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**The art of networking:
The case of Sogndal Fotball and
Fosshaugane Campus**

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Abstract

One of the most significant recent elements of restructuring in rural areas is the transition from an economy based on agricultural production to an economy based on the countryside as a form of commodity. In this transition process, different narratives or images of an area are produced in order to promote villages and other places in the countryside as commodities. Much of the literature takes it for granted that outsiders control the processes of branding rural areas, but our case illustrates that the producers (as well as potential consumers) of the countryside as commodity can be “insiders” of a community. The paper demonstrates how a local football club can take a leading role in processes of rural restructuring in the post-modern area. Football clubs are presented as commodities to attract investors, sponsors, and expertise from private businesses. In both rural restructuring and football, the challenge is to construct narratives or images that correspond with the pre-existing expectations of consumers, whoever they might be.

Our discussion demonstrates how the Norwegian football club Sogndal Football used the art of networking to turn a stadium upgrade into a rural restructuring project. Through the development project Fosshaugane Campus, the football club contributes to a commodification of the village of Sogndal by reproducing the rural not as wilderness or a place of adventure for tourists, but as a place for sport, development, and innovation for creative (young) people. Thus, Sogndal Fotball is an example of how increased professionalism of an organization can change football from a game involving 22 players to a game of rural restructuring involving the main actors in a community.

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1. Introduction

In the recent restructuring of rural areas from an economy based on agricultural production to an economy based on the countryside as a form of commodity different narratives or images of an area are produced in order to promote villages or other places in the countryside (Woods, 2005). In this paper we demonstrate how football in the post modern area can take a leading role in such shifts in society “from landscapes of production to landscapes of consumption” (Cloke, 2006, p.19). These processes “are both inter-related and multi-dimensional in character” (Hoggart and Paniagua, 2001, p.42). Much of the literature takes it for granted that outsiders control the processes of branding rural areas. The “tourist gaze”, or representations of rural areas as attractions in the form of a rural idyll, wilderness, or place of adventure, has been produced on this basis (Urry, 1990). We support those who argue that the consumers and producers of the countryside as a commodity can also be *insiders*, such as those individuals living in a rural community, newcomers, local firms, politicians and even football clubs. These agents demand representations that are different from those of the “tourist gaze”. In many aspects, rural restructuring has a parallel within football, where clubs are represented as commodities to attract investors, sponsors, and competence from public and private interests. In both cases the challenge is to construct narratives that correspond to the pre-existing expectations of consumers. We also support the argument that in order to emphasize rural space as a socially produced set of manifolds “it seems fruitful to bring together material and imaginative conceptions of rural space through their intersections in particular practices” (Cloke, 2006, p.24).

This paper analyses such practice through a study of an emerging rural restructuring project in the municipality of Sogndal, Norway, via the following questions:

- What is the position of the Sogndal Fotball Club in Norwegian top-level football and in the community?
- What are the social field dynamics behind the narrative *Fosshaugane Campus*?
- In what way can the case study inform theories on processes of branding the “rural”?

In Section 2 we discuss the concept of social fields, the construction of narratives, and rural restructuring. Our study of the way in which narratives and rural restructuring are shaped by

football is based on the argument that narratives are not universally shared, but that the dominance of certain narratives in certain *social fields* (Grønhaug, 1974) is fundamental for the coordination of rural restructuring. In Section 3 we document changes that occurred within Sogndal Fotball Club, concentrating on events and processes at different geographical scales that underlie the increased professionalism and turnover of the club and how these factors have influenced the organization of the club. In Section 4 we demonstrate the way in which the art of networking has turned a stadium upgrade into rural restructuring, as represented by the development project Fosshaugane Campus. Via Fosshaugane Campus, the football club has contributed to a commodification of the village of Sogndal by *narrating* the rural not as wilderness or a place of adventure for tourists, but as a place for sport, development, and innovation for creative (young) people. Section 5 concludes the discussion. We argue that Sogndal Fotball is an example of how the increased professionalism of an organization in a glocal world can change football from a game of 22 players to a game of material and imaginative rural restructuring practice involving the main actors within a community.

The data presented in our analysis are adopted from an ongoing project on the organization of top football clubs in Norway, in which a number of clubs are currently being investigated by a research team. In this paper, we report the findings from one of these clubs. The case study is based on interviews with people who are or have been part of the club or are connected to the club, such as managing directors, board members, investors, sponsors and representatives for the local authority and other important local institutions. We also use information from existing documents and literature.

2. Spatial rural restructuring: Towards a methodology

2.1 *Glocalization*

Our methodology of analysing rural restructuring in a post-modern world is based on the mapping of relations between shifts in rural society, narrative production, and social fields in a given area. As a consequence of “time–space compression” linked to technological innovations and political constructions of worldwide systems of transfer, capital and narratives cross borders at an increasing tempo; this has shaken established geographical patterns of relations. The result

is a complex set of social, political, and economic restructurings that enable new forms of political positions. Swyngedouw (2004) argues that globalization should be seen as a recasting of these processes both “upwards” and “downwards” in scale, rather than being reduced to an upscaling of social, political, and economic processes. He introduces the term “glocalization” to describe the dialectics between processes of time–space compression and changes in local adaptations. The term refers to “the contested restructuring of the institutional, regulatory level (the level of social reproduction) from the national scale both upwards to the supranational and/or global scales and downwards to the scale of the individual body, the local, the urban or the regional configurations” (Swyngedouw, 1997, p.170).

The economic, political, and cultural changes that are linked to time–space compression have set in motion dialectics that are characterized by flexible specialization (Storper and Walker, 1989; Amin and Thrift, 1994), political deconstruction (Jessop, 1990), and reflexive individuals in search for particularity (Lash and Urry, 1994; Giddens, 1991). Increased internationalization of the world economy and liberalization of world trade encourages global consumerism that is seen by some commentators to have a profound influence on cultural norms and values, influencing ongoing economic, political, and social practice (Hall, 1995; Sayer, 1995). Established traditions and customary ways of life are dislocated by the integration of communities into a worldwide system of the exchange of knowledge, information, and markets for goods and finance (Hall, 1995).

Giddens (1991, p.20) characterizes the dynamism of globalization as (1) *separation of time and space*: the condition for the articulation of social relations across wide spans of time–space, up to and including global systems; (2) *disembedding mechanisms* that separate interaction from the particularities of locales; and (3) *institutional reflexivity*: the regularized use of knowledge of circumstances of social life is a constitutive element in its organization and transformation. Some observers of this dynamism argue that the production of culture and identities has changed to a large degree from being a concern of communities to a global affair: “global consumerism spreads the same thin cultural film over everything” (Hall, 1995, p.176, see also Ohmae,1990). But this suggestion of homogeneity is confronted by other observers who argue that production of culture has become more like an individual affair characterized by reflexive individuals in

search of new and short-lived identities (Augé, 1995). However, neither the suggestion of cultural homogeneity (global convergence) nor cultural heterogeneity (global divergence) provides an adequate analytical basis for a study of the relations between globalization and rural contexts. Hence, an intermediate theoretical position is presented below.

2.2 Rural restructuring

Technological innovations and the construction of global transfer systems have caused changes in economic, political and cultural relations, with resulting important effects on most activities in rural communities. In most cases these changes cause *rural restructuring*, i.e. shifts in society “from landscapes of production to landscapes of consumption” (Cloke, 2006, p.19). These processes “are both inter-related and multi-dimensional in character” (Hoggart and Paniagua, 2001, p.42). During the 1980s and 1990s, rural European communities faced increasing international competition and political liberalization that caused a shift in farming practices towards larger farm units and a decrease in employment within the agricultural sector. Increased mobility has increased the flow of people in, out, and through rural spaces; tourism is a sector that is demonstrating growth. Different forms of rural tourism have changed the main economic activities of rural people from traditional agricultural activities and provided their communities with new sources of income.

It is assumed that the countryside has become a *commodity* to be bought and sold (Little and Austin, 1996). This assumption is related to a wider debate on the commodification of society that can be traced back to Polanyi’s (1957) work on the “great transformation” from a non-market to a market society. He analysed a shift in the balance of the economy from the non-commodified to the commodified sphere. This process has accelerated since the publication of Polanyi’s work. The logic of the market is invading greater portions of everyday life, and even if this commodification is not yet complete, the reality is that increasing numbers of the activities in society are mediated via the market (Watts, 1999). The term “commodification” refers to the process by which goods and services are increasingly produced by capitalist firms for a profit under the conditions of market exchange. According to Williams (2002), commodification has three distinct elements: goods and services are produced for exchange; exchange is monetized

and conducted under market conditions; and the exchange of goods and services is motivated by the pursuit of profit.

The commodification and marketing of rural places commonly means re-packing and re-presenting rural areas and features to emphasize those characteristics associated with the rural idyll (Little and Austin, 1996). Rural tourism can be classified into two kinds of activities: those that are located in rural areas but are not distinctively rural in character; and those activities that engage with the rural landscape, environment, culture, or traditions. The latter category includes mountain hiking, farm holidays, traditional craft attractions, and adventure tourism. Urry (1990, p.3) argues that in both types of activities we can talk about:

“The tourist gaze” [that] is directed to features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience. Such aspects are viewed because they are taken to be in some sense out of the ordinary. The viewing of such tourist sights often involves different forms of social patterning, with a much greater sensitivity to visual elements of landscape or townscape than is normally found in everyday life. People linger over such a gaze, which is then normally visually objectified or captured through photographs, postcards, films, models and so on. These enable the gaze to be endlessly reproduced and recaptured.

In summary, the concept of “the tourist gaze” highlights that one of the most significant elements of rural restructuring seems to be the transition from an economy based on agricultural production to an economy based on the countryside as a form of commodity (Murdoch and Marsden, 1994; Urry, 1995; Woods, 2005; Cloke *et al.*, 2006). According to Woods (2005), there are five main elements of commodification of the countryside: (1) the marketing of rural production sites as tourist attractions involving mainly on-site accommodation, such as bed and breakfast, self-catering cottages, and camp sites; (2) the repackaging of rural heritage, creating the “tourist gaze” of the rural idyll based on nostalgia and the sense that the countryside has been less affected and corrupted by modernity than the city; (3) the promotion of “fictional” rural landscapes whereby the “tourist gaze” is informed by fictional representations of rural life and landscape in film, television programmes, and literature; (4) the rural as a site for extreme experiences via adventure tourism, which extend beyond the metaphor of the “tourist gaze” to a more embodied experience based on being, doing, touching, and seeing; and (5) the use of rural areas as a brand in the marketing of premium food and craft products.

Commodification of the countryside also implies a new mentality among the actors involved. Writings on regional development have stressed learning, knowledge, flexibility, networking, and innovation as essential features for regional restructuring. Time–space compression and increased competition in the economy mean that the specific capabilities of actors within a region are essential for competitiveness (Morgan, 1997; Maskell *et al.*, 1998). Successful places are often characterized by an entrepreneurial culture that has developed over long periods of time. Such local milieus are building on a variety of channels for accessing impulses and relevant knowledge from different localities. There is the coexistence of a “local buzz” that facilitates localized knowledge spill-over, and external “pipelines” (Bathelt *et al.*, 2004); however, many rural areas lack this type of entrepreneurship and “local buzz”. Rural restructuring has often been orchestrated by external actors, or “outsiders”, resulting in a situation of dependency for the local community (Jakobsen *et al.*, 2005a). Thus, there is a need for local entrepreneurs to ensure that a development helps the region to prosper.

2.3 *Narratives*

The picture of “outsiders” as dominant in the commodification of the countryside is also a striking feature of the literature that analyses “the tourist gaze”. This literature concentrates on “outsiders” who produce “fictional” images of the countryside. However, such studies have been criticized for being biased, as they ignore commodification of the countryside arranged by “insiders” (Ilbery, 1998; Cloke, 2006) and rule out the possibility of “insiders” being the target consumers during the commodification process. To avoid this problem, our first step is to talk about “the tourist gaze” as just one of multiple representations of places (Urry, 2002). Different representations of a place are produced in order to market villages or other areas in the countryside as attractive to both outsiders and insiders. In such settings one can employ the concept of *narrative* to label the wider system of representations that are in general use concerning a certain place, and *representations* to label the specific perceptions of an actor or a group of actors concerning a certain place (Haarstad, 2005; Halfacree, 2006).

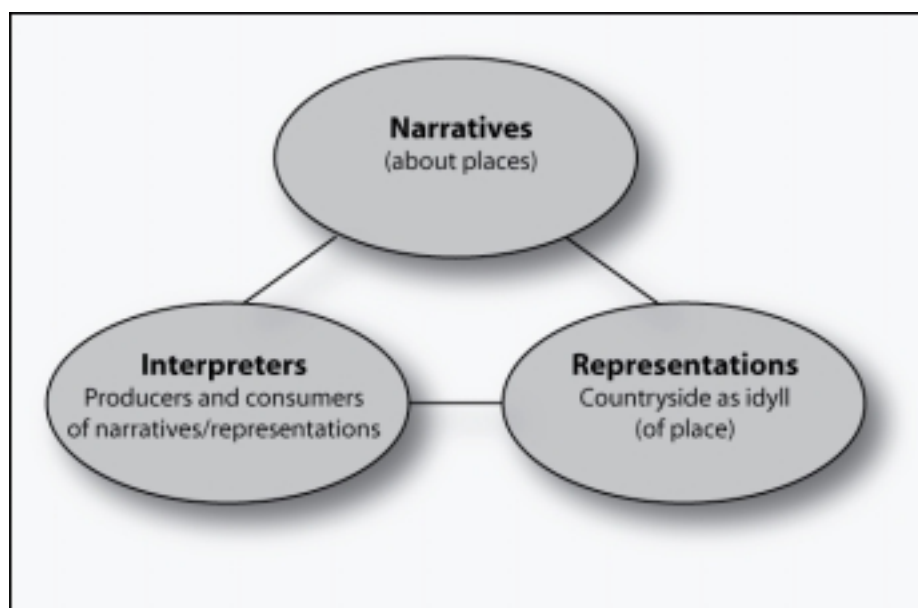


Figure 1: Interpreters, representations, and narratives of place. Graphic: Kjell H. Sjøstrøm

A *narrative* can be defined as a string of socially constructed “representations” (ideas, sayings, and stories) about people and the world that are tied together in a whole that has a coordinating role on social relations and conduct. In our case, the focus is on representations that have a coordinating role on rural restructuring. Accordingly, a narrative organizes strings of representations (Fig. 1). In the case of the commodification of rural places, such narratives are commonly selected to correspond with pre-existing expectations of potential consumers, such as tourists. Their representations of the rural as attractions in the form of the rural idyll, wilderness, and place of adventure are common; however, the potential interpreters of a representation include those people living in the community, potential immigrants such as students, relocating firms, and politicians. The target consumers can even include football players. Football players, villagers, potential immigrants, and relocating firms are attracted by different representations from those that attract tourists. In the case of multiple actors as potential producers and consumers of rural representations, the challenge is to perform a narrative that combines different representations in such a way that it is accepted by the hegemonic interest groups represented in the rural community and by multiple consumer groups outside the community.

2.4 *Social fields*

The above discussion dictates that the constructions of rural narratives must be seen as a dynamic, ongoing, socially constructed process that involves many social actors who continuously reshape the narrative and transform it to fit their perceptions, needs, values, and agendas (Hall *et al.*, 2003). Rather than understanding material, imaginative and practised ruralities as separate it is advisable to see them as intrinsically and dynamically intertwined with real life relationships (Cloke, 2006; Halfacree, 2006). The construction of narratives takes place in spatial social networks or changing sets of social relations between various actors of different scales that involve material, social, and symbolic exchange. To capture the material and imaginative dimension of rural practice we introduce our final methodological element: the concept of social fields (Fløysand and Jakobsen, 2002). A *social field* is a collection of geographically and historically distributed social networks coordinated by formal and informal rules of conduct in a given material, practiced, and imaginative setting (Fig. 2).

The “material setting” of a social field, in terms of the historical and geographical scales of a field, is empirically defined by referring to the number of actors and their relations in a social field and their distribution in time and space. Hence, the scale or “physical shape” of a social field that constrains and enables the agency of actors is defined by the number of people involved and their extension in socio-physical space.

The “practiced setting” of a social field is based on a theory of practice whereby actors are defined either as a *social person* (each social person possesses a number of statuses) or as a *group of social persons* (Linton, 1936). A network of social relations becomes a social field when you can observe a task-solving network system that frequently produces and maintains relations. Hence, a social field represents a particularly dense pattern of social relations that constrain and enable the agency of actors.

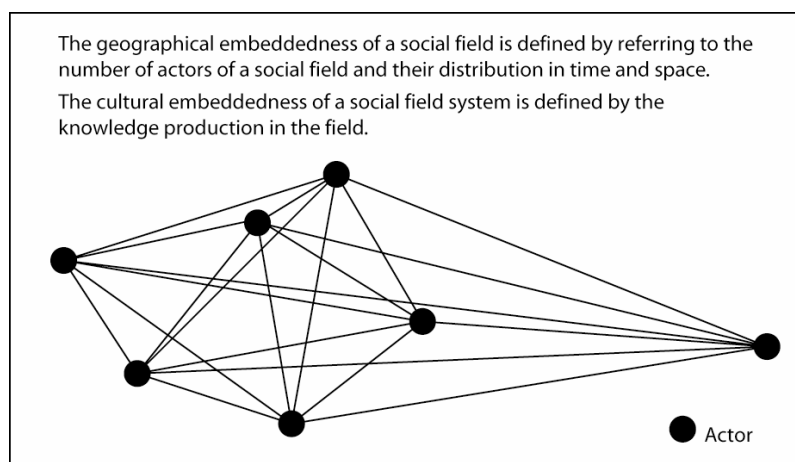


Figure 2: A social field. Graphic: Kjell H. Sjøstrøm.

The “imaginative setting” of a social field is defined by the production of meaning within this social field. Within each social field, social practices produce inter-subjective meaning composed of categories, narratives, and rules of conduct that the field members use to interpret, maintain, and generate new meaning. In our approach, we concentrate on the production of meaning in the form of narratives.

Finally, pursuing a social field approach involves the study of the dynamics between events and processes in different fields (Fløysand and Jakobsen, 2005). This approach assumes that such dynamics of social field systems are shaped by “glocal” micro–macro processes of dominance. Social fields are interconnected in the actor in the sense that each person contains various statuses with a number of linkages that in sum form the totality of fields that comprise his or her relational space. Social persons or groups of social persons normally take part in various social fields of contrasting material, practiced, and imaginative settings, for instance via family relations, neighbour relations, community relations, and market relations. In such fields, people participate by performing narratives that are legitimized via shared expectations of how relations should be conducted and the world should be viewed. A social field has to be discovered through empirical descriptions. The question of dominance has to be evolved by empirically embedded discussions; the number of social fields, their distribution in time and space and the existence of power relations.

In the case of the town of Sogndal, Norway, the construction of *Fosshaugane Campus* is a key element in a ongoing process of rural restructuring. Fosshaugane Campus is a development project that combines sport, education, and research activities. The project is rooted in the interaction between: a) local representations of Sogndal; b) growth in the turnover of the football club *Sogndal Fotball*; c) a more professional and uniform organization of the club; and d) new regulations for football in Europe. It should be emphasized that the project is dominated by a *social field of local scale* rather than outsiders, whereby the supply of resources is organized by joint action between the club and local public authorities.

3. Sogndal Fotball

3.1 Recent results: Sport and turnover

Norwegian football led Scandinavia in the 1990s in terms of net transfers to the large European leagues and in terms of players' wages (Goksøyr and Olstad, 2002). This rise was fuelled by the qualification of the Norwegian team, for the first time ever, for the World Cup in 1994. Moreover, Rosenborg of Trondheim established itself as the leading Scandinavian club by qualifying for the Champions League every year since 1995, with the exception of 2003 and 2006. The Norwegian national team again succeeded in qualifying for the World Cup in 1998, as well as the European Championship in 2000. The 1990s were the most successful period in the history of Norwegian football, and this boosted interest in football for the popular media and the public (Jakobsen *et al.*, 2005b).

The development of Sogndal Fotball followed the national trend. The club got its first taste of success in 1976, when it as a club on the third league level defied the odds to be runner-up in the Norwegian FA Cup. In 1981 the club was promoted to the top league for the first time, with a team built around key figures from the 1976 side. However, the club was relegated the following season. Its best result came in 1988, when the club ended sixth in the top league; however, it was after 1990 that the club experienced its most successful period. Since 1990, Sogndal Fotball has qualified for the top league in nine seasons (Tab. 1). Before returning to the first division in 2005, the club played four successive seasons in the top league. Even if the club has not picked up any major trophies, the results are impressive given the human resources available in the village.

Season	Position	Season	Position
1981	Winner of the 1 division (promoted)	1994	11th in the top league (relegated)
1982	11th in the top league (relegated)	1995	Second in the 1 division
1983	Third in the 1 division	1996	Second in the 1 division (promoted)
1984	Third in the 1 division	1997	11th in the top league
1985	Second in the 1 division	1998	14th in the top league (relegated)
1986	7 th in the 1 division	1999	5 th in the 1 division
1987	Winner of the 1 division (promoted)	2000	Third in the 1 division (promoted)
1988	6th in the top league	2001	8th in the top league
1989	11th in the top league (relegated)	2002	11th in the top league
1990	Winner of the 1 division (promoted)	2003	8th in the top league
1991	9th in the top league	2004	14th in the top league (relegated)
1992	11th in the top league (relegated)	2005	7 th in the 1 division
1993	Winner of the 1 division (promoted)		

Note: During the period 1981-1994 the number of teams in the Norwegian top league was 12. The following year the 14-teams league was introduced. During the years from 1981 to 1996 the 1 division (the second level) was divided into two sections, since 1997 there has been only one section. Seasons in the top league is in **bold**.

Table 1: League ranking of Sogndal Fotball during the period 1981–2005. Source: www.n3sport.no

Norwegian top football has undergone increased commercialization since the early 1990s, with a more prominent position for economic institutions and market transactions (Binns *et al.*, 2002; Gammelsæter and Ohr, 2002; Morrow, 2003). This development has been characterized by a general growth in turnover and the development of larger and more professional organizations. In 2004 the total turnover for the 14 clubs in the Norwegian top league was approximately NOK 550 million (EUR 70 million). The numbers of employees in these clubs, including players, coaching staff, and administration, is about 500 (Jakobsen *et al.*, 2005b).

In terms of turnover, Sogndal Fotball again follows the trend of Norwegian top-level football. Turnover in the club increased from NOK 6.6 million in 1995 to an estimated NOK 20 million in 2005. In 1999, 2001, and 2004, turnover was higher than the estimation for 2005 (Fig. 3). High turnover in these years resulted from income related to player transfers. In 2004, a NOK 15 million gift to the club from a donator in Bergen made for the highest ever turnover, of NOK 45 million. Increased revenue has been spent on professionalizing the sport and expanding the administration of the club and associated public limited companies (PLC). Employment in Sogndal Fotball and associated PLCs (SIL-Tribuna AS [AS is the Norwegian term for PLC], Sognahallen AS, Idrettssenteret AS, and Sogndal Trivsel AS) increased from 13 employee-years in 1995 to 41 employee-years in 2004. The increase in employment reflects a shift from amateur

to professional contracts for the football players at the club, increasingly professional administrative management of the club, and the increasing administrative requirements as the club has become engaged in new activities.

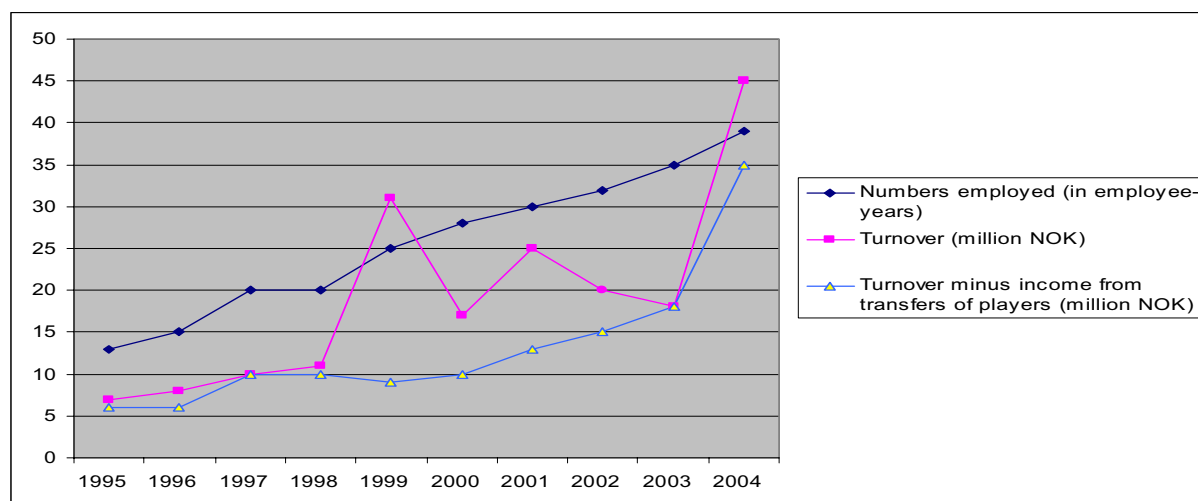


Figure 3: Numbers employed (in employee-years) by Sogndal Fotball, SIL-Tribuna AS, Sognahallen AS, Idrettsenteret AS, and Sogndal Trivsel AS, and turnover of the Sogndal Fotball, 1995–2004.

3.2 *The geography of Sogndal Fotball*

If clubs from the Oslo area are ignored, the locations of Norway's top football clubs show strong relations between the clubs and a given place. In most cases, identification with a club and a place become mutually reinforcing processes. In Oslo, rivalry exists between top football clubs. As in most cities, identification with or against top football clubs is structured by the clubs' links to historical class distinctions in specific urban areas. In the Oslo region, competition is also strengthened by clubs that are located outside the municipality boundaries, but inside the metropolitan region; however, the majority of clubs outside of Oslo do not have a rival top club within their community or in nearby areas (Fig. 4). Most of these clubs are located in municipalities with less than 100,000 inhabitants. In addition, the travel time by car between a club outside the Oslo metropolitan area and its nearest competing top club is on average half a day or more.



Figure 4: Geographical locations of clubs in the Norwegian top league and distance to nearest rival, 2004. Graphic: Kjell H. Sjøstrøm.

Sogndal Fotball is an extreme case when it comes to location. It is based in the municipality of Sogndal (with 6,794 inhabitants in 2004) in the county of Sogn og Fjordane (with approximately 107,000 inhabitants). This makes Sogndal the 146th largest municipality in the national ranking list of 434 in 2005. All other top football clubs have a much larger population base behind their results (Fig. 4).

Sogndal is very aware of its David vs. Goliath position. It represents itself as the small rural team that, despite its peripheral location and small size, manages to compete with the giant clubs from urban Norway. It is especially common to compare the development of Sogndal Fotball with Sportsklubben Brann, located in Bergen, which is the regional centre of the Vestlandet area:

We have always compared ourselves with Brann, you have this urban-rural dimension...we like to talk about how small we are, a little community, very scarce resources (Representative of Sogndal Fotball)

The point is that Bergen is hegemonic to Sogndal in most terms, but not when it comes to organizing a top football club. If the two clubs are compared, Sogndal Fotball has taken the lead in developing sports facilities. In 1996 it constructed an indoor hall for football, and its outdoor training grounds are of a much higher standard than those at Brann. In addition, Sogndal Fotball managed its finances well at a time when Brann and other top clubs were running close to bankruptcy. In 2005, Sogndal Fotball began an upgrade of its stadium, once again taking the lead on Brann. In 1991 and 2002, Sogndal even ranked higher than Brann in the top league.

The above aspects are also important when the rural and urban are compared in terms of Sogndal–Sogndal Fotball and Oslo–Vålerenga. A proud moment in the history of Sogndal occurred during the year 2000 when the club defeated Vålerenga in the final qualifying match at Ullevål and was once again promoted to the top league. The relegation of Vålerenga was seen as a disaster by the club and its followers, while the success of Sogndal Fotball had a positive effect on the self-esteem not only of club members, but also of the community at large. As a result, people began to see Sogndal as a rural place that is able to compete with urban places:

Why do we manage this in Sogndal? Why did we obtain an indoor hall before Bergen? In Bergen they are not able at all. Why? Because we are a small community of overlapping networks working together (Representative of the Sogndal municipality administration)

3.3 *The network model*

New organizational structures have been introduced into the top Norwegian football clubs to ensure the supply of external resources and to obtain an adequate internal resource allocation. Although there is a general tendency towards increasingly professional organizations and the

formulation of rules and procedures within the clubs, the nature of interaction between organizations varies between three models (Jakobsen *et al.*, 2005). The *dual model* is characterized by a contractual connection between the football club and financial actors via a PLC; the *investor model* involves tight relations between the football club and selected investors; and the *network model* is characterized by tight relations between the football club, public authorities, and diverse non-profit and for-profit organizations.

A characteristic of the *network model* is the building of trust within the local community. Conditions in Sogndal favour the network model and trust building. As already demonstrated, Sogndal Fotball rules the ground in Sogndal. The club has no competition from other top clubs in the community or in the county of Sogn og Fjordane. In many ways, Sogndal occupies an intermediate position in Tönnies' (1887) dichotomy of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, as used by Durkheim (1889) and Simmel (Wolff, 1950) to theorize and describe the passage from traditional to modern society caused by certain processes labelled "modernization". In summary, this theorizing links tradition to "community" (*Gemeinschaft*)—a society of social persons with a collective understanding—and is opposed to "modernity" (*Gesellschaft*)—a society composed of individuals and impersonal relations of short duration and of rational nature (Fløysand, 1999). Sogndal represents a middle position in this divide. The actors have to balance their interests both as professionals and as community members. This not only makes everyday life transparent, but also favours networking and trust building:

The place is not that big. When you meet people in different occasions, it might influence the way you behave in professional discussions. It must not be unpleasant to meet at Domus [the local store] after you have finished (Representative of Sogn og Fjordane University College)

Sogndal is a small place...the former Mayor of the Municipality married the sister of NN [influential person in Sogndal Fotball]...many hats on each individual actor, you become a part of it (Representative of Sogndal Fotball)

The club is built on networks...we have to collaborate...can not afford to be isolated...need to build relations towards local politicians, education system, and industry (Representative of Sogndal Fotball)

We are so few that we all know that if we are not collaborating we will not get anything done. We talk about a very tight milieu. We will not get far if we do not collaborate (Representative of the municipality administration)

4. “The art of networking”

4.1 *Fosshaugane Campus: An emerging narrative*

The *art of networking* is local knowledge in Sogndal. It has been activated several times to promote the development of Sogndal Fotball. In 1995, the future construction of a new indoor football hall became a central issue in the local election campaign. The political party that was pushing hardest for the new hall was led by a former key player at Sogndal; he emerged as the winner of the election and became the new mayor. The club got its new indoor hall.

The art of networking is also a core element behind the new development project, Fosshaugane Campus. This project is rooted in the needs of multiple “consumers” of a place and stands out as an example of the merging of different representations of a place in order to market it as attractive to both outsiders and insiders. Sogndal Fotball has been the key actor or “engine” of the project. This role of local entrepreneur relates to the development of a professional administrative management at the club. The administration has a vision of upgrading the club such that it can follow current trends in Norwegian and international football. A multi-function stadium that utilizes multiple sources of income to increase revenue is seen as an essential feature for a modern football club (Morrow, 2003), but these new multi-function stadiums of European football are located in cities and metropolitan areas of a far larger scale than Sogndal. This makes Sogndal Fotball an extraordinary case.

The development of a modern and professional football organization in Sogndal had already begun during the 1980s. Key figures in this development were former players of the 1976 team. The club has been good at recycling past players by placing them in management positions within the club. Such past players combined their knowledge of football with ideas on building an organization that could make the most of limited resources. Those founding members that originally occupied key positions, still have a role to play within the organization. This is in line with the literature that states that the ideas of the founders have long-lasting effects on organizational design (Baron *et al.*, 1999). However, since the turn of the century, newcomers

have been the entrepreneurs of the organization, but not without maintaining links with the past. The present chief executive at the club does not have a background as a player, but he is well educated, has occupied various positions at Sogn og Fjordane University College, and has been active in local politics. Thus, he knows a lot of people in the community and is experienced in the art of networking.

The involvement of Sogndal Fotball in Fosshaugane Campus is linked to events and procedures within the Union of the European Football Associations (UEFA). At the beginning of the new millennium, UEFA strengthened its facility requirements for football stadiums. The Norwegian Football Association (NFF) followed up on these new requirements by offering incentives to upgrade stadium facilities at the top football clubs. Sogndal Fotball has an ambition of being among the top 18 clubs in Norway. This ambition, and the club's earlier success in developing sporting facilities, soon required a plan for a stadium upgrade. The club had to meet the requirements of UEFA–NFF and to present a representation of Fosshaugane (their home ground) that could successfully market the “place” to football players, supporters, and sponsors. Other more pressing needs were to gain acceptance from the community for upgrading the stadium in order to gain access to capital. The stadium upgrade will cost approximately EUR 31 million, with 26 million from external sources. Construction will be completed during 2006.

A key question for members of the club is what kind of *narrative* can merge the various needs outlined above? The answer was not Fosshaugane Stadium, but instead *Fosshaugane Campus*. Fosshaugane Campus is based on representations that are far from what people normally associate with a football stadium. The challenge seems to have been to develop a *narrative* that is acceptable to the dominant interest groups in Sogndal and to various consumer groups both inside and outside the community. The project was represented as *a dream, a goal, a locality, and a melting pot* (www.angrip.no)¹ presented in a collage of drawings and texts (Fig. 5).

¹ The www.angrip.no is in Norwegian. The translations into English have been accomplished by Arnt Fløysand and Stig-Erik Jakobsen.



...The dream

The dream of creating the best milieu for development in Norway:

- to stimulate youths and adults to learn from each other
- to stimulate regional development
- to introduce entrepreneurship as a core value
- to build the future of the county
- to build economic know-how.

...The goal

The goal is to encourage dialogue between intellectual and social development agents, between entrepreneurship and youthful courage, between the professional and the voluntary.



...Locality

We saved resources via co-location and chose a campus architecture that stimulates our competitiveness in relation to others in the struggle to attract students and other users.

...The melting pot

Co-location of sport, education, and research will attract new activities and new firms. The combination of sport, exercise, health, and ICT [Information and Communication Technology] has great potential for industrial development. Sognahallen (an established indoor football stadium) has developed into a creative and dynamic milieu where ideas breed and initiatives are quickly realized.



Figure 5: The “dream, goal, locality, and melting pot” (www.angrip.no). Images: Ole A. Krogness.

The dream is about “creating the best milieu for development in Norway”; *the goal* “is to build further on the dialectics between intellectual and social development, between entrepreneurship and youthful courage, between the professional and the voluntary”; *locality* is about “co-location” and “an architecture of the campus that stimulates our competitiveness in relation to others in the struggle to attract students and other users”; and *the melting pot* is about how “co-location of sport, education, and research has inspired new activities and new firms”.

4.2 The role of Sogndal Fotball in rural restructuring

The strong position of Sogndal Fotball in the narrative is partly an effect of a perceived shortage of industrial entrepreneurs in the private sector. According to our sources, Sogndal lacks entrepreneurial spirit:

We keep an 8 to 4 culture. When people in Førde [a community in the north of the county] see others work late the reaction is that *the guys are working hard*. In Sogndal the reaction would be *why do they bother working that much?* This culture is a problem for us in Sogndal (Representative of Sogndal Fotball)

In Sogndal there is no industrial cluster which generates new industrial activities (Representative of Sogn og Fjordane University College)

In contrast, Sogndal Fotball is portrayed as a dynamic industry incubator:

At present the most dynamic industrial actor in the area is the football...not the football in itself, but in the commercialization linked to the sport, the football as niche (Representative of Sogn og Fjordane University College)

When I started in this job...the most exciting part was that Sogndal Fotball is the most important industrial developer in Sogndal. The role as industrial developer was the most attractive part of the job for me (Representative of Sogndal Fotball)

The role of Sogndal Fotball as an *industrial incubator* has its material expression in four PLCs (AS). Two PLCs (SIL–Tribuna AS and Sogndal Trivsel AS) are 100% controlled by Sogndal Fotball, while the club also has shares of 18.5% and 49.5% in Sognahallen AS and Idrettsenteret AS, respectively. The four PLCs are managed by the administration employed by Sogndal Fotball. Hence, all the PLCs are associated with Sogndal Fotball. One of the PLCs, SIL–Tribuna

AS, is supervising construction of the new stadium. Since 1990, ties between Sogndal Fotball, Sogn og Fjordane University College, and the municipality have become very tight:

We needed more space. The [national] policy encouraged leasing arrangements. First we leased facilities at Kvale Stadium, later at Fosshaugane. Over time, complementary strategies developed. SIL discovered that it was rational to finance their sports facilities through rent incomes. Sogn og Fjordane University College discovered that the sports facilities of SIL supported the sport education program of the college”. (Representative of Sogn og Fjordane University College)

In 1995/1996 “Sport as Industry” was integrated in the industry development strategy of the municipality...sport means increased industrial employment! SIL is a tool for us, an actor with more independence than the municipality, county, government...if it had not been for SIL we would not have been able [to develop the different sport facilities]...[Sogndal Fotball] is a independent player that is challenging all, if you want to take part you have to join them (Representative of the municipality)

The above quotations illustrate that the key members of the club and their networks form a dense pattern of social relations that constrain and facilitate the actions of key actors working for industrial development in Sogndal. The network forms an *industrial incubator field*, which, through Fosshaugane Campus, is able to market the place to both “insiders” and “outsiders”. Today this field includes key actors from most governmental organizations in Sogndal (Sogn og Fjordane University College, Sogndal Secondary School (County Level), Sogndal Municipality), Sogndal Fotball (including related AS), and the Western Norway Research Institute (WNRI). Given the members in this field, we can consider it to be a social field of local scale.

4.3 Fosshaugane Campus: A reification

The needs of the municipal authorities for an industrial incubator do not in itself justify the narrative. The narrative of *Fosshaugane Campus* has to satisfy the expectations of various other actors, such as Sogn og Fjordane University College, Sogndal Secondary School, and the WNRI and their partners, including staff, students, and parents. Hence, representations such as “entrepreneurship”, “melting pot”, and “youthful courage”, make more sense when the interests of other field members in the *industrial incubator field* are considered.

Sogn og Fjordane University College is the second most important actor involved in Fosshaugane Campus; the campus will provide the college with new infrastructure. Sogn og Fjordane is a

medium-sized university college, but plays a key role as an employer in Sogndal. The college is located in three municipalities in Sogn og Fjordane County: Sogndal, Førde, and Sandane. The main activities of the college are located in Sogndal, as are approximately 1700 of the total 2100 students and 250 faculty and staff members. However, research, education, and administration activities within Sogndal are spread over different sites. There is therefore a need for a spatial concentration of activities; Fosshaugane Campus, when realized, will fulfil this need. Part of the new college infrastructure will be owned by the college itself, but a major part will be leased from SIL–Tribuna AS in their new stadium building. The partners have agreed on a 20-year contract for approximately 6000 m².

Restructuring of the Norwegian education system in general also influences the narrative of *Fosshaugane Campus*. In recent years the education system in Norway has been through processes of internationalization and deregulation. The outcome of this restructuring is a more market-oriented system and increased competition for resources, including students. In response to these changes, colleges have developed education profiles to attract students. At Sogn og Fjordane University College, sport is one of the most important profiles. Fosshaugane Campus will offer modern sport facilities and hopefully recruit large numbers of students.

In summary, it can be argued that the main reason for the involvement of Sogn og Fjordane University College in Fosshaugane Campus is the need for a “place” where activities are co-located and a narrative of the *site* Sogndal, which strengthens its attraction for students. The cost of the planned upgrading of Sogn og Fjordane University College in the Fosshaugane Campus project is estimated at approximately EUR 29 million. This is an additional local investment to the EUR 31 million for the stadium upgrading.

More recently, Sogndal Secondary School has become increasingly involved in the campus project. The school is already well settled at Fosshaugane, and is one of the most important users of some of the sport facilities run by Sogndal Fotball and related AS. The school also needs to relocate some of its activities, and its planned investment in the campus area is estimated to be approximately EUR 25 million.

Finally, the WNRI is also involved in the project. WNRI is a non-profit foundation, established as an independent research institute in 1985. The institute is part of Norway's national research system, and cooperates closely with Sogn og Fjordane University College. WNRI employs a staff of 30. WNRI will be a key partner in the "knowledge park" that is integrated into the Fosshaugane Campus project, "where ideas breed and initiatives are quickly realized".

4.4 Towards commodification?

The entrepreneurial mentality of key actors in Sogndal Fotball has been essential in the construction of the *industrial incubator field* and its main narrative, *Fosshaugane Campus*. There is a tendency towards increased commodification within this field, but does the practice illustrate complete commodification? As mentioned in the earlier theoretical discussion, Williams (2002) connected three distinct elements of commodification. The first element related to commodification is that goods and services are produced for exchange. The professionalization of Sogndal Fotball implies an increased emphasis on revenue and the development of a more business-minded organization. This has been expressed via the establishment of the four PLCs (AS), development of a sponsor product, and the undertaking of various tasks designed to increase gate revenue. This is all about developing football as a product that can be exchanged in the market. There is also an increasing market orientation within the Norwegian education system. Sogn og Fjordane University College, the second most important player in the field, is developing specific education profiles to attract students. Students are viewed as customers who are shopping in an education market.

The second element related to commodification described by Williams (2002) is that the activity within a field is monetized and conducted under market conditions. The employment of players, coaching staff, and administrators implies that the relationship between the organization (Sogndal Fotball) and individuals has been monetized in the industrial incubator field. During the last couple of decades there has also emerged a market for trading football players. However, not all of the relations between Sogndal Fotball and its individuals or members have been monetized. There remain large numbers of volunteers contributing to the club. These volunteers are especially important at match arrangements as guards, ticket sellers, and in the selling of refreshments. Volunteers are a vital part of Norwegian football, but it is difficult to measure the

exact amount of unpaid work. Sogn og Fjordane University College, conversely, has a more strictly monetized relationship with individuals and members. This is also the case for other important players in the industrial incubator field, such as Sogndal Secondary School, the Western Norway Research Institute, and the Municipality of Sogndal.

Williams' (2002) final element related to commodification is that the activity should be motivated by the pursuit of profit. It is difficult to determine if the pursuit of profit is the driving force of the key actor, Sogndal Fotball. We stated that the club has become more business-minded, but its main target is to develop a football team that is the pride of the organization and the community. The activity of the club is not directed by seeking rental income or the motive of a certain rate of return for its members or shareholders. Thus, the profit motive is not essential to the activity of the club; however, during the past decade there has been a growing recognition within the organization that increased revenues are a prerequisite for good sports results. In the case of Sogn og Fjordane University College and the Western Norway Research Institute, the profit motive appears to be absent: both have clearly stated that they are non-profit organizations. The aim of these organizations is to develop their knowledge bases and positions as key players in efforts to develop the region.

Even if there is a movement towards increased commodification among the members of the industrial incubator field at Sogndal, this is far from a complete commodification situation. This is demonstrated by the use of volunteers in organizing the football club and the lack of profit motive among the field members. Other studies that have examined alternative economic spaces confirm that monetary exchanges are not always necessarily imbued with the profit motive (Crewe and Gregson, 1998). Williams (2002) states that even in advanced societies there are large alternative economic spaces that lack some of the logic of commodification, and there is a certain culture of resistance to the edicts of commodification. Our analysis of the *industrial incubator field* of Sogndal supports this line of thought. In terms of commodification, the field is a hybrid form that combines individual and collective needs.

5. Conclusions

The narrative of social fields, rural development, and football presented in this paper exemplifies a practice of rural restructuring which expresses both internal and external connections between the material and imaginative worlds of the rural (Cloke, 2006). Over the past few decades, the football club of the municipality of Sogndal has become a symbol of the successful underdog in top level Norwegian football. The Norwegian Football Association has used the Sogndal Fotball to exemplify that it is not only the size of the budget or gate revenue that determines success in the money spinning era of modern football. One outcome of the success of the club is positive self esteem in the community. The football club has taken the lead in developing sports facilities and establishing them as corporations, adding four PLCs to the original Sogndal Fotball. This has strengthened the Sogndal Football as an industrial developer, and the ties between the club, Sogn og Fjordane University College and the local authorities have become very tight.

Another outcome of the activities of the club and its associate PLCs is Fosshaugane Campus. Fosshaugane Campus is a key practiced narrative in a rural restructuring project combining stadium upgrading, education and research activities. It is based on both “material” and “imaginative” events and processes within football, education systems and rural development. The narrative demonstrates how branding of rural areas can be rooted in the new tendencies of football in Europe, including growth in turnover, a more professional organization of football clubs, and in social fields of local scale whereby the supply of resources is organized via joint actions between members of a football clubs, public authorities and other important local institutions.

“Fosshaugane Campus” is also a practice that is merging different “imaginative” representations that in sum brands the rural in such a way that it can be accepted by different interest groups in the community and by multiple consumer groups outside the community. The categories in use are vague, and as such they can be associated by a wider system of representations promoted by actors in the *industrial incubator field*, which is a hegemonic social field of local scale. The local top football club is a key actor in this field, and as such demonstrates how a football club can take a leading role in processes of rural restructuring.

In certain aspects this case differs from most rural commodity cases discussed in the literature. It clearly illustrates that the construction of narratives that target commodification of rural places occurs in social fields. The development of networks must be seen against a background of tight social relations in a glocal world. Networks and narratives are not universally shared in a glocal world, but the dominance of certain narratives in certain *social fields* is fundamental for the coordination of rural restructuring. Second, it illustrates that the producers, as well as potential consumers, of the countryside as commodity can be “insiders” within a community. Third, the narrative of social fields, rural development, and football exemplifies how time-space compression acts to develop rural places into a *form of commodity*, albeit very different from the representations produced within the “tourist gaze”. In our case the countryside is branded as a place of “development, entrepreneurship and youthful courage”. This makes the process different from representations of the countryside developed by “outsiders” for a special market segment such as tourists. The case also demonstrates how rural restructuring is constructed through “time-space compression” where multiple actors are involved. There are also multiple potential “consumers”, such as tourists, investors, sponsors, football players, villagers, potential immigrants to the region, and relocating firms. These can be attracted by totally different representations of the countryside. In such settings that involve multiple actors, the challenge is to construct a hegemonic narrative that is accepted by the majority of producers and consumer groups. The only thing that seems to glue the actors together in such circumstances is a “capitalist gaze” branding the place as a commodity.

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