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The local non-locals: Second home owners associational engagement in Sweden

Abstract

The impact of second home tourism in local destinations has been on the research agenda for some time now and can be considered as one of the eternal question in second home tourism research. In available literature it is often argued that second home owners do not contribute in any significant way to a positive local development at the destinations. On the other hand, there are studies arguing that second home owners do contribute to local development and offer one of few opportunities for many rural and peripheral areas. This study aims at contributing to this debate by exploring in what way second home owners engage in local associations at second home destinations in Sweden. Questions addressed relate to second home owners engagement, type of associations they engage in and utilization of second homes. The data used is retrieved from a nation-wide questionnaire survey to 4 000 randomly selected second home owners in Sweden during 2009. Results show that second home owners actively engage in the associational life at the destinations and is to be considered as a potential for local development rather than a problem for places that otherwise would have limited options.

Key words: temporal mobility; second homes; rural development; associations; Sweden

Introduction

Second homes are an important target for people seeking recreation and relaxation in today's modern society and the scale of ownership has increased enormously in the last decades (Hall & Müller, 2004). For some locations, the growth of the phenomena during the 20th century has resulted in significant local impacts. This, in turn, has led to a debate whether or not second home owners contribute to local development. This question has been around for some time, but the spot light was definitely put on the issue in the late 1970s. Since then, second home tourism research has put much focus on analyzing local impacts from a range of different perspectives (Marjavaara, 2008).

Second home tourism has frequently been described as leading to negative or at least to only minor positive impacts for local communities (Gallent, Shucksmith & Tewdwr-Jones, 2003). Often, the temporal presence of the owners is argued to cause seasonally "dead" societies (Glesbygdverket, 2001). Second home owners are also argued to occupy houses that would otherwise be in use by permanent residents, and would contribute to a living rural countryside on a year-round basis (Jordan, 1980).

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Further, they are also accused not to contribute to the local development, but rather live in isolation from the local society and, hence, exploiting only the best of what the destination has to offer (Barke & France, 1988; Blomqvist & Jaatinen, 1977).

Others have argued that second home tourism is one of few remaining options for rural and peripheral areas, suffering from the restructuring of the rural economy, leading to outmigration and population decline (Shucksmith, 1983; Nordin, 1994; Müller, 2004; Selwood & Tonts 2004; Marjavaara, 2007a, 2007b; Marjavaara & Müller, 2007). The argument is that second home owners bring increased consumption to these areas, which may be of importance for maintaining local services (Nordin, 1994; Müller, 1999). It is also argued that it is better to have a few individuals temporally present than no one at all, which in many cases is the alternative for rural and peripheral places (Marjavaara, 2008).

In summary, previous research on second home tourism impacts can be sub-divided into areas relating to environmental, economical and social impacts. Specific themes addressed are service provision, housing availability, local democracy, local culture and customs etc. However, it is still rather unknown in what way second home owners actually engage in local initiatives such as local associational life. Hypothetically, the temporally present second home owners can contribute to local development by their engagement in local associations, especially those associations which has a purpose of community development like dealing with business development, supporting local service provision such as grocery stores or associations which are involved in developing local events. Although the importance of associations for the entrepreneurship is not unambiguous, there are reasons to believe that the partnerships into local associations may be an important breeding ground not only for achieving the objectives of the associations but also to build network that can be used for other purposes such as to stimulate social and economic development (Lithander, 2003; Putnam, Leonardi & Nanetti, 1993). Hence, the purpose of this paper is to examine if and in what way second home owners engage in local associations at second home destinations in Sweden. Specific research questions addressed are: 1. Do second home owners engage in local associations at the second home destination at all? 2. What type of associations is important for second home owner's engagement? 3. What characterises second home owners that are members of local associations? 4. What is the possible outcome of second home owner's associational engagement?

The structure of this paper is as follows. First, a conceptual framework is presented, grounded in theories concerning second home tourism impacts at destinations alongside with a short introduction to second homes in Sweden. Second, the applied method and data sources are outlined and explained. The empirical questions are addressed in the third section. Finally, a discussion and conclusion is presented.

Second home tourism and impact studies

Impacts generated by second home tourism in different destinations and in different national contexts have been a focus for researchers within the field for some time now. Already in the 1930s, Ljungdahl (1938) studied the impact of second homes in the amenity rich archipelago of Stockholm, Sweden, focusing on social and economical impacts. However, Coppock's book "Second Homes – Curse or Blessing?" (1977) was the first major work within the field, gathered in-depth case studies from all over the world and the book paved the way for more frequent and detailed studies.

As for other areas of tourism studies in social sciences, second home tourism impacts can be divided into three major sub-sections: *economical impacts*, *environmental impacts* and *social and cultural impacts*. The sections most related to the research questions in this paper is *economical impacts* and *social and cultural impacts*. As for economical impacts, previous studies has analysed the role of second homes in rural and/or peripheral areas, since most of the second homes are located there. Newby (1988) argues that the emerging tourism sector in rural areas is becoming so important for local economies and can be viewed as an "alternative crop", totally replacing or complementing traditional sectors of the economy. Similar arguments are raised by Leppänen (2003) who reports that second home tourism in Finland is one of the most important sectors in the development of rural areas, generating the necessary income needed to sustain local services. Hence, second homes are to be regarded as a vital injection to a generally declining rural economy. Other issues concerning economical impacts is the debate concerning local price inflation on dwellings and products, fuelled by external demand for recreational properties (Green, Marcouiller, Deller, Erkkila & Sumathi, 1996; Marjavaara, 2008; Solana-Solana, 2010), the issue of taxing visitors at second home destinations (Frost & Lawrence, 2006), income generations from tourism compared to traditional rural sectors of the economy (Nordin, 1994; Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2011), spending patterns by tourists (Bohlin, 1982; Jansson & Müller, 2003), impact on local retailing (Müller, 1999) and so on. Far from all see the positive benefits from second home tourism, arguing that second home tourism is more of a curse than a blessing (e.g. Casado-Diaz, 1999; Wall & Mathieson, 2006).

As for social and cultural impacts, research focus on change caused by the presence and influence of second home owners on local customs, values and social life. For other types of impacts, the research community has many different opinions upon this. First, one can note that several researchers highlight the negative impacts caused by second home tourism. For instance, Jordan (1980) argues that second home owners are responsible for importing a "fake culture" to rural destinations. This culture represents urban values and lifestyles, which are temporally exported to an environment with more traditional norms and values, leading to potential conflict. It is also argued by Jaakson (1986) that second home owners tend to want to prevent further development in their "seasonal sanctuary" leading to further conflicts with the local community who might want to exploit or develop local resources in order to sustain jobs. Second home owners are also frequently possessing higher education and higher income than the local population, meaning that they have the resources and the skills to affect decision making to a higher degree than the locals. However, in most cases second home owners are excluded from local decision making due to their permanent residence being elsewhere, leading to further conflict potential relating to, for example, development plans (Green et al., 1996). Another issue of social and cultural concern is the lack of interaction between second home owners and permanent residents. In a study by Finnveden (1960), it is reported that individuals tend to buy second homes in areas where their neighbours, relatives or friends already have second homes. Hence, new second home owners already have established relations at the destination, leading to lower interaction potential between second home owners and the local population. This might in turn enhance conflict potentials. Aldskogius (1968, 1969) reported similar results when he concluded that personal bonds seemed to explain some of the spatial patterns of second home purchase. From Canada, Wolfe (1951) stated that different ethnic groups tend to cluster in the second home landscapes, leading to segregation also during leisure time. As for the case of Spain, Barke and France (1988) conclude that foreign second home owners tend

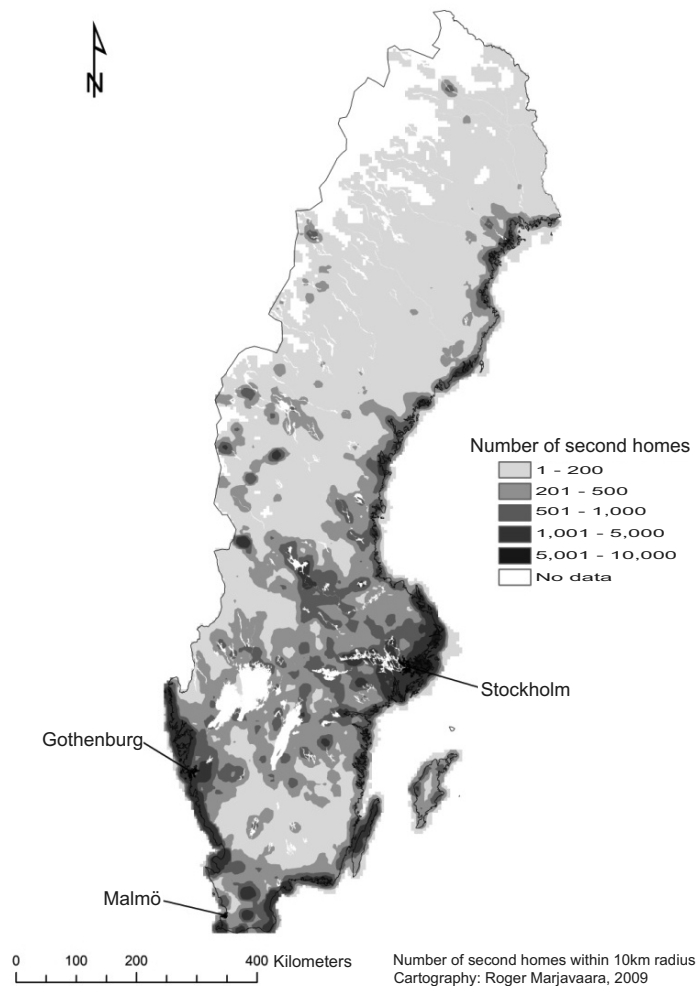
to group in seaside resorts whereas the native population prefer their second home in the interior of the country. The spatial segregation of second home owners and local inhabitants and, hence, lack of communication, further boosts the potential for misunderstanding and conflicts, creating a clear divide and a sense of "us and them" arises. On the other hand, positive impacts of second home tourism do occur but it is often the conflicts and negative impacts that get the attention from media and set the research agenda. Flognfeldt (2002) and Leppänen (2003) argue that second home owners can be seen as "centers of competence" or "knowledge blocks" for local destinations and if used the right way can lead to business opportunities and improved innovation capabilities for local firms. The key question is how to persuade a non-local second home owner to become a local patriot and how to engage the local population in this interaction?

Hence, in order to prevent and minimize conflicts it is important that locals and second home owners meet and interact and, if this interaction is to be a positive force in the development of local destinations, it is important that people gather for a joint cause. This cause can be formalized in the shape of an association with a purpose of existence. In previous research, engagement in local associations by second home owners have not been addressed and we argue that a nation-wide study regarding participation in associational life is important in order to assess the potential in second home owners as temporal "knowledge blocks" relevant for entrepreneurial local activity and further for local and regional development (Johannisson & Nilsson, 1989). One might suspect that conflicts are more atypical rather than typical, due to previous studies being focused on particular cases, hence not giving a just view of the problem on an aggregate national level. Therefore, this paper focuses on investigating exposing in what way second home owners participate in associational life at destinations in Sweden.

Second homes in Sweden

Temporal residence in privately owned second homes is common in the Nordic countries (Hall, Müller & Saarinen, 2009) but it is also found in other parts of the world. The phenomenon has a long history in Sweden and is part of the common heritage. Currently, second home tourism accounts for a significant part of all overnight stays and there are around 470.000 second homes in Sweden, which mean 19 individuals on every second home (Müller, 2007). Further, 54% of all Swedes have access to a second home (Statistics Sweden, 2011), meaning that compared to other countries, second home tourism is far from an elite phenomena. Second homes are located mainly in close proximity to urban agglomerations, along the Swedish coast line, close to lakes and rivers, in attractive ski resorts and in rural and peripheral areas suffering from outmigration and population decline with a high supply of available dwellings (Figure 1) (Marjavaara & Müller, 2007; Nordin, 1993). Most second homes are not a result of conversion of permanent dwellings into second homes. Instead, second homes are mostly purpose-built (Müller, Hall & Keen, 2004). Accordingly, most second homes are located in the outskirts of metropolitan areas and in popular tourism destinations.

Figure 1
Spatial diffusion of second homes in Sweden, 2005
 (Number of second homes within 10km radius)



Source: ASTRID, 2009.

According to Müller, Nordin and Marjavaara (2010), second home ownership in Sweden is motivated as a way to come close to nature and to be together with the family. The movement pattern of the second home owners is similar to that of the commuter. He or she moves regularly, even if not as frequently as the day-commuter, between the permanent residence and the second home. Further, many second home owners have an emotional attachment to the second home destination, often filled with positive childhood memories (Genrup & Nordin, 1977).

Method and sources

Data on associational engagement is hard to obtain because they are not registered in any official statistics. However, most municipalities keep track on associations for the purpose of giving economical assistance to them. Data used in this study is gathered from a questionnaire survey targeting a random

sample of 4.000 second home owners in Sweden, conducted during the summer and fall of 2009. The survey was conducted in collaboration with Statistics Sweden, who was in charge of administration duties. The sample was representative in terms of the owners' age, sex, country of birth, citizenship, marital status, income and permanent place of residence. A total of 2,290 questionnaires was returned, which equals to a response rate of 57.3 %. The non-response was higher for owners in the age span of 25-29 years. However, this group is not well represented in the random sample due to the relatively low ownership rate and, therefore, the response rate across different age categories matches the sample rather well and the problem is regarded as minor.

The questionnaire consisted of 37, mainly standardized questions with given alternatives. First, a section with background questions was addressed, followed by a section on ownership, utilization and the surroundings of the second home. Thereafter, sections on motives for second home ownership and participation in the local community followed. Finally, a section on the importance of the second home completed the questionnaire. Regarding associational participation, questions included membership in local associations, type of associations, level of engagement, desire to be member of any particular association, participation in local initiatives, contacts with other second home owners and/or local population and opinions regarding establishing new contacts in the destination. In the questionnaire, the respondents could choose from several association type:

- *Common land associations* – associations based on the collective ownership or use of common recourses which require continuous supervision and maintenance. Examples are: common land, roads or jetties.
- *Heritage associations* (in Swedish: *Hembygdsförening* - *literally home district association*). The purpose is to care for the local historical heritage. Many heritage associations have changed their focus from historical heritage to local development issues (Eskilsson, 2008).
- *Village associations* – have their origin in an era when the countryside was dominated by villages. The village was the smallest building block in the territorial organization of Sweden. The enclosure reforms in the early nineteenth century caused the influence of the village and village community to decline. Many village associations experienced a revival with the de-population of the countryside and smaller localities (Herlitz, 2000).
- *Trade and business associations* – organized meeting places for firm owners and entrepreneurs. Most small and family owned companies in rural areas are part of a local trade and business association (Vogel, Amnå, Munck & Häll, 2003). By tradition they are locally rooted, can be general or thematically organized and have a purpose to develop local business life.
- *Sports association* – these might be tennis clubs, sailing clubs or a football team. However, sports associations are frequently engaged in arranging local events such as concerts, dances or other festivities that are important meeting places for local inhabitants as well as for second home owners or visitors.
- *Economic association* – the aim is to promote its members economical interests trough economical activities. In rural areas, many local grocery stores are run by economical associations, but it can also be other common interest services such as preschools.
- *Local religious association* – centred on particular religious beliefs. Examples are engagement in local church activities such as a choir or arranging summer camps for children.
- *Hunting and fishing association* – typically focus on issues relating to hunting and fishing as a form

of recreation. They are often engaged in developing fishing trails and building infrastructure such as barbecue facilities in the outdoors. They are also the centre of the important annual moose hunt in Sweden.

- *Local environmental group* – aims at environmental issue important in the local context. It might be issues relating to fishing, hunting, local development projects such as building new roads.
- *Other associations* – here we find housing co-operatives, water rights associations, shooting clubs, art and culture associations and broadband associations. Some associations organize annual events such as the celebration of Midsummer or the (seasonal) eating of crayfish or fermented Baltic herring. There are also associations linked to some specific local events.

Results

On an aggregate level, the result show that second home owners are to large extent members of local associations at the destinations. 62.2 % or 1,350 respondents state that they are members of one or several local associations.

In Table 1, second home owner's engagements in different types of local associations are listed. The option for the respondents was to list their level of engagement on a scale from 1 to 5, and also state if they are board members or not. Here it is evident that the type of association that engage the highest share is Common land associations, where a total of 48.1% of the respondents are members. A relatively large part is also engaged as board members (6.7%), a higher level of engagement than ordinary members. The average level of engagement, besides board members, is 2.2. The result is not that surprising because where common resources or infrastructure is shared between property owners, the individuals who own or buy properties in the location, automatically becomes members of that particular association. This type of association accommodates the bulk of the members in local associations.

Table 1
Second home owner's engagement in different local associations in Sweden

| Type of association | Non-response | Not member | Member | Board member | Avg. level of engagement |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Heritage associations | 1,248 (54.5%) | 822 (35.8%) | 214 (9.3%) | 9 (0.4%) | 1.7 |
| Common land associations | 950 (39.7%) | 291 (12.2%) | 990 (41.4%) | 159 (6.7%) | 2.2 |
| Neighbourhood councils | 1,259 (55.0%) | 862 (37.6%) | 158 (6.9%) | 11 (0.5%) | 2.1 |
| Sports association | 1,281 (55.9%) | 887 (38.7%) | 117 (5.1%) | 11 (0.5%) | 2.5 |
| Economic association | 1,297 (56.4%) | 923 (40.2%) | 69 (3.0%) | 10 (0.4%) | 1.9 |
| Trade and business associations | 1,308 (57.1%) | 968 (42.3%) | 14 (0.6%) | - | 2.1 |
| Local religious association | 1,306 (57.1%) | 958 (41.8%) | 24 (1.0%) | 1 (0.0%) | 2.3 |
| Hunting and fishing association | 1,269 (55.2%) | 889 (38.7%) | 126 (5.5%) | 14 (0.6%) | 2.5 |
| Local environmental group | 1,318 (57.6%) | 950 (41.4%) | 22 (1.0%) | 2 (0.0%) | 2.0 |
| Other associations* | 4,252 (92.4%) | 224 (4.9%) | 97 (2.1%) | 26 (0.6%) | 2.5 |

* Respondents had the opportunity to state two other types of associations

Besides Common land associations, Heritage associations, Neighbourhood councils, Sports association, and Hunting and fishing association attract second home owners as members. However, in general the engagement in other associations besides Common land associations is scant. On the other hand, the non-response rates among these questions are high, and for all associations a minority state that they are not members, implying that there might be some hidden statistics in the non-response group. The highest level of engagement, besides board members, is registered for Sports associations, Hunting and fishing associations and Other associations. Examples of Other associations are Boating or sailing associations, Pier or jetty associations and also Snow mobile associations and Ornithological associations.

Looking at the members of local associations and comparing different background variables with non-members, one can note that both educational level and income levels are higher among members of local associations compared to non-members (table 2).

Table 2
Education level and household income level among second home owners who are members and non-members in local associations in Sweden

| Educational level | Income level (SEK*) | | Member % | Non-member % | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|-------|
| | Member % | Non-member % | | | |
| Compulsory school, < 9 yrs. | 10.5 | 15.4 | < 200,000 | 5.2 | 9.0 |
| Compulsory school, > 9 yrs. | 7.7 | 10.4 | 200,001 - 300,000 | 11.3 | 12.8 |
| High school, 2 yrs. | 10.3 | 11.8 | 300,001 - 400,000 | 14.6 | 19.3 |
| High school, 3 yrs. | 11.5 | 12.4 | 400,001 - 500,000 | 14.5 | 13.3 |
| Post-secondary, < 3 yrs. | 18.7 | 15.6 | 500,001 - 600,000 | 14.0 | 11.1 |
| Post-secondary, 3 yrs. or more | 37.7 | 31.3 | 600,001 - 700,000 | 12.0 | 12.3 |
| Postgraduate | 3.7 | 3.1 | 700,001 - 800,000 | 9.0 | 9.4 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | > 800,001 | 19.4 | 12.8 |
| | | | Total | 100.0 | 100.0 |

* 1 SEK = 0.11 EUR or 0.14 USD on 2012-01-04.

For example, 60.1% of the second home owners who are members have a post-secondary or post-graduate level of education, while from non-members the rate is 50.0%. Regarding income levels, members have a higher share of households in the upper income levels. 19.4% of the members have a household income that exceeds 800 000 SEK per year, which is 6.6 percentage points higher than for non-members. Hence, engagement in local associations among second home owners is to some extent a matter of social-economic strengths and influence.

In order to evaluate the contribution to local destinations it is interesting to see if second home owners who are associational members have a higher attachment to the local destination. This can be measured through the utilization of the second home. The duration of stay is important for local engagement in associations because engagement is based on trust and trust is built over time. Hence, long duration of stay is fundamental for engagement in local associations. In table 3, the duration of stay during the peak summer months (June to August) are displayed for both members and non-members. Here, it is apparent that second home owners who are members do utilize their second home more extensively than non-members. Of the second home owners who stay practically the whole summer in their second

home (81-90 days), 64% of are members of a local association. Owners who do not utilize their second home at all during this period (0 days), have a lower membership rate.

Table 3
Second home owner's utilization of their second home during summer season and associational engagement

| Number of overnight stays | Members % | Non-members % | Total % |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------------|---------|
| 0 | 45 | 55 | 100 |
| 1-10 | 53 | 47 | 100 |
| 11-20 | 56 | 44 | 100 |
| 21-30 | 68 | 32 | 100 |
| 31-40 | 67 | 33 | 100 |
| 41-50 | 62 | 38 | 100 |
| 51-60 | 72 | 28 | 100 |
| 61-70 | 71 | 29 | 100 |
| 71-80 | 77 | 23 | 100 |
| 81-90 | 64 | 36 | 100 |

Discussion and conclusions

Based on the results from this study some general conclusions can be drawn. First, second home owners in Sweden do engage in local associational life to a large extent and hence, do care about local development at the destination. Even though the most common member is in Common land associations, which property owners must be part of if common infrastructure or other resources are shared, second home owners are involved in local decision making and are hence a stakeholder on equal grounds with permanent residents, which is not the case when coming to participation rights in local elections. Therefore, participation in local associational life among locals and second home owners is important from a democratic perspective and as potential way to minimize conflict potential at the destination. Besides Common land associations, second home owners tend to engage in Heritage associations, which often has the purpose to cater for the preservation of local heritage, but also community development through arranging events and festivities, which are vital meeting places for locals and non-locals. Also Hunting and fishing association and also Village associations attract members among second home owners, which are important meeting places between the groups during the traditional and culturally important annual moose hunt in Sweden. This is the time when people gather in the countryside and for many rural locations this is the major annual event and an important venue for both locals and non-locals. Consequently, the notion that second home owners only utilize the local destination as merely a place for their vacation and do not want to participate in local associational life must be questioned, at least in Sweden.

Second, the study also confirms that members of local associations tend to be more socio-economically influential than non-members, showing higher educational level and higher household income. This

is important for destinations because the second home owner's competence and engagement can be utilized locally and adds to the knowledge capital at the destination, however on a temporal basis. Associations probably require members with a commitment to the aim of the association, but also to a generic knowledge and experience in writing and speech, meaning that associations will benefit from members with high education level, but also probably from relatively high age (Vogel et al., 2003). Further, members of local associations tend to utilize their second home more frequently, at least during the peak season and hence, do have a higher local impact in terms of local consumption, but also in terms potential interaction with local inhabitants, leading to increasing trust between the groups and creating a population group which can be considered as semi-permanent, or non-local locals. Therefore, local associations should try to include this group as members and try to make the best out of the fact that this group is loyal to the destination, compared to many other tourist destinations which are merely places for once in a lifetime visit.

One conclusion of this study is that second home owners do contribute to the development of an associational life that perhaps otherwise would not be possible if it only was up to permanent residents. Examples can be yacht clubs, tennis clubs or other types of local development associations which can contribute to make the year round life possible. Second home owners regularly move between places and many use their second home for long periods, not only during the summer months. For many, the second home destination is a place for social contacts to a higher degree than their every-day environment, meaning that temporal living can activate a local associational life. Going back to Coppock's (1977) question whether or not second homes are a curse or blessing for local communities, we conclude that second home tourism at least can be seen as a viable alternative for many small and fragile communities located in the periphery. Communities which today do not have many options for future developments, but who at least are attractive for a period of time during the year, compared to many other locations that cannot attract visitors or residents at all. In the light of this, local authorities and planners should encourage the development of second homes instead of seeing the phenomena as a nuisance or a problem. Second home owners can contribute to local development and should instead be seen as a temporal competence block (Flognfeldt, 2002) which can be beneficial if they are engaged in the destination development. In the light of a decreasing involvement from the state, in local and regional development, it seems to be important to increase the mobilization of local resources. This is particularly evident in marginalized rural areas. Local mobilization can be enhanced by increasing temporal mobility, or second home tourism, and can be an important component for local development and minimizing the risk for further marginalization. This can be done by forming associations, an accepted and reasonably efficient way of getting things done. In this connection, second home living probably plays an important role through a combination of continuity, resource strength, innovative thinking and emotional attachment to place. Hence, the key question for destinations is how to turn a second home owner into a local patriot?

This is an explorative study into linking temporal and permanent residents to local development analysis. In future research, it would be beneficial to focus on the meaning of these associations in more detail. This can be done by studying formal documents such as statutes and meeting protocols, who show how the associations work. This should also be related to how local destinations have developed, for instance with respect to population and businesses. Is there a positive relationship between associational activity and local development, and what is the role of temporal mobility in that relationship?

Are the preconditions for development in rural areas a combination of tradition and innovation? If so, is temporal mobility a messenger of news a necessary, although not sufficient, ingredient for the development of the destination?

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