

# **Place Identity with a Historic Landscape—an Interview-based Case Study of Local Residents' Relationship with the Austrått Landscape in Norway**

Ragnhild Skogheim<sup>a</sup>, Véronique Karine Simon<sup>b</sup>, Lei Gao<sup>c</sup>, Annegreth Dietze-Schirdewahn<sup>c\*</sup>

*<sup>a</sup> Department of Housing, Place and Regional Studies, Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, Oslo, Norway; <sup>b</sup> Department of Heritage and Society, Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research, Oslo, Norway; <sup>c</sup> School of Landscape Architecture, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Ås, Norway*

*\* Corresponding author's email: [annegreth.dietze@nmbu.no](mailto:annegreth.dietze@nmbu.no)*

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# **Place Identity with a Historic Landscape—an Interview-based Case Study of Local Residents' Relationship with the Austrått Landscape in Norway**

Abstract:

This article examines local residents' identity with historic landscapes through the case study of the Austrått landscape in Norway, where cultural and natural heritage are under pressure from increasing local development. In order to understand what the place means to local residents, i.e., how local residents perceive the landscape and how they attach themselves to the landscape, the theory of place identity was applied, which has two dimensions: identity with the place and identity of the place. Local residents were approached by interviewing local farm owners, and by holding a workshop with local interest groups. The findings indicate that local residents have a good understanding of what constitute the qualities and values of the historic landscape; they have a deep attachment to the place, mainly through activities and frequent use, and they expressed a wish to have balance between preserving the past and developing the future. The conclusion argues that, when overseeing a historic landscape that also has a close relationship with local residents, it is crucial to involve these people at all stages of the process, from knowledge generation and evaluation to planning and management. Having local residents actively involved can help ensure the lasting integrity of the qualities and values of historic landscapes, and sustain local residents' identity with the place.

Keywords: Austrått, historic landscape, local resident, place identity

## **Introduction**

Historic landscapes are part of the cultural heritage that conveys historical and cultural significance to experts and society in general. Historic landscapes, which can also be understood as the layered time dimension of cultural landscapes, are “illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal” (UNESCO World Heritage Center 2017). They embrace a diversity of manifestations of remains from the past: tangible forms, features and artefacts, and intangible manifestations of cultural heritage such as different types of practices, music, and stories. Such landscapes often contain both cultural and natural values, which have important meanings to local society. Thus, when the cultural landscape is located in a developing area, the historic landscapes’ diverse values can be challenged.

Over the past decades, the meaning and contents of cultural heritage have expanded beyond being expert-centric to include opinions from a broader range of societal groups. The change in approach to conservation principles and philosophy can be seen, for example, in the Living Heritage Approach claiming that value assessment should go beyond experts’ frameworks to allow those emerging from the communities, arguing for the right of the local community to be involved in heritage conservation and management (Court and Wijesuriya 2015, pp.3-5). The meanings of a historic landscape to contemporary society have also achieved more recognition than ever before, through recognition a historic landscape contributes to the building of place identity and people’s emotional attachment to a place: “The wider historic environment has a resonance in creating a sense of place and cultural

identity which contribute to the quality of the environment in which people live and work” (Russell, Smith and Leverton 2011, p.2).

This article presents the results of this concept of local definitions of heritage identity and management, in the context of a case study of the Austrått Manor landscape, Ørland, Norway. It is one of the outcomes of the research project “From Fragmented to Integrated Landscape Management: Values of Green Cultural Heritage and Implications for Future Policies and Practises” (FRAGLA). Carried out by a multidisciplinary team of landscape architects, historic landscape conservation professionals and a social scientist, the project resulted in the design of a framework for integrated landscape management on the local level, based on an increased knowledge of comprehensive values of the historic landscape and a comprehensive understanding of local residents’ views. This article explores the theory of why local residents’ views are important, the methodology for involving local residents, and what was learned from them about their concepts of place identity.

This article, as well as the FRAGLA project, focuses on Austrått, an ancient noble property situated in the municipality of Ørland on the west coast of Norway. The place has a rich cultural history, as well as unique natural characteristics. However, the Austrått landscape as a whole has not yet been officially recognized and protected as a cultural heritage landscape. Instead, different parcels of land and their elements are recognized and protected by different authorities. For example, part of the coastal area is under Ramsar Convention Bird Protection; the *Austråttlunden* (or Austrått grove, a former hunting park) is a protected area of forestry and cultural landscape; *Austråttborgen* (Austrått Castle), its East garden and the pyramid are protected for their cultural and historical interest and biodiversity; the Viking tombs scattered in the fields are ancient monuments automatically protected by the Cultural Heritage Act (Miljøverndepartementet 1978); the Austrått Fort, a coastal artillery built during World War II, atop a hill in Austråttlunden, is a military heritage site today. These heritages

are protected under different frameworks and for different reasons. This creates difficulties when a single management plan is needed for the entirety of the Austrått landscape (see figures 1-2).



Figure 1: Location of Ørland (Fig.1a, 1b) and the coverage of the Austrått landscape (Fig.1c, 1d). (Source: Sigurd Været 2017; Kartdata, Norwegian Mapping Authority.)



It is urgent, therefore, to have a management plan for the Austrått landscape before its heritage values are impaired by development. In order to understand local residents' relationship with the place and ultimately involve them in the development and implementation of the management plan, a series of interviews and a workshop were conducted with local residents and they were asked what kind of place(s) they identify themselves with, the perceptions they have of this historic landscape, the values and meanings they attach to it and their vision for the future of the Austrått landscape. When analyzing the empirical material collected from the interviews and the workshop, the theory of place identity provides a clear structure of analysis. On this theoretical basis, findings of the local residents' place identity are presented.

### **Place identity: a theoretical approach**

A growing body of research suggests that places matter to people. Place attachment is associated with quality of life and even highly mobile people may develop strong bonds to a place (Gustafson 2014; Massey 1994; Manzo & Devine Wright 2014; Cresswell 2012 a; Cresswell & Merriman 2011).

#### ***Two concepts: identity of the place and identity with the place***

In theories on place identity, place identity can be understood as “identity of the place” and “identity with the place.” Identity *of* the place can include a number of things, such as distinctive characteristics of landscape, architecture, cultural heritage, local culture, history, trade and industry (Relph 1976; Hague 2005). Such elements are place-identity generators and building blocks in identity formation, which in turn have impacts on place images and place attractiveness (Ruud 2015; Vestby 2015; Gospodini 2002).

Identity *with* the place refers to people's sense of belonging and emotional attachments with places and is an important element in the formation of social and cultural identity. It plays a role in defining "who we are," "what we have in common and what distinguishes "us" from other social groups and places" (Thuen 2003; Rose 1995). Hague (2005, 6) explains it this way: "We share common experiences, cultures, tastes and histories that set us apart from the rest." There is a reciprocity between the identity of and the identity with a place. This means that as individuals' identify with an environment, their identities come to be constituted through that environment (Holloway and Hubbard 2001). This relates not only to individual identity, but also to group identities. However, different dimensions of identity with places are often interwoven, because people can have emotional, social and practical identity with the places where they live, have their livelihood, their social lives and where they make use of landscape and cultural facilities (Pratt 1998).

***Nature of place identity: ever-changing, collective as well as personal, comprehensive, power-related***

Dale and Berg (2013) emphasize that the formation of social and cultural identities are ongoing processes that change over time, not something that is static and unchangeable. Similarly, Aune, *et al.* (2015) argue that places *become* places by the way people talk about and relate to them. Amundsen (2001) argues that place identity is likely to take the form of a narrative, a coherent story with high and potent argumentative and symbolic value.

Identity with a historic landscape can invoke something common among individuals and offer a kind of "spatial membership;" identity then serves as a catalyst through which resources in a local community (including social capital) can be mobilized in the event that such values are at stake or threatened, *e.g.*, when historic landscapes are in decay, are going to be demolished or damaged, or when other types of developments are affecting them.



The past can be integral to our sense of identity. A place is a powerful source of memory through sight, sound, smell, touch and taste (Hayden 1995). The ability to recall and identify with our own past, mundane or magnificent, tangible or intangible, gives existence meaning, purpose and value (Lowenthal [1998] 2003). However, as Hague (2005) argues, we must bear in mind that the past is not necessarily a part of everyone's identity with places; rather, reactions to places are highly individual. These reactions are triggered not only by physical features (identity of the place), but also by the intangible meanings and memories, experiences, use and knowledge of places and stories, and the history of the place, which are shared by people and communicated across generations. "Memories of places can validate personal identities just as history can perpetuate collective self-awareness" (Leff 1971). Hence, the aspects of a place that people highlight in the process of place identification varies from person to person, as do the meanings attached to a place. Some people will identify themselves with physical characteristics of their environments, while others might identify with memories of the past, symbols and other immaterial aspects. All together, they compose the identity with the place.

Place identity is closely related to power in the sense that national and regional authorities, architectural conservationists and other cultural heritage experts can, based on their expert knowledge and positions, establish what counts as the "official" distinctive features and identity of the place, meaning that the place identity can be officially defined, promoted and eventually accepted by the broader audience (such as visitors). However, these official definitions can be contested by local conceptions of identity with the place (Hague 2005; Amundsen 2001). This can lead to questions like "whose place identity is it," "how and by whom has the identity been constructed" and "who are the narrators of place identity."

To summarize the nature of place identity, it is ever-changing, collective as well as personal, comprehensive, and power-related. In studying a place identity, both *of* the place

and *with* the place, it is therefore important to analyze the processes, incidents, structures of power, interests and different actors who construct and reconstruct the place identities (Viken, Granås and Nyseth 2008). Apart from using different forms of written sources such as strategic municipal documents, marketing documents, newspaper articles and textbooks to understand “the politics of identity,” a sociocultural place analysis is needed (Ruud 2007), which is suitable for analyzing identity processes. Such analyses focus on the use of place, interests of place, and images of places, which give a broader picture of how a place identity is constituted (Vestby 2015).

### **Research approach and methodology**

Based on the theoretical study of place identity, sociocultural place analysis is applied in the case study of the Austrått Manor landscape in the region of Ørland to understand local residents’ use of place, interests of place, and mental images of place. Interviews and a workshop were used as the main methods of data collection. The purpose was to provide an opportunity for local residents to “give voice” (Hammersley and Gomm 2007, 3), to understand from their perspectives the identity of the place and identity with the place. In so doing, the understanding of place identity was broadened to include the “identity with the place” by adding local residents’ views, thereby giving power to the views of local residents to expand the definition of place identity.

Apart from the data collected through interviews and the workshop, the knowledge generated earlier from the FRAGLA project was used to inform the project. This included an extensive Landscape Biography study of Austrått in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Dietze-Schirdewahn, 2017), which allowed us to understand the identity of the place from historic

landscape conservation professionals' perspectives, and helped us prepare the questionnaires and analyze the results.

When designing the interviews and the workshop, the first step was to identify the 'place' and the 'local residents'. Based on the Landscape Biography study, as well as a common-applied participatory approach, the place and the people can be understood as follows.

### *Defining the “place” of the case study*

While the aim of the study was to examine the place identity of the “Austrått landscape,” the term “Austrått landscape” was not an existing quantity recognized in the local community. However, from the project's perspective, the landscape has a series of natural and cultural physical layers that can be used to identify this region.

The perceptual centre of the Austrått landscape is a manor house called the Austråttborgen (Austrått Castle). In historical records, the Austrått manor was a residence for aristocrats and officials who played a significant role in Norwegian history in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and later (Andersen and Ingebrigtsen 1995; Andersen and Bratberg 2011). The manor house as it exists today dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and is attributed to Chancellor Ove Bjelke (1611-1674). The location of older buildings that stood prior to the existence of the manor house is marked by a pyramid, on which there is a commemorative plaque in memory of Bjelke's ancestors. After Bjelke, the manor house has been the property of different owners, from nobility to politicians and investors, from the municipality to the State. In 1916, it was damaged by fire, but was later restored. Most of the remaining lands around the manor house are now owned by the municipality of Ørland, while the manor house and the garden itself are

owned by the Norwegian state and administrated by the Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum (National Museum of Decorative Arts and Design) in Trondheim.

The landscape around the Austrått manor house has evolved over time. The 17<sup>th</sup>-century property encompassed a large area from the seaside to the mountains on the peninsula of Ørland, in addition to inland estates elsewhere in Norway. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the designed manorial landscape of Austrått included a hunting park, two gardens next to the manor house (Dietze-Schirdewahn 2017), a harbor, large areas of agricultural and pastoral farms, a mill, fishing huts and game keeper's huts, among other buildings and features (see figures 3-4). Beginning in the 1870s, as incorporated farms achieved independence from the manor house, the property was divided into smaller parcels. Austrått's profile as a noble residence was lost. Gardens and hunting parks fell out of use and their features and layouts gradually disappeared. Today, visitors see only the manor house standing on an open field. In front of the manor house, on its right side, there are two lines of ash and maple trees planted in the 1990s to indicate the border of the east garden; and on the left side, the pyramid stands in the middle of a grain field (see figures 5-6).

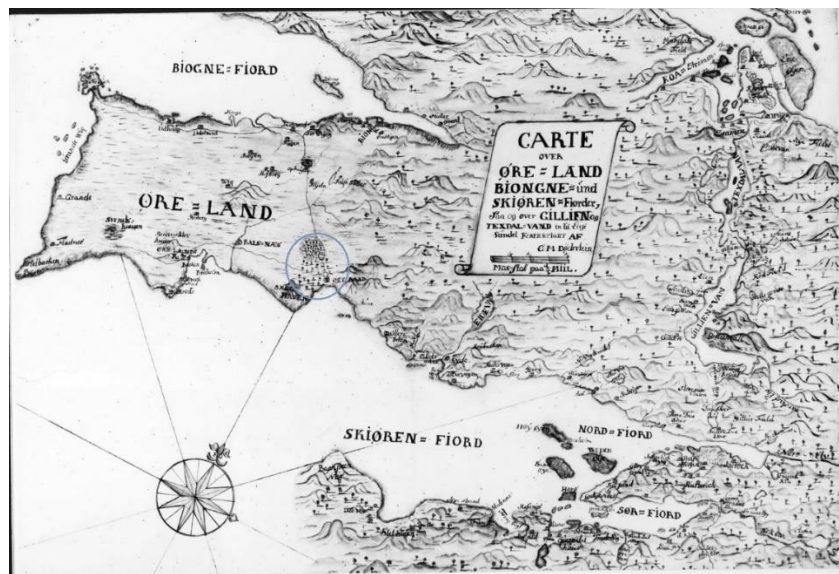


Figure 3. A historical map from ca.1730s. The Manor house and the hunting park are marked. (Source: Georg Michael Döderlein (1699-1763), *Yrjar Heimbygdslag*, collection at Gunnerius Library in

Trondheim, available online [https://www.yrjarheimbygdsilag.no/kulturminner/starten\\_k.htm](https://www.yrjarheimbygdsilag.no/kulturminner/starten_k.htm) accessed 12 August 2018)

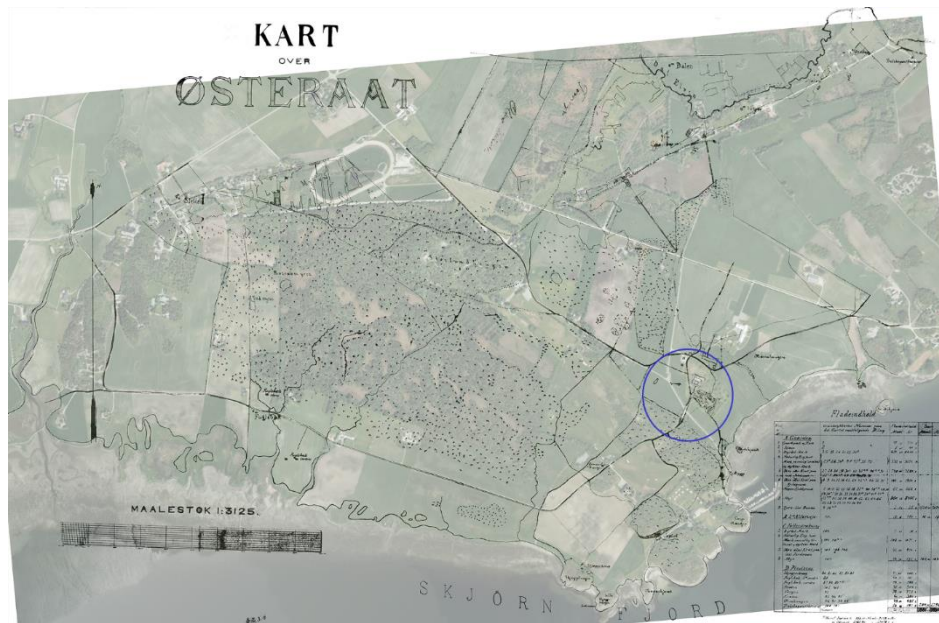


Figure 4. A historical map from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century overlaid with the contemporary aerial photo (Source: historical map from private collection; aerial photo from Norwegian Mapping Authority). The Manor house including the west and east gardens are marked with the blue circle, on its left there is Austråttlunden (the hunting park) in the centre of the image.



Figure 5: A bird's-eye view of the Austrått landscape taken from the southeast. Structures in the image are: A. the pyramid; B. Austråttborgen (Austrått manor house); C. East garden; D. site of West garden;

E. Austrått farm; F. site of Austrått harbour. Austråttlunden (hunting park) is to the left of the image and is not visible here. (Source: Daniel Ågren / Ørland Culture Center, 2011)



Figure 6: Austråttborgen (Austrått manor house) from the rear and the pyramid. (Source: Daniel Ågren / Ørland Cultural Center, 2011)

In the FRAGLA project, based on historical sources the size of the Austrått manor in Ørland during the late 17<sup>th</sup> century was defined to have been approximately 10-12 km<sup>2</sup> of coverage. The land also contains information from other periods of occupation (Aune *et al.* 2005). Archaeological discoveries indicate that the material culture in Ørland dates back to around 800 BC, with finds such as bronze axes and gold rings from the Bronze Age, weapons from the Iron Age, and the hillfort on *Borgklinten* dating from the early Middle Ages (Berglund and Solem 2017). Overlaying the ancient remains are more modern remnants from World War II, such as the military airport and several roads. Therefore, what would normally be identified as its “period of significance” as a 17<sup>th</sup>-century manorial landscape is actually largely degraded. To recognize the multiple layers of the cultural landscape and the features the local residents may find of importance, the term “Austrått landscape” is used here.

Initially only the Austrått landscape was emphasized. However, through the interviews and the workshop, it became clear that Austrått and Ørland are inseparably united. When informants discussed the quality of the Austrått landscape, they often made comparisons to the quality of other parts of Ørland. This was particularly apparent with respect to the new development of the NATO airbase, which itself became a central topic despite an intention to solely focus on the Austrått landscape.

For these two reasons, the term “Austrått landscape” is used to indicate the place surrounding the 17<sup>th</sup> century’s Austrått manorial landscape, while including a broader time span and larger areas of Ørland.

### ***Local residents: What are they? How did we approach them?***

Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with local farm owners who had direct connections with the Austrått landscape. Informants were initially approached with the help of a representative from the Ørland Cultural Center. Through the Ørland Cultural Center, officials and professionals in the Ørland City Council were also contacted, who provided a list of residences in the central area of the Austrått landscape. In total 11 residents participated in the interviews between Spring 2016 and Spring 2017.<sup>1</sup> All of them are farm owners, among whom 4 are active farmers, 6 are retired farmers and 1 has another profession. The length of each interview varied from 1 to 3.5 hours. The farm owners are from multi-generational farm families and have farms located on the former property of Austrått manor. Most of these farms have a long history of tenancy and dependence with the Austrått manor; they were part of the first territorial division in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and acquired the status of independent

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<sup>1</sup> People participated in the seven in-depth interviews are selected from the list “Official list of properties situated in the case area” provided by Ørland municipality in February 2016. The anonymity of the respondents and the confidentiality of their responses were strictly respected in the in-depth interviews. For this reason, the attributions of quotations from interview transcriptions in this article have been kept anonymous.

property at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (6 of those interviewed trace their family tenancy back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century with supporting evidence; 4 of them trace their tenancy back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; 1 bought the farm in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century). Due to their long tenure they hold a deep connection with the Austrått landscape, and the future of Austrått affects them the most.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017, for the purpose of broadening the samples of “local residents,” a workshop was arranged in Ørland municipality. Attendance at the workshop was by invitation. The goal was to have participants covering the population in the broadest and most representative way, including gender, age and interests (both hobby and professional). Participants were found through the suggestions from the municipality, combined with extensive internet searches for existing clubs and associations in Ørland municipality (data from 2016). Based on such information, 27 invitations with personalized letters addressing to individuals or associations by email or regular post were sent. An attempt was also made to involve school children and pupils but was not successful. Ultimately 18 participants attended the workshop, including representatives from the local history club, sports clubs (hunting, fishing, riding, etc.), camping company and other associations, private developers, as well as 4 official representatives for the local landowners and farmers who were interviewed previously. Therefore, altogether opinions from 25 people were collected through seven interviews and one workshop. They represented a diverse range of local residents.

### ***Extracting local residents' voice: Question design***

The objective of the interviews and the workshop was to examine the relationship between local residents and the heritage place, focusing on how local residents perceived the identity of the Austrått landscape and whether and how the Austrått landscape constitutes part of the local residents' collective and personal identity. These questions were delivered through a



series of more concrete questions referring to the uses of the place, the qualities of the place, the meaning of the place and the images of the place. The findings from the answers to the questions would help understand the role of local residents in the past, present day and the future of the Austrått landscape, and therefore provide valuable empirical knowledge to authorities on national, regional and local levels, in addition to addressing how, and to what extent, local residents should be more involved in historic landscape conservation and management plans.

When designing the questions, the same framework was used in all the interviews and the workshop to ensure that the collected data was compatible. By using open-ended questions, informants had the freedom to express their views free from suggested answers or prescribed views. The questions used for local farmers and interest groups were not exactly the same, but all the questions covered three categories: first, personal relationship with the place (such as how long they had been living at the place, and their uses and memories of the place); second, perceived values of the place (such as the most important features of the place and the features they would want to keep); and third, opinions on the future of the place (such as how they would like the place to be protected or developed).

### **Local residents' place identity: findings and lessons for Austrått landscape management**

The interviews and the workshop show that there is no clear gap among the perceptions of place identity from local farm owners and interest groups. Therefore, these two groups of local residents will not be compared. Instead, the results of all seven interviews and one workshop are analysed from three aspects: identity with the place, identity of the place, and the vision of the future of the place.

### *Identity with the place: local residents' attachment to the Austrått landscape*

All 25 participants in the interviews and the workshop expressed their feelings of attachment to, and recognition of, the importance of the Austrått landscape. They all live in the area; they all work or retired in the area; 7 of them grew up in the area. They all had both practical and emotional attachments to the place. It was their everyday landscape, and an important part of their identity, as evidenced by comments such as “It is the most important landscape I know. I am attached to this landscape with my heart, and have lived here since I was a kid,” and “It's hard to convey that love and that feeling.” The meaning of the area was closely attached to quality of life and well-being: “This landscape represents freedom, possibilities, knowledge and livelihood” and “This area has everything you can wish for.”

Almost everyone used the area frequently for recreation, such as walking, hiking, cycling, riding, hunting, and fishing. Many of those interviewed said that they had –or had had– a strong connection to the manor and to the adjoining garden (the east garden) and the woods (Austråttlunden), often since childhood, through activities such as playing games: “The garden [of the manor] and also [the woods of] Austråttlunden were open to everybody. We were there a lot. Yes, we played all the time there... So, I became very much attached to the place.” They would walk and communicate with the landscape with all their senses: “Going up over there one evening you know... and listen to the birdsong! And it's so quiet and so nice and romantic.” They would go there with their families and spend time in “...not only Austråttlunden but also the gardens of Austrått. At that spot there is...coffee and tea, waffle, cake and juice. And the kids play hide-and-seek behind the big trees. So it's an area we use.” The attachments with the place through activities and use were also mentioned repeatedly in the workshop, and one of the participants affectionately recalled “It is part of my identity. I baptized and married in Austråttborgen. I grew up in the area and have played a lot there”. Another informant emphasized that “the area raises the quality of life greatly”.

The landscape also promoted a collective identity among the local residents. Conversations with the local farm owners showed that the landscape was an inherent part of Ørland's identity that helped define the kind of people they are today. The coast and the sea are an important part of local residents' lives. Many of the informants were fishermen by occupation or hobby, and their relationship to maritime traditions was prominent. For instance, when asked about their perception of the landscape, one informant answered: "We are thriving when it is open all the way to the sea. Because if we are in a valley, we feel like...pressed down a little...I think people [from the coasts] are more used to looking far ahead and wide." Agriculture and cultivation are part of the local identity too. Many related to a period of time when the landscape consisted of marshes, with few trees, and described the extraction of peat and the work required to cultivate the land. "When I was a child, there were trees in Austråttlunden, and also some trees in the garden. And then almost no trees [in the rest of Ørland]...Most land is cultivated on Ørland, but there was an abundance of mires here...So we cut peat in the middle area over here."

In spite of the long-time attachment to the landscape, people who live close to the Austrått manor today feel a decreased sense of belonging to or ownership of it. In contrast to decades ago, when the manor house and the east garden were managed and used locally, today it is the regional government that manages the property. Local residents feel excluded from the Austrått manor. Some think the connection with their own landscape is impaired by bureaucracy and the administration's lack of understanding of their attachment to the area: "We feel that there's a distance between us--the local residents--and those who are in office in Trondheim and say 'No' to everything. That's how we feel." Some participants argued that local residents were the ones who lived there, but the "ownership" was not recognized and respected by national and regional heritage authorities when it came to conservation plans.

### *Identity of the place: qualities of the Austrått landscape perceived by local residents*

The Landscape Biography study indicated that the Austrått landscape has a rich cultural history and significant heritage values. The question of how local residents perceive the Austrått landscape was uncovered through the interviews and the workshop. All of the informants expressed an extensive awareness of the qualities of the Austrått landscape. The most recognized qualities included the history and heritage of the place (25 out of 25), the natural environment and the connected activities (25 out of 25) and the site as a place of power (8 out of 25).

All informants were conscious of the long history and heritage with which they were endowed. “It's very old here. There have been people here for a very long time,” said one respondent. “There is something so fascinating with those stories [from Bjelke’s time]. There was drama too.” Informants named several places that they visited regularly. Among various historical features and places, Austrått manor was most recognized as contributing to the identity of the place. The Manor was seen as an important part of the history of Norway, and one of which they were proud, “We are proud of the site (Austrått). It gives us identity as inhabitants of Ørland. It is a historic gem”; “Yes [we are proud to live here]. We really want it (Austrått) to be well taken care of.” The level of importance of the Austrått manor was perceived differently. While some people said that the Austrått manor was a local symbol and they felt “at home” when they saw the manor house, others felt that it was a place of regional, national or even international importance. The Austrått manor house is a strong image used in efforts to increase local identity, to attract a specific market of visitors and to brand the region. For example, Ørland Sparebank, the local bank in Brekstad, commonly uses images of the manor house as a symbol on their webpage and on a variety of products to advertise its organization to customers.

The Austrått landscape has a diverse landform, including mountains and woods, farms, wetlands, coastline and beaches; the land is flat, fertile, and open. All of these features are claimed to be exceptional qualities of the place. It is described as a peaceful landscape where one can enjoy nature. Many informants pointed out that the Austråttlunden had a great variety of wildlife: “You see squirrels, deer... You have all the wildlife gathered in the woods;” “Also a bit special with the oak and the lime tree, and many other things among other heritage elements;” “You feel that you are in an area where you find many traces of Ørland, as it once was;” “It is a fantastic and intact landscape close to the sea and the beaches.”

Local residents also recognized that Ørland had always been a place of power and grandeur, stating that it is “quite substantial that it was a power center there.” They attributed the characterization to the manor: “[The manor] is so distinctive... It was built on a deserted place in the fjord of Trondheim. Deserted, but all the old [nobility] came here... the Viking king came here— Harald Sigurdsson and everyone else. And it's because it was such a central place. But there was also something fascinating about that manor;” “We do not understand why, but it's been like that, all the time.” Today, this power is represented by the NATO airbase, which may also be considered as the factor that may change the identity of the place.

Most of the informants said that the Austrått manor and landscape represented the identity of Ørland, although a few claimed that the airbase had become a more popular subject than the historic landscape: “Nobody knows Ørland municipality, where Austrått is located, but when I mention the (NATO) aircraft base, they can put me on the map.” Although the airbase brings employment and attracts a new population, the overall opinion of it is mixed, as some informants explained,

None of us fought against [it]. Nobody wanted to fight because we all have acquaintances who work in the military... It is the disadvantage of a small community,

where everyone knows each other, and everyone is related to each other. Either way, there was no resistance. But now, there is resistance...Now they finally understand what it means. They hear noise from planes and see farms being moved...and the grief of people...who must move from the farms [they] have inherited.

It affected both the people and the landscape because of the radical transformation, which the informants saw as “a tragedy”. It also exerts a pressure on the Austrått landscape.

### ***Visions of the future: between heritage conservation and local development***

The development of the NATO airbase brings opportunities, but raises questions about the protection of the Austrått landscape and the place identity. Whether or not the airbase is a welcomed development is not a simple “yes” or “no” question, since almost all local residents want a future that balances heritage conservation and local development, although with different emphases.

Those local residents who were most “development friendly” did not want the preservation of the Austrått landscape to hamper the development and growth in the area: “It is a challenge to use the area in a sensitive way where we have both the past and the future on our mind. If we attend too much on the past it will limit our leeway in the future.” It was noted that too many paths dedicated to walking could conflict with agricultural interests and other industry. Balancing the protection of landscape values against development of housing and industry was regarded as a challenge by several informants. Some scepticism was also expressed toward cultural heritage authorities.

Local residents generally accepted that housing and industrial development was a necessity, but should not be at the expense of heritage places, the agricultural fields and other valuable qualities of the place. They were against the use of arable land and fields to build houses: “No more cultivated land shall be built. Housing development, and so on, shouldn’t

take more farmland unnecessarily. There are enough rocky hills to build houses.” They argued that development on areas outside of agricultural land, which were regulated for housing, should be more freely accepted: “I will strongly emphasize the people live and work here today. The owner of the manor would probably applaud industry, houses and other developments, like upgrading the harbor.” They supported new alternatives: “Where they are building is mostly rock. In this way no wildlife is disappearing from the area around. And I think it’s very nice.” No one wanted housing or other development placed too close to Austrått manor or to the surrounding grove, although those who were most in favor of development did not find it disturbing to see houses from the Austrått manor and Austråttlunden.

Those who were concerned about the heritage qualities of the place expressed a wish to improve the maintenance of the Austrått landscape. Overgrowth was particularly seen as a major concern. Some informants underscored that the Austråttlunden was “originally a nature park, but the quality is about to diminish.” Speaking about the landscape, one informant said that when they were kids “there were a lot less trees...because everything was grazed at that time...But now there are a lot [of pasture] that is not grazed. So, we make good use of chainsaws around here.” People also emphasized the importance of “discreet” activities such as removing dead trees and plants, draining, ditching and upgrading some of the roads and paths.

Some informants also wanted to have the Austrått manor house and the east garden restored and reconstructed in order to make the place more interesting for local residents and tourists. Today “the manor house is an empty backdrop...There are restrictions on everything. The manor house is inaccessible. There is a lack of signage about opening hours, and it is dark inside.” It was too expensive to rent the place for social events like business dinners or weddings. “The manor house should have been a spearhead and a beacon in the promotion of

the municipality, but the number of visitors has decreased...However, the cannons (World War II military heritage) are as attractive as before.” There were also voices claiming that the municipality, *i.e.*, its managers and politicians, had not sufficiently focused on the social use of Austrått manor house. Some of the informants wanted to highlight history in all of its aspects while also considering the challenges of our time on the environmental and climate front and “not stagnate in Bjelke’s time.” The discussions indicated that conservation should be integrated with local use and management.

It was stated that local interest in the place must be nurtured and passed on to the young, through activities like schools using the surrounding area of the manor house for theater and other events, as had been done in the past. It was stressed that the municipality should build identity that way. At the workshop, an idea of a community project aiming to convey culture and history to kids was presented and everyone seemed to be enthusiastic about the idea.

To summarize the local residents’ vision of the future: the conservation of the Austrått landscape and local development should be planned and managed, with consideration given to local residents’ voices. This means that housing, industry and commercial development should be carried out at carefully selected places, and history, culture, business and tourism should work together in order to find solutions that are in the best interests of different actors, as all have a common goal of creating a vibrant community. The Austrått manor house and its associated historic landscapes should be planned and maintained in order to provide a closer connection with local residents through various uses and social activities. Last but not least, place identity should be passed on to the next generation.

## **Conclusion**



To date, the conservation of cultural heritage has been largely an elite construct which mainly focuses on the identity of the place. This paper answers the question of why we should incorporate local residents' place identity, and how to uncover such place identity. By engaging local residents, we begin to develop the identity with the place, a concept that has the potential to expand our understanding of cultural heritage.

The distillation of the study's findings and the lessons learned from the interviews and the workshop with local residents are:

- Local residents are fully aware of the qualities and values of the Austrått landscape, and are willing to protect such qualities and values. Their knowledge comes from family memories, life experiences, and long-term use of the place. When compared with an understanding of the place identity formed through the landscape biography study, local residents have similar recognition of the identity of the place, but they understand better the identity with the place. Local residents' voices are complementary to conservation professionals' knowledge, and worth more serious consideration.
- Local residents have a deep attachment to the place, established through different activities, from daily life routines to festival events. Therefore, allowing and encouraging local activities on heritage sites is essential for continuing the identity with the place.
- Local residents' connections with the place are built on a sense of belonging, or perceived ownership. Therefore, a more inclusive approach is needed to give local residents an authoritarian role in heritage planning, management and maintenance.

There are more questions left to answer, which open up future research opportunities. For example, how can we improve historic landscape management by incorporating local residents' place identity? How can we approach a young generation's views on the Austrått landscape? How will their views change when they grow up? In ten years' time, when the airbase is established and people have settled down in new homes, what changes may happen to local residents' place identity and how can we incorporate those changes into the planning process?

The study revealed insufficiencies in local residents' involvement with cultural heritage management and planning. By examining local residents' place identity, a way was found to involve local residents with an approach that is also applicable in other cultural and political contexts.

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