

Authors' Accepted Manuscript of Brandth, B., M. S. Haugen & B. Kramvig (2013). Taming the Village Beast: Rural Entrepreneurship as the art of balance between economic growth and social sustainability. In Elisabete Figueiredo and Antonio Raschi (eds): *Fertile links? Connections between tourism activities, socioeconomic contexts and local development in European rural areas*, Firenze University Press, 107-127

Corresponding author: Marit S. Haugen ([marit.haugen@rural.no](mailto:marit.haugen@rural.no))

## **Taming the Village Beast: Rural Entrepreneurship as the art of balance between economic growth and social sustainability.**

Short title: Taming the Village Beast

Berit Brandth, Marit S. Haugen, and Britt Kramvig

### **Biographical note:**

Berit Brandth is professor in sociology at the Department of Sociology and Political Science, Norwegian University of Science and Technology and the Centre for Rural Research in Trondheim. Her research focuses on masculinity and femininity in agriculture- and forestry-based work. Her research topics also include gender, work, and care politics with special emphasis on fathers and parental leave. Among her publications are 'Doing Farm Tourism: The Intertwining Practices of Gender and Work', *SIGNS* (2010) and 'Farm tourism and dilemmas of commercial activity in the home', *Hospitality & Society* (2012), both co-authored with M.S. Haugen.

Marit S. Haugen has a doctorate in sociology from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. She is research manager at the Centre for Rural Research in Trondheim. Her research focuses on gender issues in agriculture and rural communities, work and life quality, work and gender identity, images of the rural, and rural tourism. Her publications within the field of tourism research include: 'Farmers as entrepreneurs: The case of farm-based tourism', *Int. J. Entrepreneurship and Small Business* (2008), co-authored with Jostein Vik, and 'Visitors to farm based tourist enterprises in Norway', *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* (2010), with A. Blekesaune and B. Brandth.

Britt Kramvig is trained as a multidisciplinary ethnographic researcher and holds a Ph. D. from the Department of Planning and Community studies at the University in Tromsø. She is inspired by music, lyrics, art and films besides reading into postcolonial, phenomenological and feminist studies. Her life as well as work is rooted in the Arctic region; from where different texts and films entering the existential and everyday

Authors' Accepted Manuscript of Brandth, B., M. S. Haugen & B. Kramvig (2013). Taming the Village Beast: Rural Entrepreneurship as the art of balance between economic growth and social sustainability. In Elisabete Figueiredo and Antonio Raschi (eds): *Fertile links? Connections between tourism activities, socioeconomic contexts and local development in European rural areas*, Firenze University Press, 107-127

challenges of live emerge. Publications include “'The Future can only be Imagined” – Innovation in Farm Tourism from a Phenomenological Perspective’, *The Open Social Science Journal* (2010), co-authored with B. Brandth and M.S. Haugen.

## **Taming the Village Beast: Rural Entrepreneurship as the art of balance between economic growth and social sustainability.**

Berit Brandth, Marit S. Haugen, and Britt Kramvig<sup>1</sup>

In this neighbourhood, there are strong sentiments for what we are doing [...] We have had some entrepreneurs here – somebody who just comes in, and stomp[s] off without looking around and involving the people in the processes, infuriating the people. There are many people who use these areas in different ways, and that must be taken into account. (A business entrepreneur in rural Norway)

### **Introduction**

The establishment of new businesses founded on both nature and culture is seen as innovative and is supported by central authorities. At the same time, establishing a new business challenges local practices, ownership, power relationships and the community and can thus be an example of a classic social dilemma, where acts of self-interest collide with collective interests. Conflicts arise when common resources and goods are privatised, commercialised and traded on a market (Brox 2001). New businesses, although seen by policy makers as a necessity for the survival of communities, are not always supported either by those living in the village, or by new entrepreneurs' funding agencies, something indicated by the quote above.

The resource base of sites and places, economic structures, traditions and established social organisations represent both opportunities and obstacles to entrepreneurship. Often, the social community's basic values and rituals are tacit and unspoken. A community's collective memory and common opinion are reproduced through practices that have traces of repetition and continuity (Connerton 1989). The key claim that anchors this enquiry is that these are the unwritten rules that entrepreneurs should follow when it is community assets

---

<sup>1</sup> Berit Brandth, Department of Sociology and Political Science, Norwegian University of Science and Technology and Centre for Rural Research, Trondheim, Norway ([berit.brandth@svt.ntnu.no](mailto:berit.brandth@svt.ntnu.no))

Marit S. Haugen, Centre for Rural Research, Trondheim, Norway ([marit.haugen@rural.no](mailto:marit.haugen@rural.no))

Britt Kramvig, Department of Sociology, Political Science and Social Planning, University of Tromsø, Norway ([britt.kramvig@uit.no](mailto:britt.kramvig@uit.no))

and resources that are being turned into tourism products. In order to assess this claim, we review the social interaction between entrepreneurs who establish farm tourism businesses and the local communities in which the businesses are established. How do entrepreneurs experience this first meeting, and how do they design and adapt their activities to the local communities' unwritten rules? We examine this through academic and local understandings of this process – including the understanding of the metaphorical existence of the 'village beast' that guards boundaries in entrepreneurs' interactions with local communities. The "village beast" may be a Scandinavian expression, but hopefully interesting in other contexts as well.

### **Establishing the business – between individual opportunities and collective frames?**

Establishing a business and entrepreneurship is about using resources in new ways, and often challenging existing values and practices. It is an economic as well as a social activity (Berg and Foss 2002, Bruni et al. 2004), and it has both an individual and collective side. We are interested in the social and cultural context of local entrepreneurship and business development, and how this frames the establishment of nature-based farm tourism in small local communities.

Establishing new businesses in rural areas is a complex process and is the focus of much public debate and research. Parts of the traditional literature on entrepreneurship have focused on the individual characteristics that transform an individual into an entrepreneur. Successful entrepreneurs require certain characteristics, for example, people should be resourceful and enterprising with strong creative abilities (Chell et al. 1991, Aslesen 2002). More recent research on entrepreneurship has been concerned with the social and cultural context in which the establishment of a new business takes place (Berg and Foss 2002, Borch and Førde 2010).

An early commentator on this perspective was the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth. In his book, *The Role of the Entrepreneur in Social Change in Northern Norway* (1963), he places the main focus on the entrepreneur's cultural and social surroundings. He showed how the market model of economic rationality and individualism failed because the model did not include societal and cultural dynamics (Tambs-Lyche 2009). Barth also showed how entrepreneurs were in complex relations with others in the local community. They often had complex and contradictory values that had to be balanced simultaneously. In Barth's model, common interests were important and innovation occurred when two different value-correlated spheres were linked together so that the circulation of value was altered. It had consequences for the entire society, since the boundaries of what could be converted into the economic sphere were shifted.

In other words, the cultural and social organisation of a location affects the actions of the people who live there. As such, the establishment of a business will take place at the interface between the individual and their local context (Spilling 2002). Although entrepreneurship is characterised by its individualism, these contexts have a great significance for which individual strategies are available.

In their article on lifestyle entrepreneurs in the tourism sector, Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) show how these kinds of regional cultural contexts affect the development of small businesses, reflecting the classical dichotomy between market driven economy and social consciousness. In their study economic and business growth opportunities was held back as part of the entrepreneurs' socio-political ideology. A sustainable relationship between businesses and local communities help to explain why businesses remain small and "stay within the fence", as they say. Small-scale entrepreneurs have motives other than purely economic ones; for example, contrary to the expectations of most business literature they may be happy to accept low earnings and limited growth of the business (Ateljevic and Doorne 2000).

The same also applies in the agricultural sector where the establishment of new activities on a farm is often grounded in rationalities other than economic ones (Brandth and Haugen 2008, Kroken et al. 2009, Sve 2010). In understanding farm-based businesses, we find the term "civic agriculture" being used (Wright 2006), which refers to agricultural activity that also pay attention to local social responsibility. Farm-based businesses are, in these situations, balanced between the demands of both market and society. In the research literature, this form of agriculture is described as having mutual benefits and is interwoven into social and economic strategies that provide economic benefits to the farmer, while also socially favouring the local community (Trauger et al. 2009).

Jante's Law' (Sandemose (1933/1991)<sup>2</sup> is said to pose a special challenge for entrepreneurship in rural areas (Bolkesjø and Haukeland 2003). Jante's Law is a common expression throughout Scandinavia, referring to a negative attitude towards individuality and success, in Norway popularly referred to as the "village beast."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> "Generally used colloquially [and sic.] as a sociological term to negatively describe an attitude towards individuality and success common in Scandinavia, the term refers to a mentality which refuses to acknowledge individual effort and places all emphasis on the collective, while punishing those who stand out as achievers. The term may often be used negatively by individuals who more or less rightly feel they are not allowed to take credit for their achievements, or to point out their belief that another person is being overly critical." ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jante\\_Law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jante_Law)) 27.10.2011

<sup>3</sup> The term "village beast" (in Norwegian: "bygdedyret") was first used by Tor Jonsson (1950) in the short story "Liket" (The corpse). Since then, the concept has become more widely used in academic and popular

Following Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), we view this “village beast” as a metaphor that makes it possible to use conventional mental images to render subjective experiences more visible or comprehensible. In this study we will also use it as a heuristic device – a thinking tool.

The concept “village beast” draws the lines between these subjective experiences and collective manifestations. It consists of loose and partially random, complex experiences of opposition or experiences of situations where the moral boundaries are manifested. Thus, the term, when used in everyday language, encompasses experience of social and cultural opposition. The metaphor has often been used as an explanation for why it can be so hard to be different and stand out in a village, and it is a fitting description of the opposition that innovation can meet locally (Førde 2010). Hompland (2000) provided the following definition of the “village beast”:

[...] A watchdog – kind and faithful to those who conform and follow traditions, but it barks against newcomers and snaps after those who stand out. The “village beast” is controlling and restraining, and it has an ill-tempered long-lasting memory. It is on a constant hunt for dissidents. (our translation)

The commercialisation and utilisation of collective natural resources can create tensions and conflicts in a local community and thus challenge the consensus of how resources should be managed and distributed. This is particularly true if the players challenge the social practices and power relations in a community (cf. Bolkesjø and Haukeland 2003). In all societies, there are limits to what can be traded as monetary goods, and sometimes the values-barrier to marketisation of goods is high. When the cultural values, or any other values that are important to the community, are commercialised through the strategies of individual entrepreneurs, a value-based, moral public debate can ensue. This provides a challenge for entrepreneurship, and is something entrepreneurs need to consider if they don't want to risk waking the village beast.

Flø (2008) demonstrates these kinds of dynamics by showing that landowners who want to sell the hunting rights to their land end up challenging the social justice norms of the community, or what he calls “the area's own collective morality” (Flø 2008:388). Although landowners formally own the hunting rights and, in principle, are free to sell them to the highest bidder, the social rules of the district reflect the belief that local people should have access to the hunting ground at a reasonable price. According to Flø the “village beast” does not oppose any change in the village. Rather, it monitors that the changes do not happen too fast. He argues that the close and informal links between people, which are typical of dense, transparent rural

---

discourse to describe various types of social control and sanctions against those who stand out. As the term suggests, it is often associated with small and transparent (integrated) societies.

communities, create a high threshold for violations of locally defined social rules (Flø 2008:389).

Community acceptance of new ways of farming and new uses of farm resources will vary from context to context. According to Høgetveit (2008:73) there is a correlation between local acceptance of an idea and the plausibility of implementation of the idea. If acceptance is poor, it might be either because acceptance of the idea is not compatible with the current economic conditions in the culture. Not everyone is dependent on gaining acceptance from the community in order to fulfil an idea, but it is easy to imagine that those who start new business activities based on local resources, as is the case with farm tourism, are largely dependent on local acceptance; commercial activity is place-bound and localised to a particular community. It cannot be moved to another area, and the entrepreneur will continue to live there and be a part of that community. The costs of acting against the interests and acceptance of the community may be perceived as too high.

It can be a delicate balance negotiating between the penalties expressed in the metaphor the “village beast” and the act of caring about one another in a positive way. Villa (2005) and Haugen and Villa (2008) have shown how the community can be both inclusive and exclusive, caring and controlling at the same time. It is also important to recall that this is not a phenomenon peculiar to rural areas. All communities have built-in boundaries. It is the formulated “we”, rooted in value-based and symbolic markers, that communicates difference. Solidarity and slander are two sides of same coin (Hompland 2000), and anyone who violates local conventions may be at risk of community sanctions.

But there are also strategies to counter such opposition. Follo and Villa (2010) mention two ways in their study of innovation. One way is to give ideas time to ‘mature’ among the villagers. The second is not to spend time and energy on the negative voices, but rather concentrate on positive messages. A third strategy, which Førde (2010:166) introduces, is to “strip the village beast”, i.e. to counter the opposition and build up one’s motivation to fight against it through creativity and enthusiasm.

As we have shown, social and cultural contexts affect how rural businesses are set up. Nature-based farm tourism builds on the use of local and collective resources, which requires negotiation and local acceptance. In the rest of this article, we examine how farm-based tourism entrepreneurs were received, and what strategies they used to adapt their business to the local society’s unwritten rules. There will be a special focus on the strategies and tactics used by farm tourism entrepreneurs to deal with any local scepticism and opposition.

## **Data Collection**

Research for this paper was conducted during fieldwork conducted from 2005 until 2008 to study farm based

tourism in Norway. The main objective of the study was to identify who the farm hosts were and how they operated their businesses. Two surveys based on different samples were conducted. This paper, however, is solely based on qualitative data. Twenty family farms from various districts in Norway were visited and the farm couples interviewed, altogether 35 persons; sixteen women and nineteen men.

In order to shed light on the entrepreneurs' experiences, we chose farm couples who had established tourism businesses on their farm. In order to avoid any influence of regional variation in innovation- climate, we interviewed entrepreneurs from different parts of the country. We selected most of the sample from a catalogue marketing farm tourism businesses. In addition, we relied on our network and own knowledge of possible cases. Criteria for sampling were that the enterprises had small-scale tourism activities based on a family farm which was run by the farm couple who had the experience with the development of a new business. Half of the farms combined agriculture with tourism, while the other half has discontinued traditional agriculture, in order to focus on farm tourism only.

All interviews were conducted at the farm site and in most cases both spouses were present. The interviews were characterised by open thematic questions, which provided plenty of room for further explanation and the elaboration of the respondents' own stories. One of the themes central in this article is the kinds of reaction that the entrepreneurs have encountered in local communities. Each interview lasted between one and three hours, and was recorded and later transcribed for analysis. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian language and in this chapter the quotes used are translated by us into English. All the interviewees are given fictitious names.

Some of the entrepreneurs in the study have run their business for less than five years, while others have been around for over 20 years. The farms that are still in operation produce a variety of products, mostly meat, milk and grain. The tourist activities offered are diverse and adapted to various groups of customers. Accommodation and food are offered by nearly all, in addition to activities such as fishing, hunting, hiking, guided tours, canoeing, horse riding and cultural activities.

The age of the entrepreneurs varies: the youngest couple were in their late twenties, while the oldest were in their sixties. Education levels are relatively high compared to the wide Norwegian population. Some are immigrants, while others have taken over a family farm and wanted to do something other than conventional farming.

### **Stories about opposition**

Nils and Randi had been looking for a farm for a long time, and when they found their dream project, they bought the farm and moved to the village. Both were trained in teaching and continued as teachers while renovating the farm buildings, starting with sheep and eventually farm tourism. «As in-migrants and with a long education, you have a problem when you come into a village», says Nils. They became particularly aware of this in the beginning:

When we bought the farm, an old lady called and informed us that it would not be easy for us. She had had so much trouble with the former owners here and she anticipated that the dispute between the farms would continue. And we did feel the “village beast” along the way with people who were difficult and who thought we created a lot of traffic and that sort of thing. And there is a lot; and it's part jealousy, when you succeed. So we did notice that the strangest little thing could still lead to rumours about us.

They had to deal with the former neighbours' dispute and the community's “long tempered memory”, but eventually they began to earn respect for the work they did and they developed a good relationship with some parts of the local community. Nils believes that one reason for this is that there has been a generational shift on the farms. This has, according to Nils, probably led to a slightly more open and modern society with a greater acceptance of those who are different.

Brit and Roger have also found that existing conflicts with neighbours are challenging. They bought an abandoned farm in a village characterised by high out-migration and low economic activity. They tried to bring about cooperation with several people in the village, but «it is a bit like if you cooperate with this person you must not approach this other person as they are not on speaking terms. »

Another informant, Leif, responded to the question of whether they had met any form of the “village beast” as follows: «It is there, but we don't confront it [laughs]. We keep it at bay. » The couple bought the farm from an elderly relative and moved to the village as adults. They have chosen to focus on organic farming and serve self-produced organic meals to their guests. In this way, they differed from local farm practice and experienced scepticism from the other farmers in the village. The fact that their tourist business means more traffic has also led to more opposition among the neighbours.

Mariann and Olaf are also newcomers to their village. Both grew up in the city and gained their education and professional experience in the school system. They bought a family farm from a distant relative and sensed distrust from the beginning, which they perceived was due to the fact that they had no background or

experience in agriculture: «[...] here comes the young teacher who thought he was something, huh. » Olav laughs and says: «It always makes better stories when there is something that has gone a little wrong.» Mariann says that they have been pioneering in some areas, and that it might have created some envy:

But then it is about achieving something that others would have liked to achieve but that they never have set out to do or managed to do. They see that there is something happening and that we might get it right. Maybe someone had a dream about doing it themselves, but never got around to fulfilling it.

In Mariann and Olav's case, they have met the "village beast" as a watch dog that is wary of newcomers and people who are different, but by succeeding with their new business, they have also met it in the form of envy.

Martin has experienced a totally different aspect of the "village beast". He was born and raised in the village and was working in dairy farming on the home farm when he and another farm couple got together in order to take advantage of the farm resources to establish a nature-based tourism package on the outland<sup>4</sup>. When asked how they had noticed the "village beast", he replied:

We noticed it in a way when very few neighbours came to visit us. It's kind of a feeling. It might not have been as bad as we felt either, but there were certain remarks made by the neighbours.

An important reason as to why the neighbours were not particularly positive related to the use of the outland area, which previously had been freely available to all, but was now being exploited for commercial purposes. Martin says: «[...] everything had somehow been free of charge, right? And then suddenly we started to use that area on a commercial basis and charge for services and things like that. » The area in question was located by a small fishing lake, and although it was part of the farm property, it had previously been used as a hiking destination and a place for the villagers to build bonfires.

This is a good illustration of the tensions that can arise when access rights are limited through commercialisation (cf. Brox 2001). Tourists are basically strangers. They are not part of the local, social community, and are thus not seen as individuals with local rights. Businesses must strike a balance between the interests of the place where the activities are to take place, and the concerns of the tourists and what they want to experience. When it is based on natural resources, these resources are often limited. There are a

---

<sup>4</sup> In Norwegian 'utmarka' which is surrounding the farm and owned by the farmer. It might include forest and rivers. In Norway the public has the right to roam in the outlands (legal rights of access to private land).

limited number of salmon in the river or cloudberries on the marsh – and there are often established local practices on how access should be distributed. When resources are not limited, as when the experience is related to local culture (stories, legends and handicraft) or sensory impressions (sights, stillness and darkness), local opposition is not triggered in the same way.

Some entrepreneurs view municipal bureaucracy as the largest problem. Brit and Roger have experienced opposition in both the local community and in municipal administration. Roger explains:

It is very difficult to engage in economic activity when there are both cousins (and second cousins) who run the municipality [...]. As a newcomer to a district, one does not know the game there, and they do not know us. So they take the easiest way out where they meet the least resistance. And it is a very delicate democratic situation. Not the least, if one wants newcomers and new initiatives. So the largest brake for regional politics is actually the district municipalities themselves. [...] Because there are so many preconceived ideas about where a business should be viable in rural areas, and where it should not be viable.

As newcomers, Brit and Roger represent something different that might challenge the usual notions and practices of the local community. Moreover, they challenge the local power constellations, and they have experienced being directly opposed and laughed at in the municipal bureaucracy. Part of the opposition is vague and can be interpreted as the “village beast”: « [...] the so-called ‘village beast’ has a tendency to creep up on you» says one of the entrepreneurs. Another one talks about a sense of opposition rather than any specific events: « [...] you could feel some kind of flicker here and there », says one, while another says that «we feel that there is a bit – that there is a bit Jante’s Law, but I cannot actually point to any specific event».

The entrepreneurs’ own narratives show that they have experienced multiple types of opposition: conflict with neighbours, opposition to the commercialisation of the resources that are covered by public law, the local bureaucracy’s lack of support and some vague feelings of jealousy and scepticism. This experience of opposition is a reminder that entrepreneurs cannot easily pursue individual interests independent of local and potentially competing, cultural frameworks. In many cases, it may be a matter of conflicts of interest, where the locals have to bear the costs in the form of increased traffic and competition for scarce resources, without receiving their share of the revenue generated by tourism.

Despite the fact that entrepreneurs describe the “village beast” phenomenon appearing during the establishment phase, most of our informants experienced a good relationship with the local community once

the business was established. It may be that those who faced considerable local opposition have given up and shut down, or that the locals actually experienced the establishment of a new business as positive growth. It may also be due to the way in which the entrepreneurs manage opposition. It is this management of opposition that we review in the following section when we ask how the “village beast” is dealt with or “kept at bay”.

### **“We feel our way forward”**

Most entrepreneurs spoke of the gradual development of their business. By taking one step at a time and testing what to do next, they attempted to avoid the abrupt and large changes that may trigger opposition in the local community. That local opposition really comes into force when things move too fast was documented by Follo and Villa (2010) in their investigation of what it takes to “build a rural community”. Our entrepreneurs expect the opposition to disappear as time goes by. Gradual development appears to be an important adaptation strategy for rural interests. If an idea is to be viable, it must not be too widely opposed by the community. At the same time, the introduction of anything new will, at times, encounter some opposition. Innovation nearly always involves challenging the boundaries in a society and those factors within society that are normative and/or the status quo.

In our material there are many examples of businesses that have developed gradually (Brandth et al. 2010). One of them is Nils' story about how he and his wife first started with the family tourism business in the summer almost 25 years ago. They began, almost by coincidence, because they had a vacant house on the farm that was suitable for rental. As tourists looked after themselves, there was little labour involved. Step by step the barn was converted to catering and banquet facilities, so that, some years later, they could accommodate bus groups, and offer courses, conferences and parties. «We have been building for 20 years and it has just expanded gradually» says Nils, while emphasising that they will keep the local feel and do not increase the number of guests at any cost.

Birgit and Leif run a business with accommodation and meals served on their farm. «We have changed quite a bit of the operation along the way, » says Leif. «We feel our way forward, » says Birgit, and continues:

We have been doing this for six years now and have not marketed our business anywhere. And we have had to say no to quite a lot. [...] But we're not going to expand the business so that we need to hire employees. Because then you need reasonably high turnover.

In this way, they also limit the traffic to the farm that annoys the neighbours.

That the development is slow is not only due to economic and work-related constraints, but also reflects the owners' beliefs that growth should not come at the expense of quality, satisfaction and social sustainability. «The financial side is one thing, but you should also enjoy it» says Roger. They enjoy it when their business does not cause opposition in the village. Brit explains why they will not grow to the expense of their farming activities:

If we are only to focus on tourism, then we can stop the farming altogether, but then we lower the quality of what we deliver. And maybe we need to sell to more tourists to sustain our livelihood, right? And that's not our goal. We want to have fewer guests and a higher quality on what we deliver. And thus we can charge a higher price.

This quote illustrates that the entrepreneurs want to maintain the quality of their products and, in this case, maintaining farming remains an important goal. They are also concerned with both social and ecological thresholds; too many guests will ruin the experience of nature and will cause wear and tear on them and the farm enterprise.

The entrepreneurs take into account many considerations in the early development phase and in the further development of their products. Farm tourism should be a livelihood that gives them an opportunity to continue to live and stay on the farm. At the same time, their livelihoods are also dependent on being socially and culturally sustainable.

### **“To not be at odds with anyone”**

Another way to respond to opposition is to look after local relationships and have an open dialogue with others in the village. «It is important that we are open towards local people about what we do so there is no dissatisfaction » Henry says firmly. There are many factors to consider in the establishment and development of new ventures, and relationships with the local community and with people in the village where they live are cherished.

Some of the entrepreneurs have all the tourist activities on their own property. They think that it is best that way, since they feel that people are wary of boundaries, and it is something they will not challenge. «We are

very conscious of not stepping too much on other people's property and instead we use our own area. Because it is stuff like that that will cause conflicts» says Olaf.

Others, again, are totally dependent on using the access to shared resources on the outland in order to operate their commercial tourism business. The public right of access to land makes all natural resources potentially public available for use, and thus requires special safeguarding. Vulnerable flora and fauna can be subject to excess and major stress with increased use. Hunting and fishing rights, which many local people take advantage of, is an area that must be dealt with sensitively in order not to challenge local norms and established practices (cf. Flø 2008). In areas where there is already some pressure on these resources they avoid hunting, fishing and gathering of cloudberries as part of the activities that they offer. The cloudberry moors are also kept secret from people outside the local community.

Kari and Henrik describe how they balance their own interests and the interests of the community. They have reduced their number of rental boats and fishing cabins to tourists so that they are not "at odds with" the locals. Henry says:

We had more fishing tourists before than we have now. But we have made a conscious choice not to pursue fishing tourists. It has to do with the fish resources and cooperation in rural Norway – that one should not get on the edge with the others. It's a little exaggerated because people often think that the fishing tourists catch too many fish, but that is not the case. The vast majority have never, not even before the quota came, brought home more than the quota.

In 2006, a limit on the amount of fish that tourists were allowed to take out of the country was introduced. The quota was set at 15 kg of fillets. As we see from the quote, according to Henry, the quota is so great that tourists have tended not to exceed it. Despite this, he has adapted to the local people's scepticism and he is moving away from fishing tourism as a prioritised area for his business. The reduction has taken place gradually in the way that they stopped promoting fishing as a part of their package of activities.

It is not merely community resources that are important to safeguard. Tourists can be both interesting and annoying, and there are aspects of their behaviour that may provoke the locals. If entrepreneurs are to ensure sustainable local relations, they must also make sure that the guests behave acceptably. Sofie and Raymond, who also engaged in fishing tourism, have set limits for the guests' alcohol consumption in the interests of the local community:

We do not accept that they stagger around and are visibly intoxicated here. There are kids and there are locals, and we don't want that reputation. We are quite strict with this. They're welcome to grab a beer, that's ok. They are welcome to sit inside the cabin and enjoy themselves, but they cannot walk about drunk on the farm. And they'd better not be seen visibly intoxicated or drunk at sea, that we do not accept. I've had those who have rolled ashore on the pier. And then I've been down and removed the hose from the gas tank and locked it up.

A number of the activities that businesses offer attract people who seek excitement and risk, or who are inexperienced with hiking in the countryside or being at sea. As this quotation shows, farm tourism entrepreneurs find it important to reduce danger and the risk of accidents. It may be that the entire community's reputation is at stake. This emphasis on social sustainability of the business challenges the models we have on entrepreneurship where risk-taking and economic rationality are central. Here we see some of the "village beast's" positive sides.

### **To give and to take – mutual benefit**

We have seen that decisions made by the entrepreneurs are based on cultural and social considerations of what is appropriate to do in their local context. One key way to handle the "village beast" is to balance growth and sustainability in their own business. One example of this kind of strategic management is that they will not let their business grow at the expense of community resources. It can help to develop a mutual understanding between the entrepreneurs and the local people. Nils, who has been very aware of this aspect, talks about the "village beast" that disappeared, and he says:

There are only nice people here and people who want to cooperate with us and they are generous. We no longer think about whether things are mathematically justified economically. Because if you help me now, and it has a cost, then it will all work out in the long run, that is how it is. That's how they are towards each other, and it is this community we are part of.

Harald points out that «it's a volunteer economy», where the logic is to give and to take. It would have been different if they had been in a big city, he says, but in the village everyone is totally dependent on the local resources. Consequently, they draw on local businesses and neighbours in their projects – as human capital and manpower. They shop at the local convenience store and buy from local producers even though it might

cost a bit more, and they believe that it is important to spread the opportunity of income to others in this way. Mariann says: «We quite like to use the closest first, so there are many who have their earnings from here during the year. Both the local dance group and fiddle players and, yes, even the local horse and carriage. » Involving local people seems to have a great significance for the lack of opposition, and thus the survival of the newly established business. Harald says:

We have made an alliance with our neighbours. There is one who is very interested in nature, and we use him. There is another retiree close by who helps us when we have trips to the bonfire place. He goes ahead and arranges the fire and has freshly brewed coffee in the black kettle hanging over the flames. We are met by the scent when we ascend. You can imagine the delicious smell of freshly brewed coffee.

When the tourists show an interest in the local history, and when locals are given the opportunity to participate, then their pride is strengthened in what they have to show and the story they are part of: «When people come from Oslo or London to experience what we have here, then they [the villagers] become proud and pleased with what they have» says Harald. The tourists' gaze and interest becomes a reflection through which they see their own community, and through which they see their own resources and expertise. As research has shown, it is in meeting with others that what is valued locally becomes apparent (Hammer 2008). The place and the stories about the place belong to the locals, and many have a strong relationship with the area where the tourists hike. Many entrepreneurs are trying, therefore, to draw them in.

Several entrepreneurs say that they have been very aware of using the local resources and culture as part of their business, partly because they focus on local foods, local handicrafts and local labour to the extent it is available. One of the entrepreneurs says the following about how he and his wife are trying to draw on local culture and resources:

Paid activities here are based on the fact that we bring in resources, and there are activities in the community that we send guests out to attend. We use, for example, a cutler, who is part of the local tradition, and who lives here in the valley. He can have eight guests sitting around him in the workshop one morning, and who then returns home with his or her own knife.

Several attempts have been made to transform local resources into activities and products. There is some trial and error. Some have been successful, but not all – for different reasons.

Laila says something along these lines:

It is somewhat important to play on the others, too. Maybe even think that one shares the revenue with the others in the village. As such, we have been quite conscious of it here. When it comes to the guided tours [...] we have a few places in the village that are tourist attractions, where you can ask for guidance for a fee. But, often, the tourists feel that they have seen something like this before, and they don't want to pay for it. We have first-hand experience that they do not pay for such a service. But now, if we are asked to arrange a guided tour through the valley, we contact those who have places of interest and ask if it is all right if we come by with a group at a particular time. Then we give one price that covers all expenses. When we are done, we will pay out to everyone involved. [...] The people we have collaborated with, they have been very happy with this arrangement.

We see how Laila, through a conscious pricing scheme, ensures that the others in the community receive commissions. It is gift-exchange logic, where everyone gains something from it. Laila does this so that there is income for more than one person, and she thinks people understand that the activities on their farm benefit the whole area:

And sometimes we get feedback. Not very often. But there have been some years when we received an award. And then it was neighbours who came around and shook our hand and congratulated us. One thing is that they appreciate it, but I think that it is a recognition that they actually show it [...]. There were, of course, some who did not. And I do not expect everyone to do it either. But it shows that people think it is good. Not just that they congratulate, but they say that what we do is good.

There are not many who say that they have received direct, positive feedback from the locals as Laila has experienced. But another way to show that one appreciates the visitors to the village is that local people take responsibility for how it looks in the village – that bushes are cleared and flowers are planted. Tourism benefits from clean and nice surroundings in the village. Fishing tourists, for example, are dependent on the landscape being kept open so that it is possible to get down to the river. The reciprocity in the relationship appears when the entrepreneurs give praise back to the village:

When we have guests here, we often hear about how nice it is in the area. Not particularly at our place, but in the valley. And it does something with us as individuals. We grow from it. But our

neighbours may not hear it. So we try to be as conscious in the context when it is natural to pass on the praise. Because our neighbours make a great effort in relation to what we enjoy as hosts for tourists, you might say. And it is somewhat important to be aware of this. For it is the first impression visitors get when they come into the valley, which we benefit from.

Some of the farm tourism businesses have specialised in courses and conferences for the business market, others receive large bus groups for day visits, while others have guests on extended vacations. In such cases, the local market is less relevant: «They [locals] do not buy a lot of services here, » says Mariann, «but they [the municipality] are quite pleased to talk about us as a place that has a kind of status in the village. » Such pride that comes from having a well-managed and prestigious tourist activity in the village is still visible. In the sample, we also have several businesses with products that are tailored to local guests, such as groups of children or families on day visits, as well as large companies and events, and here there are reports of greater use of local resources.

Farm tourism businesses can also be a venue for the village. Some people make a conscious effort to include the villagers. This may be in the form of a farm café or they may invite neighbours to gather for Midsummer celebrations and barbecues. Laila and Per have a social night for the locals one night a month. It has become a popular event in the farming village, as Laila says:

We have no café; we have no natural meeting place in the village. So, there is something about creating an activity where it is expected that the local people should turn up. It's quite exciting, because there is no guarantee. But recently there were over 50 people here, and it is a very good turnout because there are actually not that many living here. So it's more like a kind of local offer in a way. [...] But it seems as if people find it enjoyable. And it's close by, so they do not have to plan very much. Because it's a social need to meet and talk about something else than work.

In order to further develop the community and cooperation in the community, meeting places are required. We see that farm tourism can provide such meeting places for local people, who thus get the benefit and enjoyment of those businesses that are created. Knut and Berit have created a nature and adventure park, and they say:

[...] We believe that it will meet a need, [...] we have seen that for Norwegian agriculture to survive, you are dependent on good relations with the surroundings and the local area [...]. And we are

particularly pleased when the local people and neighbours tell us that they want to come. [...] It warms the heart when you feel that the local community sees what you do as something positive.

Farm tourism uses the community's assets and resources, but at the same time, it also makes available products that are developed based on these resources. In this lies the basis for the community's acceptance. Success lies in the balance between the individual and the collective, and between economic growth and social<sup>5</sup> sustainability.

## **Discussion**

The initial questions we asked were about the type of local opposition entrepreneurs faced in response to their farm tourism enterprises, and how they had potentially handled opposition associated with the so-called "village beast". The interviews show that everyone has experienced challenges involved in local entrepreneurship. Some have met the "village beast" in the form of envy, ridicule, and scepticism of outsiders with new ideas who move away from the prevailing practice. However, there are only a few tales of this, and most of the entrepreneurs have not experienced large and destructive conflict. One explanation for this may be that the rural areas have become more diverse, and rural culture more open, to new ideas and businesses.

The second explanation, that we have explored in this article, may be the way in which the entrepreneurs have built up their businesses. We have shown that our informants avoided provoking local conflicts in three important ways. One way was to develop tourist activities carefully and gradually. The second was to maintain and build good local relationships. The third was to include local people in their projects and give something back to the community.

The analysis shows the existence of a rationality that is largely characterised by the entrepreneurs' negotiation with the site's social and cultural framework. They strategize not to grow beyond a certain limit, and they think they have succeeded in this goal when they manage to create a business that is closely aligned to the rest of the life in the rural community. Local identification is important both in terms of resources and social relations. Even though they, as entrepreneurs, see opportunities to develop new activities on the farm, they tread cautiously and are careful not to challenge the prevailing social practices and ways of thinking. In this way, they move local cultural and social boundaries slowly.

---

<sup>5</sup> While the focus in this article has mainly been on social sustainability, in the Norwegian context there is an implicit inclusion of the environmental along with the social.

Several of the entrepreneurs in the survey are in-migrants who see new opportunities to commercialise resources on the farm and in the village. By taking into account local interests and the community's resources they reduce the "threat" their new business represents. The community's interests are thus safeguarded by new businesses avoiding excessive use of local resources.

Opposition is weakened when the entrepreneurs are part of an informal collaboration in the community by using local businesses and culture in their business. It can provide both economic reward and help to strengthen local identity and pride. Thus the entrepreneurs will give something back to the village, and it evolves into a mutual give-and-take relationship.

Depopulation and closure of farms means that many rural communities are pressured as a community. It makes boundary setting more critical, it is important to draw boundaries between what we are, and what the others are. These are ways to defend the values that are considered important. The "village beast" must be understood in this light. The tourist entrepreneurs can potentially challenge local structures and social order in the village. They can either succeed as our informants have done, or they may have to close down. It is therefore important that the social and cultural values have a larger place in the strategic assessment of new businesses – both by local regulators and by aspiring operators themselves. This balance between new entrants and attention to community's values and resources can be a challenge both for the entrepreneurs and for the community.

### **Acknowledgements**

This article is part of the project "Nature-based farm tourism". The project is funded by the Research Council of Norway, and research funds made available by Agricultural Agreement, Norwegian Rural Tourism and Traditional Foods (HANEN), and Sparebank 1 SMN. We are grateful to Hugh Campbell for helpful comments and suggestions to this article.

Authors' Accepted Manuscript of Brandth, B., M. S. Haugen & B. Kramvig (2013). Taming the Village Beast: Rural Entrepreneurship as the art of balance between economic growth and social sustainability. In Elisabete Figueiredo and Antonio Raschi (eds): *Fertile links? Connections between tourism activities, socioeconomic contexts and local development in European rural areas*, Firenze University Press, 107-127

## References

- Aslesen, S. 2002. *Forskning om entreprenørskap og kjønn – en litteraturgjennomgang (Research on rural entrepreneurship and gender – a literature review)*, in N.G. Berg and L. Foss (editors) *Entreprenørskap. Kjønn, livsløp og sted*, Abstrakt forlag, Oslo: 55-82.
- Ateljevic, I. and Doorne S. 2000. 'Staying within the fence': *Lifestyle entrepreneurship in tourism*, «Journal of Sustainable Tourism», 8 (5):378-392.
- Barth, F. 1963. *The role of the entrepreneur in social change in Northern Norway*, Norwegian University Press, Oslo.
- Berg, N.G. and Foss L. (editors) 2002. *Entreprenørskap. Kjønn, livsløp og sted (Entrepreneurship. Gender, Lifecourse and Place)*, Abstrakt forlag, Oslo.
- Bolkesjø, T. and Haukeland, P.I. 2003. *Entreprenørskap innafor kulturøkonomien (Entrepreneurship within the Cultural Economy)*, in D.J. Lønning (editor) *Den norske bygda og den store verda. Om lokal utvikling i ei global tid*, Telemarksforskning, Bø i Telemark.
- Borch, O.J. and Førde A. 2010. *Innovative bygdemiljø. Ildsjeler og nyskappingsarbeid (Innovative Ruralities. Enthusiasts and New Creative Work)*, Fagbokforlaget, Bergen.
- Brandth, B. and Haugen, M.S. 2008. *Fra melkefføs til gårdsturisme. Fleksible bønder på en ny arena (From dairying to tourism. Flexible farmers on a new arena)*, in R. Almås, M.S. Haugen, J.F. Rye and M. Villa (editors) *Den nye bygda*, Tapir Akademisk Forlag, Trondheim: 267-283.
- Brandth, B., Haugen, M.S. and Kramvig, B. 2010. "The future can only be imagined." *Innovation in farm tourism from a phenomenological perspective*, «The Open Social Science Journal», 33: 51-59.
- Brox, O. 2001. *Vår felles eiendom. Tar vi vare på allemannsretten? (Our Common Property. Do We Take Care of the Public Access to Land?)* Pax forlag, Oslo.
- Bruni A., Gherardi, S. and Poggio, B. 2004. *Doing gender, doing entrepreneurship: An ethnographic account of intertwined practices*. «Gender, Work and Organization», 11 (4): 406-429.
- Chell, E., Haworth, J. and Brearley, S. 1991. *The entrepreneurial personality: Concepts, cases and categories*, Routledge, London.

Authors' Accepted Manuscript of Brandth, B., M. S. Haugen & B. Kramvig (2013). Taming the Village Beast: Rural Entrepreneurship as the art of balance between economic growth and social sustainability. In Elisabete Figueiredo and Antonio Raschi (eds): *Fertile links? Connections between tourism activities, socioeconomic contexts and local development in European rural areas*, Firenze University Press, 107-127

Connerton, P. 1989. *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Flø, B.E. 2008. *Bygdedyret og elgen – ei stivhengig analyse av næringsutvikling i elgskogen (The village beast and the moose)*, in R. Almås, M.S. Haugen, J.F. Rye and M. Villa (editors) *Den nye bygda*, Tapir Akademisk Forlag, Trondheim: 371-389.

Follo, G. and Villa, M. 2010. *Å byggje staden stein for stein, (To build the place stone by stone)*, in O.J. Borch and A. Førde (editors) *Innovative bygdemiljø. Ildsjeler og nyskappingsarbeid*, Fagbokforlaget, Bergen: 121-135.

Førde, A. 2010. *Nyskaping, brytningar og samspel (Innovation, tensions and interplay)*, in O.J. Borch and A. Førde (editors) *Innovative bygdemiljø. Ildsjeler og nyskappingsarbeid*, Fagbokforlaget, Bergen: 155-170.

Hammer, R.B. 2008. *Recreation and rural Development in Norway: Nature versus culture*, «Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism», 8 (2): 176-186.

Haugen, M.S. and Villa, M. 2006. *Big brother in rural societies: Youths' discourses on gossip*, «Norwegian Journal of Geography», 60 (3): 209-216.

Hompland, A. 2000. Bygdedyret er dødt! Leve Bygdedyret! (The village beast is dead! Long live the village beast!) Byline. *Dagbladet* 25-02-2000. <  
[www.dagbladet.no/tekstarkiv/artikkel.php?id=5001000011275&tag=item&words=Bygdedyr](http://www.dagbladet.no/tekstarkiv/artikkel.php?id=5001000011275&tag=item&words=Bygdedyr)>  
(05/10)

Høgetveit, S. 2008. *Entreprenører i Vest-Telemark. Dynamikken mellom entreprenører og samfunn (Entrepreneurs in West-Telemark. The Dynamics between entrepreneurs and society)*. Master in Cultural Studies, Hedmark University College, Elverum.

Jonsson, T. 1950. *Nesler (Nettles)*, Norges boklag, Oslo.

Kroken, A., Storstad, O. and Haugen, M.S. 2009. *Bygdeturisme og gårdsmat i Norge. En nasjonal kartlegging (Rural tourism and local foods in Norway. A national survey)*, R-4/09, Centre for Rural Research, Trondheim.

Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. 1980. *Metaphors we live by*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. 1999. *Philosophy in the flesh*, Basic Books Group, New York.

Authors' Accepted Manuscript of Brandth, B., M. S. Haugen & B. Kramvig (2013). Taming the Village Beast: Rural Entrepreneurship as the art of balance between economic growth and social sustainability. In Elisabete Figueiredo and Antonio Raschi (eds): *Fertile links? Connections between tourism activities, socioeconomic contexts and local development in European rural areas*, Firenze University Press, 107-127

Sandemose, A. 1991. *En flyktning krysser sitt spor (A fugitive crosses his tracks)*, Den Norske bokklubben, Stabekk (first pub. 1933).

Spilling, O.R. 2002. Nyskaping gjennom entreprenørskap (Innovation through entrepreneurship), in O.R Spilling (editor) *Nyskaping i Norge*, Fagbokforlaget, Bergen: 87-103.

Sve, K. 2010. *Nye handlingsrom i landbruket: Lyngen som døme (New scope of action in agriculture. Lyngen as an example)*, in O.J. Borch and A. Førde (editors) *Innovative bygdemiljø. Ildsjeler og nyskappingsarbeid*, Fagbokforlaget, Bergen: 137-154.

Tambs-Lyche, H. 2009. *Fredrik Barths rolle i norsk og internasjonal sosialantropologi (Fredrik Barth's role in Norwegian and international anthropology)*, «Norsk antropologisk tidsskrift», 20 (1-2): 109-116.

Trauger, A., Sachs, C., Barbercheck, M., Brasier, K., and Kiernan, N.E. 2009. "Our market is our community": *Women farmers and civic agriculture in Pennsylvania, USA*, «Agriculture and Human Values», 27 (1): 43-55.

Villa, M. 2005. *Bygda som bustad (Rural Living)*. Doctoral Thesis in Sociology, NTNU. Report 1 / 05. Centre for Rural Research, Trondheim.

Wright, W. 2006. *Civic Engagement through Civic Agriculture: Using Food to link classroom and community*, «Teaching Sociology», 34: 224-235.