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To cite this article: Winfried Ellingsen & Berit Therese Nilsen (2021) Emerging geographies in Norwegian mountain areas – Densification, place-making and centrality, Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography, 75:2, 101-113, DOI: [10.1080/00291951.2021.1887347](https://doi.org/10.1080/00291951.2021.1887347)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00291951.2021.1887347>



Published online: 22 Feb 2021.



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## Emerging geographies in Norwegian mountain areas – Densification, place-making and centrality

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### ABSTRACT

In the mountainous hinterland of Norwegian cities new forms of habitation are emerging through mobility associated with second-home concentrations on mountain slopes. The guiding principle of this tangible spatial development is densification. The development is caused by a number of external and internal actors, each with their own agenda, geographical scale and trajectory. The objective of the article is to examine how various approaches to place-making and centre development affect and shape three case municipalities with a significant temporary population: Ringebru, Lesja and Røyrvik. Assemblage theory is employed as an analytical perspective, as the case municipalities are subject to various relations of exteriority. Based on interviews with relevant stakeholders and document analysis, the authors present the municipalities' different backgrounds and contexts, as well as relevant planning priorities and practices, and discuss how these lead to highly different types of place-making. The main finding is that while subject to the same national regulations and market forces, the case municipalities' approaches to local development have differed quite substantially. The authors conclude that different constellations of centrality constitute an important element in the municipalities' place-making strategies and that more empirical studies are needed to illustrate how local practices can reinforce spatial distinctiveness.



### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 24 October 2019

Accepted 3 February 2021

### EDITORS

Knut Hidle, Catriona Turner

### KEYWORDS

assemblage theory, centre development, densification, place-making, second homes

Ellingsen, W. & Nilsen, B.T. 2021. Emerging geographies in Norwegian mountain areas – Densification, place-making and centrality. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift–Norwegian Journal of Geography* Vol. 75, 101–113. ISSN 0029-1951.

### Introduction

Second homes have become the mainstay of many rural municipalities globally (Gallent et al. 2005; McIntyre et al. 2006; Williams & Patten 2006), particularly in the Nordic countries (Flognfeldt 2006; Peräinän 2006; Bendix & Löfgren 2007; Marjavaara 2007; Müller 2008; 2010; Farstad et al. 2009; Overvåg 2011; Rye & Berg 2011; Ellingsen & Hidle 2013).<sup>1</sup> Mobility exacerbates and accelerates urban sprawl (Overvåg 2011) and second homes undoubtedly represent one of the main urban–hinterland transactions, facilitated by materialities (e.g. roads), personal and/or household resources, work-life organisation, and cultural perceptions of 'the good life' (Arnesen et al. 2012; Ellingsen & Hidle 2013; Pitkänen 2017). Thus, places are tied into networks of connections, which calls into question the scalar logics of sedentarist organisation. In this developing situation, there can be seen a societal

evolution whereby a significant share of households' command over means, space and time supports a multi-house and multihome lifestyle. In this lifestyle, home functions are spatially distributed, prototypically between an urban first house (e.g. for work life, daily life) and a second house in the rural hinterland (for recreation). The use of second homes represents a circulation, a recurrent movement (moving between) that is distinct from the traditional understanding of counter-urbanisation (Halfacree 2001), whereby people migrate from urban to rural communities (moving to) and the fleeting gaze of tourism (moving through).

The ability to reconquer the countryside was manifested in Norway after the 1950s, based on ancestry and traditional practices of transhumance, facilitated by the advent of automobility, structural incentives for homeownership, and lubricated by the oil-based economy (Langdalen 1965; Löfgren 1999;

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<sup>1</sup>While we recognize that the notion of 'second homes' may be misleading, the term remains well established. The colloquial use of word 'cabin' (*hytte* in Norway) is widespread but refers to traditional forms of second homes.

Flognfeldt 2006). Approximately 80% of the population in Norway lives in urban areas and the number of people living in remote places is either dwindling or constant (Statistisk sentralbyrå 2020). Rural communities continue to lament the loss of large parts of the population to educational and job opportunities in the cities. However, this countermovement to the amenity-rich countryside, whether by the sea or in the mountains, seems to compensate the rural municipalities, at least in economic terms (Ellingsen 2017).

In recent decades, several changes have occurred pertaining to the use of second homes. Today, second homes in Norway are built to the same standards as urban homes and therefore represent a considerable investment in the hinterland of urban centres. In a recent study of the increasing use of second homes, Ericsson & Flognfeldt (2018) suggest summative stays of over 60 days annually. In the mountainous areas, between 2.5 and 3.5 second homes are being built annually for every house built for permanent settlement in Norway (Arnesen et al. 2010). A sizable portion of the Norwegian population benefits from the developments: c.26% of the population in terms of ownership and c.50% in terms of access (Farstad et al. 2009). As culturally meaningful practices (Hidle & Ellingsen 2011), both ownership and use of second homes can be interpreted as a commitment to rural municipalities. The scope of the population movement and the massive investments generated, which render the otherwise unprofitable outback in the mountain areas desirable places, is transforming the geographies of the hinterland. While second homes used to be dispersed over the mountain slopes, we have witnessed a trend in recent decades of second homes being collocated in settlements; this is the case for almost half of all second homes (Statistisk sentralbyrå 2018). The transformation is palpable, as custom-built concentrations of habitation close to ski lifts and trails are segregated from the original settlements located in the valleys.

Planning and producing the new 'slope villages' and other more dispersed second-home areas involves a number of external actors, as well as internal ones: landowners, developers, building companies, banks, second-home homeowners, national and regional authorities, and not least the municipalities, all of which have their own agendas, geographical scales and trajectories. Against this backdrop, in this article we examine how various approaches to place-making and centre development affect and shape three case municipalities with a significant number of second homes: Ringebru, Lesja and Røyrvik. We present a critical view of the 'relations of exteriority' in second-home development and how the municipalities have attempted to reterritorialise

second homes as they plan for and develop their local centres. We transfer the issue of centralisation to rural municipalities, questioning whether the second-home hubs are becoming dominant local features that attract services and activities, as well as municipal strategies to direct the development.

The purpose of this article is to contribute to further our understanding of how various approaches to place-making and centre development affect and shape communities today and possibly in the future. The purpose of the article aligns with Lysgård's point about the need to 'study the mobility of policies in conjunction with how spatial development policy is anchored in and produced through local practices' and how it produces different places, centres, and place-development practices (Lysgård 2019, 10). As relations of exteriority pertaining to national regulations and market forces play a major role in change (Hidle 2019), we focus on assemblage theory as a relevant analytical framework and then present our empirical investigation of the case municipalities.

### Place-making and centre development in mountain municipalities

Massey (2005) argues for place being open, as a temporary constellation and event when and/or where a multitude of trajectories (both social and natural) come together. While this 'throwntogetherness' (Massey 2005) might initially appear to have associations with random processes, place is certainly more than 'an accidental coming together of many different flows in one location' (Cresswell 2015, 108). Places are incorporated into wider social, economic and political trajectories that may be mediated by local authorities (Woods 2016). In Norwegian mountain municipalities, the trajectories comprise the state and regional administration that seek to implement coherent policies concerning environmental preservation in the form of wild reindeer management, as well as planning practices. Private actors seek the commercial privatisation of the outback and municipalities try to negotiate the various attempts at place-making under the mantle of demographic stability and place attractiveness. Thus, the inherent uniqueness of place is moderated by trajectories that seek conformity and coherence. However, place can also be conceived as a 'concrete universal', which is operative in contingent circumstances but cannot exist without concrete manifestations (Casey 1996). In other words, place is often a result of intentional and planned actions, and these spatial configurations are formed through the relationships of materiality, meaning and practices (Lysgård 2019). To reconcile trajectories operating at

various scales in conjunction with materiality, an attractive approach to understanding how places are reconfigured is assemblage theory.

Assemblage theory is often used to ‘emphasise emergence, multiplicity and indeterminacy, and connects to a wider redefinition of the socio-spatial in terms of the composition of diverse elements into some form of provisional socio-spatial form’ (Anderson & McFarlane 2011, 124). The components that comprise social entities can be analysed in terms of two dimensions or axes: material–expressive and processes of territorialisation–deterritorialisation (DeLanda 2006). Any organisation within institutional hierarchies or governance constructs are assemblages of different materials (e.g. bodies, buildings, roads, technologies), as well as linguistic and symbolic expressions of legitimacy and solidarity. Expressive components, such as municipal documents, are influenced by the physical elements and influence the perception of an assemblage through processes of coding and decoding. Material and expressive components may be part of different assemblages.

Concerning the second axis (territorialisation–deterritorialisation), assemblages are subject to processes of territorialisation that give them form and shape. While not necessarily in a literal sense, in this article territorialisation addresses the sectionalisation of places, municipalities, regions and states into actual territories (Woods 2016). Every municipality and state attempts to stabilise its territory and increase internal solidarity. Expressions, not at least in the form of documents, may consolidate territorialisation processes and expose underlying ideologies. By contrast, deterritorialisation processes blur spatial boundaries and create heterogeneity. These processes, whether initiated by technological development (i.e. communication technologies, mobilities, the state through reform processes, internationally through environmental pacts, and through changing markets) are transforming the ways we live our lives. Thus, an assemblage can have forces that try to stabilise it and components that work in the opposite direction.

Furthermore, assemblages are characterised by ‘relations of exteriority’ and are thus defined by their external interactions rather than by their internal components. Furthermore, components of one assemblage can be incorporated into other assemblages in which its interactions may be different (DeLanda 2006). This implies that assemblages are dynamic and emergent. As an analytical framework, assemblage theory is highly relevant, not least due to its focus on territorialisation.

According to Woods (2016), decoding rural places as assemblages is a straightforward exercise with

landscape, buildings, livestock, and artefacts as its material components and aesthetic qualities and emotional attachments as expressive components. Territorialisation is expressed through, for example, settlement form, work, community, and inheritance practices and structures. However, the contingencies of these practices are subject to various relations of exteriority and deterritorialisation: ‘The relations of exteriority of a rural place thus include its interactions with local towns and with the wider region, migration flows and commuting patterns, economic transactions and power relations to centres of political authority’ (Woods 2016, 33). To this, we can add translocal activities of leisure mobility from urban areas to rural mountain municipalities, which, given the scope and intensity of these practices, is hugely significant for the restructuring of rural places in Norway.

The separation of second-home villages from the original settlements, which is a typical feature in Norwegian mountain municipalities, is just one tangible deterritorialisation process. Two imperatives initially led to densified collocated second-home areas in Norway. The first related to the work of the mountain planning team (*fjellplanteam*) in the 1960s,<sup>2</sup> which advocated second-home concentrations, and the second imperative relates to service efficiency and technology, such as water management, broadband access and road access. In both cases, municipalities have used area planning as an important instrument in directing development. This tendency has been reinforced by current sustainability ideals in urban planning and place-making, which has affected inhabited rural areas and second-home areas.

The exteriority of relations of rural municipalities is affected by more general political and knowledge-based planning principles and processes. In Norway, general planning principles and ideas derive to a large extent from urban planning (Lysgård 2015). National and regional policy guidelines specify certain priorities, such as increasing the compactness of already built-up areas and further developing existing centres rather than establishing new ones, as well as more general references to sustainability and participation in planning procedures (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet 2018). With a decline in agriculture and a focus on new income opportunities in second-home areas, the demand for service provisions has increased. Together with planning prerogatives, centre development has taken on a new meaning in rural municipalities (Danson & de Souza 2012). As a concrete manifestation, ‘centre’ commonly depicts

<sup>2</sup>The *Fjellplanteam* was established by the government to suggest planning strategies for mountain areas in Norway.

concentrations of people, habitation, and concomitantly the development of a variety of functions, transactions and connections. Centres and peripheries emerge through dynamic processes (Kühn 2015) and the concept can be extended beyond the physical location to include political, social, economic, or technological aspects. Increasingly, the densification of second-home areas can lead to the establishment of segregated leisure centres, some as individualised agglomerations and some as functional centres in their own right.

### Methodological approach

We employ assemblage theory in our understanding of policy construction and interpretation based on empirical material ranging from municipal documents (area plans, land-use strategies, business strategies, municipal agreements) to reports, as well as public statistics, and policies. We used a number of interviews, both individual and group interviews to investigate how, in each of the three case municipalities, central actors who were involved in local politics, planning and implementing policies experienced the situation and argued the case for their opinions and choices. The participants from the municipalities were mayors, councillors, and representatives from the planning, business, agriculture, and forestry departments. In addition, a number of interviews were held with local residents who were affected by the same policies and politics, including participants from second-home owner associations, the Sami population (in Røyrvik), local businesses, and other participants whom we deemed were relevant in each of the municipalities.

Through the variety of viewpoints obtained during the interviews, we aimed for a comprehensive understanding of what characterised the situation in the case municipalities, what the participants saw as the main challenges, and how they aimed to meet those challenges. A total of 19 qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted, transcribed and analysed. We conducted the interviews between June and September 2018, each with a duration of between 45 minutes and two hours.

### The cases

We present three cases from the mountain region of Norway: the municipalities of Ringebu, Lesja and Røyrvik (Fig. 1).<sup>3</sup> On the fringes of Europe, Norway is a sparsely populated country, but the places presented in this study can be considered peripheral even in a

Norwegian setting. To give an example, Røyrvik Municipality has a population density of 0.3 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (Statistisk sentralbyrå 2021a). The three case municipalities have in common that second homes outnumber homes inhabited by the registered population (Statistisk sentralbyrå 2021a; 2021b; 2021c). This situation can pose challenges in planning for and dealing with what may be termed a ‘mobile population’ (Hall 2015; Ellingsen 2017). The cases illustrate that the municipalities’ degree of centralisation or urbanised form, as well as their approaches to place-making and centre development, differ based on local contexts and the handling of relations of exteriority. Further, our data clearly demonstrate how similar or identical policies can result in very different place-making strategies, which in this article is illustrated by the variety of centre developments in the three cases. Thus, there is a need for relevant empirical studies that illustrate how local practices can reinforce spatial distinctiveness.

### Ringebu Municipality

Ringebu Municipality, in the county of Innlandet, is located in the valley Gudbrandsdal, approximately midway between Oslo and Trondheim (Figs. 1 and 2). It is the fifth biggest second-home municipality in the mountains of Norway. The majority of the second-home owners are registered in the Greater Oslo Region with a commuting distance of 3 hours (Ellingsen & Arnesen 2018). The municipality has two traditional settlements in the valley, of which Vålebrua is the main one and is the administrative and commercial centre. Registered permanent population numbers have remained stable (Table 1) but the population is ageing. Albeit small, Ringebu town has been planned in an urban fashion with a grid system. Today, much of the centre is pedestrianised, with coffee shops, an alcohol store, a sausage maker that is famous in Norway (Annis), and several shops that cater for the needs of the inhabitants, including the second-home population. In 2011, the town received a prize for its urban environment, an award usually restricted to cities. The zoning plan for the town has been in effect since the late 19th century. Nevertheless, in 2010, municipal politicians declared the town a ‘village’, which shows that the urban–rural dichotomy has become unhinged.

The main areas for second homes are Venabygdsfjellet and Kvitfjell (Fig. 1). Venabygdsfjellet is the traditional location for second homes and some cabins have been in use since the 1940s. It became one of the model areas for the mountain planning team in 1965,

<sup>3</sup>For a definition of mountain regions and mountain municipalities, see Arnesen et al. 2010.

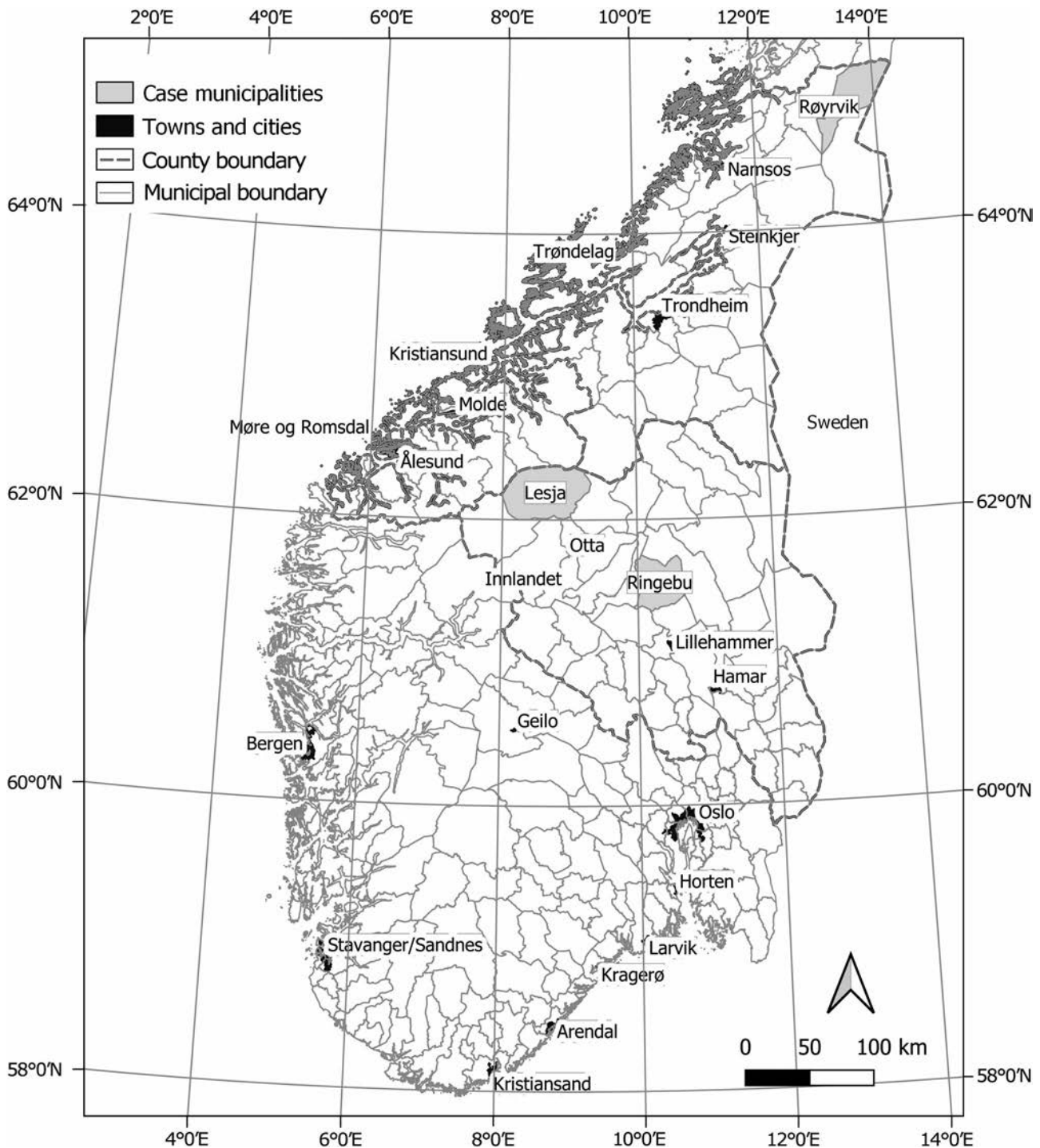


Fig. 1. Location of case municipalities in Norway

the effects of which still resonate, as they determined the transition from dispersed single cabins to second-home concentrations with uninhabited recreational areas surrounding them. In addition, the mountain planning team considered the economic consequences of the model area a just economic distribution between landowners who could sell plots for development and those who held land for recreational purposes without

reimbursement. This question is still highly relevant today.

Approximately one-third of the second homes in Ringebu Municipality are situated on Venabygdsfjellet, many of them are ageing buildings without amenities or are of lower standard than custom-built second homes. Upgrading to higher standard is the order of the day, which provides work for local craftspersons.

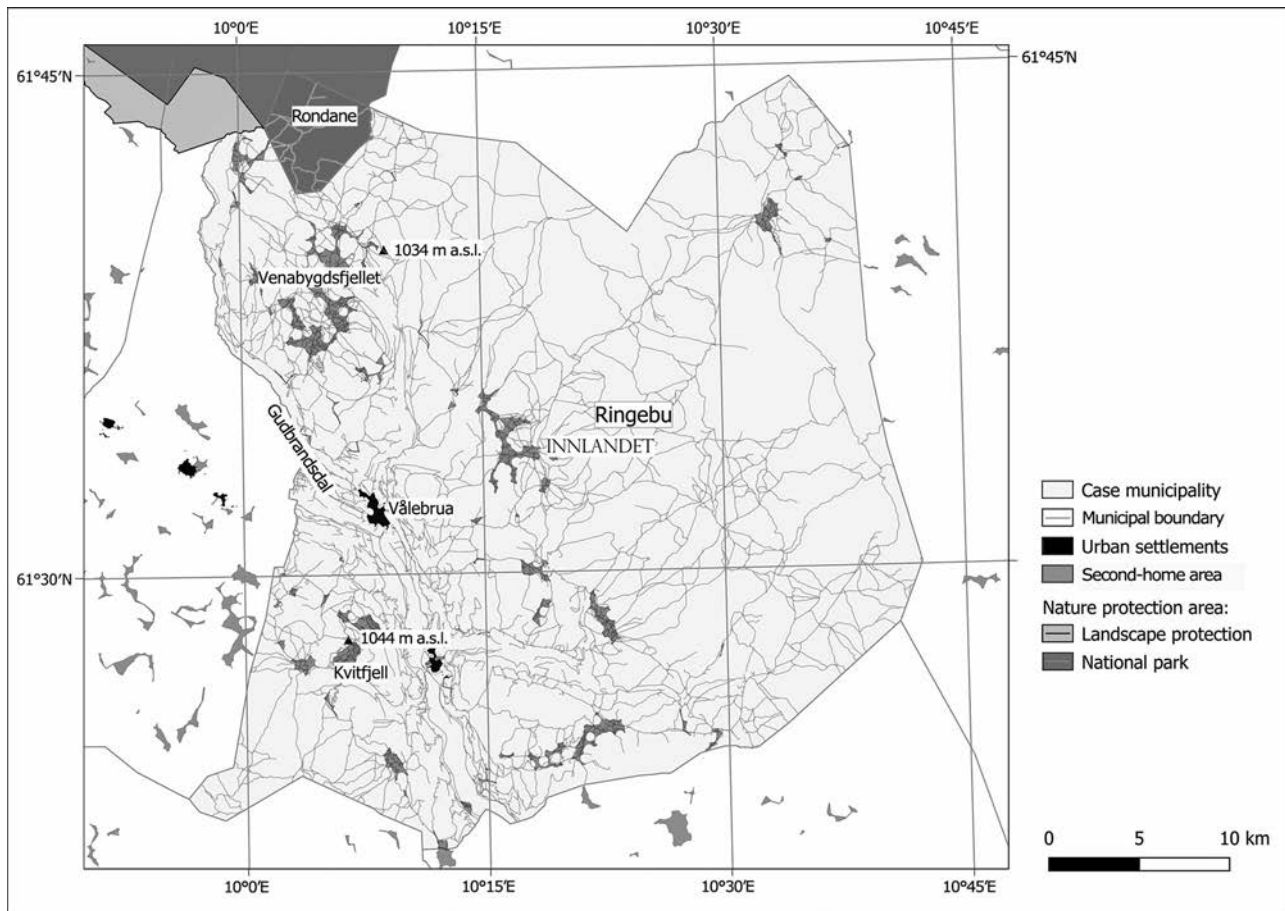


Fig. 2. Ringebu Municipality, Norway

The municipality initially wanted to open up a new area for second homes on the lower side of Venabygdsfjellet but the County Governor – a representative of the state – challenged the decision by referring to state laws on natural diversity. The argument was less about the rather insignificant footprint of second homes of 0.36% of the total national area (Arnesen et al. 2018) than about the traffic generated by skiers. In this respect, the intertwining of different trajectories and geographical scales is apparent. While the state is bound by international treaties and obligations to impose restrictions, the municipality has highlighted its own efforts over decades to increase the number of reindeer and restrict traffic (Mayor of Ringebu Municipality).

Kvitfjell, which was promoted by the Winter Olympics in 1994, is now the main area for second homes in

Ringebu Municipality. Area planning in the municipality has a 12-year perspective for opening up new territories for second homes. According to a representative of the municipal planning division there is a separate development plan for Kvitfjell, which implies that ‘it is much easier to regulate second homes speedily’ – approximately three years from start-up to implementation. By contrast, elsewhere in the municipality planning practices may be considerably prolonged due to opposition based on the need for soil conservation and reindeer management, among other reasons. As a strategy, increasing densification of second homes on Kvitfjell is welcomed by municipalities and developers alike, as it ensures the use of less space for more profit.

Furthermore, there is a distinction between the two second-home areas regarding the ‘power to develop’.

Table 1. Population of the case municipalities Ringebu, Lesja and Røyrvik in the years 2014–2017 (Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2020)

Municipality	Ringebu				Lesja				Røyrvik			
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Registered permanent population</b>	4459	4459	4462	4502	2076	2059	2055	2048	498	475	469	469
<b>Second homes (all categories)</b>	3754	3775	3829	3907	1929	1932	1989	2019	385	390	395	405
<b>Estimate, annual residents</b>	6372	6347	6377	6456	3041	3025	3050	3058	691	670	667	672

In the traditional location, Venabygdsfjellet, individual landowners have approached the municipality with suggestions for which part of the area to develop for second homes. By contrast, on Kvittfjell big developers contact local landowners directly and sign contracts. Avoiding conflict eases the developers' relationships with the municipality, as the law requires developer agreements. An interviewed planning officer contended 'it is quite usual in smaller municipalities that politicians in particular accept everything that developers or landowners come up with because it is positive for the municipality to develop.' However, the municipality currently engages three planning officers in an attempt to ensure active spatial management in defining the areas to be developed for second homes.

In addition to planning for second homes, Ringebu Municipality has other priorities. According to the mayor, the municipality is strategically committed to centre development in the original settlements, particularly Ringebu. Increased numbers of second homes and increased centre development are seen as mutually dependent, as commercial development would be impossible without recurrent visitors. Although the main issue for second-home owners is the experience of nature, attractiveness of the centre is a viable strategy, not least to compete with other second-home municipalities.

### Lesja Municipality

Lesja Municipality lies in the northern part of the county of Innlandet (Figs. 1 and 3). It is an extensive mountain municipality with a small and decreasing population (Kommunal Rapport 2019). Agriculture has been the mainstay of the local economy but the building of second homes and provision of services to them have become equally important. Much of the area (75%) is protected, thus restricting further development (Lesja kommune 2019). The municipality does not have a physical centre that would attract visitors for prolonged stays or serve as a meeting point. Therefore, the municipality has aimed at developing its six hamlets.

The notion of centrality is most relevant for the main second-homes area at Bjarli, on the outskirts of the municipality, close to the county boundary with Møre og Romsdal (Fig. 3). Since the 1970s, Bjarli has been developed from agricultural hamlet to a major tourism and second-home destination. The main tourism businesses at Bjarli have always been in the hands of external actors, particularly those from urban centres in Møre og Romsdal, where most of the second-home owners are registered. Neither the municipality nor local interests have any influence over ownership

changes in vital infrastructures at Bjarli (Hagen 2003). Bjarli has a railway station, petrol station, tourist information office, a supermarket with a post office, and a Røros-inspired pedestrianised street (Vetlegrenda handlegate) lined with wooden houses, shops, cafes, and bars; there is also an airport for small aircraft. In many ways, Bjarli is a self-contained centre, independent of the municipality.

The ownership structure, with many small forest owners who wanted to realise profits by selling plots, called for municipal intervention, and therefore the municipality decided early on that second-home development could take place in the north and west of the municipality, and would be restricted in other areas. The regulation of second homes that was implemented in the 1980s and 1990s led to higher densities of second homes in certain areas. This municipal strategy of focusing intervention on natural resources while sparing much of the landscape resonated well with state authorities, thus avoiding conflict, in a manner similar to that in Ringebu. According to the mayor of Lesja, second homes occupied a mere 0.07% of the municipality's area in 2018.

Municipal planning strategies involve a review of planning reserves in every election period, which is supposed to reflect spatial requirements. This has been set at 1500 units in the present development plan, representing a 100% overcapacity in relation to expected needs (70 units annually), which is more than double the amount of registered building activity in recent years. The justification for this 'potentiality planning' is industrial development, which particularly supports the existing cluster of construction and services companies and is part of the municipality's strategic planning to stabilise demographic development. The municipality aims to channel the expansion of second-home areas towards existing infrastructure, which in practice implies densification of second homes in existing areas.

Spatial planning in Lesja Municipality is based on a seemingly contradictory combination of concentration and dispersal. Concentration has been advocated for second-home areas in the form of densification around existing infrastructure, while the rest of the municipality, with its six hamlets, remains in a state of dispersal. The mayor of Lesja was adamant that 'this is the intended policy of Lesja Municipality. We want dispersed settlements and dispersed development.' The development in Bjarli, which is commercial and leisure hub mainly for second-home residents in the municipality, has long been outsourced to external stakeholders, with wealth creation following the same route. The lack of competence and personnel in spatial planning, though partly compensated by networking



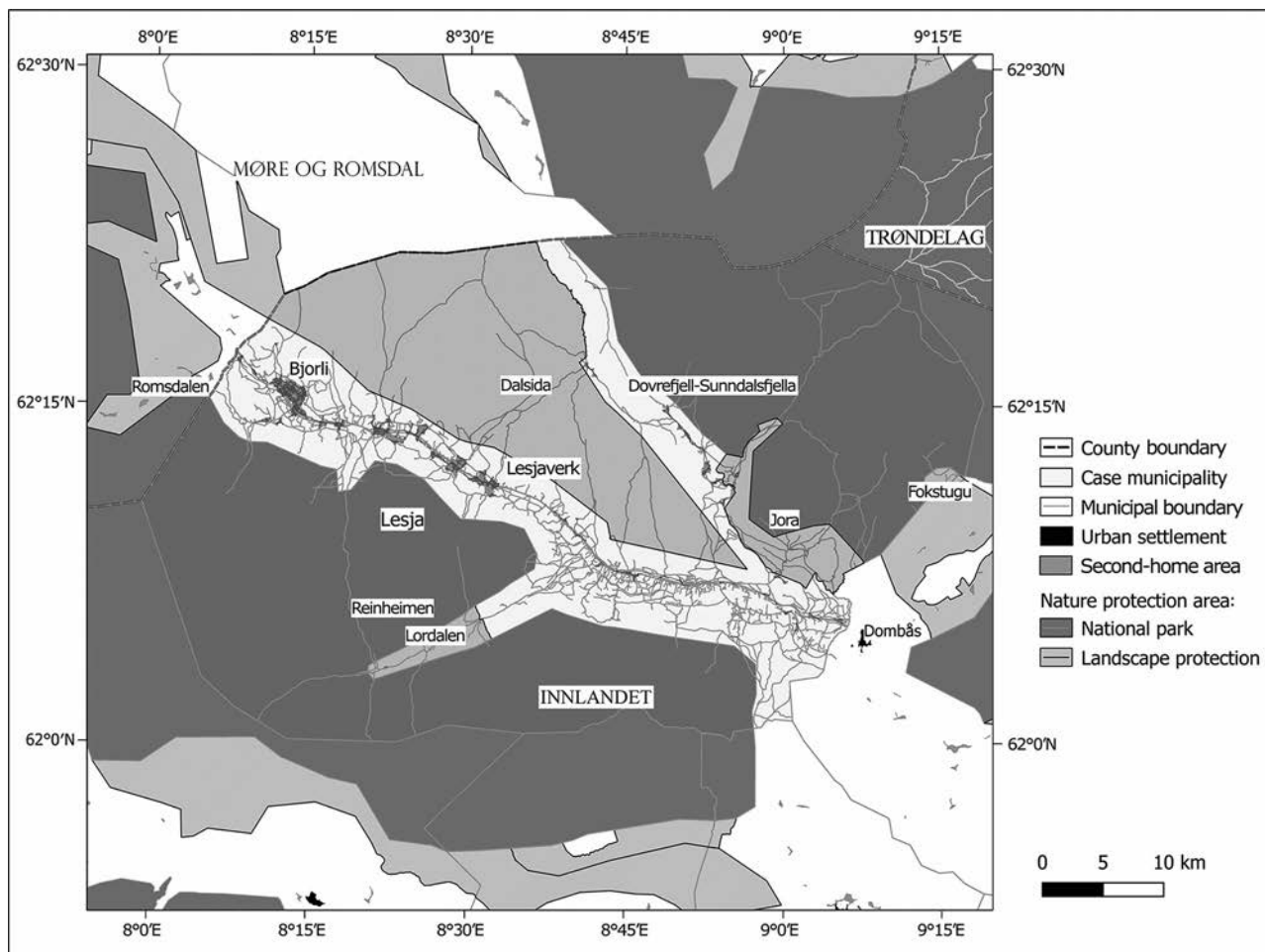


Fig. 3. Lesja Municipality, Norway

regionally, weakens the municipality's ability to control development. Thus, apart from general planning directions, planning for second homes is firmly in the hands of private stakeholders: 'External developers accrue plots, regulate, build and vanish' (Utviklingsjef (head of development), Lesja Municipality). It is not unusual for developers, backed by financial institutions, to present their own plans that have been prepared by hired planning consultants. However, strategic area planning is under the control of the municipality, such that wealth creation and conservation plans do not come into conflict.

### Røyrvik Municipality

Røyrvik is the northernmost of the three case municipalities (Figs. 1 and 4). The municipality is located in the far north of the county of Trøndelag, at the foot of the mountain Børgefjell, which borders Sweden. With a registered population of less than 500 inhabitants in an area of 1585 km<sup>2</sup>, most of which is more than 300 m a.s.l., Røyrvik has one of the smallest populations,

not only in the county but also nationally (Store norske leksikon 2021). In 2020, only 1% of the municipal area was populated (Røyrvik kommune 2020, 5).

Børgefjell National Park spans the boundary between the counties of Nordland and Trøndelag (the park in Nordland is not shown in Fig. 4), and its most southern part in Røyrvik Municipality. Most leisure and tourist activities in the municipality take place in the park area. The winter season dominates, with the ski resort Børgefjellsenteret (English translation: Børgefjell National Park Centre) serving as a hub for activities. Most of Røyrvik's second homes are dispersed and primarily owned by locals. Many have been built by landowners on their own land to facilitate activities such as hunting and fishing. Consequently, they have not been planned by the municipality, nor has the municipality been involved beyond providing applicants with building permits. The type of second homes that the municipality, landowners and business community currently focus on in their policies and planning documents are collocated settlements. The major collocated settlement in Røyrvik is in the border zone of the national park.

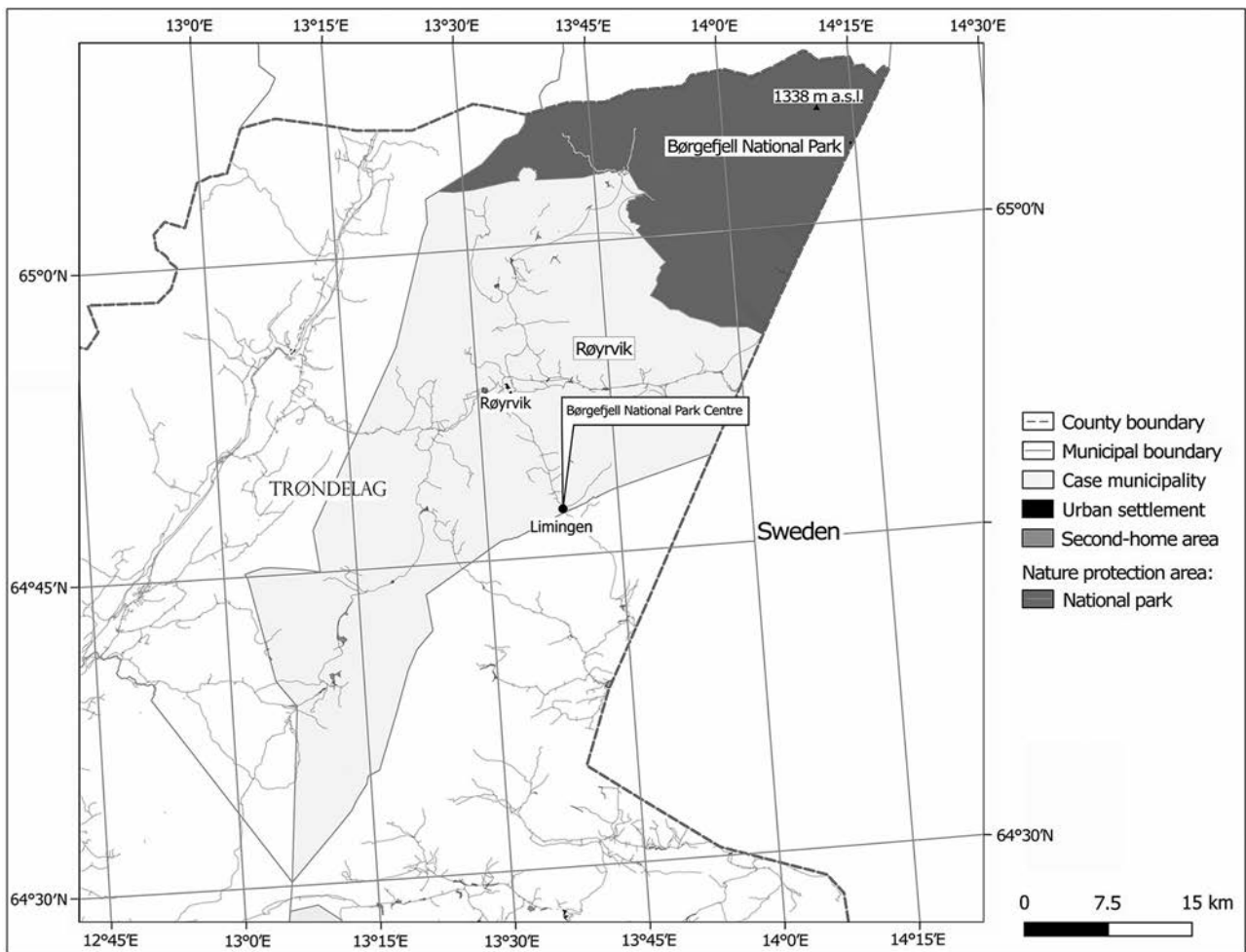


Fig. 4. Røyrvik Municipality, Norway

However, the number of second homes there is small (almost invisible on the map in Fig. 4). The settlement was partly financed through a state innovation company (Innovation Norway), which offered to pay some second-home owners' debt, and to give VAT exemption and grants as incentives for the second-home owners to use their second homes as holiday lets when they themselves were not occupying them and thus contribute to an increased use of the ski resort.

In addition to individual houses, many of which are farm buildings, permanent homes in Røyrvik Municipality are collocated in one settlement, which was a practical solution for the mining company that established the settlement close to Røyrvik centre in the 1970s. Røyrvik's mining history and the central role of the mining company is emphasised locally and cited to explain a lack of 'entrepreneurial spirit' (Namdal Regionråd n.d.). The mining company not only operated the mine but also took responsibility for local infrastructure, as well as offering goods and services. In this respect, Røyrvik can be seen as a typical mining

community, with few initiatives rewarding innovation and entrepreneurship (Nilsen 2019). Instead, local industry can be said to be characterised by path dependency (Karlsen & Isaksen 2008), whereby established industries are continued, and by lock-in, whereby the prioritising of the same industries stands in the way of new ideas (Dale 2004). Historically, relations of exteriority have characterised Røyrvik Municipality.

Considering the very low number of permanent inhabitants in Røyrvik, margins are tight for ensuring a viable society. In 2020, the number of detached houses was 225, while the registered number of second homes was 405 (Statistisk sentralbyrå 2021a). If it is estimated that each second home has on average three regular users for 60 days per year, the second-home population in Røyrvik constitutes a significant factor for the municipality. Most of the non-local second-home owners in Røyrvik live 2–3 hours driving time away and are primarily from the coastal areas of the northern part of Trøndelag. They represent a mature age segment and were described by the interviewees in Røyrvik as a

competent group representing an important resource for the municipality. The question of how second-home owners can contribute to and influence development in Røyrvik is a highly relevant topic, and particularly the survival of the grocery store and its product range is explained by the presence of the second-home owner segment in the municipality.

Spatial planning has been a challenge for Røyrvik Municipality, as it has proven difficult to recruit the necessary planning expertise. The solution has been to outsource planning to a neighbouring municipality, while maintaining overall control and strategic decisions. In combination with other factors, this situation has led to an adverse practice whereby each building of a second home has been treated as an individual case, with individual solutions for the construction of each project with regard to water, sanitation, drainage, and other infrastructure. However, in 2016 the municipal council agreed on a municipality policy decision to use development plans and has since made and followed a development plan for the largest collocated settlement (Nilsen 2019).

Røyrvik Municipality recently revised the area plan of the municipal plan for the first time since 1995 and thereby updated the municipal approach to a number of topics such as sustainability, participation, and second-home and centre development, as well as planning more generally. One highly relevant change that has affected the plan for centre development relates to the issue of sustainability. In the new area plan, a 'sustainable area and community development' is one of three top-priority areas, specifying the need to increase inhabitants' and employees' focus on climate and energy, as well as to stimulate climate-friendly and energy-efficient choices in planning and construction (Røyrvik kommune 2020, 8). However, activities such as building second homes and facilitating snowmobile tracks are considered a positive contribution to the local community.

In Røyrvik's area plan, the trajectory translates into combining sustainability, area planning and centre development, with the argument that 'to stop the negative [demographic] development, and potentially create growth, it is vital that Røyrvik Municipality uses its land rights' (Røyrvik kommune 2020, 5). Furthermore, in accordance with the plan, sufficient areas should be reserved for pedestrian and cycle paths in the centre, as well as areas for building both homes *and* second homes. This new plan for centre development not only continues existing structures established by the mining company but can also be interpreted as including the second-home population in a new and unorthodox manner, as most municipal centres do not mix first homes and second homes.

## Discussion

In terms of place-making, the municipalities of Ringebu, Lesja and Røyrvik have commonalities as well as differences. There are similarities in their geography and demography, as they all are peripheral mountainous municipalities with vast expanses of land and either a dwindling population or a stable and ageing population. Large parts of the municipalities are devoted to national parks. The three municipalities consider that ensuring a stable population is one of their main challenges, in common with most rural municipalities in Norway. As many municipal services (e.g. schools) in the rural hinterland depend on the number of residents, and given that age composition is a major factor of concern, demography is a paramount issue in the political administration of the municipalities. The municipalities seem highly aware of the importance of second-home inhabitants in ensuring the viability of their respective communities, including local businesses and initiatives.

National prerogatives of sustainability and planning principles have a strong influence on municipal practices for area planning. National policies, including the Planning and Building Act of 2008, 'promote sustainable development in the best interest of individuals, society and future generations' (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation n.d., Section 1-1). Compliance with national and/or international preservation imperatives are usually unproblematic given the large areas of land in the case municipalities. However, power is vested in national authorities, as the example from Ringebu demonstrates: the municipality intended to open an area for second-home development but was prohibited due to concerns about the movements of wild reindeer.

Norwegian planning regulations highlight sustainability, participation of the population and the densification of second-home areas. All municipalities are adhering to general planning prescriptions of announcing planned regulations and providing time for objections from the general public, including second-home owners. Coupled with a lack of planning capacity (except in the case of Ringebu Municipality), the planning and implementation of second-home areas is to a large extent outsourced to landowners and developers. The municipalities are mainly concerned with strategic planning, delineating areas, and including reserves for the future. This alliance of municipality and private capital, which can be deemed the 'marked-municipality complex', has established another form of coherence in mountain areas, where profit-seeking is combined with fear of loss (e.g. of population, of taxes). Within this development constellation decisions have already been

made and, in reality, objections to existing plans are unwanted and hardly achieve more than cosmetic changes.

Place-making practices and centre development are characterised by active steering of the development of a place in a direction that enhances that place's social, cultural and physical qualities to what are assumed to be the best for its inhabitants. Issues of centrality and densification are at the heart of recent developments. Densification itself is an example of the importance of relations of exteriority, as it basically derives from urban planning. According to statistics published in 2018, half of the second-home areas in Norway were collocated settlements (Statistisk sentralbyrå 2018), and the overall area occupied by second homes represented a mere 0.36% of the total landmass (Arnesen et al. 2018). Densification holds obvious benefits for municipalities and second-home owners through the provision of services, as well as providing benefits for landowners and developers. It appears to be a 'miracle cure' for everyone involved and so far second-home owners have bought into the idea of densification being necessary and have not only accepted the 'urbanised' nature of the densified settlements but also seemed to prefer it. The emerging 'slope villages' of second homes can be interpreted as assemblages that are deterritorialised from the municipalities, both in a territorial sense and a cultural sense.

While densification is the order of the day, it impinges on centre development, albeit with different results in the case municipalities. The notion of centrality can be interpreted in several ways. For example, it may relate to the physical distance from the city or it can be seen as a local, internal distribution of people, services and buildings. This point seems important for understanding place development in the case communities, particularly in the context of densification and micro-urbanisation. Ringebru Municipality has the advantage of a historic centre in the valley that attracts visitors. In Lesja, the centre of activities is located in Bjarli, the main second-homes hub, yet the municipality aims at dispersed development. Røyrvik Municipality is attempting to implement a novel plan to create a centre that could house both the registered population and the temporary population. The provision of attractive plots for second homes is one priority in Røyrvik Municipality's plan to develop its centre. Also, there is room for densification of already built parts of the centre area.

It can be argued that densification may lead to the establishment of other 'urban' functions, as we have shown in the case of Lesja and anticipate might happen in Røyrvik. However, while Røyrvik has a centre in mind for all kinds of inhabitants, Bjarli in Lesja

Municipality is the commercial and leisure hub mainly for second-home residents, although it also provides some jobs and outdoor activities for the local population, and the municipality directs its attention to its decentralised hamlets and a decentralised way of life. This could be considered a weak form of reterritorialisation. Ringebru and Røyrvik employ different strategies of reterritorialising second homes – Røyrvik through territorial integration, and Ringebru by disallowing centre services on Kvitfjell and directing people to its traditional centre.

Physical and social segregation ('urbanites' or outsiders versus 'real' inhabitants) of the second-home agglomerations may contribute to the municipal attitude of viewing second-home residents as 'guests', despite their contributions to place development. Thus, issues of centre and periphery may take on more complex meanings. In a material sense, second-home areas can represent a central collocation (Lesja Municipality) and still remain peripheral in a cultural sense. By contrast, in Ringebru Municipality collocated settlements on Kvitfjell are mere homesteads without further functions than leisure amenities. Instead, the municipality focuses on its traditional centres with a variety of functions. In Ringebru Municipality, densification of second homes is restricted to satellite settlements that for access to shops, services, and infrastructure, as well as for other reasons, are linked to the centre in the valley Gudbrandsdal.

## Conclusions

The three case municipalities illustrate that municipalities in the rural periphery in the southern half of Norway employ different approaches to place development or 'place-making', where national and regional politics and regulations are met and interpreted in a local reality. This relates also to different forms of reterritorialising second-home assemblages and centrality. Assemblage theory has proven useful to focus attention on the coming together of different actors in place development, including the power of the state and local capacities and strategies. Deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation processes are occurring continuously as new areas are being developed and connected. However, municipalities would be wise to pay more attention to reterritorialising and integration of the second-home population. In our opinion, processes of reterritorialisation of second homes could be further strengthened through engaging and including this part of the population more broadly in the municipalities. Developing the tourism and second-home segment is a common strategy among the case municipalities in the

mountainous region of Norway. As each local community is a unique mix of conditions, competences and resources, the result is a variety of practices both towards and from different groups of inhabitants. Coherence is established by national principles of sustainability and planning guidelines, including citizen participation and densification, and the market uniqueness is maintained by virtue of historical contingencies, concrete manifestations, and the local interpretation and application of planning principles.

## Acknowledgements

We are grateful for highly valued comments from the anonymous reviewers and editors. Further, we greatly appreciate Tor Arnesen, at the Eastern Norway Research Institute, for the Figures. Further, we wish to thank editor Kerstin Potthoff, for her efforts in revising the Figures for publication, and not least editor Catriona Turner for her thorough language review. We also express our deep gratitude to the interviewees from the municipalities of Ringeby, Lesja and Røyrvik. Then research was conducted as part of the project 'FjellHeimen 4.0', which was financed by the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation.

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