



PERCEIVED VALUES OF AGRARIAN LANDSCAPES IN EASTERN AND WESTERN NORWAY

Einar Strumse

*Faculty of Health and Social Studies, Lillehammer University College, N-2626 Lillehammer,
Norway, Tel. +47 61 28 80 50, e-mail: einar.strumse@hil.no*

Abstract

The results reported in the present paper stemmed from a postal survey (n = 447) of the evaluations of scenes from agrarian landscapes in two Norwegian regions the Hamar/Stange area in Hedmark County, Eastern Norway, and Inner Sogn of the Sogn and Fjordane County in Western Norway. The results indicate that regional characteristics still are salient in the perceptions of the general public, that participants do appear to perceive the landscape according to general dimensions or categories, and that the various dimensions are valued differently. In particular, the degree to which scenes are readily recognised appears to be of high importance for the attribution of value to any given landscape category. In this study, one way in which this was demonstrated was that participants residing in the Hedmark area attributed lower economic use value to nature dominated scenes in Sogn than what was done by residents of the Inner Sogn area. In contrast, persons living in Inner Sogn exhibited low preferences for fields and modern road scenes from Eastern Norway. The results also suggest that when landscapes scenes become too familiar, preferences tend to decrease. On the other hand, landscapes typical of area of residence and highly preferred landscapes are both important for subjective well – being. A finding of theoretical interest is the very clear tendency towards agreement across geographical regions when considering evaluations of nature-dominated scenes, whereas evaluations of scenes more dominated by built structures yielded clearer regional differences, suggesting the existence of two separate modes for landscape perception - one biological mode dominating the experience of nature-dominated scenes, and one cultural mode dominating the experience of more human-influenced scenes.

Finally, the findings suggest a conflict between the landscapes most people value in terms of non-material benefits and those landscapes that provide income through agricultural production. Without any doubt, overcoming this conflict would be important for the well-being of the population.

Keywords: agrarian landscapes, visual preference, subjective well – being, typicality, conservation value, economic value, cultural heritage
