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Ambivalence and Contradictions: A Case from Mountain Agricultural Landscape Conservation

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ABSTRACT

Loss of biodiversity stands out as a serious environmental challenge worldwide. Old mountain farmland is unique in this respect, as animal husbandry with summer grazing has created a rich ecosystem. Mountain farming usually takes place in relatively remote areas with scattered populations and marginal food production in terms of quantity. Outmigration and changes in agriculture result in overgrown pastures and thus a loss of biodiversity. To conserve biodiversity, politicians worldwide have put conservation of the mountain agricultural landscape on the agenda. The conservation policy includes traditional farming because nature in this cultural landscape depends on human activity. This article explores how policies have questionable effects on the landscape and shows how farmers choose various types of farming based on individual perspectives and goals. Several futures are conceivable, but under the circumstances of global environmental challenges, these are all fraught with uncertainty.

KEYWORDS Landscape; conservation; rural communities; farming; Norway

Early every morning during my fieldwork at a summer dairy farm in Hemsedal, Norway,[1] I sleepily went down with the milkmaid to the cowshed. We usually stopped for a few moments just to experience the day rising in the mountains. To the south, beyond the green pasture, the morning mist covered small lakes and marshlands. Hills covered by boreal forest marked the horizon. The view to the north encompassed steep alpine mountains hiding old and overgrown pastures. To the east, there were a few summer dairy farms with green pastures, simple red buildings, cows, and milkmaids.

This landscape represents the traditional mountainous agricultural landscape, our subject of conservation. Within the last decade, anthropologists have increasingly become involved in studies of landscape conservation. One reason is the massive attention to the global climate crisis and the diverse influences that climate change exerts on people and their biological environment (Crate & Nuttall 2009). Another reason is that environmental conservation connects to rural development in one way or another (West 2006; FAO 2013).

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Globally, old mountain farmland is the second richest biotope concerning species variety, bypassed only by rainforest. However, whereas logging threatens the rainforest, overgrowth threatens the ecosystem in the mountain agricultural landscapes. Overgrowth results from a lack of grazing animals and from farmers ceasing to gather wood and peat from the surrounding environment following the introduction of electricity. Overgrowth leads to a reduction of the variety of herbs, grasses, and other plants, which in turn leads to further impoverishment of the food chain. This situation has gained global attention, leading to attempts to conserve the landscapes based on the idea that traditional uses can adequately conserve this rich ecosystem. Nevertheless, conservation is under pressure from competing goals, attitudes, and practices.

The perspective in this article is inspired by the Vayda tradition in human ecology (Walters *et al.* 2009), which emphasises the significance of variation and diversity in the relationship between social and natural worlds. This perspective supports political ecology as a community of practice focusing on contradictions, human to non-human dialectics, questions about who wins and loses, and rivaling claims about the state of nature (Biersack & Greenberg 2006; Robbins 2012). Political ecology elucidates multi-scaled political processes and shows how they simultaneously affect local people and the production of nature (Langstone 1995; West 2006). This perspective provides a useful understanding of some consequences of landscape conservation.

Several ethnographers situate landscape conservation in the debate on landscape and identity focusing on specific meanings of the landscape for particular social groups.[2] Some illustrate how farmers and indigenous people perceive animals and the surrounding landscape as part of their moral universe, and the decline in the natural environment as a loss of meaning and cultural identity (Crate 2008; Roncoli *et al.* 2008). This may hold true for some farmers, but the statement runs the risk of freezing the idea of a homogenous group of people in space and time. Such generalisations support stereotypes of farmers and indigenous people. Individual biography affects hopes and dreams, but so do contemporary local and global values. Farmers adapt constantly to the changes around them. In other words, they are a diverse group who take the opportunities presented to them to build meaningful lives.

Some ethnographies of landscape also tend to represent a harmonious world (e.g. Basso 1996; Crate 2008). Rather, the utilisation of natural resources entangles with ideology and power on various levels and is therefore contested (Macnagthen & Urry 1998; Bender & Winer 2001; Howell 2002). This is evident when management of the landscape links to rural development and conflicting policies as is the case in European mountain communities, where farmers are strongly encouraged to expand their business to tourism (Funnell & Parish 2001; Lysgård & Berg 2004), and to practice both traditional and industrial agriculture.

Collective memory is sedimented in the landscape and effects the way people sense, perceive, and use the landscape (Schama 1995; Basso 1996; Howell 2002). The history of the landscape and its sociocultural meanings are crucial factors when it comes to questions of conservation (Howell 2002; West 2006). The classic view of the European mountain agricultural landscape, shaped by a long history of art and nation building, is the romantic gaze of the urban people on the area they experience as a rural idyll.

The landscape came to represent a traditional culture that has gained a high global value in recent decades (Connerton 2009). This view has also influenced European politicians when defining the concept of landscape conservation: '"Landscape protection" means actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and / or from human activity' (European Landscape Convention 2000).

Political ecology has a long tradition as a theory and method focusing on power and the role of discourse (Escobar 1998). Often, this literature shows how the state suppresses the locals. The purpose here is not to attribute blame; rather, I wish to highlight the ambivalence and contradictions that emerge when individuals perform written laws entailing practical possibilities and constraints. A closer look at the agricultural policy on different scales will demonstrate this.

Conservation of mountain agricultural landscapes – written and lived laws

For the last decade, European dairy farmers have received financial support to maintain summer farming and pasture in the mountains. The changes of the European Common Agricultural Policy (ECAP) have roots in the 1980s when the financial crisis, the development of rural areas, and a focus on biodiversity were global issues, and biodiversity became a central theme and a political term at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 (Nazarea 2006). Biodiversity is 'the variety of life forms, the ecological roles they perform, and the genetic diversity they contain' (Wilcox 1984, p. 71). Indeed, biodiversity is a socially constructed concept, nevertheless; diverse plants and animals exist and they follow their own biological logic beyond human influence.

The Seventh Ordinary Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was held in Malaysia in 2004. During the meeting, 180 countries – including Norway – signed an agreement to protect traditional mountain agricultural landscapes through neoliberal conservation, which means that European farmers get official subsidies for conducting mountain farming. The arguments behind the agreement were threefold: (1) to conserve the exceptionally rich biodiversity of these areas, (2) to conserve the aesthetic beauty of the landscape, and (3) to protect the traditional cultural rural life in these areas. Traditional farming, such as haying and maintaining a certain grazing pressure on mountain meadows with various domestic animals, is the only way to conserve the existing biodiversity in this cultural landscape (Hurni *et al.* 2010).

The global focus on conserving mountain agricultural landscapes has led to a remarkable change in the ECAP, which scholars call a change from food production to landscaping, from production to consumption (Lysgård & Berg 2004). Consumption in this context refers to the aesthetic experience of the rural landscape. This is evident in Megève, France, where the municipality encourages farmers to keep their cattle grazing on ski slopes in order to attract summer tourists, and in Leksvik, Norway, where the municipality economically supports farmers to resume small-scale summer farming in order to attract tourists. This connects landscape conservation to economic

development for rural people, which West understands as a *conservation – as – development* project. This perspective holds that landscape conservation can create economic advantages for rural people (2006). What follows is that landscape conservation implies an economy, practices, and policies that create spaces in which people manoeuvre their hopes, dreams, and livelihoods.

Scholars call this change in agricultural policy 'the third transformation' (Lysgård & Berg 2004).[3] These changes have led to an increasing enactment of urban and global ideas, technology, and socioeconomic systems in peoples' everyday lives in rural areas. I argue that the transformation is weak and half-hearted because, as I will demonstrate, the industrialisation of food production continues to a large degree.

Although Norway has voted against EU membership twice (in 1972 and 1994), Norwegian farmers have to follow ECAP policy because of Norway's participation in the European Economic Agreement (EEA). Despite global ideologies, policies and juridical agreements over landscape conservation, there are diverse national, regional, and local policies and practices. People live their lives locally engaging with diverse cultural, social, and environmental milieu. This may lead to a gap not only between global and local policies, but also between written and lived laws (Bennett 2008). There are significant variations in how politicians, officials, farmers, and other locals interpret and obey laws.

The ECAP demands and facilitates small-scale traditional farming, but there are national variations. For example, in Norway, the farmers have to produce milk at their summer farms for at least four weeks to get economic support. Meat production at the summer farms does not count. On the other hand, they get support for all cattle grazing in the outlying fields. In Sweden, farmers get additional economic support for traditional old breed cows (*landraser*), which are smaller and give less milk and meat compared to the new breed cattle, and in some areas, farmers are not supposed to use milking machines at the summer farms (Eriksson 2013), a technology that is acceptable in other European countries. In Switzerland (which also follows the ECAP), the monetary support for summer farming includes variations according to altitude, where the highest areas for pasturing get the highest subsidy.

Regional variation is visible where the regional and local municipalities enact the conservation plan differently according to local practices, traditions, and variations in ecosystems. In 2005, the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food decided that all agricultural activities should have an environmental plan on the national, regional, and local levels. The ensuing Regional Environmental Program corresponds to the ECAP's aim to conserve biodiversity, also aiming to conserve Norwegian culture and identity, as well as increasing the farmers' income. The economic support offered was limited to agriculture, including crops and animal husbandry. All counties with mountain agricultural landscapes are required to give priority to actions and economic support that would protect this landscape (Stortingsmelding 1999–2000). In practice, this means to strengthen pasture in the outlying fields and summer dairy farming. Despite these efforts, the economic encouragement is not enough to stop the decline of summer farms. The number of summer farms drops every year, except for Nord-Trøndelag, central Norway, where the number of summer farms has increased from

almost none to over 50 in 2013. The main reason for this increase is the enthusiasm of a former farmer at the agricultural office in the county (*Fylkesmannens kontor*), who adapted the requirements for summer farming according to local environmental conditions and increased the economic support from 30,000 NOK (national amount) to 50,000 NOK a year. Because of dense forest and scarce pasture, the farmers have to process milk from at least two cows or seven goats and advertise the summer farm for tourism to get the economic support (Fylkesmannen i Nord-Trøndelag 2013). Also in Sweden, there are regional differences in the requirements to obtain subsides for mountain farming (Eriksson 2013).

These examples suggest that written laws can tell us about cultural values, but less about what people do and why they act in a certain manner. Individuals analyse and customise laws according to their own perceptions, motivations, and possibilities. In order to demonstrate the importance of political and social variation and diversity regarding landscape conservation, I now move to presenting empirical material from Hemsedal, Norway.

The local place: Hemsedal

Hemsedal is the name of a valley midway between Oslo and Bergen, in a wider region where traditional farming with summer dairy farming is still alive. Hemsedal is also the name of the mountain-based agricultural municipality, where the altitude varies between 600 and 1920 m above sea level. Traditionally, farmers owned most of the land in the area. Use of the land is the foundation for the region's economic activity, since this also attracts tourism, trade and processing industries.

In many parts of the world, rural mountain communities suffer from depopulation. Yet, there are examples of mountain areas which have grown economically (Funnell & Parish 2001; Mientjes 2010). Hemsedal is one such place. Although its population was stable for centuries, the number increased from 1600 to over 2200 during the past two decades. This is mostly due to an increase in tourism, migrants from Europe coming to work in the construction industry, and Norwegians who are attracted to the mountain lifestyle. Outdoor life (*friluftsliv)* is a strong Norwegian cultural value (Høistad 1994) and Hemsedal provides a broad range of outdoor activities, such as skiing in winter, fishing, tracking, and bouldering in the mountains, as well as petting calves and lambs at the mountain farms in the summer.

Cultural landscapes are 'always in flux, since they are the result of utilisation over time' (Syse 2009, p. 1). In Hemsedal, the most dramatic changes in the utilisation of the mountain landscape have occurred during the last century. In 1907, the only person in the village who did not own cattle was the local priest. The villagers had a subsistence economy with various domestic animals, and they produced butter for the market. At that time, 432 summer farms were in use, and cattle, goats, sheep, and horses were on pasture in the mountains (Flaten 1951). Precisely this utilisation of the outlying fields produced the biological uniqueness of the landscape.

Already in the 1920s, the peasants had seized the opportunity to earn extra income from tourism (Dokk & Snerte 2003). Some of them sold cabins to wealthy people from

Oslo. Young men guided urban people to the summit of Mt. Skogshorn. Others found other creative ways to make money; for example, a local milkmaid told visitors every day that it was her birthday precisely that day, which often resulted in a gift. Twenty years later, some farmers established the first ski lift in the valley. Today, Hemsedal is a popular ski destination and most farmers have cabins on their farmland to rent out to tourists.

This development has had a major effect on the agricultural landscape. Cabin construction and the expansion of the alpine ski area through the construction of more ski slopes, hotels, apartments, and car parks, has reduced the area of forest and grazing land. This development has significantly increased tourism though much at the expense of landscape conservation, and demonstrates that cultural landscapes cannot be preserved like objects in a museum, but as an object in process, as Syse (2009) points out.

The agricultural structure and use of rough grazing has changed dramatically over the years. The number of farms with livestock, usually cattle and sheep, decreased from 128 farms in 1989, to 84 in 2005, and further to 54 in 2013. The number of active summer farms decreased from over 50 in the 1990s to 41 in 2000, and 14 in 2013. At the time of writing, there are fewer than 3000 sheep and young cattle grazing in the outlying fields, which are now characterised by closed summer farms and an overgrown landscape. Nevertheless, some farmers still operate summer mountain farms.

Ethnographic studies of rural agricultural communities in Europe within the framework of a global peasantry have raised the point that a distinct peasant world-view is more household-oriented than business-oriented (e.g. Wolf 1966; see Mientjes 2010).[4] This is not recognisable in Hemsedal, where farmers are a diverse group with different perspectives and goals. Kearney (1996) problematises the previously sharp boundary between urban and rural, and demands a shift from an anthropology of peasants as unitary objects to peasants as complex subjects with diverse perceptions and activities. Generalising the farmers in Hemsedal hides policy contradictions and ambivalence in landscape conservation. Analysing rural farmers as a heterogeneous group may also help to raise questions about who benefits and who loses, both economically and ecologically, in the ongoing process of conservation governmentality and thus fits into the perspective of political ecology as a practice.

Norwegian agricultural policy encourages farmers to perform three alternative courses of action; traditional farming that supports conservation of the landscape, industrial farming, or farming with additional tourism. The two latter choices may or may not support conservation depending on other related political regulations, which I will return to later.

The farmers in Hemsedal hold different views on landscape conservation, varying largely according to their type of farming, namely (1) Traditional farming, (2) Landscaping, or (3) Tourism.[5]

Traditional farming

Sixty years ago, Per inherited the ownership of his old family farm. Today, there are 14 dairy cows, some heifers, and 100 sheep during winter at the farm. In addition, he has

three private cabins for rent. I spent eight months over two summers in his household, usually in the company of the milkmaid, cows, and calves at the summer farm where the cattle are on surface cultivated pasture. The sheep pasture in the outlying field. Per is convinced that summer farming with free fodder is economically reasonable, and he has developed his farm to be one of the largest in the valley. This way of farming is also linked to his perception of the good life and his identity as a farmer.

In Per's perspective, to be a 'real farmer' is precisely to farm traditionally, in a way that is close to what has produced the old and beloved landscape. The concept of tradition is always in flux, and tends to be adapted to fit current livelihoods (Norbye 2013). The Norwegian 'traditional farmers' currently bring their cattle to summer farms where there are milking machines and cattle on surface cultivated pasture. Farming traditionally in this way, farmers like Per maintain their desired lifestyle, their identity as farmers, while also conserving the traditional landscape.

Per is proud to produce healthy food from 'happy animals' and at the same time conserve 'a small piece of Norway', referring to the symbolically laden narrative of national identity that the landscape represents. It also symbolises nature, freedom, peace, and quietness (*fred og ro),* (Norbye 2010, 2013), as well as a certain kind of farming and way of life. Because of the diverse policies I have mentioned, traditional farming has shifted towards monoculture compared to some decades ago, when there were multiple domestic animals at the pasture. Since different domestic animals eat different plants, this situation affects the biodiversity of the landscape.

Farmers who use their summer farm in the mountain emphasise how important it is to utilise the surrounding natural resources to maintain a sustainable farm. They are convinced that the industrialisation of agriculture with large common units is the end for Norwegian food production. Later research has confirmed that large agriculture units are not necessarily economically sustainable. The most profitable farming is when the size of the farm is adapted to the natural environment and usage of the natural resources in the surrounding area (Løkeland-Stai & Lie 2012).

Per does not agree with farmers who call traditional farming 'museum farming'. With an angry voice and hard eyes, he states:

> These big industry farms have nothing to do with farming. It is fodder production – fodder made for people, not food! Only politicians from the city can believe in profit from farms with more animals than the land can nurture. Farms that have to import hay, employ labour, and which are not utilising the natural environment, can never be profitable. Look at the first common barn in the valley. The farmers had to shut it down after 10 years. It should not be so difficult to understand that the best way to run a farm is to have cattle utilising the surrounding natural recourses. There is hardly any agriculture left in Norway. The politicians say Norwegian food production is important, but I do not believe that they really think so. We, the farmers, are OK with hosting the urban people for their holidays, and cleaning the landscape for them, but that is not farming. I do not believe in an agricultural life for the future. It has become a lonely occupation and a harsh livelihood.

From a global perspective, mountain farmers are currently suffering from marginalisation because depopulation increasingly affects mountain areas (Funnell & Parish 2001; Mientjes 2010). As mentioned, this is not the case in Hemsedal, but local agriculture is

being restructured. National laws and regulations give farmers both possibilities and limitations through the distribution of milk quotas, financial support, and regulations regarding animal welfare. All of them have implications for the conservation of the agricultural landscape. For example, the Norwegian government directs milk production from goats to the north-west and north of Norway, regardless of the farmers' actual traditions.[6] This regulation affects the landscape in large mountain areas in southern Norway – both visually and biologically.

Another agricultural policy that amplifies monoculture and forces overgrowth is the law that separates different domestic animals that should not stay together in the same room in the barn. This policy led to farmers having to slaughter the chickens, pigs, horses, and goats that they were raising, since these animals were not part of their milk production. The consequences were a decrease in number as well as in variety of domestic animals on the mountain pastures.

The farmers who still use traditional farming techniques have fewer colleagues with whom they can exchange services and machines. Several of them admit that they feel alone and have lost faith in the future of agriculture. Some numbers will illustrate the agricultural situation in Norway. Since 1970, 112,000 farms have closed down, leaving only 42,876 remaining in 2014. At the same time, the average acreage per farm has increased from 62 acres in 1969, to 230 acres in 2013 (SSB 2014a). Total meat production has more than doubled in the same period. This doubling is due to the stepped up usage of concentrates (Pedersen 2014). In fact, from 2013 to 2014, the total number of cattle and sheep has decreased by 40,000 animals (SSB 2014b), leading to fewer animals on the mountain pastures. This situation is true not only of Norway, but also generally for most mountain agrarian areas (Funnell & Parish 2001). These numbers reveal that the agricultural policy speaks with two tongues. There is no large 'third transformation'.

The lonely situation of the traditional farmers is not motivating. In spite of this, Per shows a glimpse of hope when he says: 'I wonder when people will understand that farms like mine are profitable and important'. Per is not a talkative man, much like other farmers I know. They tend not to talk needlessly, but silent demonstrations may speak volumes; as when Per puts on a sweater with slogans such as 'Norwegian Nature is Wonderful – Without Wolfs', and parades between the mineral water and the cold cuts in the supermarket on Friday afternoons when the cabin tourists arrive. This is his way of communicating his own values, which connect closely to traditional farming and the conservation of the landscape.

Sustainable summer farming depends on cheap labour and milkmaids who love their work in the mountain as Per's wife does. Problems arise with the new generation. The youth in Hemsedal often dream of spending their summer holidays abroad rather than engaging in summer farming. This frustrates many traditional farmers who own old family farms and who appreciate immaterial values, such as family and continuity (Norbye 2001, 2010). Nevertheless, some farmers follow a current trend in Norway and change from duty to desire, from work to leisure (Norbye 2001), as well as from milk production to landscaping. Encouraged and supported by national and local policy in the beginning of this century, 39 farmers in Hemsedal merged their cattle

into 13 common cowsheds with a milking robot and free-ranging possibilities. Ole, a younger farmer, is one of them.

Landscaping

The first time I met Ole, he loomed in front of me, a tall man in red shorts, grabbing a whole tree with one bare hand. I followed his movements in silence while he fed trees into a cutting machine for two hours without stopping in the summer heat. After finishing, he sat down and drank one and a half litres of water, straight. We said hello, and it turned out that he was not only tall and hardworking, but talkative, too.

Ole is a farmer in his forties with two children and a wife who works outside the farm. Some years ago, he and two neighbouring farmers decided to move their cattle into a common cowshed with a milking robot and free-ranging possibilities. The result was that they stopped summer farming. One of Ole's motivations was to get more leisure time and longer summer holidays sailing with his family. The rest of the year, he operates different kinds of machines, helping other farmers at their farms or in the forest. After 10 years, the common barn closed down. Ole was disappointed and believed that the large barn should have been more sustainable than it was. The most surprising lesson, he told me, was that the cows needed more labour than he expected. When it comes to labour, there was nothing to be gained by having many cows in a shared barn. This observation matches Per's repetitive declaration: 'cows are not dead chairs, but living animals with their own agendas and physiology', referring to the increased expenses to the veterinary. According to vets I know, there are more injuries in barns with loose housing because the cows walk into each other and have possibilities to fight. Cows are hierarchically organised, and when three different herds come together into a free-ranging barn, their positions are challenged.

Despite major official financial subsidies to build the new, modern barns, and additional free milk quotas to increase the herd, the industrial common barns in Hemsedal were not economically sustainable. The reasons are increased economic bank debt and increased expenses for grass (fodder) because the new herds are larger than the farmers' own grass production can support.

Farmers who stall their cattle in barns have to send them three months a year to pasture. That is not the case when they have their cattle in barns with free-range possibilities, and then it is convenient to discontinue the practice. The number of Norwegian dairy farms has decreased from 82,000 in 1969 to 15,500 in 2010 (Pedersen 2014) and further, to fewer than 2000 in 2014. The results are overgrown pastures and a reduction in biological diversity. The result need not be so. For the last 40 years, France has had a separate pasture law that brings about half of the domestic animals onto summer pasture. In Krn, Slovenia and Grindelwald, Switzerland, there are common barns at the summer mountain dairy farms and not in the valley. One reason is the large green pastures on official and common territory, instead of private fields as is the case in Hemsedal. Thus, policy, property rights, and ownership affect the choices available to farmers.

Today, Ole produces grass around his regular farm and at the summer farm. He still identifies himself as a farmer, a farmer who has changed his production from milk to grass, from food to fodder. This change is meaningful to him beyond simply having more time with his family. He perceives the grass production on the mountain also as landscaping which prevents overgrowth. Haying is one way to conserve the agricultural mountain landscape, and now he is happy to have the time to do this properly. His fields are tidier than many other fields, but with no sign of domestic animals which belong to the cultural landscape.

Hard work is a strong moral force among the farmers I know. Ole has a good reputation as a farmer in spite of producing fodder and not food. That is not the case for farmers who produce tourism as their main economic activity. Because of the rapid increase of tourism in the region during the last two generations, a huge flow of cash has entered the valley. The private ownership of the land, combined with a liberal policy that also encourages and supports the tourist industry as rural development have ensured that the wealth is unevenly distributed in the local community. The cost is also a large amount of new buildings in the areas that are targets for landscape conservation.

Tourism

'No, I'd rather build cabins', Harry said, and turned the majority of the locals in the village against him at the same time. Harry inherited his old family farm in 1982 and built a new barn where 14 cows lived with free-range possibilities. He cannot remember when the summer farm was last in use. His farm has land around the skiing centre. For a couple of years, the Hemsedal Ski Association, local politicians and landowners like Harry discussed building a floodlit cross-country ski area and a path with wheelchair accessibility. A final decision was about to be reached, when Harry changed his mind and said 'No'. The ski trails would conflict with the enlargement of the alpine ski centre. Harry foresaw the increasing economic value of the area, which he owned, and instead decided to sell pieces of land to exclusive ski in–ski out cabins.

A few years later, I met Harry. When I asked him why he suddenly changed his mind, he explained:

> That was in 2003 and I needed to rebuild my barn. I thought I had three options: take the large investment myself continuing traditional farming, build a common barn with my neighbours, or focus my activities more on tourism. I chose the two latter options. I still own my milk quotas, but have nothing else to do with the barn. I spend most of my time developing new cabin areas and managing my estates. The problem is that there is no long-term plan in this region. The policy is uncertain, it is impossible to foresee anything. Farmers are not supposed to make long-term plans. I just grabbed my opportunity.

His doubts about the future echoed what I have heard from every other European farmer I know. I asked him if he in fact regards himself as a farmer. 'Yes, I am still a farmer, but a kind of passive one since I do not produce food or fodder', he said and explained that he lives on his farm and from what his land provides him. He sells pieces of farmland, leases fields for grass production, and issues hunting licences for

rent. All are profitable activities that will allow his son to inherit a farm wealthier than it was before him. This goal refers to the immaterial value of old family firms, which can be analysed as a 'House', an ancestral place (Norbye 2001). Harry also appreciates that he can take his family on exotic holidays abroad and he enjoys the leisure time made available since he got rid of the cattle.

For the farmers who own land surrounding the ski centre, the increased tourism has been a goldmine. This is also the case for the local business community. Today, there are close to 100 residents in the village who have become multi-millionaires, who symbolise both possibilities and the good life, as well as greed and moral discord, and who equally inspire admiration and jealousy. The rural development has urbanised the village, and has also disturbed the established social relations and equality. Today, Hemsedal can accommodate 500,000 tourists a year, in cabins and hotels that have popped up in the landscape that simultaneously is the target for conservation. When some win, others lose.

Concluding remarks

This article has documented ambivalence and contradictions related to the conservation of mountain agricultural landscapes. The following four points summarise the argument and contribute to explaining the unsuccessful implementation of conservation policy.

- Firstly, written laws and policy reflect sociocultural values and less about what people actually do. It is about making possibilities for a good life in the future. Politicians on different scales analyse, judge, and customise the understanding of the text in light of their own ideology, agendas, and goals. Norwegian policies are influenced by neoliberal ideology, which insists that trade and capital flow should determine the economy of the farms. This ideology is the core of the policy programmes that encourage farmers to move into industrialised market-oriented farming with larger outfits. This development is not necessarily compatible with summer farming: rather, in Norway, it hastens the closure of these farms. Since supporting biodiversity is part of the stated conservation policy, the actual economic agricultural policy thwarts and runs counter to conservation goals.
- Secondly, nor do farmers follow agricultural rules and directives as a single homogenous group. Rather, they have varying perceptions, hopes and dreams for the future, and take their opportunities accordingly. In Hemsedal, where the ownership of land is private, and the tourist industry has exploded, the development has favoured industrial farming and tourism at the expense of traditional farming which conserves the landscape.
- Thirdly, whereas a few farmers continue with traditional mountain farming, the areas are small and scattered. Biological material – plants, insects, and animals – do not follow economical rationality, nor do they live in demarcated areas. Rather, many of them need more space and diversity to survive than one small farm can provide. The contradictory agricultural management is a result of seeing nature as

a resource for human exploitation. According to Langstone (1995) it is precisely this fragmentation of people and environment that is at the root of the problem. In her perspective, humans should see themselves as a part of the natural environment. This means that global and local policy-making as well as sociocultural trends have serious effects on the natural environment.

- Fourth and finally, cultural landscapes represent a form of nature that is produced and changed in relation to human activity. They are always in flux, and it is therefore questionable whether the historical cultural processes can be reconstructed successfully (see also Syse 2009). The new development in the so-called 'third transformation' in the ECAP is that the international community proudly produces relatively few small-scale farmers. Rural mountain farmers are motivated to practice traditional small-scale farming with possibilities to expand their business to support tourism. This development may create greater inequality between farmers, leading to the creation of A-team farmers who engage in industrial agriculture that creates a good profit from mono industrial food production, and B-team farmers who engage in traditional small-scale farming (Eriksson 2013).[7] In the words of Syse (2009), they become gardeners with responsibility for cultural values and aesthetic joy.

Conservation of cultural landscapes includes the conservation of biodiversity as well as of livelihoods. The project is enormous in so far as humans hold different perspectives and goals for the future. I have shown the importance of being aware of intrasocietal diversity, contradictions and some consequences, as well as showing some of the ways in which humans are part of the natural environment.

Notes

1. The fieldwork started in summer 2004 and is still ongoing. In the summers of 2004–2006, I lived with the milkmaid and the farmer at their summer farm where I participated in everyday life, visited other summer farms in the region and participated in various meetings of dairy farmers in Hallingdal. This fieldwork was part of my doctoral research. I still have regular contact with the informants. I have also conducted fieldwork at summer farms for three months in Leksvika, Nord-Trøndelag (summer 2011), at summer farms in Krn, Slovenia (summer 2003), in France (autumn 2005, autumn 2012), Switzerland (autumn 2005, summer and autumn 2012). These fieldworks are a part of my project European Summer Mountain Farming. A Comparative Study which was a part of a larger project: 'Cultures of Biodiversity: Perceptions and Practices', see acknowledgements.
2. E.g. Cohen 1976; Jackson 1995; Basso 1996; Ingold 2000; Gray 2000; Howell 2002; Crate 2008.
3. The first transformation was when the agricultural business turned into a monetary economy in the late eighteenth century. The second transformation was the period after World War II when tractors, new technology, and fertilisers entered the agricultural business (Lysgård & Berg 2004).
4. Wolf (1966) distinguished farmers from peasants. The divide is not relevant to this article. The farmers in Hemsedal were small-scale farmers with a subsistence economy including production (butter) for the market. Today, they are multifunctional men and women with a broad range of economic activities who identify themselves as farmers.
5. In the following empirical examples, I use pseudonyms. Sometimes, I also put the words of other farmers from the same group into the named farmer's speech.

6. One illustrative example is from Leksvik in Nord-Trøndelag, where farmers have traditionally practiced goat herding. There, the goat milk production competed with forestry and decreased during the last decades. The state pressed the last 'goat-farmer' to sell his milk quotas back to the state a few years ago. He discovered that the national dairy TINE had destroyed his goat milk for the last two years. This news shocked the farmer. Producing garbage and not food challenged his identity and value as a farmer. He changed his production to sheep, but missed his life with the goats. When the department advertised new quotas, he tried to buy them. The plan was to process the milk himself, but he was unsuccessful. The department earmarked the quota for a northern region, where the farmers had no tradition with goats nor wanted to develop such.
7. Both A-team and B-team farmers get official economical support. The subsidies are per animal, per kilogram of meat or litre of milk. This means farmers who run large industrial farms get more money from the state than the B-team farmers. This is the reason why subsidies have increased despite the decreasing numbers of farms (Løkeland-Stai & Lie 2012).

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