

Car Mobility and Camping Tourism in Norway, 1950-1970

Introduction

During the 1950s and 1960s a growing convoy of cars of varying quality and size, heavily loaded with tents and camping equipment, traversed Norway during the holidays, many bound for Sørlandet [southern Norway]. In the afternoon the cars would stop at campsites where, for a modest price, drivers could park, raise a tent, use the toilets and enjoy the showers. In the evening the campers strolled through the grounds, gazing at the illuminated polychromatic tents and the cars lined up in near military fashion. In many ways such camping holidays were the 1960s equivalent to the more recent fashion for trips to the sunny beaches of southern Europe.

For many people a visit to the capital or to the Sørlandet while staying in different camping sites was an exotic experience, a much-anticipated reward for a year of hard work. It was a time off from tedious employments and boring routines. Campers experienced new places and people in safe surroundings. Like the car, camping was a glimpse of the 'sweet life', a starting point for the democratisation of services and consumer goods promised by Arbeiderpartiet [The Labour Party]. Even if camping as such was not entirely new, the scope and intensity of the post-war version of car camping became a new way of seeing, doing and organising leisure.¹

This article describes and analyses the emergence of car camping tourism in Norway in the years between 1950 and 1970. Toward this end, it seeks to identify how car camping developed, changed and stabilised as a mass tourist activity. Particular attention is paid to the actors, organisations and institutions that contributed to the increased popularity of this type of leisure. Two areas are of special importance: the emergence of new identities, symbols and sensitivities related to car camping; and, the importance of technologies in the broad sense (the camping site, their rules, regulations, information, promotion and education, tents, camping equipment) to the formation of the system.²

The application of theoretical principles and methodologies from science and technology studies (STS) offers a useful basis for understanding the development of car camping tourism.³ While STS once focused on the invention and production of specific implements, today most attention is placed on users and the ways in which technology is integrated into daily life.⁴ STS practitioners recognise that producers and users engage in a

¹ John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The tourist gaze 3.0* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2011).

² The 'camping site system' concept is inspired by Thomas P. Hughes's notion of the 'Large technological system'; see Thomas P. Hughes, 'The Evolution of Large Technological Systems', *The Social Construction of Technological Systems*, ed. Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas P. Hughes and Trevor Pinch (Cambridge, Mass., MIT-Press, 1987). Even if the system concept is meant primarily to describe the development of large scale technologies, it does say something about how the material and mental, the technological and the people came together to create a new type of leisure: camping.

³ Bijker, Pinch and Hughes 1987; Wiebe Bijker and John Law, eds., *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change* (Cambridge, MA, 1992); Bruno Latour: *Reassembling the social*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 2005.

⁴ Knut Holtan Sørensen, The Norwegian Car: 'The Cultural Adaption and Integration of an Imported Artefact', in *Technologies and Everyday Life: Trajectories and Transformations*, ed. Knut Holtan Sørensen, and Anne-Jorunn Berg, (Oslo: NAVF, 1991), 109-131; Per Østby, *Flukten from Detroit: Bilens integrasjon i det norske samfunnet*, (Trondheim: Historiske studier no. 11, 1996); Dolly Jørgensen, Finn Arne Jørgensen and Sara Pritchard, *New Natures: Joining Environmental History with*

process of co-construction, each responding to the actions of the other. For those studying the car, engineers and highway planners now take a backseat to the automobile as a means for cultural expression. The role of mediation and mediators is very important to this type of analysis. In this article the mediator is a metaphorical figure who represents a connection between producers/designers and the users of technologies and products. Mediators translate, negotiate and do brokerage between different interests.⁵ Drivers associations seem to have played such roles. They negotiated between authorities and car owners (who were later camping site users). On a more ideological level, they traversed what we may call ‘American standards for social development’ and ‘Norwegian values’, tying together Americanisation and the ‘consumption regimes’ discussed by historians such as Victoria de Grazia.⁶

After the Second World War, America dominated the world militarily, economically and culturally. Through the activities of the European Recovery Plan (ERP), popularly known as the Marshall Plan, huge financial and technological resources poured into European countries. ERP officials taught Norwegian engineers and city-planners American standards for transportation and urban planning. Upon returning home to Norway, these individuals talked excitedly about American car culture, stressing that many aspects of it were well suited to Norway. Tourism development was a central part of the Marshall Plan and ERP officials actively promoted transatlantic tourism flows and the modernisation of infrastructure, all to match American tastes. It is worth asking how successful the program really was. Did it lead to the Americanisation of Europe, as Victoria de Grazia suggests, or were American ideas either rejected or domesticated to more easily fit European appetites? Likewise, what role did transnational institutions such as the European automobile clubs, tourist and travel associations and camping syndicates play in the development of mass motorisation, tourism and camping?

Historiography

The history of tourism as well as the history of recreation and leisure is poorly developed in Norway. There are some exceptions. Dag Hundstad writes about the way in which various actors made the coast of southern Norway ‘a Norwegian Riviera’ important as a vital site of leisure and recreation during the 1930s. Berit Eide Johnsen examines regional representations and the recent development of heritage tourism in southern Norway. Further, Ørnulf Hodne examines the leisure-related activities of the Norwegian Labor movement during the interwar period. In a recently published book, Bård Toldnes examines the origin of car camping in Norway in the years between 1920 and 1940.⁷ The main focus of this article however is the years from 1950 to 1970.

Science and Technology Studies (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013).

⁵ Johan Schot and Adri Albert de la Bruheze, ‘Mediated design’, in *How users matter: The co-construction of users and technology*, ed. Nelly Oudshorn and Trevor Pinch (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT-Press, 2005), 234-235; Per Østby, ‘Escape from Detroit: The Norwegian conquest of an alien artefact’, in *The Car and its environments: The Past, Present and Future of the Motorcar in Europe*, ed. Knut Holtan Sorensen (Trondheim: Proceedings from the COST A4 Workshop, 1993), 33-69.

⁶ Victoria de Grazia, ‘Changing Consumption Regimes in Europe, 1930–1970: Comparative Perspectives on the Distribution Problem’, in *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, ed. S. Strasser, C. McGovern, and M. Judt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 78; Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance through 20th-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁷ Dag Hundstad: ‘A Norwegian Riviera in the making: the development of costal tourism and recreation in southern Norway in the interwar period’, *Journal of Tourism History*, Vol. 3, (2011), 109-128; Berit Eide Johnsen, ‘The villages and Outports of Sørlandet in Southern Norway: Maritime

Beyond Norway, there is much more scholarship concerning the relationship between travel, tourism and camping. Warren Belasco makes an important contribution by describing the development of camping in the U.S. from the 1920s. According to Belasco people drove away from home in their cars and spent the night along the roadside in tents. These ‘gypsy’ activities were routinised during the 1920s and 1930s through the emergence of free, but municipally organised campsites. Later, campers had to pay to stay in these sites. During the 1940s and 1950s, cabins and motels surpassed campsites in popularity.⁸ Wolfgang Sachs examines the same period but looks at European developments. In France and Germany middle and upper class people went touring with their cars and stayed in hotels. Some did camp by the roadside using tents, a cheaper if more exotic approach to holidaymaking.⁹

Orvar Löfgren and Jonas Frykman greatly influenced Norwegian historians during the 1990s by introducing a new approach to cultural history; Löfgren subsequently pioneered the study of vacation and leisure activities. Similar to John Walton and Jonas Larsen, Löfgren and Frykman stress the reciprocal aspects of vacation. Holidaymakers affect tourism producers just as those producers shape people’s holidays. The two Scandinavian scholars also stress that *how* one travels influences what one sees, a point underlined by Wolfgang Schivelbusch in *The Railway Journey: The Industrialisation of Time and Space in the 19th Century*.¹⁰ The social and cultural aspects of camping influenced the development of the camping system.¹¹

The Swedish historian Pär Blomqvist writes extensively about the development of the car system. He argues that the rise of the private car was linked to the political goal of creating social democratic society. Blomqvist illustrates his narrative with a photograph of a Swedish housewife and her three children washing dishes at a camping site. Although this was a tedious task, the picture reflects the excitement of summer holidays and of fine living. The car had many meanings and was connected to many aspects of life, but such photographs reflect its political role as a marker of the ‘good life’ and of the promise of the welfare state.¹²

The development of tourism history and the history of technology resemble each other, although the study of technology and of automobiles is better established as a scholarly discipline. Yet both subjects also follow larger trends in the development of social science more generally. While car studies changed gears from an older focus on engineers and car production

history and heritage staged for tourists’, in *Maritime Heritage and Modern Ports. International Conferences on Maritime Heritage and Modern Ports*, ed. R. Marcet in Barbe, C.A. Brebbia, and J. Olivella (Southampton and Boston: WIT Press, 2005), 231-246; Ø. Hodne, *Folk og fritid. En mellomkrigsstudie i norsk arbeiderbevegelse*, (Oslo: Novus, 1994); Bård Toldnes, *Bilen i Norge 1918-1930 – På vei mot bilsamfunnet*, (Levanger: Læringsforlaget, 2013).

⁸ Warren Belasco: ‘Commercialized Nostalgia: The Origins of the Roadside strip’, in *The Automobile and American Culture*, ed. David L. Lewis and Laurence Goldstein (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1983) 107-120.

⁹ Wolfgang Sachs, *For Love of the Automobile, Looking back into the history of our desires* (Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), 152-154; Bruce Seeley, ‘Cars and Highways in twentieth-Century America’ in *A companion to American Technology*, ed. Carroll Pursell (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 244-246; Gijs Mom, ‘Roads without Rails: European Highway-Network Building and the Desire for Long-Range Motorized Mobility’, *Technology and Culture*, Vol.46, no. 4 (2004): 745-772.

¹⁰ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialisation of Time and Space in the 19th Century*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1977,1986).

¹¹ Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren: *Det kultiverte mennesket* (Oslo: Pax, 1994); Orvar Löfgren, *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); John K. Walton, *The British seaside: holidays and resorts in the twentieth century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

¹² Pär Blomqvist, *Den goda vägens vänner: Väg- och billobbyn och framväxten av det svenska bilsamhället 1914-1959*, (Stockholm: Symposion, 2001).

to explore culture, consumption and use, tourism studies moved away from an economic and policy focus to stress ‘gazes’, sentiments and cultures.¹³ Car studies can be divided into distinct categories. One branch examines automobile manufacture, mass production technologies, system innovations and the development of large-scale economies.¹⁴ A second branch traces the shifting roles of expertise for city planning and highway construction.¹⁵ A third and more significant branch for the purposes of this article might be called ‘car culture studies’ and it is intimately associated with authors such as Peter J. Ling, David L. Lewis and Laurence Goldstein. The work done by these men inspired other historians to explore related themes such as music, architecture, family norms, sexuality, consumer practices and tourism.¹⁶ The result is a more comprehensive understanding of the expressive and symbolic aspects of automobiles. Car culture studies along with the study of tourism history delved into consumer culture and tourism. In many ways, in the 1960s, camping was car culture par excellence; it was excitement, free driving and safe sleeping. It was exploring the wilderness and otherness, and returning safely back home.

The first years of camping

Although the mass popularity of car camping only emerged in the 1950s, car camping originated during the interwar years. Even then it had antecedents. In the late nineteenth century British gentry enjoyed Norwegian rivers and mountain areas as a place for fishing, mountain hiking and other forms of recreation. Upper class Norwegians later copied these activities. Buses, trains, bikes and later cars were used to access mountainous areas. Recreation grew evermore democratised during the 1920s. The Labour movement, a new political force, made outdoor life and recreation a vital part of its political program.¹⁷ Soon the beaches of southern Norway joined the mountains as a target for recreation. Most of the visitors stayed in hotels or rented cabins, some eventually creating their own holiday homes.

¹³ Adrian Franklin and Mike Crange, ‘The trouble with tourism and travel theory,’ *Tourist studies*, Vol. 1, (2001): 5-22.

¹⁴ Nathan Rosenberg, *Technology and American Growth*, (New York: Harper, 1972); James P. Womack, Daniel T. Jones & Daniel Roos, *The Machine that Changed the World*, (New York: Rawson Associates Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990).

¹⁵ John B. Rae, *American Automobile Manufacturers. The First Forty Years*, (Philadelphia, Chilton, 1959); David Hounshell, *From the American System to Mass Production, 1800-1932: The development of manufacturing technology in the United States* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1985); James A. Dunn jr., *Miles to Go: European and American Transportation Policies*, (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1981); William Plowden, *The Motor Car and Politics 1896–1970* (London: The Bodley Head, 1981), Bruce Seely, *Building the America Highway System: Engineers as Policy Makers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Scott L. Bottles, *Los Angeles and The Automobile: The Making of the Modern City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

¹⁶ David L. Lewis and Laurence Goldstein, *The Automobile and American Culture*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1983); Peter J. Ling, *America and the Automobile: Technology, reform and social change, 1893–1923* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990); Jan Holz Kay, *Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile took over America and how we can take it back* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Stephen Bayley, *Sex, Drinks and Fast Cars* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986); Daniel Miller, *Car Cultures: materialising culture*, ed., (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 2001); Rudi Volti, *Cars and Culture: The Life Story of a Technology* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Sachs, *For Love of the Automobile. our desires.*

¹⁷ Hodne, *Folk og fritid. En mellomkrigsstudie i norsk arbeiderbevegelse.*

A relative few brought tents and camps, seeing themselves as practitioners of a new and increasingly fashionable activity.¹⁸

The drivers association established the first few camping sites along Oslofjorden and Sørlandet during the 1930s in order to assure safe and orderly facilities for the growing number of motoring enthusiasts. The alternative was problematic. Farmers, for example, had serious concerns about ‘wild camping’ that resulted in the descent of noisy, undisciplined and drunken hordes spreading litter all over valuable farmland. Yet camping also promised lucrative business opportunities. Hotel owners, for example, moved to built cabins and campsites near their existent hotel buildings in order to offer something for each to his taste and purse.¹⁹

It did not take long for drivers associations to step up their campsite construction programs, responding to the increasing number of private cars on the roads and to the attendant development of new recreational trends. The major drivers associations were the Royal Motoring Organisation (KNA) founded in 1907, the Norwegian Automobile Federation (NAF) founded in 1924 and the Drivers Temperance Society (MA) established in 1928. NAF, KNA and MA initiated and financed the development and maintenance of camping sites in the years between 1930 and 1940. The expansion of camping was interrupted by the German occupation starting in 1940.

Out of the woods

Christiania hosted the first car exhibition in 1909. The event poster portrayed a couple in a car parked in the woods with the moon hanging over the scene. During this earliest period of automotive history, only the wealthy could aspire to car ownership. It was only after 1920, with the introduction of lower cost vehicles, that the number of cars showed any substantial increase. Even at that, the population of car owners was limited. Although that story changed soon thereafter, it nevertheless forms the backdrop for the early story of camping. Bård Toldnes describes those early years in Norway. He writes that the NAF arranged the first exhibition of tents and other types of camping equipment in 1929, in connection with a meeting at the fashionable restaurant Grand in Oslo. Later the firm Steen & Strøm, also in Oslo, equipped a showroom to exhibit different types of camping equipment.²⁰

In connection with the exhibition the owner Nils Steen claimed: ‘We will show people how practically and easily one may arrange the holidays. We will educate people to praise the nature and the feeling of independence. It is ideal now that cars have been so common’. He made this statement in the 1930s, twenty years before mass motorisation broke through. Steen also described the perfect 1930s camping kit: lunch box, primus stove, wool blankets, travel gramophone, fishing tackle and (if possible) a small two-person canoe. Naturally, campers also needed a good, Norwegian-made tent that was constructed of double-canvas, enclosed at the bottom to keep out moisture.²¹

During the coming years more camping exhibitions were arranged. A 1934 exhibition in Oslo drew more than 10,000 visitors. Even then less than 25,000 private cars were registered in the country.²² The build up of a car based camping system had its parallel in other forms of road travel and tourism. In 1936, 34,000 visitors came to Norway by road, which meant bus, car or motorcycle. In 1957 the number had risen to over 700,000 and of these, 70 per cent of

¹⁸ Hundstad: ‘A Norwegian Riviera in the making’, 109-128.

¹⁹ ‘Camping’et herlig og utvunget sommerliv’, *Aftenposten* May 5, 1936.

²⁰ Toldnes: *Bilen i Norge 1918-1940*, 302.

²¹ Toldnes, *Bilen i Norge 1918-1940*, 302.

²² Toldnes: *Bilen i Norge 1918-1940*, 298-306.

the visitors arrived by car.²³ These numbers tell something about the general increase of car-based mobility in Europe. Norway enjoyed a similar trend.

In 1950 an editorial in a Norwegian car driver association's magazine referred to the following notion: 'The Minister pointed out that the tourists coming from America had hard currency, but we do also have to remember that Americans are car people. Tourists from "the homeland of the car" like to use the car when they visit Norway'.²⁴ The critical elements of this statement are both the significance of automobiles and the importance of hard currency. Norway, as well as other European countries, needed dollars to pay for the import of raw materials and production machinery. Within the context of the Cold War and of U.S. influence in Europe, one of the strategies utilized by Marshall Plan leaders was to ship American tourists to Europe for holidays. They expected that this would counterbalance the European countries' dollars shortage. In 1952, 400,000 American tourists visited Europe spending more than \$450,000,000.²⁵

The European Recovery Program had the immediate impact of drawing American tourists and their money to Europe, to the benefit of Europeans. Another result was the further growth of car travel; during this period, Europeans started touring by car. Intra-European travelers outnumbered American tourists, although the latter spent more money, paying in dollars and helping to close the 'dollar-gap'. The up-tick in American travelers also accelerated highway development. Politicians and businessmen argued that an expected surge of car drivers demanded better roads.²⁶ Subsequent development opened Europe to car transport as well as to car-based leisure travel. In this way the United States acted both directly and indirectly to shape the evolution of car based activities.

Growing car travel demanded an increase in the availability of appropriate lodging. In 1955 a Norwegian newspaper stated: 'It's quite correct that we lack motels that have become popular in the U.S. and in many European countries. The car drivers want to have them close to a gasoline station where they can wash and oil their cars, and have gasoline in the tank. . . . We have to be in line with the development of our time and give the car tourist what they deserve'.²⁷

Car driving tourism helped to promote the creation of new leisure activities. But while tourists coming from the U.S. probably stayed in hotels, visitors from Norway's neighbouring countries such as Sweden and Denmark increasingly embraced camping. In 1956 one newspaper indicated that 80 per cent of the visitors to camping sites in Oslo were from Sweden. The publication added that not only the tourists, but also the camping equipment was Swedish. Even if the number of Swedish visitors is (quite possibly) inflated, the claim indicates that the circulation of ideas, technologies and people between the Nordic countries played a vital role in filling Norwegian camp sites and in building a new camping identity and practice.²⁸

Building the car camping site system

²³ 'Utbygging av enklere turiststeder hovedoppgave fremover, *Aftenposten*, November 28, 1958.

²⁴ 'All vår kløkt og evne', *Motortidende*, no. 2, 1950, 35.

²⁵ Frank Schipper, 'Changing the face of Europe: European road mobility during the Marshall Plan years' *The Journal of Transport History Vol. 28, No. 2* (2007); Mom, Gijs, 'Roads without Rails: European Highway-Network Building and the Desire for Long-Range Motorized Mobility, *Technology and Culture Vol 46, No. 4* (2005), 763-765.

²⁶ Frank Schipper, 'Changing the face of Europe: European road mobility during the Marshall Plan years'; Gijs Mom, 'Roads without Rails: European Highway-Network Building and the Desire for Long-Range Motorized Mobility', *Technology and Culture Vol. 46, No. 4*, (2005), 763-765.

²⁷ 'Vi kommer efter', *Aftenposten*, August 22, 1955.

²⁸ 'Fredfulle campingplasser i Oslo', *Aftenposten*, July 25, 1956.

Even if car camping and the establishment of camping sites in Norway started before 1940, it was only after 1950 that it became more common. During the first years of the 1950s, sites were established in the countryside; these regularly consisted of a small field, a shed with running water and some sort of outdoor latrines. Visitors could often buy eggs and milk from the local farmer (who often operated the camping facilities). Standards were poor at best and truly bad when compared with other types of lodgings. Interest in camping did however result in improvement in terms of location and amenities. Sites appeared close to lakes, rivers and sandy beaches and also near to the major cities of Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim. Campgrounds on the southern coast of Norway and outside the cities listed above fast became the most visited facilities. At the same time, management shifted from private farmers to the drivers' associations which emerged as either owner or organiser of the majority of the sites. This meant heavy investments, frequent repairs and supervision. Despite applications by the drivers' associations for assistance from government authorities, they had little luck. Political interest in improving the quality of camping sites was limited.²⁹

The car owner associations became the major force in improving standards and increasing the number of sites. They initiated, built, supported and controlled the chain of camping sites necessary for the increasing number of campers. Furthermore they acted as mediators to inform, promote and negotiate car camping as a healthy, useful and fun activity. Although the first camping sites developed under the auspices of the Norwegian Automobile Federation (NAF) as early as 1932, it was only after 1950 that camping sites become numerous and more thoroughly controlled.³⁰ The drivers' associations put great effort into building more and better camping facilities in Norway. Gradually, a network of orderly and tidy camping sites popped up all over the country. In 1950 the NAF managed 150 camping sites. According to the association's director at that time, at least 150 additional sites were needed.³¹

In the 1950s, the rise of car camping mass tourism developed alongside the formation of mass motorisation, the car obviously necessary for car camping. In the same way camping became a showcase for the private automobile. In the 1950s car camping illuminated the attractive and tempting elements of car ownership. With a car one could travel all over the country, and not simply to the sunny and sandy beaches of the southern coast. The handbook for drivers published by NAF Veiboken in 1956 clearly illustrates this marriage between the car and a new type of leisure. It details all the essentials for a pleasant journey, but also offers instructions for how to get to the different camping sites, describes the quality of each site, and lists the leisure activities available at each location. Other more specialised books for campers were also published. These manuals helped to provide order to this new type of social life.³²

An unbeatable combination

The development of car camping in the 1950s took place during a period when much in society was in transition. By the start of the decade, the wounds of war were healing. There was a general optimism and the standard of living was on the rise. The political system was stable, not least as the result of a fast growing economy and declining unemployment. While there were restrictions on the importation of luxury items, necessities were readily available. Economic expansion and the rise of the welfare state further fueled demand for consumer

²⁹ 'Leirplassene', *Aftenposten*, December 1, 1961; 'Liten støtte hos Bratteli for campingplassene', *Aftenposten*, November 24, 1960.

³⁰ *Aftenposten*, May 12, 1934.

³¹ *Motortidende*, No. 3, 1950, 78.

³² 'Nyttig bok om bilcamping', *Motortidende*, No. 5, (1965).

goods. Finally, there was also a dramatic increase in the amount of time off available to a broad spectrum of people across the population; the average wage earner received three weeks paid holiday.

All of this had a significant impact on the development of leisure and recreational habits during these years. American films, magazines, promotions and products influenced attitudes toward consumption. Hollywood had a profound effect on consumer behavior and on leisure patterns. People wanted something other than the usual visit to rural-dwellings. Many looked for something new, different and exotic. This happened years before the appearance of package trips to Mallorca. Modernity was not only a concept proposed by engineers and city planners. It is personified by a general restlessness. As the Swedish social democrat Sten Andersson noted in 1956: 'ownership of a car gives leisure time new and exciting contents. You need not be a psychologist to realise that the car for a worker or a civil servant is a counterweight to modern industrial production and its monotony. Both as a toy and as a useful object it could barely be substituted with something else'.³³

Not everybody felt optimistic or shared Andersson's belief in progress. Some found new trends and interests scary or challenging. Norwegian Labour party member Henning Jakeln illustrated this alternative view in 1956, noting 'It would be sad if we created a society where a limited group of people should be allowed to buy cars to such an extent that we destroy the nation's economy'.³⁴ Jakeln did not show any joy or excitement over future car ownership. Although posed during a parliamentary discussion of fiscal matters, for he and for the government the car was all about the national economy. In the 1950s there were two simultaneous but different Norwegian relations to the private car. The political elite and the administration wanted to limit and to restrict the importation, sale and use of private cars. Their political legitimation for this view was fear that an unlimited import of private cars could destroy the national economy (all cars had to be imported for hard currency). At the same time, party leaders did not find private ownership of cars to be in line with the political beliefs of their party. Instead, the car represented another symbol of the old unjust society. One representative suggested that 'people's desire for cars is strong. People buy cars instead of furnishing their homes'.³⁵ This was wrong. From the party's perspective, one's 'car' should be the bus, the tram or the train.

The other dominant view has to be accessed more indirectly. Jakeln and his colleagues were not wrong: many people really wanted to own a car. A 1957 poster advertising an international exhibition in Norway shows a portrait of a man with a car instead of a head. While a curious image, it is not one born purely of a fertile imagination—consumers' desires were anything but hidden. But there was a significant barrier to meeting demand: the import and sale of private cars was tightly restricted. People had to apply for a permit from the state examiner. Only a few of the thousands who applied were successful. Consequently, anxious consumers found alternative paths to car ownership. People bought old worn out wrecks for high prices. They imported cars illegally and the black market boomed.³⁶ The encounter between these differing mentalities is interesting in its own right. In many ways it illustrates the ambiguities inherent in Labour Party policy during the years between 1950 and 1970. The party's effort to

³³ Emin Tengström, 'Bilsamhället: Bilens makt och makten över bilismen', in *Miljö, media, makt*, ed. Svante Beckman (Helsingborg: Maktutredningen, 1990).

³⁴ *Parliamentary report: 20. juni 1955: Sak nr. 5. Innstilling fra finans- og tollkomiteen om skatt til statskassen på motorvogner i budsjett-terminen 1. juli 1955-30. juni 1956 (budsjett-innst. S. nr. 207)*, 2209.

³⁵ *Parliamentary report: 20. juni 1955: Sak nr. 5. Innstilling fra finans- og tollkomiteen om skatt til statskassen på motorvogner i budsjett-terminen 1. juli 1955-30. juni 1956 (budsjett-innst. S. nr. 207)*, 2209.

³⁶ Østby, *Flukten fra Detroit*, 116–117: see also Ana-Hannu, this volume.

reconcile its socialist past with liberal (American?) consumer fantasy was no easy challenge. How to balance collective needs with the potential for a liberal society?

In spite of the rather strict regulation in Norway 10,000 private cars were sold each year, contributing to a slow but steady build up of the car fleet. Whereas in 1952, there were 77,000 private cars in Norway, in 1970 the figure exceeded 694,000. This happened in a country with 3.5 million inhabitants. Not only did the number of cars rise, cars were also used more often.³⁷ In October 1960 restrictions on import and sale of automobiles were finally removed. Before that date, however, legal restrictions necessitated that various actors fight for their views concerning cars and camping.

NAF as a mediator for the car and for camping

While national leaders did not immediately embrace the private automobile, the NAF voiced a very different position: cars were no luxury, but a necessity in a modern society. ‘Admittedly, it is so that the sight of a car with shiny paint and nickel can lead thoughts to luxury, but the way they look tells only how the costumers in these countries want it. These are standard cars, nothing more and the purchase of standard units of these types is the cheapest we can get’.³⁸

Elsewhere, the NAF noted ‘We can only explain the plan for the increased luxury tax on the basis that Governments must still consider cars as a luxury, and that it will not consider its functions in society. The car is also used for private charter tours, camping trips in the summer, etc., but should one not accept that this is justified? Is it worse to save money for a passenger car than for a motorboat?’³⁹ For the NAF, the car represented a cheap, useful tool that might also be utilised for recreation and leisure. A private car could and should be something beneficial. Camping was part of the common good; it was something that should be promoted and encouraged.

In the 1950s *Motortidende* called camping ‘the holiday of the future’; the newspaper *Aftenposten* wrote about the ‘democratisation of tourism’ and the building of ‘camping cities’.⁴⁰ Both publications saw the activity as a suitable form of recreation for the masses. *The main difference is that road travelers can travel more freely and certainly see more. You can also leave the car during the trip. Driving a car you follow the terrain quite differently than the railroad, which just on the interesting parts, constantly pops into tunnels. It is difficult to understand the apparent aversion to luxury driving that you constantly encounter elsewhere’.*⁴¹ If driving was different from the train, so too was camping a break from using hotel-like accommodations. Therefore camping was in line with the major goals of an organisation that supported car ownership in every possible way.

From the first the NAF organised educational measures to improve the abilities of car drivers as well as the well-being of children. Competitions, information leaflets and films demonstrated traffic safety while also linking the NAF to the major automotive lobbying organisation, the Information Council of Cars (OFB). The OFB acted as a kind of mediator between drivers’ organisations, research and commercial interests, and the political elite. While the NAF, the KNA and the MA obviously fought for their members, the OFB occupied a more apolitical role and argued in favour of a modern car society.

These organisations also cooperated with their European counterparts. European organisations such as Alliance Internationale de Tourism (AIT) and Organisation Mondiale du Tourism et de l’Automobile (OTA) became important partners for the drivers associations.

³⁷ Østby, *Flukten fra Detroit*, 303–305.

³⁸ Thaulow, ‘Bilens plass i transportsystemet’, 337-338.

³⁹ ‘Hva kampen gjelder’, *Motortidende*, No. 2, 1955, 38.

⁴⁰ ‘Camping - byene vokser opp’, *Aftenposten*, June 26, 1957.

⁴¹ Thaulow, ‘Bilens plass i transportsystemet’, 337-338.

The OFB had strong links to the European development and commercial organisations and to bodies such as International Road Federation (IRF). Through these links both information and inspiration on the development of road traffic and its benefits such as camping moved between the European countries.⁴²

These transnational organisations and their Norwegian associates provided a balance relative to official government opinion, embodying standards and ideologies that were, to some extent, set by their American counterparts. Sometimes American positions were adopted as they were, but more often the Europeans generated their own versions of standards and ideologies. The NAF and its sister associations acted as mediators between American ideas, state officials, political parties, and consumers.⁴³ In relation to camping we also see 'initiation'—the car camping system was initiated and formed by the drivers association. They accomplished this task through education about what camping should/could be and about how to behave while participating in the activity. They also functioned as boosters, constantly celebrating the social and cultural benefits of this developing form of leisure which they said, offered great benefits and could form an important cornerstone of the 'good life'.

Hygiene, comfort and the camping life

During the 1950s when the car camping breakthrough took place, sites owned or managed by the car owner associations set the standard for how a camping site should be. Here drivers and their families found a safe place, food and entertainment. Moving from the more rudimentary establishments of the 1930s to the professional and high standard sites of the 1950s did not come automatically. In 1950, Peter Ødegaard, the president of the NAF, inspected the camping sites in the southern part of Norway. He found many of the sites nice and clean, while others had less suitable hygienic conditions.⁴⁴ The contrast prompted Ødegaard to begin systematic work to improve standards. One measure involved the introduction of a star system similar to that used by some American firms from 1900 and by various touring organisations in Europe for hotels, camping sites, and restaurants. It was a simple, easy to understand means of describing facilities and hygiene. After an inspection by the NAF, the site was assigned a specified number of stars. The number given was apportioned according to a rigid scheme based upon types and quality of services. Cleanliness and hygienic standards were very important. Shops, cooking facilities and a playground for children generated extra stars. The number of stars (from zero to three) described what visitors could expect from the site and what they would be charged to stay. The site's score could then be painted on the camping site signs, listed in advertisements, and highlighted in the NAF's manual of camping sites in Norway.

In addition to the star system, the drivers associations also concerned themselves with pricing. Toward this end they issued camping cards, passes and carnets to ease access to camping sites. The latter represented another transnational feature, developed by international tourism organisations.⁴⁵ Ultimately, both site owners and the car associations were anxious to keep the prices on a modest level, striking a balance between covering expenses and providing an incentive to operate campgrounds while at the same time not putting off prospective campers. The camping sites managed by the drivers associations had fixed prices that were determined by the star system and by the standard of the site. The charges were regulated annually. Opening hours and rules for owners and visitors were also standardised.

⁴² *Motortidende*, No. 7, 1950, 206; Østby, *Flukten fra Detroit*, 236-239.

⁴³ Sørensen, *The Norwegian Car*.

⁴⁴ *Motortidende*, No. 7, 1950, 10.

⁴⁵ 'Mange slags camping', *Aftenposten*, May 23, 1959. Carnets were standardised documents containing information about a driver.

Barriers at the driveway often guarded the camping sites. You could not enter or leave outside the fixed time schedules.

Standards, fixed rules and economics of the camping site were one challenge for owners and visitors alike. Another was how to blend campers into a moral collective. What one could do and not do was specified by formal and informal rules. The newspaper *Aftenposten* discussed ways to protect campground drinking water, where to safely place garbage and when to be quiet in the evening as manifestations of decent behavior.⁴⁶ The drivers associations strictly defined rules that set the absolute minimum standards of personal conduct. Beyond official rules, magazines, membership circulars and various posters educated the growing population of campers about how to behave. The results were positive: grounds were tidy, prices were modest and the majority of visitors were happy.

Oddane Sand, at Nevlungehavn, not far from Larvik, is a good example of a camping site managed by a car owner association. In 1963, when the KNA bought the fields surrounding the main attraction of Oddane Sand, a fine-grained sandy beach, they not only offered places for tents and twelve cabins for campers. The site also had a shop, a sanitary building and even twelve freezer lockers for visitors.⁴⁷ It was tidy and tightly managed. At ten o'clock, staff promptly closed the road into the site. No noise during the night was tolerated. The place offered the facilities that most campers demanded while also providing easy access to a very desirable beach. There was even a special section of the site that was reserved for campers who stayed for the whole summer. These people gradually shifted from tents to caravans, illustrating the next shift in camping life.

The controlled environment of Oddane Sand was but one aspect of the summer holiday. Staying in a campground, with access to sun, sand, strict rules and safety, was the 'light' version of conquering the wilderness. There were also significant risks. Campers often drove on safe and boring highways, but they also needed (and frequently wanted) to confront scary mountain passes, to traverse remote roads and to visit out-of-the-way places. Automobiles, especially during the years when imports were limited, tended to be unreliable. Cars broke down. Cooling systems failed. Brake fluid boiled while descending steep roads on hot summer afternoons. Drive belts snapped, sometimes destroying the engine as a result. It was easy to run out of gas due to absent or malfunctioning gauges. All this regularly happened, usually far from the auto-shop. Thankfully, the NAF was there to help.

From the mid-1950s, the NAF organised what were called 'Road Patrols'. Yellow Volvo vans, with the NAF brand stamped on the side, staffed with technicians and equipped with the most common spare parts, were a common sight at the major mountain passes and along busy roads during the summer months. In 1964 the NAF had 22 such patrols.⁴⁸ The need for these vans says something about the reliability of cars during these years as well as about the risks associated with travel. The bad pavement, the sparsely populated countryside, the steep hills and the narrow roads, often along the edge of deep west coast fjords, were all challenges for the holidaymaker.

The development of the camping site system during the 1950s ushered in the appearance of associated artifacts such as tents, cabins and caravans. Cooking equipment, foldable tables, chairs, plastic cups and how-to guides emerged as well. The NAF handbook, first published in 1928, was evermore important for campers. Yes, it provided driving directions, but it was equally significant because it offered a kind of moral guidance for the camping life. Campers had to learn the liturgy and sacraments of the campsite. Carnets and passes indicated that one was part of the congregation.

⁴⁶ 'Leirkultur', *Aftenposten*, Mai 23, 1959.

⁴⁷ 'Praktfull campingplass blir utvidet', *Aftenposten*, June 10, 1963.

⁴⁸ Ståle Urbye, *Norges Automobil-Forbund - Interesseorganisasjon for bileiere eller for bilbransjen?* (Oslo: Institutt for Statsvitenskap, Universitetet i Oslo, 1973), 19.

During the 1950s, car camping developed into a ‘free church’, but it also emerged as a system based on Fordist principles, with standardised supply as well as steady demand for the camping life. It was a regime based on an ideology supporting the collective, but also based on liberal ideas. Above all, it was initiated, promoted and regulated by drivers’ organisations.⁴⁹ These bodies believed that the development of car camping was in line with their basic mission: to serve car owners. In this way the groups contributed not only to building mass motorisation, but also to the creation of a more positive and sympathetic political image of the private car that ultimately shifted state policy. All of this represented an important addition and it helped fuel the golden age of Norwegian camping during the 1960s.

The golden years of camping

In May 1960 the national newspaper *Aftenposten* wrote that camping was the best way for a family to spend a holiday and that doing so with a car represented the ultimate way to tie the family together, an impressive gift from breadwinner to loved ones. Although the car camping system was established during the 1950s, it broke through as a major summer leisure activity during the 1960s. Newspapers reported that more than two million person-nights were registered, and this only at the camping sites managed by the NAF. That same summer the largest camping site in Northern Europe, Bogstad, near Oslo, was swamped with visitors. From 1959 to 1961, the number of visitors increased by 300 per cent.⁵⁰

Rising demand was strong incentive for the further expansion of existing facilities as well as for the establishment of new ones.⁵¹ In 1964 there were 387 Norwegian campgrounds of various standards. By the end of 1972 the number increased to 532.⁵² Even this growth did not keep up with demand. Overcrowding was a significant issue and some returned to the ‘free camping’ that predominated before the 1950s. Once again many pitched their camps in fields or along roadways. It was reported that as many as 30-40 tents might be scattered on a farmer’s fields. The result was a dialogue in the late 1960s about banning camping outside of approved areas.⁵³

During the early years of the 1960s, hordes of people swamped the camping sites along the southern coast of Norway. There were various reasons for this extending beyond the developments described above. Leisure time became more important. From 1964, Norwegians enjoyed four weeks paid holiday annually. Life in the modern welfare state ushered in lower priced leisure options. For example, family-owned cabins were once a luxury item with a high price tag. During the 1960s, construction increased; by the end of the 1960s contractors built more than 15,000 new cabins each year. Prices dropped, but there were restrictions and growth was not unlimited.⁵⁴ In 1957 a new law gave municipalities the right to regulate the establishment of new cabins along the coastline. As a basic rule, no one was allowed to build a

⁴⁹ Victoria de Grazia, ‘Changing Consumption Regimes in Europe: Comparative Perspectives on the Distribution problem’, in *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, ed. S. Strasser, C. McGovern and M. Judt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 78.

⁵⁰ ‘Bogstad – Nord Europas største tre-stjerners campingplass, noterer rekord’, *Aftenposten*, June 27, 1961.

⁵¹ ‘To millioner overnattinger på NAFs leirplasser’, *Aftenposten*, July 26, 1961.

⁵² ‘Bogstad – Nord Europas største trestjerners campingplass, noterer record’, *Aftenposten*, June 27, 1961.

⁵³ ‘Forslag om forbud mot fri camping langs hovedveier’, *Aftenposten*, November 8, 1966.

⁵⁴ Finn Arne Jørgensen, ‘Den første hyttekrisa. Samfunnsplanlegging, naturbilder og allmenningens tragedie’, in *Norske hytter i endring: Om bærekraft og behag*, ed. Helen Jøsok Gansmo, Thomas Berker and Finn Arne Jørgensen (Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forlag, 2011), 37.

cabin closer than 100 meters to the shore. Anxious to be nearer the water, the tent soon replaced the family cabin for at least some people.⁵⁵ Later, caravans parked for months at idyllic coastal camping sites substituted for the tent. At the same time, demand for a place away from home, reachable by car, rose. During the 1960s most people experienced an increase in personal wealth even as the cost of living did not grow. In short, people had both time and money for recreation. As a consequence, more people spent more money on leisure.⁵⁶ However, the most important factor to boost car camping in the 1960s were dramatic political changes that happened relative to regulation of the private car.

As mentioned before, from October 1960, the government removed all restrictions on the import and sale of private cars. Now everybody who had the necessary assets could buy a car. Sales surged, as did demand for car camping. Hilarious articles in the most prestigious newspapers noted the importance of ‘the liberation’. *Aftenposten* showed a car decorated with eyes and a mouth emerging from prison. The liberation of the private car had its parallel in shifting political rhetoric. In 1960 the Labour Party was at its peak both in power and self-confidence. In a pamphlet published in the early 1960s, the party enthused ‘the decade we now are entering was baptised already at its birth. It was named the golden years. The car and the television stand out as symbols of the new level of prosperity we are now in process of achieving’.⁵⁷

Once considered a luxury and a burden on the balance of trade, the car was now vaunted as beneficial, a positive symbol of a modern society. The ruling party no longer wanted obstacles to mass motorisation; they advocated adaptations designed to serve automobile traffic. Labour Party leaders now advocated the same views that the NAF did ten years earlier. Trygve Bratteli, a key member of the government, framed it like this: ‘the car has given us access to a means of transport that seriously affect the individual and his family’s way of life. In combination with short working hours it has given us the ability to have a more free life’.⁵⁸ A freer life was something quite different from the arguments for restriction of the 1950s.

In the previous section I showed how camping was built as a new leisure activity and developed as a kind of systemic character. In this narrative the NAF and the other car driver organisations played an important role. Not only did they establish and manage the majority of camping sites, they also informed and taught camping culture. When the political elite finally embraced camping, their action coincided with a stronger focus on the practical side of camping. The driver associations’ magazines as well as the newspapers increasingly wrote about camping equipment and how to buy good quality gear. In the 1950s the average camping tourists had rather crude and homemade camping equipment. Often this was a tent without a fixed bottom and with only one room. Later, both plastic bottoms and more rooms in the tent became usual. During the late 1950s, and the 1960s a standardisation of camping equipment took place. Newspaper advertisements show the tents, the plastic table, the four folding chairs, the gas cooker, the plastic cups and not to forget, the rubber mattress, which could be used for bathing too. Yearly exhibitions demonstrating camping equipment were arranged in Oslo.⁵⁹ The camping life was formed in conjunction with the breakthrough of plastic as the most important material for outdoor life. Plastic was used for tent bottoms, for tables and chairs, for cutlery. Even the Kelly Coat raincoat became high fashion.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ ‘Camping’, *Aftenposten*, July 24, 1963.

⁵⁶ Rolf Danielsen and others, *Grunntrekk i norsk historie* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1991), 303-305.

⁵⁷ ‘Våre oppgaver 1962-65 – et diskusjonsutkast’, Outline for the annual meeting of Arbeiderpartiet, 1962, 7.

⁵⁸ Speech by Trygve Bratteli, ‘Aktuelle samferdselsoppgaver’, Stavanger Chamber of Commerce, September 12, 1963.

⁵⁹ ‘Campingutstillingen en suksess’, *Aftenposten*, June 18, 1956.

⁶⁰ Tone Rasch, ‘Raff i regn – Plastregntøy for sports- og spaserbruk på 1950-tallet’, in *Volund* ed. Gunnar Nerheim og Frode Weium (1999- 2000), 30-31.

At the same time caravans enjoyed a dramatic spike in popularity during the 1960s. In 1961 there were 1,697 caravans in Norway. Ten years later, the number had risen to 19,901.⁶¹ Many found this shift problematic. Caravans were obviously more expensive, but there were moral issues also. Moving from tent to caravan was for some to leave the collective of campers. The magazine *Motortidende* described this moral anguish with the headline: ‘Our fiancé fails – so we are considering buying a caravan’.⁶² It was like dumping one’s first love for someone prettier. Others saw caravan ownership as a mark of upward movement into the middle class. As with the private car, in Sweden this transition from tents to caravans took place more swiftly than in Norway. The caravans quite often were of modest standard, while the quality and size of tents increased more substantively. Many of the first caravans, the *Widerøe Lillebror* and the *Camping Fix*, for example, could be folded and filled with camping equipment.⁶³ These caravans were in many ways a crossover, a technological extension bridging the gap between tent and caravan. Another ‘light caravan’ was the *Combi Camp*, an example of the same phenomenon, resembling the ‘light car’ used by the middle class in England.⁶⁴

In 1965 Knut Bjørbu published his book, *Useful book on car camping*. The first thing to notice is that it was about car camping—not camping in general. Another important point is the weight placed on description of equipment and of associated gender roles; housewives were advised that they should not invest in complicated cooking devices. Another chapter described cleaning of clothes and washing up while camping.⁶⁵

Even as politicians increasingly celebrated the car as a symbol of a better life, efforts to shift responsibility for both financing and operating campsites to the government were unsuccessful. The minister of communications and later prime minister, Trygve Bratteli, did not want to promise any financial support from local or national authorities.⁶⁶ A kind of control was exercised through the Health Service System, but leisure was not seen as an activity that should be regulated in the same way as the workplace, the military, the school system, the health system, or even nutrition and veterinary control. Camping was more or less left to the car owner associations, a task these groups continued to take very seriously.

In 1968, the NAF recorded a 7.1 per cent increase in the number of people staying at their camping sites. The number of tents increased by 20 per cent. The number of camping sites managed by the NAF reached 462. It was the heyday of camping. In the years from 1950 to 1970 a great part of the Norwegian population not only purchased a private car, they also became used to a new form of tourism, summertime camping holidays. It did not last. As the price of air travel dropped during the 1970s, new travel destinations came online. Charter tours increased in popularity. Closer to home, caravans more thoroughly supplanted tents. For others, purpose built wooden cabins along the coast or in the mountains grew increasingly affordable.

Concluding remarks

⁶¹ Opplysningsrådet for veitrafikken, *Bil og vei, Statistikk for 1962* (Oslo: Opplysningsrådet for veitrafikken, 1962), 10; Opplysningsrådet for veitrafikken, *Bil og vei, Statistikk for 1972* (Oslo: Opplysningsrådet for veitrafikken, 1972), 14.

⁶² ‘Vår forlovede svikter – kan tenke seg campingvogn’, *Motortidende*, June 18, 1963.

⁶³ *Motortidende*, June 18, 1963.

⁶⁴ Craig Horner, ‘Modest motoring» and the Emergence of Automobility in the United Kingdom’, *Transfers*, Vol. 2, no. 3, (2012).

⁶⁵ ‘Nyttig bok om bilcamping’ in *Motortidende*, no. 5, Mai, 1965.

⁶⁶ ‘Bare begrenset støtte fra Bratteli for campingplasser’, *Aftenposten*, November 24, 1960.

During the 1950s the private car emerged as a key factor in the transformation of everyday life in Norway. It impacted transportation, but also leisure activities and even social life more generally. The shift was fueled by economic change, by increased leisure time, and by the rising popularity of new approaches to recreation. In line with massive growth in the number of private cars, from the late 1950s, the Norwegian population discovered camping as a new, desirable and affordable leisure activity: an ideal way to spend the summer holidays.

The relation between the private car and tourism seems to have been vital. Since most members of the public could, with careful fiscal planning, afford a car, camping as a proper, legitimate and cheap means of accommodation was ideally suited. Not only were cars and camping siblings, they were both attached to ideologies of democratic development and of consumerism. Each had an important part to play in the build-up of European industry. The pair was knitted together by consumers and by various expert mediators such as the AIT and the FIA. Indeed, the notion that cars and camping served the common good made them that much more perfect instruments for various constituencies and political groups. International organisations, for example, communicated that an acceptable shared car culture was good for Europeans in general.

Camping started in the 1930s, but it was the increase in the availability of cars during the 1950s that made it popular. Similarly, camping did not emerge fully formed. There was considerable trial and error. People had to be educated as car campers. A system for camping life was set up, but it took time. Primitive at first, car camping steadily grew into an articulated system, with systems builders, stages, challenges and solutions. The NAF and the other car owner associations initiated and built new camping sites, while also educating campers and regulating both the camping site owners and the campers themselves through both informal and formal rules. Visits were controlled in terms of camper behaviour, noncompliant site owners were policed for hygienic violations or for a lack of general orderliness. The drivers associations promoted camping through newspapers, magazines, manuals and books. They explained what camping was, how to behave, how to pick the proper equipment and to get the most out of camping. To underline its important role they set up car patrols to guide and assist the car owners and campers.

The concept of mediator is often used to describe actors that transform political controversies or deadlocks into non-political statements and actions. They may translate between different and often opposite views and beliefs. In this connection the car drivers associations—NAF, KNA and MA—built bridges and created consensus between various interests and political views. They demonstrated and promoted what was necessary to participate in camping life, whether in terms of technology or behaviours. Last but not least, they acted as gatekeepers and cleansing agents that guarded the decency and morality of the campground.

Various technologies were also central to this story. The car was obviously pivotal. At the same time camping sites became an organisational tool that framed how camping life should be undertaken. Furthermore, standardised camping equipment, as well as rules and regulations, contributed to the stability this type of leisure. Last but not least, the creation of stories, illustrations and journal reports together formed narratives that promoted and defined a new brand of recreation.