

The villages and out ports of Sørlandet in Southern Norway: maritime history and heritage staged for tourists

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Abstract

After 1880 Sørlandet in Southern Norway, the centre of the traditional shipping industry, was hit hard by the crisis that afflicted this trade. Yet, as one industry declined, so another – tourism – emerged. During the 20th century, both the coastal landscape and its perceived maritime culture were “adopted” by the tourists and adapted for tourism. Tourists “invaded” the coastal areas, the small out ports and the maritime villages with their profusion of white lapboard houses. Existing facilities were altered and reinterpreted. The maritime working culture was “implanted” into leisure activities.

Today, Sørlandet is the most important summer holiday resort area for Norwegians. Tourists and tourism mark the landscape, and put heavy pressure upon it. But the historic architecture of the villages and out ports is still relatively well preserved. This paper seeks to describe and analyse the growth of tourism, and examine how the maritime culture – particularly of the small villages and out ports – has been recycled and re-used as part of the overall seaside tourism product. Although specifically a case study of Sørlandet in Southern Norway, this paper also intends to discuss the broader aspects of this development and attempts to cast new light on the general focus of maritime culture within the overall context of tourism.

Keywords: villages, out ports, shipping, maritime, coastal landscape, culture, tourism, leisure.

1 Introduction

In many places around the world, including Sørlandet, tourism is a relatively new industry still defining its place within an older territory already marked by



maritime industries. *Traditional maritime history* has tended to focus on the shipping and fishing industries; on ships, ports and harbours, transport, shipbuilding and technological transition. On the other hand, research into *tourism* has primarily concentrated on issues such as *tourism* trends, *tourism* development and particular aspects of the 'tourist gaze' [1]. *The tourists themselves* and the *tourism industry* have been the main focus. The significance of tourism has been well documented and during recent years, the analysis has focussed on the technological, economical, political and cultural aspects [2]. Yet the *connections* between modern leisure or tourism and traditional maritime industries and cultures – and the influence of the former on the interpretation and use of the latter – have so far not gained as much attention as they deserve, at least not in the Scandinavian research tradition.

During the 20th century, traditional shipping, shipbuilding and fishing industries contracted or closed down all over Scandinavia and other parts of Northern Europe, while the tourism and leisure industries boomed. The effect of this development was complex and not all its aspects will be discussed here. My particular focus is on *why* and *how* the *memories* and the *reminiscences* of the traditional maritime culture were adapted to and adopted by the tourism industry. What happened to the maritime cultures, landscapes and townscape *after* the traditional shipping industries declined and *after* modernisation had transformed the international dimension of shipping and taken it from such local shores; *after* the fishing industry had contracted and dramatically altered the nature of its activities during the 20th century? What happened to the traditional maritime culture when tourism continued to grow during the 20th century? In what ways was maritime culture – the immaterial as well as the material; the maritime landscape and the reminiscences of the shipping and fishing industries, the architecture, the maritime villages and out ports – used and reinterpreted by the tourism industry and the tourists themselves? In this discussion I have found Eric Hobsbawm's term: 'the *invention of tradition*' particularly useful. Its basic concept is that different groups of people often pick up reminiscences of the past and adapt it to present wants, needs and visions. To put it in Hobsbawm's own words, the references to a (largely fictitious) historic past and old situations are responses to novel situations [3]. And my question is: how has the maritime tradition been *invented*, *reinvented* or *recycled*, and for what reasons?

But before embarking on my analysis, I want to present a short survey of the *decline of the shipping industries* of Southern Norway, a survey which forms the background to this paper and also identifies some general aspects, possibly common to other regions. I shall also attempt to define the terms *tourist* and *summer guest*.

2 Shipping growth and decline

The coast of Sørlandet is scattered with tiny, rocky islands and skerries, coves and bays, sometimes with small sandy beaches. The hinterland has forests, mountains – although these are not as spectacular as in other parts of Norway – and lakes. A number of small towns and villages are situated along the coast, by



the river outlets and ports, and close to the traditional shipping lanes. From east to west these are respectively: Risør, Tvedestrand, Arendal, Grimstad, Lillesand, Kristiansand, Mandal, Farsund and Flekkefjord. There are also several out ports, which are smaller than the former and often situated on islands [4]. They are all defined by their traditional 19th century architecture: mainly white, but also red and yellow lapboard houses with small squared windows.

Although some Scandinavian summer guests visited the coast for health reasons during the late 19th century, the southern part of Norway was not particularly popular as a resort area at that time. Representatives of the British upper classes – called 'salmon lords' because they were keen on fishing – as well as wealthy Norwegians, preferred to search out the rivers, deep fjords and high mountains.

Sørlandet emerged as the centre of Norway's traditional shipping and shipbuilding industry during the 19th century. All towns and villages were highly dependent on, and defined by, the growth of the maritime industries. In the 1870s, Arendal was Norway's – if not Scandinavia's – largest sailing ship port and could boast about 10% of the national tonnage. In contrast to the neighbouring towns and villages, the out ports did not have formal rights as ports during the 19th century, but they were still regularly frequented by sailing ships. The inhabitants of the out ports adapted to the opportunities offered by maritime growth and also became totally dependent on the shipping industries. Therefore these ports have been described as examples of *maritime monocultures* [5].

But from the late 1870s, Norway was hard hit by a combination of stagnation and depression in the international freight market and a strong international trend towards steam ships. As sail was replaced by steam and wood by iron and steel across the world, the shipping industry of Sørlandet lost its comparative advantage and entered a slump. The local yards closed down during the 1880s and 1890s, whilst several shipping companies went bankrupt, closed down or moved out of the region. Surviving ship owners shifted from using locally built ships to foreign vessels. Sørlandet experienced a marked decline in its share of total Norwegian shipping tonnage. In making the transition from sail to steam, the ship owners of Sørlandet were the slowest among the slow [6]. The shipping crisis of the 1920s finally sealed the fate of the industry. Thus the once so prosperous and proud towns, villages and out ports completely lost their original function. Although the fishing industry was only of minor importance on Sørlandet, the fishing crises around 1900 reinforced the same general trends.

On many occasions, researchers have considered whether it was conservatism, traditionalism or a lack of knowledge that influenced patterns of investment in Southern Norway, and hampered the transition from sail to steam. My own research into the maritime industries of Sørlandet has suggested that traditional attitude, mentality and forms of life have strongly influenced the goals and decisions of the actors. When the traditional shipping and shipbuilding industries, based on sail and wood, collapsed around the turn of the century, the mental dynamic also changed. In short, positive and enterprising attitudes were replaced by those of conservatism and resignation. As the number of jobs fell dramatically, particularly from the 1880s, thousands migrated, not only to the



USA, but also to the capital, Kristiania (Oslo) in the eastern part of Norway [7]. Yet within a few years, many returned as summer guests.

The rise of shipping and related industries was a pre-20th century phenomena whilst the development of tourism was primarily a feature of the 20th century in Norway. Thus, tourism grew into a major industry in Southern Norway as the maritime industries contracted.

3 Tourists and summer guests

What is a *tourist*? And what is a *summer guest*? John Urry's book *The Tourist Gaze* is, according to himself, about "pleasure, about holidays, tourism and travel, about how and why for short periods people leave their normal place of work and residence. It is about consuming goods and services which are in some sense unnecessary". Thus, tourism is seen as leisure in contrast to regulated and organised work, it is defined as consumption rather than production and related to short term and temporary journeys and new places rather than the familiar, the everyday and the mundane. What Urry describes as the tourist experience and the tourist gaze – with its specific anticipation, directions and constructions – is contrasted to non-tourist experiences. He is concerned about the tourists' visual 'consumption' as they see "objects constructed as signs. They stand for something else" [8].

In his book *On Holiday*, Orvar Löfgren goes back to 1840 to answer his question: "What is a tourist?" [9]. Although the aristocracy had already searched the coast during the 18th century, primarily for health reasons, a new mode of consumption was then imported from Britain; new groups of people were leaving home, they had new experiences, pleasures, and leisure.

Another Swedish ethnologist, Anders Gustavsson, introduces an important distinction between *tourists* and *summer guests* (also called *bathing guests*) in his book *Sommargäster och bofasta*. The former search for "the new, the fickle and the unexpected", as Urry puts it [10, 11]. The latter tend to favour familiarity, the replication of similar activities year on year and the reinforcing of group norms.

4 The invention of tradition, the creation of past

'We must concede the ancients their place [...]. But their place is not simply back there, in a separate and foreign country; it is assimilated in ourselves, and resurrected into an ever-changing present [...]' [12].

In the inter war period, the *vitality* of the maritime culture at Sørlandet vanished. When the region's shipping industry recovered from 1927 onwards, it was an industry of a different kind. The steam ships and motor tankers were normally built abroad and they sailed worldwide. They seldom visited their home ports and the shipping industry no longer made use of the coastal landscape. The reminiscences of the old industries were ready to be stored, in the Norwegian Maritime Museum and in other such museum collections. Moreover, archives and historical societies, many of them established during the first part of the 20th



century, were ready to take care of these memories. *Authenticity* was ready to be replaced by *staged authenticity* [13]. Or the maritime culture could be *recycled*, because there were several optional and alternative usages of it. I want to focus particularly on two of them: the maritime past as an important element in the building of *individual and regional identity*, and the *(re)invention of the maritime tradition in a tourism setting*. Eric Hobsbawm states that

“‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.” [14].

Hobsbawm states that objects or practices are liberated for full symbolic and ritual use when no longer fettered by practical use, and stresses the difference between vital, active and living societies and *staged authenticity*. At the moment they become *picturesque*, new forces, distinctive from the original are apparent. The profound and rapid social and economic transformation during the last part of the 19th and first part of the 20th century required new methods of establishing – and keeping – bonds of regional identity and connections with the proud and prosperous past [15]. Terms like *recycling*, *reinterpretation*, *reinvention*, and *(re)creation* may also be used to describe this ‘invention of tradition’.

Before turning to the growth of tourism and how the maritime culture was (re)invented in a tourism setting during the 20th century, I want to focus on how the maritime culture and history became an important part of the regional identity of Sørlandet from 1902 onwards:

5 Image building and tourism growth

The name of the region, *Sørlandet* (*The Southern Land*), was introduced by the author Vilhelm Krag (1871-1933) in 1902. The region had formerly been called *Agder* and regarded as part of Western Norway. “We have made Italy, now we must make Italians”, d’Azeglio had stated a few decades earlier [16]. The aristocratic, elegant and urban Krag was a sensation when he made his debut with neo-romantic poems in 1891. Some ten years later, his main project became the creation of a strong Sørlandet identity, among other things by establishing regional institutions like a museum, an archive and a historical association. Sørlandet should be rooted in its proud past. It was no coincidence that he introduced his great project shortly before the union between Norway and Sweden was dissolved in 1905. A strong nationalism influenced Krag’s (and others’) regionalism.

More than anyone else, Krag created and influenced the image of Sørlandet. Both the golden days and the recession around 1900 marked the characters of his novels and plays, but the latter dominated. He found the models of his characters in the out ports and down by the piers – retired fishermen, pilots and sailors. These works, in turn, influenced both locals and summer guests. Krag himself



thought that Sørlandet was without any interest from a tourist's point of view. However, tourism started to grow from 1900 onwards.

Together with the urban bourgeoisie, the artists were pioneers and trendsetters as summer guests during the early 1900s. Tourism expanded, particularly during the inter-war period. Many hotels, small boarding houses and private guest houses with basic standards were established along the coast of Sørlandet. The ship owner's residence became a guesthouse; the captain's house became a summer house; fishing boats and sailing ships were replaced by leisure boats in ports and harbours. In 1935, Sørlandet had 2,000 visitors from outside Norway, in 1939 5,241 [17]. These figures also suggest a considerable growth in the number of Norwegian visitors (which were the overall majority of the summer guests) although exact figures do not exist. Most visitors came by coastal steamers from Eastern Norway, but some also came by ferry from abroad. In 1938, the railway between Oslo and Kristiansand finally opened.

Summer guests provided a valuable source of extra income for locals. Local people acted as servants, serving well-off middle class people from the larger cities, particularly from Oslo, Norway's capital. Locals worked in their everyday environment. The holidaymakers relaxed away from home. This influenced the tourist's gaze. Sørlandet became synonymous with holiday, sun and tranquillity.

Tourism continued to grow after the Second World War, as a result of better communications, general economic growth, longer holiday for ordinary people as well as new trends [18]. From the 1960s onwards many Norwegians – some of them former boarding house guests – bought or built their own summer houses. In addition, modern hotels were built whilst some old ones were renovated. The number of campsites also grew. The increasing number of private cars highly influenced tourism. In 1950, there were 65,028 private motor cars registered in Norway, in 1960 225,439 and in 1970 747,966 [19].

The popularity of the coast of Sørlandet within Norway, not the least among Oslo people, made it a holiday destination that featured on the front pages of national as well as regional and local newspapers, particularly during the spring and summer seasons. During recent decades, pressure upon the coast, rising prices of modest summer houses (often called 'skipper houses', although several have never been captains' homes at all) as well as luxurious residences by the sea have been repetitive themes for discussion. There is a general legal ban on building in the 100-m coastal belt. Although there are dispensations, it is difficult to get permission to build new summer houses. Another theme attracting considerable discussion concerns the local residence obligation ('Boplikten', a duty to live permanently in all-year houses) which has put severe restrictions on the right to use traditional houses as summer houses. Consequently, the price of this scarce commodity has soared.

To some extent, distinctive social – and socio-economic – groups are patronizing different kind of resorts, and there is also internal social zoning within the resorts. Nevertheless, Sørlandet and its inhabitants have traditionally been, and still are, marked by social and economic equality. *The Right of Public Access* ('Allemannsretten') makes the coastline, to a certain extent, accessible to

everybody. But this ethos of equality has been challenged during recent decades by the 'nouveaux riches' – permanent residents as well as holidaymakers.

By the end of the 20th century, tourism had become the largest industry of the world, amounting to 10.6% of the gross global product and sustaining an estimated one out of every ten jobs [20]. Norwegians are expected to make 6 million travel trips in 2004; 600,000 travellers will go to Spain alone. In March 2004, *National Geographic Traveller* put the Norwegian fjords on top of their list of the world's best travel destinations. The international market is aware of the dramatic and scenic nature of Western and Northern Norway and visitors from abroad prefer fjords and mountains to Norwegian urban culture and coast. But the fjords do not have this distinguished status among the Norwegians themselves. *National Geographic Traveller* put Costa del Sol, Spain and Phuket, Thailand, on bottom of its list. Still they are among Norwegians' most popular tourist destinations abroad. But Norwegians also favour their own coast and the maritime culture. They favour warm and bright holidays by the sea to scenic views of fjords and mountains.

Today, about 90% of the holidaymakers at Sørlandet are Norwegians. As earlier mentioned many people left the region after the shipping crisis and the subsequent unemployment in the early 20th century. Later on, many of these people as well as their descendants, returned to their native soil as regular summer guests. Today, the visitors outnumber the regular inhabitants during the summer months. The vast majority of these people stay with family and friends, or have their own summer house. Lillesand, for example, has about 9,000 inhabitants and 1,740 summer houses.

Summer holidays are a journey back to the past; often childhood and family history revised. The holidaymakers have a tendency to construct a romantic past, and for many people, the maritime past of their forefathers, the days of the white sails, is an essential part of this construction. To a certain extent, the distinction between *tourists* and *summer guests* is also a distinction between *speed tourism* and *slow tourism*.

6 Conflicts of interest?

This paper has already noted that the growth of tourism from the 1920s onwards in Sørlandet coincided with the winding up of the shipping industries. Thus, the maritime villages and out ports were nearly emptied of both traditional maritime activities and traditional maritime labour. They became 'natural' and 'clean' all by themselves, without the 'help' of the holidaymakers – a 'help' which could have caused conflicts. The coastal communities were ready to be invaded by new groups, ready to be recycled according to different needs and a new culture– the bourgeois' culture of holidaymaking. At the same time, the region desperately needed alternative income opportunities. Thus, shipping communities on Sørlandet adapted to the new and growing tourism industry with less conflicts of interest than regions where maritime industries (like fishing) were still strong and continued to use the same shores (islands, ports, harbours, out ports etc.).



In the fishing community of Arcachon in France, Alice Garner states, conflicts of interest were evident from the beginning of the 1840s when tourism established itself, and particularly from the 1860s onwards. But the fishing community's interests were considered to be secondary to the newcomers' requirements [21]. She found a shift in the 1970s, because of more money, railways, roads, longer holidays etc. The conflicts of interest were:

- Spatial conflicts: Accessibility and ownership to the coastal landscape.
- Cultural conflicts: Definition of 'coastal culture' and the right to impose values on the wider society.

In England the inshore fishing industry declined steadily through the first part of the 20th century whilst resort activities grew. There were several conflicts between representatives of the old fishing communities and town planning authorities over access to the fishing villages, town planning and demolition, particularly in the inter war period. "Examples of attempts to 'tidy up' fishing quarters by demolition and redevelopment spanned England from Penzance to Scarborough, although with widely varying outcomes", John Walton states in his analysis of the British seaside. The post-war years were marked by compromises [22].

There were – and are – differences between regions where the shipping industry contracted, closed down or left the coast and went international whilst tourism was still in its infancy and those regions where the maritime industry or industries – particularly fishing – continued to develop in parallel with tourism. In several regions, all over the Western World, where the maritime industries are but history, the reminiscences have been easily adapted, reinterpreted and changed according to other needs and standards. In areas where the fishing industry developed in conjunction with an expanding tourism industry, there was a different – difficult and often ambivalent – situation; conflict but also interdependence. *Production* was dependent on *consumption*; the fishing industry was dependent on an ever expanding tourism industry. The difficulties arose from the fact that tourism normally was the leading player – the strongest partner. The fishing industry became more and more dependent on an unreliable friend.

7 Invention of the maritime tradition in a tourism setting

How was the maritime culture, history and landscape recycled, reinterpreted or reinvented during the 20th century? The maritime culture of Sørlandet, of course, gradually ceased to draw dynamism directly from active shipping, shipbuilding and fishing industries after 1900. To use Hobsbawm's words, it was liberated for full symbolic and ritual use when no longer fettered by practical use [23]. The maritime culture was ready to be *staged*.

During the inter war period, and gradually after the Second World War, certain images of Sørlandet developed. These were particularly influenced by the region's popularity as a holiday destination. Today, the most frequent images of Sørlandet are still 'the meek and slow Southerners', 'holiday, sun and summer',



‘nostalgia and romance’ set amongst a background of ‘19th century shipping, fishing, and architecture’ [24].

Some tourists expect to find ‘the real thing’ – the old, authentic maritime culture of Sørlandet. But what they often meet is staged ceremonials, *staged authenticity*, responses to the needs, tastes and standards of a growing tourism industry. Gradually, ‘Sørlandet’ has become a *trade mark*, a tourism product. As John Urry points out in his book *The Tourist Gaze*, there is an increasingly pervasive tendency today to divide up countries in terms of signs that signify particular themes [25]. He refers to I. McKay, who has described the theme of ‘maritimicity’ which developed since the 1920s as a result of the development of modern tourism in Nova Scotia: “a peculiar petit-bourgeois rhetoric of lobster pots, grizzled fishermen, wharves and schooners [...] a Golden Age mythology in a region that has become economically dependent on tourism.” [26]. Peggy’s Cove in particular has, according to McKay, become a cliché of a prosperous and tranquil fishing village that never quite existed. Can some of the same tendencies be observed in Sørlandet?

The maritime rituals have to a large extent remained static, and the artefacts, landscapes and townscapes of Sørlandet have survived more or less unaltered throughout the 20th century. But their ‘meaning’ and interpretation have changed profoundly over the years, depending on the nature of the context [27]. The need for an identity rooted in the maritime past has found many forms, on the personal as well as on the local and regional level. I wish to illustrate these points with a few examples from recent years.

Generally speaking, traditional maritime references, symbols and stereotypes have been essential in the general image-building of Sørlandet, and indeed still are. They have frequently been used in the marketing of different local products. The idea of labelling Lillesand, one of the best preserved 19th century maritime towns, ‘The Sailing Ship Town’ or ‘Slow City’ (see beyond) has undoubtedly certain elements of ‘maritimicity’.

The term “coastal culture” found its way into the Norwegian language around 1980. Cultural heritage was trendy. Old buildings and quarters were restored, and new were built in “old style”. They were used as local museums, restaurants, offices, apartments, leisure centres etc. Kristiansand got its prestigious Fisherman’s Wharf (‘Fiskebrygga’) with restaurants, shops and offices some 10 years ago; ‘traditional’ architecture, rooted in a factitious maritime past.

A wide range of summer festivals was established during the 1970s and 1980s. Most of the festivals were built upon the traditional maritime images such as shrimps, lobster and crab, wooden sailing ships and boats, 17th, 18th and 19th century shipping and trade, migration, water, traditional folk music and folklore [28]. These (mainly summer) festivals are still popular today.

As part of this ‘maritime image’ of Sørlandet, the different sailors’ choirs should also be mentioned. The majority of the singers have never been sailors at all. Nevertheless, they wear sailor’s clothes, and meet the audience’s ideas about a genuine maritime song tradition and the maritime past. They sing traditional folk songs, but also supplemented by new songs in the same idiom [29]. One



example is Lillesand's sailors' choir "Hermanos". They perform 'invented traditions', and they have adapted to modern times.

There are only three large sailing ships left in Norway, "Christian Radich" (Oslo), "Statsraad Lehmkuhl" (Bergen) and "Sørlandet", all with steel hulls. Thousands of wooden sailing ships were built during the 19th century, particularly along the coast of Southern Norway. But not a single one has survived. "Sørlandet", the sailing ship representing Southern Norway, was built as a training (school) ship in 1927 and remained as such until 1974. She never sailed overseas in commercial trade during the age of sail. But for all the people who gaze upon her in the harbour of Kristiansand, or sail on chartered tourist voyages, or join overseas cruises during the summer season, she represents the proud maritime past of Sørlandet – the sailing ship era [30]. Thus, a suitable tradition has been invented.

But not all kinds of maritime tradition are 'suitable'. Small wooden rowing (and later motor) boats, at first used as safety boats on larger ships but later for fishing and recreation, were produced in large quantities throughout the 20th century. The production of small wooden boats was nothing less than a speciality for a large part of Southern Norway, for the coastal as well as for rural areas. This industry partly replaced the production of larger wooden sailing ships. The production of plastic leisure boat production which developed from the 1950s and became a particularly successful activity in the eastern part of Sørlandet was founded on this tradition. A documentation project was initiated by the county council in 1997 but museums and historical associations were more interested than tourists and the tourism industry. Representatives of these institutions often have different goals and priorities than those of the summer guests and the tourism industry.

Initially, this question was raised: How *were*, or how *are*, the maritime culture, history and landscape recycled, reinterpreted, reinvented? As shown, the answer to the question lies in the present situation. Tourists see – or gaze at – objects constructed as signs, Urry argues. The signs "stand for something else" [31]. The 'picturesque' towns and out ports of Sørlandet, the full rigged sailing ship "Sørlandet", the sailors' choir "Hermanos", the maritime festivals, the Fisherman's Wharf and 'the fisherman' have something in common; they are signs of Sørlandet's proud maritime past and are read as representing the traditions and emphasising the continuities. The maritime past adapted throughout the 20th century to ever changing social, cultural and economic conditions. This adaptation was influenced by both national and global forces, which leads me to my final perspective.

8 The post-modern tourism and global stereotypes

Pierre Bourdieu's term 'the service class' as introduced by John Urry in his analysis of this class in a tourism context, is particularly useful in any discussion of *the global perspective* [32]. Urry describes the struggle between different social classes based upon symbolic powers rather than economic or political ones. He argues that, in Britain, 'the service class' has increasingly imposed its



values upon the wider society [33]. The service class possesses lower amounts of economic capital than the bourgeoisie, but it has higher levels of education and hence potentially of cultural capital. He observes a tendency for the prioritization of 'culture' as opposed to 'nature'. 'Nature' is popular, low, vulgar and common, whereas 'culture', on the other hand, is, with reference to holiday resorts, the natural, the unspoilt, the uncontaminated, and the healthy.

'The service class' favours 'real' and 'clean' tourism. Among their preferred destinations is Southern Norway. The 'nouveaux riches' have their summer residences with swimming pools, tennis courts, yachts and burglar alarms. These modern urban facilities have been implanted into the sailors', captains' and fishermen's traditional environment between the skerries. The summer residences are paralleled by equally fashionable residences in the cool winter resorts up in the mountains north and west of the capital Oslo. This 'urban lifestyle' as practiced at the summer resorts by the wealthy people serves as a role model for many middle class Norwegians. Accordingly, they impose their values and lifestyle upon a wider society.

As mentioned earlier, visitors see the picturesque, the historic architecture, and traditional values of Sørlandet. In June 2002, the journalist Siobhan Mulholland, after having visited Sørlandet, presented an article in *The Independent*, one of the key newspapers of the British 'service class' [34]. Mulholland found that Norway conveys to most of the 125,000 annual British visitors the ideas of skiing, snow-covered mountains, western fjord cruises and traditional knitwear. But between Kragerø and Mandal, she found "one of Scandinavia's best kept secrets". She emphasized the typical and well-preserved architecture as well as the geography – no huge hotels or high-rise apartment blocks, but local style summer houses. Why do so few foreigners visit there, she asked? Weather and price level are the main reasons. The exclusiveness of the region is why she described it as 'the Norwegian Riviera', with flashy yachts, wealthy visitors and exclusive residences.

Orvar Löfgren focuses on 'The Global Beach' [35]. 'The fishing village' is another global stereotype. In August 2002, the New York Times critic Anthony Tommasini visited *The Risør Festival of Chamber Music*. In December, he ranked the festival as number two among the world's most memorable "Moments in Classical Music", not only because of the music itself, but also because of the "idyllically located fishing village" [36]. Although there is some inshore fishing around Risør today, this small town has actually never been a 'fishing village'. Risør prospered during the 19th century because of timber export, shipping and shipbuilding, just like all the other small towns and villages along the Skagerrak coast.

'The fisherman' has also become a global stereotype. Sørlandet's stereotype of a 'fisherman' gradually departed from the real fishermen by the middle of the 20th century, the former highly influenced by the tourists' dreams and images. The fishing industry adapted to a steadily growing consumer's market: high value sea foods such as crabs, lobsters, prawns, cod and salmon dominate, instead of salted herring and cheap fish for the poor. Germans, who come to Norway to fish, have their specific imagination of 'the Norwegian fisherman'.



Norwegians also have their own ideas and images of this whilst simultaneously trying to interpret the German tourists' image of 'a Norwegian fisherman'. This process forms new images, new constructions of realities – or unrealities – new inventions of traditions. They are *unrealities* because fishing never was an important industry east of Kristiansand. However, as a result of the demands of tourism, the global images of 'the fisherman' and 'fishing village' are also linked to the eastern parts of Sørlandet.

John Urry argues that familiarity, group norms and replication of similar activities year on year have been replaced by the new, the fickle and the unexpected. Cultural change and cultural wars have also contributed to the decline of English seaside resorts [37]. He argues that the only way to cope with such cultural transformations is by embracing such changes, especially by a ruthless repackaging as Edwardian or inter-war or 1950s theme resorts. What about Sørlandet? Should towns, villages and out ports on Sørlandet adapt to global stereotypes like 'fishing village', 'picturesque maritime community' or 'picturesque shipping town'? As shown, 'the picturesque' is what often strikes a non Norwegian visitor. Norwegians also find their ideal summer dream in the traditional towns, villages and out ports marked by 19th century architecture. Apparently, here is a potential. An adjustment of the towns, villages and out ports as '19th century theme resorts' could be done quite easily. They are relatively (some would say very) well preserved. For example, the small out port Lyngør, situated on four islands in the eastern part of Sørlandet, was awarded a prestigious price as 'Europe's best kept village' in 1991 [38].

Growth and development was so modest and relative unobtrusive during the 20th century, that many towns, villages and out ports can still stand close comparison with their 19th century photographs. Three concepts, all involving Lillesand, have already been suggested: 'Slow City', 'The Sailing Ship town of Lillesand' and 'The Picturesque Towns of Skagerrak' (with reference to the white painted towns, often called 'The white pearl necklace') [39]. The 'Slow City' movement was founded in Orvieto, Italy, in 1999, and it has grown to an international network including some 32 cities [40]. The concept is based on values such as quality of life, local identity and roots, traditional food, culture and architecture, contrary to global trends, consumer mentality and mass tourism. Neither neon lights nor car traffic within the city borders are accepted. In November 2002, some locals suggested that Lillesand should be part of this movement – and thus be a part of a global maritime heritage dream world.

Local traditionalists tend to favour a repackaging or adjustment of Sørlandet's traditional images; 'the meek Southerners', 'holiday, sun and summer', 'nostalgia and romance' and '19th century shipping, fishing, architecture'. But a development based on retrospective concepts like 'The Picturesque Towns' or 'Slow City' has provoked considerable protest. Some business people have labelled the 'Slow City' concept 'reactionary'. Referring to the long and cold winter and the lack of activity, they state that "we are slow enough already" and that "we should rather speed up" [41].

In a recent book called *Blue* (2002), Knut Bry, an international award winning photographer, Kjell Nupen, a radical and acknowledged painter and Håvard



Rem, a well known author and poet, fight the traditional (meek and slow) images of Sørlandet [42]. They challenge the image created by traditional authors such as Vilhelm Krag, and supported and preserved by the 'nouveaux riches' from eastern Norway, especially Oslo, opposing the fact that the identity of the region has been and still is defined by people other than the locals themselves. The authors of *Blue* compare the present state – the '2000 image' and their visions – to the prosperity of the 19th century. They argue that during the heyday of the shipping industry, local ships sailed all over the world, creating a cultural openness. Thus, present views and future visions influence their 'invention of tradition'. On the background of recent prosperity and internationalisation, the authors suggest that the 19th century instead of the 20th century should be the focus. But not all parts of the history of the 19th century are suitable – only the positive parts, and among them the international, prosperous times of the white sails. These representatives of Sørlandet are not the only ones who want to link present needs and future visions of their region to the prosperous and industrious 19th century and the proud maritime past. Accordingly, not everybody would like the villages and out ports of Sørlandet to be repackaged as 'romantic', 'historical' and 'authentic' tourist destinations or theme resorts.

9 Conclusions

In this paper, my main focus has been on certain aspects of the development and interpretation of the maritime culture during the 20th century; a period marked over the longer term by the generally unrelenting reduction of traditional shipping industries and the continual expansion of tourism.

Why has the maritime past been particularly attractive when traditions were 'invented' during the 20th century in Southern Norway? One aspect lies in the fact that the descendants – locals and newcomers as tourists and summer guests – occupied the same landscapes and townscapes and found reminiscences and reflections of the past there. But an important aspect is also the fact that the maritime history and culture has been associated with wealth, openness and international contacts – attractive values and forms of life.

Several groups tried to conquer the maritime landscape, as well as the maritime culture during the 20th century. These groups were fighting for dominance – fighting for the right to define 'maritime culture', fighting for the right to own, develop and interpret the coastal landscape and townscapes. They used several means, and they had a number of goals. Their success – or lack of success – was influenced by the general economic, social and cultural development of Norway, in the span between local and global conditions.

In my discussion of present trends I have particularly focused on the globalisation of tourism and the development of maritime stereotypes. People *interpret* the past and adapt it to modern standards and concepts; they *invent* it, even if they themselves think they try to *reconstruct* it. Both the coastal landscape, the reminiscences of the shipping and fishing industries, the architecture of towns, villages, ports and out ports, and the song and dance traditions are involved in this process. The past develops in a continuous process



influenced by the present. This process will continue to be influenced by tourism, the world's largest and fastest growing industry.

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- [32] Urry 1997, pp. 102-113, Urry 2002, pp. 74-93.
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