

**When the farmer becomes a provider
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wants to be part of "real rural life"
A story of insiders and outsiders
in the Norwegian landscape**

Karoline Daugstad

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Karoline Daugstad
Centre for Rural Research
Norwegian University of Science and Technology
N-7491 Trondheim
Norway

Telephone +47 73591735

karoline.daugstad@rural.no

By Karoline Daugstad:

When the farmer becomes a provider of landscapes and agri-tourism and the tourist wants to be part of "real rural life" - A story of insiders and outsiders in the Norwegian landscape

Introduction

Agriculture and tourism are tied together by destiny, facing the same challenges and with a potential for mutual benefit. This argument has been raised in recent years by central actors in Norwegian tourism and by the Minister of Agriculture and Food. The reasoning behind this argument from the agricultural side is that agriculture is under heavy pressure, farms are being closed down at the rate of about 4000 per year, and as a consequence the agricultural landscape is rapidly changing. In Norway, a country with natural limitations to intensive farming, not more than 3% of the land area is under cultivation. However, agriculture has been relying on extensive use of large areas of forests and mountains for grazing and mowing. The agricultural landscape is much cherished by the population in general. Opinion polls show strong support for agriculture as a way of maintaining cultural landscape qualities (Daugstad et al., 2002; Rønningen, 2005). Even given the fact that modern agriculture also can be a landscape destroyer (monocultures, rational methods eradicating cultural heritage objects, pollution etc), recent studies show that in general the link between agriculture and cultural landscape and heritage qualities is seen as positive (Daugstad et al, 2006).

The fear of abandonment of agriculturally influenced land, leading to overgrowth and decay of built structures (houses, fences etc), is increasing among farmers, the agricultural authorities and the public in general (Daugstad and Rønningen, 2004). A recent opinion poll shows that 43% of the population is concerned about the depopulation of rural areas and the consequent abandonment and overgrowth of agricultural land (Bondeblad, Sept 23, 2004). Not least is this concern expressed from the tourist industry, and this is where the shared destiny comes into the picture. Tourism is a growing sector internationally and also in Norway. Hotels and restaurants account for 1.4% of the gross national product (compared to agriculture which makes up 0.7%) (Statistics Norway, 2005). Much of Norwegian tourism is rurally based¹. Being a late urbanised country and a nation where primary businesses traditionally have been strong, typical tourist attractions like historic cities or built monuments are scarce. The landscape and Nature with steep mountains, narrow fjords and the midnight sun are major tourist attractions. Even if these attractions are perceived as pure Nature to visitors, the heterogeneity of the landscape with traces of agricultural activity are seen as major qualities. The still- decentralised settlement pattern with small rural communities also provides an infrastructure and services that the tourism industry relies on. If agricultural activity ceases and rural Norway is abandoned, the tourist industry fears the landscape consequences. On the demand side, there is a growing niche market of tourists who wants to get hold of "real lived lives", to hear the story of the community they visit or pass, to taste traditional food made by the farmer they can also stop to visit – in short to get a feeling of the "authentic" Norwegian landscape and culture.

¹ A substantial part of the farm based rural tourism is not included in the GNP figures for tourism.

This shared destiny between agriculture and tourism leads to a focus on the multifunctions of agriculture – meaning the “products” beside bulk food production, like cultural landscapes, biodiversity, cultural heritage, living rural communities, recreational possibilities etc. The farmer is becoming a provider of leisure goods and has to relate to “consumers” as visiting tourists at his/her farm or as a guide through his/her village giving visitors a taste of everyday life there. The farmer is not only situated in the landscape as a producer and “land-scaper”, but also has to relate to the outside gaze. The tourist on the other hand, wants to move away from the traditional outsider’s perspective of someone just passing through a landscape and experiencing it by eye only. The tourist wants to taste, feel and hear about the landscape, and to get a glimpse of the inside perspective.

The focus of this paper is the landscape views of actors that can be characterised as insiders and outsiders, and, more specifically, if these perspectives are changing due to the changes in agriculture as well as in tourism-related activities. The main question raised is: When farmers become producers and providers of “inside” qualities for outside actors, and on the other hand when outsiders want to become insiders – in what way does this lead to a change in the view of the landscape?

The questions are approached by analysing material from the main actors within agriculture and rural tourism: The Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF), The Farmers’ Union (NFU), The Norwegian Rural Tourism and Traditional Food Organisation (NRTTF) and The Norwegian Tourism Association (NTA). Texts and illustrations are analysed according to dimensions often used to describe the perspectives of outsiders and insiders in the landscape: Focus of location (in the landscape or outside), the landscape experienced by which senses, landscape to meet which needs, activity oriented or not, dynamic or static landscape view, traditional or modern (time period), urban – rural frame of reference.

As rural societies and rural landscapes are undergoing rapid and large- scale changes, the value judgements, decisions and debates about the rural landscape and the central actors forming the rural landscape and the actors whom the changes will affect (positively or negatively) are also changing. It is important to scrutinise these changes in order to get an “updated” picture of the complex countryside as a basis for decision- making and as part of a basis for a more general debate on the future of rural areas.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

The theoretical frame for this paper draws on literature from landscape research (mainly within landscape geography) focusing on landscape representations and a constructivist perspective, and literature discussing rurality/-ies (within rural studies in general).

An approach used in landscape studies is to see different views of landscape according to an insiders’ and outsiders’ perspective, meaning a standpoint outside or inside the landscape in question. This approach has been applied in studies of the agriculturally influenced landscape as well as for other landscapes (see for example Daugstad et al., 1999; Daugstad, 2000a; Daugstad, 2000b; Olwig, 2002; Setten, 2002; Sovali et al., 2003; Stenseke, 2000). The insiders’ perspective tend to be activity oriented, insiders are actively changing the landscape, working on the land or in the landscape, the notion of the embodied landscape, a focus on local and situated knowledge. The typical insider has been the farmer. The typical outsider’s

perspective on the other hand is often ascribed to the tourists. The outsider is experiencing the landscape from a certain distance, mainly by eye, visual images are important – related to the landscape seen as a painting or a picturesque scene, the outsider is not attached to the landscape, not situated knowledge, not an active changing agent.

The inside – outside perspective is also used as a background for more politically oriented arguments on the empowerment of local actors, of their view, knowledge and priorities as opposed to outsiders in the shape of planners, academic experts, politicians and central government agents – and even tourists (Gustavsson and Peterson, 2003; Mansvelt and Pedroli, 2003; Stenseke, 2000).

Regarding views on rural areas and rurality(-ies) in general, a fair number of studies have documented, discussed and debated recent shifts and trends. Groote et al (2000) describe a shift in the 1990s from a primary focus on the economic function of rural areas in north-west Europe to a diversity and consumption-oriented focus. This is in turn seen as a result or a response to processes of globalisation (Cloke and Goodwin, 1993; Hoggart et al, 1995). “Localisation”, consisting of an increased awareness of specific qualities of the local community, represents a contrast to globalism. As part of this picture, some rural areas become a focal point for “production” and “consumption” of the rural idyll or authentic nature (Groote et al, 2000). The rural becomes a refuge from urban life. According to Berg and Lysgård (2004), representations of the rural idyll are part of the national myths or images, but at the same time these myths are very much alive in both Scandinavia and UK, but in different forms according to the different national contexts. These representations affect social practice and are therefore an influential force in shaping rural places. The mutual influence between de-materialised representations and the material landscape is crucial (Daugstad 2000a; Stenbacka 2001). Berg and Lysgård (2004) present two sets of images of rural and urban. One set of images focuses on the rural as an idyll and the urban as bad. The idyllic rural offers peace and quiet, cleanness and care, it is green and healthy. The bad urban represents noise, filth, danger, social isolation, greyness and unhealthy living conditions. The other set of images presents the rural as traditional and the urban as modern. The traditional rural represents limited services and opportunities, dullness, uniformity and social control. The modern urban has a wide range of possibilities, is exciting and diverse. These two sets are both a mix of material components as well as social and cultural representations, and they are descriptive as well as normative.

Methods and material

The study is based on an analysis of documents representing the major actors within agriculture and tourism. The agricultural actors are The Norwegian Farmers’ Union (NFU) and The Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF). NFU is the major farmers’ union in Norway, it has 58 500 members (Norges Bondelag, 2005). The union, together with the Norwegian Smallholders’ Association, is part of the annual negotiations between the State and the farmers regarding agricultural subsidies, measures etc. The NFU newspaper *Bondebladet* (The Farmers’ Paper) is published once a week (with a circulation of 83 000 copies) and is sent to all members as well as to agricultural departments in counties, advisory offices etc. *Bondebladet*’s main function is to be a newspaper as well as a professional magazine for Norwegian farmers (*Bondebladet*, 2005). In this study all articles from the year 2003 and 2004 focussing on agri-tourism, cultural landscape and cultural heritage connected to agriculture have been analysed. This adds up to about 50 articles. In addition other central

documents from NFU have been studied. From the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the relevant strategic documents, campaigns and projects especially targeting rural tourism in the last two years have been studied. The major documentation is found on the MAF web-site.

From the tourism sector two organisations have been studied²: Norwegian Rural Tourism and Traditional Food (NRTTF) and The Norwegian Tourism Association (NTA). NRTTF consisted until April 2004 of two separate members' organisations – one for rural tourism producers and one for traditional food producers. Strongly encouraged by The Ministry of Agriculture and Food the two were merged in 2004 as a means of strengthening both organisations' market position. Today NRTTF has close to 500 members (Landbruks- og matdepartementet, 2004). The major purpose of the organisation is to present and market their members by a web-based system and a printed catalogue. On the web-site and in the catalogue the various products are presented county by county and you get information about accommodation, where food is served, where to find traditional farm food shops, various leisure activity possibilities (fishing, hunting, renting a boat, riding etc.). For the present analysis, the catalogues for 2004 and 2005 have been analysed, as well as web material. The second tourism actor represents another side of Norwegian tourism: The Norwegian Tourism Association (NTA, *Den norske turistforening*). NTA is the largest recreation organisation in Norway with more than 200 000 individual members (organised into 50 local branches, the largest number of members are found in urban areas). DNT is mostly a hikers' organisation for people interested in outdoor life and hiking, but a major part of the organisation's activity is to run NTAs more than 400 cabins located all over the country (mostly in mountainous areas) providing accommodation for hikers. This is a profit -based activity and a good source of income for NTA (Den norske turistforening, 2005). The association publishes a magazine for its members called *Fjell og Vidde* (Mountain and Moor). Six magazines are published each year and for this study the 2003 and 2004 volumes have been analysed which gives a total of 12 articles addressing matters of agri-cultural landscape, agri-cultural heritage and rurality.

Documents from all actors have been analysed according to the same system by checking how the material relates to the following dimensions or variables: Location in the landscape (inside or outside), how landscape is experienced (by sight, sound, smell or touch), what needs the landscape meets, activity oriented or not, dynamic or static landscape, traditional or modern landscape (time period), urban - rural frame of reference. Photos and other illustrations are also studied.

Views from the outside – the tourist gaze

By and large the NTA view the landscape from the outside tourists' perspective, as could be expected, but not just as passing through a landscape and experiencing it by eye only. The landscape experience is to feel it, hear it and taste the products from the landscape. The insiders are identified as farmers and local people with long traditions in resource use. The process of using the land and cultivating the nature contributes to desirable landscapes for the

² It must be mentioned that tourism comes under The Ministry of Trade and Industry. However, the rural tourism activity is to a large extent related to MAF since much of the measures supporting rural tourism are MAF measures. There has in fact been a debate the last two years where tourism organisations as well as the agricultural organisations suggest that the Minister of Agriculture and Food also should be the minister of tourism (Bondebladet, Feb 12, 2004 and June 24, 2004).

tourists or visitors. We can detect a notion of “them” – being the locals, the farmers – and “us” being the NTAs.

The senses used for experiencing the landscape are as mentioned the eye and the ear – mostly referring to the absence of stressing sounds (associated with the urban). However, a distinct weight is also given to taste, especially referring to the local food traditions based on local raw materials at the tourist cabins. “Food with an authentic taste” is a much used phrase.

The main need to be met is recreation and physical activity. Hence, the perspective is strongly activity oriented – the landscape experience has to do with being physically active but not working in the landscape or changing it. This is also expressed through photos of people on hikes or people fishing, and children playing with lambs and goats. The landscape is seen as dynamic, and there is a strong focus on the negative effect of landscape dynamics through the absence of agricultural activity (mowing, grazing) causing overgrowth.

Regarding the dimension traditional – modern again the focus on traditional food is obvious. The traditional dimension is also expressed through the focus on traditional resource use (related to farming) as a crucial upholder of the landscape. The rural – urban dimension is implicit in the before mentioned distinction between “them” and “us” and through the highlighting of the peaceful landscape with absence of urban noise (traffic, mobile phones ringing etc). One article stress the need for a focus on negative landscape change and re-growth and it ends with the following challenge: “The rural communities should be more creative regarding products for *us* hikers... .. The authorities are challenged to make rules and regulations to facilitate small-scale producers. And *we* in NTA can encourage hikers to choose local food from the rural communities...” (Larsen, 2004:44, my translation and cursive). Here the reference to us and them is NTA being us and them being the rural locals. The authorities are mentioned as an actor without explicit reference to “us” or “them”.

What especially stands out from the articles of the NTA magazine is the focus on rurality and agriculture through the promotion of local food at the tourist cabins. This focus takes two forms: Gourmet food, and traditional local food. The gourmet food is marketed as exotic, innovative, and as a development of the best of local raw material. The local link is there but not in the form of “traditional recipes” or a focus on the traditions at the specific cabin. The local is even seen as merged with the international as expressed in a presentation of “local raw material in continental wrapping”. This refers to locally produced raw material being prepared with an international touch at Haukliseter tourist cabin where people from 13 different countries live under the same roof (Fjell og Vidde, 2004:77). The local food concept, on the other hand, markets just the fact that you can eat exactly the same course as the first mountaineer was served when the tourist cabin was built more than 100 years ago – which is the case for Mogen tourist cabin in Telemark (Lauritzen, 2003). A special project for using local products in some of the NTA cabins was launched in 2002 in co-operation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. The aim of the project is to contribute to the development of agriculture in mountain communities and to offer a special food experience for those visiting the cabins. There is already a documented increase in turnover for the cabins participating in this project (Landbruks- og matdepartementet, 2005b).

The catalogues from NRTTF invite visitors into the landscape. The outsiders can visit and take part in activities in the landscape like riding and fishing. Active farming and actively run farms are frequently mentioned as adding to the attractiveness of the landscape. Food is important, and the needs to be met are in general to recreate by seeing, tasting and feeling the

landscape. Words frequently mentioned with strong positive connotations are “real food” (as in authentic or genuine) and “active farming”. The “real” or “genuine” is by and large linked to local raw materials and local food-producing techniques like “smoked food buffet served from our own smoking oven” (NRTTF, 2004:25) or “we bake in the old-fashioned way using griddle irons and wood-burning ovens” (NRTTF, 2005:37). The weight given to traditional or “old” is also expressed through the promotion of “selected” cultural heritage as for example accommodation in a listed building or visiting a traditional cultural landscape of special national importance (NRTTF, 2004).

Views from the agricultural sector

The NFU approach to the agriculturally- influenced landscape as expressed through articles in *Bondebladet*, is very clearly placed *in* the landscape. The perspective is the farmer’s which is presented as an active economic actor, manager and landscape upholder. The close relationship – or shared destiny – between agriculture and tourism is clearly expressed. A joint effort from the two is said to have a great potential for developing new niche businesses and strengthening rural life, but it is underlined that the economic profit generated has to be for the benefit of the farmer. Traditional food is also seen here as a major new niche.

An interesting example of how farmers themselves see their role related to the combination agriculture and tourism is found in an interview with a couple on the Rekkedal farm in Western Norway. The article describes how the couple closed down traditional milk production on their farm, a more labour extensive beef enterprise has been started and a tourism product has been developed. The Rekkedal guest farm offers accommodation and food for a niche market willing to pay extra for the gourmet touch and the historic surroundings of the farm. The farmers are very specific about presenting themselves as farmers even if milk production has ended and tourism started. “We are farmers who run a guest farm and not tourism producers with farming on the side” (Bondebladet, Dec 11, 2003, my translation). The role as farmer is here stressed even if traditional farming has been scaled down.

Even if the main focus of NFU through *Bondebladet* is the inside perspective of the farmer, the outside perspective is addressed in some of the articles. One example is the typical outsider’s view of the landscape as beautiful scenery experienced by the eye from a distance as expressed in an interview with the managing director of *Hurtigruta* – the Coastal Steamer. *Hurtigruta* is a boat line along the coast from Bergen to the northern tip of Norway, now more and more a tourist line than a means of transporting goods. The managing director is concerned by the large-scale growth of bushes and trees on former farm land that ruins the “landscape picture” seen from the boat (Bondebladet, Feb 12, 2004). *Hurtigruta* should be the show window for the best of the Norwegian landscape, the director states.

When it comes to needs being met in the landscape the focus is on farmers’ need for income and especially on the need for additional income from tourism- related activities since the profit from “regular” farming is steadily decreasing.

The farmer is the main actor in rural tourism and not least the main actor for taking care of the rural tourism landscape product. The view of the landscape is absolutely a dynamic one, and mostly in negative terms meaning that if the landscape is not run or used in active farming overgrown land reverted into scrub will be the case and then the farmers as well as the tourist

actors will lose. Referring again to the managing director of Hurtigruta, he states that overgrowth of the cultural landscape will be the end of Norwegian tourism (Bondebladet, Feb 12, 2004).

For the dimension traditional – modern it is stressed that real authentic and traditional elements are necessary as a basis for modern business and value added. In other words, traditions are necessary for modern production.

The urban rural dimension is mentioned to a very limited degree. The focus is on the farmer and the agricultural business.

The material from MAF supports the main impression from the NFU material with a very strong emphasis on the necessity of seeing agriculture and rural tourism as a whole. A special forum has been established with representatives from agriculture, tourism, the authorities and voluntary organisations with the aim of strengthening innovation and developing new products in agri-tourism. Also co-operation in marketing between actors in agriculture and tourism has been running for 10 years supported by funding from the annual negotiations between the farmers' organisations and MAF (Landbruks- og matdepartementet, 2005a). Another example of what can be seen as an increased focus on the agricultural landscape and the values attached to it, besides production of food and fibre, is a document produced by MAF in May 2005 directed towards the authorities at the local level. This is a "handbook" for the municipalities in documenting their cultural landscape values and areas of special importance, and by doing so increasing the awareness of the potential in tourism based on the rural agricultural landscape and traditions (Landbruks- og matdepartementet, 2005c).

Discussion and conclusions

The starting point for the present analysis was the following: How is the agricultural landscape, agriculture and rurality in general seen from the perspective of tourism and agriculture? Can typical insiders' and outsiders' views be identified and are they in line with the expected - rather dichotomous - view of the two main actors agriculture and tourism?

From the tourism side the material indicates that NTA see themselves as outsiders "shopping" from what a living and inside- managed landscape can offer. However, the inside qualities asked for are not only the scenery to look at from a distance or walk through. The NTA want "real" food, niche products based on local ingredients and often with the story about the localness on the side.

Another striking finding from the analysis is that NTA has an explicit focus on living rural communities. They want to contribute to local economic development and they want the well-kept landscape as part of a good hiking experience. One should not dismiss the fact that caring for rural communities and rural landscapes can be deeply felt for NTA. However, I will argue that despite this focus on the locals' perspective and their situation, the outsiders' perspective is still there. One example is how the NTA keeps referring to, and taking for granted, an urban – rural dimension or even divide. This is evident in the presentation of the local food campaign at the NTA cabins where the chairman of the NTA board states that "NTA can be a bridging actor between the urban areas and the rural population" (Nationen, June 4, 2003, my translation). The project with local food on the tourist cabins can be an eye-

opener for the NTA members regarding agriculture's role as upholder of the cultural landscape, the chairman states.

The other tourist actor, NRTTF, is, compared to the NTA with the largest number of members found in urban areas, a rural actor in being an organisation for rural small-scale tourism actors. The inside – outside perspective can be seen as very traditional with the rural actors being the insiders offering experiences to the visiting outsiders. However, in NRTTF too we can see that the focus on outsiders' interest in "inside qualities" is strong (feeling, tasting and hearing about the landscape). Elements increasing the attractiveness of rural areas are all that is traditional and genuine and also active farming is marketed as an asset.

From the agricultural or insiders' perspective, the farmers are clearly seen as the main actors for everything that has to do with agri-tourism. The shared destiny is acknowledged but the agri-tourism must be a source of extra income for the benefit of the farmer. As documented by other studies (see Daugstad et al. 2002 for an overview), to shift from the role of farmer to a tourist entrepreneur or landscape provider is problematic for many farmers. However, to other farmers the combination of farming and tourism seems like a "natural" thing, as expressed by the couple at Rekkedal farm. One mechanism explaining this could be that there is a selection process regarding which farmers end up as tourist hosts.

Food is for NFU and MAF as well as for the tourism actors the dominating focus of attention. "Taste the landscape" is a slogan that sums up the relationship between the well-kept cultural landscape and the niche products we (meaning the general consumer) must be willing to pay for. "The multifunctions of food" can be an adequate phrase here.

Another main mutual factor for agriculture and tourism from the analysis is the fear of overgrowth. The changing agricultural land use turning the landscape mosaic, the openness and the great view into forest is a major concern for all actors investigated. And the mechanism behind this "greening" of the landscape is also acknowledged – active farming is needed to prevent the negative landscape development. Here the perspectives of insiders and outsiders are the same. It must be mentioned that the mutual landscape concern has to do with which agriculturally- influenced landscapes the tourism efforts are tied to. The agri-cultural landscape of special interest for the tourism industry is the most marginal and least industrialised landscape characterised by a small-scale "mosaic", heterogeneity. The most sensible mode of production would be to keep it like that. In the more industrialised agricultural areas of Norway there are conflicts between agriculture and tourism due to what is perceived as less "tourist friendly" landscapes.

Is outside - inside still a relevant perspective or just an outgrown dichotomy? In my opinion the dichotomy is useful, but outside and inside views are not that closely tied to farmers vs tourists. It is more a perspective that can help describe and understand attitudes towards landscapes and rurality(-ies) in general and the dynamics of attitudes and values just as much within as between actors.

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