The more, the merrier? Experiences of shared usage and generational intersections at second homes in Sweden

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Abstract

Today, about 50 % of the population in Sweden has access to a second home through their family. We are now, and in the coming years, entering a time of changes in usage and ownership for many second homes. This could result in outcomes like fragmented ownership, conflicts between legal and perceived rights of use and issues around management, succession or sale that affect maintenance and usage of the second home. The reason for this is an assumed increase of generational changes and shared usage and ownership of second homes following the boom of second homes in the 1960s and 70s and the increased average age of the owners. The aim of this paper is to start to analyse second home users’ enactment, which includes their thinking, feeling and acting, of their second home in relation to existing or future shared usage/ownership and generational changes at the second home. In order to discuss this we ask: How is the situation with shared usage of second homes and the intersection of generations at second homes experienced and described in society and among second home users? Three different materials are used: a questionnaire survey of second home users, interviews with second home users and media texts. The motive for the research is the idea that the second home is a place for the family that provides a sense of place, home, identity and continuity. The emotional, social, functional and economic meanings given to these places make them potentially problematic to manage and share within a family and through generations. In order to develop our analytical framework for understanding this, we will build on geographical works on farm property, enactment, emotional relations, transgenerational family practices and a life course perspective. The three analysed materials show that second home usage within families and over generations is
common and wanted but also filled with wishes and difficulties. This paper only scratches the surface of these issues and we see a need for further exploration and analysis of the emotional, social and material values and relations to second homes, and the users’ approaches regarding this. Our long-term approach in coming studies will provide insights into the complex situations where decisions are made regarding the future of second homes as well as increase our understanding of settlement and living patterns in Sweden in the coming years.

Keywords

Second homes; enactment; family; shared usage; generational changes; Sweden

1. Setting the scene

From rural idyll to cottage TERROR”. Becoming a second home owner is a holiday dream for many Swedes. But a warning is in order, the rural idyll may quickly transform to a cottage war, if things turn bad. Endless renovation projects, fights regarding weeks of use and bored youngsters are only a few of the threats to the summer goodliness. (Aftonbladet, 2014-06-25, translated from Swedish by the authors).

Each spring- and summertime, these types of statements are widespread in Swedish media. These representations and the commonality of second home usage in Sweden surely make a case that second home usage, as well as second home dreams and conflicts, permeate Swedish society and the idea of the Swedish summer. Strong emotions appear to be in play regarding this type of places. A second home is often an important place for the owner. It is a place for meeting family and friends and for continuity, relaxation and creativity. However, it can also be a place for conflicts, agonising meetings and of diverse, and conflicting, desires, needs and values. One strong motivation for having a second home is to create a physical place for the family and for generations to come (Jaackson, 1986; Müller et al., 2010). Today, more than half of the Swedish population has access to a second home through their family (Lundmark & Marjavaara, 2013). Our reading of the current situation in Sweden is that many second homes are being shared within families and that several generations use, or try to use, second homes jointly. Moreover, research shows that the average age of Swedish second home owners has increased recently (Müller et al., 2010). This suggests that we are entering a time of generational changes and increased number of users per second home. This can make the pressure of time, space and resources per second home increase as generations change and families grow. The sense of place, identity and economic and functional values that second homes may carry (Kaltenborn & Clout, 1998) makes them potentially problematic when owners or users change and when these places are to be used and managed in common.

From studies on smallholdings and farm properties, we know that there can be strong emotional bonds between people and the properties where earlier generations have farmed and lived. These relations outrun economic reasoning and affect how individuals act, plan and relate to these places today and onwards (Flemsæter, 2009a,b,c; Grubbrström, 2011). But what about the bonds and acts regarding a second home; this leisure place that is mainly a consequence of our modern, urban society (Williams & Kaltenborn, 1999)? Second homes can be places that are inherited, used over a long period of time and charged with family connotations, memories and values of both economic and non-economic kinds. Interestingly, a second home is supposedly a place of freedom, joy and leisure; an extra, voluntary home. Yet there seem to be many elements that can influence and impose on it, in particularly when sharing it. To share a second home implies material, social and emotional co-
existence. Legislation, material and geographical dimensions, personal and others’ traditions, dreams, memories, values, perceptions and resources of different kinds may shape the present existence and the possible future of the complex place that the second home can be. In our analysis, we conceptualise second homes as being a type of a place. A place has material, immaterial and social dimensions, and possibilities and restrictions as part of those same dimensions. It is constantly (re-)shaped by the ways people think, feel and act regarding it (Lefebvre 1991; Massey 2005). Thus, how second home users engage in and at their second home is crucial for its existence, it is how it is enacted.

1.1. Aim
In the light of the suggested trend of increasing generational changes and shared usage alongside the often assumed importance of second homes for families and individuals, this project aims to increase our knowledge on second home usage within families and over generations. We see a need to dissect and understand the emotional, social and material significance and complexity of second homes as places for individuals and families. We want to analyse second home users’ enactment, which includes their thinking, feeling and acting, of their second home in relation to existing or future shared usage/ownership and generational changes at the second home. We are interested in the possible emergence of situations where a large or growing number of individuals use and have relations to the same physical place, or are taken into consideration regarding it. Those to be taken into consideration may be the closest family, and individuals of past and future generations as Flemætæ and Setten (2009) points out, but also an extended family. In order to analyse these matters, this paper focuses on the following question:

- How is the situation with shared usage of second homes and the intersection of generations at second homes experienced and described in society and among second home users?

2. Theoretical points of departure and contextualisation

Second homes are here approached as a type of place. A place can be regarded as a specific configuration of certain social practices, meanings and material dimensions, which provide both possibilities and restrictions. It is always related to other places and times and forever in a process of being created (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2005; Simonsen, 2008). This can be grasped by the term enactment. Following Flemætæ (2009a,b) and Flemætæ and Setten (2009), a property or place, like a second home, needs to be enacted continuously, through everyday activities, conceptualisations and decisions, to remain. Flemætæ and Setten (2009, p. 2269) points out that both families and properties are continuously enacted through “sharing of memories, objects, and events”. In our analysis, the enactment of second homes is investigated through exploring users’ emotional bonds and practical approaches towards the second home and the family.

The literature has pinpointed many reasons for using a second home and why they become important places (Halfacree, 2011). The most significant motive for this project is the idea that the second home is a place for the family and that it provides a sense of place, home, identity and continuity (Cohen & Taylor 1978; Hall & Müller 2004; Jaakson, 1996; Williams & Kaltenborn, 1999). In order to develop our analytical framework for understanding the nexus of families and second homes, we build on geographical works on farm property, enactment, emotional relations and transgenerational family practices, such as Flemætæ and Setten (2009), Flemætæ (2009a, b, c) and Grubbström (2011). They highlight entanglements and emotional relations between property and family, and how these complicate and influence decisions and activities regarding the property. Their conceptualisation of emotional relations is based on what geographer Tuan termed “affective bonds” (1974, p. 33). These evolve between people and places when places are ascribed with deep meaning as they are lived and experienced, or, as Low and Altmann (1992) describes such bonds, through the term place attachment;
as based on feeling, thinking and doing. Grubbström (2011) highlights that mental images of a place can be important for the emotional bonds that may evolve. These bonds, as Flemsæter (2009a,b,c), Flemsæter and Setten (2009) and Grubbström (2011) argue, can be very strong between people and their properties when they have been farmed within one family for generations. These studies demonstrate how influential emotions such as feelings of belonging or of duty for past, present and future generations of family are for maintaining the property or at least keep it in the family. The emotional aspects, which often become dilemmas, commonly outweigh economic factors. Flemsæter and Setten (2009) conclude that in order to understand property and how property owners act and think regarding their property, we also need to understand how past and future owners are taken into consideration. This paper, and our coming studies, will expand on this by exploring if there are similar, or indeed different, emotional bonds and approaches towards second homes; these places of leisure that are entangled with our modern urban society, in contrast to old properties that have been used for farming. We will also develop the idea of the influence of several generations regarding the thinking, feeling and acting at a property as we take in the complexities and influence from sharing a second home with a large or increasing number of individuals as a result of generational changes and growing families.

We consider second homes as potentially powerful and significant places full of emotions, memories, dreams and expectations. As the *emotional turn* in the humanities and social sciences has revealed; emotions, what we feel and sense, matter. They matter as they play roles in how we construct and interpret the world (Jones, 2007). Moreover, Jansson and Müller (2003) points out that people may change their permanent homes but seem less likely to change their second home; this is kept throughout the course of life, and also often within a family. A second home, and especially when kept for many years, has been described as a valued mooring providing identity, sense of place and continuity in life (Jaakson, 1986; Lagerqvist 2013; Müller et al., 2010; Williams & Kaltenborn, 1999). As such, it is presented as a way to counter the feelings of instability and placelessness often associated with living in our modern, highly mobile society (Kaltenborn & Clout, 1998; Quinn, 2004). We have elsewhere (Lagerqvist, 2013) noted how second homes may provide fixed points in life and enable travelling into family or personal history, as memories, of childhood or other parts of life can be embedded in the materiality of the second home and in the traditions of how to act there. Many users gather their lives at the second home, materially and through experience, which makes it a shrine of private or family memories (see also Bachelard, 2001). If we consider second homes as places with abilities to hold individual and family identity, memories, sense of place and continuity, all entrenched in a specific material space, one can also assume that there could be challenges regarding social, material and emotional matters when they are to be used jointly or in times of generational changes.

There are three layers to our interest in this matter. However, it should be noted that this paper only scratches the surface of these, while future research will engage more fully in these discussions. Firstly, our project adds to the theoretical discussion on the significance of moorings and stability in an increasingly mobile and fast changing world (Hannam et al., 2006; Sheller, 2011) where second homes have been described as stable points in life (Kaltenborn & Clout, 1998; Quinn, 2004). Our research scrutinises, complicates and develops this conception by taking it into situations where these places are shared within families and over generations. In this, they may become places with strong positive emotional bonds to their users and be a material, social and emotional resource and mooring for families. But they may also offer a problematic, constraining continuity and decreasing space and prospects per user, which eventually could break the stability and continuity for the family or parts of it.

Secondly, the project fills and integrates two identified academic gaps. The first gap is filled by expanding the understanding of emotional bonds between individuals, family and places and how these may intersect and influence how people think and act in trans-generational places other than the old farm properties (Flemsæter, 2009a,b,c; Grubbström, 2011). We address Flemsæter’s (2009b)
call for examining how people relate to their second home property and explore if there are as much emotions embedded in second homes that have not been used as farm property by earlier generations. Such an understanding of place attachment and identity in relation to inherited second homes has not yet been a subject for analysis within the second home literature. Our research also addresses the lack of qualitative, long-term and life-course focused approaches as a way to understand second home usage. This will increase our understanding of the present as well as future shape of the second home and its individual and trans-generational significance. The motives, needs and resources for owning or using a second home often vary over different stages in life. Lundmark and Marjavaara (2013) has called for a life-course perspective as a way to approach the variations in how people relate to and use their second home and therefore include the more problematic matters of second home usage and ownership. With its longitudinal design, a life course study is able to follow the significance of past events, experiences and emotions for the individuals’ later actions and decisions. As a way to avoid single-factor explanations of individual behaviour, the life course approach focuses on four main points: the importance of historical and geographical context, linked life, human agency, and timing of life events. This highlights the event trajectories of the individual in a context that takes into account the age of the individual, life phase, and the timing of events (Gierle & Elder, 1998). This means that we can analyse the emotional connections, views and acts of management, maintenance and usage of second homes in relation to different stages of life. The method also has the advantage of emphasising the importance of linked life, which for this study means that it is possible to make analysis that reveals the family and even more distant relatives’ influence on the individual’s situation.

Our research takes up on this, new, less examined, side of second home matters. It problematises the strong meanings given to second homes by exploring the implications of these meanings when sharing a second home and in the restructuring of usage and ownership in processes of generational changes there. This project provides a time perspective, where both families and individuals are taken into consideration, which has been lacking in most second home research. This long-term approach will provide insights into the complex situations where decisions are made regarding the future of second homes as well as increase our understanding of settlement and living patterns in Sweden in the coming years. Insights of possible future forms of second home usage also ties into the third motive for our interest, which is based on the prevalence of second home usage in Sweden. Understanding the complexities, and how it can hold both complications and possibilities, of second home usage within families is of great societal significance as it affects a large part of the population, but also the use and maintenance of the country’s many second home properties.

3. A look at the issues of second homes and families through the lenses of three different materials

This paper uses three different materials: a questionnaire survey of second home users, interviews with second home users and media texts. These are used to explore the experiences of shared usage and the intersection of generations at second homes in society and among second home users.

3.1. What a survey can tell us about present and future usage

As a background for forthcoming analysis on present and future usage we will here point at some statistical findings from a questionnaire survey that was made in collaboration with Swedish Statistical Board (SCB) in 2009 (see Müller et al., 2010). The survey was sent to 4000 second home owners. The sample was representative considering gender, age, birth, citizenship, civil state, income and permanent resident. The questionnaire included 37 questions about socio-economic backgrounds, ownership, social and economic environment close to the second home, participation in the local society and the meaning of the second home. The response rate was 57.3 %. Answers are here divided into two categories, owners who have bought their second home via advertisement and owners who have taken over their second home via inheritance or donation (hereby referred to as inheritance).
The first question (fig. 1) deals with usage, as in numbers of individuals outside the nuclear family that regularly use the second home. The answers show that people outside the nuclear family, like friends, grown up children, grandchildren or other relatives, regularly use the properties of both categories. However, the responses also show that second home properties that have been taken over through inheritance are more frequently used by friends and/or relatives compared to properties that have been bought via advertisement. We find this interesting in relation to the result of the next question.

The owners were asked to answer how many nights they spend at the second home during June, July and August (fig. 2). The answers to this question show a difference in usage between inherited second homes and those bought via advertisement. The number of nights at the second home correlate with how the owners acquired their property. The families who have inherited their second home use it less frequently compared to the second home owners who have bought their property via advertisement. Our interpretation is that the owners who got their second home through inheritance more often share the second home with others and have less interest or opportunity to use the second home. Owners with second homes bought via advertisement have a higher overnight frequency and fewer regular visitors, which indicate a higher degree of internal use and independence.
Earlier research has shown that second home owners in Sweden have higher income than the population in average (Müller et al., 2010). However, there are income differences within the group of owners and these are, similar to other resource variables, presumably relevant for forthcoming analysis of the future usage and ownership of the second home within the family. The survey shows that owners who have got their property by inheritance are, relatively, dominated by lesser income groups (fig. 3). The situation is reversed in higher income groups, where the advertisement group of house-owners dominate.

Figure 2. The usage of the second homes (Source: Survey Müller et al., 2010).

Figure 3. The gross income of the household related to how they get the second home (Source: Survey Müller et al., 2010).
Moreover, the survey shows that nearly 70 % of the second home owners who have acquired the second home through inheritance believe that the property will be taken over by their children or grandchildren (fig. 4). This share is smaller among owners who have bought their second home via advertisement, where just over 50 % believe that the second home will be taken over by their children. The opinions are reversed in regards to owners who have answered that they will sell the properties. Overall, more than 60 % of the second home owners believe that their children and grandchildren will take over the second home. A bit more than 30 % believe that the second home will be sold in connection to the generational shift. There are just a few percent who think that their second home will be rented or unused in the future.

### 3.2. The representation of a problem and its solutions: how does media describe family situations at second homes?

As noted earlier, matters of shared usage of second homes are not widely researched. However, there is one channel where such topics are often described and discussed, namely in Swedish media like newspapers and magazines. This section provides an analysis of the presence and representation of family situations at second homes in this. The analysis leans on Bacchi’s (2000) approach *What is the problem represented to be*, which is a method originally developed for analysing policies. We see the approach as a way to grasp and explore how various problems and solutions are represented, and therefore constructed and made known, in material such as media or interviews. Originally, the approach uses six questions for exploring representations, but we focus on the main question: What is the problem represented to be? The point here is that how something is framed, like in particular ways of talking about “problems” and “solutions”, influence how we think about it and possible actions made (Bacchi, 2000; Fairclough, 2003). These representations of problems and solutions may shape...
expectations, ideas and activities regarding sharing second homes and how it is dealt with among second home users. The media accounts may also provide identification and support regarding these matters.

Writings about second homes and family issues can most often be found in Swedish daily press and in magazines focusing on homes, family matters and/or private economy. In this analysis we have selected 17 articles from 1990-2013, but many more could be found. In these, almost all stories that related to second homes and families are based on the possible, or even more so, expected, conflicts. Words like war, terror, threats and conflicts are common in the texts. The problem is represented as though a shared second home is a troubled place and that sharing a second home with your family without larger problems is almost inescapably impossible, although the establishment of it as a family place was done with good intentions. When representing this, the underlying assumptions also become clear. The problem is produced by the sharing of ownership and usage combined with difficulties within families (like problematic relatives, earlier life events and the inertia, as well as legacy, of patterns and problems within a family) and the importance of second homes as the place of childhood memories and of traditions and emotions. In addition to these roots of conflicts, many media texts revolve around the probability of conflicts due to different views on modernisation and maintenance as well as insufficient rules, agreements and legislation. Moreover, the “solution” is presented as strategies such as perceiving, and managing, the second home as a business, to set up rules and agreements (of how, when and who regarding usage and maintenance of the second home), to plan, to compromise, to avoid being controlled by emotions, to build more houses or to ultimately leave or sell the second home.

3.3. Exploring the experiences of the second homes and the family through interviews

The following section analyses narratives regarding second homes and families that emerge in interviews of second home users. This text is based on two different sets of interviews.

The first set of interviews was conducted as a smaller pilot study. These were six unstructured interviews that explored issues of sharing and managing second homes within families and of dealing with generational changes. These interviews were also conducted to test the choice of interviews as a method to investigate such complex and potentially thorny issues. Initially, we expected to meet reluctance from the respondents to disclose any family conflicts and financial affairs. But in the pilot study the interviewees often spontaneously shared their experiences and family history connected to the second home. The interviews were open in their form and we started by explaining our interest in second homes, families and shared usage. The respondents were very engaged in sharing their experiences. Repeatedly we met a narrative that describes second homes as very powerful, emotional and important places that are often perceived as non-replaceable. The conflicts often seem to appear when the authority of the second home were to be transferred between generations (as also noted in Huggings Balfe, 1999). For many users, the second home seems to be a project stretching from the past into the future of the family. This means that it is not only those who live today that have to be taken into consideration when making decisions, also those who had lived before and those who will come after are given significance. This can be perceived as a straight jacket that affects how users relate and act in regards to the second home. In addition to the emotional value of second homes, other significant factors are mentioned, such as siblings’ financial condition, distance between second home and permanent home and economic values of the properties.

The second set of interviews is a re-working of material from semi-structured interviews with 20 second home users in three different areas in Sweden. These interviews were conducted from 2006 to 2009 as part of Lagerqvist’s dissertation (2011). The interviewees were all in the ages between 45 and 85 and most had families with children, and also often grandchildren. About half of them had acquired
their second home through their family and have spent parts of their childhood there, while the other half had bought it, or just rented the cottage, without previous family connections.

Many of the interviewees have had their second home for decades and most of the second homes are now, or have been, used by several generations at the same time. This is something that the users highlight as significant as to why these places become such important places. One woman explains, “By having children and grandchildren here, doing things here, I am getting roots here.” As also pointed out by earlier studies on second homes, the interviewee’s dreams and desires of having a place where family, both the now living and the generations to come, could spend time together, was a major reason for getting and/or continuously using the second home:

...to have a place where we all could be, where our children, our grandchildren and even the children of our grandchildren could come and meet up. We are four generations there now. But just to be able to spend time with them, that is what is best with it [the second home]. (woman, Småland)

The fact that many of the second homes have been kept within the family through a number of years has resulted in a sense of continuity for the users. This has generated many reoccurring practices and ways of doing things and has embedded many memories of and at the second home. Perhaps the second home can be thought of as one of the most conservative places? Things are supposed to be the same way as they always have been. The key is put under the same stone in the garden, users have reoccurring procedures of how to open up the cottage after the winter and how to close it in early autumn and reorganisation or redesign of the second home and its furniture is seldom made. The users learn the practices and learn to like them, and consequently they are transferred across generations.

When several generations have used or are using the same place, the second home becomes something of an assemblage where a number of individuals and their histories, memories, traditions and practices are embedded in the one and same place. Within this, there are ideas, dreams and plans about how life should be lived and how the second home should be. These ideas do not only concern those who live there now, but also past and future generations. The citation below illuminates how several generations come to matter, and linger, at the second home:

I guess we’ve never really thought about a ‘correct’ design of this place, it has been more about the function, or that the stuff has just been here since my parents lived here. Our son asked us just the other day why we have this particular painting from Switzerland on the wall. It is from my father’s work trip and we have never even thought about taking it down! My parents lived for 20-30 years after we had bought this from them and when they came to visit they were always saying thinks like ‘have you moved the beds?!’, and ‘where is this and that?!’. I bought it from them with furniture and all, and we have been very careful... and I would say that they had been dead for many years before I dared to throw their cloths away! (man, Uppland)

The following citation shows how the importance of the second home as a family place:

She: In a way we actually got this place to keep the family together. This is a solid point for the children. They really like coming here, and we have had a lot of grandchildren here the last months or so. It is partly for the sake of them (the children and the grand children) that we keep this cottage.

He: Yes, we would see them less often if we didn’t have it! And as they have grown up here, it is great fun for them and their children to come here and go into their rooms and dig out the closets.
She: This is our own family tradition! We, the family, are what’s important, not the house in itself.

But then the same couple highlights some possible problems regarding the future of the second home within the family:

He: This is not really what they dream of, it would perhaps be so if there was a lake here. And they have seen all the hard work with this house, they know it! So they don’t really want to take over it, it is too much work.
She: but the grandchildren are growing older and our children say to us: keep it for ten years so they can be given the opportunity to decide...
He: so we might jump one generation.
She: We’ll have to see…. (wife and husband, Uppland)

In the narratives about the family and the second home, there are some reflections on how to modernise or preserve the character of the property and how the view of this could vary across generations. Some interviewees talk about how they will modernise for the sake of the children and keeping them pleased with the comfort. Others stress the importance of teaching their children the pleasures of plainness.

Another family also highlight the diverging ideas and expectations of a second home within the family and how it can vary over time, showing the relevance of a life course perspective when analysing second home usage:

She: well, when the children grew into a certain age, they didn’t really find being here so fun. [...] 
He: But they are finding their way back here now. Now they are bringing their own children and it is so much fun! (wife and husband, Småland)

These interviews illustrate how family situations at second homes are experienced and how second homes become important family places and but also possibly divergent places where several generations are present or needs to be taken into consideration.

4. Concluding discussion and an avenue forward

The three materials confirm the picture of second home usage within families and over generations as common, wanted but also filled with wishes and difficulties. This paper only scratches the surface of these issues and we see a need for further exploration and analysis of them.

The survey provides us with some relevant information for further inquiries. One important finding is that more than 60 percent of the owners foresee that their second home will remain within the family. However, owners who have acquired their second home through family foresee a continuation of it within the family at a higher degree than owners who have acquired the second home via advertisement. The survey also shows that owners who got their second home through inheritance use it less frequently than the group of second home owners who have bought via advertisement, and they also share the second home more with others. We could also see that owners in the lesser income-groups more often got the property by inheritance. Conclusively, the survey indicates several differences between inherited places and those bought via advertisement that are relevant for the exploration and understanding of second home usage within families and over generations.
Our analysis of media indicates that there is a common way of representing or framing the shared second home as a problem with certain solutions. These representations of problems and solutions may shape expectations, ideas and activities regarding sharing second homes and how to deal with it among second home users, as well as provide identification and support. Arguably, there are various influences regarding second home usage within family to take into account in our analysis. Media may be one, but also for instance friends and neighbours can shape how second home users think and act in these matters, in terms of problems as well as solutions.

The interviews illuminate the importance of the second home as a family place and how several generations exist and come to matter at the second home. For many of the interviewees, the dream of having a place where family, both the now living and generations to come, could spend time together, was a major reason for acquiring or keep on using the second home. This can also be perceived as a straight jacket that affects how users relate and act in regards to the second home. Several of the interviewees highlight, similarly to the accounts in media, possible problems regarding how to deal with future usage and management of the second home within the family. Furthermore, many interviewees highlight the fact that they have had their second home for decades and that it have been used by several generations as significant in why these places have become so important. Here we start to see similarities with the emotional bonds to family farms that Flemsæter (2009a,b,c), Flemsæter and Setten (2009) and Grubbström (2011) have identified.

This paper has focused on the often quite complex situations of shared usage of second homes and generational intersections there. It seems that those involved deal with these issues in diverse ways and we argue that there is a significant need for research on the emotional, social and material values and relations to second homes, and the users’ approaches regarding this. In the next step we want to analyse and understand how second home users enact their second home in relation to existing or future shared usage/ownership and generational changes at the second home. The research will proceed with semi-structured interviews with two generations of owners and users of second homes and an analysis of material from archives and land registers. As we are interested in the users’ thinking, feeling and acting regarding their second home, the concept of strategies provides a useful analytical tool. Historian Scott-Smith defines strategies as means toward long-term goals, and the term is a way to describe and understand acts and patterns of the acting of individuals or families. However, as families are made of several individuals, possible discrepancies between strategies of a family and of individuals, between different individuals within the family and between the goals that individuals or families may have and the strategies they use to attain them are important to acknowledge (Page Moch et al., 1987, p. 119). So strategies are decisions with long-term perspectives, which in our case means that the second home owners formulate conditions across the generational borders. In some ways, strategies can be seen as forecasts, like chains with links of plans. However, the strategies need to be perceived as desired development, as there is no certainty that the conditions will be achieved. Importantly, we need to analyse the strategies within a life course perspective where we acknowledge that both strategies and capacities regarding how the users want, can and need to deal with the second home may vary much over time and life courses.

Finally, it seems as a majority of second homes owners in Sweden foresee that their summer paradise will be kept in the family. Yet, questions of why, and not least of how, are still shrouded in mystery.

References


