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Empowering marginal lifescapes: the heritage of crofters in between the past and the present

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ABSTRACT

There is a rich, but unacknowledged, heritage of rural subalterns, crofters, in Scandinavia. A Swedish-Norwegian interdisciplinary research-network investigated the most prominent category – the remains of crofts. Due to industrialisation, urbanisation and the modern welfare state, the institution of crofting was abolished, and many crofters left for opportunities elsewhere. The welfare state transformed a landscape of living and working people into a one filled with relicts mostly from the nineteenth century. Although numerous and important to local citizens, these sites fall outside the authorised heritage discourse (AHD) in terms of both research and heritage management. This paper takes an environmental justice perspective to challenge the AHD. Three themes are in focus: (1) bringing out the history of a subaltern and marginalised group of people; (2) promoting crofts as heritage of importance to local citizens and demanding complex management due to the various historical narratives and risks; (3) considering the crofting landscapes in relation to the (economisation) framing of heritage in development processes, especially in relation to fair development in present rural communities.

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Introduction

In the early twentieth century, the Norwegian musician and author Alf Prøysen (1914–1970) grew up in a small, grey, log timbered three-room cottage, with his parents and three siblings outside the town of Brumunddal in the county of Hedmark, Norway (Figure 1). They also had outbuildings and a small plot for cultivation. The Prøysen family were poor crofters (non-proprietors, No. *husmenn*, Sw. *torpare*), leasing their tiny home from a large agricultural estate nearby.¹ In return, they had to pay rent and do hard work on many, long days for the estate. For instance, Prøysen's father, Olaf, worked as a logger in the winter time.

The agrarian community of the region was hierarchical, and the owners of large estates held power both over the people and societal norms. The crofters constituted a marginalised group, not only in

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Figure 1. The Prøysen cottage (Prøysenstua) today. Photo: Jan Löfgren.

economic, but also in social terms. The crofters were belittled, and their children were singled out in school as being less worthy than children of the estate owners and the peasants who were freeholders. Spatial and social marginalisation went hand in hand, and crofters were assigned to land of lesser quality in marginal locations to build their lifescapes of dwelling, work and social interaction. But in the midst of marginalisation, there was also dignity; it can be found in the flowerbeds from where Prøysen's mother, Julie, spread colours and sweet fragrances, in the ability to feed a family in spite of poverty, and in the pride in a gifted son who would rise to national fame.

Prøysen did not forget his humble past when he had made his fortune, and he expressed the worlds of crofters in his artistic work. He also bought the tiny cottage where he had grown up. Today the former home of this national icon is a restored and (soon-to-be) legally protected heritage monument. Adjacent to it, a museum designed by fashionable architects has been erected. But the descendants of crofters still bear witness to the marginalisation processes and the discrimination relating to their social origin – in the midst of a modern, Scandinavian welfare state.

Local and from below – crofts as heritage and in research

Rural, non-proprietor, settlements, such as crofts² (No. *husmannsplasser*, Sw. *torp*), were common in most parts of the world in the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries. Today, there are probably numerous remains after these settlements, but – as far as we know – very little heritage management and research concerning these remains (see below, 'Knowledge production from below').

In Scandinavia, the many remains of crofts have significant impact on the cultural landscapes. There is also significant public interest in croft sites. Yet, they have been located outside the authorised heritage discourse (AHD) (Smith 2006), a situation that has created problems in the heritage management of and the research on crofts. Adding to these complications is the increasing demand for heritage to be of use in community development.

While various categories of heritage sites face such challenges in Scandinavia as well as internationally, crofts are among the types of sites as being of the greatest concern. They also possess two major characteristics which make them good examples for challenging traditional views on heritage; the importance of crofts to local citizens, which is in conflict with the national AHDs, and, for research, the significance of knowledge production from below.

Therefore this paper seeks to promote and problematise the heritage of crofts, not only from anti-quarian and scientific perspectives, but also in relation to the framing of heritage in local development processes.

The importance of being local

The crofters are no more, but remains of their marginal lifescapes are present in the landscape. Due to industrialisation, urbanisation and the modern welfare state, the rural landscapes and ways of life have changed dramatically in Scandinavia over the last century. Many homes and workplaces were deserted when people left for a future in the cities and on the other side of the Atlantic. The welfare state transformed a landscape of living and working people into a landscape filled with relicts and memories, which local citizens encounter on a regular basis.

The remains of the crofts and the memories of the crofters are important to local citizens. It is common for them to first mention crofts, and stories of the crofters, when asked about their local heritage (Lind and Svensson 2001). This is especially the case in the sparsely populated, forested areas of inner Scandinavia that are combating the effects of post-industrialism on employment, demography and social services. This marginalisation in an increasingly urban-dominated society includes a lack of a sense of the importance of history and of heritage in national belonging. This lack of awareness is reinforced by the low degree of attention paid by antiquarian authorities and research institutions (Svensson 2009). In this context, crofts stand out as a local means to not only appropriate an understandable heritage, but to also challenge national narratives on history and heritage.

With few exceptions, in the wake of lack of academic research on the lifescapes of crofters and conservation strategies for croft sites, local organisations have stepped in to research. In fact, the greatest body of publications dealing with crofts and crofters are local historical books, produced by local heritage associations (Lind and Svensson 2001, 13). In addition, it has been quite common for local heritage associations in Norway and Sweden to put up signs by the remains of the crofts to commemorate their names and sometimes those of the inhabitants. Thus, these associations have augmented the impact of the crofts in the landscape.

Knowledge production from below

Croft remains have seldom been excavated in the two countries. Excavations are almost exclusively rescue projects in urban areas dominating the societal development, due to the polluter pays-requirements of the heritage laws. In addition, archaeological research tends to focus on earlier periods and more glamorous objects (Lind and Svensson 2001; Fossum 2010; Amundsen 2012).

In Norway, the Cultural Heritage Act (KML, No) protects all monuments and sites dated earlier than 1537, the date of the Lutheran Reformation. For younger sites, the Directorate for Cultural Heritage may impose a protection order, which is granted on a case-to-case basis, or consideration may be taken through the regulations of the Planning Act. The 1537 divide puts recent cultural monuments, like crofts, in a weak position (e.g. Brattli and Larsson 2016; Kahn 2016; McLees 2016).

In Sweden, the Heritage Monuments Act (KML, Sw.) was recently changed (2014). The new version mandated that cultural historical remains established in 1850 or later would not be designated as 'ancient monuments' and be protected. Making 1850 the critical year complicates matter for nineteenth-century crofts, as it means that some are regarded as ancient monuments protected by law, whereas others fall outside of this protection. To make matter even more complicated, it is not possible to assess from the remains themselves whether they qualify as ancient monuments. Instead material

such as historical maps and written documents must be used to determine the dating of individual sites. However, the new law should be considered an improvement because nineteenth-century crofts were not protected in the previous version of the Act.

Yet crofts have often, although unsystematically, been included in the national survey for ancient monuments carried out by National Heritage Board and in other surveys carried out by different actors, from 1990s onwards. The survey for cultural heritage remains in forested areas, *Skog & Historia (Forest & History)*, carried out by the Forest Commission, is especially important for its recording of crofts.

Regardless of discipline, the approach behind the academic research on the lifescapes of crofters has commonly taken a bottom-up perspective, bringing out the subaltern social groups such as crofters, workers and marginalised ethnic communities. For archaeologists it has also been common to use the material culture as a contrast or complement to written documents, thereby nuancing notions of subaltern living conditions (e.g. Stensrud 1974; Lundsjö 1975; Winberg 1977; Jonsson 1980; Rosén 1991, 1999; Bäck 1992; Kolstad 1996; Dalen 1999; Svensson 2001, 2007; Lind et al. 2002–3; Holm 2005; Andersson 2007; Johansson and Lindholm 2007; Welinder 2007; Lindholm 2009; Svensson et al. 2009; Eymundsson 2011; Amundsen, Enger, and Ringen 2012).

Small-scale investigations dominate archaeological examinations of crofts (Lind and Svensson 2001; Holm 2005; Welinder 2007; Martens 2009; Eymundsson 2011; Amundsen, Enger, and Ringen 2012). This work has mainly been bottom-up initiatives by individual scholars/antiquarians or small teams, and research has been carried out sporadically. In Sweden, deregulation and marketisation of the rescue archaeology sector and the introduction of multi-actor competition has further complicated the situation. The structure of the research carried out, and, until recently (Nilsson 2013), the lack of consistent programmes or action plans directed by heritage management institutions, has rendered knowledge production uneven.

The Scandinavian bottom-up perspective is matched by the strong post-colonial profile in corresponding international research that pays attention to subalterns, such as slaves, industrial workers and people living under other marginalising conditions (e.g. Funari, Hall, and Jones 1999; Delle, Mrozowski, and Paynter 2000; Turner and Young 2007; Newman 2013; Robertson 2015). There has also been some research focusing on the dwelling sites in particulars such as the subaltern-building traditions (Jönsson 1976), the living biological heritage at deserted croft sites, such as relicts of cultivated plants, as a source for understanding older land use, aesthetics of the time (Andersson, Sköld, and Åhman 2007) and how crofts were transformed into the use and aesthetics of today (Fossum 2010; Lagerqvist 2011).

Theory and method – introducing a network project

The authors of this paper formed an interdisciplinary Norwegian-Swedish research network in 2014. The members of the network represent the academic disciplines of archaeology, historical archaeology, history, human historical geography and agrarian history. They are affiliated with university and research institutions, archives, heritage management institutions and a private company in the heritage sector.

Because it lacked the economic means for doing original field research such as excavations or detailed surveys, the research network relied on previous research, mainly that undertaken by the network members, experiences from practical heritage management and the preparatory searches of the historical archives for relevant information. The findings were discussed at a number of workshops, two per year, six in total. Three workshops took place in Värmland, Sweden, and three in Hedmark, Norway (Figure 2). The workshops included presentations, theoretical discussions and field trips. External contributors were invited to attend the workshops, when relevant.

Environmental justice came to be the network's overreaching theoretical perspective. Environmental justice addresses how social stratification, (lack of) access to power, environmental degradation and risk exposure intersect, thus reinforcing the unjust living conditions of subalterns and the importance of having empowerment strategies for reversing the situation (Walker 2011). It should be emphasised

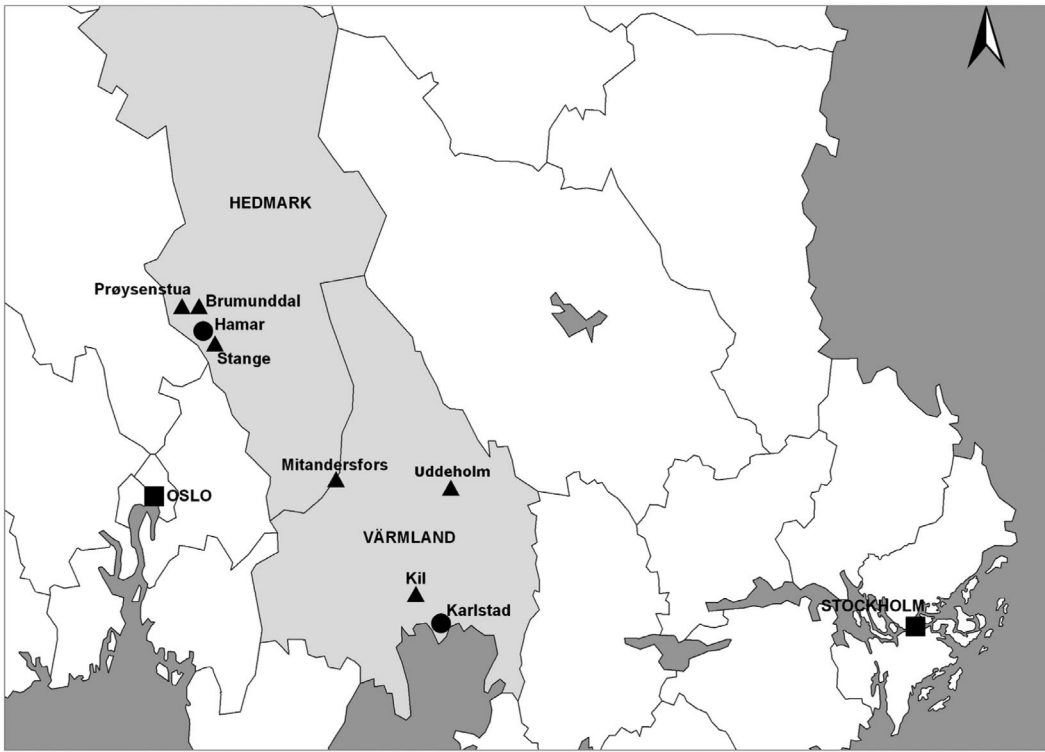


Figure 2. Map of Hedmark (Norway) and Värmland (Sweden). The different workshop venues are marked. Map: Stefan Nilsson.

that environmental justice expands social justice as it also brings the (physical) environment, including heritage, into the framework.³ Environmental justice is therefore a potentially important research perspective for heritage and heritage management, which are coupled with the exercise of power on one hand and empowerment on the other (e.g. Smith 2006; Moshenska and Dhanjal 2012; Beardslee 2016). Potentially, environmental justice goes well with the current ‘material turn’ in the humanities, and offers the possibility to combine heritage and historical/archaeological research. As a theoretical perspective, environmental justice served to both bring out and bring together the three themes of the network project. These themes were (a) promoting a heritage currently outside of, or with unclear standing in, the AHD as being important to local citizens; (b) bringing out the history of a subaltern and marginalised group of people, crofters; (c) and considering the crofting landscapes in relation to the framing of heritage in local development processes, especially in rural communities affected by post-industrial injustices in an increasingly urbanised world. The last few decades, there have been increasing demands for marketisation of heritage, for instance, history marketing (Schug 2010), which risks creating a conflict with democratic demands for making heritage available for citizens.

Drawing together people with varied competences and diverse experiences of research, and archival and heritage management allowed for a diverse yet concrete problematising and for forward-looking discussion on the three themes. Archaeology, as the instigating discipline, dominated the network. Still, the discussions were surprisingly friction free, as the members of the network were only too well aware of the shortcomings of their individual disciplines, as well as those of research and heritage management in the context. Of central importance were the discussions on how different sources could be triangulated. An understanding of crofts could be gained by information from written documents on people living in the crofts, reconstructions of specific chronological horizons in the landscape with the help of historical maps, and the testimony from material culture with the help of archaeology. The discussions also covered how far from straightforward such triangulations have turned out to

be in reality, with consequences for both research and heritage management. Below are some of the network's results and discussion in the form of reflexions on and revisions of previous research and heritage management experiences, limited new information from archival searches, observations from the field trips and learnings from the discussions at the workshops.

Crofts and crofters in archives and in the landscape

Crofts, in the sense of small agrarian units in a dependency position vis-à-vis the landowner, were established already during medieval times in Scandinavia. A major transformation started in the eighteenth century with demographic growth and scarcity of land for establishing new small holdings. The number of crofters and crofts increased rapidly until the middle of the 1800s. Throughout the 1800s, it became more and more common also to settle in the forested outlying land.

From the mid-1800s on, other possibilities opened up, such as work in the new factories in the towns and emigration to North America. At the same time, an increasingly effective and ultimately mechanised agriculture made many crofters redundant. In Sweden, the great land division, *Laga Skifte*, in the middle of the nineteenth century left many of the crofters who lived by the villages and infields as homeless proletarians. The crofters on outlying lands were less vulnerable to proletarianisation because they pursued more flexible economies than those near villages. In Norway, the Land Act of 1928 (No. *Jordloven*) gave the crofters the right to redeem their small holdings, a right they used extensively. In Sweden, the crofting institution was abolished in 1943 (Skappel 1922; Elgeskog 1945; Hovdhaugen 1975; Bäck 1992).

The extensive social and economic changes in society during the last 100 years affected the crofts. After the people moved out the small fields and pastures were incorporated into the nearby farm, converted to forest plantations or became overgrown. In many cases, the croft buildings were demolished, moved to new locations or left standing to fall apart. Some, however, were transformed into small holdings, summer or permanent cottages. In addition, there are examples of families living in the crofts under marginal economic and social conditions after the Second World War up to the 1970s.

Highlighting Hedmark and Värmland

The network project focused on the regions of Hedmark (Norway) and Värmland (Sweden). The regions are today located on either side of the Swedish – Norwegian border, but in the nineteenth century (until 1905) the two countries were part of the same nation because Norway and Sweden were united under a common king.

The south-western part of Hedmark County, the region named Hedemarken by Lake Mjøsa, is the district in Norway with the most extensive and a long-living crofting institution because it has rich agricultural conditions and numerous estates. Larger estates could have up to 20 crofts in operation (e.g. Stensrud 1974; Ødegaard 1988). They were located by the infields or on the outlying land, where clusters of crofts, so called *grends* were common. For example, Prøysenstua belonged to such a *grend* along *Præstvægen* (the priest's road) (Prøysens venner 1990).

Värmland was dominated by smaller agrarian units, which combined agriculture and various complementary economies, not least those based on forest resources. However, there were a few larger agricultural estates. Industry, especially the iron works, was a major economic actor in the region, and 'bourgeois islands' were established in otherwise forested areas, with the manor's and worker's quarters laid out in a semi-urban fashion. The iron works were also sources of extra income for peasants and crofters (Furuskog 1924; Hellspong 1974; Von Schoultz 1984; Svensson et al. 2009).

In spite of their different contexts, the crofters of the agricultural estates in Hedmark and the crofters in the industrial landscapes of Värmland had a lot in common. From an environmental justice perspective, there were similarities in social stratification, vulnerability to power exercise, environmental degradation and risk exposure, but also in empowerment strategies. The lifescapes of crofters included patriarchal hierarchies, segregated housing ranging from manors to small cottages,

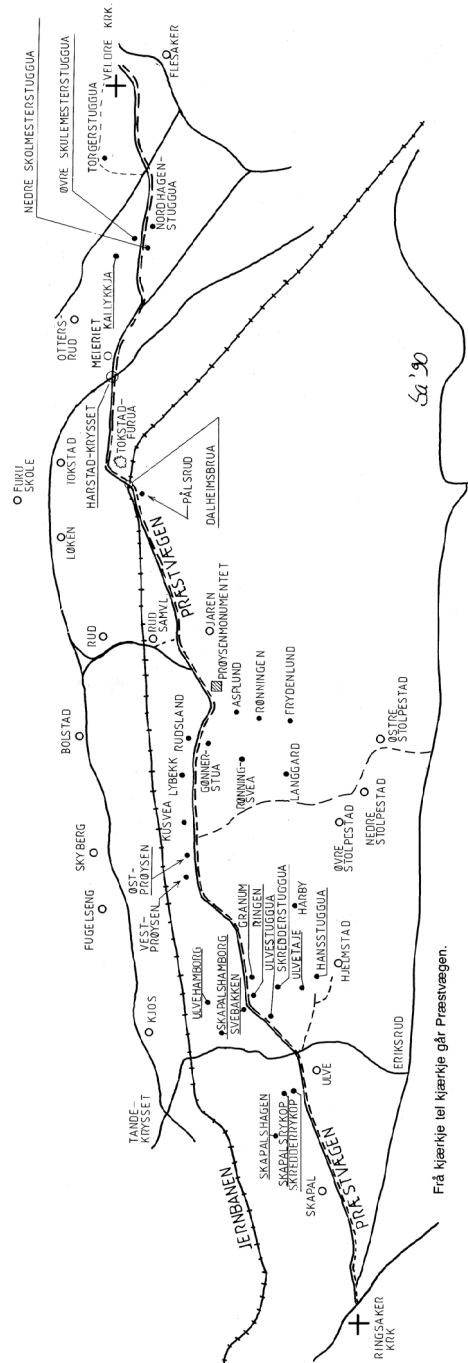


Figure 3. Map over the grend along Præstvægen, with Prøysenstua. Map: Prøysens venner, 14–15. GIS-application: NIKU.

socially uneven privileges and restrictions concerning use of natural resources, uneven risk exposure including unhealthy conditions, famine and accidents. The owners of the landed estates and the iron works exercised power over crofters both directly (e.g. through the leasing contracts) and indirectly. The debt system was a common means of oppression described in company and estate archives used in

this project. Because the crofters generally had to shop on credit in stores controlled by the iron works or estates, they often ended up with debts that enforced their state of dependence and powerlessness.

But the crofters had counter strategies such as spreading sources of incomes, challenging privileged rights, and forming social clusters. Archival information on titles and professions in the national registers, parish summons, statistical tables in the parish archives and in some company archives make it clear that the crofters in both Hedmark and Värmland relied on diverse sources of incomes and professions. They were often occupied as craftsmen and lumbermen, working in the industry or with industry-related services and deliveries, in addition to do the farm work. The women contributed both through working on the farms and selling their handicrafts (Skappel 1922; Hovdhaugen 1975; Lind et al. 2001; Tranberg 2006). The finding of lead seals from packages of clothing and of parts of a treadle sewing machine in a croft excavated in Värmland illustrates the importance of women's contribution (Bodin et al. 2007, 192). More direct forms of resistance can be seen in the court rolls. There are examples of refusals to perform certain tasks or even to work at all and the illegal use and appropriation of natural resources such as timber and firewood and fish and wildlife. The existence of poaching has also been demonstrated archaeologically by finds of shotgun cartridges in the croft in Värmland (Ødegaard 1988; Bodin et al. 2007, 191).

According to the national registers, crofters had to move frequently. The families often had to relocate to work for a new landowner. They were forced to move because their leasing contracts expired. But crofters could also choose to relocate, if not burdened by debt, when better conditions were available somewhere else. However, some crofters had the means to seek more permanent conditions. In Sweden, it was not uncommon for crofters to gain long-term leases (sometimes 50 years) by lending money to the landowner (in Swedish called *förpantningskontrakt*). There are examples of crofters related by blood or marriage settling together in minor communities based on *förpantningskontrakt* (Lind and Svensson 2001; Lind et al. 2002–3).

A crofting community can be presumed to have incorporated mutual support, collective work and shared identities and to have presented a stronger negotiation power vis-à-vis the landowners. How community building could be expressed in the landscape became evident during the field trip to the *grend* along *Præstvægen* and *Prøysenstua* in 2014, where the crofts were connected by a path (Figure 3).

Antiquarian and heritage management dilemmas

The crofting institution is a heritage in itself, but the lack of protection for many remnants of the crofters' lifescapes are a pressing archaeological problem. Due to the multi-tasking and widespread localisation of activities performed by crofters, investigating their lifescapes cannot be reduced to examining crofting sites, but requires broader landscape approaches. However, the many vestiges of crofters' lifescapes are often located in forested areas – today often planted with spruce for increased forest production. This exposes the former environments of the crofting lifescapes to multiple risks from the operations performed by modern mechanised forestry.

Conserve or not conserve ...?

In Norway, the focus is on preserving *buildings* and not deserted sites, although the law is open to the latter (KML, No. § 15). According to the Norwegian national cultural heritage database *Askeladden* (read 8 December 2016), 25 crofts are legally protected by the Cultural Heritage Act. Three of them are located in Hedmark and were each protected at different times, 1923, 1989 and 2007. In addition, two other crofts are in the process of being protected, and one is the *Prøysenstua*. This modest number suggests that crofts have received little attention in the authorised heritage management discourse. The antiquarian attitude has changed through time from a focus on single buildings to the more complex environments mirrored in the Hedmark case. In 1923, only a residential house was the subject of protection, whereas both residential houses and outbuildings were covered in 1989 and 2007. In addition, the objects were well-preserved and virtually authentic. In the resolutions of the Directorate

for Cultural Heritage (No. *Riksantikvaren*) following the preservations of 1989 and 2007, the protection was justified in terms of the importance of mediating the history of the crofters for future generations.

From an environmental justice perspective, there is reason to highlight the top-down protection policy, which leans on the AHD-concept 'of high cultural historical value', because what constitutes high cultural historical value – and for whom – is not debated. The initiative from local community NGOs to preserve what they find to be of high cultural historical value, namely crofts, poses a challenge to heritage management authorities.

In Sweden, there are few protected croft buildings, (e.g. one in Värmland), but the antiquarian focus today is on the many remains of crofts that, due to the changed legislation, have become ancient monuments. Legal protection is given to sites older than 1850, which divides crofting sites into protected and non-protected sites. The dating is based on proxy data such information in documents and historical maps.

The problems of assessing dates were clearly illuminated during the field trip in Mithandersfors, Värmland (May 2014), where the intention was to connect information from historical maps and archives with the croft sites visited. The problem we faced, which appears to be general, is that the names of the crofts as they are known in local knowledge and on the digital register of ancient monuments (*Fornsök*) do not always match the names on the historical maps and seldom match information in written documents. Often croft names are not even recorded in the written documents, as the crofters were registered under the name of the estate. To complicate matters, the connection between particular crofters and crofts was weak as crofters often moved. In addition, croft names were not fixed, as crofts were commonly renamed. Thus, the same croft may appear on maps and in written documents under different names. Connecting croft sites with information from written documents and historical maps is thus a far from straightforward process.

The shortcomings raised in the source-critical discussion above could be remedied using an environmental justice perspective. The lack of crofts being mentioned in the written documents, the high degree of mobility among crofters due to insecure tenures and the subsequent frequent changes in croft names should be regarded as another important heritage of the crofters' marginal lifescapes. However, in order to have these heritages taken into account and protected, a change would be needed in the conservation policy that currently relies on information from documents and historical maps for legal protection of croft sites.

The landscape palimpsest

Another issue raised at the workshop in May 2016 in Kil was the longevity of landscape use. It is often assumed that, due to increased demographic pressure, crofters were reduced to settling on marginal land not previously used for settlement and agriculture. But several excavations have shown that crofts were placed on older sites (Lind and Svensson 2001; Holm 2005). Often there were no connections between older land use and a subsequent, and sometimes very much later, croft. But the older land use could have been an important reason for the establishment of the croft at the site, as the reuse of previously settled and cultivated land facilitated settlement expansion. Thus, in chronologically multi-layered landscapes, the remains from different times are both mixed and reused. For instance, areas with fossilised fields often harbour traces of agricultural practices from a wide chronological span. In such cases, the younger remains can often be preserved because of the legal protection given the older remains (Holm 2007; Nilsson 2007).

Another type of complication was encountered on the field trip to Skottan in Kil, Värmland (May 2016). According to documents, Skottan was a farmstead deserted in the fifteenth century. In an attempt to locate the deserted medieval farmstead, a survey was undertaken in 2010 and a house foundation was discovered. However, the foundation gave the impression of being fairly recent, rather more like a typical croft site (Figure 4). Still, due to lack of alternative sites and due to the foundation not being documented in historical maps or any other known source, and thus not decisively post-medieval, a test excavation was carried out in 2011 (Boss et al. 2011). The excavation revealed that the house



Figure 4. The house foundation at Skottan, with the remains of the chimney overgrown with trees. Photo: Eva Svensson.

foundation was indeed post-medieval, but impossible to date precisely due to limited amount of material found. However, it appears to have been superimposed on medieval structures, because a cultural layer in the cellar pit was dated to c. the twelfth or thirteenth century.

If it had not been excavated, Skottan would not be legally protected because the visible house foundation seemed to be fairly recent, and there was no information in documents or historical maps indicating a pre-1850 dating. Ironically, the lack of information, which was used as a reason to not give it *heritage management* protection, was interpreted during the *research* as possibly indicating a non-recent dating!

A heritage for the marginalised?

The fame and popularity of Alf Prøysen is the reason behind the conservation of his cottage, but the driving force behind it was a local community NGO. The connection between crofts and local interests and identities is not isolated to the Prøysen case because in rural communities the deserted croft sites embody the meaning of heritage to local people.

The deserted buildings, remaining domestic plants, place names and narratives of people and of lives lived makes heritage understandable, interesting and easily discoverable. This closeness in the landscape is only one reason for the interest in crofts; another is the legitimisation of the present welfare state, which was built on the hard labour and the poor lifescapes of the crofters–ancestors (Lind et al. 2001, 86). But even when there are family connections between past crofters and people in an area today, those are seldom recognised and accounted for by local citizens because the crofters tend to be ‘somebody else’s’ relatives. Poverty is best enjoyed at a distance, as an ‘othering’.

Crofts and other recent heritage monuments in forested areas are privileged with a stronger legal protection than those in other contexts because they fall under forest legislation specifying consideration of all heritage sites regardless of age (Lov om skogbruk; SVL). Because many heritage monuments



Figure 5. Kulturstubbar on a croft site. Photo: Eva Svensson.

have been damaged by forestry in spite of the law (e.g. Ulfhielm 2013, 2014), the Forestry Commission in Sweden has started campaigns to prevent further harm. A quite successful mitigation is called *Kulturstubbar*, where high stumps are left on the heritage remains to mark the site (Figure 5).

The success of the mitigation lies in the reason *why* forestry destroys heritage sites, as damage is unintentional and nobody wants to harm the sites. In the neoliberal era of today, forest workers have been let go by the forestry companies and forced to become self-employed and to buy expensive equipment and compete for contracts offered by their former employers. In order to pay their bills and put food on the table for their families, the new, 'proletarian' subcontractors have to work very efficiently. They carry out forestry operations under time pressures, often including working at night – when it is even harder than usual to detect heritage sites. It should therefore be stressed that even if the destruction of ancient monuments in the forest results from individual action, the destructions are part of the societal marginalisation of forested, sparsely populated areas (Svensson 2014, 89, 90).

When they take contracts in Norway, Swedish forest workers/subcontractors have brought *Kulturstubbar* there, where this mitigation method is otherwise not used.

Injustices of the past ... for the future?

Another key dimension for managing heritage is the use of heritage as a resource for achieving political and economic goals. More specifically, here we want to address the increasing marketisation of history and culture. Cultural policy increasingly emphasises that culture, including heritage, should be a socio-economic driver to generate local and regional development. Heritage is thus operationalised and rationalised as a growth resource, and local and regional stakeholders are searching for ways to marketise local and regional heritage (Beckman 2010). The relatively recently introduced concept

history marketing is an interesting component of economically rationalising heritage and history (Schug 2010). History marketing was introduced as a strategy for companies to make use of their own history in their marketing and storytelling. Although the concept is relatively new, the practice has been going on for a relatively long time. But only carefully selected history and heritage are promoted, histories of founders and influential persons with mythical leadership qualities and narratives of an ongoing successful evolution (Lundström 2006).

Many heritages are not commercially viable and marketable, and the commodification clashes both with notions of heritage as something sacred and with the limited market value of heritage that does not have a positive story. It has been pointed out, however, that local and regional history, heritage practices and lived life values have other potential, more long-term functional forms of importance for promoting democracy, diversity and social welfare (Aronsson 2004). But so far these long-term forms have been hard to manifest or visualise because they belong to the more immaterial spheres of daily life. Still, heritage as such tends to resist blunt commodification or marketisation and to provide other values when economised. The case of *Prøysenstua* and the poet Alf Prøysen is an example of a more complex development project; it combines a focus on a famous person with alternative historical narratives, coupled with ambitions to learn from the past to gain a better understanding of the present. But it is also a story of how a local initiative to preserve the memory of a cherished artist came to grow into something much bigger. Today, the place is a major tourist destination, and an interesting hybrid of commodification, heritage management and an example of *how* the narratives of the past could be displayed.

Prøysenstua, which was in poor condition, was renovated and partly restored as the local actors sensed a need for improving a heritage of the subaltern before putting it on display. The ambition was to present the dwelling house as a tidied version of its 1920s appearance. The barn and stable are replicas, moved to the place from nearby crofts and inserted among the traces of the work of the



Figure 6. Alf Prøysen, as an adult, playing the guitar while sitting on a large, clearance cairn below his childhood home; Prøysenstua. Photo: Johan Brun – Domkirkeoddens fotoarkiv (dig-009776).

parents of Prøysen. Examples are the clearance cairns remaining from his father's work in the small fields and domestic plants lingering from his mother's garden (Figure 6).

In 1985, *Prøysenstua* was taken over by Ringsaker, the local municipality, and has served as a museum since 1997. A new visitor and information centre opened on 23 July 2014, on Prøysen's century birthday. An important criterion was that the visitor centre should be located at a distance from *Prøysenstua*. Moreover, the building had to be placed in the forest and adapted to the terrain. Emphasis was also placed on preserving the old road, *Præstvægen*, as an important element in the landscape (Prøysenhuset). The municipality also established new roads, parking places and an amphitheatre for the tourists. Lately, the regional cultural heritage management body, Hedmark County Council, has initiated a process of legal preservation of *Prøysenstua*. The preservation process raises questions about whether the croft should be considered and mediated as a historical object and reminder of harsh and unjust lifescape or as the childhood home of the famous artist Prøysen.

Another way of retrieving and transmitting knowledge of the lifescapes of crofters is by involving schools and local heritage NGOs in excavations of crofts, which happened in Hedmark. Communicating the history of crofts to children and young people could be an important input towards developing and strengthening local identity, especially in districts where the systems of crofters were strong in the past – and cast shadows in the present.

The school project had three components. First, there was the active participation of school groups to mediate the crofters' history and archaeology as theory and method. Second, there was the use of the new knowledge for developing heritage pathways, seminars and exhibitions for the broader public. Third, there was the development and testing of archaeology as an approach to both strengthen and challenge information from written records, photographs and oral narratives. The project was quite successful in producing new knowledge in relation to the limited excavations, but there were also problems. For instance, the methodological part of the study had to be simplified to accommodate school children, and there was difficulty obtaining funding for substantial excavations, post-excavation work and analyses within the established system of research and cultural heritage management in Norway. As a consequence, the crofts selected could neither be fully excavated nor could analyses of artefacts, fragments of buildings, remains of agriculture and other activities at the dwellings or written sources be performed to satisfaction. In fact, most work was done on a voluntary basis (Amundsen, Enger, and Ringen 2012; Amundsen, forthcoming).

The experiences from Värmland were both more positive and more depressing. A research project on crofts, which was initiated by a local heritage organisation envisaging crofts as a resource for future local development in cooperation with research and heritage management organisations, was able to find some research funding (Lind and Svensson 2001). The results have been widely used. The practical work, however, was carried out by the researchers and a few elderly members of the local heritage organisation. No children participated, as the local school had been closed due to a shortage of children in the sparsely populated forested community. The intention of using the results from the research to promote tourism was not successful. Nor have there been structured attempts to use the results for other kinds of local development, as there were no resources for prolonged cooperation between the researchers and the local community in spite of both doing a great deal of voluntary work.

Empowering marginal lifescapes

Alf Prøysen made his way in the world albeit a humble start in *Prøysenstua*. But most crofters remained in subaltern positions and had marginal lifescapes and their fate continues to have a negative impact on many citizens in today's welfare state. It is the heirs of the crofters, not the oppressors, that are stigmatised. And although crofts are important, even the most important heritage sites in many local communities, the narratives of the crofters includes aspects of 'othering' because few people are coming forward as crofters' heirs. It is evident that crofts are also located outside the AHD (Smith 2006) in heritage management, which is mirrored in the low interest shown by researchers.

We have proposed environmental justice (Walker 2011) as a theoretical perspective to promote crofts in heritage management. But environmental justice is still a theoretical concept in development and needs further exploration, especially in relation to heritage research, where it is still almost unused. Still, some lessons deserve highlighting.

First, heritage management has to assume responsibility in relation to crofts and reflect critically on the prevailing discourse on 'high cultural historical value'. It needs to do this not only to avoid further damaging of the sites, but also to manage landscape and immaterial heritage such as community and migratory lifescapes. Reducing heritage management to a process of evaluating the legal protection available to croft sites that depends on being able to identify the site as existing prior to a critical date, based on written documents or on historical maps is thus not satisfactory.

Second, research – or perhaps rather research funding – has to be increased. Research projects done on voluntary basis and in bottom-up initiatives are good, but severely limited in what they can achieve. Crofts tend to be discriminated against both for being located at the intersection of different academic disciplines and for not being considered important or old enough.

Third, the importance of crofts as heritage in local communities and how they can contribute to fair local development remains an issue to be explored, preferable from an environmental justice perspective. From our experience, crofts offer an interesting resistance to the economisation of heritage by not being marketable enough and by telling the 'wrong' narratives. Still, they remain cherished by local people.

Last, but not least, seemingly objective concepts such as 'high cultural historical value' serve the AHD and could be replaced by empathy as part of an environmental justice empowerment strategy. It should be born in mind that crofters were living under unjust conditions and today their heritage is being treated unjustly. We cannot change the past, but we can transmit the legacy of the crofters to the present and the future. Do we accept the challenge?

Notes

1. In Norway and Sweden it was common also for 'ordinary' farms to lease land to crofters.
2. In this paper the term crofters (living in crofts) will be used as an umbrella term for the numerous non-proprietors, rural subalterns, who leased minor agrarian units paying their rents in cash and labour. In Scandinavia there were several different designations for different groups of rural subalterns that will not be taken into account here.
3. The theoretical concept of Environmental Justice in relation to heritage will be further explored in a new project; The archaeology and heritage of the subaltern by Pia Nilsson, Eva Svensson & Martin Hansson.

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