Second home owners, locals and their perspectives on rural development

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Abstract

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

Keywords:
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Rural development
Conflicts
Norway
NIMBY

1. Introduction

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

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

We wish to begin the discussion by presenting research that has discussed the relationships between the second home population and the rural population in the above-mentioned, binary way, related to analyses of rural development discourses. We then contrast this picture with material from the Norwegian second home phenomenon, which is comprised of 42 in-depth qualitative interviews with both second home owners and locals.
suggests a far more nuanced picture of the visitor/host relationship, for the parallels between second home owners and locals’ positions appear more striking than the differences do. In the final section of the paper, we present some alternative interpretations of the relationship between second home owners and the local populations and attempt to uncover their genuine and shared “Not in my backyard” arguments regarding development discourses.

2. Perspectives on rural development

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In conclusion, the reviewed literature supports Winkler et al.’s (Unpublished) notion that the existing literature has paid extensive attention to differences between seasonal and permanent residents, and these differences have been, directly or indirectly, associated with detriments in social interactional processes required to establish community development efforts.

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

Second, some quantitative studies have shown that local residents are eager for more rural development than second home owners are. For example, Green et al. (1996) analysed results from a survey of second home owners and permanent residents of...
a northern Wisconsin county. They found that second home owners are generally more supportive of land use controls and zoning than permanent residents are, whereas the second home owners are less supportive of various growth activities than the permanent residents are. They interpret these findings to reflect that second home owners are usually more interested in the physical surroundings and less interested in business development in the host community than the permanent residents are. Likewise, Gartner (1987) conducted a survey to examine differences in the opinions of second home owners and permanent residents in Michigan. Gartner concluded that second home owners tend to support restrictive land use controls more than the permanent residents do. Furthermore, the second home owners were far less positive to additional residential development in the area (ibid:52). McIntyre and Pavlovich (2006) used statistics to compare second home owners and local residents’ valuation of the various characteristics of the Opho area in New Zealand. They revealed differences in value positions between the two parties on the issues of tourism development and community characteristics, as the second home owners rated these two factors significantly lower than the local residents did.

Even though the abovementioned empirical results indicate different interests between second home owners and local residents, the communities in which second home counties were chosen as study areas in general have conflicting interests. For example, McIntyre and Pavlovich (2006) found differences in permanent residents and seasonal-home residents’ value positions regarding tourism development and community. Accordingly, they concluded, “these value differences have been and are likely to continue to be a source of conflict in this and other similar communities” (2006:261). Yet these differences may not constitute the source of actual conflicts. The direction and intensity of attitudes and the (spatial) areas of significance to these attitudes require separate treatment, because the observation that second home owners are normally less eager for (certain kinds of) local development than locals does not necessarily amount to second home owners being opponents of such developments. Moreover, the strength of a potential opposition to rural developments may dissolve as the concrete objects of the protests disappear from their visibility, or as will be shown below, from their backyards. In other words, studies that look only at the attitudes’ directions are not able to demonstrate the foundation of conflicts.

Another criticism of the theory of polarised interests targets this research literature’s predominant focus on the second home populations and their empirically demonstrated desires for conservation of the rural idyll. Such studies have left the preferences of rural residents as theoretical assumptions that they rarely root in empirical investigations. Only a few of the studies cover both populations.

Furthermore, like some scholars (e.g., Paris, 2009; Cloke et al., 1998) have pointed out, both “second home owners” and “local residents” are heterogenic categories, where the actors within each have different standpoints and interests. Rye’s (2011) study supports this theory, for it demonstrates how rural actors vary in their perspectives of rural development both within the rural communities and between them. For example, rural elites are, in general, more positive towards new activities. Subtle differences in attitudes among second home owners are also reflected in earlier research literature. For instance, second home owners in Iceland were found to differ in their general support of local development based on their familial or un-familial connections to the host community (Huijbens, 2012). Second home owners of different nationalities may also have somewhat different views on what constitutes the rural idyll, as reflected by French and British second home buyers differing housing preferences in rural France (Hoggart and Buller, 1995). In Norway, Villa (2012) found that owners of second homes located in a vivid agricultural community and a ski resort area respectively, developed quite different relations to their host communities. Additionally, Norwegian second home owners themselves differ in their views on the extent to which second home owners’ interests should be prioritised by the host municipalities (Farstad et al., 2009). Thus, any claim about the two current groups’ perspectives, interests or actions may be problematic, as intra-group differences may be more marked and more analytically relevant than inter-group differences. In this paper, we shall add further reflections on the frugality of conceiving the local and visiting populations as genuinely different categories by citing a variety of views on rural development.

3. Studying interests in second home municipalities

To discuss the research questions, we draw on a study consisting of 42 qualitative in-depth interviews with local residents and second home owners in four rural municipalities in Norway: Hol, Karlsoy, Finnøy and Oppdal. These municipalities have relatively high densities of second homes and numerous contested development issues.

3.1. The study areas

The rationale of interviewing actors in four different locations reflects the perceived importance of place specificity in terms of the second home phenomenon. The second home municipalities in this study were chosen to optimise differences in terms of the contextual framework and structural properties of their second home economies. Important aspects include the municipalities’ demographic, economic and social characteristics; their histories as hosts for second homes; the number and types of second homes; and characteristics of the second home population.

The study areas are located in different parts of the country, both coastal and mountain/interior regions. They have divergent economic foundations and differ in their share of employment in the primary industries. The municipalities further differ from each other in the number of second homes, the pace of new developments, the ratio between the second home and local residents and the average sales prices of second homes. Thus, while all of the study areas have significant second homes populations, the areas also exhibit major differences in terms of the second homes’ economic impact on the local community as well as other impacts.

Furthermore, the specific objects of discussion and contestation vary between the municipalities due to the nature-based and socially created municipal contexts. While densification in the second home areas and grazing animals generate conflicts in all of the municipalities, specific issues like hunting rights, snowmobile traffic and preparation of ski tracks are at stake mainly in the mountain municipalities. Taxation issues and special treatment of the locals are central issues of conflict in the municipalities where this is relevant.

An important commonality between the study areas is their relative distances to urban regions, as they are all located about 1 – 3 h drive to one of the larger cities in Norway. Thus, the material reflects the rural context in-between “urban” and “peripheral” rurality. Urban second home owners’ presence is assumed to generate more conflict than rural visitors’ presence, primarily due to general identification processes (social constructions of “us” and “them”) and potential class differences, so rural municipalities in the hinterland of larger cities were chosen as study areas in order to ensure a high share of urban visitors. We present each of the study areas with a summary of their key characteristics in Table 1. See also Fig. 1 for each municipality’s geographical localisation.
3.2. The interviews

The fieldwork in the study areas was implemented in the period from spring 2008 to autumn 2009. Before the in-depth interviews were carried out, semi-structured interviews with one-three key informants from each municipality were conducted. The key informants were either employees in the municipal administrations or elected mayors. The main objective of the key informant interviews was to gain knowledge of the municipalities’ second home policy and related issues. Moreover, the key informants were also utilised to compile a list of potential local resident interviewees. Concretely, they were asked to suggest (permanent)

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Oppdal</th>
<th>Karlsøy</th>
<th>Hol</th>
<th>Finnøy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Mid-Norway</td>
<td>North Norway</td>
<td>Eastern Norway</td>
<td>South/West Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to larger city</td>
<td>Mountain area</td>
<td>Coastal area</td>
<td>Mountain area</td>
<td>Coastal area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.5 h from Trondheim</td>
<td>1 h from Tromsø</td>
<td>3 h from Oslo/ Bergen</td>
<td>1.5 h by ferry to Stavanger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of reg. pop.</td>
<td>6600</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>4400</td>
<td>2800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of sec. homes</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in no. of SH (2000–2010)</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic development</td>
<td>Long traditions</td>
<td>Newer dev./fam. ties</td>
<td>Long traditions</td>
<td>Long traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant type of SH settlements</td>
<td>Large villages</td>
<td>Conv. homes/small villages</td>
<td>Large villages</td>
<td>Scattered/small villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other kinds of tourism</td>
<td>Winter resort</td>
<td>Int. fishing tourism</td>
<td>Winter resort</td>
<td>Small boat tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avr. price 2007–09</td>
<td>250,000 USD</td>
<td>92,000 USD</td>
<td>500,000 USD</td>
<td>368,000 USD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1. Localisation of the study areas in Norway (From “Rural residents’ opinions about second home owners’ pursuit of own interests in the host community” by Farstad (2011), Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift – Norwegian Journal of Geography 65, p. 168, reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals).
residents in their municipality who possessed knowledge of, interests in and any opinions (positive and/or negative) on the local second home phenomenon. Interestingly, even though there was asked for “average” residents, many of the suggested interviewees seemed to have been engaged in local development processes in one way or another. After the list of suggested interview candidates was compiled (16–34 candidates in each municipality), every candidate received a letter with information about the research project, including an interview inquiry and a short self-completion questionnaire to be returned.

A similar procedure was employed to establish a sample of second home interviewees who all had their permanent residences in a larger city in proximity to the selected second home municipalities (see Table 1 and Fig. 1). Each second home municipality administration distributed letters with interview requests and a short self-completion questionnaire to 50 second home owners. The second home owners were selected from these municipalities’ registers with the only criterion being permanent resident in a nearby larger city. Specifically, the second home owner interviewees with a second home in Karlsøy reside in the city of Tromsø; those in Finnøy reside in Stavanger; those in Oppdal reside in Trondheim; and those in Hol reside in Oslo or Bergen.

The final samples of locals and second home owners were decided on the basis of the information in the returned short questionnaires. In every study area, five–six interviews with locals and five–six interviews with second home owners were conducted. Most of the interviews were conducted as individual interviews, while some were carried out with couples. It was aimed to maximise internal variation in the samples in terms of gender, age, work categories and personal settlement history along the rural/urban dimension, among other conditions. Among the locals, variation was sought in their distance to the nearest second home (which ranged from 100 m to 2 km), and in their long term personal financial benefits from the local second home tourism. Among the second home owners, variation was emphasised with regard to number of years having a connection to the second home municipality, their second home use frequency and the sizes and standards of their second homes.

The interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 1 and 2 h. They were all audio-taped and then fully transcribed. The material was gathered within the framework of a larger second home research project, and the interviews cover a broad range of issues in relation to the second home phenomenon. The interviews with both the local residents and second home owners extensively explored their perceptions of the second home phenomenon and its impacts, their perspectives on the relationships between local residents and second home owners in general and their personal relationships to the other group. Additionally, the interviewees were asked about their views on the second home owners’ degree of social participation in the local community, their opinions about the local governments’ handling of the second home owners and their thoughts on further second home development in the municipality. With the exception of specific questions about the second home development, the interviewees were not asked concretely for their opinions about “development”, for it is an abstract concept that accommodates numerous initiatives and establishments. Rather, the interviewees’ views on different kinds of local development emerged naturally in the conversations when they spoke about the topics mentioned above. In the end, the interviews give deep insights into the different actors’ thoughts on the rural change and conservation, and information about concrete cases and by what means they engage in local development discourses.

In the analysis section, quotes will be connected to specific interviewees by the following: the abbreviations SHO (second home owner) or LR (local resident); the initial letter of the second home municipality of belonging; and the number of the performed interview within each kind of interview category, which is made up of the two former classifications.

3.3. The Norwegian context

The study is contextually located within the Norwegian second home phenomenon, which parallels that of the other Nordic countries in many regards, especially in the extent of ownership and use and its key role in the national folklore (Müller, 2007; see also Rees, 2011). The topic of second home owners’ interests is evidently relevant in most parts of rural Norway. The country’s rural municipalities abound with second homes. In total, the Norwegian population of five million shares about 450,000 second homes, with an additional 5000–6000 second homes built each year. The larger part of these homes is located in the rural regions of the country. It is common to share the ownership of second homes and to visit others’ second homes; so about half of the population reports having access to one or several cabins (Farstad et al., 2009). The result is the presence of substantial second home populations in the most attractive destinations. The existence of many second home owner interest groups and a multitude of newspaper articles further reflect that parts of the Norwegian second home population actively pursue their interests in their host community.

A key characteristic of the Norwegian second home phenomenon is its egalitarianism (Rye and Berg, 2011). Ownership and/or access to second homes are common in all layers of society, because the “ideal” second home up until now has been a cabin of modest standard. Many newer second homes are presently challenging this ideal, for they possess the size and standard of their owners’ first homes. However, the traditional cabin still serves as an important symbol of Norwegian national identity. Furthermore, the rural/urban dimension is blurred in the Norwegian second home context (Rye and Berg, 2011). Although an important characteristic of the study areas is that they do have a large share of second home owners from urban areas, second home ownership is about as common among the rural populations as it is among urban populations (Farstad et al., 2008). There are also often multi-layered social relationships evolving between the second home and local populations. Many claim regular social intercourse across the categories, and the overall relationship is described as rather harmonic on the national scale (Rye, 2011). Another notable trait of the Norwegian second home phenomenon is its generally “endemic” character (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2001) with clear divisions between first and second home markets. However, there are local exceptions. In a survey that was conducted among Norwegian mayors (Kroken et al., 2010), 14% of the mayors (with an overweight of respondents from rural municipalities) reported competition on the same housing market between the two groups. Additionally, our material gave specific examples of this competition in Karlsøy. Yet, this is not a widespread phenomenon in Norway, whereas it is identified as a significant source of conflict in some other countries. Furthermore, Auklen and Rye (2011) found that the Norwegian second home phenomenon is less “matured” in terms of its level of commodification than the phenomenon in the US, among other countries.

These characteristics are challenged by contemporary rural development discourses in Norway, where development of new second homes is identified as a key strategy of rural restructuring. In the above-mentioned survey of Norwegian mayors (Kroken et al., 2010), a great majority of the rural mayors held that second home owners are important in terms of increasing volume of trade, the assortment of merchandise and employment. As such, town leaders...
usually believe the second home phenomenon generates important outcomes in rural Norway. Still, there are varying opinions about this. For example, second homes are considered solely as a valuable element in Oppdal’s municipal planning document, whereas in Finnøy’s municipal planning document, second homes are predominantly presented as a problem. However, in line with the main trend of the above-mentioned survey, the national governments in Norway seem to value highly the second homes in their regional policies (Hiddle et al., 2010: 144).

The Norwegian second homes are distributed all over the country with concentrations around the major urban settlements. The second home owners may find their versions of the rural idyll in places of different qualities. In other words, the mountain and coastal zones are equally attractive locations and hold about 64 percent of Norway’s second homes, while the remaining 36 percent are located inland in the lowlands (Overvåg and Arnesen, 2007). Bell (2009) suggests three ideal types of rural idylls: the pastoral (“farmscapes”), the natural (“wildscapes”) and the sporting (“adventurescapes”), and we find these to cover the Norwegian second home population’s orientations very well. While we disagree with Overvåg and Berg (2011), who claim that the “farmscape” rural idyll is in less demand in Norway, we do acknowledge that second home owners may value this kind of rural idyll more differently than the other two kinds. Independently of the rural areas’ specific qualities and idyllic character, we assume that individuals perceive a given rural idyll as impaired or ruined when changes clash with the idyllic qualities characteristic of the place where they at an earlier date decided to settle.

4. Protecting rural idylls

We organise our presentation of the material into three sections. First, we analyse instances of complaints from the second home population by addressing the following questions: What are the objects of their protests concerning rural development, and how do they protest? What are their arguments and their strength and intensity? How far-reaching are the (spatial) areas of ascribed significance? To answer these questions, we rely on the interviews from both “camps”, that is, the statements of second home owners and the rural residents. This strategy reflects the fact that the locals often provided better information on issues of conflicts in the area, regardless of their own involvement in the specific conflicts, because they live in the municipality around the year and follow the local development debates. The second home owners, on the other hand, tended to focus on issues that were of direct relevance to their own situation. Second, we give a parallel analysis from the perspective of the locals by discovering what characterises their protests. Finally, in the third section, we focus on the many instances of “cross-camp” cooperation, which occurs when (at least sections of) the two groups agree on an issue and work together to influence local development.

4.1. The second home population’s protests

The material leaves no doubt about the second home population’s interest in local development issues; it also clearly shows that they are able to articulate their views. In all four study areas, the interviewees would name a large number of concrete changes taking place in the second home owners’ vicinities, of which the latter disapproved. Very often, the reported cases involved second home owners trying to prevent types of land use that they perceived would threaten their rural idyll. An archetypal example was given by a second home owner in Hol:

We got a sketch of the second homes beside our property, in the older part of the cabin village, showing what they wanted to establish, and it was the most ugly [tenement building] I have ever seen. It was tall and awful. We have no windows in that direction, but they who own the second home below ours, they got furious, and were going to protest against it. They were willing to go far to prevent it from being built. And it is not built yet, nothing has happened. (SHO/H: int. 5)

Another illustrative example is a quote from a second home owner in Oppdal, which shows that the second home owners might direct their complaints both against other second home owners and against those who attempt to concentrate the second home developments:

When our second home site came into being, there was some grumbling. Some of the already established second home owners thought that our site came too close to theirs, so the farmer had to move some of the defined plots. (SHO/O: int. 3)

Interestingly, the locals sometimes empathise with the second home population’s complaints:

There were some reactions when the new road was established, because some part of it is located within second home areas, and it was not very easy to establish that road. The second home owners had strong opinions in this case. But it is not hard to understand them, because earlier it was a peaceful area, while now there is a main road going right through their properties. (LR/F: int. 2)

A less compassionate reflection was made by a local resident in Hol, who had sold some plots for future second homes. His remark demonstrates that the views of the land, in addition to its use and literal meaning, matters to the second home owners:

They [the second home owners] have bought a quarter or a half of an acre, but they think they own the total view. They are very clear on that you cannot do anything with...what they see. (LR/H: int. 6)

Second home owners were also reported to have opposed other kinds of economic and business activities. Such opposition includes the reactions towards plans for a stone quarry, a leisure boat harbour, and light industry, respectively, to be constructed in the vicinity of the opponents. These particular cases will be further described later in the analysis section.

An important sub-category of the second home owners’ land use-related protests concerns the agricultural activities in their vicinity:

We have a neighbour with a second home close to our barn. The neighbour was very bitter last year, because I placed various kinds of agricultural equipment close to the land border, and told me to remove them. (LR/K: int. 2, husband)

Similarly, we find issues concerning other forms of disturbances in the recreational areas that the second home owners use:

I spend a lot of time in nature, and walk a lot in the woods and mountains. And I am very negative towards motorised movements in the outlying fields. Especially the way it has become now, with these four-wheeled vehicles which you may find the tracks of, far, far into the mountains. (SHO/H: int. 3)

At the time this second home owner was interviewed, he had already contacted the local Red Cross and requested them to show more respect when driving their snow mobiles up and down the hills, as he discovered that large parts of the ski tracks had become damaged due to the Red Cross’s existing practice. Leisure aviation was another kind of motorised activity that had prompted second home owners to protest:
There was raised an action in connection with the airfield over here because of changes in the concession acts. Then the second home owners engaged fiercely in this case, because there is a lot of sport activity there, like parachute jumping and sailplane driving. (LR/O: int. 3)

The second home owners in our material have also shown to be engaged in issues additional to the ones that they perceive would threaten their rural idyll, such as administration of the local infrastructure (e.g., snow clearance of parking lots/prepared ski tracks), economic issues (e.g., introduction of property taxation including vacation properties) and issues concerning unequal treatment of second home owners and local residents (e.g., hunting rights; different prices on the same products/services for different types of dwellers).

Our mapping of the issues in which second home owners engage, shows that parts of the second home population in each of the municipalities put in claims for issues that reach from their own real estate to other areas of the municipality that are normally related to the second home stay (recreation areas and arterial roads). In other words, the second home owners express opinions on issues that concern them directly, for they wish to preserve the rural idyll in their vicinity. Thus, they are not concerned about developmental issues in the municipality as such. In fact, they may even appreciate certain kinds of local development because, as noted by Villa (2012), they are dependent on the local products and services, so they are interested in a well-functioning local service industry.

Furthermore, the second home owners apparently do not have a tendency to make claims that deeply interfere with the development of rural residents’ community life with the exception of their aforementioned desire to receive the same treatment that the locals receive. They seem not to expect the community life as such to “reflect rural idyll”. Overvåg and Berg (2011) discovered the same in other Norwegian municipalities.

4.2. Locals’ protection of their rural idyll

The local residents in the present study were eager supporters of further local development in their municipalities. Many of the locals supported further second home development, while others thought that other kinds of industrial and commercial development seemed to be the most beneficial way to ensure a sustainable community. However, interestingly, the material shows that many of the second home owners’ protests are echoed by the local population. For example, rural interviewees share the scepticism towards second home developments in their own neighbourhoods. When questioned about her attitudes towards second home development, one of the local residents in Karlsøy said:

I have no problems with the second home owners’ presence, and that second homes are being built, but it should be managed in orderly conditions. And I would not have been happy if the landowner next to me decided to apply for the right to sell second home plots. However, it is not possible to get permission to sell second home plots in this area, so.... But I would not have appreciated that. (LR/K: int. 3)

Even though she is generally positive towards the second home development in her municipality, she would not be happy to see second homes in her vicinity. A local resident in Oppdal expressed a similar attitude:

I guess there are others around in the neighbourhood who are thinking of selling second home plots, but it is not easy to get permission, fortunately. I am saying “fortunately”, because to be able to walk out and pee behind the house corner (laughter), that is freedom, right? [...] And to be able to be all by myself and watch hares and roes. (LR/O: int. 1)

This local resident expressed a very positive attitude towards the second home development in his municipality of residence in principle due to the benefits for the local community. He nevertheless does not want such development to happen at the expense of his own rural idyll.

The result is that lines of conflict concerning location of new second homes do not run between the locals and the visitors, but between those selling new plots (some rural residents, some external speculators or some second home owners with large plots to divide) and those with pre-existing buildings in that area (some rural and some second home owners). Overvåg and Berg (2011) also mention this type of binary, as opposed to the binary of locals versus visitors. Oneseller of plots also acknowledged the intra-rural conflict:

When we sold the second home plots, then our neighbour, or more exactly his daughter — she is some kind of a nut — they got furious and engaged lawyers, and claimed that no one could build anything there. Because they used to stroll in that wood... (sighing indulgently). (LR/K: int. 3)

Such lines of conflict also apply to other land use issues. One of the local residents in Finnøy mentioned that second home owners had made a complaint against local plans for development of some kind of business activity close to a second home area:

Of course, they who get new second homes in the neighbour-hood, they won’t like it — just like I did not like it when the modern chicken barn was built just below my house. I thought it was very problematic, and I did not like it at all. I said to the farmer: “I beg you to build it farther away”. I thought it was much better to look down on a green field. (LR/P: int. 5)

She underlined that she thought it was great that the young neighbour found a way to continue the farm work, but she still tried to prevent his business activity from disturbing the view from her window, as she preferred the natural environment.

Similarly, locals’ protests were revealed in connection with wind farm plans in Karlsøy. One of the second home owner interviewees was asked how the local residents reacted to these plans, and this respondent confirmed that scenic views also matter to local residents:

It is divided, you know. There are various opinions about this case. They who will be affected, and get the windmills right above their roofs, they despair over this situation. While others, who live on the other side of the island and will not be affected altogether, they cannot see the problem at all. Thus, there are both for and against. (SHO/K: int. 3)

A local resident in Hol had previously resided in the municipality’s centre area. While she was there, she had been very frustrated because of all the noise from tourism-related arrangements:

When I lived in the centre area earlier, I used to feel very negatively affected by the tourism. You have chosen to live in the countryside, but in certain periods, a whole city suddenly moves in. There is music in the ski lifts all day long, and one of the few night clubs have often these arrangements with lots of music and sounds outside on the street. And if you choose to go there and join it, that is fine. But to be a part of it notwithstanding if you want to or not, that was really exhausting. (LR/H: int. 2)

She informed the interviewer that this was something many of the locals in the centre area really disliked and had expressed to the municipality’s administration.
A quote from the interview with another local resident in Hol reflects similar sentiments towards tourism development. The interviewee talked about the start-up of an extensive second home development in one of the mountain areas in his municipality at the end of the 1990s:

And then it all started. And ‘everybody’ wanted to build and sell. And I was very sceptical. My great hunting and fishing areas... I had been hunting almost all by myself, because I used those areas quite a lot. I thought it [the second home development] was way too much, frigging quite simply. (LR/H: int. 3)

Although he recognised that the municipality today is more or less dependent upon second home tourism, he was very negative towards this development on his own behalf.

One of the local residents in Oppdal, while commenting on the second home development, mentioned that he usually had no problems with new, larger second homes in the municipality, as he thought most of them were nicely built and discretely located in the terrain. He then continued, “On the other hand, what really is visible is the terrible fox sheds [belonging to a local fox farm] on the other side of the valley” (LR/O: int. 5). These fox sheds, with metallic roofs that contrast with the surrounding environments, can be observed from many hills over Oppdal valley.

Also among the locals snow mobile driving was perceived as a problem when local conduct was not followed:

We have a problem which make me cry every time I am sitting outside on the stairs; when they start with the illegal snow mobile driving. It is like hell here where we live, because they are driving through the valley here. And there are no locals who make illegal snow mobile driving. No-one! Even though most of us have one. And not children of locals either. It is grandchildren in some of the vacation homes, and the grandchildren’s friends, and some of the holiday visitors. They are driving like idiots. (LR/K: int. 2, wife)

The presented quotations concerning local residents’ attitudes and actions indicate that they also deeply appreciate “the rural idyll” and want to protect it whenever they become affected by changes to their nearby environment. As such, it is not only the second home owners who hold a “rural idyll mentality”. McIntyre and Pavlovich’s (2006) study confirms locals’ appreciation of the countryside’s idyllic qualities. Despite differences in value positions on other issues between the two parties, McIntyre and Pavlovich found that both second home owners and local residents rated the importance of nature (nature amenity and place attachment) as important to very important. In addition, Aukens’s (2010) study, conducted in American and Norwegian rural amenity areas, contains similar findings about locals’ views. Thus, even though previous research claims that rural residents are welcoming to rural development, they still appreciate the rural idyllic qualities of their surroundings and do not want such development to take place in their vicinity.

4.3. Cross-camp cooperation

The material provides these and a number of other examples of the shared attitudes and preferences for rural development among locals and second home owners. On occasion, they have also joined forces and actively cooperated to prevent local development in their shared neighbourhoods. One local resident in Karlsøy gave an example of second home owners who had received local support for their efforts to stop plans for a gravel pit and a stone quarry. They were not supported by the local community at large, but, he added, “there were also local residents protesting against these plans who lived in the same vicinity” (LR/K: int. 5). The plans were never realised.

Another example comes from one of the islands of Finnøy, where one of the second home owner interviewees (SHO/F: int. 5) described the protests against the establishment of a new leisure boat harbour that was about to be located in the littoral zone close to his second home. The plans included roughly 30 mooring spaces and a parking lot for 16 cars, so nearby residents expected lots of coming and going, boat traffic and noise pollution to accompany this harbour. The interviewee stated that those located in the vicinity had united and engaged a lawyer on this case. Although some of them were second home owners, most of them turned out to be locals. Another example of cooperation in Finnøy is the controversy over a ferry landing place that was recently up for sale. The ferry landing would become superfluous when a new tunnel providing mainland connection would be established. To make the area useful also in the future, lots of mass from the new tunnel was dumped in the ocean close to the ferry landing, to extend the land area. One of the second home owners said that there had been much discussion over who might buy this new area, and how it might be used. Thus, residents established a cooperative society so that they could afford to buy the ferry landing place in order to prevent industry from invading there:

One was afraid that it would be a storage yard for a lot of things; lots of construction machines and more unwanted industry for those living in the vicinity. And it was not the second home owners’ project – it was first and foremost initiated by the local residents. (SHO/F: int. 1)

The material reveals also other cases in which second home owners and rural residents have worked together to protect their neighbourhood. In Hol, for example, second home owners and local residents in the same village have had a common association, “Uståøset Vel”, for almost 100 years. Among other things, they were reported to have jointly protested against some of the initiated second home development in their vicinity. The association’s formalised aim is to “work for the place’s best and the place’s improvement while protecting the second home owners’ and the local residents’ interests” (Vel, 2012 [our translation]).

To summarise, the findings in this section have clearly indicated the actual congruence in second home owners’ and local residents’ interests by demonstrating that both parties have initiated cooperation when they share the same “backyards”. Such an alignment of conservative views has also been cited in Southern England (Gal lent, 2008), and was likewise reflected in a case study from a seaside resort in Ireland (Mottiar and Quinn, 2003).

It should be mentioned that while second home owners and local residents alike were negative towards new second home development in their vicinities, there may be some exceptions from this general congruence in interests when it comes to permanent housing development. While the second home owners in our material generally disliked any kind of housing development close to their own second homes, the attitudes among the local residents seemed to be less single-tracked. In one of the study areas, Karlsøy, some of the settled interviewees experienced a remarkable decline in population in their local communities, and these residents appeared to be unequivocally positive towards new permanent house building in their vicinities. This illustrates that under certain circumstances, local residents may have social needs which overshadow their desire to preserve the rural idyll outside their doorstep, or that their social needs make more neighbours compatible with what they perceive to be the rural idyll. Thus, as a differentiation of our inferences, Norwegian second home owners’ and local residents’ interests may happen to be somewhat less congruent when it comes to this particular kind of development.
5. Not in my backyard

The presented analysis suggests some important revisions to existing theories on contradictory interests between second home owners and local residents in rural areas. The latter is assumed to pursue economic viability, and the former presumably desires preservation of the rural idyll. This binary lacks adequate nuance. The present study rather reveals the similarities between the populations. We have found that second home owners are not unambiguously negative towards rural development and that the locals are far from uniformly positive regarding development (see also Rye, 2011).

On the one hand, the interviewed second home owners make their voices heard on issues that concern them directly. They generally want to preserve the rural idyll only in their vicinity. In the municipality that extends beyond the view of their plots, they are rarely engaged in developmental discussion. On the other hand, while locals are usually supportive of rural development for good reasons, they also withdraw their support for some rural developments depending on the location targeted for development. In short, locals welcome development on the condition that the development in question does not infringe the rural idyllic qualities of their vicinity. In other words, the groups are squarely united in the “Not in my backyard” line of logic. Beyond that desire, both parties are receptive to local development. As such, instead of representing one particular “human–environment relationship” each, as suggested by Müller (2002), second home owners and local residents alike seem to employ the so-called “museum-strategy” in their vicinities while accepting or supporting the more development-friendly “home-strategy” in the remaining community.

Therefore, the two parties’ interests are congruent rather than contradictory. Thus, there is little support for the claim that second home owners represent a greater obstacle to rural development due to an inherent anti-development sentiment.

Yet the contemporary literature offers numerous examples of second home owners’ forceful protests against rural development in their hosting rural municipalities, whereupon scholars interpret these observations to indicate the second home owners’ stronger resistance. In this final section of the paper, we discuss some possible explanations as to why visitors appear to advocate the rural idyll more than the locals do.

First, the very number of actors located in a geographically delimited location affects the potential for land use conflicts. Crowding a rural municipality with numerous second home developments generates more “backyards” and accompanying guardians. The second home owners who are already in place will wish to restrict further second home developments, as will the locals. On this point, both the local and existing second home populations tend to agree by exhibiting a NIMBY approach. We also expect them to act in coordination in cases where they share the same backyards. In the material, we noted several instances of the two parties allying to advocate their shared anti-development interests.

However, the spatial distribution of the permanent housing and second homes often implies that the parties’ backyards are separated by a geographical distance. This is particularly true in the Norwegian case, although it varies from place to place, as exemplified by the study areas of the present study (see Table 1). New second home developments are often located nearby other second homes. Again, these are usually located at a distance from existing local residences (Rye and Berg, 2011). The occurrence of developments (new second homes as well as a new road) initiated in separate second home areas are also reported in several of the quotes presented in Section 4.1. Thus, when second home owners protest against new developments while the locals keep quiet, this does not necessarily mean that the parties are inherently different in their development perspectives, but it may indicate that they have different backyards.

Second, the same views on rural development may be expressed in different ways in terms of their formulations, ways of communication and noise level. The visibility of second home owners’ NIMBY orientation may indicate that they are more aggressive than the locals in these regards, or it may be a result of the populations’ different channels of expression. Morris’ (1994: 12–13) distinction between “stealth” and “public” NIMBYs may be instructive in this matter:

[stealth NIMBYs are generally the affluent, the influential, and the well-placed who can keep LULUs [locally unwanted land use] out of their neighbourhoods by quietly exerting their influence behind the scenes during the decision making process. Public NIMBYs, lacking such political clout and effectively excluded from most of the decision making process, have to fight it out in the public domain.

In rural second home municipalities, the locals often have a greater number of channels and more effective channels to use in order to influence local decision making. Generally, rural municipalities have a limited amount of inhabitants, and the full-time residents are often within rather short distance to local authorities. Thus, many inhabitants know and are able to establish personal links to the political and administrative elites. In this way, local social and professional networks and general acquaintances allow for a relatively high share of stealth NIMBYs among the local residents. Note that in the present study, the selection of participants may not reflect the rural population at large in this regard. Several of the settled interviewees had been engaged in local development processes in one way or the other, and thus they may be more stealth than in other sections of the rural community. However, most locals will have better access to the decision making process than second home owners.

Most second home owners are forced to act as public NIMBYs. With the exception of some second home owners who possess especially high social capital (perhaps due to their professional networks and positions in the region), most second home owners lack any kind of advantageous link to the local authorities. The survey mentioned earlier, conducted among Norwegian mayors (Kroken et al., 2010), further indicates that local governments evaluate second home owners’ participation in local development plan processes as far less relevant than the involvement of local residents, land owners and business actors respectively. Numbers from the same survey also show that second home owners are actually involved in such processes far more seldom than the other mentioned social categories are. Thus, second home owners’ main channel of influence is to protest against concrete initiatives. Protests in the media are then relevant to second home owners, if phone calls and letters passed on to the local authorities do not bring along any positive responses. In several of the present study’s case areas, there was also observed an increased tendency among second home owners to engage lawyers in support of their causes, where such actions seldom take place unnoticed. On the contrary, the closer social ties between the local population and the local policy makers may calm the locals’ protests, as they can communicate their complaints much more smoothly.

Even though both second home owners and locals seem to employ a NIMBY way of thinking, it is also possible that local residents may need more impetus before they decide to take action. Local residents presumably have more to lose socially than second home owners do when they oppose developmental initiatives in their neighbourhood. Second home owners do not often have the
same social connection to the host community as local residents have, in the way that individuals’ closest and most important social networks first and foremost are likely to be established and maintained in their place of residence. As such, second home owners do not run the risk of making themselves unpopular in their “innermost circle” if they resist. Thus, local residents might possibly stretch themselves further before reacting. Tighter social bonds may also imply that local residents have stronger feelings of solidarity towards local development initiators, something that can make them more disposed than second home owners to accepting necessary commercial changes in their vicinity. However, these are suggestions that invite further research.

Our third and final explanation is that the rural idyll is often the only objective of the second home owners. In general, they have less interest in the rural landscapes and its communities than the locals, due to the former’s part-time, consumer-based orientation to rural locations. Some of the second home owners in the interviews claimed that they are, in general, curious about the development in their host community and that they like to keep themselves updated on what is occurring locally. However, the reported issues of objection presented in the analysis reflect the issues to which they truly ascribe significance in this matter. The second home owners’ more or less unilateral engagement in issues concerning their natural surroundings can easily make them appear as extremely rural idyll-oriented. Not least from the perspective of rural residents, this more or less single-tracked orientation of the second home owners is found to be particularly emphasised in cases where the local community hardly seems to profit by the second home tourism (Farstad, 2011). However, as we have seen, local residents’ more numerous interests in the area do generally not imply that their interests in maintaining the rural idyllic qualities of their vicinity are weaker than the second home owners’ interests in this field.

The configurations of conflict, composed of key actors, types of alliances, objects of protests and strategies employed, vary across time and space within the Norwegian context. Still, the material demonstrates that the NIMBY logic of conflicts concerning rural space is prevalent among both second home owners and locals in all of the study areas. However, it is important to recognise that our findings may depend on the national context of the study areas. This condition applies to both second home owners’ rural idyll expectations and rural residents’ valuation of their rural idyll surroundings. The contextual significance also concerns the transferability of our findings, which invites to contextual sensitivity. For example, second home owners from different countries may differ in what they consider to be their backyards. Will second home owners expect only their immediate vicinity to comply with the rural idyll, or do their expectations comprise the municipality as such? Urban second home owners in Norway rarely visit rural areas to experience a different kind of society; instead, they wish to enjoy the wildscapes, adventurescapes and farmscapes (Bell, 2009) in the rural second home localities. Moreover, locals’ valuation of their rural idyll surroundings may vary between countries depending on the reason why the locals choose to reside in the countryside. At least in the Norwegian case, the rural idyll is an important element in rural populations’ decisions not to move to the larger cities. In one national survey as many as 86% of the rural informants stated that the nature is an important reason for living in their municipality. Eighty-one percent would miss nature immensely if they were to move from the rural area where they reside (Centre for Rural Research, 2011). Rural populations in some other countries may have other kinds of relationships to their local environments. Additionally, in countries or communities with particularly fragile economies it is conceivable that residents may be easier disposed to accept that new economic opportunities are developed at the expense of the rural idyll in their “backyards”. In such cases it is reasonable to expect conflicts of interest to emerge between the local population and a more prosperous second home population with a conservative orientation.

6. Conclusions

The presented material provides a multi-faceted picture of the local and second home populations’ perspectives on rural development and rural conservation. Our findings did support some of the conclusions in the research literature subject to our criticism. There are plenty of conflicts related to rural development in the second home municipalities, and the division lines oftentimes run between local actors and the second home populations. Furthermore, we acknowledge that the locals possess stronger objective interests in rural development than the second home owners possess, for they wish to enhance the economic viability of their community. The second home owners, on their hand, have a stronger interest in preserving the natural amenities than to maintain other qualities of the rural community. Nevertheless, the present analysis demonstrates that the relationship between the two populations’ interests is of another character than previously theorised in the second home literature brought into focus here. In short, the parallels between the local and second home populations are just as influential as their differences.

Most importantly, we suggest a re-conceptualisation of the previously dichotomous understanding of rural development versus rural preservation perspectives as well as of the presence of these perspectives in the local and second home populations, respectively. At least, this theoretical polarisation does not seem to be valid in the Norwegian context. Second home owners are by and large not reluctant towards rural development, and local residents do not seek rural development as eagerly as often presented. To the contrary, we found that they are squarely united in their NIMBY line of argument. We found that both the local and the second home populations are receptive to rural development initiatives, but only when the development does not take place in their vicinity or other areas that they are using regularly. As formulated by Morris (1994: 13), “[e]verybody is a NIMBY, and no-one wants a LULU [(locally undesirable land use)]”. As such, second home owners and locals in rural areas are united in their wish for a rural idyll in their own backyards.

We argue that three social processes may explain the general assumption of second home owners’ stronger contestations of rural development processes in rural communities. First, a disproportional number of development initiatives are located at distance to the permanent population but in the very backyards of the second home owners, thus predominately activating the latter’s NIMBY protests. Second, while united in their NIMBY disapproval of rural change, the local and second home populations differ in their available channels of protestations (“public” versus “stealth” NIMBY-ism). Third, the rural idyll is often virtually the only goal that second home owners pursue, as they have more limited interests in the rural landscapes and its communities due to their part-time, consumer-based orientation to rural locations.

As a final point, we would like to emphasise the importance of taking local and national contexts into account in analyses of the relationship between the local and the second home populations. Even though one could expect variants of the NIMBY logic to appear in most rural communities, perspectives on the backyards’ extension, preferred content in the backyards, and the perceived importance of protecting idyllic backyards compared to other vital needs may differ due to different contexts. Notwithstanding, this paper exposes and criticises commonly advanced misconceptions about development versus conservation-based conflicts in rural
second home areas. Our findings demonstrate the importance of taking both the direction and intensity of attitudes and the spatial areas of significance to the attitudes into consideration before concluding on the existence of contradictory land use interests.

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