



HYTTEVETT

THE PARADOX OF NORWEGIAN ALPINE LIVING



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THE INTENTION

Our diploma explores the paradox of the Norwegian alpine living.

Guro is from Voss and have spent a lot of time in the ski slopes, growing up. Maren is from Stord, and have spent her weekends and holidays on her cabin in Voss, next to the ski slopes. With an interest for Norwegian mountains and recreational living we started the diploma with an intention to design a sustainable cabin. Shortly after we started working on our diploma, the discussion about the cabin industry and the preservation of Norwegian nature flared up in the media. This has affected our exploration and process. We had to change the way we looked at the topic and the industry. It became a challenge for us to “just draw a cabin” and we were motivated to delve into a research phase and “dug up the dirt” to gain a broader understanding. For us, this has meant that the solution is more complex than just finding a new cabin module. Through various scenarios and cases, we try to show and highlight different ways of seeing, testing and thinking about how to develop cabin villages and recreational destinations.

THE NORWEGIAN “HOME”

THE PARADOX

THE LABORATORIUM

THE METHOD

THE NORWEGIAN "HOME"



Norway is a country of cabins. Half of the population has access to at least one, and even if it remains empty for 300 days a year, it holds significant importance. Unlike childhood homes that often disappear after parents pass away, cabins typically stay within the family, serving as starting points for nature experiences. This applies to all types of cabins, whether traditional, apartments, former dwellings, or agricultural buildings. Most cabins have utility value regardless of their price, and they are filled with memories, pictures, and objects that add sentimental value. Additionally, cabins hold market value.

The significance of cabins has evolved over the years. They began as the poor man's house, a notion reflected in the national anthem's line, "Norwegian men in houses and cabins." What Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson meant by a cabin is vastly different from today's interpretation. The simple cabin life has transformed from one of modesty to one with increased technological standards and high comfort. Cabins have grown larger and more densely packed, with the average surface area of a Norwegian second home now surpassing that of a primary residence.

In recent years, the use of cabins has expanded due to more flexible working conditions and the COVID-19 pandemic, which led Norwegians to prioritize recreation and leisure within their own country. The cabin has become an integral part of everyday life, creating a "multi-house home" concept. The Norwegian home is now often divided into a primary residence in a more central area and a cabin in a decentralized location.

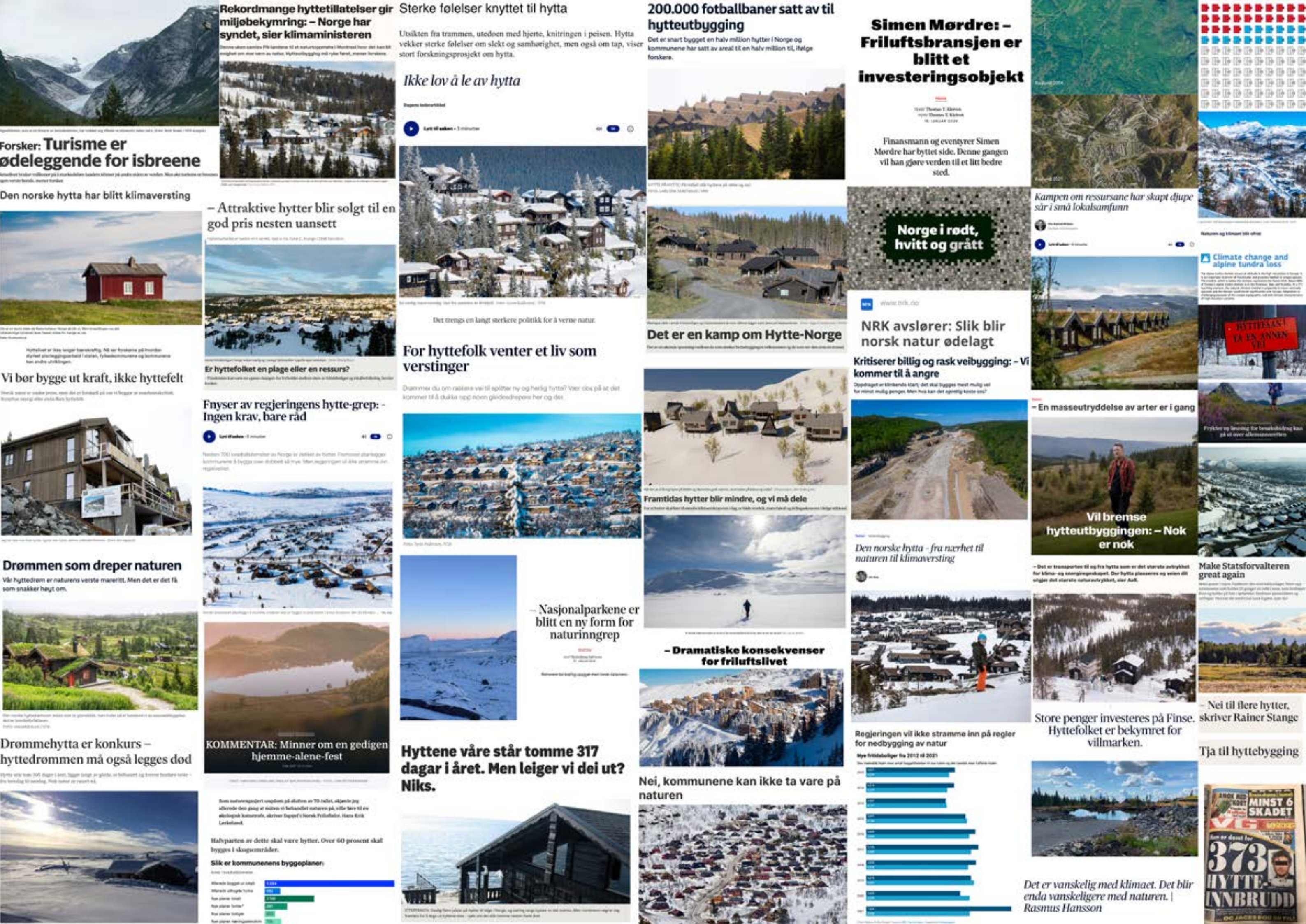
THE PARADOX

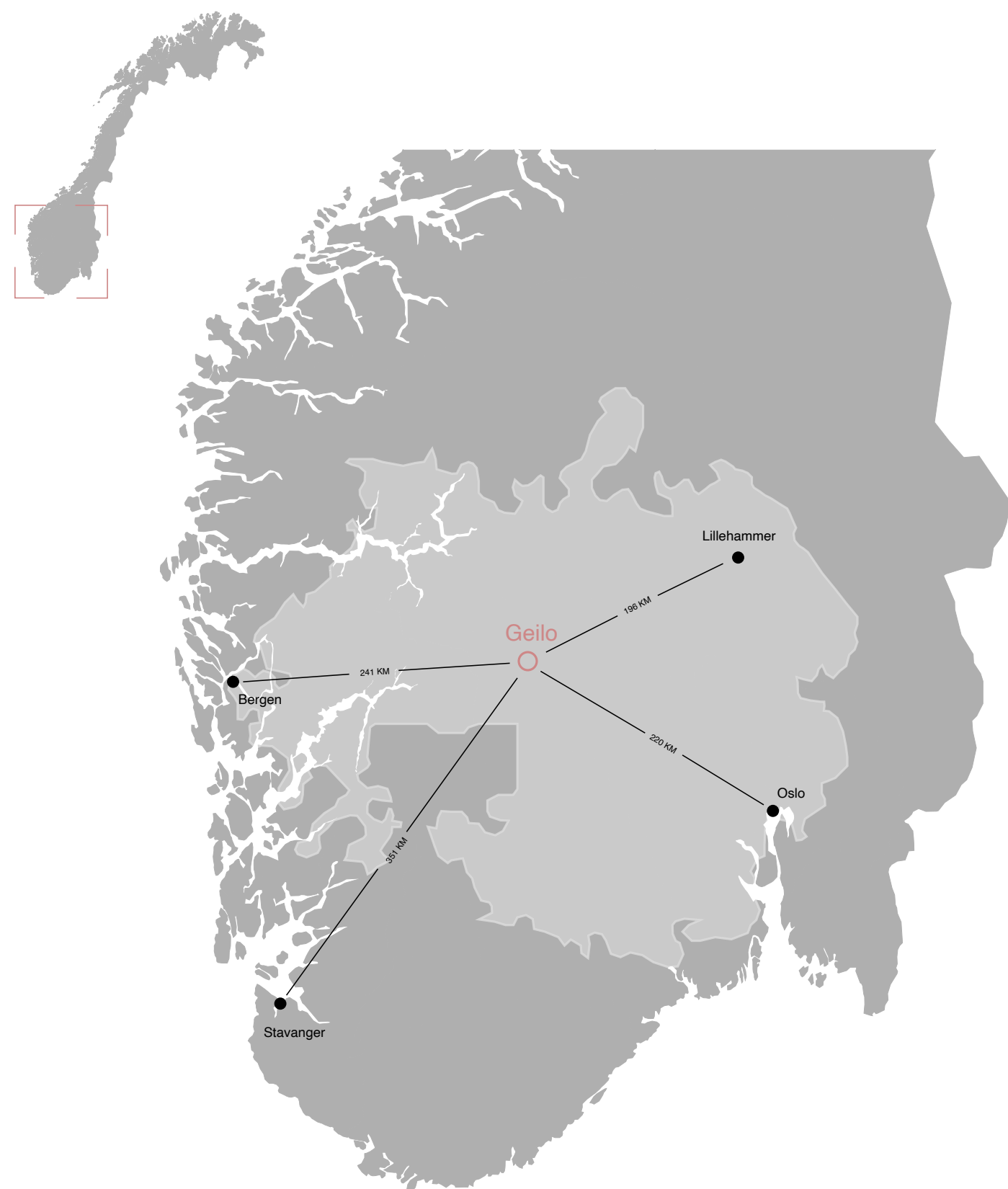
As more cabins are built, modern environmental challenges are becoming increasingly evident. Rising energy consumption, land use, and transportation needs have resulted in higher greenhouse gas emissions and additional pressure on Norway's natural environment, beyond just aesthetic concerns. The approach to the landscape has become insensitive and uncontrolled. It is paradoxical that structures so deeply rooted in our culture and daily lives have such a significant impact on the nature and wildlife we highly value.

The timberline should be taken as serious as the shoreline?

How should we build, when the best thing is to build nothing?

Who is the nature's advocate?





GEILO

Geilo is a village in Hol municipality in Viken. The city center is located in a small valley with mountains on both sides, which is also the gateway to the two national parks, Hallingskarvet and Hardangervidda. The highest point in the municipality is Hallingskarvet (1933 m) and the lowest point is around 450 meters above sea level. Hol is a popular tourist destination with hotels, winter sports facilities and large scale second home development. At its peak, there may be more than 40,000 people in the municipality, with a population of around 4500.

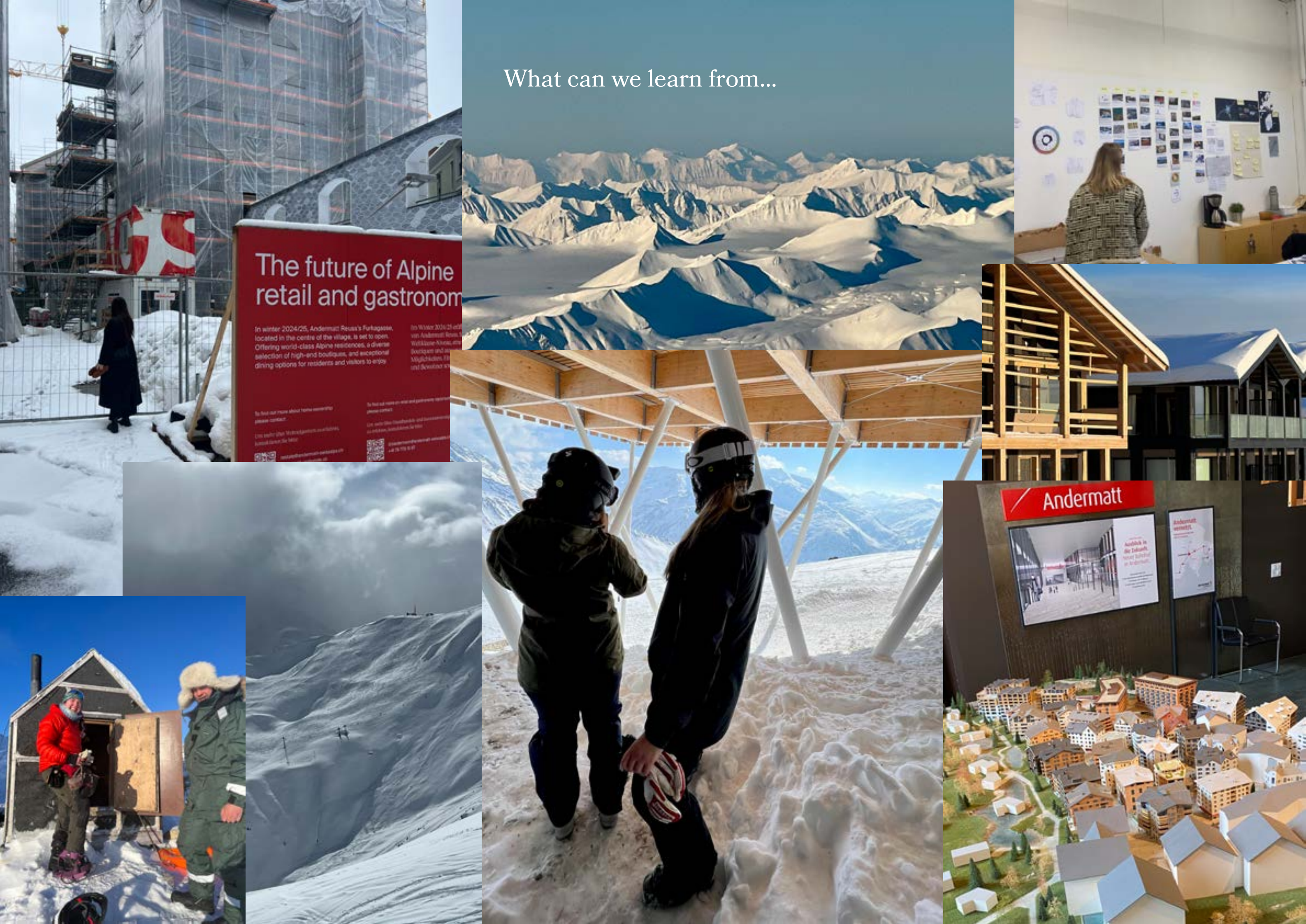
As of today there are 3163 second homes at Geilo. Future plans reveal that this number will almost double over the years. Mountain cabins in Hol municipality had an average price of NOK 10.3 mill in 2023.

THE LABORATORY

We have chosen Havsdalen in Geilo as our laboratory to test our research and findings across various cases and scenarios. We selected Havsdalen because it has a variety of different types of second homes, it is close to recreational activities, the entrance to a national park and are arranged for a green travel.



What can we learn from...



THE METHOD

Over the past six months, our intensive research into alpine areas has given new insights and reflections on the development and sustainability of cabin culture in Norway. Through our travels to diverse destinations such as Svalbard, Andermatt, Geilo, Sirdal, and Hunnedalen, we have explored the varying extremes and the causes and ripple effects of development under different conditions and premises.

Our fieldwork involved direct engagement with local communities, including developers, seasonal workers, farmers, and municipal representatives. These 1:1 meetings provided us with a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding cabin development. We combined these firsthand experiences with theoretical and scientific data, along with the ongoing debates in the media, to illuminate prevailing attitudes and concerns.

This comprehensive research has culminated in what we call the "Hyttvetreglar"—guidelines for responsible cabin development. We believe that architects have a pivotal role in presenting, orienting, and raising awareness about sustainable practices in a clear and comprehensible manner. Our diploma is not a collection of rigid proposals but rather an exploration and investigation offering new perspectives on cabin development. Some of our scenarios and cases may appear bold, realistic, or even dreamlike, but one thing remains clear: the current trajectory of cabin development cannot continue unchanged.

By fostering "Hyttvett" among Norwegians, we aim to promote a more sustainable and thoughtful approach to cabin culture, ensuring that future developments harmonize with the environment and local communities.