



# Combining business and private life; Issues of staging in agri-tourism in Norway and Austria

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# Aim of study

Through empirical examples of agri-tourism in Bregenzerwald, Austria and Valdres, Norway investigate:

- Negotiations between private and professional life in agri-tourism households and especially:
- Compartmentalization of space, staging, identity and roles, heritage and 'heritagification'

# About Valdres and Bregenzerwald

Mountainous regions

High dependency in agriculture and especially milk production: Valdres 13% employed in agriculture, BW 10.6% primary sector

Still practicing the transhumance system of summer farming or *seterbruk/stølsbruk* (Norw) and 'three-level farming system' with *Almwirtschaft/Alpewirtschaft* (Austr)

Mountain cheese (*Bergkäse*) well-known food speciality in BW

Structural challenges in agriculture as such, agri-tourism and summer farm tourism increasing activity

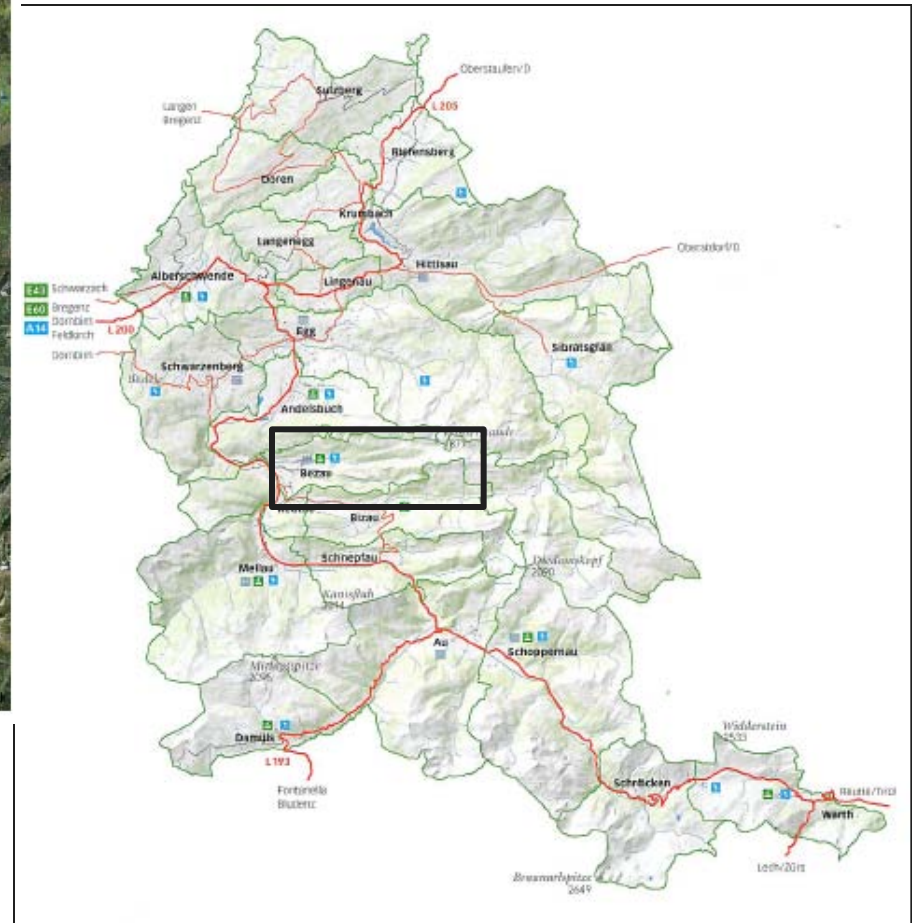
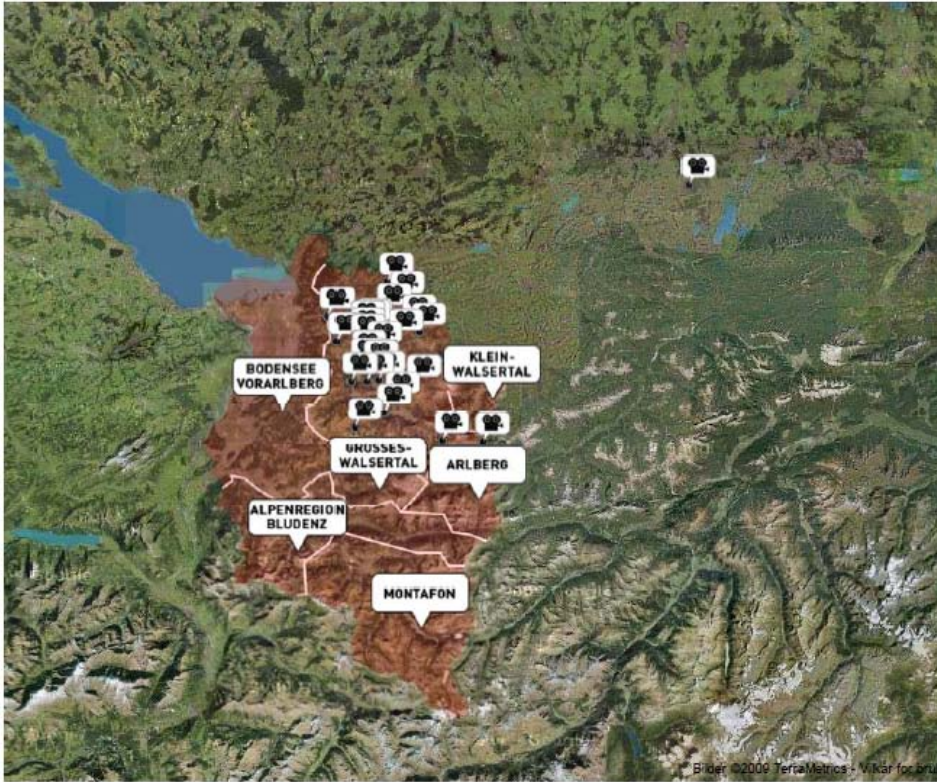
BW: Special in Austrian sense due to reliance on summer tourism and upkeep of small-scale farming and –tourism

Key figures: BW 30 000 inhabitants, 570 km<sup>2</sup>; Valdres: 18 000 inhabitants, 5400 km<sup>2</sup>

# VORARLBERG VON OBEN



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 Die schönsten Luftaufnahmen  
 der Vorarlberger Regionen  
 Montafon, Kleinwalsertal,  
 Bregenzerwald, Arlberg,  
 Alpenregion Bludenz,  
 Großes Walsertal und Bodensee-  
 Vorarlberg.

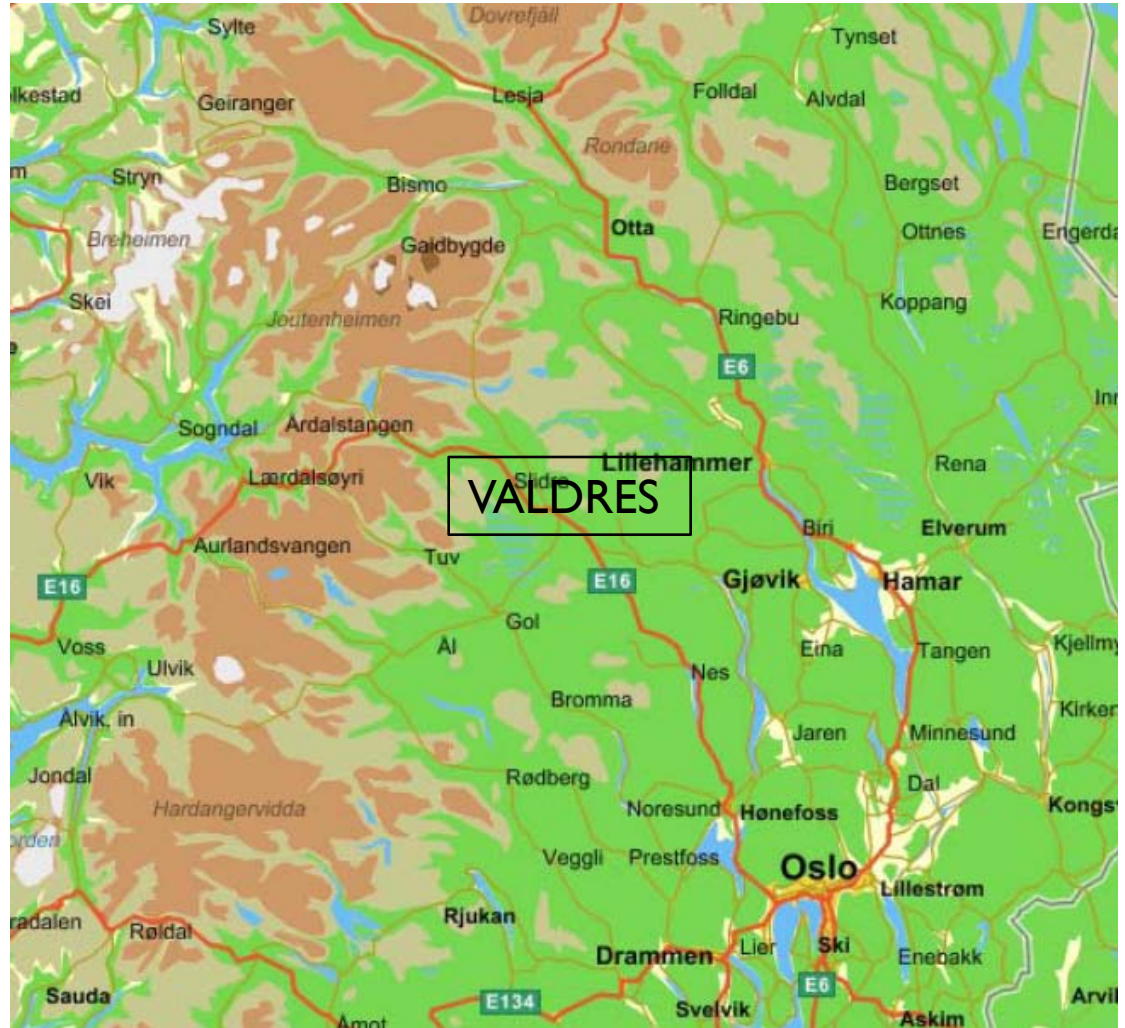


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# Southern Norway



# Valdres



# Method and material

Interviews with 4 households involved in *støls* tourism in Valdres (2008) and 6 involved in *Alpen* tourism in BW (2009)

Content analysis transcripts, plus study also informed by informal talks with interviewees and visitors





# Preliminary findings: Identity and roles

Identity as farmers strong, farmers with tourism

Especially in Norw material: 'Ambassadors of farming'

Motivation behind agri-tourism varies:

- into tourism 'by accident': the tourists came anyway, became interested after a while,
- like to socialise and talk to people,
- have spare time to be invested at the *støll/Alpe* rather than drive to the village,
- agri-tourism sensible for small farms as extra income

# Preliminary findings: negotiating space

Different strategies:  
material  
compartmentalization of  
space and more a 'mental  
compartmentalization'

The whole family (partly)  
living there: needed some  
sheltered space and  
moments

BW: Farmers take pride  
in the dairy and cheese  
cellar

Valdres: Concerned about  
hygiene regulations  
limiting tourists' access



# Preliminary findings: Staging and heritage

”In general receiving visitors involves some staging for most people, not only a phenomenon of tourism”

Behaviour, dress code, 'mentality'

Develop skills in assessing tourists

Tourists want to experience 'good old times', not interested in modernised versions...



## From interview with couple at a *støl* in Valdres:

**Me:** When I visited your *støl* everything was open and ‘on stage’ – how do you feel about that?

**Man:** I think it is tiresome. But that’s the way it is. You need to keep it tidy and... It is of course a myth you create and uphold, a myth that is not always true.

**Woman:** What myth?

**Man:** What the summer farm is, it is an idyllic image the visitors want and that’s what they get. It is a special setting where you do not want to much modern stuff inside the house, nothing to contrast the old style. We are creating a ‘special world’ up there..

**Woman:** Yes we create a special world because I like it, not because of the tourists. That was how it started – I did it for my own sake and then it turned out that others – tourists – liked it as well.

**Man:** But we are telling a story here, we adapt it to what we feel the visitors want. It is a glimpse of a ‘special world’, it is not how the world really is.

**Woman:** Well it is not our fault that this summer farm happens to confirm the image of a national romantic idyll, it’s just the way it looks up here.

**Man:** But to be mean it is fair to say that the image and imaginations are more important than the cheese.

## From interview with farmer at an Alpe in Bregenzerwald

“In the last years we have more and more helpers recruited from the internet, you see. And they look at things quite differently than me, as I’ve spent my whole life up here. I don’t even notice any more, you see. The other day a girl was sitting by that window and said, ‘I can’t believe it. I keep thinking that’s a picture, not a window’. She thought she was looking at a poster”.



Study in national contexts with substantial difference in scale of tourism – however, the two study areas comparable

'Ambassadors of contemporary farming' but landscape and built structures perceived as 19th century...

So: The system even if modernised – looks like an idyl romantic painting -> areas like Valdres and BW gradually becomes 'heritagified' and further idealized

Interesting reflection: Is it just scale that defines this tourism as good while mass tourism as in Ischgl (photo) also selling 'the Alpe atmosphere' becomes somehow 'dirty'?

Some remarks in need of further elaboration...

