

How many homes do we need? A theoretical framing of an unsustainable development of the Norwegian second home phenomenon.

This paper will address a theoretical conceptualisation of one of the clearest symbols of the North's wealth and picture on unsustainable economic growth: the second home. This paper uses the case of Norwegians' second homes to discuss the mechanisms that lead to an unsustainable development. Much research has been conducted on second homes in Norway and many researchers have focused on the impacts which second home development has on the local environment (Skjeggedal et al., 2009, Kaltenborn et al., 2007, Arnesen and Ericsson, 2013), social issues (Overvåg, 2009, Farstad and Rye, 2013) and local economic prosperity (Ericsson et al., 2010, Overvåg, 2010). Generally this research has been empirically based and often implies a view of development as a positive potential for rural communities. However the Norwegian second home phenomenon has changed drastically especially in the last 20 years without changing policy and planning measures, which put great pressure on the environment and social issues (Gansmo et al., 2011).

Thus there is a lack of theoretical knowledge in relation to how to conceptualise a 'sustainable development' of second homes. And as the Norwegian second home phenomenon is widely diverse it put forth the need to theorise concepts within the phenomenon. Thus this paper will conceptualise sustainability related to a second home development and relate to important concepts such as; planning, what is a second home, multiple dwelling home society, structure/agency relationships, debt-financed spare-time activities, economic growth and social-ethical issues.

Theoretical discussions

The method of the paper is mainly based on a theoretical discussion around the before mentioned concepts. This will build theoretical knowledge which enables analysis of the relations between the different concepts and a sustainable development of second homes. Relevance of the conceptualisation of each concept will here be briefly justified/further elaborated.

As this paper basically deals with planning related issues a definition of planning will be elaborated, which makes it obvious on which parameters of planning which the orientation of changes should be directed. Planning is seen as an organised activity of which actors design future oriented goals and uses knowledge and professional methods to analyse, prioritise, and coordinate measures to obtain these goals (Aarsæther et al., 2012). When it comes to land use planning it is a matter of analysing various questions in relation to land use in local communities as well as in society as a whole with the purpose of deciding what the areas should be used for

(Mønnesland et al., 1996). Planning should also lay down a framework for the subsequent decisions and actions (Aarsæther et al., 2012). Embedded in evaluating alternative spatial solutions and related consequences, lies a normative ideal about desired futures of society (Næss, for peer review, Næss, 2001). Thereby we can distinguish four main areas within planning where changes and/or critique could be directed: planning outset, design outcome, design process (including methods of planning) and normative futures. These distinctions are tightly interrelated.

In relation to the planning outset the Norwegian second home phenomenon has undergone a great trend development over the last 50 years. The trend development has in general changed the phenomenon from “primitive to pleasure”. Three main trends can be identified: Norwegian second homes have increased in standards (some above primary homes), people use them more often, and more acquire second homes abroad (Aall, 2011). Within academia the term ‘second home’ is becoming ever so relevant as researchers argue that Norway (in particular) is becoming a ‘multiple-dwelling home society’ (Støa, 2007, Ellingsen and Hidle, 2012), where people have more than one *home* and have equal relational ties to each of them. By now the Norwegians own up to 500.000 second homes including those abroad (Halvorsen, 2013, Statistics Norway, 2013). In this sense the development has become unsustainable for several reasons. These are mainly; increased energy consumption and environmental degradation, social-ethical issues, and economic issues (driver for economic growth and arena for debt financed consumption).

This call for a study of what mechanisms might have influence and how they influence such a trend development. A conceptualisation of a structure/agency relationship with a focus on identifying and discussing drivers that are most persistent in shaping the development of the phenomenon in a Norwegian context is needed. This includes a theorisation of the difference between tourism in general and second home ownership aiming at describing the second home phenomenon to be largely debt-financed while other tourist activities are mainly “save and spend” activities. This conceptualisation has great impact on how to view second home development as sustainable or not, compared with other leisure time activities. Leisure time activities in general and holiday trips are regarded as more energy demanding than second home ownership and use (Hille et al., 2008), and could thereby be regarded as less environmental harmful than other leisure time activities. However including other aspects such money creation (through uptake of mortgage) and the following consequences could put another perspective on the sustainability of the second home phenomenon. In this sense the second home is sided with the primary home though it is still very different as it is not a basic need as the primary home is. It has been argued that the second home is inessential (Wolfe, 1977). Such aspect on the relation between the second home and the

primary home is needed in second home research, because it will allow for a much broader analysis than has been conducted beforehand. Specifically it should open up a discussion of what features of the primary home that influences the ownership of second homes. Locational aspects has often been discussed and it would be interesting to categorise primary home locations related to type of second home and evaluate against different socio-economic features of the owners. Such results could be used in the design process of primary home areas when aiming for a specific design outcome and normative futures.

In relation normative futures the concept of sustainability is highly contested which is why a conceptualisation of a sustainable development in relation to second homes is highly relevant. I will draw on literature pointing at a de-growth solution for sustainability and discuss which barriers in relation to the Norwegian second home phenomenon that might counteract a sustainable development. I will also discuss how to frame a concept of sustainability in relation to second home development including aspects of environmental, social-ethical and economic issues.

Conclusion

Thus the main argument throughout the paper is that a holistic theoretical approach to the second home phenomenon is needed in order to analyse the consequences of the current development of the Norwegian second home phenomenon against a concept of sustainability. The theoretical framing that is presented through the paper will give new insight into the Norwegian second home phenomenon, but might also be a framing which can be used through other studies in other national contexts. In conclusion I will argue that such new theoretical approach will open the discussion and enable in-depth analysis of the main mechanisms that are relevant for planning in order to obtain a more sustainable development of second homes.

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