

## Balancing Individual and Collective Welfare in Norwegian Cabin Politics

- 1 Alf Jørgen Schnell and Marianne Skjulhaug, "Hyttedebatten handler om norsk urbanitet" [The cabin debate is about Norwegian urbanity], *Plan*, March 27, 2020, <https://plantidsskrift.no/debatt/hyttedebatten-handler-om-norsk-urbanitet/>.
- 2 See, for example various publications popularizing the Scandinavian model such as George Lakey, *Viking Economics. How the Scandinavians Got it Right—And How We Can, Too* (New York: Melville House Publishing, 2016).
- 3 The figure of the reasonable "citizen-consumer" was conceptualized by Helena Mattsson in the context of the Swedish debates, but the tendency to rely on the "reasonable citizen-consumer" is discernible also in Norway and Denmark. Helena Mattsson, "Designing the Reasonable Consumer. Standardisation and Personalisation in Swedish Functionalism," in *Swedish Modernism. Architecture, Consumption and the Welfare State*, ed. Helena Mattsson and Sven-Olov Wallenstein (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2010), 74–99.

In the first spring of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020, a heated debate flared up in Norway when the government restricted the use of cabins. The aim of prohibiting cabin owners from sleeping in cabins outside their home municipality was less to limit the risk of spreading the coronavirus than to handle the pressure that would be placed on healthcare services in remote natural areas (where most cabins are located) if the pandemic escalated. Despite these good intentions, the legislation caused a national conflict. Bent Høie, Norway's Helse- og omsorgsminister (Minister of Health and Care Services) wrote a public letter addressing the most upset voices in the debate, and *Heimevernet* (the home guard) was put into use to ensure that cabin owners stayed at home in the city. The director of *Norges institusjon for menneskerettigheter* (the Norwegian Human Rights Institution), Adele Matheson Mestad, claimed that the restriction contravened human rights.<sup>1</sup> Limiting the use of cabins obviously touched upon a complex range of deeply felt matters, but how could these have been considered more important than distributing pressure on hospitals? How did the balancing of individual and collective welfare become so heated in this case?

Historically, Scandinavian nations have been known for their consensus politics, balancing individual and collective interests in order to secure welfare for all. The Nordic welfare model—characterized by, amongst other things, high employment rates, social security, free education and healthcare, as well as guaranteed holidays—is believed to be rooted in the common core values of prosperity, security, equality, trust, and freedom, which are "both socialist and capitalist."<sup>2</sup> By extension, Scandinavian industrial, architectural, and urban design is thought to rely on the figure of "the reasonable citizen-consumer," whose individual needs and desires are integrated within the idea of common values through a well-organized and standardized system of planning and production, as well as education and democratic discussion involving various media.<sup>3</sup> Yet, balancing individual and collective welfare can be at times extremely difficult, as is shown in the case of (self-built) huts, holiday cabins, and second homes in Norway. These simple architectural structures became unresolved points of collision between ideas of collective versus individual welfare, as well as between two types of contact with nature, wherein enjoying nature from a private hut clashed with the creation of public national parks.

This chapter focuses on the political turn in Norwegian cabin politics that was launched in 1965. From being a beacon of individual freedom and part of basic welfare, the cabin was then branded an enemy of the collective good. The government initiated a re-education campaign which included a reader, a traveling exhibition, public lectures and debates, as well as pilot projects involving new types of designs of cabins and leisure villages. Despite the

- 4 Rune Slagstad, *Da fjellet ble dannet* [When the mountain was formed/cultured] (Oslo: Dreyer Forlag, 2018); Peder Anker, *The Power of the Periphery: How Norway Became an Environmental Pioneer for the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
- 5 Original quote in Norwegian: "Den norske identiteten som nasjonsbyggerne konstruerte i sine litterære verk, fant ikke sted i den uberørte naturen, men heller i en grensesone mellom jordbruk og villmark, oftest til seters eller på ei jakthytte. Det er påfallende hvor ofte handlingen i Norges mest sentrale og nasjonalistiske litterære verk fra 1800-tallet foregår på slike steder." Ellen Rees, "'Det egentlige Norge' – hytter i norsk litteratur, ca. 1814–2005" [The real Norway: Cabins in Norwegian literature ca. 1814–2005], in *Norske hytter i endring. Om bærekraft og behag* [Changing Norwegian cabins: about sustainability and comfort], ed. Helen Jøsok Gansmo, Thomas Berker, and Finn Arne Jørgensen (Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forlag, 2011), 23.
- 6 Rees, "'Det egentlige Norge'..." 23.
- 7 Povel Juel, *Et lykksaligt liv eftertænkt da indbildning og forfarenhed derom disputerede. Af den som søger efter sandhed paa jorden* [A happy life followed when imagination and experience disputed it. Of the one who searches for truth on earth] (Copenhagen: Nørwigs Bogtrykkerie II, 1721).
- 8 Henrik Ibsen, "På vidderne" [On the mountain plateaux], in *Samlede verker 1866–1873* [Collected works 1866–1873], vol. 2 (Oslo: Kage Forlag, 2005), 495.
- 9 Randi Skjerstad, "Der landet ble samlet. Friluftsliv som norgeshistorie 1940–1970" [Where the country gathered. Outdoor recreation as Norwegian history 1940–1970] (master's thesis, Oslo University, 2021).
- 10 Odd Brochmann, "Arkitekten og lediggangen" [The architect and the idle time], *Byggkunst* 8 (1952): 121.

consensus that some type of cabin planning was indeed needed, this turn was met with de facto resistance from municipalities, landowners, and cabin users.

## CABIN CULTURE

The ideal of owning one's private primitive hut in the middle of nature has played on the Norwegian imagination from the nineteenth century onwards through a combination of scientific explorations of nature and national-romantic narratives of "the good life" in mountain cabins.<sup>4</sup>

The Norwegian identity that the nation-builders constructed in literary works did not take place in untouched nature, but rather in a border zone between agriculture and wilderness, most often at a *seter* (mountain pasture farm) or in a hunting lodge. It is remarkable how often the action in Norway's most central and nationalist literary works from the nineteenth century occurs in such places.<sup>5</sup>

From Hansen's short story "Luren" (in English meaning "lure," a type of shepherd's horn) from 1819, Asbjørnsen's *Norske Huldre-Eventyr og Folkesagn* from 1848 (published in English as *The Complete and Original Norwegian Folktales of Asbjørnsen and Moe*), and Ibsen's play *Peer Gynt* from 1867, to Hamsun's *Pan* from 1894 or Bjerke's *De døde tjern* from 1942 (recently released in English as *The Lake of the Dead*), Norwegian literature highlights the cabin as an important setting, as well as an important metaphor, for storytelling.<sup>6</sup> Such cultural efforts enmeshed the cabin not only with ideas of Norwegianness—to be Norwegian is to enjoy time away in a remote cabin—but most of all with the freedom and knowledge that stems from contact with nature.

The image of the primitive hut in the middle of nature corresponded with ideas of freedom to think and do what you want. As early as in the eighteenth century, being in one's own remote cabin was compared to being a king in his realm.<sup>7</sup> And the Norwegian word for outdoor life, *friluftsliv*, literally "free-air life," was coined by Henrik Ibsen in 1859 in his poem "På vidderne" (On the mountain plateaux) in which he wrote that it was in front of the fireplace in a deserted *seter* house far up in the mountains where his protagonist found "free-air life" for his thoughts.<sup>8</sup> During the Second World War, remote cabins became meeting places for the Norwegian resistance, enmeshing the cabin again with freedom—specifically, with the heroic fight for liberation.<sup>9</sup>

According to the architect Odd Brochmann in 1952, in modern times we often consider leisure as "the key to true knowledge."<sup>10</sup> "I can't imagine that I could have worked anywhere as I do here. It's the quiet and, perhaps, the wonderful scenery; I mean, its quiet seriousness," wrote Ludwig Wittgenstein, in 1936, to his Cambridge colleague G. E. Moore when describing his Norwegian cabin that he started to build around 1914 on a cliff above Eidsvatnet, at the outer end of Lustra fjord, near the village Skjolden. The Norwegian cabin was the philosopher's favorite writing retreat and apparently it was there where he wrote significant parts of his *Philosophical*



The Norwegian cabin of philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein near Skjolden.



Arne Næss' cabin Skarveredet built in the first half of the 1940s.



The wild growth of mountain cabins at Ustaaset.

- 11 Knut Olav Åmås and Rolf Larsen, "Ludwig Wittgenstein in Norway 1913–50," in *Wittgenstein and Norway*, ed. Kjell S. Johannessen, Rolf Larsen, and Knut Olav Åmås (Oslo: Solum, 1994), 10.
- 12 Peder Anker, "The Philosopher's Cabin and the Household of Nature," in *Ethics, Place and Environment* 6, 2 (2003): 136–39; Arne Næss, *Det gode lange livs far: Hallingskarvet sett fra Tvergastein* (Oslo: Damm, 1995).
- 13 Peder Anker, *Livet er best ute. Friluftslivets historie og filosofi* [Life is best outside. The history and philosophy of outdoor life] (Oslo: Kagge Forlag, 2022), 48.
- 14 Original quote in Norwegian: "Norge er romslig. Det er plass og albuesslag for oss alle. I arbeid som til fest. Til fjells som til lands. Lenge var det slik at det var de få som dro til fjells for å feriere, for å søke avveksling og avspenning og for å oppleve det fjellet kan gi. Men etter at vi fikk 3 ukers lovfestet ferie og levestandarden ble hevet, søker de mange ut." Martin Tranmæl, "Plass for oss alle!" [Room for all of us!], *Den Norske Turistforenings årbok 1953. Fjellfolk* [The Norwegian Tourism Association Yearbook 1953. Mountain People] (1953): 58.
- 15 This essay won the first prize in the essay competition that was organized by the *Norge-Amerika Foreningen* (Norway-America Association) and U.S. Information Service in connection with the 100th anniversary of Thoreau's death. Ole Kristian Grimnes, *Thoreau og vår egen tid* [Thoreau and our own time] (Oslo: De Forente Staters Informasjonstjeneste & Den Amerikanske ambassade, 1962).
- 16 This customary law was first recorded as an official law for a larger area by king Magnus Haakonsson Lagabøte in his land law from 1274 and in his building law from 1276. In modern Norway, *allemannsretten* was recorded in a somewhat limited, but at the same time more sharply defined way, through the Open Air Act from 1957 (*Lov om friluftslivet §2 Ferdsel i utmark*). Marianne Reusch, "Allemannsretten. Friluftslivets rettsgrunnlag" [The common law. The legal basis of outdoor activities] (PhD diss., Oslo University, 2011); republished as Marianne Reusch, *Allemannsretten. Friluftslivets rettsgrunnlag* (Oslo: Flux forlag, 2011), 40–41.

*Investigations*.<sup>11</sup> Between 1937 and 1944, the Norwegian philosopher and skilled technical climber Arne Næss—who would later become known as one of the fathers of deep ecology and who next to Henry David Thoreau and Aldo Leopold would be celebrated as one of the key thinkers in the history of environmental ethics—built not one but two philosopher huts, both located in the mountain area of Hallingskarvet. The cabin called Tvergastein was built under a tall cliff and was larger and more comfortable than the other—a tiny, box-like shed that Næss called Skarveredet (the cormorant's nest) and that was dubbed "the coffin" by locals. Skarveredet sits almost at the top of the cliff above Tvergastein, and was dangerous to build. It was placed on a narrow mountain shelf and Boss Walther, one of the climber-friends of Næss, died in the process of building it. Both cabins were located above the valley and the tourist resort of Ustaoset, where one could find a large hotel and hundreds of weekend cottages.<sup>12</sup>

Spending free time in nature was typically enjoyed mostly by the better-off families. Yet, after the Second World War, Arbeiderpartiet (The Norwegian Labor Party) governments actively promoted outdoor life for all. Party leaders like Martin Tranmæl and Einar Gerhardsen were themselves enthusiastic hikers and the cabin was their second home and political meeting place.<sup>13</sup> In 1953, in an article titled "Plass for oss alle!" (Room for all of us!) which was published in the yearbook of *Den Norske Turistforening* (The Norwegian Trekking Association), Tranmæl wrote:

Norway is spacious. There is space and elbow room for all of us. In work and play. In the mountains and the countryside. For a long time, only the few went to the mountains for holidays, to seek change and relaxation and to experience what the mountains can offer. But having obtained three weeks of statutory holidays and a higher standard of living, the many are now seeking the outdoors.<sup>14</sup>

Arbeiderpartiet indeed contributed to making the outdoors accessible for workers. After the Second World War, many people enjoyed increasing amounts of state-regulated free time, mobility, and wealth. The dream of owning one's own primitive hut in the midst of Norwegian nature not only came within reach for many Norwegians, but was sometimes also considered a part of citizens' welfare as it provided necessary respite from the negative sides of industrialization and urbanization. The 1952 Norwegian translation of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden: Or, Life in the Woods* was followed in 1962 by an award-winning essay by Ole Christian Grimnes about the relevance of Thoreau's *Walden* for the building of cabins in Norway, which portrayed them as a necessary counterweight to the standardizing and uniform postwar world.<sup>15</sup>

## THE HARMONIOUS VERSUS THE SCREAMING CABIN

Beyond common sense, temporary restrictions, and *allemannsretten* (the ancient right to the commons, allowing all to safely traverse the Norwegian landscape, including across private property),<sup>16</sup> huts, cabins, and second homes were uninhibited by excessive laws and



- 17 For example: N. Peder Nielsen, *Bygging av hytter og småhus: en veiledning for bygningshåndverkere og selvbyggere* [Building cabins and detached houses: a guide for builders and self-builders] (Trondheim: F. Bruns Bokhandels Forlag, 1941–62); Tønseth Roar, *Hytter og strandstuer* [Cottages and beach shacks] (Trondheim: F. Bruns bokhandels forlag, 1955); *Vi bygger en hytte. De beste utkast fra Arbeider-avisen arkitektkonkurranse* [We are building a cabin. The best drafts from the Workers' Newspaper's architectural competition] (Trondheim: F. Bruns bokhandels forlag, 1940–47).
- 18 Knut Knutsen, "Et fritidshus" [A holiday house], *Byggekunst* 8 (1952): 127.
- 19 Maria Csaszi Rygh, "Tekst, natur og arkitektur. Knut Knutsens villa Natvig og sommerhus i Portør" [Text, nature, and architecture: Knut Knutsen's villa Natvig and summer house in Portør], in *Brytninger. Norsk arkitektur 1945–65* [Refractions. Norwegian architecture 1945–65], ed. Espen Johnsen (Oslo: Nasjonal museet for kunst, arkitektur og design, 2010), 186–97.
- 20 Original quote in Norwegian: "bygd av gamle materialer, for det meste av brukte forskallingsbord." Helge Abrahamsen and Hans Grinde, "Fritidshus i Portør" [Holiday house in Portør], in *Bonytt's hyttebok* [Bonytt's book of cabins] (Oslo: Bonytt's forlag, 1956): 34.
- 21 Helge Abrahamsen, "Samspillet med naturen" [The interaction with nature], in *På hytte – vårt andre hjem* [At the cabin—our second home], ed. Helge Abrahamsen et al. (Boksenteret, 1996), 57.
- 22 Elisabeth Tosttrup, "Modifikasjoner i landskap" [Modifications in landscape], in *Brytninger. Norsk arkitektur 1945–65*, 198–205. Even though it forms a part of their joint portfolio, the cabin in Ringkollen was designed only by Wenche Selmer, who at the time was known as Wenche Collett.
- 23 P. A. M. Mellbye, "'Kåk' i Fjellet" ["Shack" in the mountains], *Bonytt* 11–12 (1956): 242–43 (243).
- 24 V. Reinhardt, "To sjøbuer" [Two sea cabins], in *Byggekunst* 8 (1952): 144–45.
- 25 Robert C. Esdaile, "Jansholet. Hytte ved Jøssingfjord" [Jansholet: Cabin by Jøssingfjord], *Byggekunst* 1 (1976): cover, 6, 7; Kjetil Fallan, *Ecological by Design: A History from Scandinavia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2022), 61–78.
- 26 Original quote in Norwegian: "resultatene gjør sitt til å ødelegge landet, ødelegge landskapets dimensjoner og flate ut variasjoner i heiene. Sommerhusene ligger der og skriker uten miljøsammenheng." Knutsen, "Et fritidshus": 126.
- 27 Original quote in Norwegian: "På den måten kan det legges større vekt på harmoni når det gjelder denne bebyggelse. Det er derfor rimelig at all bygging av slike hus blir stanset straks, inntil vi får bestemmelser som ikke gjør det mulig å ødelegge landskapet og å få noen til å passe på at bestemmelsene blir gjennomført." Knutsen, "Et fritidshus": 129.

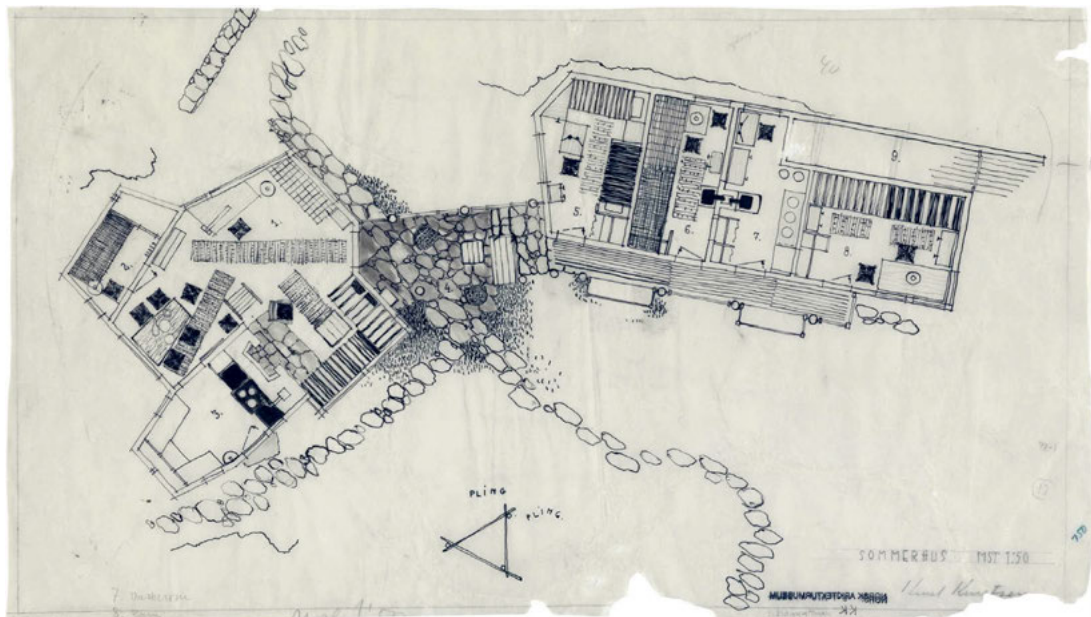
became thus beacons of relative freedom in Norway. With practical tips from various do-it-yourself handbooks,<sup>17</sup> Norwegian cabins were often self-built as remotely and as primitively as possible, often without fences or electricity, and with self-engineered running water and an outside toilet. During the postwar years, many Norwegian architects exercised their freedom to design and build their own dream cabin—many of the most iconic and oft-referenced cabins in Norwegian architectural history stem from the period 1945–65. Knut Knutsen's design for his own cabin in Portør from 1949 was driven by "the search for freedom" from "masks," "straitjackets," "unnaturalness," and "uniformity," as well as a desire to respect nature and achieve harmony between architecture and nature without camouflage.<sup>18</sup> The building transgressed both the modernist and the traditional canons and blended harmoniously with the terrain and surrounding vegetation.<sup>19</sup> Postwar scarcity led to a temporary prohibition on building holiday homes from new materials and Knutsen's cabin in Portør was as a result "built from old materials, mostly from used formwork boards."<sup>20</sup> It became a major reference project for generations of Norwegian architects and arguably "Norway's most published cabin."<sup>21</sup> Wenche and Jens Selmer's holiday cottages—for example, in Ringkollen from 1953 and their own cabin on Beltesholmen from 1957—were also formed to fit to the landscapes they inhabited. Even though comfortably modern, with wall insulation, insulating glass, and floor heating, the Selmers' holiday homes were most praised for their restraint, naturalness, and lack of pretention.<sup>22</sup> Next to these quite well-known cottages, many other less-written-about but nonetheless interesting architectural experiments were drawn, and sometimes built, in those years—for example, the plan for a half buried in the ground and snow-adapted "contemporary cabin where the original primitive concepts have been taken care of"<sup>23</sup> by P. A. M. Mellbye (Peter Andreas Munch Mellbye), the elementary cabins by Vilhelm Reinhardt,<sup>24</sup> or the primitive hut in the form of a hovering roof over the ruins of a Second-World-War Atlantic Wall casemate designed by Robert Clarke Esdaile, who was also an early advocate of connecting architecture and urbanism with ecology.<sup>25</sup> What these architect-designed cabins had in common was that they all respectfully and fittingly added to the landscapes they inhabited.

Many other self-built cabins from the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s displayed the rather personal tastes of their owners without fitting in within the landscape. Knut Knutsen commented on this development, noting that "the results do their part to destroy the land, destroy the dimensions of the landscape and flatten variations in the moors. The summer houses lie there and scream without integration with their environment."<sup>26</sup> Knutsen advocated an immediate temporary cabin construction prohibition followed by the introduction of adequate laws and regulations specifying how a weekend cottage should relate to its natural environment:

That way, greater emphasis can be placed on harmony when it comes to this building type. It is therefore reasonable that all construction of such houses be stopped immediately, until we get regulations that do not make it possible to destroy the landscape and to get someone to ensure that the regulations are implemented.<sup>27</sup>



The cabin in Portør by Knut Knutsen, built in 1949.

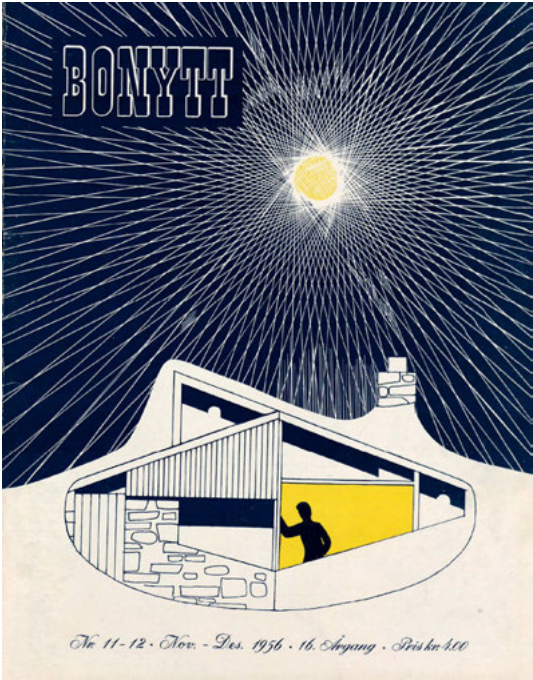


Knut Knutsen, Portør cabin, furnishing plan, probably 1949.





Jens Andreas Selmer and Wenche Selmer, own cabin on Beltesholmen, built in 1957.



The drawing for the snow-adapted stony cabin by P. A. M. Mellbye, published on the cover of *Bonytt* no. 11-12 (1956).



- 28 Original quotes in Norwegian: “den spises nå opp av bebyggelse år for år” and “mellom den enkeltes høyst legitime trang til å ha tomt og hus ved sjøen og det økende almene behov for fri natur til å ferdes i.” Eyvind Alnæs, “Friarealer ved sjøen” [Open spaces by the sea], *Byggekunst* 3 (1949): 73–83.
- 29 The exact number of cabins in Norway had not been surveyed until the 1970s when Kommunal- og arbeidsdepartementet [The Department of Municipalities and Employment] estimated that 150,000–160,000 holiday cabins existed in Norway in 1968, with 10,000 new cabins being added every year. See Yngvar Johnsen, ed., *Planlegging. Hvordan planlegger vi arealbruk og utbygging* [Planning: How do we plan land use and development?] (Oslo: Kommunal- og arbeidsdepartementet, 1968), 164, quoted as “mid-1960s” in Terje Skjeggedal, Kjell Overvåg, Tor Arnesen, and Birgitta Ericsson, “Hytteliv i endring” [Cabin life in transformation], *Plan* (January 25, 2010): 42–43.
- 30 Many people started to see their cottage as a form of investment and a chance to earn money by renting it to Swedish, Danish, German, and Dutch tourists. Klo, “Veldig vekst i hytteleien. Planer viktigere enn troen på mirakler” [High growth in cabin rentals. Plans are more important than believing in miracles], *Nationen*, November 15, 1965.

While Knutsen wanted to develop regulations that would help to fit buildings better into the landscape, Eyvind Alnæs, an architect and the secretary of Oslofjordens friluftsråd (the Oslo fjord outdoor council), did not want any buildings at all—ugly or beautiful—on Norwegian coasts. Already in 1949, Alnæs observed how the Norwegian coast was “being eaten up by buildings year after year” and warned that a conflict would soon arise “between the individual’s highly legitimate urge to have land and a house by the sea and the growing general need for free nature to roam in.”<sup>28</sup> Alnæs advocated sharper national regulations including a temporary building prohibition specifically for the coastal zones.

## THE TURN TO COLLECTIVE WELFARE IN CABIN POLITICS

Even though Alnæs and Knutsen pleaded for cabin regulations as early as 1949 and 1952, the Norwegian government hesitated to intervene for another decade until the liberal approach led to an alarming situation: a rapidly increasing number of cabins with differing qualities were being built on the best spots at the seaside, by fjords and lakes, in forests, and near mountain peaks. Whilst the exact number of cabins in Norway was not known in 1965 (in contrast to Sweden and Denmark, where various surveys were performed), it was estimated that between 150,000 and 160,000 holiday homes existed in Norway around the mid-1960s, with 10,000 new homes being added each year. Cabin construction was thus accelerating—by comparison, during the 1950s, “only” 5,000 new holiday homes per year were added to the landscape. If things were to continue at this speed, it was predicted that there would be half a million cabins in Norway by the year 1990, statistically already one cabin per ten residents.<sup>29</sup> This intensification of the wild growth in leisure cottages, as well as their increasing commercialization,<sup>30</sup> coincided with a growing interest in nature conservation. Taking as an example American nature reserves, Norway also introduced nature protection laws in 1954 and from that year on started preparations for defining national parks. Norway’s first national park, Rondane, was formally established in December 1962.

In March 1962, the Minister of Local Governments, Andreas Cap-pelen (from Arbeiderpartiet) asked the geographer, economist, and educator Axel Sømme—who became a member of the same party in 1926–27 after he left the communist organization *Mot Dag*—to compose a *fjellplanteam* (mountain planning team) that could propose a draft for regulatory plans for holiday homes in important leisure and holiday destinations bordering some of the nature areas, many of which were soon to become national parks. Firstly, around Rondane, the areas of Venabygd fjellet, Langbakken, Høvringen, Ljosmyra, and Mysusæter were chosen. Secondly, in the Ål municipality between the nature areas of Valdres and Hallingskarvet, places such as Ål, Gol, Vats, Bergsjø, Kamben, and Golsfjellet were examined. Finally, between Røros and Brekken, various areas around the waterways of Aursunden, Brekkefjorden, and Botnen were studied. The idea was to work in such a way as to distill from these specific development plans general planning principles that could be applied all over Norway.

Axel Sømme put together a mountain planning team that brought together complementary expertise, through agriculturist

- 31 Later, in 1972, Olav Gjærevoll would become Norway's first Minister of Environment.
- 32 Axel Sømme, Erik Langdalen, Ola Einevoll, Asbjørn Aase, Arne Thormodsæter, Sverre Øvstedal, Olav R. Skage, and Helge A. Sundt, *Fjellbygd og feriefjell* [Mountain village and vacation mountain] (Oslo: J. W. Cappelens Forlag, 1965).
- 33 Original quote in Norwegian: "... bilen, som luksusartikkel og statussymbol, krever beskyttelse mot vær og vind og nærgående interesse fra mennesker og dyr ... I fjellplanteamets modellområder er det eksempler på frittliggende garasjebygg som skjønner landskapet med enn noen hytte" in Erik Langdalen, "Natur og menneskeverk i fjellet" [Nature and the man-made in the mountains], in *Fjellbygd og feriefjell* [Mountain village and vacation mountain], ed. Axel Sømme et al. (Oslo: J. W. Cappelens Forlag, 1965), 28.
- 34 Erik Langdalen, "Norge utenfor bygrensene" [Norway outside of the city limits], in *Byen og samfunnet* [The city and the society] (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 1966), 102–21 (114–16). The same text was also published under the same title in *Byggkunst* 2 (1966): 37–44.
- 35 Original quote in Norwegian: "det verste er likevel alle husene som byfolkene sprer tilfeldig utover fjellet, eller som de samler i hyttebyer med altfor mange stygge hus, malt i grelle farger..." Axel Sømme, "Regulering i fjellet" [Regulation in the mountains], *Norsk Tidsskrift for jordskifte og landmåling* [Norwegian journal of land change and land surveying] 26 (1963): 185.

Ola Einevoll; architect and consultant in urban and regional planning Erik Langdalen; geographers Arne Thormodsæter and Asbjørn Aase; civil engineer, surveyor, and photogrammetrician Reidar Helming; landscape architect Olav R. Skage; the geographer with tourism industry training Helge A. Sundt; and Sverre Øvstedal, assistant professor at the Department of land transfer and property development.

At first, the idea was to shed light on the extent to which it would be possible to establish good regulatory plans for the mountain areas within the legislative and administrative practices already in place in Norway. Studies started in the fall of 1963 with the help of smaller local committees. In the summer of 1964, the whole mountain planning team surveyed study locations between Ål and Brekken. From September 1964, the team's commission was renewed by the Minister of Social Affairs, Olav Gjærevoll, who became its leader. In parallel, Gjærevoll also led a parliamentary mountain planning committee, which Sømme was also part of, that focused on how to turn the recommendations from the mountain planning team into attachments to or parts of the new building law.<sup>31</sup>

The outcome of the studies was a report that was more or less ready around June 1965 and publicly launched on November 8, 1965 in the presence of journalists from Norwegian television and a plethora of newspapers.<sup>32</sup> The 200-page-long report *Fjellbygd og feriefjell* (Mountain village and vacation mountain) included texts by all members of the mountain planning team and contained a general analysis of current trends, an analysis of the existing situation in each area, and possible scenarios for the planning of future cabins in the specific study areas through regional plans, general plans, disposition plans, and detail plans. From the scenarios that were developed for specific locations, the team extracted general principles according to which one could also plan for holiday homes in other places in Norway.

## MOUNTAIN PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The team noticed that in general the typology of the primitive hut in the mountains was transforming into a second home with almost the same level of comfort as the first home. Various technical infrastructures were laid privately, and many car owners made roads all the way up to the cabin. Sømme's team discovered the car garage as a surprising and terrifying mountain planning problem: "The car, as a luxury item and a status symbol, requires protection against the weather and the intrusive curiosity of humans and animals ... there are examples of detached garage buildings that mar the landscape more than any cabin."<sup>33</sup> The roads themselves were also considered a problem. Compared to, for example, the United States, in Norway there were too many roads of too low a standard. The team therefore recommended avoiding creating more roads, recommending improving existing ones instead.<sup>34</sup>

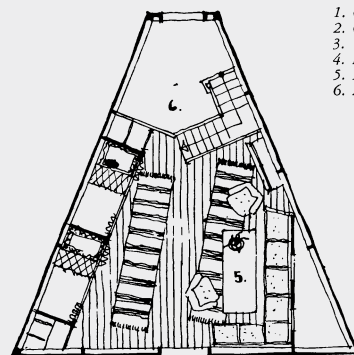
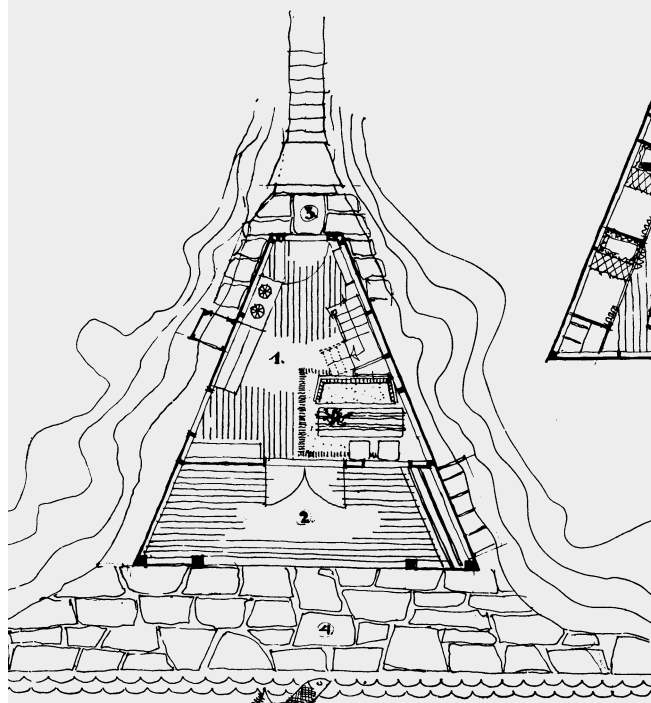
Most of all, the team criticized the disastrous scattering and visual expression of the holiday homes that colonized beautiful recreational areas: "the worst thing is all the houses that city people scatter randomly across the mountains or gather in cottage villages with far too many ugly houses, painted in garish colors."<sup>35</sup>



Sea shed in Gamle Hellesund by  
Vilhelm Reinhardt, 1952.

728.72(481)

Arkitekt m.n.a.l. V. REINHARDT: SJØBU VED GAMLE HELLESUND



1. Oppholdsrom med kjøkken.
2. Overdekket sitteplass.
3. Vaskeplass.
4. Brygge.
5. Komb. stue og soverom.
6. Åpent rom.

Planer, 1 : 100.

Stedet kaldes Perlevigen. Det udmerker sig ved landskapeleg gratie. Sjøen er kry- stallgrønn og havbunnen hvit sand med østers-avleiringer. Havnen åpner med en storslagen utsikt mot syd og mot horison- ten. Sjø-bua er skjøvet inn i en fjellkløft for å virke minst mulig forstyrrende i land- skapet. Stedets hummer, østers, sjøørret og flyndre serveres gjerne på bryggen — og rettene får en særlig velsmak på måne- skinnsaftener.

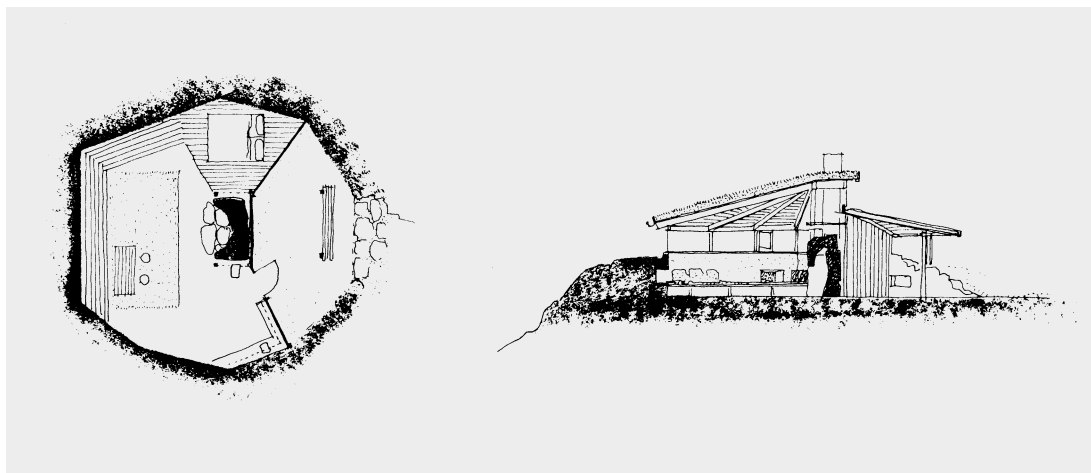
V. R.

Plan of the ground floor and the first floor of  
Reinhardt's sea shed at Gamle Hellesund,  
1952.





A hovering roof, a panoramic window, and a fireplace over the ruins of an Atlantic Wall casemate at Jøssingfjord. Designed by Robert C. Esdaille and built in 1964–65.



Plan and section of Robert C. Esdaille's cabin at Jøssingfjord that was built in 1964–65.

- 36 Langdalen, "Natur og menneskeverk i fjellet," 30.
- 37 Langdalen, "Natur og menneskeverk i fjellet," 34–35.
- 38 The original Beach Law from 1937 gave the municipalities the right to expropriate use rights or owner rights based on general considerations like necessity for public swimming and other outdoor activities.
- 39 Original quote in Norwegian: "I særlig utsatt terreng er det ofte noen få meters forskyvning av huset som er skillet mellom naturtilpassing og landskapsbrudd. Både nær- og fjernvirkninger må vurderes og en må ta hensyn til de skiftende årstider." Langdalen, "Natur og menneskeverk i fjellet," 27.
- 40 Langdalen, "Natur og menneskeverk i fjellet," 27.
- 41 Langdalen, "Natur og menneskeverk i fjellet," 42–43.
- 42 For an introduction to the differences in cabin habits between Norway, Sweden, and Denmark see Einar Odden, "Om Svenskene" [About the Swedes], in *Den norske hytta – en biografi* [The Norwegian cabin—a biography] (Kolofon Forlag, 2022), 108–27.
- 43 Langdalen, "Natur og menneskeverk i fjellet," 35–38.

As a positive counterexample the team pointed to the positioning, the composition, the use of materials, and the color setting of traditional Norwegian wooden architecture which could be found in old *gårdsanlegg* (farms) and *setergrender* (clusters of mountain pasture farms). The team imagined that the restrained aesthetics of these traditional buildings could inspire the design of new individual cabins or groups of cottages. The landscape positioning, the composition and the color schemes of the traditional (groups of) buildings should be carefully studied and turned into principles for the new cabins in the form of *typetegninger* (type drawings) that could possibly be developed as cabin systems, or used as basis for more traditional construction of cabins and do-it-yourself cottages. This could allow for adaptation to individual tastes yet guarantee a calm and coherent overall image.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, the team also proposed to reuse old farms in depopulating rural areas for agrotourism.<sup>37</sup>

When it comes to the problem of the positioning of the houses, cabin planning strategies were developed for roughly three different types of landscapes: coastal zones, mountain areas above the tree line—the altitude at which trees are no longer capable of growing—and unproductive forest areas. The coastal landscapes were the ones to be most strictly protected from new holiday cabins. The updated Strandloven (Beach law),<sup>38</sup> a temporary law that was part of the new Building Law from June 1965 onwards, determined that holiday homes should be built at least 100 meters away from fjords, lakes, rivers, and other waters. The mountain areas above the tree line were also considered to be very vulnerable as sites for new cabins. Without trees, the mountainous terrain above the tree line lies bare and anything that is located there tends to punctuate the landscape in a striking manner: "In particularly exposed terrain, it is often a few meters of displacement of the house which is the difference between adaptation to nature and disruption of the landscape. Both immediate and distant effects must be assessed, and one must take into account the changing seasons."<sup>39</sup>

The team advocated that cabin planning in general should be ideally designated foremost to the unproductive forest areas between the tree line and the lower timber line, below which trees are of good enough quality for timber production. In unproductive forests, the cabins—individually or in a group—could enjoy the greatest freedom when it comes to the spread or clustering of cabins as well as the individual design of each cabin.<sup>40</sup>

Hidden from sight in the unproductive forest areas, the cabin clusters could be designed to be grouped in different ways, preferably as concentrations of buildings very close to each other or in multiple groups, or—even though less ideally—scattered all over the forested terrain.<sup>41</sup> The densification through the grouping of multiple cabins, was the team's strongest recommendation in any case. Holiday home clusters had been successful in Sweden for some time and the committee hoped that this typology eventually would also be embraced by the Norwegians.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, these concentrations of cabins could easily fulfill growing demand for comfort with better facilities and infrastructures.<sup>43</sup>

The previous freedom in choosing one's own spot and design for one's own cabin would not be possible anymore, unless one would give up comforts of the modern life. Freestanding and freely

- 44 Original quote in Norwegian: "Den som vil bygge sitt fritidshus i ensomhet, må, om vi i det hele tatt skal slippe ham til, finne seg i å bruke særlig diskrete virkemidler og gi avkall på veg, kraft, telefon o.l. service." Erik Langdalen, "Norge utenfor bygrensene," 111.
- 45 "Fjellet kan utnyttas til beste for oss alle. Sommeteamets rapport klar etter 3 års arbeid" [The mountains can be used for the benefit of us all: The team's report ready after 3 years of work], *Aftenposten: Aften*, November 8, 1965, 1, 7; Sverre Østhagen, "Imponerende materiale framlagt av professor Sømmes fjellplan-team" [Impressive material presented by professor Sømme's mountain plan team], *Hamar Arbeiderblad*, November 9, 1965, 6.
- 46 Original quote in Norwegian: "Nordmenn har ennå en noe spesielt holding til friluftsliv og hyttebruk, en mentalitet som adskiller seg fra øvrige europeiske nasjoner," and "den romantiske forestilling om flukten fra sivilisasjonen til ensomheten." Erik Anker, "Fritidsliv og arealbruk" [Leisure and land use], *Byggekunst* 4 (1967): 86–94 (90).
- 47 Axel Sømme, "Fjellbygd og feriefjell" [Mountain village and vacation mountain], in Sømme et al., *Fjellbygd og Feriefjell*, 9.
- 48 The "tragedy of the commons" is also the term used by both Reusch and Jørgensen in relation to Norwegian cabin politics. The term was first coined by Garret Hardin in his article from 1968 with the same name: Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162, no. 3859 (1968): 1243–48. Quoted in: Finn Arne Jørgensen, "Den første hyttekrisa. Samfunnsplanlegging, naturbilder og allmenningens tragedie" [The first cottage crisis. Community planning, natural images and the tragedy of the commons], in *Norske hytter i endring. Om bærekraft og behag* [Norwegian cabins in transformation. On sustainability and pleasure], ed. Helen Jøsok Gansmo, Thomas Berker, and Finn Arne Jørgensen (Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forlag, 2011): 44; Reusch, *Allemannsretten. Friluftslivets rettsgrunnlag*, 15.
- 49 Original quote in Norwegian: "Å bygge seg hus er en utpreget egoistisk handling, enten det nå dreier seg om helårsbolig eller fritidshus.... søker å beskytte sine egne interesser og holde andre folk på avstand." Langdalen, "Natur og menneskeverk i fjellet," 27.
- 50 Original quote in Norwegian: "Hyttebyggeren har, som rimelig kan være, tenkt på sine egne interesser, og mangelen på plan, vedtekter og kontroll har gitt ham frihet til å gjøre det, på nabosens og allmenhetens bekostning." Langdalen, "Natur og menneskeverk i fjellet," 29.
- 51 See Asbjørn Aase, "Ål" [Ål municipality], in Sømme et al., *Fjellbygd og Feriefjell*, 119–48.

designed cabins on a self-chosen spot in nature should only be allowed on the condition that they compose themselves discretely into the landscape they inhabit and stay primitive: "Anyone who wants to build their holiday home in solitude must, if we are to let him do so at all, come to terms with using particularly discreet means and renouncing road, power, telephone and similar services."<sup>44</sup>

In short, with the help of these planning principles, large areas could be prevented from being colonized by the cabins and thus kept pristine for the mountain tourist, while the cabins and roads would be sited where they could do least harm to the eye.

## RE-EDUCATING THE NORWEGIAN CITIZEN: "ENOUGH SPACE, BUT PLANNING IS NEEDED!"

The *Fjellbygd og feriefjell* report was aptly dubbed a "textbook on the development of Norwegian mountains" by the newspapers *Aftenposten* and *Hamar Arbeiderblad*.<sup>45</sup> The report was indeed also a type of educational textbook as the mountain planning team felt that for the new plans to succeed it was necessary to first re-educate the Norwegian citizen.

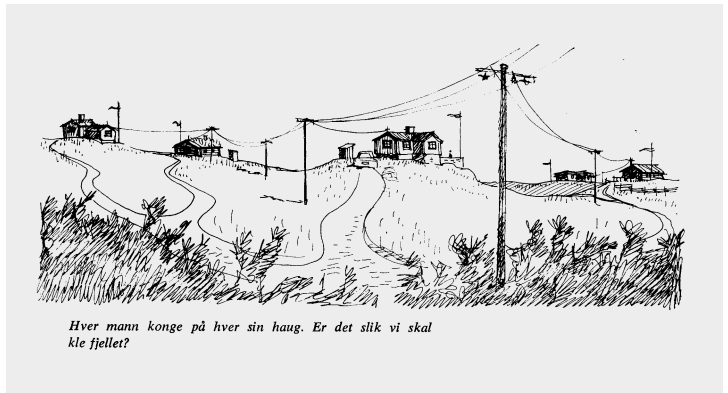
The mountain planning team as well as other planners and politicians understood that the changes they envisioned when it comes to cabins were at odds with the established cultural traditions as well as with the previous governmental efforts to popularize cabin ownership among the entire population. "Norwegians still have a somewhat special attitude toward outdoor life and cabin use, a mentality that differs from other European nations," wrote Erik Anker, further specifying this mentality in terms of "the romantic notion of the escape from civilization to solitude."<sup>46</sup> In the cabin, "we want, like the farmer, to be king in our own realm," wrote Axel Sømme, going on to note that "we do not like that the society will regulate the mountains."<sup>47</sup>

Even though the mountain planning team was thus aware that their proposals were extremely challenging toward the long-standing Norwegian cabin traditions and dreams, they had to replace the ideal of the private remote cabin with that of collective welfare. They set up an entire campaign during which they employed a range of methods to stimulate a mentality change and stem people positively toward the new plans.

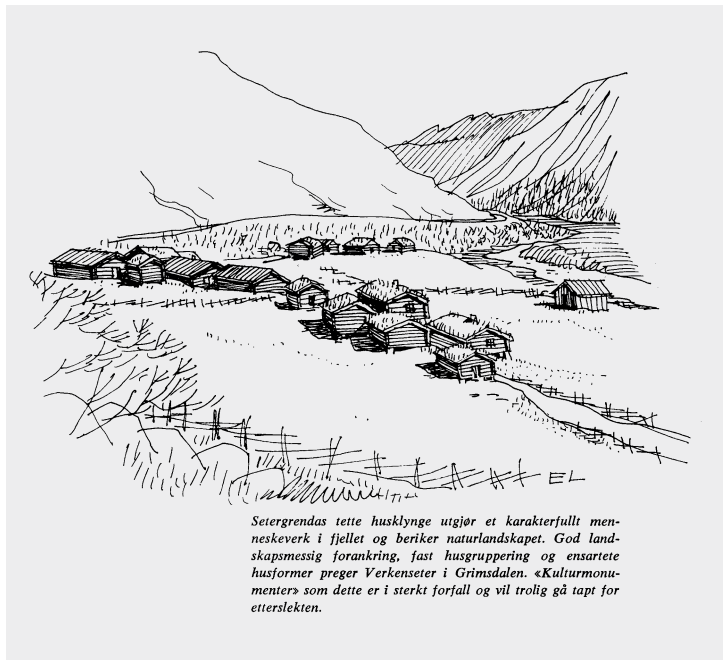
First of all, the mountain planning team felt it necessary to appeal to the Norwegian citizen's social responsibility and morality in a way which preceded Garret Hardin's "tragedy of the commons".<sup>48</sup> "Building a house is a distinctly selfish act, whether it is a year-round home or a holiday home," wrote Erik Langdalen, adding that when it comes to the holiday home especially, one is "seeking to protect one's own interests and keep other people at a distance."<sup>49</sup> These individual interests are often being executed at the cost of common interests: "The cabin builder has, as can reasonably be expected, thought of his own interests, and the lack of a plan, bylaws and control has given him the freedom to do so, at the expense of his neighbors and the public."<sup>50</sup> Asbjørn Aase warned that if the common good in the form of the beautiful natural landscape will be violated by individual interests long enough and at a large scale, the whole *raison d'être* of recreation in Norway will be destroyed for everyone.<sup>51</sup>



Drawing by architect and regional planner Erik Langdalen ca. 1965. The caption reads: "Each man [is] king on his own hill. Is this how we should dress the mountain?"



Drawing by Erik Langdalen ca. 1965 to support the idea of planning cabin clusters. The caption reads "Setergrenda's dense cluster of houses constitutes a characterful human work in the mountains and enriches the natural landscape. Good landscape anchoring, fixed grouping of houses and uniform house shapes characterize Verkensetter in Grimsdalen. 'Cultural monuments,' such as these, are in severe disrepair and will probably be lost to posterity."



- 52 Original quote in Norwegian: "Om en ikke kan regne med at sterk bebyggelses-konsentrasjon i dag er realistisk som planleggingsprinsipp ved alminnelig fritidsbebyggelse i fjellet, synes det likevel å være en aktuell løsning ved oppføring av utleiehytter." Langdalen, "Natur og menneskeverk i fjellet," 30.
- 53 Original quote in Norwegian: "vi må ta sikte på en viss nærsone omkring det enkelte fritidshus og en utnyttelse av terrengformer og vegetasjon til skjerming mot nabo." Erik Langdalen, "Norge utenfor bygrensene," 111.
- 54 See Langdalen, "Natur og menneskeverk i fjellet," 40.
- 55 Erik Anker, *Hytteområder. En veiledning i planlegging* [Cabin areas: A guide to planning] (Oslo: Kommunal- og arbeidsdepartementet og utvalg for byplan-forskning, 1967 (1966)); Steinar Skåden, *Hvordan bygge vakker hytte? Hus og landskap* [How to build a beautiful cabin? House and landscape] (Grunna Forlag, 1966); Erik Langdalen and Karl Erikstad, *Plan i fjellet. Hytta på fjellet* [Plan in the mountains, cabin in the mountains] (Oslo: A/S Byggstjeneste, 1966); Erik Langdalen, "Plan i fjellet" [Plan in the mountains], in *Den norske turistforenings årbok* (1966): 106–15; Karl Erikstad, "Hytta på fjellet" [Cabin in the mountains], *Den norske turistforenings årbok* (1966): 116–30. A short version of Erik Langdalen's article was published again years later in the magazine *Hytteliv*: Erik Langdalen, "Plan i fjellet 15 år etter" [Plan in the mountains 15 years later], *Hytteliv* 3 (1980): 78–81.
- 56 The exhibition premiered during Agricultural Week at Sjølyst in Oslo and was thereafter shown in places such as Lillehammer, Otta, Dokka, and Fagernes. Statens informasjonstjeneste, "Presse-melding Fjellbygd og feriefjell" [Press release Mountain village and vacation mountain] April 15, 1966. Da-0329/ Kommunal- og arbeidsdepartementet, Distriktsplanavdelingen/ Riksarkivet, Oslo.
- 57 Poster no. 18 features "Skal de få glede av fjellet? – planlegging må til!" [Shall they [children] be able to enjoy the mountains? Planning is needed] in Da-0329.
- 58 Original quote in Norwegian: "Plass nok, men plan må til!" Østhagen, "Imponerende materiale framlagt av professor Sømmes fjellplan-team," 6.

Secondly, the team tried to cater to the Norwegian sensibilities and soften the impact of the proposed changes accordingly. For example, members of the mountain planning team were aware of the Norwegian dream of a remote cabin and that the grouping of cabins was unpopular and therefore probably an unrealistic idea for the moment. The team hoped to get the cabin groups at least started by selling the concept as something perhaps for (international) tourists: "If one cannot count on a strong concentration of built-up areas being realistic as a planning principle for general recreational buildings in the mountains today, it still seems to be a relevant solution for the construction of rental cabins."<sup>52</sup> Understanding the need for isolation from others when in a cabin, the team proposed that planners and designers of cabin clusters "must aim for a certain near zone around the individual holiday home and a utilization of terrain and vegetation to shield against neighbors."<sup>53</sup> Still, the team hoped that eventually the whole idea of an isolated cabin could become a relic from the past—not appropriate of the new Norwegian generation.<sup>54</sup>

Thirdly, in collaboration with the Norwegian government, the team launched an extensive public information campaign that included various publications and an exhibition. In 1966, the report was followed by a series of short, richly illustrated handbooks for the wider public: *Hytteområder. En veiledning i planlegging* (Cabin areas. A guide to planning) by Erik Anker, *Hvordan bygge vakker hytte? Hus og landskap* (How to build a beautiful cabin? House and landscape) by Steinar Skåden, and *Plan i fjellet. Hytta på fjellet* (Plan in the mountains. Cabin in the mountains) by Erik Langdalen and Karl Erikstad.<sup>55</sup> The latter was part of an educational traveling exhibition, *Fjellbygd og feriefjell* (Mountain village and vacation mountain), that distilled the report's main points.<sup>56</sup>

The exhibition contained a total of 39 posters, which were to be set up solo, in pairs, and as tripartitions, in two zigzagged rows. One row of posters explained why cabin planning was needed, the other row explained how the planning could be executed in practice, taking the study areas as examples. In the first poster row, after highlighting the attractiveness of Norway's mountains, fjords, and northern lights for mountain tourists in Europe, the team addressed the main point: namely, the ugly cabins disfiguring the mountain slopes versus the beautiful mountain landscape without buildings. The second row of posters explained the types of planning instruments that existed, how planning processes worked, and how land-owners could work together through co-ownership. The specific plans for the study areas were shown at the end. From these plans, the more general mountain planning principles were derived.

The last poster of the first row announced that if the next generation—depicted as children playing—shall "enjoy the mountains," then "planning is needed!"<sup>57</sup> The last phrase was creatively mixed together with the previous Tranmæl narrative of "enough space in the mountains" by Sverre Østhagen to create the slogan "Enough space, but planning is needed!"<sup>58</sup> While this insinuated a certain continuity with the previous cabin politics, this was certainly not the case, as the proposed planning principles meant a drastic confinement of the relative freedom that came before them.

Even though the aforementioned updated Beach Law was already adopted as temporary law from June 18, 1965, as part of

- 59 Original quote in Norwegian: "Teamet sier selv at man ikke har rekket å trenge til bunns i problemene, og det vil etter hvert komme mer materiale. ... Det er også viktig at utredningene blir gjenstand for offentlig debatt." "Store utviklingsmuligheter i Rondane-regionen" [Great development opportunities in the Rondane region], *Dagningen*, November 9, 1965, 4.
- 60 "Flertall blant grunneierne for fjellplan i Sirdalen" [Majority of landowners for mountain plan in Sirdalen], *Rogalands avis*, October 14, 1965, 1; "Helårsvei i Hunnedalen" [All-year road in Hunnedalen], *Rogalands avis*, October 14, 1965, 4.
- 61 P. A. M. Mellbye, "Monterbar hytte" [Modular cabin], *Byggekunst* 8 (1952): 142–43.
- 62 Harriet Clayhills, "Hytter med system" [Cabins with system], *Bonytt* 9 (1965): 240–43; Fallan, *Ecological by Design*, 92–96.
- 63 Lars Nilssen, *Ålhytta gjennom 50 år* [50 years of the Ålhytta] (Oslo: Kurér forlag, 2016), 11.

Norway's renewed Building Law, it (together with the other ideas of the mountain planning team) was intended to be first subjected to the scrutiny of the general public, landowners, municipal and provincial governments, professional planners, tourists, and (future) cabin owners before its adoption: "The team themselves say that they have not had time to get to the bottom of the problems, and that more material will eventually come. ... It is also important that the investigations become the subject of public debate."<sup>59</sup>

## RESISTANCE DURING DISCUSSIONS AND PILOT PROJECTS

The awareness campaign started at the end of 1965 and heated up during 1966 in the discussions that were organized as part of the touring exhibition and public presentations given by members of the mountain planning team. Various pilot projects were launched in the studied municipalities and beyond in 1965 and 1966, many of which were not evaluated until after 1970.

The biggest concern during the discussions was the tension between the plan—to build cabins only in the unproductive forest and to prohibit cabin building in the coastal zones and open plains—and the interests of the landowners. Even before the launch of the report in November 1965, during the meeting between landowners and one of the local mountain planning teams in Sirdal, the landowners—although in general in favor of the common approach to mountain planning—expressed concerns. The most skeptical position was expressed by Knut Suleskard, who, whilst he did not mind that the environment would be developed into a more accessible tourist area, wanted to decide for himself about whether cabins would be built on his own land. Andreas Thu, on the other hand, was inclined to accept the new regulations but only on the condition that everything would be guaranteed to be equal and evenly fair for everybody: "landowners should use uniform contracts and get index-regulated agreements."<sup>60</sup> These two reservations, one against the limiting of the freedom of the owner, the other against possible inequalities, were typical of the feedback given on the plans.

When it came to the proposed clustering and aesthetic disciplining of the cabins, there was little enthusiasm, with the exception of planners and architects. The idea of prefabricated cabins that could be adapted to individual needs of the users was something that architects had been thinking about for some time by then. For example, as early as 1952, P. A. M. Mellbye proposed a modular cabin with a triangular A-section,<sup>61</sup> while Hans Østerhaug and Edvin Helseth connected to the office Arkitim developed from 1963 on the *Trysil-hytte/ Trybo-hytte* (Trysil-cabin/Trybo-cabin) that was launched in 1965 and also included an entire *Trybo* furniture system designed by Helseth.<sup>62</sup> A similar adaptable, prefabricated cabin assignment was launched as a pilot project under the new mountain plan recommendations in 1965. The Ål municipality, which had been one of the study areas for the mountain planning team, launched a competition for the *Ålhytta* (Ål cabin). The main question of the competition was: "What type of cabin is best suited for use in the mountain villages in Hallingdal?"<sup>63</sup> The architecture of the cabin was to be inspired by old *seter* buildings and to be flexible





View of the exhibition *Fjellbygd og feriefjell* (Mountain village and vacation mountain) in Messehallen (The exhibition hall), Sjølyst, Oslo, 1966.

- 64 Nilssen, *Ålhytta gjennom 50 år*, 13.  
 65 Nilssen, *Ålhytta gjennom 50 år*, 13–33.  
 66 Original quote in Norwegian: “Ålhytta virket heller ikke overbevisende på de norske hyttkjøperne, som skuffende nok, stort sett hele tiden har gitt blaffen i utseendet og funksjonell utforming...” Jon Haug, “Ålhytta 30 år” [30 years of the Ålhytta], *Byggekunst* 3 (1997): 58–59.  
 67 Original quote in Norwegian: “... [vi] nærmer oss synet av konsentrerte plasseringer av feriehus – så mange og med en slik stigende standard, at de nærmer seg villabyens karakter. Dermed begynner byens regler å gjelde nok en gang, og vi står overfor ikke bare å skulle bygge enkle byer, men doble byer: en for arbeide – en for fritid – for de samme menneskene!” P. A. M. Mellbye, “Tett eller spredt?” [Dense or scattered?], *Byggekunst* 2 (1966): 54.  
 68 Willy Sveen, “Tett eller spredt nok en gang” [Dense or scattered, again], *Byggekunst* 4 (1967): 96.  
 69 Original quote in Norwegian: “Det er foreløpig ikke mulig å publisere norske eksempler på en vellykket tett feriebebyggelse.” “Ferie?” [Vacation?], *Byggekunst* 4 (1967): 85.  
 70 Norges Offentlige Utredninger [Norwegian official reports], *Hytter og fritidshus* [Cabins and holiday homes] (Oslo, Bergen and Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1981), 29.

on many levels and easily customized in order to accommodate the individual's wishes; it had to be suitable for ready-made production, traditional construction, and for self-builders; it had to be adaptable to different plot conditions and to function well both as a detached house and in closer groupings; and it had to be able to be expanded.<sup>64</sup> More than 160 architects participated in this competition. The project that won the first prize, by Turid Haaland, did not make it beyond the prototype. The second prize winners, Kjell Lund and Nils Slaatto, saw their cabins—after some initial start-up problems—put into production. The design started to be developed for production, under the name *Ålhytta*, by Ål hyttebygg, in 1966 and has been commercially produced from 1969 until the present day.<sup>65</sup> The *Ålhytta* system became a private holiday cabin for many all over the world, while in Norway, it was widely used for all kinds of common purposes such as schools or community houses. It was also used as rental cabins, but it was not that popular as a private cabin. Jon Haug, who made drawings for most of the customized adaptations of the *Ålhytta* claimed: “The *Ålhytta* did not seem convincing to the Norwegian cabin buyers, who, disappointingly enough, almost always don't care about appearance and functional design.”<sup>66</sup>

A similar rejection awaited the idea of cabin groupings. Therein, the public was joined by some Norwegian architects, who expressed reservations about designing whole groups of cottages. P. A. M. Mellbye—who at the time of the release of the mountain planning team's report in 1965 was the vice president of the Norske arkitekters landsforbund (National Association of Norwegian Architects)—feared that the grouping of cabins would mean a destruction of the solitary cabin-in-nature typology and the de facto imposition of a villa neighborhood typology instead:

We approach the sight of concentrations of holiday homes—so many and with such a rising standard, that they approach the character of the residential town. Thus, the city's rules begin to apply once again, and we are faced not only with building single cities, but double cities: one for work, one for leisure, for the same people!<sup>67</sup>

Other architects like Willy Sveen found the idea of cabin groupings necessary and some even criticized the large minimum distances of 50 to 200 meters between cabins that were prescribed in some areas.<sup>68</sup> Yet, two years after the release of the mountain planning team's report, in 1967, *Byggekunst* still reported that “it is not yet possible to publish Norwegian examples of a successful dense vacation development.”<sup>69</sup> A similar picture was reported by the Norwegian Public Investigation committee in 1981.<sup>70</sup> Even though various pilot projects were launched, local municipalities struggled to get the idea to work, even later on. Either the municipalities could not find people interested in investing and in buying cabin clusters, or if they did, the final results received critique.

The mountain planning team's ideas for co-ownership, grouping, and the aesthetic disciplining of the cabins were thus met with resistance. Norwegians, who were used to building their cabins in relative freedom, found the new regulations excessive. As the editor-in-chief of the magazine *Hytteliv* (Cabin life), Tor Trosterud retrospectively summarized the general sentiment around the new

- 71 Original quote in Norwegian: "...åpnet den loven reguleringsiver som etter hvert ble det rene eventyrland for de mange som visste bedre og ville tenke for oss." Tor Trøsterud, "Med lov skal landet bygges" [The country must be built legally], *Hytteliv* 1 (1985): 5.
- 72 Sveen, "Tett eller spredt nok en gang," 95.
- 73 John Parr, *Det offentlige erstatningsplikt ved innskrenkninger i eiendoms-rådigheten* (Bygningsloven, Strandloven, Friluftsløven, Veiløven m.v.) [The public's obligation to compensate in the event of restrictions on ownership (The building act, the beach act, the outdoors act, etc.)] (Oslo: Den Norske Advokatforening, 1969), 37–40.
- 74 Harald Ellefsen, "Hytte og båt er ikke lenger urimelig luksus" [Cabins and boats are no longer unreasonable luxuries], *Adresseavisa*, August 18, 1975; "Hyttebygging og valgflask" [Cabin construction and selection], *Sørlandet Tiden*, August 13, 1975.
- 75 Sigrun Gjelberg, "Håndtering av byggeforbundet i 100-metersbeltet langs sjøen og bruk av 'annen byggegrens' som virkemiddel i Sarpsborg- og Sandefjord Kommune i lys av regionale føringer" [Handling of the building association in the 100-meter belt along the sea and use of "other building boundary" as a tool in Sarpsborg- and Sandefjord municipality in light of regional guidelines] (master's thesis, Ås, Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet, 2017).

cabin regulations in 1965: "The new law opened up regulatory zeal which eventually became a pure wonderland for the many who knew better and wanted to think for us."<sup>71</sup>

## IMPASSE AND A HALF RE-TURN FROM "NO POLITICS" TO "YES POLITICS"

In 1965, the idea was to freeze all cabin development until the government produced zoning plans and guidelines, which were to initially be based on the discussions and pilot projects and then further refined and implemented by the counties and municipalities. Yet, the work at the national level did not progress. The aforementioned resistance toward the new co-ownership principles and the aesthetic controls hampered the already quite slow development of governmental plans. While the production of new holiday homes was halted, the demand for holiday cabins grew.<sup>72</sup> As a result, the prices of the existing cabins rose exponentially. Because of this standstill and inflation, people who dreamt about owning their own cabin or wanted to sell their land to someone who wanted to build one became exponentially frustrated. The situation became unsustainable and dangerous when many owners of coastal land zones started to demand compensation from governments for the loss that they suffered in terms of land value, as they could not sell their land for real estate development anymore.<sup>73</sup>

The ten-year long period of dissent and stagnation which followed after the publication of the mountain plan report and the adoption of the Building Law in 1965 was finally put to an end by the then Minister of Environment Gro Harlem Brundtland. Against the backdrop of a public controversy involving her father's cabin, in 1975, Brundtland unclogged the situation with holiday homes by changing the "no politics" to a "yes politics."<sup>74</sup> The no-to-yes change meant that many original intentions were abandoned, and various regulations were softened. For example, the government waived their involvement in the actual mapping, zoning, and planning. From then on, the national rules could be directly translated by the provinces and municipalities into area-specific policies and plans. The application of exception-stipulations in the Beach Law became a very profitable privilege which many local municipalities eagerly executed (and continue to do so). The municipality or landowner who wants to sell land within 100 meters of the coastline for cabin development can exert or ask for the application of the exception rule. For example, Sarpsborg, a municipality on the eastern bank of the Oslo fjord applies the 100-meter rule without any exceptions, while Sandefjord, a municipality at the western bank of Oslo fjord allows for various dispensations from the 100-meter rule with the result that many leisure cabins occupy the coast.<sup>75</sup>

Municipalities have many reasons for supporting cabin development, which include enabling local landowners to profit from the cabin construction, generating work for local construction firms and maintenance staff, and ensuring a customer base for local shops and services, some of which cater almost exclusively to cabin dwellers. Beyond these regular financial motives for cabin developments for the municipalities and landowners, especially the application of the dispensations, is also entangled with far less

- 76 Original quote in Norwegian: "I strandsonen er det forbudt å bygge, men stadig dukker det opp nye større hytter, nye boder, nye tennisbaner eller et svømmebasseng ... Hyttene til flere av Norges rikeste familier er trukket inn i en omfattende etterforskning." Marie Olausen, "Strandkongene. På Sommerøya blir det umulige mulig" [The beach kings: On Sommerøya, the impossible becomes possible], *Tønsberg Blad*, accessed January 11, 2023, <https://www.tb.no/strandkongene-hor-alle-episodene-her/t/5-76-1483170>.
- 77 Marius Nergård Pettersen, *Hemmelige hytter* [Secret cabins] (Dal Forlag, 2018); Marius Nergård Pettersen, *Hemmelige Norge – det skjulte friluftslivet* [Secret Norway—the hidden outdoor life] (Dal forlag, 2021).
- 78 Eli Støa, "Drømmen om det enkle liv – et grunnlag for en mer bærekraftig hyttekultur?" [The dream of the simple life—a basis for a more sustainable cottage culture?], in *Norske hytter i endring. Om bærekraft og behag* [Norwegian cabins in transformation. On sustainability and comfort], ed. Helen Jøsok Gansmo, Thomas Berker, and Finn Arne Jørgensen (Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2011): 53–74; Carlo Aall, "Hyttebruk og miljø: en arena for nøydsomhet eller overforbruk?" [Cabin use and the environment: an arena for frugality or overconsumption?], in Jøsok Gansmo et al., "Hyttebruk og miljø," 107–23.
- 79 Anders Moen Kaste, "Norwegians Have Built a Half-Million Cabins as Holiday Homes: Is That Too Many?" *Science-norway* 17, September 2021, <https://sciencenorway.no/climate-forestry-nature-conservation/norwegians-have-built-a-half-million-cabins-as-holiday-homes-is-that-too-many/1911180>.
- 80 Jin Xue et al., "The Hidden Side of the Norwegian Cabin Fairytale: Climate Implications of Multi-Dwelling Lifestyle," *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 5 (2020): 459–584.
- 81 Terry Coppock, ed., *Second Homes: Curse or Blessing?* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1977); Dieter K. Müller and Gijssbert Hoogendoorn, "Second Homes: Curse or Blessing? A Review 36 Years Later," *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 13, no. 4 (2013): 353–69; Dieter K. Müller, "Second Homes in Rural Areas: Reflections on a Troubled History," *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift [Norwegian Journal of Geography]* 65 (2011): 137–43.
- 82 Erik Langdalen, "Second Homes in Norway: A Controversial Planning Problem," *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift [Norwegian Journal of Geography]* 34, 3 (1980): 139–44.

legal transactions involving personal connections and gains. Corruption cases have been investigated in Færder and Tjøme municipalities, drawing significant attention from the Norwegian media: "Building is prohibited in the beach zone, but larger cabins, new stalls, new tennis courts, or swimming pools are constantly appearing. ... The cottages of several of Norway's richest families have been drawn into an extensive investigation."<sup>76</sup> The public is indignant at these special cabins, which have appeared where nobody else was allowed to build. However, there is also an unknown number of other types of illegal construction: the secret primitive huts that have been self-built in remote places all over Norway.<sup>77</sup> These cabins are difficult to find and exist without any type of infrastructure, exerting a relatively low impact on the environment. Even though these cabins are truly illegal, they enjoy some sympathy among the Norwegian population, in contrast to the comfortable holiday homes that have been built on the best spots by way of the corrupt exemptions.<sup>78</sup>

What the Norwegian government and the mountain planning team feared would happen in 1990, finally happened in 2021. That year, there were half a million holiday homes officially registered in Norway, making Norway the world's top country when it comes to private cabins.<sup>79</sup> Growing demand will push these numbers further in coming years, with an estimated 5,000 legal cabins being built per year, despite lasting complaints from landscape planners about the cabins' poor positioning and aesthetics, and despite growing moral guilt stemming from the knowledge of the cabins' negative climate effects.<sup>80</sup>

## CONCLUDING CABIN CONTROVERSIES

Cabin planning is often described in international discourses as "troubled" or even "cursed."<sup>81</sup> Norwegian cabin politics is no exception. In 1980, when Erik Langdalen was evaluating the then last fifteen years of Norwegian cabin politics, the word that he used remarkably often in his report was "conflict(s)."<sup>82</sup> The many historical and contemporary controversies that appeared to surround the subject matter reveal an ongoing negotiation between collective and individual interests. At stake in the debate are fundamental issues. On one side, there are the rights to individual freedom, possession, and welfare, as well as cultivation of local cultural traditions. On the other side there are values such as protection of nature, egalitarianism, and welfare of the entire community. The past and present cabin controversies worked as catalysators that revealed these competing core values in the Norwegian society, as well as the dilemmas concerning the responsibilities and the limits of the Norwegian welfare state.

In 1965, when the unregulated cabin phenomenon was growing out of proportion, Axel Sømme's team composed mountain planning principles, inspired pilot projects for new types of cabin systems and cabin clusters, and put the co-ownership model on the table for public discussion. However, these ideas never seemed to be accepted by the Norwegian population, even though the majority of citizens rationally grasped the need for a turn from individual freedom to collective welfare when it came to cabin politics.

83 Original quote in Norwegian: "Hva om myndighetene sa ok, vær på hytta, men du må greie deg selv om du blir syk?" Schnell and Skjulhaug, "Hyttedebatten handler om norsk urbanitet."

Possibly too many changes were proposed all at once and especially land ownership appeared to be a core value that almost nobody wanted to compromise. Many continued also to adhere to the idea of a solitary cabin (instead of one placed in a grouping of cabins), and the freedom to design the aesthetics of their own cabin themselves. When the government partially re-liberalized cabin politics in 1975, it opened the door to privileges for some but not for the others when it comes to the opportunity to own a private cabin at a scenic spot in Norway. Such violation of the egalitarian principle can be considered an unwelcome and undermining phenomenon in the welfare state. With the most recent coronavirus cabin crisis, it appeared that staying at the cabin is not only an individual welfare right, but that it has acquired the status of a fundamental human right—even if the visit to the cabin would come at the cost of people's lives, as was the case in 2020 when the hospitals warned that they would break under the burden of a disproportionate number of coronavirus admissions. In the context of the latter debate Schnell and Skjulhaug asked: "What if the authorities said ok, stay in the cabin, but you're on your own if you get sick?"<sup>83</sup> This question is interesting as it touches upon the fundamental issue that runs as a red thread through all the cabin struggles, namely the deep-seated and unresolved clash in opinions about the position of the cabin phenomenon in the welfare state.

The cabin persistently seems to occupy a mental place outside of the Nordic consensus society, conceptually aligning with nineteenth-century ideas of freedom from society in a cabin in the wilderness. Knowing that these ideas have been entangled with each other from the nineteenth century onwards, thanks to various efforts of national (and international) painters, poets, philosophers, as well as previous social democratic politicians, doesn't diminish these sentiments in any way.

One can be a "reasonable citizen-consumer" when it comes to complying with state-organized planning, design regulations for public spaces, and regular homes. At the same time, when it comes to second homes—cabins and self-built huts in nature, one can have a difficult time letting go of one's desire for freedom, despite society's focus on the negative environmental impact of cabins, and on ensuring collective and egalitarian access to (and state-protection of) Norwegian nature. The Norwegian cabin controversies reveal the tendency to celebrate two types of freedom. In the daily life, there is the cultivation of the consensus freedom characteristic of Scandinavia, whereby freedom is not understood one-sidedly as the socialist "freedom from want" or as the liberal "freedom to pursue one's own desires" but as an integration and negotiation of both. However, when it comes to cabin life, there seems to exist a desire for a more individual kind of freedom and welfare.