

Gijsbert Hoogendoorn / Andreas Back

# Snowballing in 35°C: an inquiry into second-home tourism in Mozambique

## Abstract

Increased mobility has played an important role in promoting and developing tourism as a global phenomenon. One result since the late 1990s has been the development of the well-researched second-home tourism phenomenon in the Global North. Fewer studies on second-home tourism have been carried out in the Global South, especially in the least developed countries (LDCs). The difficulty of collecting reliable data in LDCs is presented as a key contributing factor to the lack of studies. Whereas researchers in, for example, the Nordic countries have access to comprehensive public registries of second homes enabling large-scale data-driven research, studying this phenomenon in data-poor contexts requires appropriate fieldwork methods and strategies. The following research note discusses snowballing and participant observation methods employed in fieldwork on second-home tourism in two small coastal Mozambican towns. It concludes with a brief discussion on the findings and the prospects for future research in historically and socio-economically comparable locations.

**Key words:** second homes; tourism; snowball sampling; Mozambique

## Snowballing in 35°C

Second homes are well-researched in many countries in the Global North (Müller & Hoogendoorn, 2013), with special emphasis on cross-border second home ownership in a variety of localities (see Hannonen, Tuulentie & Pitkänen, 2015; Müller, 1999). Second homes have also seen some investigation in countries outside of the Global North such as South Africa (Visser & Hoogendoorn, 2015) and China (Huang & Yi, 2011). This has been accompanied by limited exploration of cross-border or international second home ownership. There has however been very little research made on second-home tourism and its social, environmental and economic impacts in least developed countries (LDCs). In this research note we therefore want to highlight a future research agenda on second-home tourism in countries on the lowest rungs of the global economy and discuss possible methods that can be employed for such research. The case studied is Mozambique in southern Africa

Mozambique is an LDC that gained independence from the Portuguese colonial yoke. This struggle was followed by a brutal civil war between the previously Marxist-Leninist *Frelimo* and pro-capitalist *Renamo* that ended in 1992. Although occasional conflicts have broken out as recently as 2013, Mozambique is now relatively stable both socially and politically. Although there has been steady economic growth since 1992, Mozambique remains one of the world's poorest countries in terms of GDP per capita (World Bank, 2019a; 2019b).

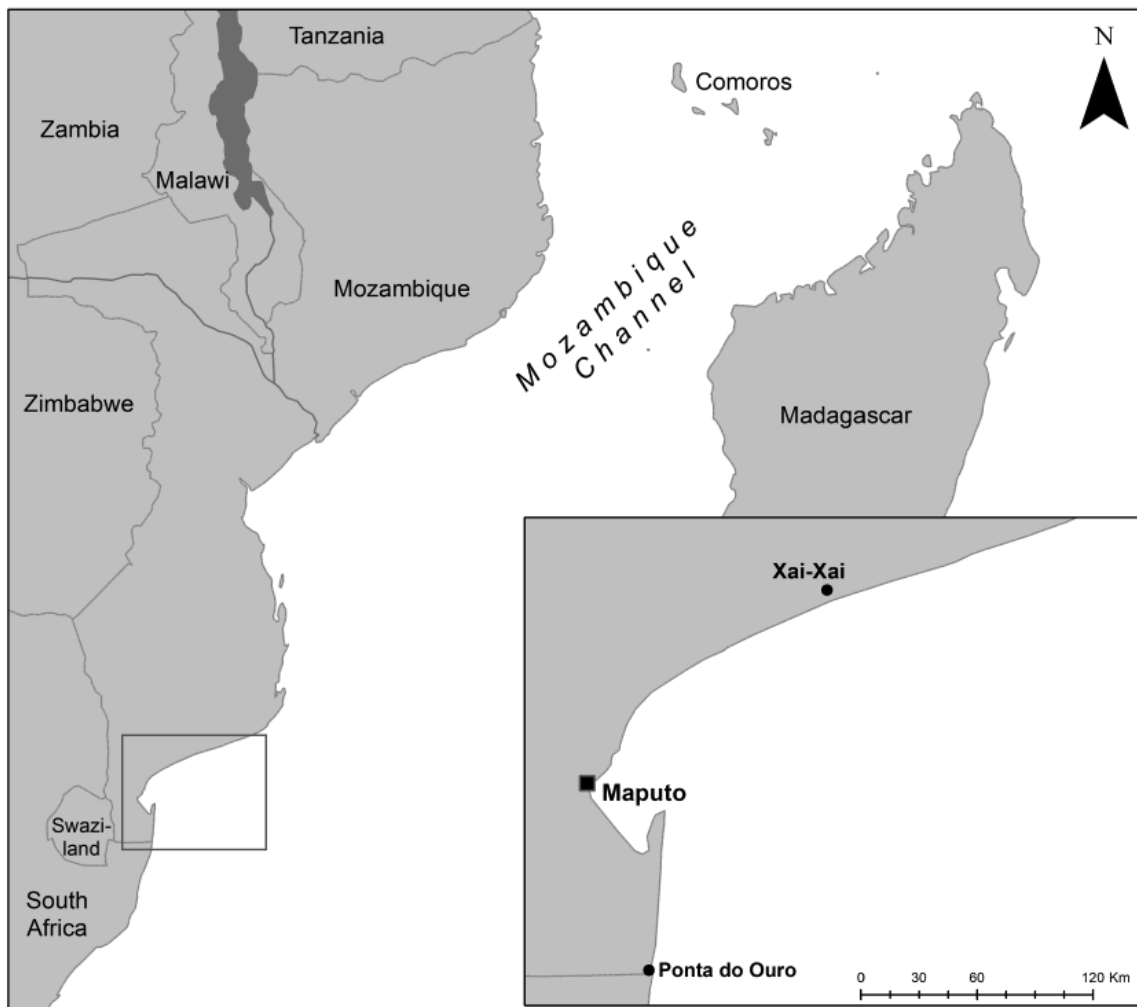
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The current economic climate makes Mozambique ripe for investments in tourism development and international second-home ownership. This is certainly the case for South African developers wanting to explore alternate investment opportunities away from the struggling South African economy (Statistics South Africa, 2018). Apart from South Africa, other major sources for foreign direct investment (FDI) are Brazil, Portugal, Mauritius, the Netherlands and China (Amanor & Chichava, 2016; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2012). With increasing investments with regard to transport, energy and road infrastructure, Mozambique is well-suited to rapidly develop and internationalise its tourism industry.

Figure 1  
**Map of Mozambique with fieldwork locations, namely Ponta do Ouro and Xai-Xai**



The background to this research note is exploratory fieldwork done in Ponta do Ouro in Maputo Province and Praia do Xai-Xai (beach area just outside the city of Xai-Xai) in Gaza Province. Both of these locations are in southern Mozambique (see Figure 1). Ponta do Ouro borders South Africa, specifically its north eastern province KwaZulu Natal, while Xai-Xai is located 220 km north of the capital Maputo. Both towns are tourism destinations, but are visibly different in the degree of maturity, development,

number of tourists, shopping opportunities and activities offered. At the time of this fieldwork (March 2019), Ponta do Ouro was bustling with businesses and tourist activity such as marine-based tourism and leisure in line with the findings of Daly, Fraser and Snowball (2015). This is very different from tranquil Praia do Xai-Xai which was observed by Kiambo (2005) to offer 'sun, sea and sand' tourism. Since quantitative data on second-home tourism at these locations was not available to our knowledge, snowballing and participant observation studies were used to gather information on second-home tourism. These techniques have also commonly been used in second-home tourism studies in South Africa (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2012). This required communication with local tourism businesses, real estate agents, hawkers, waiters and tourists, and was summarised in field notes. Photographs were also taken and brochures on second home property sales were collected.

Figure 2  
Second homes in Ponta do Ouro



Firstly, Ponta do Ouro with its close proximity to Gauteng and Kwazulu-Natal provinces of South Africa was observed to have a predominance of South African tourists. South African cities such as Nelspruit and Durban are located within a 4–5 hour drive. Conversations held with tourism workers and entrepreneurs at this destination revealed local awareness about factors influencing seasonality, for example dates for South African school holidays. A tourism entrepreneur also pointed out that recent investment in connecting roads and the Maputo-Katembe Bridge has made Ponta do Ouro more accessible to an increasing number of foreign citizens living in the capital city of Maputo. Second-home developments such as in Figure 2 were observed along the coast from Ponta do Ouro to neighbouring village Ponta Malongane. These were advertised by South African and Mozambican real-estate companies (see Figure 3). According to discussions with informants and material collected from a local

real-estate agent, investments have been relatively large-scale and made primarily by South African-owned companies encouraging South African second home ownership. These fall into the categories of either being exclusively owned or timeshare second homes (Pitkänen & Vepsäläinen, 2008). Examples of timeshares were advertised for R495,000 (\$1 = R14.07 at time of writing) and exclusive ownership second homes starting from R650,000. These figures are significantly cheaper than second homes in South Africa (Visser & Hoogendoorn, 2015) and may be particularly attractive of overseas investors.

Figure 3  
Advertisement for second-home development in Ponta do Ouro



In Praia do Xai-Xai, the situation is quite different in that the tourist area is located a few kilometres from the town centre. Few businesses were seen during the site visit apart from some restaurants, a handful of hawkers selling seafood and a single souvenir shop. However, a number of tourists were visible on the beaches. Small resorts also dot the coastline. Information from locals suggested that the majority of tourists and tourism entrepreneurs were South Africans, although other nationalities, such as Germans, were mentioned as well. Second-home developments are underway although at a fairly low level.

Based on observations made during the fieldwork, it is clear that investments into second-home tourism were being made in Ponta do Ouro, and to a lesser extent in Praia do Xai-Xai.

Figure 4  
Entrance to beach resorts in Praia do Xai-Xai



## Discussion

Given the diverse nature of second-home tourism in different geographical localities and varying socio-economic situations around the globe, it is our view that research on this phenomenon should be representative of this variety (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2015). Our argument is that there is a range of theoretical and empirical opportunities for future research to gauge the real social, economic and environmental impact of international or cross-border second home ownership in LDCs, which would be arguably quite different to countries such as Sweden and South Africa where there are middle- and high-income countries.

Detailed and regularly-updated tourism statistics in Mozambique are difficult to come by, but it is our view that the second-home tourism already existing in the country is due to expand in the foreseeable future. This lack of quantitative data means that researching second-home tourism in this and comparable contexts comes with certain methodological challenges. In this fieldwork we used a range of techniques to paint a picture of second-home tourism in the study locations. It is our view that this investigative approach using such techniques as interviews, casual conversations, photography and printed material was fruitful in laying groundwork for future research. These methods can be used for exploratory or more in-depth work here or elsewhere in the future.

Since all land in the country is owned by the state, property developments in Mozambique are on land leased by the state (Fairbairn, 2013). While the intricacies of Mozambican land laws and its policy environment have not been explored for this research note, it suffices to mention that legislation does

not permit foreign citizens to own properties. This reality inhibits the potential of cross-border second home ownership. Mozambican law does, however, give dispensation to foreign companies or foreign citizens that have resided for at least five years in the country (Unruh, 2005). This is a probable explanation for the prominence of large scale second-home developments made by South African real-estate companies as observed in Ponta do Ouro. Apart from Ponta do Ouro and Praia do Xai-Xai, places for future second home and tourism development could be coastal towns such as Vilanculos, Inhambane and Pemba. However, the environmental and social impacts of ribbon development which could ensue along the coast would also need to be carefully considered. It could also be queried whether second-home ownership is a forward for Mozambican economic development. This is particularly the case if neoliberal economic reform is prioritised in this formerly anti-capitalist state; Mozambican authorities will need to consider how they can transfer maximum entrepreneurial benefits to local economies from second-home ownership.

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