *Place and Replace: Essays on Western Canada*. Ed Adele Perry, Elyllt W. Jones, and Leah Morton. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.
- Christensen, A.D., & Qvotrup Jensen, S. (2012). Doing intersectional analysis: Methodological implications for qualitative research. *NORA: Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 20(2): 109-125.
- Christophers, B. (2015). The limits to financialization. *Dialogues in Human Geography* 5(2): 183–200.
- Clapp, J. (2014). Financialization, distance and global food politics. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 41(5): 797–814.

- Clapp, J., & R. Isakson. (2018). *Speculative Harvests: Financialization, Food, and Agriculture*. Winnipeg: Fernwood.
- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). Concepts and Coding. In *Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complimentary Research Strategies* (26-53). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Courville, M., & Patel, R. (2006). The Resurgence of Agrarian Reform in the Twenty-first Century. In Rosset, P., Patel, R., & Courville, M. Eds. *Promised Lands: Competing Visions of Agrarian Reform*. Oakland: Food First Books.
- Cresswell, T. (2004). *Place: A short introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub.
- Cronon, W. (1996). The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature. In *Environmental History*, 1(1): 7-28.
- CTV News Regina. (2017, October 11). Sask. govt. to sell untouched Crown land in online auction. <https://regina.ctvnews.ca/sask-govt-to-sell-untouched-crown-land-in-online-auction-1.3628364>. (Accessed on April 27, 2019).
- DeKay, William. (2020). Warning issued on crop rotations. *The Western Producer*.
- Desmarais, A. A., Qualman, D., Magnan A., & Wiebe N. (2015). Land grabbing and land concentration: Mapping changing patterns of farmland ownership, in three rural municipalities in Saskatchewan, Canada. *Canadian Food Studies*, 2(1): 16-47.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2017). Investor Ownership or Social Investment? Changing Farmland Ownership in Saskatchewan, Canada. *Agriculture and Human Values* 34: 149-166.
- Doucet, A., & Mauthner, N.S. (2008). What can be known and how? Narrative subjects and the Listening Guide. *Qualitative Research*, 8(3), 399-409.
- Ducks Unlimited. (2020). *Wetlands*. <https://www.ducks.ca/our-work/wetlands/> (Accessed on September 11, 2020).
- Engelen, E. (2003). The logic of funding European pension restructuring and the dangers of financialization. In *Environment and Planning A*(35): 1357–1372.
- Epstein, G. (2005). Introduction: Financialization and the world economy. In: G. Epstein, ed. *Financialization and the world economy* (3–16). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

- Fairbairn, M. (2014). 'Like gold with yield': evolving intersections between farmland and finance. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 4(5): 777-795.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2015). Reinventing the wheel? Or adding new air to old tires? In *Dialogues in Human Geography* 5(2): 210–213.
- Farm Credit Canada. (2018). Farmland Values Report 2017. <https://www.fcc-fac.ca/fcc/about-fcc/reports/2017-farmland-values-report-e.pdf> (Accessed March 11, 2019).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2020a). Canadian farmland values continue to soften amid uncertainty, FCC reports. April 6, 2020. <https://www.fcc-fac.ca/en/about-fcc/media-newsroom/news-releases/2020/canadian-farmland-values-continue-to-soften-amid-uncertainty.html> (Accessed April 7, 2020).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2020b). Farmland Values Report 2019. <https://www.fcc-fac.ca/fcc/resources/2019-farmland-values-report-e.pdf>
- Farm Land Security Act. (2020). Retrieved from the Farm Land Security Board's website. <https://publications.saskatchewan.ca/api/v1/products/842/formats/1321/download> (Accessed September 13, 2020)
- Farm Land Security Board. (2002). Annual Report 2001-2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2003) Annual Report 2002-2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2005). Annual Report 2004-2005.
- Farm Real Estate. (2019). RM 261 Chesterfield 14,105 Acres. <https://farmrealestate.com/exclusive/1100666-422-scenic-ranch-on-14-105-acres-on-saskatchewan-river-close-to-leader-leader/> (Accessed October 29, 2019).
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2): 219-245.
- Foster, J. (2007). The financialization of capitalism. *Monthly Review*, vol 58(11):1-12.
- Geisler, C. (2015). Trophy lands: why elites acquire land and why it matters. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue canadienne d'études du développement* 36(2): 241-257.



- Gidluck, L. (1995). The politics of land tenure: The Saskatchewan Land Bank experiment, 1971–1982. Masters thesis. Ottawa: National Library of Canada.
- Government of Saskatchewan. (2002, December 19). New farm ownership rules effective January 1st [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=133e5149-53cd-4ddc-abe1-58d038ca4825>
- \_\_\_\_\_. Farmland ownership review and consultations announced. Press release. <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/april/13/farmlandownership-review>.
- Hall, C., McVittie, A., & Moran, D. (2004). What does the public want from agriculture and the countryside? A review of evidence and methods. In *Journal of Rural Studies* 20(2): 211–225.
- Hall, R., Edelman, M., Borrás, S.M.J., Scoones, I., White, B., & Wolford, W. (2015). Resistance, acquiescence or incorporation? An introduction to land grabbing and political reactions “from below”. In *Journal of Peasant Studies* 42(3–4): 467–488.
- Hammond Realty. (2019). RM 286 Mildred 9,783.5 Acres. [http://www.timhammond.ca/Mildred/Saskatchewan/Farms\\_and\\_Acreages/Mildred\\_No\\_286/Agent/Listing\\_336020746.html](http://www.timhammond.ca/Mildred/Saskatchewan/Farms_and_Acreages/Mildred_No_286/Agent/Listing_336020746.html) (Accessed October 29, 2019).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2020). RM 254 Loreburn (Nunweiler) - 5,283 Acres. [http://www.hammondrealty.ca/Elbow/Saskatchewan/Farms\\_and\\_Acreages/Elbow/Agent/Listing\\_344527744.html](http://www.hammondrealty.ca/Elbow/Saskatchewan/Farms_and_Acreages/Elbow/Agent/Listing_344527744.html) (Accessed July 8, 2020).
- Harvey, D. (2010). *The enigma of capital: and the crises of capitalism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2019). *Spaces of Neoliberalization: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development*. Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Hay, D. (2006). *Rural Population*. In the Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan. Canadian Plains Research Center. The University of Regina. [https://esask.uregina.ca/entry/rural\\_population.jsp](https://esask.uregina.ca/entry/rural_population.jsp) (Accessed September 11, 2020).

- Heffernan, W. D. Concentration of Ownership in Agriculture. In Magdoff, F., Foster, J. B., & BUTTEL, F., Eds. *Hungry for Profit: The Agribusiness Threat to Farmers, Food, and the Environment* (61-76). NYU Press, 2000.
- Hursh, K. (2010, March 23). Saskatchewan farmland prices remain strong. *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*. Retrieved from <http://www2.canada.com/saskatoonstarphoenix/news/business/story.html?id=406c8c24-48f5-4f2c-b419-810b8a973483>.
- International Land Coalition. (2020). *Uneven Ground: Land Inequality at the Heart of Unequal Societies*. [https://d3o3cb4w253x5q.cloudfront.net/media/documents/2020\\_11\\_land\\_inequality\\_synt\\_hesis\\_report\\_uneven\\_ground\\_final\\_en\\_spread\\_low\\_res\\_2.pdf](https://d3o3cb4w253x5q.cloudfront.net/media/documents/2020_11_land_inequality_synt_hesis_report_uneven_ground_final_en_spread_low_res_2.pdf).
- Inwood, S., Clark, J. K., Bean, M., (2013). The differing values of multigeneration and first-generation farmers: their influence on the structure of agriculture at the rural–urban interface. In *Rural Sociology*. 78: 346–370.
- ISC. (2019). ISC Honours the Legacy of Saskatchewan Family Farms with the Century Family Farm Award. <https://company.isc.ca/investor-relations/news-releases/press-release-details/2019/ISC-Honours-the-Legacy-of-Saskatchewan-Family-Farms-With-the-Century-Family-Farm-Award/default.aspx> (Accessed April 28, 2020).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2020a). ISC Century Family Farm Awards Application. <https://company.isc.ca/social-responsibility/century-family-farm-awards/century-family-farms-application/default.aspx>. (Accessed April 21, 2020).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2020b). Our History. Retrieved from <https://company.isc.ca/who-we-are/default.aspx?section=ourhistory>. (Accessed April 28, 2019).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2020c). Saskatchewan Registry Services. Retrieved from <https://www.isc.ca/About/SaskRegistry/Pages/default.aspx>. (Accessed April 28, 2019).
- Jaffe, J. (2003). Family labour processes, land, and the farm crisis in Saskatchewan. In H. Diaz, J. Jaffe, & R. Stirling (Eds.), *Farm communities at the crossroads: Challenge and resistance* (137-148). Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Centre.
- Kambeitz Farms. (2020). <https://kambeitzfarms.com/> (Accessed June 30, 2020).

- Kearney, M. (1995). The Local and the Global: The Anthropology of Globalization and Transnationalism. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24(1), 547–565.
- Kemp, D. (2019). Western Australia Launches Land Registry Privatization Auction. January 9, 2019. <https://www.agriinvestor.com/western-australia-launches-simpler-lower-risk-land-registry-auction/>. (Accessed April 24, 2019).
- Krippner, G. (2011). *Capitalizing on Crisis: The Political Origins of the Rise of Finance*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. (1991). *We Have Never Been Modern*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge.
- Lawley, C. (2018). Ownership Restrictions and Farmland Values: Evidence from the 2003 Saskatchewan Farm Security Act Amendment. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 100: 311-337
- Lawrence, G., & Campbell, H. (2014). Neoliberalism in the antipodes: Understanding the influence and limits of the neoliberal political project. In *The neoliberal regime in the agri-food sector: Crisis, resilience, and restructuring*, ed. S.A. Wolf, and A. Bonanno (263–283). New York: Routledge.
- Lawrence, G., & Smith, K. (2018). The Concept of ‘Financialization’: Criticisms and Insights. In *The Financialization of Agri-Food Systems: Contested Transformations*, Edited by Hilde Bjorkhaug, André Magnan and Geoff Lawrence. London: Routledge.
- Li, T. (2011). Centering labour in the Land Grab Debate. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38(2): 281-298.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2014). What is land? Assembling a resource for global investment. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 39(4): 589–602.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2015). Transnational farmland investment: A risky business. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 15(4): 560–568.
- Luborsky, M. R. (1994). The Identification and analysis of themes and patterns. In Gubrium, J, F., and Sankar, A. (Eds.), *Qualitative Methods in Aging Research* (189-210). California: Sage Publications

- Mandryk, M., Reidsma, P., & van Ittersum, M. (2012). Scenarios of long-term farm structural change for application in climate change impact assessment. *Landscape Ecol.* 27, 509–527.
- Magnan, A. (2012). New avenues of farm corporatization in the prairie grain sector: Farm family entrepreneurs and the case of One Earth Farms. In *Agriculture and Human Values*, 29(2), 161-175.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2014). The rise and fall of a prairie giant: The Canadian Wheat Board in food regime history”. In S. Wolf & A. Bonanno (Eds.), *The Neoliberal Regime in the Agri-Food Sector: Crisis, Resilience and Restructuring* (73-90). New York: Routledge.
- Magnan, A., & Sunley S. (2017). “Farmland investment and financialization in Saskatchewan, 2003–2014: An empirical analysis of farmland transactions.” *Journal of Rural Studies* 49(92-103) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2016.11.007>.
- Malm, A. (2018). *The Progress of This Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World*. London: Verso.
- Massey, D. & the Human Geography Research Group. (2009). “The Possibilities of a Politics of Place Beyond Place? A Conversation with Doreen Massey.” *Scottish Geographical Journal* Vol. 125, No. 3–4, 401–420.
- Massumi, B. (1992). *A User’s Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia : Deviations From Deleuze and Guattari: Vol. A Swerve ed.* The MIT Press.
- Mayrinck R. C., Laroque, C. P., Amichev B. Y., Van Rees, K. (2019). Above- and below-ground carbon sequestration in Shelterbelt trees in Canada: a review. *Forests* 10:922. <https://doi.org/10.3390/f10100922>
- McMichael, P. (2008). Peasants Make Their Own History, But Not Just as They Please . . . *Journal of Agrarian Change* 8(2/3): 205–28.
- Milton, T. (2020, April 02). Farm real estate holding steady. <https://www.farms.com/ag-industry-news/farm-real-estate-holding-steady-127.aspx>. (Accessed September 13, 2020).
- Mitchell, D. (2001). *Cultural geography: A critical introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

- Morse, J.M. (1994). 'Emerging from the data': the cognitive processes of analysis in qualitative inquiry. In Morse, J. (Ed.), *Critical Issues in Qualitative Research Methods* (23-43). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Monette Farms. (2020). Where We Are. <https://www.monettefarms.ca/where-we-are>. (Accessed June 30, 2020).
- National Farmers Union. (2010). Losing our grip: How a corporate farmland buy-up, rising farm debt, and agribusiness financing of inputs threaten family farms and food sovereignty. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: National Farmers Union. [http://www.nfu.ca/sites/www.nfu.ca/files/06-07-losing\\_grip.pdf](http://www.nfu.ca/sites/www.nfu.ca/files/06-07-losing_grip.pdf). (Accessed July 7, 2020).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2019). Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis: A Transformative Strategy for Canadian Farms and Food Systems. <https://www.nfu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Tackling-the-Farm-Crisis-and-the-Climate-Crisis-NFU-2019.pdf> (Accessed July 7, 2020).
- Nelson, J. (2015). Saskatchewan stops pension funds from buying farmland as prices rise. In *The Globe and Mail*. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/saskatchewan-stops-pension-funds-from-buying-farmland-amid-rising-prices/article23904754/>. (Accessed on March 15, 2019).
- Nickel, R. (2015). Exclusive: Canadian province eyes tougher rules on investor farm buys. January 26, 2015. In *Yahoo News*. [https://ca.finance.yahoo.com/news/exclusive-canadian-province-eyes-tougher-194435260.html?guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAAE6YCHUE32PfxC3jzY44uJVQNbPUapx3S6R-0yFmJnq0k4x1BThqWcV\\_dU7OKBdBg2q1h0fjlaewRRtyCH3jDaQ5GcNNjFON4hOb5ZYkIbf4uqKKA82JrHt\\_S8u1Yzy0F2xy0f6-YLsE8-oQcvML87HpEtNQ73CgyiSYPCpgESm3](https://ca.finance.yahoo.com/news/exclusive-canadian-province-eyes-tougher-194435260.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAE6YCHUE32PfxC3jzY44uJVQNbPUapx3S6R-0yFmJnq0k4x1BThqWcV_dU7OKBdBg2q1h0fjlaewRRtyCH3jDaQ5GcNNjFON4hOb5ZYkIbf4uqKKA82JrHt_S8u1Yzy0F2xy0f6-YLsE8-oQcvML87HpEtNQ73CgyiSYPCpgESm3). (Accessed on March 9, 2019).
- Nyéléni Europe and Central Asia (2021). Roots of Resilience: Land Policy for an Agroecological Transition in Europe.

- Olfert, R. (2005). *Farming*. In the Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan. Canadian Plains Research Center. The University of Regina. <https://esask.uregina.ca/entry/farming.jsp> (Accessed July 23, 2020).
- Ouma, S. (2014). Situating global finance in the Land Rush debate: A critical review. *Geoforum*: 57: 162-166.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2016). From financialization to operations of capital: Historicizing and disentangling the finance–farmland-nexus. *Geoforum* 72: 82–93.
- Oxfam. (2011). Land and power: The growing scandal surrounding the new wave of investments in land. Oxford: Oxfam International Briefing Paper 51.
- Palliser Farmland Management. (2015). Re: Saskatchewan Farmland Ownership Consultation. <http://publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/20/108385-Palliser%20Farmland%20Management.pdf>. (Accessed on March 9, 2019).
- Patterson, D. (2014). Gov't must address land investment deals. *The Western Producer* <http://www.producer.com/2014/11/govtmust-address-land-investment-deals/>.
- Paunksnis, S. (2015). *Dislocating Globality : Deterritorialization, Difference and Resistance*. Brill: Rodopi.
- Pension Investment Association of Canada. (2015). Re: Consultation on Farmland ownership rules in Saskatchewan. <http://publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/20/108386-1508-04%20Pension%20Investment%20Association%20of%20Canada%20Submission.pdf>. (Accessed on March 8, 2019).
- Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2): 175-196.
- Potts, K., & Brown, L. (2005). Becoming an anti-oppressive researcher. In Brown, L., and Strega, S. (Eds.), *Research as Resistance* (255-286). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars Press.
- Pringle, G. (1998). Globalisation, reterritorialisation and national identity. In *Geopolitics*, 3:3, 1-13.

- Pritchard, B., Neave, M., Hickey, D., & Troy, L. (2012). Rural land in Australia: A framework for the measurement and analysis of nationwide patterns of ownership change, aggregation, and fragmentation. Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation Publication No. 12/03
- Pugh, A.J. (2013). What good are interviews for thinking about culture? Demystifying interpretive analysis. In *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, 1: 42-68
- Qualman, D. (2011). Advancing agriculture by destroying farms? The state of agriculture in Canada. In *Food sovereignty in Canada: Creating just and sustainable food systems*, ed. H. Wittman, A.A. Desmarais, and N. Wiebe, 20–42. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- Qualman, D., Akram-Lodhi, A., Desmarais, A., & Srinivasan, S. (2018). Forever young? The crisis of generational renewal on Canada's farms. *Canadian Food Studies / La Revue Canadienne Des Études Sur L'alimentation*, 5(3), 100–127.
- Rasmussen, B. (1994). *Absentee Landowning and Exploitation in West Virginia, 1760-1920*. University Press of Kentucky.
- Relph, E. (1976) *Place and Placelessness*. London, Pion.
- Rempel, J. C., Kulshreshtha, S. N., Amichev, B. Y., & Van Rees, K.C. J. (2017). Costs and benefits of shelterbelts: a review of producers' perceptions and mind map analyses for Saskatchewan, Canada. *Canadian Journal of Soil Science* 97:341–352
- Ribot, J. C., & Peluso, N. L. (2003). A Theory of Access. In *Rural Sociology* 68(2): 153–181.
- Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J. (2003). *Qualitative Research Practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Robinson, A. (2017, March 3). 80 parcels of Crown land up for auction. In *Regina Leader Post*. Retrieved from <https://leaderpost.com/business/agriculture/80-parcels-of-crown-land-up-for-auction>. (Accessed April 29, 2019).
- Rocha, E. (2015). Canada pension fund manager cries foul over Saskatchewan farm review. In *Reuters*. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saskatchewan-farmland->

- cppib/canada-pension-fund-manager-cries-foul-over-saskatchewan-farm- review- idUSKBN0N429320150413. (Accessed on March 8, 2019).
- Rose, C. M. (1994). *Property and persuasion: essays on the history, theory, and rhetoric of ownership*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Rosset, Peter. (2013). Re-thinking agrarian reform, land and territory in La Via Campesina. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 40(4): 721-775.
- Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, H. R. (2000). Data Analysis and management methods. In Denzin, N., and Lincoln, Y. (Eds). *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed) (769-802). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Saraceno, E. (1994). The modern functions of small farm systems: an Italian experience. In *Sociol Rural* 34: 308–328.
- Saskatchewan Environmental Society. (2019). Press Release: Provincial action on UN Biodiversity Report urgently needed. Retrieved from <http://environmentalsociety.ca/press-releases/2019/press-release-2/> (Accessed September 11, 2020).
- Savills World Research. (2014). International Farmland Focus 2014. Available at: [http://www.savills.co.uk/research\\_articles/186866/174589-0](http://www.savills.co.uk/research_articles/186866/174589-0).
- Scott, J. (1995). State Simplifications: Nature, Space and People. *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 3(3): 191-233.
- Sheppard Realty. (2019). Buying Farmland. Retrieved from <http://sheppardrealty.ca/buying-farmland/>. (Accessed on March 15, 2019).
- Sippel, S. R., Larder, N., & Lawrence, G. (2017). Grounding the financialization of farmland: perspectives on financial actors as new land owners in rural Australia. *Agric Hum Values* 34: 251–265.
- Sommerville, M. (2018). Naturalising Finance, Financialising Natives: Indigeneity, Race, and “Responsible” Agricultural Investment in Canada. *Antipode*: 1-22.
- Statistics Canada. (2011). Number and area of farms and farmland area by tenure, CANSIM (database). Table 004-0001. <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/>



a26?lang=eng&id=40001.

- \_\_\_\_\_. (2016a). Farms classified by total farm area. Table 32-10-0404-01  
<https://doi.org/10.25318/3210040401-eng>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2016b). Tenure of land owned, leased, rented, crop-shared, used through other arrangements or used by others. Table 32-10-040701  
<https://doi.org/10.25318/3210040701-eng>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2017a). Farm and Farm Operator Data: Saskatchewan remains the breadbasket of Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/95-640-x/2016001/article/14807-eng.htm> (Accessed on March 9, 2019).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2017b). Fertile Valley No. 285, RM [Census subdivision], Saskatchewan and Division No. 12, CDR [Census division], Saskatchewan (table). Census Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017.  
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed August 23, 2020)
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2017c). Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001. Ottawa, Ontario. Data products, 2016 Census.  
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-pr-eng.cfm?Lang=Eng&GK=PR&GC=47&TOPIC=1>
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2017d). Griffin No. 66, RM [Census subdivision], Saskatchewan and Division No. 2, CDR [Census division], Saskatchewan (table). Census Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017.  
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed August 23, 2020).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2017e). Indian Head No. 156, RM [Census subdivision], Saskatchewan and Division No. 6, CDR [Census division], Saskatchewan (table). Census Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017.

- <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed August 23, 2020).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2017f). Torch River No. 488, RM [Census subdivision], Saskatchewan and Division No. 14, CDR [Census division], Saskatchewan(table). Census Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017.
- <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed August 23, 2020).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2018). Canada's Immigrant Farming Population. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2018042-eng.htm>
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2019). Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016: Census farm. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/pop012-eng.cfm> (Accessed August 31, 2020).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2020a). Census of Agriculture FAQs. [https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/statistical-programs/document/3438\\_D4\\_T9\\_V2](https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/statistical-programs/document/3438_D4_T9_V2).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2020b). Farms classified by size, historical data. Table 32-10-0156-01 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tb11/en/tv.action?pid=3210015601>
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2020c). Farm Debt Outstanding, classified by lender (x 1,000). Table 32-10-0051-01 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tb11/en/tv.action?pid=3210005101>
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2020d). Number of farm operators classified by farm type and country of birth. Table: 32-10-0020-01 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tb11/en/tv.action?pid=3210002001&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.9>
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2020e). Total area of farms and use of farm land, historical data. Table 32-10-0153-01 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tb11/en/tv.action?pid=3210015301>
- Tilak, J., & Scuffham, M. (2017). Exclusive: Canada's CPPIB pension fund plans farmland retreat – sources. In *Reuters*. <https://ca.reuters.com/article/businessNews/idCAKBN17S2JX-OCABS>. (Accessed on March 12, 2015).

- Timmerman, S., and Tavory, I. (2012). Theory construction in qualitative research: From grounded theory to abductive analysis. In *Sociological Theory*, 30(3): 167-186.
- van der Ploeg, J.D., (2013). Ten qualities of family farming. *Farming Matters* 29:8–11.
- van der Ploeg, J. D., Franco, J. C., & Saturnino, M. B. (2015). Land concentration and land grabbing in Europe: A preliminary Analysis. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue Canadienne d'études du développement* 36(2): 147-162.
- Wiebe, N. (2012). Crisis in the food system: The farm crisis. In M. Koc, J. Sumner & A. Winson (Eds.), *Critical Perspectives in Canadian Food Studies* (155-170). Don Mills, CA: Oxford University Press.
- Williams, J.W. (2014). Feeding finance: A critical account of the shifting relations between finance, food and farming. *Economy and Society* 43(3): 401–431.
- The Western Producer. (2017, May 25). Privatization could put grassland at risk. <https://www.producer.com/2017/05/privatization-could-put-grassland-at-risk/>. (Accessed on April 25, 2019).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2018, March 22). 40,000-acre farm goes organic. <https://www.producer.com/2018/03/40000-acre-farm-goes-organic/>. (Accessed July 24, 2020).
- Veblen, T. (1924). *Absentee ownership and business enterprise in recent times: the case of America*. George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.
- White, B., Saturnino, M.B., Hall, R., Scoones, I., & Wolford, W. (2014). The New Enclosures: Critical perspectives on Corporate Land deals. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 39 (4): 619-647.
- World Bank. (2010). Rising global interest in farmland: Can it yield sustainable and equitable results? Washington DC: World Bank.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2011). Rising Global Interest in Farmland: Can it Yield Sustainable and Equitable Benefits? Klaus Deininger and Derek Byerlee with Jonathan Lindsay, Andrew Norton, Harris Selod, and Mercedes Stickler.

<https://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEC/Resources/Rising-Global-Interest-in-Farmland.pdf>. (Accessed on December 2, 2018).

Zhang, W., Plastina, A., & Sawadgo, W. (2018). Iowa Farmland Ownership and Tenure Survey 1982–2017: A Thirty-five Year Perspective. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, FM 1893.

## APPENDICES

### *Appendix A Short Interview Guide with Farm Leaders and Farm Organization Staff, Rural Municipal Officials/Staff, Journalists*

(30 minutes)

#### **Cover Sheet Data**

Individual's name \_\_\_\_\_

Complete the appropriate from below:

RM and Position \_\_\_\_\_

Farm organization name and position \_\_\_\_\_

Journalist's position \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Interview identification number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Draft semi-structured interview questions:

### General information:

- How long have you worked in your position and/or been elected in your position?

### A/ Interview theme: Changes in land ownership

1. What kinds of changes in farmland ownership have you seen in your rural municipality over the past decade? What about the province as a whole? (**Probe:** What exactly are some of the most significant changes that you have seen? To what extent are investors or other absentee landowners affecting land ownership patterns? To what extent are large farmers affecting land ownership patterns? Are you seeing a lot more land concentration in your area?)
2. Do you think that some RMs are more affected than others? If so, which RMs do you know of where there has been significant change?
3. Do you know who is buying up farmland? In the last decade, do you know if investor and absentee purchases of farmland have increased, decreased, or stayed about the same in your RM? What about the province as a whole? Do you know of some RMs where investors have been particularly active?
4. When looking at the farm size statistics, we can see that farms are certainly getting bigger, which means that there is an increased concentration of land among farmers. Is this happening in your RM? And, are there some RMs where this is more of an issue than in others? Which RMs?
5. When farmland comes up for sale, what difference does it make if the land is bought up by an investor, and absentee owner, or a local farmer?
6. How is the involvement of outside buyers affecting the local farmland market? What effects, if any, is this having on local farmland buyers?
7. How is the involvement of larger farmers affecting the local farmland market? What effects, if any, is this having on local farmland buyers? (**Probe:** What is your perception of how farmland concentration, that is, farms getting bigger and bigger, is leading to changes in the community?)

### B/ Theme: Social and environmental impact of the changes in land ownership

What impacts do you think farmland ownership changes are having in your community? (**Probe:** For example, what impact, if any, have these changes had on:

- the rural municipal office and the work that it does?
- infrastructure (i.e. if farms are bigger then heavier and larger equipment is needed, how does this affect the infrastructure and finances of the municipality)?
- services in the municipality?

- community spirit / well-being?
- the kind of farming that is practiced?
- Environment?

*Appendix B Long Interview Guide (RM staff and officials)*

(60-90 minutes)

**Cover Sheet Data**

Individual's name \_\_\_\_\_  
RM and Position \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Location of Interview \_\_\_\_\_  
Interview identification number: \_\_\_\_\_



## **Draft semi-structured interview questions:**

### General information:

- How long have you lived in this RM?
- How long have been an elected RM official? Or, how long have been employed by the RM?

### 1/ Interview theme: Changes in land ownership

- 8.** When looking at this map of your rural municipality, how have land ownership patterns in your RM changed over the last 10 years? (**Probe:** What are some of the most significant changes that you have seen? To what extent are investors or other absentee landowners affecting land ownership patterns? To what extent are large farmers affecting land ownership patterns?)
- 9.** Do you know who is buying up land? In the last 10 years, have investor and absentee purchases of farmland increased, decreased, or stayed about the same?
- 10.** How is increased concentration among farmers impacting the community? (Probe: What is your perception of how farmland concentration, that is, farms getting bigger and bigger, is leading to changes in the community?)
- 11.** When farmland comes up for sale in your community, what difference does it make if the land is bought up by an investor, and absentee owner, or a local farmer?
- 12.** How is the involvement of outside buyers affecting the local farmland market? What effects, if any, is this having on local farmland buyers?
- 13.** How is the involvement of larger farmers affecting the local farmland market? What effects, if any, is this having on local farmland buyers?

### 2/ Theme: Social and environmental impact of the changes in land ownership

- a) What impacts do you think farmland ownership changes are having in your community? (Probe: For example, what impact, if any, have these changes had on:
  - the rural municipal office and the work that it does?
  - infrastructure (i.e. if farms are bigger then heavier and larger equipment is needed, how does this affect the infrastructure and finances of the municipality)?
  - services in the municipality?

- community spirit / well-being?
- the kind of farming that is practiced?
- Environment?

### 3/ Theme: Identifying the different impact of investor and farmer ownership of farmland

- What differences, if any, are there between investor owners, absentee owners, and local farmers when it comes to the relationships they establish with their renters? **Probe:** In what way does the type of landowner (i.e. local or absentee) influence rental agreements? How the land is farmed? Who is hired to work on the farm?
  - a) What kinds of relationships are investors and absentee landowners developing with those living in the rural municipality?
  - b) What kinds of relationships are local landowners and local farmers developing with those living in the rural municipality?

*Appendix C Long Interview Guide with Farmers*

**Cover Sheet Data**

Individual's name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Interview identification number: \_\_\_\_\_

## 1/ Interview theme: Experience in farming and farmland ownership

- a) Which of the following best describes your situation today?
  - Actively farming
  - Semi-retired or retired farmer (**skip to question e**)
  
- b) How many years have you been farming? (Less than 10 years = early-career farmer; 11 years or more = established farmer).
  
- c) How much land do you currently farm?
  - Of this, how much land do you own? Is the land you own under your name, a spouse/family member's name, or both?
  - How much of your land is rented?
  - How much of your land is shared under some other arrangement?
  
- d) Acquiring farmland:
  - How did you acquire the land that you own? (Probe: Did your family own the land? Did you buy it from a neighbouring farmer?)
  - **Established farmers:** In the last 10 years, have you increased the amount of land that you farm? If yes, when did you expand? By how much did you expand? Did you expand by purchasing land, renting land, or both?
  - **Early-career farmers:** Since you began farming, have you increased the amount of land that you farm? If yes, when did you expand? By how much did you expand? Did you expand by purchasing land, renting land, or both?
  - Have you faced any difficulties in purchasing or renting land for your farming operation? If so, what kinds of difficulties? (**skip to question f**)
  
- e) **Semi-retired or retired farmers only:**
  - How many years did you farm? Why did you choose to retire (or partially retire) when you did?
  - In the last 10 years, have you sold farmland? If so, when and why did you sell your land? Did you sell all of it, or do you now rent some out? **Probe:** If not all land was sold, why did you not sell it all?
  - Once you stopped farming, did you stay in the community or move away? If you moved, do you still have ties to the community? If so, what kinds of ties?
  - Can you tell us about the process of selling your land? Was there a lot of interest in purchasing your land? (Probe: did you get a lot of offers from other farmers? from investors?) Were there any challenges in selling your land?
  - Who did you sell the land to? (Probe: young farmer from the community? Investor? Older, well-established farmer in the community?) Did it matter to you who bought your land? (Probe: If yes, why does it matter?)
  
- f) In your view, what are the advantages and disadvantages of owning versus renting

farmland? (Please elaborate)

- g) There has been quite a bit of land changing hands over the past years. What effect have these changes had on your livelihood/farming operation?
- h) Has any of the land in your municipality been purchased by investors? If YES: Do they live the community? What effect do you think investors are having on the local farmland market? What is the community's perception of investors buying up land in your RM?

## **2/ Interview theme: Landlord/tenant relationships resulting from changes in land rental arrangements**

- a) **Semi-retired or retired farmers who are renting land to others:** To whom are you renting your land? Does it matter to you who is renting your land? (Probe: If yes, why does it matter?)
  - How do you choose your tenants? What are you looking for in a tenant? Probe: What is most important to you (whether the farmer stays in the community? Whether they are what you consider to be a good farmer? Etc.)?
  - How do you decide on how much to charge? When you rent out the land do you place any conditions on the farming practices? Probe: What conditions? Why do you do this?
  - What do you think about the shift towards farmers increasing the amount of land then rent?
- b) **Active farmers who are renting land from others:** You mentioned that you are renting XX acres of farmland.
  - Who owns that land? **Probe:** Is it a neighbouring farmer? An absentee or local landlord? An investor? A combination of different landlords?
  - How would you describe the relationship you have with your landlord(s) (investor, absentee, or local landlords)? Probe: Do your landlords impose conditions on your farming practices? If yes, what conditions?
  - What do you look for in a landowner?
  - When you're looking for land to rent what is most important to you? Probe: Land quality? Renting from a farmer as opposed to an investor? Trust in the landowner? Cost? Location? The person's relationship to the community? Why is this particularly important to you?
  - Does renting land change the way you farm?
  - Would you prefer to own more farmland or continue renting? Why?
- c) In the last 10 years, how have landowner/tenant relationships changed in your community?

### 3/ Theme: Identifying differences in impact between investor and farmer ownership of farmland

- a) In the last 10 years, what have been the most important changes of land ownership in the community? Probe: (try to get impact of each change) Absentee investors? Big sales? Significant changes in land values? Concentration?
- b) What impacts are farmland ownership changes having on your community? **Probe:** For example, what impact, if any, have these changes had on:
  - the rural municipal office and the work that it does?
  - infrastructure (i.e. if farms are bigger then heavier and larger equipment is needed, how does this affect the infrastructure and finances of the municipality)?
  - services in the municipality?
  - community spirit / well-being?
  - the kind of farming that is practiced?
  - the impact on the environment?
- c) Have you noticed any changes in the ways that people think about and/or value of land?
- d) When land comes up for sale in your community, what difference does it make if the land is bought by an investor, an absentee landlord, or a local farmer? **Probe:** Depending on the type of landlord, are there differences in rental agreements, how the land is farmed, or who is hired to work on the farm?
- e) Do you have connections with First Nations in your RM?