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DISCOURSES REGARDING THE SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PHYSICAL PLANNING OF SECOND HOMES IN NORWEGIAN MOUNTAIN DESTINATIONS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN GOVERNMENTAL DOCUMENTS, RESEARCH LITERATURE AND THE GENERAL MEDIA

Abstract. The neoliberal trend in spatial planning seemingly causes the loss of control of spatial plans for destination developments in the mountain regions of southern Norway. The predominant local discourse, as seen in local newspapers and other media, was originally positive to the development of second homes. Changes in development plans have, as in the Skeikampen-destination case, incited strong counter-discourses based on concerns for pasture rights, nature values, and access, in addition to sustainability in general. These discourses create a perception of reality in stark contrast to the central-government discourse, as found in the plan and building act, and governmental documents.

Key words: discourses, mountain resort, second-homes, spatial planning, sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, most large mountain destinations in Norway are characterised by a fast-growing number of private second homes, as well as an increasing number of ski lifts and pistes (Skjeggedal *et al.*, 2010). As these types of developments

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are both resource and area-consuming, it is easily agreeable that the aim of the physical planning process should be to create a sustainable destination. Further new development should bring about a positive economic and socio-cultural effect on the local community, in addition to causing as little damage as possible to the environment. However, an increasing number of critical voices are raised in relation to the physical planning of destinations and second-home developments; in particular those in the academic literature in addition to those in the general media, including social media (Aasetre, 2021; Kaltenborn, 2018; Kaltenborn, 2021). However, even within local communities one can observe strongly contrasting discourses of land use (Aasetre, 2021).

Today, Norway has almost half a million second homes, meaning that half of the Norwegian population has access to a second home. This is a larger proportion of the population than in any other country in the world, only rivalled by Finland. In the last three decades, most of the new second homes in mountain regions have been built in or in the vicinity of ski resorts or mountain destinations. Most of these destinations are situated in former summer-farm areas. These constitute outlying fields still used for traditional agriculture, mainly as pastures for farm animals, and the surroundings hold important natural values and recreational values for the locals. Consequently, growing destinations, including the expansion of downhill areas and new second-home developments, cause discussions between opposing interests. This invokes incentives for both collaborative management as well as power struggles for access to land and resources. Importantly, different interests or actors differ in strength and in capacity to achieve their goals within local communities and governments. The influence of power becomes an important aspect, as the outcomes of the local planning and decision-processes typically reflect the distribution of power in these local communities.

1.1. The tradition and usage of second homes in Norway

The traditional cabins were cheap to build and maintain and were therefore typically built and owned by members of the working class or lower-middle class. The wealthier classes preferred to stay in mountain hotels, enjoying the same comforts as at home (see, e.g. Flognfelt and Tjørve, 2013). The large migration of workers to the cities during the 20th century created a desire to be able to go “home” and spend vacations where one had come from and felt they belonged (Tjørve and Flognfelt, 2013). Only after the First World War, many workers, for the first time, were given paid vacation, as well as shorter working hours. Many locals, especially in the growing towns, also dreamt of a small cabin to where they could spend their newly won leisure time. Together with those who had moved to the cities, they built thousands of small, traditional second homes all over mountains, in forests, and along the coasts. In those days, there were no governmental restrictions or control. The permission

to acquire a plot and build was a matter between you and the landowner. The cabin project and the urge to live there under primitive conditions became the Norwegian way for a stay close to nature, celebrating the newly won freedom.

From the early 1990s most second-home developments in ski resorts and other mountain destinations began to offer plots with connection to electricity, water, and sewage, as well as all year road access. This changed the building tradition, the market and the spatial distribution of new second homes in the mountain areas completely. While the traditional cabins had been scattered throughout natural landscapes, showing up on the map as if somebody had shot at it from a distance with a shotgun, the building of modern second homes became mostly confined to the areas around the resorts and popular destinations. This was all described well by Flognfelt and Tjørve (2013).

Now the wealthier classes quickly moved out of the traditional hotels and lodges and built themselves luxurious chalets (read: second homes) with all amenities, causing a sharp recession for the traditional accommodation industry. These new second-home dwellers most often did not have the same attachment to the area as workers who had emigrated to the cities, and they were not willing to travel far and just use their second home during vacation. They wanted to use their second home also during weekends and extended weekends. Therefore, the market for modern second homes is restricted to destinations that could be reached in about three hours, which is termed the “weekend zone” (Tjørve and Flognfelt, 2013). The new second homes are, therefore, used much more than the traditional cabins, probably typically more than a month per year, equivalent to one hundred guest nights, with an average of three guests (Flognfelt and Tjørve, 2013). An increasing number of second-home owners have wanted to move their permanent address to their second home. However, this is usually not allowed, and there has been an ongoing discussion to whether this is a desired development.

1.2. A Neoliberal Trend in Spatial Planning

The intense construction of second homes, especially in the mountains, has given rise to concerns over the sustainability of the developments. Already in the 1960s efforts were made by the central Norwegian government and its administration to control and direct this building activity. Later, instructions and guidelines from the central Norwegian government have continuously stressed the need for the sustainable development of tourist destinations and second homes, both for local economies and for the environment. In view of recent research literature, describing a liberal planning practice, it is timely to examine whether a disparity exists between the aspirations or intentions expressed by the central government and the perceived reality of the planning and development of second-home agglomerations in Norwegian mountains.

The present planning and construction law is shaped to be a tool for the decentralisation of power from the national to the local level. The aim is to secure local participation and influence, which also strengthens the sense of ownership and legitimacy in the planning process. Moreover, it reflects the political ambition of local spatial planning, land use and resource management as a shared responsibility between governments, private actors, landowners and other stakeholders, or indeed entire local communities (Skjeggedal *et al.*, 2021). Consequently there has been a shift in spatial planning from governmental authorities to non-governmental actors (see also Eckerberg and Joas, 2004; Saglie and Harvold, 2010; Tjørve *et al.*, submitted manuscript), and today the majority of the actual tourist-related spatial planning in the mountain regions of Norway has been driven by private actors. This trend towards a more neoliberal planning culture, where private planning has taken over, has been described as a transition from hierarchical governance to governmental assistance to stimulate development (Fimreite *et al.*, 2005). This has resulted in a piece-by-piece planning with the loss of an overall coherent planning process and the loss of sight of long-term consequences. The rapid, seemingly uncontrolled growth of second-home agglomerations has in turn sparked conflicts between farmers and other locals in addition to established second-home owners on the one hand and developers and local governments and their administrations on the other. The negative or unsustainable impacts of poor or uncontrolled planning that have been voiced, revolve around environmental issues and the loss or deterioration of nature, but also include restrictions to access to nature and over-tourism, the loss of pastures or access to pasture for livestock, increased energy expenditure, and overall negative effects on the environment.

Thus, it is timely to review and compare these discourses addressing or concerning the plans for destination and second-home developments in the mountains. To provide a better understanding of these relationships of power, we compare the discourses in governmental documents and in the general media, particularly in local newspapers. To do so, we have chosen as our case study the Skeikampen destination, which is a mountain (ski) resort in the Gausdal municipality, Inland county, the mountain region of south-eastern Norway. The new physical plan for the Skeikampen destination that was proposed by the municipality in 2021 caused a sharp increase in contributions to the local discourses.

2. SKEIKAMPEN, GAUSDAL MUNICIPALITY

The Skeikampen destination in Gausdal municipality is situated at about 1,000 m a.s.l. and has 11 ski lifts and 17 pistes. The destination had three hotels, but only one is still in operation. In addition, there are many rental apartments in the area.

Presently there are about 2,500 second homes in the area, but there are plans for potentially 3,000 more, with planning and development process at various stages. Gausdal municipality has just over 6,000 inhabitants, meaning that during the main vacation periods in winter, when the number of second-home dwellers peaks, the number of inhabitants more than doubles. In 2021, Gausdal municipality had almost as many second homes as permanent homes – 3,215 permanent homes, compared to 2,945 second homes (SSB, 2022). As such, Gausdal with Skeikampen destination serves well as a typical example of a mountain destination with an extensive and expanding second-home agglomeration within a comparatively small community. Looking at other municipalities within this mountain region, Tjørve *et al.* (submitted manuscript) have found that out of 38 municipalities 22 now have more second homes than permanent homes, with an average of just over 7,000 inhabitants.

Statistics from 2016 show that at this destination more than 60% of second home owners have permanent addresses in the Oslo region, 30% live locally or in the region around lake Mjøsa (the central area of the Inland county), which includes the towns of Lillehammer, Gjøvik, and Hamar, and less than 10% of the owners come from other places in Norway (Tjørve, unpublished).

3. DISCOURSES OF LAND USE

3.1. Governmental discourses

The message imparted from the central government flags expectations of a sustainable and environmental-friendly planning and development of new second homes in Norway. This discourse is well represented within the spatial planning and building act (Kommunal- og distriktsdepartementet, 2008), the governmental guide for planning of second-home developments (Miljøverndepartementet, 2005) and the guide for the municipality planning process (Miljøverndepartementet, 2012), as well as the government's strategic document for the mountains and the inlands (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet, 2021).

In the government's guide for the planning of second-home development (Miljøverndepartementet, 2005) the Minister of the Environment writes that cultural relics, reindeer husbandry, landscape, and natural values should be considered. In the guide, the government states that the responsibility rests on municipalities to ensure that the planning and development of second homes is conducted sustainably and according to environmental criteria, and that the plans have to comply with national and regional environmental goals. The governmental guide for the municipality planning process (Miljøverndepartementet, 2012) states the expectation of local (municipality level) planning that promotes sustainability and

that long-term environmental considerations are more important than short-term economic gains. The central government's strategic document for the mountains and the inlands (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet, 2021) also focuses on sustainability and the environment. It stresses in particular the challenge of climate change and high consumption, and that the government expects the goal of sustainability to underly public management and spatial planning in municipalities and counties. The central Norwegian government has provided comprehensive plans, regulations, and advice on the planning of second-home developments and the building of second homes. Already the first clause of the first paragraph of the planning and building act states that this law shall promote sustainable development and contribute to the protection of resources. The act also flags the expectation of a spatial-planning practice that secures the natural environment and natural resources, including access to nature for everybody.

The strong discourse of governmental expectations of sustainability, environmental considerations, and the protection of resources and nature is heavily contrasted by the official report from 2007 on the sustainability of physical planning in Norway from the Office of the Auditor General (Riksrevisjonen, 2007), where it indicated issues regarding building activity, mostly of second homes, in mountain areas and especially those in the vicinity of protected areas and pasture areas for the red-listed wild reindeer. This report, commissioned by the central government, shows an increase in the rate of building of second homes in buffer zones around the tree line, and close to national parks and other protection areas. Second homes also constitute the main building activity in or close to wild reindeer areas, though developments in these areas also now include a new ski resort. The report concludes that the knowledge about the collective effects of the existing and planned building of second homes is wanting. This strengthens the national nature-conservation discourse, critical to the present planning practice and the number of new second-home developments approved by municipalities.

The national nature-conservation discourse is common in the texts by environmental groups/NGOs and researchers, but also by existing second-home owners and locals. In a feature article in a national newspaper (Kaltenborn, 2018), a researcher at the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA), describes, in the title, that the building of second homes is beyond all limits. Another researcher, Aall (2017), has written a newspaper article stating already in the title that second-home tourism is unsustainable, not only because of the loss of nature but also regarding energy and resource consumption in general. In statements from the "Friends of the Earth Norway" (Naturvernforbundet) NGO Christensen (2019) and Eriksen (2022) have claimed that the second homes are a threat to Norwegian nature and that it is unsustainable to build new second homes, demanding that no new second-home developments be allowed in pristine nature. Also "Miljøpartiet de grønne" (MDG), the Norwegian green party, wishes to allow new second homes only in already developed areas (MDG, 2021).

A comparison of these national discourses, i.e., the governmental and that of researchers, environmental NGOs and opposition politicians, reveals a disparity between the signals sent by the central government and the perceived reality of present physical-planning practices and the building of new second homes. This could be interpreted as a signal that the legal system is not functioning as intended.

3.2. Local discourses

The construction of second homes constitutes a significant activity in many local communities and was expected to have a major positive impact on local economy and the economy of municipalities (Borge *et al.*, 2015). Local communities are not uniform units where all members are pulling in the same direction. The local community in the Gausdal municipality is, as any local community, shaped by the struggles for power between different interests and from different perspectives. In addition, the disproportionate distribution of benefits and potential negative impacts can result in conflicting interests arising between groups and may cause several and opposing discourses (see, e.g. Hajer, 1995). In the field of political ecology, it is indicated that the management of nature and natural resources has conflicts between actors or interests, and that this struggle for benefits and influence produces winners and losers (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2017; Robbins, 2020). Economic gain, for example, typically becomes very unevenly distributed within a community, as only a few landowners benefit from the sales or leases of land for second-home developments while most locals receive little or no economic gain. They may even experience the opposite in the form of increased taxes and charges in order for the municipality to finance the necessary infrastructure for the tourist destination and its second homes. This is clearly visible through opposing discourses in Gausdal regarding new second-home developments. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to identify and discuss key discourses regarding the physical planning and future land use.

4. THE MATERIAL AND METHODS – A NEWSPAPER SURVEY

An “Atekst” internet search was performed aimed at returning media and newspaper articles, editorials, commentaries, and letters to the editor, mainly found in the local newspaper. Atekst is the online archive service of the media company “Retriever Norway”, which offers internet searches in more than 300 Norwegian newspapers and magazines. In addition, a search was made on the webpages of the NRK (the Norwegian Broadcasting Company). The search was performed for the last six years (May 2016 to April 2022) using combinations of search terms

(in Norwegian) as “Skei”, “Skeikampen”, “destination”, second home, development, planning, physical plans, water works, water supply, pasture, cattle, and more. Only publications about developments, physical plans, or conflicts concerning the case destination were gathered, 74 in total. In addition, a few relevant documents from the central government were examined, including the Norwegian plan and building act, as well as guides and strategic documents.

The analysis of these texts leans towards a discourse-analytical approach, but with a somewhat more open analysis of planning choices and possible negative and positive impacts. Thus, the purpose is to provide a pragmatic or open approach that seeks to identify different perspectives on spatial planning decisions for the area in and surrounding the Skeikampen destination.

5. THE RESULTS – THE NEWSPAPER SURVEY

Several local discourses can be identified in the search in local newspapers and media. This survey of media contributions is summarised in Table 1. The number of media contributions found (Table 1) has a marked increase in 2021, with 33 out of 74 contributions. This coincided with the municipality’s presentation of a proposal for a new spatial plan for the destination (Gausdal Kommune, 2022) and a new plan for water and sewage (Gausdal Kommune, 2022).

Table 1. Summary of publications retrieved. The columns show the total number of publications found, the number of contributions that were critical to some aspects of the spatial plans for expansions, new infrastructure, etc. The table also shows how many contributions were for the local newspaper and how many or the percentage were written by journalists (rather than politicians, farmers or other locals)

Year	Total publ.	Negative	Main local newspaper	Journalist author	% journalists
2016	6	6	5	5	100
2017	4	3	2	4	100
2018	8	3	6	7	88.5
2019	9	3	7	9	100
2020	7	7	3	3	42.9
2021	33	22	29	9	27.3
2022	8	2	5	3	37.5
All yrs.	74	46	57	40	54.1

Source: own work.

Three different discourses related to physical planning and land use (or management) in the Skeikanpen destination and its surroundings were identified from the media. The picture of positive economic effects of the main expansion of the destination resulting from new second-home development, promoted by developers, landowners, and local governments, is identified as a dominant discourse in the Gausdal community. This first discourse supports new second-home developments, presenting the job creation and economically positive impacts for developers and contractors. The second discourse sees the destination and second-home developments as a threat to grazing rights and agriculture in general. The third discourse views the destination and second-home developments as a threat to nature and access to it. The plans for new water works is a more complex part of the loss of nature discourse because it also criticises the apparent incompetence of the municipality in their physical planning and the prospect of some of the costs of building new infrastructure to support the new development being laid onto residents, without any benefits being returned. The three different discourses are discussed in the following sections.

5.1. Second-home destination expansion

With only one out of three hotels remaining open, the Skeikampen destination fits well the development as observed by Flognfeldt and Tjørve (2013), describing the shift in Norwegians preferences from staying in hotels and lodges to staying in privately-owned second homes. The planning of second homes at the Skeikampen destination, as in many other destinations, is a result of a piece-by-piece type of planning, where typically each new development proposed by a developer or each application for changes to existing plans is considered separately by the municipality. On the home pages of the Gausdal municipality, a large number of proposals, applications and contracts for developments are posted. The municipality presented special spatial plans for the Skeikampen destination in 2010 and in 2021. The developers often apply (and are allowed) to deviate from existing spatial plans passed by local politicians. As many of these permissions were given for second-home developments in the years between these two plans, a number of new developments were granted in pristine nature areas outside the planning area for the destination, as anticipated in the 2010, the size of the planning area for the destination was increased considerably in the 2022 spatial plan from the Gausdal municipality. The total extent of the plans is difficult to oversee, as they are made up of a large number of documents at the municipality's own plan-and-strategy webpages (currently found at: <https://www.gausdal.kommune.no/planer-og-strategidokumenter.423491.no.html>), revealing a massive expansion doubling the destination and second-home agglomeration size from the current one covering in the region of 10 sq. km. These plans may potentially increase the number of second

homes at the destination from 2,500 to 6,000. Still, with the current national (and global) economic prospects, this seems somewhat unlikely in the near future.

Concurrent with the new and rapidly increasing plans for new second-home developments, the number of articles and letters to the editor concerning second homes and land use increased sharply in 2021 (see Table 1). The contributions positive to new second homes dominated before 2021. This discourse typically presented single building or development projects, where developers or landowners tell the public about the size of the investment or the amount of money they will make. A journalist in the local newspaper used the title “Forest turned into gold” featuring 15 landowners who planned to sell land for a development of 400 second homes. Thirteen building plots, at Skeikampen, found at www.finn.no (a classified advertisements website) (accessed on: 16 May 2022) were advertised for, on average, in excess of EUR 100,000. The 400 plots, spread over an area of 350 hectares, may then have a total sales price in the region of EUR 40 million or more. It is argued that the building of new second homes creates many jobs in Gausdal. Though not considered a separate discourse, the realisation that profits are exceptionally unevenly distributed adds to the differences of opinion, as represented by a letter to the editor, where the contributor notes that “...some makes a huge profit for themselves, while others are merely asked to yield areas to further increase the earnings for the lucky ones.”

This first “second-home discourse” can be seen as conveying the interests of landowners who profit from the sales of land for second-home developments, as well as actors within property development, contractors, and the business community. This coalition of actors has traditionally had a high level of acceptance within the local community, with very few opposing voices, a situation that has radically changed in a short time. With the proposal for a new spatial plan for an enlarged Skeikampen area, the critical discourse rose to become the dominating one in local media, driven not only by farmers and other locals, but also by existing second-home owners.

A couple who owns a second home at Skeikampen wrote in the local newspaper (Gudbrandsdølen Dagningen, hereafter mentioned as GD): “We were shocked when we heard about the plans for future developments...with about a doubling of what is developed today,” questioning a municipality that wants “to start up developments of this magnitude of investments and encroachments on nature in a time of uncertainty.” It is noteworthy that the letter to the editors and contributions from non-farmer locals are all critical to the new spatial plans; one person wrote “I become sad and ashamed over Gausdal municipality’s onward plan for Skeikampen.”

A member of a local environmental-protection group grants that the contractors and developers in the municipality provide about 14% of local jobs, but holds that continuously developing new areas in the mountains for second homes cannot go on for ever, raising the question of sustainability; mentioning also the issue of pas-

tures for farm animals (loss of food production), biodiversity (loss of nature), and energy consumption. The discussions concerning the loss of pastures and the loss of nature, including access to nature, will here be treated as separate discourses.

5.2. Gausdal as a farming community

Historically Gausdal was a farming community with 68 sq. km of arable land (meaning it is among the 10% of municipalities with most farmland) creating about 330 man-labour years (Lerfald *et al.*, 2016). The valley used to be dominated by dairy farms, but today only about 70 dairy farms remain. The dairy cattle was replaced by beef cattle and sheep, with wintering totals of about 10,000 cattle and in the region of 8,000 sheep (SSB, 2022). Still, the production of milk, 14 million l/yr, and beef, 250 tons/yr, is much higher than in neighbouring municipalities (Landbrukskontoret i Lillehammer-regionen, 2019). However, most active farms have animals that are sent to pastures in the mountains in summer. Subsequently, there are many farms that are not actively farmed in a traditional sense: many farms produce only grass (the fields are rented to active farmers or the grass is sold to them), or the farms produce other livestock such as pigs. The production of pork in Gausdal is more than 1,200 tons/yr (Landbrukskontoret i Lillehammer-regionen, 2019). These farms do not require summer pastures or grass for winter fodder.

In discourses concerning the physical planning of second-home developments, second-home dwellers and farmers have been on the same side because by selling or renting plots the farmers benefit from their unused summer pastures and second-home dwellers can build and use a second home. When it comes to pasture rights, however, they become opposing parties. When leases or plots for second homes are sold, it does not include pasture rights. They are retained by the farmer or jointly by the farmers who have pasture rights in the area. Therefore, second-home owners are usually not allowed to put up fences around their second homes, resulting in animals grazing amongst second homes and potentially in dung on terraces and in driveways, which in turn creates tension between farmers and second-home tourists. In a letter to the editor (in GD), a local farmer claimed the new spatial plan was not sustainable, noting that their animals needed food over summer. Another farmer stated that “cows belong in the mountains...farmers have had pasture rights there long before Skeikampen became a city of second homes.” Second-home tourists, however, recount stories where they have been attacked by cattle, and that they have less desire to come back in summer, while there are animals there. One story from Skeikampen about a five-year-old girl who went to “look at” a flock of cattle and was attacked “went viral” and appeared in a number of (we counted seven) newspapers around the country. In a letter to the editor one second-home tourist stated “Cows with calves should not be let loose, that is my opinion, clear and simple.”

Conflicts between second-home owners and farmers with pasturing animals are found in most places with large second-home agglomerations. The central government wants the farmers to utilise outfields more as pastures, noting that this is more sustainable than the use of grain feed (Landbruksdepartementet, 2021). Still, the current minister of agriculture does not want to intervene with national measures or legislation but holds that the municipalities themselves must solve these conflicts (Slåen and Holø, 2021).

The central government has proposed a new “dog law” that shortens the period one has to leash a dog. Farmers feel this would strongly limit old pasture rights. One Gausdal farmer wondered how one could replace pasture rights with a right to walk a dog without a leash. A common argument, as advanced by a second-home tourist in Skeikampen in a letter to the editor, is the fact “that some dogs are a nuisance to others should not befall others.”

Because many if not most farmers do not use pastures in the mountains and other farmers are the landowners that sell land for second-home developments, as actors they represent conflicting interests. Though farmers who sell land for second homes earn comparatively large sums, they constitute a small number of those who own farms. The fact that all the profit from selling land for developments is itself a source for conflict, when other farmers who still have livestock have to provide nature for recreation for second-home residents and at the same time experience a loss of access to pasture and pressure to abandon pasturing.

The pasture-rights discourse shows us that the second-home conflict is also a question of what agriculture we will have in the future. It illustrates that the conflict is more than just one of loss of nature and access to it.

Though farmers with livestock and existing second-home tourists can be united in scepticism to new, large second-home developments, they become adversaries when it comes to pasture rights, fencing, and dog laws. Consequently, farmers with livestock perceive second-home owners as lacking respect for farmers’ pasture rights, whereas second-home owners see livestock as detrimental to the second-home experience, with the sound of bells and manure on the terrace (Aasetre, 2022).

5.3. Nature values and access to nature

Comparing a possibly positive effect on the local economy to nature values and the benefits of access to nature constitute a comparison of incommensurable values. In other words, it is impossible to compare these opposing values. Moreover, this is as much a discourse that is national as one tied to the Skeikampen and Gausdal municipalities. Thus, Skeikampen serves merely as an example of a development where the local community becomes increasingly critical to a seeming unlimited growth in new second-home developments.

The two main mountain areas in the Gausdal municipality are the western mountains, which are largely unspoilt and comprise most of Langsua National Park, and there are the much smaller northern mountains, with the Skeikampen destination. The northern mountains are shared with three other municipalities, though no or very little collaboration exists when it comes to special planning here. Locals and farmers also point to a loss of nature and access to it, though this discourse is mainly promoted by nature-conservation NGOs (“Norges Naturvernforbund”) and politicians from the green party (MDG), both locally and nationally. The local leader of the nature-conservation NGO is critical to further construction of second homes: in a letter to the editor (GD) a call for a decision for a final outer limit for the expansion of the destination and second-home developments was made. He asserted that “...the massive encroachment on intact mountain nature is in violation of the UN’s goals for sustainability.” Also other local voices are critical of the steep growth of second homes and use the argument of the loss of nature and access to it. In a letter to the editor one local considered it “...unfair that we the locals shall loose more and more nature” pledging to “...for once to let nature win.” Another local noted not only the loss of nature but also questioned the sustainability of the physical plans for second-home development, noting that “both the development of second-home areas and the use of second homes inflict environmental- and climatic costs,” asking the politicians to reverse the plans to turn a lake up in the untouched mountains into a water reservoir for the second-home agglomerations.

5.3.1. A “water-works discourse” and a lack of governance

A prominent nature-conservation voice has noted in a letter to the editor that market forces govern large decisions leaving only small decisions to the politicians. A local politician in the green party has thus put it: “The politicians dance with the second-home market, but out of step with democracy.” This does not say that the politicians are without power, but rather that they refrain from using it. In a contribution to the local paper, a local senior citizen asserted that the politicians in the local government “in this situation” seemed “totally incapable of acting” in a municipality that was “in reality bankrupt.” In a second letter to the editor, he called for a halt in the construction of new second homes, claiming that the profit did not match the costs, including the destruction of nature and the environment. Another local, in her contribution advocating for the halting of the construction of second homes, called attention to the fact that the second-home owners were prioritised, when a large share of the local population was still without infrastructure such as public sewage or running water.

The need for new waterworks for thousands of new second homes at Skeikampen, where there is already not enough water for snow cannons, and all the second homes together seems to have come as a big surprise to the politicians. Norway’s largest second-home agglomeration with 8,000 second homes,

Sjusjoen, has already experienced the limitation of water supply to the enormous number of second homes. In the light of the plans for new waterworks, a new pressure group for the protection of the northern mountain area in Gausdal quickly attracted more than 400 members, which must be considered substantial in a community with only 6,000 inhabitants. This pressure group demanded a revised proposal for a spatial plan for Skeikampen, where the plans for new waterworks is put on hold.

The Gausdal municipality claim they were forced to increase property tax, which increased by 50-100% with its recent revision, in order to finance water and sewage systems for the second homes at Skeikampen. The municipality now has the highest property taxes in the country. The fact that the permanent inhabitants have to finance the infrastructure for second-home developments that make one of the few and privileged in the community rich has also enraged locals. The cost of new water works may, in addition to property tax, need to be financed by increasing the cost of water, sewage, and renovation for the locals.

The fact that the need for new waterworks come as a surprise and that the locals will have to pay for it, has created a new discourse – that of whether the steering of the municipality is out of control. The plan is to take one of two mountain lakes and turn it into a water reservoir. These fishing lakes lie in the middle of the last mountain areas outside the destination, and new waterworks thus entail a major encroachment on the last undeveloped nature area. The locals are furious, farmers are enraged, the existing second-home owners are angry, and the environmentalists are preparing for battle. Only a single voice, one of major developers and contractors, argues for the new waterworks claiming that more “second-home developments is sustainability in practice” because “if the building of second homes halts, then all carpenters, electricians, plumbers, masons, painters, tanners, machine operators, truck drivers and others who have their work from this, will lose their jobs.” All the while, one of the locals, in her letter to the editor, asked what would happen to the workplaces when the businessmen would have taken out all the profit – or whether “the idea is to continue the development of Skeikampen into eternity.”

6. CONCLUSIONS

It is obvious that the three discourses are not necessarily represented by distinct groups as local residents, or farmers and landowners. For example, farmers and landowners who use the mountains for pasture promote a very different discourse to farmers and landowners who benefit economically by selling land for second-home developments. Other locals also support different discourses, according to their interests as well as their families – or social circles.

Though there are contrasting local discourses in Gausdal, after a rapid change in attitudes, the predominant discourses are now negative regarding the rapid increase in number of second homes, calling attention to the loss of pasture rights, nature values, access to nature, and sustainability in general. The perception of reality conveyed through these local discourses stands in stark contrast to the discourse of the central government, as conveyed through governmental documents, as it describes a planning tradition expected to consider sustainability and the environment, including nature- and resource protection. The changes in local opinion may have been delayed by the fragmented spatial plans with a lack of overview and totality, where the spatial plans for the whole parts of the municipality (as the Skeikampen destination) is constantly overridden by approvals of separate proposals from developers.

The perceived planning and development of mountain areas in south-eastern Norway, the Gausdal municipality in particular, seem to be the opposite of those put forward by government – development occurring piece-by-piece with an apparent disregard for nature, local farmers, and sustainability. Kaltenborn (2018) has concluded that not only are local discourses dominated by a few powerful actors, mainly developers, contractors and landowners, but also local planners typically lacking information about local attitudes towards the developments. The Skeikampen case shows that the prevalent discourses found in local newspapers and media may suddenly experience a turnaround, possibly triggered by new plans for large encroachments on nature, access to it and use, as livestock pasturing. It remains to be seen, though, whether such a change will affect the planning processes or politics of the municipality.

The main argument for the planning of new second-home developments has been the notion that this creates a large number of job opportunities. Looking at municipalities with large numbers of second homes, these typically struggle with a drop in high-competence workplaces, declining primary industries and loss or lower quality of public services. According to Kaltenborn (2021), a researcher at the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA), the reality of massive second-home developments, as at Skeikampen in Gausdal, creates gigantic profits for a few actors, while local communities experience increased public poverty. It may be seen as a paradox that these gigantic second-home developments do not create more progress or prosperity locally.

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