

## The Expansion of Second Homes as a Policy Research and Development Issue: State of the Art

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The use of second homes has been an important expression of contemporary leisure/recreation-based lifestyles and has been a constitutive element of changing land use and spatial organization patterns. Butler (1998) claims that changes in rural areas, related to recreational motivated consumption are amongst the most significant restructuring urban-rural-relationship trends that have occurred over the last three decades. While this phenomenon has already quite evolved in countries such as Sweden and France, where policies for social tourism were defined early (Coppock, 1977; Halseth 2004; Wolfe, 1962), in most countries it has been synonymous to the Veblenian model of increased investments in and consumption of second homes as part of recent leisure class formation (Halseth 2004).

According to Halfacree and Boyle (1998), the second home phenomenon should be understood as a major shift in living and housing preferences and practices, rather than just an appendix to the traditional concept of “one home, one home area and one workplace”. Müller (2005) argues that second homes have become a part of the current complexity in contemporary mobility patterns. They increasingly challenge our present conception of “home” and, therefore, publicly provided social services. Ultimately, we become part-time residents in the city as well as in the countryside (Ericsson, Arnesen & Overvåg, 2005). At the 11th International Symposium on Society and Resource Management (2005, Östersund, Sweden), the notion of “second home” was examined, but in the literature conceptualizations that oppose secondary/seasonal to primary/permanent homes have prevailed, such as suggested by Tulik: “private dwelling temporarily used for leisure moments by persons that have their permanent residence in other place” (Tulik, 1995:21).

The expansion of second homes brought many new research issues on the agenda (Hall and Müller, 2004) and indeed embodies various interrelated dimensions such as: type of residents – nationals, emigrants, foreigners; property status – ownership, rent; time – weekend, seasonal, shared with first residence; location - peri-urban/rural areas, summer resorts; purpose - leisure, recreation, work; origin - first homes that became second, built for this purpose; type of buildings - new constructions, old rural houses (Roca & Leitão, 2006).

However, although it increasingly represents an important socio-cultural, socio-economic, environmental and, ipso facto, a land use and territorial development policy and planning issue, the phenomenon of second homes has been underrepresented in geographical research, both theoretical and applied. In fact, the proper notion of “second home” as an analytical category suffers from conceptual-methodological limitations, as evidenced in research attempting to grasp the complexity of driving forces, features and effects of this phenomenon in a wide variety of

alternative expressions such as “seasonal homes”, “vacation homes”, “retirement homes” “residential tourism”, or “housing developments for tourism”. Ericsson (2006) proposes “recreational home” as a fruitful expression since it stems from the concept of recreation and leisure as the most important motives and activities related to these homes. In contrast to travelling tourists, the users of recreational homes are characterised by recurrence to, and frequently private investments in, one given place or locality.

The multiplicity of meanings implicit in all these expressions reflects the need for thorough conceptual-methodological clarifications and orientations. For example, Halfacree and Boyle (1998), Ilbery (1998) and Sjøquist (2003) consider that second homes should be studied within a broader context, that is, of the “post productivist countryside”, where agricultural land use have lost grounds to more profitable uses such as urban developments, recreational facilities and infrastructures. The idea is that a recreational version of urban sprawl, especially by means of second homes has in itself become an important agent of change in many rural areas (Galster et al. 2000). However, what actual impacts such a development may cause on social services, infrastructures, land use, economic activities, mobility etc. has not been systematically discussed yet. Based on the experience from southern Spain, where second home expansion resulted in the exhaustion of urban land, environmental and landscape degradation, urban infrastructure and social service deficits, declining quality of urban life, increasing urban insecurity, etc., Aledo and Mazón (2004) insist that locational factors need to be preserved by introducing a new model of second home expansion, to be built within the framework of sustainable development policies. In Portugal, the expansion of second homes has already taken great proportions: in the 1990's, the number of second homes increased 40%, so that in 2001 corresponded to 20% of all dwellings, thus challenging the sustainability of spatial organization and management policies and practice, altering the identity features of places and regions and turning the second home users into ever more important local development stakeholders (Roca, 2004; Roca & Roca, 2006).

Scientific interpretations of the expansion of second homes in Portugal have been lacking. Apart from Cravidão (1989; 1989a) who studied this phenomenon among the elites of Coimbra and in mountain areas, Santos (1993) who did a study of two summer resorts and Caldeira (1995) who studied this phenomenon in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon, the national literature lacks more recent in-depth studies based on field research.

In the National Strategy for Tourism Development (2006), the Portuguese Government recognizes the strategic importance of the second home phenomenon as a factor of regional/local development although, in the National Programme for Spatial Planning (2006) recommends controlling its expansion because of its effects on land use and landscapes. However, local governments need guidelines, methods and instruments for the integration of second home expansion in spatial development programs and land use plans, based on an empirically established understanding of driving forces, features and effects of this phenomenon at municipal and inter-municipal levels. New research efforts are needed to pave the way in this direction.

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