

Privacy concerns and common access along the Norwegian shoreline: tensions and possibilities

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In a qualitative part of a case-study at Saltnes, south-eastern Norway, we have explored how different groups in their recreational practices cope with two conflicting interests along a populated and developed shoreline; the right to privacy for the house- or cabin-owners and the public right of access (see also Skår et al. 2011; Wold et al. 2012; Skår and Vistad in prep.). The area of study has a rather developed shoreline, consisting of a mixture of cottages and permanent residences. A few years ago, some fences and other hindrances were removed by the municipality of Råde in order to improve public access, in compliance with national legislation and political goals. This study indicates that it is not sufficient to provide physical and juridical access, because social, psychological and cultural mechanisms remain strong barriers for use of the shoreline. People's general respect for privacy, and the need for the house-owners to protect their privacy, form strong attitudes affecting behaviour and the perceived accessibility of the shoreline.

The study is based on a qualitative fieldwork implemented as 'walking interviews' along the shoreline. This method provides specific and in-depth knowledge on experiences and attitudes. 22 locals, 16 cottage owners and five camping guests reflected on their concrete meetings and perceptions of the private-public divide in research conversations on site.

The study is inspired by the analytical perspective of cultural models from the field of cognitive anthropology (Quinn & Holland, 1987; D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992), and in accordance with Roy D'Andrade's view on cultural models as a cognitive schema which is shared inter subjective within a group of people. Cultural models deal much about our relationship to 'The Other', what kind of behavior we think is expected by others and how we think that others should behave. Such expectations are based on 'consultation' of cultural models. Thompson (2007) maintains that exercise of private right of ownership with low or no conflict is only possible with sufficient degree of shared expectations to behavior among different users. If the cultural models are either insufficient, or not shared between the actors or seem opposed to each other; conflicts will arise. According to Thompson (2007), all these challenges are present in the coastal zone, and in a higher degree than elsewhere.

Protection of privacy and the public right of access can be seen as two extremes of different cultural models. The analysis of cultural models in this study shows that users of the shoreline (both visitors and dwellers) in their recreational practices often are positioned somewhere between the two extremes (see Figure 1). By focusing on this intermediate position, we point out some areas of action that might improve the conflict situation.

Communication contributes to clarify each other's attitudes. Several of the property owners claim that if the visitor appears friendly, polite and preferably ask for permission to take a bath, they have a lower threshold for accepting public traffic on their properties, compared to visitors that appear importunate, annoying, impolite etc. The interviews even illustrate how politeness and friendliness from the house owners are important for the visitors' satisfaction with their own walk or stay. A small gesture or 'hello' from the present property owner will help clarifying a situation that otherwise is experienced as uncomfortable both for the property owner and the visitor. Thus strategies for improving communication in shore line regulations, planning and management is a field that should be explored further.

Physical markers separating private zones from public areas. Despite some negative views on dominating physical markers in the terrain, smaller markers of the public-private divides such as fences, low hedges, boulder walls, tracks, gravelling and signposts seem important to ensure both public access and the right to privacy. Appropriate passages down to and along the sea seems important to make public access possible by canalizing it past private properties. Reusch (2012) claims that paths and shortcuts have a weak juridical protection in Norway compared with several other countries. The reason, she points out, is that small paths are not intercepted in municipal area planning. She recommends municipalities to highlight small paths in the planning phase, combined with specific demands to the developer. But most important, all small paths and short cuts should be included in electronic maps. In accordance with Reusch (2012), the interviews at Saltnes expose a concern about downscaling and shortening of walking paths down to and along the sea, and several informants ask who is actually responsible for maintaining such paths.

Diffuse regulations. Both house owners and visitors ask for clearer rules, clarifying where people are allowed to walk or stay (Skår and Vistad in prep.). The public right of access allows anyone to walk on private property in the Norwegian shoreline, as long as the property is categorized as 'outfield' and consideration and due care is taken. This study indicates that the public right of access does not secure public access to developed nature areas like populated shorelines. An important challenge is connected to the fact that respect for privacy counteracts the recreational practice and the public right of access. Reusch (2012) asks whether populated parts of the coastal zone no longer should be defined as outfields, and that regulation of public traffic on private properties along the shoreline, as well as other populated areas, is needed. This means less emphasizes on the outfield-infield categories than in prevailing regulations. It even means to take those discussions into account that con-

PRIVACY	← →	COMMON ACCESS
Cabin owners an permanent residents with shoreline properties		
Avoid other shoreline private properties		Tolerate traffic on own property
Avoid other private properties when landowner is present		Allow bathing on own property
Find alternative places to walk, such as the coastal track		Greet passing people
Deny people settling by addressing them or by other signals		Accept and follow physical markers directing traffic past the properties
Place furniture or other private stuff on the shoreline		
Build or maintain physical barriers		
Reprimand people using private docks		
Cabin owners an permanent residents without shoreline properties		
Avoid shoreline private properties		Walk close to houses, because it is "legal"
Avoid private properties during summer		Argue strongly, when asked to move elsewhere
Avoid shoreline private properties when landowners are present		Use private docks
Walk as far as possible from houses		Provoke by gathering lots of people on private beaches and make noise.
Be polite and greet people		Leave garbage
Look down and pass quietly		
Walk where signs indicate it is allowed		
Find alternative places to walk, such as the coastal track		
Camping guest		
Be considerate about neighboring properties and stay on the camping site		Bathe from neighboring docks
Avoid other shoreline private properties		Argue strongly, when disturbances are commented
Walk on tracks where signs indicate it is allowed, such as the coastal track		Tolerate that other people use the camping beach
Walk as far as possible from houses		

Figure 1. Cultural models of 'Right to privacy' and 'Public right of access'.

cerns transgression of 'the right to privacy'.

Studying different cultural models in the shoreline, based on practical experiences of the users, offers the possibility to focus on changes of accustomed mental patterns and

motivations for action. We have pointed out some actions that should contribute to reduce the conflict level in the shoreline.

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