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# **The construction of a Danish automobile culture**

## **-Appropriating the car by touring in Denmark**

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The Danish culture of automobilism was from the outset based on a regime of leisure consumption. A driving force in the development of this popular leisure culture was the Danish automobile organisation FDM (United Danish Motor Owners). The Union of Danish motor owners quickly evolved into the largest and most influential consumer-organisation in the country by creating a mediation and consumption junction for automobilism. The prime mover in this creative process of making a leisure consumer culture was the appropriation of the car by touring.

The aim of this article is to discuss the way the automobile was introduced and promoted as a vehicle for modern leisure life in Denmark 1900-1970., and to demonstrate how automobilism was constructed around an ideology of consumption for leisure and recreation. This ideology of personal freedom and mobility was appropriated by the consumers in all of the modern industrialised countries and mediated in the public as a collective vision of the good life for the modern individual. What inspired the mediators to propagate these new modernistic ideas, and what part took the consumers and their organisations in the construction of this new cultural identity of leisure and in creating a material reality that allegedly would benefit every citizen from childhood to old age. To what extent were the ideas imported directly from America and to what extent were they of European origin?

The main question is how a Danish automobile culture developed both as an infrastructure and a car travel mentality of automobile wandering. The primary source to investigate this is the activities of the leading Danish motorist organisation FDM (Federated Danish Motor owners) founded in 1909 as a consumer organisation fighting for the interests of automobilism.

Especially the FDMs magazine MOTOR founded already in 1906 as a defender of the noble cause of automobility is a very rich source for the study of this question. FDM undertook disparate activities from promoting car holidays in the MOTOR magazine, battling against the state Railways, fighting for traffic security to the operation of campgrounds and promoting international tourist organisations as the AIT (Alliance Internationale de Tourisme) contributed each in its own way to the formation of the Danish automobile culture.

From the outset FDM took the leading role as a consumer lobby in the development of an automobile mediation and consumption junction where matters of information and advertising, car service and infrastructure, the exhibition of cars and other paraphernalia, insurance policies, the establishment of a travel agency for organising car holidays abroad, transportation policies, traffic laws, road and bridge construction, traffic education and tax policies were negotiated. FDM quickly achieved the leading position as the representative of Danish motor owners and has retained the status as the largest and most influential consumer organisation of them all for almost a century as the number of motor owners has skyrocketed and the rate of memberships grew.

Two cases will be presented to demonstrate the development of the mediation and consumption junction. The first case is telling the story of touring as a narrative strategy to mobilise an ever growing number of automobile owners to use their vehicle for leisure purposes.

The second case will demonstrate how FDM transformed leisure activity into consumption through the construction and promotion of auto-camping from the interwar years and especially during the cold war period.

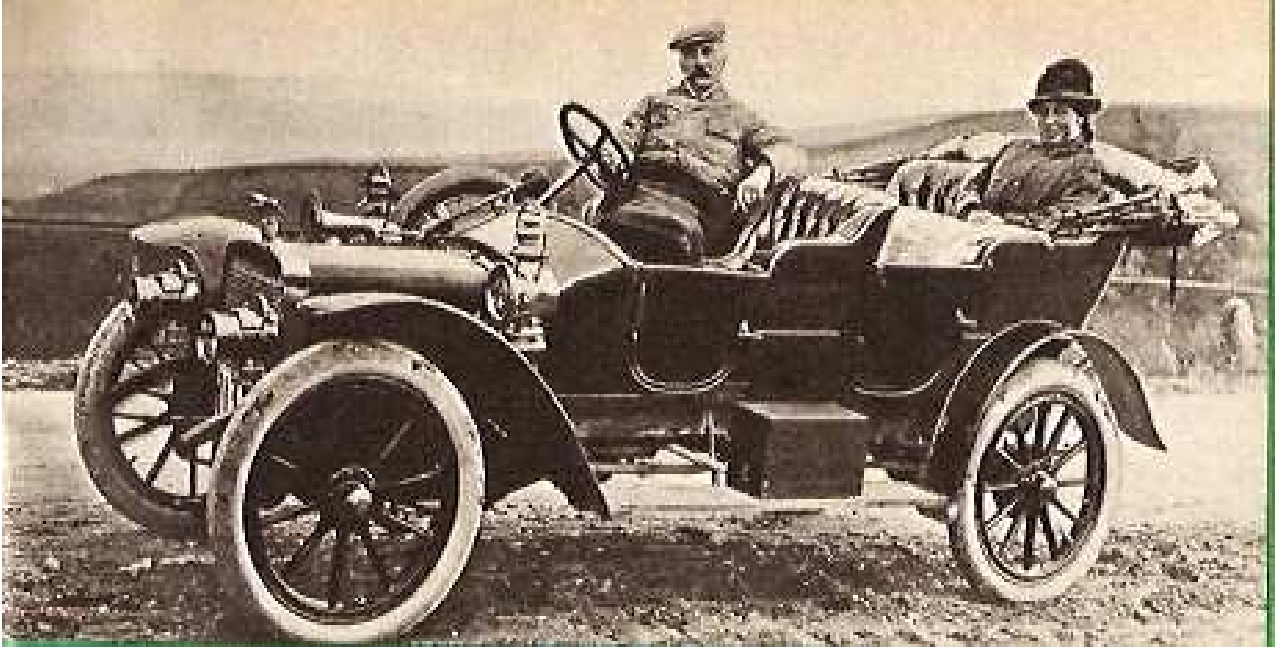
The ideology of touring by car as a specific form of leisure consumption was originally formulated by the leaders of the motorist organisation Federated Danish Motorists (FDM) and introduced massive scale to its members already before WW 1. Touring included from the beginning different activities such as Sunday driving, races cross country and going abroad for a

vacation touring in your own car. The motorist organisation also lobbied to lift national and international restrictions to automobility. In 1920 FDM opened a travel agency to facilitate touring across Europe for the members. During the interwar years touring the country on Sundays became increasingly popular. Traffic counts from the 1930'ies documents that many of the cars for professional use such as vans and trucks were also used for leisure purposes especially Sunday driving.

After WW 2 automobilism was hampered by very harsh economic restrictions that were gradually lifted from the beginning of the 1950'ies. The growing affluence would allow the normal income family to buy a small car for leisure activities and especially going on camping trips became immensely popular. In the mid fifties this kind of leisure activity was creating serious traffic problems in camping sites and summerhouse areas that called for regulation. The growing popularity of leisure driving on weekends and on vacation also gave room for a booming industry that could deliver all kinds of technological appliances that would make touring for leisure luxurious and comfortable.

The inspiration for most of these innovations in leisure touring came from America but they were also transformed by transnational activities in Europe before they would fit into the cultural pattern of the Danish consumers. With the growth of suburban areas in the 1960's the appropriation of the car by touring lost momentum to the practical need for a car to survive in everyday life. Touring for leisure purposes has retained a lot of popularity to this day, but now in competition with other forms of leisure mobility especially taking the plane for a weekend trip or a full vacation in some exotic place.

## **“Gentlemen, we drive to do the tour”**



In the early spring of 1907 a prominent Danish automobile owner, the appointed printer to the Royal Danish Court, Frederik Bagge, advertised his old car for sale in the magazine MOTOR. On Sunday May 26 he participated in an automobile race, Tour Sealand, arranged by the Danish Automobile Club (DAC). He drove his new car a Diatto-Adler Clement to a 7<sup>th</sup> position in the race. As he didn't suffer any technical problems or break down on the route he received the maximum points. The Tour Sealand was one of several Sunday races during the summer season, arranged by DAC and other clubs. The purpose of the race was to get out of the city touring the countryside, test the durability and reliability of man and material, and teach the peasants a true lesson in automobilism. First and last it was an elitist social club event in spite of the competition, and a heavy lunch at a provincial hotel was an obligatory part of the programme.

Judging from his various activities in the Automobile Club where he was elected member of the board, Royal printer Bagge was not necessarily that easy to socialise with if you held a different opinion in specific matters concerning the question of automobilism. Probably it was his nature to state things bluntly and fight for the cause in which he believed more than anything else; freedom for the driver and unhindered access to automobility. Even as a well respected pioneer in the construction of a Danish automobile culture he would lose a re-election to the board of DAC a couple of years later. But in many respects Bagge has left his important mark on the early stages of automobilism in Denmark.

In the middle of July that same year Frederik Bagge embarked on a trip to the central Europe touring by car in the company of his wife and a party of three other automobiles. Well underway a couple of the other drivers wanted to race along the road, but Mr. Bagge refused this proposition with the words: "Gentlemen, we do not make this tour to drive. We drive to make this tour". After five days of driving the touring-party finally arrived in Frankfurt where they watched the Taunus Races, afterwards they split up and went in different directions. Bagge went further south touring Bayern and Switzerland and returned through Tyrol, Austria, and Germany. Most of the tour was made in beautiful weather with driving distances of approximately 200 km a day. On the entire tour Mr. and Mrs. Bagge suffered from no mechanical problems, and they returned safely to Copenhagen after a drive of almost 5000 kilometre.<sup>1</sup>

After his return Fr. Bagge gave an interview to the MOTOR magazine, the journalist asked him how the trip had been. "It was a wonderful tour", he replied. "I get very enthusiastic when I think of all the natural beauty we had the opportunity to enjoy. I seriously wish many of our colleagues, the automobile owners, would follow our example. Certainly they wouldn't regret it".

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<sup>1</sup> The tour from Copenhagen to Frankfurt as well as the Taunus races (Kaiserpreisrennen) in Frankfurt is described in detail in Alfred Nervø: *Ti Aar bag Rattet. Fra Automobilernes og Motorcyklernes Barndomsaar.* (Ten Years behind the wheel. From the childhood years of automobiles and motorcycles). København, 1917, pp. 90-162. Nervø continued with his ekvipage to Belgium after the races were over.

The interviewer then asked Mr. Bagge how it felt letting the rubber wheels run on German soil without any of the legal restrictions we had at that time in Denmark. “I felt free as a bird. Here you are allowed to drive on the secondary roads, you don’t have to consult the almanac for the time of sunset because it’s allowed to drive at night”, he replied.<sup>2</sup>

In many ways this case of Danes touring Europe by car is archetypical of how the automobile was appropriated by touring. From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century automobilism in Denmark evolved into an elitist cult, and touring became an important activity in this new culture of leisure. The same thing happened in a lot of other European countries. Touring by car is a vital expression of the strong relations between automobilism and leisure. The majority of the automobile owners appropriated the car by touring, and with the fast and ever growing number of cars touring shifted from a leisure cult into a mass culture.

## **Touring as a universal phenomenon**

By touring the countryside and going abroad you would get away from it all leaving the drudgery of everyday life behind. Reaching unfamiliar destinations, going to strange and unknown places, and gazing at formidable views you may only have dreamed of before going on the road. If you had any knowledge beforehand of their existence it would be from reading the articles with tales of touring written by travelling automobilists in the motor magazines or from guidebooks. Conquering the traditional barriers of time and space, and escaping the national legal restrictions on automobilism by touring gave you the ultimate experience of freedom from conventional life. Touring in an automobile gave mental access to the emotional feelings of independence and omnipotence as you

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<sup>2</sup> Fra de Danskes Tur gennem Tyskland. Interview med Hof-Bogtrykker Bagge. (From the Danes Touring Germany). *MOTOR* vol. 2, 1907 p. 335-6.

could go almost anywhere as fast and as far away as you wanted, the speed enabled a clean cut with the routines of everyday life.<sup>3</sup>

**Bilen er midlet. Naturen målet.**

Svend Erik Sørensen og hans familie gemmer en af deres hemmeligheder i Sverige. Nærmere bestemt i Skåne, helt nøjagtigt i...  
 «Det vil vi ikke sige, for så får vore bølsten nok ikke lov at stå på samme plet som de har gjort år efter år. Det er en helt vidunderlig lejplads», si'r Ruth Sørensen.

Selv om familien føler størst kontakt med naturen til fods, kunne den ikke opleve så afvekslende natur uden bilen.  
 Engang var en tur ved at strande på grund af Morrie'en. Den startede kun vanskeligt og havde ringe trækraft i 2. gear. Det viste sig, der ved sidste service eftersyn var sat andre tændrør i end Champion. Fjellen blev rettet og turen reddet.  
 Champion tændrør er en anden af familien Sørensen's hemmeligheder.

**CHAMPION**

**Igen en tilfreds bilist, der skiftede til Champion.**

Touring can be divided into two distinctive types of leisure activity, short term trips and long term trips. Small trips consists of one day tours of recreation and adventure where you leave home, reach your destination and return safely back home the same day. Typically, this kind of touring activity is Sunday driving, spontaneous touring where you may not even have a clear

<sup>3</sup> Mobility and speed are general features of modernity. Even though speed and mobility as time-space phenomena are attributed to various modern transportation technologies such as trains, ships, airplanes, cinema, and lately the virtual touring in cyberspace, I consider the automobile the central and primary icon of modern mobility. Cf. Tim Cresswell: *On the Move. Mobility in the Modern Western World*. New York, 2006; James J. Flink: *The Automobile Age*. Cambridge Mass., 1988; Wolfgang Schivelbusch: *The Railway Journey. The Industrialisation of Time and Space in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*. Berkely, 1986 (1977); Stephen Kern: *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*. Cambridge Mass., 1983; Jean Baudriallard: *America*. London, 1989; Kristin Ross: *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies. Decolonisation and the Reordering of French Culture* Cambridge Mass., 1996; Jörg Beckmann: *Risky Mobility. The Filtering of Automobility's Unintended Consequenses* Copenhagen, 2001; Bente Jensen, et al (eds): *Hastværk –moderne fart og tempo (In a hurry – modern speed and tempo)*. *Den jyske Historiker*, nr. 108, juni 2005.

destination for the trip before you go ‘out into blue’ with the intention of getting a different experience without really knowing what to expect. In the early stages of touring before the automobile arrived this kind of small trip was boosted by the railways and shipping companies often in a combined package allowing a large segment of the population to tour collectively on Sundays. Only when you had arrived at the destination of the small tour, you were able to wander about for some time all on your own before returning back home. The individual mobility was enhanced tremendously by mechanisation first by the bicycle and later on by motorcycle and automobile. From the beginning the small touring by car could be in the company of other automobilist. The tours would often be organised by clubs, and the proper destinations for small touring were described in guidebooks and articles in the Motor magazines.<sup>4</sup>

Larger trips or grand touring are vacation trips for recreation, education, and adventure lasting more than one day. This type of touring implies a fundamental need for overnight accommodation and requires an infrastructure of restaurants, hotels, motels, and campgrounds to service the tourists when they are not on the move. In the wake of grand touring comes a new service sector with the proper accommodations, the development of unusual sights and destinations along the tour. The tourist industry has invented, innovated, and diffused touring products such as vehicles and transportation, sights and accommodations for leisure on a scale of mass consumption for the last 150 years. Today the tourist industry has become an important sector in the national economy.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Jan Palmowski: Travels with Baedekker – The Guidebook and the Middle Classes in Victorian and Edwardian England. Rudy Koshar, ed.: *Histories of Leisure*. Oxford, 2002; Christopher S. Thompson: Bicycling, Class, and the Politics of Leisure in Belle Epoque France. Rudy Koshar, ed.: *Histories of Leisure*. Oxford, 2002; Patrick Young: *La Vielle France* as Object for Bourgeois Desire: The Touring Club de France and the French Regions, 1890 – 1918. Rudy Koshar, ed.: *Histories of Leisure*. Oxford, 2002; Stephen L. Harp: The Michelin Red Guides: Social Differentiation in Early Twentieth – Century French Tourism. Rudy Koshar, ed.: *Histories of Leisure*. Oxford, 2002; Catherine Bertho-Lavenir: Normes de comportement et contrôle de l’espace: Le Touring Club de Belgique avant 1914. *Le Mouvement social*, no. 178, France – Belgique Fin de Siecle. Jan. –Mar. 1997;

<sup>5</sup> James Buzzard: *The Beaten Track. European Tourism, Litterature, and the Ways to ‘Culture’ 1800 – 1918*. Oxford, 1993; Dean MacCannell: *The Tourist. A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York, 1989; John Urry: *The Tourist Gaze. Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. London, 1990; Chris Rojek, John Urry, eds.: *Touring Cultures*.

## Touring in a comparative national perspective

We find more or less the same pattern of appropriating the car by touring in Denmark as in other European countries from the early period on. Only the US is different in this respect. Here the car was basically appropriated by the need for practical transportation of persons, produce, and commodities over long distances. In the countryside as well as in the city automobiles rapidly replaced the horse and buggy. A leisure culture appropriating the car by touring evolved at the same time in the US for sure, but it was never a primary motive or a driving force for automobilism. Apart from the economic aspects of constructing touring destinations and sights for tourist consumption there is also an important educational aspect to be considered in the ideology of touring.<sup>6</sup>

Touring your own countryside and visiting the sites of national historic and/or geographic importance instead of going abroad became solidly embedded in an ideology of nationalistic 'Bildung'. Touring the interior of the nation state would not only reserve the tourist consumption for the national economy and save a lot of foreign currency, it would teach the tourist a lesson of how great the nation was compared to any other nation. The examples of developing tourism in a nationalistic context are numerous. The national mobilisation of tourism seems to have been a strong and general trend in European and US history.<sup>7</sup>

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*Transformations of Travel and Theory*. London, 1997; Orvar Löfgren: *On Holiday. A History of Vacationing*. Berkely, 1999; Fred Inglis: *The Delicious History of the Holliday*. London, 2000; Warren James Belasco: *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910 -1945*. Cambridge Mass., 1979; Diane P. Koenker: Travel to Work, Travel to Play: On Russian Tourism, Travel and Leisure. *Slavic Review*, Vol. 62, No. 4. Tourism and Travel in Russia and the Soviet Union. Winter, 2003; Bente Jensen: Det danske Schweiz – Da Bornholm blev opdaget som turistmål. (Danish Switzerland – The Invention of Bornholm as a Tourist Destination) *Den jyske Historiker*, No. 65, Oktober 1993; Bente Jensen: Mellem gammelt og Nyt. Diskussionen af den tidlige turisme på Bornholm 1860-1902. (Between Old and New. The Discussion of Early Tourism on Bornholm 1860- 1902). *Bornholmske Samlinger*, III, 16, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Rudy Koshar: *German Travel Cultures*. Oxford, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Marguerite Shaffer: *See America First. Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940*. Washington, 2001; Rudy Koshar: Germans at the Wheel: Cars and Leisure Travel in Interwar Germany. Rudy Koshar, ed.: *Histories of Leisure*. Oxford, 2002; "There's No Place Like Home": Soviet Tourism in Late Stalinism. *Slavic Review*, Vol. 62, No. 4. Tourism and Travel in Russia and the Soviet Union. Winter, 2003; Bente Jensen: Hammershus slotsruin mellem seværdighed og nationalt monument. (The Castle Ruin of Hammershus between Sight and National Monument). *Fortid og Nutid*, 1995, 1, April.

More unusual is the kind of extreme nationalism Pieter Judson has shown in the case of tourism in the Austrian composite state: “No German on vacation should patronize an anti – German tavern. Nationalist organizations exhorted tourists to do their part to support their ‘nation’ within Austria by spending money according to the nationality of the hotelier, restaurant owner, or innkeeper, and wherever possible, by convincing other tourists to do the same”.<sup>8</sup>

If nationalism was able to generate the same strong emotions in Danish automobilists it has left very few traces in the sources. On the contrary Germany clearly came out as favourite touring destination to the Danish automobilist. The automobile magazines show no air of hostility towards any foreign nations at all. What they display is mere curiosity and interest in exploring these countries by touring in automobile. This message was clearly stated in an editorial in *Motor* from 1908: “When the modern automobile tourist is travelling, as already expressed by the term, it is to get to look around, to get to know new people and new conditions. To what degree this is possible to do by automobile, we don’t have to tell our readers. Everyone who’s tried Grand touring by automobile knows how different and much more intimately you get to know the nature and the population from the open seats of the tourist automobile than in the long corridors of the international express train. Internationalism is the essence and the most important characteristic of modern automobilism”.<sup>9</sup>

The only obstacle to Danish automobilists going abroad touring Germany and the rest of Europe were formal restrictions such as heavy tax barriers at the border. In may 1914 the Danish government finally signed an international convention that allowed unrestricted touring in foreign countries, this happened after heavy lobbying by FDM. One of the automobilist who seized the opportunity was Fr. Bagge who once again went touring through most of Europe driving more than 8.000 kilometre and crossing nine borders and nine mountains in his new Daimler. Afterwards he

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<sup>8</sup> Pieter Judson: “Every German visitor has a völkisch obligation he must fulfil”. *Nationalist Tourism in the Austrian Empire, 1880-1918*. Rudy Koshar, ed.: *Histories of Leisure*. Oxford, 2002, p.147.

<sup>9</sup> A. Schmitto: *International. MOTOR* 1908 p. 438.

told the MOTOR magazine: “It was a wonderful trip from one end to the other, it can’t be recommended strong enough to our automobilists, that the best outcome you can get of the summer vacation is by touring an automobile; you will get to see the more interesting aspects of popular living and especially the small cities, that you will miss by travelling in a train”.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately the outbreak of WW1 only a couple of months later put an end to this new opportunity.

### **Three stages of Danish leisure automobility**

The leisure culture of automobilism is not well researched and described in Danish historiography but it must be divided in three stages. The early stage of automobilism is covered by some memoirs of participants and a couple of interesting but not very analytical history books.<sup>11</sup> For the next two stages automobilism is only covered slightly by historians as a context to the history of roads and bridges in Denmark. As a consequence of this deficiency in sources the contemporary Motor magazines and automobile literature must be used as primary source to the history of automobilism in Denmark.<sup>12</sup>

The first stage in the history of Danish automobilism was the pioneering and inventive period 1900-1920. The first Danish automobile goes back to 1888 when Hammelvognen was built in Copenhagen. From the mid 1890ties the automobile became a toy for the leisure class of very wealthy people. But after the turn of the century things began to happen in a faster mode. Several mechanics began to build cars in small numbers and the import of foreign cars gained a stronger

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<sup>10</sup> En Automobilfart gennem Europa. Hofbogtrykker Bagge fortæller. *MOTOR*, 1914, p. 590-595.

<sup>11</sup> Alfred Nervø: *Ti Aar bag Rattet. Fra Automobilernes og Motorcyklernes Barndomsaar*. (Ten Years behind the Wheel. From the childhood of automobiles and motorcycles). Kbh., 1919; Erik Mader, Ole Ravn: *Da Bilen kom til Danmark*. (When the Car came to Denmark). Louise Karlskov Skyggebjerg: Multiopfinder J.C.H. Ellehammer. (The Multiinventor J.H.C. Ellehammer. Viborg, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Frank C. Motzkus: *100 år i bilistens tjeneste. Historien om FDM*. (100 years in service of the automobilist. Kbh., 2009; Steffen Elmer Jørgensen: *Fra chaussé til motorvej. Det overordnede danske vejnets udvikling fra 1761*. (From Chaussé to Motorway.: The Development of the Danish Main Road Network since 1761). Odense, 2001; Jørgen Burchardt, Mette Schønberg: *Lige ud ad landevejen. Med hestevogn og bil på amternes landeveje 1868-2006*. (Straight Ahead the Road. With Horsecarrige and automobile on the County Roads 1868-2006. Odense, 2006; Trafikministeriet: *Hundrede års trafik. Trafikministeriet 1900-2000*. (A hundred years of traffic. The Ministry of Traffic 1900-2000.) København, 2000; Tom Rallis: *Transport i Danmark 1830-1990*. (Transportation in Denmark 1830.1990). Kbh., 1992.

foothold. Production in series of a Danish motorcycle 'Elleham' began in 1906 and this quickly led to the establishment of a Motorcycle Club in Copenhagen. The same year the publication of MOTOR a weekly magazine for the motorist began. With these events the development of a Danish leisure culture of automobilism had found its solid foundation and things began to happen even faster.

From 1909 MOTOR turned into a magazine for the members of the newly founded association of motorclubs in Denmark FDM (United Danish Motorowners). The numerous articles on touring the countryside and going abroad appearing in every volume of MOTOR during this period were mostly written by the travelling automobilists. They all told the tales of the pioneer seeking adventure, the explorer detecting foreign and unknown places, the daredevil reaching distant sublime destinations by his own force, and the sportsman enduring any kind of hardships by the sheer will to have success. With the advent of WW1 Germany and the rest of continent was closed to Grand touring from Denmark, as a result of this blockage Norway was invented as a new and popular destination for holiday touring by automobile.

In 1920 at the end of the first pioneering stage of Danish automobilism FDM had 15.000 members and the organisation recruited 5000 new members that year. With this result FDM was quickly turning into a very important actor in the mediation junction of automobilism taking its seat in the traffic commissions where traffic matters were negotiated between the state, the industry and the consumers. During the first period automobilism had developed from an exclusive aristocratic and elitist leisure culture breaking social norms into a much broader social movement of car owners based firmly in the upper middleclass.

The second stage in the history of Danish automobilism is the formative and innovative period 1920-1940 where automobilism came of age and slowly matured. The period was culturally constructive and created a broader automobile culture based on leisure activities. FDM

evolved into an inclusive and democratic minded organisation of consumers, developing a string of membership services from legal and technical counselling, and selling automobile insurance to establishing a travel agency to promote and facilitate automobile grand touring home and abroad. In 1926 FDM opened the first of many campgrounds in beautiful natural surroundings. By 1930 this organization were running 35 campgrounds all over the country, and camping touring by automobile had become very popular among the younger generations.

MOTOR 1935 SIDE 173

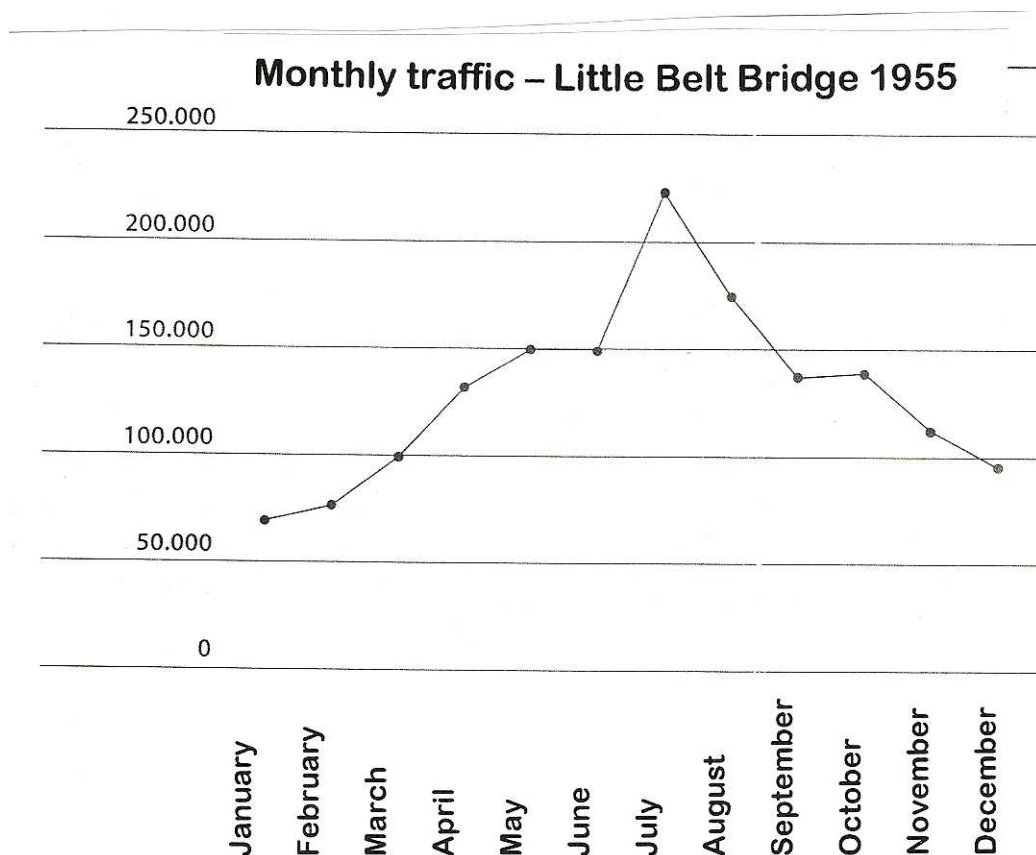
*Til Sommerferie & Week end*

*Benyt F.D.M.'s Lejrpladser*

**TAG · DISSE · 4 · SIDER · UD · OG · GEM · DEM**

By prescriptive and idealising means FDM and MOTOR managed to capture and recreate the automobile culture of leisure and give the idea of touring by car a new content that would appeal also to the lower middle classes. Now the many articles with tales of touring by automobile became more prescriptive and would demonstrate in detail how touring should be conducted the easiest way and in the most comfortable manner. Many articles would also discuss moral issues and criticize matters of bad behaviour such as drunken driving, hit and run driving, rotten driving and littering and prescribe the best moral conduct for the touring automobilist.

By 1939 there were 109.000 privately owned automobiles in Denmark. But WW2 meant a serious step back for automobilism. All kinds of touring stopped momentarily with the German occupation and only the most necessary driving was allowed for five years. This was an interregnum period for automobilism and the appropriation of the car by touring. By 1949 the total number of private automobiles had fallen to 105.000 but then things started to move in the other



direction again.

The third stage is the period of imitation and diffusion of automobilism on a mass scale of consumption 1945-1989. This period had a very long take-off phase 1945-1952 with heavy restrictions on the importation of automobiles and fuel for private use. From 1952-1957 restrictions were gradually lifted and the popular mass culture of automobilism got well underway. By 1954 there were 184.000 private automobiles in the country and ten years later this number had risen to 731.000 private automobiles. In a period of economic prosperity during the 1960ies most of the Danes including the working class were finally able to buy an automobile and go touring on Sundays and in the holiday season. Autocamping home and abroad became immensely popular, and the grand summer tour with a trailer behind the car to distant destinations in the south of Europe became common. In 1973 the total number of private automobiles had reached a number of 1.232.000, the number of registered trailers for camping was more than 100.000. This rapid expansion in the number of automobiles resulted in a reshaping of the automobile culture of leisure into a mass movement of consumers appropriating the car by touring on Sundays and on vacation.

Again FDM took the lead by developing the consumption junction for automobilism into a genuine mass culture. In a survey of leisure time activities in Denmark made in 1964 by The Danish National Institute of Social Research on the initiative of DR the national radio and TV Company almost 13% had spent their vacation on a motorised tour in Denmark or touring abroad, while 60% had used a car in connection with the hollidays. In a Gallup survey made in 1973 on the initiative of FDM the same figures for touring by car in Denmark or abroad during the vacation had risen up to 60% of the total holiday traffic. Although there may be some bias comparing results from the two surveys the overall trend upwards seems unmistakably clear.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> P-H Kühl, Inger Koch-Nielsen, Kaj Westergaard: *Fritidsvaner i Danmark med særligt hensyn til radio og fjernsyn*. København, 1966, p. 230.

From the mid 1960ies most Danes were extremely hooked on touring by car during the holidays. Explanations of this upward trend must be found in the growing economic prosperity during the period and the extension of the vacation period from three to four weeks. Of overall importance was the massive promotion campaign for touring by automobile launched by FDM Travel Agency during the same period and heavily supported by hundreds of articles in MOTOR



magazine pushing the same message. The touring articles in MOTOR became more and more trivial constantly repeating the message of new opportunities for consumption, and representing the same touring destinations again and again in each and every volume. The tale of touring was transformed into stories of touring as a means for mass consumption during leisure. The articles with presentations of gadgets and paraphernalia for touring came in an endless stream. The promotion campaign for touring as consumption culminated in the beginning of 1973 with a large exhibition in Copenhagen named Car and Leisure (Bil og Fritid), and with a bombardment of articles in the magazine on the issue of consumption for leisure though touring in automobile.

MOTOR magazine went as far as to bring an article by a very popular host in the TV News on how to manage the children on the tour and avoid any massacre in the backseat. To go along with this The MOTOR Publishing Company even produced two 'giant-books' for the entertainment of the backseat drivers. It seems as if this campaign was very successful indeed.<sup>14</sup>

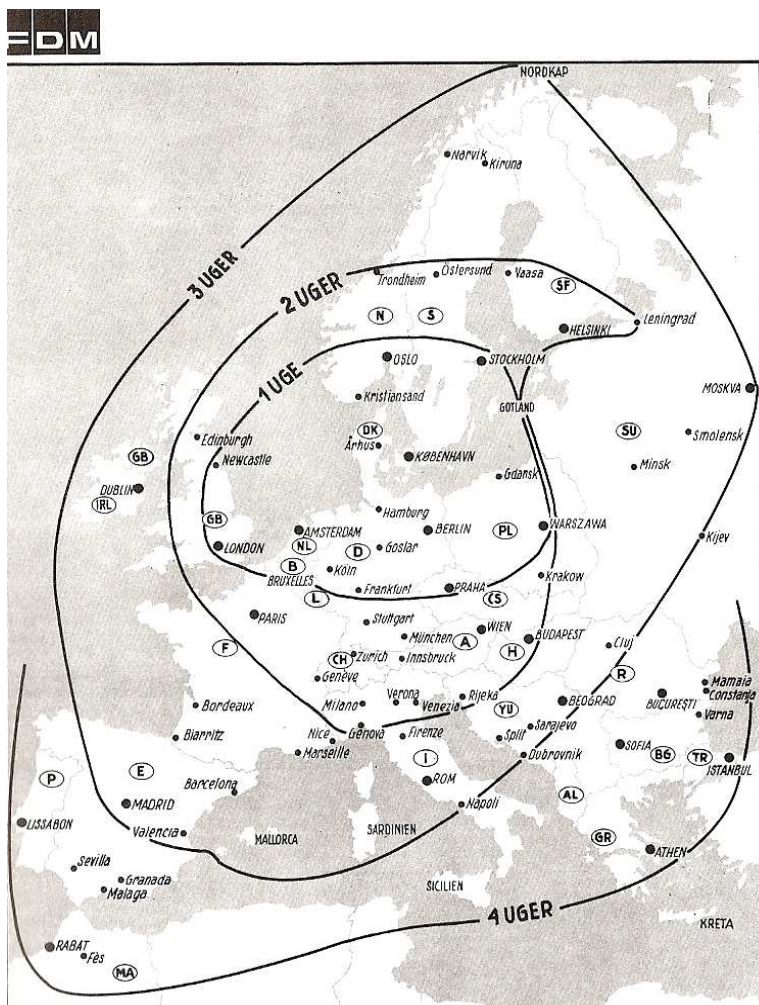
As a consumer organisation FDM peaked by the end of 1973 with almost 250.000 members that could benefit from a wide and sophisticated range of services related to the consumption of the automobile for leisure. During the recession after the oil crisis by the end of 1973 a lot of members left the organisation, and FDM has never regained its former strength as an organisation of consumers. An explanation of this downward trend can be found at the infrastructural level. During the 1970ies the suburban housing areas mushroomed and more people began to commute to work by car. At the same time the process of decentring the industry and commercial activities relocating production and consumption outside the cities turned the automobile into a practical necessity in Danish society. Automobility had come to a decisive turning point where the appropriation of the family car for practical mobility in everyday life gained more importance than the appropriation of the automobile for leisure purposes. After 100 years of service as a consumer organisation for the automobile owner it is evident that FDM from the mid seventies went through many troubles trying to adjust to this new role as an interest organisation for a new type of members with an rapidly increasing dependency on automobility if they should be able to function properly in everyday life.

The growing environmental impact and political resistance to the many consequences of automobility has turned out to be another serious challenge to the traditional leisure regime of FDM. Despite the many ups and downs for automobility during the last hundred years the organisation of United Danish Motor Owners has managed to take the lead, and develop and

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<sup>14</sup> Steen Bostrup: Børn med på ferie (Taking the children with you on vacation). *MOTOR* 10-11 May 26 1973, p. 94-97. This was an exclusive double issue entirely focusing on touring by car in the holidays.

maintain a very strong position as lobbyist and vigilant defender for the motorist. This makes FDM the pivotal point in the history of the Danish mediation and consumption junction for automobilism.



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## Conclusion

The development of a Danish automobile culture was from the outset primarily based on leisure activities, and the prime mover for automobilism was the appropriation of the car by Small and Grand Touring. Central to this thesis is that the culture of Danish automobilism was primarily constructed around and appropriated through leisure activities directed by FDM. The general purpose of this consumer organisation has been to create a cultural identity and a material reality

that allegedly would benefit every citizen from childhood to old age. All along a hundred years of active service 'Car and Leisure' has been a motto for the organisation. The most important leisure activity through all the years has been touring or 'tourism' as it was called from the beginning, when the private family automobile was called a Tourist car to distinguish it from Doctors cars and other professional types of automobiles. Promotion of the professional use of automobiles or to commute to the workplace by automobile has never been a major field of interest to FDM.

The turning point for automobilism as a popular culture of leisure appeared when the dependency of the automobile for practical every day purpose overruled the leisure regime of the automobile. This happened during the 1970ies. Danish automobilism was finally Americanized and this brought the nation wholeheartedly into the age of automobility. Today the average Danish family would find it extremely hard to live a normal life with the daily routines without one or several automobiles. As a consequence of this the appropriation of the automobile in Denmark is now primarily for practical purposes. But the Danes will still use the automobile extensively for small and grand touring as well as for other leisure activities.