Participation of second-home users in local planning and decision-making - a study of three cottage-rich locations in Finland

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PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE
Participation of second-home users in local planning and decision-making – a study of three cottage-rich locations in Finland

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Second homes form an integral part of peoples’ mobility and living patterns in today’s society. Despite the noteworthy scale of the second-home phenomenon, the political rights of second-home tourists have been studied relatively little. This paper sheds light on the governance of second homes from the viewpoint of public participation. The issue is explored based on three facilitated, future-oriented focus group interviews focusing on three Finnish cottage-rich locations. The case study areas represent very different but very typical contexts for participation of second-home users in Finland. We present three key dimensions that condition the involvement of second-home users in local planning and decision-making: (i) their personal preferences, (ii) formal statuses as residents and (iii) their informal positions in the communities. We discuss how these dimensions vary between different types of second-home user groups. We conclude that the stereotype of the traditional cottage owner is increasingly accompanied, reconstructed and challenged by heterogenic and diverse second-home users. Their influence on local planning and decision-making is channelled through – and calls for – a combination of formal and informal means of participation.

Keywords: second home; public participation; planning; decision-making; Finland

Resumen

Las segundas viviendas forman una parte integral de la movilidad de los individuos y de los patrones de vida en la sociedad actual. A pesar de la notable escala alcanzada por el fenómeno de la segunda vivienda, se han estudiado poco los derechos políticos de los turistas de segunda vivienda. Este trabajo arroja luz sobre las reglas de la segunda vivienda desde el punto de vista de la participación pública. El asunto es explorado basándose en entrevistas a tres grupos orientados al futuro que se han facilitado en tres localidades ricas en casas de campo en Finlandia. Los casos de áreas estudiadas representan contextos muy diferentes pero muy típicos para la participación de los usuarios de segunda vivienda en Finlandia. Se presentan tres dimensiones claves que condicionan la implicación de los usuarios de segunda vivienda en la planificación y toma de decisiones en esas localidad: sus preferencias personales, su estatuto formal como residentes y sus posiciones informales en las

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communidades. Se discute cómo estas dimensiones varían en función del tipo de segunda vivienda que utilizan los grupos. Se concluye que los estereotipos de propietario de casa de campo tradicional está cada vez más acompañado, reconstruido y desafiado por usarios de segunda vivienda. Su influencia en la planificación y toma de decisiones local se canaliza a través (y pide) una combinación de medios de participación formales e informales.

Palabras claves: segunda vivienda; participación pública; planificación; toma de decisiones; Finlandia

Résumé


Mots clés: résidence secondaire; participation du public; planification; prise de décision; Finlande

摘要

第二居所是当今社会人口移动和生活方式的一个重要组成部分。虽然第二居所现象已具有显著规模，但是有关第二居所的游客的政治权利的研究并不多。这篇论文从公众参与的角度探讨第二居所的管理。其借助三个以未来情境为导向的焦点群体访谈对芬兰三个农舍聚集的地区进行研究。在这些案例研究地区，一个典型特征是其居住者被视为在芬兰的第二居所，但是除此之外，其他差异性非常大。我们提出三个会影响住户外参与当地规划和决策的关键维度，即他们的个人喜好，作为居民的正式身份，以及他们在社区里非正式的角色。我们讨论了这三个维度如何因为第二居所住户的类型不同而发生变化。我们的结论是，第二居所的住户的多元化、异质化给传统农舍的业主类型带来了挑战，影响其发生化和重构。这会对当地规划和决策产生影响。这种影响的产生不仅需要住户们正式和非正式的参与，而且后者还会对前者具有引导作用。

关键词: 第二居所，公众参与，规划，决策，芬兰

1. Introduction

In developed countries, second homes are increasingly used for spending leisure time, and second-home tourism is an essential component of peoples’ housing and mobility in modern society (Hall & Müller, 2004a; McIntyre, Williams, & McHugh, 2006).
Second-home culture is particularly active in Nordic countries, where owning or having access to a summer cottage is very common (Hall, Müller, & Saarinen, 2009). For example, according to European Community Household Panel, more Finns have access to a second home than any other nationality in the EU (Reijo, 2002). With 5.4 million inhabitants, there are about 478,000 officially registered summer cottages, excluding commercial vacation homes, cottages in holiday resorts and allotment cabins (Nieminen, 2010), and every second family has an access to one, because many cottages are used by relatives and friends (Hiltunen, 2007; Melasniemi-Uutela, 2004). At the same time, as interest in acquiring second homes in abroad is growing, the number of foreign second-home purchases has increased in Finland, mostly in the ski centres in Lapland, and the lake district in south-eastern Finland (Pitkänen & Vepsäläinen, 2008; Tuulentie, 2006), where Russians make up a new group of second-home owners (Lipkina & Hall, 2014). The current trends in the Finnish second-home sector can be characterised as dual-dwelling, a growing regional concentration of second homes in tourism centres and increasing foreign second-home ownership (Hiltunen, Pitkänen, Vepsäläinen, & Hall, 2013).

The scale of the second-home phenomenon means that a variety of issues need to be managed and governed in municipalities and villages where there are a lot of second homes. Seasonal fluctuation of the population may have drastic impacts on the environmental, social and economic dynamics of these communities (Hiltunen, 2007; Kelly & Hosking, 2008), in some cases leading to conflicts over natural resource usage, biodiversity conservation and other development-related issues (Kaltenborn, Andersen, Nellemann, Bjerke, & Thrane, 2008; Overvåg & Berg, 2011). The impact of second-home tourism on rising land and real estate prices and the displacement of local communities has been much discussed in research (Coppock, 1977; Hall & Müller, 2004a).

The governance of second homes has been the subject of research in recent years. A study by Müller and Hall (2003) from Sweden suggested that the administrative system fails to recognise the dynamic and diverse patterns of peoples’ mobility and housing patterns. ‘Permanent migration’ is documented in a much more detailed manner than the ‘temporary migration’ represented by second homes (McIntyre, 2006). In many cases, the administration and related practices are largely based on the first permanent residence of the person (Paris, 2008). While these studies have shed light on the formal governance instruments, second homes have been addressed relatively little in social science research (Müller, 2011). For example, little research has been conducted on the perceptions of local administration on the development of second-home development issues (Müller, Hall, & Keen, 2004).

Less attention has been paid to the political rights of second-home owners and their inclusion – or exclusion – in local planning and decision-making. Hall and Müller (2004b) found that the administration may exclude second-home owners from local institutions, and treat second-home owners as only partial members of the community. Mottiar and Quinn (2011) found that second-home owners can play a major role in local development issues, but state that the participation of second-home owners, and how they become politically active and empowered, is not well understood and requires further investigation.

Citizen participation allows individual citizens to influence public decisions and has long been a component of the democratic decision-making process. Examples of formal participation are stakeholders’ working groups and responses to planning proposals during the hearing phase. Informal participation may constitute attending public meetings (Buanes, Jentoft, Maurstad, Søreng, & Karlsen, 2005). In Finland, citizens are
allowed to vote in municipal elections in the municipality of their permanent residence, or ‘first home’. Second-home owners, just as real property owners, have a right to make appeals about decisions that the municipality makes concerning their second home. The Land Use and Building Act (132/1999) gives them the right to participate in the preparation of land use planning and to appeal against the plans. Public participation increases with the level of access to information as well as the rights that citizens have in the decision-making process (Weidemann & Femers, 1993). But how does the participation of second-home owners and other users work in practice?

In this paper, we explore the participation of second-home users in local planning and decision-making. We ask what dimensions condition second-home users’ involvement, what means of participation are available for different types of second-home users and how participation should be developed to better meet the challenges arising from diversifying second-home usage?

Figure 1. Map of Finland presenting the three case study areas, Helsinki being the capital of Finland.
2. Materials and methods

2.1. The planning and participation context of second homes in Finland

At national level, the Land Use and Building Act (5.2.1999/132) and the Land Use Planning Decree (10.9.1999/895) are the key instruments governing second-home development. They regulate the use of land and water areas and building activities, including second homes. On the other hand, the formal National Land Use Guidelines control spatial planning at a general level. An emphasis of these key national level documents is on building issues in general, without specifying second homes, except in a few areas concerning ecological values and the attractiveness of shore areas.

Regional councils are responsible for land use planning at the most general level. They prepare regional plans, which may assign areas for second-home development. In practice, the majority of the second-home-related planning and decision-making takes place at the municipal level. Local master plans and detailed master plans are prepared by municipalities, on some occasions by planning consultants, and approved by municipal councils. Therefore, municipal planners and elected members of municipal councils are in a key position in making decisions concerning second homes.

Anyone whose circumstances and interests may be affected by land use plans have a right to participate in the planning process. Second-home owners as property owners are entitled to give formal statements and make appeals concerning the land use plans.

2.2. Case study areas

In the study, we focus on three case study areas that are all rich with second homes: Mäntyharju, Olos and Perunkajärvi (Figure 1, Table 1). The histories and current states of spatial planning and participation structures differ remarkably between the three areas, giving a different formal and informal participation context to each case.

Mäntyharju is a municipality located about 200 kilometres from metropolitan Helsinki. It has a long history as a second-home area, and currently, it is one of the most second-home richest municipalities in the country. Mäntyharju is a rural community in the lake district of eastern Finland. Almost all the lake shores in Mäntyharju have a shore master plan; and planning is currently taking place in the last as-yet unplanned shore area.

Olos is a ski and mountain resort located in the rural municipality of Muonio in the north-west of Finnish Lapland. The special feature of Olos is that it is a purposely planned second-home village, with an emphasis on winter activities. The second-home owners had their first experiences of the area through tourist trips. In Olos, there is an active residents’ association with a wide representation of second-home owners who come mainly from the capital of Finland, Helsinki. Although the buildings in Olos have the appearance of holiday homes, there are also permanent homes, a hotel and some rental cottages. In the Olos area, there is a new partial local master plan with legal consequences underway, and official complaints have been made about the plan. The situation is conflictual.

Perunkajärvi is an area where second-home owners are mainly members of the municipality, as they live in the central areas of Rovaniemi city, and Perunkajärvi is a rural area within the same municipality. Thus, the second-home owners have rights based on municipal membership, such as the right to vote in municipal elections. Rovaniemi is the capital of Lapland, covering a large area: in the rural areas of Rovaniemi, there are about 50 villages, Perunkajärvi being one of them. As an experiment,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study area</th>
<th>Inhabitants</th>
<th>Second homes</th>
<th>Description of area</th>
<th>Planning situation</th>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Inhabitants in the municipality</th>
<th>Second homes in the municipality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mäntyharju (municipality)</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>4800</td>
<td>Lake district, about 1500 km shoreline</td>
<td>Nearly all lakeshores have local shore master plans</td>
<td>Mäntyharju</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>4800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olos (tourist resort in Muonio)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Mountain area (fell), no shoreline</td>
<td>A local detailed plan in place, plan renewal ongoing</td>
<td>Muonio</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>1050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perunkajärvi (village in Rovaniemi)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>Second homes around the lake (length 15 km, shoreline about 40 km)</td>
<td>One detailed shore plan, but no local shore master plan</td>
<td>Rovaniemi</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>4200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rovaniemi currently has six official Communal District Committees and Perunkajärvi is represented by one of them which has official representatives from nine villages. The permanent residence of an official representative must be in the village they represent. The core of Perunkajärvi is a lake and most permanent residents live in detached houses along the lake shore. Currently, certain parts of the shoreline are very densely built up, but for less-developed parts it is possible to apply for an exceptional building permission from the authorities.

2.3. Future-oriented focus groups

The material for the research was obtained from three focus group interviews organised in Mäntyharju, Olos and Perunkajärvi in August and September 2013. In the focus groups, we encouraged participants to reflect on the current situation of second-home participation in the area, as well as their opportunity to develop the structures and practices in the future. Thus, we call the method future-oriented focus groups. A focus group is a technique for public consultation (Shipley & Utz, 2012), and it offers an opportunity to obtain significant insight regarding the experiences, observations and opinions of group members (Massey, 2011).

The focus groups were designed to explore the interests and positions of different individuals and institutions in the governance of second homes. A particular focus was on the inclusion or exclusion of permanent residents and second-home users in these processes, as well as the possibilities and challenges of second-home governance in the future. We aimed to keep the discussion focused on practical issues instead of abstract talk on participation. In organising the discussions, we employed the semi-structured ‘qualitative attitude approach’ (cf. Vainio & Paloniemi, 2012). The selected themes were discussed through concrete attitudinal statements that were presented to the participants on slides; the themes of the focus groups are presented in Table 2. Before discussing each statement, the interviewees showed either a red card (= I do not agree with the statement) or a green card (= I agree with the statement). However, the main objective was to discuss the statements freely. Additional questions were asked when necessary.

Permanent residents, second-home owners and other users, as well as municipal planners and civil servants, were represented in the focus groups. The interviewees were invited through open invitation and personal communications. We used local contacts in order to identify the key stakeholders and to circulate invitations to them. When inviting participants, we contacted municipal officials in each case study area. In Mäntyharju, one municipal official invited the other participants. In Perunkajärvi, locals and second-home owners were invited by the chair of the village committee and, in addition, a public invitation was put on the village’s noticeboard. In Olos, the association of second-home owners and other residents informed members by e-mail, and non-members were called by phone. The interviewees were chosen according to the order they replied to the invitation, but there was a balanced representation of permanent residents, second-home users and civil servants. Basically, everyone who wanted to participate in a focus group meeting was welcome to attend. The total number of participants at each event ranged from 8 to 11. Hereafter, we refer to focus group participants as interviewees.

The focus groups lasted three hours, and they were facilitated by three or four researchers. The discussions were recorded and transcribed in detail. The voting results were documented and photographs were taken of the flip charts at the end of
3. Dimensions of participation

When analysing the content of the data produced by the focus groups, we identified three dimensions that condition second-home users’ participation: their personal preferences, their formal statuses as residents and their informal positions in the communities.

3.1. Personal preferences to participate

Most interviewees were personally interested in public participation and they took an active part in various local social and community activities, such as planning and/or decision-making processes. Interestingly, some interviewees made a clear distinction between participating in planning processes and participating in actual decision-making processes. They argued that they preferred taking a role as a supporter of the local community, for example, by following public discussions, writing letters to the editor of the local newspaper, discussing with local people and giving advice to local
officials developing certain practices in the municipality. These individuals had a social capacity relating to many issues relevant to developing the community, but they gave community members the option of whether to use this capacity or not by leaving the decision-making power strictly to local people. This positioning was particularly discussed in Mäntyharju, as the following excerpt of a statement by an interviewee owning a second home in the municipality describes:

I don’t want to be involved in making any decisions. I just want to participate in discussions. I find it much more important that the local people feel OK; I think that in that case we do it as well. … I prefer leaving the decision-making to those who know about the issue. (ID: Mäntyharju, 5, male)

Some other interviewees preferred to take a more active position in influencing local development. In Perunkajärvi, members of the community had selected individuals to represent them in the municipal decision-making processes. In Olos, a local example of active influencing was issuing complaints about the local master plan of the area where the second homes were located. Second-home owners with high professional expertise in administrative and planning issues were both willing and able to use their personal channels and the local residents’ association to get changes made to the plan.

However, the discussions revealed that second-home users’ personal attitudes towards and preferences to participating differ remarkably. The interviewees described a general preference that second-home users did not participate in the planning and decision-making processes. This passive positioning of others was described by a relatively permanent second-home owner:

I believe that many of those who have built a cottage here prefer to be left in peace. They might work in the city with lots of responsibilities, so they just prefer clearing their mind and relaxing. (ID: Perunkajärvi, 3, female)

However, none of the interviewees described themselves as ‘passive’ second-home owners. Thus, based on our data it is difficult to explain such passiveness.

3.2. Formal status as residents

The discussions revealed differences in the formal status of second-home users. One issue discussed frequently was related to the official status of a ‘home’; namely the blurred lines between the first home and the second and, in particular, administratively ambiguous practices related to one’s possibilities to decide on their permanent address. During the discussions, it became evident that the ability to change the status of a building from a second home to first, and to formally move one’s permanent address there, differed not only between our three cases, but also within the cases.

The question of being a permanent resident or a second-home owner is relevant, because formally permanent residents of a municipality carry both rights and responsibilities. Permanent residents can vote in municipal elections and have access to public services provided by the municipality, such as health care, waste management and recreational services. They are also obliged to pay municipal tax, which does not concern second-home owners.

Moreover, second-home owners with their permanent address in the same municipality may institutionally be in a more influential position compared to other second-home owners, because they can be selected to the city council or other official
municipal bodies. Second-home owners cannot be representatives of the Communal District Committee, but as is the case in Perunkajärvi, they can participate in the parent organisation of villages – RovaTokka in Rovaniemi. In Perunkajärvi, the members of the community had selected individuals, one owning a second home and another owning a permanent home in the area, to represent the residents of the area at the RovaTokka, which promotes the development of residents’ well-being, housing and security in the rural areas and villages in this spatially large municipality. The Communal District Committees are in charge of making decisions on facilities in rural areas.

In many Finnish municipalities, residents’ associations and second-home committees have been established in order to engage second-home owners in local issues. For second-home owners, these associations provide a formal means of having an influence. In Olos, for example, there is a strong and active residents’ association where over half of the local second-home owners are members:

Of course, given that the resident association represents about one hundred members, that is quite a lot; so obviously the residents’ association wants to influence the decision-making in the area in all possible and positive ways. (ID: Olos, 5, female)

In the conflict over land use in Olos, the local residents’ association has taken an active role in questioning the enlargement of the holiday resort. However, during the discussion, there appeared to be differing opinions about the issue within the association:

I don’t consider it a huge risk for the Olos area, if for example, well, [local entrepreneurs] want to increase the accommodation capacity on that side of the hill. No, definitely not. … There are currently this kind of disagreements within the Olos association, they are opinions that are not that unisonous. (ID: Olos, 2, female)

However, in the official statements of the association such variation was not present, reflecting a challenge for public participation: how can all relevant aspects be included in the public discussion?

3.3. The informal position in the community

Besides the formal status as a permanent resident or a second-home owner, the informal position of an individual in the local community was seen to determine the possibilities of having an impact on local issues.

Being accepted as part of the local community was seen as a major issue determining the one’s chances of having an influence. For example, the social community of Mäntyharju is ‘compact’, as described by an interviewee. The small size of the community was described as being a strong advantage in public participation. The possibilities of having a direct effect were described frequently, for example, as one second-home user of Mäntyharju put it:

What is a good thing in small towns is the fact that if you know a person, you can ask him/her, and s/he knows everybody else. If you need help, you don’t need to know more than one person, it’s enough. (ID: Mäntyharju, 3, male)

Direct communication is a strength of small communities. On the other hand, as other second-home users considered, it may be difficult to be fully accepted and integrated as a member of such a small community:
Well, sorry … As a town this is so, as someone once said, so cliquey that in principle it’s impossible to make friends – getting into [to social community] takes at least [long] …

(ID: Mäntyharju, 4, female)

Direct communication needs spontaneous meeting places. On one hand, in Mantyharju, meeting in the main market square was seen as an effective means to pass on ideas to familiar decision-makers. On the other hand, in Perunkajärvi, the lack of such a physical space for daily interaction was seen as an obstacle for spontaneous encounters between permanent residents and second-home owners.

During the last few decades, the municipality of Mäntyharju had paid particular attention to developing second-home tourism. One element of this has been the invitation of second-home owners to municipal meetings. However, judging from the focus group discussions, only selected second-home owners were invited to the gatherings:

Well, there were the authorities from the municipal council and leading officials; I was there [in a gathering], there were lots of people and lively discussion and communication. But well, for sure there was … he invited those people he wanted to be there. But it was … (ID: Mäntyharju, 8, male)

It was the ‘crème de la crème’; that was the impression that I also got.. (ID: Mäntyharju, 5, male)

In the focus group, such meetings were described as having developed second-home tourism in a positive, consensus-minded and development-oriented mode. However, again, in such arrangements not all aspects were included in the discussions. The other side of the coin is that such informal gatherings highlight the importance of social status within a community.

A third aspect, relevant from the perspective of informal participation, is the role of commercial actors in the process. The case of Olos demonstrated that certain tourism entrepreneurs are powerful stakeholders in their rural environments. Some interviewees opposing the proposed land use plan in Olos felt that the role of hotel entrepreneurs in local planning and decision-making was too influential:

You may find it difficult to comprehend how strong an impact they [hotel entrepreneurs] have in such a small municipality. In that case, the municipality is a listener. [Certain actors] are telling them [the municipality] what it must do, even though it [the municipality] owns the land. (ID: Olos, 11, male)

The tourist resorts create employment and income for the local population, and accordingly they have a central say in local land use planning.

4. Varying interests and means of involvement

The case study areas represent very different yet typically complex settings for participation of second-home users. The findings reflect the challenges of acknowledging the political rights of second-home users and their inclusion in the local planning and decision-making processes. We found how personal preferences and formal and informal statuses as a resident in the communities play diverse roles in second-home governance. However, it is worth noting that not all second-home users need – or even want – to be similarly involved in the governance processes. Among the interviewees, there was a range of second-home users who were differently attached and committed
to their communities, namely permanent community members, part-time members of the community, and visitors. These groups encounter second-home governance from their own perspectives (Table 3), and accordingly challenge the second-home governance differently.

4.1. Challenges related to permanent community members

Permanent community members spend a great share of their lives in a second home, in some cases more than in their first home. Retirees have been identified as a major user group of second homes, both in Finland and internationally (Pitkänen & Vepsäläinen, 2008, p. 17; Tuulentie, 2006; Williams, King, Warnes & Patterson, 2000). These individuals are fully retired or work only part-time. They spend several months each year in a location other than their permanent address and may form a significant share of the local population. Nivalainen (2003) has shown that retirement migration is an integral part of urban-to-rural migration and that being a retiree significantly increases the probability of an urban-to-rural move. Besides the evident issue of retirement migration (Müller & Marjavaara, 2012, p. 64), our focus groups revealed other quite permanent second-home users. People may have a permanent address in one municipality, but in reality live and work in the second-home municipality. The administrative complexity of converting one’s second home to the first may hinder officially moving one’s permanent address.

Existing or future members of a community commonly renovate second homes for year-round use and are prepared to spend several months there each year, or even to

| Table 3. Formal and informal participation in second-home governance from the perspectives of permanent community members, part-time community members and visitors. |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Members of community (including retirees, returnees, in-town second-home owners)** | Wide formal opportunities to participate: especially voting in municipal elections if permanent address at a second home | Varying informal positions in social networks, family roots, old friendships, elite clubs, and connections to decision-makers |
| **Part-time members of community (including summer and seasonal residents)** | Many formal opportunities to participate: second-home owners eligible to take part in land-use planning processes (e.g. hearings) Participation through resident associations (with various practices), but not voting in municipal elections, if no permanent address in the municipality | Varying informal positions in social networks, family roots, old friendships, elite clubs, and connections to decision-makers |
| **Visitors (including rental cottage tourists and guests)** | No formal status in local planning or decision-making Only general Finnish civil rights (excluding foreigners) | Scarce informal opportunities to participate, unless relatives or acquaintances in the area Indirect impact of intensive visiting: increased power of tourism entrepreneurs |
move there permanently. Members of the communities present in the focus groups displayed high levels of motivation to influence local planning and decision-making. Due to the large amount of time they spend in their second homes, public services, health and recreation services, in particular, are of great interest to them.

Retiring second-home owners typically represent the middle class, or wealthy elements of the population (Mottiar & Quinn, 2011). As our findings support, they seem to have more time for participation than people of working age. They are well educated and are highly capable of using the formal participation channels. If they eventually change their permanent address to the second-home municipality, they may have a direct influence on municipal council elections, either as a voter or as a candidate. Those individuals whose first and second homes are located in the same municipality have access to almost all formal participation channels. They are also likely to be better connected with the local decision-makers than less permanent members of the community and out-of-town tourists.

4.2. Challenges related to part-time community members

Second-home users may be part of the local community, even though they spend most of the year elsewhere. The findings of our focus groups support the notions that these part-time members of a community have family roots or other strong ties to the second-home location (Tuulentie, 2007, p. 286). Periäinen (2006, p. 106) has concluded that one motive for having a cottage is nostalgia for a former home region. In many cases, old rural houses or summer cottages are inherited from parents or grandparents (Aronsson, 2004, p. 84; Williams & Van Patten, 2006). The buildings may stay in the possession of children and continue to be used as second homes, sometimes shared by the family. Family history and/or long second-home ownership may result in close relationships with the local community (Aronsson, 2004, p. 86).

Associations and committees provide formal participation channels for part-time residents that have their permanent address elsewhere. In the focus groups, we discovered how resident and village associations have commented on and given statements about local land use planning issues and enhanced village development differently in three case study areas. There are opportunities to enhance public involvement by developing such institutional structures. However, these associations do not have a formal position in the municipal decision-making system, and therefore the roles of the associations should be made explicit.

Local involvement is not only an issue of formal participation structures. The focus group discussions revealed that it may take several years for second-home owners and users to be accepted as members of a local community. It was emphasised that knowing the right people may greatly advance passing on ideas about practices and to decisions being made. However, there are a few challenges related to informal, direct communication. Individuals in a higher social position probably have closer relationships with local decision-makers and therefore have a stronger impact on decisions; and direct contact needs a physical space, such as market place, to occur.

As noted in all focus groups, second-home users commonly seek peace and relaxation from second homes. Often, the very reason for them having a second home is to escape from their routines and responsibilities. Thus, involving leisure-oriented second-home users in the local planning and decision-making processes and development activities is not an easy task. The socially active second-home owners presented in our focus groups lamented that it is very difficult to encourage second-home owners
to participate in cooperative action. However, normally rather passive individuals may get organised very quickly if their immediate interest, such as the local landscape, is under threat of change. Thus, to meet these second-home users, the targets of participation processes should be kept concrete and focused.

4.3. Challenges related to visitors

Visitors are non-owning second-home users who typically spend only a little time in one second home compared with the two groups above. Rental cottage tourists are a growing and heterogenic group of second-home users. In 2006, there were approximately 12,000 rental cottages in Finland, and 13% of private owners are considering the possibility of renting out their second homes (Pitkänen & Vepsäläinen, 2008, 15). Earlier studies suggest that a new type of second-home owner is emerging in Finland; a younger, profit-seeking second-home owner whose motive for owning a second home in a ski resort area is not only to spend leisure time at the resort but also gain a return on investment and cover the cost of maintenance of the property (Komppula, Reijonen, & Timonen, 2008, p. 298). One typical rental cottage tourist group is the young mobile generation that may spend one week in Finnish Lapland and the second in a resort abroad. They may choose a location without any personal connection to the place. Others prefer to rent the same cottage repeatedly, for a week each year, for example.

Another sizeable second-home user group is guests: visiting family members and friends. The ownership of second homes is well recorded in the statistics, but the figures tell us very little about the actual use of the buildings. The statistics overlook guests in second homes, and the formal status of a building (permanent residence/vacation home) may even mislead the interpretation of the actual use of buildings. A more realistic picture of the use of second homes could be drawn from surveys, which are still scarce in most areas.

Rental cottage tourists have little or no interest in local development issues. If the quality of the service or the environment declines, even regular clients may choose another location next time. Some family guests may be more interested in local participation. Some second-home owners’ children or grandchildren may expect to inherit the place when their parents can no longer maintain it and therefore may be interested in local politics and planning. Other relatives may not show such an interest for a variety of reasons. Visiting friends typically have low attachment to a place and have no interest in local participation.

Whether they want to participate or not, the formal channels for it are scarce, as visitors are neither residents of the municipality nor property owners. Their lack of social networks would further complicate their informal engagement in local issues. Foreign second-home tourists and guests have further problems with the Finnish language.

Although these non-owning second-home groups may appear to be irrelevant actors to local planning and decision-making, rental cottage tourists, in particular, may have a major indirect impact on them. Rental cottage tourists are not personally involved in planning and decision-making, but their preferences as consumers may have a great impact on local development. Tourism entrepreneurs contribute a great deal to the local economy, employment and tax income in rural municipalities. Therefore, the money spent in a tourist resort makes tourism entrepreneurs strong local stakeholders. Sometimes this may bring about conflicts with other stakeholders, such as second-home owners.
5. Conclusions: second-home users matter

Mobility and housing patterns are experiencing a rapid change in affluent countries. Increasing mobility and second homes are significant governance challenges that need to be managed by local authorities, particularly in those areas rich with second homes. Considering the scale and social importance of these phenomena, in-depth studies of second homes in social science and governance research have been surprisingly scarce. This article increases the understanding of governance of second homes from the perspective of public participation.

The results of our study suggest that the stereotype of the traditional cottage owner is increasingly accompanied, reconstructed and challenged by heterogeneous second-home users. They should not be seen only as passive leisure seekers or as mere clients for local businesses and services. If constructively involved, they may bring valuable expertise, contacts and new ideas to local communities, but sometimes they may initiate or deepen local conflicts. Even short-term rental cottage tourists may have significant impacts on local power structures. Thus, the influence of second-home owners to local planning and decision-making should be more carefully channelled through a combination of different formal and informal means of participation.

As our findings illustrate, it may take several years for a Finnish second-home owner to be accepted as a member in a local community, and for a foreigner it can be even more difficult. Thus, a future challenge is to support community participation of new second-home owners and to encourage informal personal networking between various actors.

The empirical findings of the study emphasise the important role second homes and their users may play in local planning and decision-making. Also, the case studies show that public participation may have a significant impact on the governance of second homes. Thus, it is also important that decision-makers and authorities identify and recognise the dynamics of second-home tourism in specific locations in time and space. Moreover, further research is necessary in order to better understand the dynamics between different types of second-home users and administrative practices. This understanding would help in governing second homes in a more constructive way and in avoiding unnecessary conflicts in areas rich in second homes.

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