Review

Second home countryside. Representations of the rural in Finnish popular discourses

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A B S T R A C T

This paper focuses on the representation of post-productive countryside in Finland by exploring how the rural is presented in the context of second home tourism. Being an integral part of rural areas and their history, second homes are an established example of the post-productive consumption of countryside. The international and Finnish literature on rural images provides the theoretical framework for the paper. Research on rural visions has been active in recent years with an emphasis on the Anglocentric interpretations of the rural idyll. This paper contributes to this discussion by providing an empirical review of Finnish popular discourses of second homes. The review is based on an analysis of second-home owners’ motives and media representations. The second home countryside is analysed as a farmscape, wildscape and activitiescape. The results suggest that the Finnish second home landscape is seen as wilderness (1), life at second homes imitates visions of traditional rural life (2), and the environment is used for traditional consumptive and leisure activities (3).

1. Introduction

In July 2006, the leading Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat (HS) wrote about a research project that launched a writing competition where people were asked to tell about their life and home. To the surprise of the researchers, many of the received writings were related to second homes instead of permanent homes:

When work increasingly intrudes to urban people’s homes, rest and peace are sought from elsewhere, especially from the countryside. In the country people can slow down and relax away from the haste. ‘Already thinking of the cottage relaxes me’, writes a middle-aged woman. The spiritual home of my soul is located in the cottage garden’, describes an elderly lady. For both of them, second home is a romantic dream come true. It is a promise of a simple life close to nature. Their second homes represent stability and are preserved from one generation to the other. For long, it was believed that once Finland becomes urbanised second homes gradually lose their importance. So far, this has not happened. (HS, 12 July 2006)

The researcher interviewed later in the article estimated that for many Finns a second home in the countryside feels more like a home than an urban apartment. Hence, the article suggests that the popular discourse on second homes is tightly entwined with the idea of countryside. The countryside is considered as the location of second homes as well as the environment for second home living and activities. These articulations raise questions about what exactly is meant by the countryside referred to in the context of second homes? What is second home countryside?

The history of Finnish second homes (villas and summer cottages) dates back to the eighteenth century and is very similar to other north European and American countries (e.g. Müller, 2007; Halseth, 1998). Today there are 482 000 second homes and approximately 15 percent of Finns belong to cottage owner households (Statistics Finland, 2007, 2009). Second homes thus are an integral part of the historical and contemporary Finnish rural recreational countryside.

The concept rural recreational countryside suggests that, besides second home living, the countryside itself is changing. According to Halfacree (2006), rural change driven by technological and social modernization and globalization has intensified since the 1950s. The countryside is undergoing a profound social and economic restructuring (Woods, 2005). In Finland as well as in other Western countries the majority of rural inhabitants today are not farmers but have a diversity of backgrounds and sources of livelihoods which also have a considerable influence on rural economies and ways of life (Bunce, 1994; Oksa and Rannikko, 1995). According to Urry (1995, p. 222), the countryside has become the
location and object of many new entusiasms and sociations especially those concerned with various kinds of conservation and recreation. From being conceived of as a space of production, the rural is now understood as a space of consumption (Oksa and Rannikko, 1995; Roberts and Hall, 2001; Woods, 2005). Countryside has become a tourism landscape appreciated for its recreational and aesthetic values (Sarainen, 2004).

Since the early 1980s cultural geographers have promoted a new understanding of culture as a product of discourses through which people construct their identity and experiences and which are constantly contested and re-negotiated. Cultural geographers have explored the spatial relations and meaning of place through issues of identity, representation and consumption. In rural geographies, the interest has been on the ways in which the rural is discursively constructed (Woods, 2005). It has been stated that the rural is increasingly reliant upon the social production of meanings and especially the role of media is considered to be very influential to the popular conceptions of rurality (e.g. Mormont, 1990; Cloke, 1997). As Halfacree (1997) sees it, these developments may signal a search for a new way of understanding and structuring the rural. A space in the imagination is opening, where there is no one unique and privileged vantage point, no one centre from which the rural can be captured and assessed.

The international and Finnish literature on rural images provides the theoretical framework for this paper. Research on rural visions (Cloke, 2003) has been active in recent years (see e.g. Short, 1991; Bunce, 1994, 2003; Van Dam et al., 2002; Häyrynen, 2004; Lütjhe, 2005; Horton, 2008) and it is widely agreed that despite the changes in rural space and meanings attached to it, the ideological representations of the rural and rural life have remained in the past. Popular discourse frequently portrays rural as natural and timeless space where old-fashioned virtues and their associated forms of life still linger (Murdoch and Pratt, 1997; Aho and Ilola, 2004; Malmsten, 2004). This rural idyll is an essential part of representing and reproducing the rural for recreational purposes (Bunce, 1994; Hopkins, 1998; Korhonen, 1999; Korkiakangas, 2005; Woods, 2005). The idyllic representations are influential in encouraging people to visit rural areas as tourists, and to move there as in-migrants (Van Dam et al., 2002; Woods, 2005). This leads to a range of potential conflicts between the recreational and traditional (e.g. agriculture) interests. In these conflicts, the role of rural representations and how the rural is understood and valued is high. However, the presentation of countryside as a landscape of leisure and tourism has significant implications not only for rural areas, but also for social equity in the provision of outdoor recreation (Aitchison et al., 2000). Hence, conflicts arise not only between recreation and other forms of land use, but also between the various forms of recreation and tourism (Bunce, 1994; Urry 1995; Butler et al., 1998; Roberts and Hall, 2001).

The rural idyll myth has been contested by the recognition of rural change and dystopic characteristics of rural areas (see Malmsten, 2004). It has been argued that the reality of the post-productive countryside does not match up to the rural idyll (Cloke, 2003; Bunce, 2003). The contradiction between the reality and mythical images of the rural makes it important to ask how, and by whom, the rural idyll is being reproduced in the contemporary culture/society? What is the role of non-agricultural interests and actors, such as tourism and residents, in the creation of these images?

This paper focuses on the representation of post-productive countryside in the context of second home tourism. Second home tourism serves as a good example of an established form of rural recreation (see e.g. Coppock, 1977; Hall and Müller, 2004; McIntyre et al., 2006a). Being an integral part of many rural areas and their history (Roberts and Hall, 2001; McIntyre et al., 2006b), second homes have shaped and reshaped the natural and built environment of these areas with time (Stedman, 2006). The aim of this paper is to find answers to the questions: How is the rural defined in the context of second homes? How are cultural and ideological representations of the rural reproduced in second home discourses and how does this reflect the realities of the post-productive countryside? To answer these questions, the paper provides an empirical review of Finnish popular discourses of second homes. The popular discourse encompasses both the second–home owners’ perspectives and media images of rural second homes. The analysis framework, which is developed from previous literature on rural visions, is introduced in the following section.

2. Rural visions

David Bell (2006, 150) has distinguished three types of rural idylls: pastoral farmscapes, natural wildscapes and sporting adventurescapes. Whereas the farmscape emphasises a picturesque and traditional agricultural landscape (not modern agribusiness), the wildscape portrays the countryside as a sublime wilderness: pre-cultural, pre-human and untamed. The adventur scape constructs the rural as an adventure playground, drawing on wilderness motives but adding a focus on physical endurance and ‘limit experiences’. In this paper these three categories will be further developed and used to structure the wider Anglo-American and Finnish literature on the rural idyll.

2.1. Farmscape

In the Anglocentric literature rural idyll has usually been defined as a positive and mythical image surrounding many aspects of rural lifestyle, community and landscape (Ibery, 1998; Bunce, 2003). It emphasises the amenity values of the natural environment and the traditional values of the social environment. Similarly, life in the countryside is considered to be natural and simple, and the social environment is seen as an ideal society which is stable, harmonious, healthy, secure and characterised by mutual cooperation and support (Short, 1991; Bunce, 1994; Ibery, 1998; Hopkins, 1998; Aitchison et al., 2000; Woods, 2005). According to many authors, this interpretation of the countryside has arisen relatively recently in reaction to industrialization and urbanisation (e.g. Short, 1991; Bunce, 1994; Cloke, 1999). In modern urban societies the rural has become a refuge from modernity (see Aitchison et al., 2000). The countryside has taken on a utopian, mythical status as being simpler, slower, more natural, more meaningful and thus superior to the urban (Williams, 1985; Roberts and Hall, 2001).

In Finland the rural idyll myth was an important part of the building of the national landscape discourse in the turn of the twentieth century. The Finnish national imagery portrayed the countryside as pure and genuine. The roots of Finns and Finnish-ness were considered to lie in the rural environment; in the true homeland (Häyrynen, 2004; Lütjhe, 2005; Korkiakangas, 2005). Countryside was contrasted especially with cities and urban life, which were seen as artificial, degenerating and estranged from nature (Häyrynen, 2004; Lütjhe, 2005). This romanticising of the countryside was lead by the national elite: artists, writers and scientists, people living and working in urban areas and influenced by the European romantic movement (Korkiakangas, 2005). The origins of Finnish second home culture also date back to these days and to the urbanised middle classes’ enthusiasm for leisure travel and seasonal migration to summer villas. Both are motivated by the longing for a romantic landscape and natural way of life (Vuori, 1966; Krohn, 1991).

During the twentieth century the romantic vision has diversified and a more nostalgic image of the countryside has become...
dominant. The structural changes in agriculture led to strong domestic migration from the countryside to urban areas in the 1950s and 1960s. People who were forced to move to towns returned to the countryside during their holidays to compensate for the stress of urban life. For these people the countryside became a landscape of the past, charged with positive images and nostalgia (Korhonen, 1999; Korkiakangas, 2005). This time the meanings were not created by outsiders, but by people who wished to return to their childhood landscapes and who visited the countryside regularly during their holidays (Korhonen, 1999; Korkiakangas, 2005). The same motives also increased interest in rural dwelling and the building of second homes was especially extensive during the 1960s and 1970s. Many of these second-home owners still use their cottages. In his seminal work on the social behaviour of cottage owners published in the late 1960s, Vuori (1968) distinguished longing for countryside lifestyle, roots and childhood landscapes as well as escape from the urban surroundings to spend time with family in natural surroundings as key motives for the Finns’ seasonal residence in the countryside.

Most of the current Finnish second-home owners belong to the baby boom generation born soon after the Second World War. These people have been part of the Finnish urbanisation experience and for them the rural is still associated with childhood landscapes and nostalgia (Hirvonen and Puustinen, 2008). Besides these, the romanticisation of agricultural work has come to play an important role in Finnish cottage culture (Venäläinen, 1989; Pitkänen and Vepsäläinen, 2005; Karisto, 2006). According to Silvasti (2003), agricultural work such as toiling in the fields, caring for farm animals, building and repairing, are seen as real work. It is physical and satisfying and produces concrete and visible results. The myth of a heroic small land holder building his croft with his own hands still lives on in Finnish culture and is reproduced, for example, in literature and films (Soikkeli, 1998). These myths are also reproduced in the Finnish cottage culture. Cottage activities provide a chance to engage in agrarian work and relive heroic rural myths (see e.g. Venäläinen, 1989; Pitkänen and Vepsäläinen, 2005).

Finnish representations of agrarian landscapes are in many ways similar to the Anglocentric rural idyll myth. However, the structural changes of the past few decades have profoundly changed rural landscapes, which now no longer match with idyllic representations. As Silvasti (2003) states, there is a growing gap between the socio-economic reality of contemporary business of farming and the rustic agriculture landscape that is generally appreciated. Therefore, the experience of rural as a place for rural activities and real work as well as traditional rural lifestyle and community have come to play a bigger role in the romantic representations of the farmscape than the actual visual landscape.

2.2. Wildscape

Even if the countryside is the widely accepted antithesis of the city, according to Tuan (1974, 109) it is clear that raw nature or wilderness also stands at the opposite pole of the totally man-made city. Wilderness is a social definition with origins in the agricultural revolution and in the need to make a distinction between cultivated and uncultivated land. Two historically archetypal responses to wilderness can be identified: classical and romantic. The classical perspective emphasises human action and society seeing wilderness as something to be feared and conquered, an area of waste and desolation outside the society (Short, 1991). During the last centuries this view has been replaced by the romantic conception. For the romantics, the wilderness is something to be preserved and protected from human impact, not conquered (Short, 1991; Olwig, 2002).

The Anglocentric conceptions have also been influential to the Finnish wilderness discourse. Especially the history of the intensive exploitation of forest resources is visible in the landscape as well as in people’s conceptions of nature (Lehtinen, 1991, 2006). However, despite the domination of the western projections, the ancient hunting and woodcraft culture has also left traces to the Finns’ human–nature relationship. The etymology of the Finnish word for wilderness ‘erämaa’ suggests a positive landscape outside the dominating culture (Lehtinen, 2003, 2006). ‘Erämaa’ has traditionally referred to forest-covered hunting and fishing areas located away from village borders and neighbouring agricultural lands (Hallikainen, 1998; Saarinen, 1999). In Finnish culture and traditions wilderness has not been an evil or bad thing, an object to win, tame or change into something else, as it has been in the Anglo-American heritage (see e.g. Short, 1991; Hallikainen, 1998). Nor has it been only a source of aesthetic and bodily recreation and regeneration (see e.g. Olwig, 2002). Instead, it has been appreciated for its importance for survival and experienced as an inevitable part of everyday life (Hallikainen, 1998).

The ancient wilderness-related traditions are still rooted and highly appreciated in Finnish and Nordic culture–nature practices (Hallikainen, 1998, 2001; Lehtinen, 2006; Pouta et al., 2006). The popularity of these is made possible by the wide public rights of access in Northern countries. The ‘everyman’s right’ allows free access to the land and waterways, and to the collection of natural products independent of landownership. The right is eagerly taken advantage of and it has contributed to the continuity of many traditional pursuits. Second homes are believed to have a central role in the maintenance of Finn’s special connection to nature (Sievänen and Pouta, 2002; Pouta et al., 2006; Hiltunen, 2007). The ancient wilderness-related traditions are seen as an integral part of cottage life (Pitkänen, 2008). For example, fishing and picking berries and mushrooms are among the most popular outdoor activities of second-home owners (Pitkänen and Vepsäläinen, 2005; Pouta et al., 2006).

The Finnish wilderness concept, however, is not solely a product of the hunting and woodcraft culture. The wilderness has also become valued as a romantic landscape. Saarinen (1999, see also Puhakka, 2007), suggests that the contemporary romantic wilderness discourse can be traced to the building of Finnish national identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Similarly to the countryside, the Finnish national movement romanticised wilderness as an aesthetic landscape that embodied the national identity (Saarinen, 1999; Korkiakangas, 2005; Puhakka, 2007). This romantic nationalism also gave an impetus to domestic tourism, and nature and wilderness landscapes started to attract visitors (Hirn and Markkanen, 1987). According to Hallikainen (1998), the contemporary Finns’ romantic mental image of wilderness is a rather untouched, remote, uninhabited and roadless forest area, fragmented by mires, rivers and lake systems. Important motives for using the wilderness include physical exercise, fresh air, peace and silence and escape from everyday pressures (Hallikainen, 1998, 2001). The wilderness landscape has also been one of the most important attractions for second home tourism (Periäinen, 2006). The Finnish second homes are traditionally located in forests by lakes detached from the rural community structure.

Consistently with the Anglo-American rural idyll, the Finns appreciate wilderness for its visual amenities. Besides the romantic vision, however, the wilderness has traditionally been and still is appreciated as a resource and practical part of everyday life. Hence, representations of the wilderness in Finland focus on images of the landscape on one hand and on wilderness traditions and activities on the other.
2.3. Adventurescape

Besides the idyllic representations of the physical and social environments, the rural and tourism literatures frequently refer to various activities. These have often been ignored in the Anglo-American rural idyll literature which emphasises the idealisation of the landscape and culture. In the rural idyll literature, the role of humans is mostly reduced to passive onlookers of the scenery and its embedded cultural meanings. Therefore, Bell’s (2006) category of adventurescape provides a new and fruitful perspective for the examination of rural representations. The adventurescape highlights recreational practices and activities pursued in the rural environment. Thus, it illustrates the representation of countryside as a setting for different practices and in doing so it also highlights the changes taking place in the use of rural areas.

Rural recreational activities are commonly divided into two categories. The first is traditional rural recreational pursuits that can be characterised as relaxing, relatively passive, and nostalgia-related forms of activities such as walking, picnicking and landscape photography (see e.g. Butler et al., 1998; Aitchison et al., 2000; Roberts and Hall, 2001). Butler et al. (1998) have argued that for a long time most leisure activities in rural areas were closely related to the character of the setting, and were clearly different from the types of activities engaged within urban areas. Most, if not all, of these rural leisure activities met the need to escape from the day-to-day urban life into a contrasting environment (see also Roberts and Hall, 2001). The second category of rural recreational activities is the so-called new activities that have emerged during the last few decades. These activities can be characterised as active, individual, competitive, technological, modern and fast and they are often prestige or fashion-related. Ranging from off-road motor vehicle driving, survival games, and hang-gliding, to ecotourism and shopping the specific context of the location hardly plays any role in the creation of the wanted experiences (see e.g. Butler et al., 1998; Aitchison et al., 2000; Roberts and Hall, 2001). These activities have been alleged to represent the transfer and imposition of urban values (like fashion, status, and body-awareness) on rural areas (see Butler et al., 1998; Roberts and Hall, 2001).

The relationship between recreational activities and rural areas is thus ambiguous. Instead of the categories new and old, Bunce (1994) and Woods (2005) make a distinction between the consumptive use of rural facilities and the appreciative rural recreational activities. In the consumptive use, the countryside is primarily seen in terms of the space and resources it can provide for particular kinds of outdoor activities. Such use can range from traditional rural sports and activities (fishing, hunting) to the new activities dependent on certain types of environments like skiing, rock-climbing and sailing (Bunce, 1994; Woods, 2005; Sandell, 2006). In the appreciative activities, the countryside itself is the reason for its recreational use. In these activities, engaging with rural landscape, environment, culture and traditions provides recreational experiences such as challenge, survival, escape and communion with nature (e.g. hiking, backpacking, camping, canoeing) (Woods, 2005).

In Finland, the appreciation of rural landscape and wilderness areas as a recreational and tourism environment has also increased recently (see Hallikainen, 1998; Lehtinen, 2003). Especially among the younger generations, the importance of traditional consumptive activities such as berry picking, fishing and hunting is declining, whereas exercise activities such as hiking and trekking as a source of nature experiences are becoming more popular. There has also been a change in the meaning of traditional subsistence activities into a more recreational orientation based on urban values (Pouta et al., 2006). The recreational values are also increasingly visible in the Nordic cottage cultures (Müller, 2004). In Finland, Vuori (1968) observed already in the 1960s that more recreationally oriented second home tourism motives such as the quest for excitement, competition and extreme experiences were growing in importance. However, in the motives of the contemporary cottage culture are emphasised the traditional consumptive activities that seem to correspond to rustic images of the cottage life (Pitkänen and Vespalainen, 2005; Karisto, 2006). But, as Pouta et al. (2006) state, berry picking at summer cottages may have become more a symbolic re-enactment of rural life than a frequent consumptive activity.

All in all, like the representation of the Anglocentric adventurescape, the rural in Finland is also represented in terms of recreational activities. However, instead of the new motorised and recreational activities more common representations of rural activities include traditional consumptive and outdoor activities. These have also partly become a way to re-enact traditional rural life. Hence, the Finnish adventurescape can be interpreted more as a general rural activityscape.

2.4. The contested and critiqued rural idyll

The rural idyll myth has been heavily criticized because of its urban origins (Short, 1991; Bunce 1994). The myth has been created and is constantly reproduced by the urban middle classes’ longing for the idyllic landscape and imagined pastoral way of life (Cloke, 1999). This idealised countryside is an exclusive place with no space for difference. As Bell (2006) sees it, producing this monoculture necessitates a denial and expulsion of people and things not considered appropriate to it.

However, the idyllic images are not entirely homogenous. The characteristics of rural landscape, lifestyle and community have been shaped through the complex interaction of a diversity of social groupings, cultures and subcultures, and they vary depending on the target audience and the actors producing the images (Aitchison et al., 2000; Cloke, 2003). For example, farmers, second-home owners and tourists can experience the rural in very different ways (Mormont, 1990; Cloke, 1999; Sandell, 2006; Silvasti, 2003; Stedman, 2006). Hallikainen (1998) found out that in Finland, rural visions are different between countryside dwellers, people born in the countryside, and those of urban origin. On average, young, urban and educated people consider wilderness as an opposite to their daily life environment in cities and emphasise features that contrast with urban ones (Hallikainen, 1998). On the other hand, those born in the countryside and countryside dwellers put greater emphasis on landownership rights and the productivity of the landscape (Uusitalo, 1986). Rannikko (1995) suggests that the human–nature relationship of countryside dwellers is less romanticised and more practical than that of urbanites. Similar appreciations can be found in second-home owners’ attitudes, especially those of rural origin (Pitkänen and Kokki, 2005; Hirvonen and Puustinen, 2008).

The rural idyll myth has also been contested by recognition of the dystopic characteristics of rural areas, such as poverty, depopulation and aging of the population (Cloke, 2003; Bunce, 2003). In these dystopic images, the countryside represents social backwardness, lack of culture and small-mindedness, and rural life is seen as a restraint on individual growth and a block on social development (Short, 1991). In Finnish dystopic images, the countryside has been perceived as a cultural backwater compared to the civilised cities (Lüthje, 2005). Similarly, the country people have been represented as ignorant rednecks who drink and do not have any social skills (Apo, 1996). According to Korkiakangas (2005), the 1960s and 1970s marked a negative turn when state administered subsidies for farmers as well as high food prices raised prejudices and country people were seen to live off the urban taxpayers.
(Eskola, 1963; Korkiakangas, 2005). Increasing environmental consciousness has also raised concerns about the ecological impacts of intensive and factory farming. Even nowadays, it has been alleged that the contemporary media image of Finnish countryside is too negative (e.g. Rural Policy Committee, 2000; Heikkilä et al., 2003). For example, as Heikkilä (2000) states, media often represents countryside as strange, peculiar and unfamiliar and, according to Malmsten (2004), as stagnant, insular, underdeveloped, depopulating, aging and desolating (see also Eskola, 1963; Aho and Ilola, 2004).

The imagined timelessness of the countryside is challenged by changes taking place in rural space. Globalised food industry, increasing mobility of people and production, niche fragmentation of consumption, commodification of place, and cultural urbanisation of rural areas are among the factors that raise questions about the correspondence of the myth to the reality of the modern countryside (Ibery, 1998; Cloke, 2003). The failure of modern agriculture and rural landscapes to meet the standards of the pastoral myths can lead to criticism and support the dystopic images. Similarly, criticism can also arise from the recreational use of rural areas. Paradoxically, tourists and in-migrants who seek out and demand the idyll also threaten it by turning it into a place of consumption (Halfacree, 1997; Bunce, 2003; Bell, 2006).

### 3. Analysis of second home popular discourses

Based on previous literature, the discursive building blocks of the rural are on the one hand images of a pastoral landscape and way of life, and on the other hand images of raw nature and wilderness. Besides the visual landscape, such representations extend to other experiences of and affective ties with the material environment. The rural is represented as farmscape, wildscape and adventurescape. As described in the previous chapters, the Finnish farmscape is represented as a rustic landscape (visual landscape), but especially through traditional rural lifestyle (social environment) and activities. The wildscape, on the other hand, is represented as a romantic landscape (visual landscape) and practical part of everyday life (activities) but not so much as a social environment. In addition, the Finnish adventurescape covers the whole activityscape, thus all activities engaged at second homes and their related meanings. Hence, even though the activityscape embeds also the social and visual meanings the emphasis is on how the environment is used. These readings can be formulated into three analytical questions (see Fig. 1).

In this paper, these three questions are used to analyse the images of the Finnish post-productive countryside as represented in second home popular discourses. The empirical material consists of two parts and two different types of data. The first part is based on a postal survey of urban second-home owners’ conceptions and experiences of rural second home life and environments (see Pitkänen and Kokki, 2005; Hiltunen, 2007; Pitkänen, 2008). The data was collected in 2004. The survey was targeted at second-home owners whose primary residence was located within the Helsinki metropolitan area and whose second homes were in the eastern Lake District, which is one of the major second home areas in Finland. The Lake District research area encompasses seven second home municipalities Asikkala, Mäntyharju, Mikkeli Taipalsaari, Leppävirta, Kuopio and Liperi. The municipalities are situated on different political provinces and form a spatially extensive sample of second-home ownership in the area.

The survey resulted in 1096 completed forms and the response rate was 45.5 percent. The data was stored and analysed using a statistical software package. The average age of the respondents was 57 years. Background information on the respondents corresponded well with the national profile of typical Finnish second-home owners who are late middle-aged couples, relatively wealthy, live in population centres and have roots in the countryside (Statistics Finland, 2007). The limitation of the survey data is that it only focuses on the motives of the late middle-aged urban second-home owners whereas in reality the cottages are also actively used by country people and the younger generations (e.g. Hirvonen and Puustinen, 2008). One open-ended question Q1: What inspires you to travel to your second home? (N = 1048 out of 1096) was analysed in this paper. The data was analysed through theoretical thematic analysis (see Braun and Clarke, 2006). The three questions in Fig. 1 were explored. Paying attention to both semantic and latent meanings (Braun and Clarke 2006), the responses were coded around these questions. Each main question was further specified by more detailed categories also identified on the basis of the theory. The coding scheme is presented in Table 1. Altogether, 782 responses included some reference to the rural and could be included in the analysis (see Table 1). The remaining 313 responses were either blank or included answers such as ‘I'm crazy about my second home’; ‘I just like it there’; ‘What a stupid question’.

In addition to the survey, the research consisted of a media analysis which was carried out in order to reach wider popular and inter-generational representations of the second home countryside. Because the survey responses were imposed by the question exploring the motives of second home holidays, the respondents’ images of the countryside turned out to be very positive. Therefore, the aim of the media analysis was to explore also for more negative and dystopic connotations of the rural.

The analysed media content was acquired from an electric newspaper archive, ARKISTO (http://www.helsinginsanomat.fi/yrityskset/sanoma-arkisto) maintained by the leading newspaper publisher in Finland, Sanoma Corporation. The analysed data forms an extensive cross-section of the Finnish media discourse including both serious and tabloid journalism. The archive includes the following newspapers:

- **Helsingin Sanomat** (HS) is Finland’s leading national paper, which is read by more than three-fourths of the residents of the Helsinki metropolitan area and by a quarter of all Finns. The paper is independent and non-aligned. The average daily circulation of the paper in 2006 was 426 117 copies.
- **Ilta-Sanomat** (IS) is the Finland’s leading tabloid (60% share of the market) and second biggest newspaper in Finland. The paper is read by 905 000 people daily. In 2006, the average audited circulation of the paper was 186 462 copies.
- **Taloussanomat** (TS) is a financial newspaper published five times a week. The circulation of the paper was 35 900 in 2006. In addition, the archive contains summaries provided by Esmerk Oy. Esmerk monitors almost all Finnish national and local newspapers and leading periodicals and provides media analyses and summaries.

The archive search was limited to second home related content published between January 1st and December 31st, 2006. Originally collected for another study (see Pitkänen and Vepsäläinen,
Table 1
The coding scheme and results of the thematic analysis (each survey response and media item could belong to one or more of the coding categories). The analysis questions and total number (%) of survey responses and media items coded under them in italics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding scheme</th>
<th>Survey n (%)</th>
<th>Media n (%)</th>
<th>Results/Key Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How is the landscape seen?</td>
<td>Wilderness</td>
<td>270 (35)</td>
<td>210 (47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural landscape</td>
<td>253 (94)</td>
<td>180 (86)</td>
<td>47 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the social environment experienced?</td>
<td>Relatives, friends</td>
<td>147 (19)</td>
<td>161 (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>103 (70)</td>
<td>71 (44)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roots</td>
<td>49 (33)</td>
<td>29 (18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>14 (10)</td>
<td>25 (16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the environment used?</td>
<td>Agricultural work</td>
<td>636 (81)</td>
<td>291 (65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional consumptive activities</td>
<td>169 (27)</td>
<td>75 (26)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional recreation and relaxation</td>
<td>167 (26)</td>
<td>55 (19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New recreational activities</td>
<td>530 (83)</td>
<td>183 (63)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 (4)</td>
<td>50 (17)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural representations total</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>445</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Percent of all coded rural representations in the survey data.
b Percent of landscape representations.

2008), the data was selected to reflect widely the Finnish cottage culture and its associated cultural meanings. It also included consideration of the change of seasons. The fact that the survey and media data are from different years was not seen as a problem in this study because the focus of the analysis was on cultural meanings and valuations that change slowly. However, a limitation of the media data is that the articles are written by individual reporters and they often focus on topical issues related to, for example, national politics, change of seasons or random accidents. Furthermore, because the analysed newspapers are situated mainly in the Helsinki region, the media data also stresses an urban viewpoint on the rural. A special limitation of the electronic archive, and thereby also the analysed data, is the lack of visual material connected to the original articles and items. Articles were searched using a variety of search words that extensively covered all the synonyms1 of second home (tourism/tourist) in the Finnish language. The final data set comprised 863 articles and news items which were read through several times with a focus on rural representations. The rural representations were analysed in a similar manner to the survey responses (see coding scheme in Table 1). Altogether, 445 articles were carried through the analysis whereas 418 articles had no reference to rural representations. These included, for example, articles on rental cottages; second homes/cottages in ski centres, abroad or in urban locations; number of cottages in each municipality and finally articles that had only throwaway mentions on cottages.

Even if it was presupposed that the media content would provide more versatile representations of the rural, the media’s image of the second home environment turned out to be comparable to that of the survey respondents. However, it has to be noticed that the data are not independent of each other, but that the media has a central role in creating and communicating popular images of rural whereas second homes and second-home owners, in turn, influence the media content as consumers. All in all, the different types of data were seen here as complementing each other to provide a wider view on the Finnish popular discourse on the second home countryside. Even though there are some differences between the second-home owners’ and media’s view on the second home countryside, these were not systematically scrutinized as the emphasis was on the similarities between the data.

In the final stage, the survey and media analysis were brought together. The coding scheme was further sorted, collated and refined (see Braun and Clarke, 2006). As a result, three key themes in the representation of the Finnish second home countryside were distinguished: wilderness landscape, traditional way of life and recreational activities (see Table 1).

4. Results – the key themes in representations of the Finnish second home countryside

4.1. Wilderness landscape

In both the survey and media data, the visual second home landscape was represented mainly as a wilderness like environment. Approximately 86 percent of media articles and 94 percent of survey answers coded under the landscape category were natural objects, phenomena or sceneries. In the survey data, the respondents frequently referred to the landscape and its qualities as a source of inspiration. The beauty of lake landscapes was an especially important motivator for travelling to the second home. Most often the respondents mentioned lakes or other water-related landscapes (ponds, rivers, beaches, cliffs, open lakes, islands). Lakes were often called by their proper name (e.g. Saimaa, Puula, Suvasvesi) or otherwise characterised as great, beautiful or wild. Besides lakes, forests and simply the word nature came up often. Different fish species, animals and birds were also referred to as well as natural food offerings (berries, mushrooms, fish). Thus, the second home landscape described by the respondents proved to be scenic, natural and nearly untouched. The only man-made elements were occasional mentions of lakeside saunas, jetties and cottage verandas which typically were the places from which landscape was viewed.

Q1: The scenery hasn’t changed for over 50 years: a lake in the wilderness 7 km from the town! The family has come here since the grandfather’s time. Midsummer bonfires, cuckoo bird’s calling, infinite greenness. Privacy, here I’ve composed all of my

1 The synonyms of second home (tourism/tourist) used in the study:
- mökki (most common, colloquial and culturally laden expression, close to terms summer cottage/sommarstuga/hytte, in rural/tourism centre location)
- kesäpaikka (summer place, place of family roots, rural location)
- kesäkoti (summer home, rural/urban location)
- huvila (country house, elitist connotation, seaside/rural location)
- lomaaunto (vacation home, often rented e.g. timeshare, rural/urban/tourism centre location also abroad)
- vapaa-ajan asunto (recreational residence, formal term, rural/urban/tourism centre location)
- kakkosasunto/-koti (dual residence, well equipped rural second home or work related urban residence).
In the media data, the second home environment was also typically represented as an aesthetically valued wilderness landscape. The landscape was described with attributes such as peaceful, quiet, clean, fresh, beautiful, sunny, spiritual and stable. The second home owner/tourist appeared as a passive onlooker of the scenery which held no evidence of human touch excluding a random boat sailing by in the horizon. Location on a lakeshore, near a river or the sea was described as an important determinant in the choosing of a second home destination. Especially the Finnish coast and Lakeland were reported to be popular destinations. Consistent with the survey data, the most often mentioned physical elements were water landscapes and forests. In addition to these, Lapland and northern nature came up. These landscapes were often depicted lyrically as national landscapes or wilderness.

He doesn't need special pastimes at his cottage. 'I can just gaze into the fire and water', explains the builder of the log cabin. And why not to gaze when the place commands a magnificent view from the high bank over the rugged lake landscape. (Media, HS, 2 April 2006, code: landscape/wilderness)

Elements of the agricultural landscape had a less significant role in the second-home owners’ (7%) and media’s (22%) landscape representations. In both, there were few mentions on villages, gravel roads (winding and narrow, forest roads), or some other traditional rural buildings and constructions (outhouse, well, traditional smoke sauna) which refer to the traditional, though bygone, pastoral scenery. The pastoral past was also visible in the mentioned place names of cottages (e.g. Metsälampi – forest field). Gardens, vegetable gardens, soil, and plants as well as agricultural machinery were also referred to in the context of farm work. Such basic traditional elements as hayfields, barns and domestic animals, however, were not mentioned and there were no signs of modern agricultural landscapes either. Thus, the only agricultural elements found from the representations were nostalgic and attached to the countryside of yore.

To sum up, representations of the second home landscape clearly gravitated towards wilderness and nature meanings instead of those of the agricultural landscape. The second home landscape was idealised as an untouched and uninhabited forest and lake landscape, or to use Bell’s (2006) terms, as a wildscape. The respondents’ images of the landscape were strikingly similar to each other and to the media discourse which refers to an established cultural image of second home wildscape and its valuation. Images stressed elements and attributes (such as lakes, forests, rivers, beautiful, silent, clean and expansive) typical to the Finnish wilderness and national landscape discourse (see Hallikainen, 1998, 2001; Saarinen, 1999; Lehtinen, 2003). These ideals are extended to the second home context so that the renewed version of the national landscape is lake scenery admired from the terrace of a sauna cooling off after the heat (with an icy cold beer bottle at hand).

### 4.2. Traditional way of life

Instead of a pastoral landscape, second homes were associated with an idealised rural way of life. This was best conveyed in the representations of second home activities and social environment. In the survey answers as well as in the media, life at the second home was marked by a variety of tasks that derive from ideas of agricultural work (survey 27%; media 26% of all activities). Most common were activities that referred to the renovation, upkeep or building of the second home property. Besides the cottage property, maintenance duties extended outside and to the garden. Typical practices included growing garden berries and vegetables, harvesting and taking care of the garden (flowers and lawn). Even if these were mostly considered as pleasant tasks, some of the respondents and media articles described second-home owners paradoxical relationship to this responsibility by labelling it as forced labour.

...Every day my Finnish husband has to earn his cottage holiday, idle moments with the newspaper and the beer after sauna all over again. In hand are always at least chopping and piling up firewood, thinning forest or emptying the loo. His favourite tasks, however, are building and renovating. Outside help is used only in dire straits. ‘This I’ll do myself...’ So far he has, among other things, built a Wendy house and storage, installed a boiler, enlarged the terrace, broken down a wall, and knocked two rooms into one... Yet he will, at least, replace the sewage system, build an outdoor kitchen and jetty, renovate the out-house... My suggestions on voluntary help or maybe hiring a carpenter have been received with reluctance. Our cottage is a place of never ending labour. Nowadays the children follow their father with their tiny tool boxes. (Media, IS, 1 August 2006, code: activities/agricultural work)

It is typical in Finland for second-home owners, especially in the case of inherited former farmlands, also to own a patch of forest around the cottage. The idea of the second home owner as a settler and lumberjack is represented in both of the data sets. Thus, the forests did not only provide game, berries and mushrooms, but also a place for the homestead and wood for burning and building. Important in this respect was the landownership and the possibility to make independent decisions and use the cottage for the desired activities. Forestry work often referred to with special terminology (cleaning, thinning, pruning), appeared both in the second-home owners’ and media’s descriptions. The most frequent forest related activity, however, was chopping (also hewing, sawing, collecting, supplying) firewood for the sauna.

Q1: Seeing the fruits of your and others’ labour. Wood-heated sauna and sawing the firewood. Freedom to be and do what ever I want on my own land. I don’t own land in Vantaa [home town in the Helsinki region]. (Survey, man, b. 1949, code: activities/agricultural work)

In terms of activities, the rural lifestyle was reproduced also through the representation of the traditional foraging practices. Approximately 26 percent of the survey responses and 19 percent of the media items coded under activities were related to traditional consumptive activities. The survey respondents mentioned picking berries and mushrooms and some told how they liked hunting, but especially emphasised and colourfully described was fishing in its different forms (angling, nets, traps, ice/winter fishing, crayfishing) and with a variety of different fish species (e.g. pike, zander, perch, vendace). Fishing was also referred to in the context of food (fresh fish, craving for fish, smoking the fish). Besides the practices of foraging, observing the surrounding nature (bird watching, tracking animals, observing weather, changing seasons and their effects) was represented as an essential part of cottage life. Observations were also often written down in special cottage diaries:

Start the diary by a description of the cottage's history, surrounding plants and animals. You can make notes of the rainy days, water levels, temperatures, best berry, mushroom, and fishing spots... (Media, HS, 6 January 2006, code: activities/traditional consumptive)

Besides rural activities, representation of the second home social environment conformed to the ideals of a rural way of life.
such as kinship and family togetherness. In both of the data sets, the importance of relatives and friends (survey 70%; media 44%) was highlighted in the representation of the social environment. By relatives it was meant, for example, spending time with grandchildren/parents, visiting relatives or family graves and taking care of aging parents residing nearby. Relatives and grandchildren were especially significant to the survey respondents whose children were typically grown-up and the nuclear family had declined in importance. Whereas only 7 percent of the respondents referred to the nuclear family, in the media the nuclear family came up often (40%). Similar divergence between the data was also apparent in relation to socialising with friends. Whereas in the media the emphasis was on friends coming for visits from the city, the survey respondents usually referred to friends living in the cottage area.

In a perfect Midsummer my band would have a gig early in the evening. After it, I, the boys and some other friends would go straight to a lakeside cottage, far away from any neighbours. There I could mess around in peace with my own bunch of friends. (Media, IS, 22 June 2006, code: social environment/friends and relatives)

Q1: Lake landscape, forests for picking mushrooms and berries, nice neighbours and friends in the village and in the town of Mikkeli. (Survey, woman, b. 1930, code: social environment/friends and relatives)

This divergence is explained by the fact that for many of the survey respondents the cottage municipality was also their original home area. The role of second homes as a place of one’s roots or as a place for childhood’s sunny holidays came up often in the survey responses (survey 33%; media: 18%). Many of the respondents shared their sentimental attachment to their second home, the surrounding locality or even to the province (e.g. Savo). Annual visits to the second home were described as a tradition too priceless to give up.

Q1: Affection for the place. Summer tradition for the whole of family (parents, siblings, children), family history, summer roots are there…(Survey, woman, b. 1958, code: social environment/roots)

In representations of the second home social environment, the larger sense of community common to the idyllic rural was especially brought up in the media (16%; survey 10%). The articles mentioned different forms of collective action (village meetings, working bees, hunting clubs, road, fishing cooperatives), cultural activities (village dances, festivals, exhibitions) and the general rural atmosphere. Rural people, institutions and services were described as down to earth and welcoming to second-home owners. Sense of community and appreciation of the rural way of life were emphasised as an essential part of the second home experience and a motive for second home holidays.

Lively villages with shops, services, and convivial rural atmosphere attract second home tourists, says real estate agent Sirkka-Liisa Seppänen from Jyväskylä. (Media, TS, 10 June 2006, code: social environment/community)

Hence, in the experiences of the urbanised people the second home countryside is associated with traditional rural lifestyles and values. Cultivating, foraging and other manual labour provides a nostalgic connection to the past. People flee to second homes to relax and spend time with activities that they might have been used to in their childhood but cannot do in the urban environment. Hands on soil and sweating of the real work the cottager can re-encat and relive former ways of life. On the other hand, picking berries and mushrooms and fishing to enhance the self-sufficient food management of the family are activities that derive from the foraging practices and use of nature of the hunter-gatherer society. In this respect, the second home culture can be seen as contributing to the continuity of traditional nature pursuits (see also Pouta et al., 2006).

Second homes have also become a kind of a memorial for family history and traditional sense of community (see also Pitkänen and Kokki, 2005; Karisto, 2006; Pitkänen, 2008). The ideal cottage sociability ranges from the nuclear family and small circle of friends to a larger group of relatives, neighbours and other villagers. In reality, however, only a select group of people outside the nuclear family is accepted as a part of the cottage social life and the best neighbours are often those ‘far away’ (Pitkänen, 2008). Paradoxically though, in the second home countryside this exclusionary group of people is seen as a larger sense of close-knit community and old-fashioned rural life (see also Hirvonen and Puustinen, 2008).

4.3. Second home activities

The third way to encounter the second home environment was through activities. As described above, the represented activities were often fairly traditional and suggested a utilitarian relationship with nature and land. However, the most typical activities related to the second home environment were recreational ones. These can be further divided into traditional and new activities (see Butler et al., 1998; Aitchison et al., 2000; Roberts and Hall, 2001).

Most of the activities represented in the survey responses (83%) and media articles (63%) referred to very traditional leisure pursuits. These included, for example, pastoral traditions of recreation that live on at second homes. Activities such as swimming, rowing and angling are familiar to many second-home owners from their childhood and are further taught to the next generations at the cottages. In addition, some of the traditional leisure pursuits were also expressed by the term outdoor recreation. This expression was used by both the survey respondents and the media to connote a variety of on-shore (jogging, walking, hiking, outing, skiing) and off-shore (boating, canoeing, paddling) activities. The common trait in all of these is that they aim at bodily exercise and enjoyment of the nature.

Q1: Relaxation in nature, slowing down, splash of water, birdsong, fresh fish, heating the sauna, lovely smell of the smoke, being outdoors, lovely berries and mushrooms, fresh air and clean nature, swimming. (Survey, woman, b. 1947, code: activities/traditional recreation and relaxation)

However, the most common way to enjoy the cottage surroundings was described with the phrase relaxation. Hence, besides physical exercise and keeping fit, the nature surroundings provided opportunities for idleness and relaxation such as tanning, lying on the beach, gazing into the fire, enjoying the quietness, and listening to the summer rain. The single most important way to relax was sauna (see also Hirvonen and Puustinen, 2008). The survey respondents emphasised how their sauna was situated by a lake and described the different elements found there. Also, the relaxed feeling after sauna was mentioned by many. In the media, sauna was described as a necessity of cottage life.

Another very distinctive way to spend time at the cottage represented in both of the data sets was eating, drinking and cooking (see also Hirvonen and Puustinen, 2008). Outdoor cooking (e.g. barbecuing, grilling sausages, frying pancakes, smoking fish) was often related to parties that are celebrated all summer long. The downside of these is the heavy alcohol consumption. Apo (1996) suggests that heavy drinking at the cottages is an attempt of the Finns to be ironical about their agrarian past and imitate ignorant
rural rednecks. However, in the survey responses and media, alcohol was often associated with relaxation and freedom from the social contacts, rules and norms of the city. Even if for some of the survey respondents drinking a beer on the veranda after sauna was an essential second home experience, many were conscious to emphasise how they do not need alcohol to relax. The media, however, revealed also the more dystopic realities of cottage drinking.

Booze, booze and booze. From the police's perspective, these are the three reasons for all Midsummer trouble. Hullalaboo and hubbub do not only mark traffic, but also cottage landscapes. – Most of the disturbance is due to heavy drinking. People fight and booze at the cottages. (Media, IS, 22 June 2006, code: activities/traditional recreation and relaxation)

The new more motorised types of recreational activities that referred to thrill-seeking and speed and controlling technology (e.g. snowmobiles, all terrain vehicles, motor boats) were mentioned especially in the media articles (17%; survey 4%). However, these were often referred to as noisy, polluting and aggressive and thereby inappropriate for second homes. For example, snowmobiles were often related to disturbance and accidents under the influence of alcohol. Negative treatment was given also to activities that referred to elite or urban-based recreation (golf, tennis).

Other activities categorised as new were related to the use of entertainment technologies such as television. In the media, there were articles related to the digitalisation of television in Finland and how this also meant renewal of the cottage technologies. Even if 73 percent of Finnish second homes have television receivers (Nieminen, 2009), watching TV is not seen as a legitimate second home activity (Peltola and Pitkänen, 2009; Karisto, 2006). There were no mentions of entertainment technologies in the survey answers. Similarly, the media discourse emphasised the past times and ways of life in the context of technologies. Being at the second home was represented as simpler, slower and more natural than in the urban environment. At the second home time ceases, people listen to the radio, read old magazines and wear old clothes. Modern technology and ways of life are absent. The technologies that were represented as acceptable in the media were old fashioned, maybe even slightly nostalgic, radio receivers and black and white TVs.

The mixing of categories is important in a man's life. By taking a laptop to the cottage you also take with a part of the urban home and working life. Same thing happens when you carry the 40-inches plasma TV, DVD and a deafening hi-fi home stereo system to the cottage island. The summer peace, reading of silly books, listening to the battery radio all disappear. Everything becomes urban, efficient. Next you will want to have a blender, lawn tractor and wireless broadband in the countryside. But the mixing of categories is important in a man's life. By taking a laptop to the cottage you also take with a part of the urban home and working life. Same thing happens when you carry the 40-inches plasma TV, DVD and a deafening hi-fi home stereo system to the cottage island. The summer peace, reading of silly books, listening to the battery radio all disappear. Everything becomes urban, efficient. Next you will want to have a blender, lawn tractor and wireless broadband in the countryside. But what if the world would revolve to another direction? Radio and TV replace the home and the cottage. (Media, IS, 22 July 2006, code: activities/new activities)

The representation of second home activities is thus twofold. On one hand, like described in the previous section, activities such as renovating, cultivating and foraging are an essential part of life at the cottages. These activities can be categorised under the Finnish word ’mökkipuuha’ (cottage task). This is a special noun used to refer to all kinds of smaller and bigger tasks distinctive to cottage life. These are enabled by the land/property ownership phrased in the famous Finnish proverb as ‘one’s own cottage, one’s own freedom’ (’oma tupa, oma lupa’). As a counter-balance to everyday life and office work, manual labour at the cottage, in the forests and on the lake is seen as a healthy and physical form of exercise. These activities emphasise the reclamation of the surrounding environment and nature for useful purposes, but whereas they previously used to be essential for survival, they are now played to find personal fulfilment (see also Wolfe, 1977).

Stebbins (1992) talks about serious leisure which is characterised by perseverance, the need for special skills and self-fulfilment. The counterpart of serious leisure is casual leisure, which consists of activities that are immediately intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived and require no special skills to enjoy (Stebbins, 1992). Similar to this division, the second home countryside was encountered through a second set of activities that paint a picture of the second home countryside of leisure. Instead of self-actualisation, toil and enhancement of special skills, important in these activities are recreational, aesthetic and bodily experiences. Even if modern activities are gradually becoming popular, second homes are associated especially with traditional outdoor pursuits such as hiking, nature walks, rowing and landscape sightseeing originally popularised by the urban romantic ideals of nature.

5. Discussion

In this paper, the Finnish second home countryside was analysed as a farmscape, wildscape and activityscape. The analysis highlights different aspects of the rurality revealing the idealised meanings and mythical qualities that the second home culture relies on. As a summary, a three-fold image of the second home countryside can be presented such that the second home landscape is seen as wilderness (1), life there imitates visions of traditional rural life (2), and the environment is used for traditional consumptive and leisure activities (3).

These images have many qualities distinctive to the Finnish context and culture, but they also have many similarities to other northern European and American cottage cultures (see e.g. Wolfe, 1977; Jaakson, 1986; Halseth, 1998; Williams and Kaltenborn, 1999; Müller, 2007). Connection to wild nature, counter-balance to urban life, family togetherness and the possibility to engage in various nature-based activities are listed in Finland and worldwide as key motives for second home holidays (Wolfe, 1977; Jaakson, 1986; Pitkänen and Kokki, 2005; Hirvonen and Puustinen, 2008).

The three ways of representing second home landscapes are not exclusive of each other, but in many cases overlap and complement each other producing a special image of the second home countryside. In the introduction it was argued that the rural idyll myth used to represent and reproduce countryside and wilderness does not match up to the realities of rural areas (see e.g. Ibery, 1998; Short, 1991; Cloke, 2003; Bunce, 2003; Bell, 2006). The image of second home countryside bears out this argument. It was found that idyllic representations have a focal role in how the second home countryside is constructed and lived in. The analysed rural representations excluded all signs of modern agriculture and post-productive sources of livelihood. Furthermore, rejected from the representations were those elements of the commodified countryside created to correspond to tourism demand (cf. agritourism). When the dystopic features of the modern countryside such as depopulation and desolation were missing, the representations were somewhat disconnected from the economic and social realities of the modern countryside. In a way, the second home discourses represent a middle ground between the dystopic realities of the modern countryside and the overly idealised marketing images. Consequently, the discourses also signal the existence of conflicting interests between the second-home owners and locals as well as second-home owners and tourists (see also Silvasti, 2003; Aronson, 2004).
Earlier in this paper, it was also argued that emergence of the post-productive countryside marked by new kinds of interests and actors reshapes both rural space and imagery (see e.g., Bunce, 1994; Halfacree, 1997). This raises questions about how to define the realities of the rural spaces and more importantly, whose realities they are. In Finland, second homes have always been built on shorelines, geographically isolated from the traditional village and agricultural settlement (Hiltunen, 2007; Pitkänäen, 2008). On the other hand, in the analysed representations the second home countryside proved to be a separate social and cultural space (see also Halseth, 1998). Second homes are turned into the last fortresses of the traditional and real countryside and life spent there imitates traditions of the former generations. Deriving from the ideals of the 1950s and 1960s, cottage life second homes should still aim for modesty and simplicity. It is common that objects and constructions no longer visible in the modern countryside are stored and preserved at second homes (e.g., outhouses, detached saunas, birch bark items). Life at the cottage is supposed to revolve around nature. It is about living at the mercy of nature with mosquitoes, wild animals, weather changes, and making one’s living out of the nature by foraging and cultivating like the ancestors have done (see also Karisto, 2006). To a certain extent, at second homes, the rural idyll myth is as much an abstract idea as it is the lived space. As a result the tourist landscape becomes reified (see also Stedman, 2006).

The analysis of the popular discourses demonstrates that representations of the Finnish second home countryside are based on the reproduction of the historical and cultural meanings of countryside and wilderness. Notwithstanding the many structural and cultural changes that have shaped modern rural life and landscape, the second home countryside lives in the past leaning on idealised representations of the rural. However, the second home countryside reproduced at the cottages and in the representations is not only a replica of the age-old rural landscape and traditions. The cottage landscape is constantly renewed by the people who use, produce and mediate the space. The countryside of cultivating and foraging was the childhood reality of the post-war baby boom generation born in the 1940s and 1950s. On the other hand, the countryside of sunny holidays, old radios, paraffin lamps, worn out clothes and fireplaces has its roots in the childhood cottage holidays of the generations born in the 1960s and 1970s (see Krohn, 1991).

Each second home owner generation has reproduced a second home countryside which strives for objects, feelings and sceneries familiar to its childhood and which fits to its image of the ideal second home life. Interestingly, many of the elements of this ideal derive directly from the popularisation of the second homes since the 1950s and 1960s. Hence, the rural idyll myth is extended to the cottage culture itself bypassing the paradox that second homes themselves are an example of the post-productive uses of the rural areas.

This indicates that second home tourism is not merely a phenomenon of the post-productive countryside, but the long history of second-home ownership has made them an established part of the rural landscape and thereby also contributed to the formation of that post-productive countryside. As Stedman (2006) states, there are vast differences between places purposely (and suddenly) created for tourism consumption from those where there is a long tradition of such use. In addition, second-home owners often exhibit higher place attachment than the permanent residents. These notions raise questions about who can be categorised as an outsider in rural communities and whose perspective should or should not be count in rural development? The second-home owners are only one group defining the countryside and acting in rural areas. If leisure spaces, tourists and part time residents are accepted as a part of the post-productive countryside, then a more nuanced understanding of their motives, needs and conceptions of the countryside is needed to fully understand the mechanisms directing rural change.

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