



## Second home owners, locals and their perspectives on rural development

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### A B S T R A C T

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Dominating strands within the research literature on second homes explain social conflicts between rural hosting and visiting second home populations by describing their differing perspectives on rural development. Such presentations suggest that locals are likely to welcome new developments in order to enhance the economic viability of their rural communities, whereas second home owners advocate conservation of the rural idyll that attracted them in the first place. In this paper, we argue that these simplified differences conceptualised in the contemporary second home research literature are faulty. By analysing 42 qualitative in-depth interviews with second home owners and locals in four Norwegian municipalities, we demonstrate how both locals and second home owners are protective of their rural idyll and, at the very same time, open to rural development. More exactly, locals and second home owners alike generally welcome new activities only when they do not take place in their own vicinity. As such, both categories' interests reflect a "Not in my backyard" (NIMBY) line of logic. Hence, we argue that the major lines of conflict concerning land use in second home municipalities do not run between locals and visitors but between those initiating different kinds of new developments and those appreciating the hitherto existing qualities and appearance of the areas of development localisation. Nevertheless, the influx of second home owners is still influencing the potential for land use conflicts due to the high number of actors present in the same location. In effect, crowding a rural area with second home developments generates more "backyards" and thus guardians of these.

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### 1. Introduction

The research literature on second homes abounds in examples of conflicts between second home owners and local residents in rural areas, even including the physical destruction of second homes (Hall and Müller, 2004; Gallent et al., 2005). As the second home phenomenon unfolds, it has been intensifying both in terms of scale and content (Hall and Müller, 2004; Rye and Berg, 2011), so the potential for future conflicts seems endless. Dominating strands within the contemporary second home research characterise these tensions between rural "locals" and propertied "visitors" by detailing the categories' social, cultural and economic traits. The local and the second home populations are claimed to differ in their demographic compositions, value orientations, ways of life, locations in the rural local economy (i.e., the rural as a place of work versus a place of leisure), locations in the national economy (i.e.,

socio-economic statuses) and in their relations to the rural landscapes (a place of everyday life versus a place of consumption).

Local/visitor differences become particularly visible when these scholars answer questions concerning rural development. They portray the rural population as feeling positively towards rural development initiatives, while the visiting second home population, on the other hand, is portrayed as genuine sceptics of rural change. In this paper, we revisit some key contributions to the existing literature and discuss the adequacy of such a conceptualisation of the local/visitor divide in terms of rural development in second home regions. The main research question of this paper taps into the nuances of both the locals and second home populations' perspectives on rural development: *What are their preferences in the rural development/conservation discourses in terms of direction, intensity and (spatial) areas of specific interest?*

We wish to begin the discussion by presenting research that has discussed the relationships between the second home population and the rural population in the above-mentioned, binary way, related to analyses of rural development discourses. We then contrast this picture with material from the Norwegian second home phenomenon, which is comprised of 42 in-depth qualitative interviews with both second home owners and locals. This material

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suggests a far more nuanced picture of the visitor/host relationship, for the parallels between second home owners and locals' positions appear more striking than the differences do. In the final section of the paper, we present some alternative interpretations of the relationship between second home owners and the local populations and attempt to uncover their genuine and shared "Not in my backyard" arguments regarding development discourses.

## 2. Perspectives on rural development

In the contemporary second homes literature, the visiting second home users and the hosting rural populations are regularly portrayed as quite different kinds of actors operating in a rural space. Such literature prescribes views to the rural locals that reflect their permanent, quotidian relation to the rural locality. Usually, researchers hold that locals *live* in the locality and depend on its viability socially, culturally and economically. Their municipality's ability to sustain a productive population, such as its ability to generate enough workplaces, to encourage in-migration and to develop central communications, will influence their well-being. Thus, the locals are presumed to feel positively towards rural development initiatives despite these initiatives' potential harm of the "softer" qualities of the rural environment, such as the "rural idyll". The second home users, on the other hand, represent an urban, part-time and consumer-based orientation to rural locations. That is, they are inherently *visitors*. Therefore, they generally have limited interests in the rural landscapes and its communities and feel less responsibility for them, because their relation to the rural localities is relatively distant. What does concern them is preserving the rural idyll that is at the heart of their relation to the area. In the following, we will elaborate on how dominating strands within the contemporary second home research have interpreted the *implications* of these differences between locals and visitors in the second home destinations.

Overvåg and Berg (2011) conducted an extensive review of research on second homes and the related contested space issues. They conclude that conflicts between second home owners and local residents in general seem to arise from the fact that they "share the same spaces, but use them for different purposes" (Overvåg and Berg, 2011: 419). Overvåg and Berg stress that owners of second homes want to protect what they conceive to be their rural idyll due to their mainly recreational dwelling. Thus, the authors implicitly claim that local residents are more engaged with advancing development. This understanding is more explicitly expressed by Overvåg (2011: 161) in a subsequent study:

While permanent migrants primarily focus on work and "everyday life", including the social and community aspects of life, second home owners primarily focus on nature-based leisure activities and recreation [...]. This means that they can have different interests in how the rural places should develop [...].

Müller (2002: 432) applies two out of three so-called eco-strategies introduced by Sandell (1995, 1997) to characterise different human–environment relationships, to illustrate the same point. Müller argues that Sandell's "museum-strategy", which aims to preserve the countryside like an artefact, represents the attitudes of many second home owners regarding the countryside. This strategy implies that second home owners wish to preserve the countryside as it is and oppose local development and changes. In contrast, Müller finds another one of Sandell's approaches, the "home-strategy" to reflect more closely the perspective that is dominant among the rural locals. This strategy represents a wish to develop the local area "without alienating its single elements" (Müller, 2002: 432). Müller understands that differing attitudes

and expectations can cause conflicts, as "second home owners consume the countryside as a recreational resource while the local population tries to make a living out of the area" (Müller, 2002: 432).

Brida et al. (2011: 144) found that "second home owners are visibly different from year-round residents in terms of status, values, behaviour and attitudes." They come to this conclusion by referring to Müller's above-mentioned eco-strategy metaphor use, and explain the situation as follows:

[T]his museum-strategy, aiming at preserving the countryside in an imagined state without leaving traces, can entail conflicts with the local population. For the inhabitants on the other side, local development could be important. Therefore the living together of second home owners and locals is a big challenge because of different backgrounds, different opinions, and different expectations [...].

Jaakson (1986) declares that while the locals believe growth and development enhance their quality of life, second home owners have interests in rural conservation. For the latter, the semi-wild landscape offers unique qualities in the form of amenities, such as the "quaint villages, lack of industry, and perhaps marginal farming and small-scale forestry" (ibid:385). Visser (2004) also refers to such presentations of the two parties without taking exception to this claim, and McIntyre et al. (2006: 235) point out how "tourists, migrants, and various resident groups – assumed to hold different values, perceptions, and identities – come into contact, if not collide, in spaces and places". On a similar note, Marjavaara (2008: 17) refers to Alalammi (1994) and states:

Second home owners often represent urban lifestyles and urban values that are temporarily re-allocated into an environment with different norms and values that often lead to a collision with local life.

In conclusion, the reviewed literature supports Winkler et al.'s (Unpublished) notion that

the existing literature has paid extensive attention to differences between seasonal and permanent residents, and these differences have been, directly or indirectly, associated with detriments in social interactional processes required to establish community development efforts.

This binary understanding of second home owners' and local populations' conflicting interests appears, to a high degree, to be a logically deduced conclusion that the parties are in the countryside for different purposes and that their perspectives differ accordingly. It must be noted that two strands of empirical research seem to be underlying this conclusion. First, qualitative case studies have shown that second home owners as well as lifestyle in-migrants oppose different kinds of development in rural areas, like the use of bird-scarers and helicopters in viticultural practices (Hall and Johnson, 1998 in Williams and Hall, 2000) and the construction of high density townhouses (Fountain and Hall, 2002) in New Zealand. Similarly, Jaakson's (1986) extensive case study of second home owners in Canada shows that most second home owners want to protect their area as it is, which is a semi-wild landscape without any kind of industry or 'modern' activities. In addition, some qualitative studies indicate that local residents *perceive* second home owners' or lifestyle in-migrants' interests to differ from their own (e.g. Jordan, 1980; Fountain and Hall, 2002; Shucksmith, 1983).

Second, some quantitative studies have shown that local residents are eager for more rural development than second home owners are. For example, Green et al. (1996) analysed results from a survey of second home owners and permanent residents of

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