

# JOURNAL OF NORDREGIO

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Second homes in  
the Nordic countries



**NORDREGIO**  
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# More homes but not more people

In total the Nordic countries at present have a stock of some 1.8 million secondary homes. This can be compared to the total number of primary homes, i.e. dwellings, which is calculated at just over 11.6 million. The growth of secondary homes is definitively higher than the growth of the Nordic populations and is creating new challenges for planning and regional development.

In a somewhat longer perspective the growth of secondary homes in the Nordic countries has been uneven. For Denmark, and to some extent also for Sweden, the most intensive construction of new 'summer houses', as they were called, was timed with the establishment of the modern welfare state between the late 1950s and the mid 1970s. For Norway, Finland and Iceland however construction-booms for secondary homes mostly seem to have been a phenomenon of the last 10-20 years.

The large majority of the earlier secondary homes were constructed close to the waterfront in the picturesque countryside and near the major urban areas. Travel-times should not be too extensive, and should preferably allow for weekend visits. The dwellings themselves were often small, but the ground around them was usually spacious, allowing for 'healthy' outdoor activities.

Some people have always had their summer house far away from their main residence. In all of the Nordic capitals you will find many who own houses far to the north. Travelling here might, even by plane, take some hours and by car up to a couple of days. The current change towards relatively cheap and better transport infrastructures combined with higher relative incomes has provided opportunities for the more intensive use of the housing stock in such locations. Similarly, these changes have also made it possible to buy new properties in southern Europe and beyond where prices represent relatively good value for money. One of the Norwegian families we highlight in this issue of the Journal has bought its holiday home in South Africa. Their total spending on

holidays however remains lower than that of many other Norwegian families in similar situations.

One advantage of having a *hytte*, as they say in Norway, close to home was that it gave teenagers the possibility to go to a place where they could be away from grown-ups. At home, for many that would be impossible, since they did not have a room of their own. At the cottage, however, they could bring friends, experiment with love, alcohol etc., while learning to cook and clean, basically just training at being grown-up and living independently.

With the trend towards generally larger family-sized homes we see today, as well as the changes in both sexual mores and the availability of cheap travel to southern Europe, it could however be argued that this type of social need for second homes is decreasing. In addition the increasing number of divorces and the resultant rise in one-parent households has had a major influence on the role of the second home in family life. Research is just beginning to scratch the surface of issues of this type. This is also what Eli Støa is arguing in her article at p16.

Modern communications tools have made it possible for many, at least to some extent, to work at home or in their secondary home, as well as at their primary work-place. Are we in fact, since most new secondary homes are built with modern technical facilities, witnessing a situation then where the traditional boundaries between the workplace, the primary residential property and families' recreational dwellings are becoming increasingly blurred?

Outdoor life continues to play an important role in the context of the second home, although the content of what constitutes an active way of life has changed. While cross-country skiing was previously high on the winter-agenda, the preference in recent years has clearly been for the many variations of down-hill racing and more commercialised recreational activities.

There also seems to be an ever-

increasing number of people taking up golf. Such changes have also been significant factors in the trend towards the building of secondary homes in separate areas. Not only in Spain or Portugal but also now in the Nordic countries have we witnessed continuing growth in so-called 'resort-villages' combining a residential environment with easy access to sports and other recreational facilities.

At first glance it would appear that the growth in secondary homes is very much a Nordic phenomenon. However, if comparing the number of *Madrileños* purchasing holiday-flats on the Costa del Sol or Costa Blanco, or Parisians acquiring a house in Brittany or a lodge in the Alps, or for that matter Muscovites buying a house in Cyprus in addition to their Russian *dacha*, do we not see the same developments there?

Or take the newly constructed and often empty secondary homes in countries of origin, in the Balkans or the Middle East, financed through remittances from emigration. Is the same happening in Mexico and the rest of Central America? Is it then a general international trend to acquire such extra homes that we are witnessing?

In all countries there are some people who have no home at all. Many, probably still a majority, have one while a growing number have two. Some have three and four, and maybe also five and six one could say, if the caravan and the boat are included. No doubt the trend is here to stay. ■

By Odd Iglebaek





The Wiik-Thalbitzers at their house in Sweden. From left: Henrik, Anne, Katrine, Anna Sophie and Tobias. Photo: Odd Iglebaek

## – For recreation and investment

– The desire to own a second home is usually based on a combination of two factors, namely, recreation and investment, explains Henrik Thalbitzer. He is 49 years old, a father of three and married to Anne Wiik, who is an educator specializing in teaching Danish to immigrant women. Henrik Thalbitzer is the director of a wholesale food-import company based in Copenhagen. The company has 14 full-time employees and can be described as a family business with Anne and Henrik as the shareholders.

The Wiik-Thalbitzers own houses in four different places. The family's main base, the primary home, is a villa in Virum, some 20 kilometres north of central Copenhagen. Here the family spends weekdays for most of the year except during summer. Weekends are often spent at their property in Laholm municipality in Southern Sweden which was originally a small farm with a main house and a barn.

– The most important thing about Laholm is that we have the ability to live a different kind of life from that which is possible in Denmark. The area is characterized by extensive woodlands and few people, so we are very close to nature. I also have my education in agriculture and forestry and this gives me the potential to enjoy such activities. I am particularly engaged in hunting and forestry development, explains Henrik, adding: – It only takes two hours from leaving Virum until we are installed in Laholm, in other words, a much shorter time than it would take to drive to a similar remote area of Danish countryside.

### Also Sjælland and Provence

When Anne and Henrik established their relationship, some fifteen years ago, she already had a summerhouse at Udsholt, on the north coast of Sjælland: – It is very close to the sea and very good for bathing, sailing etc. It is also situated on a relatively large property, so there is no

lack of privacy, this type of life is more social, with friends and family, but there is little opportunity to attend to my hobbies and interests, says Henrik.

The compromise is therefore that each summer the whole family spends two or three weeks in Laholm and the equivalent, or more, at Udsholt. During the later period Henrik drives into work in Copenhagen each morning and comes back in the afternoon. It usually takes less than an hour. Anne and the children might be at the beach or involved in other activities. As a teacher she has seven weeks holiday and can therefore relatively easily organize her life in this manner.

The family also owns an old stone-house in Provence in southern France: – Usually we go there at Easter, but generally we do not spend so much time there though friends and family often borrow it. We, especially the kids, just love this place, though in reality we keep this house mostly as an investment, says

Henrik adding: – To secure our future, I prefer to invest in property than, for example, in shares.

**To South Africa**

Siren Skeie Vassbotn is 46. She works in the graphical industry in a family-owned company in Kristiansand in southern Norway. It is a full-time job. Neither she nor her family has an economic interest in company: – I am one of the 30 employees, she explains. Siren has two sons aged 19 and 17 and is married to Thorbjørn Vassboth. He is currently a full-time student studying religions, arts and ethics. The family lives in a villa some ten kilometres from her workplace. This is her story:

– It happened more or less by accident. We have some friends who live in Johannesburg in South Africa, and through them we were introduced to Phalaborwa. From Johannesburg you can fly there or drive. The latter takes five hours. The area is naturally very beautiful and the wild-life is just magnificent. In fact it is only a ten minute drive to Krüger National Park, the largest game resort in Africa. In four hours you can also drive to beautiful beaches in Mozambique. I should also mention the fact that Phalaborwa has an 18-hole golf course.

– We have just finished building our secondary home there. It is a house of 100 m<sup>2</sup> with an annex of 25 m<sup>2</sup> plus a small pool. In other words, something similar

to what many people build here in southern Norway. The difference is in the cost. The total price for us is approximately 600 000 NOK, perhaps a quarter of what we would have paid here. So we also think that it is a good investment, Siren says. She explains that the house is part of a so-called ‘lodge development’ with seven houses in total. In terms of second homes the house at Phalaborwa is the only one for the Vassbotn family.

**Family Youth Hostel**

Påhl Ruin (44) is a journalist married to carrier-diplomat Cecilia Ruthström-Ruin (42). They are both Swedish and have two children, nine and four years old. Their permanent base is a semi-detached house in Lidingö 10 km from the centre of Stockholm. What is their relation to second homes?

– In my family we have two traditions in this respect, explains Påhl. – First we have what we call ‘the youth-hostel’. That is a large house in Halland in the southern part of Sweden. This is owned jointly by the extended family on my mother’s side, and everybody can use it. It is organised like a kind of co-operative and everyone pays 50 SEK per night per person to stay. In particular, it is a nice place if you want to arrange a large party. For example we celebrated our marriage here.

– The second place is located in some

small islands in the archipelago of southern Finland, approximately 50 km west of Helsinki. This is a property bought by my father’s family back in the 1890s. It was expanded in 1930s. At present, we are in the process of building our own house here, and I guess you could say that this is really our second home, he underlines.

– Of course this is a place for holidays and recreation and to some extent also an investment. But what is quite important for us, is also to have a place to stay, near friends and family, if we decide to live abroad again due to my wife’s work. He



Siren Skeie Vassbotn and Thorbjørn Vassbotn in Phalaborwa. Photo: Private



The Vassbotn’s second home in South Africa. Photo: Private



Pähl Ruin and his son during the construction of the family's summer-house. Photo: Private



The fourth house of the Asikainen family at Kangasniemi. Photo: Private



Paula Asikainen at the jetty outside the family's second home. Photo: Private

explains that from 1998 to 2002 she worked at the Swedish embassy in Japan. The family also lived there. Pähl was a correspondent for the Swedish media, and their house in Stockholm was rented out. It is not unlikely that something similar will happen in the future.

#### Four in total

– I guess it is correct to say that we now have four houses, explains Paula Asikainen (52) from Finland. – First, there is what we call the main house. That is approximately 200 m<sup>2</sup> and is located in the village of Nakkila outside Pori (Björneborg) on Finland's west coast. It is here where we reside most of the time.

In another village, Luvia, also very close to Pori, you will find our summer home. In fact, we often live here during the week and travel to and from work from here. In total we have 60 m<sup>2</sup> there. In addition to the buildings, the property in Luvia consists of a 3000 m<sup>2</sup> island. Two other families also have houses on the island.

The third home is a 45 m<sup>2</sup> flat in Turku (Åbo). Mostly it is used at weekends. Turku has a university and is traditionally more of a cultural centre than Pori, which instead is best known for its industrial rather than its academic heritage. The drive between the two towns takes around one hour.

– Our fourth place is a new *kesä mökki* (summer cottage) located near Kangasniemi, 350 km from our home. It is quite a long drive, so we use this mostly for holidays. The size is approximately the same as the summer house in Luvia. We are still building it, and thus far we have not been able to finish the steam sauna, Paula explains. The actual house is very close to a lake.

Paula works as a head administrative nurse. She has three children 16, 25 and 27 years old. Her husband is a physician. Why own so many places? – It is a combination of things; to be close to nature, to relax and to invest in the future particularly for our children, she says. ■

By Odd Iglebaek

# Piling up around urban centres

In the Scandinavian countries, the concentration of weekend and holiday homes into specialised areas (fritidshusområder) is strongly associated with their close proximity to major urban centres.

In Sweden, Statistics Sweden have defined such areas with a high concentration of recreational dwellings as areas consisting of at least 50 weekend and holiday homes situated at a distance not exceeding 150 metres from each other. In Sweden there were 1319 such concentrations in 2005, holding 27 per cent of the total number of weekend and holiday homes outside of the urban areas. Most of the concentrations are small – more than a thousand are smaller than 50 hectares.

There are however significant regional differences. In Stockholm County there are more than 300 concentrations, and 55 per cent of all recreational dwellings in the County are located within these concentrations. Other areas with a high number of such concentrations are to be found on the east and south coasts of Skåne, in Halland and in places along the Bohus coast. In the southern interior, in the middle part of Värmland and in Norrland such concentrations are however almost non-existent.

In the county of Kronoberg there are only four such concentrations, holding a mere 3 per cent of all the recreational dwellings in Kronoberg county. Second homes in splendid isolation appear to be particularly attractive to foreign visitors from North-Western Europe. In Sweden, Danish and German second-home owners have proved to have a particularly keen eye for recreational locations in the Southern Swedish interior.

In Kronoberg, a recent survey of the foreign second-home owners showed that Danish home-owners visited Sweden much more frequently than the Germans,

although the Germans stayed in Sweden for longer periods. German second-home owners in Kronoberg spent, on average, almost half the year at their vacation home, while Danish home-owners spent slightly more than 100 days per year in residence.

In Norway, the concentration of weekend and holiday homes displays the same locational pattern as in Sweden, when the same definition of concentration areas is applied. Holiday homes in Norway are, similarly, concentrated in coastal areas and in areas close to the major regional centres. 290 municipalities (out of 434) have no such concentrations at all. In the greater Oslo region almost 2 out of 5 recreational dwellings are located in these concentrated areas, while in the rest of Norway only 1 out of 20 weekend or holiday homes are clustered in this way.

A 2007 comparative study of the development of recreational homes in the urban hinterlands of the greater Oslo, Trondheim and Tromsø areas (within 200 kilometres of the urban centres) 1980-

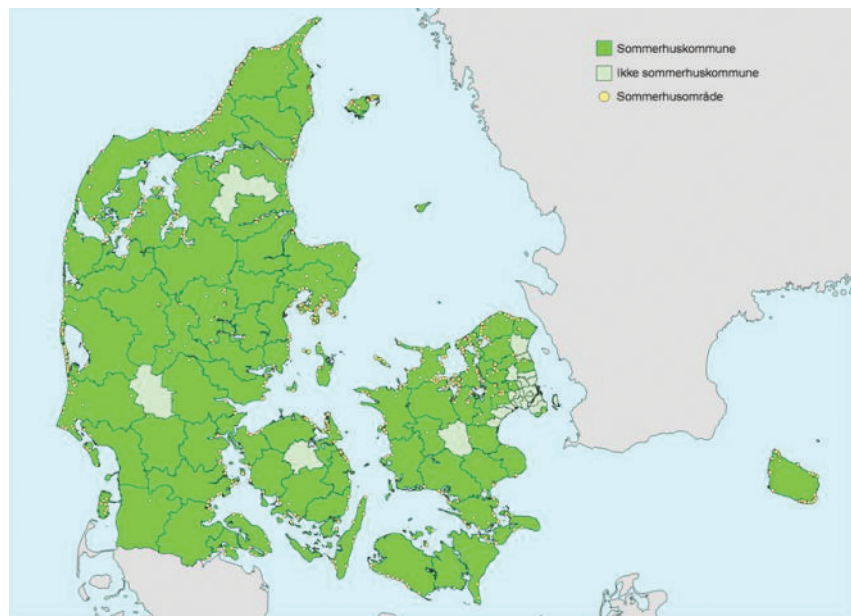
2004 illustrated that this systematic regional difference has been maintained over time and continues up to the present day. New recreational dwelling units are erected in concentration areas in the municipalities serving the Oslo hinterland, while new holiday homes are mainly developed outside of (the few) concentration areas in the greater Trondheim and Tromsø regions.

This study however applies an alternative definition of concentration areas for weekend and holiday homes, applying the following requirements:

- The distance between two recreational dwellings should be, at most, 200 metres
- The concentration area should host at least 20 dwellings

Using this definition, 44 per cent of all the holiday homes in Norway are currently located in concentration areas. In addition an increasing proportion of new recreational dwellings are being established in concentration areas which are now becoming increasingly clustered.

By Jon M. Steineke



In Denmark the concentration of summer-houses (yellow dots) is definitively coastal. Green indicate municipalities with summer-houses. Those without are in light-green. Source of map: Ministry of Environment

**Table 1: recreational homes in concentrated areas**

	Norway (2002)	Sweden (2005)
Number of concentrations	464	1319
Total number of recreational dwellings in concentration areas	53.000	155.000
Proportion of all recreational dwellings/second homes in concentration areas	17 %	27%



One alternative for a house abroad could be a flat on the cruiser *The World*. 200 m<sup>2</sup>, that is 3 balcony-units as show above, cost approximately 6 million US-dollars plus an annual fee of around 400 000 US-dollars. The ship takes you around most of the world and you decide for yourself whether you will live there permanently or only part-time. Photo: Odd Iglebaek

## How many houses abroad?

Primarily for tax reasons no reliable overview currently exists in respect of the ownership of houses abroad. Nevertheless it makes sense to assume that the number is rapidly increasing. Transport is becoming cheaper and more accessible while in relative terms at least people are getting wealthier.

Considering further the notion of house ownership abroad, one large group of people is often forgotten, namely, that of immigrants who now own new homes in their home country. Some twenty years ago, on a visit to the countryside in southern Serbia during a period where growing labour unrest in Yugoslavia was being reported, I was invited to stay in a house where the owners were visiting only temporarily. Usually they lived and worked in the then West Germany. It was

a new-built large house with all the modern facilities – their secondary home. They did not however use it very much and in fact often spent their holidays elsewhere.

Some year's later immigrants from Turkey, now living in Rinkeby on the outskirts of Stockholm, provided more details: – Yes, we have all used our savings to build modern houses in Anatolia, but our children do not want to go there. If they travel to Turkey, they want to go to the tourist-resorts on the coast. That is where all the fun is!

Driving through the countryside of Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province in many places you will see new houses built in the traditional 'fortified' style, but looking rather expensive, particularly in areas known for emigration (or

smuggling). Even though some members of the extended family live in the house ownership in reality remains with families in Northern Europe.

Or another example: Go to Melbourne in Australia and you will still find many families who own houses, or land, on the Greek island of Qitira between Crete and the Peloponnesus. Even the coast of war-torn Southern Lebanon, and home of *Hezbollah*, has for decades seen a building-boom related to the construction of holiday flats. Many owned by expatriates living permanently in Canada or the United States.

And of course there is Southern Spain; the *Costa del Sol*, if present trends continue, in a few years there will be holiday resorts for hundreds of kilometres, more or less continuously



along the coast. The flats will be owned, in the main, by Northern Europeans: The British, the Germans, the Nordics and probably more and more Russians.

The Norwegian *Prognosesenteret*, a commercial market-trends institute, has for some years tried to follow Norwegian developments: – Our findings are based on interviews and we think that they are relatively accurate, explains chief economist Kjell Senneset. He notes that they estimate the number of Norwegian families at present buying holiday-homes abroad has reached 9000 – 10 000 per year. On average they spend more than 100 000 € per house.

Spain remains the most popular and approximately one third go there. France, Italy, Greece and Portugal are now also popular. Sweden is number two with more than 2000 houses each year. The latest developments include Turkey, Thailand, Brazil, South Africa and Bulgaria, but here the numbers are relatively small.

For Sweden similar estimates seem to be lacking. This is also the case for

Iceland. As regards Finland there is very little material. However, the magazine *Arvopaperi* no 6/2004, estimated that the country has a total of 60 000 time share apartments, of which 12 000 are abroad. The most popular time share resorts abroad are in Tenerife and continental Spain.

For some years the ski-lodge market has been booming in Finnish Lapland. Traditionally, Finns have bought ski lodges, but now Norwegians are also buying ski-lodges in Kilpisjärvi. According to *Helsingin Sanomat* (11.02.2007) this has contributed to raising the price of some properties to as much as 300 000 €.

A similar development is taking place by Lake Saimen in south-east Finland. The area has become particularly popular among the *nouveau riche* of St. Petersburg. Again prices here are rising dramatically and have in one year alone increased from 50 000 to 60 000 € just for the plot of land. According to the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* (17.07.2007) the local politician Suna Kymäläinen has initiated a protest movement against

what she calls ‘the Russian invasion’.

Denmark, on the other hand, has for many years had laws against foreigners buying summer-houses in the country. The official argument has been that the country has a very short coastline compared to the number of its citizens. This has led Danish news-service *24Timer* to compare the coastline of Denmark with countries where some of the key Danish politicians have bought secondary homes. There findings are presented below:

Many Danes living in the densely populated island of Zealand (Sjælland), which include Copenhagen, have in later years been buying land and houses in southern Sweden. According to *Berlingske Tidende* (28.03.07) The Danish tax authorities have registered 5 500 such ownerships: - We think that is the majority, states Hans Kurt Larsen from *Skat*, the Danish tax authorities. In 2003 the same authorities registered 6 172 persons living in Denmark paying taxes for properties abroad. France was not included in this overview. ■

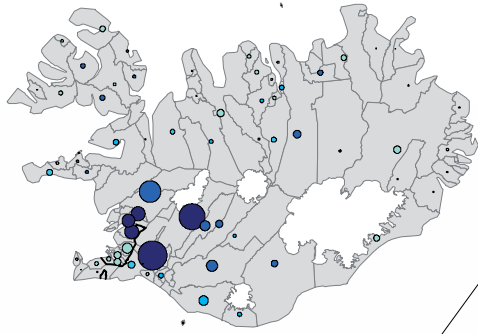
By Odd Iglebaek

Coastline per citizen (metres)	
Denmark	1.33 (Only danes and foreigners with a close connection to Denmark can buy.)
France	0.07 (Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen)
Greece	1.27 (Leader of <i>Dansk Folkeparti</i> Pia Kjærsgaard)
Spain	0.12 (It is here that the majority of Danes buy their second homes abroad)

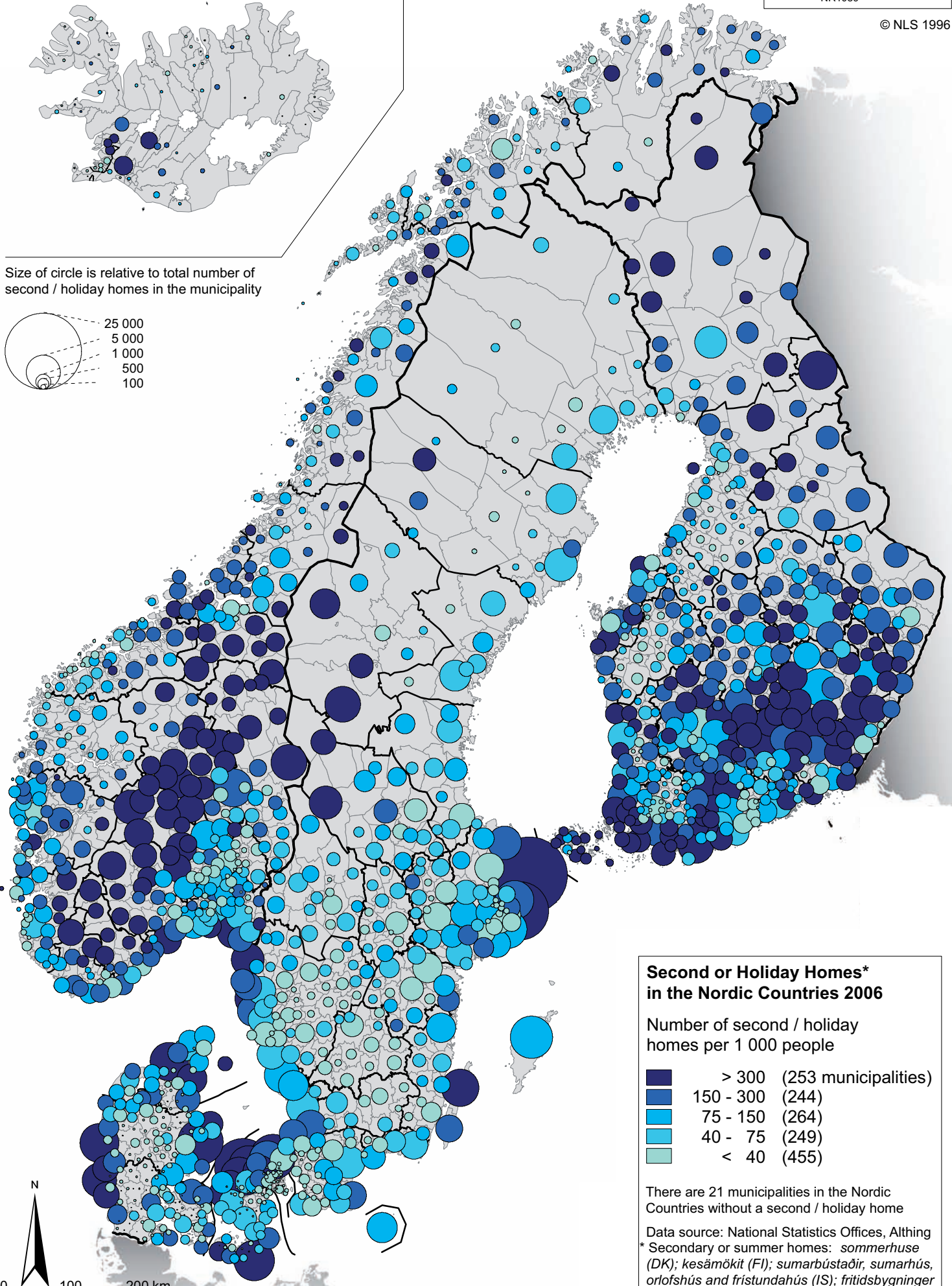
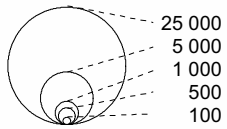


Many Nordic and Russian citizens buy flats or houses on the Mediterranean coast. Here is a typical settlement, in this case from Cyprus.

Photo: Andé Maslennikov, SCANPIX








Size of circle is relative to total number of second / holiday homes in the municipality



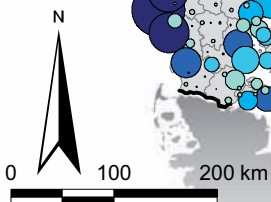
**Second or Holiday Homes\* in the Nordic Countries 2006**

Number of second / holiday homes per 1 000 people

	> 300	(253 municipalities)
	150 - 300	(244)
	75 - 150	(264)
	40 - 75	(249)
	< 40	(455)

There are 21 municipalities in the Nordic Countries without a second / holiday home

Data source: National Statistics Offices, Althing  
\* Secondary or summer homes: *sommerhuse* (DK); *kesämökkit* (FI); *sumarbústaðir, sumarhús, orlofshús and fristundahús* (IS); *fritidsbygninger* (NO); *Antall taxerade småhusenheter (fritidsbostäder)* (SE)



# The impact of recreational homes

Norrköping is the Swedish municipality that caters for the highest number of tourists in the summer holiday season. In Norrtälje, the summer holiday population is estimated to increase from a normal level of 54,000 to almost 250,000 in the peak month of July. This assessment is made based on the number of beds sold in the local hospitality industry (hotels, camp sites etc.), as well as by the number of holiday homes located in the community. In Norrtälje, half of the population increase in the summer season may be attributed to second home visitors.

On average, each holiday home in Norrtälje is calculated to host three persons during the peak summer season. This is also used as the basis for calculating the number of actual inhabitants in the municipality during the holiday season or during the most popular weekends.

In several Nordic countries, the National Statistical Authorities are currently debating whether the concept of annual inhabitants should be used in a more systematic manner in order to address development issues in rural communities and municipalities that host a large number of second homes and thus occasional boosts to the local population level.

The number of annual inhabitants is a statistical variable that is sensitive to the fact that the recreational population and the occasional second home visitors also utilise local infrastructure and planning resources. For these purposes, the number of annual inhabitants (AI) may be defined as AI = regular population + (3 x number of second homes)

The difference between the regular population and the calculated annual population level will be large in municipalities with relatively few inhabitants and a high number of second homes. In populous municipalities with few recreational homes the two population measures will be almost identical, yielding a ratio approaching 1.

We can use this ratio, AI/regular population, as a proxy or indicator of the potential community impact (CI) made by second home recreational tourism locally. In the table below, we rank the six municipalities which displayed the highest community impact from this form of recreational tourism in 2006 in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

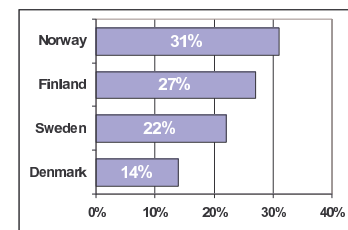
An important observation can be made from this tentative display. First, the potential community impacts from holiday or recreational homes on the local level are much larger in small Icelandic, Finnish and Norwegian municipalities than those in Denmark and Sweden. In Sweden in particular, this may be due to the incomplete registration of second homes as these only include independent buildings and not recreational homes in multiple-dwellings (*bostadsrätter*). These make up a significant portion of dwellings in the most popular tourism resorts, such as Åre.

The table does not consider the fact that in many rural areas, both the primary and the secondary dwellings are located within the same municipality. This may, in particular, have boosted the community impact (CI) estimates in Finland, where almost 1 in 3 second homes are located in the municipality where the owner also has their permanent

home. Kustavi and Iniö are, in fact, two of the Finnish municipalities where the ratio of second home owners who do not have to cross a municipal border to get to their secondary dwelling is highest.

Nevertheless, in all of these top-ranked municipalities the second homes pose a significant challenge to local planning and communal development. In the four Danish municipalities with the highest relative potential community impact from second home recreational tourism, these second homes outnumber the permanent, year-round dwellings by a ratio of 2 to 1.

Fig. 1: “Do you own a second home?”



As a % of all respondents in each country

While the number of second homes, as reflected in the housing stock, is one way of assessing the topography of second homes, another way of approaching the second home/multiple dwelling phenomenon is by asking how many households own recreational homes/second homes. In the most recent Nordic survey performed by *Synovate Temo* for *Nordea* (*Så ser svensken på fritidshus* (May 2007)), between 14 and 31 per cent of respondents owned a second home (figure 1). Second home ownership is most common in Norway and least common in Denmark. ■

By Jon M. Steineke

Table: municipalities with the highest relative potential community impact (CI) from second home recreational tourism (2006)

Denmark		Finland		Iceland		Norway		Sweden	
Municipality	CI	Municipality	CI	Municipality	CI	Municipality	CI	Municipality	CI
1. Holmsland	4.623	1. Kustavi - Gustavs	10.116	1. Skorradalshr.	22.891	1. Bykle	7.882	1. Borgholm	2.567
2. Trundholm	4.555	2. Iniö	7.344	2. Grimsnes- og Grafningshr.	17.374	2. Åseral	6.577	2. Härjedalen	2.455
3. Blåvandshuk	4.360	3. Velkua	7.147	3. Kjösahreppur	9.485	3. Tydal	5.922	3. Norrtälje	2.325
4. Sydfalster	3.939	4. Korpo - Korpoo	6.653	4. Bláskógabyggd	6.175	4. Sirdal	5.890	4. Malung	2.292
5. Fanø	3.661	5. Suomenniemi	6.072	5. Hvalfjardarsveit	2.949	5. Etnedal	5.356	5. Värmdö	2.215
6. Nykøbing-Rørvig	3.477	6. Nagu - Nauvo	5.774	6. Árneshreppur	2.680	6. Nore og Uvdal	5.073	6. Åre	2.117



The dream? A house of your own, an island of your own? In this case from the lake Mälaren in Sweden. Photo: Lars Bygdemark, SCANPIX

## Nordic topography of second homes

There are many definitions of second homes. Key factors, common to most definitions include the secondary and occasional nature of the residence. While the US Census states that any vacant house that is used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use may be classified as a second home, another definition describes second homes as ‘a property owned or rented on a long lease as the occasional residence of a household that usually lives elsewhere’.

The dynamic character of the second home, in particular the changing relationship between the first and second homes also makes identification and measurement issues difficult. Recently, some Nordic geographers have instead taken to define second homes in terms of their structural form and mobility into three distinct categories: stationary (cottages and houses); semi-mobile (such as trailers and recreational vehicles), and fully mobile (such as sailing boats).

Data availability usually confines definitional and distributional considerations to the first of these three types, not least since second homes first became an item in Nordic national censuses in the early 1970s.

### Finland

In Finland, the 1970 Census was the first occasion when data on second homes was obtained at the national level. The number of second homes then amounted to some 176,000. During the 1980s the construction of recreational homes was particularly significant, and by 1990 the number had more than doubled to 368,000. The pace of expansion has slackened somewhat since then and currently stands at some 4000 new units per year. As of 2006, the number of second homes stood at 475,000.

Since 1990, the total number of second homes has seen the largest increase in the northern part of the country (Lappi, Kainuu and Keski Pohjanmaa, Lapland, Kajanaland, Mellersta Österbotten. In all of these landscapes, the number of second homes increased by more than 44 per cent over the period 1990-2006.

### Sweden

Compared with Finland, second home development in Sweden took an early lead. In Sweden, the total number of second homes increased from 200,000 to 500,000 from 1950 to 1970, though the increase in the number of second homes has remained less dramatic since then. The geographical distribution of second homes has however undergone a significant shift during the last generation(s), as regular dwellings in rural areas have been progressively transformed into recreational homes while holiday homes in urban areas have been transformed into permanent homes.

### Norway

In Norway, the number of second homes almost doubled from 1970 to 2000 (from 200,000 to 375,000), and the growth pattern continues with some 6,000-8,000 new recreational homes being built every

**Table 1: The number of second homes in the Nordic countries**

	Number of second homes	Second homes <i>per capita</i> (1000 inhabitants)
Denmark (2006)	207,864	38
Finland (2006)	475,051	90
Iceland (2006)	10,418	35
Norway (2005)	411,039	89
Sweden (2005)	680,000*	75

\*: approximation

Sources: National Statistical Offices (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden); Althing (Iceland).

year. Although the process of urbanisation continues in Norway as in Sweden, the conversion of second homes into permanent ones is by no means as manifest in Norway as in Sweden. Most second homes were constructed for this purpose, and as of 2004, a mere 6.5 per cent of the second home stock was made up of converted farm houses or permanent dwellings. Most new holiday homes are being erected in specially laid out areas. These areas come with a well-developed infrastructure, such as standard access to water and electricity.

**Iceland**

In Iceland, the recent economic boom can be identified via a sharp relative increase in the number of second homes. Since 1997, the number of residential dwellings has increased by more than a third, and stood at some 10,400 in April 2006. These second homes are strongly concentrated in a handful of municipalities located within a 150 kilometre radius of Reykjavik. In fact, six municipalities together host more than 55 per cent of all second homes in Iceland.

**Denmark**

In Denmark, one estimate put the number of second homes (in 1960) at

50,000-60,000. This number increased significantly from 1960 to 1975, when the number of summer houses stood at some 150,000. Since then, the number of second homes and summer houses in Denmark has increased more slowly. The first wave of second homes were built in the greater Copenhagen area (up to 1950), while the major building boost in the last 50 years has come in the North Jutland, Århus and Storstrøms amt. Currently, these summer houses are concentrated in coastal areas mainly on the western and northern coasts of Jutland and on the north coast of Zealand. The uses of second homes are more restricted in Denmark than in the other Nordic countries.

A further distinction separating Denmark from the other Nordic countries is that the categorisation of second home status can be undertaken in relation to the property's usage. While in the Nordic context second homes are traditionally used, in the main, as a recreational or second home for the owners and their immediate family, summer houses in Denmark are also rented out on a commercial basis or used as permanent homes.

In a 2000 study of the Danish summer

house landscape, about three-quarters of all summer houses were estimated to be in traditional use, while a little more than two-fifths were mainly being rented out as income-generating dwellings. Almost one in ten summer houses were used year round, on a permanent basis.

Combined, the five Nordic countries could boast a stock of some 1 3/4 million second homes in 2006, or 72 per 1000 inhabitants: See table 1, p 12.

International comparisons on second-home ownership illustrates that, in the Nordic countries, second-home ownership is much more common than elsewhere. Studies published during the last 3-4 years moreover show that an estimated 6 per cent of all households owned second homes in the USA, while 14 per cent of households in the Canadian province of Quebec and 17 per cent of Australian households did so. In the continental European context, 15 per cent of households in Spain, less than 2 per cent of Dutch and British households, and less than 1 per cent of German households are second-home owners. These European statistics however also include allotments (*kolonibaver*). ■

By Jon M. Steineke



Somebody likes it dense? Second homes at Laholm in Southern Sweden. Photo: Lars Bygdemark, SCANPIX

# From recreation to retirement

Statistical and definitional inconsistencies make it very difficult to quantify how many second home owners move to their recreational dwellings on a permanent basis. Information on the extent to which second homes are being transformed into permanent homes remains incomplete, although in absolute terms such transformations appear to be on the increase across the Nordic countries.

A 2005 survey in Finland among some 4000 second-home owners revealed that 1 per cent planned to move permanently into their second home, while an additional 1 per cent would consider moving permanently to their second home. In Finland, this amounts to some 11 000 individuals.

There are two groups of the population who make up the major part of this flow, namely, economically active families with small children, and senior citizens. Senior citizens moving to their second homes are however viewed as potentially representing a future challenge to their future host municipalities, as, like all other local inhabitants, they have the same right to social and health services.

Denmark is the only Nordic country that keeps track of the in-migration of senior citizens who set up permanent residence in summer houses. This comes as a consequence of the 1992 change in

the Danish Planning Act, which enabled senior citizens and pensioners to settle permanently in their summer houses if the house had been in their ownership for more than eight years. Every year Danish municipalities with summer house areas are required to report to the Ministry of the Environment on the number of summer houses that are occupied permanently (legally or illegally) in their municipalities.

In 2005, Statistics Denmark published a brief study on whether the 1992 change in the Planning Act had provided for something that might resemble a major influx of senior citizens into the summer house municipalities over the 1995-2005 decade. Over these 10 years, an increasing number of persons aged 60 years or above decided to set up permanent residence in their summer houses.

As of 2005, this figure amounted to some 10,900 persons, representing a 130 per cent increase from 1995. By 2006, this means that almost 7600 summer house dwellings had been transformed from recreational to permanent dwellings by senior citizen owners moving in.

Most summer houses that are permanently settled are to be found in what used to be Frederiksborg and Vestsjælland *Amt*, indicating that the senior citizens undertaking this relocation are mainly moving in from

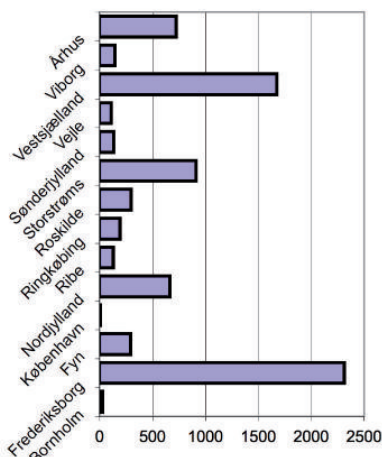
homes in the greater Copenhagen area. Their new homes are well within commuting distance from their previous home location, meaning that they may re-settle without having to abandon their established social networks and day-to-day contacts in their new life as summer house inhabitants:

In Denmark, this minor 'senior tsunami' has had its greatest effect on the demographic make-up of coastal municipalities in North Zealand which already hosts a large stock of summer house plots. In the municipalities of Frederiksværk, Græstedt-Gilleleje and Helsingør an additional 400 persons above 60 years of age were added to the population by in-migrating summer house owners during the 1995-2005 period. In these communities, this new part of the local population has now come to constitute every tenth inhabitant at 60 years of age or older. ■

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Figure 1: Number of summer houses transformed into permanent dwellings, by senior citizen's clause, by *Amt* (as of March 2006)



Source: Ministry of the Environment (2007)

Table 1: Municipalities with the greatest change in the number of second homes 1970-2006.

	1970	2006	Change 1970-2006
Espoo	3869	1653	-2216
Helsinki	2132	391	-1741
Vantaa	1213	767	-446
Nurmijärvi	965	745	-220
Pedersören kunta	972	771	-201
Tuusula	702	548	-154
Järvenpää	197	92	-105
Kerava	102	25	-77
Sippo	2120	2047	-73
Kokkola	1142	1106	-36

Source: Statistics Finland

# 'Them and us' and urban sprawl

More and more second home are now being made permanent. At the same time second home owners tend to be relatively older, well educated, wealthy and with a high disposable income. This has created a new breed of urban stakeholders on rural issues and fears of a growing divide between 'them and us'.

The term 'exurbs' was coined in the US in the 1950s, to describe prosperous rural communities that, due to the development of high-speed highways, were becoming commuter towns for a greater urban area.

In the contemporary housing policy debate, the issue of second homes has been approached as a recreational version of urban sprawl. In the Nordic context, this remains largely unexplored as a research issue, although national surveys have found second homes to be well within commuting distance for a majority of households:

## Finland

The 2003 second home survey found that the average travel distance to a recreational home was 107 kilometres. For half of the second home owners, the distance from the primary dwelling to the second home was less than 50 kilometres.

The issue of recreational urban sprawl is particularly relevant in the urban hinterlands, where second homes and recreational dwellings may be transformed into permanent residences. In Finland, this has led to a high conversion rate for second homes into regular, permanent, dwellings in the greater Helsinki area in particular. See table 1, p14.

## Denmark

Counter-urbanization and the transformation of the open landscape are particularly interlinked phenomena. The Danish summer house areas close to the major urban centres are subject to increased pressures from urban sprawl. For many, it will prove quite a challenge to maintain their current zoning status as permanent residencies are on the increase.

Common denominators in respect of these areas include the fact that they are

well-connected by public transport and are situated well within commuting distance to the main urban centres. Conversion is of course not a prospect shared by all Danish summer house areas – some areas are declining in attractiveness and undergoing something of a deterioration in the standard of their dwellings.

## Sweden

Approximately 640,000 buildings are classified as recreational homes/second homes. In addition, some 40,000 buildings are assumed to be used as second homes without being classified as such. About ten per cent of these are occupied on a permanent basis (i.e. as the main dwelling of the household), but on the other hand a significantly higher number of buildings are classified as primary dwellings without being occupied at all.

More than 150,000 persons decided to settle permanently in their second home from 1991 to 2005. As of 2006, almost a quarter of a million persons (237,000) live permanently in what are classified as recreational dwellings.

Almost 22 percent of the buildings that were classified as second homes in 1991 are today classified as regular, permanent dwellings. Most of these transformations are – and have taken place - in the three major urban regions of Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö.

In the greater urban areas it is mainly young households with small children that have chosen to settle permanently in recreational homes. In the Swedish peripheries, such conversions are driven by older households.

## Stockholm

A recent study of second-home tourism in small island communities in the Stockholm archipelago published in *Island Studies Journal* early in 2007 notes that individuals migrating from these islands are improving on their situation. Young out-migrants are to some extent being replaced by older in-migrants, resulting in an ageing population.

The Stockholm archipelago provides, together with some west-coast and

mountain communities, some of the most exclusive and densely populated recreational dwelling areas of Sweden.

Of all the second homes registered in Stockholm County in 2001, more than a third was located on these islands. Since as many as 50 per cent of all second homes are located less than 37 kilometres from the owners' permanent home, there is considerable potential for conflict between the permanent residents and second-home owners in the amenity-rich surroundings of the greater urban areas.

## Nordic Research

On the Nordic research agenda the social effects of second-home ownership in local communities is an issue of increasing interest. The socio-economic issues of second-home development on local and regional development more generally are complex, and have parallels with such themes as urban gentrification and studies of urban displacement.

Such studies indicate that with the influx of an increasing number of second-home owners, local households may begin to feel displaced, and that this situation can be connected to private actions and interventions that apparently privilege high income in-movers.

This is underscored by the fact that the socio-economic demographics of second home owners are identical in all the Nordic countries: compared to the general population they tend to be relatively older (>55 years), well educated, wealthy and with a high disposable income. This has created a new breed of urban stakeholders on rural issues, and created new fears that in some rural communities the municipality risks becoming a double society with a 'them and us' discourse between 'locals' and second home owners. ■

By Jon M. Steineke



A typically modern Norwegian mountain 'village', here at Aurdal in Southern Norway. Photo: Egil Heggen, Avis Valdres

## Also your hut is your home

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the number, and standard, of second homes in the Nordic countries. Today about one in two Nordic households have access to second homes (Müller, 2007), while in Norway the typical size of new second homes, in 2006, was more than 100 m<sup>2</sup> which is more than an average new "primary" home (Nysted, 2006). The 'second home' phenomenon has become an issue in the discussion over sustainable development and consumption, as it undoubtedly has environmental impacts as well as having other more general socio-cultural and economic consequences.

Taking the Norwegian context as a starting point, the main argument of this article is that the growth in second homes

must be seen as part of a broader change within the prevailing residential culture. As such, second homes must be understood in relation to primary places of residence. Understandings of both arenas are however continuously changing, and a discussion of policies and planning strategies must take these changes into account.

The home has, in Nordic culture at least, traditionally been understood as the centre of life – a castle or a fortress – a place to return to rest and gain the strength to go back out into the world. To be settled somewhere geographically has been a notion often connected to building a home with ones own hands. In Norway, the detached house has until recently been regarded as the ultimate goal for in

any family's housing career: The 'real' home.

The majority of Norwegians still regard detached houses as the 'ideal' home, but there are now numerous signs of changes in attitudes taking place. The single family house is no longer the ultimate goal but is rather the goal for a particular period in life: Living as a nuclear family with two parents and children. This group is however diminishing, having declined, according to Norwegian statistics, from around 42 % in 1960 to some 23 % in 2006. Four out of ten households now consist of one person while 66% of residents in the inner-city areas of Oslo live alone.

Following on from the fact that the nature of families is changing, the notion



of 'family' itself may have altered or at least changed in significance in respect of peoples lives. Life projects are certainly becoming more diverse. The result is that the typical one-size-fits-all 'ideal home' no longer exists in popular consciousness with instead a great variety of more or less ideal solutions existing for different household groups and different life phases.

We also seem to have become less attached to one place. Home is not so much about 'belonging' and investing oneself in one place and, as such, has instead become about connecting to different arenas with complementary meanings and practices. Quinn (2004) argues that there is a need to consider how the meaning people attach to different places informs the decision to become a second home owner. Drawing on several earlier studies, she discusses how, for many of us, circulation between different places has become a normal part of contemporary lifestyles. It seems to be possible, and perhaps also both natural and desirable, to feel at home in more than one place at the same time.

Following these newly emerging everyday life patterns is an evolution in the notion of domesticity. Women no longer spend most of their time at home with children. They are at work and have equal opportunities to develop their talents in both the public and private spheres. Children are in day-care centres from before the age of one, so they also spend most of their everyday lives outside the home. As such, arenas other than the private home are becoming ever more important for personal identification and development.

New communications technologies and a more flexible working status, particularly among so-called 'knowledge workers', have changed the boundaries between work and leisure time as well as those between the workplace and the diverse home arenas. Work-life is dislocated and people often move the 'office' home.

The transition between work and leisure time thus becomes increasingly blurred. Even though these changes do not necessarily bring about physical changes in houses and apartments, they undoubtedly influence the ways in which our homes are used, and also how we are attached to them and understand them.

While the meaning of home is based on individual and household perceptions, home culture is also strongly affected by politics, planning regimes and economic structures. The liberalization of the housing market is an issue that has in this respect had significant implications on the architectural qualities, social equity and life qualities, of urban areas in Norwegian cities and towns as well as many other places. As such it also affects our attitudes towards everyday life and to our home environments.

A market-driven housing sector, together with the fact that the public planning authorities have encouraged the densification of urban areas, and that more people tend to prefer living in central urban areas, has led to an enormous increase in house prices over the last decade or so. One result of this is the rise in segregated urban areas according to life phase, age and income, followed by the marginalization of some groups.

Following the residential groups in urban areas, as well as price trends, new housing typologies have evolved. Concepts like "Compact living" and "Easy living" being examples, indicating active daily lives, high mobility and loose

neighbourhood ties.

Homes become 'commodities', promoted as lifestyle images rather than places for everyday life, and may easily be written off as merely speculative building. However, seen in the light of the idea of home as multiple places, these typologies may attain a meaning not directly captured by the traditional professions' judgments of housing quality. In addition, they are increasingly part of the context within which the development of second homes must be understood.

#### **New meanings of second homes**

Much of the international research already undertaken on second homes has dealt with the meaning of, and the motives behind, second home ownership. Bjerke et al (2006:89) point to six main motives drawn from the literature: Removal or inversion from everyday life, the experience of informality and relaxed everyday lifestyles, a 'return' to nature, as an investment, as associating with ideas or ideologies about 'rurality' and finally as an expression of personal identity.

The literature states that second homes are strongly related to urban life and that one of the driving forces in their



An Icelandic variation on the hut. Photo: Nikolaj Bock

acquisition is the wish to escape, albeit temporarily, from a stressful everyday life in the city. Still it seems that the relationship between primary and secondary homes cannot merely be described as a 'simple' duality where the quiet cottage in spacious natural surroundings complements the compact urban apartment in busy and noisy environments.

Modern second homes are no longer so typically characterized by the simple life, quietness and closeness to nature as indeed they used to be. Very few cottages are built out 'in the wilds of nature' far away from neighbours.

Second homes are often located in villages or even apartment buildings close to downhill slopes, hotels, shops, 'after ski' entertainment, restaurants, and busy nightlife. It seems that many second home owners lead a more active social life in their cottage residences than they do in their urban home because working days tend to be too busy. And with modern technology it is possible to bring work to the cottage and thus extend its period of use beyond holidays and weekends (Perkins & Thorns, 2006).

On the other hand, an increasing number of rural residents probably own apartments in the city to enable them to 'escape' from the rigours of real country life and enjoy instead the recreational facilities that urban areas usually have to offer.

All of these tendencies underline the fact that second home culture is no longer

about one single trend, but now encompasses many such trends with each, in its own way, telling a story about how this plays a part in a particular contemporary dwelling can entail.

**More integrated research approaches**

There is undoubtedly then a need to think along several lines in order to achieve a more sustainable future, and to change the current, extensive, consumption patterns prevailing in western countries. Second homes are not simply connected to leisure time and holidays, however, but include situations where people live and work in different places, rural residents have 'urban cottages', couples living partly together and partly in separate flats, children sharing their time between the homes of their divorced parents etc.

A necessary rethinking of strategies and policies towards more sustainable buildings, regions and urban areas must then be based on a comprehensive understanding of socio-cultural shifts in home cultures as well as on the recent physical transformations of urban living.

■  
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Grass-roofs, almost all over, and blending into nature? Here from Beitostølen, Norway. Photo: Egil Heggen, Avisva Valdres



Summer-house landscape on the west coast of Jutland in Denmark. Photo: Dieter Betz, SCANPIX

## Second homes in Denmark

In Denmark a second home means a summer cottage, preferably near the beach, or at least in the coastal zone. Inland houses and former farmhouses used for recreational purposes exist but the vast majority of Danish 'second homes' are situated in the coastal zone.

Denmark experienced its main summer cottage 'boom' in the 1960s. Until the early 1950s, the number of summer cottages was limited, and those that did exist were predominantly owned by people from the wealthier sections of society. The majority of summer cottages were, moreover, localised within travelling distance from Copenhagen, though every provincial town had, and today retains, its own area situated along the most attractive coastal stretches.

During the 1960s through to the beginning of the 1970s, when the private ownership of cars became commonplace and the prosperity of the population in

general increased, the number of cottages rose dramatically. For the most part these 'new' cottages were constructed as small wooden houses with only very basic amenities.

Today approximately half of Denmark's 200,000 summer cottages are situated in the Eastern part of the country, in the hinterland of Copenhagen. The Western coast of Jutland is however another important resort area.

The character of the areas designated for summer cottages reflects the fact that Denmark is densely populated as compared to the other Nordic Countries. This means that these areas are often heavily utilised and have a layout similar to areas with single family houses. — see map illustrations — Despite this similarity however, many such areas retain a rather more 'rustic' character with unpaved roads and with specific vegetation often very different from the

naturally occurring local types, typically coniferous trees and *Rosa Rogosa*.

### A 30-year breathing space

In 1977 a new national planning regulation was enacted in response to the booming growth of second homes witnessed since the 1960s. The regulation essentially prohibited further summer cottage developments in the coastal zone.

At that time it was foreseen that if the trend continued the coastline and coastal landscape would, in future, be totally dominated by summer cottages. The 1977 regulation can however also be seen as an early precursor of the EU Coastal Zone Directive and thus as a forerunner of the general drive towards integrated coastal zone management. The regulation was strictly enforced up to 2004 when minor new developments again became possible.

Since the early 2000s the price of summer cottages has more than doubled while many of the simple 1960s wooden cottages have been replaced by luxury houses suited to permanent habitation.

These price rises could be explained by the general trend in the property market which has seen permanently rising prices since late 1990s but also by the fact that the number of summer cottages has been fixed while the number of households, due to demographic changes, has grown.

**Living permanently in your cottage, or not?** During the intervening decades public debate on summer cottages has re-emerged several times where the question of living permanently in these ostensibly 'summer' cottages remains a perennial one. According to Danish law it is illegal to use your cottage for other than recreational purposes. The municipal authorities have some level of discretion in implementing this rule though their ability to do so remains quite limited.

Moreover, the fact that many of the traditional 'summer cottage' areas are now situated quite close to large urban areas puts significant pressure on both the municipalities and their citizens in respect of the conversion of summer cottages into normal single family houses.

The rationale for this regulation, in part, concerns the general planning objective which states that urban sprawl should be avoided, and partly also due to the specific Danish protocol to EU membership that prohibits foreign citizens from buying and owning summer cottages in Denmark. If, however, summer cottages can be used as permanent homes no reason remains it is argued by some for retaining the protocol.

Another aspect of the discussion concerns whether pensioners should have the right to use their cottages as permanent homes. This question has frequently been put forward in the context of the ongoing political debate. In 1992 rules giving pensioner's the right to live permanently in their summer cottages were introduced. These rules have, moreover, been loosened and amended a number of times since then.

The municipalities have, moreover, maintained a rather ambiguous attitude

on the question of pensioner's rights throughout this period. On the one hand, these 'summer cottage' areas could be viewed as potential urban areas and as harbouring the potential to attract more citizens to the municipality, while on the other, pensioners living permanently in their summer cottages may, potentially, see the municipality incurring a significant level of extra costs in relation to the supply of public services.

The municipalities retain responsibility for the question of whether summer cottages are used as permanent homes and, in addition, for the drawing up of an annual report for the Minister of the Environment. The latest reports show that, in total, some 17 000 cottages out of a total of more than 200 000 are currently used as permanent homes. Approximately half of these are used by pensioners.

**Only 5 000 new houses?**

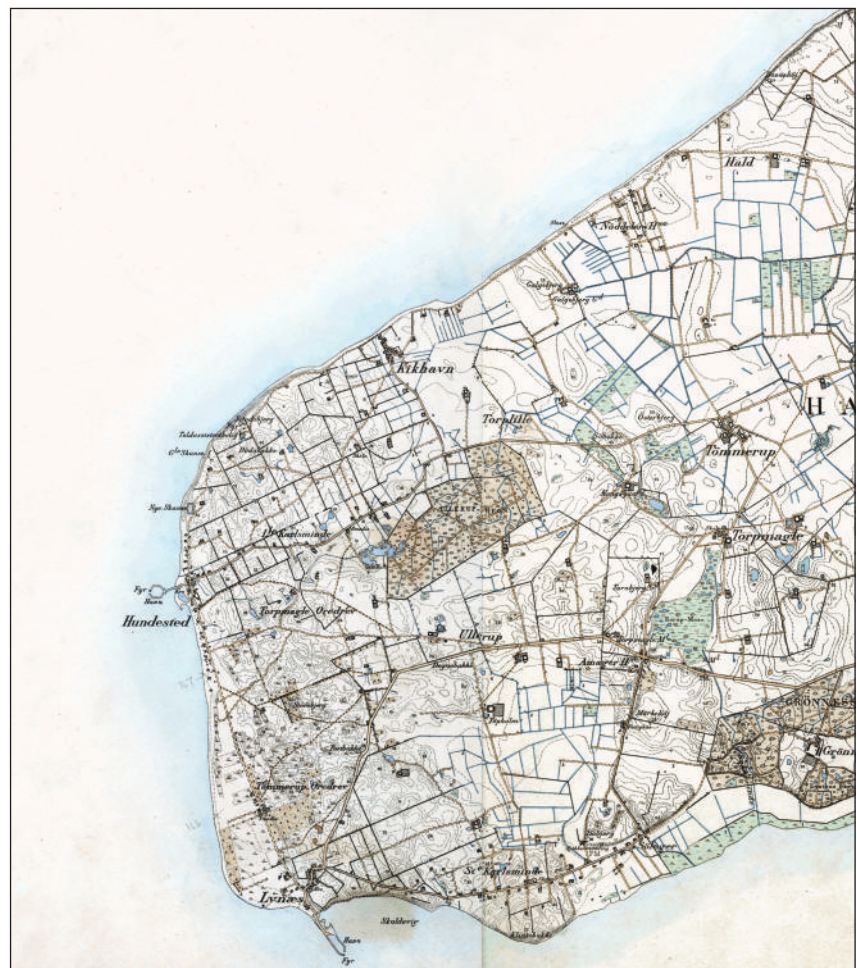
Another question emerging from the public debate is whether the 1977 restrictions on new cottage building should be liberalized. This question has often been raised by peripherally situated municipalities. The argument here being

that new summer cottages could impact the local and regional economy in a positive manner.

In 2004 an amendment to the Planning Law gave the Minister of the Environment the ability to grant 8,000 new plots for summer cottages. Hereafter a process followed where the Minister asked for proposals from the municipal level. A number of conditions had however to be respected by the municipalities if they wanted to gain access to the new building permits.

After a period of negotiation and a public hearing in 2005 the Minister proposed a new national planning regulation which enabled a total of 5,000 new summer cottages to be constructed in 33 different municipalities.

The public hearing however demonstrated the antagonistic level of public attitudes to the question. The National Society for Nature Conservation argued that the ban on new cottage construction should be continued, noting that vast tracts of the coastal zone had already been occupied by summer



Hundested, Zealand, in 1897. Map provided by www.kms.dk

cottages and that the provision for new areas would compromise a common Danish natural and recreational resource.

On the other hand a number of municipalities expressed their discontent with the conditions which followed on from the 2004 amendment stating that new cottages should be located behind existing cottages along the coastline and that no protected areas could be used for new cottages. A third condition, which was in fact ignored in many of the proposals from the municipalities, was that the local or regional economic impact of new cottages should be documented.

It can however be concluded that due in the main to the robust nature of Danish planning instruments utilised and to the general level of political will encountered at the national level designed to preserve the coastal zone, that it did – from the 1970s to the beginning of the 21st century - prove possible to preserve the Danish coastline from further demolition even in areas close to densely populated and urbanised zones.

A precondition for development in the coastal zone undoubtedly then remains the need for strong and centralised government regulation overseen by the Ministry of the Environment. Between 1974 and 2007, the previous counties had responsibility for regional planning and, in addition, formal responsibility for planning in the coastal zone. Even in this period however the state played a leading role in respect of the coastal zone and in Planning and other legal regulations in respect of summer cottages in Denmark: or from large entrepreneurial concerns. With the new administrative reform of 2007 formal planning responsibility for the coastal zone was assumed by the state. ■

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Hundested, Zealand, changed into summer-house country. This map is from 1994 and is provided by www.kms.dk

**Planning and other legal regulations in respect of summer cottages in Denmark:**

- The total area of Denmark was, in 1969, divided into three zones: Urban areas, areas for summer cottages and rural areas, - that means that summer cottage areas are the subject of a specific planning status
- This general planning regulation was followed by an act that prohibited the use of summer cottages except for recreational purposes
- In 1972 when Denmark entered the European Community a specific protocol was issued that allowed the country to prohibit foreign citizens from owning summer cottages in Denmark. The argumentation used at that time was that the Danish coastal zone was a very restricted resource and, as such, should be reserved for Danish citizens.
- In 1977 a national planning regulation was issued that prohibited the location of further summer cottages in coastal zones
- In 2004 a further amendment to the Planning Law gave the Minister of the Environment the ability to grant a small number of building permits for summer cottages to municipal authorities under certain guidance criteria.



The celebration of St. Hans (photo) is important for summer life in the Nordic countries. Photo: Henrik Thalbitzer

# Immigration and depopulation

Many politicians and administrators alike across the Nordic regions hope that immigration will help them to solve the problems associated with having an ageing population, a shrinking labour force, ongoing depopulation and the continuing out-migration of young people. In reality however while a burst of labour immigration to such rural and peripheral regions would, in theory, probably solve these problems such an occurrence is extremely unlikely to occur, at least in the vast majority of regions where the above-mentioned problems persist. Why is this so? “old” immigrants tend to cluster around the metropolitan areas and in major cities, while “new” immigrants head for the same regions. This allocation of immigrants is not optimal for the receiving countries.

During the last 10 years regional demographic imbalances have consolidated in the Nordic countries. The capital cities and major towns have increased their population significantly while sparsely populated areas have been

drained of people. Two out of three Nordic regions have thus seen a negative net domestic migration rate in recent years. Most of the Nordic capitals have a high rate of nativity which can, to some extent, be explained by a higher share of immigrants and a higher share of women of fertile age.

## uneven population development puts significant pressure on some parts of the service sector

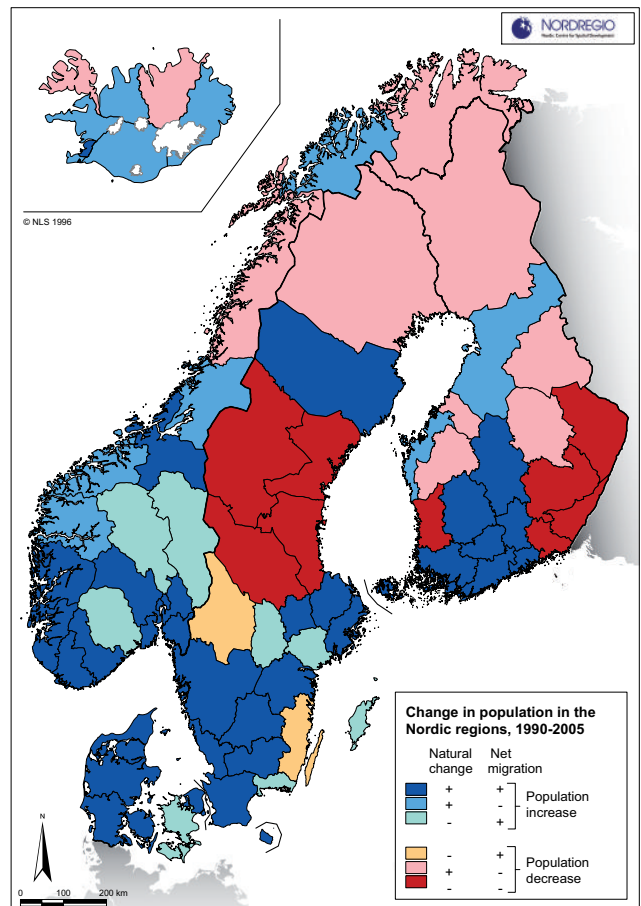
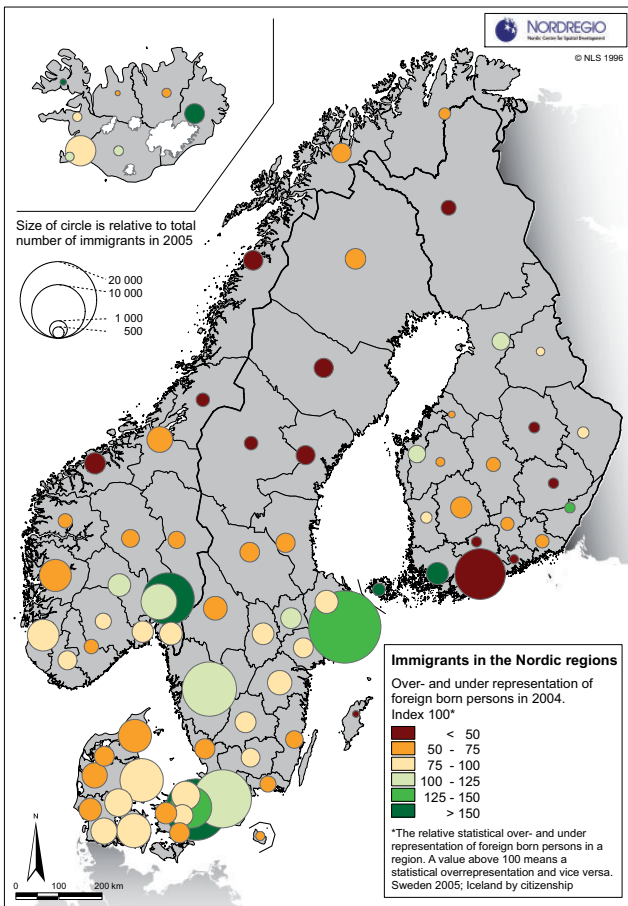
At the same time small and peripheral communities are steadily “greying”. Compared to the development in the inner parts of Finland and Sweden, where pensioners and persons in the upper working ages dominate the population, this “greying” in Danish and Norwegian peripheries is however relatively modest.

This uneven population development puts significant pressure on some parts of the service sector: the population must have reasonable access to e.g. elderly and

child care, medical and health care as well as schools whether or not they live in a metropolitan area or in the rural periphery. In addition public transport must function at an adequate level while the road system must be maintained across all regions.

The metropolitan-area population increase across the Nordic countries has created a situation where the demand for elderly and child care, medical and health care and schooling is higher in these areas than the available supply. In many Finnish and Swedish regions it is already difficult to find appropriate labour for e.g. elderly care or indeed for medical and health care positions more generally. This problem will only become more acute in future as more and more Nordic regions continue to “grey”.

On top of this, the topology and the large travel distances experienced in the sparsely populated parts of the Nordic countries mean that access to e.g. medical and health care will always remain limited – to be 100 km distant from the



nearest hospital makes it difficult to use medical services, particularly if the person concerned is elderly or has to rely on public transport. Without government subsidises from “richer” regions it would be impossible to maintain accessibility in these rural and peripheral areas. The question of central government subsidies for rural accessibility to services is however a ‘political’ and not a ‘clinical’ one and, as such, is not open to permanent resolution.

Since it is, in relative terms, easier to influence regional demographic development through migration than through changes in nativity and mortality rates, in-migration to these regions may appear to offer a solution to the trend towards “greying” and a shrinking population. By allocating a larger share of immigrants to these regions demographic pressure on metropolitan areas and larger cities, as well as peripheral areas, would, some argue, occur. Theoretically, while this may appear to be a wonderful idea, unfortunately, it does not work in reality.

### **the flow of immigrants does not favour the “greying” and peripheral regions**

In Sweden, 62% of all new immigrants entering the country settle in the three metropolitan counties (Stockholm, Skåne and Västra Götaland). About 35% of all immigrants to Norway settle in the Oslo area with an additional 9% in Hordaland and 9% in Rogaland. Varsinais-Suomi and Pirkanmaa attract 8% each of the immigrants to Finland, while the Uusimaa region attracts 36%. In Denmark, the Copenhagen area attracted about 35% and the Aarhus area 13% of all immigrants to Denmark. The capital region of Iceland attracts 53% while the East region a further 23% of all immigrants. This indicates that the flow of immigrants does not favour the “greying” and peripheral regions.

Looking at the immigrants (flow) is one way of analysing immigration. Another way is to look at the number of foreign-born persons in a country (stock). By

looking at the regional distribution of the total population and at the regional distribution of the foreign-born population it is possible to establish whether the foreign-born population is statistically over- or under-represented from a regional perspective.

The foreign-born population in Sweden is statistically over-represented in Stockholm, Skåne Västra Götaland and Västmanland, and in Norway they are statistically overrepresented in Akershus, Oslo and Buskerud. In Denmark the foreign-born population is statistically over-represented in only the Copenhagen area, while the foreign-born population in Finland is statistically over-represented in Uusimaa, Varsinais-Suomi, Etelä Karjala, Pohjanmaa and Åland.

In Iceland the foreign-born population is statistically highly over-represented in the East region, something that is undoubtedly a function of the building of heavy industries and power-stations in the area (See Journal of Nordregio No 2-07.), while, in addition, there is a small over-representation in the South, Southwest and Westfjord regions.

The underlying reason for the tendencies described above is that the low productive and unqualified industrial jobs, the jobs that labour immigrants traditionally pick up, have disappeared due to structural transformation of the Nordic economies over the last 30 years. Metropolitan areas and major cities, with an expanding service sector, have thus become more important for economic growth.

### **regional labour shortage can occur even though unemployment remains high**

Parallel to this process, the potential to substitute native labour with foreign immigrant labour has decreased. In the post-industrial society, labour and capital are complementary as compared to the industrial society where they substitute for each other. New technology and highly-skilled labour complement each other, which increases the segmentation process. This process is also regional in its

character since different regions are distinguished by different economic structures. As a result, a regional labour shortage can occur even though unemployment remains high, which, in turn, creates an inter-regional as well as an intra-regional mismatch on the labour market.

### **new immigration and settlement patterns will increase – not decrease – the already existing regional polarisation of the labour market**

What we are currently witnessing then is a situation where both refugees and labour immigrants head for the metropolitan areas and major cities of the Nordic countries – with one group targeting the low-skilled, marginally productive and unqualified jobs in the lower segment of the service sector and the other targeting high-skilled jobs.

There is then an obvious risk that the new immigration and settlement patterns will fuel – not alleviate – the already existing regional polarisation of the labour market if the mismatch on the labour market is further accentuated as a consequence of the regionally unequal distribution of jobs. This will then stimulate the concentration process once again rather than evening out the intra-regional concentration process. ■

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# EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT

## Relaunch and call for Articles!

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