



Part-time amenity migrants: Revealing the importance of second homes for senior residents in a transit-oriented development



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ABSTRACT

Transit-oriented development (TOD) has been proposed as a model for sustainable urban and regional development beyond the troubled heritage of modernistic planning. Key to TOD is mixed use and reduced dependence on private cars. However, functionalistic land-use divides persist in the principles of TOD, such as the division between leisure and work and between permanent residences and second homes. These divides relate to, and are emphasised by, a strong focus on urban qualities within the TOD discourse, while discussions on landscape amenities are set aside. Following recent research on compensation theory and amenity migration, this study argues that densification of TODs could increase residents' dependency on second homes in the countryside. The study provides insights gained from semi-structured interviews with senior residents in newly-built apartments and houses in a TOD location in Sweden. The interviews revealed how the importance of multiple dwellings is enhanced by the densification project and how car dependency is built into the model. The term 'part-time amenity migrant' has been coined to describe this phenomenon and increase awareness of landscape amenities in TOD locations.

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1. Introduction

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is frequently proposed as the key to sustainable planning (Calthorpe, 1993; Dittmar and Ohland, 2004; Lund, 2006; Boschmann and Brady, 2013). The concept was introduced by California-based architect Peter Calthorpe, who characterised TOD as “moderate and high-density housing, along with complementary public uses, jobs, retail and services [. . .] concentrated in mixed-use developments at strategic points along the regional transit system” (Calthorpe, 1993, p. 41). The model argues for a compact city with mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly urban development within walking distance of a public transport hub. With this urban pattern, TOD aims not only to reduce car travel, facilitate public transport and foster urban qualities, but also to curb urban sprawl and protect farmland and other rural assets. While the academic literature is dominated by North American case studies, the concept and its application have spread worldwide (see Pojani and Stead (2014) for an illustration of its transfer to Europe).

In Sweden, similar strategies for TOD have a long history, but regained importance in the early 1990s (Boverket, 1994; Schylberg, 2008; Qviström and Bengtsson, 2015). Today, TOD strategies (supported by planning history and the contemporary urban landscape as much as by international discourse) are one of the main pillars in regional policies for urban development in Sweden's three major metropolitan regions of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Scania (e.g. Regionplanenämnden and Stockholms Läns Landsting, 2010; Region Skåne, 2013). However, TOD as a planning strategy has not gone uncontested (e.g. see Bunce, 2004; Quastel et al., 2012). Considering its prevalence in policy debates for contemporary planning worldwide, critical assessments of TOD are needed in order to further improve future planning. This paper aims to contribute to such a critique, focusing on young retirees (age 65–75) and their relational understanding of TOD as a living environment.

As within the related discourses on New Urbanism and smart growth, proponents of TOD argue that their strategy would facilitate a move beyond modernist planning, in particular its dependence on the private car and its monofunctional zoning of land use (Calthorpe, 1993; Goetz, 2013; see Qviström and Bengtsson, 2015, for a critique). However, while some functional divides of land use have been successfully overcome, others are left unchallenged or are even enhanced. A key division is that the focus is on urban values, with a sharp demarcation (spatially and conceptually) from the countryside. With New Urbanism, of which

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Calthorpe is one of the founders, and the thrust for densification within planning, TOD proponents find ample support in the contemporary planning discourse when emphasising this divide. The marketing of dense, bustling cities with a ‘creative’ urban lifestyle has been identified as a hegemonic ideal in the current planning debate in Sweden, irrespective of the size of the town or township in question, reinforced by the polemical debate in which density equals sustainability and urban sprawl is inherently bad (Tunström, 2009; Qviström, 2015; see Quastel et al., 2012, for a critique of the “sustainability-as-density” model).

Partly due to the sharp distinction between city and country, TOD focuses on providing urban qualities and leaves landscape amenities to the countryside or protected greenbelts. For instance, when analysing reasons to move to a TOD in California, Lund (2006, p. 360) notes that only 6% of the respondents shortlisted recreational activities, which that author interpreted as a process of self-selection: “I attribute this to the fact that TODs [...] often have limited access to recreational opportunities”. In other words, the TOD model is not designed to attract those prioritising outdoor recreational activities, let alone amenity migrants. This focus on urban qualities involves systematic neglect of the role of outdoor recreational activities and landscape amenities in urbanisation processes and patterns. Such neglect is perhaps reasonable if we consider amenity migrants to be a minor (and therefore less important) group or one that will eventually leave the city. However, much of the population in Sweden and elsewhere ‘sojourns in nature’ during holidays and weekends. Such a temporary and recurrent move to the countryside is of great importance for quality of life, but is also a significant generator of car traffic (Luka, 2013).

McCarthy (2008, p. 130) defines amenity migration as “the purchasing of primary or secondary residences in rural areas valued for their aesthetic, recreational, and other consumption-orientated values”. Adapting and adopting this definition, amenity migration can be regarded as not solely being restricted to those who own or move permanently to a peri-urban location, but also including the use or access of second homes (see also Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; Halfacree, 2012). Taking into consideration the fact that 53.5% of the Swedish population has access to a second home (Marjavaara and Lundholm, 2016), densification strategies in Sweden cannot ignore multiple dwellings. The amount of travel for recreational purposes makes this even more apparent; almost half of all daily trips are for leisure activities and are also the longest trips made (Westin and Vilhelmson, 2011). We are therefore introducing the term *part-time amenity migrant* in this paper to acknowledge the need for specific studies into the importance of multiple dwellings in the context of densification. This is because densification within TOD can involve increased dependency on second homes in the countryside that are accessed using private cars.

A recent study by Strandell and Hall (2015) illustrates the importance of part-time amenity migrants in the planning discourse on TOD. They validate *compensation theory* as regards the relationship between densification and the use of second homes (see also Holden and Norland, 2005). The theory assumes that people have basic needs for outdoor life and contact with nature and that a lack of access to gardens, parks and leisure opportunities in people’s primary residential environment will be compensated for by spending time in second homes, other ex-urban green spaces or long-distance leisure travel. Holden and Norland (2005) show that access to a private garden correlates with less energy use for long leisure-time travel by plane or car, although they note that the mechanism behind this remains unclear and recommend complementary qualitative studies. This need is also illustrated by Strandell and Hall (2015). They fail to prove statistically a correlation between access to public parks and the amount of leisure travel and call for qualitative enquiries to explain the residents’ rationale. The present study offers one such qualitative enquiry.

As part of the rich and varied international discourse on second homes and amenity migration, the importance of second homes in Sweden has been well documented, especially in quantitative studies (e.g. Müller and Marjavaara, 2012; Müller, 2013; Marjavaara and Lundholm, 2016). While studies of mobilities are an emerging theme within the second home literature (e.g. Hidle et al., 2010; Halfacree, 2012; Lagerqvist, 2013), we found no previous studies on the interplay between TOD and the use of second homes. A recent study focused on the elderly and how their migration is related to ownership of a second home (Marjavaara and Lundholm, 2016). Its authors conclude that: “later-life migrants are more likely to migrate to rural and amenity-rich areas [...] which] suggests that migration to second homes contributes to rural migration in the Swedish context” (2016, p. 238). Furthermore, that study showed that the migration in question primarily targets “rural locations close to other metropolitan areas.” This could be phrased differently: elderly people with second homes contribute to ‘hidden urbanisation’ or urban sprawl. The complex role of second homes in countryside development is not discussed further in our study, but it should be mentioned that they can be regarded as an asset and not only as a problem (Gallent, 2014). However, irrespective of their role in the countryside, the relationship between densification and second homes sheds new light on TOD projects.

While elderly amenity migrants contribute to urban sprawl, they are also a target group for urban densification projects. Therefore they are a group that needs to be studied within landscape planning research in general (see also Yokohari and Bolthouse, 2011), and within TOD studies in particular (Boschmann and Brady, 2013). Even though age grouping can be a problematic way of treating the population (assuming heterogeneity within the group), Westin and Vilhelmson (2011) argue that there is a decrease in travel after the age of 75, which motivates separate treatment of young and older pensioners (the official retirement age in Sweden is 65–67). For instance, a significant decrease in car driving is noted after the age of 75, when leisure and service trips decline in number (Hjorthol et al., 2010; Westin and Vilhelmson, 2011). Furthermore, Westin and Vilhelmson (2011, p. 18) note that “young pensioners perceive themselves as having significantly better health, are more satisfied with their present mobility resources and situation, and make more trips than older pensioners”. As mobility is a key factor in wellbeing and quality of life of the elderly (Hjorthol et al., 2010; Stjernborg et al., 2015), the decrease in mobility and reduced quality of life after the age of 75 are likely to be interrelated.

2. Material and methods

This study examined how young pensioners (65–75 years old) in a TOD in southern Sweden conceptualise the importance of their second homes and the role of landscape amenities generally in relation to their permanent residence and their second home. Empirical material was obtained in ten semi-structured interviews with 14 retirees at two different locations within the TOD zone of Svedala, a town in southern Sweden (see Fig. 2), during the spring of 2015. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Participants in eight of the ten interviews currently or until recently had access to a second home. Only one had moved from one apartment to another; all the others had moved from a large house to a smaller house or an apartment. The interviews lasted on average half an hour and took place in the interviewees’ homes, with the exception of one telephone interview. In four cases, couples were interviewed; as the interviews did not reveal differences in how the partners conceptualised their living or landscape amenities, they are treated as a couple in the analysis. The interviewees were equally divided between men and women and all were of Swedish origin. While each case is unique, we obtained saturation

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