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Title: **Homogeneous Landscapes**

The aim of this paper is to explore Danish landscapes as culturally framed arenas of experience. I will argue that especially some coastal areas during the national holidays have become the locus of a certain segment of the Danish population, namely the Danish middleclass. As I will show, these landscapes are accessed, perceived and consumed in particular ways, leading to an experienced homogeneity that, in spite of Denmark being increasingly ethnically and culturally complex and a subject to globalisation, supports the conception of being part of a homogeneous and, to a large extent, equal, nation.

In the first part of the paper, I present the appearance of the Danish seaside as a recreational location for the Danish middleclass. This happens with reference to Danish movies portraying not only the mentioned landscape, but also the middleclass on holiday.

In the second part of the paper, the analysis of a relationship between landscape and people is taken further through the introduction of anthropological perspectives on time, consumption and perception. Drawing on ethnographic interviews and observations of how perception of landscape and nature is influencing human behaviour, I will show how difference and differentiation between people come to fall outside the field of vision.

In the final part of the paper, I will argue that conceptualising the Danish nation through ideas of homogeneity, equality and sameness, rather than being the outcome of the imagination (Anderson 1991), can be understood as a result of impressions and memories.

Discovering a landscape:

“When I was 5 years old I had a strange experience. Together with my friends I witnessed the recording of the silent movie *Vester vov vov*. Fy and Bi (the main characters of the movie) were fishing from the beach close to my home.

Using fishing poles, they threw their bait against the waves and the rising tide. It was the stupidest thing we had ever seen. How could anybody imagine that they could catch anything at a place that, one hour earlier, had been a sandy beach.”

The recording of *Vester vov vov* took place in 1926 just outside the small Danish fishing village of Løkken on the west coast of Jutland. In many ways, it was a strange movie. Not only in the eyes of my grandmother, who was the daughter of a local fisherman, but also regarding the plot and the choice of location.

Vester vov vov is a love story about a beach-wardens daughter and a young man of unknown descent. When the beach-warden opposes the relationship between the young couple, they receive help from the two kind tramps, Fy and Bi (Long and Short in the English version), who have set up a provisional hut on the beach. Through many entanglements including hooking a whale, the hut blowing into the North sea, stranded ships, smugglers and beautiful women, Fy and Bi manage to uncover the fact that the young man is the lost son of a wealthy English couple. This of course changes the beach-warden's attitude and ensures the film a happy ending.

Regarding the location, *Vester vov vov* was one of the first films to make explicit use of the Danish landscape¹. While most other Danish films at that time were shot at dramatic locations in Norway and Sweden, *Vester vov vov* introduced the west coast of Denmark and the North Sea as a spectacular scenery. This way of perceiving the Danish landscape was new, not only to the film audience, but also to our eyewitness on beach. Of course she would, from time to time, climb the dunes to look in the direction of the vast sea, but unlike the film audience, her attention would rarely be aimed at the panoramic scenery, but rather the expected appearance of her father's fishing vessel.

¹ Portraying the landscape as spectacular had been done by painters for more than a century. Paintings, however, were only accessible to a rather limited audience, unlike movies that, in the words of Walter Benjamin, have the quality of being easy to technically reproduce (Benjamin 1998 p. 134).

During the 1930s, car owners (often manufacturers and wholesalers) from the larger Danish cities began exploring more remote coastal areas². What they were looking for was an unobstructed view to the spectacular horizon as presented in *Vester vov vov*. This affected the visitors' engagement with the local landscape, and, as a consequence, small coastal towns like Løkken and Blokhus on the west coast, and Ebeltoft on the east coast of Jutland, started growing. The logic behind their growth was very different from that of industrial cities. Rather than factories and housing areas, hotels were erected and, like Fy and Bi, some of the urban visitors began to construct cabins and small houses in the dunes and hills along the coast overlooking the sea³. Marginal land, of little interest to the local fishermen and farmers, who lived further inland, could be purchased for relatively little money, and, by the 1950s, large areas of dunes and other types of Danish coastal landscapes had been sold by locals to urban investors.

From the 1960s, the urban commercial and industrial elite were followed by the upcoming Danish middle class, consisting of employees who, thanks to the economic boom of the 60s, had become house and car owners. Due to their status as employees, visits to the sea were restricted to national holidays. The result was a seasonal mass tourism and the appearance of a tourist industry, including a new type of real estate agency aimed at making profit from parcelling out land along the coast and selling the new "must have" of the Danish middle class – a "Sommerhus".

Today, more than 200,000 second homes, in the guise of cottages, cabins and houses, are spread along the Danish coastline (Skifter Andersen 2008).

² An exception was the island Bornholm, which had been discovered by German tourists before World War 1. However, it was not until the 1930s that Danes started visiting the island for recreational purposes.

Another exception is the small fishing villages on the north coast of Zealand. They had been attached to the railway system in 1924, and could be reached on a day trip from Copenhagen.

³ To mention an example, manufacturer Frederik Obel, already in 1927, bought a large piece of land south from Løkken from a local schoolteacher, where he, in 1933, erected a modern functionalistic cottage overlooking the sea.

The appearance of a new consuming class:

Since the making of *Vester vov vov*, the landscape, and especially the horizon, has become a desired commodity obtainable for anything from the buying of a movie ticket to a cottage overlooking the sea. From being part of an exotic movie adventure in the late 1920s and an extravagant activity reserved for a class of wealthy urban industrial entrepreneurs, enjoying the vastness of the Danish coastal areas during the 1960s turned into a realizable dream for the upcoming middle class.

Becoming accessible to the middle class had a significant impact on the cinematic representations of the Danish seaside. From the mid 1950s, the choice of main characters and the presentation of the chosen locations, as well as the narrative composition of the movies came to reflect the appearance of the new consumer orientated class.

In *Vester vov vov*, the main characters had been two unemployed tramps, locals and a young man of unknown decent. This was not the case in "*Far til fire på landet*" from 1955. In this movie, a widowed father from Copenhagen, his four children and his brother go on a holiday to a small fishing village at the east coast of Jutland. By coincidence, it turns out that their neighbour from home is also spending the summer in the village. He is a young man and very interested in the oldest daughter of the widowed father. Fortunately, the young woman shares his feelings, which, after the necessary narrative entanglements, results in a summer romance. As for the three other siblings, they make friends with two children spending their holiday in a luxurious "sommerhus." Together, they explore the countryside and provide the more dramatic passages in the movie by getting caught in a small boat on the wild and spectacular sea.

Regarding the father and the uncle, they spend their time relaxing, the former by reading police novels and the latter by painting the landscape.

Far til fire på landet differs from *Vester vov vov* in at least three significant ways.

Firstly the local population in *Far til fire på landet*, in contrast to in *Vester vov vov* is reduced to an exotic and stereotypical background. Instead, the urban middle class, outliving its middleclass dramas, is imported into a locality that it finds is simultaneously recreational and worth exploring.

Secondly, in *Far til fire på landet*, the seaside location is presented as being spatially connected to the urban middle class. While the world of *Vester vov vov* was located far away in a remote and isolated part of Denmark, the opening scene in *Far til fire på landet* is the home of the middleclass family in a Copenhagen suburb. After deciding to go on holiday, which in the movie is presented as an essential starting event, the family embarks on a journey towards the main location. At the end of the movie, this journey is repeated in the opposite direction, bringing the main characters back to their home in middle class suburbia⁴.

This connection between middleclass life and the seaside is to be found in many later films presenting the Danish seaside as spectacular and picturesque⁵. The journeys happen either by car, by sailboat or by public transportation, indicating not only how to reach the locations, but also that it can be done by most people and with relative ease.

Thirdly, the narrative composition, in regards to temporality, differs to a great extent between the two movies. In *Vester vov vov*, the timeframe is set *by* the drama. The main characters arrive at the location more or less out of coincidence. In spite of their nomadic nature (being tramps), they nevertheless feel commitment to staying as long as it takes to uncover and solve the local drama, and thereby postponing their departure into an undefined future. In *Far til fire på landet*, the drama unfolds, culminates and finds its' happy ending *within* the narrative framework of a summer holiday. The main characters in the latter film arrive at the location as a result of an epoch-making decision (deciding where to go on holiday), they camp at campsites or stay in second homes, which are paid for and accessible in a predefined period of time, and finally they leave at a fixed date in order to return to their everyday life. In other words, the location in *Far til fire på landet* is presented as a reachable commodity at the periphery of Denmark, consumable (including its dramas and narratives) within the limited period of a holiday.

⁴ The journey itself is not visually present in the movie, but merely indicated through departures and arrivals. Nevertheless the mere indication of a journey between defined locations is nothing less than an establishment of a connexion.

⁵ Especially the island Bornholm has been intensely promoted through films like *Far til fire på Bornholm* (1959), *Sonja på Bornholm* (1969) and latest the trilogy *Tempelriddernes skat I, II and III* (2006, 2007, 2008) as possible to reach.

Consuming leisure time:

After having introduced the middle class's appearance at and approach to the seaside through references to Danish films, I will now analyse the forces behind and the outcome of these excursions to the periphery of Denmark.

To do this, further exploration is needed of the relationship between certain temporal conditions of a capitalist mode of production, and of what one can call the phenomenology of the horizon.

Regarding the temporal conditions of capitalism, they, as it will become clear, have a fundamental significance in relation to constituting holiday as a phenomenon.

According to anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, leisure time is a product of work. It is, he states, "time left over from work, produced by work, and justified by work."

(Appadurai 1996: 79)

Leisure time, including holiday, is a commodity, in the sense that it is bought by selling labour. As a commodity, it is detached from the sphere of production, but, as Appadurai indicates, it is, nevertheless, surrounded by it. Although holiday is spent outside work, it presupposes work, and because it does not produce or provide means to support a livelihood, going on holiday to most people implies an obligation to return to work. In that sense, it resembles many other commodified objects of consumption.

Nevertheless, being of an exclusively temporal nature, leisure time (including holidays) to a great extent faces the risk of being used without being properly consumed.

This is not to say that other commodities lack temporality. On the contrary, being temporal is true of all commodities⁶. They can deteriorate, break or fall apart without being consumed. However, leisure time, unlike most physical objects, is a commodity without any predefined substance. Its content has to be infused by the consumer before it can be consumed⁷.

⁶ According to Marx the exchange value of a commodity (which is what makes it a commodity) is inseparable from time in the sense that by nature it is an investment in a future realisation of the commodity's use value (Marx 1970: 2. Book p. 271).

⁷ To put it another way, one can say that, whereas the substance of a wasted object can be understood as a loss of inherent qualities leading to a state of dischargeable waste, wasted time might not even reach the point of acquiring any content to discharge before it vanishes into nothing.

This puts pressure on consumers and explains why leisure time, in order to optimize its use value in relation to relaxation and leisure, to many people has to take place, acquire content and gain substance in ways and at locations significantly different from everyday life.

Going away marks time as different, and spending it at special locations doing special things fills it up and prevents it from vanishing without a trace.

The idea that holidays have to be spent away from everyday life corresponds with a survey made by the Danish sociologist Hans Skifter Andersen in 2008. When asked for the reason for owning a second home, 78 percent of the respondents replied their need to get away from everyday life (Skifter Andersen 2008). In that sense, owning or renting a second home can be understood as a means, as well as an end, to spending leisure time, or, to put it differently, as an investment in optimising the chances of a satisfying consumption of leisure time. Spending time at the seaside in a “sommerhus” in this way implies a line of consumption of commodities, springing from a capitalist mode of production, starting with the commodification of time through leisure time (cf. Appadurai), and stretching to the commodification of space through the owning/buying or renting a second home.

The mentioned commodification of time and space has a significant impact on the demographic constellation of the coastal areas during, especially, the summer holidays. Although spending time in a second home is a cherished way of consuming leisure time, it is not an option to all Danish citizens. Because the landscape is commodified to such an extent that there is almost no space outside that of the market, second homes are only accessible through ownership, or because they are let by owners with the purpose of making a profit. Therefore, a stay at the seaside is an expensive enterprise.

According to the Danish real estate company EDC, the average price of a second home in Denmark in 2009 is 1.265.000 Danish kroner (almost 170.000 euro) (EDC). In Denmark, investments in real estate is generally financed through loans from building societies and mortgages. This means that second homeowners, including the expenses related to their primary homes, are bound to pay a considerable amount of instalments and interests on a regular basis. As a consequence, the total income of a family owning a second home has to be at above the Danish average. While about half of the Danish families in 2008 had a

total annual income lower than 300.000 D.kr (40.350 euro), this was only the case for 22 percent of families owning a second home (Hjalager 2009: 34)⁸. As for the majority of the second homeowners, in comparison with total Danish population, they have a tendency to have relatively good jobs and relatively good salaries.

In other words, it is not very likely that poor people own a summerhouse. If this segment of the population wants to spend their holiday by the sea, their only option is to rent a second home or to stay at a campground. Renting a second home, however, is almost as expensive as going to, for instance, southern Europe on holiday, and since most of the second homes are located outside the coastal towns, having access to a car, which, in Denmark, is an expensive and heavily taxed good, is crucial. This adds to the fact that poor people are only rarely to be found near second homes in Denmark⁹.

Finally, this is not only true of poor people on holiday. In general the welfare state is only very weakly present at the Danish seaside. Being peripheral to urban centres, social housing and other institutions aimed at helping people in less fortunate positions are almost absent. As a single exception, a refugee centre for asylum seekers is located near the centre of the small coastal town Blokhus, 15 kilometres south from Løkken. The choice of location has caused massive protests from locals, culminating in 1986, when the centre was attacked and set on fire.

⁸ It should be kept in mind that 1.265.000 D.kr. is the average price of a second home if it was to be sold in 2009. This means that it is possible to find a cheaper house (below the average price), and that many houses bought before the turn of millennium (before the economic boom and the rising prices on real estate) were purchased for a much lower price than they would be today. Finally, many of the second homeowners having a total income below the Danish average are retired senior citizens who have owned their second homes for many years and for many parts have paid out their debts and mortgages.

⁹ Regarding the campgrounds, a protest movement in 2005, consisting of local citizens in Løkken, at the west coast of Denmark, were successful in forcing the owners of two major camping grounds to close down their facilities. The reason for their protest was that Løkken had become a favourite destination for young people who wanted to spend their holiday pub-crawling the bars and discos in Løkken. Interestingly enough, the protest movement directed more anger towards the camping sites than the facilities selling alcohol, which indicates that their ambition was to prevent unwanted people from staying in the town rather than preventing the drinking of alcohol. After the successful action against the “unwanted people,” the tourist association, according to its president, has put a lot of effort into re-establishing Løkken “as it was in the good old days” (<http://www.dansk-costablanca.com/article.212.html>)

Regarding other immigrants than asylum seekers (including members of the Danish middleclass population), there is a strong tendency to spending holidays in their home of origin or at tourist destinations outside Denmark¹⁰.

As a consequence, the rural Danish seaside can be described as a filtered landscape, accessible to and consumable by only the Danish middle and upper classes¹¹.

Opening up horizons:

After having argued that the seaside is a demographically filtered landscape, I am going to focus on the perception of the landscape.

As already mentioned, the displacement from everyday life by a vast majority of second homeowners is considered an important precondition for fully making use of leisure time. The importance of an escape from everyday life for a second home owner is made clear in the following extract from an interview with a 40 year old man:

“Just being able to get out in the car and leave everything. Just leaving all your trouble behind and not thinking about work and all that. That’s the good thing about the journey; after half an hour I begin to relax, and when we are approaching the ‘sommerhus’ (after a one hour drive), I’m relieved and in a better mood”¹².

According to this second home owner, the journey to the second home can be understood as a differentiating displacement creating a distance from everyday life that is far more than just spatial. It seems to have an almost cleansing effect, removing bodily tensions

¹⁰ To my knowledge, there is no present consistent research done in Denmark on how immigrants spend their holidays. However, qualitative interviews with immigrants concerning their relationship with their country of origin indicate that this is their favourite and most frequent choice of destination (Vacher 2005, Rytter 2006).

¹¹ According to the Danish *Law for Protection of the Environment*, paragraph 22 (*Lov om naturbeskyttelse*), the public has the right to access all beaches regardless of private ownership. However, all access must happen by public paths or roads or private paths or roads open to public traffic (Miljøministeriet 2007).

So, in theory, the public can use any beach it likes, but in order to do so it has to traverse a highly privatised landscape with no public parking, facilities or public paths.

¹² All interviews cited in this paper were carried in relation to the project *The Second Home*. The project took place in 2008-2009 and was funded by Centre for Housing and Welfare Copenhagen University and The Realdania foundation.

and bringing out a different state of mind. In this way, the journey institutes a liminal condition, which, I will argue, has a considerable impact on the perception of the environment.

This becomes very clear in relation to *Nature*. When interviewed about the relationship between the environment and their second home, owners frequently refer to *Nature* as an external and overwhelming entity one can expose oneself to. One can swim in the ocean, get “blæst igennem” (literally: blown through) by the wind, get sand between one’s toes, get wet in the rain or shone upon by the sun. “*Nature makes you feel small*” is a very common statement.

On the other hand, when asked about *Nature* in relation to everyday life, it is most likely to be described as being absent. The cause of this has nothing to do with an absence of vegetation or not living by the seaside. In fact, the two major cities in Denmark (Copenhagen and Århus) are coastal cities with many locations presenting open views to the sea¹³.

What differs is the perceived opposition of *Nature* and Man. In everyday life, the body often serves as an instrument of labour. One sees, smells, listens and touches in order to serve, organise, provide or produce. In this process, the wind is likely to be too windy, the sun too hot, the rain too wet, sounds too low or too high, and sand is not supposed to be found between the toes but rather in mortar or as stabilizer beneath pavements.

On holiday, the body has a completely different status. Then it is not supposed to be an instrument of labour, but rather an aesthetic receiver of sensory impressions. *Nature*, in relation to this bodily condition, becomes something one exposes oneself to in order to see, smell, hear and feel. In other words, *Nature* becomes like art performed in front of an audience. The extent to which *Nature* appears as an artist is not only experienced through sensational impressions, it also has its material expressions. Stones, pieces of wood and seashells found on the beach are used as decoration in many second homes in Denmark. These objects are formed by *Nature* and appreciated as such. In primary homes, this phenomenon is rarely found. Here, decorations are typically produced and shaped by man.

¹³ Being located at a bay some locations in Århus even share the same view as the many second homes situated on the opposite side of the bay.

If the relationship between *Nature* and people on holiday can be described as resembling that of an artist and her/his audience, what then constitutes the stage for this performance? The answer is this: everywhere and every time *Nature* appears as spectacular. This can be the dune when the wind is strong, the beach when the sand is felt between the toes, the ocean when one swims in its water, or every time one finds a shell or a piece of wood worth admiring, sometimes even bringing it back to ones second home.

However, I will argue, the most appreciated stage along the Danish coastline is the horizon. One of the clearest statements of this can be found beside a particular bench in the old part of Skagen (a coastal town in northern Jutland). This bench overlooks the sea and is a very popular place to watch the sunset. Next to the bench is a signpost, informing tourists that it is custom to give an applause when the sun sinks beneath the horizon. In this way, the sun is presented as an actor performing on its stage, and, as such, it is given applause by its audience.

How well appreciated the horizon is also becomes clear if one takes a closer look at the architecture of Danish second homes.

Unlike most Danish first homes, which are surrounded by cultivated gardens (the typical Danish middleclass home is known as “the parcel house”, which, among its various qualities, is praised by many Danes for being a building one can walk around (Sjørølev 2008)), the second home facing the sea is better understood as being stretched out between a small plot of land and the horizon. Through windows and transparent walls, the horizon is invited inside the house, opening up space between the house and the horizon.

The importance of the open space was expressed to me during an interview with a couple building a new second home. Their application for a construction permit had been turned down twice, because they had deliberately handed in applications and plans placing their future second home too high on their hilly plot of land.

“We knew that it was too high, but it was worth taking the chance, since it would ensure us a better view overlooking the sea. First, we tried to make them accept one metre, then we tried 50 centimetres. Unfortunately, they turned down both

our applications, so now we just have gotten the ordinary permission, and will then build just a little higher, hoping that no one will notice it”.

Because of their efforts to gain a broader view of sea and the horizon, the construction of their future second home had been delayed more than a year.

This effort to establish a free vision and unobstructed gaze is not only a question of building high enough. It also organises the outside where the surrounding landscape is often uncultivated (or rather cultivated in way that makes it appear uncultivated) in order not to distract or obstruct the openness established by the remote horizon. Despite the fact that much of the land surrounding second homes is labelled “Naturgrund” (nature ground), it is regularly maintained to prevent it from “springe i skov” (literally meaning: jumping into forest) because trees blocking the horizon are perceived as obstructing the view to the ultimate stage of (art) performance by *Nature*¹⁴.

Why is this scene so important to second home owners?

In order to analyze this obsession with open space, I will refer to the work by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In the introduction to part one in *Phenomenology of Perception*, he examines the relationship between gaze, object and horizon. An object and its horizon, he claims, are not two distinct features, but a mutual and simultaneous constitution established by a gaze. Only if “I close up the landscape”, he says, can I “open the object” (MP [1945] 2009: 78). In other words, it is by putting the surroundings in abeyance that the object is differentiated from the total (open) landscape of possible appearances, and gains identity as something particular.

This closing up, or freezing, of the landscape is what constitutes Merleau-Ponty’s notion of horizon. The horizon as closed surrounding is literally all around the object, and, because it is surrounded by horizon, it is, so to speak, dragged into the centre of the landscape. In this way, the horizon as surrounding represents a multitude of potential and

¹⁴ Even if (which is most often the case) second homes do not have an actual view of the sea, access to the seaside and a view of the horizon is included in the description of the qualities of many second homes. Thus, walking up into the dunes, finding a spot overlooking sea and watching the sunset while sharing a chilled bottle of white wine is frequently mentioned as one of the most cherished pleasures of owning a second home along the west coast of Denmark.

other possible perspectives on the object. Or, to put it in the words of Merleau-Ponty, “I already perceive from various angles the central object of my present vision. Thus every object is a mirror of all others” (Ibid.: 79).

While the aim of Merleau-Ponty is to explore and explain the perception of objects, my concern is somehow the inverse. What happens when the focus of attention, instead of being an object, becomes the thin line dividing the sea from the sky?

As indicated, it is in the mirrors of the surrounding horizon that an object gains substance and identity as an object. However, the thin line cannot be surrounded. There is no beside or behind and no mirrors except for maybe the sun, which sinks from above to below the horizon without creating any spatial differentiation¹⁵. As for the thin line, there is only one possible perspective – that of the gazing subject.

What can be drawn from Merleau-Ponty’s statements about gaze, object and horizon, is that, by gazing at the horizon, no objects are constituted, no differences are established, and no alternative perspectives articulated. By gazing at the horizon, Merleau-Ponty’s point about closing up landscapes in order to open objects is turned upside down, resulting in an uncontested landscape, free of challenges, duties and expectations. This, I will argue, is the fundamental quality of the horizon to the Danish middleclass. From a competitive everyday life related to the production of objects and services, the luxury of opening horizons and suspending objects brings the kind of leisure and relaxation that ensures leisure time to be radically different from work time and everyday life, and thereby ensuring it to be consumed rather than wasted¹⁶.

¹⁵ There seems to be no other than vertical distance between the sun and the horizon. In fact, at sunset it looks as if the sun is being swallowed/absorbed by the horizon rather than sinking behind it.

¹⁶ This is not to say that the middleclass on holiday is unaware of differences. On the contrary it is, as described by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, obsessed with distinctions (Bourdieu 1984). Thus comparing second homes and knowing the locations of second homes of famous people are frequent topics in conversations between middleclass second homeowners. However when watching the horizon, the sunset and the open space created by the sea differences and distinctions disappear opening space for an experience of ultimate opposition to work and everyday life.

Returning to the second homeowner expressing his relief of escaping everyday life, one can say that if the journey is an escape from the unpleasant nitty-gritty of things, details and commitments then the scenes of *Nature* culminating in the sunset behind the horizon come to represent the absolute opposite, namely the absence of worries.

The focus on the horizon in this way adds a further dimension to my point about the filtered landscape. Apart from being a relatively homogenous segment of the Danish population, the people spending holidays along the coast of Denmark by looking at the horizon come to share the same perspective regardless of whatever differences and distinctions they might otherwise differentiate and categorise each other through.

Conclusion - Imagining communities:

What I have shown above is how in some parts of Denmark a relatively homogeneous segment of the population is occupied by looking at the same phenomenon. If this phenomenon includes a sunset, gazes will not only be in the same direction (being west) but also take place at the same time. Finally this phenomenon unlike objects or actions reveals only one single perspective, namely that of an open, horizontal and incontestable space (nobody can own the horizon)¹⁷.

In his famous book *Imagined Communities – Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* Benedict Anderson analyses the logic of nations and nation building (Anderson 1991).

Taking as his starting point the fact that members of even very small communities cannot possibly know all the other members of the community, he argues that more complex communities like nations are to be understood as imagined rather than empirical entities. Throughout the book he convincingly shows how an imagined entity is established through maps, censuses, novels and especially newspapers. What these printed and easily distributed artefacts make possible are visual and conceptual abstractions of spatial

¹⁷ Which does not mean that people do not argue about views. On the contrary many of the complaints received by the municipality in Løkken are, according to the local Highways Department, about neighbours obstructing views by not maintaining vegetation, expanding their second homes or trespassing too close to a private terrace. These complaints however are related to the point of view rather than the viewed upon.

boundaries, simultaneity and shared reference to places and events. Or in other words “a sociological landscape of fixity” in which “the horizon is clearly bounded” (Ibid.: 31). These abstractions, he argues are way beyond the possible empirical experience of the individual human being and therefore their success as articulations of the widespread phenomena of nations and nationalism can only be understood as powerful imaginaries¹⁸. The important question however is what it means to imagine? In Anderson's book one finds rich accounts of what people imagine and how their imagination is fed by various expressions. What one does not find is a discussion of *why* people imagine? Why do people imagine and believe in phenomena they read or hear about? The simple answer is because they are possible, make sense and fit what we already know. In other words “that the possibility is in some sense very like reality” (Wittgenstein 1994 §194). This, according to the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, is the logic behind believing in any abstraction or representation. What I have tried to present in this paper is an experienced reality which if not resembles then makes it meaningful to imagine a homogeneous nation.

The Danish seaside may always have been picturesque. But it was not until a population with leisure time, money to spend and means of transportation began searching for ways of spending time that it became a commodity. Then on the other hand it rapidly changed from being a local landscape with a local population living in local social hierarchies (including beach wardens, tramps and English immigrants like in *Vester vov vov*) into what Anderson labels an undifferentiated sociological landscape with a very specific horizon (Anderson 1991: 31). In this process local inhabitants have been transformed into stereotypes producing an exotic background to a social scene, which has been invaded by a certain segment of the Danish middleclass.

This segment of cause consists of different individuals with individual taste, opinions and preferences. Nevertheless staying in second homes next to other people staying in second homes, watching the sun set next to other people watching the sun set and sharing with them the openness of the same horizon makes the existence of an even wider community an easy and reasonable abstraction to believe in.

¹⁸ That the imaginary can be powerful to a lethal extent becomes evident every time a soldier kill or get killed in the name his country (Anderson 1991: 144).

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