

LEISURE PLACES AND MODERNITY

The use and meaning of recreational cottages in Norway and the USA

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Introduction

When we think of tourism we often think of travel to exotic destinations, but modernization has also dispersed and extended our network of relatives, friends, and acquaintances. Fewer people live out their lives in a single place or even a single region of their natal country. Modern forms of dwelling, working, and playing involve circulating through a geographically extended network of social relations and a multiplicity of widely dispersed places and regions. Much of the "postmodern" discourse on tourism leaves the impression that tourists seek out only the exotic, authentic "other" and experience every destination through a detached "gaze" that rarely engages the "real" (i.e., uncommodified) aspects of the place (MacCannell 1992, Selwyn 1996, Urry 1990). Contrary to images of "gazing" tourists on a pilgrimage for the authentic, much of modern tourism is rather ordinary and involves complex patterns of social and spatial interaction that cannot be neatly reduced to a shallow detached relation. Leisure/tourism is often less packaged, commodified, and colonial than contemporary academic renderings seem to permit.

One widespread, but largely unexamined form of leisure travel involves the seemingly enigmatic practice of establishing and maintaining a second home (what we will generally refer to as *cottaging*). Like the tourist, the cottager often appears to be engaged in an effort to reclaim a sense of authentic place or identity that otherwise seems so elusive in the fragmented postmodern world (MacCannell 1976). But it is not the nomadic and ongoing pilgrimage that often characterizes tourism. Rather the very word *home* implies becoming native to a place, setting down roots, and investing oneself in a place. Because cottagers are

simultaneously tourists and residents of their cottage locale, leisure related to cottaging represents a unique context within which people encounter, come to know, and transform places.

Given the goal of this volume to broaden the description of leisure/tourism practices by examining them as vehicles for attaining geographic knowledge, our purpose is to examine the leisure practice of second home use and ownership. Maintaining a second home is common in many countries (Coppock 1977). Although cottaging shares an emphasis on leisure across cultures, it is nevertheless embedded in varying social histories and traditions of use and meaning. We examine this leisure practice by contrasting cottage use in Norway and the USA – two nations representing different histories, identities, societal development, and outdoor use traditions. Specifically, we examine cottaging within the context of two important and related geographic themes: (1) how cottage use relates to the identity dilemmas created by modernity and the phenomena of space-time compression; and (2) what cottaging tells us about sense of place as a form of geographic awareness. We begin with some background on modernity and its impacts on identity and sense of place to contextualize our two case studies of cottage use.

Modernity, identity and a sense of place

Modernity possesses an excess of meaning and no meaning at all: “The foreboding generated out of the sense of social space imploding in upon us . . . translates into a crisis of identity. Who are we and what space/place do we belong?” (Harvey 1996: 246). This problem is also reflected in research on community, home, migration, and tourism, which are infused (and encumbered) by outdated assumptions of a geographically rooted subject. The movement of peoples, rather than being seen as an integral aspect of social life, “has been regarded as a special and temporary phenomenon which has been examined under the headings of migration, refugee studies, and tourism” (Hastrup and Olwig 1997: 6). With circulation and movement more the rule than the exception an important geographic dimension of leisure practices is to understand how people in differing cultural contexts use leisure and travel to establish identity, give meaning to their lives, and connect with place.

Modernity is, in large part, experienced as a tension between the freedom and burden to fashion an identity for oneself. Aptly described by Marshall Berman in *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, this tension originates in:

our desire to be rooted in a stable and coherent personal and social past, and our insatiable desire for [economic, experiential, and intellectual] growth that destroys both the physical and social landscapes of our past,

and our emotional links with those lost worlds; our desperate allegiances to ethnic, national, class, and sexual groups which we hope will give us a firm "identity," and the internationalization of everyday life – of our clothes and household goods, our books and music, our ideas and fantasies – that spreads all our identities all over the map; our desire for clear and solid values to live by, and our desire to embrace the limitless possibilities of modern life and experience that obliterate all values.

(Cited in Sack 1992: 6)

With the melting (and profaning) of traditional sources of meaning, leisure stands to fill the void. Yet consumerism and mass tourism, as forms of leisure, are also subject to many of the same forces that contribute to the dilemma of meaning (Rojek 1995, Sack 1992). Leisure represents the increased freedom or capacity to seek out and express identity and the burden of discovering meaning in a meaningless world. Guided by fewer strictures on how and what to choose, the self is at once liberated through the expansion of leisure and, at the same time, saddled with the burden of making choices from among an ever widening market of options. Ironically, for all the choice and freedom to construct the self (i.e., the freedom of leisure), our personal appropriation of life choices and meanings is often constrained by highly standardized market-driven modes of production and consumption. Consequently, leisure and tourism may be experienced as potentially authentic, personalized, and identity-enhancing or increasingly manufactured, commodified, and disorienting.

An important geographic feature of modernity that contributes directly to both the freedom/burden of identity and the expansion of leisure/tourism is the changing nature of time-space relations. The experience of modernity is associated with rapidly accelerating rates of exchange, movement, and communication across space. As Massey (1993) points out, modern experiences such as time zones, jet lag, future shock, bank cards, ATMs, fax machines, e-mail, the Internet, and the global village are all symptomatic of time-space "compression." Modernity "breaks down the protective framework of small community and of tradition, replacing these with much larger, impersonal organizations. The individual feels bereft and alone in a world in which she or he lacks the psychological supports and sense of security provided by more traditional settings" (Giddens 1991: 33). With each new symbolic connection to the larger world "the traditional face-to-face community loses its coherence and its significance in the life of its participants. . . . Their sense of 'belonging' is no longer only, or even primarily, rooted in the local soil" (Gergen 1985: 215). The resulting crisis of meaning leads inevitably to arguments that "in the middle of all this flux, one desperately needs a bit of peace and quiet; and "place" is posed as a source of stability and an unproblematic identity" (Massey 1993: 63).

Though there is widespread sentiment that the insecurity associated with space-time compression leads to the search for authentic and stable place, the social or moral value of maintaining a unitary sense of place or strong place-bonds is not beyond reproach. On the one side, certain anti-modernist environmental and social philosophies (e.g., bioregionalism and communitarianism) suggest a return to a mode of “dwelling in place” that is thought to have been more common in past centuries. They suggest that by sinking roots more deeply into a place we can “prevent the place from eroding into McWorld – from becoming lost in the abstract space of global markets” (Sagoff 1992: 369).

Other critics see sense of place as a romantic, dangerous sentiment to recreate Tönnies’ *Gemeinschaft* (Shurmer-Smith and Hannam 1994). They fear that bioregionalist and communitarian politics hold the potential to be “exclusionary” (i.e., racist and indifferent to distant “others”). “The danger arises when such modes of thought are postulated as the sole basis of politics (in which case they become inward-looking, exclusionary, and even neo-fascistic)” (Harvey 1996: 199). In this view it is naïve to believe that such societies will respect the positive enlightenment values of human diversity and justice for the “other.”

Massey (1993) argues for a “progressive” view of place that tries to give credibility to the human need for authenticity and rootedness, recognizing that such sentiments need not be construed as a case for exclusionary communities. “The question is how to hold on to that notion of spatial difference, of uniqueness, even of rootedness if people want that, without it being reactionary” (Massey 1993: 64). Thus “what gives a place its specificity is not some long internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of relations articulated together at a particular locus” (Massey 1993: 66). Places constitute unbounded constellations of global and local process. Modernity makes this wider constellation of relations possible, but doesn’t necessarily reduce place uniqueness. Thus, a place may have “a character of its own,” but it is still possible to feel it without subscribing to the Heideggerian notions of essentialism and exclusivity. Though place identities often lack the singular, seamless, and coherent qualities frequently attributed to the idea of sense of place, multiple place identities can be, and often are, both a source of richness and conflict.

Similarly, Sack (1992, 1997) argues that the condition of modernity is not so much about a decline or loss of place-based meaning, as it is often interpreted, but about a change in how meaning is created or constituted in the modern age. These processes thin the meaning of places. “From the fewer, more local, and thicker places of premodern society, we now live among the innumerable interconnected thinner places and even empty ones” (Sack 1997: 9). In this context leisure/tourism represents a major complicitous factor of transforming places *and* the thinning of meaning, the epitome of “consuming places” (Urry 1996). This makes the very authenticity many tourists seek increasingly inaccessible

(MacCannell 1976). How much and under what circumstances can tourism balance the inevitable tension between the commodification (thinning) of places and our desire to experience and live in unique and "thickly" textured places?

Case studies in cottage culture

Building on Sack's distinction between thick and thin places and Massey's notion of a progressive sense of place, we examine the use and meaning of recreational second homes through two case studies, one in northern Wisconsin and one in southeast Norway. Their comparison provides a unique way to observe how modern place-based identities are forged within a wider assortment of local and global interactions. The contexts of seasonal migration and tourism also emphasize the ways in which the local is partially constituted from the global (or at least the larger regional) in the form of various urban migrations associated with tourism across the seasons.

The northern Wisconsin site, known locally as "Hayward Lakes", is in a region commonly identified by midwesterners as the "Northwoods" to differentiate it from the more densely populated prairie to the south. It has rural character marked by diversity of land ownership, including seasonally occupied lakeside homes (50 per cent of the dwellings in the area), resorts, and campgrounds, and large tracts of county, state, and federal forest land. The area is also adjacent to the Lac Courte Oreilles Indian Reservation which operates a modest casino on the outskirts of Hayward (population 1,900), the major commercial center in the area. The surrounding landscape is dominated by forest with dozens of interspersed lakes that provide cottage sites and many recreation activities (e.g., fishing, hunting, boating, skiing, snowmobiling, and mountain biking). Several "event" attractions that bring thousands of tourists to the region have evolved from these recreation activities, e.g., the American Birkebeiner is modeled after the famous Norwegian race by the same name and is the largest cross-country ski race in North America. There is strong regional influence of nineteenth-century Scandinavian immigration. Constituting an amalgamation of traditional-rural and modern-urban lifestyles, the region has experienced rapid transformation as a tourist destination in recent years. The majority of cottage owners and tourists originate from the nearby urban center of Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota (225 km southwest) or Chicago, Illinois (650 km southeast).

Recreation and tourism in the area prior to World War II was largely restricted to rustic summer resorts, cottaging, and traditional activities (i.e., fishing and hunting) that followed earlier logging. Tourism/leisure has dramatically changed from the dominance of fishing and most family owned and operated lakeside resorts have been replaced by seasonal homes. New recreational technologies, snowmobile and mountain bike, have impacted and, in conjunction with skiing,

expanded the tourism season into the fall and winter. With limited additional waterfront home sites, prices have risen dramatically in recent years.

The Norwegian site, known as Sjødalen, is a broad valley located in a rugged alpine and sub-alpine region at the outskirts of Jotunheimen (Home of Giants) National Park, a rural part of Norway four hours' drive (200–400 km) from urban centers Oslo and Bergen. The valley holds trails, roads and buildings associated with long subsistence use. Most of the land in the study site is state owned common property. The valley surroundings are diverse, with highland pine and birch forests, non-forested alpine lands, enclaves of pastures and, traditionally, cultivated fields around the old summer farms ("seters"); lakes, streams and a world-class rafting river. The area attracts people from urban regions and nearby communities, with a range of recreational opportunities; hiking, cross-country and downhill skiing, fishing, hunting. Although Sjødalen is primarily a recreational and second home area, it was previously used for logging and there are still summer farms scattered throughout the area; some in traditional use, but many converted into cottages, or neglected and thus fallen into ruin over time.

There are few permanent residents, unlike the Wisconsin site. Most are associated with the tourism industry and the handful of small resorts throughout the valley. It has provided a corridor for travel between the western and eastern part of Southern Norway, and today a highway bisects the area. The area is extremely

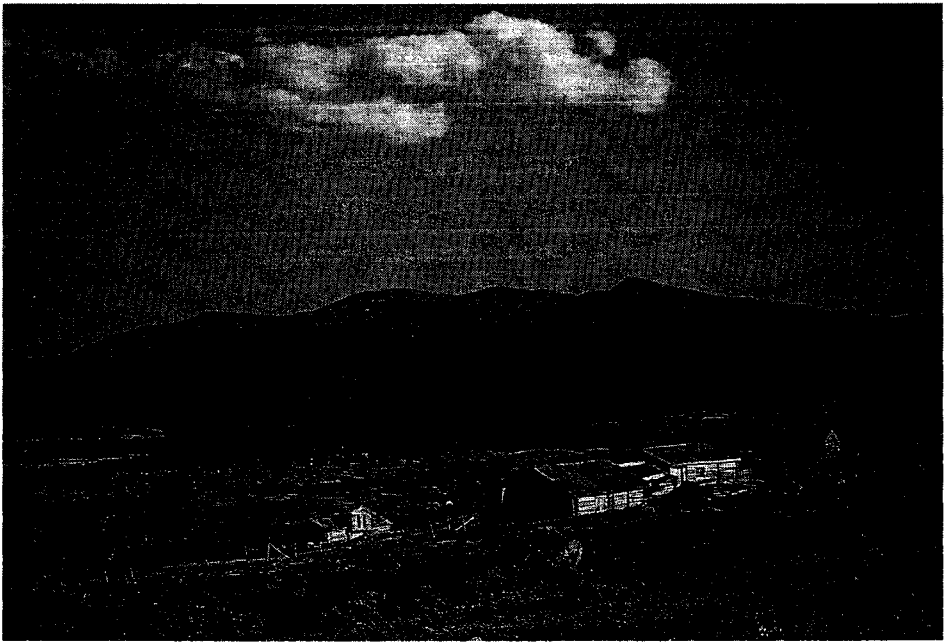


Plate 6 Summer farm, Sjødalen

Source: Bjørn P. Kaltenborn

popular and there is a great demand for more second homes. Present land-use zoning limits the potential for additional cottages in the area and consequently prices are increasing.

Escaping modernity: from thin to thick

As a reaction to the modern tendency to experience thinned out places, cottaging can represent an effort to construct an identity firmly anchored in place. Building on interviews and comments of cottage owners we discuss three themes: back-to-nature, inversion, and continuity as meanings of second homes (Jaakson 1986). In our adaptation of these categories each is embedded in a broader framework of modernity, identity, and sense of place; that is, each reflects the tension between the tendency to thin the meaning of places and to establish a sense of home and identity.

Back-to-nature

The most direct form of escape from modernity is to seek refuge in nature, (Jaakson op. cit., Halseth 1992). The setting of the cottage affords greater access to nature, in typically rural locations (i.e., "Northwoods" or "in the mountains"), and by virtue of the relative spaciousness of most cottage developments. Relaxing around the cottage combines with experiencing nature through walks, picnics, viewing wildlife, fishing, canoeing and gardening (Stynes *et al.* 1997). Among Hayward Lakes cottage owners there is far more emphasis on passive nature appreciation than more active forms of leisure such as golf, tennis, and water-skiing. Cottage use averages 72 days increasingly spread through the year. One woman cottager describes back-to-nature as "stepping back in time," "a sweetness and a simplicity to it," "rustic, but not camping out," "unsophisticated," "unadorned" and "an unadulterated environment." One male informant describes it as a quality of consciousness more than of natural surroundings:

It's just a totally different feel, I mean it's the woods, the trees, the lakes, the water, wildlife, birds, sea gulls go by, yeah so I . . . think you see things and feel things differently when you're here versus the city. Its not that there aren't birds and trees in the city, it's just that you have a different focus. You're working . . . where up here it's just the opposite. You're into relaxing and getting away from everything.

A major role of the Norwegian cottage is to provide immediate contact with nature. Most cottages in Sjudalen have natural surroundings with attractive views and some privacy from neighbors. The topography permits placing cottages so

that they seldom crowd one another. The average user spends six weeks a year at the cottage, an average of eight days during harsh midwinter. Activity levels vary considerably, typically short and long hikes, skiing, fishing and hunting, picking berries and mushrooms. Most cottagers spend a great deal of time at the cottage just relaxing and/or engaging in practical activities. Traditional and moderately strenuous activities like fetching water, gathering and heating with firewood, and maintaining the building, bring people in contact with their immediate surroundings and provide elements of well-being and give meaning to cottage life. Many cottages have no electricity or running water, many have road access only during the summer season. The lack of modern facilities seems to be a conscious choice of most of the cottage owners.

Many cottage owners cite a lack of modern facilities as important to facilitate nature experience, the feeling of well-being at the cottage largely a function of being comfortable with simple means. Such a feeling is also evident in the importance placed on adjusting lifestyles more to natural daylight and darkness, escaping the sounds of civilization, experiencing distinct differences in weather. "A lot is important, particularly getting close to nature, feeling the wind and weather, having a few people around you, and living as one with nature and the rhythms there" (middle-aged man). "You become particularly fond of special mountain peaks. To watch these at all hours of the day – in all kinds of weather is a gift" (retired man). "Nature" becomes a metaphor for empowerment, identity, and a particular experience of embodiment.

Inversion

A most pervasive meaning of a second home is that "life at the cottage is lived differently," an "inversion" (Jaakson 1986: 377), a vacation from city daily life. The cottage is a center for leisure, the primary home a center for work. The most strongly endorsed statement in a random sample of Hayward Lakes cottagers was that life was definitely "less hectic," "very different." A twelve-year veteran of the area speaks for many cottagers:

It is just great and the people up here are relaxed. They're not high tensioned, high stressed like you find in the city or work. So you forget about all that. You almost forget about what day it is.

Like 100 percent different (Chicago woman, laughing).

A particular way in which life is lived differently at the cottage is the convergence of work and leisure. Here leisure is not divorced from the rhythms of life as in the "work home." With the cottage as the setting or center of all activities, doing

chores, maintaining property and landscape, recreating, being outside, visiting with the family, the line between work and leisure fades. Maintenance of the property is seen as integral to life at the cottage. One man who hired designers for the interior and garden of the cottage did no first-home yard work, but claims to spend the bulk of his time at the cottage doing so.

The relaxed pace of life is also linked to the different way work is perceived. One informant, a geologist for an environmental consulting firm, admits to bringing some work to the cottage, but describes cottaging as a different frame of mind:

for me the switch coming up here is that down there [meaning a community 30 miles north of Chicago] every minute at work counts. You're worrying about it, you're [thinking] "what to do this minute, what do I do the next minute" and then the next day. I have to fly down to Chicago for a meeting for one day and then back up again. It's happened a couple of times before. But mostly I try to set it up where people know not to bother me unless it's an absolute emergency.

This does not necessarily mean that people are bringing the office to the cottage. Many speak of the transition to the Northwoods as leaving the world of work behind. One informant describes it as a kind of "rinsing out work" from his mind that occurs after about an hour's drive from the city.

Inversion in the Norwegian case can be more pronounced among the Norwegian cottage owners. In interviews and surveys, the cottage owners repeatedly emphasize the "different-ness" of the life at the cabin. It is clearly a retreat from everyday life, and a rest from the pressures from modern life:

[I] feel comfortable in my own company. The cabin and the mountains give me peace of mind. I often bring with me things to the cabin which I don't feel I have time to deal with at home. At the cabin I can permit myself just "to be" without doing anything. Just sit and enjoy the view.

This does not mean being entirely passive and avoiding work altogether. The typical cottage owner in Sjødalen is less reliant on modern technologies and actively applies practical skills for maintaining the place and harvesting resources like berries, mushrooms, and fish:

[It's] another environment, without all the technical appliances, nice not to have all the electrical equipment, use candle lights – wood heating, all in all live a simpler life.

Most of this is carried out at a relaxed pace without too much planning and little or no pressure to get finished at any particular time. Considerable amounts of time are spent "doing nothing in particular" (i.e. reflecting on this and that without being too concerned about time). Overt activities like small building repairs or cutting firewood interchange with spells of contemplation throughout the day. Such contemplative interludes are salient in the broader picture of inversion. Reflections about one's own existence, social life, and activities are often interpreted within the context of the natural surroundings. The central meaning of the cottage life is created through opportunities to live a comfortable and relaxed existence, with a feeling of control over one's life in attractive surroundings, without having to work too hard for it.

Continuity and sense of place

Tuan (1977) describes *place* as a center of meaning. In a globalized world many feel placeless, the cottage is a center of meaning across the life course even as the permanent residence changes. The cottage provides continuity of identity and sense of place through symbolic, territorial identification with an emotional home. In the Hayward Lakes region territorial identification occurs on at least three levels of scale: the cottage itself and its immediate surroundings as a sense of home; the lake as a social system, as neighborhood or community; and as regional landscape of shared cultural values.

The cottage provides continuity across generations within the family and across the life course within a generation. The cottage provides for family togetherness that is distinct from often segmented lives and schedules that are felt to characterize most urban households (Jaakson 1986). Daily paths and projects of individual family members are spatially bounded and more interwoven at the cottage, a site of family memories, providing symbolic territorial identification across generations, typically expressed:

My grandfather built it in the 30's. This whole area had been logged and he was the original owner of the Edgewater Lodge. It's still in my father's name, but my brothers and I come up here and take care of it too. [We are] trying to make sure that it stays in the family . . . all six of us brothers still use it. And my folks come out here two to two and a half months a year.

When asked about future plans for the place, responses almost always include a reference to passing the place on to the children. Jaakson (1986) notes that this is rarely the case for the primary home. He describes a case of two college-aged brothers whose parents had died:

They promptly sold the urban house where they had lived since childhood. But when asked if they would also sell the cottage, they looked aghast and replied: "We'd *never* sell the cottage!" . . . The cottage was their emotional *home*, the city house a mere residence.

(Jaakson 1986: 381).

Many respondents express place-identity and continuity as reasons they have a cottage:

At that time [early 1980s], we paid \$52,000 for this land and 250 feet [of shoreline] and nobody on this lake had ever paid that much for land, so we were laughed at. People thought we were crazy, but we were buying not only a piece of property, we were buying our dream. I don't know how to explain what it is about this place but there is a sense of being home.

We moved and owned 8 to 10 different homes and so we've never had any sense of ownership that was worthwhile to have, anything that was going to be there.

Shared identification with neighbors (particularly other property owners around the lake) is important, people sought a cottage amongst "community spirit" and "where everyone knows one another." Most Wisconsin respondents, especially those with longer tenures, discuss neighbors by name and describe social practices such as "puttsing" around the lake visiting neighbors and hanging out at taverns and restaurants located around the lake. A number of respondents suggested that they have more friends and more social life at the cottage than they do at their work home. This was very different among the Norwegian cottage owners who focus on family and friends who accompany them at the cottage, with little socializing amongst the cottage owners. The cottage is primarily a place for maintaining familiar social bonds.

Another symbolic identification has to do with the mystique of the "Northwoods," a symbolic place routinely reproduced in the public discourse of what it means to live in Wisconsin and neighboring states. Among residents of the upper Midwest (northern Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota) the "Northwoods" and "up north" refer to a distinct place that is symbolically "a part of the ritual retreat from the city," "(t)o most, the allure of the Northwoods is that it simply is what the city is not: pristine, wild, unspoiled and simple." (Bawden 1997: 451). This is a pristine myth (the Northwoods were "cutover" 100 years ago); nevertheless, the area is still "quite different from the cities, towns, or dairyland countryside to the south" (op. cit.: 451). Cottagers clearly experience this as they make their trek north, noting changing landscape, the

composition of the forest (“all of a sudden the white birches become the predominant tree in the forest”) and cultural elements, like a style of barn. Many often name specific towns that mark the transition. In one small Wisconsin town there is a monument on a large rock which proclaims to mark the spot as “half way north,” referring to its location at latitude 45 degrees north of the equator.

Sjodalen continuity involves identification with an emotional home, though not necessarily of childhood vacation experiences, but imbued with an outdoor ethic:

Cabin life is tradition. It has always been my favorite existence. Away from crowds, time pressures and the regulations of civilization and technical things. Experience, enjoy and protect “untrammled” nature. Live a simple life materially and in agreement with a few, chosen people. Physical – and not the least psychological – balance is quickly restored during a stay at the cabin.

(middle-aged woman)

A common theme across the Nordic countries is that people often seek cottages in the same district of their family origin (Nordin 1993), and a search for continuity is prevalent for a great portion of the cottage owners in Sjodalen. Continuity is emphasized through the importance of certain traditions associated with cottages. To some the annual ptarmigan hunt (a type of mountain grouse) or trout fishing become ritualised amongst particular friends. Less specific, but perhaps even more important traditions, include spending Easter and Christmas holidays at the cottage.

At a cultural or national level, the significance of cottaging for Norwegians is reflected in the very high levels of recreational homes per capita. In both Norway and Sweden there are between 70 and 80 second homes per 1000 population compared to 20 to 30 per 1000 in the Great Lake US states. Explanations have been offered for the popularity of seasonal homes in Scandinavia (Nordin 1993), predominantly the relatively recent depopulation of the countryside. People have a great desire to own a cottage in the district of forebears. In Norway, cottage use is also linked to summer farms where people moved up into farmhouses near the higher pastures to tend livestock. This made for a pleasant break in the routine. However, family heritage is likely only to be part of the explanation for popularity in Scandinavia. As a project to seek meaning and create and maintain identity, the diverse roots of “cottage culture” in Scandinavia are important. Cottaging bridges different epochs and domains of societal development.

Historically, extensive use of remote resources and outlying areas created a need for small cabins and summer farms. Many were later converted to recreational homes but have their roots in rural subsistence. Almost without exception these are still owned by people in rural districts or by the state. Many rural

people today still build cabins close to their primary residence, an attachment to place and heritage more salient in choice of cabin location than it is for urbanites.

At the turn of the century two additional cottage trends emerged. Individuals from the urban upper class, notably in England but also to some extent in Norway, erected exuberant retreats in the countryside, particularly in order to allow extended salmon fishing and large game hunting. Second, larger industrial companies established small "cottage communities" near the cities for the use by their employees. This working class cottage culture has since dissolved as most of the cottage communities have been sold off to individuals (although many companies still own cottages intended for more executive use). In social-democratic Scandinavia, however, the working class leisure ideal, which included the notion of residing in nature during leisure, diffused into the middle classes during the prosperous 1960s and 1970s. During this time many locations in the rural districts were opened up and even developed for recreational housing, allowing cottages to become a widely shared practice in Norwegian life.

In comparing the two case studies, cottage culture in Norway clearly involves a strong component of reinforcing national identity. That is, Norwegian use of cottages is very much embedded in "Norwegian-ness." In an effort to fortify the sense of nationhood such "typically Norwegian activities" as seeking "peace and quiet," "going for a walk," and cross-country skiing become symbols of national identity (Erikson 1997). They constitute focal symbols in a national debate about globalization and European unification (Kaltenborn *et al.* 1993). As leisure practices, these symbols are highly ritualized through cottage use – particularly as it reproduces traditional subsistence activities (e.g., hunting, fishing, mushroom and berry picking) and modes of dwelling (e.g., wood fires, fetching water, natural light, etc.). The cottage serves as a center of peace and quiet and a base for nature outings. This is diversifying, however, as cottage culture is modernized. The development of modern, fully equipped cottages may be attracting new, different groups, creating conflicting social norms. The modernization and commodification of cottaging unsettles Norwegian cottage identity.

In contrast, Wisconsin cottaging has a strong regional significance shared among residents of the upper Midwest as a "Northwoods" or "up-north" culture. Northwoods cottage use traces its origins back to a lakeside fishing and/or hunting cabin, many converted from small vacation resort properties. The historical tie to non-leisure uses, ancestral homes and village is less strong here than in the Norwegian case. Though Americans possess myths related to the conquest of nature, wilderness, and the frontier, the American identification with nature is not wrapped in cottage use to the same degree as it can define the Norwegian character. The upper Midwest emphasis on the summer cottage lifestyle may have some origins in the dominance of Scandinavian immigration and settlement of

Minnesota and Wisconsin. It may also be linked to the common experience of northern latitudes (e.g., the common "feel" of northern boreal forests and the emphasis on summer as a leisure time and place).

Conclusions: dilemmas in the creation of meaning

An attachment to place or community, the sense of "insidedness" made possible by a lifelong accumulation of experiences in place, is important in maintaining a sense of personal identity (Giddens 1991, McHugh and Mings 1996). Yet the modern identity is no longer firmly rooted in a singular local place. The leisure practice of cottaging (owning and using a second home) embodies both sides of this modern tension. It is a modern expression of the need to have an authentic, rooted identity somewhere, but also a concrete manifestation of a segmented, isolated self-living in more than one place. On the one side, cottaging represents an escape *from* modernity and *towards* a sense of place, rootedness, identity, and authenticity, echoing Crouch (1994: 96): "escape becomes an escape for home, not just from home." Cottaging is an attempt to thicken the meanings we associate with places in response to the modern tendency for places to become thinned out. Cottaging inverts much that is modern against the modern tendency to separate and segment. It emphasizes continuity of time and place, a return to nature, and convergence of spheres of life such as work and leisure. However, cottaging is very much an extension of modernity. Cottage use is motivated by and played out in the modern context of globalized cultural production and accelerated time-space relations. It necessarily re-creates the segmented quality of modern identities. It does so in the form of separate places for organising distinct aspects of a fragmented identity. It narrows and thins out the meaning of each "home" by focusing the meaning of each on a particular segment of life (i.e., work and subsistence of urban daily life versus recreation and rejuvenation of cottage life). It also segments identity around phases in the life cycle with youth and retirement focused more on cottage life than working adulthood.

Modern forms of dwelling, working, and leisure involve circulating through a geographically extended network of social relations and a multiplicity of widely dispersed geographic places. Circulation no longer represents an interruption of ordinary, settled life, but constitutes a normal condition for many people (Olwig 1997). Given contemporary unsettled life, it should not seem unusual to set down multiple roots in multiple places.

Recognizing that circulation and travel are increasingly the norm effectively deterritorializes or *dis*-places what have long been geographically bounded conceptions of culture, home, and identity and makes problematic certain salient themes in the study of tourism. The discussion of many interesting and familiar tourism practices is virtually absent in the postmodern discourse on tourism.

These include, for example, visiting friends and family, seasonal migrations linked to cycles of work and leisure, charitable uses of leisure travel (i.e., building homes for "Habitat for Humanity" or a church project to build a community school in rural Mexico). Numerous surveys of tourist patterns suggest that a significant volume of tourism involves visiting extended family members, old friends who have moved, and new acquaintances made through spatially extended social networks (Pearce 1982). These forms of leisure circulation have implications for geographical knowledge.

The second theme concerns center-periphery relations in tourism. Tourism flows are generally conceptualized as moving from the urban center to the rural periphery. In our case studies, however, many cottage owners have deeper roots in the cottage region, with ownership stretching back several generations, than in what geographers would call their primary home. In terms of time, money, and psychic energy, people invest considerable portions of their lives in these "secondary" places. To necessarily privilege one (usually the urban work place) as primary, central, and everyday and the other as secondary, peripheral, and exotic seems unwarranted.

The third theme pertains to the relation of the tourist to the site as captured in notions of the tourist gaze and authenticity. The questions become refigured. Which place embodies "ordinary" life and which place yields the "extra-ordinary" life? Which place is authentic and genuine and which is fabricated and artificial, or how does the subject feel "ownership" and identity? The tourism literature typically presumes that the anchor for normalcy, originality, and ordinariness is daily urban life and that vacations, travel, and tourism refer to seeking or gazing upon the extra-ordinary, the exotic, and *otherness*. The idea of the tourist gaze implies a contrast between the ordinary and the extraordinary with the tourist experience primarily one of looking upon "features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience" (Urry 1990: 3). When movement and circulation are the norm rather than the exception, when people regularly reside in more than one place, it is difficult to say which is the everyday place and which is the extra-ordinary one.

Unlike many forms of tourism and holiday making, with cottaging there is little sense of busy-ness, no rush to take it all in. There are no schedules to coordinate, no tours to arrange, no guidebooks listing operating hours to consult, no concert tickets to buy, no hotel concierge, and no tour bus. At the cottage one can stop consuming, one can stop "collecting signs" for a while. What is ordinary is the second home, the natural landscape and scenery: it is the modern, urban life that is felt extra-ordinary. For many the cottage is a literal and emotional home. In the modern world the identity we associate with home is increasingly created through residence in more than one place.

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