



## Farm diversification into tourism – Implications for social identity?

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### A B S T R A C T

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This article deals with how diversification and transformation of farming into tourism may influence the social identity of farmers. Based on a study of 19 farms run by couples engaged with agritourism, it shows how the development of tourism on the farms can be understood in a perspective of repeasantization; and how the couples draw on their farm resources, culture and place to sustain the farm. As hosts offering local food, stories, and various activities, they mediate a strong farm identity. The article also explores how farm identities change through three processes by which the ‘new’ work of tourism destabilizes identities. One is a shift in the meaning of farmer identity. Another is the gradual change towards a new master identity, and thirdly there is a multiplicity of identities that shift as they relate to various social memberships and settings.

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### 1. Introduction

A recent article in Time Magazine features the agricultural crises in France and stresses the idea that it is agritourism that may save rural France (Crumley, 2010). However, from the article we also learn that many French farmers refuse to diversify as they see this as a betrayal of the agricultural profession. That farmers may struggle with their identity of being a “real farmer” when diversifying their farms is the point of departure for this article. It deals with how diversification and transformation of farming into agritourism may influence the social identity of farmers. Based on a qualitative study of Norwegian farms who have been transformed into tourist businesses, it uses theories of “the new peasantries” and a perspective of identity as situated, multiple and relational to explore whether diversification into new ‘non-farming’ activities brings farmers away from traditional farm culture and way of life.

As agriculture has come under increasing pressure to diversify, pluriactivity has represented important pillars supporting farming, making it possible for farms that otherwise would have been forced to disappear to stay in business (Kinsella et al., 2000; Ploeg et al., 2000; Jervell, 1999). These pillars involve a range of activities both on and off the farm, agritourism being one of them. Today, small scale agritourism is in the process of becoming an important activity that is expected to promote employment, vitality and the

sustainability of rural communities (Hall et al., 2003; Kneafsey, 2000). As such, tourism is part of the shift in the economic base of rural societies. Agritourism may be regarded as part of the change in the European model of agricultural development from productivism towards sustainability and multifunctionality (cf. Ploeg, 2008), and it has received great attention in rural/agricultural politics and economics over the last decade.

Diversification of farm income has cultural as well as economic aspects. One consequence of the growth in agritourism is that the countryside as a place for food production may be losing ground in favour of the countryside as a place of consumption and recreation (Burton and Wilson, 2006; Crouch, 2006). The diversification of farming into tourism is in many ways a fundamental change since it demands new skills and competencies and may influence mentality and identity. However, tourism in the form of housing and catering for visitors is not a new activity on farms, as historically people from the cities have turned to the countryside for recreation and holidays. Traditionally, hosting guests was part of common rural hospitality and not necessarily a professional business. What is new is the process of commoditization, the scope and variety of activities and the increased demands on the hosting role. Scientific knowledge about the processes of change, and what they imply in terms of constraints and possibilities for those involved, is sparse.

When agriculture is restructured and diversified, one may expect that the meaning of the term ‘farmer’ will change or at least assume many more meanings (Heggem, 2008). The transition from running a working farm to becoming a provider of services raises questions about whether the farm population constructs new occupational roles and identities. Studies of farm identities have,

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however, found such identities to be very resistant to change as farmers seem to maintain an agricultural identity despite engaging in many other activities besides farming (Burton and Wilson, 2006). Burton (2004) refers to a number of studies showing that farmers resist change that requires giving up their socio-cultural status acquired through productivist agricultural roles. Studies on gender identities in family farming have also focused on continuity and stability, and conceptualized masculinity and femininity as stable and homogeneous and drawn from 'agrarian ideology' (Shortall, 1999; O'Hara, 1998; Alston, 1995; Brandth, 1994).

Regardless of such stability, farmers' identities are not unaffected by diversification. A Norwegian study found that the more hours farmers work outside the farm, the weaker their farm identities seem to be (Watn, 2006). Moreover, the demand on farmers to fulfill many functions may result in more diverse identities. This is documented in a Finnish study where Vesala and Vesala (2009) found that entrepreneurial identity fit well with how farmers conceive of themselves. Particularly diversified farmers see themselves as both entrepreneurs and farmers. The farms that diversify into tourism are perhaps the ones that have had to rely on several sources of income already, thereby not making the transition overly dramatic. Agritourism is just one part of their pluriactive mosaic (Schmitt, *in press*).

Studies of farm women's identities have also been related to activities beyond farming. One important study in this respect is reported in Bryant's (1999) article from South Australia. Creating a typology of farm identities, she shows that 'traditionality' is an important determinant of identity for some farmers, but that a significant number of farmers has identities which she conceptualizes as 'detraditional'. These two identity types are at each end of a continuum of identities: traditional identities appear as given, while detraditional identities are more open to reconstruction (p. 244). Waged work or a second enterprise on the farm adds complexity to the farm identities. Bryant's study shows that there is an ongoing shift in women's and men's farm identities, that they are constructed and reconstructed in a range of circumstances and settings, and sometimes these circumstances may be contradictory. In her study on masculine farming identities in Ireland, Ni Laoire (2001) found that traditional masculine identities were threatened by businesslike activities characterized by rationality and profit; while Brandth and Haugen (2000, 2005) in their study on farm forestry suggested that multiple identities can co-exist with and draw legitimacy from each other. It has also been documented that there exists a difference in identities between men in sustainable and industrial agriculture (Peter et al., 2000), and between fruit and vegetable growers on the one hand and sheep and cattle stock-breeders on the other (Gonzales and Benito, 2001).

In their study from the UK, Burton and Wilson (2006) demonstrate that there is a temporal discrepancy between structural change and farm identity in that farmers are still dominated by productivist self-concepts despite post-productivist undertakings. Nevertheless, they point out that new identities might "increase in importance as the farmers take on new roles and forge new social contacts" (ibid, p. 102). Such lingering identities are not unusual, but found to exist also in other life changes or adjustments to new situations (Reitzes and Mutran, 2006). Identities seem to change slowly, and some elements of identity may change while others remain stable. To quote Almás (2002), p. 357: "It is easier to get the farmer out of farming than it is to get farming out of the farmer" (our translation).

There has been little explicit research attention given to what happens to farm identity when farms diversify into tourist hosting. One exception is Haugen and Vik's (2008) study of Norwegian farmers combining farming and farm tourism. Two-thirds of these farmers identified themselves as both farmers and small-business

managers (p. 328). Schmitt's (*in press*) study from Germany, on the other hand, found a changed self-image when farms reduce or abandon dairy production and offer agritourism experiences instead. The women involved felt that they no longer could identify as typical farming women. Indeed, Sharpley and Vass (2006) suggest that successful farm diversification into tourism may demand the adoption of a service oriented self-identity. To develop the farm into an agritourism enterprise is not a single, one-step transition, but a process that extends over time (Brandth et al., 2010). This review of literature on identity and farm change, gives only a coarse picture where stability as well as reluctance and diverse processes of change seem to co-exist. The aim of this article is to supply more knowledge of the details of this change.

Turning to tourism research, there is a considerable literature on place identity (Pritchard and Morgan, 2001; Kneafsey, 2000), identity has primarily been studied from the point of view of the tourists and the tourist experience (Oakes, 2006; Veijola, 2006; Palmer, 2005; Uriely, 2005) rather than from the hosts or workers viewpoint. However, studies that have focused on the tourist encounter have pointed at implications for identities on both sides of the encounter (Crouch, 2006; Edensor, 2006; Crouch et al., 2001). In a world where mobility is the norm, identity is impossible to construct without taking the interactive dimensions of tourism into consideration (Lanfant et al., 1995).

Research on tourism-as-work (see special issue of Tourist Studies, 2009) parallels our interest in this article. Veijola and Jokinen (2008) argue that hostessing has become the grounding principle in contemporary work, tourism being a prime example. Hostessing is "a concept of doing and action" (ibid, p. 170). It underscores tourism work as "constant care and concern" (Veijola, 2009, p. 120). Investigating tourism work as performed, experienced and reflected upon by workers themselves, is an opening to study identity.

In this article we are interested in how farm tourist hosts, as self-conscious and active agents, may draw on their past roles and identities – even those that they no longer occupy – to situate themselves in a new working role and identity.

## 2. Theory: the new peasantry and social identity

In conceptualizing the process of change that we are studying, we will draw on perspectives concerning the 'new peasantries' developed by Ploeg (2008). In his work, Ploeg (2010) reinstates peasantry as a theoretically meaningful concept, and argues that it describes processes of agricultural restructuring in developed as well as in developing countries. Accordingly, he sees repeasantization as one of three trends within European rural development. In contrast to the industrial and entrepreneurial modes of agricultural development where specialization is prominent, repeasantization is an endogenous and local process.<sup>1</sup>

The repeasantization process is characterized by three elements that are relevant to our analysis: use of the farm resource base, autonomy and value adding. The farms' own resource base is being diversified and combined into new products. Old and neglected resources are rediscovered, highlighting the continuity of past, present and future. In the development of new products, working farm activities such as milking or meat and vegetable production

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the text we use the concept farmer rather than peasant. It is only when describing the process of change that we use 'repeasantization' theoretically. Ploeg (2008, 2010) conceptualizes peasant farming as the opposite of entrepreneurial and capitalist patterns of farming, and peasants are those being involved in a peasant form of production (Ploeg, 2010, p. 1). The distinction between peasant and farmer is not relevant in this study.

need not be separated from the new activities, but can be combined with them and even remade (cf. Brandth et al., 2010). This co-existence may lead to contradictions of various kinds.

Ploeg (2008) also emphasizes that repeasantization means strengthening the farms' resource base without making them dependent upon financial and industrial capital. This translates into increased *autonomy*, with greater flexibility and more space for decision-making and learning. The struggle for autonomy in a social context of dependency, marginalization and globalization are thus a central aspect of the new peasantry. The third point concerns value adding. Ploeg argues that the shift enlarges the value added both at the level of the farm and the sector as a whole because it progresses through the creation of new, additional income, not through the takeover of other farms.

In short, repeasantization redefines the farm from being limited to the production of raw materials only, into a multi-product enterprise with many new ways of relating to society and nature (Ploeg, 2008, p. 155). It is a process which changes farming because "the traditional boundaries of the specialized farming enterprise" are transgressed (p. 156). What makes it particularly interesting in our case, is that it also implies a redefinition of farm identity. In Ploeg's terms, farmers are reconstituting themselves as 'new peasants', not as yesterday's peasants (p. 152). Similarly, Willis and Campbell (2004) use the term "neo-peasantry" to show how immigrants to rural areas in France practise a blend between "the survival strategies of the old peasantry with the skills and abilities of the educated urban elite" (p. 317). As strands of the pre-modern merge with the late-modern, this produces complex or hybrid rural social forms, identities included.

Concerning farm identity, the theoretical approach we apply in this study argues that identity is simultaneously situated, multiple and relational. We have put together this conceptual lens for studying identity by drawing on a range of ideas – something we will explain in the following.

By *situated* we simply mean that the construction of identity takes place within specific, social contexts. Searching for new activities to counteract economic decline, farmers are situated in a type of employment that is under pressure, in a particular country and on a farm with specific social and material resources. Understanding identity as situated also establishes our framework for theorizing identity as practice, something which is pertinent in this article as it deals with two different types of work, farming and tourism. The practice approach focuses on the regular, everyday practices of the actors involved. Morgan (1996) who has developed this approach in relation to family sociology, reminds us that the significance of practices "derives from their location in wider systems of meaning" (p. 190); in our case the processes of history that have shaped the practices and meanings of farming.

The practice approach underpins *multidimensionality* and challenges notions of identity as singular and coherent. Particularly, research on gender identities has been sensitive towards the dangers of understanding identity as unitary. Building on symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, identities have been interpreted through ideas of 'doing' (West and Zimmerman, 1987). This approach has been prominent in studies of gender identity, where scholars have found that workers in a wide range of occupations and organizations "do gender" in particular ways, based on norms for interactive behavior and assumptions about what customers like. The concept has been further developed to apply also to class, ethnic and sexual identities (West and Fenstermaker, 1995).

As illustrated in the introductory review of literature, different identities originate in different types of work. Not only does work in both tourism and farm production display identities; it constitutes them. Identities are not just brought to work; they are forged through it (Crang, 1997, p. 152). Following this line of thinking,

multiplicity means that we cannot expect all farmers to 'do' the same farm identity. Multiple engagements in farming may shape multiple farm identities. Farmers who have diversified into tourism may practice it in many ways, emphasizing various aspects of farm resources and undertaking it in different constellations and forms of labour.

Further, understanding identity as multiple suggests that multiple identity locations exist not only within the collective – but also on the individual level. Since individuals enter into a variety of social collectives, each individual may have several identities that develop through the life-course and act on many arenas that are important to them. Thus, "modernity's overlapping and intersecting relationships, networks and affiliations lead to an increasingly dense population of the self" (Brekhus, 2008, p. 1064). Stressing women's heterogeneity of context and experience, Young (1994) has used the concept of 'serial identities' to describe this aspect. Accordingly, it should be possible to construct identities as both a farmer and a tourist host – or even as particular subcategories of farmers and tourist hosts.

The contextual situatedness of social identity links it to the perception of self and how to act in a manner corresponding to prevailing expectations from others. This is the relational character of identity. Within the symbolic interactionist school of thought, identity is produced in interactions. It is through interacting with significant and generalized others that individuals develop their sense of selves.

To share identity with a collective means that there is a common understanding of what occurrences and objects mean. Individuals accept the symbolic meaning of behaviors of the group to which they belong, and a failure to display the symbols of group belonging may result in social disapproval and a corresponding decrease in self-esteem. Burton (2004) points out that the 'audience' (or significant others) for farmers is other farmers. For a farmer, it is important how well-managed the farm is, how the fields are plowed, how evenly the fertilizer has been distributed and how large the crops are. This is what governs other farmers' impressions, gives status and confirms identity in relation to other farmers. When operating an agritourist business the important audience is the visitors. They judge the farm tourist hosts on the basis of how friendly and service minded they are, how tasty and delicious the food is, how comfortable the beds are, and how interesting the stories told and the activities offered are.

Brandth and Haugen (2005) have shown how rural men play to a more urban audience when they bring tourists into the wilderness, and how this audience influences dress, language and manners. At the same time, it is important to retain their image as rural men. Performative metaphors are productive in theorizing tourism work and identity because they are, according to Crang (1997, p. 153) "powerful constructions of the relations between work and the self". They show how the labour undertaken is not only economic but also cultural. Products of tourism are cultural representations which need culturally meaningful selves.

For these reasons, we may expect farm tourism and agriculture to give rise to various identities because they represent many different types of work tasks with different symbols and audiences. Both types of work do, however, take place at the same site – the farm – and the farm is not just a site of work. As Burton (2004, p. 207) reminds us, it is a portrait of the farmer himself. Moreover, the farm has a history, and it represents those who have lived and worked there before. Research has pointed out that farmers have a strong relationship to their land, and that the land is of vital importance to farm identity (Little, 2002).

One approach to the study of identity change is examining situations where identity may, in various ways, become problematic. In line with this, Brekhus (2008, p. 1073) has suggested that the

study of “identity shifts should focus on transitions, crossroads and watershed events”. A farm developing into agritourism may thus represent a well-suited situation for exploring processes of identity transformation. Here, we are concerned with what happens to farmers’ identities in the process through which service production assumes greater importance. How do they do farm identity when practicing tourist hosting? Tourism is a type of work where the cultural competencies of those involved are practiced. One interesting aspect is therefore how a farm habitus may serve tourist hosting, which is a type of work where relations and encounter with visitors are central. Will we find a continuation of existing roles and identities, or will tourism-as-work (service work being very different work from farming) weaken farm identity and produce other, more multiple identities?

In analyzing this topic we pursue three major lines of investigation. First, we are interested in the re-peasantization process and the extent to which the development of tourism activities on farms can be understood from this perspective. Secondly, we focus how tourism work and products mediate farm identity (i.e. they sell who they are: food, stories, activities, hosts, clothes). Thirdly, we ask how agritourism destabilizes the social identity of the farmers.

### 3. Material and methods

The article is drawn from two empirical studies of farms that are engaged in farm tourism. The first interviews were conducted in 2005/2006 as part of a pilot project, while the remainders were conducted during 2008 when the main project “Nature-based farm tourism” had gained funding. The total sample consists of 19 farm tourism enterprises from various districts in Norway. We selected most of the sample from a catalogue marketing agritourism farms. In addition, we relied on our network and own knowledge of possible cases. Criteria for sampling was that the businesses had small scale tourism activities based on a family farm which was run by the farm couple. In one case the agritourism operation was a joint operation between 2 farms. The majority of farmers in Norway cannot make a living from the farm without having additional income. This has also been the case for our sample, as both women and men have held off-farm employment for longer or shorter periods. At the time of the interviews all had been doing agritourism from 3 to 23 years, and they seemed to have succeeded in the market.

From the nineteen cases (20 farms), 35 persons were formally interviewed; sixteen women and nineteen men. Each interview was conducted at the farm site and lasted between 2 and 3 h; they were audio-taped and later fully transcribed. The interviews were semi-structured and flexible in style, giving the possibility to follow up on matters that were particularly interesting in each case. As a starting point for the interview, a list was made of items to explore and this encouraged open discussion. Discussion centered on the transformation to tourism and its implications. The development of the product and the business, consequences for the farm and the family, their working situation, competence, division of work, gender and identity were of interest. All the cases are used in the analysis, but not equally represented in the quotations.

All except four of the couples in our sample had operated a farm before starting agritourism. Although the majority either had been or still are part-time farmers, they had diverse backgrounds and work experiences. Nearly all had higher education or vocational training and work experience. Many were in-migrants or return migrants to the rural community where they started agritourism. These multiple (versatile) backgrounds make the question of social identity challenging.

Among our sample, the importance of agricultural production varies between negligible to being as important as the farm tourism

activity. In a survey of farm tourism operators (which is a part of the larger project), four categories of combinations of agritourism and conventional farm activities were identified based on the amount of work input in both activities (Kroken et al., 2009). On some farms agritourism was the sole or *main activity*; on other farms it was an *equal combination* between tourism and farm production; and on some farms, tourism was an *additional* or *hobby* activity (2009, p.36). Nine of the farms in our sample have tourism as their main activity, while five have an equal combination of farming and tourism. Five of the farms have tourism as an additional or hobby activity.

For the purpose of the analysis we use all the cases and interviews, however we have chosen to describe 3 farms which illustrate particularly well the variation of the sample – between those who have agritourism as their main activity and those who have agritourism as an additional activity – and to give a more complete picture of the context, the people, the products and the farms.

#### 3.1. Agritourism as the main activity

Mary and John are in their early sixties and have operated their farm for nearly 40 years. Mary grew up at the farm, while John moved to the area when marrying Mary. John worked as a carpenter in addition to sheep farming, and Mary took care of their three children and the household. Their farm is located in one of the most scenically beautiful mountain areas in Norway, and is a popular area for mountain hiking. They started in tourism 15 years ago, and as the response was very good they gradually expanded their tourism activities. After some years they found that the combination of farming and tourism was too demanding, so they sold the sheep and leased the land to a neighbour farmer. Today they have an all-year-round business and employ a few locals during peak periods. They offer traditional foods based on locally-produced meat and self-developed recipes, day visits with cultural experiences for groups, overnight stays and functions (weddings, anniversaries, conference facilities). They have also developed a farm museum that shows the farm history, and offer guided tours in the cultural landscape combined with serving meals outdoors.

#### 3.2. Agritourism as an equal combination with agriculture

Birgit and Leif are in their fifties. They bought the farm from a relative 12 years ago and started ecological meat and dairy production. Both had paid work in addition to the farm. In the beginning they built and rented out some cabins for tourists. They soon saw the potential in tourism, and gradually expanded the tourism business while still farming. Some years ago they ceased dairy production as they found its combination with off-farm jobs and tourism to be too demanding. They rebuilt the old barn into a restaurant, reception area and assembly rooms. Much of the food served in the restaurant is based on their produce of ecological meat and vegetables. As the work load grew, Birgit recently chose to quit her off-farm job as a nurse and become fully employed on the farm, while Leif still has a job in addition to the farm work. Birgit is the manager of the tourism aspect while Leif manages the farm work and assists with the agritourism work.

#### 3.3. Agritourism as an additional activity or a hobby

Daniel and Grete bought an abandoned small farm holding in the 1990s. They left their relatively well paid jobs in order to turn to a more traditional lifestyle and realise a dream of country living. Daniel grew up in a city, while Grete grew up in the area where they bought the small holding. They have both studied 3 years at

a university college, and have varied work experience from agriculture, outdoor life activities, tourism, handicraft and public services. Daniel and Grete are both in their late thirties and have two children. Their wish is to make a living out of the farm in the future, by building up and expanding their farm tourism services and products. Grete works part-time as a municipal advisor, while Daniel receives a disability benefit following an accident. Since beginning small scale agritourism in 2001, they have gradually transformed the small holding into a popular place for day visits for families and groups who want to have a taste of country life. They keep a few animals in order to create an old fashioned farm ambience for the visitors, and grow some herbs, vegetables and fruit in order to offer some locally-produced food. They prepare and serve lunch for visitors, but do not have overnight accommodation. The barn has been restored and turned into a farm shop in addition to conference and party facilities for small groups. They only open in the summer season and before Christmas.

#### 4. Agritourism as repeasantization

Pluriactivity has always been a common characteristic of Norwegian agriculture. Farming has been combined with other income sources, and expanding into farm tourism is a continuation of this tradition. According to Ploeg (2008), the essence of the peasant principle is to stabilize and expand the resource base of the farm (p. 159). Nils, who after many years of strawberry production and small scale sheep herding now has tourism as the main activity on his farm, explains:

“Multi-pursuits are an old tradition in this area. Farming has never given enough means of livelihood for a family. (...) So identity is much tied up to being a traditional farmer with modifications. A traditional farmer has the freedom to go for new tasks but has a sound basis, and that’s the farm. And this is the case here, too. Identity is linked to having many tasks, getting new ideas and implementing them.”

Here, his term ‘traditional farmer’ refers to a small scale producer who has income from various other sources during the year. Nils thus communicates a peasant thinking: the farm is a basis and there are many other activities that can be combined with a working farm. Martin, a former dairy farmer, said: “We have a tourist product that is based on the farm and the persons who live on the farm. We have a lot of outlying fields, and we saw a potential. Without the farm and the outlying fields, there would not be any tourist business.” This quote illustrates the importance of farm resources for the development of tourism. The business is dependent on the location of the farm being attractive to visitors. The qualities of the landscape in particular, but also the farm buildings and the cultural history of the farm, convey this value. By means of their craftsmanship they renovate the buildings, making the farm site more attractive to visitors.

Another farm couple, Ruth and Egil, took over a farm dating back to the 1850s. The old barn was about to fall apart, and they decided to rebuild it and start a restaurant serving local foods. Moreover, Ruth tells about how the environmental heritage of the farm opened up possibilities to offer quite original products:

“We realised that we could take advantage of the fact that there is a bat-colony on the property; it could be part of what we could offer as interesting for people who visited. Then by chance a geologist came by, and he told us that there were some unique geological formations not far from the farm. Now we have started out to find a way where these can be brought together into a product.”

The heritage of the place is an important aspect of their products. The tracks of generations that have put their mark on the buildings and landscape, as well as the paths of the animals, enter into the products that are offered to tourists – as stories or artefacts. Some, like Grete and Daniel who moved to the area after having bought an abandoned small holding, try to produce an illusion of traditional peasant farming with many small animals around the farm yard. Others let the old buildings and the farm history represent a cultural framework for the visit. Often, the products are a combination of the modern and the traditional. The place and the buildings may be old, but the standard is contemporary. “Renewal through tradition” is a slogan used by one of the farmers.

To start tourism on the farm is a way to maintain and renew the farm and its assets. In agrarian ideology, taking care of the farm resources and improving them for successors is a central imperative. This mentality is present as the owners continue to take care of and build on local traditions, albeit for commercial reasons. As Egil says: “I always had the intention that I will pass over the barn to my children in a better shape than it was when I took over. Now I think it will be in a condition that is ten times as good!” This constant development and improvement of the business parallels the idea of continuous expansion and modernization of the farm. In our sample we see that tourism is the way to ensure a living farm for the future.

According to Ploeg (2008), autonomy is another of the central characteristics of repeasantization. “To be one’s own boss” is repeatedly emphasized as important by our sample of farmers. None of the farms have external investors. The owners use their own capital, avoid taking up large loans and take pride in working very hard to build the business step by step, not “to bite off more than we can chew,” as Daniel said. What profit they make is commonly reinvested in the business. Egil says: “We don’t want to have external investors who can command and control the development of the enterprise, and therefore it will necessarily take more time [to develop it]. It is not desirable to put oneself in great debt. I don’t want that.” Taking small steps, their objective is not only autonomy at the individual level, but autonomy of the farm as well. As Schmitt (in press) has pointed out, agritourism has an emancipatory side to it.

One further aspect of autonomy is being self-employed. This means being independent and free to make decisions based on one’s own priorities. The desire for autonomy as a driving force for agritourism has been identified in a number of other studies (Schmitt, in press; McGehee et al., 2007; Busby and Rendle, 2000). This is also most clearly seen among the women in the sample who had made a conscious choice of a self-employed lifestyle when they started tourism together with their husbands. Many of them quit their off-farm jobs in order to be involved full time in the tourist business. Their motivation is to create new income opportunities on the farm to enable a return to the family farm business.

The ways that agritourism contributes to strengthening the resource base of the farm, and the ways many women (and men) reinvest their labour and competence in the farm, result in additional value added. This is in addition to the fact that many of the farms are developed by in- or return migrants, which adds value to the farm and the agricultural sector as well as to the rural community. To quote Willis and Campbell (2004, p. 327)’s observation of neo-peasants in France: “They are the ones who produce ‘authentic’ local goods, they are the ones who rebuild ruined farm houses in an authentic fashion, they are the ones who carry the vision of patrimoine...”. Such use of farm resources in new ways is an example of value added. Vacant buildings are used for accommodation, and farm products are processed and served in the farm restaurant or sold in the farm shop. Tourism work sometimes also

pays off more than farm work, as one of the hosts told us: “We soon learnt that we could earn more money by serving coffee to a few groups of visitors than keeping twenty sheep indoors during winter”.

In summary, we have seen that the process of development into agritourism has characteristics of re-peasantization. All of our farmers build upon and communicate a strong attachment to the peasant principle, something that may resonate with their social identity. The new tourism activities, even though they are within the frames of an old industry may, however, necessitate a reinterpretation of (farm) identity. Next, our focus is on how identity is produced by their work and performance as hosts, the products they offer, and the stories they tell.

### 5. Agritourism strengthens farm identity

The men and women in our sample have various educational backgrounds and have lived on (and in most cases operated) a working farm as either their main source of income or one of several sources. Since they all do agritourism, in this section we explore how they construct themselves through agritourism-as-work – i.e. through their hosting and the products they sell.

During their everyday work as tourist hosts, a high importance is attached to taking good care of the guests. “From the very first telephone conversation with potential guests it is important to make them feel welcome to this place”, Mary explained. To be a tourist host demands that they are always available for the guests and in a good mood. Service mindedness is considered necessary in order to build a good reputation for the place. Martin, who works full time within agritourism, explains that as a tourist host one has to offer oneself all the time, and continues: “I think one must be aware that when you do farm tourism, you are part of the product whether you like it or not.” What Martin implies is that identity is a product offered to the tourist/consumer. This is a process that may (re)construct identities (Crouch, 2006).

Mariann, who runs a successful tourist farm together with her husband, has the same experience as Martin: “We *are* the place in a way. I think it is because of *us* that people come here. I am quite sure of that”. She continues: “It must be personal – you visit Mariann and Olav’s farm. That is how we want it. Without hosts with a belonging to the farm, you may as well go to a hotel!” Martin expands on this same idea: “At a hotel you don’t walk up to the receptionist and start talking to him about what he does in his everyday life and things like that. But they [the visitors] do here. They are interested in hearing about how we live and what we do...” Many visitors might not find the place interesting to visit if it resembled any other restaurant or conference site. It is the soul and uniqueness of the farm site, its heritage and the hosts as representations of this uniqueness that make it attractive. Indeed, it is life itself that is made into a tourist object (Morris, 1995). Alternatively, what these farmers express can be seen as a form of resistance against the homogenizing influences of global tourism, something Coleman and Crang (2002, p. 2) following Ritzer (1998) has associated with the McDonaldization of travel: the same burger chain sells hamburgers of the same quality throughout the whole world.

Storytelling is an important part of what is offered on all the farms. Through telling stories from their lives they sustain their sense of self. As research within the narrative tradition has shown, people living in modern societies give meaning to their lives by constructing and internalizing stories that are self-defining (McAdams et al., 2006). Stories about the farm and the people who used to live on the farm in earlier times are popular. Olav and Mariann take great care that everyone who comes to their farm gets a presentation. Olav says:

“We tell stories about the rural community and the nature and... yes about many things around here. And, that we actually have great competence in these matters, makes people listen a bit more than they otherwise would have done. That’s how we people are. I like very much to teach people a bit, to make sure that they bring something with them from here, not just food and a bed, but actually some contribution to their knowledge about what it is like living in a sparsely populated rural area.”

Their farming background gives them legitimacy as experts on the place and the surrounding landscape and nature. Since many of the hosts have grown up in the area, they can share with their guests their knowledge about farming, farm life, plants, animals and the forests during their childhood. Some have created a farm museum in order to impart knowledge about the local culture and history of the farm. In this way, family and earlier generations, history and heritage are embodied as parts of the product. “I tell the story about the family who have lived here for more than 300 years,” Turid, the host on a large farm with characteristics of an old manor, says. “They used to be fiddlers in the last generations. Therefore, people who are interested in old fiddling traditions enjoy coming here. So, we have concerts, as this is part of what we want to communicate.” She and her husband arrange cultural events in the farm’s spare best rooms that they had redecorated into their original splendour. Through storytelling and staging they integrate the past and the present and this helps to constitute coherent identities. Several of our farmers thus do what has become quite common within tourism – and that is to develop concepts around more or less fictitious characters connected to the farm or local area (Mossberg, 2008).

By sharing a story, be it from their own life, the family history, the place, the farm, or the traditional food being served, the hosts strive to give their guests a personal, memorable and meaningful experience. Being rooted in farming adds authenticity to their storytelling. And it is through these narratives that they make themselves meaningful. As Martin said: “When we tell about this place, what we offer, and what they may participate in, then we present our culture – and we present a bit of ourselves.”

Food is another important aspect of what hosts present as part of their identity and culture. Many of the hosts hold knowledge of traditional food processing unknown to most modern consumers. They sometimes offer this knowledge as part of their product. For instance, some produce cheese and so allow the guests to participate in cheese making themselves. On one of the farms in this study, they hired a cheese maker who was able to show the guests how cheese was made on farms in the old days. Olav explains that as a first step they let the guests milk the goats. “Then we had a woman come in the evening to make cheese in the court yard. And, I don’t think any of them had ever imagined the amount of work implied in cooking one kilo goat’s cheese! They were totally impressed! They didn’t know it was such a job.”

The type of food served is a further way to mediate identity. They emphasize serving home cooked food based on products from the farm, highlighting either ecological or local production. Mariann says:

“We serve local, traditional food. Lamb and game are common in this area. And then there are foods we don’t serve. People expect to be served food from the mountains – from the area, so we don’t serve seafood. This is important – we serve lamb, deer, and moose – what we have [produced or hunted] ourselves.”

Food and wine are integral parts of contemporary tourism (Hjalager and Richards, 2002). Apart from the commonplace need for tourists to eat and drink there is a widely accepted understanding that food may act as an important part of the tourist experience (Hashimoto and Telfer, 2006; Kivela and Crofts, 2006).

Another aspect of food identity may be the use of self-developed recipes or local dishes; take Mary for instance, whose specialty was a dessert recipe developed by her mother. Lisa had specialized in what she termed 'Viking food', as a famous Viking chief was buried nearby and gave identity to the area. Food is integrated into tourism through being connected to place. Furthermore, it may be the size of the portions that symbolizes countryside living. Lisa put her pride into serving plentiful portions of food. "I am scared that people think; my god, you can't even eat to the full. I will not have a reputation of being stingy." Guests may anticipate "good old rural hospitality" or have expectations based on traditional country stereotypes of farm women, something she lives up to. Lastly, the surroundings where the meal is served are important in displaying identity. Many take great care to create a country atmosphere in decorating the dining rooms in an old style with fireplace and gadgets of different sorts. Meals are also prepared and served outdoors.

None of the farms in our sample offer participation in their contemporary farm work as a product. The activities offered are rather rooted in older modes of farm work like milking by hand, haying, and feeding small animals. Many activities are nature-based: angling, hiking, hunting, boating, etc. Farmers make sure that the activities connect to the area and its nature, and male hosts often offer guiding based on their knowledge of the forests and mountains and thereby support their identities as rural men (cf. Brandth and Haugen, 2010). Like Martin says: "I have always been interested in hunting and fishing. Otherwise I wouldn't have started this business. When we had to diversify the farm, we had to do something we were interested in. And now I am doing outdoor life and get paid for it."

Tourism work has consequences for the way they present themselves, and thus for how they appear. They display who they are by means of dress. Many of the farm tourist hosts wear special costumes, made of moose hide or garments woven with traditional patterns, for example. The intention is that their dress mediates local rural culture and their belonging to agriculture and nature. Sarah says:

"We try to be careful about our presentation – that everything is consistent. We want to present our own culture and not have any foreign elements included. The food we serve is based on local raw materials, and the activities we arrange are out in the wilderness (...), and then it fits very well with working clothes made of moose hide."

While dress is important in displaying social identity, it may communicate ambivalence however. Some hosts want to convey local, rural belonging by wearing their national costume; others find it important to communicate their respect for the guests by dressing properly; while others again stress practicality. Mariann explains that she does not feel comfortable wearing a national or local costume:

"I can't take it dashing around in a peasant girl's costume. I have to be myself... It also has to do with all the different tasks we do – from doing dishes, cooking, cleaning, fetching herbs in the garden... We do all the tasks ourselves. But it is ok to dress so that the guests can see who are the hosts."

From this quote we sense a tension between their farm identity and their identity as hosts, something we will return to later. Through dress, hosts can mark differences between themselves and their rural/farm way of life, and the guests who are only making a visit and are outsiders in a way. This is illustrated by Roger who takes small groups on fishing trips and overnight stays in the mountains: "We have our clothes and skiing equipment that we have learned to adapt to during a long life. And it functions! It is not as

fashionable as the tourists' who come here with all kinds of special gears with GII and Gore-tex, and I don't know what," he says.

In summary, from the passages above we have shown how identity construction relates to the past and heritage of the farm. Identity becomes relational as they both play up to the expectations of their guests and construct themselves as different from them. This difference is imperative because it is their rural/farm identity which forms their product and main attraction. It is practiced and mediated through their hosting work – the stories they tell, the food they make and serve, the activities they arrange and their appearance. Thus, we may conclude that diversification into tourism (repeasantization) does not diminish their farm identity, rather the opposite – it reinforces it.

## 6. Struggles over identities

Difference plays an important part in marking social identity, and as we have seen, the farm tourist hosts place themselves in a category that is different from the guests. In this section we focus on the identities within the category of farm tourist hosts where there is great variation concerning the farms' geographical location, size and former production. Although it varies whether tourism is the only income or is combined with farming, we will below look at three cases where tourism forms the major part of their work and income. We explore how identities are multiple, and how various struggles over identities may be linked to diversification into tourism.

One way to approach the question of identity was to ask how farm tourist hosts labeled themselves. The first case illustrates tourist hosts with a persistent identity as farmers. Martin, who used to run a dairy farm, explained:

"I usually fill 'farmer' in official papers, because I think of myself as still being a farmer. I live on a farm and even though I do not farm, I administer the farmland. And we run the tourist business on the farm; it is a part of the farming, too. So, still I count myself as a farmer."

Peter, who joined forces with Martin in developing a nature-based business, shares this view: "A farmer, that's what I am. The business is part of the farm, and we use the land [the outlying fields]. So even though I am not a dairy farmer anymore I produce adventures based on the farm resources." As Peter's wife, Sarah, also explained: "It is the farm that is the basis for us being able to run this business. So we feel like farmers. We have never used the farm as efficiently – so one hundred percent – as we do after having started with farm tourism."

Although their dairy production had closed down, Peter and Sarah communicate a distinct identity as farmers, and link this identity to the use of the farm resources regardless of how these resources are used. In their view it does not matter that it is for tourism and not for the production of milk. Moreover, it seems that they define their identity by connecting more to the land, the place and the buildings, rather than to the work of conventional production. It is the place they belong to, and this place gives them identity. For, as it was said: "This is where we have our roots, both in the culture and in the history of the farm. This is what we carry on with and build on." Martin, Peter and Sarah illustrate the repeasantization process.

That a farm identity persists in cases where conventional farm production does not, may be interpreted as a *lingering* identity – whereby they cling to an identity that is no longer timely – or a *transportable* identity in which identity accompanies the person beyond the situation or the particular doings that enter into the farm production of food. A third, and perhaps more likely interpretation, is to understand their identity as still being within that

which constitutes a farmer. This category is still meaningful to them even though it is no longer attached to the conventional meaning of farmer as a producer of food and fibre. Work has changed, but this has not automatically resulted in identity change. It has been argued that it is the content of the categories 'farmer' and 'farming' that need to change in order to match the post-productivist countryside (Heggen, 2008). This is what Martin, Peter and Sarah may be in the process of doing. Their identity struggle seems to defend their farm identity and inclusion in the local farming community despite of the changes.

In the second case, identity is clearly affected by the change in business type and thus work practice. John and Mary were sheep farmers for many years until deciding to close down their farm production and dispose of the animals. They describe this as a turning point identity-wise. It was hard to give up the sheep that had been their working life for so many years. But, as the tourist business expanded, it could not be avoided as the combination became too troublesome. John says: "The biggest change for me was to start cooking on a full time basis. I was in the kitchen for up to 16 h at a maximum. And then it was when we had to quit farming. I did enjoy being in the sheepcote. (...) It felt very strange for a long time." For him there were two watershed events: cooking and getting rid of the sheep. One event strengthened his identity as a tourist host. The other weakened his identity as a farmer.

In John and Mary's case, the tourist-related activities demanded a lot of time and energy, and combining them with farming became difficult, not only time-wise, but also in terms of professionalism and presentation of self. In many respects a professional tourist host does not sit well with being a farmer. Cooking and serving guests demand that you don't smell of the cowshed or have dirty fingernails – even if the dining takes place in the former cowshed. When the hosts in our study make an effort to construct an attractive (farm) setting for the tourists, there are clear limits as to how many of the farm practices can be part of the stage.

The way tourist hosting influences identity is seen in the way the couples experience diversification into tourism. The ambivalence concerning work identity is illustrated in the following dialogue between Mary and John. When asked what they call themselves, they say:

Mary: Tourist host, no, I call myself hostess or landlady.

John: Then I am the hired man.

Mary: No, you are the chef.

We: If you have to fill in your profession on a form, what do you put?

Mary: I call myself a hostess.

John: Host. We are hosts.

Mary: Yes, because we rent out our farmland to a neighbour. He will care for the land, and then we can't precisely label ourselves farmers anymore. We have turned into full time tourist hosts.

Their reflection shows how the change in work has gradually influenced their identity. As they identify a couple of turning points, first cooking then ceasing farming, identity change has occurred over a longer time period. One cannot speak of an abrupt break between a new identity and an old. This case seems to suggest that the farm identity that was connected to caring for the land and the animals is no longer deserved. They feel they do too little conventional farm work to deserve membership in the category 'farmer'. Tourism on the other hand has increased in importance for how they see themselves. Mary and John have taken pride in working very professionally at their tourist business and have chosen to invest much of themselves in the work with visitors. "We could have kept the tourism business on a small scale and then we would have been able to continue with farming as the main

occupation," Mary said, "but for us, it went so well, and we enjoyed it more, both of us." In many ways they are drawn into the new identities as they assume new tasks.

To do a good job at hosting requires professionalism, which is itself a prerequisite for a flourishing business. This implies the need to be self-conscious about what it means to be a professional host at a particular place. The farm site is important for their business, but their identities as farmers are constantly challenged by the new and different work requirements of tourism. The more professional they become at hosting, the greater importance their identity as hosts may become. As some of our interviews show, identities that match the new work roles may be developing, and some of the couples have gone further than others towards constituting themselves as professional tourist hosts. Tourism has thus become a salient part of their social identity.

The third case in our analysis of identity struggles is Olav and Mariann. Both were teachers before they inherited the farm and started farming. Over the years, they have reduced the number of sheep in order to make the farming aspect of their livelihood more compatible with tourism. On answering our question about self-labeling, Olav and Mariann both hold that they don't have particular occupational labels. Mariann elaborates:

"It is very variable what title I use – it depends... I sit as a land court judge, and in that context I like to write that I am a farmer. In other contexts I say that I am a tourist host, and yet at other times I use teacher. It is all according to what feels natural in the situation and what status I can get in relation to what I need, I think."

This is a good illustration of how identities are situational, multiple and relational. Mariann emphasizes different aspects of herself depending on the social settings or social networks in which she participates. For example, she explained that when she needs that the guests' take confidence in her, she emphasizes her identity as tourist host. This way of seeing shifting identities does not imply breaks between identities, as going from one to another. Rather it may be a daily flow between different identities. Identities shift back and forth. If 'farmer' is a master identity (as it mainly is in our sample), this master identity may still be mobile and mixed with other intersecting identity affiliations.

Thus, it is possible to juggle several identities: two of the most salient ones being professional tourist host and farmer. Farm identity is a prerequisite for, and gives legitimacy to the tourist host, while being a professional tourist host challenges their identity as farmer in many respects. It may seem like a paradox that in order to attract visitors, they have to perform as professional tourist hosts, but at the same time they need to preserve their identity as farmers as this is the very foundation upon which the business and its product is built.

## 7. Conclusion

In this article we have focused on social identity in order to contribute to understanding the nature of ongoing changes in the agricultural sector. Based on interviews with farmers who practice various combinations of tourism and farming, the article has explored how social identity may be affected by farm diversification into tourism.

The development of farms into agritourism businesses has characteristics of repeasantization, in which products are developed incrementally from the farm resources, thus keeping strong links to the past. Agritourism builds upon the farm, on the competence of farmers, and on what the farm has meant in terms of mentality and lifestyle. Moreover, the desire for autonomy both in terms of being self-employed and financially independent has been



an important driving force. It is also important to note that farm heritage and culture are combined with new elements thus adding value and turning the farmers into what may be conceptualized as 'neo-peasants'. This group of farmers blends the survival strategies of the old peasantry with modern demands. As such, tourism does not represent a break with farming, but is in many ways a continuation of an active farm.

Relating to the research 'dispute' on whether farm identities are stable or changing, we have emphasized the everyday practice of hosting tourists when analyzing how identities are done. What we find is that farm identities play an invaluable role for the attractiveness of the tourist business. The business is based on their hosts' identity and this identity is played out in their hosting style, storytelling, food, activities and their bodily displays. Since visitors are interested in local authenticity and the farm backgrounds, it is necessary to feed into these ideas and expectations of the place and its people to deliver a credible product. For that reason it seems necessary for the hosts to maintain an identity rooted in farming. Abandoning it would be to cut the ground from under their feet, and lose valuable assets for tourism. In relation to the guests, then, hosts' identity is about marking themselves as different. The presentation and selling of otherness and the unique (see Urry, 1990) are their main product, and it is the tastes of a rural reality that are the basis for the interest of tourists.

On the whole, farm identity seems strong despite their diversification of the farm into tourism. While this is an important finding, we also see indications that the identity category of 'farmer' is given meanings which encompass many activities, products and services. The hosts regard themselves as farmers also when they no longer farm. However, we have also shown that this is not always the understanding. Farm identity may be attached to activities that assume special, symbolic value, such as producing milk or meat and growing field crops. With these activities gone, farm identity may be disputed or felt not to be deserved.

Another factor that enters into tourist hosting is the necessity of being professional at hosting and service production. Working with tourists means that the farmers have to be sensitive to other peoples' expectations and needs in order to create positive experiences for those who buy the services. This demands that hosts concentrate on the guests and are available and accommodating. Being part of the product also means that they must perform as professionals in many respects. The quality of the product depends on their work and the interaction with their guests. This may warrant an identity as tourist host, an identity that gradually may replace a farm identity. However, from the data we also see multiplicity practiced as serial identities that shift as they relate to various social memberships, as well as to cultural and geographical settings. Thus, identity through time may not be linear, but rather fluid and context dependent. The people in our study realign their identity in various ways when they comply with the needs and expectations of both farming and tourism.

In Norway there have been worries that the countryside is losing its qualities and that the change to agritourism may threaten farming cultures and lead to closedowns of active farms. From what we have seen through the rural development processes of 'repeasantification' and identity dynamics described in this article, this fear is groundless. Our study has shown that agritourism has revitalized farms that otherwise might have been abandoned, and that farm identities are carried on, albeit in ways that are multiple and have various meanings.

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