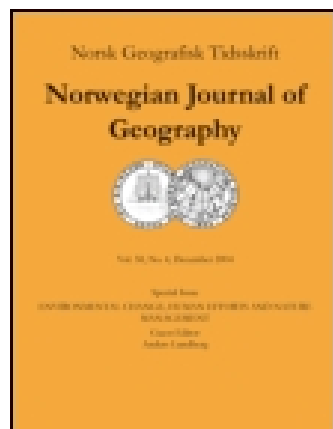


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Geography, Law and the Emotions of Property: Property Enactment on Norwegian Smallholdings

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Flemsæter, Frode. 2009. *Geography, Law and the Emotions of Property: Property Enactment on Norwegian Smallholdings*. Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor, Trondheim, December 2009. Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Technology Management, Department of Geography. Doctoral theses at NTNU, 2009:263. NTNU, Trondheim. 140 pp. ISBN 978-82-471-1942-6 (printed ver.), ISBN 978-82-471-1943-3 (electronic ver.), ISSN 1503-8181.

In 2001 and 2003, reforms were passed to the Norwegian Act Relating to Concession in the Acquisition of Real Property with the intention of increasing the price of rural smallholdings. Originally passed in 1974, the Concession Act requires owners of agricultural properties over a certain size to seek permission for the sale of their property. Prices are controlled and owners are required to inhabit the property and either farm the cultivated land themselves or rent it to another farmer. At the same time, the Allodial Act ensures that in many cases only close relatives can inherit agricultural properties over a certain size.

Farming has nonetheless ceased on many properties, with the number of active farms decreasing by approximately one-third in the last decade alone. One in five agricultural properties with buildings is uninhabited; many others are used as second homes. The reforms of 2001 and 2003 therefore increased the threshold at which the requirement to seek concession kicks in from 0.5 ha to the current 10 ha or 2 ha of fully cultivated land. Given the large numbers of Norwegians who would like to buy a rural smallholding, it was hoped that sales prices would then increase, prompting owners of abandoned properties to sell them. The aim is to combat rural depopulation by encouraging people to settle permanently in rural communities – to ensure, as a local authority project puts it, *Lys i alle glas*: 'Light in all the windows'.

The starting point for this book, the author's doctoral thesis, is the observation that the desired effect has not been forthcoming. Relatively few people have actually sold their smallholdings. Owners of smallholdings who are 'no longer owners of agricultural properties in the *legal sense*... behave as if they were, i.e. they adhere to the Allodial Act' (p. 49). Keeping property in the family is more important, it seems, than making money.

Placing such emphasis on the social embeddedness of property is often seen as characterising 'customary' tenure systems rather than the Western or liberal ownership model. One aspect of that model is the assumption that owners will tend to maximise profit and deny anyone else a say in what should happen with their property. The recent literature in legal geography has criticised the dominant model not only for privileging the individual but also for its empirical (in)accuracy. Scholars such as Nicholas Blomley argue that the dominant ownership model depicts property as fixed and static rather than continually enacted in everyday practice.

The muted response to the legal reforms in Norway therefore provides a promising opportunity to research an issue of relevance to current theoretical debates as well as social policy. Flemsæter seeks to explain the failure to open up the market in rural properties, identifying the key factors that influence how smallholders think about their properties. He undertook research in four local authority districts in different regions with contrasting economic and landscape characteristics. After an initial postal survey of 164 owners and former owners of smallholdings, he interviewed 21 people who had either sold their property recently or considered selling but decided against doing so.

Bye, Linda Marie. 2010. *Bygdas unge menn. En studie av bygdemenns forhandlinger om og utforming av «rurale maskuliniteter»*. Avhandling for graden philosophiae doctor, Trondheim, februar 2010. Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap og teknologiledelse, Geografisk institutt. Doktoravhandlingar ved NTNU, 2010:21. NTNU, Trondheim. 81 s.+artikler. ISBN 978-82-471-1998-3 (trykt utg.), ISBN 978-82-471-1999-0 (elektr. utg.), ISSN 1503-8181.

Linda Marie Bye behandler i sin avhandling forhandlinger om og utforming av rurale maskuliniteter blant et utvalg av unge bygdemenn. I arbeidet del I gjør hun rede for formål og problemstillinger, samt de teoretiske og metodologiske ansatsene som de tre publiserte artiklene i del II bygger på.

Tematisk og samfunnsmessig tar avhandlingen utgangspunktet i den norske diskursen om bygdas unge menn som marginaliserte «tapere». Denne ideen utforskes gjennom spørsmål om hvordan unge menn

The resulting book is divided into three parts. Part I reviews theoretical work on legal geography and property, describes the methodology, and offers an overview of rural restructuring in Norway and the reforms intended to reduce the number of uninhabited smallholdings.

Part II consists of three articles, published in 2009 in *Environment and Planning A*, *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift–Norwegian Journal of Geography*, and the *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*. The first article discusses how the relationship between kinship, law and property influences decisions about whether to dispose of smallholdings or retain them as an inheritance for the next generation. The second asks how smallholdings are experienced as home and how this affects property enactment. The third investigates how owners deal with the dilemmas arising when smallholdings are converted from permanent to second homes. Together, the articles explore the significance of the connections which smallholders feel to their property because of its role in their family narratives and the values they have invested in places that were once their (childhood) home.

Part III summarises the findings and relates them to a Lefebvrian conceptualisation of 'lived and represented spaces of property' (p. 121). The conclusion furthers the critical analysis of the legal instruments intended to open up the market in rural smallholdings.

The author's key argument – that the deceptive certainties of the liberal ownership model are destabilised and yield to a more diverse and less coherent set of categories when property is enacted – is well made and convincingly illustrated. His wide-ranging and persuasive findings about the emotions of property demonstrate the continuing significance of kinship and the meaning of property as home. The research adds an original twist to the literature on second homes and challenges the idealisation of home by demonstrating how these deep investments in place can become an emotional or economic burden when non-resident owners find it difficult to keep inherited properties in good repair but do not feel free to dispose of them, a situation described as 'non-practising property' (p. 67).

There are some significant omissions. Far more could have been made of the survey. Disaggregation of survey results by location or along other dimensions might well have been useful. It is a missed opportunity that the author's declared intention to 'embody' Lefebvre's conceptualisation of lived and represented spaces with flesh, blood and culture is not more thoroughly worked out. The interview material provides a basis for this. Above all, however, the core argument that the reforms were limited in their effectiveness because of lawmakers' adherence to the liberal ownership model rests on largely untested assumptions. The conclusion eventually acknowledges that policy makers may be aware of the strength of the connection between property and kinship, leaving readers wondering why the author did not seek to interview government officials. In doing so, he could have complicated the policy 'story' in the way that he effectively complicates the property 'story'. This is nevertheless a thought-provoking and sometimes moving study of how geography, and particularly legal geography, matters.

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håndterer livet på bygda og hvordan de konstruerer og uttrykker seg selv som menn og som rurale.

Leserne føres først inn i en diskusjon av manns- og maskulinitetsforskning. Det avklares hvordan Bye operasjonaliserer begrepet maskulinitet. Med støtte i blant annet Connell, legges en sosial-konstruktivistisk og praksisorientert forståelse til grunn. Maskulinitet ses som skapt og iscenesatt gjennom relasjonell praksis – uttrykt gjennom kropp, handlinger og språk. Samtidig holdes det fast ved maskuliniteters prosessuelle og mangfoldige kulturelle, *romlige* og *stedlige* uttrykk. Bye kritiserer mannsforskningen for å ha oversett maskuliniteters *rurale uttrykk*, og særlig hvordan *unge menn* forhandler og iscenesetter rurale identiteter og maskuliniteter.

Denne kritikken fører Bye over på ruralitetsforskning og forståelser av bygda og det rurale. Det teoretiske fundamentet for Byes bygdeforskning inspireres særlig av den konstruktivistiske vending; dog ved at hun slutter seg til nyere teoretiske diskusjoner om behov for å re-materialisere eller