AUTHENTICITY AND THE PSEUDO-BACKSTAGE OF AGRI-TOURISM

ABSTRACT

This article explores how summer farmers in Bregenzerwald (Austria) and Valdres (Norway) deal with their double role as farmers and tourist hosts. Based on qualitative interviews with farmers, the authors discuss how this double role influences tourist-host interactions and the staging of summer farms, and the ways in which the discourses of authenticity and heritage manifest themselves therein. In both Austria and Norway, summer farms are objects of idyllisation. They are highly suitable places for agri-tourism, which is regarded as more intimate and less detrimental to culture and environment than mass tourism. The authors suggest that one feature of such agri-tourism settings is the arrangement of a *pseudo-backstage* – a frontstage that is presented as an 'actual' backstage.

Keywords: Agri-tourism, summer farming, staging, authenticity, heritage

INTRODUCTION

> Nowhere else in Northern Europe will you find as many operative summer mountain farms as in Valdres. Many of them are open for visitors and can give you a unique insight into the traditional way of life. You can stop by for a short visit, or even stay overnight and experience the simple farm life without modern equipment. … A visit to a summer mountain farm will give the entire family a rich and memorable mountain experience. (Destination Valdres, n.d.)

> In summer, the jangle of cow bells breaks the silence in the Bregenzerwald. … Bregenz's glorious backyard is a finely woven tapestry of velvet green pastures, pretty villages and limestone pinnacles. After filling your lungs with fresh air in the hills and stomach with cheese in alpine dairies, snug log chalets invite you to put your feet up by the fire and relax. (Haywood & Walker, 2008, p. 373)

In both Norway and Austria, mountain summer farms (sg. *støl* or *seter* in Norwegian, *alpe* or *alm* in German) are intrinsic elements of the stereotypical representation of 'the rural idyll' (e.g. Short, 2006, p. 133). As the above quotes hint, summer farms signify authenticity, originality, and idealised, traditional agriculture ([author], 1999, 2000, 2010; [author], 2008, 2009). Such farms are commonly regarded as part of Norwegian and Austrian cultural heritage, which stems from the iconic status ascribed to the summer farm practice and landscape as central elements defining national identity in the late 18th century and early

19th century. *Støler* and *alpen* have been a cornerstone in the economy of agrarian mountain communities for centuries. Despite general trends showing a steady decline in summer farming, the practice remains of vital importance for milk-producing farms in several mountain communities in both Norway and Austria ([authors], 2001; [author], 1999; [author], 2008). However, given their iconic status, summer farms are also important spaces for tourism. In Austria, where tourism is one of the largest industries, *alpen* are of high economic importance because they provide infrastructure for many activities (e.g. skiing and hiking), besides being central in the marketing of alpine regions for tourism.

This article presents a qualitative study of farmers who combine agriculture and tourism on summer farms in Austria and Norway. It sheds light on how this combination affects everyday farming routines during the summer season. Life and work on summer farms is part of agricultural households' manoeuvres to make use of available natural resources. At the same time, a summer farm is a place that is gazed upon by tourists, and to varying extent a space that is managed or staged by summer farmers for the tourist gaze. Farmers' double roles when engaging in agri-tourism have been pinpointed as challenging, especially in terms of farmers' abilities to meet tourists' expectations, yet they are also rewarding, due to the 'personal feedback' from tourists (Brandth & Haugen, 2007; Nilsson, 2002). Further, as the landscape and practices at the *støler* and *alpen* are seen as vital parts of a rural (national) heritage representing traditional mountain agriculture and life, they are iconic elements in an *authorised heritage discourse* on national and international level, which 'naturalize[s] a range of assumptions about the nature and meaning of heritage' (Smith, 2006, p. 4). The two study regions, Valdres and Bregenzerwald, in many respects typify the national ideals of 'true' or authentic mountain culture in Norway and Austria.

Our theoretical point of departure is a constructivist perspective aiming at a better understanding of how authenticity and heritage create spaces of action for individuals, and how individuals in the context of small-scale agri-touristic settings deal with these discursive frames in their everyday lives. We pose the following questions: How do summer farmers (in Austria and Norway) deal with their double role of farmer and tourist host? More specifically, how does their double role influence the staging of the summer farms (regarding physical structures and practices; in Goffman's (1959) sense)? In what ways are the farmers' actions contextualised by the concepts of authenticity and heritage?

AUTHENTICITY AND HERITAGE ON THE STAGE OF AGRI-TOURISM IN AUSTRIA AND NORWAY

For several decades, the notions of authenticity and, more recently, heritage have been intensely and controversially debated in studies of tourism (Kidd, 2011; Peterson, 2005; Rickly-Boyd, 2012). In both Norway and Austria, and particularly for the chosen case areas, our analysis of pertinent literature and of

empirical data revealed that concepts of authenticity and heritage were of central importance to regional tourism strategies and representations of agricultural practices. Further, the notions of authenticity and history also proved important for the way that farmers interviewed as part of our study dealt with these issues within their double role of farmer and tourist host. Accordingly, this section outlines the two concepts, their inner logics, their cultural significance, and their function as discursive frames of action for tourism per se and for the specific agri-tourist settings studied in this article.

Authenticity

As a key concept of occidental thought for many centuries (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006) authenticity became a central subject in tourism research during the 1960s. Since then, the dichotomy of 'the authentic' (as desirable and good) and 'the inauthentic' (as objectionable and corrupt) in tourist settings has dominated not only the intellectual and feuilletonistic discourse, but also a good part of the scientific debate. Several scholars have exercised themselves in exposing 'allegedly authentic' tourist spaces as 'actually inauthentic', and thus as morally inferior (e.g. Boorstin, 1962). Often such lines of argument linger in an apparently factual demonstration of what is 'really' real or authentic. Hence, they perpetuate a normative, essentialist notion of authenticity. Other researchers, such as MacCannell (1999) and Crick (1989), have problematised the concept of authenticity but retained the authenticity/inauthenticity dualism by valuing what is authentic or not from a reflexive socio-scientific perspective.

MacCannell (1999) emphasises that tourists are chiefly motivated by the search for authenticity, which has been lost or alienated during the era of modernity, and that the search actually makes authenticity inaccessible for tourists or even obliterates it altogether. Drawing on Goffman's (1959) concept of staging, MacCannell states that tourist spaces are thus generally arranged around *staged authenticity*. He argues that when dealing with late modern tourist settings, the arrangements of spaces and practices according to front and back regions is a dichotomy that falls short. Consequently, MacCannell (1999, p. 101) defines a continuum of six different stages of front and back regions: (1) Goffman's ideal-typical front region, which many tourists seek to overcome; (2) a touristic front region, which displays several aspects or artefacts of a back region (e.g. agricultural artefacts on display in restaurants) but does not pretend to be one; (3) a front region that is entirely set up to resemble a back region (e.g. replicas of famous ships' interiors); (4) a (former) back region that is accessible for outsiders (e.g. domiciles of deceased famous persons); (5) a back region that is only exhibited to tourists occasionally and temporarily (such as Goffman's kitchen and factory); and (6) the back region in Goffman's narrower sense of the term, where outsiders are unwelcome.

MacCannell's *staged authenticity* has been criticised in subsequent tourism research, most prominently by Urry (2003a, p. 11), who recognised 'multiple discourses and processes of the 'authentic'. Urry further elaborates that in the era of post-modernity there are various types of tourists, some of whom acknowledge that there is no such thing as an authentic tourist experience and thus delight in inauthenticity (Urry, 2003b, p. 121). However, by introducing and highlighting authenticity as a key concept in tourism research, authors such as Boorstin and MacCannell have triggered an intense debate on the role of authenticity in tourism and its applicability as an analytical concept.

The debate has led to two major and partly contrasting lines of argument: in a constructivist tradition, it is argued that authenticity is a result of socio-discursive negotiation and thus has no analytical value as such (Cohen, 1988; Olsen, 2002). In this sense, authenticity cannot serve as a tool but only as an object of analysis in tourism studies. Others argue that such a view falls short of explaining actual tourist experiences that are perceived as authentic by individuals (Rickly-Boyd, 2012; Steiner and Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999). They introduce the concept of existential authenticity, which can be subdivided into 'intrapersonal authenticity', referring to a bodily inner state of being, and 'interpersonal authenticity', which focuses on social aspects (sharing experiences with friends, family members, and other tourists).

For the purpose of this article, we draw on a constructivist notion of authenticity since we generally regard it as a discursive construct, close to Cohen's (1988) notion of *emergent authenticity*. In this sense, authenticity is defined, normalised, perpetuated, and/or transformed in an ongoing process of socio-discursive negotiation, in which different actors participate, with different interests, scopes of influence, and positions of power (cf. Cohen, 1988; Hughes, 1995; Rickly-Boyd, 2012). The process of *authentication* (Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Desmond, 1999; Peterson, 2005;) takes place within specific socio-cultural backgrounds and in different arenas, including media, politics, science, and in actual tourist settings, such as the summer farms examined in this study. Cohen & Cohen (2012) identify two modes of authentication: 'cool authentication', where the authenticity of a site or an event is certified through the act of experts or an authority (typically declared World Heritage sites); and 'hot authentication', which is enacted and confirmed by tourists' practices (such as tourists' notes in guest books or rituals that develop at tourism sites). This suggests that the permanent negotiation and fabrication of authenticity is an inherent characteristic of tourism itself – on a micro-level (e.g. face-to-face tourist-host interaction), on a meso-level (e.g. regional tourism strategies), and on a macro-level (e.g. national tourism campaigns). Tschofen (1999), for example, argues that in the Austrian discourse on 'Alpine culture' authenticity serves as a major reference for both the agents of (mass) tourism who profit by commodifying this authenticity, and their critics (e.g. authors, journalists, and scientists), who claim that Alpine mass tourism has

corrupted real, traditional Alpine culture and identity. In short, both sides draw on the same Austrian manifestation of 'the authentic' in the guise of 'the Alpine idyll'.

Heritage

The explicit concept of cultural heritage in today's understanding emerged in the 19th century. Prior to then several predecessors and related notions had given way to what is currently regarded as heritage (Harvey, 2001). However, it was in the mid-20th century that the concept of heritage received attention on a global scale and reached a (still growing) mass audience (Lowenthal, 1998). This development originated in the socio-political process of coping with World War I and World War II on a European scale, and in 1972 eventuated in the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Ahmad, 2006). After several smaller modifications, the notion of tangible cultural heritage (buildings, monuments, historic sites, and artefacts) was amended in 2003 to include intangible cultural heritage (e.g. oral traditions, performing arts, and knowledge). Even though organisations such as *UNESCO* (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and *ICOMOS* (International Council on Monuments and Sites) doubtlessly serve as the institutional keepers of the global *authorisd heritage discourse* (Smith, 2006) or processes of certified 'cool authentication' (Cohen & Cohen, 2012), it is vital to acknowledge the regional and situational reinterpretations of heritage and how such heritage is negotiated locally (Smith, 2006). Smith states that heritage is a discourse per se and thus a socio-cultural process of meaning-making, not a 'thing'. Accordingly, heritage is created through a process that can be termed either *heritagification* (Hemme, Tauschek & Bendix, 2007) or *heritagisation* (Harvey, 2001). Both terms are particularly useful in order to focus on the inner dynamics of the heritage concept. In principle, heritage constitutes an attempt to freeze specific constellations of space and time. However, the reinterpretation of things as heritage never results in their actual petrification. Rather, it triggers dynamics which otherwise probably would not take place (DeLyser, 1999). Nonetheless, the basic insight that concepts such as heritage and authenticity are construed should not lead to the misinterpretation that therefore they are less 'real' or less relevant. Quite the contrary, for the residents of a newly listed UNESCO World Heritage site, such a construction can have acutely concrete impacts in terms of, for example, a sudden rise in tourist numbers and increases in planning restrictions ([author], 2010). The commercial side of heritage has been scrutinised by authors such as Hewison (1987), Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), and Lowenthal (1998), in their discussions on the ambivalences and practical consequences that this construct brings about.

Authenticity serves as an essential ingredient of the inner logic of cultural heritage. Using the example of museum display and performance, Kidd (2011) analyses the close ties between heritage and different

variants of authenticity, which among others things, serve to legitimise the former (i.e. heritage). Thus, heritage can be considered as a concept that updates and adds new momentum to the discourse on authenticity. Moreover, it serves as a zeitgeist umbrella concept that pools other related notions such as tradition, originality, and folklore. As a result, cultural heritage has been increasingly harnessed during the past three decades as a means to add value to different contexts such as regional development, the food industry, and not least tourism (Chhabra, Healy & Sills, 2003; Wang, 1999). All of the above-mentioned circumstances affect the lives and actions of the farmers living and working in Valdres and Bregenzerwald, whose tourism activities are framed by local variations of a national and international *authorised heritage discourse*.

The research setting

The choice of Bregenzerwald and Valdres as study areas was based on several considerations. First, drawing on prior research concerning socio-cultural and economic aspects on national and regional scale ([author], 1999, 2000, 2010, 2011; [author], 2008, 2009), the regions typify 'ideal landscapes' with respect to 'the rural idyll', cultural heritage, and authenticity within their national contexts, as they are at the core of what has been protected as national heritage by the authorities. Second, both regions actively utilise 'rural heritage' in their regional strategies, including those for tourism. Within these settings, agri-tourism and more specifically tourism services offered on summer farms play a significant role in addition to their 'initial' role as places of agrarian production.

The Bregenzerwald: The Bregenzerwald is a mountainous region in the Western-Austrian province of Vorarlberg encompassing 22 municipalities, a surface of c.570 km² and c.30,000 inhabitants. With a total of 10.6% of the workforce employed in the primary sector (REGIO-Bregenzerwald, 2006, p. 60), agriculture occupies an important position in the Bregenzerwald, compared to the national average of 4.7%. The dominant farm management systems are dairy farming and cattle breeding. One of the most remarkable features of agricultural production in the Bregenzerwald is that milk processing remains small scale and decentralised: today, there are 24 active dairies in the region and a significant amount of cheese is still produced directly in the *alpen* (Figure 1) – a constellation that is rarely found in many other alpine areas. After the agricultural and timber industries, tourism is one of the key economic sectors in the Bregenzerwald. In 2010, the region was a destination for 384,457 tourists, who stayed a total of 1,654,708 nights (Bregenzerwald Tourismus, 2011). There is a status of a near equilibrium between the winter and summer season, which is somewhat uncommon for alpine tourist destinations, due the boom in winter tourism since the 1960s.

* Please insert Figure 1 about here. Caption: An alpine cottage (*alpe*) in the Bregenzerwald (Photo: [author])

Since 2000, the regional planning organisation, *REGIO Bregenzerwald*, had been working to have the area nominated for the *UNESCO World Heritage List*. The nomination focused on the 'traditional cultural landscape' of the Bregenzerwald, the local farming system, its agriculture, and its produce. The *Bregenzerwälder Bergkäse* (mountain cheese) is the most prominent food speciality of this area and serves as a key object for both tourism marketing and the collective identity of the region. After a longstanding and partly controversial process, in June 2008 the local committee ceased working on the plans for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In spring 2011, after inclusion on the Austrian list of intangible cultural heritage, the Bregenzerwald was finally awarded a UNESCO certificate.

In summary, the Bregenzerwald is widely conceived as an ideal of rural, alpine Austria. It is publicly represented as a region that has effectively managed to implement the buzz-phrase of 'conciliating tradition and modernity' – just as the local motto suggests: '*We honour the old and we embrace the new and we stay true to ourselves and to our "Heimat"* [home].' Specifically, the *Bregenzerwälder Bergkäse*, the landscape, and the summer farms have been harnessed as key heritage and authenticity markers for the representation of the region. This implies that in their everyday lives, local farmers are those most intensively affected by the progressive *heritagification* of the Bregenzerwald. The marketing of the Bregenzerwald as an 'up-to-date alpine idyll', permeated by the discourses on authenticity and heritage, has mainly been executed by regional planners, politicians, tourism entrepreneurs, and advertising consultants. However, it sets the frame of agency for local farmers, who live and work around the beaten tourist tracks.

Valdres: The Valdres region is located in the interior of South Norway, in the county of Oppland. It is a mountainous area covering 5400 km² (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2007). The region consists of six municipalities, with a total population of 18,000. Primary industries still have a stronghold in Valdres, with c.13% employment in agriculture for the region, compared to the national figure of 3% (ibid.). Summer is the main tourism season in terms of both numbers of tourists and income generated; in 2009, there were 273,000 of overnight stays in commercial tourism accommodation in the months June, July and August, and 201,000 from January to April (Statistikknett, 2010).

With the challenges for rural communities of declining populations as a background, *Valdres Nature and Culture Park* (Valdres natur- og kulturpark, VNC) was established in 2007 as a consortium for rural development formed by the six municipalities in the region. Drawing inspiration from French regional parks, the VNC aimed to enhance added value and viability in local communities. Summer farming was highlighted as a key asset of the VNC. Valdres has c.300 summer farms still in operation, which make up

approximately 20% of the national total ([authors], 2011) (Figure 2). In 2007, on average 65% of the milk producers in the Valdres region used their summer farms for pasture and milk production (VNC, 2008b).

* Please insert Figure 2 about here. Caption: A summer farm cottage (*støl*) in Valdres (Photo: [author])

The VNC aims to uphold and develop Valdres's position in summer farming on a national scale. According to the VNC, the values upheld by active summer farming are biodiversity conditioned by culture, environmentally sound milk and meat production, and aspects of recreation and identity (VNC, 2008a). A number of projects, development initiatives, and specific measures directed towards summer farming have been implemented by the VNC. A recent major scheme targeting summer farms was the Farm and Summer Farm Tourism Project, which started in 2006 and ran until 2011. It revolved around 26 businesses engaged in farm or summer farm tourism. Through the project, the VNC aimed to secure and increase the level of activity in summer farm tourism, with more actors involved, new products, and more co-operation within summer farm tourism as well as with actors outside (Valdres Destinasjon, 2008).

As a region, Valdres is a core example of the stereotyped image of Norwegian rural heritage and landscape rooted in agrarian communities ([author], 1999). This position is communicated both directly and indirectly in marketing material produced by the VNC, portraying harmonious rural life set in a scene of surrounding mountains and flowering meadows, and images of farms and summer farms with traditional log houses, grazing animals, and 'smiling farmers' welcoming tourists. The activity dimension is vital, portraying busy farmers or more often people hiking, rafting, riding, fishing, or skiing.

Material and methods

The general approach of this study is a qualitative study with semi-structured interviews. This article is the result of a study carried out between 2008 and 2009 and combined with long-term research in both study areas. Both [author] (1999, 2000, 2010, 2011) and [author] (2008, 2009) have been engaged for a number of years in research on mountain agriculture, transhumance, and socio-cultural representations thereof in their national contexts. Prior to the main enquiry of 2009, [author] had repeatedly entered the Bregenzerwald since 2004 to conduct ethnographic research there. [Author] has carried out empirical research in Valdres since 2005, in the course of several short-term field stays. The main material is based on semi-structured qualitative interviews (duration 60–120 minutes) held with farmers who are also tourist hosts: four interviews with couples in Valdres (eight informants), and six interviews in Bregenzerwald, of which two were held with couples, in one of these their daughter was included, and four held with one person (nine informants). All interviews addressed topics pinpointed in the literature: the development of the enterprise, reflections on double roles, and issues related to staging and heritage (practices, perceptions, and experiences).

The interviews were transcribed, translated into English, and subject to qualitative content analysis (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Mayring, 2000). The studied summer farms were selected on the basis of our prior thorough knowledge of both areas. In the case of Bregenzerwald, our first-hand knowledge was supplemented by asking locals to name potential informants (employees in local museums and tourist offices). Some initial informants were contacted and during interviews asked to name other potential informants, i.e. we used the technique of snowball sampling to find informants. We aimed for a selection of informants reflecting differences regarding the intensity and specific mode of tourist activities. No systematic records of tourists were kept, but we were told that the tourists were mainly German, Swiss and Austrian, travelling as couples, in small groups of friends, or as families (the general pattern regarding nationality of tourists in the region (Bregenzerwald Tourismus, 2011)). The Bregenzerwald summer farms engage in tourism in different ways, from rare or occasional sales of cheese to rather professional gastronomic offerings with the tourist activities as a significant pillar of a farm's total income. One of them offers accommodation. In the case of Valdres, we targeted farmers involved in the Farm and Summer Farm Tourism Project, because the project participants all had a deliberate focus on developing tourism (to varying degrees) with their summer farm as the main asset. The four summer farms selected for our study had long been involved in farming and tourism activities (Table 1). They sold food (either served on site or to be taken home), presented the history of the *seter*, and at two places tourists could help to care of the animals. One *seter* offered accommodation. Records of visitors had not been kept systematically. However, we were told that the majority were Norwegian, many of whom were staying at their cabins in the region. The majority of foreign tourists were German or Dutch. In all cases, the general pattern, as for Bregenzerwald, was for visitors to arrive as families, couples, or groups of friends.

Table 1. Overview of informants

Informants	Age	Personal history of farming (year of farm transfer)	History of tourism activities on the summer farm
Valdres			
Man and woman	early sixties	1977	since 1998
Man and woman	early fifties	1979	since 2003
Man and woman	mid thirties	1991	since 1991
Man and woman	late 40ies	1996	since 1999
Bregenzerwald			
Man	early sixties	1963	none
Man and woman	early seventies	1965	since 2009
Man	mid forties	1984	since 2005
Woman	late forties	1984	since the 1930s
Man	mid forties	1993	since 2003
Man and woman	mid thirties	2003	since the 1980s

Combining agriculture and tourism: front, back, and in between

In recent decades different forms of agri-tourism (or farm tourism) have gained or regained significance as a specific genre of rural tourism throughout Europe (Nilsson, 2002), particularly in Austria and Norway (Forbord, Schermer & Grießmair, 2012). Typically, agri-tourism farms are operated as family businesses and mostly managed by female farmers (Brandth & Haugen, 2007; Getz & Carlsen, 2005). Another characteristic of agri-tourism enterprises is an inherent overlap of private and public spheres on individual farms, resulting in a *compartmentalisation of space* (see section 'Summer farms on stage').

In the following four subsections, the statements, experiences, and reflections recorded during the interviews are presented and discussed in relation to the theoretical platform of authenticity and heritage. We start by examining how the double role of farmer and tourism provider was viewed or experienced by the informants in terms of what motivated their choice to take on a second role as a tourism host, and thereafter we discuss how the two roles were characterised or distinguished. As staging arguably is intrinsic to any tourism offer in one way or another, we then review how physical structures and practices on *alpen* and *støler* are set up for tourism services. Finally, staging is examined more specifically when identifying and analysing what we define as the *pseudo-backstage of agri-tourism*.

Motivation for tourist services: The informants' motivations for starting and running tourist services were varied and included the following: the continuation of activities after a farm transfer; tourism developed 'unintentionally' when people 'just appeared' at the summer farm and showed interest; the rise of opportunities for tourism due to infrastructural changes (e.g. the instalment of a cable car and construction of roads); and a genuine, personal interest in starting a new enterprise. Farmers engaged in agri-tourism can be considered lifestyle entrepreneurs – a concept referring to those who run a business or start an activity motivated more by an anticipated gain in life quality than by economic output (Altjevic & Doorne, 2000; Cederholm & Hultman, 2010). It is claimed that a common characteristic of lifestyle entrepreneurs is the reduced significance in traditional market ethos in place of greater emphasis on socialising and communicating with guests (ibid.). In Valdres, the elements of socialising and communicating were motivated by the desire to educate, in the sense of demonstrating the everyday life of agriculture to outsiders and of adjusting stereotypical and inadequate images:

> *I want to show people that to run a summer farm is not 'a show', it is a necessity and something we do in order to provide enough fodder for the animals through the year. I want to demonstrate that it is possible to run a small-scale farm like this. If you keep it small and with low investments, you can keep it running even with low economic output.* (Valdres informant)

The motivation to educate was also present in Austria, as articulated by a female farmer:

> *Here, you have the opportunity to show agriculture to your guests in a positive way. ... The fact that agriculture isn't just hard work, no spare time, no possibility to go on holidays, and so on. ... The guests often have this romantic, idyllic, transfigured view that just isn't true. Some people think that progress stops down in the valley. That in here everything is like it was a hundred years ago. We ought to work like a hundred or fifty years ago. Nothing should change. Everything should stand still. But progress doesn't stand still. It comes even here and changes life on the alpe, too.* (Bregenzerwald informant)

It is most likely that the farmers' educative role as ambassadors of farming can reinforce tourists' perspectives on the authenticity of their experiences. The sole motivation of providing tourists with a 'true version' of agriculture implies that there is a 'wrong version' – one based on ignorance and stereotypical perceptions of agrarian activities as something quaint and outside the rest of modern society.

The farmers in Valdres and Bregenzerwald generally prioritised their agricultural activities over tourism activities. For example, during peak times (such as haymaking) tourism services would be suspended. By prioritising agrarian activities, the farmers hinted that they took agriculture more seriously than tourism. Hence, by giving first priority to farming and accentuating farming as their 'real' job and/or life, they indicated that tourism was pursued in a somewhat amateurish manner. This, too, adds to the authenticity of the individual agri-tourism experience, as the hosts facilitated the feeling that the tourists were visiting 'real' farmers and not professional tourist hosts. Apparently, this constellation opens up a loophole concerning the tourism-authenticity dilemma, as stated by MacCannell (1999); a point we return to (section 'The pseudo-backstage of tourism').

Switching Roles: The roles of farmer and tourist host were generally seen as interlinked and mostly mixed. However, to some extent, the roles were governed by different codes of conduct and appearance. One woman said that she consciously changed her dialect when practising her role as a host, and explained tourism as directed outwards towards the public, while agriculture was personal:

> *You simply act differently – you 'are'. Agriculture is more personal and this [the hostel] is rather out here. I wouldn't say it's all kippers and curtains, but anyway you change a bit. You are acting a bit.* (Bregenzerwald informant)

The change of roles described by the informant was acknowledged as something that is normal in the tourism business. Engaging with tourists implies having to be polite and service-minded. One summer farmer in Valdres explained switching between the private and the public sphere as follows:

> *After twelve in the morning I feel that I start with something different, I am not a private person any longer, I am a public person. I am more relaxed about this role now than I used to be. ... Something has happened up*

here [pointing to her head] in recent years. It's like I am able to draw an invisible border for myself, to be more professional and give something of me without compromising my personal life. (Valdres informant)

Codes of conduct also apply to dress code and personal presentation, and the spaces that tourists enter. In this respect, cleanliness and tidiness are crucial indicators:

If I come from the cowshed and have to help out here [at the hostel], of course I have to change clothes. The optical part, the image, that's important. Otherwise, the guests go down to the village saying 'He's a dirtbag', don't they? (Bregenzerwald informant)

Mastering the two roles becomes a skill, which can be rewarding as well as demanding:

To be able to assess the guests and understand what they want is a skill I have developed. I take into consideration where they come from and what type of background they have and then I adjust my talk and explanations according to it. It's 'a kick' when I am able to foresee exactly what they look for. (Valdres informant)

Sometimes you keep asking yourself who you really are, yes. Sometimes you also have to feign. (Bregenzerwald informant)

Even though some interviewees stated that they had needed some time to adjust to the presence and demands of tourists during summer seasons and that they were sometimes at odds with ignorant or impolite tourists, for most of the farmers interaction with tourists was an enriching and varied experience.

Summer farms on stage: In the studied cases tourism departed from agrarian systems and practices. Hence, it needed to be staged within the physical structures as well as the practical logic of farming. In this sense, tourism and agriculture are seen as symbiotic. Practices, as well as spaces, need to be negotiated. One aspect of this is *sectioning* or *compartmentalisation of space*. The co-existence of private and work-life space can be negotiated through physical compartmentalisation (separate guest rooms and private rooms) or temporal compartmentalisation (opening hours) (Lynch, 2005). Through compartmentalisation, a physical space can be alternated, to serve either as a front region or as a back region.

Not surprisingly, many of the studied summer farms with tourism activities featured a classic frontstage (MacCannell's stages 1 and 2): in an outdoor area at the front of the premises, usually where guests were served food and drinks. Such front areas were characterised by, for example tables, sunshades, menus, or decoration. A permanent frontstage inside the buildings (e.g. in form of a dining room) was installed in two places in the Bregenzerwald, but not at all in Valdres. Generally, summer farm cottages in Valdres are significantly smaller than those in the Bregenzerwald, and have fewer options for internal space to be allocated exclusively for use by tourists. Thus, the frontstage was more often temporally set, e.g. when a

private living room changed to frontstage (café) during opening hours. The back region in Goffman's narrow sense was a prevailing issue for the farmers and their families: for example, bedrooms were off-limits for tourists, as were most living rooms. Depending on the weather, tourists were to be seated outside or inside and were expected to know where to go and where not to go:

> *When guests arrive they think they may go everywhere. You find them all over the house and in every room if you don't lock the doors* (Bregenzerwald informant).

> *It is important to be strict about which space is off-limits. If I did not lock the door to the house where me and my family live, I suspect some tourists would soon be sitting on the sofa in my living room, dealing cards.* (Valdres informant)

In addition, there were other family members to be taken into consideration, and some private spaces were reserved for them. Different versions of compartmentalisation of space were practised, ranging from locking doors, closing doors, and fixing tight hooks on fences to prevent children from letting animals out, to more mental compartmentalisations of space characterised by a change of behaviour during the presence of tourists. All such mechanisms can be seen as defining borders between the 'public' and the 'private', an issue that is coined by individual experiences and attitudes as well as socio-cultural norms.

The pseudo-backstage of agri-tourism: Besides the relatively obvious front- and backstages, the settings at the studied summer farms featured another much more ambiguous variant of stage that inherently blurred the distinction between front and back. This variant closely matches MacCannell's fifth stage. However, in contrast to MacCannell, who originally maintained a dualist notion of authenticity, we take a constructivist perspective and thus are not aiming to 'expose' inauthenticity but rather to investigate how authenticity and heritage are negotiated as seen from tourist host perspectives in these concrete agri-tourist settings. Furthermore, in the context of small-scale rural tourism, this stage features one or two peculiarities that make it a specific empirical formation of MacCannell's conceptual stage.

In order to understand the ambiguous stage, it is necessary to consider the basic characteristics and lures of back regions. Firstly, back regions are generally closely associated with secrecy and mystification. Secondly, they are regarded as places of intimacy and privacy (MacCannell, 1999, p. 93). These two attributes are important differentiators for soft tourism and agri-tourism in contrast to mass tourism, which today is widely regarded as anonymous and standardised. Even though there is no exact and commonly agreed upon definition for this phenomenon, in public discourse the term mass tourism has become associated with the corruption of traditional and authentic people, places, practices, and the natural environment (Boissevain, 1996) – a criticism that was initially stated by intellectuals in the 1960s (e.g. Boorstin, 1962) and since then has reached broad parts of Western societies. Soft tourism as the

equally fuzzy antithesis to mass tourism is regarded as less detrimental to what is traditional or authentic at best, it is even deemed to preserve such qualities. Thus, agri-tourism appeals to a target group that is eager to have ostensively intimate, personalised, and ethically correct experiences in their holidays and to overcome the dilemma, as stated by MacCannell, that their search for authenticity will compromise that authenticity.

The attraction of the back region was reflected in the interviews. For example, it was addressed by a Valdres woman:

> *I know the tourists want to feel that they enter my private home. When I give something of myself, they become very happy.* (Valdres informant)

She implied that her house temporarily served as a frontstage. However, at the same time she gave tourists the feeling that they had the privilege of entering the backstage in her home. In that way, she had mediated a sense of intimacy (cf. Cederholm & Hultman, 2010; Trauer & Ryan, 2005), yet allowed the tourists to believe that they had had a glimpse into her private life and personal secrets. In that particular case, the rather small summer farm building's living room also served as a café when the weather was too bad for guests to eat outside (Figure 3), and the door from the living room to the bedroom was always kept open. However, the woman and her daughter had a routine whereby each day before the tourists arrived they tucked away their clothes and personal belongings in a suitcase kept under the bed. The action effectively 'de-privatised' the bedroom. For tourists, however, the ability to enter a bedroom freely was by definition the ability to enter a very private back region: 'What is being shown to tourists is not the institutional "backstage" … Rather, it is a staged back region … for which we have no analytical terms' (MacCannell, 1999, p. 99). In other words – and in order to find such an analytical term – The woman had created a *pseudo-backstage*, of the type that is made use of in many soft touristic and agri-touristic settings.

* Please insert Figure 3 about here. Caption: '[T]he tourists want to feel that they enter my private home': a living room as a *pseudo-back stage* in Valdres (Photo: [author])

Other examples of *pseudo-backstages* are cheese cellars and dairies on *alpen* in the Bregenzerwald: places where officially tourists are not permitted to enter due to hygiene regulations – a circumstance that was repeatedly emphasised during our interviews. However, we did not ever observe a single tourist being banned from accessing a dairy or cellar. These spaces are a central element of the Bregenzerwaldian heritage; cheese production on *alpen* is widely regarded a rare and endangered practice. Alpine dairies and the cheese cellars are places of production for the most valuable and prestigious products of agricultural activities; cheese that is wholly produced on *alpen* is said to be the best. Hence, *alpen* are celebrated as special places, of which the farmers are usually eminently proud and which many tourists are eager to

view. Therefore, they serve as a distinguishing feature, places that mass tourism entrepreneurs cannot offer to their clientele without structurally and thus overtly staging them (e.g. by installing display windows and/or showrooms). So, by saying '*I don't let everybody in here*' or '*This is actually illegal*' (referring to hygiene regulations) before opening the door to the dairy or cellar, farmers in the Bregenzerwald create intimacy and make tourists feel superior to just 'ordinary tourists' (Figure 4). When a farmer was asked whether he would show the cellar to 'just anyone', he answered that he only showed it to comparatively small groups and denied access to larger groups transported to the *alpe* by coaches, which also are an epitome of mass tourism.

* Please insert Figure 4 about here. Caption: 'I don't let everybody in here': a cheese cellar as a *pseudo-backstage* in the Bregenzerwald (Photo: [author])

As indicated, a large part of the construction of a *pseudo-backstage* occurs on the level of communication and language by which the places in question are defined. Essentially, a *pseudo-backstage* needs to be a temporal, situational installation. However, there also seems to be an even less tangible form of *pseudo-backstage* that is not bound to one specific room or place on a summer farm, but rather to the generic atmosphere of the summer farm. This 'aura' is based on the cultural idyllisation and stereotypisation of the concerned spaces and people (cf. Tschofen, 1999; [author], 2008) and is largely maintained and amplified by certain codes of communication and conduct. As one informant stated:

> '*The worst case is if you call a guest, who was here three years ago, by the wrong name. He'll take it as an insult [laughing]. But I just can't remember so many names.* (Bregenzerwald informant)

This suggests that a *pseudo-backstage* cannot be arranged just anywhere; rather, it requires a certain socio-cultural fertile ground. In both of the cases exemplified above, the *pseudo-backstages* were arranged in spaces that were central elements of the local and national heritage. In many cases, heritage is based on (an assumed) rareness, originality, or uniqueness (cf. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998), values that are highly compatible with secrecy and intimacy. Thus, we argue that *heritagised* places are generally highly qualified for the establishment of *pseudo-backstages*. Indeed, based on our study, we find that the *pseudo-backstage* can be regarded as a social practice of exhibition on the micro-level, through which heritage may be negotiated, consolidated, and/or perpetuated, resorting to regional, national, and global aspects of the heritage discourse.

Ultimately, it is important to emphasise that we do not intend the construction of *pseudo-backstages* to be evaluated as morally incorrect. Furthermore, our empirical material does not allow us to discuss the question of whether this construction is some sort of 'deliberate deceit' or whether it happens completely subliminally; most likely, it is a kind of habitualised practice (Edensor, 2000). Rather, we suggest that in

many concrete settings of agri-tourism, the *pseudo-backstage* is an informal and probably vital part of tourist–host interaction and thus contributes to the current success and attractiveness of agri-tourism. Evidently, ambivalence is a central feature of the *pseudo-backstage*, cutting through dichotomies such as front–back, private–public, intentionality–unawareness, and authenticity–inauthenticity.

Moreover, it seems plausible that the construction of a *pseudo-backstage* does not merely serve the purpose of preparing an act of sale to the tourist. Beyond that, in the case of the studied regions, it can be a platform for direct and personal appreciation of what the hosts do in their everyday lives as farmers, as demonstrated by the alpine dairies and cheese cellars. Further, it attests to and fosters the authenticity of their places and practices, which is commonly an important issue for the farmers themselves. This is in line with thinking that the maintenance of authenticity is often at least as relevant for locals and hosts as it is for tourists (Urry, 2003a, p. 121). Thus, the construction of *pseudo-backstages* is not only formative for concrete tourism contexts and situations, but is also effective in the (re)production of hosts' (and tourists') common sense worlds (cf. Edensor 2001).

CONCLUSION

In this article we have investigated how farmers of summer farms in two different cultural contexts, Bregenzerwald in Austria and Valdres in Norway, deal with their double role of farmer and tourist host. More specifically, we have asked how this double role influences the staging of the summer farms, and in what ways the farmers' actions can be seen as contextualised and coined by the concepts of authenticity and heritage.

Regarding the question of how agrarian and tourism activities or spheres are combined, we find that the interviewees gave priority to farming. However, farming and tourism were seen as symbiotic. Farmers emphasised different strategies for coping with their double role, ranging from physical compartmentalisation of space to attitudinal shifts. These strategies imply that the farmers' physical surroundings as well as their performances need to be staged. Linking the cases studied and their practices of staging to a wider frame of authenticity and heritage, summer farmers in Bregenzerwald and Valdres became objects of exhibition long ago ([author], 1999; [author], 2008, 2009). The stage was prepared when the rural life and landscape of summer farming successively emerged as symbols of national identity and heritage during the romantic era. Further, when tourism developed, and partly originated from the same symbols, the staging dimension was updated and amplified, and especially through the process of 'cool authentication' (Cohen & Cohen, 2012) related to World Heritage candidacy in Bregenzerwald. Despite the fact that the farmers had relatively little influence on the process, they had been confronted with its

results and consequences, as they, their places, and their products had become even more significant objects of touristic desire.

The cases studied show that the broader context of staging can resonate at the local level. In the context of the tourism services they offer, summer farmers construct a *pseudo-backstage*: a temporal frontstage that is presented as an 'actual' backstage and through which virtues such as intimacy, rareness, and privacy are transmitted. Apparently, this adds to the perceived authenticity of the tourism experience. By creating a *pseudo-backstage*, the farmers feel in control of tourism, because they set the terms of access and at the same time, tourists receive ostensible 'special' treatment. As a general rule, *pseudo-backstages* are based on the lure of secrecy, individualised experience and (exception from) restricted or limited access, and draw on different possible preconditions: in the case of Valdres, the cultural norm of privacy was (seemingly) penetrated, while in the Bregenzerwald case it was a legal norm. Our investigation revealed that the discourses of heritage and authenticity play a vital role in both of the studied regions, and that farmers need to deal with their social and physical manifestations in one way or another. By negotiating these discourses via face-to-face interaction between tourists and hosts, the arrangement of *pseudo-backstages* is one outcome of such negotiations.

Contemporary tourists may long for diverse experiences where authenticity may be of different importance and even of different semantic nature; MacCannell's 'classic' search for authenticity may still be one of them, albeit in a recontextualised and modified manner. Olsen (2002) reasonably argues that tourists have become increasingly aware of and uncomfortable with their role as tourists, as postulated by researchers and intellectuals from the 1960s onwards. MacCannell's formula of *staged authenticity* has trickled down from the level of science and intelligentsia into popular thought. Moreover, Feifer (1985) states that 'post-tourists' even find pleasure in encountering inauthenticity, as they appreciate the 'stagedness' of the scenery they enter. In such post-tourist settings, authenticity is often ironised, pastiched, and caricatured. However, this is not tantamount to the decline of authenticity as a central concept in tourism, as pointed out also by Mkono (2011). Rather, it adds a postmodern layer to the discourse on authenticity in tourism, by which it is updated and hence perpetuated.

Nonetheless, there are other kinds of tourism, such as cultural, soft, heritage, eco-, and agri-tourism, where the 'vintage' search for authenticity remains a central motivation and factor for both tourists and hosts (cf. Wang, 1999, p. 350). Such forms of tourism are generally regarded as less harmful for the destinations, and their culture and environment. Marketing and advertisement strategies of regions relying on soft tourism often convey the impression that they offer a solution to the tourism dilemma, as proposed by MacCannell. This offer of apparently reconciliating tourism and authenticity can thus be considered as a vital contribution to the recent proliferation of 'alternative' tourism. Ultimately, the

construction of a *pseudo-backstage*, as performed on the studied summer farms, is one way of translating the current netting of discourses on tourism, authenticity, and heritage into the social practices of concrete tourist-host interaction in an agri-tourist setting. By creating a *pseudo-backstage*, tourists are introduced to some sort of inner circle. Through this kind of ambivalent stage, tourists (and hosts) become 'de-mass-touristified'. By drawing on the discourses of authenticity and heritage, it is possible to see this as the creation of a subjectively, ethically sound 'in-group', where mass-tourism participants are seen as the disapproved 'other'. Certainly, this hypothesis needs to be empirically addressed in future studies.

The episodes of *pseudo-backstages* illustrated in this article are only two examples of how *pseudo-backstages* can be arranged within agri-tourism settings. Many issues remain open at the end of this explorative study: for example, the question of (un-)intentionality or habitualisation concerning the construction of *pseudo-backstages*; the question how tourists' performances add to the fabrication of *pseudo-backstages*; the question of whether *pseudo-backstages* are not only created on the micro-level of direct tourist-host interaction, but also on the meso- and macro-levels, and how these spheres are interrelated in given cases; and the question of what specific role the *pseudo-backstage* plays in the differentiation between soft tourism and mass tourism, recognising the fuzziness and relationality of both phenomena. Probably, there are various empirical guises of the *pseudo-backstage* that merit closer investigation in order to gain a broader understanding of this practice and its specific impact on different forms of tourism.

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