

Tradition and innovation in farm-based nature tourism: Lessons for protected area management

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Introduction

This study is focused on farm-based entrepreneurs, their place relations and values, and the process of meeting new demands in the development of nature-based tourism. The study is based on interviews with farm-based tourism entrepreneurs around the Trillemarka nature reserve in eastern Norway. We analyzed whether the entrepreneurs are situated on a dynamic continuum between tradition and innovation to more fully understand the nature of creativity and innovation at the farm level. With this, we also wish to contribute some knowledge for tourism development as an element in integrated development approaches in regards to protected areas (1).

Farming has traditionally been connected to the production of food and fibers as raw materials. However, during the last few decades this type of production has decreased in regards to the overall rural economy (2, 3). Consequently, both income and employment opportunities in the traditional agricultural sector have dropped. This has resulted in the establishment of various diversification schemes to encourage entrepreneurship on farms, many of which focus on farm-based tourism. Farm-based entrepreneurship is a complex phenomenon often raising issues in terms of identity, lifestyle and values (4-7). Much of farm-based tourism in Norway is related to nature-based tourism; as both forms of tourism are sub-sets of rural tourism. With nature-based tourism we mean tourism that are dependent on nature, enhanced by nature or are situated in nature coincidentally (8).

Theoretical framework

As the early entrepreneurship research focused on economics and personal motivation, current research look more at entrepreneurship as multi-sided, process-oriented and with a larger attention to social, spatial and everyday contexts (9-13). Further, the role of place; its assets, people relations and culture have received more interest in the research on entrepreneurship and innovation (10, 14-18). We find the broader view of entrepreneurship, as well as the attention to place, to be fruitful perspectives in our study, especially since farm-based entrepreneurs often stand in an intimate relationship with their own place and its larger context. Although an entrepreneur is shaped, by context or structure, is also important to note that the entrepreneur is able to take an active step to override the context and create new social praxis (19, 20). This challenging, yet creative process forms the basis for new creations of value, what we might call innovation (16-18).

In our study, we use the Structural Life Mode Analysis (14, 21-25) to gain a more systematic knowledge of farm-

based entrepreneurship as a phenomenon that seemingly stands between tradition and innovation. We find this to be an interesting analytical perspective since it links both the physical dimension of farm-based activities and the mental understanding of it. It is a useful perspective in examining how basic values and norms are challenged, or stretched, with the onset of structural changes, like decreased income from traditional agriculture and the need for diversification (26). This process of revising, or stretching, values to adapt to new situations has been called "neoculturation". The structure of a life mode will continue, although with new content (14, 21). We classify farm-based entrepreneurs as belonging to the independent-life mode. This is developed further in a model for good agronomy that identifies certain basic social values among Norwegian farmers (23-25). These are values that have been stable over time and to a large part connected to the farm and traditional production. With structural changes, there is an onset of new and challenging values.

Findings

Preliminary results from our study show that farm-based entrepreneurs facing new values and demands are challenged in the following ways:

- The strong value of independence and the corresponding lack of deeper commercial cooperation between farms is a challenge when there is a need for flexible network cooperation in the packing and distribution of tourism-products. New forms of mobilization and organizational structures seem to be needed.
- Farmers view their own traditional stewardship of the farm and natural areas as the primary value. The farmers have a tendency of looking into history towards traditional (production oriented) ways than to fully adopt new experience based forms of farm and nature-use. This can be a deficit when developing tourism products and meeting foreign customers with other frames of reference. In a simplified way, we could say that farmers are occupied with the products from the farm and nature, Norwegian visitors use nature in solitary ways and foreign visitors view nature (including the farm).
- There is seemingly a larger focus on tradition than true innovation among farm-based entrepreneurs. There is much creativity among farm-based entrepreneurs. However, this seems to be used in finding good imitations of other successful tourism products, rather than critically reflect on their own place and develop new inventions.
- There seem to be a need for new terms to describe

Table 1. Farmers values

Traditional values	New and challenging values
Stewardship connected to the farm	Place, hamlet and landscape attachment
The management responsibility	Multifunctional host, guide
Proficiency	Practical communicator
Production orientation	Experience producer, service, provider of landscape goods
Independence	Fleksible cooperation. Networks

the room in between tradition and innovation to more accurately describe the creative process that takes place there (18).

Lessons

- Much tourism development starts with the tourism product, distribution and the attractiveness of protected areas. However, our study shows that in a

development process, it can be an advantage to focus on people and place, as in the farm and the surrounding landscape (including the protected area).

- There is a need to critically reflect on the nature views and use, of farmers (the supplier) and the various customer groups. More knowledge can perhaps lead to more effective and innovative tourism products.

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