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***Between household and enterprise
- Strategies among small-scale producers in agriculture,
fishing and fish farming***

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Abstract

The primary industries in Norway are going through great changes. Agriculture, fishing and fish farming are facing new challenges related to globalization, new technology and increasing international competition. Changes in markets and changes in international and national politics change the conditions for local farmers, fishermen and fish farmers. This challenge traditional ways of living in local communities based on primary industries and create a demand for innovations and new strategies.

In this paper I am going to discuss a theoretical approach to analyze strategies among small-scale producers in agriculture, fishing and fish-farming in Northern Norway. The discussion is based on the description of my PhD-project. The main research question in my PhD-project is: Which strategies “choose” small-scale producers in agriculture, fishing and fish-farming to secure survival and development?

I will argue that production and enterprises in small-scale primary industries must be analyzed as embedded in the household, the wider family and the local community. The household is a special important institution to understand and analyze economic changes. Wheelock and Mariussen (1997) claim that globalization, economic restructuring and deregulation transform the household into an increasingly important part of the economy, as household members are forced into rethinking their ways of making a living. In agriculture and small-scale fishing, and to a certain degree in small-scale fish farming, the household is also still the basic unit of production and organization. Decisions regarding the development of family owned micro business are also most often made within the household.

1. Introduction

The primary industries in Norway are going through great changes. Agriculture, fishing and fish farming are facing new challenges related to globalization, new technology and increasing international competition. Changes in markets and changes in international and national politics change the conditions for local farmers, fishermen and fish farmers. This challenge traditional ways of living in local communities based on primary industries and create a demand for innovations and new strategies.

In this paper I am going to discuss an analytical and theoretical approach to analyze strategies among small-scale producers in agriculture, fishing and fish farming in Northern Norway. The discussion is based on the description of my PhD-project. The main research question in my PhD-project is: Which strategies “choose” small-scale producers in agriculture, fishing and fish farming as a response to changing living condition? How do producers in primary business act and react when they are facing increasing globalization, economic restructuring and deregulation? I want to focus on the household level and the connection between the household and the firm, and ask: What is the role of the household in coping with increasing insecurity? What is the role of the household in business strategies? How is the firm and household interrelated? How do changes in task and team in the household affect the firm, and how do changes in the firm affect the household?

2. Changes in the primary industries

The Norwegian primary industries are in a process of restructuring. Increasing global competition in the markets, technological advances, and changed politics create new conditions for the producers in primary industries. The meaning of physical distances and national borders has changed, and the flow of capital, goods, technology, people and symbols change local realities. The global world economic system has become closer to local producers, despite the physical distances (Giddens 1990). Local businesses are to a greater degree bought out by national or transnational concerns, as has been the case in the Norwegian aquaculture industry.

In the agriculture sector the greatest changes the last decade are related to reduction in agricultural subsidies and increased market competition. External pressure from the EU, WTO and internal pressure due to a growing influence of liberal political parties has led to less restricted import regulation and reductions in agriculture subsidies. Increasing consumer demands towards food quality and lower prices has also contributed to these changes.

In the fishery sector resources crisis has led to strict regulations and restricted entry the last decades. Increased belief in market solutions due to growing influence of liberal political parties has led to liberalisation of trade, and greater importance has been given to increasing productivity, co-operation and joint-venture solutions. Norway has not yet formally implemented an ITQ (individually transferable quota) system, but the liberalisation the last years has resulted in a concentration of quota shares, especially in the cod fisheries, into the hands of fewer and larger companies.

The Norwegian aquaculture industry has also experienced great structural changes the last decade. Liberalisation in licence regulation and increased market competition has led to a restructuring process. Fish farming which started as a rural industry consisting of several

small family business, has now become a heavily industrialised and capitalised industry with fewer and larger, often global, companies. At the same time production has grown considerable despite regulations.

3. The household as an analytical framework

Production and enterprises in small-scale primary industries must be analyzed as embedded in the household, the wider family and the local community. Economic activities are embedded in social life (Granovetter 1985). Mariussen and Wheelock (1997) argue that the household is a key institution in theorising and understanding economic change and development, and that it is necessary to connect micro-changes at the level of the household and micro-change at the global or national level. Wheelock and Mariussen claim that: “Restructuring and deregulation transform the household into an increasingly important part of the economy, as households members are forced to rethink their ways of making a living” (Wheelock and Mariussen 1997:xvi).

In Norway, as in many other capitalistic economies, the market has got a more important role. The logic of the market is to destroy the stability of forms of livelihood since the economic ideology of the market makes an inadvertent virtue of insecurity. Market, the argument goes, operate best when there are incentives for personal gain (or the avoidance of loss). In a market economy it is insecurity that provides the opportunity for the economically fittest to survive. This insecurity has to be handled on different levels. The household level is the most basic level of social cohesion and organisation, and it is on this level that people try to cope with globalising economic forces.

In earlier studies of economic development in Northern Norway the household has been looked upon as a key institution (see for example Brox 1966, 1984, Flakstad 1984, Rudie 1969/70, Saugestad 1984, 1988 and Wadel 1980). Analyses at the household level have also been central in some newer studies (see for example Ljunggren et. al. 2000, Nilsen 1998, Pettersen 1997, Sande 1994, Wiborg 1995, 1997). Within primary industries, the household unit has been especially important with respect to production and strategies in the family business. This is to a certain degree still the case in agriculture and small scale fishing. In the beginning, the Norwegian aquaculture industry also was a small-scale household-based production (Holm et. al. 1990, Spjelkavik 1992), and despite the industrialisation of the industry the last decade there still exist some small fish farms embedded in the household (Alsos et. al. 2003, Pettersen 2004).

Household is the basic social unit of society. In household activities related to work, consumption, reproduction and resource management are carried out. Processes that affect people’s lives most directly – such as work and consumption – take place at the household level (Oughton et.al. 1997). It is also in the household many important decisions that affect people’s lives and livelihoods are taken. In household studies the individual is studied in his or her household context. How people behave is moulded by the household they live in.

Household is a fluid and multidimensional concept, and need to be discussed. Firstly we have to make a distinction between household and family. Family and household are often taken to be synonymous unit, but this will not necessarily always be the case. Nor will they necessarily be governed or guided by the same norms of behaviour (Clay and Schwartzweller 1991). For analytical reasons it is therefore necessary to make a distinction between household and

family. According to Gullestad (1984) and Moxnes (1990), household is a concept denoting the economic, employment and residential aspects of family life, while the concept of family denotes the biological, juridical and emotional aspects of family life. The household deals with activities, while family has to do with social relations (Oughton et.al. 1997).

Definitions of household have often the residence unit as the point of departure. In official statistics, for instances, a household is defined as a group of people who share the same dwelling. But it is problematic to require members of the household to be co-resident. It will for instances not be the case in many fishing households. Members do not have to be physically present to be part of a household (Davidson 1991). Definitions have also been based upon activity and functions. Roberts for instances, proposes household to be “the basic unit of society in which the activities of production, reproduction, consumption and the socialisation of children take place” (Roberts 1991, quoted in Oughton et.al. 1997:42). Oughton et.al. (1997) suggest that household is: “...a unit whose boundaries is formed by common agreement on the management of its resources, both the management of resources inflows into the household, and their use and distribution” (Oughton et.al. 1997: 42).

These criteria of activity and function seem to be well suited to identify and define the household. Nevertheless, the concept of household is to be understood as a structured process and not a “thing apart”. Davidson point at that: “...its boundaries in the quantitative sense, can exist only as an existential moment in time; secure only at specified instances” (Davidson 1991:21). Davidson claim that household are expressed in social relationships (which are expressed in activities), and that household are extremely porous with members being continuously incorporated and disincorporated. This is in line with Wallerstein and Smith (1990 in Oughton et. al. 1997), who argue that we should not presume a single, globally recognised, boundary defining the structure of the household. We should rather look upon the bounding of households itself as an historical process.

4. Deconstructing the concept of household

How should we then study household? The starting point should not be defining the household unit, but rather to deconstruct the concept of household. A division of the household into tasks and teams can be useful (Rudie 1969/70, Grønhaug 1974). Household can then be analyzed by asking: Which tasks or activities are carried out, and which teams are performing different tasks?

Tasks related to residence, production, meals and cooking, budgeting and caring have been very central in defining households (Gullestad 1984). Housholding tasks vary culturally, and it is problematic to establish an authoritative list of types of activities. But some activities will be more central than other, Löfgren (1974) suggest that it would be useful to ask which social units perform the central activities concerned with living, budgeting, production, child care and cooking. Davidson (1991) regards production, consumption, distribution and reproduction as the constituent elements in household activities.

Coordination of activities and management of resources is also needed. A household pools resources and uses them accordingly to needs (Saugestad 1988). The management of household resources encompasses material and non-material needs, such as motivations and satisfactions. Oughton et.al (1997) use the concept “human flourishing” to comprehend this aspects of household.

The household can also be regarded as a “moral community” (Gullestad 1984). This refers to the individual’s particular view of the moral duties and obligations they have towards those whom they consider to be household members. Rudie (1984) claims that internal relations in households are guided by a “model of love”. This is a contrast to a “market model”, which rules economic relations outside the household. These concepts deal with social relations between household members, and they integrate family and kinship in household analyses.

Davidson (1991) also argues that social relations are important in household studies. Household at its base is composed of individuals whose concern rests with its maintenance and reproduction over time, and household members are bound together by various social relations which have differing sources and magnitudes.

The household is also a decision making unit (Saugestad 1988). The household has to make decisions over the production, consumption, distribution and use of resources within the household. In making these kinds of decisions, the members of the household have to compare very different factors, some material and some of non-material nature. Individuals’ endowments, intra-household relations, and status affect decisions, for instance over household labour use.

When analyzing household we can not assume altruism and harmonious goals, we also need to look upon household from a bargaining approach and take into consideration intrahousehold conflicts. Kabeer argues that behavioural outcomes are likely to reflect rights and obligations as well as economic incentives. (Kabeer 1993 in Oughton et. al. 1997). Decisions may be imposed through heavy handedness, arrived at through consensus or pursued independently, and relations of authority and dominance affect distinct decisions (Davidson 1991).

We can not only look at intrahousehold relations, we also have to take into consideration the external relations and the larger structural forces which impinge on each household (Davidson 1991).

5. Household as an “in-between” institution

It is necessary to link the internal dynamics of the household economy to political and economic processes outside it. In classical political economy societal institutions such as the household, were a part of the economy, and the economy in turn was a part of society. As a result of the division between sociology and economy from the late nineteenth century the relation between the household and economic change was looked upon as uninteresting and unimportant for theory. Theories of modernisation argue that economy is a separate institutional sphere, one in which the economic rationality of utility maximisation dominates. The process of institutional differentiation separates work in formal organisations from the household of employees. The interrelation between household and economy became an “in-between” case and thereby uninteresting in the two disciplines (Mariussen and Wheelock 1997).

Nevertheless, several attempts at remaking economy and sociology have been made, and through the new economic sociology economics are embedded in society. Weber was one of the first to throw light on the relationship between household and economy. Weber discussed

the dichotomies *Haushalten* and *Erwerben* as abstract categories (Weber 1947). *Haushalten* refer to calculus in kind, which is oriented towards satisfaction of wants. Needs are budgeted against available resources to optimise a normatively defined goal. The fulfilment of human need is the institutional context within which work is organised in the household. *Erwerben* refer to the labour market and occupational work dominated with calculus in terms of money. In Weber's discussion of industrial organisation the hybrid forms - the in-between institutions - between these dichotomies are given a lot of attention, such as the family firms. In a family firm, work may be submitted to the same values as that of household work. Alternatively, the household may be submitted to the values of capital accounting. He also pointed out that there are very different organisational solutions, as the firm may be more or less integrated with or separated from the household, with a greater or lesser clash between institutionally based values.

Family firms were also discussed by Shanin (1990) and Chayanov (1986). Chayanov, argued that Russian peasants were not accumulating capital. When peasant families had satisfied their need, they stopped working, something they would not have done had they wanted to accumulate capital.

Another important contribution is Granovetter's perspective on how economy is embedded in social institutions (Granovetter 1985). The concept of embedding showed how transactions take place in the context of societal institutions, such as families. Granovetter rely on Polanyi and his concept of reciprocity. This concept refers to norms which define obligations, and in family firms it is family reciprocity that is used to organise economic activity. Granovetter made the family once more to a central institution in understanding economic development.

6. The household and gender relations

When doing analyses on the household level is necessary to integrate gender into the analysis. At the level of the household, the management of gender identity is a central issue, both at the practical level, in the definition of tasks and duties, and at the symbolic level (Wheelock and Mariussen 1997).

Studies of household often have as the starting point the household unit. Assumption about unity is also reflected in the approach where household is regarded as a "moral community". Feminist researchers have criticised this, arguing that there exist instead multiple voices, gendered interests, and an unequal distribution in households as in families (Delphy and Leonard 1992, Hartmann 1981, Thorne and Yalom 1982, Wolf 1991). Wolf (1991) argues that we can not assume that cohesion and coherence rather than conflict are at the basis of intrahousehold relationships. We must take into consideration intrahousehold relations of power, subordination and perhaps conflict and dissent.

The division of labour in the household is gender-based, as it is in the labour market. Work and the contexts in which work tasks are carried out, convey meaning in terms of gender identity and chosen lifestyle. Actions have instrumental and symbolic aspects, conveying meaning in different ways. How work is codified is a cultural process and tasks are codified according to gender relations and prestige. Tasks associated with women tend to carry less prestige than tasks associated with men, because they are evaluated in terms of power relations (Oughton et.al. 1997).

Gender must be looked upon as a relational concept. What is considered male and female, man and woman, must be analysed in relation to each other within the household. In Norwegian primary industries housework and child-care have been considered female while agriculture work and fishing have been considered male. But the traditional model with the male breadwinner and female housewife have not been the traditional adaptation in primary industries in Northern Norway. Women had always participated in the family business and performing tasks within production (Fyhn 1991, Gerrard 1975, 1983, 1990, Røst Saugestad 1984).

7. The study of change - household strategies

The adaptations that households make in the light of social and economic changes are widely discussed in the literature under the rubric household work strategies or household livelihood strategies (See Clay and Schwarzweller 1991, Sociologia Ruralis 1986).

Studies of household strategies have been criticized for several reasons. Household is often looked upon as a unity with common interests, and individual behaviour, conflicts and power relation within the household are overlooked (Clay and Schwarzweller 1991, Wolf 1991). The concept of strategy conjures up an image of collective behaviour that is neatly planned and rationally implemented. In formal definitions of strategy the ideas of rational decision-making, applied to long-term plans are central (Andersen et. al. 1994). But activities of household are multidimensional, and behaviour that is rational in economic terms may well not be rational for the nurturing objectives of the household. Household will also consist of individuals with different interests, and the decision-making process is complex and multifaceted. Household strategies has also been criticized for leaving little room for "nonstrategic" change or for individual behaviour that is not relevant to household maintenance and development (Clay and Schwarzweller 1991).

Davidson (1991) argues that to overcome these problems we need to study the *formation* of livelihood strategies, rather than the adoption of strategies: "Individuals form livelihood strategies and as members of households these strategies entail different consequences, favourable and otherwise, for other household members. This underscores the fact that we need to comprehend the power relations – class, gender and age – which shape relations within and between households" (Davidson 1991: 26).

Wolf (1991) also argues that household strategies must be explored rather than assumed. To understand behaviour at the household-level we need to find out who makes which decisions for whom and under what circumstances. Decisions will be a combination thoughts, interests and objectives of the individuals of the household both as individuals and as members of the household group. Cultural values are central to the choices people make. Household's decisions are often a result of discussions related to non-economic issues to do with the social and cultural values of the family and the household. Household strategies must be seen as a result of negotiations, disagreement and bargaining (Becker 1981). Strategies may arise from established patterns and habits as well as explicitly negotiated solutions (Oughton et.al. 1997). Clay and Schwarzweller argue that households strategies must be regarded as:

"...a general rubric or umbrella concept that refers to both deliberate action relative to goals as well as to normatively guided "unplanned" responses by the household group and its members relative to changing circumstances both internal and external to the household group." (Clay and Schwarzweller 1991: 6)

8. Analysis of household strategies in primary business

The previous discussion is the starting point in analyzing strategies among small-scale producers in agriculture, fishing and fish-farming in Northern Norway.

The study of change must be broken down into looking at changes in the teams performing different tasks, as well as at changes in the tasks themselves. Household are flexible organisations where various tasks may be given to different teams. It is necessary to analyze tasks related both to production, consumption (such as housework) and reproduction (such as child care). Distribution must also be analyzed. Another important question is how the different tasks are gendered.

In analysing changes it is central to focus upon decision-making processes. We have to ask: Who makes which decisions for whom and under what circumstances? To analyse changes we both have to take into consideration intrahousehold relations and the larger structural forces which impinge on each household.

The interrelations between household, firms and economic change are of special interests in my study. How do economic changes at the macro level intervene at the household system and the business activity? This can be analyzed by looking at the way work is organized in the household and in the firm and how this has changed. What are the tasks in the household and in the firm, and how has this change? What teams are performing the different tasks in the household and in the business? Is it the same teams that are performing the different tasks both in the household and in the firm? How has this changed? How has changes affected gender relations inside the household and inside the firm?

Within primary business, work in the family business was traditionally embedded in the household as a joint economic activity. People were usually self-employed and production and the household were linked and overlapping (Figure 1). Different models of integration between the household and the firm are showed in the figures beneath.

Business activities
(production)

Household
(reproduction)

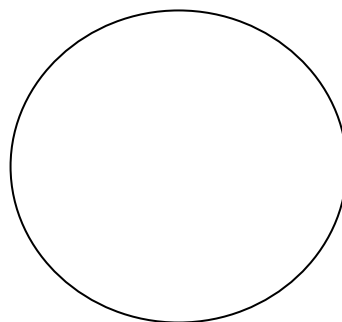


Figure 1: Household and business activities are overlapping

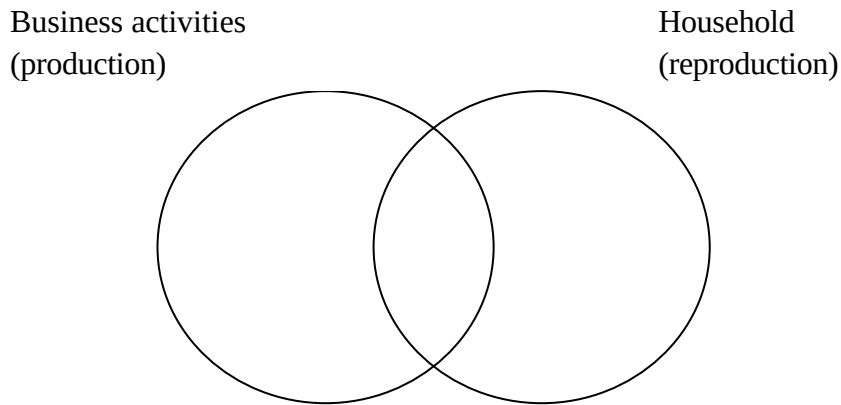


Figure 2: Business activities and household are partly overlapping

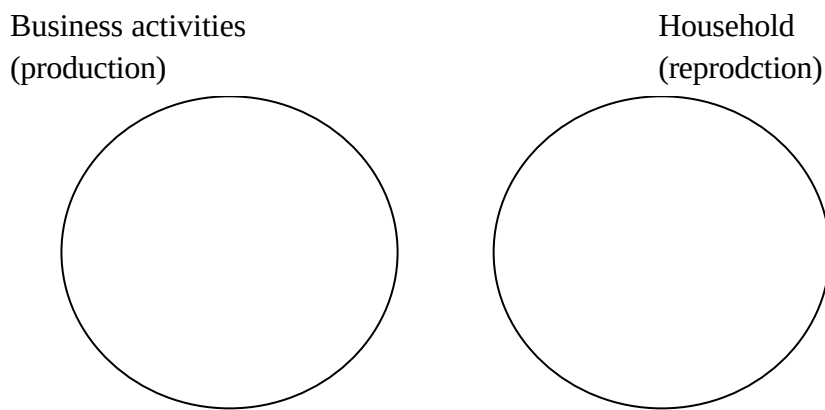


Figure 3: Business activities and household are totally separated

How organisation of business activities and household activities have changed is a central question. Is work in family business - farming, fishing and fish farming – still embedded in the household or is it disembedded from the household? And is it differences between the industries?

Studies give rise to different hypothesis. Wiborg (1995, 1997) argue that that farm and farmwork is being disembedded from the household as a joint economic activity in Northern Norway. Førde (2004) claim that the farm and farmwork and the household still are overlapping and interwoven. Women' role have a central role in this. They are the flexible one in the team, shifting from work in the household and on the farm. Studies of micro-business also show that business activities and the household still are intervoven and partly overlapping (Ljunggren et al. 2000, Baines and Wheelock 1998, Baines et. al. 2003).

One hypothesis is that there still are some overlapping functions/activities between business activities and the household (Figure 2). Another hypothesis is that business activities and household are totally separated (figure 3). People become wage earners instead of being self-

employed. A last question is what implications have these changes for household, gender relations, for business activities and for the primary industries?

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