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LIFESTYLE ENTERPRISING: The 'ambiguity work' of Swedish female horse-farmers

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Abstract

The article introduces the concept of ambiguity work as a specific form of work-life balancing performed when making a livelihood based on leisure interests and a personal lifestyle. The study focuses on female self-employed horse-farmers in Sweden involved in service work with and through horses. Through an analysis of narratives and practices of this service work, based on ethnographic interviews and observations, boundary negotiations of various social spheres are discernible: Work and life, and the commercial and the personal. The analysis shows that the horse-farmers perform a delicate and ongoing balancing act between family interests, individual leisure and paid work. Drawing on the notion of sociological ambivalence, it is suggested that this balancing act does not strive for demarcations, but rather to stay betwixt-and-between social spheres. It is argued that lifestyle enterprising is enacted and confirmed through ongoing boundary negotiations, or ambiguity work, that sustains a tension between keeping and blurring social boundaries. It is further argued that ambiguity work in this type of lifestyle enterprising both reinforces and questions ideals and norms concerning small business management and professional versus non-professional relationships. (Keywords: work-life balance, sociological ambivalence, boundary negotiations, horse-farm, gender)

Introduction

Recent studies of leisure-oriented work have called into question the often overly simplistic distinction between work and life, by highlighting how blurred boundaries can be an everyday experience as well as an ideal among certain occupational cultures (Fincham, 2008; Land & Taylor, 2010). Furthermore, debates on work-life balance have pointed at the underlying assumptions of the notions of 'work', 'life' and 'balance' by discussing the vagueness of the concepts (Fleetwood, 2007), their normative implications in presuming a 'right' balance, and the possibilities of alternative, hybrid forms such as 'recreational labour' (Ransome, 2007). This article seeks to add knowledge to the complexities of work-life balancing by highlighting the hybrid form of the lifestyle enterprise. The study focuses on self-employed female horse-farmers in Sweden, whose work is motivated by the possibility for pursuing their own leisure interest in horses and to create a lifestyle that benefit themselves as well as their family.

In line with studies of lifestyle enterprises and entrepreneurship in the tourism and hospitality field (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Di Domenico, 2005; Getz & Carlsen, 2000; Getz, Carlsen, & Morrison, 2004; Karlsson & Lönnbring, 2003), lifestyle motifs seems to be an important motivating factors to many rural service businesses. Starting a business is triggered by personal lifestyle motives in combination with, and sometimes opposed to, economic driving forces (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Author; Helgadóttir & Sigurdardóttir, 2008; Hinrichs, 1998; Marcketti, Niehm, & Fuloria, 2006). Several of the horse-farmers in this study can be characterized as "lifestyle migrants" (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009; Hoey, 2005), to whom the idea of a 'good life' often equals settling down in a certain geographical and social space. However, the notion of a 'lifestyle' to these horse-farmers also embodies the transformation of a 'serious leisure' (Stebbins, 1982) into a business. Hence, family interests, personal lifestyle, leisure, and commercial interests are all important dimensions in the horse-farmers work and thus add to the complexities in this form of hybrid occupation.

In some types of family businesses, such as farming, the notion of heritage and tradition is important in order to understand what motivates the farm family (Hennon & Hildenbrand, 2005) and for many small businesses in recreation, tourism and hospitality, the family motif is in itself an important factor (Getz & Carlsen, 2000; Hinrichs, 1998; Wilson, 2007). However, the perceived voluntary and self-realizing dimension of 'choosing a lifestyle' distinguishes the lifestyle enterprise from family based ventures which are primarily nurturing a family tradition and sense of stewardship. The dimensions of free will and self-realization are possibly even more prominent in family businesses where the 'life' aspect of the work-life distinction contains family- as well as personal leisure interests, such as the horse-farms presented in this study.

The horse-enterprises in focus are of various types, but they are all situated in the owners' own farm which is also their home. This form of enterprising can be described as a form of commercial home management where service interactions are taking place in a private or semi-private space (Di Domenico & Lynch, 2007; Lynch & MacWhannell, 2000). The tensions inherent in the commercial home, manifested through both commercial and non-commercial social interactions, entail boundary negotiations where distinctions between various social spheres are simultaneously blurred and reinforced. In the context presented here, those tensions seems to be sustained in an 'ambiguity work' where horse-farmers are not merely trying to find an optimal balance between work and life, but enact a way of living and working betwixt-and-

between the socially constructed realms of paid work, individual leisure interests and family life. The aim of this article is to introduce the concept of ambiguity work as an analytical tool that opens up for a social interactionist analysis of work in the intersection between different life spheres. In particular, the study will focus on how boundaries between life and work, lifestyle and enterprise, and values and norms related to these different spheres, are constantly negotiated in the narratives and practices of everyday service work. In line with this, the study aims to highlight the analytical potential of sociological ambivalence, partly as a structural condition, partly as a social practice sustained in social interaction.

The article starts with a discussion of sociological ambivalence, drawing on Merton's (1976) seminal essay in order to give a background to some of the structural contradictions of lifestyle work. This is followed by a conceptual presentation of the notion of ambiguity work as a means to understand the everyday work of combining leisure, family life and paid work, as well as the methodology used to capture the narratives and practices of horse-farmers. In the subsequent analysis two fields of ambiguity or tensions are in focus: The negotiation between lifestyle and 'ordinary' business management, and the ambiguous social roles of the commercial home. The conclusion discusses the dynamic interplay of ambiguity work in lifestyle enterprising, where workers simultaneously embrace and distance themselves from prevailing social norms.

Ambiguity work and structural contradictions

Although contradictory experiences and tensions in social reality are often addressed in sociology, more thorough and systematic analyses of sociological ambivalence seem to be limited, although more visible in certain fields such as family studies (Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Phillips, 2011; Mason, May, & Clarke, 2007). As critical discussions of dualistic and rationalistic thinking in Western societies have pointed out, the 'flight from ambiguity' as Levine (1985) phrases it, is still prevailing (see also Smelser, 1998).

Sociological ambivalence is, according to Merton, related to its psychological counterpart, but 'the sociological one focuses on the ways in which ambivalence comes to be built into the structures of social statuses and roles' (1976:5). Merton distinguishes between several types of ambivalence, and I will here present three of those that have relevance in order to provide a structural background to the everyday ambiguity work of the horse-farmers. The core type, according to Merton, is the incompatible normative expectations inherent in a single role of a single social status (1976). An example of this is the contradictory demands on the type of service the horse-farmer should provide to her guests/clients. Should it be efficient, standardized and more 'business-like', or should it be more personal and emotionally based? A second type embodies a conflict in statuses between different social positions occupied by each individual, such as being a mother, wife, business manager and specialist in horse breeding. In the case of the horse-farmer, however, these two types of ambivalence are integrated into one, due to their choice of lifestyle. Although the modern society's spatial and symbolic differentiation of the domestic sphere from the work sphere is challenged by new possibilities of working at home, the home-work dichotomy is still prevalent as a dualistic ordering of reality that people have to relate to in their everyday life. This means that contradictory demands on the roles of mother versus the business manager or skilled horse-farmer, is still prevalent in the horse-farmers' lives although their ambition is to integrate it all in their lifestyle work.

A third type of ambivalence is found when there are contradictory cultural values within a society. One such contradiction will be elaborated below, and seems to be particularly pertinent among the horse-farmers in this study, or probably among self-employed in lifestyle oriented work in general. It is the tension between ideals of autonomy and self-realization on one hand, and gendered norms concerning family life and obligations on the other hand.

Although self-employed are expected to have a relatively high level of job autonomy, ideals concerning time-spatial flexibility and professional autonomy is characterizing the so-called “New Working Conditions” (Peters, den Dulk, & van der Lippe, 2009). Ideals concerning flexibility and autonomy may be particularly pertinent in certain industries, such as the creative industries, where a tendency to blur work and life encourages a lifestyle-oriented work ethic, reinforcing ideals of the creative and autonomous self (Arvidsson, Malossi, & Naro, 2010; Banks, 2010; Gill, 2002; Hesmondhalgh, 2010). These tendencies have been discussed as being in line with a more general socio-cultural change in late capitalist societies where the distinction between leisure and work is blurred, and norms and ideals emphasizing creativity, flexibility, individualization and self-realization in life as well as work are taking shape (Bauman, 2007; Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Giddens, 1991). However, critical studies of this emerging “new economy” (Löfgren & Willim, 2005; McRobbie, 2002) have highlighted the precariousness entailed by notions such as autonomy, flexibility and the seemingly ‘free’ working conditions, pointing out how these ideals may in fact reproduce hegemonic social structures (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008; Ross, 2003), for instance related to gender (Gill, 2002; Grugulis, Dundon, & Wilkinson, 2000; Lewis, 2003). Although the rural horse-farm may seem remote from urban professional cultures, the female horse-farmers’ lifestyle work seems to share many features with the professionals in the new economy when it comes to cultural values of work and work identity. To the women in this study however, the notion of lifestyle includes not only personal, individual lifestyle, but the whole family. This is not without challenges, and as studies of female entrepreneurs has shown (Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004; Drew & Humbert, 2012), as well as studies of women pursuing serious leisure in male dominated fields (Dilley & Scraton, 2010; Raisborough, 2006), the norms surrounding possibilities for balancing work between time for children and time for work or leisure is highly gendered (Deem, 1986).

The structurally grounded ambivalence outlined above all come into play in the horse-farmers narratives and practices. However, how the complexities between constraining norms and ideals and a situated everyday reality are perceived and managed by the farmers themselves calls for analytical tools that make these complexities, tensions and ambiguities visible. The notion of ambiguity work presented here draws partly upon the social interactionist notion of boundary work, referring to the ordering practices of a social reality according to socially constructed categorizations (Allen, 2001; Gieryn, 1983; Nippert-Eng, 1996). It is also informed by Simmel’s (Levine, 1971; Simmel, 1950) classic work on the ambiguous features of social life, particularly the tension between closeness and distance in social interaction, and Goffman’s (1961) analysis of role-distance, where a social role is simultaneously enacted and dissociated from. The horse-farmers in this study are occasionally engaged in boundary work when they demarcate distinctions between “their” type of work and ‘ordinary’ work, or when they draw the fine line between friendship and professional relationships. However, the horse-farmers’ boundary work seems to be about negotiating boundaries, rather than demarcating (see also Ba’, 2011; Gillespie, Leffler, & Lerner, 2002). It does not seem to aim towards an ‘either or’

categorization of the social reality, but rather what the anthropologist Victor Turner (1970) has described as the ‘betwixt-and-between’ approach characterizing a ritually demarcated liminal sphere, where a tension is sustained rather than neutralized.

Related to ‘ambiguity work’ is the notion of ‘doing ambivalence’ adopted by Åkerström (2006). In a study of a human service setting for delinquent juveniles, Åkerström shows how the employees in this setting embraced new policies on how to run the organisation, while subtly rejecting them by the use of specific rhetorical devices. They said both ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to the new policies in a ‘yes, but...’ manner. Accordingly, in contrast to those types of work where conflicting social demands from work and leisure spheres turn ambiguity into a source of anxiety (Lee & Lin, 2011), the lifestyle workers in this context seem to perform a delicate balancing act of saying ‘yes, but...’ to both worlds. As in a liminal sphere, ambiguity seems to be highlighted rather than played down, and social norms are simultaneously embraced and dissociated from.

Ambiguity work in practice: analytical framing and methodology

Lifestyle enterprising in the context of horse-based hospitality is performed through social interactions with different human (and sometimes non-human) actors: clients, employees, family members, voluntary workers and horses. By adopting an interactionist perspective on service interactions, the analysis has been focusing on not only what the horse-farmers say, but how they say it and what practices are involved (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). By focusing on ordering processes in narratives and practices, such as interviewees’ normative statements and accounts of deviance and anomalies, it is possible to capture what aspects of reality are both embraced and dissociated from. Here, a specific focus will be on those roles or actors that induce contradictory responses. The first theme presented is the simultaneous embracement and dissociation from the role of the typical business manager, where lifestyle motives are highlighted through dissociations from instrumental and growth-oriented management. The second theme is highlighting the semi-professional relationship induced by the roles of clients and voluntary workers. The inherent ambiguity in relationships such as “commercial friendship” and “professional friendship” embodies the dynamic interplay of closeness and distance. The “customer who becomes a friend” or the “friend who is working for free” emerge in the horse-farmers narratives as social types in Simmel’s sense, similar to the ambivalent character of the Stranger (Levine, 1971). In this classic essay, Simmel discusses the simultaneous closeness and remoteness embodied in this social type: The Stranger is “...the man who comes today and stays tomorrow – the potential wanderer...” (Levine, 1971:143).

The study context

The selection of horse-farms providing services of hospitality as a focal point originates from two different but related research projects on lifestyle enterprising: One on commercial hospitality such as Bed & Breakfast and farm-stays, the other on commercial horse-farming including a wider variety of horse-based enterprises. During the course of these two studies, it was found that horse-based hospitality comprises interesting tensions related to the fact that the lifestyle dimensions contains a specific leisure interest. This study includes two types of horse-based hospitality; those where activities with horses are the prime offering, such as tour-riding enterprises, riding schools and livery, that is, farms providing long-term hospitality for the

horses, and those who have accommodation as their prime offering but with horses available for riding.

The main part of the study comprises ethnographic interviews with fifteen female horse-farmers. Interviewing women only was not an original intention, but this gender homogeneity partly reflects a common gender division related to management of horse-farming in Sweden (Nilsson, Petersson, & Pettersson, 2009:22). Although most of the interviewees in this study were married and horse-farming seems to involve the entire household, there seemed to be a division of labour where the woman was considered in charge of the horse business. Thus, when asked for an interview, it was primarily the woman of the household that appointed herself or was appointed as the one with most insights. Apart from this gender homogeneity, the selection of farms was based on a criteria of heterogeneity when it comes to size and type of horse-farm, but with the common denominator that the farm should contain some type of hospitality work, in the wide sense of the term, that is, providing services to clients visiting the farm with the aim of consuming a form of recreational experience. Several of the interviewees were engaged in hospitality work in the more specific meaning, providing accommodation and food, either regularly or in connection with riding camps.

The interviews were conversational and thematically structured around the women's life biographies, the decision making process around horse-enterprising, everyday life and various service interactions. The interviews commonly took place in the kitchen, often accompanied by a walk around the farm, in one case with a riding tour, and in some cases by helping out in a form of 'work along' conversations and observations similar to a go-along technique (Kusenbach, 2003). This provided opportunities for observations of the everyday life of the farm and the type and locations of interactions going on. The interviews and observations lasted approximately between 2-3 hours. The interviews were audio-recorded, fully transcribed and anonymised.

The other part of the study consists of auto-ethnographic data from my own experience of being a horse-owner in a stable with livery and breeding as the main occupations. During six months, from the day I became a horse-owner in August 2011 until January 2012, daily observations, interactions and conversations with the other horse-owners and the female owner of the farm, have provided me with empirical data that to a large extent confirms but also provides some nuances to the rest of the interview- and observation data. However, due to its semi-covert character, where the owner is the only person that knows about the research project, no direct quotes or explicit observation data will be displayed in the text. However, due to the ambivalent character of the fieldwork, which implies moving in and out of various situations that could be defined as either private or public space, or something in-between, the notion of disclosure and concealment becomes an issue of situated negotiation, and temporary concealment of the researcher's role could thus be legitimated (see Lugosi, 2006). Nevertheless, since my participant in this context is primarily due to my personal interests – although the boundary between work and leisure is blurred in this form of fieldwork – this type of data will be less visible in the text.

Between lifestyle and ordinary business

All horse-farms in this study have originated from a hobby project. The economic and practical conditions for this development vary, but none of the women in this study have ever had traditional farming as their main occupation, although one of them is brought up in a farming family and two others are the daughters-in-law of farm-families. Several of them have migrated from urban areas, bought a horse-farm for hobby which has gradually developed into a business. Around half of the women work full time with their businesses, the others have part-time jobs on the side. Child care is sometimes held as a reason why they took the step from a serious hobby to a commercial enterprise. Starting a business became a means to prolong their maternity leave.

Although the actual financial situation of the horse-farms was not investigated, the horse-farmers were asked how they experienced the economic conditions of running a horse-farm, and what business decisions was based on economic or other factors. Commonly, the horse-farmers stress the tough economic conditions for starting a horse-farm and the economic risks involved. There seems to be primarily two types of perceived economic safety valves; either they have a partner with an income that contributes to the total financial situation of the family, or they have another job on the side. Those who have managed to make a living full time on the farm, convey stories of the hard times, before the business was settled. Several of the women emphasize the importance of help, financial and labour-wise, from family, friends and neighbours. By emphasizing the economic harsh reality of horse-farming, the hard work, bureaucratic sluggishness and precarious conditions involved, several of the horse-farmers display a self-image associated with a heroic 'against all odds' commitment.

One of the farmers is Beatrice. She is a trained physiotherapist who has run a commercial horse-farm for a few years with her eldest daughter. She has a part-time employment as a physiotherapist which she takes advantage of in the horse-business since riding therapy is part of the offerings. Beatrice explains her choice of life and work:

'I have always had a passion for horses. It is a lifestyle. With animals and nature. It gives me a sense of context, it is clear and unambiguous. (...) It is... down to earth, in a way. And if you have lived, and worked, a lot in the other world, then you develop a need to come into this world...And I also want to have a place for my family, where we can be together.'

She juxtaposes 'this world' with 'the other world', demarcating a distinction to an 'ordinary' life. Beatrice's 29 year old daughter Julia also takes part in the interview. She has been educated at an art school in London, but at the time of the interview she had just completed a course to become a farrier and now works full time with the farm. She explains why: *'To me, the main motivation was that I (emphasis on "I") wanted to become a better rider, I wanted to develop my skills. And how could I create an environment that allows me to do that?'*

Simultaneously as she seems very self-determined and somewhat instrumental in her individual pursuits, Julia speaks about her life as if it was run by coincidence. Below she describes how and why she joined the art school:

'I was studying international economics at the university. It was... I didn't really know then what I wanted to do, and I lived with my cousin for a year. Then I went to visit some of her

friends in London and then I happened to walk by that art school, and then I applied, and... then I was accepted. So, that's how I came to that school, but I have always loved to paint and draw...'

She didn't finish the art school because she decided to go in for the horses instead and become a trained farrier. Albeit it seems as very disparate occupational paths, she makes the connection between her skills in art and the craftsmanship of being a farrier. On a more abstract level her choices have similarities in their lifestyle orientation, and her narrative particularly highlights the ideal of free will and autonomy in selecting paths in life. The notion of chance and coincidence that is inflicted in her story can be interpreted as a gentle reaction to a traditional work ethic that holds the planned career as the righteous path. This expresses a slightly bohemian and artistic attitude to life and work, characterizing the bourgeois ideals of the creative and autonomous self (see Banks, 2010; Holt & Lapenta, 2010).

Existential choices marking a junction in life enhance the ideals of individual choice and autonomy. Marie is in mid-fifties who left a successful career as a computer-programmer and manager in a large company, as well as an urban lifestyle in Stockholm, and bought a horse-farm in the South of Sweden. Except from working full time with her own job and, as she points out, raising three children, her husband worked in large corporations that demanded representation work: *'Finally I had enough. I didn't want to support that anymore. Dinner parties, cocktail parties and... It gave me nothing. So I made a choice that I did not want to do that anymore.'*

Another way of prizing self-determination as well as coincidence is through stories of emotional bonds to particular horses as the ultimate cause for starting a business in the first place. Anne runs a horse-farm with her husband, and she explains that it was a horse that caused the family to sell their house in a small town and buy a farm. Her husband happened to develop a friendship with the neighbor's horse and they decided to buy the horse. *"Then we had to buy a farm as well"*, she says with a smile.

These stories, although sincere, are told with a humorous air that implies an awareness of the presumed irrationality in letting a horse dictate your life. By emphasizing the emotionality and fastidiousness in this type of decision, the horse-farmer marks a distance to and an awareness of a prevailing norm of rational decision-making in business. It is also a means of dissociating from a prevailing norm that equals the work sphere with non-emotional and instrumental, planned behavior. The proper way of doing business is also a gendered norm (Bruni et al., 2004) and jokingly emphasizing seemingly irrational motives for starting a business – and in particular in the above example since it is the husband that is responsible for such emotional activities – may be interpreted as an act of distance to this norm as well.

The horse-farmers often highlight the emotional work involved in horse-based hospitality. They emphasize the wellbeing of their horses and how important it is that the horses are taken well care of. With statements such as *'they are our working comrades, they must enjoy what they do'*, the horse-farmers display their abilities in emotion work. It indicates a form of emotional management, implying the skills of a leader to be sensitive to the wellbeing of their horse-employees, but also their ability to sense the needs and wellbeing of horses who are their 'guests', as in the case of livery.

The physical and emotional well-being of the horses demands a competence in horsemanship, a term that will be used here to signify the craftsmanship oriented horse knowledge that is often described as based on life-long experience and tacit knowledge. Katherine, who runs a fairly well-established farm with tour-riding, riding school, horse-consultancy and B&B, describes her own competence and the type of skills she thinks all horse-farmer should have:

‘You must be able to *see* (her emphasis) the horses, you must be able to just glance through a flock of animals and instantly see if there is something wrong, if someone limps or...you must have this look... we often talk about that, many people ask me “how did you manage to see that”. “Well, he looked differently. He has colic” ... and that kind of things. You must have an eye for horses.’

Immediately after saying this, Katherine exclaims: ‘*And then you have to be terribly social! You must like people.*’ The importance of a service attitude is underlined and it is presumed that you must have an eye for people as well. Some horse-farmers have an articulated ambition to provide emotional closeness to their guests – with the horses as the tool or mediator:

‘The horses are in the centre of it all. And then we gather around them and have a really nice time (...) People open up their heart on a totally different way when you have horses as a... base. You have these... you truly get in to people’s life.’

In this sense, the farmers perform a form of emotional labour related to Hochschild’s (1983) well cited meaning of the concept (see also Cohen, 2010), implying an ability to evoke desired emotions among guests or clients (in this case humans as well as horses), or provide them with an emotional ‘gift’ (Bolton, 2000).

Horsemanship as well as hostmanship thus implies emotion work and experience based knowledge and this is stressed even more by downplaying economic motifs, as Marie does:

‘When people come here they have to feel welcome. They *really* (her emphasis) have to feel welcome. And that’s one of the things I live for, because you will have so much in return... For me that is important. It is much more important than money. (...) If the commercial takes over in a business, it might go very bad. I have examples of that. Then it will be bad for both people and horses. You have to find a level where it feels good...it is a balance.’

The rejection of the too business-like organization is one way of highlighting the craftsmanship and emotional work involved in horse-farming. Downplaying economic motifs does not mean that economic motifs are not important, but rather a means to emphasize the importance of non-monetary values such as genuine craftsmanship, and emotional and trustworthy relationships with horses as well as clients. Monetary values thus have symbolic meanings and do, in certain situations, illustrate social distance and an instrumental attitude. By emphasizing monetary values, they appear too business-like, which would undermine the lifestyle dimension of horse-farming. Hence, through ambiguity work maintaining a tension between emotional and personalized service work versus the demand for efficiency in business, the lifestyle work desired by the horse-farmers is reinforced.

In this manner, the horse-farmers perform a role-distance in Goffman’s (1961) meaning of the concept, when they display their knowledge of how to play the role of a typical business

manager simultaneously as they dissociate from it (see also Coser, 1966 on role distance and ambivalence). By emphasizing family and lifestyle motives, as well as dissociating from a complex whole that equals work with rationality, non-emotionality, instrumentality and a gendered labour division, the horse-farmers adopt an ambiguous non business-like approach to enterprising. Hence, their mode of performing a role-distance entails the enactment of a new and ambiguous role.

Between home and business

Although not all horse-farmers have an articulated ambition of performing emotion work, favorite guests may become almost like friends and a form a commercial friendship (Author; Lashley & Morrison, 2003; Price & Arnould, 1999) may develop. Susan, the owner of a combined B&B and horse-farm describes an occasion where her own son and the child of one of the guests started to play. Since the children wanted to be with the horses, and due to safety reasons, both Susan and the mother of the other child joined the children and took a horse for a wagon tour. The two mothers enjoyed each other's company and had such a good time that Susan found it awkward to accept payment for the 'horse-activity' that normally had a fixed price.

When I wonder about the ambivalent role of being both a service provider and a friend, Susan immediately answers that *'you have to be clear in your role'*. When she had realized that the relationship developed into something more intimate she had told the guest in a jokingly manner that *'I can't charge you now!'* This type of role-distance, and to be outspoken and articulate about the boundaries are strategies used to manage the intersection between the personal and the commercial.

Although this commercial friendship is constrained in time and place by the structural and situated conditions of the time/space framing of a holiday, and by norms framing workplace behavior as non-private, time and space may become strategic tools as well in order to sustain the tension inherent in the commercial friendship relationship. Julia and her mother, for instance, arrange riding camps and courses on their farm and the guests stay in their home as their private guests during these days – but these days only. They are both very clear about where the boundaries are and often stresses that their home is their private sphere and the importance in keeping a certain distance to their clients. During the limited time and space of the riding camp however, the distinction between the personal and the commercial is blurred:

Beatrice: 'People, like clients, are often fascinated by the fact that when we invite people here, for courses and camps... then we invite them to hundred percent. People feel as if they are one in the family. That's the way we like it.'

Julia: 'And then you think: "Shit, do I get paid for this?!" (...) I like the camps best, because they are so intense. Everything at the same time, and then it is quiet. I think it is more difficult when there is a little bit of everything all the time. So ideally, my ideal week would be like this: I would like to have three days with the clients, day and night, and then I have the rest of the time with myself and the horses.'

The strategies developed in the delicate balancing between closeness and distance implies a sense of control among the horse-farmers, which might be due to a perception of spatial

ownership. Another illustration of this sense of ownership, is when Lena equals her horse-farm with a public leisure space. Lena runs a livery stable with her two adult daughters as employees, and when she describes the freedom of being self-employed but also the constraints in being tied to the home, she says that she does not have the need to go into the city to socialize in cafés and places like that, because she has it all at home. When she is in the mood for socializing, she just takes a stroll around the farm and talk to horse-owners who comes and goes during the day. In her case, she prefers to draw a firm line between her private house and the rest of the property, implying that she can withdraw whenever she likes.

The inclination towards boundary management is discernible in non-commercial relationships as well, particularly with friends and people who are helping out. Interestingly, relationships to employees do not seem to entail the same type of boundary negotiations. On the contrary, the roles of the employees seem to be quite unambiguous and distinct. Relationships with the helpers or voluntary workers, on the other hand, are more vividly negotiated. This is particularly pertinent with the often young but adult helpers who seem to be distinguished from the young school-girls often labeled 'stable-girls'. These relationships are often described in friendship-like terms, featured by norms of reciprocity. Marie says:

'I think it is incredibly important that you have a network with people that can help you when you need it, not only employees. And then you should be generous to them... (...) I have a girl who helps me out and then we shift. That is how I work.'

Although the relationships are described in terms of friendship and reciprocity, this form of networking are often phrased in management-terms and points at a perceived competence in managing a 'staff' of voluntary workers. Catherine says: *'Well, you have to delegate. You have to make sure that you are surrounded by people. I always think "shit, how am I going to make this? Who is going to help me this time?"'*

Terms such as 'delegating' are used, and several horse-farmers talk about being 'good at' asking for help, which indicates that an often taken-for-granted and tacit knowledge in friendship networking is slightly transformed into a form of networking 'skill' or 'management'. This, in turn, stretches this form friendship into a form of professional friendship that is close to a manager/employee relationship. However, since the relationship to the voluntary workers does not include monetary rewards, the horse-farmers seem to walk on a fine line between asking for help and demanding services, with a constant negotiation of what is regarded as a fair reward. Knowledge is often regarded as a currency, and the horse-farmers often emphasize how they have trained certain people and provided them with knowledge as a reward. This may, however, lead to a dilemma if the helpers become too skilled. Lena, for example, found herself in the dilemma of where to draw the line when one of the girls who helped her with training horses started to claim a salary for her work, since the girl now regarded herself as a professional rather than voluntary worker.

The voluntary workers seem like an anomaly. Although they may seem to fall into the category of a serious leisure volunteer (Stebbins, 1996), they lack the altruistic and ideological dimension ascribed to many volunteers, and they are not labeled as 'volunteers' by themselves or the farmers. The voluntary workers or 'helpers' are primarily there for the horses, but according to the horse-farmers, the relationship is often friendship-like and the workers seem to enjoy

dwelling on the farm, socializing with each other, clients and the horse-farmer. For some horse-farmers, it is often the kitchen that functions as the office and the workers seems to 'hang' by the kitchen door, as if they symbolically were enacting the in-between role of simultaneously being part of the intimate sphere and outside. Furthermore, some voluntary workers have combined roles of both helping out with the horses, but also with the domestic work, such as baby-sitting. During the interview with Catherine, who has three small children and a husband working full time with his own enterprise, it became obvious that the girls helping out with the horses, were also helping out with the babies, coming and going between the stable and the house. Catherine, who during the interview was baking cookies for the tour-riding group that was coming that evening, sighed when I commented that she seems to have many tasks going on at the same time. *'Now it is time to employ an au-pair'*, she said, *'because now it is just too much.'* As self-employed it was difficult for her to take a parental leave, and although many fathers in Sweden do use their right to government-provided parental leave (see Haas & Rostgaard, 2011), in this case, her husband was self-employed as well. Despite their seemingly equal footing regarding this dimension, Catherine's business is situated in her home with permeable physical and symbolic boundaries between home and business. Work-family integration seems to be important to all the women in this study, and although this study comprises a relatively small sample and do not include male business-owners, it is possible that a gender difference in the narratives of work-family integration would be discernible, supported by similar studies in this field (Ba', 2011; Drew & Humbert, 2012). However, indications of a perceived gender inequality were seldom articulated by these women, and for Catherine, for example, what seemed to bother her in this case was that she had stretched the role of the voluntary worker too far. When the in-between-role of professional friendship had become too instrumental, the ambiguity work had been dissolved into a more distinct type of relationship, resulting in actions to formalize the relationship and employ someone.

Conclusions

The analysis has shown how ambiguity work is performed in the delicate balancing act between life and work, lifestyle and business. In the horse-farmer's boundary negotiations, social spheres that are commonly understood as being separate are blurred, and distinctions are questioned, reinforced and possibly modified. This is accomplished through the horse-farmers lifestyle work, where everyday interactions and accounts and narratives of the farmers work, life and social relationships, enact and reinforce the value of this specific form of work. Two fields of ambiguity are highlighted to show how ambiguity work is accomplished in practice: First, through contrastive rhetoric between lifestyle and ordinary business, a work identity of a lifestyle worker who runs a non-business-like business is taking shape. Second, narratives of relationships with clients as well as voluntary workers points at a sustained tension between emotional closeness and distance. Consequently, the in-between relationships of commercial and professional friendship emerge as specific social forms in Simmel's sense, characterized by its inherent ambiguity.

Although the analysis has a social interactionist approach, the structural contradictions of lifestyle work is addressed. Everyday lifestyle work seems to confirm as well as call into question social norms and structural conditions in society. What can be noted is that the horse-farmers relate to certain prevailing norms through the means of role-distance. The jokingly attitude toward a "proper" business, implying rational decision making and a commercial orientation, coupled with a male gendered norm of making 'good' business, is one such example.

On the other hand, lifestyle enterprising reinforces prevailing societal norms. Norms of individuality, free will and autonomy are ubiquitous in the narratives, and seem to be in tune with general ideals of individuality and flexibility in late modern societies. However, studies of labour in the so-called new economy have shown that these ideals in fact obscure the precarious working conditions inherent in lifestyle oriented work. Although this analysis primarily discerns ideals and norms visible in everyday lifestyle work, structural conditions lurks behind the narratives. Harsh economic conditions due to a tough market and governmental regulations are mentioned between the lines, but seem to confirm rather than undermine the horse-farmers self-image as lifestyle workers. However, the ambiguous role of the voluntary worker, and the fine balancing act between friendship reciprocity and exploiting free labour expressed in the narratives, points at the potential difficulties with this kind of work force. Furthermore, caring for small children, or being able to live and work with grown up children, is often mentioned as the very reason for starting the business. Challenges relating to family work and the division of labour within the family is not articulated as a gender issue by any of the women in this study, but rather as a practical problem, pointing to the fact that these farmers seem to incorporate child- or family care in their identity as lifestyle worker. Being skillful in solving practical problems reinforces the self-image of the autonomous lifestyle worker, and indications of gender issues rather points at something beyond individual control, which would undermine this self-identity. This is another example of how structural conditions, such as gender-related division of labour in the family, are both hidden and ubiquitous in this type of work. Hence, by focusing on sociological ambivalence as both a structural condition and everyday enactment through the notion of ambiguity work, the analysis may reveal how structural tensions are

enacted in situated contexts. This opens up for a social analysis going beyond either/or categorizations of social reality by focusing on what happens in the fuzzy grey area in-between.

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